CALVIN'S COMMENTARIES

COMMENTARY ON EZEKIEL

Chapters 1–20



JOHN CALVIN

SOLI DEO GLORIA

Commentary on Ezekiel

Chapters 1–20

John Calvin

Translated from the original Latin and collated with the French version
by Thomas Meyers, M.A.

Monergism Books

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John Calvin

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Published by Monergism Books
www.monergism.com

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Translator's Preface

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

An Interest of no ordinary kind is excited in the mind of the Biblical Student by the mention of "Calvin's Lectures On Ezekiel." The last Work which a great man leaves unfinished, because arrested by the hand of death, becomes at once an heirloom to posterity. After the lapse of nearly three hundred years, we read this affecting sentence with a tear and a sigh: "When this last Lecture was completed, that most illustrious man John Calvin, who had previously been weakened by sickness, then became so much worse that he was compelled to lie on his couch, and could not proceed further in his explanation of Ezekiel: This is the reason why he stopped at the end of the twentieth chapter, and did not complete the work so happily begun." Afflicted as Calvin was for the last few years of his life, the wonder is that he accomplished so much in preaching, lecturing, and dictating; and although we have still to mourn over so much unfinished, we are filled with astonishment at the labors he achieved.

The vigor of his mind and the stores of his learning are amply displayed in his Commentary On Ezekiel. And that the modern reader may enter fully into those valuable explanations of the text which he will find in the ensuing pages, it will be desirable to furnish him with a slight sketch of the times in which this Prophet lived. We shall then add such critical remarks as may illustrate our Author's exposition of the Sacred Text.

"Thy sons shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon," were the ominous words of Isaiah to a king of Judah, and after the lapse of a century they were fulfilled to the letter. Kings, and priests, and nobles, and people were all swept away by the remorseless monarch, and planted here and there along the lenny banks of the river Chebar. There Ezekiel pined in misery among three thousand captives of rank, who, according to Josephus, graced

the triumph of Nebuchadnezzar. Either a priest or the son of a priest, (for the sense is doubtful, Ezekiel 1:4,) here he was compelled to linger during twenty-two years of his life, while he was wrapt in prophetic vision, and carried on the wings of the soul to the city of his fathers. Here he tarried in body, while his spirit was at home with the Cherubim within the Temple, among their wings and wheels, and burning movements, and mysterious brightness. Here he often gazed upwards into the firmament above him, and in the clear azure of an eastern sky beheld the sapphire throne, and the appearance of the glory of Jehovah resting majestically upon it! Here he experienced the prophetic inspiration, and was strengthened to proclaim in Jehovah's Name the mysteries of punishments and desolation. He was permitted to enunciate the great truths of God's moral government of his ancient ones — to proclaim the eternal connection between obedience and happiness, transgression and ruin. Nor was he alone in his declarations of vengeance against every man "that setteth up his idols in his heart." When he entered on his office, Jeremiah had completed the thirty-fourth year of his apostleship, and was contemporary with him for at least eight years. Amidst insult, obloquy, and scorn, he proclaimed before the faithless king the coming hosts of the Chaldeans; while Zephaniah was still prophesying in Judaea, and Daniel proclaiming the power of holiness in the land of Babylon.

Ezekiel is remarkably silent as to his personal history, so that we are unable to ascertain his age, at either the commencement or the close of his mission. Josephus supposes him to have been but a youth when hurried from the land of his fathers, but Havernick remarks with justice, that he displays so fully the matured character of a priest in his intimate acquaintance with the details of the Temple service, that he may well be supposed to have attained the age of thirty before his removal. [1] The death of his wife is the only personal event to which he refers, in the ninth year of the Captivity, (Ezekiel 24:18,) and it seems probable that he spent the whole of his remaining life on the banks of the Chebar. He had evidently acquired a commanding influence over his fellow-prisoners, as their elders frequently came to enquire concerning God's message at his lips. (Ezekiel 8; Ezekiel 19; Ezekiel 20; Ezekiel 23) The traditions respecting his death are various, but as they rest on no solid foundation, they may be permitted to die out in the obscurity of intentional silence.

Before we can enter with satisfaction into any views of the style and interpretation of an ancient author, it is desirable to ascertain the genuineness and authenticity of the writing on which we are about to comment. And as Biblical Criticism has made great pretensions to advancement since the time of Calvin, it becomes necessary for his modern Editor to be in some degree acquainted with its progress, to be prepared to state some definite conclusions for the guidance of less instructed enquirers.

[1] Havernick, Commentar uber Ezelkiel. Erlangen, 1843, See also Wielder Bibl. Relaworterbuch, art. Ezechiel. Leipsic, 1833.

As to the Genuineness Of Ezekiel's Writings, it has never been seriously called in question by the learned, either Jew or Christian. Some self-sufficient Critics have impugned the last nine chapters: Their valueless arguments will be found, by those who wish to search for such unsatisfactory materials, in Rosenmuller, while their refutation is completed by Jahn, in his Introduction to the Sacred Books of the Old Testament, and is rendered accessible to the mere English reader by Hartwell Horne [2] So little weight, however, is attached to such opinions, that even Gesenius allows a "oneness of tone" to be so conspicuous throughout Ezekiel's Prophecies, as to forbid the suspicion that any portions of them are not genuine. This Book formed part of the Canon in the Catalogues of Melito and Origen, of Jerome and of the Talmud. Josephus, indeed, refers to two Books of Ezekiel, probably dividing his *prophecies* into two parts. His language [3] has necessarily given rise to some discussion, which Eichhorn has set at rest as satisfactorily as the data will allow. [4]

The Arrangement Of The Various Predictions has been the subject of a variety of opinions. Some have supposed that Chronological Order has been interfered with, and that different collections of the separate Prophecies might be made with advantage. But Havernick, in his valuable Commentary, published as late as 1843, maintains that the present arrangement is correct. It proceeds, he asserts, in the order of time, and connects, as it ought to do, the Prophecies against foreign nations with those against Israel and Judah. Hence he divides the Book into the following nine Sections: —

1. The Call to the Prophetic Office. (Ezekiel 1-3:15.)

2. The Symbolical Representations foretelling the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. (Ezekiel 4:16 through Ezekiel 7.)

3. A Series of Visions, a year and two months later than the former. In these he is shown the Temple polluted by the worship of Adonis, the consequent vengeance on the priests and people, and the prospect of happier times and a purer worship. (Ezekiel 8-11.)

4. A Series of Reproofs and Warnings against the prevailing sins and prejudices of his day. (Ezekiel 12-19.)

5. Another Series of Warnings, one year later, still announcing the coming judgments. (Ezekiel 20-23.)

6. Predictions, two years and five months later, announcing the very day of the Siege Of Jerusalem, and assuring the captives of its complete overthrow. (Ezekiel 24.)

7. Predictions against Foreign Nations. (Ezekiel 25-32.)

8. After the Destruction of the City, The Future Triumph of The Kingdom of God on Earth. (Ezekiel 33-39.)

9. Symbolic Representations of The Times Of Messiah, and the prosperity

[2] Introduction, volume 4.
[3] Antiq. 10:5, section 1.
[4] Einleitung, volume 3

of the Kingdom of God. (Ezekiel 40-48.)

There is a negative merit in Calvin's Lectures, which has not been imitated by some later Commentators. He never makes those observations on Ezekiel's Style And Diction which would reduce him to the level of a merely human writer. Grotius and Eichhorn, Lowth and Michaelis dwell on his erudition and genius, and assign him the same rank among the Hebrews which Aeschylus holds among the Greeks. They praise his knowledge of architecture, and his skill in oratory. They call him bold, vehement, tragical; "in his sentiments elevated, warm, bitter, indignant; in his images fertile, magnificent, harsh, and sometimes almost deformed; in his diction grand, weighty, austere, rough, and sometimes uncultivated; abounding in repetition, not for the sake of ornament and gracefulness, but through indignation and violence." [5]

Such language as this clearly implies a very different view of the Prophet's character and mission from that taken by Calvin. He looked upon him as a grand instrument in the hands of The Most High, and would have instinctively felt it to be profane thus to reduce him to the level of the Poets and Seers of heathenism. In this feeling we ought to concur. The modern method of criticizing the style and matter of The Hebrew Prophets deserves our warmest reprobation. They are too often treated as if their thoughts and their language were only of human origin. Their visions, their metaphors, and their parables, are submitted to the crucible of a worldly alchemy, in entire forgetfulness that these men were the special messengers of God. To them it was commanded — "The word that I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou speak." "Thou canst not go beyond the word of The Lord, to say less or more." It is not for us to speak, as Bishop Lowth does, of a "remarkable instance of that exaggeration which is deservedly esteemed the characteristic of this poet." And again, of "an image, suggested by the former part of this Prophecy, happily introduced and well pursued." All such language as this, whether in praise or blame of the imagery and expressions of the Prophets of the Old Testament, is highly irreverent. It is scarcely consistent with simple and confiding views of Divine inspiration. They assume principles of interpretation, and of exegesis, totally at variance with that implicit confidence in the plenary inspiration of the Prophets, with which the early reformers were imbued.

And what have we gained by listening to the teachers of Modern Germany, and passing by as antiquated the giant expounders of Geneva? The question is an important one, and the answer to it implies much laborious reading and much patient thought. It requires some acquaintance with the writers on Biblical hermeneutics from Calvin's time to our own — some symmetry of mind to pass a judicial sentence with candor and precision. This, at least, the casual reader may perceive, viz., a striking difference between the modern Neologian and the ancient Genevan tone in treating these sublime subjects;

[5] Lowth, Hebrews Prael., 21:279. 8vo, 2nd. ed.

and the question will recur, what shall we gain by deserting Calvin and taking up with Eichhorn? That we may present the readers with some data for estimating fairly our defense of Calvin, we will make a few extracts from this well-known writer, selecting him simply as an average specimen from many others of even greater celebrity. In the 545th section of his introduction to the Old Testament, [6] he speaks of his "originality," of "the lively fiction of his inexhaustible imagination," and of his "gathering materials for his poems." In a few sections afterwards he adds, that his poems are "inventions," and "a work" of art, [7] and "manifest the wild shoots of a heated imagination." [8]

If this be the result of the elaborate researches of modern times, then we may surely throw ourselves back into the arms of older and sounder Commentators. They never delight in banishing The Almighty from his own Word: they never treat him as a stranger in his own land. His agency is with them no intermitting tide, carrying a shifting wave of glory from strand to strand, and leaving only a dreary waste of centuries between, strewed only with the wrecks of his broken workmanship. The long line of Hebrew Seers were either inspired of God, or their writings are deceptions.

Men of Calvin's faith and devotion believed that beneath the surface of their imagery, and parables, and oriental diction, lay concealed a living power which energized all this glowing machinery, which marshaled the thoughts within the speaker's mind, and then clothed them in the burning words and the glowing phrases which spoke alternately either joy or sadness to the hearer's soul. If the proverb of the Royal Sage is true — "Death and life are in the power of the tongue," then the Master-mind of the Divine Artist touched Ezekiel's tongue with living flame, and gave his language more elevation, dignity, and majesty, than the most exalted genius, or the richest imagination could accomplish. And if these views be comforting and refreshing to the soul, we "gain a loss" by passing away from Geneva, as it was to Neology as it is. For where are we to stop in our downward course? When we allow ourselves to speak of the traditional creation-week of Moses, or the rocks on which Ezekiel stranded, we are hastening on the high road to the myths of Strauss, or the pantheism of Emerson and Parker.

The voice of an Apostle should still sound in our ears." Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy or vain deceit," when we find M. Comte, in his remarkable work *"*Cours de Philosophic Positive," speaking of a radical incompatibility between Theology and positive Philosophy — treating as chimerical all attempts to reconcile Modern* Science* with Divine Revelation, and in reliance on the irresistible tendency of our present scientific speculations, entertaining the hope of getting rid of the "Hypothesis of a God." (Tome 4:51. Lecon.) Our wisdom lies in resisting the first temptation to this downward progress. If we allow Exchhorn and Gesenius to lead us

[6] Volume 3. 8vo, Leipsic, 1783.
[7] Section 547.
[8] Section 551.

into discussions about the Prophet's "polite genius" [9] instead of his divine inspiration, and to attribute his language to the temper and talent of the man instead of to the guiding power of God's Holy Spirit, then there is no step of skepticism and infidelity which we may not ultimately reach.

This warning proceeds from no blind admirer of antiquated error, and from no thoughtless despiser of modern science. Let us have the freest and fullest right of search into all the language of Ancient Prophecy: we claim and we court the minutest investigations, while an experience of no limited extent leads us to reject the haughty boastings of the last new skeptics over the writings of men, within the fringes of whose shadow the present generation are not worthy to tread.

It may now fairly *be* enquired, how far Calvin's Interpretations Of The Visions Of Ezekiel have been superseded by the *researches* of modern times? And it may also be asked, whether the speculations of modern German divines — the children of the Reformation — have set aside the Biblical hermeneutics of their great forerunner? Those questions are worthy of our attentive replies.

The general principle of Calvin's Interpretation of The Visions of Ezekiel is an immediate appeal to the miraculous interposition of God. He saw in them God acting directly and powerfully on the Prophet's mind, and through him on the people. He did not consider them as merely illustrating God's general Providence and government of the world, or as portraying any ordinary operations of his grace in the souls of the people; he looked upon them as representing a miraculous and visible *interference* with the ordinary laws of the Nation's discipline. His perception of the obstinacy, ingratitude and perverseness of the *Jews* was so great, that he *considered* their remarkable idolatry and profaneness justified any breach of the laws of nature, with the view of restoring them to *obedience,* and securing their salvation. The moral end to be attained always appeared to him to justify the physical disturbance of the laws which regulate our outward existence. The inestimable value of the soul, when compared with anything earthly, rendered no miracle improbable to his mind, if it only tended to that ultimate result.

Comparing the Interpretations of Calvin with those of modern Continental Divines, we have no reason to conclude that the views of the great Reformer have been superseded. The progress of Biblical Criticism during the last 800 years has indeed been accompanied with some clearer views of the details, but the fundamental principles of these Lectures On Ezekiel have never been successfully impugned. The Miracles of the Old Testament have been boldly assailed, both at home and abroad, and no slight outpouring of infidel wrath has fallen upon the Calvin interpretation of those of Ezekiel. Germany, the birthplace of the Reformation, has been also the seed-bed of spurious Rationalism. The novelty of any opinion on Biblical subjects has now become

[9] Einleitung in das A. T., volume 3, and Geschichte der Hebrews Sprache u. Schrift, p. 35.

a sufficient atonement for its absurdity, and he receives the greatest applause from the many, who casts farthest from him whatsoever has commanded the veneration of ages. The direct interposition of Jehovah's power in the affairs of men, as related in the writings of the Hebrews, has lately exercised the ingenuity of German skeptics to an almost incredible extent. The mysticism of the School of Schelling has rivaled the extravagancies of the theory of accommodation proposed by the celebrated Semler.

Professors of theology in various celebrated Universities have arisen, who have rejected with contempt whatever portion of the Old Testament they could not reconcile with their own individual reason, and who have rested their instruct, ions on gratuitous assertions and groundless hypotheses, which make a larger demand on our credulity than the Miracles do on our faith. Eichhorn, Bonsdorf, Rosenmuller, and Wegscheider, are names with which the reader of Foreign Theology has become too familiar. Their theories have now given place to many a later development, including the speculative Christology of Schleiermacher, and the fanciful myths of Strauss. Highly as we value some of the grammatical and philosophical labors of this School of Hebraists, we cannot but deem them morally incompetent to be our guides in Scriptural interpretation. Far from despising the showy guesses of genius, or the solid treasures of learning, we would pause before we tender the homage of our admiration to those who profess to reconcile the study of Divinity with what they term The Enquiring Spirit of the Age. Our reverence must not be withdrawn from the piety and simplicity of a Calvin, to be prostituted to the praise of a paradoxical erudition, or a perverted ingenuity.

Nor is our view of Calvin as a Commentator overstated, in the opinion of one of the giants of orthodoxy of modern Germany. Hengstenberg, who has earned undying repute by parrying the deadly thrusts of the heroes of Rationalism, Dr. Wette Von Bohlen, Vatke and Hitzig, characterizes Calvin by saying — "This man stands still farther above his followers than above his predecessors. One cannot sufficiently wonder how such a leader could have had such followers. [...] It is impossible for any man who had carefully studied the Commentaries of Calvin to become so thoroughly and consistently superficial, as all of them show themselves to be." For instance both Von Bohlen and Vatke have asserted that there is no trace of the existence of the Pentateuch in the Older Prophets, and hence they have invented an *argumentum a silentio,* on which they lay it down as an axiom, that the Older Prophets knew nothing of the Pentateuch, and that the Law was for the first time committed to writing about the times of Ezekiel!

Doctrines such as these have been industriously propagated by three critics of great influence, viz., Spencer, Le Clerc, and J. D. Michaelis. The labors of Spencer in his work *De Legibus Hebraeorum Ritualibus,* have, in recent times, found a kindred spirit in the virulent hostility of Strauss. In both there is the same icy coldness, the same religious weakness, the same attempt to destroy that sense of God's presence, so conspicuously honored

in Calvin's Comments on this Prophet and the others. Spencer denies all spiritual meaning to the Visions of God's agents, and to the appearances of the Cherubim, allowing, indeed, at times, a *ratio mystica et typica,* but retracting it immediately on spiritual meaning being alluded to. The grossness of his idea of God, and the lowness of his views of symbolical interpretation, may be judged of from the following passage: — "Deus interim, ut superstirtoni quovis pacto irefur obviam, ritus non paneos, mulforum annorum et gentiurn usu cohonestatos, quos ineptias norat esse tolerabiles in sacrorum suorum numerum adoptavit." This shallow and shortsighted system spread rapidly among those who boasted themselves to be disciples of the early Reformation, because they no longer appreciated the spiritual nature of the Prophetic symbols, as so ably explained by Calvin in his Lectures.

After Spencer we have Le Clerc, who is as superficial and as unsatisfying as most Arminians of his School. Whatever indicates a living God — taking interest in the punishment or the consolation of the Hebrews, sending them Prophets to warn and to threaten — he calls anthropomorphism. He only plays with the husk, and finds no kernel. He had a kind of horror of any superhuman interposition: Miracle and Prophecy were alike rejected; everything beyond the operation of merely natural causes was put out of sight and artfully explained away.

At length Michaelis, in his *Mosaisches Recht,* Mosaic Jurisprudence, and in his Annotations for the Unlearned, labored most assiduously to unsettle the foundations of the Biblical Writings as inspired.

The Modern School, who look down contemptuously upon THE Credulity Of The Early Reformers, and fancy themselves emancipated from the trammels of their narrow systems, boasts in its skill of detecting truth by means of Internal Evidence. This is a weapon of two-edged power; and if used in the spirit of an earnest and sober criticism, may be used successfully in support, of the integrity of the Ancient Scriptures. Let the reader, in turning over these Lectures on Ezekiel, endeavor to discover traces of the previous existence of The Pentateuch: let him do for this Prophet what Havernick has done with reference to Hosea and Amos — scrutinizing their writings line by line, and tracing such expressions and idioms as prove them to have been familiar with The Mosaic Writings, and he will become familiar with the true use of this important instrument of Biblical Exegesis. Let him afterwards consult with diligence and apply with discretion the principles of Hengstenberg's *Christologie des Alter Testaments.* He will find it profoundly learned and unweariedly laborious, illustrating fully the intimations of Ancient Prophecy respecting Messiah's Kingdom. The reader, who has set himself at the feet of Calvin, will discover it to be a most satisfactory exposition of these Predictions. Its candor, and honesty, and accomplished philology, stand out in strong contrast with the arrogance of the Rationalists, and rebukes by its enlightened orthodoxy the reckless skepticism of their system.

Nor are such cautions without their use among ourselves. The inferences from supposed Internal Evidence have, even in our own country, been most wild and baseless. What must be our own danger, when an intimate friend of Southey, Coleridge, and Mackintosh, whose writings produced some influence on the literature of the day, could gravely put forward the following expose of his views: *"I* have attained the inference that *the feast of Purlin* is the Magophonia of Darius; the 31st Ezekiel an elegy on the death of Cyrus killed by the Massagetae; and the 14th Isaiah an elegy on the death of Cambyses, both by the same author; whom, on the ground of internal evidence, I am venturing to separate from among the different Prophets, and to call Daniel, and who is, I think, the finest ode writer in the world. Nay, Daniel is to claim of Ezekiel 25 to 32, and Ezekiel 35 to 39; of Jeremiah 46 to 51; and of Isaiah 13 to 23, and Isaiah 11 to 13; but of this last allotment I am doubtful." Here we have a fair specimen of the manner in which every unsound opinion may be propagated under the specious plea of respecting the Internal Evidence.

Another extract from the correspondence of this writer will fully justify the warning which we have sounded against the influence of such sophistical comments. "I am busied now in Theology, and have actually drawn up a paper, 'Who wrote the Wisdom of Solomon?' which has for its object to prove that Jesus Christ wrote it: partly from the Internal Evidence of passages descriptive of him, partly from the External Evidence of the extreme veneration in which the Book was held by the Apostolic characters." These verily are the men of our day — the enlightened teachers of a liberal Theology — the despisers of antiquated credulity — and the authors of a new and improved method of interpreting the Oracles of our God!

The charge of credulity may be answered by showing that even some of the chiefs of the Rationalist School have not been free From Its Influence. The Scholars Of Europe Have Not Yet Forgotten That Gesenius was imposed upon by the clumsy forgery of Wagenfeld, who pretended to have discovered a Oreck Translation of the lost Books of Sanchuniatho in a Portuguese monastery. [10] Had he relied a little more on External than Internal Evidence, had he demanded a sight of the Greek Manuscript, and also of the alleged Phoenician stone, he would have saved the discredit of the discovery that a *patois* of Arabic, Maltese, and Italian was palmed upon him for Phoenician, and that the celebrated *Lapis Lydius* of Volney will ever after serve as a landmark to indicate the credulity of this self-satisfied septic.

How painfully interesting it has become to the reader of Calvin to be made acquainted with the manner in which his views of Prophetic Interpretation have been received and adopted by later Biblical Scholars of the Continent. Three hundred years have allowed ample time for the refutation or elucidation of his Comments. The Christian Scholar who still holds fast the form of sound words received through the earliest Reformers, must grievously lament the sad degeneracy of Continental Theology. And it may here be

[10] See Foreign Quarterly Review, volume 19, and volume 20.

desirable to take a slight review of the growth and progress of theories totally opposite to those of Calvin, that, by comparison, the soundness of this illustrious Expounder may become most conspicuous. For the opportunity of doing so, concisely and accurately, we are indebted to a small treatise of Dr. Tholuck's, *Vermischte Schriften grosstentheils Apologetischen Inhalts.* (Miscellaneous writings for the most part Apologetical in their import.)

After the more stirring times of The Reformation had subsided into a peaceful calm, both the LUTHERANISM Of GERMANY, and the CALVINISM Of SWITZERLAND and France, were subject to gradual yet powerful changes. The pietism of Spener and Francke began to lose its hold over the minds of succeeding generations of students. A new race arose, who were destitute of their predecessors' deep and scriptural piety. Infidelity entered Germany through its learned universities, not as it assailed France through wit and mockery. The Sceptics soon rivaled the Pietists in the depth and variety of their Hebrew scholarship, and in their anxiety to spread abroad their new teaching. First came the philosophy of Wolf, who, after banishment from Halle, by Frederick William 1st, returned again with renewed spirit to his labors, and made many disciples. In Theology S. J. Baumgarten became his most successful follower. "It is incredible," says Tholuck, "with what enthusiasm this teacher of the Theology of his time was listened to. Above four hundred theologians, and seven jurists and physicians, sat at the feet of the venerated man, and took down every, even the minutest, word that fell from his lips. Scarcely another class could meet when Baumgarten was holding his! And, now, let any one compare his printed Prelections, as they have come down to us, what dead schematism? what dry tablemaking! and the whole dictated in the most longwinded style!" (P. 12.)

Next came the great apostle of Rationalism in Geneva. the well known Semler, a scholar of Baumgarten's — "a man who, without founding any school of his own, yet carried the torch from which the sparks darted upon the tinder which, on every hand, was scattered among his contemporaries, and kindled a blaze which continues to the present moment." (P. 29.) His principle of criticism is thus stated by himself: "The only proof of the Divine authority of a book arises from the internal conviction produced by the truths therein contained; that is, *the fides divina,* which people, for brevity's sake, and also to have the advantage of a biblical, though somewhat obscure mode of speech, have called the Testimony of the Holy Spirit in the mind of the reader." Hence, with regard to The Pentateuch, he adopts the fragmentary hypothesis of Simon and Vitringa, — dismisses from the Canon some of the Historical Books, and throws doubts upon others, which are equally destructive in their tendency. Having set up his own standard of moral improvement to be derived from any book, he sets aside Daniel and The Apocalypse, as peculiarly unsuited to his views; while The New Testament is scarcely more acceptable to him in its integrity than the Old. He treats both as merely temporary and local in their character, as filled with accommodations and

modes of speaking adapted to the times, but not permanent for all time. His principles, then, robbed the Scriptures of everything positive, and destroyed the very basis on which objective and eternal truths must rest.

The most surprising portion of the narrative is the unhappy influence of such Biblical views over others. There must have been a preparation in the German mind, as well as in that of Switzerland, before such principles could be received. Had they been put forth in England or in Scotland, they would have died an easy and a hasty death. The spark would never have been raised to a flame, because the touchwood was happily absent. But melancholy is the list., as given by Tholuck, of the Universities and of eminent individuals who gave the whole weight of their countenance to these pernicious doctrines. Happily this learned writer, in companionship with Neander, Olshausen and Hengstenberg, are permitted to witness the turn of the tide in favor of the long despised Evangelism which so thoroughly pervades these Lectures Of Calvin On Ezekiel.

In reviewing the manner in which Calvin has lectured on the single words and separate phrases of Ezekiel, the mind is naturally led to contemplate his theory of the Theopneustia of the Prophets. No question in Theology has been more fruitful in discussion than that of The Inspiration Of The Hebrew Prophets: it could hardly be otherwise, as their position, as the chief heralds of the future Christianity, forms a preliminary part of The Evidences of The Christian Faith. However lofty and sublime may be the Writings of the Prophets, yet their Divine Authority cannot be fully impressed, without we are persuaded that they are inspired. But a question has always arisen, what is that supernatural and infallible guidance which we understand by {θεοπνευστια}, or inspiration? Does it extend to every word that is uttered by the Prophet, or simply to the material and spirit of his message? Calvin, and The Early Reformers, from the very necessity of their position, contended for the Verbal Inspiration of the entire Scriptures. On these, and these alone, they took their stand against The Corruptions of Rome, and they were necessarily compelled to strengthen their position by every imaginable effort, to uphold the authority of the Written Letter.

In these days, this is too often called an ``antiquated hypothesis,'' and treated as an ``exploded theory;'' but it is important to observe that the wisest and most learned Christian Commentators have adhered to it, though not, perhaps, with the strictness of Calvin's literal views. M. Twesten in Germany, and M. Turretin, J. F. Stopfer, and B. Pictet of Switzerland, men eminent for their piety and usefulness, have upheld the Existence, Universality, and Plenitude of Inspiration, though their views involve a slight modification of the sentiments of the Early Reformers. A few references to their Works may here be appropriate, as they are not easily accessible to the English reader. The writings of Henderson, PYE Smith, Dick, and Wilson, are too accessible to need quotation here, but it may be desirable to know what the Modern Pietists of the Continent, who are foremost in the struggle with Neology, feel to be truth on these important points.

M. Twesten, in his Vorlesung uber die Dogmatik, extends the idea of Inspiration to

all parts of the Bible, but not in an equal degree to every portion. [11] This inequality of Inspiration is held as accompanied with the admission of verbal errors, which the lapse of time now renders irremediable. But it is by no means unconnected with clear views of evangelical truth, calmness of thought, and sagacity of discrimination, though not altogether free from the speculative tendencies of the German mind.

M. Turretin, a well known divine of that land which was formerly adorned with the graces and piety of the masterspirits of the Swiss Reformation, in his Institutio Theologiae Elementicae, shows how Scripture proves itself Divine, not only by an authoritative appeal to testimony, but by undoubted proofs of its Divinity. ``But,'' he afterwards adds, ``it must not be supposed that these tokens of Divinity shine forth alike and in the same degree in all the Books of Scripture; for as one star differs from another star in brightness, so some Books emit fuller and more dazzling rays of light, and others fewer and feebler, according as they are more or less necessary to the Church, and contain doctrines of more or less moment: so that the Gospels and The Pauline Epistles glow with far richer splendor than the Book of Ruth or Esther.'' [12]

The language of John Frid. Stopfer is in some degree similar. He distinguishes ``The things written in Scripture by the immediate Inspiration of the Holy Spirit from those which are committed to writing only by the Direction of the Holy Spirit. To the former class belong all The Peculiar Doctrines of Salvation, which as they could not be discovered by the principles of reason, could not be made known but by Revelation: to the latter class belong' all those Truths which, though previously known, required to be inculcated on man, both to arouse him to a sense of his duty and to convince him of his need of a Revealed Salvation. The same class also includes the Historical Facts connected with the illustration and proof of Revealed Doctrines, and pointing out the various steps of Revelation, in the bestowments of grace and in the ministrations of the Church, all of which require to be known, for the fuller explanation of Divine Truth.'' [13]

In the Christian Theology of M. B. Pictet we find the following passage: --- ``I1 n'est pas necessaire de supposer que l'Esprit de Dieu a toujours diete aux prophetes et aux apotres tousles mots dont ils se sont servis, et qu'il leur a appris tout ce qu'ils ecrivoient. Il suffit qu'ils n'ont rien ecrit, que par la direction immediate do l'Esprit de Dieu en sorte que cot Esprit n'a jamais permis, qu'ils aient erre dans ce qu'ils out ecrit. Agobard, auteur du 9 siecle, dans sa reponse a Fredigise, dit, que c'est une absurdite de croire que le Sainct Esprit ait inspire les termes et les mots… Cependant c'etoit l'Esprit qui les empechoit de tomber dans aucune erreur, non pas meme dans les moindres cheses.'' [14]

The Theopneustia of M. Gaussen is SO well known, through the English Translation, [15] that it is only necessary to say, that his view of the Plenary Inspiration of Scripture is more stringent than that of our own Writers, Doddridge, Dick, Pye

[11] Nicht gleichmassig.
[12] Loc. 2. quaest. 4.
[13] Institut. Theol. Polem., volume 2, and volume 3.
[14] Volume 1 50 1 100:16.
[15] S. Bagster, 1841.

Smith, and Henderson. He contends for ``the existence, universality, and plenitude of Theopneustia,'' and condemns the theories of those English Divines who ``have gone so far as to specify four degrees of Divine Inspiration.'' All these distinctions are in his view ``chimerical: The Bible itself does not authorize them: the Church during the first eight centuries of the Christian era knew nothing of them; and we believe them to be erroneous and fraught with evil.''

Having thus glanced at a few of the views of the successors of Calvin among his own countrymen, it will not be necessary to advert to the subject at greater length. It will be enough to refer the reader of Calvin On Ezekiel to Dr. Henderson's able work on Divine Inspiration, being the fourth series of the Congregational Lectures delivered during 1836. He will there find the difficult questions connected with the subject ably, judiciously, and satisfactorily discussed. It is only necessary to mention so accessible a volume to induce the student of Calvin to apply to it for guidance and instruction.

Another boast in which the Rationalists indulge over the early Reformers, consists in their more extensive use of Rabbinical Literature. Hence it becomes necessary to investigate their claim to superior talent and research in turning to account these stores of Cabalistic tradition. We cannot thoroughly estimate the comparative value of the Commentaries of the old and new Reformers, without being well-versed in the contents of the Targums and the follies of the Gemana. Pococke and LIGHTFOOT, GROTIUS And BOCHART, ERNESTI And KEIL have all made Rabbinical and Oriental Learning subservient to the interpretation of the Hebrew Prophets; and in doing so have thrown great light upon modes of expression, grammatical usages, and peculiar customs of the Jews. And thus far we are greatly indebted to them. They have unlocked these precious treasures of Eastern tradition with a learned and a liberal hand; they have solved philological difficulties which did not yield to the perseverance and ingenuity of Calvin.

But we are not to be led away by the abuse of this species of learning, in which some of the depreciators of orthodoxy have indulged. Let the reader, for instance, turn to the Christology of the Jews, as illustrated by Bertholdt of Erlangen; let him observe how he mingles the later Hebrew Prophets, the Apocryphal Books, and the works of Philo and JOSEPHUS, and treats them as if on the same level of authority and value. The baseless speculations of ``The Book or Zohar,'' and the extravagant conceits of the ``Nezach Israel,'' are gravely used as the basis of philosophical explanations, which are to supersede the plain, spiritual, and literal interpretations of the holy men of old. The progress of Sacred Criticism, they tell us, in the three centuries which have elapsed since the Reformation, calls upon us to reject the errors of the Schoolmen at Geneva, but still we hesitate to bow down to the dicta of these visionary theorists. We protest against the improper use which they make of the unauthorized comments of foolish and infatuated Jews. These perverters of the sense of Holy Scripture were utterly ignorant of its Spirit. They are the very blindest leaders of the blind. They are the most unspiritual guides, the most puerile corrupters of the Truth, the most contemptible inventors of falsehood. And yet they are upheld as the very authorities on which we are to receive philosophical novel-

ties, and to throw away the joys, and consolations, and blessings of the inspiration of Hebrew Prophecy. [16] Again and again must we repeat the protest., and maintain the eternal principles of childlike faith, and holy zeal, and persevering godliness which adorned and consecrated the valuable labors of the calumniated Teacher Of Switzerland.

In closing our notice of Foreign Theology, we are by no means anxious to foster any undiscerning prejudice against German divinity. We would discriminate between the tares and the wheat, while we protest against the dreamy speculations, the unsound principles, the shallow reasoning, the ostentatious and perverted scholarship, and the irreverent levity with which the Neologians have violated every law of literary evidence, and shocked every feeling of serious piety. On the other hand, we by no means desire to uphold any cramped or exploded interpretation, or to justify any details in Calvin's Comment On Ezekiel which are inconsistent with the real improvements in Hebrew philology. Let but a spirit of disciplined humility prevail, and then our later Churches may hope to rival the elder ones in the wisdom which is from above. The patient and devout use of these additional means which are now within our reach, will lead us to comprehend ``the mind of the Spirit,'' and enable the Christian Commentator to east the living seed into the stream of time, in the fullest confidence that a fruitful harvest of believers shall spring up, uniting the docility of children with the intelligence of men and. the constancy of martyrs. But to this end, the spirit of the Early Reformers must be cultivated: the spirit of skeptical criticism must be abhorred. Lord Bacon's adage is, alas, too often verified: ``Certain there be that delight in giddiness, and count it a bondage to fix a belief:'' for in the discursive reading? which we have found necessary for illustrating Calvin's Ezekiel, how often have we met with writings on the Old Testament flippant and irreverent, oscillating' for ever between fact and falsehood.

The Holy page is still undefaced --- it is the eye of the self-sufficient Commentator which willingly gathers over it the misty film: the balance of truth remains what it ever was, accurate and sensible: it is the palsied hand which agitates the scales in ceaseless alternation.

While, however, we thus strenuously uphold the general principles of Prophetic Inspiration which Calvin taught, we are willing to concede that many of his attempts to explain the text are unsatisfactory. Thus, for instance, an exception may fairly be made against the conclusiveness of his explanation of the appearance of the cherubim in the tenth chapter of this Prophecy. He accounts for the appearance of the heads of an ox and a man, a lion and an eagle on the same living creature, by asserting that it represents the energizing power of God throughout animated nature. Not content with this general and probably correct exposition, he goes on to derive the motion of all living creatures from that of angels. ``Now, when the Lion either roars or exercises his strength, he seems to move by his own inherent power,

[16] For an account of “the Book of Zohar” and the” Nezach Israel,” see Wolf’s Bibliotheca Heb., volumes 2; and 4, also volume 1. Consult also Burcker’s Historia Critic. Phil., and the Prolegom. to Bertholdt’s Christol. Judoe. Various quotations are given by Dr. M’Caul in “The Old Paths,” and the subject is treated pointedly and intelligibly by Professor Lee of Cambridge in his University Sermons, 1830.

and so it may be said of other living creatures: but God here says that living beings are in some sense parts of Angels, although not of the same substance.''

Instead of explaining how Angels are the powers (virtutes) of God, and how he proves any ``inseparable connection'' between angelic and creative motion, he draws this conclusion from the mysterious emblems of the Cherubim: ``Let us understand, then, that while men move about and apply themselves to their various pursuits, and when even wild beasts do the same, yet Angelic motions are underneath, so that neither men nor animals move themselves, but their whole rigor depends on this secret inspiration.''

One is surprised that the acute and welltrained mind of Calvin did not perceive that this assertion only shifts the difficulty one step farther back, and that it does not unfold one single law of either the life or motion of animated nature.

The student of Theology, however, must not expect to find in Calvin the correct expositions of the laws of natural phenomena, --- the discoveries of the three last Centuries have thrown a flood of light on physical and psychological science. Let the reader distinguish between the theological and scientific explanations of these Lectures; and while he allows the latter to be capable of improvement through the gradual progress of human knowledge, he will value the former as defending and upholding ``the truth of God.''

It becomes necessary also to caution the reader that he will find these Lectures at times liable to the charge of overexplanation. The Lecturer searches with microscopic scrutiny into the hidden meaning of every minute portion of a sentence, and it sometimes occurs in his explanation of Visions, Symbols, and Emblems, that he carries out his method of minute subdivision and verbal comment too far. This concession will readily be made by all who have perused the valuable treatise of Gottlob Ch. Storr on Parabolic Illustration, interspersed as it is with valuable References to Luther and Chrysostom, Ernesti and Lessing, COCCEIUS and Pfaff, Wemyss and Beckhaus.

It must not be considered that Calvin is depreciated, because he is not idolized as infallible. It is now so customary for an Editor to treat his author as a model of perfection, that it requires some degree of moral courage to assert that Calvin could possibly be indiscreet. The daily experience of life, however, convinces us that the wisest, the holiest, and the best are always fallible, and at times inconsiderate.

It may now be desirable to furnish the general reader with a few facts concerning the celebrated Gaspard De Coligny, to whom Beza dedicates these Lectures of his Master. To have been Grand Admiral of France gives him no title to admiration in the eyes of those who seek for divine, and heavenly, and soulsatisfying truth --- but to have been a burning and shining light in Christ's Holy Church in the days of its struggles and persecution, this may afford us an apology for introducing here a short account of his Christian life, and his awful martyrdom.

He was born of a noble family which had been connected with the Government of France for about three hundred years, and was the second of three brothers, all eminent for their devotion to God's saving truth. The eldest became a Cardinal, and Gaspard consequently took possession of the paternal estate as Seigneur of

Chatillon. After serving his country both by land and sea., and arriving at the high offices of both General and Admiral, he retired for a while from the distractions of public life to his residence at Chatillon, about the age of forty-three. Here both he and his excellent wife, Charlotte De La Val, study together the Word of God, and grow gradually stronger in the faith and hopes of the Gospel. Being' fully aware of the suffering's they must undergo, and the sacrifices they must make, and in defiance of all the edicts of persecution which they saw daily enforced around them, they persevere in reading the Writings of the Reformers, and opening' their minds without reserve to the beams of the New Light, they resolve both to do and to suffer God's will, as soon as they shall learn it. At length this Christian pair are joined by his brothers --- Odet, the Cardinal, and Francis, the Colonel --- and thenceforth they become a noble brotherhood of searchers for Divine guidance, of one mind and of one spirit, each equally earnest to be found after the image of their Redeemer.

About five years before Beza addressed him in the following dedication, the Queen Mother Of France had sent for Coligny to give his advice respecting the proper remedies for the discontent of the people. He boldly assigned Persecution for Religion as its cause, and advised the passing of an Edict of Toleration, in opposition to the arbitrary injustice of the House of Guise. He next stands by the Prince. Or Code, who is seized, imprisoned, and. condemned to death, but rescued from the scaffold by the decease of the king. But in a short period the enmity of the Duke Of Guise against the Hugonots became deadly, and 3000 Protestants, according to Beza, are ``stabbed, stoned, beheaded, strangled, burned, buried alive, starved, drowned, suffocated.'' Fearful wars and dreadful massacres arise, and after the assassination of the Duke Of Guise, on the 18th February 1563, Coligny retired to Chatillon, and was probably living in retirement there, when Beza announced to him the decease of Calvin.

The remainder of his history is most melancholy. The Duke Of Alva, a most inveterate persecutor of the Reformers, now gained an ascendancy over the mind of the Queen and her Council. Civil war again rages between the Romish and the Protestant parties. The Admiral is again forced into the field, the battle of Moncontour is fought and lost on the 1st of October 1569, and Coligny is wounded severely in the face. Massacre and murder rage more fiercely than ever, till at length, in the very Palace of the King, at Paris, Coligny is shot at, and seriously wounded in two places. His days are now numbered. Although both the King and Queen pay him visits of condolence, after the fingers of his right hand are cut off, he soon falls a victim to the vengeance of his foes. The fatal ST. Bartholomew Massacre is planned, and the Duke of Guise declares it to be the kings pleasure that Coligny should be the first victim. The King relents, but it is too late; the Duke is gone to the Admiral's hotel. His slaughterers stab their way to the Admiral's presence, and find him prepared to die. The sword is thrust through his body, and his corpse, dishonored by the Duke, is given up to the insults of the mob. For seven long' days and nights the streets of Paris run with blood, and its river is choked with corpses. The King and his family, and many of his nobles, went to pray in public, and to offer thanksgiving to God for the success of these measures, as if resulting in his glory. And after a while they proceed to decree that the body of the Sieur De Coligny should be dragged through

the streets, and then hung' up on Montfaucon, to the execration of the people; that his Castle at Chatillon should be leveled to the ground, and all his estate laid waste; that his children should be unable to hold property; and that for all future time this infamous transaction should be annually handed down to posterity by Public Prayers and Processions throughout the capital of France. [17]

The blood of the faithful at Paris was not sufficient: Throughout the cities of the provinces similar butcheries took place. The head of the Romish Church exulted also: The Pope and the Cardinals proceeded in solemn pomp to offer public thanksgiving before the altar; the ramparts of St. Angelo resounded with the thundering of artillery, while the Cardinal Lorraine celebrated solemn service in the Church of St. Louis, and attributed the slaughter of the heretics to the inspiration of God, in the presence of the sovereign Pontiff --- an awful leaf in the history of Europe, which must be turned over again and again, that our children's children may be familiar with these dreadful deeds of Anti-christ. [18]

On one occasion, Beza, the writer of this address to Coligny came in close contact with this Cardinal Lorraine; for on the 9th of September 1561, a remarkable meeting was held at Poissy, near Paris, called a Colloquy, for the public discussion of the Reformed and the Unreformed doctrines. The Letter which the mother of Charles IX. wrote to Pope Pius IV., with reference to this meeting, is very characteristic of those times. It states that the Reformed had become so powerful and so numerous, that the measure was both salutary and needful. The Pope replies most mildly, and foreseeing that it. would lead to the accomplishment of his long wished for desire --- the recognition of

Legate in France --- leaves all to his faithful Cardinal of Lorraine. Safe-conduct was given to many leading Reformers, among whom were Theodore Beza and Peter Martyr. Beza asked permission to open the Conference by prayer, and obtained it; and such a prayer the majority of the debaters had never heard before. He then spoke boldly, ably, and like a thorough Christian. The Cardinal replied, with great plausibility and policy; and, after many meetings, no practical objects seemed to be gained. The Prince Of Conde, Coligny, and the Chancellor L'hopital, were the leading Politicians; and in the following January the Assembly of Notables was assembled at St. Germains. An Edict of Toleration was passed, which it was hoped would prove the Magna Charta of the spiritual liberties of France. But Providence ordered it otherwise, and mysteriously allowed the sacred bands of Calvin, Beza, and Martyr, to be laid low by the ax and the sword, and the progress of the Reformation to be arrested, just as it was about to burst forth as a Spiritual Reformation For Europe.

It now only remains to observe, that this Translation has been made by a careful comparison of the Latin with the French Editions; that those of Geneva, published in 1617 and 1565, have been adopted as the basis, while the reprints of 1563, 1565, 1583, and that at Amsterdam in 1667, have been consulted. No license whatever

[17] See Lansdowe MSS. in Brit. Museum. William Cecil, grandson of Lord Burghley, was present at one anniversary. The Duke of Sully was an eyewitness. His Remains, Book 1, contain much information respecting Coligny and his contemporaries. Sec. Edit., Lond. 1756.

[18] See Villeroy's Memoirs of State, volume 2. Also Matttieu Hist. France, volume 1. book 6. De Thou, book 52 and 53. And Sully's Memoirs, book 1.

has been taken with the text, the Translation being' uniformly as close and literal as the English idiom will admit. The Translator has carefully avoided all expression of private opinion on doctrinal and speculative points; he has not softened off any of the occasional roughness of the original views of his Author, nor has he encumbered his pages with long footnotes, either to rectify or elucidate the criticisms of the text. His object has been, not to present his readers with the views and expositions of other Commentators, but to present Calvin, with all his excellencies and defects, before the English reader, in language as clear and simple as the various difficulties of the subject will allow, tie has not introduced quotations from other Divines, who have ably and impartially treated similar subjects, but, at certain intervals, (as for instance at the close of Ezekiel 10,) he has pointed out the Authors from whose Works much valuable information may be obtained.

The Translator may venture here to express his opinion, once for all, that Calvin's Hebrew philology is not always correct: his critical exposition of the meaning and derivation of Hebrew words should seldom be received as the best possible. The labors of GESEnIUS and Rosenmuller have thrown great light upon this department of Sacred scholarship, and the results of such modern labors will be found ably condensed and adapted to the wants of the ordinary reader, in the Notes to Bishop Newcome's ``Literal Translation of the Prophets,'' rendered very accessible in Tegg's Edition of 1836. This work is very valuable for conciseness, accuracy, and the intelligible application of real learning.

Instead of distracting the attention by a variety of incoherent foot notes, it is intended to close the Second Volume of this Translation with the following Addenda, as a contribution towards a complete Apparatus Criticus: ---

1. A copious Index Of Words, Phrases, And Things, occurring in these Lectures, on the basis of the original Latin Index Locupletissimus.

2. An Index Of The Places Of Scripture illustrated in these Lectures.

3. A List Of The Sacred And Profane Authors quoted by Calvin, with references.

4. A Complete Synopsis Of The Contents Of The Whole Of Ezekiel's Prophecies

5. A Connected Translation Of Calvin's Version Of The First Twenty Chapters, With A New Translation Of The Remaining Chapters

6. A List Of The Chief Interpreters, Ancient And Modern

7. A Notice Of The Ancient Versions And Codexes Which Contain Ezekiel's Prophecies

8. A few Dissertations on important subjects illustrating these Lectures, with references to various modern Treatises, philological, exegetical, and hermeneutical.

There is prefixed to the present Volume a faithful and spirited facsimile of a very rare Portrait Of Calvin, which the monogram shows to have been engraved by Henry Hondius, or De Hondt the elder, an artist of considerable eminence, who was born at Duffel, in Brabant, about 1573, and died at La Haye in 1610. Among other works, he engraved Portraits of John Wickliffe, Philip Melancthon, John Bugenhagen, John Knox, and Jerome Savonarola.

It may be worth noticing, that Jodocus Hondius, or de Hondt, (who is also called Henry Hondius the younger,) was the son of Jodocus Hondius, or de Hondt Jost, a

Flemish engraver, born at Ghendt in 1563, and probably a brother of Henry the elder, who fled to England in consequence of the troubles in the Low Countries. He engraved maps and portraits, constructed mathematical instruments, founded printing types, etc. Henry the younger studied the art of engraving under his uncle, Henry the elder, and finished many of his father's plates after his death. He engraved a number of portraits in a very neat style, which are still highly esteemed.

The old copies of the Latin and French Editions of this valuable Commentary, having remarkable Title pages, copies in facsimile follow this Introductory Notice.

T. M.

SHERIFFHUTTON VICARAGE,
March 1849.

Beza's Dedication

DEDICATION

To The Most Noble Sire, Illustrious For Piety, [19]
And Other Christian Virtues,

D. GASPAR DE COLIGNY,

Grand Admiral Of France, Theodore Beza, Minister Of The Church Of Geneva, Wishes Health And Peace From The Lord.

Although I am sure, most Noble Sire, that you are accustomed to profit much by the other writings of that great and truly excellent servant of God, John Calvin, and that you will also fully enjoy this last swanlike song' of his, yet I do not doubt that the same feelings will affect you when reading, as they do me while writing, namely, that at the name of such a man, that recent grief, which we felt so severely at his death, will break out again with the heaviest sense of our loss. And truly this sorrow is the more just and necessary, since it neither can nor ought to be hastily put away from us, so that I think it quite lawful for us to indulge it.

As to the tempests which, of late years, God's Church has sustained,, no one can be ignorant of them, since they have shaken the whole world, so that we can now use that expression --- ``What region of the World is not full of our sufferings?''

But many have not sufficiently taken notice, [20] with what defenders our Religion has been protected. The Lord has raised you up like Gideons and Samsons, not only in Germany, but in England and Scotland; and also lately, under the auspices of the most illustrious Prince or Conde, in our France, who, when your own life was in danger, through a variety of perils, turned away the swords of certain opponents from the necks of the pious. And, in truth, the chief enemies of the Church are not flesh and blood, since these can only injure the 'body. Therefore, although that is

[19] The French has "mirror and example of piety."

[20] The French reads — "But the evil is, that few have observed who those have been who have taken up the defense of religion."

in reality a most excellent gift of God, and your praise is very great, even before the angels of God, because at a most seasonable crisis so formidable an attack was averted by your prowess; yet with far other enemies, and with far other weapons, must we make war, and even now do we contend; and this contest, although not so formidable in appearance, yet is really more dangerous, because it involves the ruin of the whole family of God. I speak of spiritual wickedness, by which Satan endeavors to infect the doctrine, and to corrupt the morals; and if these are lost, the Church must not only be injured, but perish entirely. In carrying on this war, there are doubtless those leaders whom God has appointed Pastors, Teachers, and Presbyters of his Church, for this very purpose, that, by teaching, convincing, and praying, they may administer the kingdom of the Son of God; for these are the arms by which hostile forces are to be overcome. If you judge by names alone, you will find them numerous enough; if by reality, you will find them but few. Yet this our age has many of this kind, of whose constancy and labors we ourselves are the fruit and the harvest. But that the world is unworthy of such, this fact declares, that within three years, at a most unsuitable juncture, we have lost the very best and bravest; so that indeed, out of those mighty heroes who, in our time, so bravely and so successfully have thrown down Antichrist from his seat, we now behold but very few surviving, as Henry Bullinger, by God's goodness, lately preserved to us from the pestilence, William Farrel, that old man of invincible strength, and Peter Viret, even up to this time contending in the Church at Lyons with success, even in the very front of the battle. Philip Melancthon was the first who fell in this last slaughter; next to him fell Peter the Martyr, when he had returned to his charge at Zurich, after the Assembly at Poissy. After him followed Wolfgang Musculus, and then Andrew Hyperius, as if the hand of the smiting Deity turned itself from north to south; for Melancthon died in Saxony, Hyperius in Hesse, and the two others in Switzerland. Alas! what great men, and how dearly beloved!

Yet, while John Calvin was alive, all these calamities were lightened; for that great man, far superior to others, while he was safe, made all other losses, however great, seem but light. And behold, our sins have snatched him also away from us last year, and no one can estimate the loss which The Church has suffered, unless those who were eyewitnesses of his labors. For what did that man not achieve? Who was to be compared with him in Meetings, in Lecturing, and in Writings. Who was shorter in teaching, and yet more solid --- more happy in solving difficulties, more vehement in reproving, sweeter in consoling, and more correct in confuting errors? I know that, on the one hand, there are some Epicureans who laugh at what I say, (for will they not deride the servant when they mock at his Load?) and, on the other hand, that stupid and foolish men, to whom ignorance is the highest wisdom, despise it. Yet., I know this, that there is none among the more cunning enemies of God who does not silently think of him the same as I do. Each faction among the followers of Antichrist has and praises its own patron, and that, too, not without depreciating others. But may that stupid and profane ambition be far from us! We boast of neither Cephas, nor Paul, nor Apollos. Our language of Canaan is one! we have one Lord, by whom we swear.

But since there are different offices for the limbs of the same body, we prefer eyes to hands and feet; and since there are so many eyes of so large a body, we feel some more efficacious than others; but we praise and adore God in each part of this body. May this praise be offered entirely to our God and Lord; and he who does not perceive that we owe thanks for Calvin in a peculiar sense, has no judgment! But to what purpose are these remarks? There is this sweetness in these celestial goods, that by their recollection alone they most singularly profit and delight us. Hence the benefit of examples in both ways; nor is there any other end and scope of Sacred History, than that we should be affected while reading it, just as if we beheld the events themselves. So in that grief, with which all pious and good men ought 'to be affected by the death of so great a man, and especially those who received daily almost incredible advantages from his presence, by his remarkable teaching and his wonderful prudence, two things ought chiefly to console us: One, that we are in no slight degree assisted by his recent and most beautiful examples of both sayings and doings, until also we ourselves, when the course of our navigation is finished, may be conveyed to the same port. The other, that no one has existed within our memory to whom it has been permitted to leave so many and such exact monuments of his doctrine; for, if God had granted to us for another year or two the enjoyment of so great a light, I do not see what could be wanting to the perfect understanding of the Books of either Covenant! There remain the Books called Historical, except Joshua, also Job and the two Books of Solomon, which he has not illustrated by his Commentaries; although his Discourses on Job, Samuel, and the First Book of Kilos, will partly supply this want to the French, as they were received from his mouth. For this great man obtained from the Load this gift also, that he spoke not much otherwise than he wrote. Of the Prophets, he illustrated Isaiah with complete Commentaries: his Lectures on the remaining Prophets are extant, edited with the greatest diligence and fidelity by two of his disciples, endued with learning and piety, John Bude, son of the great Bude, and Charles De Jonviller. But his premature death prevented him from completing Ezekiel, which is the more to be lamented by the Church, because this Prophet, especially towards the last, is the most obscure of all, and I know not who will ever arise to complete this picture commenced by such an Apelles!

We think that we have little reason to render an account why we have determined to edit this imperfect work. If any one should chance to ask, Why I have dedicated it to you rather than to any one else? I plainly tell him, that Calvin is responsible for it, on the principle of every one deciding as he pleases in things which concern himself, and that for most just and important reasons I have purposely done the very same that he also wished.

Why, then, should I not assent to his judgment, who in your absence admired and plainly perceived those surprising endowments of both body and mind, of which I was myself an eyewitness during twenty months, both in peace and war. But he said that in the Preface to his Works he trod in the footsteps of Paul, who salutes some persons by name in his Epistles with this special intention, that he might set before the Churches certain chosen men to be looked at by the rest., by whose examples they might be excited to true piety and to other virtues. As to the truth

of his judgment concerning you, how many and what certain testimonies can be offered, if either your modesty would allow you to be praised to your face, or if it were proper to seek them, as if it were a matter of doubt? But there will be another opportunity, and I hope a more suitable one, of discussing these things.

I now prefer treating another point more pleasing to you, a man of exalted station, and yet the least ambitious of all. I had rather exhort you, most Noble Sire, with all diligence, to do what you are already doing, and have most successfully begun --- not only to read, hear, and meditate upon these sacred things continually, and to use them really; but also, that you apply yourself to defend and preserve the Churches by all just means consistent with your dignity and fortitude of mind. Your mortal enemies, and those of all pious men, do not disguise the fact that you are especially aimed at by those who think that they themselves cannot exist if Religion is preserved. But I do not know you, if these very dangers do not rather sharpen than relax your courage. You yourself have most strikingly felt and experienced God's care in defending his own. Your innocence and integrity sufficiently defend you against all accusations. You possess, if any of your rank does, that inward and invincible guard within the breast, which profane men call a wall of brass --- I mean a good conscience, in reliance upon which, believe me, you will easily surpass all your adversaries.

In these contests nothing will strengthen you so much as a diligent comparison of the Prophetic with the Historic Writings. For here the events of the future are not falsely conjectured, as mankind are accustomed to do, from an observation of past events. Here no doubtful counsels are taken, no events are obstructed by a chance coincidence of second causes; but you enter, as it were, into the very plans of the Almighty; you behold the true causes, beginning, progress, and end of all changes; and those, too, plainly and clearly declared. For although the Prophets have their enigmas, yet to those who carefully compare all things among themselves, and are acquainted with the idioms of the Prophets, and thus compare their predictions with the events themselves, all things become so plain, that you seem to look down from above upon all human things, especially while relying upon that faithful Leader, who can lead you through a sure path in the midst of impassable and inaccessible places. Nor is there any cause why these things should be despised, as already spread abroad; or be neglected, as the relation of things long ago obsolete, as certain little wits of this day esteem them. For the Prophets do not treat of small and plebeian things, as some who are unskilled in these matters suppose, but concerning the greatest Monarchies, far surpassing any of these days; about the state of the greatest Kings and Princes; about the great God of Hosts sitting in judgment on the preservation and destruction of the greatest States --- such are the contents of these Books. For in those times, the Kings, although profane and impious, never did what many do now, who are so ashamed of asking counsel of God speaking' through his servants, that they are utterly careless of that; and dare to accuse of ambition the faithful servants of God, while discharging their duty. Indeed, there was not at that time any Nation, as all Sacred and Profane Historians testify, which decided on measures of importance, without first consulting its Prophets. And while I say this, I

would not place the Ministers of the Word on the throne of Kings or Princes, or any other Magistrates, nor would I favor the ambition of any; but I state what is a fact, and what experience itself has lately proved, as I remember that you, most noble Sire, both perceived and expressed in good time.

Lastly, while I am saying something about the times, their fashion changes, I confess; but there is the same Lord, the same Providence, the same mercy towards the righteous, the same indignation towards the ungodly. But there are those perpetual and invariable, and, therefore, firmer laws of development, [21] than are found in even Mathematics themselves; since, if there is any firmness and consistency in events of any kind, it all depends upon the nature and will of God. We shall find the clearest declarations of these principles, not only generally as in the Law, but also particularly, in the Prophetic Writings, if we only compare past times with our own, and with the objects of our daily inquiry. Do you want an example? It is just four years ago since, at the Council at Poissy, The French Churches promised themselves the greatest peace and tranquillity, and their adversaries did not know where to turn themselves; but thus our man of God, at that time dedicating his Lectures On Daniel to those Churches, broke forth into these words: ``But, if we must fight any longer, (as I announce to you that severer contests than ye think for are in store for you,) with whatsoever madness the rage of the impious may burst forth, so as to rouse up the very depths themselves, remember that your course is determined by the celestial Master of the race; whose laws ye ought to obey with the greater alacrity, because he supplies strength to his own even unto the end.'' That he denounced this in a spirit truly prophetic, while the majority were anticipating the contrary, the numberless calamities which immediately followed declare; and of these no end even yet appears.]Do you ask, whence came that prediction? Certainly not from that most deceptive and profane divination of Astrology, which he of all others used to condemn from God's Word, but from those very Prophetic Books which he was then interpreting. Since, therefore, he saw the same evils prevalent in France, on account of which God was accustomed to chastise His people most severely, and to take vengeance on his enemies with just penalties, why should he not pronounce float the same inflictions hung over the impenitent?

In like manner, Luther foresaw and predicted The Late Slaughters In Germany, through contempt of God's Word; and I wish that he had noticed better their principal causes. So also, at this very time, it is not difficult to perceive that throughout France, and especially among those who ought to know better, not only are notorious superstitions and manifest idolatries defended, but even open Epicureanism and horrible blasphemies, unheard of in all former times, are tolerated by all men hearing and laughing, since at length no place is left for justice and equity, and edicts and laws are enacted in vain. Who, then, is so blind that he cannot see horrible punishments hanging over the authors and defenders of these crimes, and possibly even over the whole kingdom? And in this instance I wish I may be a false prophet! For surely heaven and earth shall pass away, before God will permit these things

[21] {ἀποδείξεων} principia. The French has simply ``maximes,'' which is not strong enough. The comparison with Mathematics is excellent, and suggests a mathematical expression.

to remain unrevenged --- things which would horrify even the Turks! --- and the longer their punishment is delayed, the heavier it will appear when it does come. I know that some will deride these things, as even Noah himself was derided: some also will vehemently accuse them, as Jeremiah was esteemed a man of strife. But, nevertheless, the truth of God will stand firm.

I pray God, therefore, most noble Sire, first, that He would specially endue his Majesty the King with all holy virtues, which, since it is already partly accomplished, all hope and wish may be continued. Next, I pray God to grant him many Counselors like thee and a few others, endowed --- I say it without flattery --- with the sacred prudence of His Spirit, and zeal for piety and justice, which is the symbol of Royal Majesty, by whose counsels so many faults may be seriously corrected, and a holy and just government happily instituted by the Sacred Word of God and the authority of the Royal Majesty. Lastly, I pray that God would happily establish and preserve you, with your truly Christian wife and children, and your most noble brothers and their holy families, and, lastly, all the assembly of the pious, who, after God and the King, look up to the most illustrious Prince Of Conde, concerning whom I hope to have another opportunity of speaking, and to thee, and to the rest of the pious and religious Nobility throughout France.

[THEODORE BEZA]

GENEVA, January 18th, 1565.

To the Reader

CHARLES DE JONVILLER,

TO ALL TRULY CHRISTIAN READERS. HEALTH.

Although our most accomplished and faithful Pastor Theodore Beza, with his singular dexterity and happy tact, seems not to have omitted anything in his Dedication of these Lectures to that most noble hero, and most pious Admiral or Francs, yet those who attentively peruse my remarks, and look upon them with a candid mind, will not judge my few observations superfluous; but I trust they will admit them to be rather grateful and useful to all the pious. And, first of all, no words can sufficiently express how severe a loss The Church Of God has suffered, in the summons from this life to eternal rest, which that illustrious and really divine man, our parent, John Calvin, has received; whether you look at the perpetual consistency of his life, or at his remarkable learning, combined with his exalted piety. For who ever surpassed him in sanctity of morals, in incredible suavity, in unbroken magnanimity, in singular tolerance, nay even in the highest virtues? And as to his wonderful erudition, his multitudinous Writings plainly bear witness to it; some of these being already published, and the rest, with God's permission, will shortly see the light, to the manifest advantage of the pious. For many of his productions are extant, either as extracted from his discourses or preserved by his friends, as those Letters, in both French and Latin, sent to all classes of men, from which it is very evident with what an acute and happy wit he was endued, and with what a clear and sound judgment he was gifted. But I will here say no more on this subject, lest I should seem to dwell upon what is out of place. It will be enough just to touch on a few things which belong especially to these Lectures.

On the 20th of January 1563, when John Calvin began to interpret Ezekiel, in the Public School, although he was continually afflicted by various severe diseases, so that he was often carried to his duties in a chair or on horseback, in consequence of the weakness of his declining health; neither during the whole year did the violence

of his maladies prevent his discharging the duty of preaching and reading. At length, about the first of February in the following year, he had advanced as far as the end of the twentieth chapter, with the exception of four verses, and then he was compelled to remain at home, and to confine himself almost always to his bed. In the meantime, during his illness, he was continually meditating, or dictating, or even writing something: so that during the time of his confinement to the house, through ill health, it is scarcely credible how much he accomplished. Among other things, he very diligently revised the greater part of these Lectures, as is evident by the copy corrected with his own hand, which I have carefully preserved with the rest.

But we must all regret, most sincerely, that as he was most skillful in explaining the teaching of the Prophets, he was prevented by death from completing his Comments On Ezekiel; for no pious man is ignorant that the following portion of this Prophet's writings is very necessary to the Church of God. How desirable, then, that they should have been illustrated by such a man! That this loss may be in some degree remedied, in deference to the wishes of some persons of great weight and learning, that it would be more satisfactory to publish these Lectures at once, than to suppress them any longer, since they will prove so useful to all the pious, my beloved brother, John Buds, and myself, have willingly undertaken the duty, relying on their judgment. We have spared neither expense, nor trouble, nor labor, in publishing the Lectures as soon as possible; and, God willing, we will shortly take care to translate them into French, for the benefit of our people, as our French Version of the Lectures On Jeremiah, put to press nine months ago, is now just finished; so that, unless I am mistaken, our people, who do not understand Latin, will reap great profit. And that nothing should be omitted in this Latin edition, we have taken care that whatever errata had occurred in printing, they are noticed at the end. And since in this book a very great treasure is included, a very copious Index has been compiled by a learned man, through whose guidance its inexhaustible riches may be readily obtained, without any trouble. Another Index is added, of those places of Scripture which are quoted and explained.

In editing these last Lectures, we have used the same industry, diligence, and fidelity, which we exercised in the others already published. There is no necessity for my explaining more at length what I have previously made known with sufficient clearness, as to the manner in which we have retained what are received from Calvin's extemporary pronunciation.

It remains, therefore, most excellent Readers, that you now enjoy the labors of so great a man, and acknowledge whatever fruit you receive as springing from the Great and Good God, and that to Him you render cordially immortal thanks. You will yourselves judge better and more surely the profit which you receive from their perusal, than I could express in many words. Farewell, then, and may it always be appointed that your studies may all tend to the glory of God.

[CHARLES DE JONVILLER.]

GENEVA, January 18th, 1565.

(August 1st, 1565. The date of the French Translation.)

Ezekiel 1

CHAPTER 1

Lecture First

Ezekiel himself explains at the very beginning of his Book, at what period he discharged the prophetic office; and on this depends the knowledge of his argument. For unless we understand how God stirred him up, we can with difficulty enter into his spirit, and shall be unable to receive any just fruit from his instruction. It is necessary, therefore, to begin from this point: namely, the time of his Prophecy: for he says:

Ezekiel 1:1-2

1. Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

1. Et fuit tricesimo anno, quarto meuse quinta mensis, et ego [22] in medio Captivitatis, [23] super fluvium Chebar aperti sunt coeli, et vidi visiones Dei.

2. In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity.

2. In quinta mensis, ipse est annus quintus captivitatis regis Joiakim.

We see that the Prophet was called to the office of a Teacher in the fifth year after Jehoiachin had voluntarily surrendered himself to the king of Babylon, (2 Kings 24:15); and had been dragged into exile, together with his mother: for it was, says he, ``in the thirtieth year.'' The greater part of the Commentators follow the Chaldee Paraphrast, and understand him to date from the finding of the Book of the Law. It is quite clear, flint this year was the eighteenth of king Josiah; but in my computation, I do not subscribe to the opinion of those who adopt this date. For this phrase --- ``the thirtieth year,'' would then appear too obscure and 'forced. We nowhere read

[22] That is, when I was. — Calvin.

[23] Among the Captives. — Calvin.

that succeeding writers adopted this date as a standard. Besides, there is no doubt that the usual method among the Jews was to begin to reckon from a Jubilee. For this was a point of starting for the future. I therefore do not doubt that this thirtieth year is reckoned from the Jubilee. Nor is my opinion a new one; for Jerome makes mention of it, although he altogether rejects it, through being deceived by an opposite opinion. But since it is certain that the Jews used this method of computation, and made a beginning from Jobel, that is, the Jubilee, this best explains the thirtieth year If any one should object, that we do not read that this eighteenth year of king Josiah was the usual year in which every one returned to his own lands, (Leviticus 25) and liberty was given to the slaves, and the entire restoration of the whole people took place, yet the answer is easy, although we cannot ascertain in what year the Jobel fell, it is sufficient for us to assign the Jubilee to this year, because the Jews followed the custom of numbering their years from this institution. As, then, the Greeks had their Olympiads, the Romans their Consuls, and thence their computation of annals; so also the Hebrews were accustomed to begin from the year Jobel, when they counted their years on to the next restoration, which I have just mentioned. It is therefore probable that this was a Jubilee year --- it is probable, then, that this was the Jubilee. For it is said that Josiah celebrated the passover with such magnificent pomp and splendor, that there had been nothing like it since the time of Samuel. (2 Chronicles 35:18.) The conjecture which best explains this is, not that he celebrated the passover even with such magnificence, but that he was induced to do so by the peculiar occasion, when the people were restored and returned to their possessions, and the slaves were set free. Since, then, this was the Jubilee, the pious king was induced to celebrate the passover with far greater splendor than was usual --- nay, even to surpass David and Solomon. Again, although he reigned thirteen years afterwards, we do not read that he celebrated any passover with remarkable splendor. We do not doubt as to his yearly celebration; for this was customary. (2 Kings 23:23.) From this we conclude that the celebration before us was extraordinary, and that the year was Jobel. But though it is not expressed in Scripture, it is sufficient for us that the Prophet reckoned the years according to the accustomed manner of the people. For he says, that this was ``the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity:'' who is called also Jehoiakim; for Jehoiakim succeeded Josiah, and reigned eleven years. The thirteen years which remain of Josiah's reign and these eleven, make twenty-four. (2 Kings 23:36.) Now, ``his successor,'' Jehoiachin, passed immediately into the hands of king Nebuchadnezzar, and was taken captive at the beginning of his reign, and reigned only three or four months. (2 Kings 24:8.) After that, the last king, Zedekiah, was set up by the will of the king of Babylon. We see, therefore, that nine years are made up: add the space of the reign of Jehoiachin: so it is no longer doubtful as to the reckoning of ``the thirtieth year'' from the eighteenth of king Josiah. It is true that the Law of God was found during this year, (2 Chronicles 34:14,) but the Prophet here accommodates himself to the received rule and custom.

We must now come to the intention of God in appointing Ezekiel as his Prophet. For thirty-five years Jeremiah had not ceased to cry aloud, but to little purpose. When, therefore, this Prophet Jeremiah was so occupied, God wished to give him a coad-

jutor. Nor was it but a slight relief when at Jerusalem Jeremiah became aware that the Holy Spirit was speaking through another mouth in harmony with himself; for by this means the truth of his teaching was confirmed. In the thirteenth year of Josiah, Jeremiah undertook the prophetic office: (Jeremiah 1:2:) eighteen years remain: add the eleven years of Jehoiakim, and it will make twenty.-nine: then add another year, and five more, and we shall have thirty-five years. This then was his hard province, to cry aloud continually for thirty-five years, to the deaf, nay, even to the insane. God, therefore, that he might succor his servant, gave him an ally who should teach the same things at Babylon which Jeremiah had not desisted from proclaiming at Jerusalem. He profited not only the captives, but also the rest of the people who still remained in the city and the land. As far as the captives were concerned, this confirmation was necessary for them: for they had false Prophets there, as we learn from Jeremiah 29:21; there was Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah; they proudly boasted that they were endued with the Spirit of revelation; they promised the people marvels, they derided the softness of those who had left their country, they said that they were determined to fight to the very last, and to run the risk of their lives rather than voluntarily give up the inheritance of divine promise. In this way they insulted the captives. After this there was Shemaiah the Nehelamite, (Jeremiah 29:24,) who wrote to the high priest Zephaniah, and reproached him for being careless and neglectful, because he did not severely punish Jeremiah as an impostor and a fanatic, and a false intruder into the prophetic office. Since, therefore, the Devil had his busy agents there, God stationed his Prophet there, and hence we see how useful, nay, how necessary it was, that Ezekiel should discharge his prophetic office there. But the utility of his instructions extended much further, since those at Jerusalem were compelled to listen to the prophecies which Ezekiel uttered in Chaldea. When they saw that his prophecies agreed with those of Jeremiah, it necessarily happened that they would at least enquire into the cause of this coincidence. For it is not natural that one Prophet at Jerusalem, and another in Chaldea, should utter their prophecies, as it were, in the same key, just as two singers unite their voices in accordance with each other. For no melody can be devised more perfectly complete than that which appears between these two servants of God. Now we see the meaning of what our Prophet says concerning ``the years.'' In the thirtieth year: then in the fourth month, (the word month being' understood,) and in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives

Before I proceed any farther, I will briefly touch on the subjects which Ezekiel treats. He has all things in common with Jeremiah, as I have said, with this peculiarity, that he denounces the last slaughter against the people, because they ceased not to heap iniquity upon iniquity, and thereby inflamed still more and more the vengeance of God. He threatens them, therefore, and that not once only, because such was the hard-heartedness of the people, that it was not enough to utter the threatenings of God three or four times, unless he should continually impress them. But, at the same time, he shows the causes why God determined to treat his people so severely; namely, because they were contaminated with many superstitions, because they were perfidious, avaricious, cruel, and full of rapine, given up to luxury

and depraved by lust: all these things are united by our Prophet, that he may show that the vengeance of God is not too severe, since the people had arrived at the very last pitch of impiety and all wickedness. At the same time, he gives them, here and there, some taste of the mercy of God. For all threats are vain, unless some promise of favor is held out. Nay, the vengeance of God, as soon as it is displayed, drives men to despair, and despair casts them headlong into madness: for as soon as any one apprehends the anger of God, he is necessarily agitated, and then, like a raging beast, he wages war with God himself. For this reason, I said, that all threats are vain without a taste of the mercy of God. The Prophets always argue with men with no other intention than that of stirring' them up to penitence, which they could never effect unless God could be reconciled to those who had been alienated from him. This then is the reason why our Prophet, as well as Jeremiah, when they reprove the people, temper their asperity by the interposition of promises. He also prophesies against heathen nations, like Jeremiah, especially against the children of Ammon, the Moabites, the Tyrians, the Egyptians, and the Assyrians. (Jeremiah 26-29.) But from the fortieth chapter he treats more fully and copiously concerning the restoration of the Temple and the city. He there professedly announces, that a new state of the people would arise, in which both the royal dignity would flourish again, and the priesthood would recover its ancient excellence, and, to the end of the book, he unfolds the singular benefits of God, which were to be hoped for after the close of the seventy years. Here it is useful to remember what we observed in the case of Jeremiah: (Jeremiah 28:) while the false Prophets were promising the people a return after three or five years, the true Prophets were predicting what would really happen, that the people might submit themselves patiently to God, and that length of time might not interrupt their calm submission to his just corrections.

As we now understand what our Prophet is treating, and the tendency as well as the substance of his teaching, I will proceed with the context.

He says: as I was among the captives While some skillfully explain the words of the Prophet, they think that he was not in reality in the midst of the exiles, but refer this to a vision, as if; when he uses the word ``among,'' signifying ``in the midst,'' its sense could be, that he was in the assembly of the whole people: but his intention is far otherwise, for he uses the above phrase that he may show that he was an exile together with the rest, and yet that the prophetic spirit was granted to him in that polluted land. Hence the words, ``among the captives,'' or, ``in the midst of the captives,'' do not mean the assembly, but simply narrate, that, though the Prophet was far from the Sacred Land, yet the hand of God was extended to him there, that he might excel in the prophetic gift. Hence the folly of those is refuted, who deny to our Prophet the possession of any spirit of revelation before he went into exile. Although they do not err so much through mistake and ignorance as through willful stupidity; for the Jews took nothing so ill as the thought of God's reigning beyond the sacred land. To this day, indeed, they are hardened, because they are dispersed through the whole world, and scattered through all regions, and yet retain much of their ancient pride. But then, when there was any hope of return, this profanation seemed to them scarcely tolerable, if the truth of God were to shine forth elsewhere

than in the holy land, but especially in the Temple. The Prophet then shows, that he was called to the office of instruction when he was in the midst of the exiles, and one among them. God's inestimable goodness is conspicuous in this, because he called the Prophet, as it were, from the abyss: for Babylon was a profound abyss: hence the Spirit of God emerged with its own instrument, that is, brought forth this man, who should be the minister and herald of his vengeance as well as of his favor. We see, therefore, how wonderfully God drew light out of darkness, when our Prophet was called to his office during his exile. In the meantime, although his doctrine ought to be useful to the Jews still remaining in this country, yet God wished them not to return to him without some mark of their disgrace. For, because they had despised all the prophecies which had been uttered at home, in the Temple, the Sanctuary, and on Mount Zion, these prophecies were now to issue forth from that cursed land, and from a master who was sunk, as I have said, in that profound abyss. We see then, that God chastised their impious contempt of his instructions, not without putting them to shame. For a long time Isaiah had discharged the prophetic office; then came Jeremiah: but the people ever remained just as they formerly were. Since then prophecy when flowing freely from the very fountain was despised by the Jews, God raised up a Prophet in Chaldea. Blow, therefore, we see the full meaning of the clause.

He says, ``by the river of Chebar,'' which many understand to mean the Euphrates, but they assign no reason, except their not finding any other celebrated river in that country; for the Tigris loses its name after flowing into the Euphrates, and on this account they think the Euphrates is called Chebar. But we are ignorant of the region to which our Prophet was banished: perhaps it was Mesopotamia, or else beyond Chaldea, and besides, since the Euphrates has many tributaries, it is probable that each has its own name. But since all is uncertainty, I had rather leave the matter in suspense. Because the Prophet received his vision on the banks of the river, some argue from this, that the waters were, as it were dedicated to revelations, and when they assign the cause, they say that water is lighter than earth, and as a prophet must necessarily rise above the earth, so water is suitable for revelations. Some connect this with ablution, and think that baptism is prefigured. But I pass by these subtleties which vanish of themselves, and very willingly do I leave them, because in this way Scripture would lose all its solidity: conjectures of this kind are very plausible, but we ought to seek in Scripture sure and firm teaching;, in which we can acquiesce. Some for instance torture this passage, ``By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept,'' (Psalm 137:1,) as if the people betook themselves to their banks to pray and worship; when the situation of that country only is described, as being watered by many rivers, as I have just mentioned.

He says, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God God opens his heavens, not that they are opened in reality, but when, by removing every obstacle, he allows the eye of the faithful to penetrate even to his celestial glory; for if the heavens were cleft a thousand times, yet what great brightness must it be to arrive at the glory of God? The sun appears small to us, yet it far exceeds the earth in size. Then the other planets, except the moon, are all like small sparks, and so are the

stars. Since, therefore, light itself grows dark before our glance penetrates thus far, how can our sight ascend to the incomprehensible glory of God? It follows therefore when God opens the heavens, that he also gives new eyesight to his servants, to supply their deficiency to pierce not only the intervening space, but even its tenth or hundredth part. So, when Stephen saw the heavens open, (Acts 7:56,) his eyes were doubtless illuminated with unusual powers of perceiving far more than men can behold. So, at the baptism of Christ, the heavens were opened, (Matthew 3:16,) that is, God made it appear to John the Baptist, as if he were carried above the clouds. In this sense the Prophet uses the words, the heavens were opened, He adds, I saw visions of God Some think that this means most excellent visions, because anything excellent is called in Scripture divine, as lofty mountains and trees are called mountains and trees of God; but this seems too tame. I have no doubt but that he calls prophetic inspiration ``visions of God,'' and thus professes himself sent by God, because he put off as it were his human infirmities when God intrusted to him the office of instructor. And we need not wonder that he uses this phrase, because it was thought incredible that any prophet could arise out of Chaldea. Nathaniel asked whether any good thing could come out of Nazareth, and yet Nazareth was in the Holy Land. How then could the Jews be persuaded that the light of celestial doctrine could shine in Chaldea, and that any testimony to the grace of God could spring from thence? and that there also God exercised judgment by the mouth of a Prophet? This would never have been believed unless the calling of God had been marked in some signal and especial manner. Since he next adds, this was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity, (or Jechoniah, or Jechaniah,) it is plain that by these very words he reproves the obstinacy of the people. For when God afflicts us severely, at first we are much agitated, but by degrees we necessarily become submissive. Since, however, the willfulness of the people was not subdued during these five years, we infer that they persevered in rebellion against God. Nor does he spare those who remained at Jerusalem, for these took credit to themselves for not going into exile with their brethren, and so they despised them, as we often find in Jeremiah. Since then those who remained at home pleased themselves and thought their lot the best, the Prophet here marks the time, because it was necessary to allay their ferocity, and since they resisted the prophecies of Jeremiah, to use a second hammer that they might be completely broken in pieces. This is the reason why he speaks of the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity.

Ezekiel 1:3

3. The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him.

3. Fuit sermo Iehovae ad Ezechielem filium Buzi sacerdotem, in terra Chaldaeorum, super fluvium Chebar: et fuit super eum illic manus Iehovae.

He does not repeat the copula which was placed at the beginning of the first verse, and we may perhaps wonder why the book should begin with a copula: for when he says, ``and* it came to pass,'' it seems to denote something going before it, and it seems out of place when nothing precedes it. But probably an oblique antithesis or

comparison is intended between those prophecies which had flourished for a long period at Jerusalem, which was their peculiar and genuine scat, and that which was arising in Chaldea; as if he would say, ``even* among Chaldaeans,'' for the particle {ו}, vau, is often used in the sense of {גם}, gam, ``even.'' The sense therefore is, after God had exercised his servants even to weariness, since many prophets had discharged their duties at Jerusalem, now at length he speaks in Chaldea. He says, therefore, ``the* word of the Lord came unto him.'' I know not why some dream that Jeremiah is here called ``Buzi,''* unless because it was a foolish persuasion of the Jews, that the father of a prophet is never mentioned unless he were a prophet himself. Their ignorance is proved on other occasions, and here surely their curiosity is shameful, since they decide this Buzi to be a prophet, and because they know of no one else, they fix on Jeremiah: as if it were probable, that when the father was left at Jerusalem, the son was an exile, which is entirely conjectural. But because he was a priest;, so he says, ``the son of Buzi.'' Our Prophet ought to have some reputation, for if he had been of plebeian obscurity, he would scarcely have been listened to. The priestly dignity, then, availed something towards securing attention. Now he expresses what I have previously mentioned, in the land of Chaldea,* as if he had said: although God has not been accustomed to raise up prophets in lands so distant and polluted, yet now his rule is changed, for even among the Chaldeans is one endued with the prophetic spirit. And the particle {שם}, illic, ``there,'' is emphatically added, ``was there upon him,'' says he. For otherwise the Jews would have dreaded Ezekiel, as if he were a monster, when they found that the word of God had proceeded from Chaldea. ``What,'' say they, ``will God pollute and contaminate his doctrine, by its springing up from such a place as that? Who are the Chaldeans, that God should erect his seat there? Mount Zion is his dwelling-place: here he is worshipped and invoked. Here must his lamp burn of necessity, as he has often witnessed by his prophets.'' To such taunts the Prophet; replies: God has begun to speak in Chaldea --- there his power is conspicuous: ``The word of the Lord is come unto me; for we know that God alone is to be heard, and that prophets are only to be attended to, as far as they utter what proceeds from him.'' Hence it is required that all teachers of the Church should first have been learners, so that God alone may retain his own rights, and be the only Lord and Master. As then supreme authority resides in God alone, when prophets desire to be heard, they profess not to offer their own comments, but faithfully to deliver a message from God. Thus also our Prophet. I touch these points rather lightly now, as I have treated them more at length elsewhere. At length he adds, the hand of the Lord was upon him* Some explain the word ``hand'' by ``prophecy,'' but this seems to me weak and poor: I take ``hand'' to mean divine power, as if Ezekiel had said that he was endued with divine power, so that it should be quite clear that he was chosen a Prophet. The hand of God, then, was a proof of new favor, so that Ezekiel might subject; to his own sway all the captives, since he carried with him the authority of God. This may also be referred to the efficacy of his doctrine. For the Lord not only suggests words to his servants, but also works by the secret influence of his Spirit, and suffers not their labors to be in vain. The passage then may be received in this sense. But since

the Prophet only assumes to himself what was necessary, and so claims for himself the position and standing of a Prophet, so when he uses the word ``hand,'' I do not doubt his meaning to be an inward operation. There is, it is admitted, an inward efficacy of the Holy Spirit when he sheds forth his power upon hearers, that they may embrace a discourse by faith, so also if all hearers were deaf, and God's word should evaporate as smoke, yet there is an intrinsic virtue in the prophecies themselves: Ezekiel points out this as given to him by God. Here I shall finish, because I should be compelled to break off directly, and we shall be coming to the vision, which is the most difficult of all.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since thou didst bless thy people with the continued grace of thy Spirit when it was cast out of its inheritance, and didst raise up a Prophet even from the lowest depths, who should recall it to life when it was all but despaired of --- O grant, that although the Church in these days is miserably afflicted by thy hand, we may not be destitute of thy consolation, but show us, through thy pity, that life may be looked for even in the midst of death; so that we may bear all thy chastisements patiently, until thou shalt show thyself' our reconciled Father, and thus at length we may be gathered into that happy kingdom, where we shall enjoy our full felicity, in Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Second.

A Vision is now to occupy our attention, whose obscurity so deterred the Jews that they forbade every attempt to explain it. But God appeared to his Prophet either in vain or not in vain: it is most absurd to suppose the former --- then if the vision is useful, it is necessary for us to attain at least a partial understanding of it. If any one object that the vision was exclusively intended for the Prophet --- the objection is easily answered, for what the Prophet wrote was clearly for the use of the whole Church. Now, if any one asks whether the vision is lucid, I confess its obscurity, and that I can scarcely understand it: but yet into what God has set before us, it is not only lawful and useful but necessary to enquire. Base indeed would be our sloth should we willingly close our eyes and not attend to the vision. We shall perhaps but skim the surface of what God wills: yet this is of no small moment, and not only a moderate but a slight degree of understanding may suffice for this. Thus briefly do I finish my preface, and come to the words of the Prophet: ---

Ezekiel 1:4

4. And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

4. Et vidi, et ecce ventus furbinis [24] veniens ab Aquilone: nubes magna, et ignis involutus [25] et splendor ei undique: et e medio ejus tanquam facies Hasmal e medio ignis.

We must first consider the intention of this Vision. I have no doubt but that God wished first to invest his servant with authority, and then to inspire the people with

[24] Or tempestuous. — Calvin.
[25] Or twisted. — Calvin.

terror. When therefore a formidable form of God is here described, it. ought first to be referred to reverence for the teaching conveyed; for, as we have remarked before, and shall further observe as we proceed, the Prophet's duty lay among a hard-hearted and rebellious people; their arrogance required to be subdued, for otherwise the Prophet had spoken to the deaf. But God had another end in view. An analogy or resemblance is to be held between this vision and the Prophet's doctrine. This is one object. Then as to the vision itself, some understand by the four animals the four seasons of the year, and think that the power of God in the government of the whole world is here celebrated. But that sense is far-fetched. Some think that the four virtues are represented --- because, as they say, the image of justice is conspicuous in man, that of prudence in the eagle, of fortitude in the lion, of endurance in the ox. Yet although this is a shrewd conjecture it has no solidity. Some take the contrary view, and think that four passions are here intended, viz. fear and hope, sorrow and joy. Some think that three faculties of the mind are denoted. For in the soul, {τὸ} {λόγικον}, is the seat of reason; {θύμικον}, that of the passions; {ἐπιθυμήτικον}, that of the lusts; and {συντέρεσις} that of the conscience. But these guesses are also puerile. It was formerly the received opinion, that under this figure were depicted the four Evangelists: they think Matthew was compared to a man, because he begins with the generation of Christ; Mark to a lion, because he begins at the preaching of John; Luke to an ox, because he begins his narrative by mentioning the priesthood; and John to an eagle, because he penetrates, as it were, to the secrets of heaven. But in this fiction there is no stability, for it would all vanish if it were to be properly examined. Some think it a description of the glow of God in the Church, and that the animals are here to be taken for the perfect who have already made greater progress in faith, and the wheels for the weak and undisciplined. But they afterwards heap together many trifles, which it is better to bury at once, and not take up our time ill refuting them. All these, then, I reject; and now we must see what the Prophet really does mean. I have already said, that it was the Almighty's plan, when he gave commands to his Prophet so to honor him, that his doctrine should not be open to contempt. But the special reason which I touched upon must be considered --- viz.: that God shortly points out by this symbol, for what purpose he sends his Prophet. For the visions have as great a likeness to the doctrine as possible. For this reason, in my opinion, Ezekiel says, behold! a whirlwind came out of the north The people had already experienced the vengeance of God, Mien he had used first the Assyrians and then the Babylonians to chastise them. Jeconiah, as we have seen, had gone into voluntary exile. The Jews thought that they would still have a quiet home in their city and country, and laughed at the simplicity of those who had so quickly gone into exile. The Prophet therefore says, that he saw a stormy wind from the north This rush of the wind or tempest ought to be referred to the judgment of God: for he wished to strike terror into the Jews, that they should not grow torpid in their security. After he has spoken concerning the storm or tempest, he adds --- I saw four living creatures and four wheels connected together, to signify that their motion had not originated from chance but from God. These two things ought to be joined together, viz.: that the storm sprang up out of the north, and that

God, the author of the storm, was beheld upon his throne. But in the meanwhile, that God's majesty might the Jews, he says --- I saw four living creatures and four wheels connected together By the four living' creatures he understands cherubim: and we have no need of any other explanation, for he explains it so in chapter 10., when he saw God in the temple, the four living creatures were under his feet, and he says they are cherubim. Now we must see why four animals are here enumerated, when two cherubim only embraced the Ark of the Covenant; and next, why he describes four heads to each: for if he wished to accommodate his language to the rites of the Sanctuary, why did he not place two cherubim, with which God was content? (Exodus 20:18;) for he seems here to depart from the command of God himself: (Numbers 7:89) now, four heads and round feet, do not suit the two cherubim by whom the Ark of the Covenant was surrounded. But the solution is at hand: the Prophet so alludes to the Sanctuary, or, at the same time, to bend his discourse to the rudeness of the people. For their religion had become so obsolete, and their contempt of the law so great., that the Jews were ignorant of the use of tie Sanctuary; then they so worshipped God as if he were at a distance from them, and entirely rejected his providential care over human affairs. Here, then, we see how gross was their stupor, so that though often stricken, they never were aroused. Because the Jews were thus completely torpid, it became needful to propose to them a new form, and so the Prophet chooses half of it from the Sanctuary itself, and assumes the other half, as it was required for so rude a people; although he did not manufacture anything out of his own mind, for I am now speaking of the counsel of the Holy Spirit. God was, therefore, unwilling to drive the Jews away from the sanctuary, for that was the foundation of all right understanding of truth, but because he saw that the legal form was not sufficient, he therefore added a new supply, and as he gave each cherub four heads, so he wished their number to be four.

With regard to their number, I doubt not that God wished to teach us that his influence is diffused through all regions of the world, for we know the world to be divided into four parts; and that the people might know that God's providence rules everywhere throughout the world, four cherubim were set up. Here also it is convenient to repeat, that angels were represented by cherubim and seraphim: for those who are called cherubim here and in Ezekiel 10, are called seraphim in Isaiah 6:2; and we know that angels are called principalities and powers, (Ephesians 3:10,) and are rendered conspicuous by these titles, while Scripture calls them the very hands of God himself. (Colossians 1:16.) Since, therefore, God works by angels, and uses them as ministers of his power, then when angels are brought forward, there the providence of God is conspicuous, and his power in the government of the world. This, then, is the reason why not two cherubim only were placed before the Prophet's eyes, but four: because God's providence ought to be evident in earthly things, for the people then imagined that God was confined to heaven; hence the Prophet teaches not only that he reigns in heaven, but that he rules over earthly affairs. And for this reason, and with this end, he extends his power over the four quarters of the globe. Why, then, has each animal four heads? I answer, that by this, angelic virtue is proved to reside in all the animals. Yet a part is put for the whole, because God by his an-

gels works not only in man and other animals, but throughout creation; and because inanimate things have no motion in themselves, as God wished to instruct a rude and dull people, he sets before them the image of all things under that of animals. With reference, then, to living creatures, man holds the first place, because he was formed after the image of God, and the lion reigns over the wild-beasts, but the ox, because he is most useful, represents all domestic animals, or, as they are usually called, tame animals. Since the eagle is a royal bird, all birds are comprehended under this word; and here I am not fabricating allegories, but only explaining the literal sense; for it seems to me sufficiently plain, that God signifies angelic inspiration by the four cherubim, and extends it to the four regions of the earth. Now:, as it is equally clear that no creature moves by itself, but that all motions are by the secret, instinct of God, therefore each cherub has four heads, as if it were said that angels administer God's empire not in one part of the world only, but everywhere; and next, that all creatures are so impelled as if they were joined together with angels themselves. The Prophet then ascribes four heads to each, because if we can trust our eyes when observing the manner in which God governs the world, that angelic virtue will appear in every motion: it is then, in fact, just as if angels had the heads of all animals: that is, comprehended within themselves openly and conspicuously all elements and all parts of the world; --- thus much concerning the four heads.

As to the four wheels, I do not doubt their signifying those changes which we commonly call revolutions: for we see the world continually changing and putting on, as it were, new faces, each being represented by a fresh revolution of the wheel, effected by either its own or by some external impulse. Since, then, there exists no fixed condition of the world, but continual changes are discerned, the Prophet joins the wheels to the angels, as if he would assert that no changes occur by chance, but depend upon some agency, viz., that of angels; not that they move things by their inherent power, but because they are, as we have said, God's hands. And because these changes are really contortions, the Prophet says, I saw wheel within wheel; for the course of things is not continuous, but when God begins to do anything, he seems, as we shall again perceive, to recede: then many things mutually concur, whence the Stoics fancied that fate arose from what they called a connection of causes. But God here teaches his people far otherwise, viz., that the changes of the world are so connected together, that all motion depends upon the angels, whom he guides according to his will. Hence the wheels are said to be full of eyes. I think that God opposed this form of the wheels to the foolish opinion of men, because men fancy Fortune blind, and that all things roll on in a kind of turbulent confusion. God, then, when he compares the changes which happen in the world to wheels, calls them ``full of eyes,'' to show that nothing is done with rashness or through the blind impulse of fortune. This imagination surely arises from our blindness: we are blind in the midst of light, and therefore when God works, we think that he turns all things upside down; and because we dare not utter such gross blasphemy against him, we say that Fortune acts without consideration, but in the meantime we transfer the empire of God to Fortune itself. Seneca tells a story of a jester belonging to his wife's father, who, when he lost the use of his eyes through old age, exclaimed that

he had done nothing to deserve being cast into darkness --- for he thought that the sun no longer gave light to the world; but the blindness was in himself. This is our condition: we are blind, as I have already said, and yet we wish to throw the cause of our blindness upon God himself; and because we do not dare openly to bring a charge against him, we impose upon him the name of fortune; and for this reason the Prophet says the wheels have eyes.

We now understand the scope of the vision, and we must next approach its several parts. After he has said, a wind sprung up from the north, and a great cloud, he adds, there was also a fire folding round itself Moses, in the ninth chapter of Exodus, (Exodus 9:24,) uses the same word when he speaks of the storm which he caused in Egypt. There was fire en-folded or entwined, and the splendor of fire. Some shrewdly expound this splendor of the fire, as if God's judgments were not obscure, but exposed to the eyes of all. I cannot agree in this meaning, nor do I think it correct. Here the majesty of God is described to us according to the usual scriptural method. He says, the fire was splendid in its circuit, and then there was as it were the appearance of ``Hasmal'' in the midst of the fire Many think Hasreal to be an angel or an unknown phantom, but, in my opinion, without reason, for Hasmal seems to me a color. Jerome, following the Greek, uses the word electrum, but surprises me by saying that it is more precious than gold or silver; for electrum is composed of gold, with a fifth part of it silver, hence, as it does not; exceed them both in value, Jerome was mistaken. But whether it was electrum or any remarkable color, it so clearly portrayed to the Prophet the majesty of God, that he ought to be wrapt in admiration, although the vision was not offered for his sake personally, but, as I have said before, for the Church at large. The color differed from that of fire, that the Prophet might understand that the fire was heavenly, and, as a symbol of God's glory, had a form unlike that of common fire. Now follows:

Ezekiel 1:5

5. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.

5. Et e medio ejus similitudo quatuor animalium, et hic aspectus eorum, similitudo hominis ipsis.

I have already explained why God showed four angels to his Prophet under the form of four animals. It was necessary to turn a little aside from the sanctuary, since the whole legal worship was obnoxious to the profane. God therefore descends, as it were, from heaven, and appears familiarly on earth, as if he would say that he reigned not only above among his angels, but that he exercised his power here, because angels are engaged on earth, and are connected with all regions of the globe; and the conclusion is, that God's providence is everywhere diffused. He says, these animals have the likeness of a man, which does not seem in accordance with the rest of the context. He will immediately say that each animal had four heads, then that their feet were round or like those of a calf, as some interpret it: but here he says they have the form of a man, and the solution is, that the first feet are like those of a man, although in some respects different; nor is it doubtful that cherubim were beheld by the Prophet as angels of God. Wings also do not suit human nature,

but he means, that they had the usual human stature: although they are not entirely like human beings, yet there is much likeness in their general appearance: and now we understand why it is said that the likeness was human

Ezekiel 1:6

6. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.

6. Et quatuor facies cuique, et quatuor alae cuique ex ipsis.

He now comes to the heads and wings themselves. Many suppose that each animal had four heads, and then that four appearances belonged to each head; others extend the wings much further, because they assign four wings to each of the four heads, and others even sixteen; but this does not seem in accordance with the Prophet's words. He simply says each had four heads, and then four wings. The wings and the heads correspond; but one animal was endowed with only four heads, and so I do not think that it had more than four wings, which will again be evident from the context. He adds afterwards ---

Ezekiel 1:7

7. And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.

7. Et pedes eorum pes rectus, et planta pedis eorum tanquam planta pedis vituli: [26] et scintillas jaciebant, [27] tanquam aspectus chalybis politi.

This seems added by way of explanation. Since Ezekiel has spoken of their human form, he adds that their feet were straight, although he calls them round or like those of a calf. I refer the straightness not to the feet only but also to the legs. It is therefore just as if he had said that these animals stood as men do. For we differ from the brutes, who look down towards the ground. As the poet appositely remarks, when he commends the singular favor which God has conferred upon man,

Man looks aloft, and with erected eyes
Beholds his own hereditary skies. [28]

The Prophet now signifies the same thing, when he says that the animals had straight feet. He asserts that they had not anything akin to brutes, but rather to the appearance or likeness of man. He says that their feet were round, and this seems to indicate their agility or the variety of their movements, as if he had said that their feet were not confined, to any one direction, but wherever God impels them they move easily, since their feet are round. If any of us wishes to turn either to the right or the left, he will feel himself to be contending with nature, if he attempt at the same time to walk backwards; if however his feet were round, or of the form of calves' feet, he could easily move in any direction. Agility of this kind then seems pointed at in the animals. As to the sparks which shone like polished brass or steel, we know that this similitude often occurs in Scripture, for whenever God wishes to render his servants attentive, he proposes new figures which may excite their admiration. This very thing happened to our Prophet, because if the usual fleshy color had appeared

[26] I conjecture that the points have been changed in this place, because {{עגל signifies round, and here {עגל} is put, which is a calf. I know no reason why the Prophet should say calves' feet or like a calf: this seems rather strange, but I do not contend about trifles. --- Calvin.

[27] Others. translate, “and sparks” — Calvin.

[28] Os homini sublime, etc. — Ovid Metam. 1 Dryden.

in these animals, this perhaps would have been neglected: even the Prophet had not considered the meaning of the vision with sufficient attention. But when he saw the glistening thighs and sparks shining in every direction, as if from polished steel, then he was compelled to apply his mind more attentively to this vision, Now, therefore, we see why he says that the appearance of the legs was like polished steel, and that sparks glittered on them

Ezekiel 1:8

8. And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.

8. Et manus hominis sub alis de sub alis super quatuor latera vel angulos, et facies et alae ipsis quatuor.

Now the Prophet says: hands were under their wings Since hands are the principal instruments of action, we know that all actions are often denoted by this word: whence hands, either pure or defiled, signify the works of men either clean or unclean. When the Prophet says that the animals were endowed with hands, he signifies that they were ready for the performance of any duty enjoined upon them: for he who is without hands lies useless, and cannot execute any work. Therefore that the Prophet may express angelic vigor, he says that they had hands. This also refers to their human figure, but hands denote something peculiar: namely, that they have such agility that they can execute every commandment of God. For he says: they were under their wings, by which words he signifies, that the angels have no motions in themselves, so that they cannot be carried where they please, except they are divinely impelled, and their every action guided by the will of God. For without doubt by wings, as in this place so in others, we must understand something more than human, Since therefore the wings, with which the animals are clothed, signify nothing else but the secret instinct of God, it follows, that hands hidden under the wings denote nothing else than that angels do not move, as we say, intrinsically, but are impelled from without, namely, by the power of God himself: hence they are not carried about rashly hither and thither, but all their actions are governed by God, since he bends and directs them whithersoever he pleases. This is the reason why the Prophet says that he saw hands on the animals, and then that those hands were under their wings He repeats again, they had faces, and four wings to them The use of the phrase four sides is worthy of notice, just as if he had said that the animals have the power of acting equally in all directions, not that they had four hands each, although at first sight this may appear to be the meaning of the words on four sides, or in each corner, but it simply means that the hands so appeared on the animals, that they were ready for action whensoever God wishes to impel these animals. Now follows ---

Ezekiel 1:9

9. Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.

9. Societae erant quaeque ad aliam alarum: [29] ipsorum animalium non reverte-

[29] That is, each wing was connected with the next wing. — Calvin.

bantur in gradiendo: [30] vir, [31] versus faciem suam ex opposite [32] incedebant.

He says the wings were conjoined, which he soon more clearly explains: for he will say that the wings were joined together, and that two were so extended that they clothed or ruled the whole body: but here he touches shortly upon what he will soon treat more at length. Their wings then were so joined together that one touched the other: and afterwards he adds, they so went forward that they did not return; and he seems to contradict himself when he afterwards says the animals ran like lightning and then returned: but these two things are not inconsistent, for he will soon add the explanation: namely, that the animals so go forward that they proceed in a perpetual course towards their own end or goal, but it does not follow that they afterwards rest there. Therefore when the animals proceed, they do not turn aside in either one direction or another, nor do they turn back, but go straight on in their destined course afterwards, like lightning, yet they have different meetings: and what this means we have no time to explain now, but must defer it till tomorrow.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, since by our dullness we are so fixed down to earth that, when thou stretchest forth thine hand to us, we cannot reach forth to thee, grant, that being roused up by thy Spirit, we may learn to raise our affections to thee, and to strive against our sluggishness, until by a nearer approach thou mayest become so familiarly known to us, that at length we may arrive at the fruition of full and perfect glory laid up for us in heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Third

We must now see why the Prophet says, each animal walked onwards, or in the direction of his face. I simply interpret it in a straight course, so that they neither wandered nor declined to either the right hand or the left. For those who turn the face on one side or the other, often stumble, and thus decline from the right way: there was therefore such attention in the animals, that they always kept their object in view, and never bent from their fixed purpose. Hence we see that a fixed, and, as we say, inflexible rule in divine actions is here commended. Men often change their places, and fluctuate, and when they have any purpose, if a different thought strike them, they are carried back again, as if they had forgotten themselves. But God wishes to show that his actions are so arranged, that they have nothing in them either crooked or erroneous. For we have said that angels are represented by these living creatures; and under the image of angels the government of the whole world is signified, because it must be held, that they are, as it were, the hands of God, since he used them in obedience to his will.

Ezekiel 1:10

10. As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.

10. Et similitudo facierum facies hominis, et facies leonis ad dextram ipsis

[30] That is, when they moved, they did not turn back. — Calvin

[31] Or each, {{איש --- that is, each animal. --- Calvin.

[32] Literally, in the direction of its face. — Calvin.

quatuor: facies bovis a sinistra ipsis quatuor, et facies aquiae ipsis quatuor.

He now comes down to the faces or countenances of the living creatures themselves. The face is properly used with reference to the whole body, but the Prophet only means the countenance. He says therefore that there was on the right as it were the face of a man and of a lion, and on the left, the face of an ox and of an eagle We explained yesterday why four heads and as many faces are ascribed to the angels of God, because so great was the dullness of the people, that they did not acknowledge the providence of God over all parts of the world. For we know that they were so intoxicated with foolish confidence, that they wished to hold God shut up as it were within a prison: for their temple was as it were God's prison. Hence the Prophet shows how the providence of God shines over other parts of the world. But since there is vigor in animals, so for brevity's sake he puts four remarkable species of animals. Yet one question remains, and that a difficult one, for in Ezekiel 10:14, he puts a cherub for an ox. Some think, or at least reply, that it appeared at a distance the face of an ox, but nearer it was that of a cherub. All see that this is a sophistry, and because they cannot otherwise escape the difficulty, they have imagined that fiction, which has no firmness in it. Others think that cherub and ox are identical; but this may be refuted from many places, for cherubim have not the heads of oxen, as all very well know. I therefore have no doubt there was some difference in the second vision, when God appeared to his own Prophet in the Temple. It is called the same vision on account of the likeness, but it does not follow that all particulars were exactly the same. Nor ought this conjecture to be rejected, because when God made himself known to his servant in Chaldea, as I have said before, he wished to reprove the sloth of the people by this multiform image; but when he appeared a second time in the Temple, there it was something more divine. Hence therefore the variety, because each animal then bore the face of a cherub instead of that of an ox. Therefore, besides the stature of the whole body, there was a remarkable feature whence the Prophet could more easily and familiarly recognize these living-creatures to be cherubim or angels. This reason also seems to explain why God showed to his Prophet a form which approached more nearly to that of the sanctuary, and to the two cherubim who surrounded the ark. Besides, some think that the heads were so arranged, that the man's head should look towards the east, and the opposite head towards the west. But it is scarcely to be doubted that the four faces had the same aspect, and turned their eyes in the same direction, there being on the right the two forms which we have mentioned of a man and a lion, and on the left, those of an ox and an eagle. Afterwards follows ---

Ezekiel 1:11

11. Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies.

11. Et facies eorum [33] animalium; et alae eorum extensae vel divisae erant ab excelso, euique [34] colligatae ad socium, et duabus tegebant corpore.

[33] Some stop here, and take the words, “but their wings were extended,” disjunctively: but because the copula is used in each place, perhaps we had better unite the clauses in the same context, thus, “Their faces therefore and their wings were extended.” — Calvin.

[34] Now he speaks of the wings themselves. — Calvin

He says, that the faces as well as the wings were extended, because the four faces proceeded from one body. Here then the Prophet says, that they are not united together, so that a fourfold form could be seen on one head: there was the form of a man, and then that of a lion, as in one glass various forms sometimes appear, but each answers to its own original. So also the reader might mistake here, as if different faces belonged to the same head: hence the Prophet says, they were stretched forth or divided from above. Here he points out a diversity of heads, and as to the wings, he says they were extended, and, at the same time, shows the manner, viz., two joined or bound together, so that each animal was bound to its neighbor. The four living creatures were united by their wings: this the Prophet means; and as to the other wings, he says that they covered their bodies, and so we see some likeness between this vision and that vouchsafed to Isaiah, which he relates in his chap. 6. The reason why the rings were joined together upwards is sufficiently clear; because God has such different motions, and so agitates the earth, that the things which seem to be conflicting are most in unison. The joining, then, was upwards, that is, with respect to God himself, because on earth there often appears dreadful confusion, and the works of God, as far as we can understand them, appear mutually discordant: but whoever raises his eyes to heaven will see the greatest harmony between those things which have the appearance of opposition below --- that is, as long as we remain upon earth, and in the present state of the world.

Ezekiel 1:12

12. And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went.

12. Et unum quodque ad contra faciem suam ambulabat; secundum quod erat illuc spiritus ad ambulandum, [35] ambulabant, non revertebantur ambulando.

Here the Prophet repeats, that the movement of the living creatures was in each case directed towards, or in the direction of its face: and he will say the same again: nor is this repetition superfluous, since, as we said yesterday and must repeat again, mankind can scarcely' be induced to ascribe glory to the wisdom of God. For we are so stupid, that we think that God mingles all things inconsiderately, as if he were in the dark. Since, therefore, the actions of God appear to us distorted, it is needful to repeat this clause, viz., that angels proceed straight forward, that is, are constrained to obedience. For the son who wishes to imitate his father, and the servant his master, is often agitated and at a loss what to do. Since then, something always appears confused in creatures, the Prophet diligently enforces that angels proceed in the direction of their face, that is, they tend at once to their goal, and decline neither to one side or the other. What he announces with regard to angels, ought to be referred to God himself; because his intention was not to extol angelic wisdom, but he sets them before us as God's ministers, that we may perceive here one of the fundamental principles of our faith, viz., that God so regulates his actions, that nothing is with him either distorted or uncontrolled.

He adds, wheresoever there was spirit for proceeding, they proceeded [36] Spirit is

[35] That is, as far as the spirit led them for walking. — Calvin.

[36] This rendering seems most in accordance with Calvin's Interpretation, and is evidently

here used in the sense of mind or will: we know that it is often put metaphorically for wind, and also for the human soul, but here the will ought to be understood, and so the Prophet alludes to that very motion by which angels are borne along when God uses their assistance. Since, therefore, the vigor and swiftness of angels is so great that they fly like the wind, the Prophet seems to allude to this likeness. And what David says in the 104th Psalm, ``God makes the winds his ministers,'' the Apostle, in the first chapter of the Hebrews, aptly applies to the angels themselves. This analogy then, will stand very well, viz., that the angels proceeded wherever their will bore them; and yet by this word the Prophet points out that secret motion by which God bends his angels as he pleases. In the meantime, he confirms what we have lately seen, that angels are not rashly driven in every direction, but have a definite end, because God, who is the fountain of all wisdom, works through their means. He says again, they so proceed as not to return, that is, that they do not deviate from their course, for he afterwards says, they do turn backwards. But it is easy to reconcile these statements, because it only signifies that their course was not abrupt. While, therefore, they are proceeding in one direction, they go forward until they finish their allotted space, and then they return like lightning. For God does not so fit his angels for one single work, and that they should rest ever afterwards, but daily, nay, every moment, he exercises them in obedience. Since, then, the angels are continually occupied, it is not wonderful that the Prophet says, that they go and return, and yet not return, which is explained by their not receding until they have discharged their duty. Lastly, this vision has no other meaning than to inform the Prophet that God does not desert his works in the middle of their course, as he says in Psalm 138:8. Since, therefore, in the works of God, there is nothing unfinished or mutilated, the angels go forward, and finish their allotted space till the goal: they afterwards return like lightning, as he will shortly say. It follows: ---

Ezekiel 1:13

13. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning.

13. Et similitudo animalium aspectus eorum tanquam carbones ignis ardentis, tanquam aspectus lampadum discurrens inter animalia, et splendor igni, et ex igne egrediebatur fulgur.

As I said yesterday, something divine ought to shine forth in this vision, because God set forth the face of a man and of an ox, of an eagle and of a lion, and in this he accommodates himself to the stupidity of the people, as I have said, and also to the capacity of the Prophet, because, as we are men, we cannot penetrate beyond the sky. God therefore bore in mind his Prophet, and all the pious, while, at the same time, he wished indirectly to reprove the people's sluggishness. At the same time, if the face of a man had not been different from common forms, the vision had not excited such admiration in the mind of the Prophet. Hence something heavenly ought to be mixed with the earthly figures. This is the reason why the living

better than Newcome's, "whithersoever the Spirit was to go, they went." The French reads, "selon que l'esprit estoit pour cheminer, ils cheminoyent." — Ed.

creatures were like burning fire Now we begin to understand what this difference means; as when God appeared to Moses, if there had been nothing wonderful in it, Moses would not have thought that he was called by God, but he acknowledged God in the bush, because he saw that the bush was on fire and yet not consumed. (Exodus 3:2, 3.) Then he began to be aroused, and to reflect within himself, that a divine vision was presented to him. The same is to be diligently observed in this place. And hence we gather, how humanely, nay, how indulgently, God deals with us. For, as on his part, he sees how small is our comprehension, so he descends to us: hence the faces of the living creatures, the stature of their body, and what we have formerly mentioned. Now, however, since he sees us torpid upon the ground, and lying there, as it were idle, so he raises us up: this is the meaning of what Ezekiel now says, viz., the appearance of the living creatures was like burning coals. And since coals taken out of the fire sometimes die out, he says the coals were burning. The Prophet would of necessity be moved when he saw that. the living creatures were not really such, that is, when he saw in the form of the animals something celestial, and exceeding the standard of nature, and even the senses of man: and this also]s profitable to the rest of man.-kind. For when we read this vision we acknowledge what the Prophet narrates to be so evident, that God shines forth in it, and does not suffer his Prophet to doubt. Hence his teaching, which is marked by such certain proofs, is better confirmed to us. In the meantime, it is desirable to impress upon the memory what we said yesterday, that there is something terrific in this vision, since the people were hardened against all threats, nay, even blows themselves. For God had already inflicted severe judgments, not only on the kingdom of Israel, but on the city itself, and the whole land of Judah. Even the captives were champing their bits and roaring, because driven into exile, and, in the meantime, those who remained in the city thought that they were treated nobly. Wherefore such was their security, that it was necessary to put terrors before them, as we shall see a little while afterwards. And it is also said, the fire burned before God, where he not only wishes his own glory to be beheld by us, but where he wishes to strike fear, as he did at the promulgation of the law. (Exodus 19:20) And David, in the 18th Psalm, narrates that God appeared to him in this way when he was preserved by him: (Psalm 18:8-15:) doubtless he understands that God unfolded his formidable power against the unbelieving. So also in this place, he says, the appearance of the living creatures was like fiery and burning coals, and then he adds another image, that they were like lamps, which some explain as firebrands or burnt wood. But another opinion is more general, and more approved by me. The Prophet now expresses the form of the fire more dearly, viz., that the coals were like lamps For lamps send out their brightness to a distance, and seem to scatter their rays in every direction, like the sun when it shines through the serene air. On the whole, the Prophet means, that the fire was not obscure but full of sparks, and shows that rays were diffused like lighted lamps. Afterwards he says, they walked between the living creatures The Prophet sees, as it were, a fiery form amidst the living creatures themselves. Thus God wished to show the vigor of his own spirit in all actions, that we should not measure it in our manner, according to the depravity which is innate with us. For when we discourse

concerning the works of God, we conceive what our reason comprehends, and we wish in some way to affix in our minds an image of God. But God shows, that when he works there is a wonderful vigor, as if fire were moving to and fro. Hence that vigor is incomprehensible to us.

Afterwards he says, The fire was bright, and lightning issued from it This would affect the Prophet's mind, when he saw fire glittering in an unaccustomed manner. We know that fire is often bright, especially when flame is added; but the Prophet here intends something very uncommon, as if he had said that the fire is not like that arising from lighted wood, but that it was resplendent, whence we may readily collect that God here sets before us his visible glory: and for the same reason he says, lightning issued from the fire Hence arises the splendor just mentioned, since lightning is mingled with the fire. But we know that lightning cannot be beheld without fear; for in a moment the air seems inflamed, just as if God would in some way or other absorb the world: hence the appearance of lightning is always terrible to us. He was unwilling, indeed, that his Prophet should be frightened, except as far as was needful to humble him. But, as I stated at the beginning, this vision was not offered to the Prophet for his private use, but that it might be useful to the whole people. Meanwhile the Prophet, as he was but human, had need of this preparation, that he might be humbled. For we always attribute something to pride, which renders our senses obtuse, so as to be incapable of the glory of God. Therefore when God wishes to become familiarly known to us, he strips us of all pride and all security: lastly, humility is the beginning of true intelligence. Now we understand why lightning issued from the fire: he afterwards confirms this.

Ezekiel 1:14

14. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

14. Et animalia currebant, et revertebantur instar fulguris. [37]

Here the Prophet explains more clearly what would otherwise be obscure. He says that the living creatures ran, and returned like lightning: by which words he doubtless signifies their amazing swiftness. For lightning (as Christ uses that comparison when he speaks of his own Advent --- Matthew 24:27) goes forth from one part of the world and penetrates instantly to the opposite. Since, then, the swiftness of lightning is so great that it reaches in a moment through the immensity of heaven, for this reason the Prophet says, the living creatures ran, and returned like lightning: as if he had said, in whatever direction God wishes to impel them, they were ready to obey; as we have formerly said, angels are at hand to obey the commands of God: but we cannot comprehend the extreme swiftness of their course, unless by this comparison of lightning. Now we see how well these two things agree, that they did return and yet did not: they did not return until they had arrived, as I have already said, at the goal, because, although many hindrances occur, yet God breaks through them, so that they never interrupt his actions. The devil, indeed, by his obstacles, endeavors to compel God to recede; but here the Prophet shows that when God determines

[37] He uses another word, but they both ({,בזק bezek, and ,{ברק} berek,) signify the same thing: for they signify lightning and brilliancy. --- Calvin.

anything, the angels are ready to govern the world, and that they have so much vigor in them, that they go on constantly to the end, as far as God inspires them with his own power. Afterwards it follows ---

Ezekiel 1:15

15. Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces.

15. Et aspexi animalia, [38] ecce rota una in terra prope animalia ad quatuor ad faciem cujusque.

Now the Prophet descends to the wheels which were joined to the living creatures. Each had a double wheel, as we shall see afterwards --- that is, one wheel rolling upon another. The Prophet did not notice at one glance that the wheels stood near the living creatures, and this is occasioned by the magnitude of the vision. For although he was attentive, and God doubtless gave him understanding by his Spirit, and although he was taken up, as it were, into heaven, yet inasmuch as he could not at once embrace so great a vision he was convicted of infirmity. Then this wonderful secret was set before him, that he might attend to the whole spectacle with greater reverence. He says, therefore, when he had fixed his eyes upon the living creatures, immediately the wheels appeared He uses indeed the singular number, but afterwards declares, there were four wheels. And now he removes all doubt: behold, says he, one wheel --- how one wheel? thus, near each living creature, at right angles, at the face of each [39] We see, then, that there was a wheel to each animal: this is easily gathered from the Prophet's words. I explained yesterday what God meant to represent to his servant and to us by these wheels: namely, the changes which constantly occur in the world. For if we consider what the condition of the world is, we may correctly compare it to a sea, and even a tempestuous one. For as the sea is subject to opposite winds, and hence storms are excited, so also since there is nothing firm or calm in the world, its condition is a perpetual change like the turning of a wheel. The wheels stood near the Angels, because the world is governed by the secret inspiration of God. When all things seem to roll round by a blind and rash chance, yet God has his servants who regulate all their motions, so that nothing is confused, nothing discomposed. This, then, is the reason why the wheels went forward and stood near the Angels, as he immediately repeats again. Now follows ---

Ezekiel 1:16

16. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: trod their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.

16. Aspectus rotarum et opus [40] stent aspectus Tharsis et strutlitudo unius ad

[38] That is, while I was beholding the living creatures. — Calvin.

[39] Latin, ad quatuor adfaciem cujusque, by which Calvin seems to mean that each wheel intersected another at right angles, the four spherical parts thus becoming four faces or sides. The French translation has in the text aux quatre, and in the comments a quatre a la face d' un chacun

[40] That is, workmanship or form — Calvin.

quatuor, [41] et aspectus eorum, et forma [42] quemadmodum si rota esset in medio rotae.

Now the Prophet uses the plural number, and says, there were four wheels. He says, the color was like a precious stone. Jerome translates it ``sea,'' because the sea which looks towards Cilicia with respect to Judea is called Tharsis. But I know not why the color of the sea or the sky took his fancy. But granting that, the word is not found simply for a bluish-green color, for tharsis is a precious stone, as we learn from Exodus, Exodus 28:20, and many other places. The Greeks translated it chrysolite, but I know not whether correctly, nor does it much matter. We need only hold it to be a precious stone, whose color was so exquisite that it attracted all eyes to itself. And so God wished, under the figure of wheels, to place before his Prophet something earthly; but, at the same time, to raise his mind by its color, because he would ascertain from this that they were not either common wheels, or wooden, or of any earthly material, but heavenly ones. The color, then, was intended to draw off the Prophet's mind, so that he might ascertain that heavenly secrets were laid open to him.

Like the appearance of a precious stone, he says: afterwards, and they four had one likeness This may, indeed, be referred to the living creatures as some have conjectured, but I have no doubt that the Prophet here teaches, that the wheels were so equal that there was no difference between them. Therefore their proportion and equality shows that in all God's work there is the greatest arrangement --- not that this lies on the surface, (for we should rather think that all things are involved in hurried confusion,) but if we raise our senses above the world, it will doubtless be given us to acknowledge what the Prophet here describes, viz.: that in all God's works the arrangement is so complete that no line could be better directed. God therefore, whilst he turns round the world, preserves an even course with respect to himself, so that what we call changes or revolutions have no inequality with respect to himself, but each is in harmony with all the others. At length he adds, their aspect and workmanship, or form, was as if each wheel were in the midst of a wheel, so that the bending of one wheel is across that of another. For he does not mean to say, that one wheel was greater and another less, but that two wheels were so united that they were at right angles to each other. Now, we may see why the wheels were double; I touched on it briefly yesterday --- viz., because God does not seem to hold on a direct course, but to have various changes, and, as it were, in contrary directions, as if the motion by which each creature is inspired with vigor was drawn in different ways. Therefore it is said, one wheel was in the middle, of another Finally, here God represents to us to the life what experience teaches. For first, the world is carried, along just as the wheels run round, and that, too, not simply but with such great variety that God seems to send forth his impelling force, now to the right hand and now to the left. This, then, is as if two wheels were entangled together. But I cannot proceed further now, and must leave the rest till to-morrow.

PRAYER.

[41] That is, there was a certain equable proportion between the four wheels, so that one was altogether like another — Calvin.

[42] Either their work or workmanship; — On leur ouvrage ou leur facon. — Calvin.

Grant, O Almighty God, since thou wishest us to be subject to so many changes, that we cannot settle on earth with quiet minds --- grant, I pray thee, that, being subject to so varying a condition, we may seek our rest in heaven, and always aspire to behold thy glory, so that what our eyes cannot discern may shine upon us from thence; and may we so acknowledge thy hand and power in the government of the whole world, that we may repose upon thy paternal care till we arrive at the enjoyment of that happy rest Which has been acquired for us by the blood of thine only begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Fourth

Ezekiel 1:17

17. When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went.

17. Ad quatuor latera sua, ambulando ibant, non revertebantur cum ambularent.

What he had already explained he now repeats for the sake of confirmation, that they went upon their four sides --- that is, each living creature proceeded straight forward; the words they turned not refer to their perseverance; not that they exceeded the appointed space, but because they went forward to their object without intermission. I touch but lightly now on what has been already sufficiently explained.

Ezekiel 1:18

18. As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four.

18. Et circumferentiae ipsis, [43] it proceritas ipsis, et terror ipsis: et terga ipsarum [44] plena oculis per circuitum ipsis quatuor.

What he says about the circumferences of the wheels may seem superfluous, but he refers to the second clause of the verse, where he says, that these circumferences were full of eyes. Here, then, he now treats about their height and terrible aspect. It signifies that the wheels were large, for being round their length and breadth is equal. When he says they were lofty, he, doubtless, signifies that they inspire terror by their very appearance, as he afterwards expresses it.. The sum of the whole is, that these wheels were not common ones, but. they so exceeded the usual size that their magnitude was formidable. But all these things tend to impress the vision on the attention of the Prophet, because unless the Lord should, as it were, draw us violently to himself, we should become torpid through sloth. The Prophet then required to be so variously affected, that, as soon as he sees that no common vision is before him, he should apply all his faculties to its consideration. What he now says, that the circumferences of the wheels were full of eyes, signifies that all the wheels were not rashly but considerately put in motion. If the eyes had been in other parts, they had not been useful; but since the wheels turned by means of their felloes --- that is, their iron hoops --- there the Prophet saw the eyes fixed.

Now, therefore, we see in what manner God directs the world in various ways, and yet nothing' is done without reason and plan. By the eyes, the Prophet understands, that providence which never wanders. He does not say, that every wheel had two

[43] Properly backs, but he means circumferences or felloes, iron hoops. — Calvin.

[44] That is, circumferences or strakes; their strakes were full of eyes. — Calvin.

eyes, but that the circumferences were full of eyes, which expresses much more than if he had said they possessed eyes: which means that there was not the least motion in the wheels unless arranged and governed with the utmost reason. And hence the error of those who think that years are intended by the entangled wheels is refuted. This idea they obtained, I suppose, front the Egyptians, for in their hieroglyphics the year is represented under the image of a serpent., which, being twisted round, bites his own tail. It is indeed true, that the continual series of time is so woven together that year draws year behind it, as Virgil also says in his second Georgic ---

``The year returns into itself by its own footsteps.''

But this is altogether out of place here, where the Prophet; signifies that motions which seem to us confused are yet connected, because God does nothing either rashly or inconsiderately. Now, therefore, we comprehend the sense of this portion. He adds ---

Ezekiel 1:19

19. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.

19. Et cum incederent animalia, incedebant rotae prope illa; et cum attollerentur animalia e terra, simul elevantur rotae.

By this verse the Prophet teaches, that all the changes of the world depend on celestial motion. For we have said that the living creatures represent to us Angels whom God inspires with a secret virtue, so that he works by means of their hands. Now, therefore, when he says, that the wheels proceeded through a higher movement than their own, it follows that nothing happens by chance in the world, but that God, by his own incomprehensible wisdom, so directs all things that nothing happens except by that secret instinct which is imperceptible to us. Therefore in this teaching of the Prophet, as in a glass, we ought to consider what is concealed from human comprehension. We see many things happen, and in the meantime we think the motions, which are so perplexed and multiplied, confused; but the Prophet meets this perverse imagination, and teaches that the wheels rest by themselves and are set in motion by a higher force --- that is, as the living creatures or cherubim are moved, so the wheels are drawn along by their influence. Now, therefore, because we perceive the meaning of the Holy Spirit, so the usefulness of the doctrine is to be noticed. When we see men planning' so many things that they disturb the whole world, when we see many conspiracies made, and then all things necessary for action prepared, let us perceive that God governs all things, but in a secret manner which surpasses our senses. Also, when we see many things happen as we think unseasonably, let us think that Angels are discharging their duty, and that by their motion and inspiration things in themselves motionless are borne along. The same may be said of other things: winter, for example, may be too mild or too rough; in that excess, let us consider what the Prophet teaches here, viz.: that God so governs the order of the seasons, that nothing happens unless by his inspiration. When, therefore, the living creatures went forward, the wheels near them also wear forward, he says, meaning that the living creatures were the rule by which the wheels directed their course, and when they were raised, he adds, the wheels were raised also

Ezekiel 1:20

20. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

20. Quo erat spiritus ad curtdum ambulabant, illuc spiritus ad eundum; etiam rotae attollebantur cum ipsis; quia spiritus antmalis erat in rotis.

Thus I arrange the clauses, for though others join the first; clause with the second part of the verse, it is too forced. Therefore the Prophet repeats what he had said, though he is rather prolix. Afterwards he adds, that the wheels were raised, taking the word generally for elevated, but not exactly as in the last and next verse. I now add the next verse ---

Ezekiel 1:21

21. When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

21. Ambulando ambulebant: [45] et cum starent stabant: et cum elevarentur, [46] attollebantur rotae simul cum ipsis; quia spiritus animalis in rotis.

He continues the same sentence, that the wheels were fixed, not that they fell but stood without motion, which we know to be unnatural, for a wheel cannot stand on any part of its rim, but will either fall on one side or the other, or will roll on: for the Prophet says that the wheels were immovable. Whence it follows that their moving force was external to themselves. Afterwards he confirms the same by additional words. For as the living creatures and the wheels stood together, so they moved and were elevated together. Here the Prophet enlarges upon what he had just touched upon. For although the matter is obscure, yet this copiousness excites attention, and leads us to understand that the motion of the wheels is not uselessly transferred to the living creatures, and that the cause resides there: because if this had been said briefly, it might have been transmitted carelessly, but since the Prophet so often asserts the motion of the wheels to be derived from the living creatures, hence it follows that all changes of things which are seen in the world have their origin from some external source, as I have formerly said. The reason, too, is repeated --- that the spirit of the living creatures or animals was in the wheels: for here as before there is an alteration in the number. Though the Prophet understood the spirit of the living creatures to be in the wheels, yet the wheels do not comprehend anything, but receive vigor, as the moon obtains its brightness from the sun. So we perceive that the wheels are impelled, not that the intelligence of the living creatures had been transfused through the wheels. For God does not give mind and judgment to either winter or summer, to either peace or war, to either the calm or the storm, the pestilence or anything else. What then? Neither air, nor earth, nor sea, have any rigor by themselves, unless so far as God by his angels directs the earth to this use, or while he bends the minds of men in one direction or the other, to either war or

[45] i.e. When the living creatures went, the wheels went, and when the one stood the other stood. — Calvin.

[46] This word, {,{נשא nesa, is correctly used for being lifted up from the earth, for he had said ``raised'' before without any addition. --- Calvin.

peace. Now, therefore, we clearly see the meaning of the spirit of the living creatures being in the wheels, viz., that God transfuses his influence through angels, so that not even a sparrow falls to the earth without his foresight, as Christ says, (Matthew 10:29; Luke 12:6.) Therefore, whenever the confusion of our affairs urges us to despair, let us try to remember this sentiment, that the spirit of the living creatures is in the wheels. And truly when we tremble in doubtful circumstances, what can we do but acquiesce in this doctrine --- viz., that the end of everything will be according to God's decree, because nothing is carried on without his permission, and that there, is no motion, no agitation under the heavens, unless he has inspired it by his angels. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 1:22

22. And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature was as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.

22. Et similitudo super capita animalis hoc est animalium firmamenti: [47] tanquam aspectus chrystalli terribilis; expansi [48] super capita ipsorum animalium desuper.

Now the Prophet states the principal thing in this vision --- that God was seated on his throne: because if he had spoken only of wheels and living creatures, the vision had been partial, and therefore inefficient. But when he places God upon his own throne, we understand that angels, who inspire motion in other things, have neither vigor nor motion peculiar to themselves. On the whole, the Prophet here says that angels so move all things that are done under heaven, that no proper motion ought to be ascribed to them. And why? because God presides over them and governs their actions. This is the object of the latter part of the vision, which we are now going to explain.

He says then, above the heads of the living creatures was the likeness of a firmament [49] By these words he wishes gradually to draw us to God himself, and God also so deals with his Prophet that he places different steps by which the Prophet himself according to his capacity may gradually climb to an immense altitude. The Prophet does not here speak concerning the throne of God, but only concerning the firmament. For when we raise our eyes upwards, God's glory appears nearer to us than it does on earth. True it is, that it shines equally on all sides; but heaven has in itself: greater excellence than the whole earth, and the nearer we approach to God, the more conspicuous to us becomes his image. For truly God there exercises his own power and wisdom much more clearly than on earth. How many wonders does the sun present to us! If we consider first the planets, and next the stars, we shall be inspired a hundred times with admiration. Therefore when the Prophet speaks of the firmament, he raises our thoughts so that they approach by degrees unto God. He saw therefore the likeness of the firmament Had he simply seen the firmament, it would not have been a vision: for this is always visible. I know not why the Greeks used the word {στερέωμα}, nor why the Latins followed them: for the Hebrew word {רקיע}, rekiang, has nothing like it or in affinity with it. Yet I use the received word.

[47] Expansion, {,{רקיע rekiang, is the word used by Moses in the history of creation. --- Calvin.

[48] Others translate ice. — Calvin.

[49] Firmament, or extended expansion; the word, {,{נטוי netvi, is referred to ,{רקיע} rekiang. --- Calvin.

The heavens then, which are always visible, could not render the Prophet sufficiently attentive. But he saw the likeness of the firmament, whence he noticed that it was not the mere sky, but a new form submitted to his eyes, as if God were bringing the Prophet himself into heaven with outstretched hand. Above the heads of the living creatures an expansion was spread out Here another participle is used, {נטוי}, netvi, signifying ``extended,'' for the word {נטה}, neteh, means to extend or stretch out. As the appearance of terrible crystal, he says; for the color of crystal was in this sky which the Prophet saw, but God added the terror, because, as I have previously mentioned, on account of our sluggishness God must put forth violence when he wishes to attach us entirely to himself. Above the heads of the living creatures themselves, he says, upwards; that is, that we may understand them to be subject to the sway of Almighty God, as we shall afterwards see. It follows ---

Ezekiel 1:23

23. And under the firmament were their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two, which covered on that side, their bodies.

23. Et sub expansione vel firmamento alto ipsorum recta, quaeque ad socium suum, cuique animali duae alae quibus se operiebat, et euique dum quibus operiebant se sua cotpora vel in corporibus suis.

There is some obscurity in the words, but it may be easily removed if we remark the two ways of covering; for those wings which tended upwards covered the living' creatures themselves- that is, their faces, but the other wings, which were joined to their bodies, covered the body itself. Some think that there is a repetition here, and say that the two wings which cover the face and those which cover the body are the same. But this seems to me absurd. I have no doubt but that what we saw before is repeated, namely, that each living creature was covered with four wings, comprising the two which were raised upwards, and the two which were so joined that each living creature was connected with another. That was one form of covering: but another was by letting the wings fall which covered the whole body. On the whole, the Prophet adds nothing new, but impresses what he had said before. It follows ---

Ezekiel 1:24

24. And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings.

24. Et audivi vocem alarum ipsorum sicuti vocem aquarum magnarum vel multarum sicuti vocem Dei, [50] cum ambularent vocem sermonis sicuti vocem castrorum, hoc est exercitus: cum starent remittebant alas suas.

When the Prophet says, he heard the voice of wings, it is an explanation of his former teaching, when he said that the wings followed the course of the living creatures, and stood, unless when they were drawn by the living creatures: this he now expresses more clearly by the word voice We know that, precepts are expressed by the voice, and this is the means of human intercourse, so that he who bears sway proclaims by the voice what he wishes to be done. Since therefore what we have

[50] Or a strong voice, or the voice of a strong one, as some think. — Calvin.

previously said was obscure --- that the wheels were moved by the living creatures --- therefore the Prophet says there was a voice in the motion of the wings He had said this before, and he now repeats that the living creatures sometimes rested and let fall their wings. When the wings were thus let fall there was no motion in the wheels; but as the wheels obey the motions of the living creatures, he says the wings were vocal; not that the wheels were endued with ears or could hear any commands. But the Prophet could not otherwise express what I have just said: viz., that heaven and earth are full of angelic motion, unless he said that in such motion there was something like a voice, as he said that whatever happens obeys God's will. But this obedience cannot be conceived unless a voice go before it. Now therefore we see the Prophet weaving his own discourse, and by a new form of speech expressing and confirming what we formerly saw --- that the wheels were mowed by the living creatures, because in the wings themselves a voice was heard, he adds, it was as it were a voice many or mighty waters We know that a great noise arises from the overflow of art impetuous river. Nothing is more terrible than its sound, for it is something like a crash which seems to threaten the breaking up of the whole earth, and this vehemence the Prophet now expresses. He adds, a voice of God It will be harsh to explain this of God himself, to whom although the phrase is often attributed, yet we know that it is done metaphorically. But there ought to be some external likeness which may show the Prophet what was not visible of itself. But that cannot suit the phrase, ``the voice of God,'' unless we understand it as in Psalm 29:5, 6, 9, concerning thunder: the voice of God shakes the cedars and the mountains, and makes the animals miscarry in the woods. Here David calls thunder the voice of God, but I know not whether this metaphor is suitable to the present place. Nor yet if we could take the word of God in another sense, could it mean anything but thunder. Others translate {שדי}, shedi, brave or violent, which suits tolerably well, unless a general form of speech is not sufficiently fitted to this place. For those images of things ought to be set before the mind of the Prophet that tend to raise it upwards. Besides, if he had said simply the voice of a strong or violent man, it would imply but little, so I dare not reject the meaning --- thunder; and if this exposition is unsatisfactory to any one, yet the meaning will still be a loud and terrific voice, because Scripture calls cedars and mountains, cedars and mountains of God, on account of their superior excellence. (Psalm 80:11; Psalm 36:6.)

He says, when they walked, because there was no other motion, for he said that the wings of the animals were let fall while they stood. Then it was not necessary for earthly things to be agitated, unless when the inspiration goes forward in the living creatures, that is the angels. He adds, the voice of speech Here Ezekiel proceeds further, asserting the voice to be articulate. True, inanimate things cannot hear a voice, but as I have said, he wished to represent the obedience in the wheels to be such as if they had been taught, and God had eloquently and articulately commanded what he wished to be done; or as if the wheels had spoken intelligibly, so that the wheels might not afterwards roll round rashly, but in accordance with a received command. He says, as it were the voice of armies And the simile is to be diligently noticed, because in an army, in consequence of the multitude, one can scarcely notice an-

other with the view of promoting union, and yet military discipline requires this. [51] Therefore, in camps there is great clamor and confusion, yet each accommodates himself to others, and so order is preserved. The Prophet therefore signifies, that although infinitely numerous events meet together, yet nothing is left without guidance, because God governs all earthly motions with much better skill than a general, though endued with singular foresight, rules his army. We see therefore what the Spirit intends by this part of the vision, when he compares the things that are carried on in the world to mighty forces; for he says that such reason was displayed among this multitude, that although their clamors are tumultuous, yet all things are mutually suited to each other. Again he says, when they stood they let down their wings This question may be asked, how can the living creatures rest when God is always at work: as also Christ says, My Father and I work even to this day? (John 5:17.) Since therefore the power of God is never at rest, what can the resting of the living creatures mean? for God works by angels as we have seen: if they rest, God has his periods of repose, which is absurd. But when the Prophet says they rested, he wishes to mark the variety of human events. For sometimes they are so tranquil, that we think God is taking some repose, and is completely at rest in heaven: not that he ever ceases, but because we do not perceive the agitations, which plainly show his virtue to consist in motion and in action. Therefore the Prophet here wishes only to denote variety; not that we ought to imagine God to rest at any time or his angels to repose, but because he does not always work in the same equable manner.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that though we have wandered far from thee, we may be taught by thy word, and hold on in the right way of approach to thyself, and by faith contemplate what is otherwise hidden from us, and thus depend entirely on thee. May we so rely on thy providence, as not to doubt our perfect safety while our life and salvation are in thy care, so that while tossed about by various storms we may remain quiet, until at length we enjoy that blessed and eternal rest which thou hast prepared for us in heaven by Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture fifth.

Ezekiel 1:25-26

25. And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, and had let down their wings.

25. Et fuit vox desuper expansione quae erat super caput eorum; cum ipsa starent remittebant alas suns.

26. And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.

26. Et super firmamentum [52] quae erat super caput eorum tanquam visio, vel aspectus lapidis saphiri similitudo solii: et super similitudinem solii similitudo tanquam aspectus hominis super ipsum desuper.

Is a former lecture we said, that the Prophet, while magnifying the glory of God,

[51] The French Translation rather amplifies than accurately renders this sentence.

[52] Or rather expansion, as we have said. — Calvin.

spoke of the firmament, because human minds cannot penetrate to so great a height, unless by degrees. On this account, the Prophet described to us the expansion of the heavens. He now adds, there was a likeness of a throne above the firmament, and the likeness of a man sat on the throne. He mentions the steps in order by saying, above the expansion was the throne, and above the thone a man For he repeats what he had formerly said about the expansion of the heavens. And as God consulted his infirmity, so he now accommodates his discourse to the measure of our capacity. It is worthy of observation that he says, he saw the likeness of an appearance. Hence we gather, that it was not the true heavens which he beheld, nor was it a throne formed of any material substance, nor was it a real and natural body of a man. This also the Prophet clearly expresses, lest any one should imagine that there is anything visible in God, and, like the fanatics, should suppose him to be corporeal; so from this passage any one might ignorantly collect, that God can be seen by the eye, confined within place and be seated as a man. Lest these imaginings should creep into men's minds, the Prophet here testifies, that it was not a human body nor any material throne which he saw, but that these forms and appearances only were presented to him. Let not any one think that the Prophet is vainly prolix in matters sufficiently clear.

He says, above the expansion, which was above the head of the living creatures We have already explained why he treats of the heads of the living creatures --- namely, because the former vision ought all to be referred to God himself. He now adds, the expansion, because we cannot ascend from the living creatures to God without some assistance. Hence the firmament is brought before us, so that we may arrive at the loftiness of God by degrees. The phrase, the likeness of a sapphire stone, is used to show that figures only were apparent to the Prophet: and this is the meaning of the likeness of a throne. For we know that heretics formerly disturbed the Church by their folly, who thought God to have a human form like ourselves, and also a throne on which he sits. Hence the Holy Spirit, that he may meet such comments, says, that the Prophet did not see a material throne, but only the likeness of one. But this is chiefly needful in mentioning the figure of a man: 'for this and similar passages, having been erroneously explained by those who assigned a human form to the Almighty, have given occasion to the error that God is corporeal and circumscribed within a defined space, and they proceeded to that pitch of fury, that they rushed in troops and wished to stone all those who opposed their impiety. The Prophet, therefore, says here, that he saw, as it were, the likeness of a human appearance One noun ought to suffice, but because we are so prone to vague and erroneous opinions, he joins the word ``appearance'' to ``likeness.'' We see, then, that whatever the ancient heretics fabricated about the visible form of God is excluded by the clearest language.

It is now asked, Why God put on the form of a man in this vision as well as in other similar ones? I willingly embrace the opinion of those fathers who say that this is the prelude to that mystery which was afterwards displayed to the world, and which Paul magnificently extols when he exclaims ---

``Great is this mystery --- God is manifest in the flesh.''

(1 Timothy 3:16.)

The view of Jerome is harsh, who applies these words to the Father himself. For we know that the Father was never clad in human flesh. If he had simply said, that God is here represented, there would have been no absurdity; let all mention of persons be removed, and then it is true enough that the man seated on the throne was God. The Prophet also at the end of the chapter bears witness to this, when he says, this was the likeness of God's glory, (Ezekiel 1:28:) for he uses the name Jehovah, by which the eternity and primary essence of God is expressed. It is quite tolerable that God should be represented by this figure, but what John says in his chapter 12 (John 12:41,) must be added, that when Isaiah saw God sitting on his throne, he saw the glory of Christ, and spoke concerning him. Hence what I have already cited from the ancients completely agrees with this, that as often as God appeared under the form of man, an obscure glimpse was afforded of the mystery which was at length manifested in the person of Christ. In the meantime we must entirely avoid the dreams of Servetus, who is easily refuted by the words of the Prophet. For he contends that this likeness was really a man, and then that Christ was a figurative Son, because God was visibly composed, as he said, of three uncreated elements.

These are most detestable blasphemies, and unworthy of refutation, yet because that impious blasphemer fascinated many vain persons, who suffered the deserved punishment of their foolish curiosity, it is useful just to touch on their errors in passing. He imagines, then, that Christ was the visible God from the creation of the world, and in this way he interprets him to be the image of God. He does not acknowledge the Father as a person, but says, the Father was the invisible God, but that Christ is both the Father's image and also a person. He now says, he was composed of three uncreated elements. If he had said of three elements only, Christ had not been God, but he fancies for himself elements called into being which have their origin in the essence of God; these elements, he says, were so disposed as to have the form of man, so that he does not say that Christ appeared only in human form, but he says, that Christ was a man figured in that. divine essence. At length he says, that Christ was made man of the seed of Abraham, because to these three elements a fourth was added, which he allows to be created: so he says Christ was man, because he imagines a mass concocted in some confused manner out of that visible deity and of the seed of Abraham. Christ then, according to him, was man for a time, because that visible deity was mingled with flesh, he next adds, that the flesh of Christ was absorbed by the Deity; and so God was made man not by union but by confusion; and then he says, that the man was deified, and that Christ's flesh became of the same essence with God: and hence, that he is no longer man. Hence he derides us, who teach that we cannot be partakers of Christ unless we ascend by faith into heaven, because he feigns his body to be everywhere and immense. How can this be? He is deified, says he, and hence retains no trace of human nature. We now see what monstrous things this impostor fabricated. But our Prophet dispels such clouds when he says --- then appeared the likeness of the appearance of a man.

Daniel describes to us the throne of God more distinctly, who (Daniel 7:9 and following) brings forward The Ancient of Days as wearing- the figure of a man. There

God is placed on the highest summit: next Christ the Mediator is joined to him: and Daniel says he was brought to the Ancient of Days, because as Christ descends from the Father, so he was received into his glory, and now the greatest sway and power has been given to him, as we are there taught at length. But, with reference to this passage, it ought to suffice us, that the Prophet saw God only in the person of Christ, because what is said of the likeness of a man cannot be transferred to either the Father or the Spirit: for neither the Father nor the Spirit was. ever manifested in flesh, but God was manifested to us in flesh when Christ appeared, in whom resides the fullness of the Divinity. In Philippians 2:7, Paul says that Christ was made in man's likeness; and that in form and habit he appeared man, but in another sense: for he does not make a figurative Christ, nor does he treat professedly of the essence of Christ's body, but he informs us, that such was his condition when he came down to us. He says, that he was humbled, so that he differed in nothing from the human species: and even the word {μόρφη} is used by Paul, which distinguishes essence from species. Now, therefore, we hold the view of Paul, who says, that Christ was found in fashion as a man, because he was outcast and despised in our flesh. But in this place the Holy Spirit teaches otherwise, viz., that Christ now appeared in the form of man, though not yet made man. If any one should now ask, whence this body was taken, the reply is at hand: the body was not created as to substance, but this form was created for the time. For God, as is well known, sometimes gives his angels bodies, which afterwards vanish away. But there was another reason for this vision, because Christ did not appear in the form of man, that he might taste food as the angels did, (Genesis 19:2, 3) but only that he might accommodate himself to the capacity of the Prophet.

The sum of the whole then is this: the likeness of body was only in appearance, as the Prophet says, but not in essence. Hence we collect, that when mention is made of God the whole essence is understood, which is common to the Son and the Holy Spirit with the Father: for under the name Jehovah it is absurd to understand Christ only. It follows, then, that the whole essence of God is here comprehended. At the same time, when the persons are mutually compared, the phrase, ``in the form of man,'' belongs solely to Christ. The whole Deity, then, appeared to his Prophet, and that too in the form of a man, but yet neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit appeared, because the persons begin to be considered when the peculiar property of Christ is shown forth. We are compelled to remark this, because fanatics now spread a new error, as if Christ and the Holy Spirit were distinct Deities from the Father. A certain impostor, named George Blandrata of Piedmont, once came among us under the character of a physician, and concealed his impiety as long as he could, but when he found himself detected he fled to Poland, and infected the whole of that region with his poison. He is unworthy of mention, but because he wished to acquire a name by his blasphemies, he has become, forsooth, as famous as he desired. Since, then, this error is widely circulated, and the whole of Poland is infected with this diabolical delirium, as I have said, those who are less exercised in Scripture ought to fortify themselves lest they fall into those snares. They imagine that Christ is indeed God, but not that God whom Moses and the Prophets celebrate; and although God

is often mentioned in the Law and the Prophets, yet they restrict this to the Father alone: they allow, indeed, Christ to be God, but when pressed closer, they say that he is God in essence, [53] to whom the Father has communicated his essence, as it were, by transfusion; so, according to these, he is only a fictitious God, because he is not the same God with the Father. They think their impiety is established as often as the Father is simply called God: but the solution is easy, that a comparison is then made between the Father and the Son. In John 3, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son: true, the Father is here called God, but, on the other hand, the Son is added: so it is not to be wondered at that the original Deity is placed in the highest position. At other times, when there is no comparison between one person and another, then the whole Deity, which is common to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and is one and simple, is denoted. Lastly, when the persons do not come into consideration, there is no relation of one to the other, but when the persons are considered, then the mark of relation between them arises, so that the Father is put first, and then the Son and Holy Spirit, each in its own order.

I shall not collect the universal testimony of Scripture, because it is sufficient just to put the finger on these foul errors, lest any of the unskillful should be caught by such snares. When Paul says, (1 Timothy 3:16,) that God was manifest in the flesh, surely he does not speak of any secondary or adventitious essence. For the essence of God is one: therefore the whole Deity was manifest in the flesh, as also Christ says, I am in the Father and the Father in me; (John 14:10, 11;) and in other places he teaches, that the whole fullness of Deity resides in Christ. Hence we collect, that the essence of God ought not to be torn, as if one part could be with Christ, and another with the Father. So that when John, in his Canonical Epistle, (1 John 5:20,) says, that Christ is truly God: This is the true God, he says, and life eternal --- surely the blasphemy will not be tolerated if men should say that the true God is any other than the Father. Concerning whom then can this be predicted, except the only God? If this is transferred from the Father he will cease to be God. If, therefore, Christ is truly God, it follows, that his essence is the same as the Father's. So that when Paul says, that the Church was purchased with the blood of God, (Acts 20:28,) surely the name of God is placed there simply and without addition. When that impostor restricts the name of God to the Father, how will this agree with the opinion of Paul? God, he says, redeemed the Church with his own blood: if this were so, we ought to understand that God of glory who was from eternity and whom Moses and the Prophets celebrate. Now therefore, we understand how Christ appeared as to person in human form, and yet the whole Deity appeared. That Christ appeared can be clearly shown from that twelfth chapter of John which I have quoted. (John 12:41.) That the whole Deity appeared both Isaiah and Ezekiel plainly testify. I saw Jehovah seated on his throne. (Isaiah 6:1.) Who is that Jehovah unless the God of Israel, concerning whom Moses formerly pronounced, Thy God, O Israel, is one God, (Deuteronomy 6:4.) How then does John transfer this to Christ? why, with regard to person. We see then how well all these things harmonize, because the whole Deity appeared in the perfection of his glow, and of his immense essence, and yet appeared in the person of Christ alone,

[53] "Deum essentiatum. Deus factitius." — Orig. "Dieu essentie. Dieu qui a este fait." — Fr.

because neither the Father nor the Spirit were ever clothed in human flesh.

I have dwelt a little longer on this doctrine, because there are many who are not versed in the writings of the Fathers, and cannot easily satisfy themselves, and these are knotty points; yet I have endeavored so to clear up a matter which seems obscure and perplexing, as shortly as possible, that any one of moderate capacity and judgment can easily understand what I have said. At the same time, I shall not proceed with what I could skillfully bring forward on the point;. Nothing is more useful in such matters than wisdom tempered with sobriety and discretion. God appeared under a visible form to his servant: could Ezekiel on that account do as scholastic theologians do --- philosophize with subtility concerning God's essence, and know no end or moderation in their dispute! by no means, but he restrained himself within fixed bounds. Paul was caught up even to the third heavens, (2 Corinthians 12:4,) but he says, that he heard unspeakable things which he was not permitted to explain. So, therefore, let us be content with sound doctrine, which can sufficiently fortify us against all the snares of the devil. For this reason he says, upon the throne was the likeness as of the appearance of a man upon it.

Ezekiel 1:27

27. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.

27. Et vidi tanquam formam Hasmal, tanquam aspectum ignis intus per circuitum, ab aspectu lumborum ejus et supra, et ab aspectu lumborum ejus et infra, vidi quasi aspectum ignis et splendor illi in circuitu.

By these words the Prophet signifies that God appeared so visible under the form of man that the splendor dazzled his eyes. For if the appearance of Christ was such that the Prophet could consider each part separately, as when I behold a man, I not only cast my eyes upon his form from head to foot, but I consider of what kind his eyes are, and also his sides, and what his stature is, whether tall or short.

When we look at men or trees, a glance is sufficient for distinguishing their several parts. But if we wish to cast our eyes upon the sun, they are immediately made dim, for the brightness of the sun is so great that it dazzles us. Then if our eyes cannot bear the light of the sun, how can the glance of our mind penetrate even to God, and comprehend the whole of his glory? This then is the Prophet's object when he says, I saw as it were the color of amber. We have said that some interpreters understand an angel here, but in my judgment, their view is erroneous: hence I reject it, for I have no doubt that color is meant, and what sort of color. As to Jerome's version, electrum, I leave it doubtful: as to his saying that it is more precious than gold and silver, this is foolish, because it is composed of both metals. But then its color was remarkable, because it not only attracted the eyes of the Prophet but dazzled them with its splendor, so that he acknowledged it as celestial and divine. Therefore he adds, there was as it were the appearance of fire within, which we have previously explained, and that, too, round about it The fire was apparent, so that the Prophet might understand that there were some marks of the glory of God; and at the same

time, that he might perceive, as we shall see at last, this vision to be otherwise useless unless he restrained himself within due limits: because when the majesty of God meets us on the way, it can destroy the angels themselves. What therefore would become of us? But God suits himself to our capacities, so that visions should be useful to us only when we avoid pride and are not carried away by foolish and bold curiosity. He says then, the fire appeared upwards and downwards, that is above and below his loins, and the fire was brilliant round about Afterwards he adds ---

Ezekiel 1:28

28. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

28. Tanquam similitudo atcus, [54] tanquam aspectas arcus, qui est in nube in die phvia [55] sic fuit aspectus splendoris in circuitu. Haec visio similitudinis gloriae Iehovm, et aspexi, et cecidi super faciem meam, et audivi vocem loquentis. [56]

The Prophet now adds, that the likeness of a celestial bow was presented to him, which profane men call his, and imagine that she performs the commands of the gods, and especially of Juno. But Scripture calls it the bow of God, not because it was created after the Deluge, as many falsely suppose, but because God wished to stir up our hope with that symbol, as often as thick vapors cloud the heavens. For we seem as if drowned under those waters of the heavens. God therefore wished to meet our distrust, when he wished the bow in the heavens to be a testimony and pledge of his favor, because it is said by Moses, I will put my bow in the heavens. (Genesis 9:13.) Now some distort this as if the bow was not in existence before: but there is no doubt that God wished to inscribe a testimony of his favor on a thing by no means in accordance with it, as he freely uses all creatures according to his will. The bow in the heavens is often a sign of continued rain, and seems as if it attracted the shower. Since then its very aspect may cause terror, God says in opposition to this feeling, as often as the bow appears, it is clearly determined that. the earth is now safe from a deluge. But the opinion of those who consider it in this place a testimony of favor does not seem to me proved, for the whole vision is opposed to it. This is indeed plausible that a bow appeared because God now wished to show himself propitious to his servant, just as they interpret that verse in the fourth chapter of Revelations, (Revelation 4:3,) when John saw the throne of God surrounded by a bow, because God was reconciled to the world by Christ. As far as this passage is concerned, I do not dispute it, but to interpret it so here would be altogether out of place, because the whole of this vision was formidable, as I said at the beginning. Thus to mingle contrary things would pervert the whole order of the vision.

What, then, is the object of this bow in the heavens? We have said that heaven appeared to the Prophet as he ascended by degrees to comprehend the glory of God, because the marks of deity are more conspicuous in heaven than on earth. For if

[54] We must repeat the words “I saw” from the former verse. — Calvin.
[55] That is, when it rains. — Calvin.
[56] Others translate, a speaking voice. — Calvin.

we look back upon what we have formerly explained, God is never without witness, as Paul says, (Acts 14:17,) but yet his majesty shines clearer in the heavens. But when the bow appears, a new reason occurs for magnifying the glory of God. For in the bow we have the image of deity more clearly expressed, whilst we reflect on the magnificent workmanship of heaven, and whilst we turn our eyes round to all the stars and planets. In this way, I allow, God compels us to admire his glory, but the bow presents an addition not to be despised, as if God would add something to the; bare aspect of heaven. Now therefore we see why the Prophet saw a celestial bow, --- that he might be more and more affected when God presented such signal appearances to his view, and that he might be more induced to contemplate his glory. Hence what interpreters bring forward about a symbol of reconciliation is altogether out of place.

I saw, says he, the form of a bow which is placed, or which is in the cloud on a rainy day. If any one should ask if those colors are without substance, it is certain that colors arise from the rays of the sun on a hollow cloud, as philosophers teach. Therefore when the Prophet says, a bow appears on a rainy day, he simply means, exists or appears in the midst; not that the colors have any substance, as I have just said, but the rays of the sun, whilst they are mutually reflected on the hollow cloud, occasion the manifold variety. Afterwards he adds again, like the appearance of brightness round about Again the Prophet confesses that his eyes were blinded, because he could not bear such great splendor. And God manifests himself familiarly to all his servants, yet so as not to foster our curiosity, to which mankind are 'far too inclined. God then wished to manifest himself as far as it was useful, but not so far as the desire of mankind --- which is always immoderate --- would carry them. Since mankind so eagerly strain themselves that they easily become weakened, we must remark what the Prophet inculcates a second time, namely, that the appearance of brightness was seen round about Of what sort, then, was that brightness? Why, such as to blind the Prophet's eyes, and to render him conscious of his weakness, so that he should not desire to know more than was lawful, but submit himself humbly to God.

At length he says, this was a vision of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah, and by these words confirms what I have said before, that the glory, of God was so beheld by the Prophet, that God did not appear as he really is, but as far as he can be beheld by mortal man. For if the angels tremble at God's glory, if they vail themselves with their wings, what should we do who creep upon this earth? We must hold, then, that as often as the Prophets and holy fathers saw God, they saw as it were the likeness or aspect of the glory of God, but not the glory itself, for they were not fit for it; for this would be to measure with the palm of our hands a hundred thousand heavens, and earths, and worlds. For God is infinite; and when the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, how can our minds comprehend him? But although God has never appeared in his immeasurable glory, and has never manifested himself as he really exists, yet we must nevertheless hold that he has so appeared as to leave no doubt in the minds of his servants as to their knowing that they have seen God. And this is the purport of those phrases which sometimes appear difficult. I have seen God face

to face, says Jacob. (Genesis 32:30.) But was he so foolish as to think that he saw God like a mortal? by no means; but that appearance convinced him of its certainty, as if he had said that no specter by which he could be deceived was presented to his view; for the devil deludes us unless we are attentive and cautious. Therefore Jacob here distinguishes the vision which he enjoyed from all prodigies in which profane nations delighted. Familiar knowledge, then, is the meaning of seeing face to face. At the same time, as I have said, God never gave the Fathers a sight of himself except according to their capacity. He always had respect to their faculties, and this is the meaning of the phrase, this was a vision of the splendor of Jehovah's glory. Since, then, it is certain that Christ was beheld by him, he is Jehovah, that is, Eternal God; and although he is distinct from the person of the Father, yet he is entirely God, for the Father is in him: for the essence cannot be divided without impiety, although the persons must be distinguished. The rest I shall put off till tomorrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, O Almighty God, since of thine unbounded goodness, thou hast counted us worthy of such honor as to descend to earth in the person of thine only-begotten Son, and to appear familiarly to us daily in thy gospel, in which we contemplate thy living image: --- grant, I pray thee, that we may not abuse so great a benefit to vain curiosity, but may be truly transformed into thy glory, and so proceed more and more in the renewal of our mind and conduct, that we may at length be gathered to that eternal glory which has been obtained for us by thine only-begotten Son our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Sixth.

After the Prophet has recited the Vision, the object of which was to confirm his mission, he now adds, I fell upon my face, by which words he expresses his persuasion that God's glory was manifested to him. For the knowledge of God does truly humble us, while the Prophet also teaches that men cannot be brought to order unless they are laid prostrate: for he does not say that he was only prepared to receive the commands of God, nor does he commend his own teachableness, but rather signifies that he was violently thrown down. For he had not all at once put off the affections of the flesh; but we know that confidence is born with us. Therefore, because the Prophet was not naturally disposed to obey God, he ought to be cast down with fear, that at length he might be really humbled. Now he adds:

Ezekiel 2

CHAPTER 2

Ezekiel 2:1-2

1. And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee.

1. Et dixit ad me, Fili hominis sta super pedes tuos, et loquar tecum.

2. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me.

2. Et venit in me spiritus cum loqueretur ad me, et statuit me super pedes meos, et audivi loquentem ad me.

Here the Prophet narrates that he was chosen by the command of God. For God never prostrates his people so as to leave them lying upon the earth, but continually raises them afterwards. As to the reprobate, they are so frightened at the sight of God, that they utterly fall and never rise again. But it is different with the faithful, because the pride of the flesh is corrected in them; then God stretches forth his hand to them, and restores them, as it were, from death to life. And this difference we must mark diligently, because we see the impious often dread the voice of God. But if they disdainfully despise him when speaking, they are frightened by his hand when some signs of his wrath and vengeance appear: but yet they remain lifeless. In like manner the faithful dread the voice of God, but the result is altogether different, as we see here: because after God has humbled them, he commands them to be of good courage, and shows that he intended nothing else but to establish them by his power. At the same time the Prophet teaches that nothing was accomplished by this voice till the Spirit was added. God indeed works efficiently by his own words, but we must hold that this efficacy is not contained in the words themselves, but proceeds from the secret instinct of the Spirit. The Prophet therefore shows us both truths. On one side he says, I heard the voice of God, so that I stood on my feet: God thus wished to animate his confidence: but he adds that he was not raised up

by the voice, until the Spirit placed him on his feet

This work of the Spirit, then, is joined with the word of God. But a distinction is made, that we may know that the external word is of no avail by itself, unless animated by the power of the Spirit. If any one should object, that the word was useless, because not efficacious by itself, the solution is at hand, that if God takes this method of acting there is no reason why we should object to it. But we have a still clearer reply: since God always works in the hearts of men by the Spirit, yet his word is not without fruit; because, as God enlightens us by the sun, and yet he alone is the Father of Lights, and the splendor of the sun is profitless except as God uses it as an instrument, so we must conclude concerning his word, because the Holy Spirit penetrates our hearts, and thus enlightens our minds. All power of action, then, resides in the Spirit himself, and thus all praise ought to be entirely referred to God alone. Meanwhile, what objection is there to the Spirit of God using instruments? We hold, therefore, that when God speaks, he adds the efficacy of his Spirit, since his word without it would be fruitless; and yet the word is effectual, because the instrument ought to be united with the author of the action. This doctrine, thus briefly expounded, may suffice to refute foolish objections, which are always in the mouths of many who fret about man's free-will: they say, that we can either attend to the word which is offered to us or reject it: but we see what the Prophet says. If any of us is fit for rendering obedience to God, the Prophet certainly excelled in this disposition, and yet the word of God had no efficacy in his case, until the Spirit gave him strength to rise upon his feet Hence we collect, that it is not in our power to obey what God commands us, except this power proceeds from him. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 2:3

3. And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day.

3. Et dixit ad me: Fili hominis mitto to [57] ad filios Israel, ad gentes rebelles vel defectrices, quae rebellarunt [58] in me: ipsi et partes eorum perfidie se gesserunt erga me usque ad ipsum huic diem.

The Prophet now more clearly explains the object of the vision which he has formerly mentioned, namely, that being armed with authority he might more freely discharge the office of Prophet among the Israelites. For we know that God claims this honor to himself alone, that he should be head in his Church, and deservedly so, for he is not called our Lawgiver in vain, (Isaiah 33:22; James 4:12,) and our wisdom consists in nothing else but in attending to his instructions. Since, therefore, God alone is to be heard, every mortal, whatever he professes himself, must be rejected, unless he comes in the name of God, and can prove his calling, and really convince men that he does not speak except by God's command. Therefore, that Ezekiel may not labor in vain, he ought to prove himself divinely inspired, and this was done by the vision. Now he more clearly explains that object of the vision. Here it may be remarked, that figures are illusory without an explanation. If the vision

[57] Literally, "I sending thee." — Calvin.

[58] Rebelled. This word is the same as the last. — Calvin.

only had been offered to the eye of the Prophet, and no voice of God had followed, what would have been the advantage? But when God confirmed the vision by his word, the Prophet was enabled to say with advantage, I have seen the glory of God. And this can also be transferred to sacraments, because if signs only are presented to our eyes they will be, as it were, dead images. The word of God, then, throws life into the sacraments, as it has been said concerning visions.

Since Ezekiel so often uses this form of speech, saying, that he was called Son of man, I do not doubt that God wished to prevent the people from despising him as one of the common herd. For he had been dragged into exile not without ignominy: since then he differed from the generality in no outward appearance, his doctrine might be despised and rejected. God, therefore, takes him up, and, by way of concession, calls him Son of man. So, on the other hand, he signifies that the teaching ought not to be estimated by outward appearance, but rather by his calling. It is quite true, that his language was then more prolix, and we see how our Prophet differs from the rest. For his language has evidently a foreign tinge, since those who are in exile naturally contract many faults of language, and the Prophet was never anxious about elegance and polish, but, as he had been accustomed to homely language, so he spoke himself. But I have no doubt that God wished purposely to select a man from the multitude contemptible in outward appearance, and then to raise him above all mortals by dignifying him with the gift of prophecy.

We must now see how God prepares him for the discharge of his duties. I send thee, he says, to the children of Israel, a rebellious race, that is, disobedient and revolting. In this manner the Prophet was able to escape as soon as he saw the odious duty' assigned to him, for its difficulty alone would frighten him. But a double trial is added when he saw himself engaged in a contest with numberless enemies. He challenged, as it were, to conflict all the Israelites of his day, and this was a most grievous trial. But another trial was, not only that he perceived himself beating the air, --- to use a common proverb, rebut he must have felt it a profanation of heavenly doctrine to address it to impious men, and that too only for the purpose of exasperating them still further. We see, then, that the Prophet had no inducement of earthly gratification to urge him to undertake his duty. If God wished to use his agency, he ought to afford him some hope of success, or, at least, he ought to leave it sufficiently uncertain to urge him to make every effort. But when in the first instance this difficulty occurs, that he has to deal with a perverse and stubborn generation --- next, that he is drawn into a hateful contest --- thirdly, that he is advised to cast what is holy before dogs, and pearls before swine, and thus, as it were, to prostitute the word of God, surely his mind must despair a hundred times when he pondered these things within himself. Hence it was God's plan to arm him with unconquerable constancy, so that he might go forward in the course of his calling.

We must bear in mind, then, this principle: when God wishes to stir us up to obedience, he does not always promise a happy result of our labor: but sometimes he so puts our obedience to the test, that he wishes us to be content with his command, even if our labor should be deemed ridiculous before men. Sometimes, indeed, he indulges our infirmity, and when he orders us to undertake any duty, he at the same

time bears witness that our labor shall not be in vain, and our industry without its recompense: then indeed God spares us. But he sometimes proves his people as I have said, providing that whatever be the result of their labors, it is sufficient for them to obey his command. And from

passage we readily collect that our Prophet was thus dispirited. And we read the same of Isaiah; for when he is sent by God, he is not only told that he must speak to the deaf, but what God proposes to him is still harder. Go, says he, render the eyes of this people blind, and their ears dull, and their heart obstinate. (Isaiah 6:9, 10.) Not only therefore does Isaiah see that he would be exposed to ridicule, and so lose the fruit of his labor, but he sees that his address has but one tendency, and that the blinding of the Jews: nay, even their threefold destruction --- though even one destruction is enough: but, as I have already said, God sometimes so wishes his servants to acquiesce in his government, that they should labor even without any hope of fruit: and this must be diligently marked. For as often as we are called upon by God before we apply ourselves to our work, these thoughts come into the mind: ``What will be the result of this?'' and ``What shall I obtain by my labor?'' And, then, when the event does not turn out according to our wish, we despond in our minds: but this is wresting from God a part of his government. For although our labor should be in vain, yet it is sufficiently pleasing to God himself; therefore let us learn to leave the event in the hand of God when he enjoins anything upon us; and although the whole world should deride us, and despair itself should render us inactive, yet let us be of good cheer and strive to the utmost, because it ought to suffice us that our obedience is pleasing to God.

For this reason Paul says, (2 Corinthians 2:15, 16,) that the gospel, although it is a savor of death unto death, is yet a sweet savor unto God. When it is said that the gospel brings death, our judgment might immediately suggest to us, that nothing is better than to leave it. Therefore Paul meets us, and says, we ought not to judge the gospel by its success. Although, therefore, men not only remain deaf, but even become worse, and rush headlong in fury against God, yet the gospel always retains its sweet savor before God. The doctrine of the Prophet is the same. Now, if any one objects that God acts cruelly while he so purposely blinds men, that those who are already sufficiently lost perish twice or thrice over, the answer is at hand --- God offers his word indiscriminately to the good and bad, but it works by his Spirit in the elect, as I have already said; and as to the reprobate, the doctrine is useful, as it renders them without excuse. Next, that their obstinacy may be broken down --- for since they refuse to yield willingly to God, it is necessary that they should yield when conquered --- when, therefore, God sees the reprobate thus broken down, he strikes them with the hammer of his word. At length he takes away all excuse of ignorance, because being convicted of their own conscience, whether they will or not, they become their own judges, and their mouth is stopped. Although they do not cease their rebellion against God, yet they are subject to his judgment. Although, therefore, this may seem absurd, that God should send his Prophets to render the people blind, yet we must reverently submit to his counsel, even if the cause is unknown to us for a time. But, as I have said, we do understand, to a certain extent,

why God thus strives with rebellious and obstinate men.

Now, therefore, since at the very beginning Ezekiel is informed of the result, it is scarcely doubtful that God wished to prepare him to descend to the discharge of his duty without yielding to any obstacles. For some who seem to be sufficiently ready to obey, yet when difficulties and obstacles occur, desist in the middle of their course, and many recede altogether; and some we see who have renounced their vocation, because they had conceived great and excessive hopes of success, but when the event does not answer their expectations, they think themselves discharged from duty, and even murmur against God, and reject the burden, or rather shake off what had been imposed upon them. Because, then, many retreat from the course they had undertaken, because they do not experience the success they had imagined, or had presumed upon in their minds, therefore before Ezekiel begins to speak, God sets before him trials of this kind, and informs him that he would have to deal with a rebellious people.

He says the children of Israel are a revolting nation; for {מרד}, mered, signifies to rebel or resist, and the noun ``rebellious'' is suitable enough. Therefore I send thee to the rebellions nations, because directly after follows the word {מרדו}, merdo, which means who have rebelled against me. We know that among the Jews this is a word of reproach; for they often call us {גוים}, goim ``Gentiles,'' as if they called us ``profane,'' ``rejected,'' and altogether alienated from God. Lastly, this word goim means with them ``pollution'' and ``abomination;'' we are to the Jews like dung, and the off-scouring of the world, because we are goim. And there is no doubt that this pride filled the minds of the people in the days of the Prophet; God therefore calls them unbelieving nations. I confess, indeed, that this is sometimes used in a good sense; but because the Scriptures more usually call foreigners goim who are not partakers of God's covenant, hence it became a mark of disgrace and reproach among the Jews. It is scarcely doubtful, then, but that God wished to abolish the honorable title which he had assigned to them; for it was a holy nation and a priestly kingdom. When, therefore, God calls them goim, it is just as if he should say, that they were cut off from all that dignity in which they formerly excelled, and differed in nothing from the profane and re-jeered nations, as we have a similar description in Hosea. There the Prophet is ordered to take a harlot to wife. (Hosea 1.) He says that he begat a son and a daughter, and that, he called the son {לאעמי}, lo-ammi that is, ``not God people.'' Then he called his daughter ``not beloved.'' By this vision the Prophet shows that the Jews were rejected, so that God no longer thinks of them as sons, but repels them as foreigners. So also in this place rejection is denoted, when the Prophet, as the mouth of God, calls them Gentiles. The plural number is used, that he may the better express the defection which oppressed the whole people. If a few only were such as this, the Prophet might still feel encouraged. But God here pronounced the severest sentence, because the whole people, taken both at large and separately, was rebellious; and this is the reason why the plural number is used.

Is 'it then asked whether a single individual remained who would embrace the Prophet's doctrine? The answer is easy. The discourse does not relate to individuals, but to the whole people; for the Prophets often use similar language, as when they

call the Israelites degenerate and spurious, then sons of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the offspring of Canaan: they inveigh against the multitude promiscuously; for they had in fact a few disciples who could not be classed in that order. (Isaiah 1:10; Isaiah 8:16; Isaiah 57:3; Ezekiel 16:3.) But we must hold what is said by Isaiah 8. --- ``Bind my testimony upon my disciples.'' There the Prophet is ordered from above to address the faithful, of whom a small number remained, and so to address them as if the letter were folded and sealed. But he spreads abroad this discourse among the whole people. So also when God pronounces the sons of Israel to be rebellious nations, he looks to the body of the people; at the same time there is no doubt that God always preserved a seed to serve him, although hidden from man. Daniel was then in exile with his colleagues, and he surely was not a rebel against God; but as I have already said, enough has been brought forward to show that the whole people were impious. God says that he had previously tried what the people was --- They have rebelled, he says, against me; by which words he signifies that he was not making an experiment as if they were previously unknown. He says that he had already found out their perverseness by many trials; and yet he says that he sends to them, because he wished, as I have already said, to render their ignorance perfectly excuseless, and then he wished to break down their contumacy, which was otherwise untameable.

He says, they and their fathers have behaved themselves treacherously against me even to this very day He does not extenuate their crime when he says, that they imitated the example of their fathers, but he rather increases their own impiety when he says they were not the beginners of it, but were born of impious parents, as if he should say, according to the vulgar proverb, ``a chip of the old block.'' [59] Hence it appears that there is no pretext for the error when we use the fathers as the Papists do, who oppose them as a shield to God; for whilst they have the fathers on their tongue, they esteem this a sufficient defense for every impiety. But we see that God not only reckons this as nothing, but that the crime of the children is exaggerated when they plead the evil example of their fathers as the cause of their own obstinacy. Now, not only does the Prophet desire to show this to be a frivolous excuse, if the Jews should object that they framed their life in imitation of their fathers, but as we see, it shows them doubly condemned, because they did not desist from provoking God at the beginning, and so by a continual succession, impiety and contempt of heavenly teaching prevailed through all ages, even to their own. Besides, this passage warns us against abusing the long-suffering of God; for when he sent his Prophet we see the purport of his doing so --- the people was now on the brink of utter destruction, but God wished to plunge them deeper into the lowest abyss. Let us take care lest a similar punishment should be our lot if we remain obstinate. When, therefore, God sends some Prophets to one people, and some to another:, it ought to recall us to penitence, and to caution us, lest the word which is peculiarly destined to the salvation of men, should be to us a savor of death unto death, as it was to the ancient people. It follows ---

Ezekiel 2:4-5

[59] Calvin's Latin is mala ova malorum corvorum — Tr.

4. For they are impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD.

4. Et filii duri fade, et robusti corde: ergo mitto to ad eos. et dices illis, Sic dieit Dominator Iehovah.

5. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

5. Et ipsi sive audiant sive desistant quoniam domus rebellionis ipsi: et [60] scient quod propheta fuerit inter ipsos.

God proceeds in the same discourse, but expresses in other words the great rebellion of the people, for they were not only obstinate and unbending in heart, but also of a contumacious countenance: therefore he places hardness in face as well as in heart. The words indeed are different, {קשי}, keshi, and {חזקי}, chezki, ``of* brazen countenance,'' for we may translate ``winked'' and ``contumacious,'' for this disposition appears in the countenance, nor is it objectionable to render it ``impudent.''* But. propriety of speech must be retained; for we must speak of the robust of heart as ``broken down,'' or if the allusion seems more apposite, we must render it ``of broken countenance,'' then of ``broken spirits,'' as we call the wicked ``brazen-fronted.'' The meaning is, that the Jews were not only rebellious against God and puffed up with proud contempt, but their impiety was so desperate that they opposed themselves to God without disguise, as if they had been horned oxen or furious bulls. We know that hypocrisy often lies hid in the mind, and although men swell with malice, yet they do not betray what they inwardly nourish. But the Prophet here signifies that the Israelites were so immersed in impiety, that they displayed themselves as the open enemies of God in their very countenances. The result is, that the Prophet, while he applied himself to perform the commands of God, ought so to determine with himself, when he approaches the people, that his teaching would be not only useless as to them, because it would not be received with the reverence which it deserves, but would be even exposed to many reproaches: since the Israelites were not only filled with a hidden contempt of God, but they openly showed their ferocity, so to speak, since they were of so brazen a front that they would without doubt purposely reject the Prophet. They are hard-hearted children, etc., yet I send thee unto them Here, again, God opposes his own command, as the Prophet simply acquiesces in this word alone, ``I have a divine mission.'' If he displeases men, he is content to have his labor approved of God. This is the meaning of the phrase which is now a second time repeated, I send thee unto them For the Prophet might object, What can I do? for if they are of a brazen heart and of an iron front, I shall labor in vain. But God answers in return, that the Prophet need not be anxious, it is enough to have a command: as if a prince should not explain the whole of his counsel to his ambassador, and yet should order him to discharge his embassy, thus God acts towards his servant. We see then how God here magnifies his authority: and we must mark this diligently, that we may not wish always to be bargaining with him, as we are accustomed. For unless God show us the present fruit of our labor,

[60] The copula “and” is here redundant, but it may be resolved into the adverb of time or the adversative particle — “trot they shall know.” — Calvin.

we languish, and so we endeavor by turning back to withdraw ourselves from his authority: but God opposes this single sentence, Behold I send thee The rest I leave till to-morrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, O Almighty God, since thou hast counted us worthy of enjoying the privilege of daily listening to thy word, that it may not find our hearts of stone and our minds of iron, but may we so submit ourselves to thee with all due docility, that we may truly perceive thee to be our Father, and may be confirmed in the confidence of our adoption, as long as thou perseverest to address us, until at length we enjoy not merely thy voice, but also the aspect of thy glory in thy heavenly kingdom, which thine only-begotten Son has acquired for us by his blood. --- Amen.

Lecture Seventh.

After God has admonished his servant as to the difficulty of his mission, he now strengthens him and exhorts him to unconquered freedom. Thou shalt say, says he, Thus saith the Lord, as if he should say, this alone is sufficient for overcoming all obstacles, that he has to take in hand God's business. For even here God does not give fixed commands, that he will do afterwards in its place, but the observation is general. Thus saith Jehovah: that is, I bring forward nothing of myself, but faithfully relate what God has commanded. We see then the Almighty's object here: viz., to oppose his name to the obstinacy of the people, and he orders the Prophet when instructed by his authority to be of a brave and intrepid disposition, although he has stern and hard-hearted enemies. Afterwards he adds, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, yet they shall acknowledge that a prophet has been among them

Here, again, God exhorts his servant to persevere whatever be the event of his labor, for if we do not succeed according to the desire of our minds, we are inclined to despair: but God wishes us to proceed in the course of our duty, though all things should turn out contrary to our wishes. But he shows that there shall be some fruit of our labor, although the people, through their own depravity, reject what has been said to them: for this thought breaks the spirits of God's servants, when they do not perceive the usefulness of their labor: for we always desire to accomplish something worth the trouble which we give to it. God therefore here signifies that he has some other object in view than the salvation of men; namely, the removal of all pretext for error, and the stripping off of every disguise of impiety in which men willingly clothe themselves. For even hypocrites, though they perish knowingly and willfully, yet think themselves excusable, unless God afford them the light of his doctrine. The meaning therefore is, although the Prophet's teaching would not profit the Israelites, yet it would be useful in another way, namely, that they may perceive that there has been a prophet among them In this way there is no defect, although some think the words of the Prophet abrupt: for an important word seems to be wanting when he says, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, because they are a rebellious house, and they shall know, etc. For we have said that the copula ought to be resolved into the adversative particle, because even then they shall know: for their perverseness shall not prevent their being convinced by God. We may

learn then from this place, that although the impious furiously endeavor to reject the doctrine of God, yet they obtain no other end than the more complete manifestation of their own wickedness. Hence, also, we may learn that God's doctrine is precious to himself, and that he cannot bear us to despise it. The wicked then never can escape punishment when they treat with contempt the divine teaching, for it is as if they trampled upon inestimable treasure, Those who are left without the law and the prophets shall not escape God's hand, because their conscience is sufficient to take away all excuse. (Romans 2:12.) But when God invites men to himself, and approaches near them, and offers himself to them in a peculiar manner as their Father and Teacher, if they reject so remarkable a benefit, truly their ingratitude is worthy of the utmost severity. For as often as God raises up prophets for us and faithful ministers of his doctrine, let this which has just been said come into our minds: unless we embrace such a benefit, we at length shall know that a prophet has been among us, because God will exact fearful vengeance for the contempt of his great loving-kindness. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 2:6

6. And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.

6. Et tu fili hominis ne timeas ab illis, et a sermonibus eorum ne timeas quia rebelles [61] sunt, et spinae tecum erga to, et cam scorpionibus tu habitas: a sermonibus eorum ne timeas, et a facie eorum.he frangaris, quia domus rebellis ipsi sunt.

Here God again commands his servant to break forth boldly, even if the people deny him all approach through their malice and wickedness. But because we often fail through terror; God arms his Prophet with impregnable confidence against the threats of the people, and then against all discourses of every sort. He brings forward no other reason than they are a rebellious house, or a rebellious and perverse nation. For we said, though at the first glance it might seem cold, yet it suffices to animate the servants of God to know that he commands nothing rashly, and when they acknowledge that God is pleased by their spending their breath upon the deaf, yet they do not cease to discharge their duty, although they fatigue themselves in vain as far as the world is concerned. But now when this thought is added, that God will take care of his own servants, it doubles their confidence and good spirits. Thus it happens, that all threats and terrors being despised, they discharge their duty boldly. For this reason he now says, thou, son of man, do not be afraid of them, nor be terrified at their words By ``words,'' I do not understand simply threats but calumnies by which we know the servants of God to be oppressed. For hypocrites rise up with great confidence and complain of the injury done to them, and then presumptuously take upon themselves the name of God, as at this time the Papists not only vomit out threats by which they disturb us, but haughtily boast themselves to be the Church, and confirm this by perpetual succession; then they say that the

[61] The word is different from {,{מורים mordim, rebellious, Ezekiel 2:3; but commentators translate it the same, though perhaps it signifies something else, for it is not in common use among the Hebrews. --- Calvin.

Church never is without the Holy Spirit, and hence it cannot happen that God should ever desert them. We see, therefore, that the domestic enemies of God not only use threats against his servants, but at the same time bring many false pretenses by which they load the true and faithful Prophets with envy and hatred. But, however such calumnies have some appearance of truth when its enemies unjustly press us, God orders us to proceed with unconquered fortitude. Be not afraid, therefore, he says, of either them, or their words And since the same phrase is repeated shortly afterwards, hence we infer that it has no common meaning. It is therefore worthy of observation, that God once, yea twice, pronounces that we ought not to fear their words who boast themselves to be the Church of God, and doubt not petulantly to render that sacred name a laughing-stock by their use of it. Since, therefore, God allows us to despise language of this kind, there is no reason why the Papists of this day should daunt us, when, with inflated cheeks, they thunder out the name of the Church and the Apostolic authority; for just honor is not attributed to God, unless every lofty thing in the world is compelled to obey him, so that the doctrine alone may shine forth which comes direct from the mouth of God.

Now he adjoins, because, (or although, for this causal particle may be resolved adversatively,) however rebellious they may be, and like thorns, however thou mayest dwell among scorpions, yet do not fear their words, and do not be broken down by their appearance, {חתת}, chetheth, signifies to be rubbed and broken, and it is here transferred to the mind, and is to be metaphorically understood for being broken in spirit, as if it had been said, be thou intrepid in receiving all threats and calumnies, because they are a rebellious house This passage teaches us that none are fit to undertake the prophetic office, unless those who are armed with fortitude and perseverance whatever may happen, so that they do not fear any threats, nor hesitate or vacillate when oppressed by unjust calamities. So Paul says, (2 Corinthians 6:8,) that he persevered through both evil report and good report, although he was unworthily slandered by the wicked. Whoever, therefore, wishes to prepare himself faithfully for undertaking the office of a teacher, should be endued with such constancy that he may oppose, as it were, an iron front to all calumnies and curses, threats and terrors.

We cannot doubt but that the Israelites were much enraged when they heard themselves called thorns and scorpions. But they ought to be thus stung, since if they had been attacking a mortal man only, they would conduct themselves far more petulantly. But when God pronounces them scorpions and thorns, and they see the Prophet performing commands of this kind fearlessly and without hesitation, they are necessarily impelled to either fury or silence. But when they have striven to the very last in their obstinacy and hardness, yet God at length causes them to yield through shame, because truth has prevailed, of which the Prophet was a minister endued with such great fortitude of mind. We also perceive from this passage, that the Prophets often spoke with great asperity when the wickedness of those with whom they had to deal required it: yet they were not hurried away into any excess, or carried forward with intemperance against their adversaries. But they could not in any other way vindicate their doctrine against the wicked, who, impelled by a diabolical fury, strove

with even God himself. We must hold, therefore, that although they were cruel and severe in language, yet they breathed pure humanity from the heart. For our Prophet was not a barbarous man, who excited by indignation, vomited out coarse reproaches against his own people, but the Spirit of God dictated, as we see, what might seem too severe to soft and delicate ears.

Ezekiel 2:7

7. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether will forbear: for they are most rebellious.

7. Et proferes verba mea ad ipsos si audierint et si destiterint, quia rebelles sunt. [62]

Again he repeats what he had said, with but the change of a few words, yet the meaning is the same, that the Prophet should not desist in the midst of his course, if he saw that he did not obtain what he wished and hoped for. For when we apply ourselves to what God commands, we ought to be of good cheer, and expect that some fruit of our labor may appear. We may, therefore, indulge both hopes and wishes, but if it should turn out otherwise than we anticipated, yet we ought to leave the result in the hands of God, and to proceed even to the goal in the discharge of our duty. To this end this sentence tends: thou, says he, shalt utter my words, or pronounce my words, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: that is, even if you sing a song to the deaf, according to the proverb, yet you shall not cease to utter my words: and he adds the reason, because they are a rebellious house. God admonishes his servant beforehand, that there was no reason why he should turn back although he should see no fruit of his labors, because he ought to determine this in his mind, although they have no ears yet he must speak in God's name. It is certain, as we mentioned yesterday, that there were some, though few in number, to whom his teaching was useful, but he treats here of the people at large. We must learn, therefore, when God calls us to the office of teaching, not to regard the conduct of mankind. For if it please God to exercise us while we strive with the rebellious and refractory, yet God's word must be uttered, because he commands it. It follows ---

Ezekiel 2:8

8. But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee.

8. Et tu fill hominis audi quae ego loquor ad re, ne sis rebellis quemadmodum domus haec: [63] aperi os tuum et comede quaecunque proposuero tibi.

God continues to confirm his servant, but he advises him of a cause of stumbling which might break his spirit; for when he perceived the great obstinacy of the house of Israel, he might refuse the office of their teacher a hundred times over. God, however, adds incentives and exhortations to perseverance, although he experiences the abandoned obstinacy of the house of Israel: do thou hear, says he, what I shall say to thee Here we see that no one can discharge the teacher's office, unless he be a proficient in God's school. It behoves, therefore, those who wish to be thought

[62] Otherwise, Thou shalt pronounce my words to them, whether they will hear, or whether they will refuse to hear, for surely they are men of rebellion. — Calvin.

[63] Israel must be understood. — Calvin.

disciples of God to be teachers of truth, and for this purpose first to listen to God's instructions. Then he takes away a stumblingblock, as we have said, be not thou, rebellious like the house of Israel For we know that a multitude has much influence over us to disturb us: for the consent of a whole people is like a violent tempest, where all conspire together, and even those who are not wicked yet are carried forward with the crowd. Since, therefore, the, multitude sometimes carries away even the servants of God, here God meets his Prophet and puts a bridle upon him, that thou be not rebellious, says he, like the house of Israel He does not here speak indefinitely concerning any people, but concerning 'that nation which boasted itself to be divinely elected, and bore in the flesh the symbol of its adoption. Yet God wishes the consent of his people to be neglected by his Prophet, because we know how insolently the Israelites boasted themselves to be the sacred and peculiar people of God; in the same way indeed as the Papists now exult, Israel then vaunted against all the Prophets. And therefore this passage must be diligently observed, because at this day many of these magnificent titles vanish away when they are brought to reason: for we know that they are mere smoke by which Satan endeavors to blind our eyes, while he falsely brings forward the name of God and the Church.

We ought, indeed, to receive whatever is uttered by God with such modesty and veneration that we may be completely affected as soon as his name is mentioned, but meanwhile we must. use prudence and discretion, lest we should be struck with awe when Satan uses God's name to deceive us. And as we must use discernment, God here shows us the rule of doing so. For if we are thoroughly persuaded that, the doctrine which we follow and profess is from God, we can safely look down from on high not only upon all mortals but upon angels themselves: for there is no excellence so great but that God's truth outshines it. Therefore when formerly the Israelites pretended that they were God's people, and were adorned by the marks of a true Church, we must hold that the honor of the Church is frivolous when hypocrites reign in it, or rather exercise impious tyranny, and oppose themselves to God and his doctrine. And at this very day we may turn this passage against the Papists --- nay, even point it at them directly as often as they bring up those pompous titles of ``the Catholic Church,'' and ``the Spouse of Christ,'' for God has said once for all, that we ought not to be rebellious, although the whole house of Israel should become so; that is, although those who bring forward the name of God should mutually enter into a diabolic conspiracy, yet we must not regard their conduct so as to subscribe to their impious conspiracy. We read the same in Isaiah, (Isaiah 8:12, 13,) Thou shalt not say a conspiracy whenever this people says conspiracy: thou shalt not feel their fear nor their dread, but sanctify the Lord of hosts. Which passage Peter also cites, (1 Peter 3:14, 15;) because the Jews, who then pertinaciously opposed the gospel, weakened the feeble by their boasting, by saying that they were the Church, and yet rejected and abominated the new teaching which was then spread abroad: Peter cites that place of the Prophet, namely, although the house of Israel impiously conspired against God, yet such contumacy must be despised. Afterwards the Prophet adds, (Isaiah 8:18,) Behold! I and the children whom God hath given me for a sign and a wonder. He says, therefore, that those little ones who worship God

purely, and withdraw themselves from the common impiety, were like monsters, and were esteemed as complete wonders. But the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews accommodates this place to the reign of Christ, (Hebrews 2:13,) and not without reason. For to this day we are a wonder to God's enemies, who carry themselves not only with boldness but with abandoned impudence against the pure doctrine of the gospel. To them we are heretics, schismatics, dogs --- nay, the offscouring of the world. But although we are to them for signs and wonders, it is sufficient for us to be acknowledged by God: because it is needful for us to be separated from that impious conspiracy unless we wish to be separated from God himself. For what agreement is there with Papists, or what union with those dregs, unless by separation from God himself? Therefore, because we cannot extend the hand to Papists on any other condition, and cultivate a brotherly intercourse with them except by denying God, let all that injurious union with them cease, and let us learn to separate from them with boldness, since we clearly see that we are all commanded to act thus in the person of the Prophet: for he had said a little before, a prophet dwells in the midst of them --- and this was clearly expressed, that he might manifest more anxious care for himself. For it is difficult to walk amidst thorns and scorpions, lest we should be pricked, and lest we should be struck by their virulent tail. God, then, commands us to be so attentive, that although we walk amid thorns we should not be pricked by them, and also that we should not be injured by the poison of scorpions; and if we seek from heaven that prudence which does not naturally belong to us, this will happen, for if the Spirit of God govern us, he will preserve us harmless from every bite of the serpent, and from all injury and mischief.

It follows: open thy mouth, and eat whatever I shall put before thee By this practical symbol God confirms Ezekiel in his vocation: for he orders him to eat a book, which was fulfilled in vision. Jeremiah uses the same metaphor, (Jeremiah 15:16,) but with some slight difference, because our Prophet seemed to himself to eat a volume: but Jeremiah only signifies that he had digested the words of God like food, not that he only tasted them with his tongue, and that they were so thoroughly fixed in his mind as if he had really dressed and digested them. But God wished to confirm our Prophet in another way, namely, by offering him a volume, and commanding him to eat it. There is no doubt that this volume comprehended whatever the Spirit of God afterwards dictated to the Prophet; and yet the effect was just as if God had made a mortal the channel of his Spirit: as if he had said, ``Now you shall utter nothing human nor terrestrial; because you shall utter what my Spirit has already written in this book.'' But here we see a difference between the true servants of God, who discharge their duty in earnest, and talkative men, who are satisfied with their own powers of eloquence, or rather garrulity: for there are many ready speakers who utter what they have never digested, and thus their teaching is but vapid. And this is the meaning of what Paul says: the kingdom of God is not in word but in power. (1 Corinthians 4:20.) But those who truly consecrate themselves to God, not only learn what they speak of, but as food is eaten, so also they receive within them the word of God, and hide it in the inmost recesses of their heart, so that they may bring it forth from thence as food properly dressed. Now, therefore, we understand why

God wished the Prophet to eat the book, concerning which also it follows afterwards ---

Ezekiel 2:9-10

9. And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein;

9. Et aspexi, et ecce marius emissa ad me, et ecce in ea volumen libri;

10. And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

10. Et explicuit coram facie mea, et ecce scriptum erat volumen a facie et retro, [64] et scriptura [65] lamentationes, et carmen, et we.

Now the Prophet more fully explains what we have just dwelt upon. He narrates how a volume of a book was offered to him: that is, a book in the form of a roll was offered to him. For the noun which he uses, {מגלת}, megleth, comes from {גלל}, gelel, to roll, as the word volume among the Latins. For they were formerly accustomed to write on rolls, that is, they had not the form of books so compact and well arranged as we now use, but they had volumes, which barbarians call rolls. Ancient documents were written in this way, for there is nothing ancient in the archives of princes which is not written on rolls. Hence the phrase, ``In the volume of the book it is written of me,'' etc. (Psalm 40:8; Hebrews 10:7.) Now the Prophet says, such a volume was offered to me that I might eat it; and he adds, it was offered to me by a hand sent forth, But by this symbol God more clearly shows that the volume was not merely formed in the air, nor was produced anywhere but in heaven. For if the Prophet had only seen a volume presented to him, he might doubt whether it was sent by God or not. But when the hand which offers the volume appears, and is truly sent forth from God, nothing is wanting for full and complete certainty.

He adds, after the volume was unrolled, that he saw it written on each side: by which words he understands not that any brief command was given to him, but that a length of much time was imposed. For if he had only spoken concerning the roll, the Jews might have contemptuously rejected him after three or four days, as if he had come to an ends'' A roll was indeed offered to thee, but now thou hast spoken three or four times, is not this sufficient?'' Hence, as the Prophet might meet with neglect, he says, the roll was written before and behind He now says, for such was his argument, that lamentations only were written there {הגה}, hegeh, signifies sometimes meditation and speech simply, but here, because it is connected with lamentations, there is no doubt that it is to be taken for a mournful strain. At length the particle {הי}, hei, is added in the sense of grieving. On the whole then, the Prophet teaches, that the instruction contained in the book was not sweet or pleasant, but full of sorrow, since truly God here showed proofs of his anger, and this cannot be apprehended unless by its causing grief and lamentations. Now, therefore, we understand that the Israelites were more and more exasperated, when the Prophet said, that he came like a herald who denounced war in the name of God, and, at the same time, had no message of peace. As to the rest of the people, we

[64] "That is, behind and before." — Calvin.

[65] "What was written in it." — Calvin.

shall see afterwards, in many places, that he was a messenger of God's mercy, but his duty was to rouse up the Jews, that they might feel God their adversary: thus the Prophet was sent with no other object than that of going, as an armed man, into the midst,, and uttering threats in the name of God. I cannot now proceed further, although what follows is connected with this subject.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since thou hast this day deigned to invite us to thyself with the testimony of thy paternal favor, that we may not be as the beasts of the forest, but submit ourselves calmly to thee, and so follow where thou callest us, that we may in reality feel thee to be our Father; and thus may we live under the protection of thy hand as long as we are pilgrims in this world, so that at length being gathered unto thy heavenly kingdom, we may cleave entirely to thee and thine only-begotten Son, who is our felicity and glory. --- Amen.

Lecture Eighth.

Ezekiel 3

CHAPTER 3

Ezekiel 3:1-2

1. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel.

1. Et dixit mihi, Fili hominis, quod inveneris, comedendo comede, volumen hoc, et vade loquere ad domum Israel.

2. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll.

2. Et aperui os meum, et pavit me volumine isto.

When the Prophet is ordered to eat whatever he receives, this ought not to be extended to everything which he meets with, but, whatever may be the taste of the book, he is forbidden to refuse it: for its bitterness might possibly cause him to reject the threats of God. Lastly, the quality of the book is noted, because it contained nothing but the material for sorrow. He adds, that he opened his mouth, for the sake of obedience; by which he signifies that he was not curious or dainty in seeking to taste it, but that he took what was divinely offered him, without the slightest hesitation. Now he adds ---

Ezekiel 3:3

3. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.

3. Et dixit mihi, Fili hominis, ventrem tuum pasce, et viscera tua reple [66] volumine isto, quod ego do tibi, et comedi, et fuit in ore meg tanquam mel in dulcedine.

Ezekiel, as we have just seen, proceeds to say, that a book was given him to eat, because God's servants ought to speak from the inmost affection of their heart. We know that many have a tongue sufficiently fluent, but use it only for ostentation:

[66] "Thou shalt fill." — Calvin

meanwhile, God treats their vanity as a laughing stock, because their labor is fruitless. Hence we must observe the passage of Paul already quoted, ``the kingdom of God is with power.'' (1 Corinthians 4:20.) But the efficacy of the Holy Spirit is not exerted unless when he who is called to teach applies his serious endeavors to attain to the discharge of his duty. For this reason, then, Ezekiel is commanded to eat the roll Next he says, it was as sweet as honey; and, but a little before, he said it was filled with curses: therefore, either he had put off all humanity, or ought to be grieved, when he found himself appointed to be the herald of God's vengeance. But, in other places, we saw that the servants of God were endued with feelings of an opposite kind; for, as they were often rough and stern like their work, so they condoled with the miserable people: but, their grief did not hinder them from proceeding in the discharge of their duty. For this reason Ezekiel now says, the book was sweet, because he acquiesced in God's commands, and although he pitied his own people, yet he acknowledged that it could not happen otherwise, and subscribed to the just judgment of God. Therefore, by the word sweetness, he signifies his acquiescence in embracing the office enjoined upon him, and he so obeyed God that he forgot all the material for sorrow in the book, because the justice of God prevailed and thus extinguished the feeling of too great humanity which might otherwise have delayed him. Jeremiah uses the same expression. (Jeremiah 15:16.) He says, that he found the words of God, and that they became to him gladness and joy of heart. For we saw, that he was only anxious but very sorrowful when he thought that utter destruction was impending over the people. But, as I have just said, these two things are not discordant: that Prophets should desire the safety of the people, and use their utmost endeavors to promote it, and yet manifest a firm constancy, and never hesitate, when necessity demands it, to condemn the people and to utter God's threats which are enjoined 'upon them. Thus shortly afterwards Jeremiah says, that he was filled with anger; thy words were found, says he, and I did eat them, and they afforded me joy and gladness of heart, because thy name has been called over me, O Jehovah God of hosts: that is, because I have been taught by the power of thy Spirit, and as I have been called to this office, so thou hast stretched forth thy hand unto me that I may fulfill thy commands with good faith and constancy: therefore thy words were my delight. Afterwards he adds, (Ezekiel 3:17,) neither have I sat in the council of scorners, nor have I exalted myself for the sake of throwing off the yoke; for since I perceived that thou must be obeyed, I was, as it were, overpowered, yet I did not sit with the scorners, but I sat alone, says he, because thou hast filled me with indignation. Hence we see, that in one person were two feelings very different and contrary in appearance, because he was filled with indignation, and yet received joy through the words of God.

Ezekiel 3:4-7

4. And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them.

4. Et dixit mihi, Fili hominis, vade (ingredere) ad domum Israel, et loquere ad eos in sermonibus reels.

5. For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language,

but to the house of Israel;

5. Quia non ad populum profun-dos [67] labiis et gravem lingua, tu missus es ad domum (Israel scilicet.)

6. Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee.

6. Non ad populos multos pro-fundos labio et graves lingua quos non intelliges; [68] si non ad eos misis-sem to, ipsi audissent to.

7. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted.

7. Atqui [69] domus Israel non volent ad audiendum to, quia si non volunt audire me, quia tota domus Israel duri fronte (vel proefracti) et robusto corde ipsi.

Now at greater length God explains why he wished his servant to eat the volume which he held forth in his hand, namely, that when instructed by it he might approach the children of Israel; for he ought not to come empty, and we know that man of himself can bring forward nothing solid: hence Ezekiel must receive from God's hand what he delivers to the Israelites. Let us then preserve this order, as the volume is first given to the Prophet, and then transferred to the people. God orders him, to offer or speak his own words, which is worthy of remark, as having the same meaning. But if Ezekiel ought to bring forward nothing but what he had received from God, this rule ought to prevail among all God's servants, that they should not heap up their own comments, but pronounce what God teaches them as if from his mouth: lastly, that passage of Peter (1 Peter 4:11) ought to guide us, he who speaks in the Church ought to speak the words of God. Now he adds, I do not send thee to a people strange in speech and hard in language, but to the house of Israel Stone think that the prophet is here animated to his duty, because God demanded nothing from him which was too difficult. For if he had been sent to remote nations with whom there was no interchange of speech, he might object that a greater burden than he could bear was imposed upon him. The difficulty would then have been a complete obstacle. They think that remote and foreign nations are here compared with the people of Israel, that he may discharge his duty with alacrity, as if it had been said, ``I* do not send thee to strangers. For neither could they understand thee, and they also would be barbarians to thee, but because thou art familiarly acquainted with thine own people, thou canst not turn thy back when I send thee unto them.'' But this opinion does not approve itself to me, because I read these three verses in the same context, as they are united. It is by no means doubtful, that, by this comparison, God aggravates the impiety of the people. For this sentence is first in order, that the Israelites would be deaf, although the Prophet should use among them the common and vernacular language: this is the first point: now he shows the reason, because they were a bitter people* Here God signifies, that nothing prevented the Israelites from obeying the doctrine of the Prophet but their malice and impiety. For this reason

[67] That is, “profound in speech:” it is a collective noun, hence the number is changed: literally. “to a people profound in Up.” — Calvin.

[68] That is. “whose language thou writ not understand. — Calvin.

[69] The copula here is taken adversatively — “but are unwilling to hear thee.” — Calvin

he says, I do not send thee to a people profound in speech I know not how some have conjectured that this epithet means learned or clever; for it is the same thing for a people to be of a strange speech and of a hard language. For what is a ``hard'' but a barbarous language? Now we perceive the genuine sense, that the Prophet is not sent to men of an unknown language because he would have been a barbarian to them and they to him. I do not send thee to them, therefore, but to the house of Israel.

Now he adds, not to many peoples Those who translate ``many'' by ``great,'' do not understand the Prophet's meaning, for God had spoken in the singular number concerning all people, but now he uses the plural, as if he had said, I send thee neither to Egyptians, nor to Chaldeans, nor to any other remote nation, since the world is on all sides of thee, inhabited by peoples whose language thou dost not understand: to those therefore I do not send thee. The particle, if not, follows, and Jerome translates, ``If I had sent thee unto them,'' although the negative particle is interposed, literally, if not, but because this phrase appears harsh, some have supposed {לא-{אם}, am-la, to have the sense of swearing, and interpret it affirmatively for {כאמת}, cameth, ``truly,'' or ``surely.'' But if we receive it so, the passage will be defective; for they understand {אם}, am, ``again,'' ``afterwards:'' for these two words, {לא-{אם}, am-la, have the force of an oath interposed. What sense then shall we extract from the words, ``truly* I will send thee unto them, and they shall hear thee?'' We see then this sense to be too forced. Some explain the passage thus: ``If I had not sent thee unto them, they would have heard thee,'' as if God here blamed the disposition of the people, because they rather sought vain and foolish prophecies:, than submitted themselves to the truth; just as if he had said, if any impostor should pour darkness upon them, they would immediately embrace his fables and lies, as they are so prone to foolishness. Since, therefore, I send thee, therefore they do not hear. But this explanation does not suit, because a little afterwards we shall see it in its own place. To me therefore this context is most probable, if I had not sent thee to them, these also would have heard thee,* as if it had been said, unless a difference of speech had interposed, I had rather have used thine assistance with reference to foreign nations. In this way God signifies his displeasure, when he says, that he would rather send his Prophet hither and thither than to the Israelites, except through the want of a common language; for this difference of language presented the only boundary to the Prophet, so that he was confined to his own people. In this sense there is nothing forced. I do not, therefore, send thee to many peoples, profound in speech and strange in tongue, because thou wouldst not understand their language But if this had not been an obstacle, I would have sent thee, and they would have heard thee. We see then what I have just touched upon, that the Israelites are compared to foreign or uncircumcised tribes, because they rejected the instruction offered them, not through ignorance of the language, but through the hardness of their heart. Isaiah also says, (Isaiah 28:11, 13,) that the word of God would be deep and obscure to even the Jews themselves, but in another sense; he also compares his prophecies to a sealed book, since God had blinded them according to their deserts. Since therefore they were so given over to a reprobate mind, and were destitute

of sound understanding, therefore he says, that his teaching would be like a closed and sealed book: then he says, that he would be a barbarian, as if he was using an unknown language. So God in this place clearly shows that the house of Israel were suffering no impediment in profiting by his word, except their own unwillingness to hear. (Isaiah 8:16; Isaiah 29:11.) For he says, that the heathen would be obedient, if they could be partakers of such a benefit. Unless therefore the language of the Prophet had been unknown to the profane and uncircumcised heathen, he had there found attentive and obedient disciples, as God testifies. How then comes it to pass that the house of Israel cannot hear! It now follows, But the house of Israel are unwilling to hear, that is, the house of Israel is unwilling to hear thee, because it will not hear me, says he.

Now, therefore, we clearly see the sloth of the people assigned as a reason why they purposely rejected the Word of God, and hardened themselves in obstinacy. He also ascends higher, and says, that the people were not only disobedient to the Prophet but to God himself, as Christ also when he exhorts his disciples to perseverance in teaching. Therefore, says he, they will not hear you, because they will not hear me, and why am I and my teaching hated by them, unless because they do not receive my Father? (John 15:18.) For this stumblingblock is likely to break the spirits of the pious, when they see their teaching so proudly rejected. This reproach alone, therefore, is often accustomed to recall the servants of God from their course: but this admonition is proposed to them in the midst, that God himself is despised. Why then should they take it ill, that they are held in the same estimation as God, who is himself rejected? They think themselves undeserving of such contempt and haughtiness being thrown upon their labor. But is not God worthy of being listened to before all angels? Since, then, they are proud and unbelieving towards God himself, it is not surprising that they do not reverently receive what is proposed to them by mortal man. Now, therefore, we see what the intention of God is when he says, the house of Israel will not hear thee, because they do not hear me: lest it should be vexatious to the Prophet to see his labor profitless, nay, even the children of Israel rising against him: because he ought to bear it patiently, if he should suffer the same obloquy which they did not hesitate to display against the Almighty himself. It follows, Because the whole house of Israel is of a bold or a daring aspect, and of a hard heart He repeats what we saw before, but in other words --- namely, that the people's hardness of heart was untameable, and that they were not only obstinate in heart but brazen in countenance, so that they cast aside all modesty; and lastly, he implies that their obstinacy was desperate, when he joins a brazen countenance with a hard heart.

Ezekiel 3:8-9

8. Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads.

8. Ecce posui facies tuas (faciem tuam) duram contra facies ipsorum, et frontem tuam duram contra frontem ipsorum.

9. As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.

9. Tanquam adamantem fortiorem lapide (vel saxo) posui frontem tuam, ne timeas ipsos, et non frangaris a fade (vel a praesentia ipsorum) quia domus rebellionis sunt. [70]

Ezekiel was forewarned of the obstinacy of the people, yea, even of their desperate wickedness. Now God strengthens him lest he should despair when he saw that he must contend with such abandoned and reckless men; for what else was it than contending with stones? If Ezekiel had been commanded to strike a mountain, it would have been just the same as contending with such a people. He had need then of this strengthening, viz., his forehead should be adamant against the hardness of the people If he had hoped for more fruit from his labor, perhaps that facility had been the cause of negligence: for confidence makes us more remiss when the work in hand is neither laborious nor difficult. The Prophet, therefore, would have been colder, if, certainly persuaded that the people would be docile, he had approached them more carelessly. God, therefore, excites him when he speaks of their obstinacy. As then it was useful that the Prophet should comprehend how arduous was the duty to the discharge of which he was called, so also he ought to be armed with the strength of God, for otherwise he would have been easily overcome by its difficulty. This is the reason why God adds, that he had given him a stout front and a brazen aspect against the face and front of the people Besides, in this way he was admonished that fortitude was to be hoped for from some other quarter, that he might not spend his strength in vain, but allow himself to be governed by the Spirit of God. For when we think only on the quality and quantity of our own powers, they may easily flow away, and disperse, and even become vapid, unless we discharge our duty with manliness. God, therefore, recalls his Prophet when he says, that he had given him a face, as if he would say, that the Prophet did not make war in his own strength, but was armed with celestial virtue. Although, therefore, this seems to have been spoken once for Ezekiel's private use, yet it belongs to us all. Let us learn, then, when God calls us to the office of teaching, never to measure the effect of our work by the standard of our own capacity, nor yet to consider our own powers, but to repose on some communicated strength which God here extols in no empty praises. Whoever, therefore, shall acknowledge that God is sufficient for overcoming all obstacles, will gird himself bravely for his work; but he who delays for calculating his own strength is not only weakened but is almost overcome. Besides, we see that we are here instructed in humility and modesty, lest we should claim anything as due to our own strength. Hence it happens, that many are so full, yea so puffed out with confidence, that they bring forth nothing but wind. Hence, let us learn to seek from God alone that fortitude which we need: for we are not stronger than Ezekiel, and if he needed to be strengthened by the Spirit of God, much more do we at this time need it.

Lastly, we gather from this passage that although the whole world should rise up against the servants of God, yet his strength would be superior, as we saw it was with Jeremiah: They shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail. (Jeremiah 1:19; Jeremiah 15:20.) Hence there is no reason why we should be afraid of the

[70] {{המה}-{מרו meri-hemeh, a word which we have formerly discussed. --- Calvin.

violent attack of any enemy, and although the whole world should be in a tumult, yet we need not tremble, because God's strength in us will always be more powerful. Therefore it is added, as an adamant, harder than flint, have I placed thee; therefore do not fear them. God says I have placed the forehead of the Prophet like adamant; not that he strove with the people by either injustice or audacity, but because God opposed the confidence with which Ezekiel was endowed to the furious impudence of the people. In this sense then the forehead of the Prophet is said to be adamant Now he adds --- do not fear, then, and do not be broken by their face or presence These phrases, that the Prophet be not broken, and yet fear not, seem to be opposed to each other, since he excels in unconquered fortitude. But God so tempers his favor, that the faithful always have need of excitements, even when he animates them, and supplies them with strength. God, therefore, so works within his servants, that they do nothing except as they are ruled by his Spirit; and yet they have need of his teaching, since his exhortations to them are never superfluous. Profane men think that there is no use in teaching, and that all exhortations are frivolous, if God, when he acts upon us by his Spirit, not only begins, but continues and perfects his own work. But the Scripture shows that these two things mutually agree; for while God strengthens us and renders us unconquerable by his Spirit, at the same time he breathes virtue into his exhortations, and causes them to flourish within us, and to bring forth fruit In this way God on his part confirms his Prophet, by giving him an adamantine forehead and more than stony, and by giving him an unconquered spirit, and yet he exhorts him to fear not. We see, then, how God governs his own people within them, and yet adds teaching as an instrument of his Spirit. Then he adds, because they are a rebellious house, or although they are; for the particle {כי}, ki, is often put adversatively, as we have said elsewhere. If we take it in its proper sense, it will suit very well, because they are a rebellious house; as if it had been said, the Prophet has no cause for fear, because he was carefully admonished beforehand, and nothing new could happen; for we are accustomed to be very much frightened by novelty; but when we have meditated on what happens, we are not disturbed, neither do we stand still nor hesitate; for although the Prophet had already learnt that the house of Israel was rebellious, yet he perseveres, because he experiences nothing new or unusual. It follows ---

Ezekiel 3:10-11

10. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears.

10. Et dixit mihi, Fili hominis, omnes sermones meos quos loquor ad te sume in corde tuo, et auribus tuis audi.

11. And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord GOD, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

11. Et vade (ingredere) ad transmigrationem, [71] ad filios populi tui, et loquere ad ipsos: et dic illis: sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, sive audiverint sire cessaverint.

This is a repetition of the same doctrine; for we said that our Prophet is more

[71] That is, to the captives. — Calvin.

verbose than Isaiah, and even than Jeremiah, because he had accustomed himself to the form of speech which was then customary among the exiles, he is not, therefore, either so restricted or so polished; but we must understand that he accommodated his language to learners, because he had to do with a people not only rude and dull, but also obstinate. And then they had degenerated as much from the purity of their language as from that of their faith; hence the Prophet purposely bends aside from elegance of language. Whatever repetition he might use with men so dull and slothful, it was not superfluous. He says, therefore, what we have formerly seen, that he was commanded to speak all the words, but he previously says, that he was commanded to receive them in his heart, and to perceive them with his ears The order is inverted, because we must perceive with the ear before we receive in the heart. And they philosophize with more subtlety than truth who say, that the interior hearing precedes, inasmuch as the ears are struck by the sound in vain, unless the heart was already docile. For although God prepares his elect for hearing, and gives them ears for that purpose, yet his teaching does not penetrate to their minds before it has been received by the car. There is no doubt, then, that here one thing is put before the other, by what we call a {ὕστερον} {πρότερον} The result is, that; the Prophet, as he is sure of his calling, hears God speaking to him. But this was not said for his sake, but that he might securely boast himself to be a servant of God, and bring forward nothing but what he had heard from the mouth of God himself. As, therefore, in this confidence, he was to contend against the people's impiety, so he was commanded to hear the words of God We hear, then, a repetition of what we formerly saw, namely, that the Prophet freely boasts that he did not bring forward merely windy eloquence, as profane men do, who have no other object than to obtain the applause of men.

The Prophet, therefore, here says, that he was commanded to receive the words of God in his heart.

Now it is added, that he may go and proceed to the captivity, to the children of his own people We see, then, that God does not regard the Prophet so much as the Israelites, because they had never willingly yielded to the Prophet when he brought a message by no means pleasing. For nothing could be more sad and hateful to them than to hear threats and curses. Because, then, they had never willingly bent to obedience, he is sent with a testimony that he had learnt what he uttered in God's school; then that he had so learnt from God, that he adds nothing of his own; lastly, that he so speaks, that; the obstinacy of the people is not overcome: Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, do thou nevertheless go forward Wherefore? Thou shalt say, thus saith the Lord. We have already explained the meaning of this phrase, namely, where we are persuaded that our labor is pleasing to God, although it be useless to men, yet this ought to suffice us, that God has sent us. Then he wishes to try our constancy, lest when we see ourselves laboring in vain, we should cease on that account, instead of being prepared to obey, whatever may happen.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since thou art desirous that the teaching of thy Prophet should be set before us, so many ages after his death, that we be not either obdurate

or rebellious; but may we submit ourselves to thee in all becoming reverence and obedience, that the labor which ended in the condemnation of thine ancient people, through their contumacy, may this day be salutary to us, and may we so follow what thou teachest through him, that we may tend to the goal to which thou callest us, until after finishing our course with perseverance, we may be at length gathered together within thy celestial kingdom, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Ninth.

Ezekiel 3:12

12. Then the Spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of the LORD from his place.

12. Et sustulit me Spiritus: et audivi post me vocem strepitus magni Benedicta gloria Iehovae e loco suo.

The Prophet again affirms what we have formerly seen, that God had worked upon his mind by the secret instinct of his own Spirit. Although, therefore, God had exhorted him to fortitude, yet the Prophet shows what he demanded of himself. In short, the Prophet was strong in God, because God implanted his virtue within him. He says, therefore, that he was raised up by the Spirit, which only means that the agitation within him was of no avail, unless through heavenly inspiration; so also he ought to be carried beyond himself for the time, that nothing human should appear within him. But more will be said about this hereafter.

He adds, that he heard a voice of a great rushing, that is, a sonorous voice, and one different from the usual voice of men: for the, Prophet, by the noise or tumult of the voice, could distinguish it from the usual voice of men. Blessed, said it, be the glory of Jehovah from his own place We cannot doubt that this benediction was suitable to the occasion of its utterance: when, therefore, this voice was heard, God wished to refute the clamorous voices of the people who thought themselves injured. For we know that the people were querulous, and murmured because they thought themselves treated with greater harshness than they deserved. Hence the glory of God is opposed to all impious and sacrilegious blasphemies, which the Israelites were in the habit of vomiting forth against God, as if he treated them cruelly. In short, this voice restrained all calumnies, by which the impious then endeavored to overwhelm the glory of God. He says that glory is blessed, because although men dare not utter gross and open reproaches against God, nevertheless they curse his glory as often as they detract from his justice, and accuse him of too much rigor. Hence, in opposition to this, a voice is heard, saying, the glory of God is blessed

By God's place, I understand the Temple. I confess that in many passages of Scripture heaven is so called; not that God's essence, which is immense, can be included within any place; for as heaven is called his throne or seat, so also the earth is his footstool, because he fills all things with his immensity. So here, as often in other places, the Temple is called God's place, because he dwelt there with respect to men. Besides, this is said as well with reference to the exiles as to the rest of the people yet remaining at Jerusalem. For the exiles did not sufficiently consider that they were banished from their country, and dragged into a distant region, through the just vengeance of God. Since, therefore, this captivity did not sufficiently subdue

them, the name of God ought to be set before them, that they might know that they were not banished from their country by the cruelty of their enemies, but by the judgment of God. The Prophet, doubtless, regards also those Jews who as yet remained at home: for they boasted that God was seated in the Temple, and so fancied that they should be always safe under his protection. But the Prophet, as we shall afterwards see, denounces on those who remained a punishment similar to that of those who were in captivity. It is then just as if he had said that God remained in his Temple, that he might shine there with conspicuous glory. Now as he wished to humble the ten tribes as well as the other two, so he wished to alleviate the grief of them all, that they should not cease to hope for the promised return. For calamity itself might lead them to despair, and to suppose their salvation impossible: nay, to think that God was as it were dead, and his virtue extinct. To what purpose, then, was the worship of God? to what purpose the splendor and dignity of the Temple, unless that God should protect his own? But they had been deserted by him; here then was matter for despair, unless it had been met: the Prophet now treats this, since on one side he reminds them that God was the just avenger of wickedness, when he suffered the ten tribes to be dragged into exile, yet that he would be their deliverer, because he does not cease to reign in his Temple, although profane men think him conquered, and treat with wanton insolence their own triumphs over him. Now therefore we perceive the sense of the Prophet: for this sentence would be cold if it were merely general; but when it is accommodated to the state of things at the time, we see that the glory of God is not extolled by any vain eulogium, and that the Temple is not mentioned in vain. (Psalm 11:4; Psalm 103:19; Isaiah 66:1.)

Ezekiel 3:13

13. I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing.

13. Et vocem [72] alarum animalium osculantium cujusque ad sociam: et vocem rotarum e regione ipsorum, vocem (inquam) strepitus magni.

The Prophet now seems to express from whence the voice which he heard proceeded: for I do not think that the voice proceeded from any other quarter, and that afterwards the living creatures moved in unison with the wheels, but it seems to me to explain what would otherwise have been doubtful, namely, that God's glory was celebrated by the living creatures and the wheels. It is not wonderful then that a voice should be attributed to the living creatures, because we saw them to be cherubim or angels, as by the wheels God wishes to mark all actions and motions; motions, I say, which seem fortuitous, but yet are governed by the living creatures, whom God inspires with his own virtue, while he wishes to execute his designs, and so exercises his dominion over all creatures; for nothing happens which is not governed by his will. Hence a voice proceeds as well from the living creatures as from the wheels, which extolled the glory of God, and proclaimed him, in the midst of that sad and wretched slaughter of the people, still reigning in his own Temple; then, indeed, especially exercising his power, because he was a judge, in punishing their

[72] Jerome rightly shows us that it is repeated — {ἀπὸ} {τοῦκοινου} ``Therefore I heard a voice.'' --- Calvin.

wickedness; then because he was about to become the deliverer of his own people, as he had promised them restoration after seventy years. He says also, I heard the voice of wings when they mutually embraced each other; for {נקש}, nekesh, signifies to embrace: others translate, when they struck or engaged in conflict with each other: but by the word osculating, conjunction is metaphorically signified. When, therefore, each wing embraced its fellow, then the voice emerged: he adds also the same thing concerning the wheels, and at length he repeats what he had said, that there was a sound of a great rushing It follows ---

Ezekiel 3:14

14. So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.

14. Et Spiritus sustulit me, et sumpsit me: et profectus sum amarus pro indignatione spiritus mei, et manus Iehovae super me fortis.

He confirms what we have formerly seen, namely, that he was acted upon by the Spirit of God, so that it was in some way without himself, and not as profane men have invented, enthusiastically: for their Prophets were deprived of self-control, and the devil so dealt with them, that they were not of sound mind. Hence the Prophet does not understand that he was deprived of self-control, because God's Prophets were of a sedate and composed mind; but he understands that he was so governed by the Spirit of God, that he was unlike himself, and did not breathe a terrestrial air; lastly, he understands that visible marks were graven upon him, which obtained for his doctrine authority with all the people. And it was the more necessary that the Prophet should be adorned with his own proofs, on account of the dullness of the people, and also because his message was distasteful to them, and he had not previously discharged the duty of a teacher. It was needful, therefore, that he should be so renewed that the people should acknowledge him as inspired. He had lived familiarly among his friends, and was sufficiently known both by appearance and character. Meanwhile God, as I have said, separated him from common life, that he should represent something celestial; and the object of this was, as we have shown, to conciliate confidence and reverence towards his teaching. He felt indeed the agitation of the Spirit, and it is scarcely to be doubted that the people also knew it, otherwise they would scarcely have had confidence in him when speaking of himself.

The object of this remarkable government of the Spirit was, that the Israelites, if only awake and attentive to the miracle, might know the Prophet to be in some manner renovated. But what follows seems opposed to the former sentence; for he says (Ezekiel 3:3) the volume was sweet as honey, but now that he departed in the bitterness of his spirit;. but as I briefly explained yesterday, this is easily reconciled; for the Prophet was not deprived of all sensation. Although he was entirely consecrated to God, and in no degree remitted his diligence and alacrity, yet he retained some human feelings: hence the spirit of bitterness of which he speaks, which he calls his own spirit Whence we perceive an implied contrast between that motion by which he was caught up and that feeling, which, although not sinful, was in some way different from the grace of the Spirit, because the Prophet so burnt with zeal that he performed the commands of God almost in forgetfulness of self: yet, at the

same time, he felt within him something human, since the power of the Spirit had not extinguished all sorrow. We hold, therefore, that the Prophet was in some degree inspired by the Spirit, and yet that his own spirit was bitter He adds, and the hand of Jehovah was strong upon me By ``hand,'' some understand prophecy, but in my opinion ignorantly: I do not doubt that its meaning is power or authority. He says, the hand of God was strong, because he ought to obey God, although the bitterness of which he spoke should draw him in a contrary direction. As Paul says, (2 Corinthians 5:14, and Philippians 1:23,) that he was constrained by a zeal of God, so also the Prophet signifies that he was constrained by the secret instinct of the Spirit, so that he did not act from human motives, nor yet obey the wishes of his own mind, nor follow his own individual will, but was only intent on rendering obedience to God. In this sense, then, he says, that the hand of God was strong upon him Otherwise it might be objected --- why did he not fall away when he was so oppressed with grief, and anxiety so overwhelmed his spirit? he replies, the hand of God was strong and prevailed, since otherwise he would have failed a hundred times, had he not been supported by the power of God. And thus we see that there was some repugnance in the Prophet, since as man he was affected with sorrow, but the power of the Holy Spirit ruled over him, so that he denied himself and all his human affections.

Ezekiel 3:15

15. Then I came to them of the captivity at Telabib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.

15. Et veni ad transmigrationem [73] in Thelabib: sedebant [74] autem prope flumen Chebar: illic ipsi sedebant; et sedi etiam illic septem diebus, obstupescens [75] in medio ipsorum.

Now he says, that he had returned to his own people, not that he had ever removed from them, but had been drawn by the vision from the intercourse with men. For God revealed himself to him on the bank of the river Chebar, but he was solitary: and that this was done by vision, is by no means doubtful, since he was always among his own people. How then does he say, that he is now returned? Why, because the vision had vanished, and so he was entirely occupied with the other captives. What some affirm with subtlety, that he was like a monk, is frivolous: for they say, that he abhorred the wickedness of the people, and, that he might not contract any stain of impurity, had sought solitude: but this is not probable. Without doubt., the Prophet means that he returned to his former mode of life from the time when he heard God speaking and saw the vision. He then says --- I sat seven days in some way absorbed in either admiration or sorrow, for {שמם}, shemew, signifies ``to* be desolate,'' ``to* be astonished,'' ``to* wonder.'' But as to the Prophet sitting quiet and silent for seven days,* there is little doubt but that in this way God prepared him for beginning to speak afterwards to the greater surprise of the whole people. Nor ought it to seem absurd that he was dumb although sent by God:: for this did

[73] That is, to the captives. — Calvin.
[74] Literally, the passing over of those sitting — Calvin.
[75] Or, desolate — Calvin.

not occur through any negligence or delay which can be accounted a fault, but the office of teaching had been so imposed that he was not yet instructed by any fixed commands; as if any one were chosen ambassador either by a king or a senate, and were afterwards furnished with his instructions, so the Prophet was called to the prophetic office., but knew not yet what he was to say. He had indeed eaten the roll, but God had not yet suggested whence he ought to begin, nor how he ought to temper his doctrine. Hence Ezekiel had not yet been drawn forth: therefore he says, that he sat with either great stupor or great desolation, as they say. For his very appearance would rouse the attention of men, that they should enquire the meaning of this unusual sorrow. Whatever it was, we see that this silence was a preparation for the discharge of his duty with greater fruit and efficacy, since his speech ought afterwards to be received with greater reverence when he had been silent for seven days

Then he says, I came to the exiles who sat in Thelabib I willingly accord with the opinion of those who take this for the name of a place, and ancient interpreters even have left these two words. Their Septuagint version has {μετέωρον}, as if it meant ``lofty.'' {תלל}, thelel, signifies to elevate, but it ought to be {תלול}, thelol, if the Prophet meant that he was exalted, but this is not suitable, since he rather asserts that he was like the rest of mankind after the vision was withdrawn. Some render it ``skillful,'' but I am not aware of their reason: but as I have already said, their opinion is probable, who suppose it the proper name of a place. Jerome translates, ``a* heap of fruit,'' and not badly; for this was probably the origin of the place's name, as cities and villages and mountains often receive their name from their situation and other circumstances; so also this place was called Thelabib. For {תל}, thel,* signifies ``a heap,'' and {אביב}, abib, means a ``stalk,'' or ``straw of corn,'' and it may, therefore, be that the place was called Thelabib on account of its fertility, since the harvest there is very plentiful. But this is of no great moment. What we have mentioned must be especially remembered, that the Prophet was beheld in that sad and sorrowful countenance, and was silent for seven days

Ezekiel 3:16-17

16. And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

16. Et accidit a fine septem dierum [76] factus [77] sermo Iehovae ad me, dicendo.

17. Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

17. Fili hominis, speculatorem posui [78] to domui Israel: audies ergo ex ore meo sermones, et admonebis illos ex me.

Now the Prophet shows more clearly why he continued in silence for seven days, because, indeed, he had been appointed a teacher, but the time had not fully arrived in which he was to utter the commands of God. He waited, therefore until he should receive a distinct message. Hence he says, at the end of seven days I received a

[76] That is, “after seven days.” — Calvin.
[77] Happened or occurred, for the same word is variously repeated. — Calvin.
[78] Or. appointed. — Calvin.

word from the Lord Whence we gather, that he had been chosen before, and that the burden of an embassy was imposed upon him: meanwhile he stood, as it were, in suspense, because he did not distinctly understand what he was to say, and where he ought to begin. Hence it appears, that God acts by degrees towards his servants, so that he claims them for his own, then he shows them generally what duties and labors they have to discharge, and at length he sends them forth to the performance of their work, and the execution of their office. This we see was done in the case of our Prophet. For first he learned that he was chosen by God, afterwards he was admonished generally to behave himself courageously, and not to yield to any threats or terrors: at length God explained to him what commands he wished him to bear to the people. As yet God seems to speak but generally, but it is as if he announced that the time had come when the Prophet must gird himself to his work: hence he says, Son of man I have appointed thee a watchman of the house of Israel

What Ezekiel heard belongs to all teachers of the Church, namely, that they are Divinely appointed and placed as on watch-towers, that they may keep watch for the common safety of all. It was the duty of those who have been appointed from the beginning ministers of the heavenly doctrine to be watchmen. And would that in the Papacy, as this name has been imposed on idols, dumb and blind and deaf, those who with swelling cheeks call themselves Bishops, had been admonished of their vocation. For we know that the word Bishop means the same as watchman. But when they were boasting themselves to be bishops, they were drowned in the darkness of gross ignorance: then also they were buried in their pleasure, as well as in sloth, for there is no more intelligence in these animals than in oxen or asses. Asses and oxen do spend their labor for the advantage of man, but these are not only destitute of all judgment and reason, but are altogether useless. But what I have said is to be remembered, when God chooses Prophets, that they are placed, as it were, on watch-towers, that they may keep watch for the safety of the whole Church. This ought now to have its force, that pastors may acknowledge themselves placed in stations whence they may be watchful: and this, indeed, is one point. Now this cannot be done unless they are endued with superior gifts and prevail in the grace of the Spirit above the commonalty. Nor is it sufficient that pastors should live as private men, but they ought to wait longer, as if they were placed on a lofty watchtower, which demands both diligence and a power of observation: this is a second point.

It is now added, thou shalt hear words from my mouth, and shalt announce them to the people from me. Here a general rule is prescribed to all Prophets and pastors of the Church, namely, that they should hear the word from the mouth of God: by which particle God wishes to exclude whatever men fabricate or invent for themselves. For it is evident, when God claimed to himself the right of speaking that he orders all men to be silent and not to offer anything of their own, and then, when he orders them to hear the word from his mouth, that he puts a bridle upon them that they should neither invent anything, nor hanker after their own devices, nor dare to conceive either more or less than the word: and, lastly, we see that whatever men offer of their ownselves, is here abolished, when God alone wishes to be heard, for he does

not mingle himself here with others as in a crowd, as if he wished to be heard only in part. He assumes to himself, therefore, what we ought to attribute to his supreme command over all things, namely, that we should hang upon his lips. But if this was said to Ezekiel, how is it that men of no authority now dare to spread abroad their own fictions, as we see done in the Papacy? for what. is such a religion but a confused jumble of the numberless fictions of men? dray have heaped together, from many brains, an immense chaos of errors; 'for they wish us to adore as the oracles of God whatever foolish men have imagined. But who among them will boast himself superior to Ezekiel? nay, if they were all put together will they dare to assert that they can be compared with him alone? And if they dare, who will admit their arrogance? We see then, that Ezekiel with the other Prophets is reined in, that he should not say anything but what he has heard from God's mouth.

Now it follows, thou shalt admonish them from me The word which the Prophet uses, signifies as well to admonish as to caution. There is no doubt that he means those admonitions by which men are roused to caution, lest they should perish through any error or thoughtlessness. Hence after God had subjected the Prophet to himself, and commanded him to be a disciple, he appointed him a teacher, because hearing was not sufficient, unless he who had been called to rule the Church should deliver out of his hand what he had received from God. God therefore commands his Prophet to speak, after he had ordered him to hear. But he adds, from me, that the people may understand that God alone is the author of instruction. False teachers, indeed, proudly assume the name of God, as we see in the Papacy that this axiom sounds through it, that the Church is ruled by the Holy Spirit immediately, and therefore that it cannot err: but these two things are to be read conjointly, namely, that he who is appointed a teacher should hear God speaking, and afterwards should admonish in the name of God himself, that is, should profess that he is the minister and witness of God, so that his teaching should not be thought his own. For those who affect the praise of ability, or learning, or eloquence, often obscure the name of God, and therefore although they professed that they had their teaching from God, yet afterwards they speak from themselves: that is, they puff themselves up with vain ostentation, so that the majesty of God does not appear, nor the efficacy of the Spirit in that profane method of teaching. Hence God afterwards imposed a law upon his Prophet, that he should utter nothing but what he had heard: now he adds another clause: that he should admonish the people; but he must admonish them not from himself, but must always have in his mouth that sacred name of God, and show that he is in reality sent from him. For after this manner spake Moses, What am I and my brother Aaron? (Numbers 16:11.) Here we see that Moses spake from God; that is, professed himself to be God's minister, when he bore witness that he was nothing, that he assumed nothing to himself, and acted in nothing by his own peculiar counsel or motion.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since thou condescendest to interest thyself in our salvation, and stirrest up thy servants to be to us instead of eyes, that we may know thy watchfulness over us lest we perish, --- grant, I pray thee, that we may be so roused

by the holy admonitions which flow from thee through their ministry and service, that if we have turned aside from the right way we may speedily return to it, and so go forward in our course, and be endued with such perseverance, that we may at length arrive at the fruition of that blessed rest, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy Son. Amen.

Lecture Tenth.

Ezekiel 3:18

18. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

18. Cum dixero impio, morte morieris, et non admonueris ipsum, et non locutus fueris ad eum, admonendum impium a via sua impia, ad vivificandum ipsum: impius ipsc in iniquitate sua morietur: sanguinem vero ejus e manu tua requiram.

The Prophet is now taught how difficult and dangerous an office he has now to undertake. God had previously laid it down as a law that he should utter nothing of himself: now he adds, that, the watchman is so set over the people that he must render an account of the diligence with which he goes through his watches. It is just as if it had been said that souls were committed to his care and fidelity, so that if they should perish he must undergo punishment before God. But it is better to explain the words --- if when I say to the impious, ``Thou shalt surely die,'' and thou dost not admonish him, and he perish, then from thee will I require his blood In the first place, God confirms what we saw yesterday, that it is not. permitted to any mortal to condemn or absolve at his own discretion. When, therefore, God sends forth his servants, he does not resign that power, for still the supreme authority remains with himself: because there is one lawgiver, as James says, who can save and destroy. (James 4:12; Ezekiel 13:19.) And elsewhere Ezekiel reproves the false prophets, because they keep alive the souls which were dying, and slay the souls not devoted to death. For we know that proud men always tyrannize over the conscience when they take upon themselves the prophetic name, and substitute themselves in the place of God, as their practice is in the Papacy. For the Pope indeed pretends that he does nothing in his own proper name, but meanwhile he claims the prerogative of God, and sits in the temple as an idol, because nothing is more peculiar to God than ruling our minds with celestial doctrine; but the Papists themselves heap on their own comments, and so it comes to pass that they miserably distort and drown their own consciences even to utter destruction. They enact laws according to their pleasure, then they always add the condition, that they must be kept under pain of eternal damnation, or of mortal sin, as they say. This place, then, must be diligently marked, where God claims to himself alone the power and right of condemning: if, says he, when I say to the impious. From this we infer, that all those are sacrilegious who bind consciences with their own laws, decrees, and enactments, enforcing one thing and forbidding another, because they take away from God what here he wishes to be assigned to him, for it is his office alone to pronounce sentence, for Prophets are only his heralds.

Meanwhile those fanatics are to be rejected, who, under pretext of this place,

wish to give license to sin, and assert there is no difference between good and evil, because it is not our duty to condemn. For, properly speaking, we do not assume anything to ourselves when we recite what has proceeded from the mouth of God. God condemns adulterers, thieves, drunkards, murderers, enviers, slanderers, oppressors: if one inveigh against an adulterer, another a thief, a third a drunkard, shall we say that they take upon themselves more than they ought? By no means, because they do not pronounce of themselves as we have said, but God has said it, and they are but witnesses and messengers of his sentence. Yet this moderation must be maintained, not to condemn any one through moroseness, since many immediately abominate whatever displeases them, and cannot be induced to use diligent inquiry. Inquiry, therefore, should precede our sentences; but when God has spoken, then we must follow the rule which was given to the Prophet, if thou hast not admonished him, and spoken for his admonition Here the character which was imposed upon Ezekiel is referred to: for the same duty does not devolve upon private individuals who do not bear the prophetic name. For we must remark that this is not a general declaration which concerns all men at large, but it concerns a Prophet who had already been called to be a watchman: for unless those who sustain such a burden admonish mankind, no excuse remains for them but the necessity of sending an account to God for those who are lost. And the repetition shows that this ought not to be done as a matter of course, but that Prophets ought to be anxious and even zealous in recalling sinners. This clause was clear enough: if thou dost not admonish the wicked after I have spoken: but it is added, and hast not spoken for his admonition This sentence seems to be repeated in vain, but God signifies that. unless the Prophet admonishes sinners, he is not absolved, because he spoke once in passing and uttered but a single word. We should remember that sinners ought to be continually reproved that they may return to the right way. And this is the tendency of Paul's doctrine to Timothy:

``be instant in season and out of season.'' (2 Timothy 4:2.)

For if it had been sufficient to reprove sinners mildly, and afterwards to spare them, Paul would have been content with that courtesy, but he says, we must be urgent on every occasion. The minister of the Church then must not cease to repeat these admonitions, as Paul says elsewhere to the Philippians ---

``I am not weary of repeating the same things to you.''
(Philippians 3:18.)

And we know what he professes in the Acts. (Acts 20:31.) I have not ceased day and night, publicly and privately, to admonish each of you. That perseverance then which Paul shows that he used is here enjoined on all the Prophets and servants of God.

He says, to urge him to turn from his evil way, that is, to be cautious; as it was said yesterday, {זהר}, zeher, means to be cautious; here it is taken actively --- unless thou hast spoken, that thou mayest teach him to be cautious, or to return from his evil way Here it may be asked, why does God touch only on one side of the teaching, and omit the chief point? For why was the law given? and why were Prophets called forth, unless to collect the people for God? Here we must exercise the obedience of faith,

since we know that God regards nothing as more important than uniting miserable men in the hope of eternal life. This is the chief end of the law and the gospel, that men being reconciled to God, may worship him as a Father. Chastisements, threats, and terrors follow afterwards, of which now there is only the mention; but we must consider the condition of the people, as we have already seen it; for at that time the prevalence of impiety, and contempt of God, and of all kinds of wickedness, was so great, that the Prophet could not address the people mildly and softly. Since, indeed, that passage of Paul must be remembered, (1 Corinthians 4:21,) what will ye? how shall I come to you? with a rod, or in the spirit of mildness? When he gives the Corinthians the choice, whether they wish him to come in a spirit of tenderness, or armed with a rod for their chastisement --- and why? For when they were self-satisfied with their sins, Paul could not, according to his custom, treat them as sons, nor deal freely with them, but he was compelled to assume, as it were, another character, and to use pure austerity and rigor. Such, then, were the Israelites, and hence we cannot feel surprise that God should lay aside his pity, his promises of favor, and whatever is sweet and pleasant to men; for they were not in a fit state to hear the paternal voice of God, unless previously subdued; and this could not be done without violence, because of their exceeding perverseness.

Hence we must remark, that the more displeasing the Prophets' embassy, the greater need they had of excitements; because, if the grace of God only is to be set before a people, and the hope of eternal life to be held out to them, since there is nothing in such teaching which greatly offends them, or embitters their feelings, hence it is easy to offer freely messages of this kind. But when men are to be summoned, or rather dragged, to the tribunal of God, when they are to be frightened by the fear of eternal death, when the minister, in the armory of God, as Paul says, (2 Corinthians 10:5-7,) brings his vengeance before mankind, because offense is thus stirred up, and this sometimes instigates men to fury, because, they cannot bear thus to be pressed home with the word of God; hence it is necessary that Prophets themselves should be animated, lest they fail, or even hesitate in their duty. Now, therefore, we understand why God speaks only of his own threats and terrors, for he mingles no taste of pity, because, in truth, the Israelites were not capable of profiting by any mildness, so that the Prophet would never have dared to discharge his duty so courageously unless this threat had been added. In other places we shall see the Prophet as God's ambassador, for reconciling the miserable exiles to God; for he will bring forward many testimonies concerning the reign of Christ, and the restoration of the Church, and will herald the mercy and pardon of God; but before he can utter any message of grace, he must himself contend with the extreme obstinacy of the people. Hence it is, therefore, that God only can say, that the impious must be admonished, that they may return from their impiety

It is added, to give them life; and this may seem absurd, because all hope of repentance was taken away beforehand; they are a rebellious house and a bitter one, thou wilt not profit them. (Ezekiel 2:5, 6, 8.) But it now seems that the fruit of his labor is promised, when mention is made of the life of those who, when admonished, shall repent. But in the first place we must remember, that some individuals always

are curable, even if the whole body of the people appears desperate. For God, when he previously said that all the Israelites were rebellious and intractable, referred to the body at large, but as he is accustomed to preserve some small seed, there were a few remaining in that people who might be converted by the Prophet's labor. This is one point. Besides, we must remember, even if no success from labor appears, yet it ought to satisfy us, just as if we had succeeded better and according to our wishes. For example, suppose our duty to be with the impious multitude, where-ever we turn our eyes contempt of God meets us, and even such wickedness, that we seem to lose all our pains. But yet, whilst the sin of the people affords us only materials for despair, we ought, nevertheless, to pursue our course, just as if the seed sown were producing fruit. Although, therefore, Ezekiel had heard from God's mouth that the people would be rebellious, yet he ought to spend his labors for God quite as much as if he either perceived or hoped for some good result. In the meantime, what I have touched upon must be borne in mind, namely, that God always has some seed as a remnant, although the people as a whole may be lapsed into impiety.

It is now added, the impious man shall die in his impiety, but I will require his blood at thy hand. God here says, that he had called his servant under this condition, that he must render an account if any one perished through his fault. This place, although I have lately touched upon the subject, shows how dangerous an office those sustain who are called to the duty of teaching. Nothing is more precious to God than souls which he has created after his own image, and of which he is both the Redeemer and Father. Since, therefore, our souls and their salvation are so dear to God, hence we infer, how anxiously Prophets and all pastors ought to discharge their duties; for it is just as if God were to commit souls to their care, under this condition of rendering an account of each. Nor is it sufficient to admonish one and another, for unless they had endeavored to recall all from destruction to life and salvation, we hear what God here pronounces. Hence, also, Paul uses this expression, woe is me if I preach not the gospel, for a necessity is laid upon me. (1 Corinthians 9:16.) In fine, that the Prophet may be roused to undertake his office, God here announces that certain penalties hang over him, unless he diligently endeavor to recall all wanderers into the way of salvation. But, because men think that their ignorance will prove a sufficient defense, this cavil is removed, because God says they shall perish, although they were not admonished. This exception is added advisedly, that men may not flatter themselves, and throw the blame upon their pastors, if they perish in error. Although, therefore, any one has not been admonished, yet he shall die, and although the pastor shall render an account of his negligence, and shall spare himself while doing so, yet he shall have no excuse before God. Now we perceive that negligence in Prophets and pastors is allied to perfidy, when they knowingly and willingly permit souls to perish through their own silence: meanwhile, it is not surprising if God adjudges to death those who are not admonished: for their conscience is a sufficient accuser, and however they may now defend their error and ignorance, it is certain that they perish of their own accord. Afterwards it follows ---

Ezekiel 3:19

19. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his

wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

19. Et tu si (quod st) admonueris impium et non fuerit conversus ab impietate sua, a via sua impia, ipse in sua iniquitate morietur: tu vero animam tuam liberasti.

The Prophet is here taught how usefully he will lay out his labor, although he should appear to fail, for he ought to be satisfied with this alone, that God approves his efforts. Although, therefore, those who were to be brought back by holy exhortations remain obstinate, yet God's servants ought not, through fastidiousness, to throw up their commission as if it were useless, for they free their own souls. It has been formerly said, that a necessity was imposed upon them, but if they are dumb dogs the destruction of souls will be imputed to them, but when they have executed their duty and satisfied the Almighty, ought not it to suffice them to be absolved in his opinion? We see then, that the Prophet was animated by this consolation, lest he should be weary of admonishing abandoned and obstinate men, because, if they were not profited by his teaching, yet its fruit should return to himself. That expression of Christ's is well known, ``Into whatsoever house ye enter, salute it: if the house be unworthy, your blessing shall return to yourselves.'' (Matthew 10:12, 13; Luke 10:5, 6.) So also when the Prophets anxiously desired to reclaim the wandering sheep and to collect them within the fold, if they experienced such petulance that their labor did not profit them, yet their usefulness shall return to themselves. Now we understand the counsel of God in these words, Thou, therefore, hast freed thy soul. Here he does not put impiety only, but impious way, for the sake of explanation: unless any one had rather distinguish that impiety is the interior wickedness of the heart, but an impious way is the outward life and comprehends all actions, which is perhaps more probable, although there is no reason to object to add impious way as an explanation after the mention of impiety. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 3:20

20. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

20. Et si justus aversus fuerit a justitia sua, et fecerit iniquitatem, et posuero offendiculum coram facie ejus, [79] ipse morietur; quia non admonueris, in scelere suo morietur, et in memoriam non venient justitiae ejus, quia (quas) fecit, sanguinem vero ejus e manu tua requiram.

Here God adds another part of duty which is incumbent on all Prophets. For they are first sent to bring back into the way those who had been alienated from God, then to retain those who are already within the flock, and to lead those onward to the goal who have already entered upon the course. We see, therefore, that Prophets ought to be occupied with both duties, so that they may not only recall to their obedience to God those who wander after their own lusts, but also confirm those who are, of their own accord, teachable already, and encourage them to persevere, and prevent them from failing away. Hence, after God has spoken concerning the correction of sinners who had strayed, he now adds another member. If, says he, the righteous

[79] Or, "and then I shall put a stumblingblock before his face." — Calvin.

man be turned aside from his righteousness, and thou hast not admonished him, he shall ate, and I will require his blood at thy hand Where in effect God signifies, that Prophets are guilty, not only if they do not exhort those who have withdrawn from the right way to retrace their steps, but also if they do not retain within their duty those who have already entered upon the right course. We must then have two objects in view, to recall those who have fallen into various errors, and to take care that those within the fold should not fall away, but be strengthened in perseverance. Hence it is now added, If the righteous shall turn aside, he indeed shall die, but his blood will I require

Here it may be asked, how can the just turn aside, since there is no righteousness without the spirit of regeneration But the seed of the Spirit is incorruptible, (1 Peter 1:23,) nor can it ever happen that his grace is utterly extinguished; for the Spirit, is the earnest and seal of our adoption, for God's adoption is without repentance, as Paul says. (Romans 11:29.) Hence it may seem absurd to say, that the just recedes and turns aside from the right way. That passage of John is well known --- if they had been of us, they had remained with us, (1 John 2:19,) but because they have departed, that falling away proves sufficiently that they were never ours. But we must here mark, that righteousness is here called so:, which has only the outward appearance and not the root: for when once the spirit of regeneration begins to flourish, as I have said, it remains perpetually. And we shall sometimes see men borne along with a wonderful ardor of zeal for the worship of God, and to be urged to promote his glory beyond even the very best men; indeed we shall see this, but, says Paul, God knows those who are his own. (2 Timothy 2:19.) Hence it is not wonderful that God under the name of righteousness here commends virtues which deserve praise before men, even if they do not spring from a pure fountain. Thus we see it. often happens that the righteous are alienated, and turn aside from the right way. This passage, then, ought to stir us up to seek from God continually a spirit of perseverance, because such is our propensity to sin, that we immediately flow in different directions like water, unless God strengthen us. When therefore we see the righteous themselves depart from the way, let us lead and become sure of the constancy of our own faith, only let our confidence be founded on the help of the Holy Spirit and not in ourselves. In the meantime, we see that Christ did not pronounce this passage in vain: Happy are those who persevere unto the end, (Matthew 24:13,) because many fall away in the midst of their course, or reversing their steps, turn their backs upon God.

Now we must carefully remark what follows, his righteousness shall not be remembered, because some desire to bargain with God, so that if for a time they enter upon the pursuit of piety, that may be taken into account and avail in their favor. But we hear what God pronounces, all their righteousness shall not be remembered in the case of backsliders There is no encouragement to flatter ourselves into sloth and security, when God shows that unless we continue to the end, even the goal of our career, whatever else we attain unto, it is useless. He says, as clearly as words will express it, if he shall fall away, or recede, or turn aside from his righteousness and shall commit iniquity We must mark this diligently, because we know that the very

best men often fall away; but here a falling away is intended, where any one casts himself headlong on impiety: hence to commit iniquity is to give oneself up entirely to impiety; as when John says, that those who are born again of the Spirit of God do not commit sin, (1 John 3:9,) he means, are not addicted to sin, even if as yet they dwell among many infirmities and failings: as also Paul says, that sin dwells in us, but does not reign. (Romans 6:12.) Hence to commit sin is to give oneself up to sin. But God says, I will place, or for placing, or if I shall have placed, a stumblingblock before his face Punishment is here called a stumblingblock, when God demonstrates his vengeance against apostates. Although a stumblingblock may also be called actual admonition, as the phrase is; but because that is too far-fetched, I receive it simply, if the righteous shall have turned aside: but I shall have rendered the reward which he deserved, he shall die, because thou hast not admonished him: in his unrighteousness shall he die: thus I point it off, for interpreters seem to me improperly to have mingled together --- he shall die, and --- he shall die in his iniquity. Now that threat which we have seen is repeated, namely, that all prophets who have deserted their office are guilty before God, because their sloth differs little from perfidy: for God considered them worthy of the greatest honor, since he committed souls to them, which, as we have said, he esteems so dear and precious. But if they reject this trust committed to them, we see that they not only act injuriously to man, but are also ungrateful to God; and their sluggishness is not only united with perfidy, but also with sacrilege, because they permit Satan to snatch from God what was his own. Just as if any watchman should desert his post and betray it to the enemy; because when they see some wander and others desert, it is clear that this does not arise from ignorance, as we have said, but to the snares of Satan and lust are those exposed whom Christ has redeemed with his blood: hence as we have said, this their treachery is without excuse.

PRAYER,

O Almighty God, grant, that as thou dost appoint the ministers of thy doctrine, whom thou dost raise up, watchmen over us on this condition, that they be vigilant for our safety, --- grant that we also may be attentive to their instructions, and avoid a double destruction through our own fault, by error and obstinacy; but if we should happen to wander, may we be wise again immediately we are blamed, and so return into the right way, as never to desert it again, but persevere unto the end, that we may at length enjoy that eternal blessedness which is laid up for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Eleventh.

Ezekiel 3:21

21. Nevertheless, if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.

21. Et tu si ipsum admonueris nempe justum ne peccet justus, et ipse non peccaverit, vivendo vivet, quia admonitus fuit: tu vero animam tuam liberasti.

We saw in our last lecture that the office of pastors is twofold, that they collect the dispersed sheep, and retain within the fold those whom they had gathered together.

For as man's nature is inclined to many failures, it often happens that those who have been gathered into God's sheepfold are dispersed hither and thither, through their own infirmity, unless they are strengthened. For this reason constant admonitions are necessary; and hence God asserts that those pastors will be guilty, if though their negligence the righteous fall away. He now pursues the same sentiment, but adds another clause --- but if the righteous is admonished the shepherd is guiltless The whole meaning is this, because Ezekiel had been called to the office of teaching, he ought to be intent in recalling into the way those who have erred, and also in retaining others. In the meanwhile we must observe, that those who seem to have entered on the right way are daily subject to error, unless God retains them by his servants, and urges them to go forward. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 3:22-23

22. And the hand of the LORD was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee.

22. Et fuit super me illic marius Iehovae et dixit mihi, surge et egredere in planiciem, et illic loquar tecum.

23. Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and, behold, the glory of the LORD stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river of Chebar: and I fell on my face.

23. Et surrexi, et egressus sum in planiciem: et ecce illic gloria Iehovae stetit stans sicuti gloria quam conspexeram super flumen Chebar: et cecidi in faciem meam.

God seems in some way to play with his Prophet, when he sends him about, and apparently changes his plan. For the duty of teaching was previously imposed upon the holy man, but now he is commanded to go abroad, and afterwards God orders him to shut himself up at home. Hence this variety seems like a change of plan, when God first commands his servant to speak, and afterwards to be silent. But it is by no means doubtful that, by this method, the authority of the Prophet was confirmed, when God evidently governed his tongue, whether for speech or silence. For although he was created a teacher, yet he restrained himself till God should suggest what he was to say. Afterwards he was ordered to be silent, and obeyed God; then when God dictated words, and commanded him to go forth in public, he began to discharge his office. Now, if he had begun to speak directly upon his appointment, too great levity might be objected against him; but when he showed his alacrity, and yet remained silent during God's pleasure, greater weight was added to his teaching.

Now we understand to what purpose the hand of God was upon him By the hand of God his power is understood; for that exposition is cold, as I have before observed, which interprets the hand of God as the prophetic office. He perceives, then, that he was impelled by the secret virtue of God. Lastly, the hand of God is nothing else but the agitation of the Spirit, since the Prophet felt that he was not carried forward by human power, or by any arbitrary impulse, tie says, therefore, the hand of Jehovah was upon me, and he said to me arise, and go forth to the plain, that I may speak there with thee. Ezekiel could not but suppose that he was led forth to proclaim immediately God's commands to the people. But in this opinion he was mistaken, because, as we shall see, he was brought forth into the midst that he should immediately shut himself up at home. But before he says this, he says that

he went forth We see hove submissive he was whenever God sent him. And this is worthy of notice, because unless God's calling please us, and our sense approve [80] it, we fly back, or at least put it off. But the Prophet had a just excuse, according to human judgment, for turning his back with some color of reason; for God had often addressed him already, and as yet without fruit. But now, although he is hitherto held in suspense, yet God does not pronounce what he wishes him to do; yet he goes out into the plain, because God commanded him. We are taught by this example, even if the result of things is hidden from us, that as soon as God issues any command, we must obey, even if our senses refuse, yet we ought so to obey him as to follow whenever he calls, even if our doing it seems not only in vain, but ridiculous. But God did not address him in vain when he appeared in his glory, for the appearance of the glory of God ought to satisfy a holy man, although all other things should fail. He saw the glory of God, as it were, near the river Chebar; whence we gather, that. the vision was not fixed to any definite place. God, therefore, appeared once above the bank of the river to his servant, and then in the plain. As to his saying he fell on his face, I have previously explained what he means. It must necessarily happen that the faithful, who are impressed with a serious fear of God, should dread his appearance. The impious, also, are compelled to fear God, but afterwards they grow hardened, and although they are rendered almost lifeless, the stupor which follows extinguishes all sensation. But the fear which the faithful feel from the appearance of God is joined with reverence. Thus also Ezekiel fell on his face, so as not to rise again until the Spirit raised him up, as it follows afterwards.

Ezekiel 3:24

24. Then the spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thine house.

24. Et venit in me spiritus, et statuit me supra pedes meos, et locutus est mecum, et dixit mihi, Vade occludere in medio domus tuae. [81]

Here Ezekiel confirms what I have said: whenever the faithful are frightened at the sight of God's glory, they cannot collect their mind unless the Lord prop them up by his strength. But this state was peculiar to the Prophet, because he ought to acknowledge himself, as it were, dead when he felt the Spirit of God living and flourishing in his mind. Therefore this tends to confirm him, because the Spirit restored him from a state of death to life: therefore he says, the Spirit came In fine, as the soul gives life to the man, so the Spirit of God is a supernatural life in man. We live after the manner of men, because a virtue is implanted in our soul which has faculties of its own. For in the soul is the seat of intelligence, and the will, and the sensations, and it diffuses its vigor through all the members. But the life which souls breathe into bodies is only earthly, but the Spirit of God gives life supernaturally. And this distinction must be held, because profane men boast only in outward appearances, as they call it --- that is, in outward splendor, which is nothing else but a mask: and so with all their might they celebrate free-will and our natural faculties, because they have never tasted what that supernatural life is which is here mentioned. Ezekiel

[80] Calvin's Latin — "Quia nisi nobis arrideat Dei vocatio, et sensus noster subscribat." The French is — Pource que si la vocation de Dieu ne nons vient a gre, et que nostre sens l'approuve.

[81] That is, "within thy house." — Calvin.

indeed was filled with the Spirit of God after a peculiar manner, that he might be fit to undertake the prophetic office, but this is common to the faithful for their spiritual life.

He says next, that he was placed upon his feet, because he was lying prostrate, nor could he, as I have said, raise a finger, unless he had been raised by divine power. Afterwards he relates the command of God, which appears to be absurd. For why did God appoint Ezekiel a Prophet unless that he should apply himself to the office of teaching? But now he orders him not only to rest, but even to he concealed at home. He uses the word ``concealed'' as if he had said, remain at home as a captive. If he had been a private man, he had enjoyed a free passage out, but now since God enjoins upon him the prophetic office, he is held captive. But all this is opposed to his mission. But first, God wished to prove the obedience of his servant; then he wished specially to confirm his calling more and more, for this was no common confirmation, because although the Prophet excelled in singular virtue, yet he did not leap into the midst, but rested at home, and became a voluntary captive, because it so pleased God. Hence the whole people might know that the Prophet did not proceed rashly, or by any sudden impulse, because he was often mute by the command of God. Afterwards it follows ---

Ezekiel 3:25-26

25. But thou, O son of man, behold, they shall put bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them:

25. Et nunc, Fili hominis, ecce posuerunt super to vincula, [82] et ligabunt to illis, [83] ideo non egredieris in medium ipsorum:

26. And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover: for they are a rebellious house.

26. Et linguam tuam adhaerere faciam palato tuo, et obmutesces, et non eris illis in virum coarguentem [84] quia domus rebellionis [85] sunt.

Now God explains the reason why he wishes the Prophet to cease for a time, and to remain at home as if dumb. They have placed, said he, ropes upon thee with which they may bind thee. The opinion of those who take the passage metaphorically is not unsuitable, as if it had been said, the perverseness of the people hinders Ezekiel in the discharge of his duty, just as if he had been bound with ropes.

To make this clearer, we may call to mind what Paul says to the Corinthians, (2 Corinthians 6:11,) namely, that he was held in bondage, because his teaching could not find access to them, nor penetrate to their souls. ``Our mouth,'' says he, ``is open towards you, O Corinthians! Our heart is enlarged towards you:'' that is, as far as lieth in me, I am prepared faithfully to spend my labors upon you: but your bowels are straitened. Since therefore men, by their own depravity, hinder the course of doctrine, by reducing the servants of God to straits, it is quite consistent to represent the malice of those who are not teachable to be like ropes by which faithful teachers are bound, so that they cannot proceed freely in the course of their duty. If any one,

[82] {,{עבותים gnebuthim, ``ropes,'' ``twisted and perplexed ropes.'' --- Calvin.

[83] That is, “with which they bind thee.” — Calvin.

[84] “One who reproves;” — “Qui les repreuve;” — Fr. “vel Corripientem.” — Calvin.

[85] Or, “of bitterness.” — Calvin.

however, prefers taking what is here said strictly and literally, the sentence must thus be understood, that the Israelites were not as yet prepared for instruction, because if the Prophet shall utter God's commands immediately, they would be like the furious who would lay hands upon him and bind him with ropes. This sense also is very appropriate, and hence we may choose freely between them. But as to the general purport, God's intention is by no means obscure, namely, that the Prophet ought not to take it ill, if he be for a time apparently useless without obtaining either hearers or fit disciples. We see then that this is said for the Prophet's comfort, that he should not murmur or take it ill that God wishes him 'to remain shut up at home; because the fit time had not yet come, as if it had been said --- ``If you hasten now, you will approach furious men who will by and bye rush against you and bind you with ropes. Because, therefore, you see them not yet prepared for learning, wait a while until I prepare their ears for you, that they may attend to you; or at least, that they may be rendered the more excuseless, I will send thee; and meanwhile, although they are as yet perverse, yet they cannot rise violently against thee, but whether they will or not, they shall be compelled to hear the commands which proceed from my mouth.'' And he afterwards confirms this at length, as we shall see.

But he now adds, I will fix thy tongue to thy palate --- or I will make thy tongue adhere to thy palate --- so that thou shalt not be to them a reprover, because they are a rebellious house What God ascribed to the Israelites he now transfers to himself. He had said, They will bind thee with ropes: he now says, I will make thy tongue cleave to thy palate But these two things are easily reconciled, because in truth the Israelites rejected prophecies through their intemperance, and God thus deprived them of this benefit, because he saw they were unworthy of it. But this place shows that it is a sign of God's vengeance, when all prophecies cease, and opportunity for hearing is taken away. For as God shines upon us by his instruction, and we have thereby a certain pledge of his fatherly grace and favor, so also when instruction is removed, it is just as if God hid his face, nay, even turned his back upon us. We must consider, therefore, what is here said --- because the house of Israel was rebellious: hence the Prophet was dumb, and refrained from teaching those impious ones. God therefore desists, when he sees that he is dealing with the stupid and deaf; but. not on the first occasion of their wearying him, because he rather contends with man's ingratitude, and never ceases, as we see in Jeremiah, to rise in the morning, and to keep watch even while it is yet night; (Jeremiah 7:2; Jeremiah 11:7; Jeremiah 35:14; Psalm 74:9;) he never ceases to call to himself even those who are slow and sluggish, nay, even the utterly rebellious: but at length, when he sees that he does not succeed by long-suffering, he takes away his instruction, as we have said. And therefore the Church complains that it is destitute of Prophets, and places that slaughter among the extreme signs of God's anger: ``We do not see our signs, and Prophets do not appear among us.'' In this way they understand that they are alienated from God, and that no consolation remains to them, when God does not give them any taste of his goodness by Prophets. The ungodly indeed wish this, because nothing is more troublesome to them than to hear God continually exclaiming. Hence, as far as they can, they seek hiding-places, and think nothing better for themselves than to be

torpid amidst their vices, and to be deaf to every voice of reproach; but yet nothing is more destructive to them, because God offers himself as a physician who cures our diseases, while he exhorts us to wisdom. But when he is silent, he deserts us as if abandoned to de-st, ruction, and hence I said that nothing is more destructive than when no reproach sounds in our ears, but we are sweetly flattered, because in this way Satan deprives us of our senses, and this is his final poisoning, when he so soothes us with his blandishments, that all reproach which may alarm our security altogether ceases. Now it follows: ---

Ezekiel 3:27

27. But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house.

27. Et quum locutus fuero, et aperuero os tuum: [86] tunc dices ad eos, sic dicit Dominator Iehovah: qui audit audiat: et qui desistit desistat: quia domus rebellionis sunt.

After a silence, God shows by what commands he wishes to instruct his servant, namely, by such as would exasperate the people, as we have formerly seen. His embassy therefore was hateful, since the Prophet begins with this insult --- ``If ye wish to hear, hear; but if not, I am not concerned.'' Those who are sent as ambassadors are usually ordered to try whether they can conciliate, by courteous and friendly discourse, those with whom they have to deal. But God here follows a method completely the contrary. For what is the meaning of these words, He who hears, let him hear: he who desists, let him, desist? namely, that the Israelites may understand that the Prophet was sent to them, not because there was any hope of their becoming wise again, since they had borne witness by experiments sufficiently numerous that they were altogether desperate: but the Lord sends the Prophet, that he may strike and wound them further, and at length inflict a deadly blow. Now, therefore, we see that confirmed which the Prophet previously brought forward, that the office of teaching was enjoined upon him, not because his labor would be useful and fruitful with reference to the common people, but that he might inflame the Israelites to madness, if they were unwilling to grow wise again, that he might break them if they would not bend, and if they rejected him, that he should accuse them before God, who would be their judge, and in the meanwhile the course of Prophetic teaching would be free, however pertinaciously they might resist it. Now we understand the intention of the Prophet. Hence also we collect what I have lately touched upon: that God deals with the reprobate in various ways. Sometimes he makes it doubtful whether they be curable, and destines Prophets for them, who should exhort them to repentance. But when he sees them in their ingratitude burying all the light, then he deprives them of all doctrine; afterwards it shines forth again: at length other and denser darkness succeeds: therefore let us hasten, as long as the doctrine of salvation shines upon us, lest God darken all our minds and senses, and deprive us of that singular benefit, when the image of his paternal favor is engraven on us, as

[86] Thus I interpret it: verbally "I will open thy mouth," but I read in one context — "when I shall have spoken to thee, and shall have opened thy mouth." — Calvin.

we have said. Let us go on ---

Ezekiel 4

CHAPTER 4

Ezekiel 4:1-3

1. Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and pourtray upon it the city, even Jerusalem:

1. Et tu, Fili hominis, sume tibi laterem, et pone ipsum coram facie tua, et pinge super ipsum urbem, nempe Hierosolymam:

2. And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set battering rams against it round about.

2. Et pone contra eam obsidionem, et extrue contra eam turrim, et funde adversus eam aggerem, et pone adversus eam castra, et statue contra eam arietes in circuitu.

3. Moreover take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city: and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel.

3. Et tu sume tibi patenam vel sartaginem ferream, et pone illam murum ferreum inter to et inter urbem: et obfirma faciem tuam adversus eam vel contra ex opposito, et sit in obsidionem, et obsidebis eam. Hoe signum domui Israel.

Here God begins to speak more openly by means of his servant, and not to speak only, but to signify by an outward symbol what he wishes to be uttered by his mouth. Hence he orders the Prophet to paint Jerusalem on a brick Take therefore, he says, a brick, and place it in thy sight: then paint on it a city, even Jerusalem This is one command: then erect a tower against it. He describes the form of ancient warfare; for then when they wished to besiege cities, they erected mounds from which they filled up trenches: then they moved about wooden towers, so that they might collect the soldiers into close bands, and they had other machines which are not now in use. For fire-arms took away that ancient art of warfare. But God here Simply wishes the picture of a city to be besieged by Ezekiel. Then he orders him to set up a pan

or iron plate, like a wall of iron This had been a childish spectacle, unless God had commanded the Prophet to act so. And hence we infer, that sacraments cannot be distinguished from empty shows, unless by the word of God. The authority of God therefore is the mark of distinction, by which sacraments excel, and have their weight and dignity, and whatever men mingle with them is frivolous. For this reason we say that all the pomps of which the Papal religion is full are mere trifles. Why so? because men have thought out whatever dazzles the eyes of the simple, without any command of God.

But if any one now objects, that the water in baptism cannot penetrate as far as the soul, so as to purge it of inward and hidden filth, we have this ready answer: baptism ought not to be considered in its external aspect only, but its author must be considered. Thus the whole worship under the law had nothing very different from the ceremonies of the Gentiles. Thus the profane Gentiles also slew their victims, and had whatever outward splendor could be desired: but that was entirely futile, because God had not commanded it. On the other hand, nothing was useless among the Jews. When they brought their victims, when the blood was sprinkled, when they performed ablutions, God's command was added, and afterwards a promise: and so these ceremonies were not without their use. We must therefore hold, that sacraments at first sight appear trifling and of no moment, but their efficacy consists in the command and promise of God. For if any one reads what Ezekiel here relates, he would say that it, was child's play. He took a brick, he painted a city on it: it was only a figment: then he had imaginary machines by which he besieged the city: why boys do better than this: next he set up a plate of iron like a wall: this action is not a whit more serious than the former. Thus profane men would not only despise, but even carp at this symbol. But when God sends his Prophet, his authority should be sufficient for us, which is a certain test for our decision, and cannot fail, as I have said. First, he says, paint a city, namely Jerusalem: then lay siege to it, and move towards it all warlike instruments: place even {כרים}, kerim, which some interpret ``leaders,'' but they are ``lambs,'' or ``rams,'' for the Hebrews metaphorically name those iron machines by which walls are thrown down ``rams,'' as the Latins do. Some indeed prefer the rendering ``leaders,'' but I do not approve of their opinion. At length he says, this shall be a sign and on this clause we must dwell: for, as I already said, the whole description may be thought useless, unless this testimony be added: indeed the whole vision would be insipid by itself, unless the savor arose from this seasoning, since God says, this should be a sign to the Israelites.

When God pronounces that the Prophet should do nothing in vain, this ought to be sufficient to lead us to acquiesce in his word. If we then dispute according to our sense, he will show that what seems foolish overcomes all the wisdom of the world, as Paul says. (1 Corinthians 1:25.) For God sometimes works as if by means of folly: that is, he has methods of action which are extraordinary, and by no means in accordance with human judgment. But that this folly of God may excel all the wisdom of the world, let this sentence occur to our minds, when it is here said, Let this be for a sign to the house of Israel. For although the Israelites could shake their heads, and put out their tongues, and treat the Prophet with unbridled insolence,

yet this alone prevailed sufficiently for confounding them, that God said, this shall be for a sign And we know of what event it was a sign, because the Israelites who had been drawn into captivity thought they had been too easy, and grieved at their obedience: then also envy crept in when they saw the rest of the people remaining in the city. Therefore God meets them and shows them that exile is more tolerable than to endure a siege in the city if they were enclosed in it. Besides, there is little doubt that this prophecy was directed against the Jews who pleased themselves, because they were yet at ease in their rest. For this reason, therefore, God orders the Prophet to erect towers, then to pitch a camp, and to prepare whatever belongs to the siege of a city, because very soon afterwards the Chaldeans would arrive, who had not yet oppressed the city, but are just about to besiege it, as we shall afterwards see at length.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since thou so graciously invitest us to thee, and ceasest not, even if we are deaf, to continue towards us the same goodness --- that at length we may be disciplined to obedience and permit ourselves to be ruled by thy word: grant also that we may obey not only for a single day or a short period, but perseveringly, until at the final close of life's journey we may be gathered at length to thy celestial repose, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture twelfth

Ezekiel 4:4-8

4. Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity.

4. Et tu cuba super latus tuum sinistrum, et pone iniquitatem domus Israel super illud; pro numero dierum quibus eubabis super illud, portabis iniquitatem ipsorum

5. For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.

5. Et (pro nam) ego dedi tibi [87] annos iniquitatis ipsorum ad numerum dierum, trecenti et nonaginta dies, [88] et portabis iniquitatem domus Israel.

6. And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year.

6. Et cum finieris eos dies, tune eubabis super latus tuum dextrum secundo: et portabis iniquitatem domus Iehudah quadraginta diebus, diem pro anno, diem pro anno constitui tibi. [89]

7. Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thine arm shall be uncovered, and thou shalt prophesy against it.

7. Et ad obsidionem Ierusalem diriges [90] faciem: et brachium tuum nudatum (erit), et prophetabis contra eam.

[87] Or, "I have appointed thee." — Calvin.

[88] "They shall be" is understood. — Calvin.

[89] "I shall now go on with the whole context." — Calvin

[90] Or, "station," for {,ken{ɒ signifies either. --- Calvin.

8. And, behold, I will lay bands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another, till thou hast ended the days of thy siege.

8. Et ecce posui super to funes, et non vertes to a latere tuo ad latus tuum, usque dum compleveris dies obsidionum tuarum.

We must first consider the scope of this prophecy, and we shall then discuss more conveniently its separate parts. It is not doubtful that God wished to oppose the pride of the people, for they thought themselves punished more severely than they deserved. And this is customary with hypocrites, because while they dare not acquit themselves altogether, they yet murmur as if God afflicted them too severely, then they willingly offer something in compensation that they may free themselves from punishment. For although they confess themselves guilty, yet they do not cease to turn aside, and think if God descends to equity with them, that either they will escape, or at least be less miserable. Such was the disposition of the ancient people, as is well known. We now only need to repeat what we have said before: that the Jews were more obstinate because God had spared them. Nor did they think this only temporary, but they exulted with great freedom, as if they had settled all their business with God. Meanwhile the exiles were constantly complaining, first, that God had treated them so severely, and yet had in clemency pardoned the Jews: then they thought that they had been deceived, and that if they had prudently attended to their own affairs they could have escaped the miseries by which they were oppressed. Now, therefore, Ezekiel is ordered to come forward into the midst of them, and shortly to show that no other result is possible but that the whole people should receive the reward of their wickedness. But because simple teaching was not sufficient to stir them up, a vision is added, and to this end the Prophet is ordered to lie on one side for three hundred and ninety days, and on the other side forty days. Now the interpretation is added, that days are taken for so many years But the meaning is, that the people through three hundred and ninety years carried on war with God, because they had never ceased from sin. Hence the Prophet is ordered to take upon him the iniquity of so many years: but God appointed him days for years, then forty years are added which belong to the people of Judah.

This place is variously twisted by interpreters. I will not refer to all their comments, for they have fatigued themselves in vain by inventing arguments which vanish of their own accord: I will not spend the time in refuting them, but will only endeavor to elicit the genuine sense. Some extend the name of Israel to the whole body of the people, but this must be rejected; for they begin the three hundred and ninety years from the first revolt, of which mention is made in the Book of Judges, (Judges 2:2,) and they gather together those years during which the Israelites often fell into impiety: hence they reckon the three hundred and ninety years, and subtract those periods in which religion and the pure worship of God flourished, as under Gideon, under Samson for some time, and under David and Solomon. They subtract then those years in which piety flourished among the people, and the remainder reaches about three hundred and ninety years. But it would be absurd to include the tribe of Judah under the name of Israel, when a comparison between each kingdom is made. We know, indeed, that all the posterity of Abraham were so named by their father

Jacob, when, therefore, the name of Israel is put, the twelve or thirteen tribes are comprehended without exception; but when there is comparison, Israel signifies only the ten tribes, or that adulterous kingdom which set up Jeroboam as king after the death of Solomon. (1 Kings 12:20.) Since, then, both Israel and Judah are treated of here, it is by no means suitable that the prophecy should speak of the whole people, and mix the tribe of Judah with the rest. Then the event itself dispels many clouds and takes away all room for controversy: for if we number the years from the revolt in Rehoboam's time, we shall find three hundred and ninety years till the siege of Jerusalem. What then can be easier, and what room is there for conjectures? I wonder that Jerome, since he relates nothing but mere trifles, yet boasts of some wonderful wisdom; for he says, he did not do it for the sake of boasting, and truly he has little cause for it; for if any one will read his Commentary, he will find nothing but what is puerile. (1 Kings 12:28.) But, as I have already said, since the name of Israel everywhere signifies the ten tribes, this interpretation is best here: namely, that the obstinacy of the ten tribes was continued through three hundred and ninety years. For, as is sufficiently, known, Jeroboam erected two altars, that he might turn away the people from the worship of God: for he thought himself not sufficiently established in his kingdom, so as to retain the obedience of the people, unless he turned them away from the house of David. Therefore he used that artifice --- thus the worship of God was corrupted among the Israelites. Now by idolatry the Prophet here points out the other sins of the people; for from this fountain flowed all other iniquities. After they had once cut themselves off from God, they became forgetful of the whole law. The Prophet therefore includes all their corruptions under this one expression, since by the edict of their king this people had shaken off the yoke of God, for which Hosea reproaches them. (Hosea 5:11.) We now understand the three hundred and ninety years of Israel's iniquity, because the people then rejected the law, and followed foreign superstitions, which Jeroboam fabricated with no other intention than That; of strengthening the power of his kingdom, just as earthly kings are influenced by no other desire, although they pretend, and even magnificently boast, that they seek God's glory with the utmost devotion, yet their religion is only a delusion; provided only that they retain the people in obedience and duty, any kind of worship, and any mode of worshipping God, is the same to them. Such, therefore, was the cunning of Jeroboam: but his posterity greatly deteriorated, so that the worship of God could never be restored among the Israelites. Circumcision, indeed, remained, in which they imitated what Moses had commanded in the law, but at the same time they had two altars, and those profane ones, instead of one only. At length they did not hesitate openly to adopt the idolatries of the Gentiles: hence they so mixed up God with their inventions, that what even they valued under the pretense of piety, was an abomination to him. This is the reason why God says that the iniquity of the people of Israel has endured for three hundred and ninety years

The difficulty in the second clause is greater, because the computation does not agree exactly. After the death of Josiah we shall only find twenty-two years to the destruction of the city. But we know that this king, of his eminent piety, took care

that God should be sincerely worshipped; for he purged the whole land of all its defilements. Where, then, will be those forty years? Hence it is necessary to take a part of the reign of Manasseh, because then Jerusalem not only revolted from the teaching of the law, but that tyrant cruelly raged against all the Prophets, and the city was defiled by innocent blood. Hence it will be necessary to omit the reign of Josiah, then a part of the reign of Manasseh must be cut off, because he did not immediately relapse into idolatry; but after he grew up, then the worship of God and the examples of his fathers being despised, he turned aside to strange and fictitious worship, though he did not persist in his impiety to the end of his life. Eighteen years, then, must be taken and joined to the two-and-twenty, that the number which the Prophet uses may be made up, unless, perhaps, any one would rather take a part of the reign of Josiah. (2 Kings 22) For although that pious king did his utmost to uphold the worship of God, yet we know that the people of very wickedness strove with the goodness of God. For when the law was found no amendment followed, for the memory of all its doctrine had grown obsolete; but when it was placed before the people they ought to have become new. But so far from those who had been previously alienated from God becoming wise again, they betrayed their obstinacy more and more. Since then, the impiety of the people had been detected, it is not surprising that the people of Judah is said to have sinned for forty years. Certainly this latter explanation pleases me most, because the Prophet refers to continuous years, which followed the captivity of the ten tribes; although I do not reject the other interpretation, because it reckons those years during which Manasseh exercised his tyranny against God's servants, and endeavored as much as he could to abolish his pure worship, and to pollute it with the filth of all the nations. Now, therefore, we understand the forty years of the iniquity of the tribe of Judah.

As to those interpreters who refer the four hundred and thirty years to the siege of the city, as if God's vengeance was thus satisfied, I fear it will not hold good; it seems to me not a suitable explanation; it only signifies that it is not surprising if their enemies besiege the city so long, since they did not cease to provoke God for as many years as the siege continued days. The city was besieged a whole year and two or three months. The beginning of the siege continues to the end of the half year, but it was finished in three or four months, when Pharaoh endeavored to free the Jews, who were then his allies and confederates, by bringing up his army. Then Nebuchadnezzar went forth to meet him, and the city was relieved for a short time. Now if we take three hundred and ninety days, we shall find a whole year at first, that is three hundred and sixty-five years, although then there was an intercalary month, and they had not their year defined as we now have; but yet there will be three hundred and sixty-five days, which make a complete year. The two months will make sixty days, so we shall have four hundred and twenty days. Now a month and a half elapsed before the return of Nebuchadnezzar. Then the computation will amount to four hundred and thirty years. But interpreters are satisfied, because the siege of the city endured to a time which answers to that prescribed to Abraham. For God entered into covenant with Abraham four hundred and thirty years before the promulgation of the law. But I do not see why they are so satisfied with this

resemblance. Nor is this the meaning of our Prophet. When he speaks of a siege he certainly regards especially the destruction of the city. Therefore I do not think that the days of the siege are here enumerated as a just punishment, but only that years are compared with days, that they may determine how long the siege should be, and that the end was not to be, expected until the whole people perished.

Besides, we see as we go on that the Prophet lay on his side three hundred and ninety days; where there is no mention of forty days, and that part seems to be omitted. Yet this remains fixed, because Israel and Judah had been obstinate in their wickedness; hence the city was besieged until it was utterly taken. Now surely the punishment of Israel cannot be considered as consisting in the overthrow of the holy city; for already the ten tribes had migrated from their country, and did not know what was doing at Jerusalem, except by report. Whatever happened their condition was altogether separate from all the miseries of the people, for they were then quiet in exile. As then the Prophet is ordered to bear the iniquity of Israel for three hundred and ninety days, this ought not to be restricted to the siege. God simply means, since so many years had elapsed during which both Israelites and Jews had not ceased to sin, their final destruction was already at hand. But we know that then the kingdom of Judah was extinguished, and exile was to the ten tribes like death. On this account they had perished; nor did the Prophet bear their iniquity as if they were then paying the penalty of their sins. But we know that this is the customary manner of Scripture, because God reckons sins to the third and fourth generation. (Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 5:9.) When, therefore, God wished the ten tribes to be dragged into exile, then he punished them for their wickedness three hundred and ninety years. Afterwards he bore with the city of Jerusalem for a certain time, and endured a similar impiety in that tribe, that he should not utterly blot out the memory of the people. But the Jews did not repent, since we also see by Isaiah comparing them with the Israelites, that they became worse. (Isaiah 18:1, 7, 8 [sic].) Micah reproves them for following the statutes of Omri; (Micah 6:16,) whence it is not surprising if the punishment which they endure should answer to the wickedness in which they had involved themselves. We shall see also that the same subject is repeated by our Prophet in Ezekiel 16.

On the whole then, God wished to show the people that they had abused his forbearance too much and too long, since they did not desist from sinning even to the four hundred and thirtieth year. The Israelites indeed began to turn aside from the true worship of God while the Temple still remained pure, but at length the tribe of Judah, by degenerating, became guilty of the same impiety. Now we understand the intention of the Holy Spirit.

I pass on to the words. Thou, says he, shalt lie upon thy left side We must remark that this was not in reality completed, because Ezekiel did not lie for three hundred and ninety days upon his side, but only by a vision, that he might afterwards relate to the people what God had made manifest. As to the opinion of those commentators who think the ten tribes are meant by the left side, because Samaria was situated to the left hand, I do not think it applicable. I do not doubt that God wished to prefer the tribe of Judah to the kingdom of Israel; for although the ten tribes excelled in the

number, opulence, and strength of men, yet God always made more, of the kingdom of Judah. For here was the seat of David; and the ten tribes were the posterity of Abraham only after the flesh, the promise remained to Jerusalem, and there also the lamp of God shone, as we have said in many places. Hence the right side signifies that dignity with which God wished always to adorn the kingdom of Judah: but the ten tribes are marked by the left side; because, as I have said, they did not enjoy equal glory with the kingdom of Judah, although they are more numerous, more courageous, and more abundant in all good things. It must now be observed that the burden of bearing their iniquity was imposed on the Prophet: not because God transferred to him the iniquity of the people, as some here invent an allegory, and say that the Prophet was a type of Christ, who bore on himself the iniquity of the people. But an expiation is not here described: but we know that God uses his servants for different purposes. So therefore the Prophet on one side is ordered to oppose Jerusalem, as if he were the king of Babylon; hence he sustains the character of king Nebuchadnezzar when he opposes the city of brick, of which we spoke yesterday. Now he sustains other characters, as of the ten tribes and the kingdom of Judah, when he lies upon his left side three hundred and ninety days, and on his right side forty days For this reason also it is said, I have appointed to thee the years of this iniquity, according to then number, of the days, etc; that is, when I order thee to lie on thy right side so many days, I represent to thee years. For it would have been absurd to demand of the Prophet to lie upon one side four centuries, so God accommodates himself in these figures to our standard; and it is contrary to nature that a man should lie for four centuries, and because that is absurd, God changes years into days; and this is the reason why days are said to be substituted for years. Afterwards it is added, when thou shalt have fulfilled those years, then thou shalt afterwards lie upon thy right side, and shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days Here God shows the tribe of Judah, that when it ought to be frightened by the punishment of the kingdom of Israel, it still persisted in its wickedness hence the Jews could not possibly escape the punishment of the Israelites.

It is added, and towards the siege of Jerusalem thou shalt set or establish thy face Either meaning may be received; either directing and ordering, or establishing and strengthening; although the word directing or ordering pleases me better in this place. He had said, indeed, before, thou shalt direct thy face until Jerusalem shall be besieged; but in my opinion God simply here orders his Prophet to be intent on the overthrow of the city. And thine arm shall be made bare; that is, for expedition: for we know that orientals use flowing tunics and long robes, so that they cannot execute any business without putting off their garments. Hence the Prophet is here ordered to make bare his arm, just as if any one should take his coat half off, and throw it over the other side, that he might have one arm free. Such was the dress of the Prophet, but by a vision, as I have said. Afterwards it is added, that thou, shalt prophesy against it Again God repeats what we saw yesterday: for nothing had been colder than that the Prophet should make bare his arm, and direct his face against towards the siege of a painted city. Had the picture been only an empty one, the spectacle might be justly condemned; but God adds the meaning to the

figures, that the prophecy may have more force: as if he had said, I see that these signs are not of themselves of much moment, and you may object to me, why do you concern yourself with these trifles? But whatever you do shall be a certain seal of prophecy. Now we see why God joins the word ``prophecy.'' Then he adds, Behold I will place upon thee ropes, so that thou canst not turn from, side to side, until thou hast completed the days of thy siege God here signifies that his decree concerning the siege of Jerusalem was inviolable: for as he held his servant so bound down, by this the firmness of his decree was designated, because the Jews thought that they could extricate themselves by their deceits. For we know that they always flattered themselves when the Prophets threatened them. Therefore God signifies that the siege of the city was certain until it was taken; because the Prophet should be bound with cords, and should not move himself, nor turn from one side to the other. And hence we understand, from the figure here used, that the Jews should suffer the same punishments as the ten tribes. Just as if God should say that the time determined for the destruction of the kingdom of Israel had come, and that the same end would happen to the Jews; for ill whatever direction they might escape, yet the same execution of God's judgment would arrive, as if the matter had been already determined. Now it follows:

Ezekiel 4:9

9. Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof, according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon thy side, three hundred and ninety days shalt thou eat thereof.

9. Et tu sume tibi triticum, et hordeum, et fabam, et lentem, et millium, zeam, [91] et pones ea in vase uno, et facies ea tibi in panem [92] pro numero dierum, quibus jacebis super latus tuum, trecentis et nonaginta diebus comedes illum.

It is by no means doubtful, that this verse applies to the siege, because God signifies that the city would then suffer famine, but a little afterwards he adds another vision, from which we gather, that the subject is not only the siege of Jerusalem, but the general vengeance of God against all the tribes, which had fallen on the Jews through their alliance with them, and which ended at length in the siege. But here God shows the future condition of the city Jerusalem. For this various kind of bread is a sign of want, for we make bread of wheat, and if any region is barren there barley is eaten or' vetches, and if we have but a moderate supply, still wheaten bread is used, but when lentils and beans, and millet and spelt are used, a severer penury is portrayed. In the time of Jerome the name of spelt was in use for ``zea,'' since he says, it was ``gentile'' among the Italians. I know not how it agrees with what Jerome calls ``vetches;'' in his Commentaries he says it is ``zea,'' and uses that name for spelt, which was then wheat: whatever it is, when leguminous plants are mixed with wheat, and when barley and spelt are used, it shows a deficiency in ordinary food. It is just as if the Prophet Ezekiel were to denounce against the Jews a deficiency in the harvest which they were then reaping while they were free, for this vision was

[91] The word for “fitches” is in the plural: so the word for “barley:” there is an enallage of the number. — Calvin

[92] That is, thou shalt make bread for thyself out of them. — Calvin

offered to the Prophet before the city was besieged. Hence he threatened want and famine at a time when they were still eating bread made of pure wheat. For he orders all these things to be put in one vessel Hence we gather, that this mixture would be by no means acceptable to delicate palates: for we know that beans and lentils are grosser than wheat, and cannot be kneaded into a dough of the right kind, since the wheat and pulse are dissimilar. For this reason, then, God places them in one vessel Then it is added --- thou shalt make bread for thee according to the number of the days The days here numbered are the three hundred and ninety: there is no mention of the forty days, but it may be a part put for the whole. Now it follows:

Ezekiel 4:10-11

10. And thy meat which thou shalt eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day: from time to time shalt thou eat it.

10. Et cibus quem comedes in pondere, erit viginti siclorum pro die [93] a tempore usque ad tempus comedes. [94]

11. Thou shalt drink also water by measure, the sixth part of an hin: from time to time shalt thou drink.

11. Et aquas in mensuram bibes in sextam partem hin: a tempore usque ad tempus bibes.

This confirms what I have said, namely, that the want should be such, that the Prophet dared not eat even that bread to satiety: you shall eat, says he, bread by weight, viz, twenty shekels. These are not complete rounds, so that the sense is, that God commanded his Prophet to live sparingly. When the city was besieged, bread was distributed in pieces to each person. God then here says, that the Jews should be almost famished during the siege, so that they should not have bread except by fixed weight, and that a small one. What follows is more miserable, namely, the want of water; for this is the last stage of calamity when thirst oppresses us. it seems hard, indeed, to want wine, but when water is deficient, this, as I have said, is the last stage of famine, and this the Prophet denounces against the Jews when he says, water was not given to him during the time of the siege unless by measure. I shall leave the rest till to-morrow.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, since thou hast thus far sustained us by thy inestimable clemency, grant that we may not abuse thy goodness, and by our perverseness provoke thy vengeance against us, but may we prevent thy judgment, and so submit ourselves to thee that thou mayest take us into thy confidence and protect us against all our enemies: then supply us bountifully with whatever is needful for us, and since thou wishest us to restrain our natural desires, may we never be deficient in spiritual food, but be continually refreshed with it, until at length we enjoy that fullness which is promised us and laid up for us in heaven by Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Thirteen

WE saw in yesterday's lecture that as many days were assigned to the siege of the city Jerusalem as years in which they had provoked God's wrath. For, as I have

[93] That is, in or for each day.–Calvin.

[94] That is, from the beginning to the end: viz., from the first day to the 390th. — Calvin

said, God did not punish them for their wickedness by a long siege, because in this way Israel had been free from punishment. But the meaning is, that as during four hundred and thirty years they did not cease adding to themselves the vengeance of God, so now the end had come for paying them their wages which they had earned. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 4:12-13

12. And thou shalt eat it as barley cakes, and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man, in their sight.

12. Et placentam [95] hordeorum comedes, et ipsam in stercoribus humanam excrementi coques coram oculis ipsorum.

13. And the LORD said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them.

13. Et dixit Iehovah: sic comedent filii Israel panem suum pollutum in gentibus ad quas expulero eos.

This vision properly belongs to the ten tribes, and, for this reason, I have said that God's vengeance is not to be considered as to the siege of the city alone, but to be extended longer. After the Prophet had spoken of the siege of Jerusalem, he adds, that their reward was prepared for the children of Israel, because a just God was the avenger of each people. As, therefore, he punished the remnant who as yet remained at Jerusalem, so he avenged the wickedness of the ten tribes in exile at Babylon. For this reason the Prophet is ordered to cook a cake with dung: that is, he is commanded to take human dung instead of fuel: nor does he simply say dung, but the dung of men. By and bye the application follows. Thus the children of Israel shall eat their polluted bread among the Gentiles Now, therefore, we see that the Jews are at length drawn to judgment, because they had not been so touched with the slaughter of their brethren as to repent, but, in the meantime, the wrath of God was conspicuous against the ten tribes, because among the Gentiles those miserable exiles were compelled to eat their bread polluted. We know that cakes are made of the finest flour, for the purer the flour the more delicate is the bread, but the Prophet is ordered to make cakes of barley, and then to cook them in dung, for that uncleanness was forbidden by the law. (Leviticus 5:3; Leviticus 7:21.) Therefore God signifies, that the Israelites were so rejected that they differed in nothing from polluted nations; for the Lord had separated them as we know from the rest of the world: but from the time of their mingling themselves with the filth of the impious, at length, after long forbearance, they were altogether rejected as it is here said. For under this figure a universal pollution is signified, as if he had said, nothing is any longer holy or sacred in Israel, because they are mixed up with the pollutions of all nations: finally, the impure bread embraces within itself all kinds of impiety. Now when he says among the Gentiles, it means, that they would be such inhabitants of the lands among which they were driven, that they should be not only exiles but banished from the land of Canaan, which was their inheritance. In fine, a disinheriting is here marked, when the Jews are said to be driven about hither and thither, so as not to, dwell in the promised land. It follows ---

[95] That is, "made of barley." — Calvin.

Ezekiel 4:14-15

14. Then said I, Ah Lord GOD! behold, my soul hath not been polluted: for from my youth up even till now have I not eaten of that which dieth of itself, or is torn in pieces; neither came there abominable flesh into my mouth.

14. Et dixi, Ahah, [96] Dominator Iehovah, ecce, anima mea non fuit polluta, et cadaver et discerptum non comedi a pueritia mea huc usque, et non intravit in os meum caro putrefacta. [97]

15. Then he said unto me, Lo, I have given thee cow's dung for man's dung, and thou shalt prepare thy bread therewith.

15. Et dixit mihi, Vide, dedi tibi stercori bovis pro stercoribus hominis, et facies panem tuum super illa. [98]

The Prophet here inserts the answer which he received to his request that God would relax his severe command: for it was abominable to eat flesh cooked with human dung, not only on account of the stench, but because religion forbade it: though the Prophet did not regard the taste of his palate, but objects that it was not lawful for him, and relates how anxiously he had abstained during his whole life from all polluted food. For if he had formerly dared to feed promiscuously on all sorts of food, he could not pray against it as he now does, that he should not be compelled to eat polluted bread: but he shows here that he had abstained throughout his whole life from all polluted food. My soul, says he, never was polluted: for soul is often put for the belly: then never have I tasted of a carcass, or of what has been torn in pieces By the figure a part put for the whole, he intends all unclean meats, which were unlawful food, according to the commandments of the law. (Leviticus 9.) For because a carcass is mixed with blood, God forbade them to touch the flesh of an animal which died by itself, because it had not been strangled, then if a wild beast should tear a sheep or an ox, that cruelty ought to be detestable to men. Since, therefore, both a carcass and torn and lacerated flesh are unclean food, the Prophet here says, that from his childhood even to that time he had kept the commands of God with his utmost endeavors: hence he obtains, as I have said, some mitigation. Yet he is compelled to eat his flesh cooked with the dung of oxen. This was done by vision, as I said yesterday: but meanwhile God did not change what he had determined concerning the people: viz. that they should eat their bread polluted among the Gentiles. For a cake cooked in the dung of oxen was unclean according to the Law. Hence God shows his own decree was fixed that the Israelites should be mingled among the Gentiles, so that they should contract pollution from their filth. It follows ---

Ezekiel 4:16-17

16. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment:

[96] "Or, alas." — Calvin

[97] Or abominable, {,{פגול pigol, is their word for corrupt or rancid, or putrefied, and hence by translation animal flesh is called detestable, that is, of an unclean animal." --- Calvin.

[98] That is, "thou shalt cook."

16. Et dixit mihi, Fili heminis, ecce ego frango [99] baculum panis in Hierusalem: [100] et comedent panem in pondere et metu, [101] et aquas in mensura, et in stupore bibent.

17. That they may want bread and water, and be astonied one with another, and consume away for their iniquity.

17. Ut indigeant pane et aquis [102] et obstupeant, [103] vir et frater ejus, et liquefiant [104] in iniquitate sua.

God returns again to the citizens of Jerusalem, and announces that they should be so destroyed by famine, that they should be reduced to the last extremity, and all but consumed by want. But he places here two forms of punishment: he says, that he should break the staff of bread: then, that their abundance of bread should be small, because they would be compelled to eat their morsels by weight and fear, and to drink water by measure and astonishment. I said they were different forms, because even if bread was sufficient, God often breaks its staff, as he calls it. And this clearly appears from Leviticus 26:26, whence our Prophet has adopted this expression. For here Moses explains what it is to break the staff of bread; because, he says, ten women shall cook their bread in one dish, and then they must bona fide restore the quantity of meal given them; for the bread shall be weighed, and thou shalt eat and not be satisfied. There God had said, I will break the staff of bread: but a clearer explanation follows --- namely, although wheat for cooking the bread should be sufficient, and the women should mutually observe each other that no theft should take place, but should return in weight what had been given out to them, yet its nourishment should be deficient. We see then that God breaks the staff of bread, when a sufficiently plentiful supply exists, but those who eat are not satisfied.

That this may appear more clearly, we muse assume the principle that men do not live by bread only, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God, (Deuteronomy 8:3,) for here God signifies that we are not nourished by virtue of the bread, properly speaking: for how can bread be life-giving when it wants both sense and vigor? We see then that there is no force in bread to nourish us which excludes the hidden grace of God, for we live by the word of God. The subject here is not the word of doctrine nor yet spiritual life; but Moses understands that we are sustained not by bread and wine and other food, or by any kind of drink, but by the secret virtue Of God whilst he inspires the bread with rigor for our nourishment. Bread then is our nourishment, but not by any peculiar or intrinsic virtue: this it has from another source, namely, the favor and ordination of God. As, therefore, a small portion of bread is sufficient; for us, so if any one gorge himself he will cry out sooner than be satisfied, unless God inspires the virtue. And for this reason Christ uses that passage against Satan: Man lives not by bread alone, (Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4,) because he shows that the life of man was propped up by the secret virtue of God, and that

[99] Or, “destroy.” — Calvin.
[100] Or, “at Jerusalem.” — Calvin.
[101] Or, “with fear and trembling.” — Calvin
[102] That is, “bread and water shall fail them.” — Calvin.
[103] “Others, they shall be desolate, {,{שמם shemem, signifies both." --- Calvin.
[104] Or, “consume away.” — Calvin.

God, whenever it pleases him, does not need these foreign assistances. God then can sustain us by himself: sometimes he uses bread, but only as an adventitious instrument; in the meantime he derogates nothing from his own virtue: hence a staff is taken metaphorically for a prop. For as old men already totter on their legs, and all their limbs being broken down by weakness, support themselves with a staff, so also bread is said to have a staff, because we are propped up by the nourishment. Our strength also becomes deficient, and hence he who takes nourishment is said to refresh himself with food. God, therefore, breaks the staff of bread when he renders men famished, even when they have a sufficient abundance of bread. Neither are they satisfied, how much soever they may gorge themselves, because the food loads instead of refreshes them.

This is the first punishment with which God threatens the Jews. Another also is added, namely, that they shall be destitute of bread. We see then that there is a double mode by which God punishes us by hunger. For although bread is sufficient, yet he breaks and destroys its staff, so that it cannot prop us up nor recall our lost vigor. At length he takes away our bread, because he either strikes our fruits with blight or hail, or makes us suffer under other calamities. Hence barrenness brings want, so that God will affect us with hunger both ways: for he says, behold! I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem, and then he adds, they shall eat their bread by weight and in fear, they shall drink their water by measure and in astonishment, because in truth they shall be reduced to such straits that they shall scarcely dare to touch their bread, because while they look forward to the morrow they shall fear and be astonished. And he confirms this opinion in the next verse, that they shall be destitute of bread and water, and shall be astonished: for this explanation agrees better; therefore a man and his brother shall be astonished, that is, they shall look mutually on each other as if astonished. Thus those who are without wisdom and discern nothing but despair are accustomed to act: at length they shall pine away in their iniquity. Again God repeats that the Jews could not complain when he so grievously afflicts them, because they shall receive the reward of their own iniquity. Now follows ---

Ezekiel 5

CHAPTER 5

Ezekiel 5:1-4

1. And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause it to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard: then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the hair

1. Et tu, fili hominis, sume tibi gladium acutum, novaculum tonsorum, sume eum tibi, et transire fac, [105] super caput tuum, et super barbam tuam: et sume tibi stateram ponderis, [106] et divide illa. [107]

2. Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a third part, and smite about it with a knife: and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them.

2. Tertiam partem igne combures in medio urbis, ut completi fuerint dies [108] obsidionis: sumes tertiam partem, percuties gladio per circuitum ejus, tertiam vero partem sparges in ventum: et gladium evaginabo post eos.

3. Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts.

3. Et sumes inde exiguum in numero, et ligabis illa [109] in alis tuis. [110]

4. Then take of them again, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire; for thereof shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel.

4. Et ex illis adhuc sumes, et projicies illa in medium ignis mittes et combures illa igne, unde egredetur ignis in totum domum Israel.

By another vision God confirms what he had lately taught concerning the siege

[105] That is, “draw it across” — Calvin.
[106] That is, “a just one.” — Calvin.
[107] That is, “the hairs which are erect upon thy head and thy beard.” — Calvin.
[108] “They shall be filled up;” literally, “for filling up the days” — Calvin.
[109] That is, “a small part in number.” — Calvin.
[110] That is, “that part of them in the skirts of thy garments.” — Calvin.

of Jerusalem. For he orders the Prophet to shave the hairs off his head and his beard, then to distribute them into three parts, and to weigh them in a balance. He mentions a just balance, that equity may be preserved, and that one portion may not surpass another. There is no doubt that by the hairs he understands the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as by the head he understands the seat itself of their dwelling-place. Then the application will follow; but this I shall pass by today, because I cannot proceed farther. It is sufficient to hold briefly, that men are here designated by hairs, for hair can scarcely be counted, indeed that of the beard is countless; such was the multitude at Jerusalem, for we know that the city was very populous. We know, again, that it took occasion for pride from this; when they saw that they were strong in the multitude of their people, they thought themselves equal, if not superior, to all enemies, and hence their foolish confidence, which destroyed them. God then commanded the Prophet to shave off all the hairs of his head and of his beard. Thus he taught that not even one man should escape the slaughter, because he says, make the sword pass, or pass it, over thy head, then over thy chin, so that nothing may remain. We see, then, how far the passing of the razor is to go --- until no hair remains entire on either the head or beard. Whence it follows, that God will take vengeance on the whole nation, so that not one of them shall survive. As to his ordering three parts to be weighed, and a proportion to be kept between them, in this way he signifies what we have often seen in Jeremiah, (Jeremiah 15:2) --- Whosoever shall have escaped the sword shall perish by famine, and whosoever shall escape the famine shall perish by some other means. But here God explains at length the manner in which he was about to destroy all the Jews, although they were distributed into various ranks. For their condition might seem different when some had been put to flight, and others had betaken themselves to Egypt. But in this variety God shows that it detracts nothing from his power or intention of destroying them to a man.

Let us come to the words make a razor pass over thy head and over, thy beard; and then take scales {מאזנים}, maznim, is properly called a balance on account of its two ears. Take, therefore, a balance, or scales for weighing, and divide the hair. What this division means I have already explained, because all the Jews were not consumed by the same punishment,, and therefore those who had escaped one kind of destruction boasted that they were safe. Hence they were enraged against God. But this foolish confidence is taken away, when the Prophet is ordered to divide the hair extracted from his head and beard, Divide them, he says; afterwards he adds, a third part. As to God's distributing the people into three parts, it is not done without the best reason for it; for a part was consumed by famine and distress before the city was taken. But because God marks all miseries by fire, therefore he orders a third part to be cast into the fire, and consumed there. Now because there were two parts remaining, every one promised himself life; for he who escapes present death thinks himself free from all danger, and hence confidence is increased; for we too often think ourselves safe when we have overcome one kind of death. For this reason, therefore, it is added, after thou hast burnt a third part in the fire, he says, take a third part and strike it with the sword Besides, he orders a third part to be burnt in the midst of the city. Ezekiel was then in Chaldea, and not near the city; but

we said that all this took place by a prophetic vision. What is here said answers to the wrath of God, because before the siege of the city, a third part was consumed by pestilence, and famine, and distress, and other evils and slaughters; and all these miseries are here denoted by fire. For after the city had been taken, God orders a third part to be struck with the sword. We know this to have been fulfilled when the king with all his company was seized, as he was flying over the plain of Jericho, (2 Kings 25) when meeting with the hostile army; because very many were killed there, the king himself was carried off, his sons murdered in his sight, while his eyes were put out, and he was dragged to Babylon bound in chains. Hence this is the third part, which he commanded the Prophet to strike with the sword, because that slaughter represented the slaughter of the city.

Now it is added, that he should take a third part and cast it to the wind: then follows the threat, I will unsheathe my sword after them Here it is spoken as well of the fugitives who had gone into various countries, as of the poor, who being dispersed after the slaughter of the city, protracted their life but a short time. For we know that some lay hid in the land of Moab, others in that of Ammon, more in Egypt, and that others fled to various hiding-places. This dispersion was as if any one should cast the shorn-off hairs to the wind. But God pronounces that their flight and dispersion would not profit them, because he will draw his sword against them and follow them up to the very last. We see therefore, although at first sight the citizens of Jerusalem differ, as if they were divided into three classes, yet the wrath of God hangs over all, and destroys the whole multitude.

It is now added: Thou shalt take then a small number, and bind them, (that is, that number, but the number is changed,) viz., those hairs of which the number is small in the skirts of thy clothing It either takes away the confidence which might spring up from a temporary escape, or else it signifies that very few should be safe in the midst of the destruction of the whole people, which came to pass wonderfully. If that is received, the correction is added, that God would give some hope of favor because the people was consumed, yet so that the covenant of God might remain. Hence it was necessary that some relics should be preserved, and they had been reduced like Sodom, unless God had kept for himself a small seed. (Isaiah 1:9; Romans 9:29.) Therefore in this sense the Prophet is ordered to bind and to hide in the skirts of his garment, some part of the hair. Moreover, that part is understood only in the third order, because those who had escaped thought that they had obtained safety by flight, especially when they collected themselves in troops. Afterwards it follows, thou shalt then take from these, and throw it into the midst of the fire, and burn it in the fire Out of these few hairs God wishes another part to be burnt and consumed; by which words he signifies, even where only a small portion remains, yet it must be consumed in like manner, or at least that many out of these few will be rejected. And indeed those who seemed to have happily escaped and to have survived safely, were soon after cut off by various slaughters, or pined away by degrees as if they had perished by a slow contagion. But since it pleased him to remember his promise, we gather that a few of the people survived through God's wonderful mercy: for because he was mindful of his covenant, he wished some part to be preserved, and therefore

that correction was interposed, that the Prophet should bind under his skirts a small number. Yet from that remnant, God again snatched away another part, and cast it into the fire. If the filth of the remainder was such, that it was necessary to purge it, and cast part of it into the fire, what must be thought of the whole people, that is, of the dregs themselves? For the portion which the Prophet bound in his skirts was clearly the flower of the people: if there was any integrity, it ought to be seen there.

We just saw that there were many reprobate in that small number. Hence, therefore, it is easily gathered how desperate was the impiety of the whole people. After this, he says, take: this adverb is used that those who survived after the slaughter of the city should not think that all their punishments were over: after this, says he, that is, when they shall fancy all their difficulties over, thou shalt take from that part which thou hast preserved, and shalt cast it into the fire. Thence, he says, a fire shall go forth through the whole house of Israel He signifies by these words, as we have seen before, that the vision was not illusory, just as many fictitious things are represented in a theater. Hence God says, what he shows by vision to his servant would happen, as the event itself at length proved. But he goes further that the whole house of Israel shall burn in this burning, because indeed the last destruction of the city brought despair to the miserable, exiles, who, while the city was standing, promised themselves a return. But when they saw such utter destruction of the city, they were consumed just as if fire from Judea had crept even to themselves. In the meantime the remnant are always excepted whom the Lord wonderfully preserved, although he was in a vision destroying the whole people. We now see the tendency of this vision. I will not proceed further, because I should be compelled to desist, and so the doctrine would be abrupt. It is sufficient therefore to hold, although the people was divided into many parts so that the condition of each was distinct, yet that all should perish, since God so determined. Hence the confidence of those who thought they would be safe at Jerusalem was broken: then the ten tribes, which were captives, ought also to acknowledge that the last vengeance of God was not complete, until the city itself, the seat of government and the priesthood was destroyed.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since thou hast proclaimed such a proof of thy fierce anger against thine ancient people, that we may this day learn wisdom from the suffering of others, and may so subject ourselves obediently to thee, that thou mayest receive us into favor, and show thyself so propitious to us, that by thy pardon we may be restored from death to life, until we enjoy that eternal blessedness which is provided for us by thine only-begotten Son our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture fourteen.

Ezekiel 5:5-6

5. Thus saith the Lord GOD; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her.

5. Sic dicit Dominator Iehoyah, Haec est Hierusalem, in medio gentium, posui eam, et in circuitu ejus terras.

6. And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the countries that are round about her: for they have

refused my judgments and my statutes, they have not walked in them.

6. Et mutavit judicia mea ad impietatem [111] prae cunctis gentibus: et statuta mea [112] prae terris quae in circuitu ejus: judicia mea spreverunt et in statutis meis non ambulaverunt.

Now God shows the reason why he determined to act so severely and harshly towards that holy city which he had selected as the royal residence. For the greater the benefits with which he had adorned the city, by so much the baser and grosser was their ingratitude. God recounts, therefore, his benefits towards Jerusalem, and that for the sake of reproving it. For if the Jews had embraced the blessing of God, doubtless he would have enriched them more and more with his gifts: but when he saw that they rejected his favors, he was the more angry with their indignity. For contempt of God's benefits is a kind of profanation and sacrilege. Now, therefore, we understand the intention of the Holy Spirit when he says, that Jerusalem was placed as it were on a lofty platform, that its dignity might be conspicuous on all sides. This is not said in praise of Jerusalem, but rather to its greatest disgrace, because whatever the Lord had conferred upon it ought to be taken into account, since they had so unworthily corrupted themselves and had polluted God's glory as it were on purpose. As to its being said, that Jerusalem was in the midst of the nations,(Psalm 74:12,) I do not take this so precisely as Jerome and most others. For they fancy that Jerusalem was the center of the earth, and he twists other places also into this sense: where God is said to have worked salvation to the midst of the earth, he explains it the very middle, as they say. But that is in my judgment puerile, because the Prophet simply means that Jerusalem was placed in the most celebrated part of the world: it had on all sides the most noble nations and very rich, as is well known, and was not far distant from the Mediterranean Sea: on one side it was opposite to Asia Minor: then it had Egypt for a neighbor, and Babylon on the north. This is the genuine sense of the Prophet, that Jerusalem was endued with remarkable nobility among other nations, as if God had placed it in the highest rank. There is no city which has not nations and lands round it, but God here names lands and nations par excellence, not any whatsoever, but those only which excelled in fruitfulness, in opulence, and all advantages. And the demonstrative pronoun is emphatic when he says, This is Jerusalem: for he extols the city with magnificent praises, that its ingratitude may appear the greater --- hence it was placed in the midst of the nations and of countries round about it: because it was surrounded by many opulent regions, and there the grace of God was chiefly displayed, as if it were the most beautiful part of a theater, which attracted all eyes towards it, and moved all minds to admiration.

He now adds, My judgments are changed concerning the word {מרה}, mereh, I said that it signifies sometimes to change, but oftener to transgress or to reject, and there the sense suits very well, because the Jews were rebellious against the judgments of God even to impiety. But he enlarges upon their wickedness when he says, my statutes have been despised since they so addicted themselves to impiety. For if there had been any pretext of virtue, their fault might have been extenuated, but

[111] Or, "she has transgressed my judgments or been rebellious. {,{מרה mereh, properly signifies was rebellious against my judgments." --- Calvin.

[112] Or, "was rebellious against my statutes." — Calvin

when they cast themselves into gross impiety, and thus despise God's commandments, this is inexcusable. Let us learn from this passage, that unless we use God's blessings with purity the charge of ingratitude will always lie against us: for whatever God bestows upon us, he sanctifies as well to our salvation as to the glory of his name. We are then sacrilegious when we corrupt those things which were destined for his glory; then are we utterly perverse when we convert to our destruction what God has appointed for our salvation. Now we must consider the ingratitude of Jerusalem as flagrant, because they rejected the commandments of God. When therefore God deposits among us the treasure of celestial doctrine, we must diligently take care that we do not turn aside to impiety, because there is no excuse for error when once we have been taught what is right, and that from the mouth of God himself. Then he declares the same sentiment in other words, and says, beyond all nations and all lands which were round about; by which sentence he signifies that the Jews; were worse than all the rest, because knowingly and willingly they had shaken off God's yoke. Other nations had not conducted themselves better, for we know that the worship of God was then everywhere vitiated: but the impiety of the elect people was fouler, for they turned light into darkness, while the Gentiles wandered in darkness for they were blind, but the conduct of this people was different whom God had familiarly instructed. Since therefore the teaching of the law was conspicuous among the Jews, the Prophet deservedly says, that they were impious beyond all nations and countries Then he explains how they had either changed the judgment of God, or were themselves rebellious, because they had despised, says he, my judgments, and had not walked in my statutes First, he says, they had not fallen through ignorance but through pride and contempt; for when the will of God is made known to us, there is no place for ignorance. We do not sin lightly therefore, but our minds are necessarily infected with pride and contempt of God. Now he adds, that they did not walk in his precepts, by which words he signifies that the contempt just mentioned appeared openly, because in truth the fruit showed itself in their whole life. It follows ---

Ezekiel 5:7-8

7. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Because ye multiplied more than the nations that are round about you, and have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that are round about you;

7. Propterea sic dicit Dominator Iehovah propter multiplicare vestrum [113] prae cunctis gentibus, quae in circuitu vestro sunt, ut in statutis meis non ambularetis, et judicia mea non faceretis, et secundum judicia gentium, quae in circuitu vestro sunt non faceretis

8. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I, even I, am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations.

8. Propterea sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, Ecce ego contra to, etiam ego: et faciam in medio tui judicia coram oculis gentium.

This verse is variously expounded on account of the word {המנכם}, hemenekem:

[113] Or, "because of your multiplication." — Calvin.

for some read it jointly in one context, as if through being multiplied they did not worship God; as if he meant that they were luxurious through their opulence, as horses are restive through too much food and fatness. That passage of Moses has been marked: Israel, when highly fed, kicked; therefore they think that this place is like it, and so they combine it together: because thou hast been multiplied beyond. all Gentiles which were around thee, thou hast despised my judgments, for thou hast become blind and drunken by prosperity. (Deuteronomy 32:15.) But I do not approve of this sense, for it is clearly too forced. Others derive it from {המה}, hemeh, which signifies to be agitated or disturbed, and elicit this sense, because ye are tumultuous beyond all nations --- -that is, because your lasciviousness and licentiousness surpass that of all people, whilst your eagerness has drawn you on as it were without a bridle. But I fear that explanation is far-fetched, and so I take it simply for to be multiplied, or multiplication; for machor may be either a noun or a verb, but in the same sense. At the same time, I do not refer this to the number and multitude of the people, nor even to the abundance of goods, as the majority do; for they say that the number of persons was multiplied, which does not suit the sense; if it be referred to wealth, it is indeed true that God had acted liberally towards that city, but I take it actively, that they have multiplied beyond all nations: and Jerome, in my opinion, has not rendered it badly by translating, ``because* ye have surpassed the nations,'' yet he has departed from the proper sense of the word: so it will be better to retain the verb ``multiply'' or the noun ``multiplication,'' yet actively, because they had wantoned intemperately in their superstitions, so that they surpassed all nations in evil doing. On account then of your multiplying,* or on account of your multiplication beyond all nations, that is, because ye were not content with moderate impiety, but heaped together all kinds of wickedness, so that your impiety has arrived at the highest pitch whence a curse follows it: but before he comes to that he confirms what he had said before, namely, because they had not walked in his statutes, and had not kept his judgments This, therefore, is the meaning of to multiply, because when the law was delivered to them they despised it, and imitated the wickedness of the nations and the countries around them. These sentences then agree, because beyond all the nations they had been rebellious in impiety against God, and then because they had multiplied beyond all nations and countries. Again the reason is to be observed, because they did not walk in God's statutes For the Gentiles held no course, hence it is not surprising that they wandered in their own oblique direction. But a way had been shown to the Jews: the language of Moses was not in vain. (Deuteronomy 30:19.) I call heaven and earth to witness that I have set before you life and death: choose ye therefore life. Since then God had thus laid down the doctrine of salvation for the Jews, he was the more indignant at their insolence and baseness in not walking according to his statutes. Life then had been set before them, as Moses says; it remained for them to walk therein, which the Gentiles could not do.

Now he adds, and according to the judgments of the Gentiles which are round about you Here the Prophet seems to blame what otherwise and in many places is praised. For the Jews ought to be separate from the Gentiles, so that they might

worship God in purity, and the Prophets often expostulate with them because they followed the judgments or statutes of the Gentiles. On these words I have said nothing, because they occur often, and it has been already shown in many places why God calls his judgments laws. Some distinguish between judgments and statutes, because judgments belong to mortals, and statutes to ceremonies. But this distinction is not everywhere observed. But God, in very many places, commends the precepts of his law, since he shows that nothing necessary to a complete system of teaching was omitted. But. this name is sometimes transferred to perverse rites and vicious superstitions, so that to walk in the judgments of the Gentiles, is to corrupt oneself with their perverse morals. As I have said already, the Jews were often condemned by the Prophets because they gave themselves up to the corruptions of the Gentiles.

Here, therefore, the Prophet says, that they had not done according to the judgments of the Gentiles But he understands that in this particular, also, they had surpassed the madness of the Gentiles, because they had not embraced the law of God so as to remain constantly in obedience to it. For we saw in the second chapter of Jeremiah, (Jeremiah 2:10, 11,) that the Gentiles were obstinate in their madness. Although that was not praiseworthy, yet God deservedly blames his people because they held him in less honor than the Gentiles did their idols. For we know how obstinately the nations were fixed in their superstitions, for they did not change their religion except by some violent impulse, just as if heaven and earth were shaken together. Since, therefore, the religion of each was firm and fixed, God accuses the Jews of trifling deservedly, because they inclined towards the errors and madness of the heathen. This, therefore, is Ezekiel's meaning when he says, the Jews had not done according to the statutes of the Gentiles: as if he had said, they should have looked at the Gentiles, and as they saw them obstinately worshipping idols, so they should have persisted in my law and in pure worship. But while the obstinacy of the Gentiles was so great that they could not be torn away from their own superstition, my people, says he, have perfidiously declined from me and my law by rash impulse, and without necessity for it. Now, therefore, we perceive why the Prophet adds this to their crimes, that the people had not walked after the judgments or manners of the Gentiles. Hence they might have perceived, that what men had once embraced they ought not lightly to have thrown away, because when we are suddenly and easily turned aside in the matter of the worship of God, it is certain that we have never put forth living roots. Since, then, the Gentiles instructed the Jews in their duty, their crime became more detestable.

Now follows the threat, that God was prepared to take vengeance. Behold, I, even, I, am against you The particle {גם}, gam, ``even,'' is used as we in French say, yea, even: I, even I. We now see that the repetition is emphatic, as if God asserted a horrible destruction to be hanging over the Jews. For he wishes to inspire them with fear, since he assures them that he will prove an avenger. Though I do not receive Jerome's comment, for he says, that angels and other ministers of God's wrath are excluded, because God determined to destroy the Jews by himself. This we know to be false, for he made use of the Assyrians and Chaldeans. Since then those

people were his scourges, it follows, that angels and men are not excluded when God pronounces himself an avenger. But he increases the weight of the punishment when he says, I, even I, am he with whom thou shalt have to do Now he adds, I will execute judgments, by which word jurisdiction, as they call it, is intended. What Jerome and those interpreters who follow him affirm is not correct, that by this name God's justice is asserted, as if he meant, that he would not be cruel in exacting punishment, nor yet unjust nor too rigid. For to execute judgment means merely to exercise jurisdiction, and an earthly judge is said to exercise justice when he sits on his tribunal, even if he perverts justice and equity. This, indeed, cannot be the case with God, although the word allows of it. Besides, there is a suitable antithesis between the doctrinal judgments and the actual ones; God complained that the Jews did not execute his judgments: now he threatens that he himself would execute them, because he will vindicate his law by punishments.

The sum of the whole is that he will execute judgments in the midst of Jerusalem, because he will ascend a tribunal and compel the wicked to plead their cause, and to render an account of their life. God, therefore, then executed his judgments when he manifested his vengeance by means of the Chaldeans, and so famine was a part of his punishment, as well as the sword and the pestilence. For while he delays, he seems to have ceased from his duty, and then the impious indulge themselves as if he had forgotten to execute judgment. Therefore, in opposition to this, he denounces that he would execute judgments: as if he had said, I will appear as judge although you think me asleep. For he says, he will execute judgments in the midst of Jerusalem, before the eyes of the Gentiles, by which assertion he means, that their punishments would be remarkable, and such as might be easily considered by all the nations: for we know that the Gentiles were then blind, for they thought that good and evil happened by chance. But God affirms, that his judgments will be so manifest that the blind will be, as it were, eye-witnesses. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 5:9-10

9. And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations.

9. Et faciam in to quae non feci, et quae, non sum facturus secundum hoc amplius, propter cunctas abominationes tuas.

10. Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds.

10. Propterea [114] patres vorabunt filios in medio tui, et filii vorabunt patres suos: faciam ergo judicia in to et dispergam cunctas reliquias tuas ad quemlibet ventum.

Now God subjoins, that their punishment should be so severe that no similar example could be found in the world --- I will do what I have not done, nor intended to do, that is, I will avenge your contempt of my law in a striking and unexpected manner; for God sometimes so chastises men as not to exceed the ordinary method. But because punishments seem vile and contemptible when they are so common, God is compelled to surpass the ordinary measure, and to punish the wicked signally

[114] "Because," or "on that account." — Calvin.

and portentously, as he says by Moses. (Deuteronomy 28:46.) When therefore he now says, that he would do what he had not done before, and what he would not do again, he signifies a horrible vengeance, which has no similar example. It means nothing else than what, we have quoted from Moses, that the vengeance would be signal and portentous. Interpreters take this metaphorically, but this view cannot be admitted, because in their opinion no history has recorded its fulfillment; hence they fly to allegory and metaphor. But first of all, we know what Josephus says, that mothers were so ravenous that they slew their children and fed upon them, although here a previous siege is referred to, in which God signifies that he would cause fathers to devour their children: I confess it; but even if we receive what they wish, it was not done then; hence Jeremiah is mistaken when he says, that miserable women cooked their children for food. (Lamentations 4:10.) Surely this is a sufficient witness; for to say that we never find that this actually happened is to reject the testimony of Jeremiah. Besides, God had threatened that very thing by Moses; nor can the passage be eluded, because there is weight in the words ---

``Men delicate among you, and those accustomed to luxuries,'' says he, ``shall eat their own children; a man shall envy the wife of his bosom, so that he shall not suffer her to enjoy that nefarious food with him. Then by stealth shall he consume and devour the flesh of his son, so that he shall distribute no part of it to another.'' (Deuteronomy 28:54, 55.)

When Moses uses this language he certainly does not mean that there shall be intestine dissensions, so that disciples shall rise up against their masters, and masters oppress their disciples, as Jerome fancies. But it is necessary to take the words as they sound, namely, that God would not be content with common and customary punishments when the Jews had arrived at the very last pitch of impiety and wickedness, since he blames them so severely. Hence Ezekiel now threatens this; nor is it surprising that the Prophets took such forms of expression from Moses, since they used the language of Moses rather than a new one, that the people might not despise their prophesyings. Now, therefore, we must decide, that the Prophet uses these threatenings against the Jews literally. But if any one now object that what God says will not happen does often happen, a solution must be sought for. For we said that when the Jews were besieged by Titus, such a ravenousness attacked certain women, that they fed by stealth on their own children. But God pronounces that he never would do this again I reply that this kind of vengeance is not to be restricted to one day, so that God should not often punish the Jews in a similar manner. But we do not read that this was done, except by the Jews, for although this cruelty is related in tragedies --- that children were used as food by their parents, yet this barbarity nowhere existed, that a father knowingly and willingly ate his own son; hence this was peculiar to the Jews. And that God had once executed this vengeance on them by means of the Chaldeans, is no obstacle to his again inflicting the same punishment, when he wished to take vengeance on the extreme rebellion of the people. For although in Ezekiel's time all things were very corrupt, yet we know that when the Son of God was rejected, the Jews cut off from themselves all hope of restoration to the mercy of God. It is not surprising, then, if again he had suffered sons to be

devoured by their fathers, as he now threatens that fathers should be so rabid as not even to spare their own bowels.

I know not why Jerome invented this difference, which is altogether futile. For he says, that when a thing is honorable and becoming it should be ascribed to God, but when the thing itself is base, God averts the infamy from himself. For when this wonder is treated of here, God does not say I will cause the people to eat their sons, but he says, fathers shall eat their sons, and sons their fathers. But there is nothing solid in this comment, because the cruelty which the Chaldeans exercised towards the Jews certainly was not either honorable or becoming, and yet God ascribes to himself whatever the Chaldeans did. Again, what was baser than the incest of Absalom, in debauching his father's wives? and even that was not sufficient, but he wished the whole people, at the sound of a trumpet, to be witnesses of his crime; and yet what does God say? ``I will do this before the sun,'' says he. (2 Samuel 12:12, and 2 Samuel 16:21, 22.) We see, then, that this man was not familiar with the Scriptures, and yet that he offered his comments too hastily. There was, indeed, no true religion in the man, and it is not without cause that I admonish you; for there is danger lest many be deceived, if they were not admonished that his genius was full of ostentation and arrogance.

He says, then, fathers shall eat their sons in the midst of you, and this was certainly fulfilled: for Jeremiah speaks of women, but he comprehends men also. (Lamentations 4:10.) For he says that women are tender-hearted, he does not say mothers merely, but that they were humane beyond others; but we know that maternal affection is more tender. But when mothers and those tender ones devour their children, that was the final portent. Now he adds, I will execute, therefore, (for the copula here ought to be resolved into the expletive particle,) judgments against thee That is, in this manner I will really show myself a judge, and I will scatter all thy remnants unto all winds. He signifies that there should be such dispersion, that no body or name of the people should remain. But that hope might cherish and sustain the Jews, if any name and body of the people had been left. But when God pronounces that they should be offscourings to be scattered to every wind, he takes away all hope of restoration for the present at least. We know that there was a certain number left, but such destruction was necessarily threatened before God gave any hope of his mercy. When he says, to any wind, he signifies in any quarter whatever. For as one or another wind blows so the dust is carried, and the offscourings are dispersed in all directions. It follows ---

Ezekiel 5:11

11. Wherefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD; Surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish thee; neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity

11. Propterea vivo ego, dicit Dominator Iehovah, si non propterea quod sanctuarium meum polluisti [115] in omnibus detestationibus tuis, et omnibus abominationibus tuis: Etiam ego diminuam; [116] et non parcet oculus meus, et etiam ego non misere-

[115] That is, “since thou hast polluted my sanctuary.” — Calvin
[116] Others translate, “I will break thee in pieces.” — Calvin

bor. [117]

Here God again expresses more clearly why he was so eager to take vengeance namely, because the religion of the Jews was corrupt, and the Temple had been violated, as we shall see to-morrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since at this time thou hast so familiarly manifested thyself to us in the gospel of Christ our Lord, that we may learn to raise our eyes to the light which has been prepared for us; and grant that we may have them so fixed that we may be directed and urged towards the object of our existence, until the duties of our calling being finished, we may arrive at length unto thee, and enjoy also with thee that glory which thine only-begotten Son acquired for us by his blood. --- Amen.

Lecture fifteen

Yesterday, after Ezekiel had prophesied concerning the slaughter of Jerusalem, he expressed one reason why God was so angry against that city, which he had formerly chosen for his dwelling. He says, they had violated or polluted his sanctuary Now therefore we see of what great importance before God is that true and pure religion whose pollution he so severely avenges. And indeed the safety of the city depended solely on the pure worship of God. Therefore the profanation of the Temple was just as if they had rejected God himself, and renounced his aid. Lastly, that impiety sufficiently shows that they despised whatever God had promised them. And these words are to be marked, where he says, even I will diminish thee, and my eye shall not spare, and I will not pardon, because nothing is more precious to God than that worship which he has commanded: when his sanctuary is polluted, it is no wonder if he is thus angry. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 5:12

12. A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee: and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and I will scatter a third part into all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them.

12. Tertia pars peste morietur, et fame peribunt in medio tui: et tertia pars per gladium cadent in circuitu tuo, et tertiam partem in quemlibet ventum dispergam, et gladium evaginabo post eos.

Now he explains without a figure what he had previously proposed figuratively. For he had been commanded to shave off the hairs of his head and of his beard with a razor, and to divide them so that the pestilence should consume one part, the sword another, and the famine a third. Now he repeats the same thing but in another manner. Hence God explains why he had offered a vision of this kind to his servant. But he shortens what we formerly saw, because he omits the fourth member; for he was commanded to take some portion and to hide it under his armpit, or in the hem of his garment: but here there is no mention of that part, and yet it was not spoken in vain, but God speaks in various manners, and that by his own right. Meanwhile, both the figure and its application agree, because God was consuming the whole people by either famine, pestilence, or the sword. What was said concerning the

[117] "I will not pardon." — Calvin.

fourth part was not in vain, but it was not necessary to repeat it. To this end then the Prophet tended, since some were survivors it might seem that they were exempt from the common slaughter: that he might take away that hope, he said, that they also, or at least many of them, should perish by burning, so that they should light up a fire in the whole people of Israel. For it happened through the unconquerable obstinacy of the people, that the wretched exiles were more hated; those who had already spared them began afresh to rage against them with cruelty, because the name of the people became detestable among all men. Because, therefore, the remnant of the citizens who remained at Jerusalem perished, hence it happened that the burning penetrated to the ten tribes, and to those wretched exiles who were captives in remote lands. But now our Prophet is silent on this point. In the meanwhile, he comprehends whatever we saw before, although more briefly: only that explanation was wanting, which, although it was formerly useful, yet ought not of necessity to be repeated. A third part, therefore, shall die by pestilence, and shall perish by hunger in the midst of thee; then a third part shall perish by the sword around thee, and a third part shall be scattered towards every wind: although God claims this for himself, I will scatter, says he, the third part, and draw out the sword after them, so that they also shall perish in their dispersion. Now that dispersion is by itself miserable, but God pronounces that he would not be content with that moderate punishment until he utterly consumed them. It follows ---

Ezekiel 5:13

13. Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I wilt cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted: and they shall know that I the LORD have spoken it in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury in them.

13. Et perficietur ira mea, et residere [118] faciem excandescentiam meam in ipsis: et consolationem accipiam: et cognoscent quod ego Iehovah, qui locutus sum in zelo meo [119] cum perfecero excandescentiam meam in ipsis.

In this verse the Prophet only teaches what he had said before, but by way of confirmation, namely, that God's vengeance would be horrible and unceasing until the destruction and extinction of the people. There are some who think that this was interposed that God might mitigate the rigor of his vengeance, and so this verse, according to them, contains a promise of pardon; but it is rather a threat. For what they assert --- that God would cause his anger to cease --- cannot stand. For it follows afterwards they shall know that I Jehovah have said it, when I shall have filled up my wrath or anger against them And the context, as we shall afterwards see, will refute that comment. Let this, then, remain fixed, that the Prophet does not here promise the people any mitigation of their punishment, but goes on denouncing the vengeance which he formerly mentioned.

First he says, it shall be filled up: {כלה}, keleh, signifies sometimes ``to finish,'' but also, ``to be accomplished,'' ``to consume,'' and also, ``to be consumed.'' In this place God signifies that there should be no end to the punishments until he was satisfied. The image is taken from men desirous of vengeance, whose eagerness

[118] Or, “rest.” — Calvin.
[119] Or, “in my jealousy.” — Calvin.

does not cease till they satiate themselves with revenge. God, therefore, here likens himself to men when he speaks of the end or fulfillment of his anger. Now he adds, I will cause my fury to rest upon them, that is, my fury shall be, as it were, fixed upon them. For ``rest'' is not to be received here for ``cease,'' for wrath is said to rest when it has spent itself, but God wishes here to mark by his Prophet the perseverance or untiring course of his vengeance. My wrath, therefore, shall rest upon them, that is, it shall not remove or pass away; for God is said to withdraw his hand when he ceases to punish us, but here the rest of his wrath is its perpetual continuing. He adds, I will take comfort Here God transfers to himself what properly does not belong to him, for he does not delight himself after the manner of men when he takes vengeance on wickedness; but we know that God's judgment cannot be comprehended, unless he puts on the character of man, and in some manner transforms himself. Hence he is said to receive comfort in the approbation of just judgment. For this comfort signifies, that God cannot bear the contempt of his law --- then that the malice of man is so desperate, that the judge must at length appear in his own nature; not that he indulges in any passions, as is sufficiently known, but because we cannot otherwise conceive him to be a just judge, unless he declare himself pleased with vengeance, when he sees men so utterly abandoned and beside themselves, as not to be otherwise recalled to penitence.

He afterwards adds, and they shall know that I Jehovah have spoken it Here God obliquely blames the stupidity of the people, because they not only despised all prophecies, but also proudly laughed at his threats. As often, then, as the Prophets declared the vengeance and judgments of God, they gave material for laughter to a perverse and impious people, and their obstinacy so blinded them that they did not think it was God who spoke; for they supposed that men only would be their adversaries, and hence their rage against the Prophets. For if they had thought that they had spoken by divine inspiration, they would never have dared to rise against them so madly; but because they thought that the Prophets uttered in public their own comments, therefore they strove with them in forgetfulness of God. The Jews, therefore, did not acknowledge him. But let us mark the source of their ignorance: they turned aside their senses from God of their own accord, as at this time many do not think that God speaks when his truth is openly shown from the Scriptures. Why do they not think so? because they are unwilling. Hence this blindness was voluntary and affected, so to speak, in the ancient people, since they imagined that the prophecies would be without effect. This is the reason why the Prophet says, then they shall know that I have spoken, because, as the proverb is, experience is the fool's teacher; since, therefore, they rejected all threats, it came to pass that, by the teaching of calamity, they perceived too late that God was the speaker. And so there is an antithesis between experimental knowledge, and blindness which arises from an evil disposition and a contempt of God. For when he says, they shall know when he has fulfilled his wrath, that knowledge shall be too late and unfruitful. Lastly, God here pronounces, that he would inflict just punishment on their voluntary ignorance, from which the Jews should know, whether they would or not, that the prophecies against which they had closed their eyes had proceeded from himself alone.

He says also, that he had spoken in his zeal, or jealousy, because the Prophets were thought to be very furious when they thundered so against the impious. God therefore here acquits those whom we know were commonly esteemed fanatics, and says that he spoke in his zeal, because the impious, when they wish to load the servants of God with envy, object that he is mild and merciful, and that it does not accord with his character to speak roughly and sharply. God therefore says that he also uses zeal, or anger, that the Jews might not think his Prophets carried away with inconsiderate zeal and fervor, since we know that they fell into that grievous error. It follows ---

Ezekiel 5:14

14. Moreover I will make thee waste, and a reproach among the nations that are round about thee, in the sight of all that pass by.

14. Et ponam to in vastitatem, et opprobrium inter gentes quae in circuitu tuo sunt, in oculis eujusvis transeuntis. [120]

He explains what we saw before more at length, whence also we understand that in the next verse God had not softened his anger, but proclaimed the ultimate destruction of the nation. He says therefore, that the Jews shall be desolate, as they translate it: it also signifies dryness, and hence is the name for a desert. But it suits this place to say, the Jews shall be laid waste, and a reproach among the nations: for they were formerly a celebrated nation: God had ennobled them with remarkable gifts, so that they excelled in dignity in the sight of all the nations. Now he says, they should be like a vast desert, and in utter ruin, and a reproach; and not only is this rumor spread abroad, but all travelers through that land are witnesses of this reproach. But in the next verse this is followed out more at length.

Ezekiel 5:15

15. So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an astonishment unto the nations that are round about thee, when I shall execute judgments in thee in anger and in fury and in furious rebukes. I the LORD have spoken it.

15. Et eris probrum, et subsannatio, castigatio, et stupor gentibus quae in circuitu tuo sunt, dum fecero in to judicia in ira, et excandescentia, et increpationibus excandescentiæ: ego Iehovah locutus sum.

He further explains how the Jews should be devastated and become a reproach among the nations. Now, he does not speak of their dispersion, but uses two words for one idea: he puts {חרפה}, cherepheh, which signifies a reproach, and adds {גדופה}, gedopheh, which signifies a taunt and a mocking: but this could not take place without the slaughter of the people. Unless the profane heathen had some ground for it, there was no reason why they should utter their taunts and hissings against the Jews. Hence destruction and complete slaughter are comprehended under the words reproach and taunt, or laughing-stock. But this sentence belongs to the former verse: there it was said, I will make thee: here, thou shalt be Meanwhile the execution of God's vengeance is marked; when, therefore, God reproaches us, we are compelled to lie under the power of his hand, because an attempt to resist him is vain. We shall wrestle, indeed, as the ungodly do, but unless we yield will-

[120] Or, "traveler." — Calvin.

ingly, the violence of his power will crush us. Hence we must observe the context: I will make thee a reproach, and thou shalt be one, because God signifies that his threats should not be either empty or in vain. He adds, thou shalt be a correction: {מוסר}, moser, signifies discipline and instruction, but is often used for that correction which springs from a sense of God's wrath. When, therefore, God chastises his people, if they repent, they are said to profit by his discipline, since they have learnt themselves to be sinners by the punishments which he has inflicted on them. But he says that the Jews should be a correction to the profane nations, because they should grow wise by their punishments; for while we apply examples to our use, this is a timely correction, since we do not wait till God strikes us; but when he takes vengeance on the despisers of his law at a distance, if we are moved by such examples, this is, as I said, correction in good time: for the Prophet now applies it to the nations, not without the disgrace of the elect people: as if he had said that their punishment would be so notorious that the very blind would recognize them, and tremble at the perception of their import.

Afterwards he adds --- in astonishment These words, indeed, do not seem sufficiently in agreement with the Jews being for a wonder and a correction; but the Prophet does not simply mean that those who perceived the judgment of God should be either stupid or docile, he only means that in God's severity material would be proposed for all, as well of correction as of astonishment, so that they should be horrified when they saw God treating his elect people so harshly. For he adds, when I shall execute judgments on thee in wrath, and in fury, and in burnings of anger. He confirms what we saw before, namely, that God's judgment would be remarkable, because he had so long borne with a reprobate people. Since he had so long borne their impiety, he broke forth at length in one impulse, and then exercised the formidable judgment of which he speaks. This is the reason why he says the nations shall be astonished when I execute my judgments upon thee. What, then, were these judgments? --- in truth, anger, and burning, and furious rebukes. Here the Prophet seems verbose; but he could not be too much so, since the sluggishness of the people was so great that they were not moved by any prophecies. As we have formerly seen, he had been, doubtless, derided by those Jews in Chaldea, who as yet remained at home tranquil, as it were, in their nests. ``Does he, the wretched exile, threaten us? let him be content with his own lot: since God has spared us, he seems to be stirred up to vex us by envy alone; but we have no reason to fear the envy of a captive and an exile.'' Since, then, the Prophet knew that he was contemptible among the Jews, it was necessary to heap up such forms of speech, that his teaching might have more weight: nor does he look: at the Jews alone, but at those people also who had been dragged into the same exile; for he has to advise them, for the reasons which we have formerly explained. Now, therefore, we understand his meaning when he speaks concerning anger and burning, and adds, at the same time, burning rebukes He adds also, I Jehovah have spoken it: which he will repeat at the last verse of the chapter. And this confirmation is also very useful, because when both the Israelites and the Jews looked at a mortal and abject man, a captive and a slave of an impious people, they would doubtless have despised all

his prophecies. Hence he sets God before them, by which he means that he was not the author of the threats, but spoke only from the mouth of God, as the organ of the Spirit. It follows ---

Ezekiel 5:16

16. When I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famine, which shall be for their destruction, and which I will send to destroy you: and I will increase the famine upon you, and will break your staff of bread:

16. Cum emisero [121] sagittas famis malas in ipsos, quae erunt in perditionem, [122] quas jaculabor in ipsos ad perdendum eos: et famem addam contra eos, et confringam ipsis baculum panis.

He illustrates the sentiment which we have seen, but not after the manner of rhetoricians, who affect splendor and ornament of speech; but his only design was to penetrate the minds of the people, like stones or iron. This, then, is the reason why he uses such variety here, and adorns his teaching with various figures. For he now compares God to an archer, who points his arrows against them; but he speaks metaphorically concerning the arrows of God; for he calls them arrows of famine and evil, that is, deadly and death-bearing. Since, then, I shall hurl evil arrows against them, they shall cause their destruction, says he; that is, they shall not escape death, because they shall be struck with mortal wounds. A person might be struck by the blow of an arrow, and yet become convalescent; but God pronounces the arrows of which he speaks deadly, so that whoever is struck by them has no hope of safety left. Besides, by arrows of famine we may understand such barrenness of soil as flies, locusts, and other scourges of God --- at one time scorching, at another mildew dries up the corn-field, now rains make the wheat rot, now heat burns it up, as many sources of corruption and pestilence as these are to the crops, so many are the arrows of God which transfix men's hearts, and that too by a deadly wound. If so subtle an explanation does not please any one, he is at liberty to take it otherwise; yet if any one properly attends, he will confess that God darts his own arrows as often as he causes famine, or deprives men of sustenance. He adds, which shall become corruption He confirms what we said was denoted by the epithet {הרעים}, hergnim. He says, therefore, that these arrows would be destructive, because they should be for perdition and destruction. Another confirmation follows: which I will send, says he, against them to destroy them Here God distinctly affirms that he would dart forth those arrows, and repeats again what we saw before, and that, too, in the same verse. But we have taught you why the Prophet insists, in many words, on a matter by no means obscure. He adds, and I will multiply famine against them. Here he signifies that he was armed with different weapons, so that if men perceive themselves to have fallen, they may perceive that God has other hidden weapons, which he has not yet brought into use. By the word ``multiply'' the Prophet expresses what we have already seen, by means of arrows, for he uses the plural number, but the impious restrict as much as they can the power of God. ``If God wills'' they say, ``he can indeed ruin the corn-fields with continual rain, he can also burn them up

[121] Or, "I shall have darted {,שלח shelech, signifies to send, but it here means to dart; for the context requires it." --- Calvin.

[122] Or, "destruction."

by too much heat, if we have escaped the frost and the hail, the storm, and the rain., and the drought, it will have already gone well with us.'' Thus the impious harden themselves in their security. And why? because they restrict God's arrows to a fixed and certain number. This is the reason why he says, I will multiply famine upon them; that is, when they think their yearly produce safe, because they have escaped drought, and rain, and mildew, and storm, and hail, I will find, says he, other modes unknown to them, by which I will bring famine upon them. And he expresses one manner of doing so --- I will break the staff of bread, concerning which form of speaking we have spoken previously. I do not subscribe to their opinion who say, that the staff of bread is broken when God sends a deficiency of corn; for in the greatest plenty the staff of bread is broken, as we saw in Moses, when God takes away the nourishing quality of bread, and makes it vanish, (Deuteronomy 8:3,) because man lives not by bread alone, but by that secret inspiration which God has implanted in the bread. Hence we may eat more than fourfold the usual quantity, and yet not be satisfied, as this form of speech often occurs with the Prophets, which they take from Moses. Thou shalt eat, and not be satisfied, say they. (Leviticus 26:26; Isaiah 9:20; Ezekiel 7; Hosea 4:10; Micah 6:14.) So also here the Prophet repeats what we saw in the last chapter --- that God breaks the staff of bread, that is, takes away its nourishing quality, so that he who feeds upon it does not feel that he has recovered new rigor. It follows ---

Ezekiel 5:17

17. So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee. I the LORD have spoken it.

17. Et mittam in vos famem, et bestiam malam, [123] et orbabunt to; [124] get pestis, et sanguis transibunt in to, et gladium venire faciam super to: ego Iehovah locutus sum.

Here God speaks generally concerning certain adversities --- I will send evil upon them, he says, but immediately afterwards he adds the kind of evil, of which he had not yet spoken. Hence, under the name of evil he embraces all adversities, as if he had said that he intended to exact the penalty from the wicked, not in one or two ways only, but by those numberless troubles which surround us, and to which we are subject; so that there would be no bounds to his wrath, unless men should cease to provoke his anger. This is the reason, then, why he now speaks generally concerning evil; but as I have said he adds the kind of evil --- An evil beast shall come upon thee, and so I will bereave thee Although only one form of evil is expressed, yet it is by no means doubtful that for the sake of example God mentions this, that they might understand that all injuries are in his hand. And these are numberless. If we look upwards, how many deaths hang over us from that direction? If we look at the earth, how many poisons? how many wild and fierce beasts, how many serpents, swords, pitfalls, stumbling-blocks, precipices, falls of houses, throwings of stones and darts? In short, we cannot stir a step without ten deaths meeting us. So God here speaks

[123] Or, “wild beast” — Calvin.

[124] “He used before the plural number” — Calvin.

of wild beasts only for the purpose of showing that they were at hand, and that by them he would execute his judgments. Now, therefore, we understand why Ezekiel first spoke of the genus, and afterwards came to the species.

And at length he adds, I will bereave or deprive them, namely, that he will deprive fathers of their sons, and sons of their fathers; and he will do that, not only by cruel and savage beasts, but by various other ways. Again he repeats --- pestilence and blood shall pass over thee. He had not spoken of blood before, unless under the name of the sword, which he repeats again: but he heaps together, as I have said, various forms of speech, so that those should be at length awakened who had been too slow, and were afterwards turning themselves willingly away from all sense of the wrath of God. Hence he says, pestilence and blood shall pass through thee. Then, I will bring a sword, says he, upon thee When he spoke of blood, he really intended a sword, but, as I have already said, this did not cause either the Israelites or Jews instantly to tremble at such threats. What, therefore, was in itself sufficiently clear and easy, ought to be impressed in various ways. With this view he adds again, I Jehovah have spoken For he turns away the Jews and Israelites from looking at himself, and shows them that he was not the author of the threats, but that he faithfully delivers what he had received from God's hand, and what he was commanded to utter against them.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since we are so dull and heavy, that we may awake in time at thy threats, and submit ourselves to thy power, that we may not experience by our destruction how formidable it is, but profit under thy rod when thou correctest us like a father, and may we so become wise, that through the whole course of our life we may proceed in the continual pursuit and meditation of true repentance; and having put off the vices and filth of the flesh, we may be reformed into true purity, until at length we arrive at the enjoyment of celestial glow, which is laid up for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture sixteenth

Ezekiel 6

CHAPTER 6

Ezekiel 6:1-3

1. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

1. Et fuit sermo Iehovæ ad me dicendo,

2. Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them,

2. Fili hominis, pone faciem tuam ad [125] montes Israel, et prophetiza ad eos,

3. And say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys; Behold, I even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places.

3. Et dic, Montes Israel audite sermonem Dominatoris Iehovæ: sic dicit Dominator Iehovah montibus et collibus, rivis [126] et vallibus: ecce ego adducem contra vos gladium, et perdam excelsa vestra.

The Prophet now turns himself to the kingdom of Israel, since he had formerly spoken concerning the Jews alone. He says that he was divinely sent to the mountains of Israel. The first question may arise about the time; for the kingdom of Israel had been cut off, and the ten tribes dragged into exile- and the kingdom had come to an end in Ezekiel's time. The time, therefore, does not seem to accord with the denunciation of the Prophet as to what had happened many years previously. But nothing will appear out of place, if we say that it was partly prophecy and partly doctrine, so that the Israelites might understand why they were driven out of their country, and dispersed among the nations. I say that God's plans were partly explained to the exiles, that they might know why God had driven them to distant lands: for this punishment would not have been useful had not God convinced them of its cause. But although the kingdom had fallen, it is probable that some of the people were re-

[125] Or, "against." — Calvin.

[126] "Some translate 'torrents;' others, 'the rushing down of waters;' others, 'rocks.'" — Calvin.

maining: for the Assyrian did not carry off so many thousand men, and his kingdom would have been burdened by such a multitude. Doubtless he collected the flower of the people, and permitted the commonalty to remain there: for he sent from his own kingdom inhabitants for the deserted soil. But the change was great and ruinous to the king himself, and vexatious to all alike. Although, therefore, the kingdom did not exist any longer --- nay, even the name of Israel was almost extinct, because there was no mass of people, and they dwelt in their country like foreigners and guests, yet there was still some portion of them left. Now, we collect from the words of the Prophet that they were obstinate, because they were not induced by either the exile of their brethren, or their own calamity, to leave their own superstitions, and embrace the true and pure worship of God.

Since, therefore, this chastisement did not profit them, hence the Prophet is ordered to preach against them It is ascertained from the first chapter that Ezekiel received this command after the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, (Ezekiel 1:1, 2) for he said that he was divinely stirred up in the thirtieth year after the jubilee, and in the fifth year of the captivity of Jechoniah or Joachim. It is evident, therefore, that the Prophet spake against the land of Israel after the ten tribes had been dispersed. Hence we may elicit that there were still many people there, because it would have been difficult for the Assyrians to receive all the people, and those who remained alive in the country went on in their own abominations, so that it became necessary for some other judgment to be denounced against them, on which we are about to enter. Now, therefore, this principle is established, that the Prophet so treats the slaughter of the kingdom of Israel, that he predicts as about to come to pass what those left in the country by no means feared; for they were persuaded that. they were free from all dangers. But the Prophet shows that God's wrath was not yet complete, but that their former calamities were only a prelude, and that heavier woes were at hand, because they had so hardened themselves against the power of God. The prophecy, too, has greater weight when the Prophet addressed the mountains than when his discourse was directed to men. So that Ezekiel is not ordered to exhort the Israelites to penitence, and to threaten them with the punishment which still remained, but he is ordered to turn his discourse to hills, and mountains, and valleys Thus God obliquely signifies, first, that the Israelites were deaf, and then unworthy of the trouble which Ezekiel would spend in teaching them. Thus the Prophet sent to Jeroboam did not design to address him, but turning to the altar ---

``O altar, altar,'' says he, ``thus saith Jehovah, Behold a son shall be born to the family of David, by name Josiah, and he shall slay upon thee the priests of the high places, and shall burn upon thee the bones of the dead.'' (1 Kings 13:2.)

The king was burning incense on the altar, the prophet does not regard him, but as I have just said, directs his discourse to the altar: that was far more vehement than if he had reproved the king sharply. For that was no common reproof, to pass by the king as if he had been only the shadow of a man, and to admonish the dead altar concerning a future event: so also in this place: Son of man, set thy face against the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them The Prophet might object that the mountains had no ears, and hence that it was only child's play. But he understood

God's intention, and so obeyed cheerfully, because he saw the people despised and rejected by God because they were deaf and incurable, and meanwhile he knew that his labor would not be lost although he addressed the mountains. For we know that the earth was created for the use of man, and hence God proposes to us examples of his wrath in brutes, trees, the atmosphere, and the heavens, that we may know that admonitions belonging to us are engraven there, although in every other way God turns away his eyes and his face. This, therefore, is a sign of his wrath, when God shows his judgments on all sides, and yet is silent towards us, because we gather from this that we are unworthy of any trouble for our improvement, and this was doubtless the Prophet's conclusion.

Now a clearer expression follows in the third verse: Thou shalt say, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord. Here an audience is required of the mountains which they could not give, but that has respect to mankind, as I have just said. God, therefore, requires the mountains to listen, so that men may understand that an inanimate thing may be endued with sense, if their stupidity is considered. For at length God enforced his judgments against the mountains of Israel. Although, therefore, they could not hear the Prophet speaking, yet they took up his instruction, because it was efficacious in them, and God at length in reality proved that he had not spoken in vain. The event, therefore, openly made the mountains in some way attentive. Neither could they escape the judgment which had been openly denounced. Now he adds, Thus saith Jehovah to the mountains and the hills Ezekiel now addresses not mountains only, as he had been commanded: hence he seems to exceed the prescribed command, for he had been sent to mountains and hills only, but now he says, hear ye mountains, hear ye hills, hear ye valleys. But we said yesterday that prophets sometimes speak briefly, and sometimes explain more fully what they had uttered but shortly. God, therefore, at the beginning spoke only of mountains, but he doubtless comprehended valleys, and the flowing down of rivers, because the Prophet only explains what he had said in one word: hence he speaks to mountains and hills, and then to the pouring down of waters or torrents Jerome translates it rocks, and the Hebrews call whatever is violent {אפיק}, aphik, hence when there is any violent course they use this word; and so we may understand in this place either rocks or flowing down of waters or torrents, no matter which. But since he afterwards adds valleys, this explanation is to me probable, that the Prophet indeed understands either torrents or the rushing down of waters. Here we must also remark, that those parts are marked out where the Israelites had erected perverse and adulterous worship: for we know that mountains were filled with superstitions, and so also valleys, though the reason was different: for when they erected their altars on the mountains they thought themselves near God, but when they descended into the valleys, their rites were thus performed in shade and obscurity, and thus they thought themselves in this way hidden as it were in a sanctuary. It is sufficiently known that they exercised their idolatries in the mountains as well as the valleys. This, therefore, is the reason why the Prophet here shows that the whole land of Israel was polluted with defilement. Behold, says he, I bring a sword against you. Hence we infer that when the Prophet addresses the mountains, yet he speaks for

the sake of man. For the sword could not injure the mountains: for one stone would break a hundred, nay a thousand swords, and yet remain entire. God, therefore, had threatened the mountains with slaughter in vain, nay, when mention is made of the sword, we know that death is understood: for the cause is put for the effect. Hence God addresses men indirectly, but when he directs his discourse to the mountains he shows that men themselves are deaf, and therefore turns away his face from them, and addresses mute elements and inanimate things: and I will destroy, says he, your lofty things He now explains what I have taught before, that mountains, and hills, and valleys, and descending waters are named, because perverse and impure worship flourished there. For by ``lofty things,'' the Spirit doubtless intends whatever the Israelites had mixed of their own imaginations to corrupt the worship of God. They properly call altars lofty, because they were erected in high and conspicuous places. But the species is here put for the genus. Meanwhile, God signifies that he so abominates all fictitious worship that he cannot bear the sight of the places. The stones indeed of which the altars were built we know to be harmless: for places are not polluted by idolatry of their own will; for as far as the world was created by God it always retains its own nature, but as far as man is concerned, the places themselves were polluted, and the contagion renders them hateful to God. Hence this is put for the detestation of idolatry. He continues the same sentiment, and first denounces that altars should be laid waste. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 6:4

4. And your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken: and I will cast down your slain men before your idols.

4. Et desolabuntur altaria vestra, et conterentur idola vestra, et cadere faciam [127] occisos coram idolis vestris.

Hence it appears how greatly obedience pleases God, and how true it is that it is better than sacrifices. (1 Samuel 15:22; I Kings 12.) For it is certain that the Israelites extolled their own fictions exorbitantly, as if they were worshipping God correctly In the beginning, indeed, Jeroboam cunningly devised those new rites, that he might alienate the ten tribes from the family of David, and at length the error spread, so that they thought that God approved that impious worship. But we see that God abominates them. We should always hold this principle, that although men think that they obey God when they thrust in their own fictions, yet they produce no other effect than to provoke the wrath of God against them. This vengeance, therefore, had not been taken against altars, unless God had been greatly offended with the impious mixture. Your altars, therefore, shall come to ruin and destruction, and then your idols shall be destroyed. Here some understand the idols of the sun, as the noun is taken from heat, which is afterwards repeated: but this divination seems to be too contracted Hence I do not doubt that the idols are so called on account of the mad love with which the worshippers were seized: for throughout the Prophets they are said to be like adulterers, and our Prophet also uses the same language. Idols therefore may very properly derive their name from heat, because their superstitious worshippers inflame themselves with love, and like adulterers run

[127] Or, “I will lay prostrate” — Calvin.

after harlots, as we shall again see. He afterwards uses another word, when he says, I will lay prostrate your slain before your idols: for they call idols {גלולים}, gelolim, on account of their foulness, nay even filth. We see then in the first place that the fury with which the Israelites were inflamed is condemned by the Prophet, since they perverted the pure and lawful worship of God: then he reproves their enormity because they willingly remained in filth and defilement. But here also we are taught how mightily God is angry with all superstitions, when he not only cites mankind to his tribunal because they profane true piety, but is angry with external instruments --- as stones and wood, and, as it were, involves these instruments of idolatry with their authors. It follows ---

Ezekiel 6:5

5. And I will lay the dead carcases of the children of Israel before their idols; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars.

5. Et ponam cadavera filiorum Israel coram idolis vestris, et spargam coram idolis suis: [128] spargam ossa vestra [129] In circuitu altarium vestrorum

By these words the Prophet signifies that God's wrath would be manifest, because he impresses certain marks by which it may be judged that the Israelites had provoked his anger; because they had departed from the pure and genuine order of the law. He says, therefore, I will place the carcases of the sons of Israel before their idols, when the carcases were so mingled with the idols, hence it appeared that God was greatly offended. For we know that it was detestable in all sacrifices that either human bones or carcases should be joined with the victims: so that the religion of the Israelites was openly condemned by this sign, so that unless they had been utterly blind, they would acknowledge all their worship to have been abominable. We understand, therefore, the design of God when he says, that he would cast the carcases of the sons of Israel before their idols: as if he had said, I will defile all your rites which seem to you sacred, and I will make them stink even before the unbelievers. But how? for the altar is polluted by contact with a carcase; but the carcases shall be cast there, that the contagion may spread to the altars. And I will sprinkle, says he, your bones around your altars Lastly, he signifies that he would profane those sacred rites which the Israelites had fabricated for themselves with their carcases: by which he understands that they would be doubly disgraced whilst they defiled by their pollutions what they had thought beautiful. The Prophets constantly proclaimed that these rites were folly and an abomination, but still those who were attached to those superstitions pleased themselves. When, therefore, God's servants effected nothing by their sacred admonitions, at length a real and actual proof was added, when their altars were polluted, and that, too, with their own defilement. For in this God's remarkable vengeance appeared, as I have formerly said.

Ezekiel 6:6

6. In all your dwellingplaces the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works

[128] "The relation is in the third person." — Calvin.
[129] "He returns again to the second person" — Calvin.

may be abolished.

6. In omnibus habitationibus vestris urbes desolabuntur: [130] et excelsa in vastitatem redigentur, ut vastentur et desolentur [131] altaria vestra, et conterantur, et cessent [132] idola vestra, et excidantur idola vestra, et deleantur opera vestra.

In other words, the Prophet signifies that God would take vengeance on the superstitions of the ten tribes in all places; whence it is clear, that no corner was free from corruption. For, while he names all habitations, he means that they had defiled every habitable place. Wheresoever they dwelt they had erected their altars and strange worship, as another Prophet reproves them; according to the number of your cities were your Gods. (Jeremiah 2:28; Jeremiah 11:13.) He addresses the Jews there, but the meaning is the same. Hence the Prophet signifies, that it was not a single part only that was polluted with their idolatries, but their filth was spread abroad through the whole land wherever there were any inhabitants. In all your habitations, therefore, the cities shall be deserted When he threatens destruction and desolation to the cities, he means what I have just said, that those places were corrupted by impious superstitions. He adds, and thy high places shall be destroyed or made desolate. Here he explains himself more clearly, that the cities should be reduced to solitude, because their religion was corrupt, and the inhabitants were given up to their own fictions and idolatries. He adds therefore high places to cities, that he may point out the reason of the cities perishing. He adds, that they may be desolate or reduced to a desert: it is again the word {חרב}, chereb, and your altars may perish. He confirms the same doctrine, namely, that he was so hostile to the cities of Israel because they were all polluted with profane and strange altars. For, as we have said, God had chosen that land to himself, and so all its cities were dedicated to his glory. This, then, might move us to wonder why he threatened them with destruction; for we might readily answer this by saying his counsel was changed. But the Prophet shows, that although the cities themselves were pleasing to God, yet they were hated by him through the corruptions by which they were polluted. Hence he joins high places to altars. Hence a probable conjecture is elicited, that the Israelites did not sacrifice wherever they had erected high places. They had then their own high places when they worshipped false gods, and also their own altars. And since the worship of God was vitiated in both ways, the Prophet, as I have said, here joins them both.

At length he adds, and your idols shall be broken up and cease, or be abolished. Again he uses that reproachful word which I have said is taken from the stench of dung. (Luke 16:15.) But it signifies that which is highly esteemed among men is abominated by God, especially when it is worshipped. And your idols, says he, shall be cut off. I have said that this word is derived from heat. It means, that the idols were the cause of their madness, since the Israelites were so corrupted with impure love that they deserted God and looked only at the idols: but he compares the zeal with which idolaters are maddened to impure and brutal lust. At length he adds, your works shall be destroyed. Here he uses a general name, and significantly points out

[130] That is, "in every habitable region they will be deserted." This word we have illustrated before — Calvin.

[131] Or," shall be destroyed and perish." — Calvin.

[132] Or, "abolished," the same word for idols which is derived from heat. — Calvin.

the difference between the pure worship of God and all corruptions. There is no need of a long discussion if we desire to know how God is to be worshipped. For he rejects and excludes our works. If, therefore, we do not obtrude our works, but only follow what God demands, our worship will be pure, but if we add anything of our own, it is an abomination. We see, therefore, that useful instruction can be collected from one word, namely, that all worship is perverse and disapproved by God when men bring anything forward of themselves. For by works he does not here understand idols made of either wood, or stone, or brass, or gold, or silver, but it comprehends likewise whatever men have fashioned, and whatever can be ascribed to them, because they have not taken them from the mouth of God and the commands of his law.

Ezekiel 6:7

7. And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

7. Et cadet interfectus in medio vestri: et cognoscetis quod Ego Iejovah.

Here the Prophet adds a small clause to his former threats, namely, that God would so consume the whole people with slaughter, that they would be compelled to acknowledge him as Jehovah. The slain, therefore, shall fall in the midst of thee, that is, the enemy shall arise who shall cause slaughter everywhere through the midst of the land. As to the phrase, I am Jehovah, it refers to the prophecy; for the Israelites did not openly deny God, but because they had no faith in the words of the Prophet, hence God appears and confirms and establishes the authority of the prophetic teaching, when he shows that an avenger was at hand if it was despised, as we know it was despised; and this he will soon explain a little more clearly. It follows now ---

Ezekiel 6:8

8. Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have some that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries.

8. Et residuum faciam, [133] ut sint vobis qui evadant gladium in gentibus, cum dispersi fueritis per terras.

Yet here another promise is added, which may temper the bitterness of so sorrowful a prophecy. For hitherto God shows that he burns with indignation against the land of Israel, so that he determined to destroy it, since it was polluted everywhere, and at all corners. Nothing could therefore be hoped for, if Ezekiel had spoken precisely; therefore a promise is added in mitigation --- I will leave a remnant, says he, that you may have some who escape the sword; that is, that some of you may survive. But how? God does not promise simple pardon, that he may leave the Israelites quiet and safe in the land, but he says that their safety shall be in exile. Hence therefore we collect that they were so depraved that they were unable to obtain pardon, because God says that his patience was their scorn and aversion. Although, therefore, he gives the Israelites some hope of favor, yet he also admonishes them that they could not obtain safety in any other way, except by a kind of death, namely exile. I will leave a remnant, says he, of you, who shall escape the sword; but how?

[133] "It is one word — 'I will leave remaining.'" — Calvin.

whom shall the enemy have spared so that they do not change their place? nay, he says, when ye shall be dispersed among the Gentiles He promises them life, therefore, but a wretched one, because it was united with exile. But God's favor cannot be sufficiently estimated from these words, unless what follows immediately is added.

Ezekiel 6:9

9. And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols: and they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations.

9. Et recordabuntur qui ex vobis evaserint mei in gentibus, apud quas captivi fuerint illic [134] quia frangar ad cor ipsorum quod fornicatur, [135] a quod recessit a me, et ad oculos ipsorum scortantes [136] post idola sua, et pudifient coram facie sua super malis quae fecerunt in omnibus abominationibus suis.

I see that I cannot finish, and I think the time is advancing.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since thou desirest a continual memorial of thy former remarkable judgments on thy people, that we may this day restrict ourselves to thy pure worship --- grant, I say, that we may be teachable by thee, and never attempt to adulterate thy worship by our devices; and since thou hast clearly manifested thy will to us, through thine only-begotten Son, that we may remain in obedience to him, and may so invoke Thee the Father, in his name, while we are pilgrims in the world, until at length we arrive at that blessed inheritance which is laid up for us in heaven by the same, our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Seventeenth.

In the last lecture I only recited the ninth verse, but did not explain it; for the Lord says, he would afterwards make some part of Israel a remnant, since he hoped they would profit by the chastisement: then, says he, the remnant will remember me. By these words he obliquely reproves the sluggishness of the ten tribes, who could never be brought to any sense of God's anger, unless by experiencing it. For there is an opposition between remembrance and forgetfulness, since he says they would remember after they were afflicted, he signifies that during their prosperity they were drowned in negligence and contempt. We may learn from this that God's chastisements are very useful to us, because when he indulges us we abuse his kindness, and flatter ourselves so as to become hardened in sin. It is necessary, therefore, nay, even useful, that those who indulge themselves in their vices, should be chastised, and although the Lord can recall us to himself in other ways, yet our weakness is so great that we always grow torpid in our sins, until his chastisements draw us back to life. Besides, we must also observe, that; all are not permitted to become wise again, even when chastised by God. And the Prophet does not speak generally, but marks out the survivors, or those who shall have been preserved.

[134] "The adverb of place is redundant" — Calvin.
[135] "That is, which burns with adultery." — Calvin.
[136] "Or full of lust" — Calvin.

{פליטיכם}, phlitikem, says he, that is, those of you who shall be saved; but this was only a small portion, as we have seen. Now as the difference is sought for between the few permitted to escape, and the multitude which perished, none other will be found, except because it pleased God to preserve a seed. All were worthy of death; he consumed almost the whole body of the people; he wished a small number to remain safe. We see, therefore, that the safety of those of whom the Prophet now speaks flowed from the mere mercy of God. Besides, what I have said must be borne in mind --- that none repented but those to whom it was given; whence it follows, that repentance is a singular gift of God. And we see that many plunge into a worse state, nay, even rage against God when he chastises them: first they roar, then they are outrageous, then they rush on to unbridled madness, so that they would be prepared to wage war with God, if they could penetrate as far as the heavens. Since therefore chastisements are common to the elect and the reprobate, and yet some go on to rage more and more against God, it follows that it is not permitted to all to repent when God admonishes them, cites them to his tribunal, and demands punishment for their sins when they displease him.

This therefore is the reason why the Prophet restricts this promise to those who should be saved out of the whole people. He had said they should be preserved, because God was unwilling to extinguish the whole Church, that he might not destroy his covenant, which ought to be perpetual and inviolable. He says among the Gentiles, among whom, or where, they were captives Here also the Prophet signifies that exile would be useful to the Israelites, because as long as God suffered them to possess the Holy Land, they provoked him as if on purpose. Since, therefore, they so polluted God's worship in the Holy Land, he ought long ago to have destroyed them. And the Prophet signifies this when he says, among the nations where they were captives they would then return to a sound mind, though they had been obstinate in the region assigned them by God. It follows that he was broken down, or worn down, through their heart There may be a double sense of the words. The first is, that God was at length conquered by their wickedness, after he had found that he did not profit by bearing them patiently. For when he sees that his favor becomes a laughing-stock, he is the more angry, and deservedly so. Thus, therefore, this passage may be conveniently explained, that God was broken on account of the adulterous heart of the Israelites; because when he had long suffered them to sin with impunity, yet when he saw no end to it, being conquered, as it were, by their obstinacy, he descends to punish them. But we may also refer this to pardon, because they will acknowledge that God is broken through their heart, because he wishes to pardon them. For he is said to be broken who voluntarily forgives injuries; and since there are many tender and kind, who willingly pardon their enemies for even the greatest crimes. And this explanation is in some degree suitable, because the sinner cannot really remember God, without perceiving some taste of his goodness, so that he hopes he will be propitious to him. Yet the first sense seems more suitable, that the Israelites will begin to remember when they were dragged into exile, that just punishment awaited them, because God had borne with them patiently, and had not treated them at once with the utmost rigor, but when compelled, he

descended at length to take vengeance, after he was broken down or worn down by their desperate wickedness. Now, therefore, we understand the Prophet's intention. Hence also we gather, that those who seriously repent do not acknowledge their fault lightly, but think within themselves in what ways, and how long, and how perversely, they have provoked God's wrath. The Prophet expresses this by the word breaking. God, therefore, did not treat the Israelites so harshly, while he was offended by their wickedness, but at length he was broken by their hardness.

He says, Through their adulterous heart which departed from me, and through their adulterous eyes after their idols This image occurs everywhere throughout the Prophets; and because I have often explained it, I now pass it slightly by. For the superstitious are said to commit whoredom with their idols, that all idolatry may be rendered more detestable. For those who adulterate the worship of God by their fictions, yet think that they offer an acceptable obedience. Since, therefore, the blind and unbelieving so please themselves by their corruptions, hence Scripture compares them to adulterers. The name of devotion among the Papists is at this time so plausible that it buries all the light of sound doctrine. For by this one word they reject whatever is offered them in the law and the gospel: and so also concerning ``good intentions'' as they call them. Since, therefore, the incredulous so intoxicate themselves with their own comments, God distinctly mentions fornicators, and says, that all who recede from the pure rule of the law contaminate themselves with debaucheries. At the same time, as I have often said, the prophets allude to a sacred and spiritual marriage in which God has bound himself to his Church. For chastity of soul means the pure worship of God. When, therefore, men fall off from that sincerity, it is just as if a woman should desert her husband and follow adulterers. Now that the Prophet may express this mad desire more clearly, he adds eyes to the heart. By these words he understands furious lust, not only because they were devoted to their idols with all their heart, but they were drawn that way by their eyes, as if their eyes had been torches to inflame their mind. He retains, however, his own image, because adulterers by their wandering glances generate the flames of lust, and so their heart is set on fire. For this reason therefore he says, they were adulterous both in eye and heart

Afterwards he adds, and they shall become ashamed, or shall be cut off in their faces, that is, before their face: others translate, they shall feel nausea, which seems rather too rough. But because the word {קט}, ket, signifies to spew out, those who use a word of abomination render the Prophet's sense faithfully. They shall be therefore, says he, an abomination to themselves Those who translate it, ``They shall be cut off,'' also receive the word metaphorically; for he who suffers so much shame that he scarcely dares to look on heaven and men, is said to be cut off. But others translate, they shall contend or quarrel before their eyes. But since that signification is rarer, I scarcely dare subscribe to their opinion, especially when the best sense is, that they should be abominable to themselves. Therefore, they shall be rejected before their face, that is, they shall not wait till men condemn them or until others reprove their perverse worship, but they shall willingly abominate themselves. Now the Prophet shows that their penitence is real, because it may

happen that a person may feel that he has some dealing with God, and yet not be truly humbled: just as Cain was compelled to tremble at the sight of God, yet was always like himself. (Genesis 4:9.) So it usually happens to all the wicked. The acknowledgment of this judgment of God is indeed some portion of repentance, but only half: wherefore the Prophet, that he may show the Israelites that they would remember God not without fruits when his hand was upon them, adds, that they should be abominable to themselves. This displeasure is then the second part of repentance. He says, for the evils which they have done in all their abominations The Prophet expresses more clearly, that the veil by which the eyes of the Israelites had been so long covered should be removed when they returned to God. For escape from punishment causes men to connive at their sins, as if a veil had been placed over their eyes, and they imagine that what God not only rejects but even detests is honorable. But when God by the infliction of punishment forces the wretched to perceive this, and no longer to put light for darkness and darkness for light, then they begin to be displeased with themselves. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 6:10

10. And they shall know that I am the LORD, and that I have not said in vain that I will do this evil unto them.

10. Et cognoscent quod ego Iehovah non frustra locutus fuerim ad faciendum ipsis malum hoc. [137]

He now mentions the fruit of their repentance, because the Israelites were beginning at length to attribute just honor to his prophecies. For we know that they trifled carelessly while the Prophets were threatening them. Because, therefore, they were in the habit of destroying confidence in all the servants of God, and of reducing as it were their truth to nothing, the Prophet says, that when they repented they would then perceive that God had not spoken in vain. While they were despising his threats, they did not perceive that they ought therefore to be considered despisers of God. For listening only to men, when they heard Jeremiah or Ezekiel, they thought that they were contending with them only, and could do so with impunity against mere mortals. God therefore, in opposition to this, testifies that he was the chief author. For as error springs from error, they proudly rejected whatever the Prophets said, when they treated it as frivolous and vain. God therefore says: They shall then know that I have not spoken in vain, when I bring upon them this evil This knowledge, which is produced by real dissatisfaction with self, is very useful. I have said that it is the fruit of repentance, but at the same time it profits the miserable, to humble themselves seriously before God, and to call to memory their own ingratitude: then they perceive what they had never admitted before, that God is trustworthy as well in his threats as in his promises. Hence it happens that they reverently embrace his word which they had formerly despised. He pronounced the same thing previously concerning the reprobate, who, as we have already said, feel God's hand without producing fruit. But because he now speaks of those very few whose conversion he had previously praised, he doubtless comprehends the fear of God under recognition

[137] "That is, in making them bear this evil, or slaughter, or penalty: for 'evil' is not to be taken here for unjust violence, but only for adversity." — Calvin.

or perception of him. For if all God's threats had been buried, the people could not be thought to have returned into the right way, nor could their conversion have any existence before God. We know that contempt is not free from impious sacrilege, which is now treated of. Therefore, that the sinner may submit himself sincerely to God, this acknowledgment is required, that he should weigh within himself how unworthily and wickedly he had formerly either repudiated or neglected the word of God. In the meantime the Prophet triumphs over the arrogance of those who had wantonly despised the teaching of all God's servants, when he says, they shall feel (or acknowledge) that I Jehovah have not spoken in vain Since, therefore, the Prophet here depicts as in a painting their late repentance, let us learn to tremble in time at God's threats. Although indeed God does not yet execute his vengeance upon us, yet let us be sure that he does not speak in vain, and let us be alarmed as soon as he shows any sign of his indignation. God indeed testifies that he would be propitious to the Israelites, although their repentance was tardy; but as far as we are concerned, let us repent in time, as I have already admonished, and as soon as God utters his threats, let it be to us just as if their execution were at hand. It follows ---

Ezekiel 6:11

11. Thus saith the Lord GOD; Smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say, Alas for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! for they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.

11. Sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, Percute manu tua [138] et divarica pedes tuos, [139] et dic Hei [140] super omnes abominationes mahas domus Israel: quia gladio, fame et peste cadent.

This confirms what we have formerly seen concerning the slaughter of the ten tribes. The kingdom of Israel had been indeed afflicted, but because those remaining in their own country thought themselves free from further calamity, and gave themselves up to their idolatries more and more, it was on this account necessary that final destruction should be denounced against them. Since, then, words moved them but little, God adds a sign, according to his custom in obstinate cases. He orders the Prophet, by clapping of hands, and by extending his legs and feet, to show that the land was cursed. Divide, therefore, thy feet; for thus men are accustomed to do when they denounce anything gravely, or burn with indignation: they extend their legs in opposite directions; so I have rendered it verbally separate thy feet: the clapping of the hands has the same object. God wishes by this gesture that his word should be confirmed, not for the Prophets sake, but for the sake of the obstinacy of those who were deaf to all words, as we have said. Hence we truly comprehend how great was the stupidity of men, who, when God was thundering from heaven, yet remain secure, and do not cease to follow after their own desires: even when God inspires terror, they do nothing but laugh --- this is monstrous. And yet we see it was an old disease, and I wish we of this day were free from what Ezekiel experienced.

Lastly, it is just as if he had been commanded to bring the Israelites into his

[138] That is, “clap thy hands.” — Calvin.
[139] Or, “extend;” verbally, “extend in thy foot.” — Calvin.
[140] Or, “heus, alas!” — Calvin.

presence When, therefore, he was commanded to cry alas! or, oh! upon all the abominations of the house of Israel, there is no doubt that his gesture as well as his exclamation ought to be efficacious. The reason also is added --- that all shall perish by sword, pestilence, and famine We have said that these three kinds of punishment are always proposed, not because God strikes the despisers of his law with pestilence, the sword, and famine only, but because this method is more known and more common. God has innumerable hidden methods of punishing transgressors; but since, as I have said, this scourge is more used, hence the Prophets more frequently mention it.

The result is, that destruction to the kingdom of Israel was at hand, which they had never thought of; because God avenges the wickedness of his people not only by war, but by pestilence and famine. Sometimes by the figure, a part for the whole, it comprehends other punishments. And we know with how many miseries war is replete; for when once men begin to take up arms, the gate is opened to robberies and rapines, burnings, slaughters, debaucheries, and all violence; and in war all humanity and equity is buried. Then as to famine, we know that it usually renders men ravenous. But in pestilence the husband will desert the wife, every family is invaded by death, orphanhood afflicts one, and widowhood another. Since, therefore, these scourges of God draw with them infinite miseries, it is not to be wondered at if the Prophets use war, pestilence, and famine, for shortness, when they signify that those who provoke God too long shall perish. Now follows a clearer explanation ---

Ezekiel 6:12

12. He that is far off shall die of the pestilence; and he that is near shall fall by the sword; and he that remaineth and is besieged shall die by the famine: thus will I accomplish my fury upon them.

12. Qui procul erit, peste morietur; et qui prope erit, gladio cadet, [141] et qui relictus fuerit, et obsessus fame morietur: et complebo Indignationem [142] meam in ipsis.

Now the Prophet explains himself how the Israelites were to be destroyed by famine, the sword, and pestilence, namely, those who shall be far off shall die by pestilence; that is, after they think themselves hidden in secret places, so that no danger nor inconvenience can overtake them, they shall die there by pestilence. For when they were dragged into distant exile, they thought themselves altogether remote from all harm. But pestilence, he says, shall attack them although the sword shall cease. Then those who shall be at hand, that is, those who remain at home, the sword shall consume. Now the remnant, he says, who had been besieged and hemmed in, shall die by famine. And so he confirms what we formerly saw, that there should be no cause why the Israelites should sleep amidst their sins when God spared them: because if they do not all perish by the sword, God has other means of punishing them; for he has pestilence and famine in his hand, so that he can extinguish those who are far off, since pestilence will pursue them even there;

[141] "Some translate 'shall fall on the sword,' but too harshly. Already, in the last verse, the Prophet used the same word in a different sense, therefore I change nothing: he who is near shall fall by the sword." — Calvin.

[142] Or, "burning" — Calvin.

then if any are left, they shall perish --- even in the midst of peace --- nevertheless, because God will destroy them by famine and want. Then he adds, I will fulfill my burning wrath against them: by which words God signifies that he had borne with that impious people thus far, but if at any time he pleased to exercise rigor, that he had not yet exacted sufficient punishment for their wickedness. Hence God blames them, though he had borne with them thus far, and although he had sometimes stricken them with his rods, yet he was not a rigid judge, but admonishes them as a father to return to the right way. But since they had so obstinately abused God's forbearance, he here pronounces that his last act was approaching, and for this reason he speaks of the fulfilling of his burning anger: thus the Prophet turns away all envy from God, that the Israelites should not charge him with cruelty; thus he shows them that whatever evils they suffered were only a prelude to a horrible slaughter which was overhanging them, and which they still despised. It follows ---

Ezekiel 6:13

13. Then shall ye know that I am the LORD, when their slain men shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet savour to all their idols.

13. Et cognoscetis quod ego Iehovah, cure vulnerati eorum [143] in medio idolorum ipsorum [144] in circuitu altarium ipsorum, super omnem collem excelsum, in omnibus capitibus [145] montium, et sub omni arbore frondosa, et sub omni quercu densa, [146] in loco ubi obtulerint suffitum bonae fragrantiae omnibus idolis suis.

Now he again announces that they shall know what they have long neglected. But here a different knowledge from the former seems to be marked; for he has lately said that they should so remember as to be ashamed, and acknowledge that the slaughters predicted by the Prophets had not been in vain: but here he mentions nothing of this kind, but only speaks of that experimental knowledge which is common to the ungodly. And, in truth, this doctrine seems to be extended promiscuously to all the commonalty. For although for the most part they did not profit by it, yet all perceived that God was a judge, because so clear and conspicuous was the proof of his vengeance, that they were compelled to feel, whether they would or not, that their punishment was just. We may perceive, then, that the Prophet intends the phrase --- then ye shall know, etc., in a wide sense, because he addresses all the Israelites without exception, even those who should perish. For, we said, such was the character of that knowledge, that it only frightened them, and did not bend them to humility. And, truly, the words which follow show only the terrible vengeance of God, when they shall be slain, says he, that is, shall fall, near their idols But we have said that they would more clearly acknowledge the vengeance of God from this --- that he rendered their false gods an object of ridicule. But, as I have said before, the Prophet uses an opprobrious name when speaking of idols. Since, therefore, they so fell near their idols, under the confidence and protection of which they thought

[143] Or, "slain." — Calvin.
[144] "The person is here changed, but this does not obscure the sense." — Calvin.
[145] That is, "the tops" — Calvin.
[146] "Some translate 'elm,' but it is also oak." — Calvin.

that they would always be safe; and although the idols themselves were thus involved in the condemnation, this made God's vengeance more manifest. And this is the reason, as I have before suggested, why the Prophet enters into these details. What follows is to the same purpose --- by the circuit of all their altars This, then, was profanation of all altars, to be defiled by carcases being drawn over them, and then sprinkled with human blood. But he also points out the places where they worshipped false gods; for we have said that lofty places were chosen for them, but here he puts lofty hills, and then the tops of the mountains But as idol-worshippers heaped to themselves various and numerous games, when they were satiated with their high places, they had shady valleys, for their altars were under trees, where they offered incense. The Prophet therefore pronounces that there was no place which God did not condemn with infamy. When, therefore, he says that the incense had a pleasing smell, the opposite is doubtless intended, since this incense was foul before God: as when an immodest woman desires to please an adulterer, it moves the wrath of her husband, so here God silently complains that he was provoked by that foul incense with which the Israelites wished and desired to gratify their idols.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since thou not only proposest to us this day the ancient examples of thine anger, by which we may be restrained within thy pure and perfect worship, but also hast so clearly manifested thyself to us, through thine only-begotten Son, that we cannot err unless we are insane, --- grant, I say, that we may be not only docile and moral, but attentive to that doctrine which is contained in thy gospel, so that we may be directed by this perfect light, until we arrive at length at the full and solid alliance with the Sun of righteousness, Christ, thy Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Eighteenth

Ezekiel 6:14

14. So will I stretch out my hand upon them, and make the land desolate, yea, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblath, in all their habitations: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

14. Et extendam manum meam super eos, et ponam terram vastitatem, et derelictionem [147] prae deserto Diblathah in omnibus habitationibus eorum: et cognoscent quod ego Iehovah.

Ezekiel pursues the same sentiment, but it is necessary to persist with more words in confirmation of his prophecy, because it was somewhat difficult of belief, especially among men so secure, and who had been hardened against God by long habit. This is the reason, then, why he uses so many words about a thing in itself by no means obscure. Now he speaks concerning the extension of God's hand, which is a Scriptural form of speech sufficiently familiar; for it is said that God extends his hand when he puts forth manifest examples of his wrath. But the phrase is taken from men, who, if they wish to accomplish anything great extend their arm. We know that God accomplishes all things by his nod alone, but because through our sluggishness we do not comprehend his judgment, the Scripture, in compassion to our rudeness represents his hand as extended. But he says, that he will place the

[147] "Or, stupor: for {,{שמה shemeh, as we have seen, signifies this also." --- Calvin

land in devastation and stupor The two words, {שממה}, shemmeh, and {שמה}, shemeh, are different, though derived from the same root. {שמה}, shemeh, signifies to destroy and lay waste; also to wonder at: so that the explanation of some is not bad --- I will place the land for a desolation and an astonishment. But because the comparison of a desert follows immediately, I willingly subscribe to the opinion of those who translate desolation or solitude, and vacancy or waste: for although these: two words are synonymous, as they say, yet the Prophet properly adds vacancy or solitude to waste, because he does not inculcate the same thing too often, for the sake of explanation, but only that he may confirm what he otherwise knew would not be attended to by the Israelites. Some translate from the desert even to Diblathah; and there are some who think Riblatha should be read instead of Diblathah --- and it may happen that an error has crept in, on account of the similarity of the letters {ד} and {ר}. But I do not think any change is needed: and besides, I reject as absurd, the explanation from the desert even to Diblathah or Riblatha. But {מ} is rather a mark of comparison: the land of Israel shall be reduced to desolation more than the desert of Diblathah. For how could the Prophet have said --- from the desert even to Diblathah? The threat is against the land of Israel, but Diblathah was in Syria beyond the land, for they think it was Antioch: hence the true sense, according to the Prophet's intention, could not be elicited from this. But it is most suitable that the desert should be placed before the eyes of the Israelites, because it was not far from their country: Syria was between them and it, but since there was frequent intercourse, that desert was sufficiently known to them. Already had they passed through the desert when they passed into exile, and the difference in the aspect of the country would rather waken up their senses: for the whole of Syria is fertile, and Antioch has an excellent site, as geographers relate. Since, therefore, the Israelites had traversed a pleasant land, and one filled with all opulence, when they came to a desert vast and sorrowful, that appearance, as I have said, would stir them up the more. This, therefore, appears to me the reason why the Prophet says that the desert Diblathah was not so waste, or solitary, or dry, or squalid, as the land of Israel should become.

He says, in all their habitations, that they may know that there would be no corner free from that devastation which he predicts: for it will often happen that some land is partially seized and spoiled, but here the Prophet comprehends all habitations. And they shall know, he says, that I am Jehovah: that is, they shall know that I have spoken by my Prophets. But God announces this with displeasure, because the Prophet's authority ought to have been sacred and established among the people. For his calling was so marked out that they could not contend against him without being opposed to God. Hence Ezekiel is omitted here, and God comes forward, as if he had spoken himself. They shall know, therefore, he says, both my faithfulness and power. Besides this knowledge is extended to the reprobate who do not profit by God's chastisements. Although, therefore, experience compels them to acknowledge God as a judge, yet they remain obstinate, as we shall soon see again and again. It follows ---

Ezekiel 7

CHAPTER 7

Ezekiel 7:1-2

1. Moreover, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

1. Et fuit sermo Iehovæ ad me, dicendo,

2. Also, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD unto the land of Israel; An end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land.

2. Et tu fili hominis, sic dicit Dominator Iehovah terrae Israel, vel de terra; finis, venit finis super quatuor alas terrae.

Ezekiel seems here too verbose; for he repeats the same sentiments almost in the same words. But the reason which I have brought forward must be marked, if God had only uttered his commands shortly, when the people were not only slow to believe but of a perverse disposition, his message had proved cold and ineffectual. With this design he uses, as we have seen, many words, and now repeats the same: he now changes his expression, because he ought by all means to stimulate that sloth, or rather sluggishness, under which the people labored. Another thing to be noted is, that he came not once only by God's command to preach to the people, but. that he was often sent to stir up their minds. For if he had included in one context what God had enjoined, the Israelites might for the time have thought of God's judgment, but a prophecy once uttered would have easily escaped them. Besides, when Ezekiel testifies that he was sent by God, and afterwards returns and affirms that he brings new commands, this was more effectual to influence their minds. Now we see the meaning of the phrase, the word was given by Jehovah For this prophecy is distinguished from the former, and yet the matter is the same, without any difference, as it seems to weave in with the same discourse: this, indeed, is true, but he ought to be sent twice, that the people may understand that not once only, but twice and perpetually, what he heard from God's mouth was to be repeated: since it was sufficiently clear, that God was anxious for their safety, since he never ceased

to exhort them. Thus, therefore, says the Lord Jehovah concerning the land of Israel: an end is coming, an end upon the four corners of the land Here God seems to regard the moderate punishments which he had already inflicted on the kingdom of Israel. For we know that they often felt God's hand, but when some relaxation was afforded them, they thought themselves escaped, so they forgot their wickedness and went on in it so carelessly that it was very clear that they despised God, unless when he oppressed them with his dreadful power. This seems the meaning of the word end, and it is emphatically repeated: an end is coming, an end upon the four corners of the land He puts, indeed, wings, but intends it metaphorically for four different regions. God, therefore, reproves the Israelites for their obstinacy, because though often chastised they did not cease to transgress, through not supposing that any thing more grievous could happen. He puts therefore the word end, as if he said, hitherto I have treated you moderately. And surely God had displayed a remarkable specimen of clemency in punishing the Israelites so lightly when he might utterly have cut them off. Since, therefore, he had so refrained himself in punishing, the sluggishness of the people was on that account the less tolerable, since they thought all was over as soon as God had withdrawn his hand. An end, says he, an end is come, that is, after this you must not hope for any moderation. I see there is no hope of repentance in you, and so I shall utterly consume you; and he adds, on the four corners of the land, as he had just said, in all your dwellings. Again, therefore, he teaches, that no part of the earth should be free from the slaughter which he predicts. It follows ---

Ezekiel 7:3

3. Now is the end come upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense upon thee all thine abominations.

3. Nune finis super to: et mittam indignationem meam in to, et judicabo to secundum vias tuas: et ponam super to cunctas abominationes tuas.

He puts the word end a third time, and repeats it even a fourth and a fifth time. Whence we collect, that those miserable ones, although admonished more than enough both by teaching and experience, were yet like brute animals, so that they always promised themselves something to fly to, and were not impressed with the fear with which the Prophet would strike them. They did not think that an end was really coming, but said, Oh! something will remain, some will escape; and this therefore was their pride. Hence the Prophet does not inculcate the same word in vain: now, says he, the end is come When he says the end has come, he signifies that the Israelites vainly and foolishly trusted in the future, because they had not yet experienced extreme rigor. God, as he had said, had been lenient with them as to punishment. What then did they do? When they perceived such forbearance in God they thought, that it would always be so. Hence the Prophet marks the difference between the past and future, as if he should say, that God's vengeance as they had formerly known it, was moderate, but now nothing else remained but that God should utterly tear them up and consume them. Now, therefore, there is an end concerning thee He had spoken in the third person, but he was directing his

discourse to the whole land of Israel, and he had said upon the four corners of the land, now, says he, the end cometh upon thee Then, I will send my indignation upon thee God indeed had given signs of his anger, but he had not been so severe that the Israelites ceased from flattering themselves. When, therefore, he speaks of his own indignation, he doubtless signifies that he was so offended that he would not restrain himself as he had formerly done. This too is the sense of what follows, I will judge thee according to thy ways. They had been judged formerly, but only in part; for God had given them time for repentance had they been curable: but now, when he compares their judgment with their sins, he means, that nothing was wanting to extreme severity. And he explains that more clearly at the end of the verse, I will put upon thee all thine abominations, that is, I will cast thine own burden upon thee. For although God had begun to exact just punishment. for their superstitions, yet they had not suffered a greater burden than they deserved. Hence God now pronounces that all their abominations should come upon their own heads, so that they should be utterly buried. It follows ---

Ezekiel 7:4

4. And mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity: but I will recompense thy ways upon thee, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

4. Et non parcet oculus meus super to, et non miserebor: quia vias tuas super to ponam, et abominationes tuae in medio tui erunt: et cognoscetis quod ego Iehovah.

In other words he confines his own sentence, that God will not spare them, nor will he be entreated. For when hypocrites hear the praises of God which are assigned to him in scripture, namely, that he is merciful and long-suffering, (Numbers 14:18; Psalm 103:8,) they seize upon them and fabricate for themselves the material of foolish and perverse confidence. God here pronounces that his pity would not be accessible to the wicked, who do not cease to repel it far from them. And this is worthy of notice, because nothing is more natural than to be intoxicated with false hope when we hear that God is merciful, unless we know for what purpose he testifies this concerning himself, namely, that sinners may betake themselves to him, and may fearlessly call upon him, and implore his mercy, of which they have such remarkable testimony. But hypocrites always become worse, meanwhile they wish God to be propitious to them. Hence when he says, his eye will not spare, neither would he pity them, his intention must be observed, that. wicked and ungodly men should not think his clemency prepared for them against which they have previously shut the door. Because I will put thy ways upon thee --- that is, I will cast thy wickedness against thee. We see then that the people's sins were placed before them, and as it were lay there as long as God spared them. Now, therefore, he first signifies that they should have no cause of quarrel or complaint, because he will cast against them the iniquities which they had heaped upon him. Then also he silently accuses them of too much security, because they never could be brought to repentance, while God sustained and tolerated their sins. And thy abominations, he says, shall be in the midst of thee They were so from the first as far as their guilt was concerned, but God had not yet poured forth his anger. He says, therefore, thy abominations shall

be in the midst of thee, because it should really appear that they were not obstinate against God without punishment. Again he repeats, ye shall know that I am Jehovah It is quite clear, that by their obstinacy they compelled God to speak thus, since they despised Ezekiel. But although they pretended to some piety, it cannot be doubted that they would despise God himself.

Therefore he reproves their impiety so sharply, because they denied that God was God as often as they withdrew their confidence from the teaching of the holy man. It follows ---

Ezekiel 7:5

5. Thus saith the Lord GOD, An evil, an only evil, behold, is come.

5. Sic dicit Dominator Iehovah: Malum, unum [148] malum ecce veniet.

If we read {אחת}, acheth, or {אחר}, acher, the sense seems to me the same, an evil, another evil is come: that is, one evil is come from another, or one evil is come and an evil: that is, when one evil is come another will soon follow. Some explain it in way which seems to me harsh and unsatisfactory: one evil is come; this is so severe that at its first impulse it suffices for complete slaughter, so subtilely do they explain it. But it seems to me that the sense of the Prophet flows best thus, one evil shall come upon another --- that is, there will be no cessation in God's heaping evils upon evils until the very name of the whole people shall become extinct. And this appears to me to be said, that the Israelites should not after their manner suppose themselves safe, if God gives them a short respite. For when a slight intermission happens, the impious erect their crests, and keep up their spirits, and think that God is at peace with them. Since, therefore, any intermission is taken by hypocrites, as if they had made their peace with God, therefore the Prophet says, one evil shall come upon another It follow ---

Ezekiel 7:6

6. An end is come, the end is come: it watcheth for thee; behold, it is come.

6. Finis venit, venit finis: evigilavit super to, ecce venit.

The whole context has the same meaning, namely, that although the Israelites are deaf, yet they are compelled to attend to God's continued threats. The Prophet therefore strikes their ears, because he was not immediately attended to, and again he speaks of the end: an end is come, says he, an end is come Here Ezekiel does not affect to use graceful figures of speech, but was rather compelled by necessity to use the repetitions which we see. For the end concerning which he speaks could with difficulty penetrate their minds, for they were always supposing that God could be appeased by various means. Since, therefore, they promised themselves something remaining behind, and put away from them what the Prophet taught about the end, he could not do otherwise than threaten often though he could scarcely persuade them. Hence an end is come, an end is come: it has been watchful against thee: behold it is come When he says it has watched, he signifies haste, not that God had suddenly revenged the wickedness of the ten tribes, but that he regards the torpor of those who indulged in a vain confidence and dream that God's judgment is far

[148] Some understand {אחר acher, and one evil more. --- Calvin.

distant. That diabolic proverb --- ``Le terme vaut l'argent,'' [149] is still common in the mouths of many, and such impiety has been rife in all ages. When therefore God suspends his judgments, the reprobate intemperately boast themselves as if they could continue in sin with impunity. For this reason the Prophet says, the end is watching --- that is, hastening --- because although God had delayed he would no longer refrain from destroying the Israelites. It follows ---

Ezekiel 7:7

7. The morning is come unto thee, O thou that dwellest in the land: the time is come, the day of trouble is near, and not the sounding again of the mountains.

7. Venit mane super to, habitator terrae: venit tempus, propinquus est dies tumultus, [150] et non clamor [151] montium.

Now he uses another word. He says, the morning is come, though some translate kingdom, but erroneously. For although {צפירה}, tzephireh, is a turban sometimes, or a royal diadem, yet the Prophet's language is distorted when they say that the kingdom was transferred, or taken over to the Babylonians. But the sentence flows best --- the morning cometh By ``the morning'' he implies what he had said before, namely, the hastening of God's vengeance. As, therefore, he said the end was watching, since God was hastening to take vengeance, so also he says, the morning is come to them, and then rouses them from that drowsiness in which they had grown torpid. We know that hypocrites commit all their sins as if no eye were upon them; as long as God is silent and at rest they revel without shame or fear. But the chosen remain faithful even in secret; but God's word always shines before them, as Peter says --- ye do well when ye attend to the Prophetic word, as a lamp shining in darkness. (2 Peter 1:19.) Although the faithful may be surrounded by darkness, yet they direct their eye to the light of celestial doctrine, so that they are watchful, and are not children of the night and of darkness, as Paul says. (1 Thessalonians 5:4,5.) But the impious are, as it were, immersed in darkness, and think they shall enjoy perpetual night. As the rising morning dispels the darkness of night, so also God's judgment, on its sudden appearance, strikes the reprobate with unexpected terror, but too late.

For this reason, then, the Prophet says, that morning is come to the Israelites, because they had promised themselves perpetual night, as if they were never to be called upon to render an account of their conduct. We see, therefore, that he alludes suitably to that torpor which was the cause of their obstinacy, when they thought themselves safe in their hiding-places. Hence he laughs at their perverse confidence, who promise themselves impunity because they are in night. For the morning, he says, will immediately seize upon you; hence morning is coming upon thee, O inhabitant of the land; afterwards, the time is come: {עת}, gneth, properly signifies all appointed or determined time. Hence the Prophet meant that the time had come which God had fixed beforehand for his judgment, and thus he takes away from the impious the material for pride, for they always suppose that God is as it were

[149] Meaning — the duration of the sinful pleasure is worth the price paid for it.
[150] Or sound; some translate “of cutting off,” I know not why — Calvin.
[151] Some translate “glory,” as if it had been {,{הד hed. --- Calvin.

asleep when he does not attack them at the very first moment. He speaks, therefore, of an appointed time, as in other places the Prophets usually do, and frequently of the year of visitation. He signifies the same thing when he says, the day of tumult, or noise, is at hand. This member of the sentence answers to the former. He had said the end was watching; he had said that the judgment was hastening on: now simply and without figure he says, the day is at hand, {קרוב}, krob, a day, I say, of noise, and not the echo of the mountains, says he; that is, it shall not be an empty resounding, as when a. sound is produced among the mountains a concussion arises, and since the sounds which are uttered there, when taken up by the neighboring mountains, return to their own place, and thus a greater resounding occurs, called echo. The Prophet therefore says, that the clamor of which he speaks should not be an echo, that is, an empty resounding, because all should seriously cry out. Some think {הד}, hed, means ``acclamations,'' which is properly {הידד}, hided; it is, indeed, from the same root, but {הר}, her, is used in the same sense. But if this explanation seems better, the Prophet will allude to mountains, not lofty, but vine-bearing, as many were in the land of Israel. But the other explanation is preferable, namely, there shall be the sound of a tumult, not on account of the reverberation, as they say, but because every one should cry out, until sorrow and crying should abound on every side. It follows ---

Ezekiel 7:8

8. Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee: and I will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense thee for all thine abominations.

8. Nunc e propinquo effundam indignationem meam super to, et complebo iram meam in to, et judicabo to secundum vias tuas: et ponam super to cunctas abominationes tuas.

He repeats here almost the same words. We have explained the intention, namely, that the Israelites should be positively assured that God threatened not for the sake of frightening them, but because the execution of his wrath was prepared. Now, says he, I will shortly pour out my indignation He had said the day was at hand. This refers to the time; for it would be foolish to place together I will shortly pour out my indignation, against thee, and I will fulfill my indignation against thee; this fulfilling explains what he had formerly said concerning the end. For God had formerly executed his vengeance against the Israelites, but not completely. This completion, then, of God's wrath prevails even as far as their ultimate destruction. Now I have explained those words --- I will judge thee according to thy ways, and I will put upon thee all thine abominations

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that we being admonished by such remarkable proofs of thy wrath, may learn to walk anxiously in thy sight, and so to bring ourselves into voluntary obedience to thyself, that the certain testimony to our gratuitous adoption may appear in our life; and grant that we may so prove ourselves to be sons, that we may truly invoke thee the Father, until we arrive at that blessed inheritance which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Nineteenth.

Ezekiel 7:9

9. And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways and thine abominations that are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I am the LORD that smiteth.

9. Et oculus meus non parcet, neque miserebor: secundum vias tuas super to ponam, et abominationes tuae in medio tui erunt: et cognoscetis quod ego Iehovah percutiens.

This verse contains nothing besides a repetition, unless that at last the Prophet more clearly points out what that knowledge was which he formerly mentioned, namely, that they should unwillingly feel God's power, because they had withdrawn their confidence from the Prophet's teaching. For he had said two or three times, ye shall know that I am Jehovah: now he adds the participle, and that it is I who smite you This then is the knowledge by which God makes himself known to the reprobate, while they are compelled, whether they will or not, to feel that there is a judge of the world. The faithful indeed profit under God's chastisements, and they are at times humbled under his hand, because they do not willingly obey his word: but we said that the Prophet here triumphs over the people's pride who dared to deride all threats as if God were sleeping in heaven. He says therefore at length, that when God strikes them they should feel what they did not believe. It follows ---

Ezekiel 7:10

10. Behold the day, behold, it is come: the morning is gone forth; the rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded.

10. Ecce dies ecce venit: egressum est [152] mane, floruit baculus, germinavit superbia.

Now Ezekiel uses another figure, but to the same purpose. He repeats what he had said before: the day is come, and he adds another part, that the morning had advanced But we said that the impious, when God connives at their sins, exult as it were in darkness without shame or fear. Since therefore they were as wanton as if they had obtained the license of night, the Prophet denounces that morning is at hand, because God would suddenly bring to light what they thought would be always hidden. Since therefore, when God retired, they supposed themselves in complete darkness, the Prophet recalls them to the consideration of the daily order of things: for light emerges immediately from the dawn. Thus he laughs at their folly, because they thought that God had his eyes shut, when for the time he dissembles. This therefore is the reason, as was fully explained yesterday, why the Prophet calls the sudden change morning Therefore the morning has arisen, afterwards, the rod has blossomed, pride has flourished It is not doubtful that he means Nebuchadnezzar by the rod, but interpreters vary on the context; for many refer the following verse to the king of Babylon: but others, in my judgment rightly, take it of the Israelites themselves. As to his saying the rod has blossomed, it refers to God's forbearance. For when the Israelites had sinned a long while with impunity, they thought, as I said yesterday, that their peace with God would be perpetual. But

[152] Or, “has arisen” — Calvin.

here Ezekiel pronounces in opposition to this, that God had as it were a hidden root; as he who plants a tree waits for the time, till it rises to a just magnitude. Hence he compares Nebuchadnezzar to a rod which was growing. God could indeed without man's assistance destroy the Israelites, and could also compel others to obey him: for all creatures are at hand to fulfill his commands; but here Ezekiel commends God's forbearance, though he had planted the tree, from which the rod was to spring up with which he would smite the Israelites. So he reproves their sloth, because they did not reflect upon the time of their visitation, which God had determined in his secret counsel.

On the whole, in saying the rod has flourished, he refers to those steps which God takes in executing his judgments. For he does not act hastily after the manner of men, but just as a husbandman in sowing and planting. Hence God provides for his own use ministers of vengeance, and permits them to increase and to arrive at maturity. If therefore God does not hasten as we wish, we may know that he still has rods prepared, and if they are not yet grown to maturity, it is because the time which the Almighty has previously fixed is not yet arrived. Now it follows, that pride has budded I have just said that some referred this to the Babylonians, but I rather understand it of the Israelites. Hence God shows how the staff grew in Chaldea by which the Israelites were to be struck, and yet the root was among themselves. For here the noun ``pride'' is to be taken as usual in a bad sense: it does not denote simply haughtiness or arrogance, but that licentiousness which springs from a contempt of God. But this does not suit the Babylonians as far as God governed them with his hand, when he wished to take vengeance on the Israelites. But in this sense there is nothing forced, that the staff with which the Israelites were to be struck had increased, and yet it had no other origin than their sins, and hence that no other root need be sought for than this. Hence it flourished, but whence did it spring? from pride The seed therefore of this staff was the pride of the Israelites. But this pride is akin to impiety, and we know that they were blinded by their confidence when they despised God, and treated all his threats as vain. Hence the Prophet points out pride as the fountain of all evils. A clearer explanation follows ---

Ezekiel 7:11

11. Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness: none of them shall remain, nor of their multitude, nor of any of theirs: neither shall there be wailing for them.

11. Violentia surrexit in baeulum impietatis, non ex ipsis, et non ex opulentia ipsorum, et non ex strepitu ipsorum, et non luctus inter ipsos.

This is an explanation of the words, that pride had budded: now he adds violence to pride, which is its fruit: for contempt of God always begets cruelty and savagery, and rapine, and all injustice. But he speaks, as I have said, concerning the Israelites. He says that violence had risen up into a rod of wickedness Thus he confirms what he had touched upon, that the rod of God's vengeance was not to be sought elsewhere than among the Israelites. God indeed had stirred up the king of Babylon to punish them: but the rod had grown up from the root of their wickedness by which the Israelites had provoked God's anger: and so he adds, that nothing should be left of them: nothing, says he, should remain safe, either of themselves or of their

opulence: for so I interpret {המון}, hemon: then, of their noise or multitude; either will do moderately well; and there shall not be wailing for them Jerome reads, {נה}, neh, and hence translates --- there shall not be rest among them: but the Prophet means that there shall be neither sorrow nor lament, because the slaughter of all would be promiscuous. And we saw the same in Jeremiah: when one family has perished, friends and acquaintances assemble, and celebrate the funeral of the deceased; but when a pestilence pervades the whole city, and no house is free from death: nay when fathers are mingled with sons, so that their carcases can scarcely be drawn out for multitude, all sorrow ceases. With this intention then the Prophet says, there shall be no grief nor lamentation. For {נהה}, neheh, means lamentation. But we have already explained its meaning, namely, that all the Israelites were so destined to destruction that there should be, no survivors to lament the dead, and even should there be any, they should be so astonished amidst the multitude of the dead, that every duty of humanity towards them would perish. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 7:12

12. The time is come, the day draweth near: let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn: for wrath is upon all the multitude thereof.

12. Venit tempus statutum, appropinquavit dies, quo emens non lætabitur, et qui vendit non afficietur tristitia; quia indignatio super omnem multitudinem ejus.

The Prophet now uses another kind of speech. Meanwhile he teaches that there should be such a change that all things should be so mixed as if there were no difference between the rich and the poor. Yet such a change does not happen unless God were grievously offended, and so did not exact ordinary vengeance as he had formerly denounced. Paul indeed exhorts all the pious to pass through this world as if they were pilgrims in it, (1 Corinthians 7:29, 30, 31,) and thus he says is our faith proved, as with the buyer so with the seller, as with the married so with the single. This general doctrine is prescribed to all the children of God, since the fashion of this world passes away, that they may pass through it, without having their minds fixed on these perishing things. But the meaning of our Prophet is different, because God will so disturb all things among the Israelites, that there shall be no difference between buyer and seller. He who acquires rejoices, and he who is compelled to sell suffers some degree of sorrow; and sometimes the man who is deprived of his lands and possessions tears out as it were his own entrails. It is natural therefore for the buyer to rejoice, and for the seller to lament. Now God shows that the confusion in the kingdom of Israel was so great, that neither poverty nor riches afford the material for sorrow or grief. Now we understand the Prophet's meaning. He says, the time has come, the day has approached, in which the buyer will not rejoice, and the seller will not lament: because, says he, indignation is upon all this multitude Here that reason of Paul is not brought forward, that the fashion of this world passes away, but a concussion, or rather ruin of that land is pointed out, so that nothing remains safe. For although, whilst we travel through the world, we ought always to erect our minds and senses towards heaven, yet the political faculty remains and flourishes even among the faithful. For the sons of God, though they are poor in spirit, yet possess what God has conferred upon them: they exist, as Paul exhorts them, as

it were not possessing but yet enjoying their goods. But the Prophet here signifies, that when the kingdom of Israel shall have been overturned, there will be no use for either money or lands, because all being cast out of their country shall be reduced to want. And he follows up the same sentiment ---

Ezekiel 7:13

13. For the seller shall not return to that which is sold, although they were yet alive: for the vision is touching the whole multitude thereof, which shall not return; neither shall any strengthen himself in the iniquity of his life.

13. Quia vendens ad venditionem [153] non revertetur: et adhuc inter vivos vita ipsorum: [154] quia visio super omnem multitudinem ejus: non revertetur, et vir in sua iniquitate animam suam non roborabit. [155]

This verse is interpreted variously, but the Prophet's meaning is by no means obscure: at the beginning he says, that those who sold had no cause of sorrow on account of their not returning to their lands. But this does not seem suitable. But, under one member, the Prophet comprehends what I have lately said --- that the disturbance of all things would be so great, that the lands would be deprived of their masters, and those who formerly possessed them would be outcasts and exiles; they would be in want of all things, and be unable to plant their foot on their own soil. Nor is this opinion contrary to Jeremiah's prophecy. (Jeremiah 32:7, 8, 9.) When Jeremiah was in prison, he was commanded to buy land from a relation: but that was done that the faithful might hope for their promised restitution with quiet minds. But the discourse is now directed to the reprobate, who were excluded from all hope of freedom. Our Prophet, therefore, only fulminates here in God's name, and breathes nothing but terrors; there is no mention of favor in the meantime, because they had cast themselves into despair. And this is the reason why he speaks of perpetual slaughter. He says, therefore, they shall not return to the things sold, although their life is among the living This clause is variously explained, but I do not willingly consume time in repeating the errors of others: I shall follow what appears to me to be right. First, this clause must be read adversatively: he says, indeed, and as yet their life is among the living: but the copula ought thus to be resolved --- although their life is among the living. The Prophet seems to allude to a custom then common. For there was not a sale of lands in perpetuity among the sons of Abraham; for that was forbidden by the law, because they were only strangers in the land. (Leviticus 25:13, 14, 15.) God, therefore, in claiming the dominion of the land, did not permit them to sell their land except for a time --- for every fiftieth year they returned to their own possessions. If they sold in the twentieth year, they were restored after thirty years; if in the fortieth, the sale was only for ten years, through the occurrence of the Jubilee. Now therefore the Prophet says, although they remain survivors, yet they shall not return Why? for the captivity will hinder them. Now, therefore, we understand the Prophet's meaning: those who sold, says he, shall suffer no loss For if they had remained at home, they would have been deprived of

[153] Or, "to the thing sold." — Calvin.
[154] That is, "although they are yet alive." — Calvin.
[155] Or, "shall not strengthen his life." — Calvin.

their possessions; but this shall not happen, for they shall be dragged to a distant region, and there they shall live and die exiles. But if they should protract their life even to the hundredth year, yet their possession will remain deserted, because the conquerors will not allow them to return to their country. Hence the miserable condition of the exiles is denoted, since, if God were to prolong their life, they would still be compelled to consume it in poverty and want, since they had been driven away from their lands and were unable to return to them.

He adds, because the vision shall not return upon all the multitude of them Here also interpreters differ. For some distinguish this part into two clauses, because the vision was for the whole people, nor had any one been converted or repented. This opinion is plausible, because it contains a useful and fruitful doctrine, which is everywhere met with among the Prophets. For we know that nothing is less tolerable to God, than when men, admonished by Prophets, do not return to a sound mind, but go on in their wickedness. Since, therefore, such obstinacy exceedingly provokes God's anger, this sense seems to suit well enough --- that the vision was for the whole multitude, and yet none repented; that is, that God exhorted all, from the least to the greatest, to repentance; for all were deaf, and, as it were, desperate in their vices. Although, therefore, this exposition seems probable, I do not adopt it: for I doubt not the Prophet's meaning to be that the vision concerning the whole multitude should not return; that is, be in vain. And thus also Isaiah speaks when he says, thy word shall not return to me void, (Isaiah 55:11,) for he means that prophecies are always joined with their effects. Some turn this to the fruit of the doctrine, because God will always have some disciples who will embrace the prophetic word. But this is foreign to the purpose. The Prophet rather means that hypocrites will be greatly deceived, while they think God's word to be an empty sound, by which the air only is struck. Hence he says that God's word will not want its effect., because God will fulfill whatever he pronounces --- whether he promise safety to the faithful, or denounce destruction on the reprobate. As therefore Isaiah says God's word shall not return to him fruitless, since he will prosper it, so our Prophet denies that God's word should return after it had been promulgated against the whole multitude. The vision, therefore, is taken here for the prophetic doctrine; but there is no doubt that he restricts the vision to God's judgment. The vision, therefore, was towards the whole multitude, nor shall it return; that is, it shall be certainly executed. Afterwards he adds, and a man shall not strengthen his soul in his iniquity Others term it --- in the iniquity of his soul: but since the relative is double, this opinion cannot stand; but others take it otherwise. But I am unwilling to hold you in suspense here, and it seems to me that nothing is more useful than to investigate the genuine sense of the Prophet. I have no doubt the Prophet here confirms what we have now explained --- that it is vain for the despisers of God to hope to escape, because when God executes his vengeance, he will hold them in his grasp. For as to what others say, that they have not fortified their soul on account of iniquity; that is, that they were so bound down to their sinfulness, that they did not lift up their minds and desires to the hope of safety, that sense is too forced. Therefore the Prophet confirms what we now see, namely, that his threats should not return empty, because God would take

away all material for confidence from the hypocrites and despisers of his teaching. For the impious wrestle against God, and oppose their own obstinacy and hardness, as if by violence they could break and destroy his word. Since, therefore, the wicked precipitate themselves so boldly, says the Prophet, they shall not fortify themselves by iniquity unto life; that is, they shall strive in vain to obtain life by their iniquity, which is not sufficient for resistance. I do not understand --- on account of their iniquity; because he simply denounces that obstinacy should be in vain, which profane men use as a shield against God, and its force be reduced to nothing. They shall not fortify themselves, therefore, in life, or by iniquity, unto life; that is, by that obstinate wickedness by which they think themselves superior. Let us, therefore, from this place learn to tremble at God's threats, and always to have their effect before our eyes, as the Apostle says --- Noah saw by faith the deluge which was hidden, (Hebrews 11:7,) because, whilst others indulged themselves, he was always reflecting during one hundred and twenty years how horrible that vengeance would be. So, therefore, when God has spoken, may we immediately apprehend his judgment, as if it were clear before our eyes; and let us especially beware of that obstinacy which will assuredly be in vain, because we hear what the Prophet here denounces. It follows ---

Ezekiel 7:14

14. They have blown the trumpet, even to make all ready; but none goeth to the battle: for my wrath is upon all the multitude thereof.

14. Clanxerunt tuba, pararunt omnia; [156] nemo autem egressus ad proelium: quia indignatio mea super totam multitudinem ejus.

Here the Prophet adds, although the Israelites provide themselves with every aid, and prepare all things for carrying on the war, nay, while they omit nothing for the best fortification, yet when it came to the point, their hopes would be vain, and all the supplies which they prepared for themselves of no avail. However, therefore, they may blow the trumpet, and prepare all things, he says, yet no one goes out to battle The reason must be marked, since God's indignation was upon the whole multitude of them, that is, because God determined to destroy them all. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 7:15

15. The sword is without, and the pestilence and the famine within: he that is in the field shall die with the sword; and he that is in the city, famine and pestilence shall devour him.

15. Gladius foris, pestis et fames e domo: qui in agro erit, gladio morietur: qui autem in urbe, eum fames et pestis in urbe, eum fames et pestis consumet.

He inculcates what we have seen before, although this sentence agrees with the last verse. He had said that God's anger should be on all the people; now he shows that none were safe when God stretched forth his hand for avenging their sins. Now he says, he had in his hand a sword, and pestilence, and famine. If they went out into the field, says he, a sword shall meet them; if they remain at home in the city, pestilence and famine shall consume them there; as if he said, God could fetch various

[156] Or, "Blow ye the trumpet, and make ready, as others translate, in the imperative mood, but I prefer the perfect tense — they have blown and prepared all things." — Calvin.

kinds of destruction from different quarters, because he will arm foreign enemies, who shall devastate the whole land; and if these enemies were at rest, yet there were others, famine and pestilence Here he signifies, that although the Israelites closed their houses, and desired and endeavored to expel every thing injurious, yet God's wrath could penetrate all hiding-places. It follows ---

Ezekiel 7:16

16. But they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity.

16. Et evadent evasores ipsorum, [157] et erunt super montes quasi columbae vallium, omnes fremendo, [158] vir [159] in sua iniquitate.

The Prophet seems here to be at variance with himself, because he formerly pronounced them all devoted to destruction. How, then, does he now say that some should come hither and thither, to seek hiding-places in the mountains? But what seem at, variance easily agree, because by these words he means that the life of those who escaped should be more miserable than if they had perished by the sword, or had been consumed by pestilence and famine. And why so? They shall be, says he, in the mountains. By mountains he doubtless understands dry and desert places. But he who seeks hiding-places in the mountains is only anxious about preserving his life, since he expects not to live. So, therefore, the Prophet means, nothing can be more miserable than the exile of those who had escaped, because they would be in dry and desert places, like doves of the valleys, there they will not dare to cry out. He means, also, that they would be so timorous, that even in anxiety, want, and squalidness, and despair of all things, finally, in the heap of their miseries, they would groan as doves, and as doves of the valleys, that is, which hide themselves through fear, and dare not show themselves; unless, perhaps, the contrast increases the evil, as if he had said that they should be much more astonished, because the unaccustomed aspect of the place should strike them with greater fear. Now, therefore, we understand the Prophet's meaning --- if any should escape from the people, yet nothing else would happen through their flight, than that they should miserably protract their life in the greatest anxiety. For we know that this is the last solace in evils, when men complain freely, and unburden themselves by weeping and groaning. But when the wretched one dares not complain, he becomes as it were twice dead among the living. It follows ---

Ezekiel 7:17

17. All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak as water.

17. Omnes manus solventur, et omnia genua ibunt aquae. [160]

He confirms the last sentence, that such should be the trembling, that those who were oppressed with all kinds of evil, dare not utter their complaints freely. He says, all hands should be loosened, and all knees should be unstable as water We know that this doctrine frequently occurs with the Prophets, by which God shows

[157] That is, “those who are to escape of them shall escape.” — Calvin.

[158] Or, “murmuring or shouting” — Calvin.

[159] That is, “each one” — Calvin.

[160] A mark of similitude must be understood — shall flow like water; for here ‘to go’ is taken for ‘to flow.’

that men's hearts were in his hands. But since profane men are fierce against God, through trusting in their own wealth or fortitude, hence, on the contrary, God pronounces that they should be timorous and anxious, nay, almost vanishing away, and as it were lifeless, as if their knees were flowing away amidst water, and their hands were relaxed. It follows ---

Ezekiel 7:18

18. They shall also gird themselves with sackcloth, and horror shall cover them; and shame shall be upon all faces, and baldness upon all their heads.

18. Et accingent se saccis, et operiet ipsos formido, et super omnes facies, [161] probrum, [162] et in omnibus capitibus calvitium.

He continues the same sentiment. He says, such was the slaughter of the people that they should all gird themselves with sackcloth. But it seems little in accordance with this, that those who should be astonished should gird themselves with sackcloth, so as not to bewail the dead. But the prophets so vary their discourse because they cannot otherwise affect obstinate minds. Although therefore these things do not seem at first sight to agree, that they should bind themselves in sackcloth, and upon all their heads should be baldness: then that all should perish without grief or sorrow: yet these things suit well enough, because the Prophet does not express what they should do, but what the event should be. Since, therefore, slaughter shall occur on every side, at length God shall consume some by pestilence, others by famine: therefore he adds, there should be material for grief, although in consequence of the multitude of evils they should be lifeless, and torpid, and omit all signs of sorrow. Therefore they shall gird themselves with sackcloth We know that this was a remarkable symbol of penitence, but it is often transferred to common sorrow, and even profane men clothe themselves in sackcloth, although they do not acknowledge God the author of evils. Hence when the Prophet says, all should take sackcloth in which to clothe themselves, he does not mean that they should feel punishments divinely inflicted that they should repent; but he only expresses the common ceremony of grief in distress which is also common to the wicked and to despisers of God, Now he adds, fear shall cover them, and disgrace, or shame, shall be on all faces: then upon all heads shall be baldness This was forbidden by the law, (Deuteronomy 14:1;) since we know that God restrained too much intemperance in sorrow, when he forbids the people to fall upon their face, or to make themselves bald; for that was preposterous affectation. And we know that men are ambitious in grief. Hence that God may impose restraint upon sorrow, he forbids his people to cut the skin, or to produce baldness. Hence we see that the Prophet does not speak of the true sign of repentance, but only marks, as I have said, that God's vengeance should be so horrible, that dread should cover them, and then that shame and confusion of face should come upon them: then, that they should cut the skin like the Gentiles, and put on sackcloth like men abandoned to destruction,

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since thou hast recalled us to thyself, that we may not grow

[161] Or, “countenance.” — Calvin.
[162] Or, “shame.” — Calvin.

torpid in our sins, nor yet become hardened by thy chastisements, but prevent in time thy final judgments, and so humble ourselves under thy powerful hand, that we may seriously testify and really prove our repentance, and so study to obey thee, that we may advance in newness of life more and more, until at length we put off all the defilements of the flesh, and arrive at the enjoyment of that eternal rest which thine only-begotten Son has acquired for us by his own blood, --- Amen.

Lecture Twentieth.

Ezekiel 7:19

19. They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD: they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels: because it is the stumblingblock of their iniquity.

19. Et argentum suum per compita projicient, et aurum ipsorum in disjectionem [163] erit: argentum eorum et aurum eorum non poterit ad liber andum ipsos in die excandescentiæ Iehovae: animam suam non satiaunt et viscera sua non replebunt, quia offendiculum iniquitatis ipsorum fuit.

Now the Prophet threatens that the desperation of the people would be so great that they would forget both gold and silver: for we know that men are more anxious about those possessions than about life itself. But gold, unless it be prepared for use, has no value in itself: yet we see that the majority are so inflamed with the desire of gold, that they cast themselves into the certain danger of death. For how many neglect their own life to acquire wealth: hence when men despise gold, they are assuredly astonished by fear and anxiety so as to lose their natural senses. The Prophet means this when he says, they shall cast their gold into the streets, because if they thought they should survive, and if there were any hope of life left, doubtless they would hide their gold and silver. But when gold is cast away, it is certain, as I have said, that all things are full of despair. Their gold, says he, shall be cast away I prefer this interpretation to an unclean thing. {נדה}, nedeh, signifies pollution, defilement, and separation. If any prefer-the translation ``separation,'' I do not object, only let us understand that the Jews would treat their gold as valueless, and so willingly separated from it. For we know that men are so attached to their gold and silver that it grieves them to be torn from what they so much love: no less than if you tore away their entrails. But the word ``a casting away'' is clearer, and will answer to the former member of the sentence better. He adds, their gold and silver will be unable to preserve them in the day of Jehovah's anger Here the Prophet derides the perverse confidence of those who thought themselves safe, because fortified with great wealth. For when men see themselves protected by guards they fear nothing, and such security is not easily wrested from them. For this cause also, Ezekiel pronounces that gold and silver would be useless to the Jews when God was fierce against them. And at the same time he obliquely reproves their sloth, because they despised God's judgments since they were spared at the time. Hence he declares --- the day of God's burning wrath shall come: then he says, they shall not satisfy their souls, and they shall not fill their bellies Here he means that the richest even should

[163] Some translate, “as an unclean thing.” — Calvin.

be famished. When any famine presses upon the people, yet those who have money at home do not suffer; besides, the rich have all kinds of produce in their barns and granaries. But the Prophet says, that the penury shall be such as to involve the rich, so that they should not have food to refresh themselves. Thus the reason is added, because it was the stumblingblock of their iniquity Some take this clause generally, that the Jews should stumble on account of their iniquity, that is, then shall be the time of receiving their reward. For God had seemed to pardon them, and not to notice so many iniquities with which they provoked him. He says therefore, in that day shall be a stumblingblock, if that sense pleases you, but I would rather restrict it to money itself, since silver and gold shall profit nothing, inasmuch as it shall be a stumblingblock of iniquity, that is, it shall be the material or occasion of sinning: and the next verse confirms this sense when it says ---

Ezekiel 7:20

20. As for the beauty of his ornament, he set it in majesty: but they made the images of their abominations and of their detestable things therein: therefore have I set it far from them.

20. Et decus ornamenti sui in superbiam posuit ipsum, et imagines abominationum suarum, et spurcitiarum suarum fecerunt ex illo: propterea posui illis [164] in projectionem.

I doubt not that Ezekiel strengthens what he had just taught by other words, namely, that the people's silver should be cast away, because it had been unworthily abused for luxury, vain pomps and superstitions. Some explain {עדיו צבי}, tzebignediu, of the temple; and certainly I confess that the temple was the chief glory of the Jews, so that they might boast of it, if they had rightly and properly worshipped God there. Hence God conveyed great glory to the Jews when he desired a temple to be erected among them to himself, which should be as it were his earthly dwelling-place. But I do not see why we should take these words of the temple, because the Prophet explains his own discourse: for he mentions gold and silver: he said, there should be no use for gold and silver, because every one should cast it into the mud, since they should cast away all hope of life and safety. He now continues the same sentiment; he shows the lawful use of gold and silver: it was, says he, the glory of his ornament For whatever God has given to men is a testimony of his paternal favor: therefore God's liberality is refulgent in us when he enriches us with his gifts. If therefore riches are a glory and ornament, so also are bodily health, and honors, and things of this kind. Since therefore God wishes his favor to be conspicuous in all his gifts, by which he adorns and marks men out, the Prophet properly says that the Jews were adorned with gold and silver. But he accuses them of ingratitude because they turned such glory to pride. For {גאון}, gaon, I here take in a bad sense, as in many other places: it sometimes signifies excellence, but I have no doubt that the Prophet here blames the Jews, because they were proud of their wealth, which they took as a testimony of God's favor. Therefore, says he, he turned the beauty of their ornament, he turned it to pride It follows, and the images of their abominations and of their detestable things, or of their idols, for the Hebrews thus speak sometimes

[164] Or, "I have appointed to them" — Calvin.

of idols, they made therewith Here {ב}, is used as if it were {מ}, as often in other places, and thus it points out the material; for he says, that the Jews made their images, which were so many abominations before God, out of gold and silver This was a second profanation of God's gifts: the former was in pride, when the Jews through wantonness and abundance began to be insolent against God, thus they profaned the glory with which they had been adorned. But another pollution is also added, namely, that they made their idols of gold and silver, and offered to them gifts and sacrifices: as God complains in Hosea, (Hosea 2:8,) that they converted whatever he had conferred upon them into impious worship. I had given, said he, my corn, and wine, and oil: but they adorned their idols: this was forsooth their thanksgiving, that blind to my liberality, they offered sacrifices to their idols of my corn and oil and wine. Of which matter Ezekiel discourses more fully in Ezekiel 16. But he now says: that they made images of their abominations out of that glory by which he had distinguished them And at the end of the verse he confirms what we have lately seen: wherefore, says he, I will appoint it, namely, that beauty, to them for a castaway We see the same sentiment repeated which he had used before: but he here relates the reasons why the Jews should disregard their gold and silver in the day of God's wrath, since they had unworthily defiled these gifts of God in which his grace and paternal favor shone forth. I will make, therefore says he, their gold or beauty as a castaway: he had said the same thing before, but had not yet expressed the reason of God's wrath. It follows ---

Ezekiel 7:21

21. And I will give it into the hands of the strangers for a prey, and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil; and they shall pollute it.

21. Et ponam [165] ipsum in manum alienorum ad direptionem, et impiorum terrae ad spoliationem, et profanabunt ipsum.

I have said that I do not approve of twisting these words to the sanctuary, as some interpreters do. Hence I do not doubt that the Prophet still speaks of the people. He changed indeed the number in the former verse, for at the beginning he had used the singular number: now he returns again to the singular number, and designates the people. I will deliver it, says he, into the hand of strangers. This was more severe than if they had been oppressed by any domestic tyranny: nor do I doubt that by strangers the Prophet signifies remote and barbarous nations, as we know that those with whom we have no communication are more savage against us. First, therefore, he says, they shall be the slaves of strangers; he adds, the impious of the earth: he means that their enemies should be so cruel and wicked, that no pity or equity was to be expected from them. The sum is, that God's wrath would be terrible since he had borne the iniquities of the people so long. Hence we gather that wicked and abandoned men are God's scourges, and are governed by his will and hand. Since it is so, we gather that God so works by them that he is pure from all alliance with their faults, because he so exercises his judgments by means of them, that he appears without blame with regard to them; but they are condemned deservedly, because either their own avarice or ambition, or other lusts destroy them. I shall

[165] Or, "I will deliver." — Calvin.

give them therefore into the hands of strangers to destroy them: then, to the wicked of the earth for a prey, and they shall profane them By this word interpreters have been induced to take this verse with reference to the sanctuary. But we know that {חלל}, chelel, is taken in another sense --- to slay. This word therefore may be explained, that there shall be a general slaughter of the people: because the enemies not content with the booty and spoil, shall also slay the captives when they have obtained the victory. But I willingly retain the sense ``profane,'' which means the same as ``render vile,'' because the Prophet seems to me to allude to all kinds of abuse, as when we do not consider for what purpose things are intended, but rashly and thoughtlessly, contemptuously, and even insultingly dissipate them. It means therefore that such should be the insolence of their enemies, that they should waste and lay in ruins not only the people's substance, but also their persons: although this may be here referred to the substance itself: for a robber is said to prey upon a man when he takes away whatever he has and leaves him naked: in this sense we may conveniently explain what the Prophet now says. But that simple explanation satisfies me, namely, that the enemy shall so disperse the people generally, that there shall be no difference. It follows ---

Ezekiel 7:22

22. My face will I turn also from them, and they shall pollute my secret place: for the robbers shall enter into it, and defile it.

22. Et avertam faciem meam ab ipsis, et profanabunt absconditum meum: et ingredientur in illud perruptores, [166] et profanabunt illud.

As to the beginning of the verse there is no ambiguity, for God pronounces that the Jews would be miserable, because he would avert his face from them For in this was situated their happiness, that God, as he had promised, would regard their safety. As long, therefore, as God deigned to look upon them, their safety was certain, so that there was no fear of danger. But when he no longer cared for them, these wretched ones were exposed to all calamities; hence they are said to be deprived of all protection, when alienated from God. This, then, is one clause. As to what follows, expositors interpret it of the sanctuary; and I do not greatly object to this, if any one approves of this sense, but I take it in a wider sense. For God in my view calls the land his hidden place, which was safe under his protection. For he says, that he had extended wings, under which he could hide the people, (Exodus 19:4;) and David prays that God would receive him within the hidden place of his tabernacle. (Psalm 27:5.) Since, therefore, the people was protected by the power of God, the land is deservedly called God's hidden place, as an asylum, and it will be proper so to translate it. Devastators, therefore, shall profane my asylum, because they shall enter in there, and shall profane it. He repeats the same word. Those who take it for the sanctuary restrict it to the holy of holies, for so they call the shrine or oracle whence the answers were given; and they call it an oracle, not from praying, but because they enquired there of secret things. But as I have said, that seems to be forced, though I will not quarrel with it, but show what I like better. The meaning is, however God had spared the Jews for a long time, nay, had them hidden, as it

[166] Or, “devastators.” — Calvin.

were, under his wings, and the land was as it were a sacred asylum, since they were so hidden that they felt no injury from foreign enemies: yet this should profit them nothing, because God would throw down all bulwarks, and give easy access to their enemies, so that they might break through, and then profane and confuse all things. It follows ---

Ezekiel 7:23

23. Make a chain: for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence.

23. Fac cathenam: quia terra repleta est judicio sanguinum, et urbs repleta est violentia.

Interpreters refer the Prophet's being ordered to make a chain to the captivity; for we know that captives are accustomed to be bound with chains and fetters, or manacles. Hence they explain it that God threatens the people with exile. But the Spirit seems rather to allude to criminals, who plead their cause in chains. For the Jews had long reveled in their vices, and the absence of punishment had rendered them very audacious. Now the Prophet says, the time had come in which they were to be brought to the tribunal of God, and there to be dealt with most justly as criminals. Since, therefore, they bound criminals with chains, that they might plead their cause ignominiously --- criminals, I say, who were already, as it were, half condemned; hence the Prophet is ordered to make a chain, so that not only the people should be called upon to render all account of their wickedness, but should also be drawn, whether they wished it or not, to God's judgment-seat. And he explains himself when he says, since the land is full of the judgment of bloods The Hebrews call judgment of bloods the material of death, when the cause is capital, and the criminal is so convicted that he cannot escape final punishment; so any capital conviction is called a judgment of blood. He says, therefore, the earth is full of a judgment of bloods, that is, is guilty of so many crimes, that it cannot escape the final vengeance. And afterwards he adds the city, which, in the general corruption of the land, ought to retain something of its purity; but he says, the city also is so full of violence, under which word are doubtless embraced all unjust oppressions --- rapines, pillage, unlawful gains, robberies, and whatever opposes justice and equity. The result is, that the people's impiety and wickedness had come to such a pitch, that they were no longer endurable by God; and hence God ascends his tribunal to exact punishment from them; and this is the chain of which he speaks. It follows ---

Ezekiel 7:24

24. Wherefore I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses: I will also make the pomp of the strong to cease; and their holy places shall be defiled.

24. Et venire faciam improbos gentium, [167] et possidebunt domos eorum: et cessare faciam superbiam fortium, et polluentur sanctuaria ipsorum.

He repeats what he had said, that enemies would come who should be ministers of God's vengeance. And again we learn from this place, that even the impious are impelled by the hand and secret direction of God, so that they cannot move a finger

[167] That is, "the wicked and perverse among the Gentiles." — Calvin.

but by his will. He had formerly said that he would give the Jews into the hands of strangers; but what now? I will cause them to come, says he, as if he would stretch out his hand to them, and induce them. We see, therefore, that God holds the impious under his guidance, as it were, for executing his judgments; but we must consider the difference which I have lately laid down; for God so works by them, as still to have nothing in common with them. For they are carried on by a depraved impulse; but God has a method, wonderful and incomprehensible by us, which impels them hither and thither, so that he does not involve himself in any alliance with their fault. For he calls them the perverse nation, that the Jews might know that the last slaughter was approaching, since they should have to do with the most cruel enemies. He says, shall possess their homes, and because the pride of the people might seem an obstacle to God's exacting the deserved penalty, therefore he adds, I will make the pride of the powerful to cease, says he; for as long as the Jews were swollen with haughtiness and self-confidence, the Prophet could not profit them at all. Therefore he says, that God would make their haughtiness to cease, by which they were vainly puffed up as long as God sustained or bore with them. At length he adds, their sanctuaries shall be polluted This passage confirms the opinion which I formerly approved. For Ezekiel speaks of the pollution of the sanctuary as of a new thing. For he here draws away from them the vain hope by which they deceived themselves, when they boasted that they dwelt under God's guardianship, since the temple protected themselves and the city. Jeremiah reproves them for trusting in lying words, while they declare that they have the Lord's temple ---

``The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord.'' (Jeremiah 7:4.)

Our Prophet does not speak openly, but he doubtless shows that their security was false, while they oppose the temple to God, as if the temple were a shield to repel his vengeance. God, indeed, dwelt in the temple, but this condition was added, that he was to be purely worshipped there. But when the temple was polluted, God departed from it, as we shall afterwards see. For this reason the Prophet says, the enemies should come who should pollute and contaminate the holy places of the people Hitherto he had not spoken of the temple, but he now adds, the temple, that the Jews should not rashly boast in the name of God, as if they held him fixed to themselves. It follows ---

Ezekiel 7:25

25. Destruction cometh; and they shall seek peace, and there shall be none.

25. Excidium venit, et quaerent pacem et non. [168]

He confirms the same doctrine. He says therefore, destruction is come He now adds, there shall be no peace This confirmation was not in vain. For men always hope they shall obtain some advantage by turning their backs; hence they seize on hiding-places whence God draws them into light. Then they form for themselves many hopes of safety when God holds them bound down. Since, therefore, men are so slippery, and, by catching at refuges, think to elude God and his judgments, the Prophet says, though they seek peace they shall find none, that they may not doubt about that destruction and cutting off which he mentions. It follows ---

[168] That is, “there shall be no peace.” — Calvin.

Ezekiel 7:26

26. Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumour shall be upon rumour; then shall they seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients.

26. Calamitas super calamitatem veniet, et rumor super rumorem erit: et quærent visionem a propheta, [169] et lex transibit [170] sacerdote, et concilium a senibus.

The Prophet here explains more at length the nature of that slaughter of which he was a herald. And again he deprives the Jews of all ground for hope, and shows that they should look around on all sides in vain, because God would deprive them of all help. This is the meaning of the passage. Hence he says, calamities shall come, and that some shall follow one portion, and others another. In this way he advises the Jews that they should catch at security in vain, as if, at the passing away of one evil, they were already free. For the wicked as soon as God with-draws his hand, think themselves escaped from all trouble, and so despise God more carelessly: for they fancy that God has done with them just like a debtor who has paid a small sum to his creditor, and thus has obtained a relaxation, is careless; so the reprobate harden themselves when God grants them some respite: for they think that they have an agreement with him that he should not trouble them more. But the Prophet denounces that there would be such a heap of evils that one calamity should have many companions, because God would not cease to add evils to evils. He adds, rumor upon rumor This is referred to the object of fear, because rumors of wars and of the cruelty of enemies would be spread abroad. Since, therefore, the Jews are deaf and stupid, the Prophet announces that God would continue exercising his vengeance, so that one calamity should be only the forerunner of another, until they should perish a hundred times rather than that God would suffer them to escape with impunity.

Afterwards he adds, they shall seek a vision Here the Prophet again shows that the Jews should be stripped bare of every help. For although they boldly despised God, yet we know that they wickedly abused his name. For they so threw aside all modesty that. they did not hesitate to ridicule God and all his gifts. Hence their last refuge in their calamities was to seek a vision, that is, to enquire what God was about to do. Hence he says, they shall seek a vision from the Prophet. It seems to me that the expression is too abrupt, that they shall seek a vision from a Prophet, because nothing is added except concerning the priest and elders. {נ} is sometimes taken negatively when words are united: I know not whether the language will properly bear our saying, they shall seek a vision, but there shall be no Prophet And yet the sense would flow better, if Ezekiel denied there should be any Prophets: for this is a sign of desertion, when no consolation occurs which assists us in our wars. Thus the Church complains in the Psalms, (Psalm 76:9,) that it was reduced to the greatest straits, and that no Prophet appeared: we do not see our signs, nor is there a Prophet among us. And, in truth, Ezekiel meant that the Jews would seek a Prophet

[169] Or, "since there is no prophet." — Calvin.
[170] That is, "shall vanish away." — Calvin.

in vain, because God would take away that gift from them. As far then as the sense is concerned there is no ambiguity, though the diction is, as I have said, rather obscure. The meaning is, when they think God so bound to them that he will never deprive them of visions which are prepared for their comfort, yet they are already deprived of this good, and since they are destitute nothing remains except that utter destruction which he has mentioned. We must leave the rest for to-morrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since thou hast hitherto deigned to guard us safely by thy power, and hast driven away so many violent assaults from us, and turned away so many perverse counsels of our enemies, and snatched us from numberless evils, --- grant that we may so value thy benefits towards us that we may be grateful in return, and so devote ourselves obediently to thee, that thy holy name may be glorified through our whole life in thy only-begotten Son our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture twenty first.

We yesterday began to expound the Prophet's language when he denounced what the Jews little feared, that a time would come when God would deprive them of their Prophets. Since therefore God was accustomed to rule his people by counselors, and priests, and prophets, hence he says, counsel should perish from the elders, and the law from the priests. As to the Prophets, he says, the Jews would enquire of them in vain the will of God. The result is, since God always governed his people, there would be miserable dispersion, because no more teaching should shine forth, but they would be immersed in the darkness of ignorance. But this was the most grievous threat, because in extreme evils it is no common consolation to have God shining upon us by his word. For by this we are stirred up to patience, then our sorrows are mitigated when we taste some hope of pardon, and God bears witness that he will be propitious to us. But when this comfort is withdrawn, we are easily overwhelmed by even the smallest evils. Yet God sustains us by his word in the deepest afflictions as upon a vast sea, and as long as his teaching remains to us we have as it were a chart of guidance which will bring us safely into harbor. But when God nowhere appears, the lightest trial buries us in the deepest abyss. So this was the sign of God's fearful vengeance when the gift of prophecy was extinct among the Jews, and the priests and elders had no counsel. For we know how mightily they boasted that were powerful in wisdom. For while Jeremiah blames them, (Jeremiah 18:18,) we see that they rose up against him, relying on this confidence, that the law could not pass away from the priests, nor prudence from the wise men and counselors, nor yet a vision or utterance from the prophets. ``Come ye, let us take counsel against Jeremiah, and let us strike him with the tongue; for counsel shall not perish,'' etc. Being excited by this diabolical fury they dared to raise their crests against God, and boldly claimed for themselves what God here denounces that he would take from them: for the vision they asserted must remain with the prophets and the teaching of the law with the priests. But we see that God averts that perverse boasting when he denounces that there should be no counsel to the old men, no teaching with the priests, and no vision among the prophets. And hence also we gather that we can this day refute the Papists by the same argument. For in the strength of what

weapons do they so proudly rage against the clear and certain doctrine of the law and the gospel? Namely, that they are the representative Church, as if they openly declared to God that his doctrine could not possibly perish from their priests. I omit to notice that this priesthood is not from God, since priests are created for sacrificing Christ, and that without any command. But suppose we grant them to be ordinary pastors of the Church, of what advantage is that title when God deprived of all light of doctrine the Levitical priests, who were created by him and not by human suffrages?

Let us learn therefore from this passage, that the gift of prophecy and all teaching is God's peculiar gift: let us learn that this gift is withdrawn when God wishes to exact punishment for man's ingratitude. For if the doctrine is received less reverently than becomes us, and God himself is despised, as is often the case, he throws men into darkness, and causes them to err through blindness, and deprives them of the least spark of light. when the priests themselves forget their office God infatuates them, as we see has happened in the Papacy. Nothing is more to be despised than those beasts, and yet they claim to themselves the spirit of revelation. But God repays them the just reward of their madness, because they have ruled tyrannically, and so have utterly abused the sacred name of pastors: then because they have mingled their fictions with the law and the gospel, and so have corrupted all purity of doctrine by their comments. God therefore has revenged their pride, as we see; but when God shows us the way of life by his servants, and shines upon us with heavenly doctrine, let us not blindly wander in darkness, let us know that this inestimable treasure is not to be despised, lest we should be deprived of it. It follows ---

Ezekiel 7:27

27. The king shall mourn, and the prince shall be clothed with desolation, and the hands of the people of the land shall be troubled: I will do unto them after their way, and according to their deserts will I judge them; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

27. Rex lugebit, et princeps induetur desolatione: [171] et manus populi terrae turbabuntur: secundum vias ipsorum faciam iis, et pro judiciis ipsorum judicabo ipsos, et cognoscent quod ego Iehovah.

In this verse the Prophet affirms that God's vengeance should be so common that it should alight equally upon the highest and the lowest. He begins with the king, then he descends to his counselors, then he comprehends the whole people. The king shall lament, he says. But it is his duty to give life to others, and then to devise a remedy for all evils; but when the king has nothing left but grief and sorrow, it is a sign of despair. He metaphorically clothes the elders in a garment of desolation. We know that a garment has two uses; since it fortifies us as a defense against the cold, and then it hides whatever is dishonorable in us. In the opposite sense the Prophet says, shame shall be as a garment to the elders, and then he goes down to the common people. At the same time, he assigns the reason, I, says he, will do to them according to their ways {מ} is here taken causally, according to their ways, therefore, will I do unto them: and in the same sense he adds, in their judgment will I judge you The word ``judgment'' is used peculiarly here, and contrary to its ordinary

[171] Or, “laying waste.” — Calvin.

sense. For judgment means the same as righteousness; but it is often transferred to transgressions, as if he had said, they shall feel me a just judge though I avenge their sins. Hence their judgments mean perverse abuses, and comprehend not only superstitions but all kinds of iniquities. By these words God intimates that though he should punish the Jews severely, yet it would not be cruelty, because they deserved such treatment. A confirmation follows in the next vision. The vision is, indeed, separate, but as the Prophet had just asserted in God's name that the punishment was just under which the Jews would suffer, he confirms this doctrine by the vision which follows, when he was seized by the Spirit of God and transferred to Jerusalem, where he saw the temple filled with various abominations; because there was no corner which they had not defiled and violated with their idols. But let us come to the words.

Ezekiel 8

Chapter 8

Ezekiel 8:1

1. And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord GOD fell there upon me.

1. Et fuit anno sexto, mense sexto, die quinto mensis, ego sedebam [172] domi meae, et Seniores Jehudah sedentes coram facie mea, et cecidit super me illic manus Dominatoris Iehovae.

There is no doubt that a prophetic vision is here narrated; for the Prophet was not carried to Jerusalem, nor had he changed his place, nor were the elders of Judah before him, but he seemed to himself to be seized by the Spirit of God, that he might perceive the pollutions by which the Jews had profaned the temple. For he says, that he was at home when this vision occurred to him, and yet it was possible for him to be walking in the field. He does not, therefore, relate the thing as done, but simply teaches how God appeared, and adds the circumstances. By elders of Judah I do not understand captives, but those who were then dwelling at Jerusalem, that they should be witnesses of this prophecy, and so all excuse and pretense of mistake was taken away from them. He also expresses the time at which this vision happened, namely the sixth year, which he numbers from the exile of Jechoniah, as we saw in the first chapter. Hence an interval of a year and two months has elapsed since the first vision which was then unfolded, and the present which is now to be treated. Since, therefore, fourteen months had elapsed, God appeared again to his Prophet. This circumstance of the time is by no means superfluous, for this shows the great obstinacy of the people. The Prophet, as I have said, numbers the years from the exile of the king. But they were accustomed to count from the jubilee year; but he

[172] Verbally, "sitting." — Calvin

now renews the grief for that slaughter, when the king was treated ignominiously as a vile captive, and was harassed as a slave by the enemy. Since, therefore, the Prophet humbles the Jews by this computation of years, hence it appears how hardened was their obstinacy, as they did not grow wise though so severely chastened. But we shall see that they were seized with a prodigious madness, so that they cast aside the worship of God, they heaped together on every side new idolatries, and infected the temple with their abominations. We saw in Jeremiah (Jeremiah 7:17, and Jeremiah 44:17-19) that the worship of God was overthrown in the city Jerusalem, and in the temple itself; for they poured out libations to the workmanship of heaven --- others translate, the queen of heaven, but we have shown that those places ought to be understood of all the stars --- since, therefore, they offered incense to the workmanship of heaven, then they afterwards took to themselves idols and polluted themselves with the superstitions of all the nations. Our Prophet shows that they were not touched with any sense of their punishment, but that they became worse from the time when God began to raise his hand against them; for it was just as if he had begun to show himself from heaven the avenger of their superstitions. Hence we have a reason why the Prophet here mentions years and months, and even the fifth day of the month, namely, that the Jews may be held more convicted of their obstinacy, since no punishments recalled them into the way, but they wrestled with diabolical obstinacy against God. He says, the hand of God fell; by hand I do not simply understand prophecy as some do, but strength; for the sense seems too restricted to say, God's prophecy fell --- the phrase is too cold. But this is properly said of the power of God. It is just as if he professed that he did not bring forward anything of his own, because he put off, as it were, the man whilst Gods power reigned in him. Thus the power of God is opposed to all human faculties. It follows ---

Ezekiel 8:2

2. Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber.

2. Et aspexi, et ecce similitudo [173] tanquam aspectus ignis: ab aspectu lumborum infra ignis: et a lumbis ejus sursum tanquam aspectus splendoris, tanquam figura chasmal.

Some translate the last word angel, but in my opinion erroneously: for {עין}, gnin, properly signifies color, and I have already refuted that error in the first chapter. I am not clear as to what color it was, hence I follow the received opinion that, it was like amber. Now the Prophet says, he saw a likeness, or image composed of two parts; for from the loins downward it was like fire, but upwards it was brightness. By the word {דמות}, demoth, I do not doubt that he means the image of a man. God, therefore, appeared to his servant under some image; nor is the human figure out of place, because if it had been any other figure without doubt the Prophet had been silent. But we have already seen that God had put on the human form, and so represented himself in the person of his only begotten Son, as we have said, and shall see again

[173] Or, "image." — Calvin

in the tenth chapter. This, therefore, is the likeness of which the Prophet speaks, but he uses this word on purpose, that we may know that it was not a true and solid and substantial thing called body. As to the Prophet's beholding a figure or likeness, this took place only in a bare vision, not that God then put on a body; and concerning this point also I have treated at length in the first chapter, and shortly I shall glance at it again. Now as to his saying, one part of the figure was fiery, but in another, the aspect of splendor, he seems here to express what the Jews ought to hope for, when at length they perceived God to be near, from whom they thought themselves very far off, since they so boldly despised his law and all the prophecies. As to the splendor, God's majesty and incomprehensible glory is signified. For if brightness blinds our eyes, what would happen if we endeavor to penetrate to that immense light of which the sun is only a little spark? Since, therefore, Ezekiel says, there was the likeness of splendor above his loins, he doubtless shows how formidable the majesty of God ought to be to us. For God dwells in light, but inaccessible, as the Apostle says: but below, says he, was the appearance of fire, namely, because he must not. wait till the Jews received any joy from the presence of God. (1 Timothy 6:16.) We know, indeed, that hypocrites always boast rashly in the name of God, as Amos reproves them, What is to you the day of the Lord? it is a day of darkness and not light. (Amos 5:18.) For they boast that God would be entreated in their miseries, and that he must assist them, because he had taken them under his protection. The Prophet refutes this arrogance, and says, that the day of the Lord would be darkness. So also in this place, God appeared in the form of fire towards the earth, that the Jews should tremble when they saw the vengeance of God lighted up to consume them. Therefore in the splendor God's majesty was shown, which humbled the Prophet and all the pious, that they should receive the vision reverently; for in the fire God's vengeance was shown, lest the Jews should make for themselves too wide a shield of the name of God, which they extended falsely and fallaciously.

Ezekiel 8:3

3. And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy.

3. Et misit similitudinem marius, et sustulit me in cincinno capiris met: et erexit [174] me spiritus inter terram et inter coelum: et adduxit me Hierosolymam in visionibus Dei, ad ostium portae interioris, quae respicit Aquilonem: ubi illic sedes idoli zeli zelare facientis.

The Prophet here relates that he was carried to Jerusalem that he might behold the foul superstitions by which the Jews had defiled the temple. But first he says, that the form of a hand was put forth Whence again we collect that the body was not solid or substantial which the Prophet had seen; but was only a visible figure as a symbol of God's presence. This explains the word likeness or figure, for it was not a real hand which seized the Prophet by the locks or hair of the head, but it was the likeness of a hand, and therefore he adds, in the visions of God it was done. He says

[174] "Raised." — Calvin.

indeed that he was carried up between heaven and earth, but let no one imagine that this was really done, for he explains himself and says, in the visions of God By visions of God he understands a revelation free from all doubt: for there is a silent opposition between these divine revelations and the spectres which often deceive men's senses. Those who interpret ``visions of God'' simply as prophecy weaken what the Prophet wished to express emphatically; and those who think God's name used here as an epithet, (as the Hebrews call anything remarkable, divine,) also depart from the genuine sense of the Prophet. There is no doubt, therefore, that he opposes the visions of God to all spectres: for Satan as we know deludes men's senses with his prodigies and his wonderful arts of fascination: for it happens that the children of God are sometimes deluded: hence the Prophet, to take away all doubt from his teaching, says that he was carried to Jerusalem in visions of God, and adds, that he was carried to the northern gate. We know that there were many gates of the large area, so that the people's entrance should be more commodious. For if there had been only one gate open, they would have been more tumultuous, as a multitude usually is. The area of the temple then had an eastern and a northern gate: then it had other gates, which gave an easy entrance to the people as well as to the priests. The priests indeed had an inner area which was distinct, but when they offered victims on the altar, they mingled with the people. This therefore was the reason why the floor of the temple had different gates. Now the Prophet says, that he was carried to the porch of the gate, so that he did not penetrate directly into the secret part of the temple, but seemed to himself to be standing before the doors, till God informed him of what was doing within. He says, there was the seat of the idol. We know not what the idol was, except that the Prophet says it was abominable. He first calls it the idol of jealousy, and then adds the participle, provoking God to jealousy But although the noun as well as the verb is often taken in a bad sense, yet God transfers the affection of jealousy to himself, and in this sense he says in Deuteronomy,

``They provoked me: they made me jealous with what is not God: therefore will I make them jealous,'' (Deuteronomy 32:21.)

He alludes to the jealousy of husband and wife, for if the woman prostitutes herself, the husband burns with indignation, and that outbreak of his anger is most flagrant, So also when the wife in her turn knows that her husband is an adulterer, she is carried away with intemperance and excess. Hence God, when he shows how he esteems his glory and worship, compares himself to a jealous man, when we turn aside to idolatrous and adulterous worship. In this sense the idol which was in the porch or entrance of the temple is called the idol of jealousy, and the idol which causes jealousy. Although we may also translate, it was the seat of the idol causing jealousy, since the noun, {קנאה}, kenah, is taken in the ablative case. It is said that this idol provoked to jealousy, because the Jews by erecting this idol trod under foot their God, or at least endeavored to prostrate his glory. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 8:4

4. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain.

4. Et ecce illic gloria Dei Israel, secundum visionem quam videram in planicie. [175]

Now he only says that he saw God's glory as he had formerly beheld it near the bank of the river. This was as it were the seal of his prophecy: for the holy man ought to be so strengthened, that he should boldly restrain the furious audacity and obstinacy of the people. Hence he had to strive with hard heads, and God did not arm him in vain; and to this end again a new vision was offered. He knew that to be the glory of God. Hence he was again made more certain that the whole action was under divine direction, and that it was neither human nor fictitious, nor deceptive nor doubtful. It follows ---

Ezekiel 8:5

5. Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry.

5. Et dixit ad me, Fib hominis, tolle agedurn oculos tuos ad viam septentrionis: et sustuli oculos meos ad viam septentrionis: et ecce a septentrione ad portam altaris idolum illud zeli in introitu.

Here one profanation of the temple, is shown to the Prophet, namely, the idol erected at the entrance of the area near the altar. It may happen that the worship of God is but slightly vitiated, so that the corruption is scarcely apparent. But while the Prophet repeats that the idol was that of jealousy, lie points out the gross and shameful disgrace of that spectacle, so that they could not gloss over their impiety by any pretense, after they had so openly and confessedly revolted from the law of God. But when he is ordered to raise his eyes to the way of the north, this also avails for the confirmation of his teaching. For if the Prophet had turned his eyes that way of his own accord, his looking that way would have been of less moment, but when God directs his eyes by express command, the reproach which afterwards follows has more weight. This, therefore, is the reason why the Prophet did not cast his eyes of his own accord towards the idol, as he might have done, but was admonished by God to do so. Meanwhile it appears with what docility he obeyed God's commands. He puts these two things together, that he was ordered to raise his eyes, and that he immediately did so We see here that he was so obedient to God's command, that he did not delay but instantly obeyed it. He says, the idol was near the gate of the altar, which circumstance exaggerates the crime. If the idol had been erected in any remote corner it would have been an intolerable sacrilege, though the modesty of the Jews had been greater: but when they erected the idol before the altar they flew as it were in the very face of God. If an immodest woman runs after an adulterer, her husband is justly enraged; but if she brings him before her husband, and wantons with him before his eyes, and prostitutes herself to all crimes, then certainly such wanton lust cannot be endured. But such was the audacity of the people, that when the idol was erected before the gate of the altar it seemed like wishing to dethrone the Almighty, and to contaminate his altar by the sight of the idol. It follows ---

[175] "It is properly a valley, because {,{בקעה bek-gneh, is deduced from cutting: for a valley when interposed seems to break the mountains, and prevent their running in a continual track. But it is also taken generally for any plain, and the first vision occurred to the Prophet near the river Chebar, where there were no mountains.'' --- Calvin.

Ezekiel 8:6

6. He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations.

6. Et dixit ad me, Fili hominis, an tu vidisti quod isti faciunt? abominationes magnas, quas domus Israel faeiunt [176] illic ut procul recedam a sanctuario meo? et adhuc converte to, [177] et videbis abominationes magnas.

Now God complains with his Prophet; and we must always mark the object and consider God's design, because at the end of the chapter we shall see how severe a vengeance God was about to take on the people. Hence the Prophet prevents those obstreperous reproaches with which the people loaded him through envy, when he chastised them according to their deserts. Hence he doubtless wished the exiles to be persuaded of what they could scarcely conceive, namely, that the destruction of Jerusalem was near. For we have said that those who had been drawn into captivity had displeased him, and wished to return to their country. Since therefore their condition was too grievous and severe, for this reason God wished to testify to them that the last overthrow of Jerusalem was at hand. He does this while he shows the great abominations which reigned in the very temple, whence the Almighty must of necessity appear as the avenger of his glory and worship. The rest to-morrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since thou hast treated us so indulgently, and when provoked by our iniquities, hast yet shown thyself a propitious Father to us, that we may no longer abuse thy patience, but return directly to thy way and submit ourselves to thee --- and, being humbled by a true sense of penitence, grant that we may be so dissatisfied with our sins, that we may devote ourselves to thee with our whole heart and follow the direction of thy holy calling; until after finishing the pursuits of this rife, we may arrive at that happy repose which thine only-begotten Son has acquired for us by his blood. --- Amen.

Lecture Twenty-Second.

WE stopped yesterday at that. clause when God asks his Prophet, whether he saw the abominations which the sons of were perpetrating in the very temple: by which words he not only cites his servant as a witness, but constitutes him in some sense a judge, so that all should know that the coating vengeance was not only just but must be immediate. This is the reason why God asks, whether he saw the abominations. For if a mortal is compelled to pass an opinion, surely God, who sees much further than the eyes of man, cannot be ignorant of their crimes, when they had come to such a pitch of obstinacy that his patience could no longer hold out. Now the adverb of place is used, which seems to be put emphatically, because he refers to the temple, from which all filth and defilements ought to be removed. Since therefore God complains that abominations were perpetrated there, he magnifies the people's wickedness, because even the temple did not remain pure. He adds,

[176] That is, “perpetrate.” — Calvin.
[177] That is, “to turn again” — Calvin.

for retreating: some refer this to the people and elicit this sense, that those who so pervert God's worship recede from his sanctuary, because they have no longer anything in common with God. But I rather interpret it concerning God himself, who is compelled to depart from his sanctuary, as we shall afterwards see. For while they so defiled the temple with their sacrilege, they yet thought God included therein. He now renounces the temple, and says, that he left the place empty and void, because he could not bear to dwell among that sordid defilement. The meaning is, that God would depart from his temple, because the complete worship which he had commanded under the law did not flourish there. And this place is worthy of notice, because we gather from it that God could not bear the profanation of his worship, but will leave those who pervert his law by their fictions, as we see the Jews did. At this day we know how haughtily the Papists pride themselves in their figments, but the more they heap together fictitious ceremonies the more they provoke God's anger. Hence it happens that they vainly boast that they have him in their temples, as they think. For this sentiment will ever remain fixed, that God cannot dwell in a profane place. Now nothing sanctifies a place more than obedience and sincerity of faith. When men introduce their inventions, it immediately causes God to depart from them: this is the full meaning. Now he adds, turn thyself, and thou shalt see great abominations. Some translate greater, but because a question would arise, why he calls the abomination first greater and then different, I interpret it simply that the Prophet should see other great abominations. Afterwards indeed he will express another, for he will say {מאלהתועבות} {גדלות}, gedloth-maleh-thogn-both, but in my opinion there is no comparison here between greater and less; {מאלה}, maleh, I simply interpret *``beyond* others,'' and I rather approve of this simplicity, because interpreters anxiously labor to show this last abomination heavier than all others, though the reason for it does not clearly appear. But there is no need of our making these difficulties, because the Prophet only speaks of great abominations. Let us go on ---

Ezekiel 8:7-11

7. And he brought me to the door of the court; and, when I looked, behold a hole in the wall.

7. Et induxit me in portam Atrii et aspexi, et ecce foramen unum in pariete.

8. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and, when I had digged in the wall, behold a door.

8. Et dixit ad me, Fill hominis, fode agedum parietem: et fodi in pariete, et ecce porta una.

9. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here.

9. Et dixit ad me, Ingredere, et vide abominationes malas quas ipsi faciunt.

10. So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about.

10. Et ingressus sum, et aspexi: et ecce omnis similitudo reptilis, et animalis

abominatio, et omnia idola domus Israel, depictum [178] in pariete circum circa.

11. And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up.

11. Et viri septuaginta ex seni-oribus domus Israel, et Iazanias, filius Saphan stabat in medio ipso-rum qui stabant coram ipsis, [179] et viro [180] thuribulum in manu sua: et densiter nubis suffitus ascendebat.

Here now the Prophet is brought to another place, where another kind of abomination is shown. If an idol had been erected in some recess of the temple only, even that impiety when joined with sacrilege could not have been borne. But when all parts of the temple were contaminated with such filth, hence we collect that the people was utterly desperate. For the Prophet says, that he was led into a more secret place, and since there was a hole there, he dug it by God's command, so that it became a door by which he could enter. This only ought to be understood of a vision. For the Prophet had brought nothing with him with which he could so dig a wall, but when he could only behold that hidden abomination through a chink, God opened the wall. But the Prophet seems to himself to make a door of entrance by his own hand. But he says, there were painted birds, reptiles, and animals: then he adds, an abomination and all the idols of the house of Israel We see that there was not only one idol, but a great number. And in truth as soon as the true worship of God is neglected, men place no bounds to themselves: they are not content with one or two errors, but they heap to themselves numberless delusions. So the children of Israel fell away from one idol to a great multitude. Meanwhile it must be remarked, that the idol which he has mentioned was detestable beyond all others. For it was not called a provocative of jealousy without reason, since it inflamed God to jealousy. It is therefore probable that this idol was more noble than others, and held in greater price and veneration, since the unbelievers had greater and lesser deities. But now the Prophet refers to common idols, of which there was a great abundance, but not such great honor. For he says, that part of the temple was full of pictures all around It is indeed certain, that the use of painting was always plentiful, but God wished his temple to be pure from images, lest men, being taken with such enticements, should turn aside directly to superstition. For if we see a man or an animal painted in a profane place, a religious feeling does not creep into our minds: for all acknowledge it as a painting: nay idols themselves as long as they are in taverns or workshops, are not worshipped. If the painter's workshop is full of pictures, all pass them by, and if they are delighted with the view of them they do not show any sign of reverence to the paintings. But as soon as the picture is carried to another place, its sacredness blinds men and so stupifies them, that they do not remember that they had already seen that picture in a profane dwelling. This therefore is the reason why God did not admit any pictures into his temple, and surely when the place is consecrated, it must happen that the painting will astonish men just as if some secret divinity belonged to

[178] "There is a change of number from plural to singular. — Calvin.
[179] Meaning "idols." — Calvin.
[180] That is, "to each." — Calvin.

it. Although the Prophet here does not say simply that the walls were full of pictures, yet he says, that an abomination and the idols of the house of Israel were there We see therefore not only that the walls were so decorated for the sake of ornament, but because the people desired to celebrate all the deities whose names it knew to be famous among the profane nations.

Now as to the Prophet's being ordered to dig through the wall, we gather from this that superstitions are sometimes so hidden in secret places, that they escape our eyes even while we look at them. For such is the weakness of the human mind, that it does not easily perceive how abominable it is to vitiate the worship of God. Thus the Prophet only looked through a chink, so that he could not form a correct judgment concerning those pollutions; hence he is ordered to dig through the wall, just as if God assured him that a thin and obscure view was not sufficient, but that a door must be opened by which he should look in and thoroughly consider what would otherwise be concealed beneath those coverings. Now he says that he entered and saw the likeness of everything, and we must remember what I have lately touched upon, that the Jews are here condemned for heaping to themselves a multitude of gods: for it was very disgraceful to worship reptiles and brutes. The worship of a human figure has a specious pretext, for the Greeks, who always seemed to themselves wise above others, and thought the rest of the world barbarians, were deceived in idols referring to the human figure, but it was too base and gross for them to worship an ox, a dog, or an ass, as a god. We see therefore how basely the Jews were blinded who mingled brutes and reptiles for gods. But it is no wonder that they were so deluded, because Egypt was near, where we know that dogs and oxen, and even cats, were considered deities: nay they worshipped all kinds of herbs. Since therefore the Egyptians imagined that the deity resided in reptiles and unclean animals, as well as in herbs, it is no wonder that the Jews were drawn into these delusions through neighborhood. But since heavenly teaching had shown them the way, such blindness was inexcusable, because they could not err so basely without suffocating and so extinguishing the light which had been set before their eyes. But we see how men's audacity breaks forth, when they do not restrain themselves within obedience to God's teaching. He says that pictures were painted all round on the wall, which again confirms our observation, that the Jews were inflamed with such desires that they left no space empty, because they wished their eyes to fall upon those figures, which more and more inflamed their superstition.

He says also, that seventy elders of the house of Israel made incense for their idols I do not think that the seventy who were chosen for ruling the people are referred to here, though I suppose the Prophet to allude to this number. For we know that from the beginning seventy were set over the people, and were chosen from each tribe, and were united together. But with regard to this place, I think the number seventy is used of those whom, although they were not prefects, they called seniors in respect to their office, not through their age only. Meanwhile we must remember that the Prophet looks to that order, because from the beginning God had wished the seventy to bear rule and hold the government. (Numbers 11:16.) Thus the Prophet signifies that the leaders of the people, who ought to rule others by their counsel,

were remarkable for corrupting the worship of God. He puts Jezaniah, the son of Saphah, who was probably a man of great repute. Since therefore he excelled in the reputation for prudence and piety, the Prophet wished to exaggerate his crime, because he also, among others, offered incense to idols. What then could remain pure among the people, when he who was esteemed a holy man, so profaned himself among the rest! Hence we see that the Prophet means, that the whole people, from the least to the greatest, was so corrupt, that those who were superior to the rest prostituted themselves to idolatry. He says, then, that he stood before them, and each had a censer in his hand Incense was the sign of the greatest veneration, and even this was retained for common use. Hence at the outset of Christianity, when the impious wished to seduce the Christians to idolatry, they only gave two or three grains of frankincense: [181] that was a sign of apostasy: they did not order them to bend the knee before idols, nor to offer sacrifices, but only to smell to a few grains of incense. In sign, therefore, of veneration, the seventy men are said to bear censers or incense dishes. The Prophet adds, and the incense ascended in a thick cloud. Here understand the particle of likeness. The incense ascended as a thick cloud. I do not doubt that they were profuse, or rather prodigal, in their madness, so as to spare no expense: since idolaters rashly squander all things, when the intemperance of their zeal seizes upon them. And this was not considered with sufficient prudence. The Prophet therefore says that it was not common incense, but was dense like a cloud, since they threw it forth in great abundance, so that the offering might be fatter and richer: just as if he had said, that they were so intemperate in their superstitions, that they threw away an abundance of incense, and had all their expense for nothing, and only to satisfy their idols. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 8:12

12. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth.

12. Et dixit mihi, An vidisti, fili hominis, quae seniores domus Israel faciunt in tenebris, [182] quisque in absconditis [183] imaginationis suae? qui dicunt, non rider nos Iehovah, deseruit Iehovah terram.

Again God questions his servant: we have explained the reason --- that he may pass sentence as a judge on his own people, whence it may be more clearly evident that those who had provoked God were unworthy of any pardon. Thou seest, says he, what the elders do? Through a feeling of honor he does not here name these elders of the house of Israel, but rather reproves their ingratitude, because they so drive others with them into alliance with their impiety. For elders ought to show the way to others. Since, therefore, the profanation of the worship of God took its origin from them, hence their disgrace is increased, and they were worthy of greater reproach. Seest thou, says he, what they do in darkness? From this word I gather that the place was remote from public observation; for there were near the floor

[181] Plin., lib 10, ep. 2, de Christianis ad Trajanum.
[182] "In darkness." — Calvin
[183] Or, "inward places." — Calvin

of the Temple many cells and many chambers, as we see in Jeremiah. (Jeremiah 20:2; 1 Kings 6:5.) Since, then, the ciders had their apartments there, it is not surprising that a place was shown to the Prophet which they had so stained with their paintings. But he says that they did it in darkness, because they kept secret their sacred rites; as also there were mysteries among profane nations, which were not open to any but the initiated. Since therefore the multitude was not thought worthy of those mysteries, it is therefore probable that the place among the Jews of which the Prophet speaks was like a small chapel, which the elders, and those who had authority among the people, retained to themselves. he adds, each within the recesses Some translate --- in the chambers of their painting; but I take the word {משכית}, meshkith, for imagination, as it is also taken in other places. It properly signifies painting, but it is also transferred to the thoughts of men. Therefore when he speaks of recesses or hidden places, I do not understand chambers, though I do not deny that he alludes to those recesses by which men separate themselves from the multitude, by way of honor. In the meantime he equally reproves those tortuous and perverse counsels which the ciders of the people inwardly cherished. For those who think themselves wiser than the vulgar, have some hidden pride, and swell with concealed haughtiness; and therefore they are said by Isaiah to dig for themselves hiding-places to escape from God, while they seem to themselves cunning. (Isaiah 29:15.)

Now, therefore, we see in what sense the Prophet mentions hiding-places of their imagination, namely, because they reckon such pictures the mark of the greatest and rarest prudence. This was again prodigious, that the elders so gave themselves up to foul defilements. For among profane nations no religion held the leaders and heads of the people. We shall not find, either among the Greeks or the Latins, any of the higher classes, and of the chief governors, involved in the errors of the common people, but they pretended religion, that they might hold others in obedience. They instituted, indeed, great pomp; they pretended no small degree of reverence; but when they passed their time as friends at home, they laughed at all these trifles. Since, therefore, all the ceremonies of the Gentiles were a laughing-stock to sensible men, this was indeed a detestable prodigy that the elders of the people of Israel, in a secret place, in the very recesses of their thoughts, fabricated idols for themselves. Now the cause is expressed why they heaped to themselves that multitude of gods, namely, because they thought that God no longer regarded them This passage is badly explained when interpreters think that the elders were epicureans, who dreamt that God enjoyed case and indulgence in heaven. They bring forward other passages, which seem similar but in words only, as where, in the book of Job, the impiety of the multitude is described, he says they think that God walks upon the hinges of heaven. (Job 22:14.) But the Prophet speaks more within bounds. Hence those who take this passage generally, extenuate the force of the doctrine which ought to be elicited from these words. Why, then, had the Jews fabricated so many idols for themselves? because they thought that God no longer regarded them, as I have already explained it; and this was the sign of their gross depravity; for God had chastised them in various ways: they ought to have returned into the way, yet they

were so far from repenting, that they rather champed the bit, and thus persuaded themselves to seek other deities. And this impiety has occurred in all ages. At this time it clearly appears in the Papacy; nay, even the blind may even feel it with their hands. For when God afflicts these wretched ones, at first they suppliantly ask pardon; but. when he presses upon them more severely, then they begin to rage and look hither and thither, and have a common proverb --- ``I know not to what saint I ought to pay my vows.'' Boys learn this proverb in the Papacy, and old men always have it on their lips in perplexity. Hence Ezekiel reproves this fault, when he gives this as a reason for the aged heaping up this multitude of deities --- that they thought themselves overlooked by God --- Jehovah, they say, does not see us here: they do not speak simply of God's providence, but indignantly complain of his disregard, because he did not relieve their miseries, and had deserted the land, as they afterwards explain themselves; for they immediately assert that God had deserted the land We see, therefore, that they did not speak simply against God's providence, as if he despised human things, but that they were inflamed with fury, because God's hand pressed them heavily, and they did not feel any help in him. Hence they descended to brutes, reptiles, various painting's, and all kinds of abomination, because they thought that they were worshipping in vain the one true God. It follows ---

Ezekiel 8:13-14

13. He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do.

13. Et dixit ad me, adhuc con-vertere, et videbis abominationes magnas quas ipsi faciunt.

14. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD'S house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.

14. Et deduxit [184] me ad ostium portae domus Iehovae quod respicit ad aquilonem: et ecce illic mulieres sedebant lugentes Thammuz.

He now mentions the third kind of idolatry by which the Jews polluted the temple; for this was a kind of sin peculiar to females; and we know that they were always more addicted to such wickedness. Satan, indeed, fascinates men always more than enough, but in women recklessness reigned more than superstition. They had therefore a female worship in bewailing Thammuz. Who Thammuz was is uncertain. Jerome translates it Adonis, and Adonis was beloved by Venus, as the poets trifle; and when torn to pieces by a boar, he was turned into a flower of sweetest odor; and in honor of Venus women yearly solemnized by lamentations the death of that beautiful youth; but it is not probable that this rite prevailed in Judaea, because we do not read that this lamentation was practiced in the neighboring regions, but in Greece and Asia Minor I refer it rather to Osiris, for, as we said before, the Jews were neighbors to the Egyptians --- hence they adopted various rites from them; but we know that Osiris was yearly wept for by the Egyptians, and that great pollution occurred; for they carried the virile member on a pole in procession, and called it

[184] Or, "introduced." — Calvin

Phallus; [185] and women also showed their parts to the idol, as if offering themselves to debauchery. This was a most disgraceful spectacle. But I conjecture that the Jews had adopted this rite when the women bewailed Thammuz. Here also we perceive, that when once Satan has prevailed, and cast men into deep depravity, they despise all moderation, nay, are reduced to more than brutal stupor. Who would think this could occur, that women should be reduced to such a pitch of defilement, when they had been taught in the doctrine of the law from their early childhood. But when God's temple was open to such pollutions, we see the Jews so blinded by madness, that God already was showing signs of his extreme vengeance, since he had endured them up to this point.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since thou hast delivered to us a sure rule of worship, which cannot deceive us, and since thy Son became for us a perfect master of all wisdom and of solid piety, that we may obediently follow whatever he prescribes for us, and turn neither to the right hand nor the left; but being content with that simplicity which we have learnt from his Gospel, may go on in the course of our holy calling, until at length, that pursuit being finished, we may arrive at the perfect state of thy glory, and may so enjoy it that we may be transformed into it, as thou hast promised us by the same Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Twenty-third

Ezekiel 8:15-16

15. Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these.

15. Et dixit mihi, Fili hominis, adhuc convertere, videbis abominationes magnas prae istis. [186]

16. And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.

16. Et deduxit me in Atrium doritos Iehovae interins: et ecce ad portam Templi Iehovae inter vestibulum et inter altare, circiter viginti quinque viri, posteriora eorum versus Templum Iehovae, et facies eorum versus orientem: et ipsi adorabant in oriente Solem.

Here the Prophet refers to another profanation of the temple, since the chief citizens of Jerusalem and those who ought to point out the way to others, prostituted themselves to impious worship, lie says, therefore, that he saw about five and twenty men, and it is probable, that there were as many as this among the first rank of citizens. But a certain number is put for an uncertain, and I think that the Prophet. was not so scrupulous on this point, or rather the Spirit of God, who showed that number in the vision; whatever it was, they not only worshipped the sun in private houses, but in the temple itself, and that not without gross and pointed contempt of God. For when they turned their back upon the sanctuary, they made a laughing-stock of

[185] Herod. 2, c. 48. — Ed.

[186] "Or, "besides these." — Calvin.

God. It hence appears, that they were of so daring a front, that they openly boasted in their superstitions, and purposely polluted God's temple. This, indeed, was monstrous, to see the elders of the city, and those practiced in the teaching and worship of the law, so alienated from all piety as to worship the sun. For this could not happen through either error or ignorance. For God in his law when he forbids the worship of the sun and stars, adds as a reason, that the whole celestial host was created for our use. (Deuteronomy 17:3.) Since, therefore, the sun is our servant and the moon our handmaid, and the stars also were created to serve us, it is preposterous to depart from the divinely ordained order, that the sun which was given us to spend his time in our service should be to us a god. Since, therefore, God has borne witness to this in his law, there was no excuse for error when the Jews adored towards the east.

Now he adds also another grosser dishonor done to God, when they turned their backs upon his sanctuary. They could, as I have said, pollute themselves at home and in conceal-merit with such defilements. But while they came of their own accord into the temple, it is just as if they provoked God by open daring, Now, when they turn their back, this is not only a foul denial but a contempt of God, as if they had said, that he was unworthy of their respect. Now, therefore, we see the whole force of the passage. But he says, turn yet again, and thou shalt see great abominations: some translate greater, as I have formerly mentioned, but I do not think it suitable. I do not contend for it, but if a reason is asked why this abomination is greater than others, it is not clear to me; hence I prefer to take it more simply in the positive degree. Nor is it an objection to this that {מאלה}, maleh, is added, for {מ} is not always taken comparatively; but as I think it means only, as if God had said, you will see other abominations besides those of which mention has been already made. But he points out the place of the temple where they worshipped the sun, namely, between the porch and the altar. This was the sign of great impiety to break into the holy place, and from thence to despise God. Now we know this to be a sign of lawful adoration, when the faithful turned their eyes to the sanctuary and the ark of the covenant, but when they turned their backs upon it, there is no doubt that they professedly wished to boast in a contempt of God and the law. It already appears, that they had adopted various and numberless forms of superstition. In Egypt they had not seen the worship of the sun, nor do we read that such worship was in use in Chaldea; but because they heard that the Persians and other Orientals worshipped the sun as a god, they imitated their custom. Therefore we see, that from these people they heaped up rites for themselves, so as to make an immense assemblage. It follows

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Ezekiel 8:17

17. Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose.

17. Et dixit mihi, Vidisti-ne fili hominis? an leve est domui Iehudah, ut faciat abominationes istas quas feterunt illic? quia repleverant terrain violentia: et con-

versi sunt ad me provocandum: et ecce ipsi emittunt ramum [187] ad nasum suum. [188]

God complains as formerly of the wickedness of the people, especially of their perfidious and wicked revolt, because they so defiled the temple which ought to be sacred to God alone. He adds besides another complaint, that they were not content in their wickedness, which tended to violate human society and common rights, and the pursuit of mutual equity, unless even religion should be weakened by them. For under the word {חמס}, chemes, is comprehended whatever is contrary to the second table of the law. There is, therefore, a use of the figure a part for the whole, in this word {חמס}, chemes, violence, as if he had said, they were addicted to frauds, rapine, slaughter, cruelty, perjuries, spoliations. Since, therefore, they abstained from no injustice, says God, they manifestly provoke me also: as if he had said, after being unjust towards men, they now dare to erect their horns against me. We know that God's law was comprehended in the two tables. As to the former table, it prescribes what the true and pure worship of God is. The Jews had violated the second table, since they neglected all the duties of charity, and neither equity nor uprightness flourished among them. After they had filled the land with iniquity; this was their intolerable ungodliness, that after despising men they attacked God himself. We see now the reason of the context, Is this a light thing? says he. Thereafter he had spoken of the wickedness simply and by itself, as they say, he now amplifies by comparison when he says, before this they had filled the earth with violence, but now they have turned themselves to provoke me --- behold these, he says, etc. The adverb of place must be noticed here, as I have before advised. For their impiety is the more detestable, since they broke into the temple to defile themselves with their idols. That place at least ought to remain pure and unpolluted, though the whole land had been infected with many defilements; but when not even the temple is spared, this is a sign of desperate and almost furious audacity. He, therefore, repeats the adverb which he had used before, and in the same sense.

As to the latter part of the verse, some, as I have said, take {הזמורה}, hez-moreh, for foulness: I know not why, for I am not aware that this noun is used elsewhere in this sense. But because nothing better occurred to them, they think it probable, and some have invented a foolish fable that they broke wind in honor of the sun, as if the noise of the belly was a grateful offering to the idol, since by this means they openly despised God. But these are conjectures. Others think more correctly who suppose this to be used metaphorically: for they were accustomed to burn incense to their idols; and so, according to them, God alludes to a pleasing and sweet odor when he names it a foul smell, as if he had said, even if the Jews pleased themselves in their superstitions, yet the incense sent forth a foetid odor and they should perceive it: for if he speaks of the nostrils it ought to be considered as a punishment. Some suppose that the relative of the third person is put for that of the first, as if God would say, to my nose or to my wrath: and they fabricate an insipid comment, that this place was changed by the Rabbins through reverence for God, as if forsooth there

[187] "Others translate it, a foul smell." — Calvin.

[188] "As many think, but I approve of 'to their own wrath,' the word 'wrath' being taken passively for the anger of God which they roused against themselves." — Calvin.

were not numberless passages where God pronounces in clearer words that he was disgracefully despised. But first, because this noun properly signifies a branch, and is taken in that sense in many places; then since the noun {אפ}, aph, may be explained as well passively as actively, the context will flow best if we say, they put forth a branch to their wrath --- that is, to their destruction, because they provoked God. For what is the meaning of putting forth a branch, but that they heaped evil upon evil. They had violated, as I have said, the second table of the law, they were thieves, robbers, perjurers, and violent. Now at length their rage was directed against the former table of the law, so as to overthrow the whole worship of God. So therefore it will make good sense to say, that boughs were put forth --- for the singular number is taken for the plural, as often happens. Since, therefore, they so put forth boughs or budded, God says, that this should be for their destruction, because at length when he had spared them a long time, after a fit time for their punishment arrived, he would consume them. Now, therefore, we understand what the Prophet means. But if any other conjecture pleases, every one may form his own opinion; I do not contest the point, but I show what I think most probable. It follows ---

Ezekiel 8:18

18. Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.

18. Ego etiam [189] vicissim faciam in iracundia mea: non parcet oculus meus et non miserebor: et cum elamaverint ad aurem meam voce magna, non audiam ipsos.

This seems to me a confirmation of the last clause. For he had said, that they sent forth their boughs or east them forth, but yet to their destruction. He now repeats the same thing in other words. Therefore I will also act in, my turn --- that is, as they now boldly increase their superstitions, and so continually provoke me, at length I will act, says he. There is a tacit contrast, since God forsooth had ceased for a long time, because there is a certain form of rest when he ceases from his judgments: God seems to rest when he does not take vengeance on man's wickedness, when he indulges them and passes them by for a time. Since, therefore, he had so suspended his judgments against the Jews, he seemed to cultivate ease in heaven: with this view he says, that he would do it in his anger, and he adds, that his vengeance would be so dreadful that there would be no place for pity. This ought indeed to strike us when God pronounces himself implacable. For what is more formidable than to have God hostile, and to be verily without any hope of pardon? As often as God withdraws his mercy he shows us material for trembling, nor is it wonderful that he threatened the Jews so harshly, because he had proved by all methods that they were desperate in their wickedness. For truly nothing had been omitted towards curing them, unless they had been of an abandoned disposition and of most obstinate manners. Since, therefore, they were such, it is not surprising that God was extremely enraged against them, so that he left them no hope of pardon. But this ought to be referred generally to the whole body of the people: meanwhile it is by no means doubtful, as we shall afterwards see, that God excepts his elect from the ordinary multitude. If any one object, that God always hears prayers, I reply that

[189] "I also." — Calvin.

he never rejects prayers which spring from faith: but here that tumultuous clamor is alluded to which necessity occasions to unbelievers. For although they fly to God as their natural sense impels them, yet they do not this with composed minds, nor even relying upon the promises of God: but because the torture of their minds does not suffer them to rest, so that by a natural impulse they are carried to God and cry to him without any faith or sincere affection. He speaks, therefore, concerning that kind of ejaculation which is described to us in the case of Esau, and hence he says with a loud voice, (Genesis 27:34; Psalm 3:4; Psalm 22:2; and Psalm 32:3, and elsewhere often.) Although the faithful also raise their voice: nay even cry out loudly, as David testifies of himself, yet it is peculiar to the incredulous to utter their clamor with full cheeks though the mind is void of faith, and is even obstinate in its wickedness. Hence they do not open the heart when they thus cry to God. Hence it is not wonderful if God rejects them and is deaf to their complaints. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 9

CHAPTER 9

Ezekiel 9:1

1. He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand.

1. Et clamavit voce magna in aure mea [190] dicendo, appropinquate [191] praefecturae [192] urbis: et quisque [193] instrumentum perditionis [194] suae in manu sua.

Now the manner of that vengeance which was lately mentioned is expressed. Hence the Prophet says, God exclaimed, so that his command reached to the Chaldeans, who were to be executors of his vengeance, and therefore the imperative mood pleases me better, approach ye therefore. Those who consider the tense past say ``visitations,'' nor can they do otherwise, because no sense can be elicited from the words --- to have approached the prefecture of the city. But if we read the imperative mood, the sense agrees very well, approach ye the prefecture: the thing is put for the persons, or the name of the men may be understood, and thus {פקדות}, phekdoth, may be taken in the genitive case. As to the general meaning, God commands his servants who held authority over the devoted city, to approach, or apply themselves, or be ready to fulfill his work, and let each, says he, have his instrument of destruction: here destruction is taken actively. For God does not mean that the Chaldeans were armed for their own destruction, but for that of the Jews, and the ruin of the city. It follows ---

Ezekiel 9:2

[190] That is, “in my hearing.” — Calvin.

[191] Some translate “they have approached” in the past tense, but the other rendering seems to me to suit better, as God commands to approach; “approach ye therefore.” — Calvin

[192] Others translate, “visitations.” — Calvin.

[193] We must understand, “let him have.” — Calvin.

[194] That is, “his warlike instrument of destruction.” — Calvin.

2. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter-weapon in his band; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brasen altar.

2. Et ecce sex viri venientes e via portae superioris [195] quae est e regione aquilonis: et cuique [196] instrumentum mallei sui [197] in manu sua: et vir unus in medio ipsorum vestitus lineis, [198] et atramentarium scribae in lumbis ejus: et venerunt, et steterunt e regione altaris aenei.

Now the Prophet writes that God's command was not vain or empty, because the effect appears directly by vision. Therefore six men offered themselves. Why again he names six, rather than more or fewer, I have not found out. For some cite the thirty-ninth chapter of Jeremiah, where eight leaders are referred to who were in Nebuchadnezzar's army, and had the chief authority; but first they vary in number, then they twist themselves in many ways. But I am not so anxiously curious, nor does it seem to me of any consequence, unless perhaps God wished to show his servant that a little band was sufficient, and that there was no need of a large army: or by six men he confusedly designated the whole army. It is certain indeed that Nebuchadnezzar came surrounded with a large force to destroy the city; but in the meantime God wished to destroy that pride and contumacy of the people, since he only shows to his servant six men who could destroy the whole city. He says therefore, that he came by the gate, or by way of a lofty gate, or higher one, which was towards the north, because Babylon lay towards that region with respect to Jerusalem. It appears therefore that the Chaldeans were here pointed out, to whom the way was direct through that gate, since it ascended from the north over against Jerusalem. He says, each man had an instrument of destruction, or of pounding. This word is derived from {נפץ}, nephetz, which is to destroy and rub to pieces: therefore it can be taken as well for the mallet as for the act itself. There is no doubt that the Prophet meant that God's command should not be without immediate effect: because as soon as he cried out, six men were directly at hand for obeying him, which he afterwards expresses more clearly when he says that they stood near the altar For it was a sign of their readiness to obey God's commands when they placed themselves before the altar. But this passage is worthy of notice, because it shows us how anxiously we ought to give heed to God's threats, which are for the most part directed against us. In order that we may learn to rouse ourselves from our torpor, here as in a glass the conjunction of God's vengeance with his threats is proposed to us. For as soon as he had spoken, we see that there were six men armed and drawn up for destroying the city. But God wished to show his Prophet this vision, because his business was with a hard and stupid people, as we have already seen. God's voice was as it were their final doom: just as if a trumpet resounded, and announced that there was no hope of pardon unless the enemy gave himself up directly. So therefore God exclaimed with a loud voice, but this was no empty cause of fright, because he

[195] Or, “lofty.” — Calvin
[196] Verbally,” every man.” — Calvin
[197] Or, “of his breaking in pieces.” — Calvin.
[198] “In a linen garment.” — Calvin

directly joined the execution of it, when six men appeared before the altar. But he calls the altar which Solomon had built of square stones brazen: even the brazen altar was not sufficient, but it looks to its first origin.

Now he says that there was among them, one man clothed with a linen garment (1 Kings 8:64.) He is not placed among the multitude, as one among the others, but he is separated, because his signification is distinct. This man then doubtless sustained the character of an angel, and it is sufficiently customary in Scripture that angels, when they take a visible form, should be called men: not because they are really men, but because God endues them with such forms as he sees fit. Some, whose opinion I do not altogether reject, restrict this to Christ. But because the Prophet adds no remarkable traits, I had rather receive it generally of any angel. He says therefore, that there was among the Chaldeans, who were prepared to execute God's vengeance, one man clad in a linen garment A distinct mark is sometimes given to angels which separates them from men. The linen garment was then a remarkable ornament. And the sacrificing Papists, as if they were apes, have imitated that custom in their garments called surplices. But since priests were accustomed to be clad in linen robes, here the angel was represented to the Prophet in this garb. Now let us go on, because in the next verse it will be evident why mention was made of that angel.

Ezekiel 9:3-4

3. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side;

3. Et gloria Dei Israel ascendit [199] a cherub super quem residebat [200] ad limen domus: et clamavit ad vi-rum indutum vestibus lineis, eujus atramentarium seribae in lumbis erat.

4. And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

4. Et dixit Iehovah ad ipsum, transi per medium urbis, per medium Hierosolymae: et signa signum super frontes virorum qui gemunt, et clamant super omnibus abominationibus quae patiuntur in medio ejus.

Now the Prophet shows why the angel was added to the Chaldeans, namely, to put a bridle on them, lest they should rage promiscuously and without selection against the elect and the reprobate. This is a remarkable passage, because from it we learn, first, that God effectually threatens the impious, so that he may have attendants always at hand to obey him; then, that even unbelievers make war under the direction of God, and are governed by his rod, and do nothing except at his will. Nor are the Chaldeans said to have come to the temple in vain, and to have placed themselves before the altar of God. This is not related to their praise, as if they obeyed God spontaneously, or as if they had purposed to themselves to carry out his commands, but the secret providence of God is here treated. Although, therefore,

[199] "Or, was lifted up." — Calvin.
[200] "Verbally, which was above it" — Calvin.

the Chaldeans gave the rein to their self-will, and did not think themselves divinely governed; yet God here pronounces that they were under his hand just as if God had them as hired soldiers: as Satan is said to have joined himself to the sons of God: this was not a voluntary obedience, but because his machinations could not attack the holy Job, unless by God's command. (Job 1:6.) God's sons appear in a very different way, since they offer a free obedience, and desire him only to reign. But how great soever is the difference between the sons of God and Satan, and all the reprobate, yet it is equally true that Satan and the wicked obey God. This, therefore, we must learn in the second place. But, thirdly, we are taught that God never rashly executes his vengeance without sparing his elect. For this reason in the slaughter of Jerusalem he has an angel, who opposes a shield, as it were, to the Chaldeans, lest their cruelty should injure them beyond God's pleasure, as we shall by and bye see. Therefore I said that the place was remarkable, because when God puts forth the signs of his wrath, the sky is, as it were, overclouded, and the faithful no less than the unbelieving are frightened, nay terrified with fear. For as to outward condition, there was no difference between them. Because therefore the sons of God are subject to that terror which obscures all sense of God's favor in adversity, so this doctrine must be held diligently, namely, when God gives the rein to furious men, so that they dissipate, overthrow, and destroy all things, then the angels are always united, who restrain their intemperance with a hidden bridle, since otherwise they would never be moderate.

He says, therefore, that the glory of the God of Israel ascended from the cherub to the threshold He takes the glory of God for God himself, as we may readily collect from the next verse; for he says that Jehovah had spoken. But this speech agrees very well, because God cannot be comprehended by us, unless as far as he accommodates himself to our standard. Because therefore God is incomprehensible in himself, nor did he appear to his Prophet as he really is, (since not angels even bear the immense magnitude of his glory, much less a mortal man,) but he knew how far it was expedient to discover himself, therefore the Prophet here takes his glory for himself; that is, the vision, which was a sign or symbol of the presence of God. But he says that it ascended from the cherub Here also is a change of number, because God is said everywhere to sit between the cherubim. (2 Samuel 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; Isaiah 37:16.) But here only one cherub is put, but this figure of speech is well understood, as it is so common, for God resided between the cherubim: it is said that he went thence to the threshold of the temple This was a prelude to departure, as we shall afterwards see. And this testimony was needful to the Jews, because they thought that God was bounded by the visible temple. Hence the Prophet shows that God was not fixed to a place, so as to be compelled to remain there. This is the reason why it is said that he came from his seat to the threshold of the temple Now, he adds, that he cried out to the man clad in the linen garment, and whose inkhorn was by his side, though others translate it writing-tablets: but as he afterwards says, write on their foreheads, it is very probable that the ink was in his girdle, that he might mark the elect of God, that the Chaldeans should not touch them. Again he calls the angel a man, but on account of the form which he put on, as I said before. I cannot

proceed further.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since thou hast deigned to approach us so familiarly, that in return we may also desire to approach thee, and remain in firm and holy union; so that whilst we persevere in that lawful course which thou prescribest for us in thy word, thy blessings may increase towards us, until thou leadest us to fullness, when thou shalt gather us into thy celestial kingdom, by Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Twenty-fourth.

We began to explain the precept given to the angel before God sent forth the Chaldeans to cut off the city, and destroy the people. The angel is at length commanded to sign the foreheads of all the pious. But many take the noun {תו}, tho, which means the same as a mark, for the last letter of the alphabet, and yet there is no reason to compel them to do so. {תו}, tho, is a Hebrew mark. It is puerile to invent that subtle comment, that the foreheads of the pious were signed with that letter, because the noun {תורה}, thoreh, which signifies the doctrine of the law, begins with the same letter. Jerome brings forward another figment: he says that in his time, among the Samaritans, the letter {ת} was like a cross, with which the Christians used then to sign themselves. But all see how nugatory this is. Although it was not the figure which is now in use among the Papists, but was the mark which the brothers Antonii used: but I omit that as unworthy of mention. If puzzles please you, it would be a better reason why the faithful were marked with the last letter, because they were last among men, and as it were the offscouring of the world. Since therefore from the beginning, the world has treated the sons of God as if they were castaways, therefore I have said that they may be signed with the last letter: but we may be content with the simple and genuine sense of the Prophet: therefore God orders their foreheads to be signed. We yesterday explained the cause, and said that a most useful doctrine could be collected from this place, namely, when all things seem mingled on the earth, and turned upwards and downwards, yet that God never casts away the care of his own, but protects them from all harm. God therefore always restrains his judgments, so that he really proves that the safety of his people is dear and precious to himself. We gather also that angels are ministers of this grace, because they watch over the safety of the faithful, as Scripture everywhere testifies. (Psalm 91:11, 12, and elsewhere often.) Now, if any one asks what this sign was? it must be simply answered, that this vision was presented to the Prophet for the common perception of all; for if we wish to single out a few in a crowd, we need some sign. God therefore here borrows what we read concerning a sign from the customs of men: for the faithful could not otherwise understand that they were beyond the reach of weapons, when mixed with the unbelieving. Because therefore it seems the common condition of all, they might be frightened just as if God should raise his hand to chastise their sins. Therefore he says here, that they were signed in some way. It is true then that we daily bear a sign by which God distinguishes us from the reprobate. For the blood of Christ reconciles us to the Father, as is sufficiently known; but perhaps that also may be too far-fetched. It is also true that when God struck the land of Egypt, the Israelites were passed over by the angel,

since the blood of a lamb was sprinkled on the door-posts. (Exodus 12:22, 23.) Every house which had the mark of blood was secure and safe, when God's vengeance was inflicted upon all the Egyptians. But as to this passage, I interpret it thus: when God gives liberty to unbelievers, so float they seem to be able to overturn the whole world, the angels are at the same time sent forth, who hinder their lust that they should not touch the sons of God. This then is sufficient for us.

Now the Prophet adorns the faithful with various titles, when he says, upon the foreheads of men who groan and cry. There is a great likeness between these two words, {אנך}, anek, and {אנה}, aneh; but one is written by K final, and the other by {ה}. He says then, that the faithful groan over the abominations: and then, that they cry out: for thus they translate the latter clause, although it may also be taken for bewailing, if we only understand outward sorrow, and that which openly appears. Hence we gather how God receives us under his guardianship, and sends us his angels as protectors, so that if mixed with the impious, we may yet keep ourselves undefiled by their pollutions, and then when we cannot correct their wickedness, yet we bear testimony by grief and sorrow that they displease us. When the Apostle commends to us the patience of Lot, he says, that he tormented his heart while he dwelt in Sodom. A single stranger could not recall those abandoned ones to a sound mind, who had given themselves over to all wickedness. (2 Peter 2:7.) But he did not grow hardened to the foulness of so much sin, but continually groaned before God, and Was in perpetual grief. The Prophet now bears the same witness concerning other believers. Whatever it is, God here shows what he wishes his sons to be. Therefore if we allow ourselves to approve the sins of the impious, and take pleasure in them and applaud them, we boast ourselves in vain to be God's sons, because he does not reckon any among his own who do not groan at abominations. And truly this is the sign of too much sloth, when we see the sacred name of God made the subject of ridicule, and all order overthrown, and yet are not affected with grief. Nor is it surprising if we are involved in the punishment of sins which our own connivance has fostered, instead of their being a torment to us. For that exhortation must be remembered, that the zeal of God's house may eat us up, and the reproaches of those who reproach God may fall upon us, (Psalm 69:10,) as it is said elsewhere, May my tongue cleave to my palate, if I am unmindful of thee, O Jerusalem, at the summit of my mirth. (Psalm 137:6.) Therefore when we see on one side the name of God trodden as it were under foot, and all justice violated, we see on the other side the Church of God miserably and cruelly afflicted, if we smile in security, by this very thing we sufficiently show that we have nothing in common with God, and in vain we call him Father. Hence these titles must be marked, by which the Prophet marks all God's elect, when he says, whosoever groan over the abominations: then he adds the word, crying out, the better to express the ardor and vehemence of their zeal, --- just as if he said that groaning was not sufficient, as many groan in a corner, when they see the whole order of God so perverted, but when they come to the light and the sight of men, they dare not give any sign of the least suspicion, because they are unwilling to incur hatred and ill-will. The Prophet therefore here exacts more from the sons of God than secret groaning, when he wishes them to groan openly and

vociferate; so that they bear witness that they abominate those things which God has condemned in his law. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 9:5-6

5. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity:

5. Illis autem dixit in auribus meis, Transite per civitatem post eum, percutite: et ne parcat oculus vester, et ne misereamini:

6. Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.

6. Senem, adolescentem, puellam, puerum et mulieres percutite ad internecionem: tamen ad omnem virum super quem fuerit signum, ne accesseritis, [201] et a sanctuario meo incipite: et inceperunt a viris sentortbus qni erant coram domo.

Now the Prophet adds, that the Chaldeans were sent to destroy the city and its inhabitants, but the order must be observed, because they are ordered to go behind the angel. The grace of God therefore precedes to the safety of all the pious: then he opened the gate, and made a way open for his wrath, long and wide, after he had removed the faithful from all danger: for this reason it is said, that he went through the city yet after him. And Patti also signifies this, when he says, after that your obedience has been fulfilled, then wrath is at hand against all rebels and proud ones. (2 Corinthians 10:6.) God therefore first cares for his own; but after he has received them into his keeping, and hid them as it were under his wings, then he permits the flame of his wrath to burn against all the wicked. In fine, we see that as often as God revenges man's wickedness, he regards his Church, and treats all as worthy of peculiar care who are endued with true and serious piety.

Then he orders them to strike, so that their eye should not spare; what God had taken to himself he transfers to the Chaldees, because there ought to be an agreement between God and all his servants, even those who are not voluntary agents, but whom he bends every way by his secret instinct. Then he expresses more clearly, that they should not spare either old men or young men or boys or girls; as if he said, that he must rage against all promiscuously, without any choice of age or sex. He here opposes women to men, because that sex bends even the most cruel to pity, and we know that when men are slain, women are preserved. Now girls seem to hold a better position and boys also: and decrepit old men, because nothing is to be feared from them, are preserved safe. But God wishes the Chaldeans so to attack the whole city, that they respect neither age nor sex. Meanwhile he excepts the faithful of whom he had spoken, upon whomsoever the mark shall be, do not approach him. Here it is asked, were all the good preserved free from slaughter? for we know that Jeremiah was drawn into Egypt, to whom Chaldaea would have been a preferable place of banishment. Already Daniel and his companions had been snatched away before him, many were faithful in that multitude. On the other hand, we see many despisers of God either escaped or left in the land, as Nebuchadnezzar wished the

[201] Or, “do not touch those who bear the mark.” — Calvin.

dregs of the people to remain there. But we saw of what sort they were in Jeremiah. It follows therefore that God neither spared all the elect, nor made a difference in consequence of the mark, because the wicked obtained safety as well as the faithful. (Jeremiah 39:10; Jeremiah 43:2, 3, 4; Jeremiah 44:15, 16.) But we must observe, although God apparently afflicts his people with the ungodly, yet they are so separated, that nothing happens which does not tend to the safety of the righteous. When therefore God forbids the Chaldeans to approach them, he does not mean them to be free from all injury or disadvantage, but he promises that they should be so separated from the ungodly, that they should acknowledge by sure experience that God was never forgetful of his faith and promise. Now therefore we see how that difficulty must be solved, since God does not so spare his own as not to exercise their faith and patience, but he does spare them so that no destruction happens to them, while he is always their protector. But when he seems to give license to the impious, he grants this to their destruction, because they are rendered more and more inexcusable. And this daily experience teaches us. For we see that the very best are so afflicted, that God's judgment begins with them. We see meanwhile that many reprobate exult with joy, even when they wantonly rage against God. But God has the care of his own as if they had been sealed, and separates them from the ungodly; but their own destruction remains for the ungodly, and they are already held within its folds, although it is not yet perceptible by the eye.

It follows, begin at my sanctuary. By the word ``sanctuary'' the priests and Levites are doubtless intended, and their fault was clearly greater. There was indeed a small number who worshipped God purely, and stood firm in their duty, but the greater part had revolted from the worship of God. Hence this passage ought to be understood of those impious priests who had despised God and his servants. Nor is it surprising that God's wrath should begin with them. For they sin doubly; because if any private man fall away, his example is not so injurious as that of the eminent, who thus draw all men into the same ruin. For we know that the eyes of the multitude are turned towards their superiors. Since therefore the priests sinned more severely than all the rest, it is not surprising if God should punish them in the first place. Those who interpret this sentence generally, as if God ordered the Chaldeans to begin from his Church, extenuate the sense of the Prophet too much. For this is not a comparison between the Church of God and profane nations, but God rather compares the ministers of his temple with the people in general, and a clearer explanation follows directly after, that the Chaldeans began from the men, the elders who were before the house; that is, who were set over the temple Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 9:7

7. And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city.

7. Et dixit ad eos, poiluite [202] domum, et implete altaria occisis egredimini: et egressi sunt, et percusserunt in urbe. [203]

[202] Or, “contaminate.” — Calvin.

[203] That is, “they made a slaughter or destruction in the city.” — Calvin.

Here God. repeats what he had formerly touched upon shortly and obscurely, namely, that the Jews trusted in vain in the visible temple, because already he had ceased to dwell there, as we shall afterwards see that he had departed. He had promised that his perpetual dwelling should be there, (Psalm 132:14,) but that promise is not opposed by the casual desertion of that dwelling-place. Now therefore he adds this sentence, when he orders the Chaldeans to pollute the temple itself But it was already polluted, some one will say: I confess it: but it regards the Common perception of the people; for although the Jews had infected the sanctuary of God with their wickedness, yet they boasted that his worship still remained there and his sacred name. Now therefore he speaks of another kind of pollution, namely, that the Chaldeans should fill all the area with the slain If a human corpse or even a dog was seen in the sanctuary, this was an intolerable pollution; all would cry out that it was portentous. But as often as they entered the temple, although they dragged their crimes into God's presence, (for they went there polluted with blood, rapine, fraud, perjuries, and a whole heap of guilt,) yet they reckoned all these pollutions as nothing. God therefore here obliquely derides their sloth, when he says that they boasted of the sanctity of the temple in vain, because they should see it at length filled with corpses, and then should really acknowledge that the temple was no longer sacred. Now therefore we understand the intention of the Holy Spirit. He adds, that they had gone forth, and occasioned a slaughter in the city Here again the Prophet shows that the Chaldeans would be at hand to smite the Jews with terror, as soon as God commanded them to destroy the city and cut off the inhabitants. Perhaps the city had not yet been besieged, and that is probable, for the Jews thought Ezekiel's threatenings fabulous. For this reason he says that the Chaldeans appeared to him, that they might hear or receive the commandment of God: then that they had returned from the slaughter, to prove their obedience to God. In fine, he shows that God's threatenings should not be in vain, because as soon as the right time should arrive, the army of the Chaldeans would be prepared for obedience. It follows ---

Ezekiel 9:8

8. And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?

8. Et factum est eum percuterent relictus fui ego: et cecidi super faciem meam, et clamavi, et dixi Aha [204] Dominator Iehovah, an delebis tu quidquid residunm est Israelis? [205] fundendo iracundiam tuam super Ierusalem.

The Prophet does not so carefully preserve the historical order in the context of the words. For he says, the Chaldeans had returned He afterwards adds, while they were striking the city that he fell upon his face. But we know this to be sufficiently common among the Hebrews, to relate first what is done afterwards. Although the Prophet seems to have fallen upon his face a little after their return, i.e., as soon as he perceived the city to have been nearly destroyed; yet he says, while they were smiting, he himself was left. They think the word compounded of the past and

[204] Or, "oh!" — Calvin.
[205] Or, "all the reliques of Israel." — Calvin.

future tense, because there can be no grammatical reason that the word should be one and single. Indeed the word seems compounded of the first and third persons, as if he would say that he was left alone when all the rest were perishing. Yet there is no ambiguity in the sense; for it signifies that the Chaldeans had so attacked them everywhere, that they left none remaining. Since, therefore, they raged so savagely against the whole multitude, the Prophet seemed to himself to remain alone, as if God had snatched him from the horrible burning, by which he wished the whole people to be consumed and perish. Now if any one should object, that they were not all slain, the answer is, that a slaughter took place which almost destroyed the name of the people; then the survivors were like the dead, because exile was worse to them than death itself. Lastly, we must remark that the prophecy was extended to the last penalty, which at length awaits the ungodly, although God connives at them for a time, or merely chastises them moderately.

In fine, the slaughter of the city was shown to the Prophet as if all the citizens had utterly perished. And so God wished to show how terrible a destruction pressed upon the people, and yet no one feared it. Now as the Prophet fell upon his face, it was a testimony of the human affection, by which he instructed the people although unworthy. Hence he fell upon his face as a mediator, for we know that when the faithful ask pardon of God, they fall upon their face. They are said also to pour forth their prayers for the sake of humility, because they are unworthy to direct their prayers and words upwards. (Psalm 102:1.) Therefore Ezekiel shows that he interceded for the safety of the people. And truly God was unwilling that his servants, under pretense of zeal, should cast off all sense of humanity, so that the slaughter of the people should be their play and joke. We have seen how anxiously Jeremiah prayed for the people, so that he was at length entirely overwhelmed with grief; for he wished, as we see in the ninth chapter, that his eyes flowed down as fountains. (Jeremiah 9:1.) Hence the Prophets, although they were God's heralds to promulgate his wrath, yet had not altogether put off all care and anxiety; for when they seemed to be hostile to the people they pitied them. And to this end Ezekiel fell on his face before God And truly that was a grievous trial, which he did not disguise; for he complains that a populous city was destroyed, and women and boys slain promiscuously with men. But he lays before God his own covenant, as if he said, even if the whole world should perish, yet it was impossible for God to lose his own Church, because he had promised, that as long as the sun and moon shone in heaven, there should be a seed of the pious in the world. ``They shall be my faithful witnesses in heaven,'' said he. (Psalm 89:37, 38.) The sun and moon are remaining in their place: therefore God seemed to have broken his covenant when he destroyed the whole people. This is the reason why the Prophet lies on his face, as if astonished, and exclaims with vehemence, Alas! O Lord God, wilt thou destroy the remnant of Israel by pouring forth thine anger? that is, whilst thou so purest forth thine anger against Jerusalem --- for that city remained as a testimony of God's covenant; for as yet some safety could be hoped for; but although after it was cut off, the faithful wrestled with that temptation, yet the contest was hard and fatiguing; for no one thought that any memorial of God's covenant could flourish when that city was ex-

tinct. For he had there chosen his seat and dwelling, and wished to be worshipped in that one place. Since, therefore, the Prophet saw that city destroyed, he broke forth into a cry, what then will become of it! For when thou hast poured forth thine anger against Jerusalem, nothing will remain left in the city. Hence also it will readily be understood, that God's covenant was almost obliterated, and had lost all its effect. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 9:9

9. Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not.

9. Et dixit mihi, iniquitas do-mus Israel et Iehudah magna supra modum, [206] et repleta fuit terra sanguinibus, et urbs repleta fuit perverse: [207] quia dixerunt, Deseruit Iehovah terram, et Iehovah non respicit.

Here God so answers his Prophet, that he restrains too much fervor, and at the same time asserts his own justice --- for the Prophet might be impelled this way and that --- he might even doubt whether God would be true to his word. God might also shake his confidence in another manner, as by raging too much against the innocent; since therefore he might be agitated amidst those waves of trial, what God now does ought to set him at rest. Therefore, as I have already said, he mitigates the feelings of his Prophet, and at the same time asserts the equity of his judgment against all false opinions which are apt to creep over us when God's judgments do not answer to our will. Meanwhile it must be remarked, how the Prophet complains suppliantly of the slaughter of the city, and although he seemed to expostulate with God, yet he submitted all his senses to his command, and on that account an answer is given which can calm him. Whenever, therefore, God does not seem to work as our carnal reason dictates to us, we may learn, by the Prophet's example, how to restrain ourselves, and to subject our reason to God's will, so that it may suffice us that he wills a thing so, because his will is the most perfect rule of all justice. We see that Prophets sometimes complain, and seem also to permit themselves too much liberty when they expostulate with God, as we saw a memorable example in Jeremiah. (Jeremiah 12 and Jeremiah 20.) Then we read also a similar one in Habakkuk. (Habakkuk 1:2.) How so? Do the Prophets contend with God himself? yea, they directly return to themselves, and collect into order all those wandering opinions by which they perceive that they were greatly disturbed. So also our Prophet, on the one hand, wonders at the slaughter of the city, and exclaims vehemently; at the same time he falls upon his face, and in this way testifies that he would be obedient, as soon as God answered him. This is the reason, then, why God also desires to appease his servant; nor is it doubtful that we shall experience the same thing, if we modestly and soberly learn to enquire when God's judgments do not answer our opinions. If, therefore, we approach God in this way, he will doubtless show us that what he does is right, and thus supply us with material for rest. Hence, also, God's inestimable indulgence toward his people is collected, because he so deigns to render a reason,

[206] "For thus I interpret {{במאד ,{מאד} bemad mad." --- Calvin

[207] "Understand judgment, but it signifies simply revolt." — Calvin.

as if he wished to satisfy them. It is certain that men are carried forward into too much rashness, as often as they ask questions of God; for who will dare to oppose himself to his judgments? and who will reply to him? so Paul says. (Romans 9:20.) But God in his amazing goodness, descends even thus far, so as to render a reason of his deeds to his servants, to settle their minds, as I have said.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since thou didst formerly chastise thy people so harshly, that we may profit by their example; and may we be so restrained by fear of thy name and obedience to thy law, that thou mayest not pour forth thy wrath against us: then if thou chastisest us, grant that it may all turn out to our good: and may we so feel ourselves to have been sealed by thee, and to be acknowledged in the number of thy sons, until at length thou shalt gather us into that blessed inheritance which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Twenty fifth.

We began yesterday to explain God's answer, when he restrains the Prophet's feelings: for he complained of the destruction of the whole nation. There was a specious reason for it, because he thought that in this way God's covenant was made vain. But God simply answers, that he does not exceed propriety in punishment. The question is not answered in this way: for the Prophet might still doubt how God's covenant remained firm and yet the people was cut off. But God does not in every way untie all the knots by which we are entangled: hence he leaves us in suspense, but while he does this, he wishes to prove our modesty, for if he satisfied us altogether, there would be no proof of our obedience. But when he commands us to acquiesce in his judgment, if we do not pass beyond it, then we bear ourselves towards him as modestly as becomes us. Thus, therefore, he now answers half the question of his Prophet when he pronounces, that the sin of Jerusalem and Judah is grievous But he says, beyond measure, that the Prophet may understand that the city, together with the nation, was to be utterly destroyed, since there was no end to its wickedness. When he says, the land was filled with bloods, and the city with perverse judgments: bloods we may take for slaughters, or, generally, for all kinds of sin; for the Scripture sometimes calls atrocious crimes which deserve death, bloods, but it sometimes calls unjust slaughters so. But because God embraces all the sins of the people, I readily interpret bloods as crimes, by which those who had so often provoked his anger, brought destruction upon themselves.

It follows, because they said, Jehovah has deserted the land, Jehovah sees nothing We had a similar sentence a little before, (Ezekiel 8:12,) and I then hinted that it was taken too coldly by interpreters, because they think that the Jews were Epicureans, who thought that God enjoyed his own ease, and did not regard human affairs. They think, therefore, that the Jews were so inebriated by a brutish contempt of God, as to think they could do as they pleased with impunity, since God was afar off: as at this time profane men allow themselves so much license, because they do not set God before their eyes, as the Scripture often says. But we said that the Prophet intended something else. For when the Jews had been often chastised, they were hardened in their sins, and when they ought to acknowledge that those punishments

were justly inflicted upon them, they imagined that all things happened to them by chance; just as unbelievers reckon all events as fortuitous. Such then was the sloth of the people. God was visiting them, as he often says, that he would be known among them as a judge: when they felt God's hand present with them, they said he was far off, because he did not succor them in their miseries, nor offer himself as a shield against their enemies. For their fathers had experienced the helping hand of God in all their dangers. Since, then, God had cast away all regard for them, and showed himself rather their enemy than the defender of their safety, they said that he was afar off. And as we saw, he had stirred up the Chaldeans, and was then proving the faithfulness of all his prophecies when he was executing what he had denounced by his servants. Now, therefore, we see in what sense they said, that God had deserted the land, because, in truth, he was not granting it any taste of his favor. But they experienced his power in another manner when he executed his punishment upon them. Why then did they not think him a just avenger when he thus chastised them? But they laid hold of one thing, that they were not so regarded by God as to be rescued from their enemies. This passage then is worthy of notice. For when God not only invites wretched men to himself, but also draws them to receive the punishment due to their sins, they are often rendered more obstinate, and fancy that God' is afar off. Hence, therefore, it happens that they are seized with madness, and hesitate not to provoke him more boldly. This perverseness is now described when Ezekiel represents the Jews as saying, that God had deserted the land For they are unable to see in it anything more than this; for when profane men once take up the principle that they are deserted by God, they think at the same time that whatever they do escapes his notice. But this was the extreme of impiety: hence God shows, that he could no longer spare men so abandoned. And he confirms this also in the next verse when he says ---

Ezekiel 9:10

10. And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; but I will recompense their way upon their head.

10. Etiam ego, non parcet [208] oculus mens, et non miserebor: vias ipsorum in capita eorum reddam.

Now God pronounces the Jews to be so obstinate in their malice as to have cut off from themselves all hope of pardon. For when he now says, that he would be hostile to them without pity, he shows the necessity of taking vengeance, because their impiety had penetrated even heaven, so that he could not spare them without denying himself. And abrupt speech increases vehemence, as if God pronounced that he had changed his plans. Now then we understand the meaning of this answer, that the Jews were bound by so many and such impious crimes, that they had closed the door of God's pity: nay, they had compelled him to the utmost pitch of vengeance, because they continued to provoke him more and more. Let us learn then from this passage not to weigh God's judgments in our scale, because we are too much accustomed to extenuate our sins, and to treat our serious iniquities as but slight errors, because we do not attribute just honor to God as the only judge.

[208] "Them." — Calvin.

Now when God commands his Prophet to rest and be silent, without doubt he at the same time restrains that rashness of ours by which we burst forth in disobedience when he seems to us to be too rigid. But, as I have said, we do not consider the greatness of our sins. Therefore it is God's province alone to pronounce concerning sins, that no mortal should estimate the quality of actions, for then we trench on God's peculiar office. It follows ---

Ezekiel 9:11

11. And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me.

11. Et ecce vir indutus lineis vestibus, cui atramentarium erat in lumbis, reversus retulit dicendo, Feci quemadmodum praeceperas [209] mihi.

This sentence confirms what I said yesterday about God's paternal anxiety towards the faithful. For the Prophet taught, before God would permit the Chaldeans to destroy the city, that an angel was sent before to succor the elect, and thus to oppose himself to the violence of the enemies: where we have said that it is shown to us as in a glass that God holds this order in his judgments, that his fatherly love towards the faithful always precedes them, so that he does not permit anything to happen to them but what tends to their safety. For this reason the angel now says, that he had done as he was commanded. Doubtless the obedience of the angel is reported to us, because it answers to the will of God. Hence, therefore, we gather that the safety of the faithful is always precious to God, and therefore they will always be safe and secure when we think heaven and earth mingled together. This then is the explanation. Now follows ---

[209] Or, "commanded." — Calvin.

Ezekiel 10

CHAPTER 10

Ezekiel 10:1

1. Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne.

1. Et aspexi, et ecce super expansionem quae erat super caput cherubim tanquam lapis sapphiri, sicut aspectus similitudinis solii quod videbatur super cos.

Here the Prophet relates another vision which has a great likeness to the first which he related to us in the first chapter, but it has another object, as we shall soon see. Since we discussed the chief members of the vision in the first chapter, I shall now therefore be shorter. I shall only glance at what I formerly said, and at the same time point out any difference. But before we descend to that, God's design in this vision must be understood. God wished to bear witness to the Jews that he had nothing further in common with them, because he intended to leave the temple, and then to consume the whole city with burning. But lest this threat should be unheeded by the Jews, God's majesty was placed before them so fearfully that it might strike even the obstinate with fear. Now I come to the words. He says, that he saw again over the heads of the cherubim a throne, whose color was like sapphire Instead of living creatures he now puts cherubim, and there is no doubt that those living creatures of which he formerly spoke were cherubim. But because the vision occurs in the temple, God begins familiarly to explain to his servant what was previously too obscure. For he had seen the four living creatures near the river Chebar, namely, in a profane country. When therefore the Jews and Israelites were absent as exiles far from the temple, it is no wonder that God did not appear so clearly to his Prophet as he now does when brought into the temple. For although the Prophet has not changed his place, yet he does not seem to have been transferred to Jerusalem in vain, and to behold what was done in the temple. This is the reason why he now

calls those cherubim which he had before called simply living creatures. But we have explained why four cherubim were seen, while only two were in the sanctuary, namely, because the Jews were almost buried in gross ignorance. They had long ago departed from the pursuit of sincere piety, and the light of celestial doctrine had been almost extinct among them. Since, therefore, the ignorance of the people was so gross, something rude must be put before them, or otherwise they could not understand what they ought to learn.

Now it is by no means doubtful that God obliquely wishes to reprove that base ignorance, because it was not his fault that they did not perceive in the law and the temple whatever was useful to be known for their salvation. When, therefore, God changes this legal form, there is no doubt he shows how degenerate the people was, just as if he had transfigured himself. But we must also remember what I then said, that four cherubim were offered to the Prophet that God might show that he embraced the whole world under his own dominion. We saw a little while ago, that the Jews, While they thought themselves already without God's care, being thoroughly callous, were so blind that they supposed at the same time that God exercised no care over the world. In vain, therefore, in their perverse imaginations they shut up God in heaven; he shows that he rules the whole universe, and that nothing moves except by his secret power. Since then four cherubim are put instead of two, it is just as if God showed that he reigned throughout the four quarters of the globe, and that his power is extended in all directions, and hence that it was the height of impiety for the Jews to imagine that he had deserted the earth Thirdly, we must remark what has also been said before, that the cherubim had four heads, that God might show that angelic motions flourish in all creatures. But I shall repeat this last comment in its proper place. I now only touch it shortly.

We must now see why the Prophet says, there was a throne whose color was like sapphire, and the throne itself was above the four cherubim: because in truth God has his angels at hand to obey him: hence they are placed under his feet, that we may know that they are not independent, but are so subject to God that they always depend upon his nod, and are borne wherever he commands them. This is the reason why they were placed under the expanse where God's throne was As far as the expanse is concerned, it is the noun which Moses uses in relating the creation of the world. (Genesis 1:6, 7, 8.) The Greeks translated it by {στερεωμα} but badly: the Latins imitated them when they used the expression ``firmament:'' but it is taken for the heavens, and for the whole space between us and heaven, and yet it is above the world. God shows his throne above the expanse of heaven, not without himself, lest the Prophet should conceive anything earthly. For we know how inclined men's minds are to their own fictions. But when God is mentioned, we cannot conceive anything aright unless we raise all our senses above the whole world. God, therefore, to raise up the mind of his Prophet, and to show himself at hand that the Prophet may reverently attend to the oracles, and then that he may regard the heavenly glory of God with becoming humility, interposed the expansion between his throne and the earth. It follows ---

Ezekiel 10:2

2. And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city. And he went in in my sight.

2. Et dixit ad virum, qui indutus erat vestibus lineis, dixit, Vade [210] intra in medium rotarum [211] sub cherub, et imple volas tuas carbonibus ignis [212] e medio cherubim, et sparge contra urbem. Et ingressus est in oculis meis. [213]

Now the end of the vision is related, which I just touched upon, since God determined utterly to destroy the city; but this is described by a visible and external symbol. God therefore is said to have commanded the wan who was clad in linen garments to fill his hands with coals, and to scatter them, on the city, namely, that he might cause a general burning. Here, indeed, God's name is not expressed, but shortly afterwards the Prophet more clearly relates what he here touches so briefly and so obscurely. It is evident that the person seated on the throne is here spoken of, and we may collect from the context, that this command cannot be referred to any but to God. But we must observe, that the angel commanded to mark the elect now assumes a new character. And hence we collect that the angels were so the ministers of God's favor toward the faithful, that at the same time, whenever they were commanded, they executed his vengeance; as a steward placed over a large family, not only sustains the office of providing for the family, in supplying it with food and clothing, but in chastising those who conduct themselves sinfully and wickedly. Such, therefore, is the duty of God's angels. When God wishes to brand sinners with double shame, he often delivers them up to the devil as his executioner, and when we are delivered into the devil's hand, this is a sign of extreme vengeance. But God by his angels often exercises judgment against the reprobate, as examples everywhere occur; but that is peculiarly remarkable, when the angel slew so many thousands in the army of Sennacherib, that he raised the siege by which the Assyrians oppressed Jerusalem. (2 Kings 19:35; Isaiah 37:36.) The same thing is now delivered by the Prophet. We saw the angel clad in the linen garments become the protector of the faithful, to preserve them from all injury. But now he is sent to scatter coals through the whole city, to consume the stones and the wood, as well as the men.

These things seem to be contrary to each other, but we show that there is nothing absurd in it, if God imposes a double character on his angels. He said, therefore, to the man who was clothed, enter within the wheel under the cherub Here there is a change of number, because the singular number cherub is put for cherubim. But I remarked before that this is usual, and God proposed nothing else than to mark the place where the fiery coals were taken which burnt up the city. The altar was never without fire; for it was not lawful to use any kind of fire, since in this way the sacrifices were contaminated. (Leviticus 6:12, 13.) But that perpetual fire, which God wished to burn upon the altar, regarded reconciliation to himself; for sins were expiated by sacrifices, and therefore the fire on the altar was as it were the

[210] Or “enter.” — Calvin.
[211] “Of the wheels.” — Calvin.
[212] That is, “lighted coal.” — Calvin.
[213] “To my eyes.” — Calvin.

people's life. But now God signifies that he had a hidden fire within the wheels, which were near the cherubim, or the four animals. But we have said, and it will be necessary to repeat it again, that by wheels all agitations are represented which are discerned under heaven, or revolutions, as they are usually called. But he saw wheels under the angels, because when the wind rises, when the sky is covered with clouds and mists, when the rain descends, and the air is disturbed by lightnings, we think, when all these things happen, that such motions and agitations take place naturally. But before this God wished to teach us that great agitations are not blind, but are directed by secret instinct, and hence the notion or inspiration of the angels, always exists. Now, therefore, when God orders his angel to take fire from the midst of the wheel which was under the cherub, this only means that God has various means of destroying the city. Now the wheels, as we saw before, were carried in different directions, so that they flew throughout the city. Since, therefore, the fire was in the midst of the wheels, while the angels transferred the wheels by their own secret motion, hence we gather that the burning of the city was in the hand of God, and at the same time in the temple. For the Prophet does not now see the wheels near the river Chebar, but in the temple itself; and there is a tacit contrast, as I have reminded you, between the fire by whose incense God was reconciled, and whence also the sacrifices had their odor sweet and pleasing to God, and between this fire, which should be destructive to the whole people. But he says, the angel had entered, that we may know, as I have said before, as soon as God has pronounced what he wishes to be done, that the execution of it is at hand. Lastly, the Prophet here commends to us the effect of his command, when he says, that the angel entered immediately, as God had commanded. It follows ---

Ezekiel 10:3

3. Now the cherubims stood on the right side of the house, when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court.

3. Et cherubim stabant ad extra domus cum veniret vir: [214] et nubes replevit atrium interius.

Here the Prophet relates where the cherubim were when the men entered, which looks only to the certainty of the prophecy. For we are not here to seek any cunning speculations why they were on the right hand. It is only intended to show that the way was open to the angel to approach directly to God, and that the cherubim were disposed there to render their assistance; for there ought to be an agreement between the angel who took the fire which he scattered through the whole city, and the cherubim who carried all the angels. Here the Prophet shows this agreement, because the cherubim were turned to the right hand when he entered, so that God was at hand; then also the cherubim were at. hand, and thus the wheels bore along the fire.

Now we understand the intention of what we read. The interior court was filled with a cloud: doubtless this signifies, that God by all means confirmed the vision, that no suspicion should creep in that the Prophet was deluded with an empty spectra (Exodus 40:34, 35; Numbers 9:15.) This therefore is the reason why God not only

[214] That is, "while he was entering." — Calvin.

appeared on his heavenly throne, but also filled the temple with a cloud; although, as I have said before, this cloud was a symbol of God's alienation, (1 Kings 8:10, 11; Psalm 18:12,) and we know that the sanctuary was filled with a cloud, although God then wished to testify his paternal favor: but in this place and elsewhere, as in Psalm 18, and in other places, a cloud seems to signify the averted face of God, as if the temple was full of darkness. And this afterwards is better confirmed; for he says ---

Ezekiel 10:4

4. Then the glory of the LORD went up front the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD'S glory.

4. Et elevata fuit gloria Ie-hovae desuper cherub [215] ad limen domus; [216] et impleta fuit domus nube: et atrium impletum fuit fulgore gloriae Iehovae.

In this verse the Prophet confirms what he lately touched upon, viz., that the temple was filled with blackness, because God had transferred his glory away. He says then, that the brightness of God's glory appeared above the threshold But the glory of God resided in the sanctuary and in the very ark of the covenant; but now, when it advances to the threshold, it is just as if he should extinguish the splendor of his glory by which the temple was adorned, and transfer it elsewhere. But he says, that the glory of Jehovah was elevated from its place: these words signify change of place: God is everywhere said to dwell between the cherubim, and he wished to be called upon there; but now his glory is said to be removed elsewhere. Hence, therefore, it appears, that the temple was deprived of God's presence, and was in some sense stripped of its furniture; for without God what remained? Hence that darkness which was formerly mentioned, and is again repeated. The glory of Jehovah then was withdrawn: from whence? from its own place and station, where it dwelt between the cherubim, and came to the threshold of the temple: then he says, all was changed. For the temple in which God's glory formerly shone forth became full of darkness; but the threshold of the house, which was as it were profane, was full of splendor: not that God dwelt at the threshold, for this vision has another meaning, viz., that God after leaving his temple appeared without it; for by the threshold he signifies a place conspicuous to all. Now therefore we understand the design of the Holy Spirit when he says, the glory of Jehovah was elevated from that seat, which he had chosen as a residence for himself between the cherubim, and was conspicuous above the threshold: whence it happened that the temple itself grew dark, but God's brightness was conspicuous in the court itself. It follows ---

Ezekiel 10:5

5. And the sound of the cherubims' wings was heard even to the outer court, as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaketh.

5. Et vox alarum cherubim audita fuit usque ad exterius atrium, sicuti vox Dei omnipotentis cum loquitur.

In this verse also the Prophet confirms the vision, because God always gave signs of his presence. But it seems also to have another object, since the cherubim by

[215] That is, "which was above the cherub." — Calvin.
[216] "Above the threshold of the temple." — Calvin.

the sound of their wings point out a remarkable change, both unusual and incomprehensible. For he says, there was a noise which shook the place, just as if God was speaking. When therefore we hear God's voice, the Prophet means to say, it is just as if God thundered from heaven and made the whole world tremble; for no concussion can be more severe than that sound of the cherubims' wings. From this a certain wonderful change must be perceptible, since God so filled his Prophet with terror, that he should be a messenger and witness of it to all others.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since thou now placest before our eyes proofs of thine anger, that we may not perversely provoke thy wrath, like thine ancient people; but rather, may we so profit by this teaching as to grow wise in time, and strive to be reconciled to thee, and to cast away all our depraved desires, until at length we shall be gathered unto that blessed rest which thine only-begotten Son has procured for us by his blood. --- Amen.

Lecture Twenty sixth.

Ezekiel 10:6-7

6. And it came to pass, that when he had commanded the man clothed with linen, saying, Take fire from between the wheels, from between the cherubims; then he went in, and stood beside the wheels.

6. Et factum est cum praecepisset viro qui indutus erat lineis, dicendo, Sume ignem e medio rotae, e medio cherubim; profectus est, et stetit e regione rotae.

7. And one cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubims unto the fire that was between the cherubims, and took thereof, and put it into the hands of him that was clothed with linen: who took it, and went out.

7. Et extendit cherub manure suam e medio cherubim ad ignem qui erat in medio cherubim: et recepit, et dedit in volas [217] ejus qui indutus erat lineis: et accepit, et egressus est.

Here the Prophet teaches the end of the vision. The Jews thought that they should always be safe and secure under God's presence; they thought that the sacred fire on the altar availed for the expiation of all wickedness. But God showed that he so resided in the temple that he clothed himself with wrath against them, and that the cherubim were keepers of his arms by which they were at length to be destroyed. We see, therefore, that this false and perverse glowing by which the Jews were intoxicated was cut from under them, since they thought that God was in some way bound to themselves exclusively. Hence the angel is ordered to take fire and to sprinkle it about the city, that it may be destroyed by the burning. But this was necessary, because the Jews, while they for a long time obstinately abused the forbearance of God, could not be induced to repent by any fear of his wrath. For this reason this vision was shown to the Prophet. Then he says that fire was given, but whence was it taken? it was, says he, in the midst of the cherubim. When David prays to God, he makes mention of the cherubim, (Psalm 80:1,) by which a more familiar access is laid open, and deservedly so; because God, when inviting the faithful to himself, as if he stretched forth his hands to them, had angels at hand who brought him in contact

[217] "Into his hands." — Calvin.

with men. Now the Prophet teaches, that God's presence was of no use to the Jews, because he was in arms for their destruction; and the cherubim, who were formerly ministers of his grace, were now at hand to execute his vengeance, since they extend fire from hand to hand for the conflagration of the whole city. For he says, that he was come who was clad in linen garments, and stood near the wheels, by which words he signifies, that angels were thoroughly prepared to obey God's commands in every particular. In men there is great delay and even languor; but the Prophet assures us, that angels were ready for the performance of their duty. As soon as God shows them what he wishes to be done, they have their hands extended, and thus they are prepared to execute his will. For this reason he says, that they stood near the wheels It follows ---

Ezekiel 10:8

8. And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man's hand under their wings.

8. Et visa est ipsis cherubim similitudo manus hominis sub alis

I will now pass rapidly over what I explained more copiously in the first chapter, lest I should burden you with vain repetition. I said that hands appeared under the wings, that the Prophet might understand the great vigor of angels for action: but in the meantime it marked the agreement of their agitation with the obedience which they offer to God. For doubtless wings in angels represent direction, by which God testifies that the angels have no proper or independent, motion, but are governed by his secret instinct: for wings signify something terrestrial and human. And it is clear that when wings were given to angels, by this symbol God's secret government was pointed out, (Colossians 1:16,) for they are not only called principalities, but powers. Since, therefore, God governs angels by his own will, he therefore wishes them to be represented in the sanctuary as winged. (Exodus 25:20, and Exodus 37:9.) Now, because there is no action without hands, the Prophet says that human hands appeared under the wings: as if he had said, that this alacrity was not without its effect, because it was joined with operation, for we know that all functions are designated by this word in Scripture. It is then as if he said, that the angels were winged, since they were animated by the secret virtue of God, and had no motion in themselves; then that they were apt and fit for exercising the functions committed to them, because they were endued with hands. But he says that those hands lay hid under their wings, because angels do not take up anything rashly, as men take up a matter vigorously, but without choice. He says, then, that their hands were covered by the wings, because angels undertake nothing rashly nor without consideration, but every operation of theirs depends on that secret government of God of which I have spoken. It follows ---

Ezekiel 10:9

9. And when I looked, behold the four wheels by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub: and the appearance of the wheels was as the colour of a beryl stone.

9. Et aspexi, et ecce quatuor rotae e regione cherubim, rota una e regione cherub unius, altera rota e regione alterius cherub: et aspectus rotarum tanquam similitudo

lapidis Tharsis.

Here the Prophet, as in the first chapter, says that wheels were added to each living creature. I have previously explained what the wheels mean. I will now only allude to them; concerning the living creatures I shall by and bye treat more fully. But the wheels are images of all the changes which are discerned in the world. No more suitable figure can be chosen; for nothing is stationary in the world, but revolutions, as we commonly call them, are continually happening. Since, therefore, they are so changeable, nay even tumultuous at times, profane men cannot understand how the world is governed by the fixed counsel of God; but they fabricate for themselves a blind fortune: hence God in concession to our weakness has represented to us, under the form of wheels, all changes of things, all accidents, as they are called, and all events; as if he were to say, that all things in the world are revolving and changing, not only that all elements are agitated upwards and downwards, but human events especially. Meanwhile he has corrected the error, while he has conceded something to the rudeness of men. For we see manifold conversions which appear to us under the form of a wheel: but meanwhile we indulge in too much license, when we imagine a blind fortune. Hence the Prophet saw wheels near the cherubim; that is, he saw those changes by which men's minds are disturbed, as if all things happened rashly in the world. But he saw that the wheels did not revolve by their own force, but are annexed to the angels, since all events depend on a first cause, namely, on that secret ordinance and inspiration of God, by which the angels are moved, and whence also they have their vigor. In this explanation nothing is forced, because it is not doubtful that the living creatures, as we shall soon see, signify angela Let us go on then to the context ---

Ezekiel 10:10

10. And as for their appearances, they four had one likeness, as if a wheel had been in the midst of a wheel.

10. Et aspectus eorum similitudo una, [218] ipsis quatuor, quemadmodum si rota esset in medio rotae.

We have also explained this part. He says that all had the same aspect, not because God always governs events in an equable manner, for experience opposes this. But he means that the appearance was the same, because the variety which causes darkness to our eyes, does not remove the perpetual and well-arranged tenor of the works of God. Hence there is one appearance to the four wheels, because all God's works agree among themselves; and although their wonderful variety draws our eyes this way and that, yet he knows how to direct to his own purposes things which appear so dissipated. There is again a kind of concession, when he says, that wheel was in the midst of wheel For we see things so mutually involved, that no distinction occurs to us when we consider God's works by our own carnal sense. If we wish, therefore, to judge concerning God's works, wheel will be in the midst of wheel; that is, there will be wonderful perplexity, and this will hold us so bound together, that our minds cannot extricate themselves. This, therefore, is the concession, that. wheel was in the midst of wheel; but the common error is corrected directly after-

[218] That is, "the appearance of each was the same." — Calvin.

wards, when the Prophet adds that the wheels were full of eyes It follows then ---

Ezekiel 10:11-12

11. When they went, they went upon their four sides; they turned not as they went, but to the place whither the head looked they followed it; they turned not as they went.

11. Cum profisiscerentur, ad quatuor latera pergebant, non revertebantur in eundo [219] quia ad locum ad quem respiciebat caput post illud ambulabant, non revertebantur eundo.

12. And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about, even the wheels that they four had.

12. Et tota caro ipsorum, et dorsa ipsorum, et manus ipsorum, et alae ipsorum, denique rotae ipsae plenae erant oculis in circuitu ipsis quatuor rotis.

Now, as I have remarked, after the Prophet has granted that there are certain events of things as it were twisted and bending, and that God acts through windings, he then shows that God does nothing rashly: and that the events which we think tumultuous and confused have a certain direction, and that too the best. For this reason he says, first that the wheels had set out, they did not return, since each followed its own head Interpreters do not agree on these words. For as to the turning of the head, some translate it ``the first,'' and thus mean that in whatever way the first cherub goes, the others follow him. But I rather think that the wheels are compared with the cherubs themselves, and the singular noun head is here put for heads: for we before saw that wheels were annexed to each cherub, Therefore each wheel has its own head, that is, has a living creature by which it is ruled. Hence the sense of the Prophet is, that the 'wheels turned on this side or on that, by any outward or sudden impulse, but were governed by the cherubim themselves, which will explain this portion more clearly.

He adds, that the wheels were full of eyes. Hence we gather, that although by the events of things God may seem to sport and to have various erratic circuits, yet all things are governed by his inestimable wisdom: for this reason the wheels are said to be full of eyes The Prophet uses the word flesh inappropriately for the very body of the wheels. But we know that the language which he used in exile was not very elegant, and hence it is by no means wonderful if it is rather rough and savors of asperity. Yet the sense is not doubtful, since the whole body of the wheels in their back and their hands was all full of eyes: he next adds, the wheels themselves, not to mark anything different, but afterwards when he speaks of the flesh, the back and the hands, he names the wheels simply: as if he had said that they were full of eyes in every part. Now we see how things contrary in appearance may be best reconciled. For the events of things are as unstable as if any one kept turning' a wheel: then they become complicated, as if wheel was within wheel: but in the meantime God so tempers all things among themselves which seem to us confused, that it may appear that he perceives best what is necessary to be done, and that the events of things are full of eyes. But whence does this arise? This clearness depends on the angelic inspiration, for the wheels are not turned in different directions of their own accord,

[219] "Going forward." — Calvin

but each follows its own leader and head. It is also said, in appearance like the stone Tharsis, (beryl.) Jerome thought the Cilician sea was intended, and so translated it sky-colored: but because we know that this name beryl occurs among the precious stones, I therefore retain the simple sense. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 10:13

13. As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel.

13. Ad rotas ipsas clamavit, rota in auribus reels.

By this verse the Prophet better confirms what I have said, that the events of things are full of eyes, since they depend on the secret commands of God. Because therefore nothing happens unless by God's command, hence it happens in the multiform changes of things that there is an equable tenor with reference to God. He says therefore that God cried, or the angel, O wheel. We know that wheels are properly without sense: but here the Prophet signifies that God's voice is heard by all creatures, so that not even the slightest motion happens without that secret instinct. When the air is serene and calm, we do not think that God's voice reigns there, but we imagine some natural cause: so also when the sky is clouded, when it rains, when storms rise, when other changes happen, in some way or other we exclude God from these actions. But the Prophet, on the contrary, says, that he heard the voice of God when he cried O wheel [220] But God did not exclaim by way of derision, but wished to testify that there was a certain hidden inclination by which all creatures obey his command To this end therefore God exclaims, O wheel, that we should not think that events are rashly moved, or that any agitation arises without control, or that the elements are so gross that they do not obey God, since his voice gives efficacy and vigor to all.

Ezekiel 10:14

14. And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

14. Et quatuor facies uni, singulis animalibus, facies unius facies cherub, et facies secundi facies hominis, et tertii facies leonis, et quarti facies aquilae.

Now Ezekiel descends to the animals themselves, which he now pronounces to be cherubim, yet under another form than that in the sanctuary. We said in the first chapter why he saw four cherubim since only two surrounded the ark of the covenant. This variation may seem absurd, for God was accustomed to accommodate his visions to the forms of the law, that he might hold the people in the simplicity of the law. But the reason which I brought forward in the first chapter is by no means to be rejected, because in truth so great was the grossness and rudeness of the people, that it was necessary to bend aside from the first and genuine institution. God had been content with two cherubim, and in that number doubtless he represented all angels; but he was surrounded on the right hand and on the left that he might show the people that he could never be wanting in power to bring them help. Now the Jews were so stupified that they shut up God in heaven, because scarcely any recog-

[220] Compare Milton here: — "Wheel within wheel indrawn, Itself instinct with spirit." — Par. Lost, 6:751.

nition of his providence then remained, as we have already seen. Since, therefore, the Jews thus excluded God from the government of the world, he was obliged to use a new form, different from that of the law, that they might really perceive that God's government extended over the four quarters of the world. And there is no doubt that by the four living creatures God reminded them that nothing took place in the world without his control. But when the world is described, its four quarters or regions are put.

Now, therefore, we understand why the Prophet saw not two cherubim only but four: the same reason for difference in the form of the cherubim is also added. For the cherubim were like winged boys: but the Prophet says, that each of the living creatures was furnished with four heads. This was doubtless an assistance towards rousing' the people from their torpor, because the Jews could not otherwise understand the meaning and the force of the angelic inspiration by which God governs the whole world: hence after four living creatures had been presented before the Prophet, four heads were also given to each living creature, namely, the head of an ox, of a man, of a lion, and of an eagle We said in the first chapter, that by these heads all living creatures were represented to us: for although trees, and the sea, and rivers, and herbs, and the air, and stars, and sun, are parts of the universe, yet in living beings there is some nearer approach to God, and some clearer display of his energy: for there is motion in a man, in an ox, in an eagle, and in a lion. These animals comprehend within themselves all parts of the universe by that figure of speech by which a part represents the whole. Meanwhile since angels are living creatures we must observe in what sense God attributes to angels themselves the head of a lion, an eagle, and a man: for this seems but little in accordance with their nature. But he could not better express the inseparable connection which exists in the motion of angels and all creatures. We have said, that angels are not called the powers [221] of God in vain: now when a lion either roars or exercises its strength, it seems to move by its own strength, so also it may be said of other animals. But God here says, that the living creatures are in some sense parts of the angels though not of the same substance, for this is not to be understood of similarity of nature but. of effect. We are to understand, therefore, that while men move about and discharge their duties, they apply themselves in different directions to the objects of their pursuit, and so also do wild beasts; yet there are angelic motions underneath, so that neither men nor animals move themselves, but their whole vigor depends on a secret inspiration.

A difficult question remains, namely, why Ezekiel says here that the first head was that of a cherub, while in the first chapter he said it was that of an ox. (Ezekiel 10:10.) Some escape the difficulty by saying that it appeared at a distance like an ox, but a nearer inspection showed it to be a cherub, But this is too forced, so that I have no doubt that there is some difference in the vision; nor does what he afterwards adds, that this was the living creature which he saw at the river Chebar, oppose this; for he calls anything which is like another, and has the same object, the same thing.

[221] "Virtutes." — Lat. "Vertus de Dieu." — Fr. An important word, lint not very easily translatable by a single English word. — Tr.

Paul says their fathers in the desert ate the same spiritual food, and drank the same spiritual drink. (1 Corinthians 10:3, 4.) But we know how different was the symbol manna, and the water flowing from the rock, from the sacred Supper which Christ left for us; but as I have already said, since there is an affinity between the sacred symbols, they are to be referred to the same scope. Thus Paul says, the same drink and the same food, and Ezekiel says, it was the same living creature. Meanwhile, there is nothing out of place in our saying that the vision is slightly changed, For when God opened himself at first, the Prophet was on profane ground, now the vision is added more in the form of the sanctuary, because he was seized by the Spirit, that he might see the abominations by which the Jews had stained the temple, as already stated. When therefore the face of an ox was presented to the Prophet, near the river Chebar, that he might now understand that they were angels, or living' cherubs, and that the four heads may not distract him, the face of a cherub is presented to him; so that, being admonished by this sign, he may determine that each living creature is nothing else than an angel or cherub, although it differs from the received form, of which God had proposed to Moses an example on the mount.

We now understand why God turned aside from the course prescribed in his law, when he offered this vision to his Prophet; because, in truth, the people had so degenerated from all sense of piety, that they could not be taught by the simple plan or rule of the law, but had need of gross remembrancers. This is one explanation. Then again four living creatures are employed, that God may signify that his energy is diffused through the whole universe. Then, again, four heads are assigned to each living creature, that we may know that no part of the world is free from his providence, and from that secret inspiration which is efficacious through angels. Then as to the last clause, where the face of an ox appeared to the Prophet before, now he beholds that of a cherub, that he may understand that these living creatures are nothing else than angels; but the reason why God endues his angels with a new form, is because the slothfulness of the people was so great, that they did not recognize what they ought to have been familiar with, for it was not God's fault that they had not imbibed the doctrine of piety from their earliest childhood. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 10:15

15. And the cherubims were lifted up. This is the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar.

15. Et ascenderunt cherubim: ipsum est animal quod videram in fluvio Chebar.

We shall afterwards explain in the proper place why he says the cherubim ascended. The first and principal scope of this vision was that God would no longer dwell in the temple, because he had determined to depart thence on account of the impious and wicked profanations by which the temple had been contaminated. Now for this reason he says, the cherubim ascended; but he adds, that was the living creature, which he had seen near the river Chebar He adds this for clearing up the vision, because if it had been offered only once, the Jews might doubt its tendency, and its obscurity would take away their taste for it, and render the prophetic teaching quite insipid. But since the vision is repeated, God confirms and sanctions what otherwise had not been sufficiently stamped upon the hearts of the people; for experience

also teaches us this, that we increase in faith and make further progress according as God speaks with us again and again. For even if we seem to ourselves to follow up what we have learnt from the Scriptures, yet if the same sentence is repeated, we become still more familiar with it. Then again, if we read the same sentiment in two or three Prophets, God brings forward more witnesses, that so the truth may be better established; since we know our great propensity to doubt, we are always fluctuating, and although the word of God has in it sufficient energy to confirm us, we are still unsettled, unless our minds are propped up by various supports. God therefore wished to place the same thing twice before the eyes of his Prophet, that the former vision might make more impression not only on the Prophet himself, but also upon all the Jews. For we said that although there was some difference, yet there is no discordance in the Prophet's saying that the living creature was one and the same.

Ezekiel 10:16

16. And when the cherubims went, the wheels went by them: and when the cherubims lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also turned not from beside them.

16. Et cum proficiscebantur cherubim proficiscebantur rotae e regione ipsorum: [222] et cum attollerent cherubim alas suas in sublime e terra, non revertebantur rotae, etiam ipsae e regione ipsorum.

The Prophet here confirms what he had said before, namely, that there was no intrinsic motion in the wheels, but that they were drawn by a secret instinct wherever the cherubim moved themselves. Hence we gather that the events of things are not accidental, nor excited in various directions by any blind impulse, but directed by the hidden energy of God, and that too by means of angels. First he says, when the cherubim set out, the wheels set out at the same time: then when the cherubim raised their wings upwards, the wheels followed the same course, and did not return; that is, were not drawn aside from that agreement of which he had spoken before; but how the wheels were not reversed, we shall explain more clearly to-morrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since we are the work and fashioning of thy hands, that we may know that we exist and move in thee alone, so that we may submit ourselves to thee, and not only may we be ruled by thy hidden providence, but may it so appear that we are obedient and submissive to thee, as becometh sons, that we may desire to glorify thy name in the world, until we arrive at the fruition of that blessed inheritance which is laid up for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Twenty seventh.

We began yesterday to explain the sentence of the Prophet when he says, that the wheels were raised together with the living creatures But we have shortly taught that whatever we behold in creation so depends on angelic motion and inspiration, that there is an inseparable connection between them. Now the Prophet adds, that the wheels were not reversed, by which phrase he expresses their continual tenor.

[222] Or, "near them." — Calvin.

For it cannot happen that any agreement should appear for a time without a sudden change occurring. But the Prophet says that the wheels were so raised with the living creatures that they never departed from them. Now we understand his intention. He had previously asserted the same thing of the living creatures, and there was a kind of contradiction to be solved which might otherwise occasion a scruple, for he said that the living creatures were reversed and yet not reversed, but we can reconcile these two things, because the living creatures never deviated from their prescribed course and from a definite and settled space; meanwhile they were reversed, because they ran like lightning and hastened quickly from one action to another. Meanwhile the Prophet wished to teach, that in God's works nothing is abrupt, nothing cut off, nothing mutilated, but angels so direct all actions and all events of things, that whatever God determines arrives at its own end. But this does not prevent God from operating variously, and after at one goal from beginning a new course. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 10:17

17. When they stood, these stood; and when they were lifted up, these lifted up themselves also: for the spirit of the living creature was in them.

17. Et cum starent animilia stabant etiam: et cum elevaren-tur elevebant se: quia spiritus animalis in ipsis.

As he just said that the wheels were obedient to the movement of the living creatures, so he now says that they ceased with them. But in this place it seems as if some incongruity might arise: for it is not correct to say that angels ever rest. We know that their quickness and promptness in executing God's commands is celebrated. (Psalm 103:20, 21.) Then since angels are the powers of God, it follows that they never cease from their office of working. For God never can rest; he sustains the world by his energy, he governs everything however minute, so that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without his decree. (Matthew 10:29.) And there is that known and celebrated sentence of Christ, My Father and I work hitherto. (John 5:17.) Since, therefore, God never rests from his works, how then can that resting be explained of which the Prophet says, when the angels stood, the wheels also stood? I reply: it must be taken in a human sense; for although God works continually by means of angels, yet he seems sometimes to rest between. For he does not govern his works in any equable manner, as for instance, the heavens are sometimes calm, and at others agitated, so that a great variety appears in God's works, from which we may imagine that he is sometimes in vehement motion, and at others at perfect repose. This, therefore, is the cessation of which the Prophet now speaks when he says, the living creatures stood, and at the same time the wheels with them Experience also confirms this; for God sometimes seems to mingle heaven and earth, and rouses us by unaccustomed work, while at others the course of his works seems to flow like a placid river. So that it is not absurd to say that the wheels stood with the living creatures, and proceeded and were elevated with them He adds, the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels, I explained this point, in the first chapter, but here it may be shortly explained, that the spirit is here taken for secret vigor or instinct. The wheels are not properly animated, because we said that the events of things

are represented to us by this word, and whatever seems to happen in the world; but their incomprehensible vigor and agitation proceeds from God's command, so that all creatures are animated by angelic motion: not that there is a conversion of the angel into an ox or a man, but because God exerts and diffuses his energy in a secret manner, so that no creature is content with his own peculiar vigor, but is animated by angels themselves. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 10:18-19

18. Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims.

18. Et egressa est gloria Iehovae e limine domus, et stetit super cherubim:

19. And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also were beside them, and every one stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD'S house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.

19. Et sustulerunt cherubim alas suas, et ascenderunt e terra in oculis reels: cum egrederentnr rotae etiam coram ipsis: et stetit super limen portae Iehovae orientalis: et gloria Dei Israel super ipsa sursum.

Here the Prophet teaches us what is the principal point in the vision, namely, that God had deserted the temple: for we, know with what confidence the Jews boasted that they should be safe continually under the protection of God. In consequence of the promise, that God's temple should be the place of his rest wherein he would dwell, (Psalm 132:14,) they did not think it possible that God would ever leave them: so they sinned without restraint; and while they drove him far away from them by their crimes, yet they wished to have him in some way bound to them. This folly is derided by Isaiah --- Heaven is my seat, and earth is my foot. stool: what house therefore will ye build for me? (Isaiah 66:1.) God had commanded his temple to be built, and wished to have his earthly dwelling, place there: but he says that his wish had been rendered nugatory: and how? why when he promised that he would dwell in the temple, he wished his name to be purely and reverently invoked there.

But the Jews had polluted the temple in every way. Hence they thought that God was shut up there in vain: because his liberality did not tend to his partaking of the captivity of the Jews, but to his having them in obedience to himself. Therefore Isaiah deservedly says, that the temple became unfit for the use of God when it was profaned. So also we see in Jeremiah: Do not trust in lying words, the temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah. (Jeremiah 7:4.) That repetition is used because they were so elated by their obstinacy. The Jews resisted the Prophets, and as often as any threat was uttered against them, they immediately fled to that asylum, the temple of the Lord.

For this reason therefore the Prophet now relates, that the glory of God had deserted the sanctuary: for otherwise what we have seen would have been out of place: he was sent to scatter burning through the whole city: in this way the temple would have been burnt, and God would have been consumed by peculiar fire: here I speak after the common form, because when the ark of the covenant is called the God of hosts, (2 Samuel 6:2,) how could it happen that the fire should destroy the

ark, together with all parts of the temple? But God himself meets them and shows them that the temple was deprived of its glory when it was destroyed by the enemy. Afterwards the temple was overthrown And in the Psalms its lamentable ruin is described, how cruelly and proudly, and with what barbarous mockery the enemy insulted it, (Psalm 74, and Psalm 79:) this was very disgraceful, and disturbed their weak minds. Hence it was necessary to persuade the faithful that God no longer dwelt in the temple, but that it remained only an empty spectacle, because he had taken away his glory since the place was corrupted by so many defilements. Now therefore we understand the design of the Prophet, when he says that the glory of Jehovah had departed from the threshold of the house, and stood above the cherubim But he had already said that the cherubim had raised their wings, which he again confirms. Whence it follows, that God with his angels, when the temple was left, deserted the Jews, so that for the future they would boast themselves in vain to be safe under his protection. Therefore he says that the cherubim raised their wings, and ascended from the earth before his eyes Nor is this clause superfluous, since it was difficult to persuade the Jews of what he said about his deserting them. There was a celebrated oracle, ``here will I dwell, since I have chosen it.'' (Psalm 132:14.) When they grasped at that, they thought that the sun would sooner fall from heaven than God would leave that temple.

But the Prophet says that he saw it clearly, that no doubt might remain. If any one should here ask, how that promise which I have mentioned agrees with that departure which the Prophet here relates? the answer is easy, if we only understand that God does not always work by human means, nor yet according to our carnal perception. God often seems to act so abruptly that his beginning is without an end: in fine, God seems sometimes to sport and to draw back his hand, so that the event does not answer to the joyful beginnings. Since therefore, according to our carnal senses, God's works appear to be frustrated, it is necessary to use such language: otherwise we should never understand how God departed from the sanctuary, when he had chosen it in perpetuity. But he so departed, that the place still remained sacred, and the temple stood before God though it had been overthrown in the eyes of men. The visible appearance of the temple was taken away, but meanwhile, since the temple was founded on the promise of God, it stood among its ruins, as I have said. For this reason Daniel, although solitude and devastation ought to avert his eyes and senses from Judea, prayed in that direction, as if the temple had remained entire. And why so? He looked at the promise. (Daniel 6:10.) And for this reason the Prophet said, after the return from the captivity, that the glory of the second temple surpassed that of the first, as the Prophet Haggai says. (Haggai 2:9.) And we know with what copiousness and magnificence Isaiah discourses concerning the splendor of the second temple and its inestimable glory. (Isaiah 60:7.) We shall see also a similar doctrine at the end of this book. Since therefore the temple stood before God, because it was founded on his promise, this temporary desertion could not abolish what I have said concerning God's perpetual station.

same thing also must be said concerning the kingdom: that kingdom ought to stand while the sun and moon shone in heaven, (Psalm 89:37, 38,) this is true: and

yet there was a sad interruption during many years. For we know what a serious disgrace the last king suffered: then had all dignity fallen to ruin, so that nothing could be seen but the horrible vengeance of God. And yet that promise always had its own effect; as long as the sun and moon shall stand, they shall be my faithful witnesses of the perpetuity of the kingdom. Now then we understand in what sense God left his temple, and yet did not in anywise break his promise. But he says, the glory of the God of Israel stood at the eastern gate, but above it, so that it was raised up from the earth. The meaning of that speech was, that the Jews might know that God was no longer to be sought in that dwelling of wood and stone, because he had not only left his seat, but had ascended upwards, that they should have no more intercourse with him. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 10:20

20. This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were the cherubims.

20. Ipsum est animal quod vide-ram subtus Deum Israel in fluvio Chebar: et cognovi quod cherubim esscut.

He repeats what we have seen before, namely, that one vision was offered twice, because God wished to mark distinctly what otherwise had been doubtful. The Prophet indeed was sufficiently persuaded that God had appeared to him, but the confirmation of it was not in vain, because he would have to sustain great conflicts. Meanwhile it must be observed, that the vision was confirmed a second time, not for the private advantage of a single person, but that this drawing attention to it might profit the whole people, or at any rate render those without excuse who so despised the favor of God, so manifest and so clearly laid open to them. He says, therefore, this was the living creature which he had seen under the God of Israel In the first chapter he related that there was a throne in the open firmament of heaven, where he sat who was like a man in external form, and yet was not a man. There we saw that the true and only God was alluded to, and yet that this description could not apply to the Father, but necessarily belonged to the Son. These two things then are to be borne in mind: and the Prophet here takes away all doubt when he names the God of Israel like a man, which could not apply to the person of the Father. That likeness then ought, to be agreed upon among the pious. Controversy, therefore, on this point ought not be engaged in; for Sabellius, who took away the distinction of persons, was sufficiently refuted by his own extravagance. Since, therefore, the Father never put on the form or likeness of man, and it is nowhere read in the Scriptures that. he is compared to a man, we must explain this of Christ. And now Ezekiel bears witness that he is the God of Israel. We see, therefore, how foolishly the triflers of our day babble who desire to disturb the Churches by making Christ a sort of deity transfused from the substance of the Father. They confess, indeed, that he is God, but this confession is a mere pretense, [223] since they say that the God of Israel means God the Father, and that the title cannot apply to either the Son or the Spirit. The Spirit, therefore, is mistaken when he says by the Prophet's mouth, the God of

[223] The Latin is, “merus est fucus:” the French, “mats ce n’est que toute tromperie:” Anglice, “all trash.” — Tr.

Israel appeared in human form This place, therefore, is remarkable for refuting that delusion by which foolish men fatigue themselves and others: while they allow Christ to be God, yet they deprive him of his true deity, because they say that it is derived from the Father.

He says also, that he knew them to be cherubim Now although he knew that God had appeared to him before, yet he had no certain knowledge concerning the living creatures, for with regard to them he remained in suspense; but now after God has familiarly explained to him the vision in the temple, he says, that he was taught that they were cherubim So what we said yesterday is confirmed, that the face of the ox was changed into that of a cherub, so that the Prophet understood that angels were pointed out under the form of cherubim, even those which surrounded the ark of the covenant. Let us proceed ---

Ezekiel 10:21

21. Every one had four faces apiece, and every one four wings; and the likeness of the hands of a man was under their wings.

21. Quatuor quatuor: [224] facies uni, et quatuor alae uni: et similitudo manuum hominis sub alis ipsorum.

The Prophet appears to dwell on points by no means doubtful: he has already spoken of the four heads, then why does he repeat it? Because he was dealing with a dull and perverse people: they were also slow in receiving the Prophet's doctrine: and they added this vice worse than all the rest, namely, a constant and open endeavor to detract from the authority of all the Prophets. For this reason the Prophet says, that there were four heads and four wings to each living creature, lest the Jews should scoffingly deride it as an empty specter and delusion of the Prophet, because he thought he saw what had no existence. For this reason he inculcates more frequently what. was sufficiently clear by itself had the Jews been docile and obedient. It follows ---

Ezekiel 10:22

22. And the likeness of their faces was the same faces which I saw by the river of Chebar, their appearances and themselves: they went every one straight forward.

22. Et similitude facierum ipsis, facies quam videram super fluvium Chebar, aspectus eorum et ipsa [225] quisque [226] ad [227] faciem suam proficiscebatur.

He pursues the same sentiment, that nothing was obscure or perplexed in this vision, since all things were mutually suitable. For the remembrance of the vision which he had received remained in the Prophet's mind: but now when he is hurried into the temple, he recognizes the same God and the same forms as those to which he had been accustomed. We see then how he meets their perverseness, who had otherwise boasted that he had offered them only his own fictions without any truth in them. Hence he restrains this petulance, and shows that God had certainly appeared to him, and that too a second time. Since he now says that each living creature went, forward in the direction of its face, it is not doubtful that this refers to their actions.

[224] This is, "four apiece." — Calvin.
[225] "The living creatures or cherubs themselves." — Calvin.
[226] "Cherub." — Calvin
[227] "Towards." — Calvin.

Hence he points out that angels did not wander in their course as a person usually does who looks this way and that, or deserts the path, or turns to the right hand or the left. The Prophet therefore says, that the living creatures proceeded so that each was intent on its own end or scope: because if the motion of the angels had been turbulent, they had not been the servants of God. Finally, the Prophet signifies that the angels were not only alert and prepared for obedience, but were at the same time arranged and formed after a fixed rule, so that they did not in the slightest degree turn aside from. the command and direction of God [228] It now follows ---

[228] The explanation which Calvin gives of the meaning of these singular Disclosures is indeed very adverse to our modern ideas of those physical laws by which the Almighty governs the universe; and they will not perhaps be easily adopted by those who have been inspired with the philosophy of Bacon and Newton. The reader of Calvin may with satisfaction con-suit C. B. Michaelis' Sylloge Comment. Theol., edited by D. T. Pott, volume 5, and following; Lightfoot's Description of the Temple, volume 1; and Jahn's Bibl. Archoeolog., volume 2, sec. 187, and following. The learned Commentary on Ezekiel and Explanations of his Visions, by Hieron. Pradus and Joan. Bapt. Villalpandus, two Jesuits, published at Rome in 1596 and 1604, by the permission of their superiors, illustrates this tenth chapter very copiously, and displays great diligence, erudition, and accuracy. Another valuable exegetical exposition of this chapter is given by OEcolampadius in his Comment. in omn. libr. Prophet., edit. 1558; he occupies eighteen folio pages with an elaborate comment under the title "Expositio mysterii quod hac visione adumbratur," in which he sees Christus dominus glorioe and gratia est firmamentum justitioe Christi The discussion of the Cherubim is very complete, though it may be well to consult the article in Kitto's Biblical Cyclopedia on the word "Cherub." Rosenmuller, in his valuable Scholia, makes constant use of the Arable and Syriac versions, quotes fully from the Greek. of Theodoret, and diligently compares the Hebrew Codices of Kennicott and De Rossi, as well as the Greek texts of the Roman Codex, the Complutensian, and the Alexandrine. With such adminicula the reader of these Lectures on Ezekiel will have sufficient data for forming a correct judgment on the merits of Calvin's interpretation.

Ezekiel 11

CHAPTER 11

Ezekiel 11:1-2

1. Moreover, the Spirit lifted me up, and brought me unto the east gate of the LORD'S house, which looketh eastward: and behold at the door of the gate five and twenty men; among whom I saw Jaazaniah the son of Azur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people.

1. Et sustulit me Spiritus et introduxit me ad portam domus Iehovae orientalera: [229] et ecce in limine portae vigintiquinque viri: et aspexi in medio ipsorum [230] Iaazaniah filium Azur, et Pelthiah filium Benaiah, principes populi.

2. Then said he unto me, Son of man, these are the men that devise mischief, and give wicked counsel in this city:

2. Et dixit ad me, Fili hominis, isti homines cogitant vanitatem, et consultant consilium perversum in urbe hae.

Here the Prophet admonishes the people that perverse leaders would be the cause of their destruction. For if the blind lead the blind both will fall into the ditch (Matthew 15:14; Luke 6:39.) Since, therefore, the elders of the city were such wicked apostates, they drew with them the whole body of the people into the same ruin. Now, therefore, the Prophet shows that the state of the city was so corrupt that no hope of pardon remained, since those who ought to be the eyes of the whole people were involved in darkness. But he names the five and twenty seniors Whence it is probable, that this number was chosen in the midst of confusion, or that a definite number is put for an indefinite; and I rather embrace this second view. Whatever it is, it implies that those who held the reins of government were impious despisers of God, and hence it is not surprising that impiety and defection from God and his law had begun to increase among the whole people. But we must remark the Prophet's in-

[229] "Which looks towards the cast." — Calvin.

[230] That is, "between themselves." — Calvin.

tention. For common soldiers are accustomed to consider their commanders as a shield, as we this day see in the Papacy. For this is their last refuge, since they think themselves guilty of no fault when they obey their holy Mother Church. Such also formerly was the obstinacy of the people.

Lastly, men always throw off all blame from themselves, under pretense of error or ignorance. Hence the Prophet now shows that the city was not free from God's wrath, since it was corrupted by its leaders and rulers; nay, that this was a cause of its destruction, since the people were too easily led astray by perverse examples. Meanwhile, we must notice the Prophet's freedom, because he here fearlessly attacks the most noble princes. He was, indeed, out of danger, because he was an exile: but it seems that he was at Jerusalem when he uttered this prophecy. He shows, therefore, his strength of mind, since he does not spare the nobles. Hence this useful doctrine is collected, that those who excel in reputation and rank are not free from blame if they conduct themselves wickedly, as we see happens in the Papacy. For, as to the Pope himself, it is in his power to condemn the whole world, while he exempts himself from all blame. And as to the Bishops, now twenty or thirty witnesses are required, and afterwards even seventy: hence one of those horned beasts could not be convinced, unless the whole people should rise up: so also it was formerly. But here the Prophet shows, that however eminent are those who are endued with power over the people, yet they are not sacred nor absolved from all law by any peculiar privilege, since God freely judges them by his Spirit, and reproves them by his Prophets. Lastly, if we wish to discharge our duty rightly, especially when it consists of the office of teaching, we should avoid all respect of persons, for those who boast that they excel others are yet subject to the censures of God. For this reason it follows ---

Ezekiel 11:3

3. Which say, It is not near; let us build houses: this city is the caldron, and we be the flesh.

3. Qui dicunt, non in propinquo: aedificare domos [231] ipsa est olla [232] nos autem sumus caro.

Here the Prophet explains what might be obscure through their perverseness. He brings forward, therefore, what the impious thought could be covered by many fallacies. For we know that hypocrites endeavor to fix their eyes on God, and when they scatter their own clouds before themselves, they think that he is blinded. For this reason Isaiah says, that God also is wise, (Isaiah 31:2,) and derides their cunning, since they think that they blind God's eyes whilst they conceal their sins with various coverings. Since, therefore, the obstinacy of these men was so great., the Prophet here strips off their mask; for they could be turned aside by perverse counsels to deny that they deserved anything of the kind. But the Prophet here cuts away their pretenses, because, in truth, their impiety was more than sufficiently evident, since they boast that the time is not yet at hand, and, therefore, that they might build houses at Jerusalem as in a time of ease and peace. As we saw in Jeremiah, the

[231] That is," Let us build." — Calvin.
[232] Or, "caldron." — Calvin.

time of the last destruction was approaching; everything remaining in the city had now been destined to final ruin: and for this reason Jeremiah advised houses to be built in Chaldea and in foreign lands, since the captives must spend a long period there, even seventy years. (Jeremiah 29:5.) Since then the predicted time was now drawing on, it became extreme folly in the people to oppose themselves, and to treat God's threats as a laughing-stock, and to boast that it was a time for building. Now, therefore, we see what the Prophet blames and condemns in the five and twenty men who were princes of the people, namely, that they hardened the people in obstinate wickedness, and encouraged torpor, so that the Prophet's threats were unheeded. Since, therefore, they so stupified the people by their enticements, and took away all sense of repentance, they also set aside all fear of God's wrath which had been denounced against them. The Prophet condemns this depravity in their counsels.

But, in the second clause, this contempt appears more detestable when they say, that Jerusalem is the caldron, and they are the flesh I do not doubt their allusion to Jeremiah; for in the first chapter the pot was shown, but the fire was from the north, (Jeremiah 1:13;) so then the Spirit wished to teach us, that the Chaldeans would come like a fire to consume Jerusalem, as if a pot is placed on a large and constant fire, even if it be full of water and flesh, yet its contents are consumed, and the juice of the flesh is dried up by too long cooking. God had demonstrated this by his servant Jeremiah: here the Jews deride and factiously elude what ought to strike them with no light fear, unless they had been too slothful: behold, say they, we are the flesh and Jerusalem is the caldron: So they seem to rate the Prophet Jeremiah, as if he were inconsistent, --- ``What? do you threaten us with captivity? and meanwhile you say that this city will be the pot and the Chaldeans the fire. If God wishes to consume us, therefore let us remain within: thus we may build houses.'' Now we understand how they sought some appearance of inconsistency in the words of the Prophet: as reprobate and profane men always take up arguments by which they may diminish and extenuate all faith in heavenly doctrine, nay, even reduce it to nothing if they could. The Prophet, therefore, provides a remedy for this evil, as we have seen. But before he proceeds to it, he repeats their impious saying, that Jerusalem is a caldron, and the people flesh They turned what had been said to a meaning directly contrary, for the Prophet said that they should burn since the Chaldeans would be like fire' but they said --- well, we shall be scorched, but that will be done lightly, so that we shall remain safe to a good old age. Hence we understand how diabolical was their audacity, who were so blinded by the just judgments of God, that they did not scruple petulantly to blame even God himself, and to make a laughingstock of the authority of his teaching. Thus we see in another way how faithfully Ezekiel had discharged his duty: he had been created a Prophet: he had not to discharge his office by himself, but was an assistant to Jeremiah. And we cannot otherwise discharge our duty to God and his Church unless we mutually extend our hands to each other, when ministers are mutually united and one studies to assist the other. Ezekiel now signifies this when he professes himself the ally and assistant of Jeremiah.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as we know from thine ancient people how great our hardness is, unless we are inclined by thy Holy Spirit, nay, totally renewed into obedience to thy doctrine: that as often as we hear thy threatening, we may be seriously frightened, and that we may desire to return to true and perfect obedience, not by momentary but by permanent repentance, till at length we are gathered into that happy rest, which has been obtained for us through the blood of thine only-begotten Son. Amen.

Lecture Twenty eighth.

Ezekiel 11:4

4. Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man.

4. Propterea prophetiza contra cos, prophetiza, fili hominis.

Yesterday we saw that the Jews scurrilously eluded the prophecies of Jeremiah, especially when he threatened them with God's wrath. For he had said, that a vision was offered to him, in which Jerusalem was like a pot, and the fire lighted from the north. For a laughing-stock they said that they could rest safely within the city, because they were not yet cooked but raw, so that if that prophecy is true, said they, we shall not so quickly depart from the city. For God foretold that we should be the flesh which was about to be cooked: if this city is a caldron, we ought to remain here till we are cooked: but this has not happened. Hence what Jeremiah pronounces is vain, that we shall be dragged into exile, because these two things disagree, viz., God wishing us to rest in the city, and yet dragging us into a distant region. Since it is so, Jeremiah's prophecy is vain; thus then they deceived themselves. But God commands another Prophet of his to rise up against them. And the repetition is emphatic, prophesy, prophesy against them For nothing is less tolerable than that men should petulantly spurn God's anger, which ought to inspire all with fear. For if the mountains melt before him, (Isaiah 64:3,) if angels themselves tremble, (Job 4:18,) how comes it that the vessel of clay dares to conflict with its maker? (Isaiah 45:9.) And we see also how God grows angry against such perverseness; especially when he denounces, by the mouth of Isaiah, that this sin would be unpardonable. I have called you, said he, to ashes and mourning: but, on the other hand, ye have said, Let us eat and drink, and ye have turned my threats into a laughing-stock. For this was your proverb, to-morrow we shall die: as I live, your iniquity shall not go unpunished. God affirms by an oath, that he would never be appeased by the impious and profane despisers of his judgments. For this reason also he now repeats again, prophesy, prophesy. Let us go on ---

Ezekiel 11:5

5. And the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak; Thus saith the LORD; Thus have ye said, O house of Israel: for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them.

5. Et cecidit super me Spiritus Iehovae, et dixit mihi, Die, sic dicit Iehovah, sic dixisti domus Israel: et ascensiones spiritus vestri ego novi ipsam. [233]

Here the Prophet turns the impious scurrility of the people into another sense, for they had corrupted what Jeremiah had said. They knew what he meant by the pot

[233] There is a change of number. — Calvin.

and the flesh, but they thought they could avert God's wrath by their cleverness. Here the Prophet brings forward another sense, not that of Jeremiah, nor that of the people, but a third. In the twenty-fourth chapter he will again denounce them as like flesh, since God will cast them into a pot to be cooked, so that even their bones should be consumed. But here the Prophet only considers how he shall refute their wicked saying, by which they think to catch Jeremiah in a snare, as they did not agree sufficiently with his prophecy. What does he say, then? First, that the Spirit had fallen upon, him, that he might gain a hearing for his prophecy; for if he had spoken from his own mind he might be rejected with impunity; for the speakers ought to utter God's word, and to be the organ of his Spirit. The Pope boasts this to his followers, but the true and faithful servants of God ought to do this in reality, namely, not to utter their own comments, but to receive from God's hands what they deliver to the people, and thus to discharge their duty faithfully. To this end the Prophet says, that the Spirit fell upon him. For although he had been previously endued with the gift of prophecy, yet as often as he exercised it this grace ought, to be renewed; because it is not sufficient for us to be imbued once with the illumination of the Holy Spirit, unless God works in us daily. Since, therefore, he follows up his gifts in his servants while he uses their assistance, hence it is not in vain that Ezekiel says, the Spirit was still given to him, because this gift was necessary for every act. Afterward she expresses more dearly what he had said, namely, that the Spirit had spoken; for it signifies that what he shortly subjoins had been dictated to him.

Here, therefore, he admonishes the Jews that they should not foolishly promise themselves impunity, when they despised his prophecies, since he does not speak from himself, but only relates what the Spirit suggested and dictated. Thus have ye spoken, O house of Israel, said he, and I have known the risings of your heart God here precisely urges the Jews that they should not hope to obtain anything by turning their backs; for we know how carelessly and boldly hypocrites reject all teaching, and do not hesitate to strive with God, since they find many pretexts by which they excuse themselves. Hence there would be no end, unless the Lord should racet them, and with the supreme command and power of a judge, should show them that subterfuges were vain, and make all their excuses idle, and of no moment. This then is the Prophet's meaning when he says, that whatever rose up in their heart was known to God But by these words he implies, that they sought in vain a theater in the world, as if they should succeed if they proved their cause before men: he says that it is vain, because they must come into the court of heaven, where God will be the only Judge. Now, when our thoughts are known to God, in vain we take up with this or that; because God will not admit our subterfuges, nor will he allow himself to be deluded by our smartness and cunning. Now, therefore, we see what the Prophet means by saying that God knows what sprang up in the heart of the Jews, because, forsooth, they had never desisted from contending and quarreling by their fallacies, so as to draw away all confidence from his prophecies. Hence we see the utility of the doctrine, that we deceive ourselves in vain by acuteness, so as to escape by our crooked imaginations, because God sees men's cunning, and while they desire to be ingenious, he seizes them, and shows the vanity of what they think the greatest

wisdom. So let us desire to approve ourselves to God, and not esteem our deeds and plans according to our own sense and judgment. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 11:6-7

6. Ye have multiplied your slain in this city, and ye have filled the streets thereof with the slain.

6. Multiplicasti interfectos vestres in urbe hac, et implevistis compita ejus interfectis.

7. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Your slain, whom ye have laid in the midst of it, they are the flesh, and this city is the caldron: but I will bring you forth out of the midst of it.

7. Propterea sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, Interfecti vestri quos posuistis in medio ejus, ipsi erunt caro, et ipsa olla [234] et vos ejiciam e medio eius.

Now Ezekiel attacks, as it were, in close combat, the buffoons who trifled with God by their jests, and brings forward that; sense which I have just before touched on, and of which the prophecy of Jeremiah was full, in a different manner to that. which they imagined. Ye, says he, have slain many; the city was full of many slaughters: therefore the pot was full of flesh; this flesh was cooked: there is no longer any room in the vessel. You must therefore of necessity be cast forth as froth, or as foul flesh, for which no vessel is found for cooking it. We see, then, that the Prophet here treats them wittily, and plays off jests in answer to them; meanwhile he strikes a deadly wound, when he shows that they joked so petulantly to their own destruction, and boasted that Jeremiah was their adversary. Hence he confirms the prophecy of Jeremiah, and yet he does not interpret it, because Jeremiah had spoken properly and clearly, when he said that they were flesh. The meaning was the same as if God were to pronounce that he would consume them in the midst of the city. It happened as we have formerly seen; for he scattered some of the people, and slew some with the sword, and some with hunger. Whatever it is, the prophecy of Jeremiah will always be found true, namely, that God had cooked the Jews with the fire of the Chaldees. (Jeremiah 1:13.) But since they had perverted that doctrine, the Prophet does not regard the meaning of Jeremiah, but shows that they never profited while they turned their backs on God. Ye shall not be flesh, says he, but your slain were flesh: ye have refilled the caldron, that is the city with the slain; now there is no room for you. What therefore remains, but that God should cast you out as foul flesh? Neither will he cook you, says he, nor will he consume you in a caldron, but where he has stretched you at full length on the earth, there will he consume you. Now, therefore, we see how great a destruction the Jews had brought upon themselves, when they took the liberty of joking and jesting at the Prophets. Hence he says, they had filled the city with the slain He does not mean that men had been openly put to death in Jerusalem, but this form of speech embraces all forms of injustice; for we know that God esteems those homicides who oppress miserable men, overturn their fortunes, and suck innocent blood. Since, then, God esteems all violence as slaughter, he properly says, that the city was filled with the slain The Jews might object that no one had brought violence upon them; they could not be convicted in the sight of

[234] Or, "caldron." — Calvin.

men; but when their wickedness was so gross among themselves, that they did not spare the wretched, but cruelly afflicted them, he says that the city was filled with the slain He now adds, when the city was full of flesh there was no more place for them, and he now shows that although Jeremiah had predicted that they should be cooked with the fire of the Chaldeans, yet they had advanced so far in wickedness, that they were unworthy of being cooked within the city. Hence, says he, a greater vengeance from God awaits you, since ye proceed to provoke his anger more and more. It follows ---

Ezekiel 11:8-11

8. Ye have feared the sword; and I will bring a sword upon you, saith the Lord GOD.

8. Gladium timuistis, et gladium adducam super vos, dicit Dominator Iehovah.

9. And I will bring you out of the midst thereof, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and will execute judgments among you.

9. Et ejiciam vos e medio ejus, et tradam vos in manum extraneorum, et exercebo in vos judicia.

10. Ye shall fall by the sword; I will judge you in the border of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

10. Et gladio cadetis: ad terminum Israel judicabo vos, et scietis quod ego sim Iehovah.

11. This city shall not be your caldron, neither shall ye be the flesh in the midst thereof; but I will judge you in the border of Israel:

11. Ipsa non erit vobis in ollam: et vos non eritis [235] in medio ejus in carnem: in termino Israel judicabo vos.

We ought to join these verses together, because the Prophet treats the same thing in many words. First he denounces that they should perish by the sword since they feared the sword By these words he admonishes them, that even if God should draw them out of the city, yet Jeremiah's prophecy would prove true, since the Chaldeans would consume them as if the pot was boiling on the fire. Lastly, he shows how frivolous was their cavil when they said, ``if we are flesh, we shall remain in the caldron.'' But the Prophet shows that they must not cavil like children with God, because when he showed the caldron to his servant Jeremiah, he meant nothing else than that the Jews should perish, since the Chaldeans would come to consume them. But they had purposely perverted the Prophet's sense, and thought themselves clever and shrewd when they corrupted the heavenly doctrine. First of all the Prophet says, ye have feared the sword, and ye shall fall by the sword: he afterwards adds the manner: I, says he, will bring the sword upon you, which ye feared: he says, I will draw you out from the midst of it. He declares the manner: namely, that he will bring them into an open plain, that he may more easily slay them there. If any should object, that this was not seething them in the city, the answer is easy: that God did not restrict his wroth to one kind of punishment, when he thus spoke by Jeremiah. For we know that the Prophets set before us God's judgments in various ways, and thus use various figures. Since therefore the Prophets do not always teach

[235] The negative must be understood. — Calvin.

in the same manner, it is not surprising if, when he shortly shows that God's wrath was near the Jews, he used that simile: ye shall fall, says he, by the sword, and in the borders of Israel shall I judge you.

Here he clearly expresses what I lately touched upon. It was indeed God's judgment, when the Jews were drawn from the city in which they thought they had a quiet nest: for when they were violently dragged into exile, God exercised his judgments upon them: and from the time when he deprived them of their country, then he already began to be their judge. But here he begins to treat of a severer judgment. Although God had begun to chastise the Jews when he expelled them from the city, yet he treated them more severely in the boundaries of Israel; because when they came in sight of the king of Babylon, then the king saw his slain: then he himself was rendered blind and dragged into Chaldea, and all the nobles slain. (2 Kings 25; Jeremiah 39.) Hence we may gather that the people's blood was poured out without discrimination. Now therefore we understand what God means when he threatens to judge them in the borders of Israel, that is without their country. Lastly, he here denounces a double penalty, first because God would east them out of Jerusalem in which they delighted, and in which they said that they should dwell so long that exile would be their first punishment: then he adds, that he was not content with exile, but that a heavier punishment was at hand, when they should be cast out of their country, and the land should cast; them forth as a stench which it cannot bear. I will judge you therefore in the borders of Israel: that is, beyond the holy land: for since one curse has already occurred in exile, still a harder and more formidable revenge will await; you. Now he adds, ye shall know that I am Jehovah

Doubtless Ezekiel reproves the sloth which was the cause of such great contumacy: for they had never dared to contend so perseveringly with God, unless their minds had been stupified; for were we to reflect that we are striving with God, horror would immediately seize upon us; for who labors under such madness as to dare to contend with God his maker? This torpor, therefore, Ezekiel now obliquely reproves, when he says that the Jews would know too late that they were dealing with God. Although therefore they sinned through ignorance, it does not follow that they were without, excuse, for whence arose their ignorance except from being inattentive to God? It sprang first from carelessness: then that carelessness and security produced contempt, and contempt sprang from their depraved lust of sinning. Since therefore they determined to give themselves up to all manner of sinning, they put away as far as possible all teaching: nay they willingly endeavored to stupify their own consciences, and thus we see that depraved desire impelled them to contempt, and contempt begat in them security, in which at length this ignorance plunged them. Since therefore at the time it did not come into their mind to contend with God, this does not extenuate their fault, because, as I have said, they had stupified themselves with determined and spontaneous wickedness.

Meanwhile, it is by no means doubtful that God always pricked them that they might feel themselves sinners, but the Prophet here speaks of that knowledge which is called experimental. For the impious are said to know God when, being struck by his hand, they unwillingly acknowledge his power: because whether they will or not

they feel him to be their judge. But this knowledge does not profit them; nay even increases their destruction. But we understand the Prophet's meaning, that the Jews were rebellious and despised God's servants: because they pretended that they had to do only with men, and covered themselves with darkness, lest they should behold the light which was offered to their eyes. God pronounces that they should know at length with whom they contended, as Zechariah says, they shall see whom they have pierced; (Zechariah 12:10;) that is, they shall know that it is I whom they have wounded, when they so proudly despised my servants, and abjured all confidence in my teaching. Hence also we gather that the minds of the impious were so confused, that seeing they did not see; for when they experience God to be their judge, they are compelled in reality to confess that they feel his hand: yet they remain stupid, because they do not profit, as the Prophet had just now said, --- ye feared the sword. But they were careless, as we saw, and despised all threats. Of what kind, then, is this fear which is remarked upon by the Prophet? that of the impious forsooth, who while they make for themselves blandishments, and fancy that they have made a covenant with death, as is said in Isaiah, (Isaiah 28:15; Isaiah 48:22; and Isaiah 57:21,) and promise themselves freedom from punishment, even when a scourge is passing through the land, yet tremble and are always ill-at-ease, because they have no peace, as it is said elsewhere. In fine, we see the impious always remaining careless and stupid: though they are careless, yet they tremble and are tortured with secret impiety, since the severity of God urges them on. At length he concludes, Jerusalem should not be their caldron, but he would punish them in the border of Israel But I have sufficiently explained this clause. It follows ---

Ezekiel 11:12

12. And ye shall know that I am the LORD: for ye have not walked in my statutes, neither executed my judgments, but have done after the manners of the heathen that are round about you.

12. Et cognoscentis quod ego sim Iehovah; quia in statutis meis non ambulastis, et judicia mea non fecistis: sed secundum judicia gentium quae in circmitu vestro sunt, fecistis.

He repeats what he had said, that they would acknowledge too late how impiously and wickedly they had despised the prophecies: because this was to draw down God himself from heaven; for God wishes that reverence which he exacts from us to be given to his own word. Therefore men rage in contempt of his teaching, as if after the manner of giants they wished to draw God down from heaven. But he expresses the cause more clearly: because indeed they have not walked in his law and his precepts; but have entangled themselves in the superstitions of the nations Here we see that God could not possibly be accused of too much rigor, because he executed a judgment so heavy and severe against the Jews. For he had given them the law. This was the greatest ingratitude, to reject the teaching, which ought to be familiar to them, and at the same time to add to it the impious rites of the Gentiles: this was to prefer the devil to God himself with full deliberation. Hence God shows that although he would treat the Jews severely, yet that his wrath was moderate compared with their sins: because nothing was wanting to complete their impiety

when they so rejected his law. When therefore he says that they did not walk in the law, he takes this principle for granted, that the law was not given in vain, but that in it the Jews were, faithfully and clearly taught the right way, as also Moses says, ``this is the way, walk ye in it.'' There is no doubt that Ezekiel referred to that sentence of Moses, when he said,

that the Jews did not walk in the law, and did not perform the judgments of God. (Deuteronomy 5:33; Isaiah 30:21.)

Since therefore God has shown the way, so that they had no excuse for wandering, how great was their ingratitude in leaving the way and willfully casting themselves into wanderings?

Now comparison aggravates their crime, when he says, that they preferred the judgments and rites of the Gentiles which were around them Because they had unbelieving neighbors, God had opposed his law like a rampart to separate them from the profane Gentiles. Since therefore they had so far approached these detestable rites, and that too by rejecting utterly the law of God, do we not perceive that they were worthy of severe punishment? Meanwhile let us observe, when God has borne with us a long time, if we persist in our obstinacy, that nothing else is left but the extinction of the light of doctrine, and that God should show himself in some other manner. For the Prophet's discourse is like a glass, in which God represents himself. But when we shut our eyes and throw down the glass and break it, then God shows himself in some other manner; that is, he no longer thinks it right to show us his face, but teaches us by his hand, and convinces us of our impious obstinacy by a proof of his power, because we were unwilling to submit to his teaching. It follows

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Ezekiel 11:13

13. And it came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then fell I down upon my face, and cried with a loud voice, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?

13. Et fuit cum prophetarem, tunc Phalatias filius Benaim mortuus est: et cecidi super faciem meam, et clamavi voce magna, et dixi, Heus Dominator Iehovah, tu consumptionem facies residui Israel?

It is by no means doubtful that this Phalatias died at the same time at which the vision was offered to God's servant. We shall see at the end of the chapter that the Prophet was always in exile; but then he seemed to himself caught up into the temple, and seemed also to himself to behold Phalatias dead. And yet it is possible that he died at his own home, and not in the entrance or threshold of the temple. But we know that the vision was not limited to places. As, therefore, Ezekiel was only by vision in the temple, so also he saw the death of Phalatias; and in this way God began by a kind of prelude to show that the slaughter of the city was at hand. For Phalatias was one of the chief rulers, as was said in the first verse of this chapter, and was doubtless a man of good reputation: hence his death was a presage of a general destruction. Hence this exclamation of the Prophet, Ah Lord God, wilt thou utterly consume the remnant of Israel? for now only a small number out of an immense multitude remained. Phalatias is seized, and in this way he shows that

destruction hangs over the whole people. Hence it came to pass that the Prophet fell upon the earth astonished, and exclaimed that it was by no means agreeable to God's promises to destroy the remnant of Israel. For some remnant ought to remain, as we often see in other places: even in the general slaughter of the whole people, God always gave some hope that he would not abolish his covenant. For this reason the Prophet now exclaims.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since we cease not to provoke thine anger every day, that at least being admonished by the prophecies which thine ancient people did not despise with impunity, we may be touched with a true sense of penitence, and may we so submit ourselves to thee, that we may willingly humble and renounce ourselves; and not only do thou mitigate the punishments which otherwise hang over us, but also show thyself a merciful and gracious Father towards us, until at length we enjoy the fullness of thy fatherly love in thy heavenly kingdom, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Twenty-ninth

IN the last Lecture the Prophet's complaint and lamentation on account of the death of Phalatias, was described to us. He had heard indeed by the Spirit that Phalatias and others like him were impious despisers of God, and corrupters of his whole worship: yet he exclaims when he sees him dead, as if all things were lost. But we must remember that the Prophet did not speak in his own senses. [236] He regards also the reputation and dignity of Phalatias, for there is no doubt that he excelled the other elders, as the greater of the people thought their own stability depended on his counsel and prudence. Since, therefore, almost all thought Phalatias to be the support of the city and kingdom, it is not surprising that the Prophet, according to the common opinion, asks with wonder whether God is about to consume every remnant of the people. And he alludes to the man's name, For {פלט}, phelet, is to escape; whence {פליטים} (phelitim) is the name for survivors, and those who escape from any danger or slaughter. Since, therefore, Phalatias carried in his very name something of this kind, viz., if there was any hope of safety for them, it resided in his person: for this reason the Prophet asks whether God will destroy the remnant of his people. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 11:14-16

14. Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

14. Et fuit sermo Iehovah ad me, dicendo,

15. Son of man, thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the LORD: unto us is this land given in possession.

15. Fili hominis, fratres tui, fratres tui, viri propinquitatis tuae, et omnis domus Israel tota ipsa: quibus dixerunt ipsis incolae Ierusalem, Procul discedite a Iehovah, nobis data est terra in haereditatem.

16. Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet

[236] "Ex proprio sensu:" — in contrast to prophetic inspiration.

will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.

16. Propterea dic, Sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, Quia procul ejecti estis inter gentes, et quia dispersi estis per tetras: ideo [237] ero ipsis in sanctuarium parrum [238] in terris ad quas venerunt.

Here God seems to rebuke the thoughtlessness of his servant, or rather the error of the people, because we said that the Prophet announced not what he privately thought, but what was commonly received. Whatever it is, God answers his complaint as we saw, and shows that even if he takes away from the midst the eminent and conspicuous, and those who seem to be the supports of a city and kingdom, yet the Church does not perish on that account, because he has hidden reasons why he preserves it, not in splendid and magnificent pomp, as men call it, but that its safety may at length excite admiration. The sum of the matter is, therefore, although not only Phalatias, but all the councillors of the king, and all the leaders of the people should perish, yet that God can work in weakness, so that the Church shall nevertheless remain safe: and so he teaches that the remnant must not be sought in that rank which was then conspicuous, but rather among men ordinary and despised. Now we understand the intention of God in this answer.

He says therefore, thy brethren, thy brethren, and the men of thy relationship. He here recalls his servant to the exiles and the captives, of whom he himself was one, as if he would say that they were not cast out of the Church, as they were still in some estimation. For God seemed to east them off when he banished them from the promised land; but he now shows that they were reckoned among his sons although disinherited from the land of Canaan. Hence he twice repeats the name of brethren, and adds, men of thy relationship, that the Prophet might rather reckon himself also to be among the number. Those who refer this to the three exiles, weaken the vehemence of the passage, whilst they obtrude an inappropriate comment, and turn away the reader from the genuine sense of the Prophet. But rather, as I lately hinted,. God here chastises the Prophet because he perversely restricts the body of the Church to the citizens at Jerusalem; as if he said, although the Israelites are captives, yet do they seem to you foreigners? and so will you not leave them a place in the Church? They are, therefore, thy brethren, thy brethren, says he, and the men of thy relationship Hence the repetition is emphatic, and tends to this purpose, that the Prophet may cease to measure God's grace by the safety of the city alone, as he had done. Because one man had suddenly died, he thought that all must perish. Meanwhile he did not perceive how he injured the miserable exiles, whom God had so expelled from the land of Canaan, that yet some hope of pity remained, as all the Prophets show, and as we shall soon see. This passage then is worthy of observation, that we may learn not to estimate the state of the Church by the common opinion of mankind. And so with respect to the splendor which too often blinds the eyes of the simple. For it will so happen, that we think we have found the Church where there is none, and we despair if it does not offer itself to our eyes; as we see at this day that many are astonished by those magnificent pomps which are conspicuous

[237] "Therefore" — the copula ought to be resolved into the causative. — Calvin.
[238] Or, "of fewness." — Calvin.

in the Papacy. There the name of ``The Church'' keeps flying bravely in the face of all: there also its marks are brought forward: the simple are attracted to the empty spectacle: so under the name of the Church they are drawn to destruction; because they determine that the Church is there where that splendor which deceives them is seen. On the other hand, many who cannot discern the Church with their eyes and point to it with the finger, accuse God of deceiving them, as if all the faithful in the world were extinct. We must hold, therefore, that the Church is often wonderfully preserved in its hiding --- places: for its members are not luxurious men, or such as win the veneration of the foolish by vain ostentation; but rather ordinary men, of no estimation in the world. We have a memorable example of this, when God recalls his own Prophet from the chief leaders at Jerusalem, not to other leaders, who should attract men to wonder at themselves, but to miserable exiles, whose dispersion rendered them despicable. He shows therefore that some remnants were left even in Chaldea.

Now it follows, to whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem said, depart, ye far from the sanctuary of Jehovah, the land is given to us Here God inveighs against the arrogance of the people, which remained at home quiet and careless. For he here relates the words of the citizens of Jerusalem, because, forsooth, they preferred themselves to the exiles, nay boasted that they were alienated from the holy people because they had been dragged into exile, or had left the city of their own accord. As to their saying, depart afar off, it ought not to be taken strictly in the imperative mood; but the speech ought so to be understood, that while they depart far from the sanctuary, the land will remain as an inheritance for us. We see, therefore, that the citizens of Jerusalem pleased themselves, and were satisfied with their own ease, since they still enjoyed their country, worshipped God in the temple, and the name of a kingdom was still standing. Since therefore they so enjoyed themselves, God shows that on the contrary they were blinded with pride, since he had not entirely cast away his captives, although he afflicted them with temporal punishment. But this their boasting was very foolish, in congratulating themselves on their escape from exile. For meanwhile what was their state? In truth their king' was treated with ignominy, and we know what happened to themselves afterwards; for they were reduced to such straits, that mothers devoured their children, and those nourished in great, luxury consumed their dung. Nay even before the city was besieged, what reason was left them for boasting in themselves! but we here perceive how great was their obstinacy in which they hardened themselves against the scourge of God. Hence they stupidly supposed that God could not subdue them. Now what is their ferocity, that they insult over the miserable exiles as if they were cast away far from God? since Ezekiel and Daniel and their companions were among these exiles. We know that Daniel's piety was so celebrated at Jerusalem, that they all acknowledged him as the peculiar gift and ornament of his age. When, therefore, Daniel was in such estimation for superior piety, how could they erect their crests against him --- since they were Conscious of many crimes, profane, full of all defilements, addicted to cruelty, fraud, and perjury, being foul in their abominations, and infamous in their intemperance?

Since therefore we see that they so boldly insulted their brethren, can we wonder that at this day the Papists also are fierce, because they retain the ordinary succession and the title of the Church, and that they say that we are cast away and cut off from the Church, and so are unworthy of enjoying either a name or a place among Christians? If, therefore, at this day the Papists are so hot against us, there is no reason why their haughtiness should disturb us; but in this mirror we may learn that it always was so. But there was another reason why the citizens of Jerusalem said that their captives were cast far away. For it was clear that their exile was the just penalty for their crimes; but meanwhile how did they dare separate themselves from others, when their life was more wicked? Lastly, since God had already passed sentence upon them, their condition could not be really different from theirs, concerning whom the judge had pronounced his opinion, but they were deaf to all the Prophets' threats, so that they despised God, and hence that boasting which treated all as foreigners who did not remain in the land of Canaan. This passage also teaches us, that if God at any time chastises those who profess the same religion with us, yet there is no reason why we should entirely condemn them, as if they were desperate; for opportunity must be given for the mercy of God. And we must diligently mark what follows. For after the Prophet has related that the citizens of Jerusalem boasted when they thought themselves the sole survivors, God answers on the contrary, because they were cast away far among the nations, and dispersed among the lands, or through the lands, therefore I shall be to them as a small sanctuary

We see that God even here claims some place for sinners in the Church, against whom he had exercised the rigor of his judgment. He says, by way of concession, that they were cast away and dispersed, but he adds, that he was still with them for a sanctuary; nay, because they bore their exile calmly and with equanimity, they pronounce this to be a reason why he should pity them. For neither is their sentence so general that God overlooked his own elect. This promise then ought not to be extended to all the captives without discrimination, because we shall see that God included only a few. Without doubt then, this was a peculiar promise which God wished to be a consolation to his elect. He says, because they bore exile and dispersion with calmness and composure, therefore God would be a sanctuary to them But this was a gracious approval of their modesty and subjection, because they not only suffered exile but also dispersion, which was more severe. For if they had all been drawn into a distant region this had been a severe trial, but still they might have united more easily, had they not been dispersed. This second punishment was the sadder to them, because they perceived in it the material for despair, as if they could never be collected together again in one body.

thus their wrestling with these temptations was a sign of no little piety; and as some of the faithful did not demonstrate their obedience at once, yet because God knows his own, (2 Timothy 2:19,) and watches for their safety, hence he here opposes to all their miseries that protection on which their safety was founded. Because, therefore, they were dispersed through the lands, hence, says he, I will be to them a small sanctuary

The third person is here used. Interpreters make {מעט}, megnet, mean the noun

toar, and understand it as ``a small sanctuary,'' although it may be taken for a paucity of men, and we may, therefore, fairly translate it ``a sanctuary of security.'' Although the other sense suits the passage best, that God would be a small sanctuary to the captives, so there will be an antithesis between the splendor of the visible temple and the hidden grace of God, which so escaped the notice of the Chaldeans that they rather trod it under foot, and even the Jews who still remained at Jerusalem despised it. The sanctuary, therefore, which God had chosen for himself on Mount Zion, because it deservedly attracted all eyes towards it, and the Israelites were always gazing at it, since it revealed the majesty of God, might be called the magnificent sanctuary of God: nothing of the sort was seen in the Babylonish exile: but God says, that he was to the captives as a small or contracted sanctuary This place answers to the 90th Psalm, where Moses says, Thou, O God, hast always been a tabernacle to us, (Psalm 90:1,) and yet God had not always either a temple or a tabernacle from which he entered into a covenant with the fathers. But Moses there teaches what God afterwards represented by a visible symbol, that the fathers really thought that they truly lay hid under the shadow of God's wings, and were not otherwise safe and sheltered unless God protected them. Moses, therefore, in the name of the fathers, celebrates the grace of God which was continual even before the sanctuary was built. So also in this place God says by a figure, that he was their sanctuary, not that he had erected an altar there, but because the Israelites were destitute of any external pledge and symbol, he reminds them that the thing itself was not entirely taken away, since God had his wings outstretched to cherish and defend them. This passage is also worthy of notice, lest the faithful should despond where God has no standard erected: although he does not openly go before them with royal ensigns to preserve them, yet they need not conclude themselves altogether deserted; but they should recall to remembrance what is here said of a small sanctuary. God, therefore, although he does not openly exhibit his influence, yet he does not cease to preserve them by a secret power, of which in this our age we have a very remarkable proof. The world indeed thinks us lost as often as the Church is materially injured, and the greater part become very anxious, as if God had deserted them. Then let this promise be remembered as a remedy, God is to the dispersed and cast away a small sanctuary; so that although his hand is hidden, yet our safety proves that he has worked powerfully in our weakness. We see then that this sense is most suitable, and contains very useful doctrine. Yet the other sense will suit, that God is ``the sanctuary of a few,'' because in that great multitude but few remain who are really the people of God, for the greater part was ignorant of him; since then God does not regard that multitude of the impious which was already within the Church, but only here directs his discourse towards his own elect, it is not surprising that he asserts them to be but few in number. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 11:17

17. Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD, I will even gather you from among the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.

17. Propterea dices, Sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, congregabo vos e populis, et

colligam vos et terris, ad quas expulsi estis, et dabo vobis terrain Israel.

Now God expresses the effect of his grace. In the last verse he had said that he would be a sanctuary. I have reminded you that these words ought not to be understood of a visible place in which God was worshipped, but of that hidden influence by which he cherishes his people. But if the exile had been perpetual, that promise might seem vain. Why then did God protect his people in exile, if he wished them to be consumed there? because otherwise his covenant would have been in vain. Therefore lest any one should object that God deceives his faithful ones, when he pronounces that he would be their sanctuary, he now points out its result, viz., that he would restore them to their country. Therefore, says he, I will collect you from the people, and gather you from the nations to which ye have been, driven, and I will give you the land of Israel Since therefore a return to their country was a certain pledge of God's love, hence he announces that they should at length return On the whole the restitution of the Church is promised, which should confirm God's covenant. In it had been said to Abraham, I will give this land to thee and to thy seed for ever. (Genesis 13:15; and Genesis 17:8.) God, therefore, to show his covenant still remaining entire and secure, which he had interrupted for a short time, here speaks concerning this restoration. And as to the Prophet so often inculcating the name of God, and relating his orders in God's name, and directing his discourse to the captives, this tends to confirm his message, because in such a desperate state of things it was difficult to wait patiently for what the Prophet taught, viz., that a time would come when God would collect them again, and recall them home. Hence the faithful were admonished that they must consider God's power, and put their trust in this prophecy. It follows ---

Ezekiel 11:18

18. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence.

18. Et venient illuc, et tollent omnia idola ejus, et omnes abominationes ejus ex ea.

Here he adds something more important --- that when the Israelites had returned to their country they would be sincere worshippers of God, and not only offer sacrifices in the temple, but purge the land of all its pollutions. Here also the Prophet admonishes them how great and detestable was the impiety of the ten tribes, because they had contaminated the land with idols. He does not here allude to the idols of the Gentiles, but rather reproves the Israelites because they had contaminated with their defilements the land which had been dedicated to God. Hence the Prophet exhorted his countrymen to repentance, when he shows that they were not cast out of the land before it was polluted; and therefore that they were justly punished for their sacrilege. This is one point. Afterwards we must remark, that we then truly and purely enjoy God's blessings, when we direct their use to that end which is here set before us, namely, pure and proper worship. Nothing more frequently meets us than this teaching --- that we have been redeemed by God that we may celebrate his glory; that the Church was planted that in it he may be glorified, and we may make known his attributes. Hence let us learn that God's benefits then issue in our safety,

and are testimonies of his paternal favor when they excite us to worship him. Thirdly, we must remark, that we do not rightly discharge our duty towards God, unless when we purge his worship from all stain and defilement. Many so worship God, that they corrupt with vicious mixtures whatever obedience they seem to render. And to this day even, those who seem to themselves very wise, are shamefully divided between God and the devil, as if they could satisfy God with half their allegiance. Hence let us learn from this passage, that God abhors such deceivers; for when he says that the Israelites after their return should be devoted to piety, he indicates it by this mark --- that they shall take away all their abominations, and all their idols from the land It afterwards follows ---

Ezekiel 11:19-20

19. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:

19. Et dabo illis cor unum, et spiritum novurn ponam in visceribus eorum, et tollam cor lapideum e carne ipsorum, et dabo ipsis cor carneum.

20. That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

20. Ut in statutis meis ambulent, et jndicia mea custodiant, et faciant ea: et erunt mihi in populum, et ego ero ipsis in Deum.

As God had already spoken concerning the piety of the Israelites, he shows that they could not forsake their sins until they were renewed, and so born again by his Spirit. Therefore he seemed in the last verse to praise the Israelites; but because men too eagerly claim as their own what has been given them from above, now God claims to himself glow of their virtues, of which he had formerly spoken. Their zeal in purging the land of all abominations was worthy of praise; hence the survivors of the people of Israel are deservedly celebrated, because they were impelled by the fervor of zeal to free the worship of God from all corruptions; but lest they should boast, that they had done it in their own strength, and from the impulse of their own hearts, God now modifies his former assertions, and shows that such pursuit of piety would exist among the Israelites, after he had regenerated them by his Spirit. And this plea alone may suffice to refute the Papists, as often as they seize upon such passages from the Scriptures, where God either exacts something from his people, or proclaims their virtues. David does this; hence he does it of his own free will: God requires this; hence it is in the will of men that they are equal to the performance of all things. Thus they trifle. But we see that the Prophet unites two things together, namely, the faithful elect of God strenuously attending to their duty, and intent on promoting his glory, even with ardor in the pursuit of his worship; and yet they were nothing by themselves. Hence it is added immediately afterwards --- I will give them one heart, and will put a new spirit in their breasts But we must defer the rest to the next lecture.

PRAYER.

Grant, O Almighty God, that we may learn to cast our eyes upon the state of thine ancient Church, since at the present day the sorrowful and manifest dispersion of thy Church seems to threaten its complete destruction: Grant also, that we may look

upon those promises which are common to us also, that we may wait till thy Church emerges again from the darkness of death. Meanwhile, may we be content with thy help, however weak as to outward appearance, till at length it shall appear that our patience was not delusive, when we enjoy the reward of our faith and patience in thy heavenly kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Thirtieth.

In the last lecture, after Ezekiel had announced the conversion of the people, at the same time he taught that the singular gift of repentance would be bestowed: because when any one has turned aside from the right way, unless God extends his hand, he will plunge himself even into the deep abyss. Hence after a man has once left God, he cannot return to him by himself. We then touched shortly on this doctrine: now a fuller explanation must be added. As soon as we consider the Prophet's words, we shall at once understand the matter. God promises to give the people one heart Some explain this of mutual consent, but it does not suit in my opinion. In the third chapter of Zephaniah, at verse 9, (Zephaniah 3:9) ``one shoulder'' is taken in this sense. For when the Prophet says, that God would make all call upon him purely and worship with one shoulder, he seems to mean that all should be unanimous, and that each would excite, his neighbor. But in this place one heart is rather opposed to a divided one; for the Israelites were distracted after vague errors. They ought to listen to God's precepts, and subject themselves to his law: thus they had been content with him alone, and had addicted themselves entirely to true piety. But their heart was distracted: as when a woman does not preserve her fidelity to her husband, but is led away by her lusts, nothing is at rest in her. So also when the people revolted from the law of God, it was like a wandering harlot. We see, therefore, that the hearts of all the impious were divided and distracted, and that nothing in them was simple or sincere. Now God promises that he would take care that the people were not drawn aside after their superstitions, but remained in pure and simple obedience to the law. If any one objects, that the faithful endure a perpetual contest with the lusts of the flesh, and hence their heart is divided, the answer is easy, that one heart is understood in the sense of regeneration. For although the faithful feel a great contest within them, and their heart is by no means whole, since it is agitated by many temptations, yet as in the meantime they seriously aspire to God, their heart is said to be entire, because it is not double or feigned. We understand then what the Prophet means, and at chapter 36, (Jeremiah 36) where he repeats the same sentiment, for one heart he puts a new spirit, as also he says a little afterwards, I will put a new spirit in their bowels, or inward parts. As by the word heart he means affections, so also by the spirit he signifies the mind itself and all its thoughts. the spirit of a man is often taken for the whole soul, and then it comprehends also all the affections. But where the two are joined together, as the heart and spirit, the heart is called the seat of all the affections, it is in truth the very will of man, while the spirit is the faculty of intelligence. For we know that there are two special endowments of the mind: the first is its power of reasoning, and the next its being endued with judgment and choice: afterwards we shall say how men have the faculty of choosing and yet want free will. But this principle must be held, that the soul

of man excels first in intelligence or reason, then in judgment, on which choice and will depend. We see, therefore, that by these words the Prophet testifies that men have need of a complete renovation that they may return into the way from which they once began to wander.

Afterwards he adds, I will take away the heart of stone, or the stony heart, from their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh. The word flesh is here received in a different sense; for the Prophet alludes to the heart, which we know to be part of the human body, when he says, I will take away the heart of stone from their flesh. When God regenerates his elect, he does not change either their flesh, or skin, or blood; the spiritual and interior grace has no relation to their body: but the Prophet speaks rather grossly, that he may conform his discourse to the state of a rude and gross people. For flesh in the former clause meant the same as body: but at the end of the 'verse a fleshy heart is put for a flexible heart: an opposition also must. be marked between the flesh and a stone: a stone by its own hardness repels even the strongest blows of the hammers, and nothing can be inscribed on it; but the fleshy heart by its softness admits whatever is inscribed or engraven on it. The Prophet speaks grossly, as I have said, yet the sense is by no means ambiguous: namely, since the Israelites were full of obstinacy, God afterwards changed their heart, so that they became flexible and obedient that is, by correcting their hardness he rendered their heart soft.

He adds afterwards, that they may walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God Now the Prophet more clearly expresses how God would give his elect hearts of flesh instead of those of stone, when he regenerates them by his Spirit, and when he forms them to obey his law, so that they may willingly observe his commands, and efficiently accomplish what he causes them to will. Now let us consider more attentively the whole matter of which the Prophet treats. When God speaks of a stony heart, he doubtless condemns all mortals of obstinacy. For the Prophet is not here treating of a few whose nature differs from others, but as in a glass he puts the Israelites before us, that we know what our condition is, when being deserted by God we follow our natural inclinations. We collect, therefore, from this place, that all have a heart of stone, that is, that all are so corrupt that they cannot bear to obey God, since they are entirely carried away to obstinacy. Meanwhile it is certain that this fault is adventitious: for when God created man he did not bestow upon him a heart of stone, and as long as Adam stood sinless, doubtless his will was upright and well disposed, and it was also inclined to obedience to God. When therefore we say that our heart is of stone, this takes its origin from the fall of Adam, and from the corruption of our nature; for if Adam had been created with a hard and obstinate heart, that would have been a reproach to God. But as we have said, the will of Adam was upright from the beginning, and flexible to follow the righteousness of God; but when Adam corrupted himself, we perished with him. Hence, therefore, the stony heart, because we have put off that integrity of nature which God had conferred upon us at the beginning. For whatever Adam lost we also lost by the fall: because he was not created for his own self alone, but in his person God showed what would be the condition of the

human race. Hence after he had been spoiled of the excellent gifts by which he was adorned, all his posterity were reduced to the same want and misery. Hence our heart is stony; but through original depravity, because we ought to attribute this to our father Adam, and not to throw the fault of our sin and corruption on God. Finally, we see what the beginning of regeneration is, namely, when God takes away that depravity by which we are bound down. But two parts of regeneration must be marked, of which also the Prophet treats.

God pronounces that he gives to his elect one heart and new spirit It follows, therefore, that the whole soul is vitiated, from reason even to the affections. The sophists in the Papacy confess that man's soul is vitiated, but only in part. They are also compelled to subscribe to the ancients, that Adam lost supernatural gifts, and that natural ones were corrupted, but afterwards they involve the light in darkness, and feign that some part of the reason remains sound and entire, then that the will is vitiated only in part: hence it is a common saying of theirs, that man's free will was wounded and injured, but that it did not perish. Now they define free will, the free faculty of choice, which is joined with reason and also depends upon it. For the will by itself, without the judgment, does not contain full and solid liberty, but when reason governs and holds the chief power in the soul of man, then the will obeys and forms itself after the prescribed rule: that is free will. The Papists do not deny that free will is injured and wounded, but as I have already said, they hold back something, as if men were partly right by their own proper motion, and some inclination or flexible motion of the will remained as well towards good as evil. Thus indeed they prate in the schools: but we see what the Holy Spirit pronounces. For if there is need of a new spirit and a new heart, it follows that the soul of man is not only injured in each part, but so corrupt that its depravity may be called death and destruction, as far as rectitude is concerned. But here a question is objected, whether men differ at all from brute beasts? But experience proves that men are endued with some reason. I answer, as it is said in the first chapter of John, (John 1:5,) that light shines in darkness; that is, that some sparks of intelligence remain, but so far from leading any man into the way, they do not enable him to see it. Hence whatever reason and intelligence there is in us, it does not bring us into the path of obedience to God, and much less leads by continual perseverance to the goal.

What then? These very sparks shine in the darkness to render men without excuse. Behold, therefore, how far man's reason prevails, that he may feel self-convinced that no pretext for ignorance or error remains to him. Therefore man's intelligence is altogether useless towards guiding his life aright. Perverseness more clearly appears in his heart. For man's will boils over to obstinacy, and when anything right and what God approves is put before us, our affections immediately become restive and ferocious; like a refractory horse when he feels the spur leaps up and strikes his rider, so our will betrays its obstinacy when it admits nothing but what reason and a sound intelligence dictates. I have already taught that man's reason is blind, but that blindness is not so perspicuous in us, because, as I have said, God has left in us some light, that no excuse for error should remain. It is not surprising, then, if God here promises that he would give a new heart, because if we examine all

the affections of men, we shall find them hostile to God. For that passage of St. Paul (Romans 8:9) is true, that all the thoughts of the flesh are hostile to God. Doubtless he here takes the flesh after his own manner, namely, as signifying' the whole man as he is by nature and is born into the world. Since, therefore, all our affections are hostile and repugnant to God, we see how foolishly the schoolmen trifle, who feign that the will is injured, and so this weakness is to them in the place of death. Paul says that he was sold under sin, that is, as far as he was one of the sons of Adam: The law, he says, works in us sin, (Romans 7:14,) I am sold and enslaved to sin. But what do they say? That sin indeed reigns in us, but only in part, for there is some integrity which resists it. How far they differ from St. Paul! But this passage also with sufficient clearness refutes comments of this kind, where God pronounces that newness of heart and spirit is his own free gift Therefore Scripture uses the name of creation elsewhere, which is worthy of notice. For as often as the Papists boast that they have even the least particle of rectitude, they reckon themselves creators: since when Paul says that we are born again by God's Spirit, he calls us {τὸ} {ποίημα}, his fashioning or workmanship, and explains that we are created unto good works. (Ephesians 2:10.) To the same purpose is the language of the Psalm, (Psalm 100:3,) he made us, not we ourselves. For he is not treating here of that first creation by which we became men, but of that special grace by which we are born again by the Spirit of God. If therefore regeneration is a creation of man, whoever arrogates to himself even the least share in the matter, seizes so much from God, as if he were his own creator, which is detestable to be heard of. And yet this is easily elicited from the common teaching of Scripture.

Now it follows, that they shall walk in my statutes, and keep my precepts and do them Here the Prophet removes other doubts, by which Satan has endeavored to obscure the grace of God, because he could not entirely destroy it. We have already seen that the Papists do not entirely take away the grace of God; for they are compelled to confess that man can do nothing except he is assisted by God's grace: that free will lies without vigor and efficacy until it revives by the assistance of grace. Hence they have that in common with us, that man, as he is corrupt, cannot even move a finger so as to discharge any duty towards God. But here they err in two ways, because, as I have already said, they feign that some-right motion remains in man's will, besides that there is sound reason in the mind; and they afterwards add that the grace of the Holy Spirit is not efficacious without the concurrence or co-operation of our free will. And here their gross impiety is detected. Hence they confess that we are regenerated by the Spirit of God, because we should otherwise be useless to think anything aright, namely, because weakness hinders us from willing efficaciously. But, on the contrary, they imagine God's grace to be mutilated, but how? because God's grace stirs us up towards ourselves, so that we become able to wish well, and also to follow out and perfect what we have willed.

We see, therefore, that when they treat of the grace of the Holy Spirit, they leave man suspended in the midst. How far then does the Spirit of God work within us? They say, that we may be able to will rightly and to act rightly. Hence nothing else is given us by the Holy Spirit but the ability: but it is ours to co-operate, and to

strengthen and to establish what otherwise would be of no avail. For what advantage is there in the ability without the addition of the upright will? Our condemnation would only be increased. But here is their ridiculous ignorance, for how could any one stand even for a single moment, if God conferred on us only the ability. Adam had that ability in his first creation, and. then he was as yet perfect, but we are depraved; so that as far as the remains of the flesh abide in us which we carry about in this life, we must strive with great difficulties. If therefore Adam by and bye fell, although endued with rectitude of nature and with the faculty of willing and of acting uprightly, what will become of us? for we have need not only of Adam's uprightness, and of his faculty of both willing and acting uprightly, but we have need of unconquered fortitude, that we may not yield to temptations, but be superior to the devil, and subdue all depraved and vicious affections of the flesh, and persevere unto the end in this wrestling or warfare. We see, therefore, how childishly they trifle who ascribe nothing else to the grace of the Holy Spirit unless the gift of ability. And Augustine expounds this wisely, and treats it at sufficient length in his book ``Concerning the gift of perseverance, and the predestination of the saints;'' for he compares us with the first Adam, and shows that God's grace would not be efficacious, except in the case of a single individual, unless he granted us more than the ability. But what need have we of human testimonies, when the Holy Spirit clearly pronounces by the mouth of his Prophet what we here read? Ezekiel does not say: I will give them a. new spirit or a new heart, that they may walk and be endued with that moderate faculty: what then? that they may walk in my precepts, that they may keep my statutes, and perform, my commands We see therefore that regeneration extends so far that the effect follows, as also Paul teaches: Complete, says he, your salvation with fear and trembling, (Philippians 2:12;) here he exhorts the faithful to the attempt. And truly God does not wish us to be like stones. Let us strive therefore and stretch all our nerves, and do our utmost towards acting uprightly: but Paul advises that to be done with fear and trembling; that is, by casting away all confidence in one's own strength, because if we are intoxicated with that diabolical pretense that we are fellow-workers with God, and that his grace is assisted by the motion of our free will, we shall break down, and at length God will show how great our blindness was. Paul gives the reason, because, says he, it is God who works both to will and to accomplish. (Philippians 2:13.) He does not say there that it is God who works the ability, and who excites in us the power of willing, but he says that God is the author of that upright will, and then he adds also the effect; because it is not sufficient to will unless we are able to execute. As to the word ``power,'' Paul does not use it, for it would occasion dispute, but he says that God works in all of us to accomplish.

If any one object, that men naturally will and act naturally by their own proper judgment and motion, I answer, that the will is naturally implanted in man, whence this faculty belongs equally to the elect and the reprobate. All therefore will, but through Adam's fall it happens that our will is depraved and rebellious against God: will, I say, remains in us, but it is enslaved and bound by sin. Whence then comes an upright will? Even from regeneration by the Spirit. Hence the Spirit does not confer on us the faculty of willing: for it is inherent to us from our birth, that is, it

is hereditary, and a part of the creation which could not be blotted out by Adam's fall; but when the will is in us, God gives us to will rightly, and this is his work. Besides, when it is said that he gives us the power of willing, this is not understood generally, because it ought not to be extended to the bad as well as to the good; but when Paul is treating of the salvation of men, he deservedly assigns to God our willing uprightly. We now understand what the Prophet's words signify, and it seems that he denotes perseverance when he says, that they may walk in my precepts, and keep my judgments and do them. the whole matter had been explained in one word, that they may walk in my statutes: but because men always sinfully consider how they may lessen the grace of God, and by sacrilegious boldness endeavor to draw to themselves what belongs to him; therefore that. the Prophet may better exclude all pride, he says that we must attribute to God the walking in his precepts, preserving his statutes, and obeying his whole law. Hence let us leave entirely his own praise to God, and thus acknowledge that in our good works nothing is our own; and especially in perseverance, let us reckon it God's singular gift: and this is surely necessary, if we consider how very weak we are, and with how many and what violent attacks Satan continually urges us. First of all, we may easily fall every moment, unless God sustain us: and then the thrusts of Satan by far exceed our strength. If therefore we consider our condition without the grace of God, we shall confess that in our good works the only part which is ours is the fault, as also Augustine wisely makes this exception: for it is sufficiently known that no work is so praiseworthy as not to be sprinkled with some fault. Neither do the duties which we discharge proceed from a perfect love of God, but we have always to wrestle that we may obey him. We seem then to contaminate our deeds by this defect. There is then in our good works that very thing which vitiates them, so that they are deservedly rejected before God. But when we treat of uprightness and praise, we must learn to leave to God what is his own, lest we wish to be partakers in sacrilege.

Now it follows, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God Under these words the Prophet doubtless includes that gratuitous pardon by which God reconciles sinners to himself. And truly, it would not be sufficient for us to be renewed in obedience to God's righteousness unless his paternal indulgence, by which he pardons our infirmities, is added. This is expressed more clearly by Jeremiah, (Jeremiah 31:33,) and by our Prophet, (Jeremiah 36:25-27,) but it is the mark of a Scripture phrase. For as often as God promises the sons of Abraham that they should be his people, that promise has no other foundation than in his gratuitous covenant which contains the forgiveness of sins. Hence it is as if the Prophet had added, that God would expiate all the faults of his people. For our safety is contained in these two members, that God follows us with his paternal favor, while he bears with us, and does not call us up for judgment, but buries our sins, as is said in Psalm 32:1, 2, Blessed is the man to whom God does not impute his iniquities.

It follows, on the other side, that all are wretched and accursed to whom he does impute them. If any one object, that we have no need of pardon when we do not sin, the answer is easy, that the faithful are never so regenerated as to fulfill the law of God. They aspire to keep his commands, and that too with a serious and sincere

affection; but because some defects always remain, therefore they are guilty, and their guilt cannot be blotted out otherwise than by expiation when God pardons them. But we know that there were under the law rites prescribed for expiating their sins: this was the meaning of sprinkling by water and the pouring out of blood; but we know that these ceremonies were of no value in themselves, except as far as they directed the people's faith to Christ. Hence, whenever our salvation is; treated of, let these two things be remembered, that we cannot be reckoned God's sons unless he freely expiate our sins, and thus reconcile himself to us: and then not unless he also rule us by his Spirit. Now we must hold, that what God hath joined man ought not to separate. Those, therefore, who through relying on the indulgence of God permit themselves to give way to sin, rend his covenant and impiously sever it. Why so? because God has joined these two things together, viz., that he will be propitious to his sons, and will also renew their hearts, Hence those who lay hold of only one member of the sentence, namely, the pardon, because God bears with them, and omit the other, are as false and sacrilegious as if they abolished half of God's covenant. Therefore we must hold what I have said, namely, that under these words reconciliation is pointed out, by which it happens that God does not impute their sins to his own. Lastly, let us remark that the whole perfection of our salvation has been placed in this, if God reckons us among his people. As it is said in Psalm 33:12,

``Happy is the people to whom Jehovah is their God.''

There solid happiness is described, namely, when God deems any people worthy of this honor of belonging peculiarly to himself. Only let him be propitious to us, and then we shall not be anxious, because our salvation is secure. It follows ---

Ezekiel 11:21

21. But as for them whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord GOD.

21. Et quorum cor pergit [239] ad cor abominationurn [240] et spurcitiarum ipserum, viam corum in caput ipsorum rependam, dicit Dominator Iehovah.

The phrase which the Prophet uses is indeed harsh: he says, their heart goes after heart, so that some interpret this of imitation: namely, since God promises that he will be an avenger if any of the people conduct themselves after bad examples and unite in alliance with the wicked, just as if they glued together their hearts and affections, but that is harsh. The repetition is therefore superfluous, and the Prophet means nothing else than that God will be avenged if the Israelites follow their own heart, so as to walk in their own foulness and abominations. First of all we must understand the reason why the Prophet uses this sentiment. God had liberally poured out the treasures of his mercy, but since, hypocrites have always been mixed with the good, at the same time that they confidently boast themselves members of the Church, and use the name of God with great audacity; so that the Prophet uses this threat that they may not think all the promises which we hear of to belong

[239] Or, “walks.” — Calvin.
[240] “Foulness.” — Calvin.

to themselves promiscuously. For there were always many reprobate among the elect people, because not all who sprang from father Abraham were true Israelites. (Romans 9:6, 7.)

Since therefore it was so, the Prophet properly shows here that what he had previously promised was peculiar to God's elect, and to the true and lawful members of the Church, but not to the spurious, nor to the degenerate, nor to those who are unregenerated by the true and incorruptible seed. This is the Prophet's intention. But lest there might seem to be too much rigor when God, as it were, armed comes down into the midst to destroy all who do not repent, the Prophet here declares their crime --- namely, because their heart walks after their heart, that is, thine heart draws itself, and so the word heart is twice repeated. It is indeed a superfluous repetition but emphatic, when he says, that the heart of those who so pertinaciously adhere to their own superstitions is then impelled by its own self to new motions, so that by its continual tenor it goes always towards superstitions. Hence I will be an avenger, says God. Hence as often as God proposes to us testimonies of his favor, let each descend into himself and examine all his affections. But when any one lays hold of his own vices let him not please himself in them, but rather groan over them, and strive to renounce his own affections that he may follow God: neither let him harden himself in obstinacy, so that his heart may not proceed and rush continually towards evil, as is here said.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since we have utterly perished in our father Adam, and there remains in us no single part which is not corrupt, whilst we carry material for wrath, and cursing, and death, as well in the soul as in the body, that being regenerated by the Spirit, we may more and more withdraw ourselves from our own will and our own spirit, and so submit ourselves to thee, that thy Spirit may truly reign within us: And afterwards, grant that we may not be ungrateful, but considering how inestimable is this benefit, may we dedicate our whole life and apply ourselves to glorify thy name, in Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Thirty First,

Ezekiel 11:22-23

22. Then did the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.

22. Et sustulerunt cherubim alas suas, et rotae e regione ipsorum: et gloria Dei Israel super ipsos sursum.

23. And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city.

23. Et ascendit gloria Iehovae e medio urbis, et stetit super montem qui est ab oriente urbis.

Here Ezekiel repeats what we saw before, namely, that God as he had chosen Mount Zion had at length rejected it, because that place had been polluted by the many wickednesses of the people. The Jews fancied that God was, as it were, held captive among them, and in this confidence they gave themselves up to licentiousness. Hence the Prophet shows them that God was not so bound to them as not to

go wherever he pleased, and what is more, he announces that he has migrated, and that the temple is deprived of his glory. This indeed was almost incredible. For since God had pro-raised to dwell there perpetually, (Psalm 132:14,) his faithful ones could scarcely suppose that he would neglect his promise, and desert the temple which he had chosen. But this interruption does not interfere with his promise, which was always true and firm. God, therefore, did not entirely desert Mount Zion, because the opposite promise concerning his return must be kept. Since then the exile was temporary, and the temple was to be restored after seventy years, these points may be reconciled: namely, that God departed from it and yet the place remained sacred, so that after the lapse of that time which God had previously determined, his worship should be restored again in the temple and on Mount Zion. But he says, that God had visibly gone out of the city and the cherubim also: that is, that God was borne above the wings of the cherubim, as also the scripture elsewhere says: and he does this, because the Jews were governed by external symbols, and when the ark of the covenant was shut up in the sanctuary, no one could be persuaded that God could be torn away from it. With this view the Prophet says, The cherubim had flown away elsewhere, and that at the same time God was carried upon their wings Now he adds ---

Ezekiel 11:24

24. Afterwards the spirit took me up, and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to them of the captivity. So the vision that I had seen went up from me.

24. Et Spiritus sustulit me, et reduxit me in Chaldaeam ad captivitatem, in visione, in Spiritu Dei. Et ascendit desuper me [241] visio quam videram.

Let us add also the next verse ---

Ezekiel 11:25

25. Then I spake unto them of the captivity all the things that the LORD had shewed me.

25. Et locutus sum captivitati cunctos sermones Iehovae, quos mihi ostenderat. [242]

The Prophet here confirms what he had said at the beginning, viz., that this vision was divinely presented and was not an empty and deceptive specter. This prophecy was difficult of belief, so that all doubt ought to be removed, lest any one should object that God was not the author of the vision. He says, therefore, that he was raised up by the Spirit of God and brought into Chaldea. We have already asserted, that the Prophet did not change his place, though I am unwilling to contend for this, if any one think otherwise. But still it appears to me, that when the Prophet remained in exile he saw Jerusalem and the other places about which he discourses, not humanly but by a prophetic spirit. As then he had been carried to Jerusalem by the Spirit, so was he brought back into exile. But Spirit is here opposed to nature, since we know that our prospect is limited within a definite space. Now if the least obstacle occur our sight will not pass over five or six paces. But when God's Spirit illuminates us, a

[241] That is, “left me.” — Calvin.
[242] “Which he had made me see.” — Calvin

new faculty begins to flourish in us, which is by no means to be estimated naturally. We now see in what sense Ezekiel says, that he was brought back into Chaldea by the Spirit of God, because he was in truth like a man in an ecstasy. For he had been carried out of himself, but now he is left in his ordinary state. And this is the meaning of these words, in a vision in the Spirit of God For a vision is opposed to a reality. For if the Prophet had been brought back by a vision, it follows that he had not really been at Jerusalem so as to be brought back into Chaldea. Now he meets the question which may be moved, viz.: ``What was the efficacy of the vision?'' For the Prophet recalls us to the power of the Spirit which we must not measure by our rule. Since, therefore, the operation of the Spirit is incomprehensible, we need not wonder that the Prophet was carried to Jerusalem in a vision, and afterwards brought back into captivity. He adds that the vision departed from him, by which words he commends his own doctrine, and extols it beyond all mortal speeches, because he separates between what was human in himself and what was divine when he says, the vision departed from me. Hence the Prophet wishes himself to be considered as twofold: that is, as a private man, and but one of many, for in this capacity he had no authority as if he was to be heard in God's stead. But when the Spirit acted upon him, he wished to withdraw himself from the number of men, because he did not speak of himself, nor treat of anything human, or in a human manner, but the Spirit of God so flourished in him that he uttered nothing but what was celestial and divine.

Afterwards he says, that he spoke all those words to the captives, or exiles. This passage seems superfluous. For to what purpose had the Prophet been taught concerning the destruction of the city, the overthrow of the kingdom, and the ruin of the temple, unless to induce the Jews who still remained in the country to desist from their superstition? But we must remember that the Prophet had a hard contest with those exiles among whom he dwelt, as will more clearly appear in the next chapter. For as the Jews boasted that they remained safe, and laughed at the captives who had suffered themselves to be drawn away into a distant land, so the exiles were weary of their miseries. For their condition was very sorrowful when they saw themselves exposed to every reproach, and treated by the Chaldeans servilely and insultingly. Since, then, this was their condition, they roared among themselves and were indignant, since they had to bear the manners of the Prophets, and especially Jeremiah. Since, therefore, the captives repented of their lot, it was needful for the Prophet to restrain their contumely. And this is the meaning of the words that he related the words of Jehovah to the captives. Nor was this admonition less needful for the exiles, than for the Jews who as yet remained safe in the city. He says, the words which God caused him to see, improperly, but very appositely to the sense; for not only had God spoken, but he had placed the thing itself before the eyes of the Prophet. Hence we see why he says, that words had been shown to him that he might behold them I have already said that this language is improper for words, because it applies to the sight, for eyes do not receive words, but cars. But here the Prophet signifies that it was not the naked and simple word of God, but clothed in an external symbol. Augustine says that a sacrament is a word made visible, and

he speaks correctly; because in baptism God addresses our eyes, when he brings forward water as a symbol of our ablution and regeneration. In the Supper also he directs his speech to our eyes, since Christ shows his flesh to us as truly food, and his blood as truly drink, when bread and wine are set before us. For this reason also the Prophet now says, that he saw the word of God, because it was clothed in outward symbols. For God appeared to his Prophet, as I have said, and showed him the temple, and there erected a theater, as it were, in which he beheld the whole state of the city Jerusalem. [243] Let us go on ---

[243] See Augustine's Homily on John, 89, bk. 19, com. Faust. Calvin, as well as other Commentators, often felt great difficulty in separating the human element from the divine, while interpreting the Prophets. He has expressed it feelingly while interpreting this last verse of the eleventh chapter. It is confessedly most difficult to draw the line rigidly between the direct agency of God and the subservient instrumentality of man. The spiritual teaching delivered by the Prophets evidently needed some visible and tangible means of conveyance to the outward senses of the recipients; but who shall mark off any palpable boundary between spirit and grace — the mind of God, and the regenerated mind of the Prophet? If there are no harsh transitions and sudden breaks in the natural world, so in the spiritual and moral, the limits between the essentially divine and the clearly human are at present untraceable by mortal vision. As the revelations to Ezekiel were progressive, differing in immediate character and object, so together with them something extrinsic was needed, to become a suitable vehicle for the majesty and purity of the truth conveyed. Neither the Prophet nor his countrymen could bear the naked effulgence of the divine messages; they were too luminous and dazzling for their sin-burdened souls, and thus they needed a condescending adaptation to their many infirmities. The pure and colorless water of life, instinct though it be with the spirit of Deity, comes to us tinctured with the peculiarity of the earthen vessel through which it flows. Our attention ought often to be dragon to this while reading Ezekiel. The Almighty not only condescends to his infirmities, but to those of the captives among whom he dwelt, so that the pure light of prophetic manifestation becomes tinged in passing through a two-fold medium, before it reaches us, among "the isles of the Gentiles." And while we cannot give the reader any formal rules for testing the soundness of Calvin's interpretations, we must appeal to that sound mind, that cultivated scholarship, and that Christian tact, which is the result of experience, in discriminating between the chaff and the wheat. Ordinary faculties, chastened by severe and patient study, combined with holy and Christian views of Divine truth as a whole, will suffice for deciding on such abstruse questions with a sufficient degree of precision and correctness.

Ezekiel 12

Chapter 12

Ezekiel 12:1-2

1. The word of the LORD also came unto me, saying,

1. Et fuit sermo Iehovae ad me dicendo,

2. Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house.

2. Fili hominis, in medio domus rebellis tu habitas, oculi illis ad videndum, et non vident: aures illis ad audiendum, et non audiunt: quia domus rebellis ipsi. [244]

Because God was about to give a command to his servant, he wished to inspire him with fortitude of mind, lest, when he saw that he was consuming his labor in vain, he should withdraw from his course. For we know how severe is that temptation to God's servants when they speak to the deaf, and not only is their doctrine rejected but even refused with ignominy. They think, therefore, that nothing is better than silence, because where their word is so despised it only exposes the name of God to the reproaches of the impious. Now then we understand for what purpose God admonishes his Prophet about the contumacy of the nation. The Prophet had tried enough, and more than enough, how unmanageable the Israelites were, but God confirms by his judgment what the Prophet had discovered sufficiently in practice. Then we must observe another reason, for God not only commanded his Prophet what to say, but he added an outward symbol, as we shall see. But the Prophet might object, that it would be ridiculous to take a staff, and scrip, and hat, as a traveler about to commence a journey. Nor is it doubtful that the Israelites derided through perverseness what he was doing, as a boyish amusement.

Lest, therefore, the Prophet should think what he was commanded to do absurd,

[244] That is, "they are." — Calvin.

God instructs him, and gives him the reason of his plan. He says, therefore, the house of Israel is rebellious, and then he expresses the greatness of their contumacy, namely, that they are deaf, though endued with ears: that they are blind, and yet do not want eyes God here shows that the Israelites could not defend their error, as if they had sinned without consideration; but he assigns their neither hearing nor seeing to their obstinacy. And this must be diligently remarked, because hypocrites, when convicted, catch as much as possible at this excuse, that they fell through error or ignorance. But God on the contrary here pronounces that the Israelites were blind and deaf, and shows that their blindness was voluntary. When, therefore, unbelievers pretend that they have not been illuminated by the Lord, it may be conceded to them that they are blind and deaf: but we must often proceed beyond this, since their own obstinacy is the fountain of their blindness and deafness: and God blinds them, because they will not admit the light offered them, but stop their ears. In God's judgments, indeed, the causes do not always appear, for we sometimes see a whole nation Minded without any reason apparent to us; but as far as the ten tribes are concerned, there can be no excuse for their error, since they were brought up from childhood in God's law, so that their pride and contempt caused God to reject them. Hence they were so stupified that they neither saw with their eyes nor heard with their ears. And this the Prophet expresses significantly, they hear not, says he, since they are a rebellious house; he does not say, because their senses do not penetrate to the secrets of God, are not sufficiently acute, are not endued with such great prudence; but because they are a rebellious house, that is, because they have stupified themselves. Hence it happens that they neither hear nor see. It follows ---

Ezekiel 12:3

3. Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight: it may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house.

3. Et tu fili hominis, fac [245] tibi vasa transmigrationis: et transmigra interdiu in oculis ipsorum: migrabis autem a loco tuo ad locum alium in oculis ipsorum, si forte videant, quia domus rebellis strut.

Now God instructs his Prophet in what he wishes him to do: he orders him to take vessels for journeying, that is, he orders him to prepare for a long journey, even for exile: for exile is the subject here. But he who is compelled to leave home to go into a foreign land, collects whatever he can carry with him, namely, his clothes, shoes, hat, scrip, and staff, and other things of that kind, if he have even a little money. Therefore the Prophet is advised to gird himself for his journey, by which he represents the character of those who were just about to be dragged into exile. For this reason he is ordered to prepare for himself vessels for traveling The Latins call garments as well as other goods ``vessels:'' whence proverbially to collect goods is to remove baggage in a military phrase, or to take away one's stuff. But he orders this to be done in the day-time, that the Israelites may see what is done.

Then the Prophet is ordered to remove from one place to another As I have said,

[245] Or, “prepare.” — Calvin.

this might appear puerile. Cicero describes those legal fictions, [246] how those who went to law about a field when called upon to plead, had, so to speak, an imaginary way of going to see it; for since it was too troublesome to the judge to mount his horse and ride over various fields, they retained an ancient and customary ceremony: the plaintiff said, the land which you say is yours, I claim for myself and say is mine, and if you wish to dispute with me legally, I summon you to the spot: the defendant replied, as you summon me there, I in return answer your summons. The judge then arose and moved from his place, and so an imaginary action took place. Cicero derides that by-play, and says it is unworthy of the gravity of a court of law. But such was the action of the Prophet; he took his hat, cloak, staff, and shoes, and other things, and changed his place as if he were moving. But he only went a short distance. But God previously had said, that he was dealing with a perverse nation, and so had need of such assistances. And we must remark the particle, if by chance they should see, because they are a rebellious house For here God as it were suspends the event of his teaching, when he says, if perhaps they should hear And the reason is added, because the hardness of the people was so great, that they could scarcely be turned to obedience by any discourses or signs. Meanwhile let us learn from this place, that we must still go on, although success does not answer to our labor, when we spend our strength for God. And this instruction is peculiarly necessary, because when God imposes on us any duty, we dispute with ourselves as to its result, and thus all energy flags, because we are seldom willing to put forth a finger unless we perceive a prosperous issue. Because, therefore, we are always too attentive to the fruit of our labor, hence this passage should be diligently regarded, when God sends his Prophet and yet adds, if by chance they should listen. Whatever may be the event, we must obey God; if our labor should not profit, yet God wishes us to obey him. It follows ---

Ezekiel 12:4

4. Then shalt thou bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing: and thou shalt go forth at even in their sight, as they that go forth into captivity.

4. Et effer vasa tanquam vasa captivitatis interdiu in oculis ipsorum: et tu egredieris vespere in oculis ipsorum secundum egressus captivitatis.

The other verses must now be added ---

Ezekiel 12:5-6

5. Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out thereby.

5. In oculis ipsorum perfodies tibi parietem, et educes per ipsum.

6. In their sight shalt thou bear it upon thy shoulders, and carry it forth in the twilight: thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the ground: for I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel.

6. In oculis ipsorum super humerum gestabis, in tenebris egredieris; faciem tuam occultabis et non aspicies terram, quia portentum constitui to domui Israel.

Ezekiel is verbose in this narration. But in the beginning of the book we said,

[246] Orat. pro Murcena, sect. 12, page 129; and Edit. Lond. 1819, tom. 2, page 760. It is needless to quote the passage, as Calvin's allusion to it is sufficienfiy copious, and the reader will readily perceive how our own obsolete law forms are open to the same objection, and illustrate the text in a similar way.

that because the teacher was sent to men very slow and stupid, he therefore used a rough style. We added also, that he had acquired it partly from the custom of the region in which he dwelt. For the people declined by degrees from the polish of their language, and hence it happens that the Prophet's diction is not quite pure, but is intermixed with something foreign. As to the subject itself there is no ambiguity, since God repeats that he should dig through a wall, and bring out his vessels by himself before their eyes Here follows another part of the vision, namely, that there should be no free egress but that the Jews would desire to depart by stealth. First, therefore, it is shown to the Prophet, that the Jews who when secure at Jerusalem boasted that all was well with them, should be exiles; then, that it would not be in their power to go forth when they wished, unless perhaps they stealthily escaped the hands of the enemy through their hiding-place, as thieves escape by digging through a wall. Then the application will follow, but yet it was worth while to state what God intended by this vision. Afterwards everything is embraced. In their sight, says he, thou shalt bear upon thy shoulder, that is, thou shalt be prepared and girt for a journey as a traveler, and this shall be done in the day-time: but in darkness, says he, thou shalt bring them forth: after thy vessels have been prepared, wait for the evening: in the darkness afterwards thou shalt go forth. Here he shows what I have already touched upon, when necessity expelled the Jews from their country, that their departure would not be free, because they would be well off if' they could snatch themselves away from the sight of their enemies in hiding-places and the darkness of the night.

He adds, thou shalt hide thy face, and the clause, neither shalt thou look upon the earth, means the same thing. Anxiety and trembling is marked by this phrase, as when he says, thou shalt hide thy face, it signifies that the Jews should be so perplexed that they should fear every event which happened. For those who fear everything veil their faces, as is well known. But this trembling is better expressed when he says, thou shaft not look upon the earth. For those who are in haste do not dare to bend down their eyes the least in either one direction or another, but are carried along to the place to which they are going, and press forward with their eyes, because they cannot hasten with their feet as quickly as they desire. Hence they seize their way, as it were, with their eyes. This is the reason why God says, thou shalt not look upon the earth, because I have set thee, says he, for a sign to the house of Israel. Here God meets the petulance of those who otherwise would laugh at what the Prophet was doing: what do you mean by that fictitious emigration? why do you not rest at home? why do you here frighten us with an empty spectacle? God, therefore, that the Jews should not obstinately despise what he shows them, adds, that the Prophet was a sign or a wonder to the house of Israel The word wonder is here taken in its genuine sense, though sometimes it has an unfavorable meaning. We say that anything portentous is disagreeable: but a ``portent'' properly designates any sign of the future. When therefore men predict what is hidden, it is called a portent. And this is the meaning of Isaiah, (Isaiah 8:18,) where he says, Behold me, and the children whom God has given me, for signs and wonders. He puts {אתות}, athoth, ``signs,'' in the first place, then {מופתים}, mophthim, ``portents.'' Here the

Prophet speaks in the singular: I have given thee for a wonder. But since Isaiah treats of the rest of the faithful, he then uses signs and portents; since Isaiah seems to imply something more, namely, that the people were so stupid that they so feared and abhorred God's servants, as if they had met, with a prodigy. Here, therefore, the depravity of the people is to be marked, because when they saw any pious and sincere worshipper of God they turned away their eyes as from a formidable prodigy. But now the Prophet speaks simply, that he had been placed for a prodigy to the house of Israel: because in truth this action was a presage of that future captivity which the Jews did not fear for themselves, and which was also incredible to the Israelites; whence that penitence and weariness of which I have spoken. But I do not object if any think that the Prophet speaks of a portent, because the Israelites were struck with astonishment; but the former sense is far more apposite. In this way then God distinguishes the action of the Prophet from all empty spectacles, and so vindicates his servant from all opprobrium. Meanwhile he signifies that although the Prophet was despised, yet that he would be true, and at the same time the avenger of contempt. It follows ---

Ezekiel 12:7

7. And I did so as I was commanded: I brought forth my stuff by day, as stuff for captivity, and in the even I digged through the wall with mine hand; I brought it forth in the twilight, and I bare it upon my shoulder in their sight.

7. Atque ita feci quemadmodum jussus fueram, vasa mea eduxi tanquam vasa captivitatis interdiu: et vespere perfodi in parletem [247] manu; in tenebris eduxi, super humerum extuli [248] in oculis ipsorum.

Here the Prophet relates that he had executed what God had commanded: nor did it escape him that this action would be exposed to many jeers and reproaches. But he esteemed nothing of equal moment with pleasing God: hence we must remark the Prophet's alacrity in executing God's commands. For since to ingenuous natures nothing is more distasteful than reproach, he might reject the burden imposed upon him, because it provoked the laughter of all men. But because God was otherwise pleased he did as he was ordered. He says, therefore, that he carried away his vessels, as it were vessels of captivity, or of migration, and that in the day-time: as if he said that he had prepared whatever was necessary for the journey, as if he saw that a long march, even exile was before him. This then was the reason why he prepared his goods in the day-time. Now it follows, at evening he dug through the wall This belongs to the second clause, that the Israelites might understand that all egress was blocked up to the Jews, so that no safety remained but in concealed flight. He says also, by the hand, whence it appears to be done suddenly and tumultuously. He says, that he went out in darkness, and carried things on his shoulder --- namely, that he may confirm what we have so often said, that the Jews had no hope of safety except under cover of the night: because they were besieged on every side, and could not move on one side or the other, lest the enemy should seize them. This is the reason why the Prophet says, that he went out in darkness through the wall

[247] Verbally, "but I dug through a wall for myself." — Calvin.
[248] Or, "I carried forth." — Calvin.

which had been dug through

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since thou so wishest us to live in this world, that we may travel onwards till thou gatherest us into thy heavenly rest, that we may truly contemplate that eternal inheritance, and apply to it all our endeavors: and next, that we may so travel in this world that we may not wander nor stray from the way; but being always intent on the mark which thou settest before us, grant us to proceed on our way, until we finish our course, and enjoy that glory which thine only-begotten Son has prepared for us through his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture Thirty-second

Ezekiel 12:8-11

8. And in the morning came the word of the LORD unto me, saying,

8. Et fuit sermo Iehovae ad me mane, dicendo,

9. Son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said unto thee, What doest thou?

9. Fili hominis, an non dixerunt tibi, domus Israel, domus rebellis, [249] Quid tu facis?

10. Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; This burden concerneth the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel that are among them.

10. Dic illis, sic dicit Dominator Iehova, Principis onus hoc [250] in Ierusalem, et totius domus Israel quae in medio ipsorum.

11. Say, I am your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them: they shall remove, and go into captivity.

11. Dic els, Ego portentum vestrum sicuti feci ita fiet illis, in transmigrationem, in caprivitatem ibunt.

We gather from these words of the Prophet, that he was himself derided when he began to migrate: then that he dug through the wall by night secretly, and thus carried away his baggage. For those who think that the Israelites enquired about this, as if it were unknown to them, do not sufficiently consider the Prophet's words. For the repetition of the epithet rebellious house is not in vain; for if this question had proceeded from mere folly, God would not have called them rebellious. This epithet, then, refers to the present passage, and thus we may determine that the Israelites asked the Prophet deridingly, what does this mean? For he seemed to them to be trifling, and thus they jeered at him; for we know the audacity of the nation in despising their Prophets. It is not, then, to be wondered at, when they obtained a plausible ground for it, if they commented rather freely upon what the Prophet was doing. We said yesterday 'that this seemed a childish spectacle. Hence the Israelites seemed, not without reason, to reject what the Prophet was doing as a thing of nought. But God does not suffer his servants to be reviled in this way. He now signified to the Prophet that his calling ought to be deservedly held sacred. Since therefore Ezekiel bore certain marks of the prophetic office, although at first sight his conduct could not appear serious, yet the people ought to have enquired

[249] Or, as we have elsewhere said, “exasperating,” or “bitter.” — Calvin.

[250] “This sorrowful prophecy.” — Calvin.

modestly. For whatever we know to flow from God should be reverently received without controversy. But if there is any obscurity we may wonder and enquire into it; but as I have said, docility and modesty ought always to precede. But what did the Israelites do? they enquired, indeed, the meaning of the Prophet's conduct, but only to reject it with ridicule. For this reason God is angry, and announces himself a severe avenger of that audacity, because they persecuted the sacred Prophet. Hence this must be read emphatically --- what doest thou? as if they said that the Prophet was foolish, and carried and prepared his goods, and dug through the wall, in vain, since all these things were of no moment. But the answer, when it shows that God is greatly offended with such trifling, sufficiently demonstrates that they did not ask the question through ignorance, or want of thought, but through mere wantonness.

He now says, this prophecy relates to the prince, and the whole house of Israel which is in the midst of them. Without doubt he understands the king, as we shall soon see: nor does he speak of any king indefinitely, but points out Zedekiah, as will be immediately evident from circumstances. He says, therefore, this burden, or this sorrowful prophecy, looks towards the prince, and to the house of Israel, which dwell at Jerusalem. But it is probable that some had fled that they might not fall into the hands of the enemy, since Jerusalem was a safe receptacle for them. The captives thought themselves bad managers, because they had not followed those leaders, since Jerusalem was a safe refuge for them, and hence the greater sorrow at their captivity. Hence God pronounces that the Israelites were comprehended with their king in this prophecy. It is indeed true that this was a common name to all the posterity of Abraham; for the twelve tribes sprung from the patriarch Jacob, but it was then becoming customary for the ten tribes to retain the name of Israel, and for that of Judah to have their own proper and peculiar name. Afterwards he confirms his teaching, that he was as a sign to them. We explained this expression yesterday, showing how the Prophet was placed before them as a sign, so that God represented what was as yet unknown to them; for signs divinely sent are called portents, when they foretell what no one would expect to happen. God, indeed, often shows what he is going' to do by many, yet ordinary signs; but an extraordinary one, which cannot be considered natural, is called a portent. So therefore the Prophet is ordered to say to the Israelites that he was to them for a wonder, namely, to reprove their obstinacy, which, as we have said, was the cause of their impious contempt. For it was no part of their religion for a Prophet to deride them, so that they should suppose him to be trifling with them, as if frightening children about nothing. God, therefore, that the Israelites might at length be roused up at his own time, pronounces his servant to be a wonder to them. And we gather from the reason which is added, what the name portent meant in yesterday's lecture. For he says, as I have done, so shall it be done to you; that is, what you now think to be child's play, shall be seriously fulfilled in yourselves. For the Prophet seemed to act a part, like a player, and on this account was derided. He now declares that it should not be fabulous, since the Israelites, who were left in Judea among the Jews, and the king himself, should not act a part; for God would compel them to collect their baggage, and to take flight by

stealth in the darkness of the night, which he follows up through the whole verse. Into banishment and exile, says he, shall they go. When therefore the Prophet was commanded to collect and prepare his goods, he was a sign of the exile of which he now speaks. But the explanation of the second part is added.

Ezekiel 12:12

12. And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with his eyes.

12. Et princeps qui in medio ipsorum est super humerum portabit in tenebris, et ingredietur in pariete quem effoderint ad educendum [251] in ipso: faciem suam occultabit, ne (ut non) aspiciat oculo terram.

We have said that two things were shown, both the people's exile and their clandestine flight: the Prophet now speaks again about this trembling. He says therefore, that not only the vulgar and the dregs of the people would be so anxious that they would endeavor to escape secretly and carry their own baggage; but the prince himself, that is, their king would be subject to such ignominy: the prince himself, says he, shall carry on his shoulder. Many followed him, as we have seen, and at length he was seized with a great company, as the Prophet will shortly subjoin, and being' caught in the desert of Jericho, he was dragged by the enemy before their king: but here mention is made of the king alone, because it was almost incredible that the enemy could not be reconciled. For surrender often appeases even the most hostile enemies; it often preserves kings, although an extended carnage may take place; and we know that kings are often preserved on account of their dignity, after they have been led in triumph. What therefore the Prophet pronounces concerning king Zedekiah does not imply any escape of the multitude from similar punishment: but because the king himself, together with his subjects in general, would be compelled to escape by stealth, and would be sure to fall into the hands of the enemy.

Next, the prince who is in the midst of them Here the words, the midst of them, are taken in a different sense from that in which the Israelites were lately said to be in the midst of the people who inhabited Jerusalem, because they had been mixed with the Jews from the time when they had dwelt within their territories. But he says their prince was in the midst in another sense, because in truth the eyes of all were turned towards him, as if when a standard is erected, it is beheld by all, and retains the whole multitude in their ranks, so also the king was in the midst, that the people might not disperse, for a miserable dispersion follows when the head is taken away. But the intention of the Holy Spirit must be observed. For the Jews, as we have formerly seen, were hardened in their wickedness by the false pretense that God would always maintain his dwelling among them. For it had been said of the throne of David, that it should stand as long as the sun and moon should shine in the heavens. (Psalm 89:36, 37.) And hence Jeremiah's lamentable complaint: the Christ, or anointed of God, in whose breath our life consisted. (Lamentations 4:20.) The Prophet does not speak there after the usual mode, and obtrusively remind God of his promise, as hypocrites do, but he has respect to God's counsel. For David, since

[251] Or, "for carrying out." — Calvin.

he was a type of Christ, was truly the soul of the people, even among the Gentiles, as he is there reckoned to be. For they not only looked to their king for safety while included within the city walls, but although dispersed among the nations, they still hoped to be safe under their monarch's shadow. But their confidence was perverse, since they had impiously departed from the true worship of God. Hence the Prophet, to deprive them of that vain source of pride and boasting, says, now their king was in the midst of them: but it would not always be so, for God would drive him out, and even compel him to fly into secret hiding-places.

He afterwards adds, he shall hide his face, that he shall not see the ground with his eyes This also was accomplished, the sacred history narrates. For Zedekiah escaped through the gardens by subterraneous passages: he thought the enemy would be ignorant of his flight, but he was seized. (2 Kings 25:4, 5; and Jeremiah 39:4, 5.) We see, then, the meaning of this concealment of his face or countenance, namely, because Zedekiah distrusted any he might meet. But this was very bitter, and also base and disgraceful, for a king so to conceal himself, and not to dare to look upon the ground with his eyes. And now something far more disastrous follows.

Ezekiel 12:13

13. My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon, to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there.

13. Et extendam rete meum super ipsum, et capietur in plagis meis, [252] et educam eum inquit Babylonem in terrain Chaldaeae, et ipsam non videbit, et illic morietur.

That was no slight slaughter, when Zedekiah at length, in his desperation, thought of flight, and thus descended into hidden trenches, as if seeking life in the tomb: thus was he reduced to extremities. But the Prophet now adds, that it would be useless, because notwithstanding this he should be taken by his enemies Besides, what God executed by means of the Chaldeans he properly transfers to himself. The Chaldeans laid their snares when advised of the king's flight: they knew its direction, and hence they apprehended him. So God announces himself as the author: I, says he, will stretch out my net. This we know, that the Chaldeans did not leave their own country of their own accord, nor carry on the war in their own strength, nor take the king by their own counsel; but the whole affair was under the government of heaven. Men lent their aid, and seemed to carry' on the work by their own labor; but unless God had provided for the event, all their endeavors had proved fruitless. Hence, as God had stirred up the Chaldeans to exact punishment from the king and the people, so he raised their minds to confidence, then he strengthened them to persist in the siege of the city, and afterwards opened their eyes, and sent persons to disclose the plans of the king, so that he might be seized in a cave, as it really happened. The whole of this was done by the secret providence of God. So diligently ought we to observe those places in which God shows that what seems to be the work of men is really his own. Even likeness does not want its weight; for we seem always to have

[252] "In nets," some translate "a drag-net," but erroneously, and this has given rise to mistake, because some have thought the similie derived from fishes, while it is clear that the same thing is indicated by different words: he shall be taken therefore in my net. — Calvin.

some refuge in perplexity, and on whatever side we look around, some hope deceives us. But God announces that he has nets spread, by which we are surrounded on every side: hence when we seem to have a way of escape, God has hidden nets in which he encloses us. So that this place compares God to a hunter, and ourselves to wild beasts; for when a huntsman follows wild beasts, they seek for a way of escape and rush out there, but they are caught in nets: so also when we endeavor to elude God's hands, we are entrapped and held by him: because when we wish to withdraw ourselves from his providence, we deserve that blindness which leads us to rush on our own destruction.

Hence I will spread my net for him, and he shall be taken in my snares, I will lead him away, says he, to Babylon The Prophet shows by degrees how formidably God's vengeance should alight on Zedekiah and the whole people. It was already most miserable to be taken by the enemy and subjected to their lust and cruelty. If he had been slain, this would have been accomplished in a single moment, but God wished him to be drawn into exile; meanwhile he says that he should die at Babylon, without seeing the city, both of which were accomplished. Zedekiah then wasted away in exile, for he lay even to his death in filth and defilement. And although he was buried, as we saw in Jeremiah, yet this condition was most sorrowful --- to fear through one's whole lifetime some fresh wrath of an enemy. Then he was barbarously and inhumanly treated: his eyes were put out on the journey; and here it is said, he shall not see Babylon, and yet he shall arrive there and die there. Afterwards he saw his sons strangled in his sight: then his eyes were dug out --- a spectacle more grievous than death. Now we may reflect on the kind of life a man must spend in exile, in prison, and in chains --- since he was bound with chains, as the sacred narrative informs us --- there to consume away by a slow death in a foul prison and in total darkness; yet all this happened to Zedekiah. We see then how God thunders against the Israelites, who thought themselves hardly treated in exile, since they might have remained safe at Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 12:14

14. And I will scatter toward every wind all that are about him to help him, and all his bands; and I will draw out the sword after them.

14. Et omnes qui in circuitu ejus sunt in auxilium ejus, et omnes alas ejus [253] dispergam ad omnem, vel ad quemlibet, ventura et gladium evaginabo post ipsos.

He confirms the verse above, and says, that although Zedekiah had many soldiers as a garrison, and accustomed the people to bear arms, yet all this would not profit him, since God would disperse all the guards in whom he trusted. He says then, that he would scatter to every wind all who were around Zedekiah For unbelievers were deceived when they saw the king surrounded by auxiliaries, and the people of the city trained to warfare: and since Zedekiah was so armed for the defense of the city, they thought it could never be taken by the Chaldeans. God, therefore, here first of all teaches that the war was carried on under his auspices, and then that there was no doubt of his taking the city. He does not speak of the Chaldeans, lest unbelievers should institute a comparison --- ``it is true indeed that the Chaldeans are besieging

[253] That is, "all his garrison." — Calvin.

the city with a strong and numerous army, but the city is impregnable, and besides it is defended with great spirit, and the king has forces sufficiently strong for his defense.'' Lest this opinion should foolishly deceive the disbelievers, God comes into the field and turns their attention away from the Chaldeans. For this reason he ascribes to himself the conduct of the enemy: hence we gather that profane nations are in God's hands, since he not only governs them by the spirit of regeneration, but compels even the impious, who desire to abolish his authority, to obey his commands. God does not draw his sword from heaven, nor do angels openly appear with drawn swords; the Chaldeans do that; but as it is said in Isaiah, (Isaiah 10:15,) Shall the ax boast itself against its owner? Since thus the vigor of the Chaldeans was nothing in itself, God armed them and then afforded them the success which he wished. It follows ---

Ezekiel 12:15

15. And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries.

15. Et cognoscent quod ego Iehovah, postquam expulero ipsos inter gentes, [254] et dispersero ipsos per terrag. [255]

Here God insults both Jews and Israelites who had united themselves. He says that he would so display his power that they should be compelled to acknowledge him, but to their own destruction. Experimental knowledge is sometimes attributed to the faithful; because when we are too slow, God shows us his power by sure proofs. But what is here said ought to be restricted to the reprobate and abandoned, who do not acknowledge God except in death. Yet Zedekiah was not entirely without the fear of God: he reverenced Jeremiah, and the seed of piety was not altogether extinct in his mind. As regards the people, inasmuch as they offered the daily sacrifice, they certainly cherished some opinion of God's favor, and also of his power. But because they despised the Prophets, they were altogether unsubdued, and made a laughing-stock of their threats, and for this cause they are said not to acknowledge God. And we must diligently notice this. For the impious do not think themselves so stupid as to refuse to God his just honor; but yet when God calls them they turn their backs: when he sets before them his message, even for their own advantage, they are not only deaf and stop their ears, but they are even riotous, and deride all his threats like idle stories. But it is certain that no knowledge of God can flourish when such contempt of his doctrine prevails. For this reason he says now, at length the Jews shall know, because this contempt hindered them from ascribing praise to God for his power; for they had been terrified by even his nod. Jeremiah had assiduously instructed them in God's word, but they were so hardened that they treated it as a thing of nought. The threat then is most grievous: as if God had said, When I smite you with my hand, you shall feel me to be God. Let us learn then to acknowledge God betimes by faith, because this is the fitting opportunity for salutary knowledge. Let us not abuse his patience while he rages against us with a stretched out hand, and pursues us fiercely. Sometimes, indeed, he chastises his own people for their good,

[254] Or, "dissipate," or, "scatter abroad;" {,{בהפיצ behephitzi, signifies violent expulsion. --- Calvin.

[255] That is, "through different regions." — Calvin.

but when it comes to pass that there is no hope of repentance to the reprobate, then he reduces them to nothing. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 12:16

16. But I will leave a few men of them from the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence; that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen whither they come; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

16. Et residuos faciam ex illis homines numeri [256] a gladio, a fame, a peste, ut enarrent cunctas abominationes suas in gentibus, ad quas venient; et cognoscent quod ego Iehovah.

Some think that God here speaks of the faithful, whom he had determined to preserve in the very midst of death. And certainly there is some mitigation of his former vengeance. But it is not in harmony with the rest to understand the faithful here, for he is speaking of the people in general. But as we have already seen that the slaughter of the city was such that God scattered the remnant to the four winds, and this the Prophet confirms. We must hold, then, first of all, that this promise was not directed peculiarly to the elect or to God's Church, but rather that God is showing that exile will not be the end of woes to the captives, although they will not be directly cut to pieces. Their condition, indeed, might seem preferable, but God pronounces that he would be inexorable towards them. Although all should not perish by the sword, or famine, or pestilence, and some remnant should be left, that will happen, says he, not because I am going to be reconciled to them, but that I may spread their crimes among the Gentiles. For when he says, that they may narrate, he does not mean that they would be witnesses to their own sins, as the pious are accustomed, as we shall see elsewhere, to extol the mercy of God, and candidly to confess their faults before men. He does not mean that kind of confession which is a sign of repentance, but rather a real speech. [257] For that exile uttered with a loud voice, that those men were abandoned whom God treated with such hostility. He had chosen the people, was the guardian of the city, and would have been their perpetual preserver, if their perverseness had not prevented it. Hence their being destitute of his aid, their being deprived of all their goods, their being treated tyrannically by their enemies, this made their extreme wickedness clearly appear. They narrated, then, not by words but by their actual position, their own sins to the Gentiles.

Now, therefore, we understand the intention of God: although some remained alive and unconcerned by either the sword, or famine, or pestilence, yet they were cursed, since their expulsion to a distance served no other purpose than that of spreading their disgrace and rendering them detestable, so flint the profane Gentiles acknowledged that they deserved vengeance for their wickedness. Therefore they shall narrate among the Gentiles all their abominations, and they shall know that I am Jehovah. Again he repeats that sentiment, that they should know too late what they had despised: since God had acted towards them as a father, and they had not acknowledged his favor; and at length they should be compelled to feel him as their judge, even to their eternal destruction.

[256] That is, “few men.” — Calvin.

[257] “Realis sermo.” — Calvin. “Une parole par effect, c’est a dire, reelle.” — Fr.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since thou declarest to us by so many proofs the formidable nature of thine anger, especially against the obstinate and rebellious, who reject thy word familiarly spoken to them: Grant, I say, that we may embrace what is proposed to us in thy name with the humility and reverence becoming' to thy children, so that we may repent of our sins, and obtain their pardon, until at length we are freed from all corruptions of the flesh, and become partakers of that eternal and celestial glory which thy only-begotten Son has purchased for us by his blood. --- Amen.

Lecture Thirty third

Ezekiel 12:17-19

17. Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

17. Et fuit sermo Iehovae ad me dicendo,

18. Son of man, eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with trembling and with carefulness;

18. Fili hominis, panem tuam in tremore comede, et aquas tuas in tumultu et dolore [258] bibe;

19. And say unto the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord GOD of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of the land of Israel; They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, that her land may be desolate from all that is therein, because of the violence of all them that dwell therein.

19. Et dices ad populum terrae, Sic dicit Dominator Iehovah habitatoribus [259] Hierosolymae super terrain Israel, Panem snare in anxietate [260] comedent, et aquas suds in desolatione bibent, ut vastetur [261] terra a sua plenitudine, propter violentiam omnium qui habitant in ea.

The Prophet is now ordered to represent the famine which awaited the Jews in both the siege and exile. But this prophecy ought to be especially referred to the time of the siege; for the Jews were in continual fear, and thought that by means of their garrison they would be impregnable. But as the Lord had often removed this trust from them, so he does now: hence therefore that miserable anxiety and fear, so that they never ate their bread but in fear, nor drank their water but in confusion. For a besieged city always fears for itself, and then the enemy so harasses them that fatigue at length compels the besieged to surrender. And it is probable, since the army of the Chaldees could often attempt to take the city with ease and without any great loss, that the Jews would daily be subject to fresh terrors, so that they could neither eat bread nor drink water except in anxiety and confusion. But because simple and unadorned teaching would not have been effective among the ten tribes and the Jews, hence an outward symbol is added. The Prophet therefore is the image of the besieged people, and hence he is ordered to eat his bread with trembling, that the spectacle might the more affect these slow and slothful men. By and bye the application follows, thou shalt say to the people of the land I do not doubt that he here means the ten tribes: hence the land signifies Chaldea, and those regions through

[258] Either “torture,” or, “anxiety.” — Calvin.
[259] Or, “inhabitants.” — Calvin.
[260] Either “torture,” or, “pain,” for he repeats the same word. — Calvin.
[261] Or, “be made desolate.” — Calvin.

which the exiles were dispersed. As we have before seen, it was to their advantage to hear this, because they thought that the Jews remaining at home were treated well, and themselves miserably. Hence not only their complaint but even their outcry against God and his servants, especially Jeremiah. This then is the reason why the Prophet is obliged to utter his discourse to the captives.

But afterwards it follows, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah to the inhabitants of Jerusalem concerning the land of Israel, that is, those remaining in the land of Israel. We here see that the land of Israel is distinguished from the other land, of which mention was lately made. Those who dwelt at Jerusalem remained quiet in their own inheritance; and hence their condition was esteemed better, because nothing is more sad than exile and captivity. But God pronounces them more miserable than the captives, who had already been relieved from the principal part of their miseries. They shall eat, says he, their bread in pain, or torture, and shall drink their water in desolation: he does not repeat the same words which he had formerly used, but shortly shows that the Jews boasted in vain that they were still in safety: because very soon the enemy will press upon them, so that they should not be able to eat a mouthful of bread in peace. That the land may be reduced, says he, from plenty to devastation: some translate, after its plenty, which is forced and far-fetched; for the Prophet means that the land would be desert and empty through exhaustion: for plenty, as we well know, means an abundance of all things. Judea was then reduced from plenty to want, when the enemies plundered whatever it contained, and so the region was despoiled of its wealth. The reason follows, through the violence of those who dwell in it. Some explain this erroneously of the Chaldees, because they lost the whole land through their rapacity. For the Prophet rather advises that this vengeance of God was just, because in truth all the Jews were given up to violence, cruelty, and rapacity. {חמס}, chemes, signifies all kinds of injury, but usually means violence and rapine. Hence we understand the Prophet's intention, namely, that the Jews suffered this slaughter deservedly, because the just reward of their wickedness was measured out to them. And thus Ezekiel represses all complaints, in which they too freely indulged, as if God was treating them too roughly and hardly. Therefore he shortly teaches them that he would not spare them any longer. It follows ---

Ezekiel 12:20

20. And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall be desolate; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

20. Et urbes habitatae redigentur in solitudinem, et terra vasta erit, [262] et cognoscetis quod ego Iehovah.

He pursues the same sentiment. He had threatened destruction to Jerusalem and its citizens: he now adds the other cities of Judah which were still inhabited. Lastly, he speaks of the whole land, as if he said that no single corner should suppose itself free from slaughter, since God's vengeance should attack it as well as the cruelty of enemies through all regions. Jerusalem was the head of the whole nation; Ezekiel predicts its siege, and after that it became easy to overthrow and spoil other cities, so that the whole region was rendered subject to the lust of the enemies. He af-

[262] Or, "desert." — Calvin.

terwards adds what we have noticed previously, ye shall know that I am Jehovah They had heard this instruction from the Prophets, they ought to have been imbued with it from their earliest childhood, for God had borne witness by many proofs that he was the true God. For his power had become sufficiently known and understood by the frequent succors by which that wretched people had been snatched from even immediate death. But as their impiety had stupified them, so that they carelessly despised not only the Prophet's teaching, but the very judgments of God, when he openly punished them, this knowledge is not mentioned without reason. When therefore God puts forth his hand for the last time to chastise them, he says that his power should be so manifest among them, that it should no longer escape them; but yet they were so hardened in their depravity that they almost entirely forgot God. For a contrast is always to be observed between that knowledge which springs from performance and that arising from utterance; for those who had closed their ears when God invites them to himself as servants, must be compelled to feel him to be God when he is silent and is executing his vengeance upon them. It follows ---

Ezekiel 12:21-23

21. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

21. Et fuit sermo Iehovae ad me dicendo,

22. Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?

22. Fill hominis, quodnam proverbium hoc vobis in terra Israel dicendo, prorogati sunt dies, [263] et evanuit omnis prophetia?

23. Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision.

23. Propterea dices illis, sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, Quiescere [264] faciam proverbium hoc, et non pro-verbiabunt amplius in Israel: quin potius loquere ad eos, Appropinquarunt dies, et sermo omnis visionis.

Here God inveighs against that gross ridicule which prevailed everywhere among the Jews. For when the Prophets had been threatening them so long, this their earnestness was so far from leading them to repentance, that they became more obstinate and callous. Since they persisted in this obstinacy, and boasted in their escape, and through confidence in their freedom from punishment, re-belied more and more against God, the Prophet is ordered to repress this their boasting. It was monstrous indeed for a people who had imbibed from childhood the teaching of the law and the Prophets, thus to break forth against God as if he had spoken falsely by his Prophets. For this was their boasting: Oh! the days are prolonged: therefore every vision has passed away and failed From this delay they argued that they had no cause for fear, since whatever Jeremiah and the rest had predicted had passed away. We perceive then how unbelievers turn the patience of God into material for obduracy and stupidity. God spares them, gives them leisure, and invites them to repentance; but what do they do? They count the days and years, and when they

[263] Or, “protracted.” — Calvin.
[264] Or, “cease.” — Calvin.

see that God does not immediately, execute the judgment which he had uttered by his servants, they laugh at it, and esteem the Prophet's words as idle fables. Such, then, was the impiety against which the Prophet inveighs, saying, what is this? The question implies detestation, for God here wonders at the sloth, nay fury of the people, because it dared thus to vomit forth its blasphemies with open mouth:' for what remains when God is supposed to be false both in his promises and his threatenings? In this way all religion is abolished. Nor is it surprising that God detests so monstrous a thing, while he asks how it can happen that the Israelites break forth into such madness: what, says he, is the meaning of this your proverb? He seems to include his servant among the others, because he was one of the people: hence he participates in that which did not belong to him personally. Moreover, this passage must be diligently noticed, when the impious conclude that they have no occasion to fear, because their days are protracted.

This is, as I have said, a sign of extreme folly, but it is not surprising if they imagine God to be false to his word and his threats to be in vain, because his hand does not instantly appear, since they treat his teaching without the slightest respect. Since, therefore, unbelievers are never afraid unless terrified by the power of God, and are never in the slightest degree moved, it is not surprising that they think it entirely illusory, when they see him at rest while his words still resound in men's ears. Hence the language of the Apostle should come to mind, that Noah built the ark by faith, because he feared the hidden judgment of God of which he had been admonished, as if the whole deluge was before his eyes, in which he saw the whole world immersed. (Hebrews 11:7.) Although, therefore, God conceals his hand for the time, let us learn so to fear the whole of his instructions that delay may not lead us into such sloth as this.

Now he adds, Thou shalt tell them, therefore, thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I will make this proverb cease from the land of Israel Here God shows that his anger was more and more inflamed by their contempt. And the impious, by pretending that he is not true to his word, produce the effect of hastening the accomplishment of those judgments which otherwise God was prepared to suspend. Lastly, the impious stimulate God to exercise his vengeance, while they infer that they have escaped through delay, and that the vision was so fleeting and evanescent that they provoke him purposely to a contest. For the confirmation of this sentiment follows directly, that verily the days were approaching. Since time gave the Jews confidence in escape from punishment, God announces that the end was at hand, that they may feel themselves to have been too long blinded while they abused his continued forbearance. The days then approached: also the word of every vision: ``the word'' is here taken for the ``effect.'' We know that {דבר}, deber, is often taken for ``thing,'' ``business,'' ``result;'' but in this place the Prophet takes the word for the effect of the vision, as if he had said, that whatever the Prophets had spoken should be firm and stable. It follows ---

Ezekiel 12:24

24. For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel.

24. Quia non erit amplius omnis visio [265] mendacii, [266] et divinatio blandientis in medio domus Israel.

Here God deprives the Jews of another source of confidence; for they flattered themselves, and had their own agitators, that is false Prophets, who puffed them up with flatteries: hence when they heard prophecies of sadness they despised them, and afterwards hardened themselves as if the Prophets had frightened them needlessly. Every one was too much inclined to this besotted confidence, but, as I have said, enticements were added, by which the flatterers deceived them. For the false Prophets said, that God would not be so severe, and that those predictions about the destruction of the city and temple were at variance with many promises. We see then that the Prophets were despised by the voluntary contumacy of the people, and also by the perverse acts of the false Prophets. Afterwards God asserted, that the days approached: now he adds, that there should be no more vision of vanity, not that the false Prophets were altogether removed, but because their mouth was stopped, since the event had proved their wickedness. Since then the people were made ashamed by slaughter, in this sense and for this reason it is said, that prophecies of vanity must be taken away: afterwards, divination of flattery from the midst of the house of Israel For in ease and shade they promised themselves a prosperous delivery from their miseries. For when the people were dragged out of the city into exile, some were slain, others spoiled of their fortunes and treated ignominiously, then the character of those Prophets appeared who had nursed the perverse confidence of the people by their vain enticements. Now we understand the Prophet's genuine sense. It follows ---

Ezekiel 12:25

25. For I am the LORD: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord GOD.

25. Quia ego Iehovah loquar: quod loquar verbum, faciam; [267] non protrahetur amplius, quia in diebus vestris domus exasperans, [268] quod loquar verbum, faciam illud, dicit Dominator Iehovah.

He confirms the last verse. there is some obscurity in the context of the words, but as to the general sense, the Prophet wishes to teach simply that what even God had spoken should be shortly accomplished, since God wishes to assert his own fidelity by the execution of the vengeance which he had threatened by his servants. The Prophet here means, that it is not right to separate God's word from its effect, because God who speaks is not divided against himself. Whenever he opens his mouth, he stretches out his hand to fulfill his words. Now we understand the Prophet's meaning; and hence we may collect the usefulness of this teaching. For, because God's word seems cold to us and to be dissipated into air, we must always consider his hand. Whenever the Prophets speak, let God come before our eyes, and let him come not merely with bare words, but armed with his power, as if his hand was in

[265] That is, “any vision.” — Calvin.
[266] Or, “vanity.” — Calvin.
[267] “The copula is not redundant.” — Calvin
[268] Or, “rebellious.” — Calvin.

some way included in his word. This is the meaning of the whole verse, I Jehovah will utter a word, and whatever I shall utter that will I do: it shall be no lower delayed, but, as I have often said, it shall return, nay in your days, O rebellious house, I will do what I have spoken by my servants. Here he expresses what might yet appear doubtful. For since a thousand years are with God as one day, the time might be thought near, even if the city had not been taken and destroyed with the temple for thirty years. But now God, after the manner of men, defines the time to be near, because those who were then alive should see the accomplishment of the prophecies which they had despised. It follows ---

Ezekiel 12:26-28

26. Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

26. Et fuit sermo Iehovae ad me, dicendo,

27. Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off.

27. Fill hominis, ecce domus Israel dicunt, [269] visio quam hic vidit, ad dies multos extenditur, et in tempora longinqua ipse prophetat.

28. Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord GOD.

28. Propterea dices ad cos, Sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, non prorogabitur amplius; omnes sermones quos locutus fuero, sermonem etiam faciam, [270] dicit Dominator Iehovah.

Here indeed such detestable blasphemy as we lately heard is not condemned in the Jews: but oblique ridicule, the tendency of which was first of all to weaken all confidence in Prophecy, and then to get rid of all heavenly doctrine. Those who are now condemned by the Prophet did not dare to bluster against God with swollen cheeks, but when others concluded the Prophecies to be vain and frivolous, because the time was put off, they said --- it may happen that God will accomplish what he has denounced against us by his servant: meanwhile let us feast securely as we shall be dead before these things can happen. We see, therefore, that there were two classes of men: some who utterly rejected God's Prophets, and wantonly derided their threats: this gross impiety has been already exposed. But others neither openly nor distinctly pronounced God to be a liar, but put far away from them the performance of the prophetic announcement. We see that the former were so abandoned, that they all but openly derided God, so as to turn away all fear from their own feelings since God prorogued the time. For Jeremiah had spent his strength in vain for many years in daily summoning them by a loud trumpet to God's tribunal, and in setting the Chaldeans before their eyes. Since he effected nothing, Ezekiel is chosen, and after he has inveighed against a fouler impudence in despising God, he now attacks the hypocrite who had not yet proceeded so far as to vilify God by the use of words. But as I have just remarked, the gliding down from this security to open contempt of God is easy. Those then who feign themselves quiet and without

[269] "Saying. — Calvin.

[270] Or, "I will fulfill." — Calvin.

danger, since God patiently delays his judgments, at length determine him to be content with his own ease, and not to regard human affairs. Let us then be on our guard against the snares of Satan; and not only abhor the foul blasphemy of which the Prophet speaks, but as soon as God threatens us, let us prevent his judgment, and not promise ourselves a long period of escape, which may render us so stupid as to deprive us of all fear.

The house of Israel then said, he prophesies for many days. They did not openly assert that Ezekiel was speaking rashly and arrogating to himself the prophetic name, but they said that he prophesied for many days and a long period. Now he adds, thou shalt say unto them, it shall not be any lower put off Some thus interpret these words --- all my discourses shall not be put off. They prefer a change of number, and resolve it thus --- each of my words shall not be put. off. But the other view seems to suit the context better: it shall not be put off any lower, for the words which I utter I will execute Here again he confirms what we formerly saw: that God would not speak in vain, since he is not divided in opinion. It belongs to men to lie, and to utter vainly what they cannot perform, and to change their; nothing of the kind ought to be imagined of God, for his hand is always in union with his speech. [271]

PRAYER.

Grant us, Almighty God, since thou sparest us in some degree, and meanwhile dost admonish us by no obscure signs of thine anger, to be wise in time, lest sloth seize upon our minds and dispositions, and deprive us of sound judgment: Grant also that we may be attentive to thy words, and to all proofs of thy coming vengeance, and may we so strive to be reconciled to thee, that for the future being born again of thy Spirit, we may henceforth glorify thy name through Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen

[271] The reader may profitably peruse the comment of CEcolampadius on this chapter. He spiritualizes it more than Calvin, and treats it allegorically, thus giving it a personal and practical bearing on ourselves. He says, “Unica et perpetua allegoria est, propter contemptum verbi Dei instare captivitatem conscientiarum, et alienationem a Jerusalem, a vero Dei cultu, qui est iu spiritu et veritate; unde servilia opera peccatorum in sabbatismo Christi vetantur.” His explanations are always sound, and his practical reflections very instructive.

Ezekiel 13

CHAPTER 13

Lecture Thirty-Fourth.

Ezekiel 13:1-3

1. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

1. Et fuit sermo Iehovae ad me, dicendo,

2. Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say you unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear you the word of the LORD;

2. Fili hominis, prophetiza contra prophetas Israel prophetizantes, et dic prophetizantibus ex corde suo, Audite sermonem Iehovah.

3. Thus says the Lord GOD, Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!

3. Sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, Vae super prophetas stultos [272] qui ambulant post spiritum suum: et non viderunt.

He speaks of the exiled prophets, as will be evident from the context: for among the captives there were those who assumed the name of God, boasting themselves endowed with the prophetic spirit: but meanwhile they intruded into the office, and then vainly boasted in their deceptions. But the end which they proposed to themselves was to promise the people a speedy return, and so to will the favor of the multitude. For the captives were already almost broken-hearted by weariness: and seventy years was a long period. When therefore they heard of returning after three years, they easily suffered themselves to be deceived by such blandishments. But although God is so vehemently enraged against those impostors, it does not therefore follow that when he charges them with their crime, he absolves the people, or even extenuates their fault. Nor could the people object that they were deceived

[272] Or, "disgraceful." — Calvin.

by those falsehoods, since they willingly and knowingly threw themselves into the snare. They were not destitute of true prophets; and God had distinguished his servants from false prophets by well-known marks, so that no one could mistake except willfully. (Deuteronomy 13:3.) But in the midst of light they blinded themselves, and so God suffered them to be deceived. But that was the just reward of their pride, since they could not be subject to God and his servants. Then when they thought enticements, as is evident from many passages, God also gave the reins to Satan, that there should be a lying spirit in the mouth of all the prophets. Micah reproves them because they desired prophets to be given them who should promise large grape-gatherings and a plentiful harvest, (Micah 2:11;) meanwhile, when God chastised them severely, they roared and were tumultuous. We see, therefore, that while God inveighs so sharply against false prophets, the people's fault was not diminished; but rather each thought thus to reason with himself --- if God spares not our prophets, what better have we to hope for?

When therefore the Prophet turns his discourse to the false prophets, there is no doubt of his intention to reprove the whole people for attending to such fallacies while they despised the true doctrine, and not only so, but even rejected it with fury. Say therefore to the prophets of Israel while prophesying, say to those prophesying out of their own hearts. Here he concedes the name of prophets of Israel to those who thrust themselves forward, and rashly boasted that they were commanded to utter their own imaginations, or what the devil had suggested. For then indeed no others thought to have been lawfully reckoned prophets, unless divinely chosen. But because the wicked seized upon this title, they are often called prophets, though God's Spirit is a complete stranger to them: but the gift of prophecy can only flow from that one fountain. This great struggle then happened when the prophets, or those who assumed the title, engaged with hostility among themselves: for we are commanded to acquiesce in God's truth alone: but when he is offered to us instead of truth, what can we do but fluctuate and at length engage in conflict? There is no doubt, then, that weak minds were thus vehemently shaken when they saw contests and dissension's of this kind between prophets. At this day God wishes to prove the fidelity of his people by such an experiment, and to detect the hypocrisy of the multitude. For, as Paul says, there must be heresies, that those who are approved may be made manifest. (1 Corinthians 11:19.) God therefore does not rashly permit so much license to Satan's ministers, that they should petulantly rise up against sound doctrine: nor yet without a cause does he permit the Church to be torn asunder by diverse opinions, and fictions to grow so strong sometimes, that truth itself is buried under them: he wishes indeed in this way to prove the constancy of the pious, and at the same time to detect the lightness of hypocrites who are tossed about by every wind. Meanwhile, if the contention which we now perceive between those who boast themselves pastors of the Church disturbs us, let this example come to mind, and thus novelty will not endanger our faithfulness. What we suffer the ancients have experienced, namely, the disturbance of the Church by intestine disputes, and a similar tearing asunder of the bond of unity.

Next, God briefly defines who the false prophets are; namely, those who prophesy

out of their own hearts: he will afterwards add, they have seen nothing, they only boast in the name of God, and yet they are not sent by him. The same thing is expressed in various ways, but I shall treat other forms of speech in their own places. Here, as I have said, we may readily decide at once who are the true and who the false prophets: the Spirit of God pronounces every one who prophesies from his own heart to be an impostor. Hence nothing else remains but for the prophets faithfully to utter whatever the Spirit has dictated to them. Whoever, therefore, has no sure testimony to his vision, and cannot truly testify that he speaks from God's mouth and by the revelation of his Spirit, although he may boast in the title of prophet, yet he is only an impostor. For God here rejects all who speak from their own heart. And hence we also gather the extreme vanity of the human mind: for God puts a perpetual distinction between the human mind and the revelation of his Spirit. If this be so, it follows that what men utter of themselves is a perverse fiction, because the Spirit of God claims to himself alone, as we have said, the office of showing what is true and right. It follows ---

Woe to, the foolish or disgraceful prophets {נבל}, nebel, signifies ``a vile person,'' ``a castaway,'' just as {נבלה}, nebeleh, means ``foulness,'' ``crime,'' ``wickedness,'' although {נבל}, nebel, is oftener taken for folly, and I willingly embrace this sense as it is generally received. He calls false prophets foolish, because they doubtless fiercely insulted the true servants of God --- just like upstarts puffed up with wonderful self-conceit; for the devil, who reigns in them, is the father of pride: hence they carry themselves haughtily, arrogate all things to themselves, and wish to be thought angels come down from heaven. And when Paul speaks of human fictions, he grants them the form of wisdom. (Colossians 2:23.) Hence there is no doubt that these pretenders of whom Ezekiel speaks were held in great esteem, and so, when swollen with bombast, they puffed forth surprising wisdom; but meanwhile the Holy Spirit shortly pronounces them fools: for whatever pleases the world under the mask of wisdom, we know to be mere folly before God.

Now he adds, who walk after their own spirit, without seeing any thing: that is, when no vision has been given them. Ezekiel explains himself more clearly, or rather the Spirit who spoke through him. As, therefore, he has lately condemned all who prophesy out of their own mind or heart, --- for the noun ``heart'' is here used for ``intellect,'' as in other places, --- as, therefore, the Spirit has lately condemned all such, so he says that those who walk after their own spirit wickedly abuse the prophetic office. He here alludes to the prophetic gift when he speaks of ``spirit.'' For, because they might object that false prophets did not speak from their own heart, but had secret revelations, he concedes to them the use of the word ``spirit'' by a rhetorical figure, [273] and thus refutes their boasting, as if Ezekiel had said that those fictitious revelations are mere fancies: they have indeed something in them more than common, but still they are fanatics. This then is the sense of the word ``spirit.'' Meanwhile there is no doubt that he repeats what he lately saw, and the contrast removes all doubt. Without seeing any thing, says he: thus vision is

[273] Calvin uses the Greek word {καταχρηστικῶς}, meaning in rhetoric the use of a word in a sense different from its natural one. Catachresis is the grammatical term, implying the use of terms in their ``non-natural'' sense. The French has ``neantmoins que ce soit improprentent.''

opposed to the human heart and spirit; but what is vision but a supernatural gift? When, therefore, God raises his servants above the capacity of human ability, and makes them discern what no mortal power can bestow, that is a vision; and if a vision is removed, nothing will remain but the spirit or heart of man. Hence those who cannot really show that their utterance is evidently inspired, shall be compelled to confess that they speak of their own minds. It follows ---

Ezekiel 13:4

4. O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts.

4. Tanquam vulpes in locis solitaries prophetae tui, Israel, fuerunt.

Hence Ezekiel exposes the snares of the false prophets. The ten tribes had been dispersed, just as if a field or a vineyard had been removed from a habitable neighborhood into desert regions, and foxes held their sway there instead. For they have many hiding-places; they insinuate themselves through hedges and all openings, and so break into the vineyard or field, and lay waste its fruits. Such, as I have said, was the condition of the people from the time of its dispersion. While the Israelites dwelt at home, they were in some way retained within their duty, as if fortified by certain ramparts. At Jerusalem, too, the high Priest presided over spiritual trials, that no impious doctrine should creep in: but now, since the people were so dispersed, greater license was given to the false prophets to corrupt the people, since the miserable exiles were exposed to these foxes; for they were liable to injuries just as if desert regions surrounded them. Being thus destitute of protection, it was easy for foxes to enter by clandestine arts, and to destroy whatever good fruits existed. Meanwhile Ezekiel obliquely reproves the people's carelessness. Although they were dispersed, and were so open to the snares of the false prophets, yet they thought to have been attentive and cautious, and God would doubtless have afforded them aid, as he promises to his people the spirit of discretion and judgment whenever they need it. (1 Corinthians 12:10.) But when the Israelites were wandering exiles, and attention to the law no longer flourished among them, it came to pass that foxes, meaning their false prophets, easily entered. Whence it follows that the people were not free from faults, since they exposed themselves to the snares of these false prophets. It follows ---

Ezekiel 13:5

5. You have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD.

5. Non ascendistis ad rupturas [274] neque sepiverunt sepem super domum Israel ad standum in praelio in die Iehovae.

Hence he pursues the same sentiment, but presses the false prophets harder. He has said generally that they were sacrilegious, making a false use of God's name when speaking entirely in their own. He now separates them by another mark from the approved and faithful servants of God, namely, they had not gone up into the breach, nor built up a hedge to protect the house of Israel, that they might stand in the battle in the day of Jehovah. This verse is variously explained: some refer what is here said to prayer; others twist it according to different imaginations, but I restrict it

[274] Or, "breaks." — Calvin.

to their teaching. [275] Ezekiel not only blames their inner and hidden perfidy, he not only strikes their minds, so as to convince them that they had no desire for piety, and no zeal for God's glory, but he shows that their teaching must be altogether rejected, because they did not propose to themselves the right object. But what is the mark at which all God's servants thought to aim? Surely to consult the public safety; and when they see signs of God's wrath, to meet them, and prevent the urgent calamity. These impostors saw the people not only impious, but rebellious, so that there was no hope of their repentance. On the other hand, they saw God threatening; and although they were blind, yet they could behold the signs of God's reproaching vengeance. Hence it was their duty to go up to the breaches. Hence, also, we understand what the Prophet means by ``breaches,'' namely, as an approach is open to an enemy to storm a city when a breach is made in the wall, so also, when the iniquity of the people overflows like a deluge, a rupture is already made, by means of which God's wrath is able to penetrate immediately, and to lay everything waste till it is reduced to nothing.

As often, then, as we see God offended by the people's wickedness, let us learn that a breach has been made, as if we had been destined to destruction. Hence those who desire to discharge the office of teaching faithfully ought to hasten to the breach, to recall the people from their impiety, and to exhort them to repentance. Thus the wall becomes restored, because God is appeased, and we are able to rest in quietness and security. What follows has the same object --- they have not restored the hedge. For when a people breaks through all rights, and violates God's law, it is just as if they laid themselves bare in every part from the protection of God, as Moses reproves them when speaking of the molten calf: Behold, says he, this day you are naked; that is, because they had hurled themselves into destruction. (Exodus 32:25.) So the Prophet says that these traitors did not run up to restore the hedge when the house of Israel was exposed to robbers, thieves, and wild beasts, because it was no longer protected by the hand of God. What follows has the same object, that they should stand in the battle in the day of the Lord; that is, to oppose themselves to God's vengeance. This relates to prayers, when mention is made of Phinehas, in Psalm 106:30, and also in the same psalm, Psalm 106:23, where it is said of Moses, Unless Moses had stood in the breach to turn away God's wrath. Here also, as I have said, the Prophet looks rather to doctrine. For here he sharply rebukes the folly of false prophets who had promised wonderful things. Now, when God approached in earnest, all their prophecies vanished: he says, therefore, they stood not in the battle in the day of Jehovah; for, if they had diligently exhorted the people to repentance, those sinners had reconciled God to themselves: for we turn aside his judgment beforehand when we turn to him in time, as Paul teaches. (1 Corinthians 11:31.) If, therefore, the people had been thus diligently advised, they had stood in the battle; that is, their teaching would have been a bulwark against the breaking out of God's wrath to destroy them utterly. Now, therefore, we see the meaning of Ezekiel, namely, to show how the fallacies of the false prophets could be

[275] CEeolampadius takes a different view: he says, “principibus et prophetis juxta quadrat: eorum est animam ponere pro ovibus contra pseudoprophets.” he then quotes John 10, “Vident lupum venientem et fugiunt.” The remainder of his comment on this verse is worthy of perusal.

perceived, since by their blandishments and flatteries they destroyed the people,. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 13:6

6. They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word.

6. Viderunt vanitatem, divinarunt mendacium, dicentes, dicit Iehovah, et non misit eos Iehovah: et sperare fecerunt [276] ad stabihendum sermonem.

Here again he pronounces generally that those false prophets were vain, and this assertion depends upon the principle that they had spoken from their own heart or spirit, for nothing false or vain can proceed from God. It follows, therefore, that they are here condemned of vanity and lying, because they dared falsely to use the name of God when they uttered nothing but their own dreams. He now confirms what we saw in the last verse, when he says, they hoped to establish their word. Hence they puffed up the people with vain hope, when they said that God would not be so severe as to exact continual punishment of the holy and elect nation. True prophets also often recall sinners to the mercy of God, and magnify it so, that those who wrestle with despair may not doubt God's long-suffering, since he is said to be slow to anger, and inclined to reconciliation; and his pity endures for a life, while his anger passes away in a moment. (Numbers 14:18; Psalm 103:8, and Psalm 30:5.) True prophets indeed act thus; but they join two members which must not be separated, otherwise God himself would be, as it were, dissipated. [277] Hence, when true prophets exhort sinners to hope and predict God's freeness to pardon, they likewise discourse about penitence; they do not indulge sinners, but rouse them, nay, wound them sharply with a sense of God's anger, so as in some way to stir them up, since God's mercy is set before us for that end, that by it we may seek life. Hence we must be dead in ourselves; but false prophets sever between the two, and divide God, as it were, in half, since they speak only of his freeness to forgive, and declare his clemency to be set before all, while they are profoundly silent about repentance. Now, therefore, we see why the Prophet here reproves these traitors [278] who abused the name of God, since they made the people to hope. Without hope, indeed, the sinner could not be animated to seek God: but they promised peace, as he will say directly, when there was no peace. Therefore let us proceed with the exposition.

Ezekiel 13:7

7. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas you say, The LORD saith it; albeit I have not spoken?

7. An non visionem vanitatis vidistis? et divinationem mendacii locuti estis? Et loquentes [279] dicit Iehovah: ego non fueram locutus?

Here God shows why he had formerly pronounced that they brought forward nothing but vanity and falsehood, namely, because they used his name falsely, and out

[276] Others translate, "to be hoped for;" but the word is here taken transitively. — Calvin.

[277] Dissipetur: The French has "fust luy-mesme deschire par picces."

[278] Calvin's Latin is nebulones; the French translation "belistres;" the familiar English "rascals."

[279] Verbally, that is, "by saying." — Calvin.

of light created darkness; for by the feint of speaking in God's name, they darkened men's minds. That sacred name is, as it were, a fount of splendor, so as far to surpass the light of the sun; nay, whatever light exists, is made apparent and refulgent by it. But, as I have said, the servants of Satan turn light, into darkness, because they audaciously boast that God has said so. This passage and similar ones show us how diligently we ought to guard against Satan's fallacies. This is their astounding boldness to bring forward God's name while they so wantonly trifle with his judgments. For to boast that God has spoken is as if we wished, by impious profanation, purposely to draw him into a dispute. For how can God bear us to turn his truth into lie? But there have been impostors in all ages who have thus thoughtlessly flown in the face of God. We are not surprised at the heathen doing so; but in the chosen people, it was certainly an incredible prodigy and an intolerable disgrace, when they had access to all heavenly doctrine for the guidance of their conduct, and when God was daily calling forth prophets, as he had promised by Moses, to see these impious dogs who barked so, and you pretended so proudly to speak in God's name. (Deuteronomy 18:15-18.) Admonished, then, by this caution, let us be on our guard when we see Satan's servants endued with such arrogance. It follows ---

Ezekiel 13:8-9

8. Therefore thus says the Lord GOD; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord GOD.

8. Propterea sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, eo quod locuti estis vanitatem, et vidistis mendacium, [280] propterea ecce ego contra eos, dicit Dominator Iehovah.

9. And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and you shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

9. Et erit manus mea contra prophetas qui vident vanitatem, et qui divinant mendacium: in consilio populi mei non erunt, et in scriptura [281] domus Israel non scribentur: et ad terram Israel non redibunt: et cognoscitis quod ego Dominator Iehovah.

Here at length he begins to pronounce judgment against the false prophets. Hitherto, under the form of a complaint, he shows how wickedly they had corrupted and profaned his sacred name: then how impiously they had rendered prophecies contemptible by their lies, and how cruel they were to the people whose safety ought to be their first care, and how they drew on the miserable to destruction. For after God has so narrated their sins, he now denounces punishment; and, first, generally he says that he was their adversary. This clause is by no means superfluous, since such carelessness would not have besotted the impious, unless they thought themselves free from all dealings with God; hence they utterly reject all fear and sin with freedom. But this could not happen, unless they determined that God either sleeps, or does not behold human affairs or trifles as they do. Since, therefore, false prophets very licentiously corrupt God's word, when they pretend it to be a pleasant sport; God, on the other hand, pronounces Himself their adversary; as if he said, your con-

[280] There is a change of expression here, since he had formerly said, "you have spoken a divination of falsehood and have seen a vision of vanity." — Calvin.

[281] That is, "in the catalogue." — Calvin.

test shall not be with men, but I will be the avenger of so wicked a profanation of my name.

Besides, he afterwards points out the punishment; my hand, says he, shall be against the prophets. For although God threatens to become an adversary to the reprobate, yet this is not sufficient to terrify them, they are so stupid. But it is necessary to use another stimulus, namely, that God should display his power. This is the reason why he now adds, his hand should be against the false prophets. The hand is sometimes taken for a blow: but because God sees the impious torpid amidst their sins, he says that he would not only be their enemy and an avenger of his glory, but he brings forward his own hand into the midst. It follows, they shall not be in the counsel of my people. Some explain the noun {סוד}, sod, more subtlety than they need for that experience of God which is offered to the elect for their salvation. But this explanation is forced, for they are deceived in thinking that the Prophet's meaning is different in the second clause, where he adds, they shall not be written in the list of the house of Israel: he repeats the same thing in different words: in the first place he had said, they should not be in the secret of the people: for {סוד}, sod, signifies a secret, but it is taken for counsel: they shall not be therefore in the assembly of the people: afterwards he adds, they shall not be in the catalogue of the house of Israel. He mentions a catalogue, because judges and others elected to any office were written in a list. We see, therefore, what the Prophet intends --- for I am compelled to break off here --- namely, that those impostors who wished to enjoy the prophetic title, were altogether without the Church, since God had cast them off.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since we are so torpid in our vices that excitements are daily necessary to rouse us up, first, that our destined pastors may faithfully call us to repentance; then, that we in our turn may be so attentive to their exhortations, and so suffer ourselves to be condemned, that we may be our own judges: Grant also, that when you chastise us severely, the taste of thy paternal goodness may never be so lost to us, so that a way may always be open to us to seek reconciliation in Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Thirty-Fifth.

We explained yesterday what the Prophet meant when he pronounces that the impostors who deceived the people should not be in the counsel of the pious nor in their catalogue, and we said that this was twice repeated. Now the question arises, did the Prophet speak of the secret election of God, or only of an external state? For although these traitors were at the greatest distance from the Church, yet we know that they boasted in a common title like Ishmael, who, until he was cast out of his father's house, proudly boasted in his right of birth. (Genesis 21:9.) And at this day, we see how the Papists claim to themselves the name of ``the Church,'' since they pretend to the perpetual succession: and truly we are compelled to confess that the ordinary ministry is with them. But because they have tyrannically abused their power, and have altogether overthrown that method of governing the Church

which the Lord had appointed, we may safely laugh at their boastings. [282] There was the same haughtiness in the false prophets of old, who asserted that they held no mean rank among the people, because they were created prophets by God. Hence, therefore, we gather that these words are not used of any external state, because a place among the elect people was always conceded to them. Without doubt, then, we must understand the contrast between the true members of the Church and hypocrites, who pretend to the name of God. And for this reason it is said in Psalm 15:2, as well as Psalm 24:4, that not all who go up to the mount of God have a perpetual seat there, unless they are pure in heart and hand. The sum of the whole then is, although false prophets thunder forth their boasts with inflated cheeks, and claim the prophetic name, yet they thought not to be reckoned in that rank, as they are altogether without the elect people.

But a second question arises out of this. If the Prophet denies their right to be included in the council of the pious, he ought not to speak in the future tense: because as God's election is eternal, so his sons were written in the book of life before the creation of the world. But he says they shall not be written, and this seems absurd. But Ezekiel here accommodates his language to the usual custom of mankind. The language of the psalm is harsher: let them be blotted from the book of life, since they are not written among the just. (Psalm 69:28.) For it cannot happen that he who is once written in the book of life can ever be blotted out. But in the second clause the Prophet explains himself --- that they be not written with the just; that is, that they be not written in the catalogue of the just. So also Ezekiel now says: they shall not be in the secret of my people, and they shall not be written in the writing of the house of Israel: because for a time they seemed to be in the number of the pious: hence a change of expression is here used, but only in accommodation to the rudeness of our mind.

This passage is useful in this sense. The Holy Spirit admonishes us that it is not sufficient to suppose men members of the Church because the greater number seem to excel others, just as the chaff is above the wheat and suffocates it: thus hypocrites bury the sons of God whose number is small, while they shine forth in their own splendor, and their multitude makes them seem exclusively worthy of the title of the Church. Hence let us learn to examine ourselves, and to search whether those interior marks by which God distinguishes his children from strangers belong to us, viz., the living root of piety and faith. This passage also teaches that nothing is more formidable than to be rejected from God's flock. For no safety is to be hoped for, except as God collects us into one body under one head. First, all safety resides in Christ alone; and then we cannot be separated from Christ without falling away from all hope of safety: but Christ will not and cannot be torn from his Church with which he is joined in all indissoluble knot, as the head to the body. Hence, unless we cultivate unity with the faithful, we see that we are cut off from Christ: hence I said that nothing was more to be feared than that separation of which mention is here

[282] The subject of “the perpetual succession” being so fully discussed in the present day, this admission of Calvin’s is worthy of notice. The Latin has ordinarium ministerium: the French, “le ministere ordinaire.” The reasons which he gives for rejecting such pretensions would be deemed by many unsatisfactory.

made. On the other hand, it is said in Psalm 106:4, Remember me, O God, in thy good will towards thy people: visit me with thy salvation. When the author of the Psalm prays in this way, he at the same time acknowledges that our true and solid happiness is placed in the Lord's embracing us with the rest of the faithful. For God's good will towards his people is that fatherly kindness by which he embraces his own elect. If, therefore, God thinks us worthy of that fatherly favor, then we have a sure confidence of safety.

Afterwards he adds, And they shall not return to the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am Jehovah. Ezekiel here places an outward mark as the sign of reprobation, since, while a free return was permitted to others, these were excluded. Hence Ezekiel signifies that God's anger would be manifest in the case of false prophets by their exclusion from the benefits common to the people. For when God shall open the door, and promulgate an edict concerning a free return: they shall remain exiles, and shall never enjoy that native country to which they boasted that they should in a short time return. He confirms then by an outward symbol what he has already said about reprobation. For although many died in exile who were real members of the Church, as Daniel and his allies, and many others, yet., as far as these deceivers were concerned, it was a sure sign of their rejection that they boasted of their speedy return to their country. Since, therefore, they were deprived of that advantage, God openly shows that they were unworthy of being reckoned among the elect people. It follows ---

Ezekiel 13:10-11

10. Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered, morter:

10. Propterea et propterea [283] quod deceperunt populum meum dicendo, pax et non erat pax: et ipse aedificavit parietem, et ecce ipsi leverunt ipsum insipido.

11. Say unto them which daub it with untempered morter, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it.

11. Dic ad linentes insipido, cadet: [284] erit pluvia vel imber inundans: et dabo lapides grandinis, [285] et spiritus turbinum vel tempestatum scindet vel disrumpet

Here Ezekiel pursues the same metaphor which he had used with a very slight difference, for there is such an agreement that the connection is apparent between the former and the present sentence. He had said that the false prophets did not go up to the breaches, and did not restore the hedges of the house of Israel: we have explained these words thus --- teachers who discharge their duties honestly and sincerely are like builders, who, if they see a breach in a wall, instantly and carefully repair it: they are like gardeners who do not allow either a field or a vineyard to be exposed to wild beasts. As, then, he had formerly said that these false prophets did not go up to the breach through their not being affected by the dispersion of the

[283] The repetition is emphatic. — Calvin.

[284] The copula is superfluous. — Calvin.

[285] Others translate “and you hailstones shall fall;” others take it transitively, “you shall cause to fall;” ’but we must explain it either “they shall fall,” or “cause to fall.” — Calvin.

people, but knowingly and willingly betrayed the people's safety through open and gross perfidy; so also he now says, that they built a wall indeed, but without mortar. The word {תפל}, thephel, ``untempered,'' is variously explained, but I doubt not the Prophet meant sand without lime. Jerome thinks it to be mortar without chaff; but my view is better, namely, that they built only in appearance; and in this the image which the Prophet now uses differs from the preceding one. He had said before, they did not go up to the breach; he now grants them more --- that they really built; but it is easy to reconcile the two assertions: since they did not go up to the breach to provide safety for the people; and yet they feigned themselves anxious, and seemed as if they wished to restore the ruins. But while the Prophet merely grants their intention, he adds that they were bad builders, just as if any one should heap together a quantity of sand, and moisten it with water, yet it would profit him nothing; for the sand disperses by itself, and grows solid by lime alone, and thus becomes cement. Therefore the Prophet means that those impostors accomplish nothing seriously; and when they show great anxiety and care, that is in vain, because they only heap up sand and dust when they ought to temper the mortar with sand and lime. We understand then how these two places mutually agree: because, even because they have deceived my people: this is without a figure. Now he adds figuratively, they have built up a wall, but they have daubed it only with untempered mortar, that is, sand.

The kind of fallacies are now mentioned: because they said, Peace, when there was no peace. We yesterday reminded you that impostors have something in common with God's true servants, just as Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:14.) We know that all the prophets were always messengers of peace: now this agrees chiefly with the good news, How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace. (Isaiah 52:7; Romans 10:15.) Whenever God commends his own word, he adds its character of peace. For when he is justly at enmity with us, there is one way of reconciliation and remission of sin. This springs from the preaching of the gospel. The prophets formerly discharged this duty; and when these impostors strove to deceive the people, they stripped off their masks and deceived the simple through the difficulty of discerning between themselves and the true servants of God. And yet, as we said yesterday, no one could be deceived except through their own fault. For God, indeed, offers us peace, and invites us to reconciliation by his own prophets; but on this condition, that we make war with our own lusts. This, then, is one way of being at peace with God by becoming enemies to ourselves, and fighting earnestly against the depraved and vicious desires of the flesh. But how do false prophets preach peace? Why! so that miserable and abandoned men may sleep in the midst of their sins. We must diligently attend, then, to this difference, that we may safely embrace the peace which is offered us by true prophets, and be on our guard against the snares of those who fallaciously flatter us with peace, because under promise of reconciliation they foment hostilities between God and ourselves.

How, then, can it happen that we can be at rest while God is opposed to us? Thou shalt say, therefore, to those who daub with untempered mortar, it shall fall. Here the Spirit signifies that the false prophets should be subject to the greatest ridicule,

when they shall be convicted by the event, and their is shall be proved by clear proof. Hence, also, we may gather the utility of the doctrine which Paul teaches, that we must stand bravely when God gives the reins to impostors to disturb or disperse the Church. They shall not proceed any further, says he. (2 Timothy 3:9.) He says elsewhere in the same epistle, (2 Timothy 3:13,) They shall wax worse and worse; that is, as far as God pleases to be patient with them. But meanwhile the end is at hand, when the Lord shall shame all the impious false prophets, and detect their ignorance, rashness, and audacity, because they dared to use his name in offering peace to the reprobate. Thou shalt say, therefore, the wall shall fall. He speaks here of doctrine. There shall be an overflowing shower, says he --- a desolating rain. Here the Spirit signifies that there shall be a violent concussion which shall disperse all the artifices of the false prophets, and detect their frauds, when the Lord should bring on the Chaldaeans, and deliver the city to them. Hence the same meaning is intended by the shower, by stones, by the rush of a whirlwind, but it was necessary to express the same thing in many ways, because the Israelites had grown torpid through their fallacies, and willingly seized upon what the false prophets said --- that God would be propitious to them. After he had mentioned the shower, he goes on to hailstones. The more probable reading is, Ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; unless perhaps it is better to take the verb {תפלנה}, thephelneh, transitively, as I am inclined to do, ye shall make fall. This apostrophe is emphatic, because God addresses the stones themselves, and thereby obliquely reproves the sloth of those who thought to escape in safety through their blandishments. When God, therefore, addresses the stones, he doubtless reproaches the Israelites for hardening themselves so completely. He adds the violence of whirlwinds, or of tempests, in the same sense. The violence of the whirlwinds, then, shall break down or overthrow the wall. In conclusion, Ezekiel teaches that the doctrine of the false prophets had no need of any other refutation, that the arrival of the Chaldaeans, and their boasting, is like a storm and whirlwind to devastate the whole land: and thus he derides those praters who used their tongues so audaciously: he says that those strangers should come to refute these lies, not by words only, but by a violent attack. It follows ---

Ezekiel 13:12

12. Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it?

12. Et ecce cadet paries, [286] annon dicetur ad vos, ubi litura [287] quam levistis.

He confirms the last sentence, namely, that the false prophets would be a laughing-stock to all when their prophecies and divinations came to nothing, for the event would show them to be liars. For when the city was taken it sufficiently appeared that they were the devil's ministers of deceit, for they were trained in wickedness and boldness when they put forth the name of God. Now the Prophet teaches that a common proverb would arise when the wall fell; for by saying, shall

[286] That is, "when the wall shall have fallen:" we must understand the adverb "when." — Calvin.

[287] Some translate lenimentum or linimentum: grammatically it thought to be litio; but although good Latin authors do not use the word litura here for "daubing," yet we express it ubi litura. — Calvin.

it not be said to them, he signifies that their folly and vanity would be completely exposed, so that this proverb should be everywhere current --- where is the daubing with which you daubed it? It follows ---

Ezekiel 13:13

13. Therefore thus says the Lord GOD; I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury, to consume it

13. Propterea sic dicit Dominator Iehovah. Cadere faciam [288] spiritum tempestatum in ira mea: et imbre inundans in ira mea: et erit imber inundans in ira mea, [289] et lapides grandinis in excandescentia ad consumptionem.

He still pursues the same sentiment; but he says he will send forth storms and hail, and a whirlwind. He formerly spoke of hail, and showers, and violent storms; but he now says, that those winds, storms, and showers should be at hand to obey him. We see, therefore, that this verse does not differ from the former, unless in God's showing more clearly that he would send forth storms, whirlwind, and hail to overthrow the empty building which the false prophets had raised. It follows ---

Ezekiel 13:14

14. So will I break down the wall that you have daubed with untempered morter, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and you shall know that I am the LORD.

14. Et evertam parietem quem levistis insipido, et projiciam in terram, et discooperietur fundamentum ejus, et cadet: et consumemini in medio ejus: et cognoscetis quod ego Iehovah.

This verse ought to be united with the other: God says, I will throw down the wall. For the false prophets had acquired so much favor, that their boasting was as much esteemed as an oracle. Hence the people were persuaded that what even these impostors dreamt was uttered by God. Since, therefore, they had so bound men's minds to themselves, the Prophet was obliged to inveigh vehemently against those impostures, since he would not have succeeded by simple language. This language, indeed, may seem superfluous; but if any one considers how greatly these miserable exiles were deluded by the false prophets, he will easily acknowledge that God does not repeat the same thing so often in vain: as in this place he brings forward nothing new; but he so inculcates what we have already seen as to confirm it. I will pull down, therefore, the wall which you have daubed with untempered mortar, and I will lay it low on the ground, and its foundation shall be uncovered, or discovered. Here the Prophet signifies that God would so lay bare the fallacies of those who had deceived the people with vain hopes, that no disguise should remain for them, but their disgrace should be plain to every one. Now, such was the shamelessness of these impostors, that if they were convicted on one point, yet they did not desist on

[288] This is the same word which he had formerly used, but it is here taken in another sense: he had formerly said, “And the spirit of tempests shall break or cut;” but he now says, “I will make it cut or break forth;” so that the sense is clearer — “therefore I will make it break forth.” — Calvin.

[289] The original words for ira are different. We may translate {,{חמה chemneh, ``burning wrath'' --- ``therefore in my burning wrath I will make the whirlwind break forth.'' --- Calvin

that account, but took credit to themselves if anything turned out more fortunately than they could expect, [290] as if they had not prophesied in vain, while a single thing came true. Since, therefore, the impious so turned their backs when God detected their folly, the Prophet adds, that the false prophets would have nothing left, because God will not only overthrow whatever they seemed to build, but he will uncover even the foundations, so that the people may understand that there was not a scruple or the least particle of truth in them.

And it shall fall, and you shall be consumed in the midst of it. He had just said that it should be ruinously consumed: hailstones, he said, should fall to consume it; by which word he understood that the final slaughter should be so severe that no hope should be left. For as long as Jerusalem stood, the Israelites always look forward to a return. But when they saw the kingdom not only weakened, but utterly destroyed, the temple overthrown, and the city ruined, whenever they heard of their dreadful dispersion, not the slightest remnant of hope survived. Now this consumption is transferred to the false prophets. As that consumption was final, and without a gleam of hope, ye shall be consumed, says he, in the midst of it, and ye shall know that I am Jehovah. He does not inculcate this particular so often in vain; but he inveighs with indignation against the wicked audacity of the false prophets, who dared so petulantly to oppose themselves to the true servants of God, and to assume his name, and to trifle with him like children. Such is the prodigious madness of mortals who dare to set themselves against God: for this reason, he says, they shall at length perceive with whom they have to do. It follows ---

Ezekiel 13:15

15. Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered morter; and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it;

15. Et complebo excandescentiam meam in pariete et linentem ipsum insipido: et dicam illis non est paries, et non sunt qui leverunt ipsum.

If the inveterate obstinacy of the people had not been known to us, Ezekiel would seem too verbose, since he might have said in a few words what he explains at such length. But if we bear in mind the perverse and refractory disposition of the people, we shall find that there was need of such continual repetition, I will fulfill, says he, my burning wrath upon the wall; that is, I will show how detestable and destructive to my people was this doctrine. Hence God fined up his anger on the wall, when he reduced to nothing all the lies of the false prophets: afterwards also he attacked them, since the mark of disgrace was attached to their characters, and this rendered their doctrine detestable: afterwards, says he, I will say, There is no wall; those who daubed it are not. When God speaks thus, he means that he will suffer the false prophets to triumph among the people for only a short time. For even to the destruction of the city and temple they always withstood God's servants with a bold forehead, as if they would thrust their horns against God and his announcements. Let us observe, then, that while Jerusalem was standing, the appearance of a wall

[290] Calvin's Latin is very cramped here. The French translation paraphrases it thus: "Mais ils repliqueront qu'il se pourra bien faire qu'il leur sera eschappe quelque chose mal a propos."

existed; for there was the prop of false doctrine, and the people fed willingly on such deceits. Their daubing, therefore, stood till it vanished with the ruin of the city, and then their vanity was proved, for God took vengeance on these insolent triflers. It follows ---

Ezekiel 13:16

16. To wit, the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, says the Lord GOD.

16. Prophetae Israel prophetarunt de Hierusalem, et viderunt ei visionem pacis, et non est pax, dicit Dominator Iehovah.

He now concludes this discourse, and shows what he had hitherto intended by a building badly cemented, by using sand without lime. The prophets of Israel prophesied concerning Jerusalem. Here he does not mean false prophets, with whom Jeremiah was continually contending, but those who in exile still hardened the wretched. While they thought to make use of the occasion, and so to humble the people who had been so grievously wounded by the hand of God, they stirred them up to pride, as we have formerly seen. Our Prophet was obliged to strive with them for the comfort of his exiles, for he was peculiarly sent to the captives, as we have said, although the advantage of his prophecies also reached Jerusalem. The prophets, those of Israel, that is, the ten tribes dispersed in different directions, prophesied concerning Jerusalem. Why then did they not rather predict a happy result? For they were reduced to extremes, and meanwhile promised victory to the Jews. And they saw a vision, for it, says he. This clause seems opposed to another, in which the Prophet says that they saw nothing. How, then, do these two things agree --- to see a vision, and yet to see nothing'? What he now says as to seeing a vision refers to their false boasting. For they were altogether without the Spirit of God, nor did they possess any revelation. Yet when they boasted themselves to be endowed with the Spirit, and many had faith in their words, the Prophet concedes to them the name of a vision, although there was none, by accommodation. He says, therefore, that they saw a vision, that is, that they boasted in one since they professed to be spiritual. As at this time the Papists deny that they utter anything out of their own minds, and say that they have all those fictions, by which they adulterate all piety, from the Holy Spirit; so these prophets said they were spiritual: and as far as the title is concerned, the Prophet grants what in reality he disallows when he adds, there was no peace when they said there was peace. Hence it appears that a vision was in their mouth united with sacrilegious boldness: yet there was no vision; because, if God had manifested anything by his Spirit, he would really have proved it as he says by Moses. (Deuteronomy 18:22.) Since, then, there was no peace, but the final overthrow of the city was at hand, it is easily collected that they saw nothing, but made false use of that sacred name of vision to acquire confidence for themselves. As to his saying there is no peace, it extends to the future. They promised peace by saying that the siege of the city was to be raised, and prosperity to await the Jews. But God, on the other hand, pronounces there should be no peace, because it will shortly be evident that Jerusalem is devoted to utter destruction.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since we do not cease to provoke thee by our sins, that we may at length consider our wretched condition, unless you govern us by thy Spirit, and subject us to thyself in true obedience: and may we so desire to be reconciled to thee, that we may not flatter ourselves, but being altogether humbled and emptied of self, may we fly to thy mercy with a true feeling of piety: and so find what is prepared for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Thirty-Sixth.

Ezekiel 13:17-18

17. Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them,

17. Et tu fliesi hominis, pone faciem tuam contra filias populi tui, quae prophetant ex corde suo: et propheta contra eas.

18. And say, Thus saith, the Lord GOD; Woe to the women that sew pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you?

18. Et dices, sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, Vae consuentibus pulvillos super omnes cubitos manus, et facientibus pepla [291] super caput omnis staturae ad venandum animas: in animas venabimini a populo meo, [292] et animas quae vobis sunt [293] vivificabitis.

WE may gather from this passage that Satan's lies were not spread among the people so much by men as by women. We know that the gift of prophecy is sometimes though rarely allowed to women, and there is no doubt that female prophets existed whenever God wished to brand men with a mark of ignominy as strongly as possible. I say as much as possible, because the sister of Moses enjoyed the prophetic gift, and this never ceased to the reproach of her brother. (Exodus 15:20.) But when Deborah and Huldah discharged the prophetic office, (Judges 4:4, and 2 Kings 22:14,) God doubtless wished to raise them on high to shame the men, and obliquely to show them their slothfulness. Whatever may be the reason, women have sometimes enjoyed the prophetic gift. And this is the meaning of Joel's second chapter, (Joel 2:28,)Your sons shall see visions and your daughters shall prophesy. There is no doubt that the Spirit transfers to the kingdom of Christ what had been customary among the ancient people. For we know that Christ's kingdom is described, or rather depicted, under the image of that government which God formerly held under the law. Since, then, certain women were gifted with the prophetic spirit, Satan, according to his custom, abused this under a false pretense. We know that he always emulates God and transforms himself into an angel of light, because if he were to show himself openly, all would instantly flee from him: hence he uses God's name deceptively, to ingratiate himself among the simple and incautious. And he not only sends forth false prophets to scatter abroad their lies and impostures, but he turns even females to the same injurious use.

[291] Or, “veils.” — Calvin.
[292] That is, “you hunt the souls of my people.” — Calvin.
[293] That is, “yours.” — Calvin.

Here we see how anxiously we ought to guard against any corruption which may creep in to contaminate the pure gifts of God. But this contest seems not to have been sufficiently honorable to the servant of God; for it was almost a matter of shame when they engaged with women. We know that those who desire praise for their bravery do not willingly engage with unequal antagonists who have no strength to resist; since there is no praise in a victory when it is too easy: so also Ezekiel could put away from him this undertaking, since it was unworthy of the prophetic office. Hence it appears, that God's servants cannot faithfully discharge the duties assigned to them, unless they strive to remove all impediments. This then is the condition of all those to whom God assigns the office of teaching, that they may oppose all false doctrines and errors, and never consider or wish for great praise from their victory: it should suffice them to assert God's truth against all Satan's devices. Thus we see Paul strove with a workman (Demetrius), (Acts 19:24,) and that was all but ridiculous: and truly he might seem not sufficiently to regard his dignity; for from the time when he saw secret things which it was not lawful for him to utter, and was carried up to the third heaven, (2 Corinthians 12:4,) when he engages in a contest with a craftsman, he seems to forget that dignity to which God had raised him. But we must remember the reason which I have mentioned, that as the duty of teaching is assigned to God's servants, so they are appointed as his avengers and defenders of the doctrine of which they are heralds. Hence if, so to speak, fleas were to come out of the earth and rail at sound doctrine, none who are influenced by a desire of edification will hesitate to contend even with those fleas. Thus the Prophet's modesty is conspicuous, because by God's command he turns to these weak women to refute even them.

It is said, then, woe to those who sew pillows or cushions; it is the same thing --- to all armholes, and to those who make covers for the head of every stature. There is no doubt that by these tricks they deluded the minds and eyes of the simple. It is evident from the law that some ceremonies are useful, since God commands nothing superfluous; but Satan by his cunning turns everything useful to man's destruction. Meanwhile we must remark that false prophets were always immoderately fond of outward signs; for since they have nothing substantial to offer, they have need of ostentation to dazzle all eyes. This then is the reason why men and women who intend to deceive, always heap together a number of ceremonies. Hence Ezekiel says, that those women had sown together pillows, and he adds, for all armholes. Whence it appears that they laid them under the armpits of those by whom they were consulted, although he afterwards seems to hint that they themselves reclined upon these pillows. But now he is treating of the people. The ancients were accustomed when they reclined at table to have cushions under their arms, though this is not our habit. But there is no doubt that they wished to represent a kind of sleep, like the foolish who consult oracles, and think themselves in ecstasies, and snatched away beyond all thoughts of this world. Then they had veils or coverings which they put over their heads. In this way imposture flourished with the Roman augurs; for they veiled their head when they wished to begin their incantations. Livy says, that the augur stood at the threshold with his head covered, and uttered these words, ``O

Jupiter, hear;'' [294] so that it is probable that veils covered the heads of those who wished to consult God, that they might be as it were separated from the world, and no longer look upon human things, but have only spiritual eyesight. With this view these women used such ceremonies that wretched men thought themselves caught up above the world, and all earthly thoughts being laid aside, they dozed so as to receive the oracles, and at the same time had the head covered to avoid everything which might call them off and distract them, and to be wholly intent on spiritual meditations.

As to his saying, upon all arms, and upon the head of every stature. I doubt not that the Prophet teaches by these words that these women exercised a promiscuous trade, making no distinctions, but, gratifying all without choice, so long as they brought their money in their hands, as we shall by and by see. Hence this mark of universality ought to be noticed emphatically, because these women did not attend to the disposition with which persons came, but only grasped at their reward, and thus the gate was as open to all as that of the market-place. For shops are open to all, since all are expected to promote profit and make bargains, and merchants by their allurements entice as many as they can to purchase their goods. So also veils were provided for all heads and cushions for all arms, for there was no difference except in reference to profit from these profane and base transactions. With regard to the word ``stature,'' the opinion of those who think it used, because the women ordered those who consulted the oracles to stand, appears to me forced, and not in accordance with the Prophet's intention. I have no doubt that, the Prophet uses the word for ``age,'' or person, as others correctly interpret it; as if he had said, that they made no difference between old and young, tall and short, but prostituted their answers to all from whom they looked for gain.

It afterwards follows, Is it not to hunt souls? Here God reproves one crime, but he will shortly add another, namely, the profanation of his sacred name. But he here speaks only of the death of souls, as if he said that the women laid those snares to deceive wretched souls. And because Ezekiel was commanded to, prophesy against them, he here addresses them more vehemently --- Will ye hunt the souls of my people? It is literally the souls which belong to my people; but it will be more simple to receive it thus --- will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye give life to your own souls, unless any one wishes to interpret it so as to make the Prophet repeat the same thing twice. For the souls of the people were also their own. For as we shall afterwards see, no one is deceived by the devil unless he offers himself of his own accord, and entangles himself in his snares on purpose. Since then it is always true that wretched men who catch at vain oracles devote themselves to the devil and his ministers, hence the passage may be explained in this way. But the sense which I have proposed is more simple, namely, that these women must not be yielded to because they have hunted the souls of the people; as if the Prophet had said, the people are precious to God, who has undertaken the care of them. Thus then he reasons; such is your audacity, nay, even fury, that you doubt not to seize upon

[294] "Lib. 1. ch. 32. See also chap. 36., 'statua Atti capite velato, referring to 'Attus Navius, inclitus ea temptestate augur."

God's people: since therefore your impiety is so licentious and bold, will God suffer you to rage with impunity against the souls of which he is the guardian? Lastly, he signifies that punishment is prepared for the women who ensnare God's people, because although those who are deceived are worthy of death, yet God will still exact punishment of Satan's ministers who have endeavored to despoil him of his rights. It, follows ---

Ezekiel 13:19

19. And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies?

19. Et profanastis me erga populum meum in pugillis hordeorum [295] propter frusta [296] panis: ut occidaris animas quae non moriebantur, et ad vivificandum animas quae non vivebant, decipiendo populum meum audientes mendacium. [297]

Here God accuses these women of a double crime; one crime was that which I have mentioned, cruelly to destroy the souls which were sacred to God, and hence were destined to be saved; but he added a more atrocious crime --- that of sacrilege, because they had abused the name of God to deceive. Nothing is less tolerable than when God's truth is turned into a lie, because this is like reducing him to nothing. God is truth; if, therefore, that is abolished, what else will remain behind? God will be, as it were, a dead specter. Hence the Prophet, in God's name, complains of both: ye have profaned me, says he, before my people. For as the gift of prophecy was a rare and remarkable pledge of God's love and paternal anxiety towards the Israelites, so when that gift was corrupted, the name of God was at the same time polluted. For God was never willing to be disjoined from his word, because he is himself invisible, and never appears otherwise than in a mirror. Hence God's glory, and sanctity, and justice, and goodness, and power, ought to shine in the gift of prophecy; but when that gift is contaminated, we see how such a disgrace becomes a reproach against God. In this way his holiness is defiled, his justice, virtue, and fidelity, are corrupted, and his very existence called in question. So it is not without cause that God pronounces his own name to be polluted. Then he adds, among the people. And this circumstance increases the crime, since God's name was profaned where he wished it to be peculiarly worshipped; for it was also profaned among the Gentiles: but since God had never made himself known there, their profanation was the less detestable. But, because God erected his throne among the people of Israel, and wished his glory to shine there, we see how sacrilege increases, while his name is profaned in that sanctuary which he had chosen. This is one crime.

But he also adds, on account of handfuls of barley and pieces of bread. Here God shows how much and how basely he was despised by those females, who sold their prophecies for a piece of bread or a few grains of barley which any one could hold in his hand. If they had demanded a great reward, their insatiable avarice would not have extenuated their crime; but their impiety is the rather discovered,

[295] Literally, "in handfuls of barley, or on account of them." — Calvin.
[296] Or, "fragments." — Calvin.
[297] That is, "those who hearken to a lie." — Calvin.

when on account of a small reward they so prostituted themselves and the name of God. They boasted themselves to be the organs of the Holy Spirit: but when by this mask they deceived the people, injustice was done to the Holy Spirit, since for so paltry a reward they vainly boasted in their prophecies. They prostituted even God himself: and in fine, this was just as if; being corrupted by a small bribe of no value, they did not treat God's name with sufficient respect to be withheld from the crime by the slightest of the recompense. A comparison will make the matter clearer. If a person is tempted by a moderate reward to the perpetration of any crime and refuses, and then when he is offered a far more valuable reward, and thus yields to the temptation, this shows that his will was upright, though not sufficiently firm. But if any one, for a single farthing, undertakes to do what he is ordered, and refuses no crime, this shows his readiness to all sorts of wickedness. If a girl rejects bribes when she knows her modesty to be assailed, but yet yields for a large reward, here, as I have said, virtue struggles with vice; but if she prostitutes herself for a morsel of bread, here she manifests that depravity which all abominate. This, then, is God's intention, when he says that these women traded in their lies for handfuls of barley and pieces of bread. If any one objects that prophecies were anciently saleable, since it was customary with the people to offer the prophets rewards, I answer, that the women are not condemned merely for receiving either the handful of barley or the piece of bread, but because they did not hesitate to corrupt God's truth for a trifling gain, and then to turn it into a lie. The Prophet afterwards points out the nature of their deceit, for it would not have been sufficient to blame these women generally, unless Ezekiel had pointed with his finger at their pestiferous impostures.

Now, therefore, he says, that they slew the souls which were not dying, and kept alive the souls which were not living. We have said before, that by this mark the true and righteous servants of God were distinguished from impostors. For the servants of God, who faithfully discharge the duty enjoined upon them, kill and make alive: for God's word is life, and brings health to lost mankind; but is a savor of death unto death in those who perish, as Paul says. (2 Corinthians 2:15, 16.) Hence it is true that prophets who faithfully and properly discharge their duty both kill and make alive: but they give life to the souls which are to be freed from death, and slay the souls which are devoted to destruction; for they denounce eternal death to all unbelievers unless they repent; and whatever they bind on earth is also bound in heaven. (Matthew 18:18.) Their teaching, therefore, is effective for destruction, as also Paul elsewhere teaches. We have at hand, says he, vengeance against every high thing which exalts itself against Christ, (2 Corinthians 10:5, 6.) Hence honest teachers are armed by God's vengeance against all unbelievers who remain obstinate: but they convey life to those who repent, since they are messengers of reconciliation; nay, they reconcile men to God when they offer Christ to them as our peace, and by whom the Father is propitious to us. (Ephesians 2:16.) When false prophets desire to rival God's servants, they omit the principal part, namely, faith and repentance; hence it happens that they proclaim life to souls already adjudged to destruction; for they give life to the reprobate who are hardened in contempt of God by their flatteries; for they do not require of men either faith or penitence, but only a reward. Hence also

it happens that they slay the souls which ought not to die, namely, because nothing is prouder or more cruel than these false prophets. For they fulminate according to their pleasure, and sink even to the lowest hell the whole world when no hope of profit appears.

Here then we see the vices of these women of whom Ezekiel treats so pointedly out, that no one need be any longer deceived by them except through his own fault. Hence also we gather a perpetual rule in examining doctrine, lest the deceits of Satan should surprise us for the word of God. Let us learn, then, that the prophetic word is life-giving to us, if we are dissatisfied with our sins, and fly to God's pity with true and serious penitence; for all souls are slain who do not receive this kind of life; and whoever compares the papacy with that corruption which Ezekiel describes to us, will see that, although Satan has many methods of deceiving men, yet they will always be discovered like himself. Ezekiel spoke of veils and cushions. We see many rites exhibited in the papacy, so that the incredulous, being snatched as it were out of the world, are not only delirious, but suffer themselves to be drawn in any direction like cattle by the grossest impostures. But in their teaching we perceive what Ezekiel condemns, namely, that they give life to souls devoted to death, and slay souls which thought to be kept alive. For what is the meaning of their immense heap of laws, except to bury wretched consciences? For any one who wishes to satisfy the laws of the papacy from his heart, must cut himself to pieces, so to speak, through his whole life. We now perceive with what intent our Prophet will elsewhere say that legislators of this kind are implacable, since they remit nothing, and exact all their conditions with the utmost rigor. Hence it happens that these miserable souls perish, because despair oppresses them and overwhelms them in the deep. Meanwhile we see how they give life to souls subject to death, since; pardon is prepared for adulterers, robbers, manslayers, and all criminals, if they only buy themselves off, as popish priests and monks pretend that God is appeased by satisfactions and prayers. Hence they thrust expiation's of no value upon God; and, to speak more correctly, trifles and follies, which do not deceive even children, they call expiation's, as if God could change his nature. Hence we must diligently remark this passage, that we may know how to distinguish between true and false prophets, and may not despise the test which the Prophet puts before us.

He says, in deceiving my people by listening to a lie. He accuses some of lying, and others of willingly embracing is. For the noun {כזב}, kezeb, which is repeated, is derived from the same root. Here, again, God undertakes the cause of his people; for though they were all worthy of being drawn into exile by Satan, yet when God took care of them, it was like snatching them out of Satan's hand, and claiming them as his own peculiar people. This is one point. But meantime these wretches are deprived of all excuse for seeking false oracles. For the Prophet pronounces them deceived because they listened to vanity, that is, because they wished to be deceived, since it was entirely their own fault, and they could not in any way throw it off. It is true they were deceived under false pretenses through the abuse of the prophetic name, and hence their vision was obscured by a darkened cloud; but still they thought to have gone to the fountain, for no opening would have been found for Satan if they had

been properly fortified: for God had surrounded them with ramparts by giving them a law to protect them from all fallacies. Since, then, they thus exposed themselves of their own accord, it is not surprising if God allowed them to be deceived.

Ezekiel 13:20

20. Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly.

20. Propterea sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, Ecce, ego ad vestros pulvillos quibus vos venamini illic animas ad volandum; et lacerabo eos desuper brachiis vestris, et eruam animas quas vos venamini, animas ad volandum.

Here Ezekiel begins to threaten those women with what would shortly happen, namely, that God would not only render them contemptible, but also ridiculous, before the whole people, that their delusions and impostures might sufficiently appear. This is the Prophet's intention, as we shall afterwards see; but the Prophet is verbose in this denunciation. God therefore says, that he is an enemy to those cushions, that is, to those false ceremonies which were like cloaks to deceive miserable men: hence he says, that those souls were a prey. He uses the comparison from hunting: ye have hunted, says he, the souls of my people. And this is the meaning of the word used immediately afterwards for flying. This word {פרח}, pherech, signifies also ``to flourish;'' but I here willingly subscribe to the opinion of all who interpret it to fly: unless the paraphrast is right in translating it ``to perish;'' for he thought the Prophet was speaking metaphorically, as if he meant that those souls were ensnared, and so vanished away. But I do not think this quite suitable, since it is more probable that the Prophet is speaking of their lofty speculations. For we know that false prophets boasted in this artifice, when they either raise, or pretend they raise, men's minds aloft, and curious men desire this only; and hence it happens that the doctrines of the Law and the Gospel are insipid to them, because subtleties alone delight them. And we see at this day how many embrace the follies of Dionysius [298] about the celestial hierarchy, who treat all the prophets, and even Christ himself, as of no value. Hence the Prophet says, that these women hunted the souls of the people, because they had snares prepared in which they entangled all who were subject to their impostures and fallacies. Yet, in my opinion, he also alludes to birds. When, therefore, he has said that all impostures were Satan's method of hunting souls, he now adds obliquely another simile, that all false prophecies are so many allurements to catch birds. The sense of the passage now appears clear. Behold, therefore, says he, God will arise against your cushions, by which you have hunted birds to make them fly; that is, when you promised wonderful revelations those wretched dupes whom their own curiosity urged on were deceived by such enticements. Afterwards he adds, I will free them from your arms, and I will let go the souls which you have hunted to make them fly, says he. He repeats again what we have already said about deep

[298] Dionysius was a Carthusian, a philosopher imbued with the mystic doctrines of Plato, on whose 'writings he wrote an elaborate comment. Calvin refers to his attempt to combine the scholastic theology of his day with the mystical fancies of Platonism. He was commonly called a Ryckel, and wrote A.D. 1471. See Gieseler's Eccl. Hist., edited in English by Francis Cuningham, volume 3

speculations, by the sweetness of which false prophets are accustomed to entice all fools who cannot be content with true doctrine, nor be wise with sobriety. Meanwhile it is by no means doubtful that God here speaks peculiarly of his elect, who were left among the people. For although they were but few, God was unwilling for them to perish: and for this reason he announces that he would be their avenger, and undeceive them, whether they had been already entrapped, or were just surrounded by these allurements. Since, then, he uses the same word, we gather from this that the phrase cannot be used indiscriminately. For God suffers many to perish, as he says by the Prophet Zechariah, ``Let what perishes perish,'' (Zechariah 9:9); but meanwhile he rescued a small number as the remnant of his choice, as Paul says. (Romans 11:5.)

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, since you show us that our salvation is so precious in thy sight, that through our ingratitude we may not cast away this testimony of thy favor, but be anxious to listen to thy instructions: Grant also, that being gifted by thee with the spirit of discretion, we may not be exposed to capture as a prey; but may we be so ruled by the light of thy word that we may hold on in the right way, till after our allotted time is finished we may arrive at that happy repose which is laid up for us in heaven through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Thirty-Seventh.

Ezekiel 13:21

21. Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

21. Et conscindam pepla vestra, [299] et eruam populum meum e manibus vestris: et non erunt amplius in manibus vestris in praedam: et cognoscetis quod ego Iehovah.

What the Prophet had said concerning the pillows he now pronounces of the veils, by which they were accustomed to cover either their own heads, or those of the persons who consulted them. The conclusion is, that God would put an end to such follies. For the people were so fascinated by these silly things, that it became necessary to strip away these masks, since these women were always ready to deceive. He adds also, that he would do that for the benefit of his own people. We have said that this ought not to be extended generally to all the sons of Abraham according to the flesh. For God suffered almost all to perish, as he had said by Isaiah:

``Even if thy people had been as the sand of the sea-shore, a remnant only shall be saved,'' (Isaiah 10:22.)

When, therefore, God speaks here concerning his own people, this sentence ought to be restricted to the elect: as when it is said in the psalm, How soft and kind is God to his people Israel; and then he adds by way of correction, to those who are upright in heart, (Psalm 73:1,) Since many boasted themselves to be Israelites who are very unlike their father, and through being degenerate deprived themselves of that honor: hence the Prophet restricts God's goodness peculiarly to the elect who

[299] Or, "I will tear." — Calvin.

are upright in heart, after he had spoken of the whole people. Although Ezekiel did not distinctly express what we have cited from the psalm, yet the sense is the same; and this is easily gathered from the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans (Romans 11:5, 6), where God sets before us the remnant preserved according to God's gratuitous election. For the same sense it is added, that they should no longer be for a prey. We have said how these women hunted these wretched souls, not only for purposes of gain, but also because Satan abused their fallacies. So, therefore, it happened that these souls were enticed to their destruction. For this reason God pronounces that they should no longer be their prey. And he repeats what he had already said, ye shall know that I am Jehovah. Here God brings before us his power, because we know how safely hypocrites allude his sacred name; and this easily appears in the boldness and licentiousness of these women. Hence God here threatens them: he says that they should feel at length who had spoken, since they ridiculed Ezekiel and his other servants. There is, then, a silent antithesis between God and the prophets; not that God separates himself from his servants; for the truth, of which they are ministers and heralds, is an indissoluble bond of union between them; but the language is adapted to the senses of those with whom the Prophet treats. Now, since these women were so wanton, he says that he was not despised by them, but God himself. It follows ---

Ezekiel 13:22-23

22. Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life:

22. Quia contristastis cor justi mendacio, [300] et ego non contristaveram ipsum; [301] et roborastis manus impii, ut non converteretur a via sua mala, vivificando ipsum.

23. Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver my people out of your hand: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

23. Propterea mendacium non videbitis, et divinationem non divinabitis amplius: et eruam populum meum e manu vestra: et scietis quod ego Iehovah.

He explains in other words what we saw yesterday: but the repetition adds to the weight of the matter. The Prophet therefore shows that he had a just cause of complaint, because the women so deceived the people. He says now that they made the heart of the righteous sad, and strengthened the hands of the wicked: the sentiment is the same, though the words are changed. He had previously said that they gave life to those devoted to death, and slew those destined to life; but now he shows more clearly the meaning of killing the soul that should not, or ought not to die, when the heart of the righteous is made sorrowful. By the righteous he means those whom the false prophets inspired with causeless terror. But why, it is asked, does he say that the righteous are grieved, since we have formerly taught that no others were deceived unless those who spontaneously throw themselves into the snares and traps of Satan? I answer, that the false prophets thundered so, and their lies were so spread about here and there as to involve the simple: for they scatter

[300] Or, "fallaciously." — Calvin.

[301] The word is different, but only in one letter, and signifies to be sad and to be grieved. — Calvin.

their threats so as to reach all men. Hence they wound weak consciences; as at this day when the lies of Satan fly about; by which true religion is corrupted, many simple ones are frightened, for they are destitute of judgment, and do not distinguish whether God threatens, or man vaunts himself rashly.

We see, then, how false prophets cause the righteous sorrow, when they suggest scruples, and, under the penalty of mortal sin, denounce first one thing and then another: then they deprive them of confidence in God's favor, and strike them with various terrors, as we discern clearly in the papacy of this very day. Let us take that one point which is with them without controversy, that our confidence springs from our works, and hence that we cannot determine whether God is propitious to us or not., and thus they overthrow all assurance of faith. They retain, indeed, the name of faith, but meantime they wish wretched consciences to vacillate and be turned about with disquiet, since no one can know whether he can invoke God as a father. [302] That confidence which Paul says is common to all Christians, they call presumption and rashness. (Ephesians 3:12.) We see, then, how that point not only grieves the righteous, but disturbs innocent consciences: for a series of traditions is afterwards added, and the penalty of eternal death is always annexed. hence it happens that those who wish to worship God in any other way, when they are thus rendered spiritless, know not which way to turn: hence also they lose all fear of God, since no one can seriously reverence God unless he who feels him to be easily entreated, as we learn from Psalm 130:6.

We now understand what the Holy Spirit means when he reproves the women because they made the heart of the righteous sad. It is added, but I was unwilling to grieve them. For God's faithful servants often inspire terror, but only when necessary. For they cannot otherwise subdue those who exult in their lusts, and they cannot bring them to obedience unless they overcome them with fear. Hence even true prophets and evangelists cause pain, as Paul says: If I have caused you sorrow, I do not repent of it: for so I thought to do: for there is salutary grief. (2 Corinthians 7:8.) Besides, true prophets do not afflict men for nothing; they only cause anxiety in the minds of those whom God wishes to grieve: hence they do not fabricate the material for sorrow and pain in their own brain, but receive it from God's mouth and the spirit of revelation. Hence the word righteous is used, and falsely is added, by which particle the severity which true prophets are often compelled to use is distinguished from the roughness, or rather savage rudeness, of false prophets. For as I have said, they frighten wretched consciences. But by what right? by transferring God's power to themselves; just as at the present day the Pope with swelling cheeks thunders forth that himself and his throne are apostolic, and therefore infallible. Since, therefore, false prophets thus contend by fallacies, the simple are overcome by fear.

It is now added, that they strengthened the hands of the impious (literally, of the impious man in the singular). When the Prophet spoke of the righteous, he used the word heart: he now uses the word hand, and not without reason. For the false terrors

[302] The modern state of this controversy is fully explained in Ward's "Ideal of the Christian Church." He utterly rejects Calvin's theory, and then very consistently joins the Church of Rome.

in which the false prophets indulged, penetrate even to the intimate affections, and as each is affected by the fear of God, so he becomes afraid of those threats which he hears uttered in God's name. We see, then, that it was said with very good reason that the mind of the righteous was sadly grieved; and now when he says that he had strengthened the hands of the impious, he means that audacity was added, so that not only the wicked always remain obstinate against God, but they break out in unbridled license, and hesitate not openly to violate God's law: for strengthening the hands is more than grieving the mind. For it may and it does happen, that a man may swell with pride and contempt of God, and yet modesty may hinder him from basely contaminating himself with many crimes. But when the hands themselves are engaged in licentiousness, all evils are heaped together. Now, therefore, we understand the reason of this difference. In fine, Ezekiel means that the impious had been hardened by the blandishments of these women, so as not only to despise God in their minds, but to bear witness through their whole life, that they were openly and confessedly erecting the standard of war against God. In this sense, then, he says, that they had strengthened the hands of the impious.

He adds, that he should not be converted. Here he more clearly defines how those souls which were devoted to death [303] were kept alive, since such confidence was set before them as to lull and stupefy their consciences. He does not say, then, that the hands of the impious were strengthened, as in a conspiracy of the wicked one often assists another, as if they mutually bound their hands together. But the Prophet now speaks in another sense, namely, that these women so hardened the wicked that they went on securely in their wickedness, and made a laughing-stock of God and his law. You have strengthened the hands that they should not be converted: but how? by affording them life. Hence we gather that men cannot be humbled otherwise than by placing death before them, because all willingly indulge themselves, and hypocrisy is so ingrained in us by natural corruption, that every one readily persuades himself that all things will turn out well. Unless, therefore, death is presented before our eyes, and God himself appears as a judge to destroy us, we remain like ourselves, and proceed to still greater audacity. The Prophet signifies this when he says, that by giving life to the impious the false prophets strengthened their hands, and opposed their repentance altogether. How so? When the sinner thinks God propitious to him, he is not anxious about reconciliation, but abuses God's forbearance, and is daily rendered bolder, until at last he puts off all sense of fear. Hence this is the true preparation for conversion, when the sinner is slain; that is, acknowledges himself liable to the judgment of God, and takes a formidable view of his wrath. When, therefore, he sees himself lost, then he begins to think of conversion; but when men sleep over their sins, as I have said, they persist till they arrive at constant apathy, as Paul says when he remarks that they have no longer any sense of sorrow. (Ephesians 4:19.)

It follows, you shall not see a lie any more. He has hitherto explained the reason why God grew so warm against these women, because they destroyed miserable

[303] The Latin edition of 1565 has "motu:" the true reading is "morte." The French version is correct in rendering it by "perdition."

souls either by their cruelty or their flatteries, and thus were like false prophets: now he adds, you shall not see a lie any more. This ought not to be understood as if God promised these women a sound mind, so that they should cease to hurt the people by their lies: but he confirms the sentiment previously expressed, namely, that they should be subject to the taunts of all men, as boys themselves acknowledge that what they boasted to be oracles were mere imposture. It is just as if he had said --- I will make you ashamed, so that hereafter you may be deprived of the use of the prophetic name, as you have hitherto used it. Although these women persisted in their madness, yet they saw vanity no more, since it became openly apparent that those wretched ones who trusted in them were deceived. Lastly, this thought to be adapted not to any change of feeling in these women, but rather to a failure in the effect. It is just as if any one were to say to a foolish fellow boasting himself to be a Lawyer or a physician, --- I will take care that you profit no more as either a Lawyer or a physician; and yet that foolish person should not be able to put away the opinion which he had ever formed of his own skin. But this is said, because the mere vanity of his boasting should be evident to all. So also God now speaks. This addition has the same meaning: you shall not divine divination any more. And yet there is no doubt that they desired by all means to invent new prophecies, and to boast in new revelations: but they were despised, because God had detected their lies when Jerusalem was taken, and the people dragged into exile: then because they promised the people a speedy return, when the same God refuted them by prolonging their exile. When, therefore, any one suffers the just penalty of his impiety, then the vanity of those women was detected: in this way they ceased to divine. He repeats --- I will free my people from your hand: and you shall know that I am Jehovah. Since I have lately explained this phrase I now pass it by. It follows ---

Ezekiel 14

CHAPTER 14

Ezekiel 14:1-3

1. Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me.

1. Et venerunt ad me viri ex senioribus Israel, et sederunt coram facie mea. [304]

2. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2. Et fuit sermo Iehovae ad me, dicendo,

3. Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them?

3. Fili hominis, viri isti ascendere fecerunt idola sua super cor suum, et offendiculum iniquitatis suae posuerunt coram facie sua. An quaerendo quaerar ipsis? [305]

Here Ezekiel relates an event worthy of notice. For this was not a mere vision, but a real transaction, since some of the elders of Israel came to him for the sake of consultation. He says that he sat, as men who are perplexed and astonished by evils are accustomed to do, when they see no remedy. The gesture then which the Prophet describes was a sign of anxiety and despair. A person wishing for an answer is said to sit before another; but since it is probable that they disputed among themselves about beginning, and did not immediately discover how they should commence, hence they became anxious to consult the Prophet. Ezekiel, indeed, might be touched and softened by pity when he saw them seeking God in this way. For this was a sign of repentance when they turned to the true and faithful servant of God. But since they had no sincerity, the Prophet is warned in time against supposing them to come with cordiality. Hence God instructs his servant not to give way with too much facility when he sees old men coming to be disciples. But he shows

[304] "At my face." — Calvin.

[305] Or, "by them." — Calvin.

their hypocrisy, because superstition still reigned in their hearts; nay, they desired openly to violate God's law, and they did not disguise this feeling whenever occasion offered. First, he says they have set up idols in their hearts; by which words he means that they were addicted to superstition, so that idols obtained a high rank in their hearts; as Paul exhorts the faithful, that the peace of God which passes all understanding may obtain the rule in their hearts (Philippians 4:7; Colossians 3:15); so on the other hand the Prophet says that these men had given supreme sway to idols. And again an implied comparison must be remarked between God and idols. For God has erected the seat of his empire in our hearts: but when we set up idols, we necessarily endeavor to overthrow God's throne, and to reduce his power to nothing. Hence the most heinous crime of sacrilege is here shown in those old men who caused idols to rise above their hearts. For hence it follows that all their senses were drowned in their superstitions.

He adds, they placed the stumblingblock of their iniquity before his face. By this second clause he signifies their hardness and perverseness; as if he had said, although the doctrine of the law was put before their eyes, yet they had no regard for piety, and despised even God's threats, as if he were not going to be their judge. When, therefore, the sinner is not moved by any admonitions, and is more than convicted of his impiety, and is compelled, whether he will or not, to suffer God's anger, and yet afterwards despises it, he is said to put the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face. For many slide away by error and thoughtlessness, because they do not think they can attempt anything against God. But here Ezekiel expresses that there was a gross contempt of God in these old men, and even a professed rebellion against him. Now he asks, Shall I by inquiring be inquired of by them? Some translate, Shall I, when consulted or asked, answer them? But this comment seems to me too remote from the mind of the Prophet; and it is probable that they thought this to be the sense, because they could not understand what else the Prophet meant. But God shows that this was like a wonder, since these old men dared to break forth, and to pretend to have some desire to inquire the truth. Hence their impudence is shown here, because they did not hesitate to place themselves before God's servant, and to pretend a regard for piety when they had none. God says, therefore, can it be done? For this question expresses the absurdity of the thing, and that for the above mentioned purpose, that their wickedness may be the more apparent in their daring to insult the face of God. For what else is it than openly to reproach God when impure men approach him, and wish to become partakers of his counsel? Meanwhile they show by their whole life that they are most inveterate enemies of the whole heavenly doctrine. Afterwards it follows ---

Ezekiel 14:4

4. Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols;

4. Propterea loquere ad ipsos, et dic illis: sic Dominator Iehovah, vir vir, domo

Israel, [306] ascendere fecerit idola sua super cor suum, et offendiculum iniquitatis suae posuerit coram facie sua: et venerit ad prophetam: ego Iehovah respondebo huic [307] secundum multitudinem idolorum ejus. [308]

Here God seems to treat those hypocrites too indulgently who pretend to ask his advice and yet despise his counsel. But God here rather threatens what would be destructive to the wicked than promises anything which they ought to expect. It is indeed a singular testimony of God's grace when he answers us: for prophecy is an image of God's paternal anxiety towards us and our salvation. But sometimes prophecy only ends in destruction; and this is but an accident. Although, therefore, God's word by itself is naturally to be greatly desired, yet when God answers as a judge, and takes away all hope of pardon and pity, no taste of his favor can then be perceived. Thus this passage must be understood. God pronounces that he would answer, but whom? The reprobate, and those who tauntingly inquired of the Prophet what they should do. When he answers them, he only shows himself the avenger of their perfidy; and thus his answer contains nothing else but the fearful judgment which hangs over all the reprobate. For God does not here impose a perpetual law on himself; for he does not always act in the same way towards all the reprobate, but says that those impious ones should feel that they shall not profit by their cunning and artifices, since they shall find the difference between God and Satan: for they were accustomed to lies, and had itching ears; hence they wished to have some pleasing and flattering answer from the servant of God, since the false prophets gratified their inclinations. What then does God say? I will answer them, but far otherwise than they either wish or desire: for I will answer them according to the multitude of their idols: for they bring with them the material for their own condemnation: hence they shall take back nothing from me but the seal of that condemnation which is already placed upon their hearts, and appears on their hands. In fine, God here laughs at the foolish confidence of those who inquire about future events of his prophets; but meanwhile they have their heart bound up with superstitions, so as openly to show their gross impiety: hence he says, that he would answer them, not as they thought, but as they deserved.

Ezekiel 14:5

5. That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols.

5. Ut deprehendam domum Israel in corde ipsorum, quia alienarunt se [309] a me in suis idolis omnes.

He shows God's object in being unwilling to dismiss without an answer the hypocrites who still impiously trifled with him. He says, that I may seize the house of

[306] That is, "any one of the house of Israel." — Calvin.

[307] "It is another word: {,{עמה gneneh, is properly to answer --- I will answer him in his inquiry." --- Calvin.

[308] "Some think the letter {{ה to have been substituted for ,{א} and translate it --- I will answer him, because he comes in the multitude of his idols. But I follow the simpler sense, because I fear their explanation to be too forced, namely, that God would reply to the impious when they consulted him, but according to the multitude of their idols, that is, as they deserved." --- Calvin. The Hebrew word to which Calvin here refers is, ,{בא} beh, which is so entirely Syriac, that Eichhorn says the Masoretes wished to corrupt it to ,{בא} ba. It is wanting in two MSS. Newcombe quotes the authority of Kennicott for reading, ,{בא} ba, though Houbigant treats it as a barbarism. The Chaldee interpretation is perhaps preferable. Rosenmfiner discusses the point fully. See also Cappell. Crit. Sac., volume 1. Edit. Hal.

[309] Or, as others translate, "separate themselves." — Calvin.

Israel in their heart. It is yet asked how the impious are seized, when God answers them neither according to the opinion of their mind nor their expectation, but pronounces what they dislike and fear most grievously. I reply, that the impious are answered when they are driven to madness, and God thus extracts from them what was formerly hidden in their own hearts. He says, therefore, that their impiety may be manifest to all, I will answer them. For as long as God spares the impious, they endeavor to soothe him by a kind of flattery; but when they see that they take nothing by their false blandishments, then they roar, nay, bellow furiously against God: thus they are caught in their own hearts: that is, all their former dissembling is made bare, so that all may easily perceive that there never was a spark of piety in their hearts. God, therefore, bears witness that his answers would be of this kind, that he may take the house of Israel in their hearts; that is, that his severity may draw out into the light what was formerly hidden; for the word of God is a two-edged sword, and examines all the sentiments of men. (Hebrews 4:12.) Some are so slain by this sword that they grow wise again; but others are stung with fury when they see that they must engage with the power of God; therefore they are seized in their own hearts when God twists from them what they would willingly have kept always hidden. Since they have estranged themselves from me, literally, in their idols. This passage is explained in two ways, as we have said. Some say, because they separated themselves; but I approve of the other version, because they have alienated themselves, and we shall understand the point more clearly afterwards when the subject leads us to it. They alienated themselves, then, from God; that is, when they had utterly declined from God's law; yet, as long as this was concealed, they still wore their masks. The separation of which the Prophet here speaks seems to be referred to this pretense. Since, then, they so alienated themselves from me by their idols; that is, he says they are deceived in thinking that they cannot be discovered, and that their abominations, however foul they are, will remain secret. And this agrees with the last clause, namely, that he would seize the hypocrites in their own heart.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since we are so inclined to all kinds of vices, that we may be restrained by the power of thy Spirit: then that we may be attentive to the teaching which sounds continually in our ears, so that we may persevere in the pure worship of thy name; and thus being strengthened against the cunning of the wicked, may we be upheld in our weakness, and preserved from all error, until we finish our course, and arrive at the goal which is proposed to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Thirty-Eighth.

Ezekiel 14:6

6. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations.

6. Propterea die ad domum Israel, Sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, revertimini et redire facite ab idolis vestris, et a cunctis abominationibus vestris redire facite [310] facies vestras.

[310] Or, "turn away?." — Calvin.

Now God shows why he had threatened the false prophets and the whole people so severely, namely, that they should repent; for the object of God's rigor is, that, when terrified by his judgments, we should return into the way. Now, therefore, he exhorts them to repentance. Hence we gather the useful lesson, that whenever God inspires us with fear, he has no other intention than to humble us, and thus to provide for our salvation, when he reproves and threatens us so strongly by his prophets, and in truth is verbally angry with us, that he may really spare us. But the exhortation is short, that they may be converted and turned away from their idols, and may turn their faces from all their abominations. When he uses the word {השיבו}, heshibev, in the second clause, some understand ``wives;'' but this is frigid: others think the verb transitive, but yet impersonal, thus make yourselves return: this also is harsh. [311] I have no doubt that the Prophet here exhorts the Israelites that each should desire to reconcile himself to God, and at the same time bring others with him. As many were mutually the authors of evils to each other, he now orders them to do their utmost to bring back others with them: and surely this is a true proof of our repentance, when we are not only converted to God one by one, but, when we stretch forth our hand to our brethren, and recall them from error; especially if they have wandered away through our fault, we must take care to make up for the injury by at least equal diligence. The sense therefore of the Prophet is, first, that, the Israelites should repent; next, that one should assist another to repentance, or that they should mutually unite in the pursuit of piety, just as each was previously corrupted by his companion and brother. This seems to be the full meaning. Besides, this series must be remarked: because many show zeal in seizing others, and stretching out the hand to free them from error; but they themselves never think of repenting. But the Holy Spirit here shows us the true method of proceeding, when he commands us to repent, and then extends our desires to our brethren who have need of our exhortations. At length he adds, withdraw your faces, or turn away from all your abominations. A part is here put by the Prophet for the whole, since turning away the face means the same as withdrawing all the senses. Since, therefore, they had been almost affixed to their own abominations to which they had cast their eyes, and were completely intent upon them, he orders them to turn away their faces, so as to bid them farewell. It follows ---

Ezekiel 14:7

7. For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by myself:

7. Nam quisquis, domo Israel, et e peregrino qui peregrinatur apud Israelem, et separatus fuerit [312] de post me (ad verbum), et ascendere fecerit idola sua super cor suum, et offendiculum iniquitatis suae posuerit coram facie sua, et venerit ad

[311] Calvin has not explained the difficulty which he raises. The verb "return" is in Hiphil, and thought to have a case following it. Houbigant reads it in Hophal, and Newcombe prefers to understand "yourselves." Rosemuller, as usual, is very explanatory.

[312] "It cannot be otherwise translated here: the word is {,נזר nezer, which we yesterday saw might be derived from ,{זור} zor, to be estranged. There is no doubt about the sense, `he who has been separated.'" --- Calvin.

Prophetam ad inquirendum ipsum ex me, [313] ego Iehovah respondebo ei in me (vel per me).

Ezekiel again returns to threats, because exhortations was not sufficiently effectual with such hardened ones; for we have seen that they were obdurate in their vices and almost like untamed beasts. For unless God's judgment had been often set before them, there had been but small fruit of teaching and exhortation. This then is the reason why God here sets before them his vengeance: a man, a man, says he, or a stranger who sojourns among Israel. When he adds strangers, he doubtless speaks of the circumcised who professed to be worshipers of the true God, and so submitted to the law as to refrain from all impieties. For there were two kinds of strangers, those who transacted business there, but were profane men, continuing uncircumcised. But there were others who were not sprung from the sacred race, and were not indigenous to the soil, but yet they had been circumcised, and as far as religion was concerned, had become members of the Church; and God wishes them to be esteemed in the same class and rank as the sons of Abraham. The law shall be the same for the stranger and the home-born, wherever the promise is concerned, (Numbers 15:15,16,) and the same sentiment is repeated in many places. Thus the word foreigners is now to be explained. But this circumstance exaggerates the crime of the chosen people. For if any one settled in the land of Canaan and embraced God's law, this was an accidental event: but the Israelites were by nature heirs of eternal life, for the adoption was continued through successive ages. Since then they were born sons of God, it was the more disgraceful to depart from his worship. And so when Ezekiel here gravely rebukes the strangers, he shows how much more atrocious the crime was in the case of those who were bound by a more sacred bond to the worship of God. He says, and he was separated from after me. The Prophet yesterday said {מעלי}, megneli, from near or from towards me: here he more clearly expresses declension, when men reject the teaching of the law, and openly show that they pay no obedience to God. For he is said to follow God or to walk after him, who proposes to himself God as a guide, and is devoted to his precepts, and holds on in the way pointed out by him. Thus by the obedience of faith we follow God or walk after him: so we recede from him when we reject his law, and are openly unwilling to bear his yoke any longer. Hence he shows of what kind the separation of the people or of individuals from God is, namely, when they refuse to follow his law. The Israelites indeed wished God always to remain united to them, but they made the divorce, although they denied it: hence the Prophet cuts away from them beforehand this prop of backsliding, when he says that they separated from God by not following him.

At length he repeats what we saw yesterday, he who caused his idols to ascend unto his heart, he who placed the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, that is, was drowned in his own superstitions, so that his idols bore sway in his heart: lastly, he who is so forward in audacity that he did not conceal his wish to oppose the Almighty: if any one, says he, came to a prophet to inquire of him in me, or my name, I will answer him. He confirms what we saw yesterday, that he could no longer

[313] That is, "through me, or to inquire of him in or by me, or through my name." — Calvin.

bear the hypocrites who deluded themselves so proudly. And certainly when they openly worshipped idols, and were fined with many superstitions, what audacity and pride it was to consult true prophets? It is much the same as if a person should want only insult and rail at a physician, and not only load him with reproaches, but even spit in his face: and should afterwards go and ask his advice, saying, ``What do you advise me to do? How must I be cured of this disease?'' Such pride could not be borne between man and man. How then will God permit such reproaches to go unpunished? For this reason he says that he would answer, but after his own manner, as if he had said --- they seek flatteries, but I will answer in myself: that is, in my natural character. I will not change it according to their pleasure, for they change my character by their fictions, but they are deceived: they profit nothing when they expect me to answer according to their views: I will answer, says he, in myself; that is, they shall feel that the answer proceeds from me, and they shall have no reason for thinking that my servants will be submissive to them, as they are accustomed to abuse the false prophets whom they buy for reward, because they are venal. For when any one is venal he is compelled to flatter like a slave. For there is no freedom but in a good and upright conscience. Hence God here separates his servants from impostors who make a trade of their flatteries. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 14:8

8. And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

8. Et penam ficiem meam in viro illo, [314] et ponam illum [315] in signum et proverbia et excidem eum e medio populi mei: et cognoscetis quod ego Iehovah.

Here God adds, that the execution of his wrath would be ready when the prophet had denounced it. For profane men always fabricate for themselves empty treaties, and when God threatens they say that it is only thunder without lightning. Since the prophetic threats moved the reprobate either nothing or but little, so God now shows that he would not only answer what they did not wish to hear, but they should perceive by its effect how truly he had spoken. And this ought to be understood from the last sentence; for when God answers by himself, he neither is nor strikes the air with threatening words, but denounces what he determined to fulfill and accomplish in his own time. For God never answers in himself without joining the effect with the prophecy. But hypocrites are too stupid to acknowledge this, unless a clearer explanation was afforded. This then is the reason why the Prophet brings a message respecting the effect.

He says, I will put my face upon that man: when God speaks openly against us, this is sufficient for our destruction; but he wished to express more in this case, namely, that prophets were the heralds of his wrath, and that hypocrites should be admonished about the penalties which await them, and even now hang over them,

[314] Or, “upon that man.” — Calvin.

[315] Some translate, “I will destroy him,” changing the point from left to right; but the reading, “I will place him,” is better. — Calvin. Calvin’s meaning is, that by altering the point over the Hebrew letter the meaning of the word is changed: in this and in the previous verses, Calvin prefers the reading of our authorized version.

since his hand is stretched out against them. He is said to place his face against another who rises against him, or descends to a contest and engages hand to hand. So also God pronounces that he would be an adversary to all the reprobate who thus endeavored to elude him. He says, I will place him for a sign and a proverb. He marks the heaviness of the punishment by these words: for God sometimes chastises the faults of men, but after a common and accustomed manner. But when punishment excites the wonder of all and is like a portent, then God puts forth the sign of his wrath in no common fashion, as they say. The Prophet then means this, and hence at the same time admonishes us how detestable a crime it is to decline from the pure worship of God. For God chastises thefts and lewdness, drunkenness, deceits, and rapines: but not always so rigorously that the punishment is remarkable, and turns the minds of all towards itself. Hence from the greatness of the punishment the atrocity of the crime is made known. He now adds, for proverbs. This phrase is taken from the law, as the prophets who are the interpreters of Moses make use of words from it. (Deuteronomy 28:37.) When any remarkable slaughter occurs it is said to be for a proverb, as all persons usually boast when speaking of any slaughter, that none is equal to it or more horrible. But, {משל}, meshel, is also used for a disgrace: as if he had said, it should not only be material for remark among the whole people, but their name should be subject to reproach and contempt. At length he adds, I will cut him off from my people. This is most severe of all, for even the hope of pity is taken away. A person may be a wonder for a time: then his calamity may be the subject of vulgar taunts and proverbs: and yet God is still exorable, and may not cut him off from his people. But when any one is cut off from God's people, his safety is already beyond hope. It is not in vain that this sentence is so often repeated, you shall know that I am Jehovah, says he, since we even formerly saw hypocrites always put a veil before them, since they think they have only to do with the prophets, and thus they despise mortals with security. Hence God here inscribes his name on his word, that they may know that he has spoken, and may experience the effect of his words by his hand. It follows ---

Ezekiel 14:9

9. And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel.

9. Et Propheta cum deceptus fuerit, et locutus fuerit sermonem: ego Iehovah decepi prophetam eum: et extendam manum meam super ipsum, et delebo illum e medio populi mei Israel.

Here God meets that foolish thought in which many minds are rapt up. When they had their own impostors at hand, they thought that all God's threats could be repelled as it were by a shield. Jeremiah and Ezekiel threaten us, say they, but we have others to cheer us with good hope: they promise that all things shall be joyful and prosperous to us: since, therefore, only two or three deprive us of the hope of safety, and others, and those, too, far more numerous, promise us security, we have no need to despair. Since they thus oppose their impostors to the true prophets, and imagine a kind of conflict, in which imposture prevails and God's truth is vanquished,

he says there is no reason why the flatteries of the false prophets should deceive you. For if you say that they bear also the prophetic name and office, I reply, that they err through your fault; for I deceive them because your impiety deserves it. This may as yet be obscure, but I will endeavor to explain it by a familiar example. At this time we see that many through sloth withdraw themselves from all fear, and promise themselves freedom from punishment, while they reject all care for God. O, say they, what have I to do with religion? for this only occasions me trouble; whoever wishes to give himself up seriously to God amidst, these dissension's and divisions will enter a labyrinth. Since, therefore, many think themselves free from fault, even if they reject God, this doctrine may be turned against them. There are, indeed, at this day dissension's in religion which disturb many; but do you think that this happens rashly: Oh! we know not which party to follow: inquire; for God has not so given the rein to Satan and his ministers, that the Church is disturbed, and men are mutually opposed by chance. But when this happens by the just judgment of God, it is certain that no one can be deceived unless of his own accord. For the Prophet takes that principle from Moses, whenever false prophets come forth, that this is a proof of faithfulness and of sincere piety. Thy God tries thee, says Moses, whether you love him. (Deuteronomy 8:3.) Since, therefore, no false prophet arises without the just judgment of God, and since God wishes to distinguish between sincere worshipers and hypocrites, it follows that no one can be excused on this pretext, of differing opinions which arise by wise ordination. For since God wishes to make an experiment, as I have said, concerning his servants and sons, and since false prophets so mingle all things, and involve the clear daylight in darkness, no one who truly and heartily seeks God shall be entangled among their snares.

But Ezekiel will proceed still further, as I have previously hinted, namely, that all impostures and errors do not spring up rashly, but proceed from the ingratitude of the people itself. For if they had not so willingly given themselves up to the false prophets, God would doubtless have spared them. But, since false prophets abounded on every side, and were so plentiful everywhere, hence it may be understood that, the people were worthy of such impostures. Now then we perceive the meaning of the Holy Spirit when God pronounces that he is the author of all the error which the false prophets were thus scattering abroad. For it is not sufficient to observe merely the sound of the words, and then to illicit the substance of the prophetic teaching; but we must attend to the Spirit's purpose. I have already explained why the Prophet says this, namely, that the Israelites should cease to turn their backs according to their custom, saying, that if they remained in doubt amidst various opinions, this ought not to be imputed to them as a crime. For he answers, that the false prophets only took this license, because the people deserved to be blinded: and in fine, he says that Satan's lies multiplied not at random or at the will of men, but because God repays a graceless and perfidious people with a just recompense. So Paul says that error has a divine efficacy, when men prefer embracing a lie to the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12), and do not submit themselves to God, but rather shake off his yoke. Now, therefore, whoever wishes to excuse himself under the pretext of simplicity for not acquiescing in God's word, this answer is at

hand --- that all things are thus mingled by God's just decree. Since, therefore, Satan eclipses the light whenever clouds are scattered to disturb the weak, we here find God to be the author of it, since man's impiety deserves it. For the Prophet does not here discourse profanely about God's absolute power, as they say; but when he brings forward God's name, he takes it for granted that God is not delighted with such disturbance, when false prophets seize upon his name. It is certain, then, that God does not delight in such deception; but the cause must be thought, as we shall soon see: the cause is not always manifest; but without controversy this is fixed, that God punishes men justly, when true religion is so rent asunder by divisions, and truth is obscured by falsehood.

We must hold, then, that God does not rage like a tyrant, but exercises just judgment. Besides, this passage teaches us that neither impostures nor deceptions arise without God's permission. This seems at first sight absurd, for God seems to contend with himself when he gives license to Satan to pervert sound doctrine: and if this happens by God's authority, it seems perfectly contradictory to itself. But let us always remember this, that God's judgments are not without reason called a profound abyss (Psalm 36:6), that when we see rebellious men acting as they do in these times, we should not wish to comprehend what far surpasses even the sense of angels. Soberly, therefore, and reverently must we judge of God's works, and especially of his secret counsels. But with the aid of reverence and modesty, it will be easy to reconcile these two things --- that God begets, and cherishes, and defends his Church, and confirms the teaching of his prophets, all the while that he permits it to be torn and distracted by intestine broils. Why so? He acts thus that he may punish the wickedness of men as often as he pleases when he sees them abuse his goodness and indulgence. When God lights up the flame of his doctrine, this is the sign of his inestimable pity; when he suffers the Church to be disturbed, and men to be in some degree dissipated, this is to be imputed to the wickedness of men. Whatever be the explanation, he pronounces that he deceived the false prophets, because Satan could not utter a single word unless he were permitted, and not only so, but even ordered; while God exercises his wrath against the wicked.

In another sense Jeremiah says that he was deceived (Jeremiah 20:7). I am deceived, but you Jehovah have deceived me: for there he speaks ironically. For when ungodly men boasted that so many of his prophecies were delusive, and derided him as a foolish and misguided man, he says, If I am deceived, you, O Lord, have deceived me. We see, then, that by false irony he reproves the petulance of those who despised his prophecies; and finally, he shows that God was the author of his teaching. But in this place God pronounces without a figure that he deceived the false prophets. If any one now objects, that nothing is more remote from God's nature than to deceive, the answer is at hand. Although the metaphor is rather rough, yet we know that God transfers to himself by a figure of speech what properly does not belong to him. He is said to laugh at the impious; but we know that it is not agreeable to his nature to ridicule, to laugh, to see, and to sleep. (Psalm 2:4; Psalm 37:13.) And so in this place, I confess, there is an improper form of speaking; but the sense is not doubtful --- that all impostures are scattered abroad by God --- since Satan, as I have

said, can never utter the slightest word unless commanded by God. But the kind of deceit which will solve this difficulty for us is described in the sacred history. For when Ahab had a great crowd of false prophets, Micah alone stood firm, and faithfully discharged his duty to God: when brought before king Ahab, he immediately blows away their boastings --- Behold! all my prophets predict victory: he answers --- I saw God sitting on his throne; and when all the armies of heaven were collected before him, God inquired, Who shall deceive Ahab? And a spirit offered himself, namely, a devil, and said, I will deceive him, because I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. God answers, Depart, and thus it shall be. (1 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 18.) Afterwards it follows, Therefore the Lord put a lie in the mouth of all those prophets. Here he distinctly shows us the manner in which God maddens the false prophets, and deceives them, namely, since he sends forth Satan to fill them with his lies. Since, then, they are impelled by Satan, the father of lies, what can they do but lie and deceive? The whole of this, then, depends on the just judgments of God, as this place teaches. God, therefore, does not deceive, so to speak, without an agency, but uses Satan and impostors as organs of his vengeance. If any one flies to that subtle distinction between ordering and permitting, he is easily refuted by the context. For that cannot be called mere permission when God willingly seeks for some one to deceive Ahab, and then he himself orders Satan to go forth and do so. But the last clause which I have quoted takes away all doubt, since God put a lie in the mouth of the prophets, that is, suggested a lie to all the false prophets. If God suggests, we shall see that Satan flies forth not only by his permission to scatter his impostures; but since God wished to use his aid, so he afforded it on this condition and to this end. But we shall leave the rest for the next lecture.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since we are so prone to error, that thy truth may always shine upon us amidst the darkness of this world: Grant, also, that we may gaze upon it with open eyes, and subject ourselves to thee with true docility, so that being governed by both thy Word and thy Spirit, we may fulfill our course, and at length arrive at that happy rest, which your only begotten Son has prepared for us. Amen.

Lecture Thirty Ninth.

WE saw in the last lecture with what intention God permits so much license to the false prophets to deceive the people. For men would desire to throw the fault of their errors on God, if he did not meet their rashness. But God has pronounced in this place, that his judgment is just, since the exiles as well as the Jews remaining in the city were equally blind. Hence we must understand that there was no cause for excuse when God's hand was against an impious and wicked people. He now adds, that he would be an avenger in destroying the false prophets from the midst of the people. This seems at first sight not to be in accordance with justice, that God should impel and precipitate men into error, and then exact punishment of them: and as I have said, men think themselves free from blame, if God blinds them, casts them into a reprobate state of mind, and even hurries them into impious desires. But I have already remarked that those act erroneously who estimate God's judgment by their

own notions. For how small is the measure of our intelligence: for God's judgments are a profound abyss. (Psalm 36:6.) Nothing therefore remains, except waiting for that day in which we shall see face to face the things which we now behold darkly and obscurely, as Paul says. (1 Corinthians 13:12.) Whatever may be the sense, God does rightly in deceiving the false prophets by way of punishing an impious people; and when he summons the false prophets to judgment, that also is free from blame. But if men are restive through their own rashness and audacity, God will free himself from all their calumnies. Wherefore let us diligently mark this passage where God pronounces that he is the deceiver; because however Satan may plot by his lies to abolish the truth, yet he can accomplish nothing unless God permit him, as we have already explained at full length. But when false prophets are dragged to punishment, they have no cause of expostulation with God and they profit nothing by their complaints, since their own consciences condemn them. They cannot object that they were compelled or drawn violently aside by God, since of their own accord and by their own efforts they endeavored to deliver wretched men to destruction by their lies. Since this is the case, God justly extends his hands to punish them, as he now says. But let us proceed to the next verse.

Ezekiel 14:10

10. And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity: the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh unto him

10. Et ferent iniquitatem suam, sicut iniquitas sciscitantis sic iniquitas Prophetae erit.

Here what Ezekiel had partially touched upon is more clearly taught. For he had said, that at length false prophets should meet with punishment, but he now joins the whole people with them, and at the same time repels the empty pretenses by which men are always willing to conceal their fault. For when he mentions their iniquity by name, it is the same as forbidding them to turn their back any more. In this way, then, God removes all the cavils to which men usually resort, since they never pursue these tortuous paths without being conscious of their iniquity. For when God says that he is a searcher of hearts, he brings openly before us the secret feelings of mankind. As long as hypocrites have to deal with men, they easily delude them: and then they put on various disguises, by which they throw off the blame from themselves. But when God addresses them, his language necessarily penetrates to their hidden thoughts. Now therefore we understand the force of the words which God uses, they shall bear their iniquity

He now adds, the iniquity of the inquirer shall be like that of the prophet. We have said that the sacred name of prophet is improperly transferred to impostors: but God often speaks thus by concession, and in this way a stumbling block occurs by which the weak are disturbed. For when they hear that deceivers, who not only obscure God's word but pervert it, proudly boast in their title, they are moved, and not without reason. For divine things ought seriously to move us to reverence, since prophets are organs of the Holy Spirit. Hence that man is worthy of such honor that no man ought to despise one who is reckoned a prophet. But because God tries his own people and blinds the reprobate, as we have said, when he sends them false prophets, in order

that the faith of the pious should not faint when they hear that sacred name profaned, he says by concession --- well, they shall be called prophets --- but he does not mean that those shall be truly and really esteemed such who falsely claim to themselves that glory. Now let us come to the next clause, the iniquity of the inquirer shall be like that of the prophet. We have already spoken of the iniquity of those who, being led captive by the lies of Satan, endeavor to pervert both the worship and the pure doctrine of God. Since therefore they propose to contend with God, their iniquity is by no means excusable. But another question may arise concerning the people, which, although we have solved it before, yet it may be expedient to repeat it. He says, then, that those who had been deceived by the false prophets would be subject to punishment, that they may sustain the same penalty. This seems hard, as I have said: but the Prophet had previously taught that the people would be justly involved in the same punishment with the impostors, because they erred knowingly and willingly. For if they had cordially devoted themselves to God, and had suffered themselves to be ruled by his Spirit, and by the teaching of the law, they had doubtless been freed from all error. For God takes care of his own people, though he does not defend them from the insults of the ungodly, yet he fortifies them by the foresight and fortitude of his Spirit. Those who are deceived, receive the just reward of either their sloth or pride or ingratitude. For many scarcely deigned to inquire what the will of God was: others looked down as from an eminence on whatever was uttered in God's name: for through self-confidence they receive with difficulty any instruction but their own. Since then they were so unteachable, they are worthy of the reward which I have mentioned. Others again are ungrateful to God: for they stifle his instructions and the knowledge of heavenly things, and contaminate and pollute what is sacred; so that God justly joins the disciples with their masters when he revenges sacrilege as we see, since all sacred teaching is overthrown.

But Ezekiel expresses more when he says, that the people had inquired. For they had counselors, who thereby gave a direct approbation to their employment. If they had been teachable they would not have betaken themselves so eagerly to the false prophets: hence the greater their diligence in this direction, the more their crime was apparent, since they purposely rejected God and his servants, by transferring themselves to the false prophets. We now understand the meaning of this sentence. It only remains that each of us should apply what is here said to his own profit. The Papists think themselves to be twice or thrice absolved if they have been deceived in any quarter. But, on the other hand, Christ exclaims --- If the blind lead the blind, it is not surprising if both fall into the ditch. (Matthew 15:14.) The reason is here expressed, because however those who are deceived show their simplicity, it is by no means doubtful that they flee from the light and desire the darkness by a crooked and perverse craving. Hence it happens that the iniquity of the inquirer is like that of the prophet.

Ezekiel 14:11

11. That the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, says the Lord GOD.

11. Ut non errent amplius domus Israel a me, [316] et non polluantur amplius in cunctis sceleribus suis: ut sint mihi in populum, et ego sim illis in Deum, dicit Dominator Iehovah.

Here God shows that there was no other remedy, if he would recall to safety those who had almost perished, and at the same time he teaches that it is useful to the Church to chastise those who had so impiously declined from himself. Meanwhile it happens that God thunders, and exercises his judgments even to the extreme of rigor: meanwhile men do not repent but remain obstinate: nay, the punishment which God inflicts upon the reprobate sinks them into deeper destruction. How so? Those who harden themselves against the hand of God heap upon themselves severer punishments, since the reprobate do not submit to the yoke when God wishes to correct their hardness and obstinacy. But here God announces that he will not be so severe as not to consult for their safety. But this contradiction might disturb many, since God destined the people as well as the false prophets to destruction, for this seems to render his covenant vain. But he prevents this question, and says, since he should exact such severe penalties from the despisers of his word and from apostates, that rigor would be useful to the Church. Now we understand the meaning of the saying, the house of Israel shall not err any more: since otherwise their obstinacy was incurable: and unless God had seriously roused them up, they had never been brought back into the way of their own accord. Here therefore God obliquely rebukes the hardness of his people, because they could not be instructed except by punishment. For incorrigible indeed are those sons who, while their father cherishes and indulges them, despise him, and become worse by the indulgence. Of this then God now complains, that the children of Israel were so untractable that they could not bear destruction, unless he descended to the utmost rigor. For it was a very sad spectacle, that God's truth should be corrupted and adulterated by lies, and that the people, with those who imposed upon them, should utterly perish. But we now hear that there was but one remedy since the children of Israel were untameable, unless they were completely broken down. He now adds, from me: a phrase worthy of notice, for we here gather, that as soon as we bend ever so little from following God, we wander after errors: for we shall never hold on in the right way unless we follow God, that is, unless we are intent upon the end which he sets before us: and then unless our eyes are turned in the direction that he points out, lest we bend to either the right hand or the left. Thus we shall be beyond any danger of wandering if we, follow God: on the other hand, if our minds turn to either this side or that, and we are not retained in obedience to God alone, the Prophet teaches that we wander in error, and that this will at length turn out unhappily for us. When he speaks of the house of Israel, he does not embrace without exception those who spring from Jacob; for both the false prophets and those who consulted them were of Jacob's line, and had a name in that family. But we have already seen what was decreed concerning them, namely, that God would destroy them and blot them out from the midst of his people. We see then that they are not; comprehended under the offspring of Abraham or the house of Israel; but this is restricted to the remnant

[316] Verbally, "from after me." — Calvin.

of the people whom God wished to spare. For we know that there was always some seed left, that the covenant which had been made with Abraham might be firm and sacred. This sentence then properly refers to the elect, who are called by Paul the remnant of grace. (Romans 11:5.) But God says that the example would be useful to the survivors, since the punishment of others would instruct them: and when they should see the false prophets perish, and should acknowledge God's remarkable judgment in their destruction, then they would profit by it. Now we understand what the Prophet means by the destruction of the false prophets and of those hypocrites who despised the true prophets, and prostituted themselves to be deceived by impostors: when God makes them an example of his wrath, the Prophet says that the house of Israel should receive advantage from their perishing, and profit by their utter ruin.

Now he adds, And that they should not be polluted any more in all their wickedness. Here he purposely enlarges on their crime, that he may the more magnify the mercy of God; for if they had been only moderately guilty, his pardoning them had not been so remarkable. But the Prophet here pronounces them abandoned in sin, and does not condemn them for one sin but for many: he says they were polluted and contaminated in their crimes: and when God's mercy is extended to such as these, we discover with certainty how inestimable it is. Finally, let us learn from this passage, that God not only pardons men who transgress but lightly through want of thought and error, but that he is also merciful to the abandoned who are convicted of many iniquities. He says, that they may be my people and I may be their God. God had already adopted the whole seed of Abraham, and all were circumcised to a man: and thus they bore personally the testimony and covenant of God's paternal favor. Since, therefore, they were already God's people, and were considered as members of the Church, what can it mean that they shall be my people? For God seems here to promise them something new. But by this form of speech the Prophet marks their declension and manifests their deserts. For although God had thought them worthy of such honor as to reckon them among his elect people, yet they had cast themselves out by their own depravity. For since all religion among them was corrupt, God's worship was profaned, his whole law almost buried, and they were separated as far as possible from God, as we shall afterwards see. On the part of God the adoption remained firm: but here Ezekiel regards their condition if they would really look at it themselves, namely, as one of estrangement, since their own wickedness had cut them off: hence he speaks as of a new benefit when he says, they should be for a people when they repented.

The second chapter of Hosea will help us to understand this more clearly, when it is said,

``I will call them my people who are not my people,
and her beloved who is not beloved.'' (Hosea 2:23.)

For the Prophet was commanded to go into an improper house and to take an impure female and to beget sons: he says that a son was born to whom God gave the name {לאעמי}, lagnemi, it shall not be my people: and then when a daughter was born, she was unworthy of love. There Hosea signifies that the Jews were cut

off from the sacred root, and he speaks not of one or two, but of the whole race; for they were neither God's people nor a beloved daughter. Afterwards when reconciled, they begin again to be God's people and a beloved daughter. Paul does not accommodate that sentence to the calling of the Gentiles rashly: (Romans 9:25,) namely, that there was no difference between Jews and Gentiles, since the former were rejected. Whatever it is, we see that those who had a place and a name among God's people, and whom he had chosen for himself, were cast off and had become strangers through their own fault. Thus they begin to be God's people afresh when they repent and God receives them to favor. The conclusion is, I will restore them afresh, that my covenant may be renewed in some way, that they may be my people as they formerly were; and I may be to them a God, since by their own backsliding they deserved to be treated as entire strangers. Besides, it is well to remember what we said elsewhere, that under these words is contained whatever belongs to solid happiness. For if God acknowledges us as his people, we are certain of our salvation, as when he pronounces that he will be our God while we call upon him as a father. But whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13.) Then we must remember that celebrated sentence of the Prophet Habakkuk, You art our God: we shall not die. (Habakkuk 1:12.) Lastly, we have nothing else to wish for towards the fullness of all good things and confidence in eternal life, than that God should reckon us among his people, so that there may be open to us a free access to him in prayer. It follows ---

Ezekiel 14:12-13

12. The word of the LORD came again to me, saying,

12. Et fuit sermo Iehovae ad me, dicendo.

13. Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it:

13. Fili hominis terra cum scelerate egerit erga me, [317] et extendero manum meam super eam, et confregero in ipsa baculum panis, et immisero in ipsam famem, et excidero ex ipsa hominem et jumentum.

The next verse thought to be joined: for some interpreters altogether pervert the Prophet's sense by finishing the sentence there, as if he had said, I will extend my hand over it, &e. But the sentence is dependent, as we shall see ---

Ezekiel 14:14

14. Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.

14. Et fuerint tres viri isti in medio ejus, Noe, Daniel, et Job, ipsi in justitia sua eripient [318] animas suas, dicit Dominator Iehovah.

Here again God threatens the people of Israel with final destruction: but the words seem opposed, that God would be merciful and propitious to his people, and yet that no hope of pardon would be left. But we must remember the principle, that the prophets sometimes directed their discourse to the body of the people which was

[317] "By prevaricating prevarication," according to some, {{מעל megnel, properly signifies perfidy, hence the version just given --- Calvin.

[318] Or, "shall free." — Calvin.

utterly devoted to destruction, since its wickedness was desperate; yet afterwards they moderated that rigor, when they turned to the remainder, which is the seed of the Church in the world, that God's covenant should not be extinguished, as we have already said. Hence, when we meet with this kind of contradiction, we know that God affords no hope to the reprobate, since he has decreed their destruction: so that language ought to be transferred to the body of the people which was already alienated, and like a putrid carcass. But when God mingles and intersperses any testimony of his favor, we may know that the Church is intended, and that he wishes a seed to remain, lest the whole Church should perish, and his covenant be abolished at the same time. The Prophet, therefore, as before, so also now, sets before himself the people desperate in wickedness, and says that they had no right to hope that God would act mercifully as usual, since necessity compelled him to put his hand for the last time to the destruction of the impious. This is the full meaning. We had a similar passage in Jeremiah (Jeremiah 15:1), where he said, If Moses and Samuel had stood before me, my mind is not towards this people; that is, it never could be that I should return to favor them, even if Moses and Samuel should intercede for them, and endeavor to obtain pardon by their own intercession. The papists foolishly distort this passage to prove that the dead intercede for us, for Moses and Samuel had been dead some time; but God says, Even if they should pray for the people, their prayers would be in vain. But this passage refutes that gross ignorance: for God is not here making a difference between the living and the dead; but it is a kind of personification, and of bringing back Moses and Samuel from the grave; as if he had said, Were they living at this time, and entreating for these wicked ones, I would never listen to them: for Ezekiel here mentions three, Noah, Job, and Daniel. But Daniel was then alive: he had been dragged into exile, and lived to a mature old age, as is well known. Then he expresses his meaning more clearly, by saying, if they had been in the midst of the city they had escaped in safety themselves, but they would not have prevailed for others. The whole meaning is, that God cuts off all hope of mercy from the abandoned people.

We must remark the form of speech which is used: he relates four kinds of punishments by which men's crimes are usually avenged, and enumerates them distinctly. If I shall break the staff of bread, says he, because the land has revolted from me, and I shall send famine upon it, Daniel, Job, and Noah, shall preserve their own souls, but shall not profit others by their holiness: then he adds, if I shall send a sword, that is, if I shall follow up the impious by wars, even Daniel, and Job, and Noah, shall save their own souls, but they shall not intercede for others. He pronounces the same of pestilence and wild beasts. At length He reasons from less to greater. When I shall have punished any nation, says He, with famine, pestilence, and the sword, and wild beasts, how much less shall Daniel, Job, and Noah, prevail with me by their intercession? But God had condemned the house of Israel to all punishments, just as if he had poured all his curses like a deluge to destroy them. Hence He concludes that there is no reason for cherishing any hope of escape from these imminent dangers. Now then we comprehend the Prophet's meaning.

Now let us come to the first kind of punishment. If the land, says he, acts wickedly

against me, or conducts itself wickedly, {חטא}, cheta, to act wickedly, but by prevaricating with prevarication. By these words the crime of perfidy is distinguished from error, because men often fall away and depart far from God through ignorance of the way which they thought to pursue. But here the Prophet condemns the people's defection through perfidy, as if he had said that they purposely, and by deliberate malice, were estranged from God, since they had been correctly taught how God ought to be worshipped. Although the Prophet speaks generally, yet he wished to show God's wrath to be of no ordinary kind: for God will often chastise men's sins by either pestilence, or sword, or famine, and yet will not be implacable. But he here speaks of a desperate people, and one already addicted to eternal destruction. He says, therefore, by prevaricating with prevarication; that is, by deceiving my confidence by open and gross perfidy.

Again, and I will stretch forth, my hand upon it, and will break the staff of bread, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off from it man and beast. Here, as I have mentioned, he touches upon only one kind of punishment; for God is accustomed to take vengeance on men in four ways; and the prophets, as you have often heard, usually adopt the form of speech used by Moses. These four curses of God are everywhere related in the law, --- war, famine, pestilence, and the assault and savageness of wild beasts. Now the Prophet begins with hunger; but he points out the kind of hunger --- if God has broken the staff of bread. For sometimes, when he does not reduce men to poverty, yet he puffs up the bread, so that those who think to use it as nourishment do not gather any rigor from it. But the Prophet properly means it in this second sense, as we see in Ezekiel 4 and Ezekiel 5. The metaphor is in accordance with the word staff: for as the lame cannot walk unless they lean on a staff --- and tremulous old men need a similar support --- so by degrees men's strength vanish, unless new rigor is replaced by meat and drink. Bread is, therefore, like a staff which restores our strength when want has weakened it. We now come to the word breaking. How does God break the staff of bread? By withdrawing the nourishment which he had infused into it; for the virtue which we perceive in bread is not intrinsic: I mean this --- that bread is not naturally endued with the virtue of continuing and inspiring life within men; and why? Bread has no life in it: how then can any one derive life from it? But the teaching of the law has been marked: that man lives not by bread only, but by every word proceeding from God's mouth. (Deuteronomy 8:3.) Here Moses intends, that even if God has inserted the virtue of nourishment in bread, yet this is not to be so attributed to it as if it were inherent in it. What follows then? That as God breathes a secret virtue into the bread, it sustains and refreshes us, and becomes our aliment. On the other hand, God says that he breaks the virtue of the bread when he withdraws from it that virtue: because, as I have already said, when we taste bread, our minds ought to rise immediately to God, since men, if they cram themselves a thousand times, yet will not feel their life to be deposited in the bread. Therefore, unless God breathes into bread the virtue of nourishment, the bread is useless; it may fill us up, but without any profit. Now, then, we understand the meaning of this sentence, about which we shall have something more to say.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since you shine so clearly upon us with the teaching of thy Gospel, in which thy Son reveals himself familiarly to us, --- Grant that we may not shut our eyes to this light, or turn them hither and thither by depraved curiosity, but may remain in simple obedience, until at length having passed through the course of this life, we may arrive at the fullness of light, when you will transform us into thy glory by the same --- your only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Fortieth.

I have already partially explained the Prophet's design, when he says, if God has sent famine upon a land, and Job, Noah, and Daniel were in it, that they indeed should be safe, but that the land should perish, since he had determined to destroy it. Moreover, he described the kind of famine, when he said, when I shall have broken the staff of bread; because, though wheat should be plentiful, and men be prevented from starving, yet they would not be refreshed, since the bread would only burden them. On the whole, God means that famine, even if it arise from natural causes, proceeds from his judgments: for by continual rains the seed rots in the ground, and drought consumes all its juice and substance. Then, if hail devastates the sown fields, the causes of the ensuing famine are manifest. But it is necessary to look higher, because, as we are nourished by God's bounty, so we never suffer poverty unless when he withdraws his hand.

Let us now come to the next verse. If these three men, the most just of all, had been in the land, they should only free their own souls. The exclusive particle is not expressed, but it is easy to gather the Prophet's sense from the context; as if he had said that God's decree was fixed when he had determined to afflict the land grievously. It is sometimes asked why Noah, Daniel, and Job are named, rather than Abraham, Jacob, or David, or any others. Those who wish to be precise guess various comments; namely, because Noah could not preserve the old world from the deluge, but only his sons an their wives. But this example does not suit: and as to the others, they say that Job did not preserve his own sons, since they were all consumed by the lightning. But the same thing happened to others. Thus Abraham was the common father of the people, and even he could not snatch his posterity from the wrath of God: nay, Jeremiah describes Rachel, though dead, weeping for her children, and refusing consolation because none of them survived. (Jeremiah 31:15.) We see, then, that this is cold. Others say that these three men had experienced three different kinds of life; that Noah, living before the deluge, had seen the horrible devastation of the whole earth, and yet the renovation of the world had followed: they say, also, that Job had flourished in prosperity, and then was deprived of all his goods and his children, and was so defiled by disease and filth as to be rather a carcass than a living man, and yet was restored like a captive from the enemy's hand. Daniel, again, had lived at Jerusalem, had been taken captive, and had lived there in exile; that he at length saw the beginning of the restoration of the people when that sudden change happened, and the Babylonian monarchy passed to the Persians. These things, at the first glance, seem to be clever; but whatever is affected is always cold and tame. Ezekiel here mentions these three men, simply because they first occurred to him. For we must remember that passage of Jeremiah which I quoted

yesterday, (Jeremiah 15:1,)where it is said, If Moses and Samuel had stood before me, I should not have listened to them for the safety of the people. A question may arise, why Jeremiah names Moses and Samuel rather than any others? What will these clever speculators say? We see, therefore, that each of these things must not be so scrupulously beaten out, since it is enough to understand the general intention of the Holy Spirit. Three men, then, are placed here, whose holiness was celebrated. Daniel was then living: the others had been dead many ages ago; but the integrity of them all was universally manifest. It is then as if he had said, even if those should come who either are or have been most perfect among men, yet they would avail nothing in interceding for a land already devoted to destruction.

But the Prophet's saying, they should be saved on account of their own righteousness, seems absurd: for no one can be found whose righteousness can stand before God's tribunal: for if God was to reason with men, every one must be found guilty, as the Scripture also often teaches, and experience most fully convinces us. Here the Prophet seems to extol too much the merit of works, when he attributes the person's freedom to his righteousness. But the solution is easy; namely, this righteousness of which mention is made ought not to be separated from gratuitous pardon, which reconciles men to God, so that their sins are not imputed to them: for as to some saying that they were justified by faith, this does not forward the inquiry; and besides that, it is forced. By their own righteousness shall they free their own souls, that is, say they, by their faith. But when God addresses Noah himself, (Genesis 7:1,) and says that he was found just through his piety, he does not mean that he was endued with faith; this would be nugatory. There is no doubt, then, that he commends sanctity and integrity in his servant; so also in this passage, under the word righteousness or justice, he implies the fear of God, in which all virtues are founded, and chastity and temperance, and whatever belongs to the rule of living holy and justly. But meanwhile this derogates nothing from the righteousness of faith; for the faithful are reckoned just before God, and their works are also reckoned just --- not by any inherent merit --- not because they bring any perfection of that kind before God which may conciliate his favor, and in which they can stand; but because God pardons them indulgently through his own paternal clemency, and so approves their righteousness, which otherwise might be deservedly rejected. For example, Pinnehas was thought just when he avenged the reproach of the sanctuary. (Numbers 25:7, 8.) When inflamed with zeal, Pinnehas brought out of the midst the courtezan with her paramour; for this cause, as is said in the Psalm, (Psalm 106:31,) he was reckoned just. But that could not suffice for a man's righteousness, since one special act could not render a man just. Pinnehas, then, could not be reckoned just on that ground; but while his work was pleasing to God, for that reason it was just. But, on a serious inquiry, that work was also condemned as being infected with some fault, and so was not just in itself. But because God pardons his sons, as we have said, hence he accepts their works: so he acknowledges them also as just, and they do not obtain this by either their own worthiness or peculiar merits. For the beginning of the righteousness about which we are now speaking is a gratuitous reconciliation by which all the faults of the faithful are buried: whence it happens also that their

integrity, although not perfect, is still pleasing to God. We see, therefore, that these things are easily reconciled; that men are freed by their righteousness, and yet that their temporal safety depends only on the mere pity of God: for when God's gratuitous favor has gone before, hence he seems to acknowledge as true righteousness which was in itself mutilated and but half complete. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 14:15-16

15. If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land, and they spoil it, so that it be desolate, that no man may pass through because of the beasts:

15. Si bestiam malam transire fecero per terram, et orbaverit eam, et fuerit vastitas ut nemo transeat propter bestiam. [319]

16. Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate.

16. Tres viri isti in medio ejus, vivo ego, dicit Dominator Iehovah, si filios et filias liberabunt: ipsi soli liberabuntur, et terra erit in vastitatem.

Now he mentions the second kind of punishment. For we said that God's four scourges were here brought before us, which are more familiarly known to men through frequent use. They are hunger and wild beasts, war and pestilence. The Prophet has spoken of famine; he now comes down to wild beasts. This kind of scourge is rarely used in Scripture; for God more frequently mentions the sword, pestilence, and famine; but when he distinctly treats, of his scourges, he adds also savage beasts. Now therefore he says, if he had sent wild beasts to lay waste the land, and Noah, Job, and Daniel, had been in that land, they would be free from the common slaughter, but that their righteousness would not profit others. He expresses a little more clearly what he had spoken briefly and obscurely when he treated of the famine. If, says he, I shall cause an evil beast to pass through and injure the land, so as to lay it waste, that no one may pass through on account of the wild beasts, as I live, says he, if these three men shall free their sons and their daughters. This passage teaches what I lately touched upon about the famine, namely, that the beasts did not break in by chance to attack and rage against men, but that they are sent by God. Thus God follows out his judgments no less by means of lions, and bears, and tigers, than by rain and drought, the sword and the pestilence: and surely this may be understood, if we reflect upon the great savageness of these beasts; first, when hunger arouses them they are carried along by a ravenous impulse; and then, without the compulsion of necessity, they are hostile to the human race, and without doubt they would urge themselves on to tear to pieces all whom they met with, unless restrained by God's secret instinct. If, therefore, God restrains the wild beasts, thus also he sends them forth as often as it pleases him, to exercise their ferocity against mankind, and in this way to become his scourges. But here an oath is interposed that God may inspire confidence in his sentence, so God swears by his own life. This is the meaning of the phrase as I live; that is, I swear by my life. This is indeed spoken improperly, but elsewhere we have seen that God swears by his life; that is, just as if he swore by himself, because he has

[319] That is "beasts," for there is a change of number. — Calvin.

no greater by whom he can swear, as the Apostle says (Hebrews 6:13); and as often as we swear by the name of God we attribute the supreme power to him, and thus we profess our life to be in his hand, and he to be our only Judge. When, therefore, he swears by himself, he admonishes us at the same time that his name is profaned if we swear by any others: then he shows how much religion is to be exhibited in oaths. Let us follow, therefore, God's example, when our speech needs confirmation, by calling in a witness and judge: next, that we should not use his name rashly and falsely, but that our oath should be truly a testimony to our piety. But here in truth a question arises, --- How God can say that the land should perish which has been once subjected to wild beasts? For sometimes wild beasts have infected many regions, and God has immediately restrained them, and so their cruelty has passed away like a storm.

Again, we knew that the prayer of the saints are not superfluous when they pray for others; but God seems here to deny what is clearly manifest. But the solution is easy. For since he does not inflict his judgments equably but variably, and at one time hastens punishments and at another suspends them: at one time punishes men's sins and at another delays doing so, he fixes for himself no sure law by which he is always bound, but he speaks of the land which he has destined to destruction. God therefore will strike one region with famine, another with war, a third with pestilence, a fourth with wild beasts, and yet he can mitigate his own rigor, and when men begin to be terrified, he can withdraw his hand. But if it has been once decreed that any land must perish, all the saints would run together in vain, because no one would be a fit intercessor to abolish that inviolable decree. We now understand the Prophet's intention, for he does not speak generally of any lands whatever, but he points out the very land which was devoted to final destruction. It follows ---

Ezekiel 14:17-18

17. Or if I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off man and beast from it:

17. Vel gladium transire fecero super terram illam, et dixero gladio, Transi per terram, ut excidatur ex ea homo et jumentum.

18. Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves.

18. Et tres viri isti in medio ejus, vivo ego, dicit Dominator Iehovah, non liberabunt filios et filias, quia ipsi soli liberabuntur.

The Prophet now descends to the third kind of punishment. Hence God says, if he send a sword upon a land, he cannot be entreated so as not to consume it utterly, neither will he admit any man's intercession, although the most holy dwell there, namely, Job, Noah, and Daniel. But the phrase used must be marked: if I shall say to the sword, pass through to exterminate and blot out the whole land, or cut off from it, both man and beast, because we here gather the great power of God's secret government. For we think that wars are stirred up at random: and as men are in agitation, so also we imagine war to be nothing but confusion and turbulence. But God governs even wars by his inestimable wisdom, and also men and their swords: men are enraged, their swords fly about in their hands, and they

seem to go hither and thither at random by blind impulse. But God here announces that he permits swords to pass through a land, and to destroy both men and cattle. If he had said, after the language used in many places, that he would arm men, it would not have been very wonderful: for everywhere throughout the Prophets he calls the Chaldaeans and Assyrians executors of his judgment. Hence that sentence of Jeremiah, Cursed is he who has done God's work negligently. (Jeremiah 48:10.) But that work of God was the slaughter at Jerusalem. So also Nebuchadnezzar is called God's servant and minister when he laid waste Egypt, and God promises him the reward of his labor. (Ezekiel 29:20.) So here Ezekiel proceeds further, not only that the hands of men are directed as God wishes, but also that their swords listen to his secret command, so that they neither pass by nor strike any man or animal except as far as God pleases. But if God so commands the swords, let us know that whenever men rise up against us, that our patience is exercised and our sins chastised in this way: and that the impious are God's agents: and let us determine that we shall never profit by noise and resistance, since there is but one remedy, to humble ourselves under God's strong hand. Now the fourth kind of punishment follows ---

Ezekiel 14:19-20

19. Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast:

19. Vel pestem immisero in terram illam, et effudero iracundiam meam super ipsam in sanguine ad perdendum [320] ex ea hominem et jumentum.

20. Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.

20. Et Noe, Daniel, et Job in medio ejus, vivo ego, dicit Dominator Iehovah, si filium et filium liberaverint: ipsi in justitia sua liberabunt animam suam.

He now affirms of the fourth kind of punishment, what he has hitherto pronounced of the rest. He says, then, If I shall have sent a pestilence, and have devoted a land to devastation, that Job, Daniel, and Noah, should be safe if they dwelt there: but that their righteousness should not profit even their sons and their daughters. Nay, he seems to speak with greater restriction, since he has substituted the singular number for the plural: for he had just said, they shall not free either sons or daughters. He now says, not even a son or a daughter, that is, they shall not prevail with me by their intercession so much as to save from death even a single son or daughter. We must also remember what I have said, that God does not always act in the way related here: for he has manifold and various methods of carrying out his judgments. Hence it would not be just to impose a law not to liberate any one, and according to his own will either to hear or reject their prayers. But here he only means, that when he has determined to destroy a land, there is no hope of pardon, since even the most holy will not persuade him to desist from his wrath and vengeance. But now the conclusion follows ---

Ezekiel 14:21-22

[320] Or, "to cut off." — Calvin.

21. For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?

21. Quoniam sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, Quanto magis cum quatuor judicia mea mala, gladium, et famem, et bestiam malam, et pestem immisero contra Hierusalem ad excidendum ex ea hominem et animal?

22. Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it.

22. Et ecce evasio in ea residua, [321] evasio egredientium, inquit nempe filii et filiae: ipsi egredientur ad vos: et videbitis vias ipsorum, et opera ipsorum: et consolationem sumetis super malo quod venire fecero super Hierusalem, super omni quod venire fecero super eam.

He now reasons, as we said in the beginning, from the less to the greater. Hitherto he has said, If I shall have sent forth only one weapon to take vengeance upon men, no one will oppose my following out my decree: then he enumerated four weapons, one after another. Now he adds, What then, when I shall have heaped together all punishments, and not only shall have sent pestilence or sword or famine, but as it were when I have four armies prepared and drawn up, and shall command them to attack and destroy mankind, how shall even one person escape? If Job, Daniel, and Noah, cannot snatch away even their sons and daughters from a single scourge, how shall they snatch them from four at once! We see, then, that God here cuts away the false and specious hopes by which the false prophets deluded the miserable exiles when they promised them a return to their country, and daily proclaimed how impossible it was that the sacred city, the earthly dwelling-place of God, could be taken by the enemy, and the religion which God had promised should be eternal could perish. Since, therefore, the false prophets so deceived these miserable exiles, here God shows how greatly they erred while they cherished any hope in their minds; because he had not only held one kind of scourge over Jerusalem, but approached it with a whole heap of them to destroy and cut off both man and beast. This then is the full meaning.

Now he says, If I shall have sent my four evil judgments. Here God calls his judgments evils, in the sense in which he says in Isaiah, that he creates good and evil, (Isaiah 45:7,) since immediately afterwards he expresses his meaning by saying life and death. Hence what is against us is here called evil, and so this epithet ought to be referred to our perceptions. For our natural common sense dictates that whatever is desirable and useful to us is good: food and life and peace are good, and whatever is conducive to life, and what we naturally wish for, we call good. So also, on the other hand, death and famine are evils: so are nakedness, want, and shame: why so? since we dread whatever is not useful to us; and because we fly from evils as soon as reason dawns. In fine, evil here is not opposed to justice and right, but, as I have said, to men's opinion and our natural senses. He now confirms what we

[321] That is, “some remnant which shall escape shall remain in it.” — Calvin.

before said, namely, that these are God's judgments when enemies rage against us, pestilence attacks us: poverty assails us, and wild beasts break in upon us. When therefore we suffer under these afflictions, let us learn immediately to descend into ourselves and to discover the cause why God is so angry with us. For if we turn our attention towards the sword, and pestilence, and famine, we are like dogs which gnaw and bite what is thrown at them, and do not regard the hand which threw it, but only vent their rage upon the stone. For such is our stupidity when we complain of famine being injurious to us, wild beasts troublesome, and war horrible. Hence this passage should always be borne in mind that, these are God's evil judgments, that is, scourges by which he chastises our sins, and thus shows himself hostile and opposed to us.

He now adds, there shall be a remnant in that escape. They explain this verse parenthetically, as if God by way of correction engaged to act more mercifully towards that city, than if he struck any land with only one scourge. They explain it thus: although these four scourges should meet together, yet I will mitigate the rigor of my vengeance, since some shall go out safely, and reach even to you. Almost all agree in this sense; but when I weigh the Prophet's intention more accurately, I cannot subscribe to it: because God seems to me to confirm what he had said before, that he would be a just avenger of wickedness while he treats the Jews so harshly. To discover the most suitable sense, we must consider the condition of the exiles: it was surely worse than if they had been destroyed by a single death for they were dying daily; and at length, when cast out of the sacred land, they were like the dead. Hence that exile was more sorrowful than death, since it was better to be buried in the holy land than among the profane. Since, then, they had been mixed with dog's, it was no life to them to protract a wretched existence amidst constant languor; and if the hope of restoration had been taken away, concerning which we are not now treating, and to which not a single syllable applies, exile was by itself like death. Since, then, the Prophet here says, that some should be left, to escape, he does not mean that they should be safe: hence this is not a mitigation of their punishment. For as we saw before, and especially in Jeremiah, those who died quickly were less to be deplored. (Jeremiah 22:10.) Finally, when the Prophet here says that some should come to Babylon, he does not promise them pardon, as if God was propitious to them, or noticed them favorably; no such thing: for he speaks of the reprobate, and of those who bore on their forehead the manifest sign of their impiety, and show by their whole life that they are abandoned, and most worthy of final destruction.

For he says, a departure of those who go forth shall come: sons as well as daughters shall come to you, says he, and you shall see their ways and their work: that is, you shall see that the men are so wicked, that their ungodliness shall compel you to confess the city to be worthy of perishing, and the people deserving destruction. For the word consoling, which the Prophet uses immediately afterwards, refers here to the acknowledgment of their wickedness appeasing the minds of those who formerly roared and murmured against God. Neither does he mean that consolation which, according to the common proverb, has many friends; but only the calm acknowledgment of God's just vengeance, in which the ten tribes acquiesced. For before they

saw the state in which the inhabitants of Jerusalem were, they thought that God was too severe, and hence their outcry and complaint against God. The Prophet, therefore, now says, that the sight of your wickedness will bring you consolation; for you shall see that it could not be otherwise, and that you deserved such punishment: hence, when you have acknowledged your abandoned wickedness, you will regard my justice with peaceful and tranquil minds; and you will so finish and cease your complaints which now agitate your minds in different directions. The rest, to-morrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since you daily exercise thy judgments in all parts of the world, and since many regions are harassed by pestilence and war, that so long as you spare us we may profit by the evils and slaughters of others: Grant, also, if thy scourges reach also unto us, that we may not be obstinate, but may submit ourselves to thy judgment, and being truly humble, may we seek pardon by the serious pursuit of piety, so that we may truly acknowledge thee; and may feel thee to be a propitious Father to us, until at length we enjoy thy love in thy heavenly kingdom, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Forty-First.

WE said in yesterday's lecture, when the Lord pronounces that he would have some remnants when destroying Jerusalem, that this is no act of clemency, as if he had relaxed the rigor of his justice. For exile was not preferable to death, as we may collect from the context, since God does not use these words of his elect. For there is no mention of repentance, so that the cause of his vengeance would be conspicuous in their crimes. You shall see, therefore, and shall take comfort: because the exiles who were then in Chaldaea could not subscribe to the judgment of God. But when they saw their brethren of such abandoned morals, the review of their sins availed to their comfort, that is, to appease their minds. He repeats the same in the last verse of the chapter.

Ezekiel 14:23

23. And they shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings: and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, says the Lord GOD.

23. Et consolabuntur vos, quia videbitis vias ipsorum et opera ipsorum: et scietis quod non frustra fecerim quaecunque feci in ea, dicit Dominator Iehovah.

He now puts the verb for comforting in the third person, but in the same sense, because after the Jews shall have been led captive, they will bear sure and special marks of God's justice against their sins. This, then, is the consolation, as I explained it yesterday, while the exiles acknowledge that cruelty cannot be ascribed to God, as if he had exceeded moderation in exacting punishment; for the desperate wickedness of the people demanded it. But this passage contains a useful doctrine, since we collect from it that we are never tranquil in our minds unless when the greatest equity and justice appears in God's judgments, and become present to our minds. As long, therefore, as we do not acknowledge God to be severe in just cases, our minds must necessarily be disturbed and disarranged: hence the word ``consolation'' is opposed to those turbulent thoughts. But since nothing is more miserable

than to be distracted and drawn hither and thither, and to be anxiously disturbed, let us learn that those profit most who acquiesce in God's judgments, although they do not perceive the reason of them, yet modestly adore them. But when God shows why he treats either us or others so severely, this is a special favor, since he offers us material for joy and tranquillity. Let us proceed.

Ezekiel 15

CHAPTER 15

Ezekiel 15:1-5

1. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

1. Et fuit sermo Iehovae ad me dicendo,

2. Son of man, What is the vine-tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?

2. Fili hominis, quid erit [322] lignum vitis prae omni arbore rami [323] quae est inter arbores sylvae?

3. Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon?

3. An sumetur ex eo [324] lignum ad formandum, ut sit opus, vel an sument, [325] ex eo paxillum, ut suspendatur in eo omne vas? [326]

4. Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for any work?

4. Ecce in ignem traditur [327] ad consumptionem, duas extremitates ejus consumpsit ignis, et medium ejus exustum est, [328] an utile erit ad opus?

5. Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work: how much less shall it be meet yet for any work, when the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned?

5. Ecce, cum esset integrum non factum fuit [329] ut esset opus: quanto magis

[322] Or, "what is these." — Calvin.
[323] Or, "branching." — Calvin.
[324] "Namely, wood." — Calvin.
[325] Verbally, in taking, that is, if they take. — Calvin.
[326] Whatever vessel. — Calvin.
[327] Or, "is cast." — Calvin.
[328] That is, "after the fire had consumed it." — Calvin.
[329] That is, "was not formed or fitted." — Calvin.

postquam ignis consumpsit ipsum et exaruit [330] formabitur adhuc ut sit opus?

The Prophet's intention is to humble the foolish confidence of the people, who boasted of the gratuitous kindness of God, as if they were naturally excellent: hence, also, their obstinacy against his threats was so great. For when the prophets reprove them sharply, they boasted against them the remarkable gifts by which they were divinely adorned: as if they had been so armed by God's benefits to resist his power, for we know that they were so blinded. Since, then, that disease had attacked the people, it is not surprising that the prophets in many places refute such folly. But the Prophet here uses a simile to show the Jews that they were not intrinsically but only accidentally excellent, since God had treated them as worthy of remarkable benefits. Since it is so, their arrogance is easily refuted, when they oppose their superiority to God, as if it were peculiar to them, and not God's special gift. But we must understand the simile which Ezekiel uses: what is the vine more than other trees of the woods? It is certain that the vine produces very good fruit, and therefore is preferred to other trees: the very flower of the vine has a most, delicious scent; but the fruit which it produces proves its excellence. For the wood of the vine is without elegance and shapeless: it does not attain to any thickness; it is slender, pliable, and twisted. In looking at a vine, it. seems scarcely worth numbering among shrubs: if compared with trees, it clearly has no value; but in the excellency of trees something is easily acknowledged which surpasses all vines. For when we cast our eyes upon a branching tree, we are struck with admiration, while the vine lies at, our feet. If, therefore, a tree is compared with the wood of the vine, it will be praised for its beauty, while the vine will be despised as a low and insignificant wood. Hence God collects that the Jews were in no respect more excellent than others, unless because they are planted by himself, as he says in many places in Isaiah, O my vine, I have planted thee. (Isaiah 5.) Then in the 80th Psalm: he brought his vine out of Egypt, and planted and propagated it even to the sea, (Psalm 80:9-12; Jeremiah 2:21.)

Now we understand the Prophet's meaning, namely, that the Jews excelled, indeed, in privileges, but not in nature, nor yet by themselves, but by the gratuitous kindness of God: and if other nations were compared with them, they had greater dignity than the Jews. And we know that other nations flourished in arts and wealth, in population, in warlike valor, and in other respects: the profane nations were like lofty trees which grow up and attract all eyes to themselves. But the Jews were like a vine which, being planted by God's hand, deserved more praise than the trees of the wood which were fruitless. Ezekiel now carries on the comparison at, greater length: if the vine is torn up, can its wood, says he, be fitted to any use? it will not make beams or tables, or any vessels; it will not make a peg or a hook on which to hang a hat or cloak, or anything of the kind. Since, then, the wood of the vine is useless when torn from the soil, and is of no use but for burning, hence the Jews are made acquainted with their condition since their excellence and worthiness depend on the mere good pleasure of God: since, as he planted them, he can pluck them up in a moment; and when they have been torn up, they will be altogether useless, and will be cast into the fire, while trees are of some use. But, the Prophet proceeds

[330] Or, “was burnt as before.” — Calvin.

another step: if a bundle of twigs were cast into the fire, and the two extreme parts were burnt up, and the middle made dry, that scorched part would be much less useful. For since fire penetrates to the very marrow, wood, which is half consumed, is reduced to powder by the touch alone: He afterwards accommodates what he had said about the vine to the city of Jerusalem; therefore let us go on to the rest of the context.

Ezekiel 15:6

6. Therefore thus says the Lord GOD; As the vine-tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

6. Propterea sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, Quemadmodum lignum vitis in ligno sylvae, quod posuli [331] in ignem ad consumptionem, sic dedi habitatores Hierusalem.

Here the Prophet shows that the citizens of Jerusalem were cast into a fire, by which they suffered various kinds of death: for although they were not immediately and entirely consumed, yet the extremities were burnt off. For the whole region was laid waste all around, and the kingdom of Israel was entirely cut off: Jerusalem remained like the middle portion of the bundle. But the inhabitants of Jerusalem were so worn down by adversity, that they were like a stick burnt at both ends. Since this was so, we here perceive their great stupidity in persisting in contumacy, although God had humbled them so in various ways. Now, therefore, we understand the meaning of this point. But the words of the Prophet must be explained, what shall be, or what is the wood of the vine compared with other wood? Some translate, with the palm branch; others, with the wild vine; but both of these are foreign to the mind of the Prophet: especially the wild vine cannot have any place here. As far as the palm is concerned, what reference is there to the palm branch in the midst of a wood? for palms are not planted in woods amidst lofty trees. But since the wood, {זמורה}, zemoreh, signifies boughs as well as palms, it agrees best with the sense to speak of every tree as branching. What, therefore, is the vine in comparison with every branching tree which is among the trees of the forest? Here the Prophet brings before us fruitless trees, but yet those which attract our notice by their beauty: and so he implies, if the Jews wish to compare themselves with the profane nations, they are not superior in any worthiness or elegance which they have naturally and of themselves. This must be diligently noticed; although God sometimes adopts those who excel in ability and learning, in warlike prowess, in riches, and in power, yet he gathers his Church as much as possible from lowly-born men, in whom no great splendor is refulgent, that they may be objects of wonder to the world. For what end, then, does God do this? for he could fashion his own elect, that they may be completely perfect in every way. But since we are too inclined to pride, it is necessary that our infirmity should always be set before our eyes to teach us modesty. For if nothing in us reminded us of our weakness, our worthiness would blind us, or turn away our eyes from ourselves, or intoxicate us with false glory. Hence God wishes us to be inferior to the profane, that we may learn always to acknowledge as received from him whatever he has gratuitously conferred upon us, and not to arrogate anything to ourselves when our humility is so plainly set before

[331] "I have lost." — Calvin.

our eyes. But as far as concerns the Jews, they were, as we have said, like a vine, because their excellence was not natural, but external. God had fashioned them, as it were, from nothing; and although they were adorned with many remarkable gifts, yet they could claim nothing from themselves.

Shall there be taken, says he, any wood from it to fashion it for any work? God here shows that the Jews were deservedly preferred to others, because he had planted them with his hand; for if they had been pulled out of the earth, he shows that the wood would be useless, since it could not be used for any purpose. And Christ uses the same simile (John 15:1-7), when he shows that we have no root in us by nature, nor yet sap or moisture or rigor, since we are a vine planted by our heavenly Father. But if he roots us up, nothing remains for us but to be cast into the fire and utterly burnt. Lastly, God shows that the Jews should be viler than the nations, if he took away from them whatever he gave them; and he admonishes them that their state has no firmness unless through his goodwill towards them. For if the Prophet had only said, that whatever the Jews had they owed to God, and for this reason were bound to his liberality, yet they might still exalt themselves. But it is added in the second place, that they remained safe day by day, as far as God spares them, cherishes, defends, and sustains them. Therefore the Prophet means this when he says, Shall it be taken to form any work from it, or will they take it for a peg to hang any vessels upon it. Behold, says he, it was given for consumption, and its two ends were burnt up. Here, as I said, he points out various calamities by which the Jews were almost struck down, though not subdued. For they were hardened in their obstinacy; and although they were like burnt and rotten wood, yet they boasted themselves to be perfect through their adoption, and through the covenant which God had made with Abraham: they boasted themselves to be a holy race, and a royal priesthood. Yet God reproves their sloth when he says theirs was like burnt wood, when a bundle of twigs has been cast into the fire, and there is some remnant so injured by the smoke as to be deprived of its strength.

Behold, says he, when it was whole could it be formed into any work! How much less after the fire has consumed it. Here we pursues the same sentiment. If any one should take any part of the bundle after the fire had dried it, could he fit it for any work? If he should take the twig when whole, it would not be fit to receive any shaping: how much less could the burnt wood be used for a peg or anything else. If, then, not even a peg can be found in the entire bundle, when the stem is like an ember through being parched by fire, how can it be turned to any use? Now follows the application: as I have given the wood of the vine among woods, says he: verbally, in the wood of the forest. Hence gather we what I formerly said about the branch, that it agrees with trees and is not put for the wild vine or the palm branch: for he now says, simply, amidst all the wood of the forest. But he says that the wood of the vine was among the wood of the forest --- not because vines are merely planted there, but this comparison is used: that is, among woods, or even among all the woods of the forest, because these trees are felled, and destined for buildings, or vessels are made from them, and all kinds of wooden furniture, as well as the materials of houses, are taken from trees. He says, therefore, that the wood

of the vine is given among the wood, of the forest, that is, among the woods of the forest, since the twigs are burnt, as they cannot be rendered useful to men: so have I given, says he, the citizens of Jerusalem

Now after we understand the Prophet's meaning, let us learn that the Holy Spirit so addressed the Jews formerly, that this discourse might profit us in these days. We must perceive, in the first place, that we are superior to the whole world, through God's gratuitous pity: but naturally we have nothing of our own in which to boast. But if we carry ourselves haughtily, through reliance on God's gifts, this arrogance would be sacrilege: for we snatch away from God his own praise, and clothe ourselves, as it were, in his spoils. But Paul, when he speaks of the Jews, shortly, but clearly, defines both sides: Do we excel? says he --- (for he there makes himself one with the people) --- Do we excel the Gentiles? says he, (Romans 3:1); by no means: for Scripture denounces us all to be sinners --- all to be, accursed. Since, therefore, we are children of wrath, he says, there is nothing which we can claim to ourselves over the profane Gentiles. After he has so prostrated all the pride of his own nation, he repeats again --- What? Are we not superior to others? Yea, we excel in every way. For the adoption, and the worship, and the law of God, and the covenant, confer upon us remarkable superiority, and such as we find nothing like it in the whole world. How do those things agree? That the Jews excel, and are to be preferred to others, and yet that they excel in nothing! namely, since they have nothing in themselves to cause them to despise the Gentiles, or boast themselves superior; hence their excellence is not in themselves but in God. And so, Paul here does not commend their virtues, but says that they excel by gratuitous adoption, because God made his covenant with Abraham, and they were to arise from the holy nations, because he instituted a fixed line of piety among them, in promising himself to be a Father to them; nay, he determined that Christ should spring from them, who is the life and light of the world. We see, then, the former privileges of the Jews: ours is the same in these days. As often as we are favored with God's gifts, by which we approach near him and overcome the world, we ought also to remember what we were before God took us up. Then our origin will prostrate all arrogance, and prevent us from being ungrateful to God. But that is not yet sufficient; but we must come to the second clause, that not only has God's free grace raised us to such a height, but also sustains us; so that our standing is not founded in ourselves, but depends only on his will. Hence not only the remembrance of our origin ought to humble us, but the sense of our infirmity. Whence we gather that we have no perseverance in ourselves unless God daily, nay, momentarily strengthen us, and follow us up with his favor. This is the second point: the third is, if God afflicts or chastises us with his rods, we should know that the foolish confidence by which we deceive ourselves is by this means beaten out of us. Here we ought diligently to weigh the meaning of the phrase --- the wood of the vine is useless when it is torn up, and especially when dry. For although the profane nations perish, yet it is not surprising if God's judgments are more severe towards the reprobate, who had obtained a place in his Church, and who had been enriched with his spiritual gifts. This ingratitude requires us to become an example to others, so that the whole world may be astonished at

beholding in us such dreadful signs of God's anger. Hence the Jews were for a hissing and an abhorrence, an astonishment and a curse to the profane nations. Why so? They had more grievously exasperated God who had acted so liberally towards them, and were not only ungrateful and perfidious, but had purposely provoked him. Thus also it happens to other reprobates. So this clause is to be diligently noticed, when the Prophet says that the wood of the vine is cast into the fire, although trees, when cut down, are still useful either for building or for furniture. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 15:7-8

7. And I will set my face against them; they shall go out from one fire, and another fire shall devour them; and ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I set my face against them.

7. Et ponam faciem meam in ipsos: ex igni egredientur, et ignis vorabit [332] eos: et scietis quod ego Iehovah, cum posuero faciem meam in ipsis. [333]

8. And I will make the land desolate, because they have committed a trespass, saith the Lord GOD.

8. Et ponam terram in vastitatem, quia transgressi sunt transgressione [334] dicit Dominator Iehovah.

He confirms what had been said in the last verse, and at the same time explains it: as if the citizens of Jerusalem retained some form, because they were not reduced to dust; but the fire had burnt all round them, as if the flame was licking a bundle of twigs. While the royal seat remained to them, the name of a people remained, and hence an opportunity for their obstinacy. For they were not to be subdued, since they were not entirely consumed: and now another madness is added; for as soon as they had escaped from any misfortune, they thought themselves quite safe, --- ``O now we shall rest,'' said they; if the enemy had departed from the city, or if new forces had not arrived against them, or if provisions failed the enemy's troops, they immediately regained their courage, and not only breathed again, but proudly laughed at God and his prophets, as if they were beyond all danger. For this reason he now says, I have set my face against them. To set, or, if any one prefers it, to establish one's face, is to persist constantly, so as not only to do anything on passing, but to remain there until we have accomplished our intention; so that those are not bad expounders of the Prophet who say, ``I have set my face firmly:'' they do not translate verbally, but according to God's meaning. For he often chastises a whole nation or city, and yet he does not set his face, that is, he does not stay there, but chastises them lightly, and but for a short time, as if passing in another direction. But he means something else here --- that he would set his face; that is, never desist until the people's name, as well as their city, was utterly abolished. For we have said that the prophets speak of the present state of the people when they threaten such destruction. I will set my face, therefore, against them: they shall escape from one fire, and another shall devour them. Here the Prophet strikes down that foolish opinion by which the Jews deceived themselves. For if they escaped from one dan-

[332] Or, “shall consume.” — Calvin.

[333] Or, “against them. — Calvin.

[334] Or, “they have prevaricated with prevarication,” as some translate; that is, have acted perfidiously, or have been shamefully perfidious. — Calvin

ger, they thought it the last, and hence their security, and even obstinacy. But the Prophet says here, after they had escaped from one fire, that a new fire to consume them was lighted up: he means, that there were different means in God's hand by which he destroys and extinguishes a people: as he had previously said, that he was armed with pestilence and the sword, and famine and wild beasts; so now under the name of fire he comprehends various scourges. If, therefore, men have escaped the sword, a new attack shall inter them, since God will press them with famine, or urge them with pestilence, or in other ways: and then, they shall know, says he, that I am Jehovah, when I shall set my face against it. By these words he signifies that his glory could not otherwise remain safe, since impunity blinded the Jews --- nay, hardened them till they became like the brutes. If, therefore, God had spared them, his glory would have been as it were buried, and through so long a connivance he had been no longer acknowledged as God. There was a real necessity for so much rigor: since he would never show himself to be God otherwise than by destroying the impious who were so stupefied by their sins as long as he bore with them. At length he adds, I will lay the land waste since they have prevaricated by prevarication. Here, also, God expresses how terrible, yet just, was that judgment, because the Jews were no trifling offenders, but perfidiously departed from his worship, and from the whole teaching of the law, and were obstinate in their ingratitude. Since they were so abandoned, we gather that God was not too severe when he put forth his hand to destroy them utterly.

PRAYER.

Grant. Almighty God, since you have not only deigned to separate us from the common herd of men, but also to renew your image in us: and while thy favors towards us are conspicuous you exhort us at the same time to glorify thy name: Grant that being mindful of our calling we may study to devote ourselves wholly to thee and so to extol thee by peculiar and true and rightful praises, that we may be at length partakers of the glory to which you invite us, and which has been acquired for us by the blood of your only begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Forty-Second

Ezekiel 16

CHAPTER 16

Ezekiel 16:

1. Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

1. Et fuit sermo Iehovae ad me, dicendo,

2. Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations,

2. Fili hominis, indica [335] Hierosolymae suas abominationes,

3. And say, Thus says the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite.

3. Sic dices, Sic dicit Dominator Iehovah Hierosolymae, habitationes tuae, et natales tui e terra Chanaan: pater tuus Amorrhaeus, mater tua Hithaea, et quae sequuntur.

This chapter contains very severe reproaches against the people of Judea who were left at Jerusalem. For although Ezekiel had been a leader to the Israelites and the Jewish exiles, yet God wished his assistance in profiting others. Hence the office which God had imposed upon his Prophet is now extended to the citizens of Jerusalem, whose abominations he is ordered to make manifest. The manner is afterwards expressed, when God shows the condition of that nation before he embraced it with his favor. But after recounting the benefits by which he had adorned the people, he reproves their ingratitude, and shows in many words, and by different figures, how detestable was their perfidy in revolting: so far from God after he had treated them so liberally. These things will now be treated in their own order. As to Ezekiel's being ordered to lay bare to the Jews their abominations, we gather from this that men are often so blinded by their vices that they do not perceive what is sufficiently evident to every one else. And we know that the people was quite drunk with pride, for they voluntarily blinded themselves by their own flatteries. It

[335] Or, "make evident." — Calvin.

is not surprising, then, that God orders them to bring their abominations into the midst, so that they may at length feel themselves to be sinners. And this passage is worthy of notice, since we think those admonitions superfluous until God drags us into the light, and places our sins before our eyes. There is no one, indeed, whose conscience does not reprove him, since God's law is written on the hearts of all, and so we naturally distinguish between good and evil; but if we think how great our stupidity is concealing our faults, we shall not wonder that the prophets uttered this command, to lay open our abominations to ourselves. For not only is that self-knowledge of which I have spoken cold, but also involved in much darkness, so that he who is but partially conscious grows willingly hardened while he indulges himself. Again, we must remember that the Jews were to be argued with in this way, because they pleased themselves with their own superstitions. For the Prophet shows that their chief wickedness consisted in deserting God's law, in prostituting themselves to idols, and in setting up adulterous worship like houses of ill fame; but in this they pleased themselves, as we daily see in the papacy, that under this pretext the foulest idolatries are disguised, since they think themselves to be thereby worshipping God.

It is not surprising, then, if God here obliquely blames the stupidity and sloth of the Jews when he commands their abominations to be laid open, which are already sufficiently known to all. Afterwards, that God may begin to show how improperly the people were behaving, he recalls them to the first origin or fountain of their race. But we must notice that God speaks differently of the origin of the people. For sometimes he reminds them of Abraham's condition before he had stretched forth his hand and dragged them, as it were, from the lowest regions into life, as it is said in the last chapter of Joshua, (Joshua 24:2, 3,) Thy father Abraham was worshipping idols when God adopted him. But sometimes the beginning is made from the covenant of God, when he chose Abraham with his posterity for himself. But in this passage God takes the time from the period of the small band of men emerging by wonderful increase into a nation, although they had been so wretchedly oppressed in Egypt; for the redemption of the people which immediately followed is called sometimes their nativity. So here God says that the Jews were there born when they increased so incredibly, though when oppressed by the Egyptian tyranny they had scarcely any place among living men. And what he says of Jews applies equally to all the posterity of Abraham: for the condition of the ten tribes was the same as that of Judea. But since the Prophet speaks to a people still surviving, he is silent about what he would have said, if he had been commanded to utter this mandate to the exiles and captives, as well as to the citizens of Jerusalem. Whatever its meaning, God here pronounces that the Jews sprang from the land of Canaan, from an Amorite father, and from a Hittite mother

A question arises here --- When God had adopted Abraham two hundred years previously, why was not that covenant taken into account? for he here seems not to magnify his own faithfulness and the constancy of his promise when he rejects the Jews as sprung from the Canaanites or Amorites; but this only shows what they were in themselves: for although he never departed from his purpose, and his election was never in vain, yet we must hold, as far as the people were concerned, that they

are looked upon as profane Gentiles. For we know how they corrupted themselves in Egypt. Since, then, they were so degenerate and so utterly unlike their fathers, it is not surprising if God says that they were sprung from Canaanites and Amorites. For by Hosea he says, that they were all born of a harlot, and that the place of their birth was a house of ill fame. (Hosea 2:4.) This must be understood metaphorically: since here God does not; chide the women who had been false to their husbands, and had borne an adulterous offspring; but he simply means that the Jews were unworthy of being called or reputed Abraham's seed. Why so? for although God remained firm in his covenant, yet if we consider the character of the Jews, they had entirely cut themselves off by their faithlessness. Since, then, they did not differ from the profane Gentiles, they are deservedly rejected with reproach, and are called an offspring of Canaan, as in other places. Now therefore, we understand the intention of the Prophet, or rather of the Holy Spirit. For if God had only said that he would pity that race when reduced to extreme misery, it would not have been subjected to such severe and heavy reproof, as we shall see. Hence God not only relates his kindness towards them, but at the same time shows from what state he had taken the Jews when he first aided them, and what, was their condition when he deigned to draw them out of such great misery. Moreover, since he was at hand to take them up, their redemption was founded on covenant, and so they were led forth, because God had promised Abraham four centuries ago that he would be the liberator of the people. That they should not be ignorant of the favor by which God had bound himself to Abraham, the Prophet meets them, and pronounces them a seed of Canaan, having nothing in common with Abraham, because, as far as they were concerned, according to common usage, God's promise was extinct, and their adoption dead and buried. Since they had acted so perfidiously, they could no longer boast themselves to be Abraham's children. Hence he says, thy habitations, that is, the place of their origin. Jerome translates it ``root;'' but the word ``nativity'' suits better, or native soil, or condition of birth in the land of Canaan: and thy father an Amorite and thy mother a Hittite There were other tribes of Canaan, but two or three kinds are put here for the whole. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 16:4-5

4. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast you washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all.

4. Et nativitates tuae in die qua nata es tu [336] non praecisus fuit umbilicus tuus, aquis non fuisti lota, ad mollitiem [337] sale non fuisti salita, et non fuisti involuta fasciis. [338]

5. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.

5. Non misertus est super te oculus faciendum tibi unum ex his ad considerandum

[336] That is, “of your origin or nativity.” — Calvin.
[337] Or “to soften thy flesh:” we shall speak of this afterwards. — Calvin.
[338] Verbally, “wrapped in wrappings.” — Calvin.

super te et projecta fuisti in superficie agri, in probrum animae tuae quo die nata es.

Here the Prophet metaphorically describes that most miserable state in which God found the Jews. For we know that scarcely any nation was ever so cruelly and disgracefully oppressed. For when they were all driven to servile labor without reward, the edict went forth that their males should be cut off. (Exodus 1:16, 22.) No species of disgrace was omitted, and their life was worse than a hundred deaths. This, then, is the reason why God says that the Jews were so cast forth on the face of the earth without any supply of the common necessaries of life. He takes these figures from customary usage; for it is usual to cut the navel-string of infants: for the navel affords them nourishment in their mothers' womb, and mother and child would both perish unless a separation took place; and if the navel-string were not tied the child would perish; for all the blood flows through that organ, as the child received its sustenance through it: and this is the midwife's chief care as soon as the child is born, to cut away what must afterwards be restored to its place, and to bind up the part, and to do it, as I have said, with the greatest care, as the infant's life depends upon it.

But God says, that the navel-string of the Jews is not cut off. Why so? because they were cast, says he, on the surface of the earth; that is, they were deserted and exposed, --- using but a single word. He now adds, they were not washed with water: for we know how young infants require ablution; and unless it be performed immediately, they will perish. Hence he says, they were not washed with water. He adds, to soften or refresh, or ``fettle'' them, as the common phrase is; for water softens and smoothes the skin, though others translate it in the sense of causing it to shine: but we understand the Prophet's meaning sufficiently. He afterwards adds, they were not rubbed with salt; for salt is sprinkled on the body of an infant to harden the flesh, while care must be taken not to render it too hard; and this moderate hardness is effected by the sprinkling of salt. The full meaning is, that the Jews at their birth were cast out with such contempt, that they were destitute of the necessary care which life requires. He adds, No eye pitied thee, so as to discharge any of these duties, and to show thee pity: and this is sufficiently evident, since the Israelites would have been destroyed had no one taken compassion on them; for they were in some sense buried in the land of Egypt; for we know how cruel was the conspiracy of the whole land against them. No wonder, then, if God here relates that they were cast upon the surface of the land, so that no eye looked upon them and showed them pity. He adds, they were cast to the loathing of their life. He simply means, that they were so despicable that they had no standing among men; for loathing of life means the same as rejection. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 16:6

6. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live.

6. Et transivi juxta te, et vidi te foedatam [339] in sanguinibus tuis: et dixi tibi, in sanguinibus tuis, Vive: et dixi tibi, in sanguinibus tuis, Vive.

[339] Or, “contaminated:” some translate “trodden down,” I know not why. — Calvin.

I have already explained the time to which the Prophet alludes, when the seed of Abraham began to be tyrannically oppressed by the Egyptians. For God here assumes the character of a traveler when he says that he passed by. For he had said that the Jews and all the Israelites were like a girl cast forth and deserted. Now, therefore, he adds, that this spectacle met him as he passed by: as those who travel cast their eyes on either side, and if anything unusual occurs they attend and consider it; meanwhile God declares that he was taking care of his people. And truly the matter is sufficiently evident, since he seemed to have neglected those wretched ones, while he had wonderfully assisted them. For they might have perished a hundred times a-day, and if he had not taken notice of them, they had not dragged out their life to the end. That celebrated sentence is well known --- I have seen, I have seen, the affliction of my people. When he sent for Moses and commanded him to liberate the people, he prefaces it in this way, I have seen, I have seen. (Exodus 3:7) Hence he had long ago seen, though he seemed to despise them by shutting his eyes. There is no doubt that the doubling of the word here means that God always watched for the safety of this desperate people, although he did not assist them directly: he now means the same thing when he says, that he passed by: I passed by, then, near thee, and saw thee defiled with blood. That spectacle could not turn away God's eyes; for whatever is contrary to nature excites horror. God therefore here shows how compassionate he was towards the people, because he was not horrified by that disgraceful foulness, when he saw the infant so immersed in its own gore without any shape. As to the following phrase, I said to thee, he does not mean that he spoke openly so that the people heard his voice, but he announces what he had determined concerning the people. The expression, live in thy blood, may indeed be taken contemptuously, as if God had grudged moving his hand, lest the very touch should prove contagious; for we do not willingly touch any putrid gore. The words, live in thy blood, may be thus explained, since at first God did not deign to take care of the people. But it is evident from the context, that God here expresses the secret virtue by which the people was preserved contrary to the common feelings. For if we consider what has been previously said, the people surely had not lived a single day, unless it had received rigor from this voice of God. For if a new-born child is cast out, how can it bear the cold of the night? surely it will instantly expire: and I have already said that death is prepared for infants, unless their navel-string be cut. Since therefore a hundred deaths encompassed the people, they could never have continued alive, had not the secret voice of God sustained them.

God therefore in commanding them to live, already shows that he was willingly and wonderfully preserving them amidst various kinds of death. As it is said in the 68th psalm, (Psalm 68:20,) ``In his hands are the issues of death,'' so that death is converted into life: since he is the sovereign and lord of both. But this phrase is doubled, since the people were afflicted in Egypt for no short period. But if that tyranny had endured only a few years, they must have been consumed. But their slavery was protracted to many years: whence that remarkable wonder occurred, that their remembrance and their name were not often cut off. We see then that God has reason enough to speak that sentence in which the safety of the people

was included, live in thy bloods, live in thy bloods. The fact itself shows the people to have been preserved, since it pleased God. The history which Moses relates in the book of Exodus is a glass in which we may behold the living image of that life of which we have made mention as drawing its whole vigor from the secret good pleasure of God. Now the reason is asked why God did not openly and directly take up his people, and treat them as kindly as he did during their youth? The reason is sufficiently manifest, since if the people had been freed at the very first, the memory of the benefit would have by and by vanished away, and God's power would have been more obscure. For we know that men, unless thoroughly convinced of their own misery, never acknowledge that they have obtained safety through God's pity. The people then thought so to live, as always to have death before their eyes --- nay, as if they were bound by the chains of death. It lived, then, in bloods, that is, in the tomb, like a carcass remaining in its own putridness, and its life in the meantime lying hid: so it happened to the sons of Abraham. Now then we understand God's intention why he did not raise up the children of Abraham with grandeur from the beginning, but suffered them to drag out a miserable life, and to be steeped in the very pollution of death. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 16:7

7. I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare.

7. Et magnam te feci quasi germen agri: [340] et crevisti, et adolevisti, [341] et venisti in ornamentum ornamentorum: [342] ubera tua aptata sunt, [343] et pilus tuus germinavit: tu autem nuda et discooperta eras.

Here what I lately touched upon is now clearly expressed, that the people in their extreme distress were not only safe, but increased by God's singular favor. For if the infant after exposure retains its life, it will still be a weak abortion. Hence God here by this circumstance magnifies his favor, since the people increased as if it had been properly and attentively cared for, and as if no kind office had been omitted. This is the meaning of the words they were increased; for though he looks to the propagation of Abraham's family, yet the simile is to be observed, for the people is compared to a girl exposed in a field from its birth, and their growth took place when God increased them so incredibly, as we know. And surely God's blessing was great when they entered Egypt, 75 in number, and were many thousands when they left it. (Acts 7:14; Exodus 12:37.) For within 250 years, the family of Abraham was so multiplied, that they amounted to 800,000 when God freed them. But since the Prophet speaks metaphorically, when he says the people were increased, and, under the image of a tender girl, until they grew up to a proper age; meanwhile he shows that this was done only by the wonderful counsel and power of God. I placed thee, says he. God claims to himself the praise for this great multiplication, and

[340] Others translate, "ten thousand," and, {,{רבבה rebbeh, means this, but the other sense is simpler: I made thee fruitful as the bud of the field. --- Calvin.

[341] "You became great." — Calvin.

[342] Or rather, "to beauty of beauties; that is, the greatest beauty." — Calvin.

[343] Others translate, "swelled or were prominent." — Calvin.

then strengthens what I have said, namely, that the people's safety was included in that phrase live in bloods: then he says, she came into ornament of ornaments. Here {עדי}, gnedi, cannot mean any occasional ornament, since it is added directly, thou wast naked and bare. It follows then that it refers to personal comeliness. It means not only that the girl grew in loftiness of stature but in beauty of person. Hence elegance and loveliness are here marked, as the context shows us. Thou camest then to excellent or exquisite beauty, for we know this to be the meaning of the genitive, signifying excellence. He adds at the same time, thy breasts were made ready, for {כון}, kon, means to prepare, to strengthen: but as he is speaking of breasts, I have no doubt that he means them to have swelled as they ought to do. Thy breasts then were fashioned, that is, of the right size, as in marriageable girls. Thy hair also grew long. Finally, the Prophet expresses thus grossly what he could have said more concisely, in consequence of the people's rudeness. Thy hair grew long, whilst thou wast naked and bare; that is, as yet you had no outward ornament, you was like a marriageable girl --- you had great beauty of person, a noble stature, and all parts of thy body mutually accordant, but you had cause to be ashamed of thy nakedness. And such was the condition of the people since the Egyptians devised everything against them, and conspired by all means for their destruction: we see then how God stretched forth his hand not only for the people's defense, but to carry them forth against the tyranny of Pharaoh and of all Egypt. He points out the time of their redemption as near, because the people had increased and multiplied, just like a girl who had reached her twentieth year. Now it follows ---

Ezekiel 16:8

8. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.

8. Et transivi juxta te, et vidi te; et ecce tempus tuum tempus amorum: et extendi alam meam [344] super te, et texi nuditatem tuam, [345] et juravi tibi, et veni in foedus tecum, dicit Dominator Iehovah: et fuisti mea.

God now reproaches the Jews with his kindness towards them, since he had clothed them in splendid ornaments, and yet they afterwards cast themselves into the vilest lusts, as we shall see. But we must remember that the Prophet is now speaking of the time of their liberation. But God says that he passed by again and saw the state of the people, --- not that he had ever forgotten it. For we know that even when he dissembles and seems to shut his eyes and turn them from us or even to sleep, yet he is always anxious for our safety. And we have already said that there was need of his present power, that the people might prolong their lives, since if he had not breathed life into them, a hundred deaths would have immediately prevailed. But it is sufficiently common and customary to mark an open declaration of help by God's aspect. When God appears so openly to deliver us that it may be comprehended by our senses, then he is said to look down upon us, to rise up, and

[344] That is, "the skirt of my garments." — Calvin.
[345] Or, "shame." — Calvin.

to turn himself towards us. He passed by, then, near the people, namely, when he called Moses out of the desert and appointed him the minister of his favor, (Exodus 3,) he then saw his people, and proved by their trial that he had not utterly cast them away. I looked, then, and behold thy time, thy time of years. Here God speaks grossly, yet according to the people's comprehension. For he personates a man struck with the beauty of a girl and offering her marriage. But God is not affected as men are, as we well know, so that it is not according to his nature to love as young men do. But such was the people's stupidity, that they could not be usefully taught, unless the Prophet accommodated himself to their grossness. Add also that the people had been by no means lovely, unless God had embraced them by his kindness, so that his love depended on his good pleasure towards them. So by the time of loves, we ought to understand the complete time of their redemption, for God had determined to bring the people out of Egypt when he pleased, and that had been promised to Abraham: after four hundred years I will be their avenger. (Genesis 15:13, 14; Acts 7:6, 7,) We see, then, that the years were previously fixed in which God would redeem the people. He now compares that union to a marriage. Hence if God would bind his people to himself by a marriage, so also he would pledge himself to conjugal fidelity. But I cannot proceed further --- I must leave the rest till tomorrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since from our first origin we have been entirely accursed, so that we were entirely foul and polluted in thy sight, that we may be mindful of our condition, and acknowledge your inestimable pity towards us, since you have deigned to draw us from the lowest estate, and to adopt us among thy children: and may we so desire to spend our whole life in obedience to thee, that we may at length enjoy that blessed glory to which you has called us, and which you have prepared for us in your only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Forty-Third.

We began yesterday to explain another point of which the Prophet treats, namely, the liberation of the people. For then was the fitting time in which God espoused them to himself. He now adds, that he spread out the skirt of his garment to cover the foulness and disgrace of the people. This spreading comprehends all the virtues which God exercised in freeing his people. For he then delivered them from all reproaches by which they were shamefully and disgracefully treated in Egypt. Some think that it was a nuptial rite for a spouse or husband to cover the bride with his garment, but this is only a conjecture. Hence I simply interpret it, the border of the garment was spread out, when God vindicated his people from the reproaches by which they had been deformed. He afterwards adds, and I have sworn to thee, and come into covenant with thee. There is no doubt that this thought to be referred to the promulgation of the law. For although God had long ago made a covenant with Abraham, and the adoption of the people was founded upon it, yet that favor on the people's part had almost vanished away, as I yesterday said; hence God pronounces that he had, as it were, adopted the people afresh. It was like the renewal of the covenant, when God bound the people to himself by a fixed law, and prescribed a

fixed method of worship. These, then, were the accustomed marriage rites. But God deservedly announces that he had come into covenant, because he then coupled the people to himself; whence also that eulogy of Moses --- What nation is so illustrious under heaven, which has God so near them, as thy God approaches unto thee? You shall be to me a kingdom of priests; you shall be my inheritance. (Deuteronomy 4:7; Exodus 19:6.) We should remark the word swear as emphatic, for God increases his indulgence when he says that he swore. If we think of the majesty of God, and of what his people was, this is surely incredible, that God should deign to descend so far as to swear like men accustomed to pledge their faith, and to sanction it by an oath. Now, therefore, we see the singular benefit expressed here with which God adorned his people, when, at the giving of the law, he chose them as his own, and appointed them to be a kingdom of priests. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 16:9

9. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I throughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil.

9. Et lavi te aquis, et mundavi [346] sanguines tuos abs te [347] et unxi te oleo.

Here God more clearly explains what had been formerly touched upon, namely, that he then married the people, as a young man marries his bride. But he here states that he endowed her; for they would not have been sufficiently adopted by God unless they had been adorned with superior presents; since if they had been left in that miserable slavery by which they were oppressed, God's favor would have been very obscure. Now, therefore, God means, that by his law he had entered into a new covenant with his people, so that he did not leave them naked and bare, but clothed with remarkable gifts. First of all, he says, I washed thee with water. Although he had just said that the people were like a beautiful damsel, and had praised their beauty, yet the filth of which the prophet had spoken yet remained: it ought, therefore, to be cleansed from those stains: I have cleansed thee with water, says he, and washed off thy bloods, namely, the corrupt blood which the damsel whom Ezekiel mentions had retained from her birth. Lastly, Ezekiel says that God performed those offices which the nurse discharges for the child. Afterwards he adds ---

Ezekiel 16:10-13

10. I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk.

10. Et vestivi te Phrygionica veste, [348] et calceavi te taxo, [349] et cinxi te bysso, et operui te serico.

11. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck.

11. Et ornavi te ornatu, et posui armillas in manibus tuis, et torquem in collo tuo.

12. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head.

[346] Or, “I wiped.” — Calvin.
[347] Or, “down from thee.” — Calvin.
[348] Or, “variegated.” — Calvin.
[349] Or, “purple.” — Calvin.

12. Et posui circulum super faciem tuam, [350] et inaures super aures tuas, et coronam decoris in capite tuo. [351]

13. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; you didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom.

13. Et ornata fuisti auro et argento, et vestitus tuus byssus, et sericum [352] et variegatus: [353] similam, et mel, et oleum comedisti, et pulchra fuisti in valde valde, [354] et prospere [355] progressa es usque ad regnum.

Here the Prophet, in a metaphor, relates other benefits of God by which he liberally adorned his people; for we know that nothing has been omitted in God's pouring forth the riches of his goodness on the people. And as to the explanations which some give of these female ornaments allegorically, I do not approve of it, as they fruitlessly conjecture many trifles which are at variance with each other. First of all, their conjectures may be refuted by the Prophet's words: then, if we suffer the Prophet's words to be turned and twisted, what these allegorical interpreters chatter with each other is entirely contrary in their meaning. Let us, therefore, be content with the genuine sense, that God was so generous towards the Israelites that he poured forth all his blessings in enriching them. Now, if one asks how the people were adorned? I answer, in two ways --- first, God embraced them with his favor, and promised to be their God, and this was their chief honor; as Moses says they were naked, and their shame was discovered when they set up an idol in the place of God. He now adds a second kind of blessing, when God took care of them in the desert: he appeared by day in a cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire: the water flowed for them from the rock; daily food was given them from heaven, as if God with his own hands had placed it within their mouths: then in his strength they conquered their enemies, and entered the promised land; while he slew the nations for them, and gave them quiet possession and dominion there: then he blessed the land, so that it nourished them abundantly, and made it testify that it was no vain promise that the land should flow with milk and honey. (Exodus 3:17; Exodus 13:21, 22; Exodus 16:15,16; Exodus 17:6; Exodus 22:25; Numbers 20:11.) Ezekiel includes all these things under necklaces, bracelets, gold, silver, linen garments, broidered work, etc. As to the particular words I will not, accurately insist, unless I shortly touch on a point or two which may occasion doubt.

When he says that he clothed them, {רקמה}, rekmeh, this is in accordance with eastern customs: for they were accustomed to use clothing of different colors; as Benjamin wore a dress of this kind when he was a boy; and this was no royal splendor on his father's part, who was a shepherd, but simply the usual custom. At this day, indeed, if any one among us wore a party colored garment, it would not be manly: nay, women who desire such variety in colors show themselves to have cast off all

[350] Or, “thy nose or nostrils.” — Calvin.
[351] “These are all to be united together.” — Calvin.
[352] Or, “silk cloth.” — Calvin.
[353] Or, “many-colored.” — Calvin.
[354] That is, “beyond measure.” — Calvin.
[355] Or, “happily.” — Calvin.

modesty. But among the Orientals, as I have said, this was the usual kind of dress. He afterwards adds, I shod thee with badgers' skin. I know not why Jerome translates it violet-colored, and others hyacinth: it is sufficiently clear that it was a precious kind of skin. The word is often used by Moses when treating of the tabernacle; for the coverings were of violet-colored skin, and the whole tabernacle was covered with them. The badger was an animal unknown to us: but since he is here treating of shoes, there is no doubt that the skin was more elegant, and more highly esteemed by God. (Exodus 35:23; 36:19.) Afterwards he adds, I bound thee with fine linen. We know that linen garments were in more frequent use among that people than in Greece or in Italy, or in these parts: for linen was rarely used by the Romans even in their greatest luxury; but in the East they wore linen, as that region is very warm. But we know that linen is very fine, and that they were accustomed to weave transparent veils. Now this clothing was commonly worn by men in the East, though it is by no means manly: nay, in women it is scarcely tolerable. But the priests afterwards adopted the custom, and clothed themselves in linen while performing sacred rites. The Papal priests too --- apes in all things --- have imitated the custom; and although they do not wear fine linen, yet use linen robes, which they call surplices.

He now adds, and I covered thee with silk, or silken garments, or silk cloth. He adds, that he placed bracelets upon the hands: barbarians call them armlets. This luxury was spread abroad almost everywhere; but the circular ornament which the Prophet adds to it was rejected by other nations. He puts a chain round the neck: chains were in common use as they are this day: nay, to necklaces were added looser chains --- double, threefold, and fourfold; for this fault was too common. And what he afterwards adds of the ring was left to the Orientals, for they had jewels hanging from their nostrils: and I wonder why interpreters put earrings here, and then instead of earrings put nose-rings. But the Prophet here means a ring, whence a jewel was hung from the nose; and this with us is ridiculous and deforming: but in those barbarous regions both men and women have gems hanging from both their noses and ears. He adds, a crown on thy head. He does not mean a diadem or crown as a sign of royalty, but an ornament sufficiently common.

If any one makes any inquiry about these various kinds of dresses, whether it was lawful for women to use so many ornaments, the answer is easy, that the Prophet here does not approve of what he relates, but uses a common image. We said that his only intention was to show that God could not have treated his people more freely; since in every way he had unfolded the incomparable treasures of his beneficence in adorning the Israelites. He now describes this in a metaphor, and under figures taken from the common practice everywhere received. It does not follow, therefore, that women ought to adorn themselves in this way. For we know that superfluous ornaments are temptations; and we know also the vanity of women, and their ambition to show themselves off, as the saying is: and we see how sharply this eager desire of women is blamed, especially by Isaiah. (Isaiah 3.) But it is sufficient to elicit what God wished to teach by these figures, namely, that he had not omitted any kind of liberality. Whence it follows, that the people's ingratitude was the less excusable, as Ezekiel will immediately add. But before we proceed further, we must

turn this instruction to our use. What has hitherto been said of the Israelites does not suit us, I confess, in all things: but yet there is some likeness between us and them. If we reflect upon our origin, we are all born children of wrath, all cursed, all Satan's bondsmen, (Ephesians 2:3;) and although many have been well brought up, yet as to our spiritual state we are like infant children or the new-born babe, exposed and immersed in its own filth and corruption. For what can be found in man before his renewal but the curse of God? Hence we are such slaves of Satan, that God hates us, as it is said in Genesis, (Genesis 6:7,) I repent of having formed man; where he does not acknowledge his image in us, which is not only defiled by original sin, but is all but extinct, surely this is the height of deformity: and though we do not perceive what is said by our senses, yet we are sufficiently detestable before God and the angels. We have no cause, then, to please ourselves; nay, if we open our eyes, the foulness which I have mentioned will be sufficiently clear to us. Meanwhile, God so aided us that he truly fulfilled what Ezekiel relates. For although we were not freed from any external tyranny, yet God espoused us: then he adopted us into his Church: this was our greatest honor; this was more than royal dignity. We see, then, that this instruction is useful for us also at this time, if we only consider in what we are like the ancient people. I had almost omitted one point --- the nourishment. God here not only reminds them that he had adorned the people with various kinds of clothing, and necklaces, and gems, and silver; but he adds also, you did eat fine flour, or fine meal, and honey and oil, and you was very beautiful, and proceeded prosperously, even to a kingdom. Here God again commends and extols his beneficence, because he not only clothed sumptuously his spouse of whom he speaks, but also fed her plentifully with the best, and sweetest, and most delicate food. He puts only three species: he makes no mention of will or flesh; but by fine flour he means that they lacked no delicacy: the oil and honey mean the same thing. This clause points out an accumulation of grace when he says that they progressed happily even to a kingdom: all God's benefits could not be recounted: he says that his bride was not only magnificently clothed and delicately brought up, but that she proceeded even to the royal dignity. In the next verse he still reminds them of his benefits.

Ezekiel 16:14

14. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD.

14. Et egressum tibi fuit nomen in gentibus in pulchritudine tua: [356] quia perfecta fuisti in decore quem posueram super te, dicit Dominator Iehovah.

Here the Prophet still continues to recite those blessings of God by which he had bound the people to himself. As to his saying, that its name had gone forth, it cannot be restricted to a short period; but it embraces a continued series of God's favors until the people reached the highest point of happiness; and this happened under David. There is no doubt that God here means that he was so continually liberal towards the people that their fame became celebrated, for the name of the Israelites were spread far and wide; and God deservedly recounts their nobility or celebrity of fame among his benefits: hence he adds, on account of the beauty or elegance which

[356] Or, "on account of thy beauty." — Calvin.

I have placed upon thee, says he; because you was perfect through the ornament which I had placed upon thee. Here, therefore, God signifies that the people had not earned their fame by their own virtue, nor were they noble through their own native excellence, so to speak; but rather by ornament bestowed upon them. You, therefore, was of great name among the nations, said he. But wherein was that nobility and excellence? Certainly from my gifts. For nothing was accomplished by thyself so to arrive at a name and dignity more than royal. Through that ornament thy fame was spread abroad among the nations. But this enlargement must be noticed, since the people had not only experienced God's goodness in that corner of Judea, but, when they ought to be content with their lot, were held in admiration and repute among foreigners. Now follows the reproof ---

Ezekiel 16:15

15. But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was.

15. Et confisa es in pulchritudine tua, et fornicata es pro nomine tuo, [357] et effudisti fornicationes tuas ad omnem transeuntem; [358] illius fuit.

Here God begins to expostulate with his people; and with this view relates all the benefits which for a long time he had bestowed upon the Israelites, and especially upon the tribe of Judea. The Prophet now addresses them. Nothing was more unworthy or preposterous than for the Jews to be proud through the pretext of God's gifts. But this vice has always been rife in the world, as it is now too prevalent, and especially among handsome women; for, though beauty is God's gift, nine women out of ten who possess it are proud, and fond of men, and unite lust with elegance of form. This is quite unworthy of them; but it was customary in all ages, as it is this day: for we recognize the same in men; for as each excels in anything, so he arrogates to himself more than he ought, when he exults against God, and is reproachful towards others. If any one abounds in riches, he immediately gives himself to luxury and empty pomp; and others abuse them to various perverse, and even corrupt uses. If any one is endowed with ability, he turns his acuteness to cunning and fraud; then he plans many devices, as if he wished to mingle earth and heaven. Thus almost all men profane God's gifts. But here the Prophet shows the fountain of this pride, when he says that the Jews trusted in their own beauty: for if modesty flourished in us, it would certainly suffice for restraining all insolence; but when that restraint has been once thrown off, there is no moderation before either God or man. This passage, then, is worthy of observation, where God reproves his ancient people for trusting in their beauty: because the figure signifies that they drew their material for pride from the gifts which ought rather to lead them to piety; for the gifts which we receive from God's hand ought to be invitations to gratitude: but we are puffed up by pride; and luxury, so that we profane God's gifts, in which his glory ought to shine forth. We must also observe that God has thus far recited his benefits, that the people's ingratitude may appear more detestable: for God gives all things abundantly, and

[357] Or, "according to thy name." — Calvin.
[358] That is, "to whomsoever she met." — Calvin.

upbraids not, as James says, (James 1:5;) that is, if we acknowledge that we owe all things to him, and thus devote and consecrate ourselves in obedience to his glory, with the blessings which he has bestowed upon us. But when God sees us impiously burying and profaning his gifts, and, through trusting in them, growing insolent, it is not surprising if he reproves us beyond what is customary. Hence we see that God assumes as it were another character, when he expostulates with us concerning our ingratitude; because he willingly acknowledges his gifts in us, and receives them as if they were our own; as we call that bread ours by which he nourishes us, although it is compelled to change its nature as far as we are concerned. It always remains the same in itself; but I speak of external form. God therefore, as it were, transfigures himself, so as to reprove his own gifts, conferred for the purpose of our glorying only in him. (Matthew 7:11; Luke 11:13.)

God afterwards says, that the people had played the harlot according to their renown. I have no doubt that the Prophet alludes to famous harlots who excel in beauty, and interpreters have not observed this sufficiently; for they do not explain anything by saying, you have committed fornication in thy name: for as many lovers flow from all sides in troops towards a famous harlot, so the Prophet says the Jews were like her; and since they were universally noted, they were exposed to promiscuous lust, and attracted lovers to themselves. Here the Prophet condemns two kinds of fornication in the Jews; one consisting in superstitions and in the multiplication of idols, --- the other in perverse and unlawful treaties: and we know this to be the worst kind of fornication, when God's worship is vitiated; for this is our spiritual chastity, if we worship God purely according to the prescription of his teaching, if we do not bend to either the right or the left from his commands: so on the other hand, as soon as we pass the goal fixed by him, we wander like impure harlots, and all our superstitions are so many acts of defilement. The Prophet begins with the former kind, when he says that the Jews had committed fornication, namely, with their idols. But before he comes to that, he shows that their lust had been insatiable, since they had so eagerly and ardently approached their various idols, just as a harlot burns with unsatisfied desire, and is carried hither and thither, and must have a number of men; so the Prophet here says that the Jews committed fornication, not with one or two only, but with whomsoever they met; and this was occasioned by that favor of which we formerly spoke. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 16:16

16. And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colours, and playedst the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so

16. Et sumpsisti e vestibus tuis, et fecisti tibi excelsa conspersa maculis, [359] et scortata es cum illis: non venientes: [360] deinde et non erit.

He says that the Jews erected houses of ill fame for themselves; and the language is mixed, because the Prophet, expresses simply the kind of harlotry of which he is speaking, and yet in the meantime mingles another figure; for he says that they

[359] Or, "tinged with divers colors," as some translate. — Calvin.

[360] But it is in the feminine gender. — Calvin.

took garments and made themselves altars. No doubt he compares the high places to tents, just as if a harlot wished to attract a number of eyes to herself, and, through desire of a crowd, should place her standard on a lofty place. So also the Prophet says that the Jews, when they gave themselves up to fornication, made high places for themselves. When he says high places with different colors, some refer this to ornaments; yet it may be taken in a bad sense, since those high places were stained, so that they could be distinguished from chase and modest dwellings; as if he had said, If you had been a modest woman, you had remained in retirement at home, as honest matrons do, and you would not have done anything to attract men to thee; but you has erected thy high places, like conspicuous houses of ill fame, as if a female, forgetful of modesty and delicacy, should set up a sign, and show her house to be open to all, and especially to her own adulterers. It seems to me that the Prophet intends this; for when he adds, that they committed fornication with them, he means doubtless with their lovers, and all besides; but this is not the sense of the words {טלאות} {במות}, bemoth telaoth. Now, at the end of the verse, where he says, they do not come, and it shall not be, some explain this part as if the Prophet had said that there was no instance like it in former ages, and there should be none such hereafter. In this way they understand that the insane lust of the people is condemned, as if it were a prodigy, such as was never seen, nor yet to be expected. Others say, that such was the multitude of high places, that nothing was ever like it; because, although the Gentiles built idols, and temples, and altars everywhere, yet the Prophet says that the madness and fury of the people surpassed the intemperance of the Gentiles: --- this is indeed to the purpose. Meanwhile, as to the general scope, it is not of much consequence; as in the former verse, where he said it shall be theirs, some understand appetite or desire. But I interpret it more simply --- that she was exposed to every passer-by, and that it was in his power to engage her. The sense does not seem to me doubtful, because the Jews were so cast out, that no liberty remained to them, as when a woman becomes abandoned, she is the slave of all, and all use her disgracefully after that, since she is no longer her own mistress. Ezekiel now reproves the Jews for the same vice.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that we may diligently consider in how many ways we are bound to thee, and may deservedly magnify thy fatherly indulgence towards us, so that in return we may desire to devote ourselves to thee: Grant also, that as you have adorned us with thy glory, we may endeavor to glorify thy name, until at length we arrive at the enjoyment of that eternal glory which you have prepared for us in heaven by Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Forty-Fourth.

Ezekiel 16:17

17. Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them,

17. Et sumpsisti vasa pulchritudinis tuae ex auro meo et ex argento meo quae

dederam tibi: et fecisti tibi imagines masculi, [361] et scortata es cum illis.

The Prophet reproves them because they used silver and gold in making idols for themselves. He not only condemns idolatry, but ingratitude, since they turned to God's dishonor the gifts which he had bestowed. First, the profanation of his gifts was base; besides this, they had rashly and purposely abused his liberality to his dishonor, and that was not to be endured. He reproves at the same time their blind intemperance, since they willingly gave themselves up to licentiousness, and buried themselves in their superstitions. But he does not say that they simply took gold and silver, but vessels of elegance or beauty of gold and silver. Whence it appears that they were blinded by furious lusts, as we have seen. He still pursues the simile of fornication, when he calls these manufactured deities images of males; and it seems obliquely to mark the excess of lust in having to do with shadows; by which he means that they were hurried away about nothing by their unbridled appetites, just as a woman feeds her passion by the mere picture of her paramour. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 16:18-19

18. And tookest thy broidered garments, and coveredst them: and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them.

18. Et tulisti [362] vestes tuas discolores, [363] et operuisti eos [364] et oleum meum, et suffitum meum dedisti coram ipsis. [365]

19. My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, wherewith I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savour: and thus it was, saith the Lord GOD.

19. Et. panem meum quem dederam tibi, similam, et oleum, et mel quibus te cibaveram [366] etiam dedisti coram ipsis in odorem quietis: et ita fuit, dicit Dominator Iehovah.

Here God complains that the Jews turned their abundance of all things to perverse worship: for, as a husband who indulges his wife freely supplies all her wants, so a woman who is immodest was what she has received from her husband, and bestows it on adulterers; so also the Jews were prodigal in the worship of idols, and wasted upon them the blessings which God had bestowed upon them. Ezekiel, therefore, now follows up this sentiment. He says that they took those variegated garments, of which we spoke yesterday, and covered their idols; just as if an adulteress were to clothe her paramours in the very garments which she had received from her husband's liberality: you have covered them, he says. He afterwards adds, you have offered my oil and incense. Here he speaks more clearly, although he does not depart far from the figure, for they were accustomed to use oil in sacrifices; and incense was used by all nations when they wished to propitiate their deities. There is no doubt that the unbelievers imitated the holy fathers, but sinfully, because they

[361] That is, “masculine.” — Calvin.
[362] Or, “has taken.” — Calvin.
[363] Or, “variated.” — Calvin.
[364] Namely, “the false gods or lovers.” — Calvin.
[365] That is, “has offered to them.” — Calvin.
[366] Or, “had nourished.” — Calvin.

did not consider the right end. We know that the fathers used oil in their sacrifices, (Leviticus 2:1, and often elsewhere;) we know that incense was prescribed by God's law, and it was used promiscuously by all the nations, but without reason and judgment. So now God complains that they made incense of his herbs, and an offering of the oil which he had bestowed upon the Jews. He then adds the same of bread, and fine flour, oil, and honey. We said yesterday that by these words ample and delicate food was intended; for by the figure, a part for the whole, fine flour comprehends the best and sweetest bread, as well as other viands. Oil and honey are added. It is then just as if the Prophet had said that the Jews overflowed with all luxuries, yet consumed them badly. But this was a mockery not. to be borne, when the Jews, after being enriched by God's beneficence, rashly threw it all away, and not only so, but adorned their false gods to the dishonor of God himself, when they ought to have offered to him what they wasted upon idols. For this reason he calls it his own bread, and explains the passage in this sense, that the Jews could neither ascribe to themselves the abundance of their possessions, nor boast in the fruitfulness of the soil; for all these things flowed from the mere benevolence of God. This ingratitude, then, was too foul --- to bestow upon idols what God had given for a far different purpose. I, says he, have fed thee He shows the legitimate use of such manifold abundance. Since they abounded in wheat, whence they obtained fine flour, and were stuffed full of other delicacies, they thought to be elevated towards God, and to exercise themselves in the duties of gratitude; but they abused that abundance in adorning false deities.

You have offered it to them, therefore, for a savor of peace. Rest no doubt signifies appeasing here, as frequently with Moses, though others translate ``for an odor of sweetness;'' but they do not sufficiently express the meaning of Moses; for he means that when God is appeased there is peace between himself and men. (Leviticus 3:9, 13, 17, and often.) There is no doubt that ``the odor of quiet'' signifies a just expiation, by which God is appeased, so that he receives men into favor. This is everywhere said of the sacrifices of the law, since there was no other means by which men could be reconciled to God, unless by offering sacrifices according to his command. Now the Prophet transfers this ironically to their impious worship, when he says that they offered to idols all the delicacies by which God nourishes his people. To what purpose? for a sweet savor; that is, that they may be propitious to you. But it was ridiculous to wish to appease gods of stone and wood and silver. We see then how Ezekiel reproves the people's folly, when he says, that they offered both fine flour and other things to their idols to reconcile themselves to them. Now the crime is increased since the Jews did not recognize that singular blessing of being so reconciled to God, that he no longer imputed their sins to them. Woe indeed to us if we are destitute of this remedy! because we constantly commit various faults, and are thus subject to God's judgments. Unless, then, God receives us into favor, we see that nothing can be more miserable for us. But he has prescribed a fixed and easy rule by which he will be appeased, namely, by sacrifices --- I am speaking of the fathers who lived under the law: for we know that we of this day must flee to the only sacrifice of Christ, which the sacrifices of the law shadowed forth. Since, therefore,

the Jews could return to God's favor, and bury all their sins, and redeem themselves from the curse, how great was their madness in willingly depriving themselves of so inestimable a boon! Hence the Prophet now rebukes this folly, when he says that they propitiated their idols that they might appease them. He concludes at length, and it was so, says the Lord Jehovah. Here God takes away all occasion for their turning aside, when he says it was so; for we know that men always have various pretenses by which they lay the blame on some other parties, or soften it off, or cover it with some disguise. But God here says that there is no occasion for dispute, since the matter is perfectly plain. We see, then, that this word is used emphatically, when he says I am the Lord; for, if Ezekiel had announced it, they would not have listened to him; but God himself comes before them, and cuts off all excuses from the Jews. It follows ---

Ezekiel 16:20

20. Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter,

20. Et sumpsisti filios tuos, et filias tuas quos genueras mihi: et jugulasti eos [367] ad comedendum: [368] an parum a scortationibus tuis?

Here God blames them for another crime, that of sacrificing their offspring to idols. This was a very blind superstition, by which parents put off the sense of humanity. It is indeed a detestable prodigy when a father rejects his children, and has no regard or respect for them. Even philosophers place among the principles of nature those affections which they call natural affections. [369] When, therefore, the affection of a father towards his children ceases, which is naturally implanted in all our hearts, then a man becomes a monster indeed. But not only did an inconsiderate fury seize upon the Jews, but, by slaying their own offspring, they thought that they obeyed God, as at this day the Papists are content with the name of good intentions, and do not think that any offering can be rejected if it be only daubed over with the title of either good intention or zeal for good. Such also was the confidence of the Jews; but, as I have said, we see that they were seized with a diabolic fury when they slew their sons and daughters. Abraham prepared to offer his son to God, but he had a clear command. (Genesis 22:9, 10, and Hebrews 11:19.)

Then we know that his obedience was founded on faith, because he was certainly persuaded, as the Apostle says, that a new offspring could spring up from the ashes of his son. Since, therefore, he extols the power of God as equal to this effect, he did not hesitate to slay his son. But since these wretches slew their sons without a command, they must be deservedly condemned for prodigious madness. The Prophet therefore now brings this crime before us: that they had taken, their sons and their daughters, and slew them to idols. He now adds, to consume them, since it is probable, and may be collected from various passages, that the sons were not always slain, but there were two kinds of offerings. [370] Sometimes they either slew their

[367] Or, "has slain them." — Calvin.

[368] Or rather, "to consume them." — Calvin.

[369] Calvin uses here the appropriate Greek word {στόργη}

[370] A passage in Dionysius Halicarnassus illustrates this idolatrous practice: "And after this,

sons or cast them alive into the fire and burnt them as victims. Sometimes they carried them round and passed them through the fire, so that they received them safe again. But God here shows that he treats of that barbarous and cruel offering, since they did not spare their sons.

In this sense he adds, that they slew their sons to eat them up, or consume them. But another exaggeration of their crime is mentioned, when God expostulates concerning the insult offered: thou, says he, hath slain thy sons and daughters, but they are mine also, for you barest them to me. Here God places himself in the position of a parent, because he had adopted the people as his own: the body of the people was as it were his spouse or wife. All their offspring were his sons, since, if God's treaty with the people was a marriage, all who sprung from the people ought to be esteemed his children. God therefore calls those his sons who were thus slain, just as if a husband should reproach his wife with depriving him of their common children. God therefore not only blames their cruelty and superstition, but adds also that he was deprived of his children. But this, as is well known, is a most atrocious kind of injury. For who does not prefer his own blood to either fields, or merchandise, or money? As children are more precious than all goods, so a father is more grievously injured if children are taken away, as God here pronounces that he had done: you had born them unto me, says he. Hence sacrilege was added to idolatry when you did deprive me of them. He will soon call them again his own in the same sense. A question arises here, how God reckons among his sons those who were complete strangers to him? He had said in the beginning of the chapter (Ezekiel 1:3) that the people derived their origin from the Amorites and Hittites, since they had declined from the piety of Abraham and the other fathers. Since then the Jews were cast off while they were in Egypt, and after that had been such breakers of the covenant as the Prophet had thus far shown, were they not aliens? Yes; but God here regards his covenant, which was inviolable and could not be rendered void by man's perfidy. The Jews, then, of whom the Prophet now speaks, could no longer bear children to God: for he said that the body of the people was like a foul harlot, who walks about and turns round and seeks vague and promiscuous meetings. Since it was so, the children whom such idolaters bore were spurious, instead of being worthy of such honor that God should call them his sons: this is true with respect to them, but as concerns the covenant, they are called sons of God. And this is worthy of observation, because in the Papacy such declension has grown up through many ages, that they have altogether denied God. Hence they have no connection with him, because they have corrupted his whole worship by their sacrilege, and their religion is vitiated in so many ways, that it differs in nothing from the corruption's of the heathen. And yet it is certain that a portion of God's covenant remains among them, because although they have cut themselves off from God and altogether abandoned him by their perfidy, yet God remains faithful. (Romans 3:3, 4.) Paul, when he speaks of the Jews, shows that God's covenant with them is not abolished, although the greater part of the people had utterly abandoned God. So also it must be said of the pa-

having ordered that fires should be made before the tents, he brings out the people to leap over the flames, for the purifying of their pollutions." — Antiq. Romans Bk. 1, sect. 88, p. 72, and marg. 75. Edit. Hudson.

pists, since it was not in their power to blot out God's covenant entirely, although with regard to themselves, as I have said, they are without it; and show by their obstinacy that they are the sworn enemies of God. Hence it arises, that our baptism does not need renewal, because although the Devil has long reigned in the papacy, yet he could not altogether extinguish God's grace: nay, a Church is among them; for otherwise Paul's prophecy would have been false, when he says that Antichrist was seated in the temple of God. (2 Thessalonians 2:4.) If in the papacy there had been only Satan's dungeon or brothel, and no form of a Church had remained in it, this had been a proof that Antichrist did not sit in the temple of God. But this, as I have said, exaggerates their crime, and is very far from enabling them to erect their crests as they do. For when they thunder out with full cheeks --- ``We are the Church of God,'' or, ``The seat of the Church is with us,'' --- the solution is easy; the Church is indeed among them, that is, God has his Church there, but hidden and wonderfully preserved: but it does not follow that they are worthy of any honor; nay, they are more detestable, because they ought to bear sons and daughters to God: but they bear them for the Devil and for idols, as this passage teaches. It follows ---

Ezekiel 16:21

21. That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them?

21. Et maetasti filios meos, et posuisti eos ut transirent illis. [371]

He strengthens the same sentence, and more clearly explains that they offered their sons and daughters by cruelly sacrificing them when they passed them through the fire. This was a kind of purifying, as we have seen elsewhere. When, therefore, they passed their children through the fire, it was a rite of illustration and expiation; and they brought them to the fire, as I have lately explained, in two different ways. Here the Prophet speaks especially of that cruel and brutal offering. We have already mentioned the sense in which God claims a right in the sons of his people, not as members of the Church properly speaking, but as adopted by God. And here again we must hold what Paul says, that all the progeny of Abraham were not lawful sons, since a difference must be made between sons of the flesh and sons of promise. (Romans 9:7, 8.) This is as yet partially obscure, but it may be shortly explained. We may remark that there was a twofold election of God: since speaking generally, he chose the whole family of Abraham. For circumcision was common to all, being the symbol and seal of adoption: since when God wished all the sons of Abraham to be circumcised from the least to the greatest, he at the same time chose them as his sons: this was one kind of adoption or election. But the other was secret, because God took to himself out of that multitude those whom he wished: and these are sons of promise, these are remnants of gratuitous favor, as Paul says. (Romans 11:8.) This distinction, therefore, now takes away all doubt, since the Prophet speaks of the unbelievers and the profane who had departed from the worship of God. For this their unbelief was a complete abdication. It is true, then, that as far as themselves were concerned, they were strangers, and so God's secret election did not flourish in them, but yet they were God's people, as far as relates to external profession. If any

[371] Verbally, for passing them over to them, that is, to idols. — Calvin.

one objects that this circumcision was useless, and hence their election without the slightest effect, the answer is at hand: God by his singular kindness honored those miserable ones by opening a way of approach for them to the hope of life and salvation by the outward testimonies of adoption. Then as to their being at the same time strangers, that happened through their own fault. Hence we may shortly hold, that the Jews were naturally accursed through being Adam's seed: but by supernatural and singular privilege, they were exempt and free from the curse: since circumcision was a testimony of the adoption by which God had consecrated them to himself: hence they were holy; and as to their being impure, it could not, as we have said, abolish God's covenant. The same thing ought at this time to prevail in the Papacy. For we are all born under the curse: and yet God acknowledges supernaturally as his sons all who spring from the faithful, not only in the first or second degree, but even to a thousand generations. And so Paul says that the children of the faithful are holy, since baptism does not lose its efficacy, and the adoption of God remains fixed, (1 Corinthians 7:14,) yet the greater part is without the covenant through their own unbelief. God meanwhile has preserved to himself a remnant in all ages, and at this day he chooses whom he will out of the promiscuous multitude.

Now let us go on. I had omitted at the end of the last verse the phrase, Are thy fornications a small matter? By this question God wishes to press the Jews home, since they had not only violated their conjugal fidelity by prostituting themselves to idols, but had added the cruelty which we have seen in slaying their sons. Lastly, he shows that their impiety was desperate.

Ezekiel 16:22

22. And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood.

22. Et in omnibus abominationibus tuis et scortationibus tuis non recordata es dierum adolescentiae tuae, cum tu esses nuda et discooperta, et foedata in sanguinibus tuis esses.

Here God accommodates to his own ends what he has hitherto related, namely, the extreme wickedness and baseness of the people's ingratitude in thus prostituting themselves to idols. Hence he recalls to mind their condition when he espoused them. For if the wretched slavery from which they had been delivered had been present to their mind, they had not been so blinded with perverse confidence, nor had they exulted in their lasciviousness. But since they had forgotten all God's benefits, they became lascivious, and prostrated themselves to foul idolatries, and provoked God in every way. Now the Prophet proves this when he says, behold, through these abominations the people did not remember their youth. Whence happens it that impure and lustful women thus despise their husbands, unless through being blinded by their own beauty? And since they do not recognize their own disgrace, they please themselves in foul loves, as says the Prophet Hosea, (Hosea 2:5.) Such then was the self-confidence of the, Jews, that they pleased themselves by their beauty and ornaments: though God's glory and brightness shone forth in them, yet they did not perceive the source of their dignity; and hence the addition of ingrati-

tude to pride. You have not remembered, says he, the days of thy youth, when you was naked, and bare, and defiled in thy blood. It follows ---

Ezekiel 16:23-25

23. And it came to pass after all thy wickedness, (woe, woe unto thee! saith the Lord GOD;)

23. Et fuit post omnem malitiam tuam, Vae vae tibi, dicit Dominator Iehovah.

24. That thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee an high place in every street.

24. Et aedificasti tibi excelsum, et fecisti tibi excelsum in omni platea. [372]

25. Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms.

25. Ad omne caput [373] viae aedificasti excelsum tuum: et abominabilem fecisti tuam pulchritudinem: et divaricasti [374] pedes tuos omni transeunti, et multiplicasti tuas scortationes.

The first verse is variously explained. Some read the clause separately, {ויהי} {רעתך} {כל} {אחרי}, vihi achri kel regnethek --- it was after all thy wickedness: and they think that God threatens the Jews here as he did in Hosea, (Hosea 2:9,10.) For after God had there complained that his wool and his flax had been taken away, and offered as gifts to idols, he afterwards adds, I will demand all things back again, and then all thy beauty shall be taken from thee, and thy nakedness shall be laid bare, so that you shall be deservedly ashamed. Thus then they explain these words, that the condition of the Jews should be as it formerly was; as if he had said in one word, I will so avenge myself, that whether you will or not, you shall be compelled to feel the disgrace of your nakedness, since I will manifest it again. But this sense seems forced; therefore I unite it with the remainder of the verse which follows it. Thus then the language of the Prophet flows on: and it was after all thy wickedness that you built a high place for thyself --- you made for thyself a lofty place in every street: there are two different words, but the sense is the same: you did set up thy high places in all the principal ways, and so, says he, thy beauty became abominable. But this is inserted by way of parenthesis, Alas! alas for thee! This exclamation is abruptly interposed. But, at the same time, I have no doubt that these things all adhere together, since the Jews added sin to sin, and never made an end of sinning. He says, therefore, after they had been perfidious and ungrateful to God, after they had basely devoted all they had to perverse worship, then this new crime was added, that they had erected high places in every street and in every path.

If any one objects that this was not a greater crime than others, the answer is easy, that God does not speak of one high place only, or of one altar, but he comprehends all the signs of idolatry by which they had infected the land; for it was the height of impudence to erect everywhere the standard of their superstitions. For every high place and every altar was a testimony of their backsliding; just as if they had openly

[372] In every street." — Calvin.

[373] Or, "beginning." — Calvin.

[374] "Thou have poured forth, or opened; but we may use the proper word, you has spread." — Calvin.

boasted that they would not magnify the worship of the law, and intended purposely to overthrow whatever God had prescribed. God therefore, not without cause, burns with wrath because the Jews had erected high places and altars everywhere. Now, then, we understand the Holy Spirit's meaning as far as these words are concerned. It is added, after all thy wickedness, says he; that is, in addition to all thy crimes, this sin and impudence is added, that you have built not only one, but innumerable high places in every street, nay, in every pathway of importance, that is, in the most celebrated places. For the heads of the pathways are the most conspicuous places, and whatever is done there is more exposed to the eyes of all.

We must now notice the exclamation which is interposed. Alas! alas! for thee, says the Lord Jehovah. Since the Jews, through their sloth, were not at all attentive to the reproofs of the prophets, that God might waken them up, he here pronounces his curse twice. It is clear that they were not moved by it: but this vehemence tended to their severer condemnation, since, though they were drowned and sunk in deep sleep, yet they might be raised by this formidable voice. There is no doubt that they applauded themselves for their own superstitions; but it is on that account profitable to estimate the weight of these words of God. For we gather from hence, that when idolaters indulge in their own fictions, and think themselves entirely free from blame, the word of God is sufficient, by which he thunders against them, saying, alas! alas! for thee. Hence men cease to judge according to their own notions, and are rather attentive to the sentence of God, and acknowledge his curse passing on them when they think that they are rightly discharging the duty of piety in worshipping idols.

He now adds, that he made their beauty to be abhorred. I have no doubt that the Prophet alludes to the filthiness of abandoned women; and even the Latins called them ``worn out,'' whose foulness arises from their utterly giving themselves up to every wickedness. The Prophet then says that the people were not only like an abandoned woman who engages in impure amours, but that their conduct was gross in the extreme; for though many gratify improper desires through intemperate lust, yet they fastidiously reject those foul and shameless females who are notorious for profligacy. The Prophet means, then, that the people had come to such a pitch of abomination, just as the most abandoned of the sex. He now adds, you have spread thy feet to every passer-by, and have multiplied thy fornications. This is taken also from the conduct of harlots and confirms what we have already explained, that the Jews indulged not only in one kind of idolatry, but were prone to all abominations, like females who beset the paths, and address all they meet, and not only so, but shamelessly spread their feet everywhere to entice admirers.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since you desire to receive us not only into confidence and dependence, but to the condition of sons, that we may worship thee with sacred love, and revere thee through our whole life as a Father; and may we so submit ourselves to thee as to feel thy covenant firm and sacred towards us; and may we experience that you never call men to thee in vain, so long as they obey thee and respond to thy promises; until at length we enjoy that blessedness which is laid up for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Forty-Fifth

Ezekiel 16:26

26. Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger.

26. Et scortata es cum fills AEgypti vicinis tuis magnis carne: et multiplicasti scortationes tuas ad irritandum me.

I Mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, that the Prophet blames the Jews not for one single kind of fornication, but for two different kinds. Interpreters do not observe this, but think that the Prophet is always discoursing of idols and superstitions. But if we prudently weigh all the circumstances, what I have said will not appear doubtful, namely, that the Jews were condemned not only for vitiating the worship of God by their perverse fictions, but for flying, now to the Egyptians, now to the Assyrians, and thus involving themselves in unlawful covenants. It is a very common method with the Prophets to call such covenants fornications: for as a wife ought to lie under the shadow of her husband, so God wished the Jews to be content under his protection. But as soon as any danger frightened them, they fled tremblingly to either Egypt, or Assyria, or Chaldea. We see, then, that they had in some sense renounced God's help, since they could not rest under his protection, but were hurried hither and thither by vague impulse. After the Prophet had inveighed against their superstitions, he now approaches another crime, namely, the Jews implicating themselves in forbidden treaties. He begins with Egypt. God had clearly forbidden the elect people to have any dealings with Egypt. Even if God had not made known the reason, yet they ought to have obeyed his command. But I have already explained the reason why God was unwilling that the Israelites should enter into any covenant with the Egyptians, because he wished to try their faith and patience, and if they would fly to his help when any danger pressed upon them, as the saying is, like a sacred anchor. There was also another reason, because from the time when God drew his people out from thence, he wished them separated from that nation which had raged so cruelly against their miserable guests. As far as the Chaldmans and Assyrians are concerned, the former reason prevailed thus far, that it was not lawful for them to distrust God's aid in their dangers.

Now, therefore, we understand the Prophet's meaning when he says, that the Jews had committed fornication with the sons of Egypt He adds, they were gross in flesh. He means that they were foul and immodest, and were inflamed with disgraceful lust. [375] He uses a grosser simile by and by, for the perfidy of this detestable people could not be sufficiently condemned. The Prophet here says reproachfully, you have committed fornication with the Egyptians, as a licentious woman acting most basely. He adds, you have multiplied thy fornications: he speaks to the people under the character of a woman, as we have formerly seen: to irritate me. Here the Prophet takes away all excuse for error from the impious people. He says, therefore, since they so wandered after these impure desires, that they had not fallen through ignorance, since they knew well enough what God had commanded in his law. And

[375] Calvin's Latin adds, "ut inhiarent longis et crassis mentulis." The Reformer dwells so minutely on the language of the Prophet, that the refined taste of modern days will not bear a literal translation of some clauses.

there is no doubt that they darkened their own minds, as the impious always dig hiding-places for themselves, and have specious pretexts, by which they not only hide their malice before men, but also deceive themselves. Hence it is probable that the Jews were not free from such pretenses. But, on the other hand, we must remark that they were abundantly instructed by God's law what was lawful and right. Since, therefore, through neglect of the law they were so ravenous in impious desires, the Prophet says that they had purposely and designedly entered into a contest with God. For if any one raises the question whether it is lawful to enter into an alliance with the impious, the answer is easy, that we must beware of all alliances which may couple us under the same yoke; for we are naturally enough inclined towards all vices: and when we invent fresh occasions for sin we tempt God. And when any one joins himself in too great familiarity with the impious, it is just like using a fan to inflame his corrupt affections, which, as I have said, were already sufficiently flagrant in his mind. We must take care, therefore, as far as we can, not to make agreements with the impious. But, if necessity compels us, this conduct cannot be thought wrong in itself, as we see that Abraham entered into an agreement with his neighbors, though their religion was different. (Genesis 21:27,32.) But because he could not otherwise obtain peace, that was a kind of agreement by which Abraham hoped to acquire peace for himself. (Genesis 14:13; Isaiah 51:2.) Nor did he hesitate to use the assistance of allies when he succored his nephew. But if we seek the principle and the cause which induced Abraham to enter into a treaty with his neighbors, we shall find his intention to be nothing else but to dwell at home in peace, and to be safe from all injury. He was solitary, as Isaiah calls him: he had, indeed, a numerous family, but no offspring; and hence he could not escape making treaties with his neighbors. But when the Lord placed the people in the land of Canaan on the condition of defending them there, of protecting them on all sides, and of opposing all their foes, we see them enclosed, as it were, by his protection, so as to render all treaties useless; since they could not treat with either the Egyptians or the Assyrians without at the same time withdrawing themselves from God's aid.

As far as we are concerned, I have said that we have more freedom, if we are only careful that the lusts of the flesh do not entice us to seek alliances which may entangle us in the sins of others; for it is difficult to retain the favor of those with whom we associate, unless we entirely agree with them. If they are impious, they will draw us into contempt of God and adulterous rites, and so it will happen that one evil will spring from another. Nothing, therefore, is better than to reef our sails, and to look to God alone, and to have our minds fixed on him, and not to allow any kind of alliance, unless necessity compels us. And though we must prudently take care that no condition be mingled with it which may draw us off from the pure and sincere worship of God, since the devil is always cleverly plotting against the sons of God, and draws them into hidden snares. When, therefore, we are about to contract an alliance, we should always take care lest our liberty be in any degree abridged, and lest we be drawn aside by stealthy and concealed arts from the simple worship of God. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 16:27

27. Behold, therefore I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary food, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of thy lewd way.

27. Et ecce, extendi manum meam super te, et diminui demensum tuum, et tradidi te desiderio [376] earum quae te oderant filiarum Philistim, quae pudefactae sunt a viis tuis sceleris. [377]

Here God reproves the hardness of the Jews because admonition did not render them wise. The common proverb aptly says, ``fools grow wise only by the rod;'' and when their obstinacy is such that the rod does no good, their faults are indeed desperate. Hence God complains, when he had chastised the Jews, that even this did not profit them, for they were so perverse that they did not apply their minds to reflect upon their sins. For God's blows ought to rouse us up, so that our faults previously hidden ought to be brought to light and knowledge; but when we champ the bit, and are not affected by the blows, then our abandoned disposition is made manifest. Now the Prophet condemns this obstinacy in the Jews: I have extended, says he, my hand over thee. He now enumerates two kinds of chastisement, first, when God deprived the Jews of the abundance of the possessions by which they were enriched; and then because he had subjected them to the lust of their enemies. Those who translate justification as Jerome does, depart from the sense of the Prophet: {חק}, chek, signifies, indeed, a statute and edict, and he explains it of the law. But how will this agree with the Prophet's retaining the simile already used? for he compares God to a husband. God now pronounces that he had taken away their appointed portion, when he saw himself a laughingstock through his impure wife; that is, what he had intended for both food and clothing: for husbands spend a fixed sum on their wives in food, clothing, and ornament. And God previously recounted, among other things, that what he had conferred upon the Jews they had spent in superstitions. Hence, for this reason, he now says, I have taken away their allotted portion, that is, what I had assigned to them. This was one part of the chastisement: for he compares the fruitfulness of the land and other advantages to the portion which the husband assigns to the wife.

Now the other chastisement follows --- their being harassed by their enemies; for not only did the Jews find themselves encompassed by the Philistines, but they were delivered up and bound to slavery, as Moses says, (Deuteronomy 32:30,) How, then, could one vanquish ten, and ten chase a thousand, unless we had been shut up in his hand? He shows, therefore, that our enemies are never our superiors unless God enslaves us to them. But those who do not calmly subject themselves to God's command, but are refractory, are delivered into the enemy's hand, that their contumacy may be subdued by severe tyranny. Now we understand what the Prophet means by this verse: he enlarges upon the people's wickedness in not turning to God, though they felt by clear experience that they were under a curse. They ought to examine their lives, to groan before God, to acknowledge their fault, and to beg for pardon: since no feeling was awakened, the Prophet gathers that their obstinacy

[376] Or, “lust.” — Calvin.

[377] That is, “which were wicked.” — Calvin.

was desperate. This passage is worthy of our notice, that we may be attentive to God's chastisements. Whenever God even raises his finger and threatens us, let us know that he is anxious for our safety: hence in our turn let us rouse ourselves and implore his pity, and especially let us repent of our sins by which we see his anger to have been enflamed. (Jeremiah 2:30.) But if we remain slothful, we see that no excuse for us remains, since God elsewhere complains that he is trifled with, when he has chastised his children in vain. Here, {נפש}, nepish, the soul is used for lust or desire, as I have explained it. It follows ---

Ezekiel 16:28

28. Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast unsatiable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet couldest not be satisfied.

28. Et scortara es cum fills Assur, [378] quia, non esse satietatem tibi, [379] scortata es inquam cum illis, et ne sic quidem fuisti satiata.

I interpret this verse also of the covenant by which the Jews had entangled themselves, when they willingly joined themselves to the Assyrians; for this was a sure sign of distrust, when they so desired foreign aid, as if they had been deprived of God's protection. And it would be absurd to explain this verse of idolatries, since the prophets were not accustomed to speak in this way, that the people committed fornication with the Assyrians, because they imitated their superstitions and perverse worship. As, therefore, we formerly saw that the Jews had defiled themselves with idols, and prostituted themselves to impious ceremonies, forgetful of God's law; so now the Prophet accuses them of a different kind of pollution, since they eagerly sought for aid from all quarters, as if God had not sufficient strength for their protection. For otherwise there was no religious reason for their not making peace with the Assyrians; but when they saw themselves oppressed by the kings of Israel and Syria, then they thought of sending for the Assyrians; and this was like thrusting God from his place. (2 Kings 16:7-9.) For God was willing to defend the land with extended wings, and to cherish the Jews as a hen does her brood, as Moses says, (Deuteronomy 32:11.) Now, in thinking themselves exposed to any danger, they really throw off the help of God. It is not surprising, then, that the Prophet says, that they had polluted themselves with the Assyrians, because they were not satisfied. He pursues the simile on which we have dwelt sufficiently; for he blames the Jews for their insatiable lust, just as when a woman is not content with a single follower, and attracting a crowd obtrudes herself without modesty or delicacy, and sells herself to wickedness. Such was the licentiousness of the Jews, that they united many acts of pollution together. They had already departed from the true faith in making a treaty with the Egyptians, and they added another imagination, that it was useful to have the Assyrians in alliance with them: hence that unbridled lust which the Prophet metaphorically rebukes. It follows ---

Ezekiel 16:29

29. Thou hast moreover multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea; and yet thou wast not satisfied herewith.

[378] "Of Assyria." — Calvin.

[379] Verbally, "because there was no satisfying thee." — Calvin.

29. Et multiplicasti [380] scortationes tuas super terram Chanaan in Chaldaea, et ne in hoc quidem fuisti satiata.

Here the Prophet teaches that the Jews were immoderate in their desires, just as if a woman was not satisfied with two or three followers, should wantonly crave after many lovers: such, says the Prophet, was the Jews' licentiousness. As to his saying, over the land of Canaan in Chaldaea, some think it means, that they heaped up the impure rites of all the nations, and not only defiled themselves with the ancient. idolatries of the nations of Canaan, but imitated the Chaldaeans in their impiety. Others say in Chaldea, which is next to the land of Canaan; but this comment, like the last, is too forced: others take {אל}, al, comparatively, for ``through'' the land of Canaan. But I only understand it as a particle expressing likeness, thus, you have multiplied thy pollution's in Chaldaea just as in the land of Canaan. It is not surprising if they defiled themselves with their neighbors, as the Prophet had formerly said they did with the Egyptians, but when they ran about to a remote region of the world, this indeed was most remarkable. This then seems the real sense, and it reads best, that they increased their defilement in Chaldaea as in the land of Canaan. For if a female meets with a stranger she may act sinfully without so much disgrace, but when she runs about to a distance to seek followers, this proves her most abandoned. I have no doubt that the Prophet here exaggerates the people's crimes by comparison, since they penetrated even to the Chaldaeans to pollute themselves among them. He says that the Jews were not satisfied even with this, using the same expression as when treating of the Assyrians. The sum of the whole is, that the Jews were seized with such a furious impulse that they manifested no moderation in their wickedness. For they had not revolted from God once only, or in one direction: but wherever occasion offered, they were accustomed to seize it too eagerly, so that they showed in this way that not even a drop of piety remained in their minds. Let us learn then from this passage to put the bridle on cur lusts in time: for when the fire is lighted up, it is not easily extinguished, and the devil is always supplying wood or adding oil to the furnace, as the phrase is. Let us then prevent the evil which is here condemned in the Jews, and let us restrain ourselves, lest the devil seize upon us with insane fury. It follows ---

Ezekiel 16:30

30. How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord GOD, seeing thou doest all these things, the work of an imperious whorish woman;

30. Quam molle [381] est cor tuum! dicit Dominator Iehovah, cum facis hoc totum opus mulieris meretricis robustae. [382]

The Prophet seems at variance with himself when he compares the Jews to a robust or very strong woman, and yet says that their heart was dissolute. For those who translate an obstinate heart are without a reason for it, for this seems to imply some kind of resistance, as they were strong and bold, and yet of a soft or weak or infirm heart. But in the despisers of God both evils are to be blamed when they flow

[380] Or, "you has increased." — Calvin.
[381] Or, "dissolute." — Calvin.
[382] Or. "ruling." — Calvin.

away like water and yet are hard as rocks. They flow away, then, when there is no strength or constancy in them; for they are drawn aside this way and that, as some explain it, by a distracted heart, but we must always come to the idea of softness. All who revolt from God are borne along by their own levity, so that the minds of the impious are changeable and moveable: for the heart is here taken for the seat of the intellect, as in many other places. Hence the Prophet accuses the Jews of sloth, but under the name of a dissolute heart: as in French we say un coeur lasche, and the Prophet's sense is best explained by that French word --- faint-hearted. But it is sufficient to understand the Prophet's meaning, that the Jews were unstable, and agitated and distracted hither and thither, since there was nothing in them either firm or solid. Meanwhile he compares them to a strong and abandoned woman, since we know the boldness of the despisers of God in sinning against him. Since then they are dissolute, because they have no power of attention, and nothing is stable in their minds: yet they are like rocks, and carry themselves audaciously, and do not hesitate to strive with God. Although therefore these two states of mind appear contrary in their nature, yet we may always see them in the reprobate, though in different ways. Thus he properly calls the Jews not only a robust or abandoned woman, but ``a high and mighty dame,'' as it may best be rendered in French, une maitresse putain ou painarde. [383] It is forced to explain the word ``lofty,'' as taking license for her desires. I do not hesitate to interpret it of the people being like dissolute women, who throw aside all modesty, and seek lovers from all quarters, and entertain them all. This is the Prophet's sense. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 16:31

31. In that thou buildes thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thine high place in every street; and hast not been as an harlot, in that thou scornest hire;

31. Cum extulisti sublime tuum in capite omnis viae, et excelsum tuum fecisti in omni celebri loco: et non fuisti tanquam meretrix ad spernendum munus.

Here the Prophet again reproves the superstitions to which the Jews had devoted themselves: but yet he speaks figuratively, because by high places he does not simply mean altars, but tents by which the Jews had attempted to entice their neighbors: just as if an immodest female should choose a high place, and build her couch there conspicuously to attract her followers. Although therefore he inveighs against superstitions, the language is not simple, but retains the same simile as had been previously used. He says that the Jews were so prone to lust, that they were ostentatious and thought followers from a distance, and erected their tents or couches in high places. Since this has been treated before, I now pass it over slightly. But we may remark that a thing which seems of slight importance is here seriously condemned by the Prophet, whence we may learn that the worship of God is not to be estimated by our natural perception. For who would think it so great a crime to build an altar on a high place to God's honor? but we see that the Prophet abhors that superstition. Since therefore God wishes nothing to be changed in his worship, as the principal part of his worship is obedience, which he prefers to all sacrifices, (1

[383] The readers of Shakespeare will readily translate this into idiomatic English.

Samuel 15:22,) let us learn that things which we might tolerate ought to be detested by us, because God condemns them so severely.

Since therefore you have erected and made for thyself a high place at the head of all streets and paths, that is in every celebrated place. Here we see how ardently they were enflamed by idolatry so as to provoke the anger of God, and this seemed unworthy of them, as the papists at this day, who are bent upon idol worship, and under the title of ``devotion,'' think that any vice both can and ought to be excused before God. But, on the other side, the Holy Spirit says that idolaters sin the more grievously in being so eager for those impure rites. He says, thou wast not like a harlot in despising hire Some explain this coldly, that harlots mentally despise the folly of those who reward them, but this comment is incorrect: the other view is more probable, namely, that the Jews were not like a harlot who despises the bribe by which she is deceived: for by this craftiness they gain most influence when they contemptuously despise what is offered them, and scarcely deign to touch it: they do this that the wretched lover may not think himself sufficiently liberal, and so may double his gift and squander away all his goods. This passage then may mean that the people were not like a harlot who despises her reward that the wretched lover may feel ashamed and increase his offer. But the Prophet's sense seems to me different, though I do not altogether reject this. I interpret it thus: the Jews were not like a harlot, since they despised any reward for their sin, and harlots do not: they make a gain of their lusts, whence the name they bear. Since then such persons sell themselves for reward, the Prophet say's that the Jews were not like them: how so? because they despised reward, and through the mere desire of gratifying their appetites, they neither asked nor expected any reward. Afterwards it follows ---

Ezekiel 16:32

32. But as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband!

32. Mulier adultera loco viri sui sumit extraneos.

Some translate it an adulteress under her husband's roof, and {תחת}, thecheth, signifies ``instead of:'' and they explain it thus, that adulteresses do not divorce themselves from their husbands when they violate the marriage bond, but always remain at home for the purpose of admitting strangers; and they think the people's crime increased by this comparison, that they not only acted deceitfully towards God, but openly revolted from him, and left his home; for many shameless women remain at home, and hide their crimes as far as they can; but when a woman deserts her husband and children, then her case is most deplorable: they think, therefore, that the Prophet is here exaggerating the divorce or revolt of the people from God; but the sense seems better simply to compare them to an adulteress who admits strangers in her husband's stead: thou art says he, an adulteress who has sent for strange lovers instead of thy husband: for a woman married to a liberal husband is treated by him honorably; and if she seeks lovers from all sides, she is induced by neither avarice nor covetousness, but by her own lusts. In fine, as the Prophet lately said that they despised all gain through being blinded by their appetites, so he now says they were like an adulteress who rejects her husband; and not only so, but

throws herself into the protection of others, while she has an honorable and happy home.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since you have thought us worthy of such honor, that we should be bound to thee in your only-begotten Son by the bond of a spiritual marriage, --- that we may remain in that fidelity which we promised to thee, since we have found thee faithful to us by so many proofs on thy part, until, having passed through this present life, we arrive at the enjoyment of that blessedness which is the fruit of our faithful chastity, through Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Forty-Sixth.

Ezekiel 16:33

33. They give gifts to all whores: but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirest them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom.

33. Cunctis meretricibus dant munus, [384] tu autem dedisti munera tua cunctis amatoribus tuis: et conduxisti eos ut ingrederentur ad te undique [385] in scortationibus tuis.

Here the Prophet shows the great folly of the Jews in shamelessly squandering their goods; for gain impels harlots to their occupation: they feel the disgrace of it, but want urges them on. But the Prophet says, that when the Jews committed sin they did it with extravagance, since they spared no expense in attracting their lovers. He pursues the simile which we have had before; for he compares the nation to a perfidious woman who leaves her husband and offers herself to adulterers. We now understand the Prophet's meaning. It is clear that the Jews did not act thus on purpose, for they thought they would profit by their treaties with the Egyptians and Assyrians' they were unwilling to serve their idols for nothing, since they hoped for most ample rewards from this their adulterous worship. But the Holy Spirit does not regard either what they wished or hoped for, but speaks of the matter as it was. It is clear, then, that the Jews were very prodigal in their superstitions, and we see this even now in the papacy. Those who grudge even a farthing for the relief of the poor will throw away guineas when they wish to compound for their sins; and there is no end to their extravagance under this madness. The very same rage prevailed among the Jews for which Ezekiel now reproves them. He says, then, that they offered gifts to their lovers; for, as I have said, they were so prodigal in the worship of false gods, that when they desired a treaty with either the Egyptians or Assyrians, they were necessarily loaded with valuable presents; and history bears witness that they entirely exhausted themselves. Lastly, the Prophet here shows that the Jews were so blind, that in leaving God, and devoting themselves to idols, they failed to obtain any advantage. Then, when they implicated themselves in perverse and wicked treaties, he shows that they were so utterly deranged as to deprive themselves of all their goods, and yet to receive nothing but disgrace in return for their extravagance: presents are given to all harlots, but thou bestowest thine. Jerome takes the pronoun passively, meaning the blessings which God had bestowed upon the people: and this

[384] That is, "presents are accustomed to be given." — Calvin.

[385] "From all around." — Calvin.

passage is like that in Hosea, (Hosea 2:5-8) where God complains that the Jews had profaned the blessings which he had conferred upon them, just as if a wife should bestow on adulterers what she had received from her husband. Foul indeed is this! for a husband thought these would be pledges of chastity when he adorned his wife with precious garments, or enriched her with other presents and ornaments; but when a wife, forgetful of modesty and propriety, throws her husband's gifts at the feet of adulterers, this is indeed outrageous. Hence this sense does not displease me, although it would be more simple to understand it that the Jews had washed away all their goods. He says, that they had hired their lovers to come in from every side for wickedness. He repeats again what we saw before, that the Jews were abandoned sinners, for some, though impure, are content with a single lover. But as he had before said that the Jews spread their feet widely, so he now adds, that they hired lovers from all sides. Shameful indeed is such conduct in any woman: yet Ezekiel reproves the Jews for this indelicacy, and we saw the reason in yesterday's lecture. It follows ---

Ezekiel 16:34

34. And the contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms, whereas none followeth thee to commit whoredoms: and in that thou givest a reward, and no reward is given unto thee, therefore thou art contrary.

34. Et fuit in te inversio a mulieribus, in scortationibus tuis, et post tua postrema [386] non erit scortatio: [387] quia dedisti munus, et munus tibi non fuit datum: ita fuisti in contrarium. [388]

But the Prophet only confirms his former teaching, that the Jews were seized with such lust, and in so unaccustomed a manner, that they could only satisfy their desires with severe loss; but this comparison only magnifies their crime, since they were worse than any harlots; for although they basely sell themselves, yet the hope of gain is a kind of pretext and excuse, and a starving woman may be led into great excess; but far fouler and less excusable is her conduct who purchases her lovers. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 16:35-37

35. Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD:

35. Propterea, meretrix, audi sermonem Iehovae.

36. Thus says the Lord GOD; Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them;

36. Sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, quia effusum fuit infimum tuum, [389] et detecta fuit turpitudo tua [390] in scortationibus tuis erga amatores tuos, et erga omnia idola abominationum tuarum, et in sanguinibus filiorum tuorum quos dedisti illis.

[386] That is, “following thee.” — Calvin.

[387] “Understand like your.” — Calvin.

[388] The meaning is the same, the verb {,{הפך hephek, means to overthrow; hence the noun signifies ``inversion,'' or ``the contrary.'' --- Calvin.

[389] Properly “thy money;” but it is taken metaphorically for “thy lower parts.” — Calvin.

[390] Or, “nakedness.” — Calvin.

37. Behold, therefore I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all them that thou hast loved, with all them that thou hast hated; I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness.

37. Propterea ecce congregabo cunctos amatores tuos, quibus te oblectasti erga eos, et omnes quos dilexisti, et quos odisti: congregabo inquam, eos contra te a circuitu, et retegam [391] pudenda tua [392] coram ipsis, et videbunt totam turpitudinem tuam.

After God has inveighed against the people's sins, and treated the whole nation as guilty, he now pronounces judgment on their wickedness. He repeats shortly what he had said, as a judge explains the reason of his sentence. Since, says he, the lower parts of thy body and thy disgrace has been discovered before thy lovers. This is the reason of the judgment, whence it is collected that God is induced to treat his people harshly for just and necessary causes. It now follows: therefore, says he, I will assemble all thy lovers, with those also whom you hate, I will assemble them, and uncover thy shame before them. We may now see what the Jews are threatened with, namely, a disgraceful destruction, so that they become a common laughingstock without any one to succor them; for the diction is metaphorical when he speaks of lovers and of parts of the body; for by lovers he here means the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Chaldeeans. Whence their opinion is refuted who think that the Prophet treats only of superstitions. Nor can this language be transferred to idols, since we know that false gods were not spectators of the punishment which the Prophet denounces against the Jews. Whence it follows that this language will only suit those persons to whose protection the Jews trusted, so as to treat God's help as useless. Since, then, such is the metaphorical sense of the passage, we understand that shame means spoliation and slaughter; nay, the destruction of both the kingdom and city, and even of the temple. Thus the nation was a common laughingstock, and in this way like a foul and aged harlot. Now we understand the Prophet's intention. As to Jerome translating ``wealth,'' it is altogether adverse to the Prophet's meaning; there is no doubt that he means the lower part of the body, and it follows in the same sense, thy shame was uncovered. But at the same time God expresses why it was done, namely, for fornication, as if an abandoned woman were to act so disgracefully. He now says it was done towards your lovers, towards the idols of your abominations: {על}, gnel, is here taken for towards or against. He distinguishes between lovers and idols. Those who think that the Prophet treats only of superstitious think the copula superfluous; but there is no doubt that the Prophet means, on one side, the Assyrians, and Egyptians, and Chaldeeans; and on the other, false gods.

And in bloods, says he. He here adds another crime, namely, that of barbarous cruelty, because they did not spare their own sons, as we saw before: many offered up their children, and some were found so excited as to cast them into the fire: it was indeed a monstrous crime when they hesitated not to rage against their own offspring: but they were so carried away by insane zeal that they burnt, up their

[391] Or, “I will discover.” — Calvin.
[392] Or, “thy disgrace.” — Calvin.

children when others only drew them through the fire. Hence the Prophet again accuses them of cruelty for offering their children to idols, and so pouring forth innocent blood. Now follows the punishment. Behold, says he, I collect all thy lovers. We said that this ought to be understood of the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Chaldreans, all of whom looked upon the slaughter of that perverse and perfidious nation, but none of them helped her. God therefore pronounces the destruction of the people just like that of a harlot abandoned by her lovers, and perishing through hunger, want, and other miseries: for it very often happens that a person under the impulse of love prefers a harlot to his own life; for he will throw off all regard for his wife; he will be disrespectful to both his father and mother, and will break through every restraint to enjoy her company: but when such persons are grown old, and their hair becomes white, which represents the winter of life, and when wrinkles deform the face, then they are despised, and especially if they suffer through disease. So also the Prophet now says that the Jews would be despised by all, so that their lovers should be compelled to behold that example; and meanwhile they scarcely deign to look at the foul appearance which had formerly sweetly delighted them.

Then he proceeds further, namely, that their enemies should behold their ignominy: we know that the Jews were surrounded on all sides by enemies, and that all their neighbors were hostile to them. The Prophet now says that the nations disgrace should be exposed before their lovers, that is, the Egyptians, the Assyrians, Chaldaeans, Philistilles, Edomites, and other nations. This passage teaches us, that although the reason for God's judgments does not always clearly appear, yet they are never too severe; and when he condescends to afford us a reason, he grants us a gratuitous indulgence. But when he silently executes his judgments, let us learn to acquiesce in his justice, and not to cry out if he exceeds moderation; because when he has once explained that his severity is only justice, hence we must gather the general rule, that whenever he seems to treat his people too severely and harshly, yet he has just reasons for it. Let us learn, also, that the Jews only suffered a just recompense when God so cursed all their counsels. They thought themselves very provident and circumspect when they engaged in alliances with Egyptians and Assyrians. But all their plans turned out unhappily for them, since they consulted their own will contrary to that of God. Let us learn, then, if we wish to promote our own salvation, and to obtain a prosperous result, to do nothing without God's permission, and not to undertake any deliberations except those which God has dictated and suggested by his word and Spirit. For here every future event is shown to us as in a glass when we wish to be wiser than they ought, and than God permits them. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 16:38

38. And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy.

38. Et judicabo te judiciis adulterarum, et fundentium sanguinem et ponam te sanguinem excandescentiae [393] et zeli. [394]

[393] Or, "of emulation." — Calvin.
[394] Or, "of envy." — Calvin.

This verse is only added for the sake of explanation. Already God had explained shortly and clearly every event which should happen to the Jews, yet they should perish in the greatest disgrace and be destitute of all help, since through distrust in God they sought the favor of men, like a woman eager for lovers. But he confirms the same teaching, that they should suffer double punishment, since they not only polluted themselves thus shamefully, but also by impious slaughters, since they burnt their children in honor of false gods. This sentence may be explained generally, I will judge you with the judgments of women pouring out blood, as we know that not only idolatry was rampant at Jerusalem, but rapine, and all kinds of cruelty; for since they had departed from God and his worship, they boldly violated his law. By the second word we may understand all the crimes by which they had provoked God's anger on account of their cruelty. But since he has lately spoken of sons, I willingly retain that sense, that they should suffer as an adulteress and a parricide who has put her children to death. But they thought that they obeyed: but he not only rejects, but abominates such foolish thoughts; for nothing is more disgraceful than, under the pretense of piety, to slay and to burn one's own children: this, I say, was a profanation of God's name scarcely tolerable. No wonder, then, that he denounces double vengeance, since, when the Jews pleaded their zeal, God branded upon them the mark of wickedness, though they thought him bound to their interests. It afterwards follows ---

Ezekiel 16:39

39. And I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare.

39. Et dabo te in manum eorum: et sublime tuum diruent, [395] et disrumpent [396] excelsa tua; et spoliabunt te vestibus tuis, et sument vasa gloriae tuae, [397] et dimittent te nudam et discoopertam.

Here Ezekiel enlarges upon God's judgment, when he teaches that the Jews would not only be exposed to every disgrace, as if they were brought forward into a noble and conspicuous theater, but they would suffer spoliation and rapine from those in whom they formerly trusted. I will give thee, says he, into their hands He speaks of lovers and enemies: in truth, he says all shall meet together --- your ancient allies and friends as well as your enemies: and we know that they were spoiled at one time or another by the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Chaldaeans. For at the time when Jerusalem was taken and cut off, the Assyrians were reduced under the monarchy of the Chaldees. Babylon had oppressed Nineveh, as is well known, but the strength of both people were joined together. Thus the Jews were spoiled by them when they thought that they had provided for themselves very successfully by an alliance with the Assyrians against the kings of Israel and Syria: and afterwards, when they had formed an alliance with the Chaldaeans, they thought themselves beyond the reach of all danger. But now the Prophet derides there foolish confidence, and says that

[395] Or, “overthrow.” — Calvin.
[396] Or, “break down.” — Calvin.
[397] Or, “of beauty;” that is, “thy precious furniture.” — Calvin.

they should be spoiled by all their friends: so also he says that their altars should be thrown down. Those who translate it ``a house of sin'' do not sufficiently consider what I yesterday observed, that the Prophet uses the figure so as to mark a thing simply from any part of it. The Prophet's language is moderate or mixed, because he speaks partially of lofty and profane altars, and at the same time follows out its own simile. There is no doubt, therefore, that by a high place and lofty things he means altars themselves: although he does allude to these sinful houses, because he said in yesterday's lecture that the Jews stood at the top of the streets so as to entice any casual and unknown strangers to them. As also the Chaldaeans did not spare the temple, so there is no doubt that they destroyed all the altars promiscuously. and yet the Jews had wished to gratify them by destroying a part of them. But God shows how foolishly men imagine they shall succeed while they purposely fight against him: and experience teaches that the same thing happens to all unbelievers. For when any one has embraced his own superstitions, and despises what others think sacred and holy, then the conquerors destroy temples and images, and deform the region which they wish to be ruined and desolate. So also it is now said, they shall destroy your altars and high places. He now adds, and they shall spoil thee of thy garments, and take away the vessels of thy beauty. The Prophet comprehends in these words whatever benefits God had conferred on the Jews; for we know how liberally he had adorned them with his gifts, and especially in rendering the earth wonderfully fruitful by his blessing. He signifies in a word, that the Jews, when deprived of all their ornaments, would be disgraced; as it follows, and they shall send thee away naked and bare; that is, they shall cast thee off, just as a lover when satisfied rejects the companion of his iniquity.

Ezekiel 16:40

40. They shall also bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords.

40. Et ascendere facient contra te coetum, [398] et lapidabunt te lapidibus, [399] et perfodient te gladiis suis.

Since what Ezekiel has hitherto brought forward was incredible, he now explains the manner of its accomplishment --- that the Chaldmans and Assyrians should bring a large army and bury the whole of Judea with stones, and pierce it through with swords. By these figures he simply means that there should be such slaughter that the whole region should be made desolate, just as if the enemy should slay all that they met with stones and swords. Some think that he alludes to stones which were thrown by engines of war; but I doubt whether the Prophet thought of this. What I have stated is more simple, that the Jews had no cause to think themselves free from that final slaughter of which the Prophet spoke, since numerous and powerful armies should come and overwhelm them with stones, and pierce them through with swords. It follows ---

Ezekiel 16:41

41. And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee

[398] Or, “army.” — Calvin.

[399] But the noun is superfluous, since {,{רגם regem, signifies to stone to death. --- Calvin.

in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shall give no hire any more.

41. Et exurent domes tuas igni, [400] et facient in te [401] judicia in oculis mulierum multarum, et cessare faciam te a scortando: atque etiam munus non offeres amplius.

After he had spoken of the slaughter of men, he adds the burning of their dwellings. This was sad indeed, that the whole land should be deprived of inhabitants: but the deformity of this last slaughter was heaped upon them when the houses were burnt up; for the country was laid waste for the future, and for a length of time. For when men are slain others may succeed, if they find houses prepared, and fields not uncultivated. But when all these things are consumed by fire, and by other means of ruin, all hope for the future is taken away. The Prophet now means this when he says, that the houses were burnt up. He adds, they shall execute judgment against thee in the sight of many women. As he had used the simile of a harlot for the Jewish people, that the clauses of the sentence may correspond, he understands the neighboring people under the name of women. He confirms what we formerly saw, that the penalty which should be exacted of the Jews should be joined with the greatest disgrace. But this is very bitter, when not only we must perish, but the cruelty of enemies must be satiated while many behold us; and doubtless it was much more severe for the Jews to sustain the ridicule of their foes than to perish at once. If they had perished at once, death had not been such a torture to them as those mockeries by which they were harassed by their enemies. For we said that they were hated by almost all; and in the 137th Psalm (Psalm 137:7) it is shown that the Edomites, and others like them, said, by way of congratulation, Hail! hail! when Jerusalem was destroyed: Remember, O Lord, the sons of Edom, who said in the day of Jerusalem, Down with it, down with it, even to the ground. The Prophet, therefore, announces this, that the punishment which he formerly mentioned should be an example to all nations. He speaks improperly of the Chaldaeans, when he says that they should be executors of God's judgments, for there was not a duty assigned to them; but God often transfers to man as the instrument of his wrath what peculiarly belongs to himself alone. And in this way he wounds the Jews more severely when he makes the Chaldaeans their judges. God, properly speaking, was the sole judge who avenged the people's wickedness; but meanwhile he substitutes the Chaldaeans for himself, that the punishment might be the more disgraceful. He adds, and I will make thee cease from fornication, nor shall you offer gifts any more God does not mean that the Jews would be better when in exile, but simply reminds them that the opportunity for their sinning would be wanting, as when an immodest person is ashamed through being despised by every one, not through any improvement in her disposition, since her licentious feelings are the same as before. So also the Jews were always obstinate in their wickedness, though deprived of the opportunity of sinning. It follows ---

Ezekiel 16:42

42. So will I make my fury toward thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from

[400] The noun “fire” is redundant. — Calvin.
[401] Or, “they shall execute.” — Calvin.

thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry.

42. Et quiescere faciam excandescentiam meam in te, et recedet aemulatio mea abs te: et quiescam, et non irascar amplius.

Although God seems here to promise some mitigation of his wrath, there is no doubt that he expresses what we formerly saw, namely, that such should be the destruction of the nation that there would be no need to return again to punish them. When, therefore, he says, I will make my indignation rest upon thee, it means that he would satiate himself with vengeance for all their crimes: so that the consumption of the people is here called the rest of God's indignation, as if he had said, When I have utterly reduced you to nothing, then my indignation against thee shall rest. In the same way he afterwards adds, and my indignation shall depart from thee. But I cannot finish today.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since you have hitherto sustained us, and since we are worthy of being utterly destroyed a hundred times, --- Grant, I say, that we may repent of ourselves, and prevent that horrible judgment of which you set before us a specimen in your ancient people: and may we so devote ourselves to thee in the true chastity of faith, that we may experience the course of thy goodness until we enjoy the eternal inheritance which your only-begotten Son has acquired for us by his blood. --- Amen.

Lecture Forty-Seventh

We stopped yesterday at the passage where God pronounces that his rivalry should depart from the Jews. Some interpret this of jealousy, and this sense does not displease me; for we know that God has hitherto spoken in the character of a husband. But when a husband avenges the injury which he has suffered, he is enflamed with jealousy. Hence he has no moderation in his wrath; but when he begins to despise his wife because she is defiled, and to think her unworthy of further notice, then his anger and indignation is allayed. So, therefore, some understand it, My jealousy shall depart from thee, that is, You shall be no longer esteemed as my wife, but I shall despise thee as if you are altogether strange and unknown to me. But the word jealousy or rivalry may be taken otherwise; as he said yesterday, I will put upon thee the blood of indignation and jealousy, that is, I will treat thee in no milder way than those do who burn with wrath, and breathe out nothing but slaughters; as when any one is enflamed against his enemies, he slays all he meets. As, therefore, God put aside, in the last lecture, the blood of jealousy and anger, so in this place the word may be taken to mean simple rivalry; for God's {קנאה}, kenah, zeal, or ardor in vengeance, shall depart from the Jews, because material shall be deficient, as we explained it yesterday, I shall be at rest, says he, and shall not be angry anymore. By these words he confirms the same thing, that such should be the destruction of Jerusalem that God shall cease his wrath, as if he were satiated. He does not here promise any mitigation, as some think, but expresses its formidable nature, since it should consume and abolish the whole people, so that God's anger ceases, just like a fire is extinguished of its own accord when no fuel is left. This is the full sense. It follows ---

Ezekiel 16:43

43. Because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, but hast fretted me in all these things; behold, therefore I also will recompense thy way upon thine head, saith the Lord GOD: and thou shalt not commit this lewdness above all thine abominations.

43. Quia [402] non es recordata dierum adolescentiae tuae, et irritasti me in hoc toto [403] etiam ego viam tuam in caput reddam, [404] dicit Dominator Iehovah: et non fecisti cogitationem super cunctis abominationibus tuis. [405]

He first blames the Jews for not reflecting on the liberality of their treatment. But that ingratitude was too shameful, since God had not omitted any kind of beneficence for their ornament. But since they thought themselves not adorned with sufficient splendor by God, and that he was less munificent than he ought to be, it may here be gathered that they were unworthy of such great and remarkable benefits. Finally, God here shows that how severely soever he punished the Jews, yet they deserved it for their ingratitude in not thinking him sufficiently liberal towards them: for their spirits were utterly broken. If a wife leave her husband, she is either compelled to do so by his perverse conduct, or else she betrays an illiberal disposition if she has been treated honorably. But since the Jews were bound to God so strongly in so many ways, their perfidy and revolt was so much the more detestable; for God does not suffer his blessings to be despised by us: since we must always mark the reason of his omitting nothing which may testify his paternal love towards us, namely, that we may celebrate his goodness. But when we turn his benefits to the profanation of his name, that is like mingling heaven and earth. Hence this passage against ingratitude must be remarked.

He now adds, thou, has been tumultuous against me, or has moved or irritated me. {רגן}, regen, sometimes signifies to frighten, but it means here to quarrel with, contend, or be in a rage with: for the word may, in my opinion, be taken either actively or passively, and also as a neuter. If we take it in the neuter sense, it will mean that the Jews were tumultuous against God, as if they were seized by a turbulent spirit, so as to neglect and despise him, and to indulge themselves in wickedness. If you prefer the active sense, it means you have irritated me. He adds again, I also will recompense thy way upon thy head, [406] by which words God again affirms that he was not induced to punish the Jews by any rash or inconsiderate zeal, since if any one considered their crimes, he will acknowledge that they had received a just recompense. In fine, the mouth of the Jews is here stopped, lest they should suppose God to act unfairly when they were only reaping the fruit of their deeds. He next adds, and you have not made consideration I have already given two expositions in the note, but neither of them pleases me, for it seems altogether adverse to the

[402] "Because." — Calvin.

[403] Or, "you have been tumultuous against me." — Calvin.

[404] "I will put." — Calvin.

[405] Others translate, "that you may not execute thy thought in all your abominations." Jerome reads it in the first person, and translates it thus: "I have not fulfilled my thought according to your abominations," as if God would praise his own clemency here in being so moderate in his wrath; but this is altogether foreign to the subject. — Calvin.

[406] We must understand the pronoun "thy" before "head." — Calvin.

Prophet's context to receive it as if God were the speaker: besides, it is not necessary to change the tense of the verb, and take the past for the future, when the sense tends in another direction. It agrees far better that the Jews did not recall to mind their own abominations so as to be displeased with them. To make consideration, means to reflect upon. {זמה}, zemeh, is mostly taken in a good sense, and signifies consideration simply; and as this is the word's proper meaning, we see that the Prophet here accuses the Jews of stupidity, because they did not turn their attention to reconsider their abominations. Those who take it for lewdness distort the sense. The whole meaning is, that the Jews were worthy of the horrible destruction which hung over them, because they were not only obstinate in their ingratitude, but altogether stupid: for their abominations were so foul before the nations, as we have formerly seen, that the daughters of the Philistines were ashamed of the wickedness of the nation, but they did not apply their minds to the consideration of these things. Since, therefore, their abominations were so gross, it was a mark of the greatest indolence not to turn their attention to review them. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 16:44-46

44. Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter.

44. Ecce quisquis proverbiat [407] super te proverbiabit dicendo, Sicut mater filia ejus.

45. Thou art thy mother's daughter, that lotheth her husband and her children; and thou art the sister of thy sisters, which lothed their husbands and their children: your mother was an Hittite, and your father an Amorite.

45. Filia matris tuae es quae abjecit [408] maritum suum et filios suos: et soror sororis tuae [409] quae repudiarunt maritos suos, et filios suos. Mater vestra Chitaea, et pater vester Amorrhaeus.

46. And thine elder sister is Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left hand: and thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, is Sodom and her daughters.

46. Et soror tua major Samaria est, et filiae ejus, quae habitant ad sinistram tuam: et soror tua minor prae te, quae habitat a dextris tuis, Sodoma et filiae, ejus.

Here the Prophet uses another form of speech; for he says that the Jews deserved to be subject to the taunting proverbs of those who delight in wickedness. The sense is, that they were worthy of extreme infamy, so that their disgrace was bandied about in vulgar sayings. This is one point: he now adds, that proverbs of this kind were the Jews' desert --- the daughter is like her mother and sisters Then he says, their mother was a Hittite, and their sisters Samaria and Sodom. We must briefly treat these clauses in order. When the Prophet speaks of proverbs, he doubtless means what I have touched on, namely, that the crimes of the nation deserved that their

[407] "Verbally." — Calvin.

[408] Or, "repudiated, abominated." — Calvin.

[409] I rather think the place corrupt, and that {,{אחותן achothek, is put for ,{אחותין achothik, for it follows --- ``who have turned away from their husbands;'' and this does not agree with a single sister: then shortly after the Prophet will say, that the Jews had two sisters, Sodom and Samaria; and surely what follows cannot be understood of one woman; for it says, ``they have despised their husbands.'' --- Calvin. Newcome agrees with this emendation of Calvin's; so also does Maldonatus, the Jesuit, Comment. in Ezekiel, etc.

infamy should fly abroad on the tongues of all; for there are many sins which are hidden, through either their being spared, or their not seeming to be much noticed. If any one surpass all others in cruelty, avarice, lust, and other vices, his disgrace will be notorious, and he will be pointed at by vulgar proverbs. Hence Ezekiel dwells on the people's wickedness, since they supply material for all men to laugh at their expense; for he alludes to buffoons and wits, and such as are ingenious in fabricating vulgar sayings.

The maker of proverbs shall utter this proverb against thee: like mother like daughter. There is no doubt that they used this saying at that period, and it often happens that daughters' faults are like their mothers'. Daughters indeed often degenerate from the best mothers, and matrons will be found who excel in the virtues of modesty, chastity, sobriety, and watchfulness, while their daughters are rash and proud, luxurious, lustful, and intemperate; but it usually happens that a mother has wicked daughters like herself: this happens less by nature than by education; for a woman of a perverse inclination will think that a stigma attaches to herself if her daughter is better than she is, and so she will wish to form her after her own morals; hence it happens that few daughters are found modest whose mothers are immodest: few sober who have been brought up by drunkards. Since therefore experience always taught the similarity between mothers and daughters, hence this proverb was in the mouth of every one. Proverbs, however, are not always true, but only on the whole; but God sometimes extends his pity so far that the daughter of a wicked woman is honorable and well conducted. But this is very rare: hence this proverbial saying cannot be rejected, --- like mother like daughter. It now follows: thou art the daughter of thy mother; that is, altogether like her: and this phrase is equally common among us, ``Thou art thy father's son,'' namely, you are like him in thy sins. Thus the Prophet means that the nation was like their mother, since it differed in nothing from the Canaanites and the Hittites. He adds also, sister and their daughters, as if he would collect the whole family. He says that Samaria is their elder sister, and Sodom their younger. I know not whether those who think that Samaria is called older than Jerusalem, through its revolting first from the worship of God, have sufficient grounds for their interpretation: for as we go on we shall see that Samaria is compared with Sodom, and since Sodom is the worst, it is very naturally compared with it. For Jerusalem will afterwards be placed in the highest rank, because it had surpassed them all in enormity. Samaria therefore is one of the sisters, and so is Sodom these towns are called daughters, for we know that Sodom was not the only one destroyed by fire from heaven, since there were five cities. (Genesis 10:19, and Genesis 19:25.) We see, then, why those smaller cities near at hand were called daughters of Sodom, and as far as Samaria is concerned, it was the head of the kingdom of Israel: hence all the cities of the ten tribes were called its daughters.

With relation to the father, the Prophet says here more than he had ventured before. He says, their father was an, Amorite, as if the Jews had sprung from profane nations, and did not draw their origin from a holy parent; and the Prophet very often makes this objection, not that they were spurious or descended according to the flesh from the uncircumcised Gentiles, but because they were unworthy of their father

Abraham, through being degenerate. In fine, God here signifies that the parents of the Jews were not only profane nations but utterly reprobate, and those whom God for very just reasons had ordered to be destroyed, since they had contaminated the earth with their crimes far too long. He says that the Jews were like a daughter sprung from most abandoned parents. As to his saying, that the mother as well as sisters had despised their husbands, this may seem absurd. But we know that in proverbs, parables, examples, and comparisons, all things ought not to be exacted with the utmost nicety. When Christ's coming is said to be stealthy, (Matthew 24:43, 44,) if any one here desires to be cunning and inquires how Christ is like a thief, that will be absurd. And also in this place when it is said, thy mother has abandoned her husband and her sons, and thy sisters have done the same. God simply means that both the mother and sisters of Jerusalem were impure and perfidious women; and cruel also, since they not only had violated the marriage pledge and had thus broken through all chastity, but were like ferocious beasts against their own sons. (Luke 12:39, 40; 1 Thessalonians 5:2.) He reproves the crime which we yesterday exposed, that of the Jews burning their own sons. In fine, he means to compare the Jews with the Canaanites, the Samaritans, and the Sodomites, in both perfidy and cruelty. Hence they are first condemned for throwing away all modesty and conjugal fidelity, and next for forgetting all humanity. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 16:47

47. Yet hast thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations: but, as if that were a very little thing, thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways.

47. Et non in viis ipsarum ambulasti, et non secundum abominationes earum fecisti quasi parum [410] et exiguum: et corrupt, es prae illis in cunctis viis tuis.

Now the Prophet, not content with the simile which he had used, says that the Jews were far worse than either their mothers or sisters. Yet he is not inconsistent, for God wished by degrees to drag the wicked to trial. If at the very first word he had said that they were worse than the Sodomites, they would have been less attentive to this accusation. But when he proposed a thing incredible, namely, that they were the daughters of the nations of Canaan, and the sisters of Samaria and Sodom, and afterwards proceeded further, and pronounced that they surpassed both their mother and sisters, this, as I have said, would stir up their minds more vehemently. This difference then contains no inconsistency, but rather tends to magnify their crimes. You, says he, have not walked according to their ways. He does not here exempt the Jews from participating in sins as if they were faultless through not imitating the Hittites, or Sodomites, or Israelites: but the word walking ought to be restricted to the sense of equality, as if he said, you are not equal. But it is a kind of correction when God says that the Jews were not equal to the Hittites or Sodomites, meaning that their impiety was more detestable, since they rushed forward to all kinds of wickedness with greater license. We now understand the Prophet's meaning when he says that; the Jews had not walked in the ways of either Sodom or Samaria or the nations of Canaan, since they had gone before them, and even with greater ardor of pursuit;

[410] "A small matter." — Calvin.

for if they had simply imitated the three people of whom mention has been made, they had walked in their ways. But when they were so hurried on in their intemperance as to run before them, they did not walk in their ways only through leaving them behind. And this comparison will sufficiently explain the Prophet's mind, that the Jews did not follow either the Sodomites, Israelites, or Canaanites, but through their base and headlong violence left them far behind. And he says, as if it were only a small matter, that is, as if it were of little moment to thee to be like thy mother and sisters. But you have been corrupt, says he, before them. He now explains the case more clearly, since they had not walked in their ways through precipitating themselves with greater license, as we have already said. It follows ---

Ezekiel 16:48

48. As I live, saith the Lord GOD, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters.

48. Vivo ego, dicit Dominator Iehovah, si fecerit Sodoma, soror tua ipsa et filiae ejus quemadmodum fecisti tu, et filiae tuae.

Since what we have lately seen was difficult to be believed, hence God interposes an oath. Nor is it surprising that shame was so despised and cast far away by the Jews, since they were inured to it; and we know how they were swollen with pride, for they always boasted in their adoption and gloried in the name of God. Besides, we know that at this day, if any one accuses a wicked nation, yet it is not so detestable as Sodom, and if he uses this phrase, he inflames all against himself, and causes them to reject his language with indignation. For who will suffer either one city or nation to be compared with Sodom? As far as concerned the Jews, we have said that it was intolerable in them to be fastidious and proud. There was also another reason why they should be indignant at being pronounced worse than the Sodomites: since God had not chosen them as his peculiar treasure in vain and marked them with magnificent titles: you shall be a nation of priests unto me, you shall be my inheritance, and besides, my son --- my first-born Israel. (Exodus 19:6, and Exodus 4:22.) We now see how necessary the interposition by oath was to sanction what the Prophet had said. God therefore here swears by himself, because we call him in as a witness and judge when we swear. But he swears by himself or by his life, because, as the Apostle teaches, he has no greater by whom to swear. (Hebrews 6:13.) Whatever it be, he here prostrates all foolish boasting, by which the Jews were puffed up when he swears by himself, that they were worse than Sodom and her daughters. And here also he calls in like manner the smaller cities daughters of Jerusalem. This was very hard upon the Jews, when the Prophet says and often repeats, thy sister Sodom. But he wounds their feelings far more bitterly, that Sodom was just in preference to Jerusalem: this was indeed intolerable, and yet we see that the Holy Spirit by no means indulges them here. Hence we must not regard what the reprobate are able to bear, but they must be treated according to their own disposition, and since they rise fiercely against God, so also are they to be subdued, and, according to the common proverb, ``a hard wedge must be formed for a hard knot.'' It now follows ---

Ezekiel 16:49

49. Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

49. Ecce haec fuit iniquitas Sodomae sororis tuae, superbia, satietas panis, et securitas oti [411] fuit illi et filiabus ejus: et manum egeni et inopis non apprehendit.

Here God begins to show the reason why he extenuated the wickedness of Sodom in comparison with that of his own people: for if he had spoken generally, without explaining the counsel of God, his language would have been incredible, and so would have been ineffectual. But now God shows that he did not pronounce rashly what we heard before, namely, that the Jews were worse than the Sodomites. How so? for this was the iniquity of Sodom thy sister, says he, first pride, then fullness of bread, and luxury in which they were in the habit of indulging, and of drowning themselves in ease to enjoy a long peace; afterwards, they did not seize the hand of the poor. Now he adds ---

Ezekiel 16:50

50. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good

50. Et superbe se extulit, et fecit abominationem coram me, et abstuli ipsos quemadmodum vidi. [412]

We must diligently attend to this passage; for God does not here excuse the wickedness of Sodom; but, abominable as that people was, he says that the Jews were yet more abandoned. We know why God inflicted his vengeance in a terrible manner against the Sodomites and their neighbors, for that was a fearful example; and Judea says that it was a kind of mirror of the wrath of God which awaits all the impious, (Jude 1:7;) and Scripture often recalls us to that proof of God's judgement: but we must see how Sodom rushed forward to that degree of licentiousness so as to be horrified by no enormity. God says that they began by pride, and surely pride is the mother of all contempt of God and of all cruelty. Let us learn, then, that we cannot be restrained by the fear of God, unless moderation and humility reign within us. Pride, we know, has two horns, so to speak; one is, when men forget their own condition, and claim to themselves not only more than is right, but what God alone calls his own. This, then, is one horn of pride, when men, trusting in their dignity, excellence, plenty, and wealth, are intoxicated by false imaginations, so as to think themselves equal to God. Now, another horn of pride is, when they do not acknowledge their vices, and despise others in comparison with themselves, and please themselves in enormities, just as if they were free from any future account. Since, therefore, pride is contained in these two clauses, when men arrogate too much to themselves, and thus are blind to their own vices, each of these is doubtless condemned in the Sodomites, since they first raised themselves by a rash confidence, and then refused to subject themselves to God, and rebelled against him as if they could shake off his yoke.

He afterwards adds fullness of bread. But the Prophet seems to condemn in the

[411] Or, "quiet peace;" others, "abundance of ease." — Calvin.
[412] That is, "as I pleased." — Calvin.

Sodomites what was not blamable in itself: for when God feeds us bountifully, fullness is not to be considered a crime; but he takes it here for immoderate gluttony; for those who have abundance are often luxurious, and nothing is more rare than self-restraint when materials for luxury are supplied to us. Hence fullness of bread is here taken for intemperance, since the Sodomites were so addicted to gluttony and drunkenness, that they gratified their appetites worse than the brutes, who do retain some moderation, for they are content with their own food: but men's covetousness is altogether insatiable. Let us observe, then, that by fullness of bread we are to understand that intemperance in which profane men indulge when God supplies them bountifully with the means of living; for they do not consider why they abound in wine, and corn, and abundance of all things, but they drown themselves in luxuries with a blind and brutal impulse. Hence such greediness, so inflaming to the spirits of the Sodomites, is added to pride, that they arrogate to themselves more than is just. He afterwards adds, and rest; ,{תולש} sheloth: some translate it abundance, but almost everywhere it means peace; the noun ,{טקש} sheket, which is added next, means properly rest; so that it will be the peace of rest or ease, and this seems without blame: for why shall we not be permitted to enjoy ease, if no one molests or troubles us? nay, it is reckoned among God's blessings: you shall sleep, and no one shall frighten thee. (Leviticus 26:6.) Since God, therefore, wishes this to be considered among his blessings, that the faithful should sleep soundly, without any anxiety or trouble, why is Sodom condemned for thus enjoying ease and peace? But here its excess is pointed out, not its true use, since the use of peace is to render our minds tranquil, that we may return thanks to God, and dwell calmly under his sway. But how do the reprobate act? They grow brutish, so to speak, in their own peacefulness. Hence sloth is in this passage meant by the peacefulness of ease, and God means that the Sodomites were intoxicated by their luxuries when they enjoyed peace. We must put off the remainder.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since you have deigned to graft us once into the body of your only-begotten Son, that we may be mindful of our origin, since from our very birth we were lost and cursed; and grant that we may be mindful of that grace by which you have honored us, so that we may worship thee as a father, and preserve our trust in thee inviolate: and may we be so obedient to thee that thy image may be renewed in us more and more in all righteousness and holiness, until thy glory may perfectly shine forth in us in thy heavenly kingdom by the same Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Forty-Eighth.

We began in the last lecture to treat that passage where God pronounces that the Jews surpassed in all kinds of wickedness both the Sodomites and the ten tribes of Israel. When he wished to prove this he said that the iniquity of Sodom was pride, fullness of bread, and then ease, with sloth and cruelty: afterwards he put another kind of pride, since the people were intoxicated with confidence, and indulged in unbridled and brutal license, as he afterwards says. For he adds, that the cities were overthrown and destroyed since they had perpetrated foul abominations. With

regard to excess, we said that good living simply is not here condemned when any one uses the affluence granted to him for God's glory; but luxury and intemperance. For the rich boast as much as possible, and are not only eager for delicacies, and stuff themselves to the full, but they triumph and luxuriate in what is sure to destroy them. The Prophet then blames this in the Sodomites. We said also of quiet and rest, that it denoted that sloth by which the profane madden themselves; but that is more clearly expressed shortly by vain-boasting. The Prophet now adds, that they had not seized the hand of the poor and needy. We must notice this, since pride is almost always cruel; and truly no one heartily succors his poor brethren who is not affected by their necessities. But those who are intoxicated by false confidence, and claim everything for themselves, despise their brethren, and thus carelessly permit them to be utterly oppressed by poverty and want. The Prophet here pronounces nothing concerning Sodom but what we too often perceive by daily experience. He now adds ---

Ezekiel 16:50

50. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.

50. Et extulit se, [413] et fecerunt abominationem coram facie mea, et abstuli eas quemadmodum volui. [414]

Here God shows that Sodom had not at first fallen into those foul and gross crimes which were the cause of its final destruction. We must diligently mark this: for when Satan begins to entice us, we think that we shall be free to retract our steps whenever we please; but we are ensnared, some in one way and some in another. But when we are entangled by Satan's deceits, it is not in our power to escape from them; nay, we feel that we are involved in a complete labyrinth. Since, then, men proceed gradually in provoking God's wrath, we must observe this passage, in which God informs us that the Sodomites were not given up at once to enormous lust, but they began with smaller sins, and then became luxurious through their abundance, and were stupefied by ease and quiet; meanwhile they despised the poor and needy, and did not stretch forth their hands to them. For to seize the hand means the same as to stretch forth the hand, when we set up again those who have fallen, or prop up those who are slipping. Hence God shows that the Sodomites were afterwards so corrupted by luxuries, that he at length adds, that they raised themselves up, that is, that they purposely, and of their own accord, exempted themselves from all fear of punishment: for this is the meaning of the word raised up; that is, they buoyed themselves up, since they promised themselves freedom from punishment; and in that fallacious hope they dared to perpetrate abomination before my face. Hence we must always fear lest Satan should entangle us by His enticements, and at length so fascinate and stupefy our senses that we can no longer distinguish between good and evil, as the Sodomites exceeded the brutes in their abominations, which were the cause of their ruin.

When God announces that he removed those cities as he pleased, he wishes

[413] "And they raised themselves up," for he comprehends the daughters of Sodom, that is, the neighboring cities. — Calvin.

[414] That is, "as I pleased and desired." — Calvin. He repeats Ezekiel 16:50.

to inspire the Jews with terror, lest they should suppose that they would profit by turning their backs; because, whether they wished it or not, he would at length drag them before his tribunal. God, therefore, here passes the final sentence, that the Jews may feel that they must render an account to him. Now, if any one should ask whether these crimes which Ezekiel relates are worse than those of the Jews, the answer is at hand, that the Sodomites were not under the law; and hence it is no wonder if they wandered and stumbled in darkness: but when the right course of life was pointed out to the Jews, they professedly sought their own destruction, they knowingly and willfully rejected God's yoke, and haughtily despised all the prophets who daily desired to recall them into the path of duty. Other circumstances are also to be noticed, that the Jews not only abused the goods which God plentifully bestowed upon them, but, as we have seen, squandered them upon adulterous worship, and then they fetched from thence all kinds of superstition, and became worse than the beasts, as we have seen elsewhere. While we know that the imitation of the people of Sodom was very common in Judea, when they were tainted with many corruption's through forgetfulness of the law. If, therefore, we weigh these points together, it will not be surprising that God pronounces the Jews to have sinned more grievously that the Sodomites. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 16:51

51. Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done.

51. Et Samaria secundum dimidium scelerum tuorum non scelerate egit: et multiplicasti abominationes tuas prae illis, et justificasti sorores tuas in omnibus abominationibus tuis quas patrasti.

God now pronounces the same thing concerning Samaria, whom he had formerly called the younger sister. By Samaria, as we said, he means the Israelites, because that city was the head of the Kingdom of Israel: the ten tribes had been already driven into exile; and he says they were not half so wicked when compared with the Jews. This, at the first glance, may seem absurd; for we know that God's worship was continued at Jerusalem when the Israelites rejected the law, and basely and openly turned aside to idolatry. Since, therefore, some sound piety flourished at Jerusalem when the Israelites wickedly revolted from God's law, what can it mean by the Jews being censured as worse than they were? We must always come to the fountain which I have pointed out; for ingratitude has great influence in exaggerating men's crimes. But another reason must also be remarked. The Jews had seen how severely God had avenged the superstitions of the kingdom of Israel: they were so far from repenting that they rather courted their alliance, as if for the very purpose of provoking God afresh. If we reflect upon these two points, the question will be solved as far as relates to the present passage. God says what is incredible to us, that the Jews were worse than the Israelites: but he asserts this, because ingratitude had rendered them less excusable; for God had retained them under his own charge when that wretched dispersion happened, and the ten tribes were all but absorbed. God's candle was always shinning at Jerusalem, as it is said. (Exodus 27:20.) When,

therefore, God had preserved for himself that small band as the very flower of the people, safe and sound, the revolt of this people was far more criminal than that of the ten tribes: for these tribes were drawn away from the worship of God by little and little, as is well known. For Jeroboam always set before himself one definite object --- the worship of God as the liberator of the people, (1 Kings 12:) for the Israelites did not look on themselves as apostates, although they had degenerated from their fathers. But the Jews addicted themselves to gross superstitions, of which the Israelites at first were ashamed; and then they were warned by many penalties not to imitate their kinsmen: still, as we saw before, the temple was defiled by many pollution's; for Ezekiel, in the eighth chapter, says that he saw there many defilement's. Since then the Jews profited so badly, though God set his vengeance before their eyes, it is not surprising that they are said to have sinned grievously.

In conclusion, he adds, thou hast multiplied your abominations beyond them; and you have justified thy sisters in all the abominations which you have perpetrated. Here the word ``justified'' is to be received at first comparatively: it does not signify that the fault of others is extenuated by the wickedness of the Jews; but if the people wished to offer excuses, they might easily be convinced that both Sodom and the kingdom of Israel were just in comparison with the Jews. To justify is usually received for to absolve; and we must observe this when we treat of justification, since the papists always seize upon the quality, as if to be justified was in reality to be just. Hence they are unable to comprehend a doctrine sufficiently familiar to Scripture, and plain enough --- that we are justified by faith: for they examine man, that they may find justice there, and do not ascend any higher: but to be justified by faith signifies nothing but to be absolved, though we are not just in ourselves; hence a justification by faith without us must be sought for, and hence we gather that it is not a quality. Hence Jerusalem justified her sisters, although Sodom and Samaria were found worse than herself. It follows ---

Ezekiel 16:52

52. Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters.

52. Etiam tu porta probrum tuum quae judicasti sororem tuam in sceleribus tuis quibus impie egisti [415] prae illis: justificatae sunt prae te. Atque etiam tu [416] pudefias, et porta probrum tuum, quod justificaveris sorores tuas.

Here at length God announces that he would punish the Jews according to their deserts. Hitherto he has recounted their crimes, as judges are accustomed, when they condemn criminals, to state the reasons which induce them to pass sentence: thus God shortly shows how wicked the Jews were. He now adds, that he would avenge them according to the magnitude of their crimes. For they would easily have swallowed all reproaches if the fear of punishment had not been infused into them. This second head, then, was necessary, lest they should Judea off with impunity,

[415] Or, “thou was abominable.” — Calvin.
[416] “Even thou.” — Calvin.

since they had surpassed both Sodom and Samaria. Do thou also bear thy disgrace who has judged thy sisters. Here Ezekiel seems to be at variance with himself, for he said just now and will repeat again shortly, that Jerusalem had justified her sisters; and this is contrary to judging. But he says that Samaria was condemned by the Jews; and the solution of this discrepancy is easy: for the Jews justified both the Israelites and the Sodomites, not by absolving them in any sentence passed on them, but because they were worthy of double condemnation; as Christ says, In the last day it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for the Jews. (Matthew 11:24.) But what is here said of condemnation has another meaning --- that the Jews insulted over their brethren when they saw their kingdom destroyed, and the Israelites driven away from their land. Since they spoke so proudly of the slaughter of the ten tribes, as if innocent themselves, the Prophet here reproves them as if they judged them. And this is too common with all hypocrites, to inveigh hardly against all others, and to grow hot against them, as if in this way they covered their own crimes. And Paul reproves this vice in them, since they were supercilious censors of others, and at the same time committed every sin. Thinkest you, O man, says he, when you judge others, that God will not condemn thee; for who art you, O mortal man? Do you claim the office of a judge? (Romans 2:1-3.) Meanwhile will God be deprived of his rights, so as not to call thee to account for thy sins? Now, therefore, we understand the Prophet's intention: for he exaggerates the crimes of the Jews when he pronounces sentence from on high against the ten tribes. Truly God blotted out this kingdom deservedly: for they were apostates; they had revolted from the family of David, and had violated that sacred unity by which God had bound to himself the whole family of Abraham. They had indeed just cause for speaking thus in condemning the Israelites; but when they were worse than them, what arrogance it was to harass their brethren, and to be blind to their own vices, nay, to grow utterly callous to them!

Thou, therefore, have judged thy sister, that is, you have taken God's office upon thee, and yet you were worse than thy sister. Some explain it otherwise, that the Jews judged the ten tribes as long as they remained in a moderate degree worshipers of God: but they do not attend to the context. There is no doubt that the Prophet here rebukes the pride with which the Jews were puffed up, while they judged others severely and themselves leniently. They were justified in comparison with thee, says he: you, therefore, he repeats, blush and bear thy disgrace. This repetition is not superfluous, although in the former words there was nothing obscure, for it was difficult to persuade the Jews that they should suffer punishment, since God had borne with them so long. God's goodness, then, which invited them to repentance, had rather hardened them, and had occasioned so much torpor that they thought themselves free from all danger. Hence this is the reason why the Prophet confirms his former teaching concerning the nearness of God's vengeance against them. He says, when you have justified them. He here repeats the cause, and does so to restrain all pretenses by which the Jews could in any way protect themselves. For by one word he shows that they must perish, since they had justified those who had been treated so strictly. For it is by no means likely, that God should cease from his

office of judge in one direction, since he had been so severe against the Sodomites, who were in some way excusable for their errors. This then is the reason why the Prophet affirms again that Sodom and Samaria were justified by the Jews. It follows ---

Ezekiel 16:53

53. When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them:

53. Et convertam captivitatem earum, captivitatem Sodomae et filiarum ejus, et c.aptivitatem Samartiae et filiarum ejus, et captivitatem captivitatum tuarum in medio ipsarum.

He here confirms again what we lately saw, that the Jews were doomed and devoted to final destruction, nor was it possible for them to escape any more than for Sodom to rise again and Samaria to be restored to her original dignity. The Jews foolishly corrupt this passage, since they think that restoration is promised to Israel and Sodom. But by Sodomites they mean the Moabites and Ammonites, the descendants of Lot who dwell at Sodom: but a child may see that this is trifling. There is no doubt that the Prophet here deprives the Jews of all hope of safety by reasoning upon an impossibility: as if he had said, you shall be safe when Sodom and Samaria are. We now understand the Prophet's meaning. But the inquiry arises --- how can he pronounce none of the Israelites safe, when their return home is so often promised? But we must bear in mind, what we saw elsewhere, and what it is often necessary to repeat, since many passages in the prophets would otherwise give rise to scruples. Therefore we have sometimes said, that the prophets speak of the people in two ways; for they sometimes regard the whole body of the nation promiscuously: but the Israelites were already alienated from God; afterwards the Jews also cut themselves off from him. Since therefore each people, considering them in a body and in the mass, to speak roughly, was outcast, it is not surprising if the prophets use this language --- that no hope of mercy remained --- since they had excluded themselves from God's mercy. But afterwards they change their discourse to the remnant: for God always preserves a hidden seed, that the Church should not be utterly extinguished: for there must always be a Church in the world, but sometimes it is preserved miserably as it were in a sepulcher, since it is nowhere apparent. God, therefore, when he denounces final vengeance on the Jews, regards the body of the people, but then he promises that there shall be a small seed which he wishes to remain safe. Hence it is said in Isaiah, (Isaiah 8:16,) seal my law, bind up my testimony among my disciples; that is, address my disciples as if you were reading in a hidden corner any writing which you did not wish to be made public. Do you therefore collect my disciples together, that you may deliver to them my law and my testimony like a sealed letter. But now God cites to his tribunal those degenerate Jews who had nothing in common with Abraham, since they had made void and utterly abolished his covenant: Now, therefore, we see how the Jews perished together with Sodom and Samaria, and were never restored, that is, as far as relates to that. filth and dregs which were utterly unworthy of the honor of which they boasted. I will

restore, therefore, their captivities; namely, the captivity of Sodom and of its cities, and the captivity of Samaria and its cities, and the captivity of thy captivities, that is, and the captivity of all thy land; I will restore you, says he, altogether; but he speaks ironically, and, as I have said, he shows that God's taking pity upon the Jews was impossible. It follows ---

Ezekiel 16:54

54. That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them.

54. Ut portes probrum tuum, et pudefias ab omnibus quae fecisti, consolando ipsas.

Hence we gather from the last verse, that God gave the Jews no hope of safety, but rather confirms their utter destruction, so that no future safety was to be hoped for. For he says, that you may bear thy reproach and become ashamed, namely, because they had sinned grievously, as I have said before, and had not repented of their wickedness. He adds, in consoling them. He speaks after the ordinary manner of men, since the miserable feel some consolation in seeing themselves perish among a great multitude. This then is the consolation of which the Prophet speaks, not that the sorrow of Sodom and Samaria was mitigated when they saw the Jews joined to themselves, but, as I have said, God adopts the common language of men. It follows ---

Ezekiel 16:55

55. When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate.

55. Et sorores tuae Sodoma, et filiae ejus revertentur ad pristina sua, [417] et Samaria et filiae, ejus revertentur ad antiquitatem suam, [418] et tu et filiae tuae revertimini ad pristinum statum.

A clearer explanation of the former doctrine now follows, that the Jews, should thus feel God merciful when his mercy reached Samaria and Sodom; but that never could be done, and hence the Jews were reduced to despair; for, as I have said, the Prophet argues from what is impossible and almost absurd. Just as Virgil writes ---

``The inhabitants of seas and skies shall change,
And fish on shore, and stags in air shall range:''
Virgil, Dryden's, Eclogue 1. V. 60 ---

which can never take place: so that it implies the complete denial of what might seem doubtful. This way of speaking is proverbial, when Ezekiel says that the Sodomites and Israelites should return to their ancient state or their former dignity; and that could never be hoped for, as I have said: hence it follows, that the Jews could not be safe when God draws them into the same punishment. Besides, the Prophet speaks as if the city should be cut off and temple overthrown, since the Jews had often been threatened with this, and he had shown them the wrath of God present before their eyes. But, although they had always hoped well, yet he

[417] "To their ancient state." — Calvin.
[418] That is, "to their former state." — Calvin.

despises their pride by which they were blinded, and utters his prophecies openly as if God had executed whatever he had threatened. For this reason he says, the captivity of thy captivities shall be in the midst of them. But they might object, that they enjoyed their country, that they still cultivated their fields, and had sufficient food for their support although besieged by their enemies. But the Prophet looked down upon it all, because before God the city was as it were taken and all were exiles, since God had not threatened them in vain. Weakness here compels me to break off.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, since in your inestimable mercy you have deigned to separate us from the profane nations, and to adopt us into thy family, that we may so conduct ourselves that you may not treat us as strangers: but while you acknowledge us as thy sons, may thy Spirit govern us until the end, so that thy name may be glorified in us, and at length we may be made partakers of that glory which has been acquired for us through Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Forty-Ninth.

Ezekiel 16:56-57

56. For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride,

56. Et non fuit Sodoma soror tua in sermonem in ore tuo in die superbiarum tuarum, [419]

57. Before thy wickedness was discovered, as at the time of thy reproach of the daughters of Syria, and all that are round about her, the daughters of the Philistines, which despise thee round about.

57. Priusquam detegeretur malitia tua secundum tempus probri filiarum Syriae, et omnium quae in circuitu ejus sunt filiarum Philistim, quae spreverunt [420] te a circuitu.

God here blames the Jews because they did not attend to that remarkable judgment which he had executed against the Sodomites: for they had always before their eyes what ought to retain them in the fear of God; for that was a formidable spectacle, as it is this day. They knew that region to have been like the paradise of God, as it is called by Moses. (Genesis 13:10.) Since, then, the fertility and pleasantness of the place was so great, to see there the lake of sulphur and bitumen was sufficient material for instructing them, unless they had been utterly sluggish. But the Prophet says, that there was no mention of Sodom while the Jews lived happily; and we know that it was a great crime not to consider God's judgments, as we read in Isaiah. (Isaiah 5:12.) Among other things he says, that the Jews and Israelites were so corrupt that they did not regard God's works: hence as it is a useful exercise to consider God's judgments, yea, this is the chief prudence of the faithful; so, on the other hand, those who shut their eyes to the manifest judgments of God are like the brutes. And yet this is a very common fault, especially when the circumstance here expressed is added, that profane men do not attend to God's operations through being intoxicated by prosperity; for in this passage we have two ways of explaining

[419] Or, "loftiness." — Calvin.
[420] Or, "have seized." — Calvin.

the word {גאוניך}, gaonik, which the Prophet uses for pride or loftiness. Sometimes the word {גאון}, gaon, is taken in a bad sense, as well as for sublimity or any high degree of honor. Besides, the Prophet's meaning is clear, while things proceeded according to the Jews desires they were not anxious about rendering an account before God; nay, they passed by with their eyes shut that memorable example which God designed for them in Sodom and the neighboring cities. Therefore we should learn from this passage, when God indulges us, and treats us softly and delicately, that we must always recall his judgments to mind, that we may be restrained from all licentiousness, lest prosperity should incite us to self-indulgence; for such remembrance is most needful. For we know that nothing is more dangerous than to exult like ferocious horses when God feeds us in abundance. Hence the remedy must be taken in time that we may receive instruction from the examples of punishment which we read in Scripture, or in other histories, or such as we witness with our own eyes. He adds, before thy wickedness was discovered. Here Ezekiel says that their wickedness was discovered, when it appeared that God was hostile to their sins; because even then, when their sins could be pointed out with the finger as notorious throughout Jerusalem, yet the people gloried in them; just as if an immodest woman, who is the town's talk, is saluted honorably by all because she has many admirers to worship and adore her, and so sets herself above every chase matron: but if they all reject her, and she is reduced to want, and to foul and disgraceful ulcers, then all her enormities are made evident. This is the effect of which the Prophet speaks: before, says he, thy enormities were discovered. How so? God, indeed, constantly proclaimed them 'by his prophets, and the wickedness of the people was open enough; but then they also remained as if buried: for they proudly rejected all the prophetic warnings, and were even restive against God himself: thus they lay hid under their own hiding-places. But when they became a laughingstock they were spoiled by their neighbors, and suffered the extremity of reproach, and then it was apparent that God had rejected them; for their crimes were detected by punishments, since neither reproofs nor threats profited them in any way.

Besides, interpreters explain this of the slaughter which the Jews suffered in the time of Ahaz. (2 Kings 16.) For then the King of Syria laid waste almost the whole region, and the citizens of Jerusalem were grievously fined. The Philistines took advantage of this occasion and made an irruption: they think, therefore, that the time is pointed out when the King of Syria made war upon the Israelites, and violently assaulted Judea. But I know not whether the Prophet looks to the future, as I said yesterday; for he speaks of punishment at hand, just as if God was fulfilling what he had already determined. I am inclined to think that the beginning and the end ought to be united. Hence God begins to disclose the wickedness of the people from the time when the burning consumed their neighbors till it reached themselves; for the slaughter of the tribes of Israel brought upon them many losses, as we know well enough. But God seems to embrace their ultimate destruction, which was now at hand. Hence he says, that they had been, and would be, a laughingstock to the daughters of Syria, and the nations all around, and also to the daughters of the Philistines. But because they were spoiled by the Philistines, who took their cities,

as the sacred narrative informs us, it is very suitable thus to explain the word {שאט}, shat, to despise, in this passage. But because it signifies to despise, and the Prophet spoke of reproach, he may repeat the same thing of the Philistines which he had a little before said of the Syrians. It follows ---

Ezekiel 16:58

58. Thou hast borne thy lewdness and thine abominations, saith the LORD.

58. Pravas cogitationes tuas, [421] et abominationes tuas, tu portasti ea, dicit Iehovah.

Here God repeats what we saw before, that the Jews were deprived of all excuse. We know how bold they were in their expostulations, and how they always cried out when God treated them severely. Because, therefore, complaints were always flying about from this proud people, here, as before, God pronounces that they deserved their sufferings: you bear, says he, not any immoderate rigor of which you falsely accuse me, but your abominations and crimes. {זמה}, zemeh, signifies simply purpose, but also abomination, so that it is better to translate it wickedness or baseness. Now, therefore, we understand the Prophet's intention, that the Jews, indeed, suffered the just reward of their wickedness; and the penalties which awaited them could not be imputed to God as too severe, since, if they weighed their enormities, they would be found heavier than God's treatment of them. Besides, this verse also embraces the final destruction of the city and temple; although God at the same time adds the punishment by which he wished to recall them into the way of life. It follows ---

Ezekiel 16:59

59. For thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant.

59. Quia sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, et faciam tibi quemadmodum fecisti, quae [422] sprevisti jusjurandum ad dissipandum [423] foedus.

Here, also, God meets the false objection by which the Jews might strive with him; for whatever they were, yet God had entered into covenant with them. They might, therefore, fly to this refuge, that God had bound himself in covenant with them, since he had adopted Abraham with his seed. Although they had provoked God's anger a thousand times, yet this exception remained, that God ought to stand to his agreement, and not to look at what they had deserved by their ingratitude, but rather to be consistent with his promises. Now, therefore, he returns to this cavil, and says that he is free to break the covenant since they have done so first. I will do, says he, to thee as thou has done. We see, therefore, that the calumny is here repelled by which the Jews could obliquely defame God, as they were accustomed to do, as if he had rendered his covenant void. He says, then, that in agreement it is customary for a person, when deceived, no longer to be necessarily bound to a perfidious breaker of agreements; for covenanting requires mutual faith: but the Jews had violated their agreement, and reduced it to nothing. Hence, through their perfidy and wickedness, God had acquired the liberty of rejecting them, and of no longer reckoning them

[421] Or, "your enormities." — Calvin.
[422] Or, "because." — Calvin.
[423] Or, "that you should render vain" — Calvin.

among his people. Hence, as in the last verse, he said that the Jews paid a just penalty; so now, he adds specially, that he could not be condemned for bad faith in departing from his agreement, because he had to deal with traitors and covenant-breakers who had rendered void their agreement: for there is no covenant when either party declines it. I will do, therefore, to thee as you has done, namely, because you have despised an oath, so as to render the covenant void Here God enlarges upon the crime of revolt, because the Jews had not only dissipated the covenant, but had despised an oath. {אלה}, aleh, signifies both an oath and a curse; (Deuteronomy 27;) hence some think that the Prophet here looks to the curses by which the law was sanctioned, which I willingly adopt. But we must remark what I have already said, that their criminality is increased, because the Jews had not only acted falsely, but had also set at naught that solemn oath by which they had bound themselves. For as God promised that he would be their God, so Moses stipulated in his name that the people should remain obedient to him, and they all answered, Amen; (Leviticus 26.) A punishment was announced, and such as ought to have terrified them. For the Jews then to neglect this covenant as a mere trifle, was the act of brutal stupidity. Whence we see that their crime was doubled, when the Prophet accuses them of not only being truce-breakers, but also of wantonly deriding God, and of treating their own solemn oath, by which they had bound themselves, as a childish action. It follows ---

Ezekiel 16:60

60. Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.

60. Et memor ero [424] foederis mei tecum diebus adolescentiae tuae: et stabiliam tibi foedus perpetuum.

Because God here promises that he would be propitious to the Jews, some translate the former verse as if it had been said, ``Shall I do with thee as you have done?'' or, I would do as you have done, unless I had been mindful; but that is too forced in my opinion. I have no doubt that the Prophet restrains himself, so to speak, and directs his discourse peculiarly to the elect, of whom we spoke yesterday. Hitherto he had regarded the whole body of the people which was abandoned, and hence he put before them nothing but despair. But he now turns himself to the election of grace, of which Paul speaks, (Romans 11:5;) and for this reason promises them that God would be mindful of his covenant, though he would not restore the whole people promiscuously. For the body on the whole must perish; a small band only was reserved. We know, therefore, that this promise was not common to all the sons of Abraham who were his offspring according to the flesh, but it was peculiar to the elect alone. God therefore pronounces, that he would be mindful of his covenant which he had made with that people in their youth, by which words he signifies, that his pity should not go forth except from the covenant. For God always recalls the faithful, as it were, to the fountain, lest they should claim anything as their right, or imagine this or that to be the cause of God's being reconciled to them. He shows, therefore, that this pity

[424] Or, "I shall yet be, mindful," for the copula ought to be resolved into the adversative particle. — Calvin.

has no other foundation than the covenant; and this is the reason why he says, that he would be mindful of his covenant. He now adds, and I will establish a perpetual covenant with thee. Here God promises, without obscurity, a better and more excellent covenant than that ancient one already abolished through the people's fault. This passage, then, cannot be understood except of the new covenant which God has established by the hand of Christ. But these two clauses are so mutually united that they ought to be carefully weighed, namely, that God here gives the hope of a new covenant, and yet teaches us that it originates in the old one already abolished through the people's fault. Thus we see that the New Testament flows from that covenant which God made with Abraham, and afterwards sanctioned by the hand of Moses. That which is promulgated for us in the Gospel is called the; New Covenant, not because it had no beginning previously, but because it was renewed, and better conditions added; for we know that the Law was abrogated by the New Covenant. Whether it be so or not, the excellence of the New Testament is not injured, because it has its source and occasion in the Old Covenant, and is founded on it. It follows ---

Ezekiel 16:61

61. Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant.

61. Et recordaberis viarum tuarum, et pudefies cum tu assumes sorores tuas majores prae te, et cum minoribus prae te: et dabo ipsas tibi in filias: et non a foedere tuo.

As God, then, shows that he would not be merciful to the Jews for any other reason than through being mindful of his covenant, so now, in return, he informs us what he requires from them, namely, that they should begin to acknowledge how basely they had abjured their pledged fidelity --- how unworthily they had despised his law --- how impiously obstinate they had been against all his prophets in deriding their threats, and in being stupid under manifest penalties. But this passage is worthy of notice, since we gather that none are capable of obtaining God's mercy except those who are dissatisfied with themselves, and, being ashamed and confounded, betake themselves to his mercy. In fine, we see that God's grace does not profit the obstinate at all: it is offered to all in common; but none receive it except those who condemn themselves, and bear in mind their crimes, so that they are forgotten before God. If, therefore, we wish our sins to be buried before God, we must remember them ourselves; if we wish our iniquities to be blotted out before God and the angels, we must disgrace ourselves; that is, we must blush and be ashamed of our baseness whenever we transgress and provoke God's wrath. Hence we here see that the whole contents of the Gospel are shortly summed up; for the Gospel contains nothing else but repentance and faith, as is well known. Concerning faith, Ezekiel has proclaimed that God, mindful of his covenant, will become reconciled to the lost; but he now adds an exhortation that they should acknowledge their faults: but we know that the shame of which the Prophet speaks is the fruit or part of repentance, as is evident from Paul's description of penitence in the seventh chapter of his second epistle to the Corinthians, (2 Corinthians 7:9-11.) But we shall have yet to speak on this

subject, so that I now hasten forwards, because what I have hitherto taught cannot be understood until we come to the end of the verse. He says, when you shall receive thy sisters, as well the elder as the younger; for he does not speak here of Sodom and Samaria alone,, but of all nations; for all the nations may properly be called sisters, for all the world was corrupt. Since, therefore, they were all alike in vices, their union was like that of relationship. For this reason he says, that when the Jews shall return to favor, they shall then have a great multitude with them, who shall receive their own sisters; that is, shall collect from all sides an immense multitude, so that all shall be assembled in obedience to God, and shall be partakers of the same covenant. If any one object that this has never been fulfilled, the answer is at hand, that the prophets speak of the calling of the Gentiles in two ways. They sometimes proclaim it so as to declare that the Jews and Israelites are the leaders of all the others, so as to confer upon them the favor and patronage of God. In that day seven men shall lay hold of the skirt of a single Jew, and shall say, Lead us to your God, (Zechariah 8:23;) and this was the legitimate order, that the Jews, as first-born, should join others in alliance to themselves, and thus unite all into one body and one Church: but because the Jews were cut off through their ingratitude, the prophets make mention of another calling, that the Gentiles should succeed in the place of the ungrateful people, as Paul says that the natural branches were cut off, and that we were grafted in who belonged to the unfruitful tree. (Romans 11:16-19.) The Prophet adds this former reason, that the Jews should receive their sisters, both elder and younger, since they should collect God's Church from all nations; and this has been partly fulfilled. For whence came the Gospel except from this fountain? as it had been foretold, A law shall go out from Zion, and God's word from Jerusalem. (Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2.) Again, in the 110th Psalm, (Psalm 110:1,) Thy scepter shall go forth from Zion; that is, the kingdom of Christ shall be propagated throughout the whole world: because, therefore, salvation flowed from the Jews, and the Gospel emanated from thence, what is here promised was partly fulfilled, namely, that other people were received by the Jews.

He now subjoins, I will give them to thee for daughters: for if the Jews had not, by their ingratitude, rejected the honor of which God had reckoned them worthy, they had always been the first-born in the Church. Then the Gentiles would have been, as it were, under a mother, since they were ``the primitive Church`` (according to the language of the day,) and thus they would have obtained the degree of mother among all nations. Therefore God here deservedly pronounces that he would give them, all nations for daughters, to be added to the Jews, when the Gentiles were grafted into the same body of the Church by faith in the Gospel. But he adds, not from thy covenant. Some refer this to ceremonies, since, when the Gentiles were adopted, they still remained free from the ceremonies of the law; but that is cold. Others compare this passage with Jeremiah: I will establish a new covenant with you, not such as I established with your fathers, which they rendered vain; but this is the covenant which I will make with you, etc. (Jeremiah 31:31-33.) Since, then, it is here said, the covenant shall not be according to the covenant of the people, this is said with truth, because it will be a New Testament. But such expounders are partly

right, but not wholly so; for a contrast must be understood between the people's covenant and God's. He had said just before, I will be mindful of my covenant: he now says, not of thine. Hence he reconciles what seemed opposites, namely, that he would be mindful of his own agreement, and yet it had been dissipated, broken, and abolished. He shows that it was fixed on his own side, as they say, but vain on the people's side. I will be reconciled, then, but not through thy covenant; for there was now no covenant, as Hosea says --- Not my people, not beloved. (Hosea 1:9.) All the progeny of Abraham were not God's people, nor all their daughters beloved: but although the covenant was vain through the people's perfidy, yet God overcame their malice, and so he again erected his own covenant towards them. And when he says, I will establish a covenant, we may explain it, I will set it up again, or restore it afresh: for we said that the New Testament was so distinguished from the Old, that it was founded upon it. For what is proposed to us in Christ, unless what God had promised in the law? and therefore Christ is called the end of the law, and elsewhere its spirit: for if the law be separated from Christ, it is like a dead letter: Christ alone gives it life. Since, therefore, God at this day exhibits to us nothing in his only-begotten Son but what he had formerly promised in the law, it follows that his covenant is set up again, and so perpetually established; and yet this is not man's part. Wherefore? For men had so revolted from the faith, that God was free; nay, the covenant itself had no force, and lost its effect through their perfidy: for it is easy to collect the points in which the New and Old Testaments are alike, and those, in which they differ. They have this similarity, that God to this day confirms to us what he had formerly promised to Abraham, and in no other sense could Abraham be called the Father of the Faithful.

Since, therefore, Abraham is at this time the father of all the faithful, it, follows that our safety is not to be thought otherwise than in that covenant which God established with Abraham; but afterwards the same covenant was ratified by the hand of Moses. A difference must now be briefly remarked from a passage in Jeremiah, (Jeremiah 31:32,) namely, because the ancient covenant was abolished through the fault of man, there was reed of a better remedy, which is there shown to be twofold, namely, that God should bury men's sins, and inscribe his law on their hearts: that also was done in Abraham's time. Abraham believed in God: faith was always the gift of the Holy Spirit; therefore God inscribed his covenant in Abraham's heart. (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3; Ephesians 2:8.) He inscribed his law on the heart of Moses and on the rest of the faithful. This is true: but at first that inner grace was more obscure under the law, and then it was an additional benefit. It could not therefore be ascribed to the law that God regenerated his own elect, because the spirit of regeneration was from Christ, and therefore from the Gospel and the new covenant. But yet we must remember what I have said, that the faithful under the ancient covenant were gifted and endowed with a spirit of regeneration. As far as relates to the remission of sins, it was still more obscure: for cattle were sacrificed, which could not acquire salvation for miserable men, nor blot out their sins. Therefore, if the law is regarded in itself, the promise in the new covenant will not be found in it: I will not remember thy sins: yet to this day God is propitious to us, because he promised to Abraham that

all nations should be blest in his seed. (Jeremiah 31:34; Genesis 12:3, and Genesis 18:18.) We see then that the difference which Jeremiah points out was really true; and yet the new covenant so flowed from the old, that it was almost the same in substance, while distinguished in form.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since your only-begotten Son has appeared for us, who filled up all the measure of thy grace, that we may not be ungrateful in despising so inestimable a boon; but may we embrace with true and sincere faith what you offer us, namely, the mercy which we always need, and also the spirit of regeneration; that we may so devote ourselves to thee through a whole life of obedience, that at length we may arrive at that glory which at this day: shines upon us as in a mirror, until its fruition shall appear in heaven, by the same Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Fiftieth.

Ezekiel 16:62

62. And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD.

62. Et stabiliam ego foedus meum tecum, et cognosces quod ego Iehovah.

The Prophet here confirms his former teaching, namely, that although the Jews rendered God's covenant vain as far as they possibly could, yet it should be firm and fixed. But we must hold what I have mentioned, that this discourse is specially limited to the elect, because the safety of the whole people was already desperate. Hence God shows that the covenant which he had made with Abraham could not be abolished by the, perfidy of man. And this is what Paul says in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, (Romans 3:4,) Even if the whole world were liars, yet God must always remain true. But we see that the covenant of which we are now teaching was new, and yet had its origin from the old, because we are so reconciled to God by Christ that we ought to be grafted into the body of the ancient Church, and be made sons of Abraham, since, as we saw before, he is not called the father of the faithful in vain. God says, therefore, that his own covenant should be firm with the people, not with that people which had been already deserted through its perfidy, but with the true and genuine children of Abraham, who followed their father in faith and piety, as it is said in the 102d Psalm, (Psalm 102:18,) A people shall be created to the praise of God. For the Prophet now shows that God's covenant could not be otherwise constituted afresh unless a new Church were formed, and God was to create a new world: for this is the meaning of the words, A people when created shall praise God. The Spirit, therefore, obliquely reproves the Israelites, as if he had said that the praises of God were abolished among them: but when the new people shall come forth, then God should be glorified. He adds, and you shall know that I am Jehovah. This phrase is often repeated, but in a different sense. For when a prophet threatened the people, he always added this particle, and thus a contrast must be understood between the people's stupidity and good sense; for all their prophecies were neglected by the people. God's servants indeed uttered their voice, and severely blamed the impious and wicked, but without any effect. Since, therefore, they so wantonly played with reproaches and threats, it was often said to

them, You shall begin to feel me to be God when I shall cease to speak to you, and shall instruct you by scourges. But now the Prophet, as we see, preaches concerning the gratuitous reconciliation of the people with God. Hence they really felt him to be God, because he stood firm to his promises, although, through the fault of man, his covenant had fallen to pieces and become invalid. The Prophet here announces that they should feel God to be unlike themselves, that is, not to change his counsels, or to vary with the levity and inconstancy of men: as also it is said in Isaiah, My thoughts are not as your thoughts: as far as the heavens are distant from the earth, so are my thoughts distant from yours, and my ways from your ways. (Isaiah 55:8,9.) God here means that the Jews acted wrong in estimating his pity by their own common sense: for he says that he differed very much from them, since his pity was unfathomable, and his truth incomprehensible.

Now, therefore, we understand what the Prophet means in this verse. In the first clause he pronounces, that the covenant which God would make with his new and elect people should be firm: then he adds, that the Jews should know that they were dealing with God, because they could not take away what God was then promising. Now we can understand the reason why God's covenant in Christ was perpetual: because, as we read in Jeremiah, he inscribed his law on the hearts of the righteous, and remitted their iniquities. (Jeremiah 31:33.) This, then, was the cause of its perpetuity. Besides, although the Prophet magnifies God's grace in the second clause, yet at the same time he recalls the Jews from every perverse imagination which might entirely shake their confidence. For when they thought themselves plunged in an abyss, they were ready to collect that there was no further remedy. But if God wished to preserve them, why did he not send them help in time? But when he suffered them to be led into exile, and to be plunged into the lowest depths, there was no hope of restoration. For this cause Ezekiel announces that the faithful ought not to persist in their own thoughts, but rather to raise their minds to heaven, and to expect what seemed altogether out of place, since they thought to judge according to the nature of God, and to measure the effects of his promises by the immensity of his power rather than by their own perceptions.

Ezekiel 16:63

63. That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord GOD.

63. Ut recorderis, et pudefias, et non sit tibi amplius apertio oris propter probrum tuum cum propitius fuero tibi in omnibus quae fecisti, dicit Dominator Iehovah.

Ezekiel again exhorts the faithful to repentance and constant meditation. We have said that these members cannot be divided, namely, the testimony of grace with the doctrine of repentance: we have said, also, that this is the substance of the gospel, that God wishes those to repent whom he reconciles by gratuitous pardon. For he is appeased by us only when he makes us new creatures in Christ, and regenerates us by his Spirit; as it is said in Isaiah, God will be propitious to the people who shall have returned from their iniquity. (Isaiah 59:20.) That promise is restricted to those who do not indulge and revel in sin, but humble themselves before God, and decide

their own salvation to be impossible without their being severe judges to their own condemnation. Therefore Ezekiel follows up this point when he says that you may remember and be ashamed. I have said that penitence is not only to be commended here, but the continual desire for it. And this must be remarked, because it is troublesome to us to be often shaking off our sins; and hence we escape as far as we can from the perception of them: for we desire our own enjoyment, and every one willingly puts his sins out of sight. Surely if we do look upon them, they first compel us to be ashamed, and then we are wounded with serious grief; conscience summons us to God's tribunal: we then acknowledge the formidable vengeance which slays even the boldest, unless they are upheld by the assurance of pardon. Since, then, the acknowledgment of sins brings us both shame and sorrow, we endeavor to put it far away from us by all means. But no other way of access to embracing God's favor is open to us, except that of repentance of sins. This, then, is the reason why God insists so much on this point: we do not follow him directly; hence it is not sufficient to show us what ought to be done, unless God pricks us sharply, and violently draws us to himself. This passage, then, must be remarked where the Prophet commands the faithful, after they have obtained pardon, to remember their sins, for hypocrites are here distinguished from the true sons of God. Hypocrites boast with swelling words, that they rely on the mercy of God, and speak mightily of the grace of Christ, but meanwhile they wish the memory of their sins to remain buried. On the other hand, we cannot be otherwise truly humble before God, unless we judge ourselves, as I have said. If we desire, therefore, our sins to be blotted out before God, and to be buried in the depths of the sea, as another Prophet says, (Micah 7:19,) we must recall them often and constantly to our remembrance: for when they are kept before our eyes we then flee seriously to God for mercy, and are properly prepared by humility and fear.

The Prophet adds also, that you may be ashamed: for it is not sufficient simply to remember, unless we add the shame of which the Prophet speaks. For we see that many remember their faults and confess their sins, but they do it lightly, and as a matter of duty; nay, they acknowledge them so as to remain in their integrity, and, as they say, to preserve their credit. But the recognition here required is accompanied by shame, as Paul, when addressing the faithful, puts before them their past life thus:

``What fruit could you gather from that course of life.''
(Romans 6:19-21.)

You blush now in truth when so many crimes are heaped upon you: you were then blind, and wandered in darkness: but when God shone upon you by the gospel, you acknowledge your baseness and foulness, from which shame is produced. He now adds, neither may thou open thy mouth any more. It is not surprising if the Prophet uses many words in explaining one thing which is not obscure in itself. But I have already shown why he does so, because we are with the greatest difficulty led on to that shame which the Prophet mentions. We condemn ourselves indeed verbally at once; but scarcely one in a hundred can be found so to cast himself down as to sustain willingly the reproach which he deserves. Since then voluntary submission

is not found in man, it is necessary that we should be impelled more hardly and sharply, as the Prophet does here. When he says, there shall be no opening of the mouth, he means, that no partial confession of sins shall be exacted by which men bear witness, and acknowledge themselves liable to God's judgment; but a full and entire confession, so that they may be held convicted on all sides. And this must be diligently noticed. For we see that the world is always endeavoring to escape God's sentence by turning away from it; and since it cannot do this completely, it invents subterfuges, so as to retain some portion of its innocence.

Hence the fiction among the papists of partial justification: hence also their satisfactions; for they are compelled, whether they wish it or not, to confess themselves worthy of death: but afterwards they use the exception, that they have merited something before from God through their good works, and are not altogether worthy of condemnation: then they descend to compensations, and wish to treat with God, as if they could appease him by what they call works of supererogation. Whatever be the sense, men can scarcely be found who sincerely and honestly acknowledge that there exists in themselves nothing but material for condemnation. We confess, as I have said, that we are guilty before God, but only for one or two faults. What then does the Holy Spirit here prescribe? that there should be no opening of the mouth; as also Paul says, adopting his form of speech from this and similar passages. It is often said in the Prophets, Let all flesh be silent before God, (Zechariah 2:13;) but here the Prophet speaks specially of the shame by which God's children lie so confused, that they are altogether silent. Paul also says, that every mouth may be shut, and all flesh humbled before God. (Romans 3:19.) He afterwards shows that Jews as well as Gentiles were involved in the same condemnation, and that there was no hope of safety left except through God's mercy: he then adds, that God's justice truly shines forth when our mouth is stopped, that is, when we do not turn aside and offer any excuses, as hypocrites divide the merit between God and themselves. I indeed confess that I have sinned; but why may not my good works come into the account? why should I be condemned for one fault only? as if those who violate law do not depart from righteousness. We see, then, that we are properly humbled when we are silent and do not reproach God, when we do not quibble or allege first one thing and then another to extenuate or excuse our fault. God indeed wishes our mouth to be open; as Peter says, that we are called out of darkness into marvelous light, to show forth his praises who delivered us. (1 Peter 2:9.) For this purpose, then, God was merciful to us, that we might be heralds of his grace. And in this sense, also, David says, Lord, open you my lips, and my mouth shall declare thy praise; that is, by giving me material for a song, as he elsewhere says, He has put a new song into my mouth. (Psalm 51:15; Psalm 40:3.) God, therefore, opens the mouths or lips of the faithful whenever he is liberal or beneficent towards them. But he is here treating of the exceptions of those who would willingly transact business with God, as if they were not wholly worthy of condemnation. In fine, Ezekiel signifies that this is the true fruit of penitence when we do not defend ourselves, but silently confess ourselves convicted. A passage of Paul's may possibly be objected as apparently contrary to this of our Prophet, in which he reckons defense among

the effects or fruits of penitence, (2 Corinthians 7:11;) but defense is not here used in our customary sense: for any one who asserts that he has acted rightly, and so without fault is said to defend himself. But a defense in Paul's sense is nothing else but a prayer against punishment when a sinner comes forward, and after confessing his fault, begs of God to pardon it, and, as it were, covers himself with mercy, so that his condemnation is nowhere apparent. We see, then, that the language of Paul is not in opposition to that of the Prophet.

He now adds, from thy disgrace, verbally from the face of thy disgrace, when I shall be propitious to thee. We again see that these things agree well together, that God buries our sins and we recall them to memory. For we turn aside his judgment when we willingly accuse and condemn ourselves. For when conscience is asleep, it nourishes a hidden fire, which at length emerges into a flame and lights up God's wrath. If, therefore, we desire the fire of God's wrath to be extinguished, there is no other remedy than to shake off our sins and to set before our eyes the disgrace which we deserve, and God's mercy induces us to this. For we must remark the connection, when I shall be propitious to thee, you shall be silent in thy disgrace. And surely the more any one has tasted of the grace of God, the more ready he is to condemn himself, and as unbelief is proud, so the more any one proceeds in the faith of God's grace, he is thus humbled more and more before him. And that is best expressed in the words of the Prophet, since he teaches that silence is the effect of grace or of gratuitous reconciliation. When therefore he says, I shall have been propitious to thee, then you shall blush that thou may be mute, namely, on account of thy disgrace. And we see that the people were so taught by legal ceremonies to apprehend the mercy of God, and to be touched at the same time with the serious affection of penitence; for without a victim, God was never appeased under the law. And now although animals are not sacrificed, yet when we consider that no other price was sufficient to satisfy God, except his only-begotten Son poured forth his blood in expiation, there matter is set before us for embracing the grace of God, and at the same time we are touched, as the saying is, with the true affection of penitence. Besides, God amplifies the magnitude of his grace when he says {לכל} {עשית} {אשר}, lekel asher gnesith, on account of all things which, you have done. For the people thought not only to feel God merciful, but to examine their faults, and then to feel how manifold and remarkable was God's mercy towards them. For if the people had only been guilty of one kind of sin, they would have valued God's grace the less: but when they had been convicted of so many crimes, as we have seen, hence the magnitude of his grace became more apparent. [425] Let us now go on.

[425] In commenting on this chapter, Calvin takes occasion to explain the gospel doctrines of justification, faith, and repentance, and refers to the adverse fictions of the papacy. This interesting subject is fully treated by Bishop Davenant in his Disputatio de justitia habituali et actuali, delivered when professor of divinity at the University of Cambridge (1631). The English translation by the Revelation Josiah Allport, 1844, is a most valuable work, and treats largely on this and all collateral subjects. His “Determinationes,” edit. 1634 and 1639, may also be consulted: with Penrose on the Atonement, 1843; and St. Bernard’s Sermon on Isaiah 6:1, 2. Oecolampadius, on Ezekiel 16:55, is copious, spiritual, and practical; and Maldonatus gives the sense of the Hebrew remarkably well and with great consistency, though he adds no practical comments. Theodoret and Jerome are both very explanatory, especially on Ezekiel 16:45. See Dissertations at the end of this volume.

Ezekiel 17

CHAPTER 17

Ezekiel 17:1-2

1. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

1. Et fuit sermo Iehovae ad me, dicendo,

2. Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel;

2. Fili hominis, aenigmatisa aenigma, et proverbia proverbium [426] ad domum Israel.

In this chapter the Prophet shows that the Jews were utterly foolish in thinking themselves safe, since they had God as their adversary. At the end of the chapter he promises indeed the restoration of the Church, and heralds the kingdom of Christ: but the principal part of the chapter is consumed with this teaching, that the Jews were utterly foolish in promising themselves safety for the city, the temple, and their kingdom: for, as it now appeared, they had violated the covenant of God and he had rejected them. When deprived of God's help, what could they do? This was egregious folly to hope for a prosperous state of their kingdom when their power was diminished and cut off, and they were reduced almost to the very last straits. But since the Prophet's discourse came be understood without a knowledge of the history, I shall therefore make a beginning: When Nebuchadnezzar appointed Zedekiah king, he also made him tributary to himself. He was made king at the will or rather by the lust of the king of Babylon, when Jeconiah was led captive. (2 Kings 24:15-17; 2 Chronicles 36:10; Jeremiah 37:1.) Jeconiah had not sinned greatly, but when he saw himself unable to resist, he surrendered himself with his mother and children; he was carried away to Babylon, and there was treated humanely and even splendidly, although not royally. Nebuchadnezzar, foreseeing much trouble if he set any of his satraps over Judea, and fearing daily tumults, appointed Mattaniah king, to whom

[426] That is, "bring forward a remarkable sentence." — Calvin.

he gave the name Zedekiah; this was the last king: already, as I have said, the royal dignity was greatly diminished: it was tributary to Nebuchadnezzar, and Zedekiah's sway was but precarious. His position depended on the will of his conqueror, and he who placed him on the throne could remove him as often as he pleased. A little while afterwards, when he saw that Nebuchadnezzar was at a distance, he made an agreement with the king of Egypt, and thought he should have sufficient help if Nebuchadnezzar were to return again with an army. And the Egyptians, as we have elsewhere said, were sufficiently desirous of this treaty. For they saw the Babylonian monarchy gradually increasing, and it was probable that, when the Jews were utterly subdued, Nebuchadnezzar would not be content with those boundaries, but would attack Egypt in like manner, and absorb that kingdom, as he had done others. Hence a reason for their entering into the treaty was at hand, since the king of Egypt thought that Judea would be a defense if Nebuchadnezzar should come down with his army: and certainly the Jews must receive the assault first. Whatever be the meaning, Zedekiah, through despising his oath, as we shall see, revolted to the Egyptians, and when Nebuchadnezzar afterwards demanded tribute, Zedekiah refused, through reliance on that covenant which he had made with the Egyptians. We now see how foolish the Jews were in sleeping carelessly in that miserable state to which they had been reduced. For when their power was unbroken they could not sustain the attack of the king of Babylon: their king was then a mere dead image, and nothing but a shadow: yet they indulged in pride not only against Nebuchadnezzar but also against the Prophets and God himself, just as if they were flourishing in wealth and power and complete prosperity. Hence Ezekiel now refutes and rebukes this arrogance. He shows how easy it was for the Babylonians to overthrow them again, since when they attacked them before they were subdued, they easily compelled them to surrender.

But I come to the words Son of man, set forth in enigma: the noun and the verb mutually answer to each other, hence any one may if he please render the Prophet's words, by saying enigmatize an enigma: for the Prophet here speaks of allegorical language, {חידה}, chideh, signifies the same as ``allegory,'' where the words are different from the sense, that is, where the sense is wrapped up in obscure involutions: but we know that God sometimes spoke enigmatically when unwilling to be understood by the impious and disbelieving. But here the obscurity of the sentence has another meaning, namely, that the Jews should be waked up, and this prophecy should penetrate their minds: we know their extreme hardness, and hence if the Prophet had spoken simply and in his accustomed language, they had not been so attentive. This therefore is the reason why, God orders him to speak enigmatically. He now adds, {ומשל} {משל}, vemeshel meshel. We know that meshel is a remarkable sentence, and is the word used by Solomon as the title of his proverbs: {משל}, meshel, then, means the same as apothegm: but it is sometimes taken for likeness: and in this place God so denounces destruction upon the Israelites in an allegory, as to illustrate his language by a comparison, since otherwise it would have been obscure. Be this as it may, God so prefaced his address, that the Jews might acknowledge the message to be no common one, but that it ought to affect them seriously. The usual reason for speaking enigmatically does not hold good here, namely,

that the Jews were unworthy of the doctrine of salvation, since the Prophet will very shortly explain what he had hitherto uttered in figure and allegory. It is indeed true, that Christ spoke in parables to the people, because the disciples alone were capable of familiar and pure teaching. Of unbelievers, also, Isaiah says, Prophecy shall be to you a sealed book. Hence I will speak with this people in a strange and barbarous tongue, and they shall not proceed beyond the rudiments. (Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8; Isaiah 29:11, 12.) But, as I have said, the obscurity of this teaching was only a preparation, that the people should strictly attend to the subject here set before them.

Ezekiel 17:3-4

3. And say, Thus says the Lord GOD; A great eagle with great wings, longwinged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar:

3. Et dic, Sit dicit Dominator Iehovah, aquila magna, magna alis, longa penna [427] plena [428] plumis quae illis variae [429] erant venit ad montem Libanum, et accepit summitatem cedri.

4. He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffick; he set it in a city of merchants.

4. Caput [430] surculorum ejus avellit, et transtulit in terram mercatoris, [431] in urbe mercatorum posuit eam. [432]

Here the Prophet reasons from the greater to the less: for if Nebuchadnezzar was able to subdue the whole kingdom with ease, when as yet the Jews were untouched, how much more readily would he overthrow them when wretched and all but ruined: for nothing remained which was not threatened with ruin; and this is the meaning of the Prophet. But he compares King Nebuchadnezzar to an eagle, whom he says was great, and then with large or extended wings. There is no doubt that by wings, feathers, and plumes, he means the regions and peoples over which Nebuchadnezzar presided; for we know that the Chaldaeans possessed the monarchy of the East. Since, therefore, so many regions and people obeyed Nebuchadnezzar's sway, it is not surprising that the Prophet calls him a great eagle, with ample wings, and with numerous feathers or plumes; for where he now says, {הנוצה} {מלא}, mela henotzeh, full of feathers, he will shortly say, {נוצה} {רב}, reb notzeh, many feathers, when speaking of the king of Egypt. He says, the wings were of divers colors; it is the same noun which the Prophet used in the last chapter, when he said that the people were clad in precious garments; for thus the Hebrews speak of Phrygian texture: hence he compares the wings of the king of Babylon to a woven garment, resplendent with various colors; for although Nebuchadnezzar held his throne at only one place, yet he had seized and subdued many tributaries on all sides. This, therefore, is the reason for this variety; --- but I cannot proceed further at present.

[427] Or, “wings” — there is a change of number. — Calvin.
[428] Or, “thick with,” “plentiful in.” — Calvin.
[429] The number, though singular, is taken for plural, that is, “of divers colors.” — Calvin.
[430] Or, “the top.” — Calvin.
[431] The word {,כנען cengnen, (or, chnaan,) is not a proper name, but is taken appellatively. --- Calvin.
[432] Or, “that top.” — Calvin.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since you have treated us so liberally by opening the immense and inestimable treasures of thy grace, that being mindful of our condition we may always bewail it, and remember what we were when you desire to adopt us as sons, and how often and how variously we have provoked thee, and rendered thy covenant vain: Grant, also, that we may glorify thee in our shame, and perpetually magnify thy name by our humility, until we become partakers of that glory which your only-begotten Son has procured for us through his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture Fifty-First

WE began yesterday to explain the saying of the Prophet, that an eagle came to mount Lebanon, and there cropped off the top of a cedar, that is, the highest bough. Some interpreters seem to me to labor in vain about the word Lebanon. They think it means Jerusalem, and cite the passage in Zechariah where it is said, Open thy gates, O Lebanon. (Zechariah 11:1.) But Zecharia does not speak of the city here, but of the temple, because it was built of a great mass of cedar. But here Ezekiel means the land, and names Lebanon rather than other places, not only because that mountain was the remarkable ornament of the region on account of its lofty cedars, and balsam and aromatic trees, but because this was needful to complete his allegory. If he had said that an eagle had come to a city, it would have been absurd. Hence we see that the word Lebanon is taken for that part of Judea in which the most beautiful trees spring up and flourish. But he says, that it plucked off a bough, from the top of the cedars, because Nebuchadnezzar, who is intended by the eagle took away King Jeconiah as we said yesterday. Hence King Jeconiah is compared to a very lofty bough of a cedar, because at that time all thought that the kingdom was superior to every danger; for the Jews boasted that they were under God's protection, and that the city was impregnable: hence that occurrence was incredible. Now the Prophet adds, that the eagle plucked off the head or summit of the boughs, as the Hebrews call the tender shoots; and here the word means the tender branches: and it means, as we shall afterwards see, the elders who were dragged away into exile. It took away the head into the land of the merchant We said that this was a mere appellative here, chnaan, because it follows a little afterwards in the plural number: {רכלים} {בציר} {שמו}, begnir-reklim shemo, in the city of merchants he set it: he says, then, that the boughs were placed in a city of merchants. This name was given to Babylon, not only because it was a celebrated mart of trade, but because it was a firm and strong place of custody through the multitude of inhabitants, so that it was not easy to draw captives from it. For any one could easily be rescued from a solitude without resistance; but in a great concourse it is not so easy to plan or attempt anything. I do not doubt, therefore, that the Prophet means that the higher classes of the kingdom, together with Jeconiah, were shut up in firm custody that they should not escape. It follows ---

Ezekiel 17:5-6

5. He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed it by great waters, and set it as a willow-tree.

5. Et sustulit [433] e semine terrae, et posuit illud in agro seminis, [434] sumpsit super aquas multas, tanquam salicem posuit illud.

6. And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs.

6. Et germinavit, et fuit in vitem luxuriantem, humilem statura, ut respicerent palmites ejus ad ipsam, [435] et radices ejus sub ea essent: et fuit in vitem, et produxit palmites [436] et emisit propagines.

After Ezekiel has narrated that Jehoiacin was carried away with his counselors and the flower of the whole people, and was so deprived of his native country as to be without hope of return, he now says, that the eagle took up the seed in Judea, and placed it in a fertile land; for he calls it a land of seed, since it was cultivated and produced fruit abundantly. He says, that the seed was afterwards hidden in the soil, that it grew immediately, and became a luxuriant vine. He says also, that its roots were irrigated, like a willow planted by a river's bed. The Prophet afterwards explains himself: hence it is sufficient to state briefly what he means. The seed, then, which he here means is Zedekiah, the last king. It is said to have been planted beside the waters; for his condition was tolerable, since the royal name and dignity and wealth was left to him. For although he was tributary, the kindness with which he was treated by Nebuchadnezzar was not to be despised, since, by the right of war, he was able to lead him captive. together with his nephew; for Zedekiah was the uncle of Jeconiah or Jehoiacin. But he said, that this vine, which sprang from a seed or germ, grew so that it was of low stature; the Prophet means by these words, as we shall afterwards see, that Zedekiah was not a king, that he was restrained by a bridle from daring to rebel against the king of Babylon; and hence it is added, that its branches turned towards the eagle, and its roots were under him; but in the next clause Ezekiel announces, that it became a vine which set forth branches, and shot forth boughs, which he repeats again, that Zedekiah's ingratitude may appear the greater, who, not content with his moderate confinement, perfidiously revolted from the king of Babylon, through reliance on the new treaty, on which we touched yesterday. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 17:7

7. There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers: and, behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him, and shot forth her branches toward him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation.

7. Et fuit aquila una [437] magna, magnis alis, et copiosa plumis: et ecce vitis ista collegit radices suas ad eam, [438] et palmites suos emisit ad eam, ut irrigaret ipsam alveis [439] plantationis suae. [440]

[433] "He took." — Calvin.
[434] That is, "a fertile or rich field." — Calvin.
[435] "The eagle." — Calvin.
[436] Or, "twigs." — Calvin.
[437] That is, "another eagle." — Calvin.
[438] That is, "applied." — Calvin.
[439] Or, "beds, or rows or furrows," {,{ערגות gnergoth, signifies properly ``furrows.'' --- Calvin.
[440] Or, "in its plantation," to make the sense clearer. — Calvin.

He now detects, under a figure, the perfidy of Zedekiah, since he very soon applied himself to the king of Egypt, and bent his roots and branches towards him, that they might be irrigated. I do not disagree with the opinion of those who think that the Prophet alludes to an Egyptian custom; for we know that they dug furrows through which water flowed through the whole region: hence the fruitfulness of the soil; and thus Egypt is elsewhere compared to a garden. (Deuteronomy 11:10.) Whatever the meaning is, the Prophet shows that Zedekiah was deceived by a foolish confidence when he thought himself safe under the protection of the king of Egypt; for he had said that the seed was so planted that the vine did not rise to a great height, but spread itself under the wings of the eagle. But Zedekiah despised the king of Babylon, thinking that he should improve his condition by entering into a treaty with the king of Egypt. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 17:8

8. It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine.

8. Super agrum bonum [441] juxta aquas multas [442] ipsa plantara erat, ut produceret folia, et proferret fructum ut esset in vitem magnificam. [443]

He exaggerates the ingratitude of Zedekiah, because, as we have said, he had been treated humanely by the king of Babylon; for he had been but a private man till that time: he was elevated to a throne and to a sway over the people beyond his expectation, and he had an avenger if any one despised him. For when he was tributary to the king of Babylon, he would doubtless have been assisted by him in adversity: hence his revolt was less excusable, since he had been treated liberally beyond all anticipation. For this reason it is said, the vine was planted in a good soil, and near many waters, that it might put forth branches and bear fruit, so that it might be a goodly vine. It follows ---

Ezekiel 17:9-10

9. Say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? it shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof.

9. Dic, Sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, An feliciter aget? [444] an non radices ejus evellet? et fructum ejus succidet? et siccabit omnes surculos germinis ipsius, ut arefiat [445] et non brachio magno et populo multo ad tollendum [446] e radicibus suis.

10. Yea, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the furrows where it grew.

[441] That is, "in a good soil." — Calvin.

[442] Or, "copious." — Calvin.

[443] Or it is usually rendered, "others have a beautiful vine:" {,{אדר ader, signifies properly to strengthen: hence it may be translated a strong vine; but here it means beautiful, elegant, or superb. --- Calvin.

[444] Or, as they commonly say, "shall it prosper?" — Calvin.

[445] Or, "grow dry." — Calvin

[446] It is a noun put in the place of an infinitive, "for taking it away," or" for its being taken away." — Calvin.

10. Et ecce plantata: an prosperabitur? [447] an non cum attigerit [448] ipsam ventus orientalis arescendo arescet super areas [449] plantationis suae scet?

Here God announces that this vine could not flourish any longer and bring forth fruit; for it had been planted to flourish under the shadow of an eagle, and it had removed itself away. Nothing therefore remains, than that the former eagle should avenge the injury committed against it. This is the meaning of the passage: hence he says, Shall it prosper? Shall not the eagle tear up its roots, and cut off its fruit? Ezekiel assumes this principle, that the vine could not be otherwise preserved than by the power and aid of the eagle which had planted it; for when it passed away from that eagle to another, the Prophet says that the end of the ungrateful vine was at hand; all the leaves of its branches shall wither, and so be dried up, and that not in, a mighty branch, nor in much people. It is certain that Nebuchadnezzar was accompanied with a great army when he came down upon Judea. But the Prophet means, even if Nebuchadnezzar had only brought with him a small band, yet Zedekiah could not remain king, since destruction awaited him through perfidy and revolt, as will afterwards be said. The Prophet often speaks by concession, as if he had said that, by a singe blast, Zedekiah and all the people would wither away, since he could not remain in safety unless he drew sap from his own root; but he had removed his root elsewhere, and so Ezekiel pronounces that he must immediately wither away. It was not then in the power of much people to tear it from its own roots; for Zedekiah had purposely cut off his own roots, when, through his own levity, he had transferred himself to the king of Egypt Behold, says he, he had been planted; but should he have good success? as if he had said, it is vain for Zedekiah to hope for safety from him, whom his own perfidy prevented from befriending him; and therefore the comparison of an east wind is added: since then the east wind has struck it, will it not wither and decay, even upon the furrows of its branches? that is, although it has furrows whence it may expect perpetual moisture; for Egypt was, as we have said, artificially watered; and the Prophet describes Zedekiah's state just as if the king of Egypt were nourishing him by a stream of water: upon his beds, or furrows, will he wither when the east wind shall strike it. We know that the east wind destroys the fruits in that region, and so it is often mentioned in a bad sense. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 17:11-16

11. Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

11. Et fuit sermo Iehovae ad me, dicendo,

12. Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these things mean? tell them, Behold the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon;

12. Dic quaeso, [450] domui rebelli [451] an non cognoscitis quid hoc sit? dic, Ecce venit rex Babylonis Hierosolymam, et abstulit regem ejus, et proceres ejus, et adduxit

[447] That is, "shall it do prosperously or happily?" or, "shall it have good success?" for prosperari is not a sufficiently classical word, unless derived from prosperare, used by Horace, and so is passive. — Calvin.

[448] Or, "shall have struck or touched," for it signifies either. — Calvin.

[449] Or, "furrows." — Calvin.

[450] "Say now." — Calvin.

[451] Or, "bitter." — Calvin.

eos ad se Babylonem.

13. And hath taken of the king's seed, and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken the mighty of the land:

13. Et sumpsit e semine regio, et percussit cum eo foedus, et descendere fecit [452] ad jusjurandum: et fortes terrae accepit,

14. That the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping of his covenant it might stand.

14. Ut esset regnum humile, ac ne se afferret, ut servaret foedus suum; ut staret in ipso.

15. But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such things? or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered?

15. Et rebellis fuit ei ad mittendum nuntios suos in Egyptum, ut darentur equites, et populus multus. An feliciter aget? an evadet qui hoc fecit? et qui irritum fecit foedus an evadet? [453]

16. As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die.

16. Vivo ego, dicit Dominator Iehovah, si non in loco regis qui regnare fecit eum, cujus sprevit jusjurandum, et cujus irritum fecit foedus cum ipso in medio Babylonis moriatur.

An explanation of the allegory is now added. The figure being dropped, God shows what he had hitherto set forth enigmatically. We said the object of the allegory was to induce the Jews to apply their minds more diligently to the Prophet's destruction; for if he had used common and ordinary language, we know how carelessly they were accustomed to despise all rebukes and threatenings; but a riddle, while it held them in suspense, at the same time roused them, and so they were prepared for receiving the instruction which now follows. God says, therefore, that the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem. This reason has induced some to think that Lebanon is metaphorically called Jerusalem, but falsely, as we have already said. As long as the Prophet spoke figuratively, the parts ought to be mutually fitted to each other, as a tree and its branches have some connection with an eagle. The king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, and took the king away, and the elders, and led them off to Babylon. Although the Jews thought to be sufficiently moved by simple narrative, yet God here reproves them, because he saw how sluggish they were. First, he calls them a rebellious house; then he asks, Whether they know the meaning of all this? This is a kind of reproach by which God reminds them of their stupidity; since that riddle was not so obscure as to prevent them from understanding what had happened, unless they had been destitute of reason and judgment. But the Prophet thrusts at them more pointedly, by calling them a rebellious house, although at the same time he obliquely reproves their stupidity in not immediately perceiving the meaning of the riddle. He now adds, that the king of Babylon had taken from the

[452] Lead him to take." — Calvin.

[453] "The copula is here redundant, or is taken for a note of interrogation." — Calvin.

royal seed. We said that Zedekiah was the uncle of Jehoiakim: he was placed on the throne beyond all expectation; because, if Jehoiakim had begat sons when he was still secure, they would have been his successors: hence it was an extraordinary advantage to Zedekiah in being placed on the throne. But he says, that he was so created king, that the king of Babylon made a covenant with him, and induced him to take an oath. Here God shows that, humanly speaking, Zedekiah's revolt could not prosper; for even profane men are always persuaded that the perfidy of him who breaks his word will not go unpunished, especially in treaties, which are held sacred by common consent. Since, therefore, the sacredness of treaties was so great, that they could not be violated without weakening the bonds of society, hence the general persuasion that the falsehood of all truce-breakers will turn out unhappily. Now, therefore, God leaves his own cause, and takes up that of King Nebuchadnezzar: Behold, says he, you was made king by gratuitous liberality: a conqueror indeed imposed conditions upon thee, but still thy state was desirable --- you could rule your own people splendidly and with moderate dignity: now, because thy covenant has been despised, and your oath broken, you has been ungrateful to the king of Babylon, who had bound thee to himself by his munificence: how can this perfidy prosper? Now, therefore, we see the Prophet's meaning, when he says that the king of Babylon made a treaty with King Zedekiah, and took an oath of him: this is added for the sake of amplifying; for although men never enter into treaties without a mutual oath, yet Ezekiel seems to have doubled the crime of Zedekiah, when he expresses that an oath intervened. He says that he took the strong of the land, namely, as hostages. There is no doubt that Nebuchadnezzar assembled this troop around him that the Jews might be more quiet: for he knew the turbulent character of the nation, and that the maintenance of so many was expensive: but, as I have said, it was his plan to hold the whole country at peace in this way. But Zedekiah rendered his own brothers and relations liable to death, since Nebuchadnezzar might be induced, by just anger, to slay them all. Hence Zedekiah's revolt was the betrayal of his brothers: for this reason the Prophet adds, that the strong ones of the people were led away to Babylon; that is, those of the first rank, who were held in honor by the people.

He now adds, that the kingdom might be humbled. Zedekiah then could not pretend error, nor turn his back, as if he had been outwitted by the cunning and secret counsels of the king of Babylon: for Nebuchadnezzar dealt with him openly, and proscribed the conditions on which he wished him to reign. Since, then, the king of Babylon showed Zedekiah openly and sincerely what he wished him to do, that wretched man could not say that he was imposed upon, and not made sufficiently aware of the cunning of the king of Babylon: no such excuse was left to him. And therefore the Prophet clearly expresses that Nebuchadnezzar imposed conditions upon Zedekiah, that his kingdom should be lowly, so as not to lift itself up, but that it should keep the agreement. This was most equitable: for when he appointed a king, he might have imposed upon him very hard conditions, but he was content with moderation, which was surely tolerable even among the best friends. For he made a treaty with him, and then he wished the kingdom to be lowly for its preservation.

For it is just as if the Prophet had said, that Nebuchadnezzar thought of nothing else than that Zedekiah might reign in peace; and since he saw it to be useful to the king and the whole people to be restrained within some bounds, he followed that plan. Since, then, Nebuchadnezzar consulted the public advantage by this method of action, Zedekiah was the more wicked in not allowing his own safety to be consulted, since nothing was better or more desirable than for him to remain humble, and not to raise himself up to his own destruction, as afterwards happened. It now follows, that he rebelled by sending his messengers into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. These points ought to be mutually compared; that the contrast might correspond: Nebuchadnezzar regarded nothing else but the peace of the country, for he wished to prevent all fears and disturbances. What, then, was Zedekiah? a rebel. And why? for sending messengers to Egypt to fetch many troops of both horse and foot to succor Judea against Nebuchadnezzar. After the conclusion of the war he had done nothing hostile, for it was a part of his paternal anxiety to give them a king of their own nation, and so to set the whole country at rest, that there should be no occasion for tumult. Why, then, should Zedekiah seek help from the Egyptians? Thus we see that the Prophet is removing from him all excuses for self-defense. He now adds, shall he prosper? shall he who has acted thus escape? The Prophet asks with emphasis; because, as I have said, this persuasion was engraved on the minds of all, that vengeance must overtake all the perfidious, especially if they had violated their oath in treaties. The Prophet, therefore, does not simply pronounce that Zedekiah should perish through violating the treaty, but he rises more confidently, and inquires, as of a thing settled and undoubted, Shall he prosper? shall he who has planned such a crime escape? He now adds, shall he who has violated a treaty escape? This repetition is not superfluous: he had formerly said, shall he who has done this escape? he immediately repeats, shall he who has violated a treaty escape? There was nothing obscure in the first clause: but the Prophet added this, not for the sake of perspicuity, but to give more weight. to the sentence. The conclusion is, that it was not possible to escape God's vengeance for such perfidy, as we shall treat the point more at length tomorrow.

It now follows, As I live, says the Lord Jehovah, in the dwelling of the king who placed him on a throne, shall he die. Although the Prophet had sufficiently shown that Zedekiah could not escape the penalty of his revolt, yet God here again comes forward, and swears by himself, or by his life, that he would punish Zedekiah. Hence the great stupidity of the people appears, for God never acts falsely by his own name, or brings it forward in vain, but when necessity demands it, he swears by himself. And by his own example he prescribes to us, that we should not rush rashly upon an oath, but be sober in this respect. But God swears that Zedekiah should die on the spot, that is, at the capital of the king who put him on the throne; that is Babylon, where he died: and yet he did not see Babylon, because his eyes were put out at Riblath, as we saw elsewhere. (Jeremiah 39:7; Jeremiah 52:11.) But the Prophet simply denounces the penalty, that he should die in exile, and in the dwelling of the king who had placed him on his throne, and from whose covenant he had departed, and whose oath he had despised.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since you show thy regard for mutual fidelity between man and man, that we may so conduct ourselves in every way that we may not deceive our brethren, but assist each other with sincere affection: Grant, also, that with true consent we may afford thee that confidence which you require, and which we are bound to pay thee; since you desire not only to enter into covenant with us by means of your only-be-gotten Son, but also to seal it with his blood, until we enjoy that inheritance which you have obtained for us by the sacrifice of his death. --- Amen.

Lecture Fifty-Second.

Ezekiel 17:17

17. Neither shall Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company make for him in the war, by casting up mounts, and building forts, to cut off many persons:

17. Et non in exercitu magno, et in multitudine multa faciet cum eo Pharao in praelio, fundendo aggerem, et extruendo turrem [454] ad excidendum animas multas.

As Ezekiel has before pronounced that there was no need of great forces when God wished to punish Zedekiah by means of the king of Babylon; so he now teaches, on the other hand, how great and powerful an army Pharaoh would collect, and yet it would profit nothing, since Nebuchadnezzar would be victorious. Some interpreters explain the passage otherwise, namely, that Pharaoh would not perform his promise; for kings are accustomed to boast of their supplies when they enter into treaties: they promise 50,000, but only supply 10,000. They think, therefore, that these vain promises by which Zedekiah was deceived are here reproved, since Pharaoh boasted that he would come with very great forces, so as easily to repel the Babylonian army. But the sense which I propose is far more suitable, namely, that whatever Pharaoh should attempt, it would fail to assist him. Although he should come well attended, and oppose the Chaldaeans by immense forces, yet he should effect nothing in battle with him: although this may be true equally of Zedekiah as of the king of Babylon. For Pharaoh did nothing with King Nebuchadnezzar, since he was quickly compelled to retreat into his own territories, and could scarcely defend his own kingdom, for he did not succeed against Nebuchadnezzar: and he did Zedekiah no good, since he did not assist him in his misfortunes, as he had promised. But as far as concerns the general sense, we see that the Prophet means that Zedekiah would be deceived although Pharaoh should faithfully perform his promises, since he was undertaking an expedition against the will of God, which must turn out disastrous. He adds, when he shall throw up a mound and build a tower, (towers are meant, for there is a change of number,) as is customary in besieging cities. This thought to be referred to Nebuchadnezzar, for he began to cast up mounds and build towers against Jerusalem when Pharaoh led away his army. Since Nebuchadnezzar could not contend with both the Egyptians and Jews together, he raised the siege and set out to meet Pharaoh, who, when conquered, retreated with trembling within his own boundaries. Nebuchadnezzar afterwards returned, and after preparing all things, he did not desist till he had stormed the city. Now Ezekiel means this, that Pharaoh

[454] Or, "turrim." — Calvin.

would come to his help in vain, when Nebuchadnezzar began to cast up his mounds and build towers against the city. It follows ---

Ezekiel 17:18

18. Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when, lo, he had given his hand, and has done all these things, he shall not escape.

18. Sprevit jusjurandum ad abolendum foedus, et ecce porrexit manum suam: et totum hoc fecit, non evadet. [455]

Ezekiel repeals again, that, even speaking, Zedekiah could not succeed, since he violated the treaty for we yesterday said that this persuasion is always fixed in men's minds, that treaties are sacred, and cannot be broken with impunity. Since, therefore, the sacredness of treaties was always prevalent among men, Ezekiel here pronounces that the issue would be disastrous, because Zedekiah despised his oath when he broke the treaty after stretching out his hand. He describes a gesture, as I think, customary among men --- that of stretching forth the hand when they wish to witness a covenant. The alliance, then, between the Egyptians and the Jews is here described by an outward gesture, because Zedekiah stretched forth his hand, and yet had violated it in this way: but since he perfidiously revolted from King Nebuchadnezzar, to whom he had pledged his faith, he has done all this, says he, therefore he shall not be liberated. It follows ---

Ezekiel 17:19

19. Therefore thus says the Lord GOD; As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head.

19. Propterea sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, Vivo ego, si non jusjurandum meum quod sprevit, et foedus meum quod irritum fecit, rependam [456] in ejus caput.

The former sentence is confirmed. The Prophet had spoken after the usually received manner when he said that Zedekiah's perfidy would not be unrevenged; but he now brings forward God as the speaker, because, unless he appeared as an avenger of perfidy, mankind would scarcely ever be seriously persuaded that punishment was prepared for perjurers and truce-breakers. As I have said that this opinion was fixed in the hearts of all, so it must be understood that this opinion was received, and that men were fully persuaded of it: but persuasions which are called ``common'' [457] vanish away; there are common thoughts which are almost born with us, and follow nature, but they are not firm, because the profane do not hold the principal point, that God is the judge of the world: this sentence, therefore, is added of necessity. Now God swears that Zedekiah should suffer punishment, because he had despised the oath and rendered the covenant void. But we must notice the epithet; for God calls the oath and the covenant his own: he has despised, says he, not simply the oath, but mine: he has violated my treaty. The reason of this language is, that God wishes fidelity between man and man to be cultivated: and so he detests all perjury and all frauds. Now, since there is no more sacred method of contracting

[455] Or, "be liberated." — Calvin.
[456] Or, "I will throw it back." — Calvin.
[457] {κοίνας} {ἐννοίας}. --- Calvin.

a treaty than by solemn rites, there also God shows his judgment in a peculiar manner. In fine, we may deservedly call him the guardian of treaties; for when heathens entered into treaties, they were accustomed to bring forward the name of Jupiter the supreme, because they thought he would inflict vengeance on all who violated their pledge. But God here comes forward, not like an imaginary Jupiter, but because he wished confidence to flourish in human society; since, unless men act sincerely to each other, all society would be broken up. This, then, is the reason why Ezekiel says that the treaty struck with King Nebuchadnezzar was divine, since God would be its vindicator. Meanwhile we must remark that this treaty was lawful and pleasing to God. (Jeremiah 27:17.) And we see from Jeremiah 28 and Jeremiah 29., that God wished the Jews to suffer under this disgrace for a time. For King Zedekiah, if he had truly discharged his office, was an image of the Messiah, the first-born among the kings of the earth: Hence it was unworthy of him to become tributary to a profane monarch and a cruel tyrant. But since God had so imposed slavery on his own people, Zedekiah ought to be under the yoke, as it is there said, Be you servants to King Nebuchadnezzar and live; that is, there is no other method of obtaining safety, unless you suffer the Chaldaeans to rule over you, and you bear their sway calmly, since Nebuchadnezzar is God's scourge. This covenant, as I have said, was approved by God, otherwise he could not have been its avenger. We know that there are three kinds of treaties. When there has been war between two kings, if the conqueror wishes to spare his enemy, he receives him into covenant, but imposes conditions at his own discretion. We know that the Romans followed that custom, since it was too difficult for them to hold in subjection all whom they had subdued, and especially at the beginning; and thus they entered into treaties with many tribes under many circumstances. Another sort of agreement is, that between either kings or people when at variance with each other; but before they actually engage, they make a truce with each other, and so remove the occasion of the war --- this is another kind. Lastly, those who never were enemies enter into an alliance; and such was the treaty between Zedekiah and the king of Egypt. For they wished to be cautious, and to anticipate the danger which he feared from the Chaldaeans; and hence he entered into the agreement,. Thus the Israelites were formerly joined with the Syrians, and afterwards with the Assyrians. So we saw that the Jews committed adultery when they ran about first to Egypt, then to Assyria, and then to Chaldaea. But this treaty, of which mention is now made, was necessary; for Zedekiah could not escape from embracing the conditions imposed on him by King Nebuchadnezzar. For this reason God pronounces himself the avenger of perfidy.

It is now asked, Whether we may never break our word when any one has been violently attacked, and promised what was otherwise unjust? The reply is at hand, that God's name is more precious than all human advantages. If any one, therefore, object that he was deceived, and oppressed by unjust conditions, still God's name must prevail. Hence we must always weigh what is due to the name of God; and hence we shall readily conclude that those can never be excused who violate their engagements on the pretext of being violently compelled, or induced by fraud, or not allowed the liberty of considering whether their promise was according to equity.

For this reason, also, it is said in the 15th Psalm, (Psalm 15:4,) that the sons of God swear and suffer loss, because when God's, name has been interposed, no utility ought to be of such importance as to outweigh the oath that has been taken. And so not without reason God now pronounces that he would avenge the perjury which Zedekiah had committed, since, in truth, we cannot depart from promises which have been sanctioned by an oath in God's name, without seeming to slight the Almighty himself. Meanwhile, it is certain that there was another reason why God punished the Jews; but here, as I have previously shown, the Prophet mentions what was more familiar to men. The first cause of the destruction of the city and of the whole kingdom, was idolatry, as we saw before, and then the many crimes of the people were added. For from the period of the corruption of true religion, the pollution of many vices increased through the city and the whole land. Hence it happened that God destined his people to destruction; hence also King Zedekiah was deprived of sight. For, as the sacred history testifies, God wished to destroy the whole people: for this reason Zedekiah fell, and provoked the Chaldaeans against him. We see, therefore, that there is a continued series of causes in the eternal providence of God, but not as the Stoics supposed; for they concocted their fate from complex windings or implicit causes, without any will of Deity in that confusion. But God, as I have said, has different reasons why he does one thing or another. Some causes are remote and incomprehensible to us, and others manifest to us: so the proximate cause of the destruction of the people was the revolt of Zedekiah from King Nebuchadnezzar; but there was another more important reason, namely, that the people deserved to perish. Hence Zedekiah was rendered blind by the just judgment of God, since he passed over perfidiously to the king of Egypt, and so armed himself against King Nebuchadnezzar. But we must hold that the reason universally manifest is here reviewed. It follows ---

Ezekiel 17:20

20. And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me.

20. Et extendam [458] super ipsum rete meum, et capietur in plagis meis, [459] et venire faciam ipsum Babylonem, et judicabo [460] cum eo illic de transgressione [461] qua praevaricatus est contra me.

Here he points out the kind of punishment which he was about to inflict on King Zedekiah. He had said generally that his perfidy should fall upon his own head, but he now proceeds further, namely, that Zedekiah should be a captive. For God might chastise him by other means, but the prophecy was thereby confirmed, since the Prophet had clearly threatened Zedekiah as we see. But he speaks in the person of God that his language may have more weight. I will spread my net, says God, and he shall be taken in my snares. The passage is metaphorical, but it best ex-

[458] Or, "I will spread." — Calvin.

[459] Some translate "drag-net," but erroneously, for the word is derived from hunting. — Calvin.

[460] Or, "plead in a trial." — Calvin.

[461] Or, "prevarication." — Calvin.

plains what often occurs in Scripture, namely, that while the impious take first one course and then another, they are agents of God who governs them by his own secret virtue, and directs them wherever he wishes. As, therefore, men false up all things confusedly, and are, as we see, driven about hither and thither by their lusts, and disturb heaven and earth; yet God moderates their attacks by his secret providence. We gather this from the Prophet's words when he calls the army of the king of Babylon, and his plans, and the apparatus of war, God's net and snares. Although Nebuchadnezzar was impelled by his own ambition and avarice, and did not suppose himself under the divine sway, yet we see what the Spirit pronounces. And we must diligently observe this doctrine, because, if we repose on the paternal solicitude of God, although armies surround us on all sides, yet we may confide securely, and await the end with quiet and tranquil minds, since men can do nothing without God. But when we provoke God's wrath against us, we must bear in mind, that while men have their reasons for being hostile to us, yet God governs them, or that they are his nets or snares, as the Prophet here says.

I will bring him, says he, to Babylon, and there will I dispute with him in judgment, according to the prevarication by which he has prevaricated. Not only did God dispute with Zedekiah there, but he inflicted a heavy and formidable judgment upon him in Riblah, when he saw his own sons put to death first, and then his own eyes were put out, and then he was bound by chains. But he almost pined away in his captivity, and was treated shamefully even unto death; for this reason God says that he would judge him at Babylon: and yet there will be nothing out of place if we comprehend Riblah also. For although Zedekiah had been partially punished before he entered Babylon, yet God there inflicted his own sentence, after he was dragged from his country and led into exile. He was buried indeed not without honor, as we saw in Jeremiah, (Jeremiah 34:5,) for they bewailed him at his burial --- Alas, my brother! alas, O master! as the Prophet says: yet till his death he was like the vilest prisoner, for he pined away in his chains, and was meanly clothed, when the king treated Coniah nobly and splendidly: hence Zedekiah's captivity was the seal of this prophecy for Ezekiel could not have pronounced this sentence, unless he had been the organ of the Holy Spirit. It follows ---

Ezekiel 17:21

21. And all his fugitives with all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered toward all winds: and ye shall know that I the LORD have spoken it

21. Et omnes profugi ejus in omnibus copius ejus in gladio cadent: et qui residui erunt ad omnem ventum dispergentur: et cognoscetis quod ego Iehovah loquutus sim.

The Prophet now descends to the whole people, especially to the soldiers, whom Zedekiah himself thought would be fit guardians of the city. He says, then, thus shall all his forces be dissipated, so that they shall be dispersed hither and thither and all by the sword. By these words he means the slaughter of the army, since as long as soldiers stand in their own ranks they sustain and repel a hostile attack; but when they are dispersed, every one is subject to the enemy, and hence a promiscuous

slaughter arises. He says, therefore, that Zedekiah's soldiers would be fugitives amidst all their bands: that is, although he had a large army, yet all his forces should be dispersed, and while each should consult his own advantage, he should fall into the enemy's hands: thus, all shall fall by the sword; then those who remain shall be dispersed towards every wind. We saw the same thing before, for when the Prophet had declared that all the people should suffer by the sword, he added, at the same time, that all the survivors should be fugitives, just as if any one should throw out refuse or hair which the wind would blow hither and thither. Hence he repeats the same now, namely, that the whole people would be like a torn body, since if they escaped the sword, yet they would find no place of rest. Hence while a few would flee to Egypt, some to the Moabites, and others to the neighboring nations, the whole body of the people, would be dissipated. He adds, and you shall know that I Jehovah have spoken. We have explained the meaning of this, and why the Prophet repeats it so often, namely, because the Jews were untractable and derided all God's threats: the Prophet teaches that they should really feel that he had spoken, and this is the wisdom of fools, as the common proverb expresses it. For because they do not obey any counsels, nor admit any admonitions, and receive no teaching, they are instructed only by the event itself. It follows ---

Ezekiel 17:22

22. Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent:

22. Sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, Et assumam [462] e summitate cedri excelsae, [463] et ponam e capite propaginum ejus, tenerum evellam, et plantabo ego super montem excelsum et elevatum.

Here the Prophet begins to treat of the restoration of the nation and kingdom. Thus this prophecy without doubt refers to Christ, because although in some sense God had pity on the people when they enjoyed the liberty of returning under Cyrus and Darius, yet what is here written was never fully exhibited except under Christ. It is indeed true, as I have elsewhere expressed, that when the prophets promise restoration to the Church, that they do not restrict their discourse to the person of Christ, but begin with the return of the people for that was the beginning of the full and solid liberty which was at length made manifest in Christ. And Christian writers have erred in urging so precisely that anything said about the restitution of the Church must be understood of the person of Christ, and thus they make themselves ridiculous to the Jews. But, as it has been said already, as often as the Prophets hold out the hope of liberty to the elect and the faithful, they embrace the whole of the time from the return of the people, or from the end of their exile to the end of the kingdom of Christ. When, therefore, the reign of Christ is treated, we must date its commencement from the period of the building of the temple after the people's return from their seventy years captivity: and then we must take its boundary, not at the ascension of Christ, nor yet in the first or second centuries, but through the whole

[462] "The copula is redundant." — Calvin.
[463] Or, "of a tall." — Calvin.

progress of his kingdom, until he shall appear at the last day. Now let us come to the Prophet's words, thus says the Lord Jehovah, I will take from the top of the lofty (or tall) cedar. God pursues the allegory which we saw: for as he said that the top was torn off, or that the highest branch was plucked from the cedar of Lebanon, so he now says, that he would take from the top of the cedar, and after he had plucked or wrenched off a bough, and planted it, such would be the increase, that all the trees would acknowledge that to be a wonderful work. Now this restoration is described to us variously, because after God had spoken of a lofty bough, he descends to a low and abject one; he then pronounces that such should be the beginning of the new kingdom, that he would make the dry tree to bud and humble the lofty one. These things at first sight seem to be opposite to each other, but they agree very well, because God took from the top of a lofty cedar when he planted a new king. For Christ, as respects God's eternal decree, was always more excellent than heaven and earth; at the same time God afterwards says that he was humble, as he certainly was. But let us follow up the words, I will take, says he, from the top of a lofty cedar, and I will set it: from the top of its twigs I will pluck a tender one, and I will plant it upon a lofty and elevated mountain. Here, as I have said, he speaks of a tall and lofty cedar, and then he speaks of a high branch, but he adds afterwards, I will pluck a tender one from it, by which he means that the twig which he should pluck and plant would be without strength. Here, therefore, is shown the contemptible beginning of the reign of Christ, as the Prophet afterwards more clearly explains himself.

Ezekiel 17:23

23. In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell.

23. In monte excelso Israel plantabo illud, et tollet ramum, et faciet fructum, et erit in cedrum elegantem: [464] et habitabit sub eo [465] omnis avis [466] omne pennatum [467] in umbra surculorum [468] ejus habitabit.

When God announces that the twig which he will plant shall become a lofty cedar, he shows by lofty words that the increase of Christ's kingdom shall be so wonderful, that it shall surpass the common rule of nature; which indeed was shadowed forth in the person of Zerubbabel, who was chosen to bring back the people from their sad and disgraceful captivity. (Ezra 2:2; Haggai 1:14.) For it does not naturally happen that a twig increases in a short time to a lofty cedar, for we know how slowly cedars grow, and hence we see the Spirit's intention in saying that a tree should spring from a very small twig. And this prophecy answers to one of Isaiah's, where he says, (Isaiah 11:1,) A branch shall spring from the root of Jesse: for the house of Jesse was cut off, and he names the house of an obscure and private man as if the remembrance of David were utterly lost. The house of Jesse then was cut off like a tree: that twig, says he, shall spring from its root. Now the Prophet signifies

[464] Or, "magnificent;" it is the same word of which we spoke yesterday. — Calvin.
[465] Under that branch or cedar." — Calvin.
[466] That is, "birds of all kinds." — Calvin.
[467] Or, "flying thing." — Calvin.
[468] Or, "boughs." — Calvin.

the same thing, and almost under the same similitude. I leave the rest for the next lecture.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since you have deigned to enter into a perpetual and inviolable covenant with us which you have sanctioned by the blood of your only-begotten Son, that we may faithfully stand to it: and may we be so obedient to thee unto the end, that we may experience thee a propitious Father to us, until we enjoy that eternal inheritance which you have prepared for us in heaven, through the same Christ our Lord.-Amen.

Lecture Fifty-Third.

In the last lecture we began to explain that passage of the Prophet in which God. promises that he would take from the boughs of the lofty cedar a tender branch, which should soon grow into a tall tree. We said that the restoration of the people was the foretaste of this grace, since God already showed that he cared for his people whom he seemed utterly to reject when he suffered them to be dragged into exile. We said also, that although Zerubbabel was a captive and an exile, yet that he was the twig plucked from the tall tree, as he was of the royal stock whence Christ would at length spring forth. But at the same time we added that this prophet was not complete until the kingdom of Christ of which it was the beginning, when he was manifest in the flesh, and thence it made daily progress until the end of the world. Thus then we see that the twig was plucked from the cedar, and from a tall or lofty one, and it was planted upon a mountain. The mountain on which the branch was to be planted was called sublime and lofty, and there is no doubt that God meant Mount Zion: it is indeed a small hill, but Isaiah shows us the reason why it was called lofty, because it excelled in dignity and eminence all the heights of the world. (Isaiah 2:2, 3.) It is there said, I will make Mount Zion conspicuous above all lofty mountains: that eminence indeed was not perceptible by the eye, but the Prophet at the same time declares what he means, since a law should go forth from Zion and God's word from Jerusalem. We see, therefore, that Mount Zion, although low among hills, was eminent and conspicuous among the highest mountains, since God's glory shone forth from it, and it was rendered conspicuous to even the ends of the earth. Hence the Prophet repeats a second time, On a, lofty mountain of Israel will I plant it, namely, the twig, and it shall raise or bear a bough, and produce fruit, and it shall be a magnificent or elegant cedar, as we said, and every bird, that is, all birds, shall dwell under it, every winged thing, or flying thing, shall dwell under the shadow of its branches or boughs. The repetition shows that something rare is here denoted, and what would scarcely be comprehended in an ordinary sense, when God speaks of a high and elevated mountain. So that it confirms what we said, that this place thought to be understood of Mount Zion, which was supernaturally elevated when Christ's scepter went forth from it, by which he reduced the whole world under his yoke. He now adds, that it should be a magnificent cedar, so that the birds of the air should nestle in it and rest under its shadow. This simile is used by Daniel when treating of the sway of Nebuchadnezzar, (Daniel 4:8, 9, 17-19,) it is common to all kingdoms to protect men under their shadow, as birds find their dwelling-place only in trees, and

repair and collect themselves there. But meanwhile the Prophet shortly states that the kingdom of which he is would be for the common safety and advantage of the whole people. For as kings usually think the human race created for their sakes, they are taken up with their own private reasoning, and do not consult the interests of the wretched people whom they are divinely appointed to cherish under their wings. The Prophet therefore shows that the kingdom which God had determined to set up in his chosen people would be useful to all, when he says, under its shadow there would be safety for all birds. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 17:24

24. And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the LORD have spoken and have done it

24. Et cognoscent omnes arbores agri, quod ego Iehovah, qui humilio arborem excelsam, et extollo in sublime arborem humilem: arefacio arborem viridem, et fructuosam reddo arborem aridam: ego Iehovah loquutus sum, et feci. [469]

In this verse the Prophet signifies that God's work would be memorable. For when he says that all trees should feel themselves in God's hand and power, to raise what was fallen, and to cast down and to prostrate what was elevated, he doubtless expresses no common action. By trees he means all the kings of the earth, and all possessed of any dignity. For he follows up his own metaphor: as he called the kingdom of Christ a tree or cedar which grew from a small twig, so he now speaks metaphorically of kings when he says, that all should take notice; for they shall know that Jehovah brings down the high tree. Ezekiel may here seem to be inconsistent with himself, as I have already noticed, because God said that he would take from a lofty cedar a little twig, which he wished to plant: but he now says that God would raise what was low and abject. But we have dissipated this absurdity, because, from the beginning Christ was in the glory of his Father, and thus, as Micah says, his beginning was from eternity. (Micah 5:2.) This excellency of Christ, therefore, is noticed, because, from the time when God erected David's throne, he at the same time gave a visible sign of the more excellent kingdom which was then secretly hoped for. For this reason Christ was taken from his lofty place, and since he not only put on the form of a slave, but emptied himself even unto death, (Philippians 2:7,) it is not surprising that the Prophet should say, like a tree cast down. Although, as I have remarked, this sentence is not to be restricted to the person of Christ, but thought to be adapted to his kingdom; that is, to his manner and way of governing: since we know, and it has been lately stated, that the gospel is like a scepter, by which Christ subdues all people, and rules them for himself. Now if we reflect on what the preaching of the gospel was, we shall see, as in a glass, the Prophet's meaning here, that the low tree was elevated, since no one would have thought, that from such slender beginnings the increase which God afterwards bestowed on it could arise. It follows, then, that the height was wonderful, since it could not be comprehended by the human senses.

Meanwhile he adds, I am he who humbles the lofty tree, which is not only under-

[469] Or, "I will do it." — Calvin.

stood of the Jews, but, in my judgment, embraces all the empires and principalities of the world. God, therefore, humbles lofty trees, because, whatever opposes itself to Christ's kingdom, must necessarily fall; and this is described more at length in Daniel. (Daniel 4.) For although all the empires of the world are founded in Christ, and sustained by his virtue, yet, since earthly kings rise up and desire to lay Christ prostrate, their pride is the reason why Christ's empire causes their ruin. This contrast, then, must be noticed, that God sets up low trees, or takes them away, and casts down lofty ones, since we are here taught to hope better of the reign of Christ than we can estimate by our senses; since, if we cast our eyes round us, many things meet us which diminish and weaken our hope. For what is the outward appearance of Christ's kingdom? In truth we shall feel nothing but despair if we judge of Christ's kingdom by the present state of affairs. But when we see how the gospel creeps along the ground, this passage should come to our minds, that God will raise up the tree that is abject and contemptible. At the same time, let us learn, that the changes which happen and are perceived in the world are to be imputed to the pride of those who are blinded by their own boasting; for kings, as we have said, forget that they are men, and so rebel against God: hence they must of necessity fall. If this is not fulfilled immediately, let us learn patiently to await the effect of this prophecy. Whatever happens, God has so established the kingdom of Christ alone, that it shall last as long as the sun and moon, but the other empires of the world shall vanish away with their own splendor, and their loftiness shall fall although at present they overtop the clouds. I, says Jehovah, have spoken, and I will do it. God here recalls the minds of the faithful to his power, because, from the time the people were dispersed --- I speak of the final overthrow of the city and temple --- there was no hope of restoration. Since, then, it was difficult to persuade men of what God now pronounces, he brings pointedly forward his own prowess, in order that men, by holding in check their carnal senses, should raise themselves above the world, and wait for the inestimable prowess of God which does not yet appear to them. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 18

CHAPTER 18

Ezekiel 18:1-4

1. The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying,

1. Et fuit sermo Iehova, ad me, dicendo,

2. What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?

2. Quid vobis? vos proverbiantes proverbium [470] super terram Israel, dicendo, Patres comederunt omphacem, [471] et dentes filiorum obstupescunt.

3. As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.

3. Vivo ego, dicit Dominator Iehovah, Si erit vobis amplius [472] qui utatur hoc dicterio [473] in Israele.

4. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that shineth, it shall die.

4. Ecce omnes animae mihi, [474] sicut anima patris sic anima filii mihi. [475] Anima quae peccaverit ipsa morietur.

We may collect from this rebuke that the Jews were perverse interpreters of the best teaching; yea, they purposely reviled the Prophet's expression, and drew it to a contrary meaning. For it, is far commoner than it ought to be among unbelievers, always to take occasion of turning backwards, twisting, distorting, and tearing the teaching of heaven. And at this time we see this impudence increasing greatly in

[470] That is, "that you use this saying or apothegm." — Calvin.

[471] Sour grape — I know not why some translate it "the wild vine," for it does not suit. — Calvin.

[472] Or, "hereafter." — Calvin.

[473] Or, "utter this proverb." — Calvin.

[474] That is, "are my own." — Calvin.

[475] That is, "are my own." — Calvin.

the world. For the world is full of buffoons and other deceivers, who wickedly sport with God, and seek material for joking from the law and the gospel: and so also it appears to have been in the Prophet's time; for although they listened to the wrath of God hanging over them, they did not cease to provoke him, and that too for many years. And not only were their own iniquities set forth against them, but also those of their fathers: hence the occasion for cavil when they heard --- For so many ages you do not cease your warfare against God: he has borne with you patiently unto this day. Do you think that you can carry on your audacity with impunity? God wished hitherto to tame you by his forbearance; but your obstinacy is not to be subdued. Since, therefore, not only for one or two generations, but for four and five, your obstinacy has wrestled with God's goodness, he cannot any longer pardon you. Since the prophets thus gathered up the iniquities of their fathers, impious men scattered abroad their witticisms --- then we are to pay the penalty of our fathers' sins: they provoked God, but we suffer the punishment which they deserved. The Prophet now convinces them of this unfairness, and shows that they had no reason for transferring their faults to others, or to thrust them away from themselves, since God was just in taking vengeance on them. We know that men willingly shuffle so as to free themselves from blame, and then afterwards accuse God of cruel injustice. It is true, indeed, that they are held in such constraint by their own consciences that they are compelled, whether they will or not, to feel that they are suffering punishment justly; but afterwards they become refractory, and suffocate their conscience, and strive pettishly with God. Hence these words ---

Though guiltless of your fathers' crimes,
Roman, 'tis thine to latest times
The vengeance of the gods to bear,
Till you their awful domes repair.
Horace, lib. 3, Od. 6, as translated by Francis.

Since so many crimes were rife at Rome, why does that trifler say that the men of his own age were undeservedly paying the penalty due by their ancestors? But, as I have said, this is the testimony of a corrupt nature, because we desire to throw off the blame as far from ourselves as we possibly can. Hence we begin to strive with God, and to rebel against his judgments. And hence this destruction is the more useful to us, since it is proposed as a remedy for a disease by far too common. Whatever the meaning is, this sentiment came into common use like a proverb --- that the children's teeth were set on edge, because their fathers had eaten sour grapes. By these allegorical words they wished to free themselves from blame, as if God was unjustly charging the wickedness of their fathers against them. For to eat the sour grape or wild grape has the same meaning as to set the teeth on edge; for we know this to be the effect of acidity. If any one eats a sour grape, his teeth will suffer from its unripeness. To eat then is to cause this effect on the teeth --- referring to sin: for they said that their own teeth suffered, not through their own eating the sour grapes, but through its flowing down from their fathers. On the whole, they wished to contend with God, as if he were afflicting the innocent, and that, too, under the fallacious pretext which I have mentioned, as God announced that he would avenge

the wickedness which had been perpetrated in former ages.

Ye, says he, use this proverb; but as I live, says the Lord Jehovah, you shall not use this proverb anymore. He does not mean, by these words, that the Jews should repent and become more modest, and not dare to vomit forth such blasphemy against him; for he is not treating of repentance here; but it is just as if he said, I will strike from under you this boasting, since your iniquity shall be made manifest, and the whole world shall acknowledge the justice of your punishment, and that you have deserved it yourselves, and cannot throw it upon your fathers, as you have hitherto endeavored to do. The Jews indeed did not cease their rebellion against God, and there is no doubt that they were more and more exasperated, so as to expostulate with audacity against him; but because their wickedness was really apparent, and God was not hostile to them in vain, or for trifling reasons; and although he was severe, yet they had arrived at the highest pitch of impiety, so that no punishment could be sufficient or too oppressive. We now understand the meaning of the Prophet, or rather of the Holy Spirit, since God took away all pretense for shuffling from the Jews when he detected their impiety, and made it conspicuous that they were only suffering the due reward of their crimes. But God swears by himself, whence we gather how abominable was their blasphemy; and truly men cannot absolve themselves without condemning God; for God's glory then shines forth, when every mouth is stopped, as we saw before. (Ezekiel 16:63; Romans 3:19.) As soon as men descend into that arena, through wishing to show their innocence, it is just as if they wished to reduce God's justice to nothing. Hence it is not surprising that God is very angry when he is despoiled of his justice; for he cannot exist without this attribute.

We now see why an oath is interposed, while he pronounces that he will take care that the Jews should not ridicule any longer Behold, says he, all souls are mine; as the sole of the son so the soul of the father, all souls are mine; the soul, therefore, which has sinned it shall die. Some interpreters explain the beginning of the verse thus: that men vainly and rashly complain when God seems to treat them too severely, since the clay does not rise against the potter. Since God is the maker of the whole world, we are his workmanship: what madness, then, to rise up against him when he does not satisfy us: and we saw this simile used by Jeremiah. (Jeremiah 18:6.) The sentiment, then, is true in itself, that all souls are under God's sovereignty by the right of creation, and therefore he can arbitrarily determine for each whatever he wishes; and all who clamor against him reap no profit: and this teaching it is advantageous to notice. But this passage ought to be understood otherwise; namely, that nothing is more unworthy than that God should be accused of tyrannizing over men, when he rather defends them, as being his own workmanship. When, therefore, God pronounces that all souls are his own, he does not merely claim sovereignty and power, but he rather shows that he is affected with fatherly love towards the whole human race since he created and formed it; for, if a workman loves his work because he recognizes in it the fruits of his industry, so, when God has manifested his power and goodness in the formation of men, he must certainly embrace them with affection. True, indeed, we are abominable in God's sight, through being corrupted

by original sin, as it is elsewhere said, (Psalm 14:1, 2;) but inasmuch as we are men, we must be dear to God, and our salvation must be precious in his sight. We now see what kind of refutation this is: all souls are mine, says he: I have formed all, and am the creator of all, and so I am affected with fatherly love towards all, and they shall rather feel my clemency, from the least to the greatest, than experience too much rigor and severity. At length he adds, the soul which sinned it shall die. Now, Ezekiel expresses how God restrains the Jews from daring to boast any longer that they are afflicted undeservedly, since no innocent person shall die; for this is the meaning of the sentence; for he does not mean that every guilty person should die, for this would shut against us the door of God's mercy, for we have all sinned against him: so it would follow that there is no hope of safety, since every man must perish, unless God freed sinners from death. But the Prophet's sense is not doubtful, as we have said, since those who perish are not without fault; neither can they bring up their innocence to God, nor complain of his cruelty in punishing them for the sins of others. Although here a question may arise, since no one at this day perishes who does not partly bear the fault of another, namely, of Adam, by whose fall and revolt the whole human race actually perished. Since therefore Adam, by his fall, brought destruction upon us, it follows that we perish through the fault of another. Since this question will be treated again in its own place, it will now be sufficient to say, in three words, that although we perish through the fault of another, yet the fault of each individual is joined with it. We are not condemned in Adam as if we were innocent in ourselves, but we have contracted pollution from his sin; and so it has come to pass that each must bear the punishment of his own crime, since the punishment which he deserved first is not simply inflicted on the whole human race, but we have been tainted with his sin, as will afterwards be said. Whatever the meaning, we shall not die innocent, since each is held convicted by the testimony of his own conscience. As far as relates to young children, they seem to perish not by their own, but for another's fault; but the solution is twofold; for although sin does not appear in them, yet it is latent, since they carry about with them corruption shut up in their soul, so that they are worthy of condemnation before God. This does not come under the notice of our senses; but we should consider how much more acutely God sees a thing than we do: hence, if we do not penetrate into that hidden judgment, yet we must hold that, before we are born, we are infected by the contagion of original sin, and therefore justly destined to ultimate destruction: ----this is one solution. But as far as concerns the Prophet's expression, the dispute concerning infants is vain and out of place, since the Prophet only wished to refute that impious perverseness, as I have said, so that the people should no longer charge God with cruelty. The soul, says he, which has sinned; that is, none of you can boast of innocence when I punish you: as when it is said, He who does not labor, neither let him eat. (2 Thessalonians 3:10.) Surely this cannot be extended to infants. Nature teaches us that they must be nourished, and yet sure enough they do not acquire their food by labor: but this is said of adults, who are old enough to acknowledge the reason why they were created, and their fitness for undergoing labor. So also, in this place, we are not treating of the tender young when newly born, but of adults,

who wish to charge God instead of themselves, as if they are innocent; and so, when they cannot escape punishment, they are anxious to transfer the fault elsewhere --- first upon others, and then upon God himself.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since you have not only created us out of nothing, but have deigned to create us again in your only-begotten Son, and have taken us from the lowest depths, and deigned to raise us to the hope of thy heavenly kingdom:-Grant, I say, that we may not be proud or puffed up with vainglory; but may we embrace this favor with becoming humility, and modestly submit ourselves to thee, until we become at length partakers of that glory which your only-begotten Son has acquired for us. --- Amen.

Lecture Fifty-Fourth.

Ezekiel 18:5-9

5. But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right,

5. Et vir si fuerit justus, et fecerit judicium et justitiam,

6. And hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman,

6. Super montes non comederit, et oculos suos non extulerit ad idola [476] domus Israel, et uxorem socii sui [477] non polluerit, et ad mulierem menstruatam non accesserit,

7. And hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment;

7. Et neminem afflixerit, [478] pignus suum reddiderit debitori, praedam non rapuerit, [479] panem suum famelico dederit, et nudum texerit vestimentis;

8. He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man,

8. Cum usura non dederit et incrementum [480] non acceperit, ab iniquitate retraxerit manum suam, judicium fideliter fecerit inter virum et virum,

9. Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD.

9. In statutis meis ambulaverit, et judicia mea custodierit ad faciendum veritatem, [481] justus est, vivendo vivet, dicit Dominator Iehovah.

Here the Prophet confirms his former teaching by examples. For he first says, if any one faithfully keep the law, he shall prosper, since God will repay the reward of justice: afterwards he adds, if the just man beget a son unlike himself, the justice of the father shall not profit the degenerate son, but he shall receive the reward

[476] Properly, "to the filthiness." — Calvin.
[477] Or, "of his neighbor." — Calvin.
[478] Or, "oppressed." — Calvin.
[479] Verbally, "has not seized booty." — Calvin.
[480] Or, "reward, gain." — Calvin.
[481] That is, "to conduct himself faithfully." — Calvin.

of his iniquity. But if this second person should beget a son who does not imitate his father, God promises that this third person shall be acceptable by him, because he is just, and therefore enjoys prosperity and happiness. We see, then, that the grandfather and grandson are here spoken of, and that the son of the first, and father of the third, is placed between them. But this is the Spirit's intention, that God has prepared a reward for each according to their lives, so that he does not permit them to be deprived of their promised blessing, nor let the impious and despisers of his law escape. Now let us come to the words, if any one has been just, says he, he shall be just, therefore he shall live. He speaks generally first: he afterwards enumerates certain species under which he embraces the sum of the whole law. The full sentence is, if any one has been just, he shall live in consequence of his justice. But the Prophet defines what it is to be just, and he there chooses certain parts of the law: by putting a part for the whole, as I have said, he signifies, that whoever faithfully observes the law is esteemed just before God. Now we must examine each of these kinds of justice, and afterwards come to the general doctrine. He says first, that he is just who does justice and judgement. By the word judgment holy Scripture signifies rectitude; but when the two words are joined together, judgment seems to express more than justice: for justice is nothing but equity, fidelity, integrity, when we abstain altogether from fraud and violence, and deal with our brethren as we wish them to deal with us. Whoever so conducts himself is said to do justice; but judgment is extended further, namely, when we not only desire to benefit but defend our brethren, when unjustly oppressed, as far as we can, and when we oppose the lust and violence of those who would overthrow all that is right and holy. Hence to do judgment and justice is nothing else than to abstain from all injury by cultivating good faith and equity with our neighbors: then to defend all good causes, and to take the innocent under our patronage when we see them unjustly injured and oppressed. But these duties belong properly to the second table of the law. But it is clear from this that we fear God when we live justly with our brethren, for piety is the root of charity. Although many profane persons seem blameless in their life, and manifest a rare integrity, yet no one ever loves his neighbor from his heart, unless he fears and reverences God. Since, therefore, charity flows from piety and the fear of God, as often as we see the duties of the second table placed before us, we should learn them to be the testimonies to the worship of God, as is this place: but then the Prophet also adds certain parts of the first table.

He says then, if he has not eaten upon the mountains, and not raised his eyes to the abominable deeds of the house of Israel. These two points respect the worship of God: for by the figure ``a part for the whole'' to eat, means to offer sacrifices: he refers to those to which banquets were added as appendages. And truly when Paul speaks of idolatry, he does not say, if any one bends his knees before stone or wood, but he quotes the words of Moses, that the people rose up to play after eating, that is, after banqueting. (1 Corinthians 10:7; Exodus 32:6.) Hence a feast is there taken for that sacrilegious profaneness when the people made for themselves a calf, and wished to worship God before it. When, therefore, it is now said, if any one has not eaten upon, the mountains: by a feast, as I have said, a sacrifice offered to idols is

intended. Now we know that altars were raised on high in every direction, because they thought that they were near God when they ascended to an elevated spot. Because, therefore, superstitions were so exercised on the mountains, hence the Prophet relates what was customary, if any one has not eaten, upon the mountains: then he explains himself more clearly, if any one has not raised his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel. To raise the eyes is here taken by a figure of speech for to be urged with eagerness towards superstitions: for we know that eyes are the principal outlets to the affections; for when the affections burst forth in the eyes, and are conspicuous there, it is not surprising if all our desires are marked by this form of speech. Thus a person is said to raise his eyes to the house of his neighbor when he covets it, and also towards his wife, or anything else, when he is seized by a depraved lusting. The meaning is, then, that those who do not contaminate themselves with idols are thought just before God, as far as concerns the first table of the law, since they are content with the simple and lawful worship of God, and do not incline from it in any direction; nor, like the superstitious, allow their eyes to be wandering and erratic: and so they are compared with harlots who seek lovers on all sides. I repeat it again. --- the meaning is, that the true worshipers of God are those who are content with his doctrine, and are not carried hither and thither by a perverse appetite, and so fabricate for themselves idols. Besides, the Holy Spirit calls idols {גלולים}, gelolim, ``defilements,'' [482] since all superstition should be detested by us; for as we are prone by nature to all kinds of error, we cannot be sufficiently restrained within the true and pure worship of God. Since, then, unbelievers imagine their gods to be sacred, the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, pronounces them to be defiling, since their profane worship is disgusting and abominable. But he says, the idols of the house of Israel, so that all shuffling must cease: because, if he had spoken of idols only, they might have objected that they detested the false and foolish gods of the Gentiles; but since many ceremonies were through long use received among the elect people, these ought not to be condemned like the impious rites of the heathen. The Holy Spirit refutes this cavil, and says, that though the house of Israel has approved such defilement's, yet they are not to be excused for setting aside the law of God, and devoting themselves to human fictions.

And has not polluted his neighbors wife. The Prophet now returns again to the second table, and treats here of adultery; and the language must be noticed, since such contamination shows how holy God considers the marriage tie: hence we see the atrocity of the sin, and the detestable nature of adultery; for both parties are equally polluted, though it appears stronger in the female sex through their natural modesty. We must hold, then, that the very body is engrained with disgrace and infamy, as Paul says, when such sins are committed. Other sins, says he, are without the body; but this is a sin against the body itself which thus bears the marks of shame and infamy. (1 Corinthians 6:18.) Here, as I have said, Ezekiel treats the case of the woman, since the offense is in her case more pernicious. It follows --- and has not approached a female when legally unclean: for we know this to be prohibited under

[482] The older lexicons connect this word with that for filth, dii stercorii, following the Jewish commentators: it occurs forty-seven times in the Old Testament, and our translators have always translated it "idols." The margin of Deuteronomy 29:17, has dungy gods.

the law; as being contrary to nature; for it was not necessary to define the matter by written law, as it speaks for itself. and God detests such crimes, not only because their offspring would contaminate cities and the nation at large, but because they are adverse to the instincts of human nature. (Leviticus 18:19; Leviticus 20:18.) He afterwards adds, if he has not oppressed or afflicted any one. This is general, just as if the Prophet had said, if he has abstained from all fraud, violence, and injustice. But this is a great point to live so innocently among men, that no one should complain of any injury done to him, nor of any loss sustained. But it is not enough to preserve this self-restraint unless we desire to profit our brethren, since God wishes the good offices of life to be reciprocal: although, indeed, to take care to be free from all injustice ought to precede other duties. He says, if he has returned his pledge to the debtor. This ought not to be taken generally, but depends on the precept of the law; for we have often said, that the prophets are the interpreters of Moses, and so they often touch briefly on what Moses expresses more clearly. But if we wish to occupy ourselves usefully in reading them, we ought to determine the meaning of the law, and then to accommodate what we read in the prophets to what is there contained. [483] So, in this passage, to restore the pledge to, the debtor, is restricted to the poor and needy, who had pledged either their garments, or their beds, or the tools by which they acquired a livelihood: for God forbids taking a pledge of a widow or a poor person: then he forbids taking a millstone, that is, any tool which a workman uses to Judea his living; for if any one empties the workshop of the miserable, he might just as well take his life. Hence Moses says, His life is in the pledge, (Deuteronomy 24:6,) that is, if any one pledges his tools, it is like having his hands cut off, since he cannot carry on his trade without His tools: hence you take away his life. Hence God forbids taking a coverlet, or garments, or bedding, for a wretched man would perish with cold were he to pledge either his coverlet or his bedding. But if, on the other hand, men of this kind are assisted without taking a pledge, they will bless those who abstain from too much rigor. Lastly, God forbids the destruction of the poor man's house, lest he should be ashamed of his poverty, and then because it is too cruel to penetrate into the house of another, and inquire for its contents; nay, this is a species of robbery. We see now how Ezekiel thought to be understood, if he has restored a pledge to the debtor, that is, to the poor debtor, or the necessary pledge, as I have said, such as tools and needful furniture, without which a person cannot exercise his trade. He has not seized a prey, that is, has not preyed upon his neighbors. For every kind of robbery is here marked by the word {גזל}, gezel, violence. And has given his bread to the hungry. Here the Prophet teaches what I have lately touched on, that cautious self-restraint from all injury is not sufficient, and sparing our neighbors; but that more is required, since we ought to assist them as far as we possibly can. Unless this had been added, many might object that they injured no one, never defrauded any, nor took advantage of the

[483] This canon of sacred criticism was not received by the Jews. The Talmud informs us of discussions among their doctors, pointing out the discrepancy between this chapter of Ezekiel and the Pentateuch, and objecting to the writings of this prophet being received into the Canon. See Bartolocci Biblioth. Heb., volume 2, and Wolf. Bibl. Heb., volume 2, as quoted in Norton's Genuineness of the Gospels, volume 2 Additional Notes, p. 141.; and also the Dissertation on this chapter at the end of this volume.

simple. But since God has united men in the bonds of mutual society, hence they must mutually perform good offices for each other. Here, then, it is required of the rich to succor the poor, and to offer bread to the hungry. But it is said, His bread, lest any one should object, through his habit of being too restricted; but there is no reason to bind me to bestow my goods on others: this is my bread, and so I have a right to possess what is my own: if any one is oppressed by want, I confess it to be praiseworthy to succor him, but no one is compelled to this act of liberality. Lest any one should escape thus, behold, says the Holy Spirit, although you rightly call the bread yours, yet it is not so yours that you ought to refuse your brother when his hunger provokes you to pity. And has covered the naked with a garment: the rule for garment and for bread is the same. The substance is, that others are not deemed just before God unless they are inclined to benevolence, so as to supply the necessities of their brethren, and to succor them in their poverty. It follows, since he has not given on usury and has not received increase. Here, among other crimes, Ezekiel enumerates usury --- though the word usury is not properly suitable to this passage {נשך}, neshek, is deduced from biting, and so the Hebrews name usury, because it gnaws and by degrees consumes the miserable. Ezekiel then says, that they are considered observers of the law who abstain from usury. But because men are very acute and cunning on this point, and devise subterfuges by which they may hide their cruelty, he adds, and has not received increase: for we know how various are the schemes for gain: for whoever devotes his attention to unlawful gains, will find out many monstrous things which no one would ever have thought of. Thus it happens that the usurer will deny that he exacts usury, and yet he will spoil the wretched and even suck out their blood. Under the name, {תרבית}, ther-bith, Ezekiel comprehends those more secret kinds of usury which the avaricious use with many disguises, and when they spread such coverings before them, think themselves free from all blame. Hence the Prophet says, even if the name of usury is removed and is not taken into account, yet it is sufficient to condemn men if they receive increase, that is, make a profit at the expense of others. A question arises here, whether usury be in itself a crime, since God formerly permitted his people to take interest of strangers, and only forbade it among themselves. And there was the best reason for that law. For if its just proportion had been overthrown, there would have been no reciprocity, since the Gentiles could exact interest of the Jews; and unless that right had been mutual and reciprocal, as the phrase is, the condition of God's people would have been worse than that of the Gentiles. God therefore permitted his people to take interest, but not among each other, as I have said: this was only allowable with strangers. Besides, the law itself was political: but in this case the Prophet seems to condemn all kinds of interest, and exaggerates the weight of the sentence, when he adds increase, that is, whatever gains the avaricious mutually strive for. So also in the 15th Psalm, where a just mode of living is proscribed for us, David mentions, among other things --- who has not lent his money on usury, (Psalm 15:5.) It seems, then, from these two places, that usury is in itself unlawful. But because God's law embraces complete and perfect justice, hence we must hold that interest, unless it is opposed to God's law, is not altogether to be condemned, otherwise ignominy would clearly attach to

the law of God if it did not prescribe to us a true and complete rule of living justly. But in the law there is that perfection to which nothing can be added. If then we wish to determine whether interest is unlawful we must come to the rule of the law, which cannot deceive us: but we shall not find all interest contrary to the law, and hence it follows that interest is not always to be condemned. Here, too, we must remember that we must regard the subject rather than the words, for men trifle by their own caviling, but God does not admit of such fallacies. Hence, as I said, the substance ought to be weighed, because the words alone will not enable us to decide whether interest be sometimes lawful or not. For example, among the Latin's the word for interest is honorable in itself and has no disgrace attached to it, but that for usury is odious. What causes disgrace to be thus hidden under it, but they fancied that they abhorred usurers, hence the general term interest contains within it all kinds of usury, and there was nothing so cruel, so unjust, and so barbarous, which was not covered by that pretense. Now since the name for interest was unknown to the French, that for usury became detestable: hence the French devised a new craftiness by which they could deceive God. For since no one could bear the name of usury, they used ``interest'' instead: but what does this mean but something which interests us, and thus it signifies all kinds of repayment for loans, for there was no kind of interest among the ancients which is not now comprehended in this word. Now since we have said that interest cannot be totally and without exception condemned, (for we must not play upon words, but treat the real point,) we must see how far it can be proved not to be reckoned a crime. First of all, in a well regulated state, no usurer is tolerated: even the profane see this: whoever therefore professedly adopts this occupation, he ought to be expelled from intercourse with his fellow-men. For if any illiberal pursuits load those who pursue them with censure, that of the usurer is certainly an illiberal trade, and unworthy of a pious and honorable man. Hence Cato said that to take usury was almost the same as murder. For when asked concerning agriculture, after he had given his opinion, he inquired, But what is usury? Is it not murder? says he. And surely the usurer will always be a robber; that is, he will make a profit by his trade, and will defraud, and his iniquity will increase just as if there were no laws, no equity, and no mutual regard among mankind. This is one point: but there is another part of the occupation besides that of taking interest. When any one sets up his table he uses the same art as a farmer does in employing his labor in cultivating the fields. But any one may receive interest without being a professed usurer. For example, a person may have capital and put out a part of it on loan, and thus receive interest: and if he do that once, he will not be called a usurer; so that we must consider when and from whom a person exacts interest. But this sentiment ought to prevail here: ``neither everywhere, nor always, nor all things, nor from all.'' This indeed was said of offices, and that law was imposed upon the governors of provinces: but it agrees best with this subject. It is not suitable then to receive ``all things,'' because if the profit exceed moderation it must be rejected, since it is contrary to charity: we said also that the continual habit and custom is not without fault. Neither ``everywhere,'' since the usurer, as I have said, ought not to enter or be brought into the Church of God. Then again, not ``from all,'' because it is always

wrong to exact usury from a poor man; but if a man is rich, and has money of his own, as the saying is, and has a very good estate and a large patrimony, and should borrow money of his neighbor, will that neighbor commit sin by receiving a profit from the loan of his money? Another borrower is the richer of the two, and might do without it and yet suffer no loss: but he wishes to buy a farm and enjoy its fruits: why should the creditor be deprived of his rights when his money brings profit to a neighbor richer than himself? We see, then, that it may sometimes happen that the receiver of interest is not to be hastily condemned, since he is not acting contrary to God's law. But we must always hold that the tendency of usury is to oppress one's brother, and hence it is to be wished that the very names of usury and interest were buried and blotted out from the memory of men. But since men cannot otherwise transact their business, we must always observe what is lawful, and how far it is so. I know that the subject might be treated at greater length, but I have shortly expressed what is sufficient for our purpose.

It follows, And has withdrawn his hand from iniquity. Here again the Prophet commends innocence, when we are cautious that our neighbor should not receive any damage or injury through our fault. Hence abstaining from injury is again praised here, but a new form of speech is used, since if men are not very anxious and careful they easily extend the hand to iniquity: and why so? various means of gain from many quarters present themselves to us, and we are easily led captive by such enticements. Hence the Prophet, not without reason, here commends the servants of God to withdraw the hand from iniquity, that is, not only to abstain from injury, but when the sweetness of gain entices us, and some plausible means of profit is proposed, that they should restrain themselves this is the meaning of to withdraw the hand from iniquity. The rest I leave for tomorrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since you have so instructed us by thy law in the rules of living justly, that we have no excuse for error or ignorance: Grant, I say, that we may be attentive to that teaching which you prescribe for us; and so anxiously exercise ourselves in it, that each of us may live innocently among the brotherhood: and then may we so worship thee with one consent and so glorify thy name, that we may at length arrive at that happy inheritance which you have promised for us in your only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Fifty-Fifth.

We yesterday explained why the Prophet says that no one is just unless he withdraw his hands from iniquity, because many occasions tempt us to injure others: unless we restrain ourselves in a middle course we often hurt our neighbors. Now among the virtues of a just man he puts, to judge according to truth: to act truthfully, says he, between man and man. This seems indeed to be the proper duty of judges who discharge a public office, but yet it is suitable to private persons; for although no one argues his own cause except before some one endued with power to decide it, yet we see that the inclinations of men often pervert equity and rectitude in judgments. Again, many are chosen arbitrators who do not hold any public office. The meaning is, that what Ezekiel previously sought concerning equity is extended

to the causes of others, that no one should turn aside from right and equity through private friendship. Afterwards it follows, if he has walked in my statutes and kept my judgments, in acting with truthfulness. Again, the Prophet returns to general remarks: for he has recorded certain kinds of justice, as we said yesterday, whence its nature may be more clearly perceived. Besides, because God's law contains within it more than the prophet has thus far mentioned; hence it was necessary to add this clause, who has walked in my decrees, says he. It is too cold to restrict this to ceremonies, as is sometimes done; hence I interpret it of edicts or decrees. The metaphor of walking does not require a long explanation, as it is very common in Scripture. Hence, to walk in God's precepts is nothing else than to form his life and morals according to the rule which has been prescribed by God; or, what is the same thing, so to conduct oneself, that in desiring to be deemed just a man should attempt nothing but what is agreeable to God's precepts. But since the observance of the law is difficult, first, because we are not only of a frail disposition, but prone to sin; hence the word ``serving'' is added, by which the Prophet commends diligence. Whoever wishes to direct his life according to God's precepts should attentively keep them, since nothing is more natural than to transgress and fall. He now adds, for acting truthfully. Integrity is here denoted by the word truthfulness. We gather, then, from this word the fruitful teaching, that the object of God's whole law is to conduct ourselves without deceit or fraud, and study to assist one another in simplicity, and to conduct ourselves with sincerity in every duty. If any one, then, asks the object of the law, the Prophet here describes it to us --- the performance of truth; and this is said rightly of the second table. But this may be adapted to the former table, since the Scripture teaches us that no dissembling can be pleasing to God. And we see also what Paul says when he briefly defines the end of the law to be charity out of any pure heart, and faith unfeigned. (1 Timothy 1:5.) But the word truth in this passage is, in my judgment, referred to that sincerity which we must cultivate, so that no one should deceive another, nor act fraudulently or knowingly, but be really simple and sincere. He adds, he is just, and in living he shall live, says the Lord Jehovah. At length he pronounces, as we said, that he is just who has faithfully observed God's law; then that a recompense is prepared for all the just who thus sincerely worship God. Now let us come to the second example.

Ezekiel 18:10-13

10. If he beget a son that is a robber, a shedder of blood, and that doeth the like to any one of these things,

10. Et genuerit filium praedonem, [484] qui sanguinem effundit, et facit fractri: [485] fratri (ergo) unum ex his. [486]

11. And that doeth not any of those duties, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and defiled his neighbour's wife,

[484] Or, "a destroyer:" {,{פרץ pheretz, signifies to corrupt, destroy; whence, ,{פרצין} pher-tzim, means thieves who dig through the walls of houses. But that derivation seems to me forced: I rather interpret the word as ``a violent man,'' and one who breaks through all rectitude. --- Calvin.

[485] So I interpret it: others read "one thing;" but we shall afterwards see that the word brother is better. — Calvin.

[486] That is, "any one." — Calvin. Three manuscripts with the Syriac version omit the word {,{אח ach, brother; but the Chaldee, and Houbigant, with Archbishop Newcome, all agree with Calvin in inserting it.

11. Et ipse haec omnia [487] non fecerit, quin potius omnia in montibus comederit, et uxorem proximi sui corruperit. [488]

12. Hath oppressed the poor and needy, hath spoiled by violence, hath not restored the pledge, and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination,

12. Pauperem et egenum oppresserit, praedas rapuerit, pignus non reddiderit, et ad idola oculos suos extulerit, abominationem fecerit.

13. Hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase: shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him.

13. Cum usura dederit, et incrementum acceperit: et vivet? [489] non vivet: abominationes cunctas patravit, moriendo morietur, sanguis ejus in eo erit. [490]

He has oppressed the poor and needy: he had simply said, He has oppressed a man; but now to make the greatness of the crime appear, he speaks of the poor and needy: for cruelty in oppressing them is less tolerable. Whatever the condition of the person whom we treat, with injustice, our wickedness is in itself sufficiently worthy of condemnation; but when we afflict the wretched, whose condition ought to excite our pity, that, inhumanity is, as I have said, far more atrocious. Hence this circumstance exaggerates what Ezekiel had formerly simply expressed. In the phrase for seizing booty, the word for booty is in the plural: in the next phrase he omits the word for debtor, because it is sufficiently understood: in the next, he does not add ``of the house of Israel'' to the word ``idols;'' and in the last clause the word ``abomination'' seems to refer to one kind of grossness only: but if any wish to extend its meaning further, I do not, object; but since he lately used the word in the plural, I rather take this word in its restricted sense. I pass thus rapidly over this second example, as I shall over the third, because Ezekiel preserves the same sentiments, and repeats almost the same words as he had just used. Hitherto he has taught that life is laid up for all the just as the reward of their justice: but he now sets before us a degenerate son, sprung from a just father, running headlong into all kind of wickedness. He says, then, if a man who desires to obey the law beget a son of a perverse disposition, who rejects the discipline of his father, and at the same time violates the whole law of God, shall he surely live? No, says he, he shall die, his blood shall be upon him; that is, he cannot escape God's judgment;, because his crimes cry out, and are heard. Hence none who turn aside from the right way shall remain unpunished: this is the simple meaning of the Prophet. Let us now come to the third member.

Ezekiel 18:14-17

14. Now, lo, if he beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like,

14. Et ecce genuerit filium, et viderit cuncta scelera patris sui quae perpetravit, et timuerit, et non fecerit secundum ipsa,

[487] The precepts of the law, which he had mentioned before. — Calvin.
[488] "Polluted," as we said yesterday. — Calvin.
[489] That is, "shall he live?" — Calvin.
[490] That is, "shall rest upon himself." — Calvin.

15. That hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbour's wife,

15. Super montes non comederit, et oculos suos non extulerit ad idola [491] domus Israel [492] uxorem proximi sui non polluerit,

16. Neither hath oppressed any, hath not withholden the pledge, neither hath spoiled by violence, but hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment,

16. Et neminem oppresserit, pignus non pigneraverit, [493] et rapinam [494] non rapuerit: panem suum famelico dederit, [495] et nudum operuerit vestimento.

17. That hath taken off his hand from the poor, that hath not received usury nor increase, hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live.

17. Ab egeno retraxerit manum suam, foenus et ineremtum non acceperit, judicia mea fecerit, in decretis meis ambulaverit, ipse non morietur in iniquitate patris sui, vivendo vivet.

In this third example Ezekiel announces, that if a man be born of a wicked father, he may nevertheless be pleasing to God, if he be unlike his father and thus he refutes the proverb that was so common in Israel --- that the father ate the sour grapes, and the children's teeth were set on edge. For if the sons were sufferers through the father's eating the sour grapes, then the pious who drew their origin from wicked despisers of God would be freed from all their sins. Thus Ezekiel would have been punished instead of his father, Ahaz, and Josiah instead of Manasseh. But here the Prophet bears witness that the good, however they may have been born from wicked parents, should receive the reward of righteousness no less certainly and faithfully than if they had come down from heaven, and if their family had always been without the commission of any crime. Since, therefore, God does not punish them for their fathers' crimes, it follows that the Israelites uttered this taunt not only foolishly, but impiously, saying that their own teeth were set on edge, because their fathers had eaten the sour grapes. Besides, as there is a difference in the phrase, I shall notice briefly what is worthy of remark: if he begat a son who saw all that his father had done, and was afraid. Here the Prophet teaches that it needed the greatest attention for the son to forsake the example of a bad father. For sons are blind to their fathers' vices; and although, when duty is set before them, they carelessly despise it, yet they fancy themselves held so far by pious reverence, that they dare not condemn their fathers. Hence it happens that sons do not acknowledge their fathers' crimes, and thus a wicked father corrupts his son willingly. Bad discipline, therefore, is added to this, so that it is not surprising if the offspring is worse than his ancestors. For this reason the Prophet says, if he has seen, that is, if a righteous child has observed his father's sins, since sons shut their eyes as much as possible to all their fathers'

[491] Or, “pollutions” — Calvin.

[492] The house of Israel is expressed here as in the first set. — Calvin.

[493] Verbally; but because there is a difference between the Latin words for to give and receive a pledge, it makes the sense clearer to say, not to receive a pledge. — Calvin.

[494] He now uses the singular number, “a prey.” — Calvin.

[495] Or, “distributed.” — Calvin.

crimes; nay, they embrace their vices for the greatest virtues.

He then adds, if he has feared. It would not be sufficient to take notice of this without adding the fear of God. It is true, indeed, that many were unlike their parents, through being restrained by shame; for when they heard the reproaches of their parents, they were touched with ingenuous modesty, so as to be on their guard against such enormities. But all these followed the empty shadow of justice; and here the serious observance of the law is treated, which cannot flow from anything else but, the fear of God, and this, as Scripture says, is the beginning of wisdom. (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7.) A person thus may be blameless through his whole life, and yet not touch on any part of justice, since righteousness flows from only one principle --- the fear of God. He afterwards adds, and has not done according to them. We see, therefore, that those who implicate themselves in others' crimes are not otherwise deceived, unless they purposely stifle all difference between good and evil; for if they had attended to this, they would doubtless have been touched with some fear, and thus have governed their life according to God's precepts: but scarcely one in a hundred thinks of this, and hence every one mingles freely with his neighbors, and so all perish together. He afterwards adds, he has not eaten upon the mountains, has not raised his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel: we have explained all these: and has not oppressed any one, and has not received a pledge. We said that this ought not to be explained of every pledge; for it was lawful for any one, on giving money, to receive a pledge for its return, but not from one who is destitute of either garments or the necessary implements of trade: so I pass this by. He has not received a prey, has distributed his bread to the hungry He adds, what he had not touched on previously, he has withdrawn his hand from the poor. This seems to differ from the opinion which we had in the sixteenth chapter, (Ezekiel 16:49.) Among the sins of Sodom, the Prophet there puts this also, that they withdrew their hand from the poor and needy; and surely, when we stretch forth the hand for the sake of help, it is a true proof of charity; but if we withdraw the hand, it is a proof of cruelty, since we do not deign to aid a brother who ought to obtain some favor from us. But we must bear in mind that there are two senses in which the hand is either extended or withdrawn. If I extend my hand to the poor to supply what is wanting, and to the weak to render him aid, this is the duty of charity. If, on the contrary, I withdraw my hand, I unjustly turn away from him who implores my confidence, and whose misery ought to win for him some favor. But we extend the hand when we seize on a neighbor's goods, and violently deprive him of them, and despoil the innocent of their rights. On the contrary, he who withdraws his hand is humane in sparing his brethren, and not enriching himself at their expense, and profiting by their oppression. In this sense the Prophet now enumerates withdrawing the hand from the poor in the list of virtues, because the poor are subject to all kinds of injury. If, therefore, when we see booty already prepared for us, and yet we refrain from it, this is a proof of true charity. But again, we must remark upon what I treated but briefly yesterday, namely, that we must withdraw our hands from the poor, because nothing is more easy than to be enticed to make a gain of the poor; and wherever occasion and impunity offer themselves, avarice so seizes us, that we

neither discern nor consider what is right and fair. Every one who wishes to preserve his self-restraint, and to subdue his affections, ought to attend to this with all his strength and with constant struggling: thus the Prophet says, we must withdraw the hand

Now at last he concludes: he shall not die through his father's iniquity; he shall surely live. He does not repeat that this is just, yet we must understand it so; but he stops at the immediate effect, since God's blessing awaits all the just, as Isaiah says surely there is a reward to the just, (Isaiah 3:10;) and the Prophet exclaims as if it were believed with difficulty: for, since we see all things revolving promiscuously in the world, we directly imagine either that God is at rest in heaven, or that chance governs all things here on earth. But we must strive against this perverse supposition, and determine, as Isaiah teaches, that there is a reward for the just. The Prophet now expresses this, while a difficult question arises from the passage; for he says that he is just who has kept the law, and so God will bestow a recompense upon. him: hence these two things are connected together, and the question which I mentioned arises from the former clause; for the whole Scriptures teach that no one is just, and that none can be justified by the law. But these things are contrary to each other; to be just and worthy of reward through keeping the law, since none is just, all are transgressors, all devoid of justice, and so but one remedy remains --- that of seeking our safety from the gratuitous mercy of God. But although, at first sight, this kind of it consistency disturbs the rude and partially-exercised commentator, yet this solution is easy, since, strictly speaking, justice is the observance of the law. If any one asks, then, what justice is, the proper definition is, the observance of law. Why so? Because the law, as I said yesterday, lays down the solid rule of justice; whoever observes it will be esteemed just; and thus justification is properly said to be placed in works. But, on the other hand, Scripture pronounces what is very true, and entirely confirmed by experience, that no one can satisfy the law, and, on account of this defect, we are all deprived of justification by works. What I have said may be made much clearer by many testimonies of Scripture. Not the hearer of the law, says Paul, in the second chapter of the epistle to the Romans, but the doer of the law, shall be justified, (Romans 2:13.) There Paul speaks naturally, that those are just who conform their whole life to the obedience of God's law. So also John, in his canonical epistle: He who does righteousness is righteous. (1 John 3:7.) Now, if any one asks whether any perfect observer of the law can be found, or one who does justice in every respect, the answer is at hand, that we are all by nature very far gone from all righteousness, and all our senses and affections are enemies which contend against God's law, as Paul teaches: The whole soul of man is perverse, and we are not fit to think anything of ourselves, and that all our sufficiency is of God, since we are slaves of sin. (Romans 8:7; 2 Corinthians 3:5; Romans 11.) But it would be superfluous to heap together many testimonies. Let it suffice, then, that we are by nature all together rebels against God, so that not the slightest particle of good can be found in us. As far as concerns the faithful, they aspire indeed to righteousness, but lamely, and at a great distance from their aim; they often wander from the way, and they often fall, so that they do not satisfy the law, and hence require God's

pity. Hence we must come to the second kind of righteousness, which is improperly so called, namely, that which we obtain from Christ. He who does righteousness is righteous. (I John 3:7.) None of us does it; but Christ, who fulfilled the law, is esteemed just before God. Hence it is necessary that we should be approved by God through his righteousness; that is, it is imputed to us, and we are accepted through his righteousness. Hence justification by faith, as it is called, is not properly righteousness; but on account of the defect of true righteousness, it is necessary to fly to this as to a sacred anchor; and Paul, in the tenth chapter to the Romans, explains this briefly and clearly. The righteousness of the law, says he, thus speaks: He who has done these things shall live in them; but the righteousness of faith says, He who has believed shall be just. The Apostle here speaks of a double righteousness --- that of the law and of faith: he says, that the righteousness of the law is situated in works, since no one is thought just unless he fulfills the law. (Romans 10:5-8.) Since all are far distant from this standard, another is added and substituted, namely, that we may embrace the righteousness of Christ by faith, and so become just, by another righteousness without us: for if any one again objects that justification by the law is superfluous, I answer, that it profits us in two ways; first, because the law brings in those convicted of their own unrighteousness to Christ. This, then, is one fruit of the law, that we renounce our own righteousness, when our iniquity so discloses itself, that it compels us to be silent before God, as we formerly saw. A more fruitful result follows; because, when God regenerates his elect, he inscribes a law on their hearts and in their inward parts, as we have elsewhere seen, and shall see again in the thirty-sixth chapter. (Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:26, 27.) But the difficulty is not yet solved; because the faithful, even if regenerated by God's Spirit, endeavor to conform themselves to God's law, yet, through their own weakness, never arrive at that point, and so are never righteous: I answer, although the righteousness of works is mutilated in the sons of God, yet it is acknowledged as perfect, since, by not imputing their sins to them, he proves what is his own. Hence it happens, that although the faithful fall back, wander, and sometimes fall, yet they may be called observers of the law, and walkers in the commandments of God, and observers of his righteousness. But this arises from gratuitous imputation, and hence also its reward. The works of the faithful are not without reward, because they please God, and pleasing God, they are sure of remuneration. We see, then, how these things are rightly united, that no one obeys the law, and that no one is worthy of the fruits of righteousness, and yet that God, of his own liberality, acknowledges as just those who aspire to righteousness, and repay them with a reward of which they are unworthy. When, therefore, we say that the faithful are esteemed just even in their deeds, this is not stated as a cause of their salvation, and we must diligently notice that the cause of salvation is excluded from this doctrine; for, when we discuss the cause, we must look nowhere else but to the mercy of God, and there we must stop. But although works tend in no way to the cause of justification, yet, when the elect sons of God were justified freely by faith, at the same time their works are esteemed righteous by the same gratuitous liberality. Thus it still remains true, that faith without works justifies, although this needs prudence and a sound interpretation; for this

proposition, that faith without works justifies is true and yet false, according to the different senses which it bears. The proposition, that faith without works justifies by itself, is false, because faith without works is void. But if the clause ``without works'' is joined with the word ``justifies,'' the proposition will be true, since faith cannot justify when it is without works, because it is dead, and a mere fiction. He who is born of God is just, as John says. (1 John 5:18.) Thus faith can be no more separated from works than the sun from his heat yet faith justifies without works, because works form no reason for our justification; but faith alone reconciles us to God, and causes him to love us, not in ourselves, but in his only begotten Son. Now, therefore, that question is solved, when the Prophet teaches that life is reposed in the just, even if they are born of wicked and unholy parents.

Lastly, we must notice the word ``life,'' since the word ``living'' ought not to be understood only of life on earth, but looks to eternal life: and here some expositors are mistaken: for because they could not free themselves from those difficulties which I lately explained, they interpreted the words of Moses in a civil sense --- He who has done these things shall live in them. But Moses is speaking of life eternal. Hence we must hold, not only that a reward is promised in this life to the just observers of the law, but that eternal life is also a promised reward. Besides, as I have said, since we are all destitute of righteousness, so we thought not to hope for any reward, since we are all under the law and under the curse, as Paul says: neither is there any means of escape, as Paul again says, (Galatians 3:10, 13,) unless we fly with complete and abject faith to the mercy of God alone, and to the satisfaction by which Christ has reconciled us to his Father. Here I shall finish.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since you have pointed out to us the true way of safety, since you did perceive us all deficient in this respect, and since the law which ought to have given us life brought death through our transgressing it: Grant, I pray thee, since you have set before us your only Son in whom we may be reconciled and obtain the perfect righteousness which we need, that we may so embrace the grace which is offered to us in the gospel, that we may strive more and more to proceed in the pursuit of piety, till we arrive at length at the blessed inheritance which the same, your only-begotten Son, has acquired for us. --- Amen.

Lecture Fifty-Sixth.

Ezekiel 18:18-19

18. As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, spoiled his brother by violence, and did that which is not good among his people, lo, even he in shall die in his iniquity.

18. Pater ejus quia opprimendo oppressit, et rapuit praedam a fratre, et quod non est bonum fecit in medio populi sui: ecce is morietur iniquitate sua.

19. Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live.

19. Et dicitis, Quare non portabit filius iniquitatem patris? eo quod filius fecit judicium et justitiam, et custodivit omnia statuta mea fecitque ea: ideo vivendo

vivet.

He inculcates the same thing more at length, not for the sake of ornament so much as to refute that impious saying in which the Israelites so perniciously persisted. Since then it was difficult to tear from their minds what was so deeply rooted in them, the Prophet often exclaims that no one was punished except he deserved it for his crimes. He adds in the next verse what seems superfluous and absurd: for the Israelites did not contend with God for sparing the innocent: but here Ezekiel represents them speaking as if they wished the innocent son to be punished equally with the wicked father. But he does not mean that they contended about the right, but about the fact, as we usually say. For since they were imbued with that error, that punishments extended beyond the criminals, on the other hand he pronounces that the just were not absolved by their own goodness, if they sprang from impious parents, although the people supposed so; for they were buried under their own depraved judgment, otherwise they must have perceived that justice is never deprived by God of its reward of life.

Ezekiel 18:20

20. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

20. Anima quae peccaverit ipsa morietur: filius non portabit iniquitatem patris, et pater non portabit iniquitatem filii: justitia justi super eum erit, et impietas impii super eum erit.

Ezekiel still pursues the sentiment which we have explained, namely, that God is a just judge and treats every one according to his conduct; as Paul says, As each has lived in the flesh, so God lays up a reward for him. (Romans 8:13.) But he more clearly refuted the proverb, that the sons should suffer for their fathers' sins. He says, then, that each when he comes before God's tribunal should be judged by his works. As far then as the general sentiment is concerned, it is in accordance with common sense that God should exact punishment of the wicked, and that they should receive the just reward of their works. But in the next clause, the question arises how the Spirit here pronounces that the son should not pay the penalty due to the father, when God so often declares that he visits the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. (Exodus 20:5.) That sentiment often occurs: but there are two passages peculiarly remarkable, where it is annexed to the second precept of the law, (Deuteronomy 5:9,) and then in that remarkable vision which occurred to Moses, God pronounces the same thing as before, namely, that the iniquity of the fathers should fall upon the sons. (Exodus 34:7.) These passages seem opposed to each other, but it will be easy to remove the contradiction by beginning with the fall of Adam, since if we do not consider the whole race fallen in Adam, we can scarcely extricate ourselves from that difficulty which we often feel as causing pungent scruples. But the principle of one universal fall in Adam removes all doubts. For when we consider the perishing of the whole human race, it is said with truth that we perish through another's fault: but it is added at the same time, that every one perishes through his own iniquity. If then we inquire into

the cause of the curse which presses upon all the posterity of Adam, it may be said to be partly another's and partly our own: another's, through Adam's declension from God, in whose person the whole human race was spoiled of righteousness and intelligence, and all parts of the soul utterly corrupted. So that every one is lost in himself, and if he wishes to contend with God, he must always acknowledge that the fountain of the curse flows from himself. For before the child was born into the world, it was corrupt, since its menial intelligence was buried in darkness, and its will was perverse and rebellious against God. As soon as infants are born they contract pollution from their father Adam: their reason is blinded, their appetites perverted, and their senses entirely vitiated. This does not immediately show itself in the young child, but before God, who discerns things more acutely than we do, the corruption of our whole nature is rightly treated as sin. There is no one who during the course of his life does not perceive himself liable to punishment through his own works; but original sin is sufficient for the condemnation of all men. When men grow up they acquire for themselves the new curse of what is called actual sin: so that he who is pure with reference to ordinary observation, is guilty before God: hence Scripture pronounces us all naturally children of wrath: these are Paul's words in the second chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, (Ephesians 2:3.) If then we are children of wrath, it follows that we are polluted from our birth: this provokes God's anger and renders him hostile to us: in this sense David confesses himself conceived in sin. (Psalm 51:5.) He does not here accuse either his father or his mother so as to extenuate his own wickedness; but, when he abhors the greatness of his sin in provoking the wrath of God, he is brought back to his infancy, and acknowledges that he was even then guilty before God. We see then that David, being reminded of a single sin, acknowledges himself a sinner before he was born; and since we are all under the curse, it follows that we are all worthy of death. Thus, the son properly speaking shall not die through the iniquity of his father, but is considered guilty before God through his own fault.

Now let us proceed further. When God pronounces that the iniquity of the father returns into the bosom of the son, we must remember that when God involves the son in the same death with the father, he does so principally because the son of the impious is destitute of his Spirit: whence it happens that he remains in the death in which he was born. For if we do not consider any other punishments than those which are openly inflicted, a new scruple will again arise from which we cannot free ourselves, since this inquiry will always recur, how can the son perish by his own fault, if he can produce good fruit and so reconcile himself to God? But the first punishment with which God threatens the reprobate is that which I have mentioned, namely, that their offspring are destitute and deprived of spiritual gifts, so that they sink deeper and deeper into destruction: for there are two kinds of punishment, the one outward and the other inward, as we express it. God punishes the transgressors of his law by either the sword, or by famine, or by pestilence, as he everywhere denounces: he is also armed with other means of slaughter for executing his wrath, and all these punishments are outward and openly apparent. But there is another sort inward and hidden, when God takes away the spirit of rectitude from the repro-

bate, when he gives them up to a reprobate mind, subjects them to foul desires, and deprives them of all his gifts hence God is said to cause the fathers' iniquity to recoil upon the children not only when he outwardly punishes the little ones, but because he devotes a cursed offspring to eternal destruction, through being destitute of all the gifts of the Spirit,. Now we know that God is the fountain of life, (Psalm 36:9,) whence it follows that all who are separated from him are dead. Now therefore it is evident how God throws the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, since when he devotes both father and son to eternal destruction, he deprives them of all his gifts, blinds their minds, and enslaves all their appetites to the devil. Although we may, in one word, embrace the whole matter of the children suffering for the fathers when he leaves them to simple nature, as the phrase is, since in this way he drowns them in death and destruction. But outward punishments also follow afterwards, as when God sends lightning upon Sodom many young children perished, and all were absorbed with their parents. (Genesis 19:24.) If any one asks by what right they perished, first they were sons of Adam and so were accursed, and then God wished to punish the Sodomites through their offspring, and he could do so deservedly. Concerning the young who thus perished with their fathers, it is said, happy is he who dashes thy young ones against the stones or the pavement. (Psalm 137:9.) At first sight, indeed, that atrocity seems intolerable that a child whose age and judgment is thus tender should be so cruelly slain: but as we have already said, all are naturally children of wrath. (Ephesians 2:2.) No wonder, therefore, that God withdraws his favor from the offspring of the reprobate, even if he executes these outward judgments. But how will this now be suitable, shall not the son bear the iniquity of the father? for Ezekiel here speaks of adults, for he means that the son shall not bear his father's iniquity, since he shall receive the reward due to himself and sustain his own burden. Should any one wish to strive with God, he can be refuted in a single word: for who can boast himself innocent? Since therefore all are guilty through their own fault, it follows that the son does not bear his father's iniquity, since he has to bear his own at the same time. Now that question is solved.

He now adds, the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the impiety of the impious shall be upon him. We said that this was the legal sentence: if God used the same language everywhere, no hope of safety would be left to us. For who would be found just if his life were judged strictly by the law? But it has already been said, speaking accurately, that God rewards those worshipers who observe his law, and punish those who transgress it. But since we are all far from perfect obedience, Christ is offered to us, from whom we may partake of righteousness, and in this way be justified by faith. Meanwhile it is true, according to the rule of the law, that the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, since God will not disappoint any, but will really perform what he has promised. But he promises a reward to all who observe his law. If any one object that this doctrine is useless and superfluous, we have an answer at hand, that it is in many ways useful, since, first of all, we acknowledge that God, although he owes us nothing, yet willingly binds himself to be reconciled to us; and thus his surprising liberality appears. Then we again collect, that by transgression we cannot profit or obtain any advantage when God offers a

reward to all who observe his law. For what can we demand more equitable than that God should of his own accord be our debtor? and should reward us while he holds us bound to himself, and completely subject to him with all our works? And that pattern of Christ must be considered, When you have done all that was commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants. (Luke 17:10.) Why so? for we return nothing but what God has justly required of us. We gather, then, from this sentence, that we cannot expostulate with God, or complain of anything while the fault of our own condemnation resides in us for not keeping the law. Thirdly, we acknowledge another instance of God's mercy in his clothing us in the righteousness of his Son, when he sees us in want of a righteousness of our own, and altogether destitute of everything good. Fourthly, we said that they are esteemed just who do not satisfy the law, since God does not impute their sins to them. Hence the righteousness of the law is not without fruit among the faithful; since on account of that blessedness which is described in Psalm 32:2, their works are taken into account and remunerated by God. So the righteousness of the righteous is upon him, just as the impiety of the impious is upon him, and it shall recoil upon his own head. It follows ---

Ezekiel 18:21-22

21. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

21. Et si impius reversus fuerit ab omni iniquitate sua quam fecit, et servaverit omnia edicta mea, et fecerit judicium et justitiam, vivendo rivet, non morietur.

22. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.

22. Omnes transgressiones quas fecit non venient in memoriam ei, [496] sed in justitia sua quam fecit rivet.

In this sentence God proposes the hope of pardon, and invites and exhorts to penitence all the transgressors of his law. But this doctrine is specially worthy of notice, that God extends his arms, and is prepared to meet and receive all who betake themselves to good fruits: for despair hurls us into madness, and then hardens our hearts by abandoned obstinacy. Hence it is necessary that God should extend his hand towards us, and animate us to penitence. This is the meaning of this passage of the Prophets, as soon as the impious is turned away from his impiety, God will be at peace with him. Now we see that no excuse remains for us if this humane invitation of God does not stir us up when he bears witness that he is propitious to us when we heartily desire to be reconciled to him. But he here requires serious repentance when he says, if the impious has turned away from his impiety, and has kept my statutes, and done justice and judgment, he shall live, says he. For a sort of half conversion is discerned in many who think that in this way they are safe before God, but they are greatly deceived; for many mingle virtues with vices, and imagine their guilt blotted out, if they can only bring forward something as worthy of praise. But this is just as if any one should offer muddy will to his master, because he had mixed it not only with dregs, but even with filth: so are all the works of those

[496] That is, "against him." — Calvin.

who do not put away all depraved desires, and strive to free themselves from all the corruption's of the flesh. Thus what is here taught is worthy of notice, namely, that the beginning of conversion is, when any one renounces himself and his own lusts. But it is necessary to add another part of duty, that when any one bids farewell to his vices, he must devote himself obediently to God. The Prophet joins the two together, therefore, since one cannot be separated from the other. Hence the Spirit here shortly defines what true and legitimate conversion is. He says, that when any one is thus converted, that his life is prepared for God, since God will forget all his sins. This is a confirmation of the doctrine; for God cannot be entreated as long as he imputes our sins to us: hence, that we may determine him to be propitious to us, he promises, as soon as we repent, that all our sins shall be buried, and no longer come into remembrance. But this is the incomparable goodness of God, since he deigns to forget all our sins as soon as he sees us earnestly desirous of returning to him. On the whole, Ezekiel pronounces that all the penitent pass at once from death to life, since God blots out all their transgressions by voluntary oblivion. It afterwards follows ---

Ezekiel 18:23

23. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?

23. An cupio cupiendo mortem impii, dicit Dominator Iehovah? An non ut convertatur a viis suis, et vivat?

He confirms the same sentiment in other words, that God desires nothing more earnestly than that those who were perishing and rushing to destruction should return into the way of safety. And for this reason not only is the Gospel spread abroad in the world, but God wished to bear witness through all ages how inclined he is to pity. For although the heathen were destitute of the law and the prophets, yet they were always endued with some taste of this doctrine. Truly enough they were suffocated by many errors: but we shall always find that they were induced by a secret impulse to seek for pardon, because this sense was in some way born with them, that God is to be appeased by all who seek him. Besides, God bore witness to it more clearly in the law and the prophets. In the Gospel we hear how familiarly he addresses us when he promises us pardon. (Luke 1:78.) And this is the knowledge of salvation, to embrace his mercy which he offers us in Christ. It follows, then, that what the Prophet now says is very true, that God wills not the death of a sinner, because he meets him of his own accord, and is not only prepared to receive all who fly to his pity, but he calls them towards him with a loud voice, when he sees how they are alienated from all hope of safety. But the manner must be noticed in which God wishes all to be saved, namely, when they turn themselves from their ways. God thus does not so wish all men to be saved as to renounce the difference between good and evil; but repentance, as we have said, must precede pardon. How, then, does God wish all men to be saved? By the Spirit's condemning the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment at this day, by the Gospel, as he did formerly by the law and the prophets. (John 16:8.) God makes manifest to mankind their great misery, that they may betake themselves to him: he wounds that he may cure, and

slays that he may give life. We hold, then, that; God wills not the death of a sinner, since he calls all equally to repentance, and promises himself prepared to receive them if they only seriously repent. If any one should object --- then there is no election of God, by which he has predestinated a fixed number to salvation, the answer is at hand: the Prophet does not here speak of God's secret counsel, but only recalls miserable men from despair, that they may apprehend the hope of pardon, and repent and embrace the offered salvation. If any one again objects --- this is making God act with duplicity, the answer is ready, that God always wishes the same thing, though by different ways, and in a manner inscrutable to us. Although, therefore, God's will is simple, yet great variety is involved in it, as far as our senses are concerned. Besides, it is not surprising that our eyes should be blinded by intense light, so that we cannot certainly judge how God wishes all to be saved, and yet has devoted all the reprobate to eternal destruction, and wishes them to perish. While we look now through a glass darkly, we should be content with the measure of our own intelligence. (1 Corinthians 13:12.) When we shall be like God, and see him face to face, then what is now obscure will then become plain. But since captious men torture this and similar passages, it will be needful to refute them shortly, since it can be done without trouble.

God is said not to wish the death of a sinner. How so? since he wishes all to be converted. Now we must see how God wishes all to be converted; for repentance is surely his peculiar gift: as it is his office to create men, so it is his province to renew them, and restore his image within them. For this reason we are said to be his workmanship, that is, his fashioning. (Ephesians 2:10.) Since, therefore, repentance is a kind of second creation, it follows that it is not in man's power; and if it is equally in God's power to convert men as well as to create them, it follows that the reprobate are not converted, because God does not wish their conversion; for if he wished it he could do it: and hence it appears that he does not wish it. But again they argue foolishly, since God does not wish all to be converted, he is himself deceptive, and nothing can be certainly stated concerning his paternal benevolence. But this knot is easily untied; for he does not leave us in suspense when he says, that he wishes all to be saved. Why so? for if no one repents without finding God propitious, then this sentence is filled up. But we must remark that God puts on a twofold character: for he here wishes to be taken at his word. As I have already said, the Prophet does not here dispute with subtlety about his incomprehensible plans, but wishes to keep our attention close to God's word. Now, what are the contents of this word? The law, the prophets, and the gospel. Now all are called to repentance, and the hope of salvation is promised them when they repent. this is true, since God rejects no returning sinner: he pardons all without exception: meanwhile, this will of God which he sets forth in his word does not prevent him from decreeing before the world was created what he would do with every individual: and as I have now said, the Prophet only shows here, that when we have been converted we need not doubt that God immediately meets us and shows himself propitious. The remainder tomorrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since we are all lost in ourselves, that we may desire to

obtain life where it is laid up for us, and where you do manifest it, namely, in thy Son: and grant that we may so embrace the grace which has been exhibited to us in the sacrifice of his death, that we may be regenerated by his Spirit; and thus being born again, may we devote ourselves wholly to thee, and so glorify thy name in this world, that we may at length be partakers of that glory which the same, your only-begotten Son, has acquired for us. --- Amen.

Lecture Fifty-Seventh.

Ezekiel 18:24

24. But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.

24. Et si aversus fuerit justus, a justitia sua, et fecerit iniquitatem, secundum omnes abominationes quas facit impius fecerit, an vivet? Omnes justitia, ejus quas fecit non venient in recordationem: [497] in transgressione qua transgressus est, et in scelere, quo scelerate egit, in ipsis morietur.

As in the last lecture the Prophet offered to sinners a sure hope of pardon if they heartily repented, and promised that God would be propitious to them as soon as they shall seek reconciliation with him: so now, on the other hand, he pronounces, if the just shall decline from his justice, whatever he has hitherto done, shall not come into the account before God. He urged sinners to repentance when he assured them that God was prepared to pardon them: but he now frightens those who profess for the occasion to be pure and sincere worshipers of God, if they fall back in the midst of their course: as Paul says, Let him who stands take heed lest he fall. (1 Corinthians 10:12.) Besides, we gather from this passage, as Christ teaches, that those only are happy who persevere, (Matthew 24:13;) since a temporary righteousness will never profit those apostates who afterwards turn aside from God. We see, then, how these two clauses unite together, namely, that God invites all who are in danger of perdition with extended arms, and promises them salvation if they heartily return to him. Again, that he may restrain within the bounds of duty those who have made some progress, and correct their sloth and stir up their anxiety, he threatens, that unless they pursue the course of a holy and pious life to the end, their former righteousness will not profit them. But here a question arises, Can a truly just person deflect from the right way? for he who is begotten of God is so free from the tyranny of sin that he devotes himself wholly to righteousness: and then if any do turn aside, they prove that they were always strangers to God. If they had been of us, says John, they would never have gone out from us. (1 John 2:19.) And regeneration is an incorruptible seed: so we must determine that the faithful who are truly regenerate never fall away from righteousness, but are retained by God's unconquered power: for God's calling in the elect is without repentance. (Romans 11:29.) Hence he continues the course of his grace even to the end. Nor are they to be listened to, who, in contradiction to Scripture, teach that faith is extinct in the elect, when, through its

[497] That is, "be taken into account." — Calvin.

barrenness, they bring forth no fruit. In what sense, then, does Ezekiel mean that the just fall away? That question is easily answered, since he is not here treating of the living root of justice, but of the outward form or appearance, as we commonly say. Paul reminds us that God knows us, but adds, that this seal remains. (2 Timothy 2:19.) God therefore claims to himself alone the difference between the elect and the reprobate, since many seem to be members of his Church who are only outwardly such. And that passage of Augustine is true, that there are many wolves within, and many sheep without. [498] For before God demonstrates his election, the sheep wander, and seem altogether strangers to the hope of salvation. Meanwhile many hypocrites make use of the name of God, and openly boast themselves pre-eminent in the Church, but inwardly they are wolves. But because it often happens that some make the greatest show of piety and justice, the Prophet very properly says, that if such fall away, they cannot boast of their former righteousness before God, since its remembrance will be bloated out.

In fine, we see that the word righteousness is referred to our senses, and not to God's hidden judgment; so that the Prophet does not teach anything but what we perceive daily: for those who seem to excel others desert their calling, shake off every yoke, and cast away the fear of God, and sometimes rush on with diabolical fury. When this result occurs we hear what the Spirit pronounces by the mouth of the Prophet, that none of their righteousness shall be taken into account. But weight is added to his words when he says, if you have turned aside from righteousness, and done according to all the abominations of the impious, (or wicked,) shall he live? For the Prophet separates those who desert God and rush into every wickedness from those who fall through infirmity or want of thought, and from those also who would fall headlong into ruin, unless God preserved them, yet do not utterly cast off his fear, and the desire of living piously and righteously. For example: every one is occasionally off his guard; and hence, in numberless ways, we offend God through error: and hence David exclaims, Who can understand his faults? (Psalm 19:12.) We fall of our own accord, since we are often conquered by temptations, even when our consciences accuse us; so that, although sanctified, we decline from the path of uprightness through ignorance, and depart from duty through infirmity. But what is far worse, the saints sometimes rush headlong, as though utterly desperate. For the example of David shows that the elect, although regenerated by God's Spirit, not only sin to a small extent, but, as I have said, plunge into the very lowest abyss. David became a perfidious homicide, and a traitor to the army of God; then that wretched king fell into a series of crimes: yet he failed in only one thing, and showed that God's grace was only suffocated within him, and not altogether extinguished. For as soon as Nathan reproves him, he confesses that he had sinned, and is prepared to undergo any punishment which God may inflict. Since, therefore, the saints sometimes fall, the Prophet here stretches forth his hand, lest they should despair, and bears witness that God does not reject them unless they turn aside from their righteousness and commit all the abominations which the impious do. By these words, as we see, he expresses a complete revolt, and he so mitigates the severity of the sentence, lest

[498] Augustine. Comment, in John 10:16.

the minds of those who had only partially relapsed should despond. Now we see the meaning of this language: If he has done according to all the abominations of the wicked, shall he live? says he; all the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered, because he shall perish. Here the Prophet shows that: a mere temporary righteousness will not profit us unless we persevere unto the end in the fear of God.

Here again the contrast is worthy of notice, because it enables us to refute a fiction which is current in the schools of the papacy. They say that guilt is remitted by God, but the punishment is retained. Now what says our Prophet? If the impious turn away from his impiety, I will no longer remember any of his iniquities. Here the papists thrust for-ward the foolish distinction, that God does not remember them as to their guilt, but he does as to their punishment. But what follows a little afterwards? If the just turn away from his justice, his justice shall not be taken into account. But if they do not come into the account as to merit, and yet do as to reward, what is the meaning of the passage? how will the Prophet's meaning stand? But it is necessary thus to receive what the Prophet says; because, if the distinction of guilt and punishment avails, that of merit and reward will avail also. Hence it will follow, that as to merit God forgets all acts of righteousness; but as far as reward is concerned, they are remembered since they are not abolished. Since, then, it is sufficiently clear that the righteousness of the backslider is not taken into account, so as to lead him to hope for reward, it follows, on the other hand, that his sins are abolished not only as to guilt, but also as to punishment. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 18:25

25. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?

25. Et dixistis, Non rectificata est via Domini: audite agedum domus Israel, Via mea non rectificabitur? [499] An non viae vestrae non sunt rectae? [500]

The Prophet here shows that those who used the vulgar taunt --- that the children's teeth were set on edge, because their fathers had eaten sour grapes --- had broken away from all restraint; and nothing further remained to hinder them from uttering their blasphemies arrogantly against God: but their insolence and madness now increases when they say that God's ways are not equal. And this is discerned in almost all hypocrites: at first they indirectly find fault with God, and yet pretend not to do so: while they endeavor to excuse themselves, they accuse him of injustice, and of too much rigor, yet they do not openly break out into such impiety as to dare to charge God with this crime: but after they profit nothing by their double dealing, the devil inflames them to such a pitch of boldness that they hesitate not openly to condemn God himself. The Prophet refers to this when he says that this disgraceful saying was bandied about among the Israelites, that the ways of the Lord are unequal. Lest, therefore, we should happen to resist God, and to contend with him, let us learn to restrain our rashness in good time before he becomes enraged against us. As soon as any thoughts spring up, tending to reflect upon the character

[499] That is, "is not straightforward." — Calvin.

[500] {,{תמן theken, signifies ``to weigh;'' but it means also ``to balance accurately.'' --- Calvin.

of the Almighty, let us quickly restrain them; for if we do not, they will entangle us by degrees, and draw us into the extremity of folly, and then no sense of either religion or shame will deter us from open rebellion against God. But it is worth while noticing the source of this impiety: first of all, when we think of men's relation to God, they should be ashamed to rise up against their Maker: for the clay does not cry out against the potter; and we are a hundredfold more insignificant than the clay, with reference to God. (Isaiah 45:9; Romans 9:20, 21.)

But let us come to another consideration. We know with how much greater clearness the angels are able reverently to adore God's wisdom than the human race. What, therefore, must we do? Not only is God's wisdom incomprehensible, but his justice is the most perfect rule of all justice. Now, if we desire to pass opinions upon God's works according to our own perceptions, and to weigh them in our balance, what else are we doing but passing judgment upon him? But we must remember that passage of Isaiah, As I live, says Jehovah, every knee shall bend before me, and every tongue shall swear by me. (Isaiah 45:23.) Paul, too, is a faithful interpreter of this sentiment, when he forbids mortals to judge arrogantly, by saying, we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ (Romans 14:10, 11.) Since, then, it will be necessary for us to render an account before Christ heavenly tribunal, we must now acquiesce in God's judgments; because, when at length our license has entirely spent itself, and our petulance has had its full scope, God will be our judge. We see, therefore, that when men claim to themselves the right of daring to pronounce their own opinions on God's work, they first subject his wisdom to their own fictions, and then feel too much hostility and contempt towards his justice. But this one thing ought to be sufficient, that men are too forgetful of their own condition when they dare to open their mouth against their Maker, not only to murmur, but openly to condemn him, as if they were his superiors. Let us then obey the contrary rule; let us with sobriety and modesty learn to look upon those works of God which are unknown to us, and to concede to him the praise of supreme wisdom, although his counsels seem at first sight contradictory. Hosea also briefly reminds us of this. For after God had promised that he would be merciful to the people, and when he had discoursed on the slaughter which he had inflicted, he says, that at length he would heal them: he adds, Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? (Hosea 14:9;) because many might have thought it inconsistent to remit so many sins for the abandoned people; and others might object that what they heard was utterly incredible and absurd, since God suffered the people to be utterly torn to pieces, so that no hope remained. For this reason, then, the Prophet exclaims, that we have need of rare and singular prudence to comprehend and embrace that teaching. When he says, ``who is wise?'' it signifies that the number is but small of those who will wait patiently till God really fulfills his promises. Yet he adds, because the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the impious shall stumble and perish. When he speaks here of the ways of the Lord, he does not mean only precepts, though the Scriptures often take the word in this sense; but he means the whole order of government which God upholds, and all the judgments which he exercises. He says, therefore, that all the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in

them, since the just will give God the glory calmly, and with the proper docility; and when they are agitated by various doubts, and through their infirmity are ever in a ferment through the force of many temptations, yet they will always repose on the providence of God, and briefly determine, by cutting off every occasion for long and perplexing and thorny questions, that God is just. Thus the just walk in the ways of the Lord, because they submit to all his works.

He says also, that the impious stumble and fall; for as soon as they begin to think that God does not act rightly or prudently, they are rebellious, and are carried away by blind impulse, and their pride at length hurries them headlong into madness. Thus they stumble in the ways of the Lord: because, as we see in this passage, they vomit forth their blasphemies against God. Hence we ought, to be influenced by this course of action, namely, adoring with humility the counsel of God, although to us incomprehensible, and attributing the praise of justice to all his works, though in our opinion they may not correspond, or be consistent with each other. --- This, then, is the sum of the whole. Although the Prophet speaks of the penalties which God inflicts on the reprobate, and of the reward which he has laid up for the just, yet we ought to ascend still higher; and if God in his deeds seems to pervert the whole course of justice, yet we should always be sustained by this bridle --- he is just; and if his deeds are disapproved by us, it arises from our error and ignorance. For example, we not only contend with God when he seems not to repay us a just reward for our good works, or when he seems too severe towards us; but when his eternal election is discussed, we immediately roar out, because we cannot penetrate to so great a height: the pious, indeed, are not altogether free from perplexing doubts which disturb them, but they restrain themselves directly as I have said. But some restive men break out in this way, --- I do not comprehend --- I do not understand: hence God is unjust. We see how many blusterers in the present day betray their desperate impudence, whence this teaching should recur to our minds --- the ways of God are right. But since we do not perceive how it is so, another clause is added, that our ways are not right; that is, that all our senses are defective, and our intellect blinded, and that we are all so corrupt that our judgment is perverted. If, therefore, we conclude with the Prophet, that our ways are not right, the glory of God's justice will remain untarnished and entire. Afterwards he adds ---

Ezekiel 18:26-28

26. When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die.

26. Si aversus fuerit justus a justitia sua, et fecerit iniquitatem et mortuus fuerit in illis, [501] in iniquitate sua quam patravit morietur.

27. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.

27. Et si conversus fuerit sceleratus a sceleribus suis quae fecit, et fecerit judicium et justitiam, ipse animam suam vivificabit. [502]

28. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he

[501] The number is changed from singular to plural, “in his wickedness.” — Calvin.
[502] That is, “he shall snatch from death, or restore to life.” — Calvin.

hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

28. Et viderit, et conversus fuerit ab omnibus sceleribus quae patravit, vivendo vivet, non morietur.

The Prophet repeats what we formerly saw, namely, that the state of the case turned upon this, Whether the people had any cause of complaint when God absolves those who repent, and condemns the just who desert the course of a pious and holy life? Now, we must always return to this cardinal point, that God rewards every one according to his works, since he offers mercy to all the lost, and demands nothing else but a sincere and hearty return to him. Since, then, God treats the impious with such clemency, and is so ready to pardon them, what is the reason why men contend with him? If the just should retrace his steps, and after having shown some signs of the fear of God, throw off all obedience, who can object when God punishes him, and blots out the remembrance of his former righteousness? God, therefore, determines the result fairly in each case. We have explained how the phrase, the just should turn aside from their righteousness, ought to be understood, not that the elect ever utterly fall away, as many think their faith is extinguished, and every root of piety also in the sons of God; that is too absurd, because, as I have said, the gift of regeneration has perseverance always annexed to it: but here that righteousness which mankind recognize is intended. But we know how frequently it happens that what seemed entirely pure and perfect is deficient. Now, God pronounces that he would punish all who fall away from him, and would be accessible and propitious to miserable sinners who desire to be reconciled to him; and he repeats again, if the wicked have seen and turned away from his wickedness. We must mark this phrase, for it shows that thinking rightly is the commencement of repentance; because, though the reprobate knowingly and willingly transgress God's law, it is certain that they labor under blindness and madness, so that the Scripture does not call them foolish and beside themselves in vain. He does not extenuate their faults, as if they sinned ignorantly; but he means that they were so blinded by diabolical madness as to think of nothing; for surely horror would immediately possess their minds if they only perceived God to be their adversary, and themselves to be making war with him. For this reason, therefore, when the Prophet describes to us the conversion of the wicked, he says, if he has seen; that is, if at length he has returned to a sound mind, and collected his senses, so that he may not rush on madly, as he has been accustomed to do, but may look upon both God and himself. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 18:29

29. Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?

29. Et dixerunt domus Israel, [503] non rectificata est [504] via Domini: An viae meae non rectae sunt, domus Israel? An non viae vestrae non rectae sunt?

Here God briefly shows how furious those are who dare to rebel against him even when his justice is manifest: for what can be desired more justly than that God should

[503] That is, "the Israelites said" — Calvin.

[504] The tense is future, but continued action is intended. — Calvin.

punish all the transgressors of his law? and also, if sinners repent, that he should be prepared to pardon them? But if it seems hard that punishment should overtake the just if they fall away, common sense dictates that no virtue can be approved without perseverance. Since, therefore, it is very clear throughout this course of action, that God is just and without blame, what madness it is to vomit forth blasphemies against him, as if his ways were unjust! But God shows in one word, as I have mentioned, that the Israelites had no excuse for such dishonesty and impudence; and he repeats what he had formerly said, that men would always be guilty of rashness in insolently cursing God when their own ways are found oblique and perverse: but God will sufficiently vindicate his own ways. But we must add what follows ---

Ezekiel 18:30

30. Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

30. Propterea quemque [505] secundum vias ejus judicabo in vobis, [506] domus Israel, dicit Dominator Iehovah. Convertimini et redire vos facite [507] ab omnibus sceleribus vestris, et non erit vobis in laqueum iniquitas.

Here God precisely points out that he would discharge the office of judge, and then he reduces the Israelites to order, and refutes their audacity: for, as long as men do not feel God's judgments hanging over them, and are not held completely in cheek, they grow restive in their petulance. We see how ferocious and wanton the reprobate are, because they are not held in by the fear of punishment, nor do they dread the judgments of God. Hence that he may take away every vestige of excuse, he says, I will be your judge: plead now; but I will decide your strives in one word, since each of you shall be judged by my will. It is certain, then, that God here asserts for himself the praise of justice and rectitude; but at the same time he brings forward his own authority, that he may strike terror into those who thus madly dare to oppose his sway, and call upon him to render an account. Now, therefore, we understand in what sense he says that he will judge them all according to their ways; that is, although you do not confess yourselves worthy of destruction, it is sufficient that I, as the lawful judge, pronounce you so. I will judge you justly, therefore, since I pronounce sentence according to your ways and to my supreme power, that all your complaints and murmurs may cease. He afterwards exhorts them to repentance, and signifies that they have no other remedy than being dissatisfied with their sins, and deprecating his wrath. Hence we collect that men rebel so extravagantly against God, while they wander away from themselves, since, if they descended within themselves, and sincerely examined their whole life, they would be instantly humbled before God; hence that thought should stimulate them to repentance: but because their conscience is stupid, and they are willingly brutish, they boldly blaspheme God. On the other hand, God now offers a remedy on their repentance and return from their wickedness. The word being converted, or return, refers to the

[505] Verbally, "each man." — Calvin.

[506] Or, "between you." — Calvin.

[507] "And bring you back:" others, "bring your neighbors back;" but this is far-fetched. I prefer "bring yourselves back." — Calvin.

renovation of the mind and heart: for this also is the beginning of repentance, that we should be inwardly renewed in mind, as Paul says, and so be made new men. (Ephesians 4:22, 23.) And this deserves notice, because many, when repentance is spoken of, fix their eyes only on the outward fruits of penitence. But we must begin at the root, as the Prophet teaches, by saying be you converted. But he afterwards adds, {והשיבו}, veheshibu, and return. This second word ought to be referred to the fruits of penitence; for as interior conversion comes first in order, when we leave off our peculiar vices, and renounce flesh and blood, the fruits and proofs of repentance thought to follow, as John said, Bring forth fruits as witnesses to your repentance. (Matthew 3:8; Luke 3:8.) We see, then, that the Prophet begins with purity of heart, and then comes to hands, as the Scripture elsewhere says, flint is, to outward works. He says, from all your iniquities or crimes, to show that a partial repentance is not approved by God. It is true, indeed, that even those who strive with all their might to act rightly, do not succeed in discharging their duty without many faults remaining; but we are not treating here of perfection, but only of sincere affection and serious endeavors. Let us then only strive seriously to return into the way, and to humble ourselves calmly and sincerely: this is the integrity which the Prophet now requires.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, since nothing is more frail than we are, and even when you have once stretched forth your hand to us, we labor under such infirmity, that numberless falls await us unless you do succor us: Grant, I say, that being propped up by your unconquered strength, we may proceed in the course of thy holy calling, and may so bravely and perseveringly make war against all temptations, that we may at length enjoy in heaven the fruit of our victory, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Fifty-Eighth.

Ezekiel 18:31

31. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

31. Projicite a vobis omnes iniquitates in quibus inique egistis: et facite vobis cor novum, et spiritum novum: et quare moriemini domus Israel?

Ezekiel again exhorts the people to leave off complaining, and to acknowledge that there is no remedy for their evils but to be reconciled to God. But that cannot be done unless they repent. For God was not hostile to them in vain; nor did he, after the manner of men, persecute with hatred the innocent, and those who did not deserve it. Hence it was necessary to seek God's pardon suppliantly. Ezekiel had already touched upon this, but he now confirms it more at length. He says, therefore, that they not only lost their labor, but increased the flame of God's wrath by striving with him, and complaining that they were unworthily treated by him: cast forth, says he, your iniquities from you. He shows that the cause of all evils is within themselves: so that they have no excuse. But he afterwards expresses more clearly that they were entirely imbued with contempt of God, impiety, and depraved desires. For if he had only spoken of outward wickedness, the reproof would have been partial, and therefore lighter; but after he commanded them to bid farewell

to their sins, he adds, make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. He requires, therefore, from them a thorough renewal, so that they should not only conform their life to the rule of the law, but should fear God sincerely, since no one can produce good fruit but from a living root. Outward works, then, are the fruits of repentance, which must spring from some root; and this is the inward affection of the heart. What is added is to refute their impiety, for they wished their destruction to be ascribed to God. Here God takes up the character of a mourner, saying, Why will ye die, O house of Israel? while the next verse confirms this more clearly.

Ezekiel 18:32

32. For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, says the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.

32. Quia non oblector morte morientis, dicit Dominator Iehovah: convertimini itaque, et vivite.

We see, therefore, how God throws off that false reproach from himself with which the children of Israel taunted him, saying, that they perished by his immoderate rigor, and could find no reason for his severity against them. He announces, on the other hand, that the cause of death rested with themselves; and then he points out the remedy, that they should amend their life, not only in outward appearance, but in sincerity of heart: and at the same time he testifies of his willingness to be entreated; nay, he meets them of his own accord, if they only repent heartily and unfeignedly. We now understand the Prophet's meaning. We said, that we are admonished in this way, that if we desire to return to God we must begin at the beginning, namely, renewal of the heart and spirit; because, as Jeremiah says, he looks for truth and integrity, and does not value outward disguises. (Jeremiah 5:3.) But it may seem absurd for God to exhort the Israelites to form their hearts anew: and men badly trained in the Scriptures erect their crests under the pretense of this passage, as if it were in the power of man's free will to convert himself. They exclaim, therefore, either that God here exhorts his people deceitfully, or else that when alienated from him we can by our own movement repent, and return into the way. But the whole Scripture openly refutes this. It is not in vain that the saints so often pray that God would renew them; (Psalm 51:12, and very often elsewhere;) for it would be a feigned and a lying prayer, if newness of heart were not his gift. If any one requests of God what he is persuaded that he has already, and by his own inherent virtue, does he not trifle with God? But nothing occurs more frequently than this mode of entreaty. Since therefore, the saints pray to God to renew them, they doubtless confess that to be his peculiar gift; and unless he moves his hand, they have no strength remaining, so that they can never rise from the ground. Besides, in many passages God claims the renewal of the heart as peculiar to himself. We noticed that remarkable passage in the eleventh chapter of this Prophet, (Ezekiel 11:19,) he will repeat the same in the thirty-sixth chapter, (Ezekiel 36:26, 27;) and we know what Jeremiah says in his thirty-first chapter, (Jeremiah 31:33.) But Scripture is everywhere full of testimonies of this kind, so that it would be superfluous to heap together many passages; nay, if any one denies that regeneration is a gift of the Holy Spirit, he will tear up by the roots all the principles of piety. We have said that regeneration is like another creation;

and if we compare it with the first creation, it far surpasses it. For it is much better for us to be made children of God, and reformed after his image within us, than to be created mortal: for we are born children of wrath, corrupt and degenerate; (Ephesians 2:3;) since all integrity was lost when God's image was removed. We see, then, the nature of our first creation; but when God re-fashions us, we are not only born sons of Adam, but we are the brothers of angels, and members of Christ; and this our second life consists in rectitude, justice, and the light of true intelligence.

We now see that if it had been in man's free will to convert himself, much more would be ascribed to him than to God, because, as we have said, it was much more valuable to be created sons of God than of Adam. It ought, then, to be beyond all controversy with the pious that men cannot rise again when they are fallen, and turn of themselves when alienated from God; but this is the peculiar gift of the Holy Spirit. And the sophists, who in all ways endeavor to obscure God's grace, confess that half the act of conversion is in the power of the Holy Spirit: for they do not say that we are simply and totally converted by the motion of our own free will, but they imagine a concurrence of grace with free will, and of free will with grace. Thus they foolishly represent us as cooperating with God: they confess, indeed, that God's grace goes before and follows; and they seem to themselves very liberal towards God when they acknowledge this twofold grace in man's conversion. But God is not content with that partition, since he is deprived of half his right: for he does not say that he would assist men to renew themselves and to repent; but he attributes the work to himself entirely: I will give you a new heart and a new spirit. (Ezekiel 36:26.) If it is his to give, it follows that the slightest portion of it cannot be transferred to man without diminishing something from his right. But they object that the following precept is not in vain, that men should make for themselves a new heart. Now their deception arises through ignorance, from their judging of the powers of men by the commands of God; but the inference is incorrect, as we have said elsewhere: for when God teaches what is right, he does not think of what we are able to do, but only shows us what we ought to do. When, therefore, the power of our free will is estimated by the precepts of God, we make a great mistake, because God exacts from us the strict discharge of our duty, just as if our power of obedience was not defective. We are not absolved from our obligation because we cannot pay it; for God holds us bound to himself, although we are in every way deficient.

They object again, God then deludes men when he says, make yourselves a new heart. I answer, we must always consider to what purpose God thus speaks, namely, that men convicted of sin may cease to throw the blame on any one else, as they often endeavor to do; for nothing is more natural than to transfer the cause of our condemnation away from ourselves, that we may seem just, and God appear unjust. Since, then, such depravity reigns among men, hence the Holy Spirit demands from us what all acknowledge they ought to pay: and if we do not pay it, still we are bound to do so, and thus all strife and complaint should cease. Thus, as it concerns the elect, when God shows them their duty, and they acknowledge that they cannot discharge it, they fly to the aid of the Holy Spirit, so that the outward exhortation becomes a kind of instrument which God uses to confer the grace of his Spirit. For

although he gratuitously goes before us, and does not need outward channels, yet he desires exhortations to be useful to this end. Since, therefore, this doctrine stirs up the elect to deliver themselves up to be ruled by the Holy Spirit, we see how it becomes fruitful to us. Whence it follows, that God does not delude or deceive us when he exhorts each of us to form his heart and his spirit afresh. In fine, Ezekiel wished by these words to show that pardon would be prepared for the Israelites if they seriously repented, and showed its effects through their whole life. That was most true, because the elect did not embrace this doctrine in vain, when at the same time God worked in them by his Spirit, and so turned them to himself. But the reprobate, though they do not cease to murmur, yet they are rendered ashamed, since all excuse has been removed, and they must perish through their own fault, since they willingly remained in their wickedness, and by self-indulgence they cherished the old man within themselves, --- a fountain of all injustice. Whenever such passages occur, let us remember that celebrated prayer of Augustine: grant us what you command, and command what you wish, (Epist. 24;) for otherwise, if God should lay upon us the slightest burden, we should be unable to bear it. Besides, our strength will be sufficient to fulfill his requirements, if only he supply it, and we are not so foolish as to think anything comprehended in his precepts which he has not granted to us; because, as I have said before, nothing is more perverse than to measure the angelic righteousness of the law by our strength. By the word heart, I understand him to mean the seat of all the affections; and by spirit, the intellectual part of the soul. The heart is often taken for the reason and intelligence; but when these two words are joined together, the spirit relates to the mind, and so it is the intellectual faculty of the soul; but the heart is taken for the will, or the seat of all the affections. Hence we see how very corrupt the Israelites were, since they could not be otherwise reconciled to God, unless by being renewed in both heart and mind. Hence also we my gather the general doctrine, that nothing in us is sound and perfect, and hence all entire renovation is necessary that we may please God.

The subjoined phrase, why will ye die, O house of Israel? suggests many questions. Here unskillful men think that God speculates on what men will do, and that the salvation or destruction of each depends on themselves, as if God had determined nothing concerning us before the foundation of the world. Hence they set him at naught, since they fancy that he is held in suspense and doubt as to the future end of every one, and that he is not so anxious for our salvation, as to wish all to be saved, but leaves it in the power of every one to perish or to be saved as he pleases. But as I have said, this would reduce God to a specter. But we have no need of a long dispute, because Scripture everywhere declares with sufficient clearness that God has determined what shall happen to us: for he chose his own people before the foundation of the world and passed by others. (Ephesians 1:4.) Nothing is clearer than this doctrine; for if there had been no predestination on God's part, there had been no deity, since he would be forced into order as if he were one of us: nay, men are to a certain extent provident, whenever God allows some sparks of his image to shine forth in them. If, therefore, the very smallest drop of foresight in men is laid hold of, how great must it be in the fountain itself? Insipid indeed

is the comment, to fancy that God remains doubtful and waiting for what will happen to individuals, as if it were in their own power either to attain to salvation or to perish. But the Prophets words are plain, for God testifies with grief that he willeth not the death of a mortal. I answer, that there is no absurdity, as we said before, in God's undertaking a twofold character, not that he is two-faced himself, as those profane dogs blurt out against us, but because his counsels are incomprehensible by us. This indeed ought to be fixed, that before the foundation of the world we were predestinated either to life or death. Now because we cannot ascend to that height, it is needful for God to conform himself to our ignorance, and to descend in some way to us since we cannot ascend to him. When Scripture so often says that God has heard, and inquires, no one is offended: all pass over those forms of speech securely, and confess them adopted from human language. (Genesis 16:11, and often.) Very often, I say, God transfers to himself the properties of man, and this is admitted universally without either offense or controversy. Although this manner of speaking is rather harsh: God came to see, (Genesis 11:5,) when he announces that he came to inquire about things openly known; it is easily excused, since nothing is less in accordance with his nature: for the solution is at hand, namely, that God speaks metaphorically, and adapts his speech to the convenience of men. Now why will not the same reasoning avail in the present case? for with respect to the law and the whole teaching of the prophets, God announces his wish that all should be saved. And surely we consider the tendency of the heavenly teaching, we shall find that all are promiscuously called to salvation. For the law was a way of life, as Moses testifies, This is the way, walk you in it: again, Whosoever has done those things shall live in them: and, again, This is your life. (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19; Deuteronomy 32:47; Leviticus 18:5; Isaiah 30:21.) Then of his own accord God offers himself as merciful to his ancient people, so that this heavenly teaching ought to be life-giving. But what is the Gospel? It is God's power unto salvation to every believer, says Paul. (Romans 1:16.) Therefore God delighteth not in the death of him who dieth, if he repent at his teaching. But if we wish to penetrate to his incomprehensible counsel, this will be another objection: Oh! but in this way God is chargeable with duplicity; --- but I have denied this, though he takes up a twofold character, because this was necessary for our comprehension. Meanwhile Ezekiel announces this very truly as far as doctrine is concerned, that God wills not the death of him that perishes: for the explanation follows directly afterwards, be you converted and live. Why does not God delight in the death of him who perishes? Because he invites all to repentance and rejects no one. Since this is so, it follows that he is not delighted by the death of him who perishes: hence there is nothing in this passage doubtful or thorny, and we should also hold that we are led aside by speculations too deep for us. For God does not wish us to inquire into his secret. Counsels: His secrets are with himself, says Moses, (Deuteronomy 29:29,) but this book for ourselves and our children. Moses there distinguishes between the hidden counsel of God, (which if we desire to investigate too curiously we shall tread on a profound abyss,)and the teaching delivered to us. Hence let us leave to God his own secrets, and exercise ourselves as far as we can in the law, in which God's will is made plain to us and to our children. Now

let us go on.

Ezekiel 19

CHAPTER 19

Ezekiel 19:1-4

1. Moreover take you up a lamentation for the princes of Israel,

1. Et tu tolle lamentu [508] super [509] principes Israel,

2. And say, What is thy mother? A lioness: she lay down among lions, she nourished her whelps among young lions.

2. Et dices, Quare mater vestra leaena inter leones occubuit? in medio leonum educavit catulos suos.

3. And she brought up one of her whelps: it became a young lion, and it learned to catch the prey; it devoured men.

3. Et sustulit unum e catulis suis, leo factus est, et didicit praedari praedam, homines comedit. [510]

4. The nations also heard of him; he was taken in their pit, and they brought him with chains unto the land of Egypt.

4. Et audierunt de ipso Gentes, in fovea ipsarum captus est; et abduxerunt in cathenis in terram AEgypti.

Here the Prophet, under the image of a lion, informs us that whatever evils happened to the Israelites could not be imputed to others. We must understand then his intention: it is not surprising that the Spirit of God insists on a matter not very obscure, since nothing is more obstinate than the pride of men, especially when God chastises them, although they pretend to humility and modesty, yet they swell with pride and are full of bitterness, and, lastly, they can scarcely be induced to confess God to be just, and that they deserve chastisement at his hand. For this reason, therefore, Ezekiel confirms what we formerly saw, that the Jews were not afflicted

[508] Or, "a mournful song." — Calvin.
[509] Or, "against." — Calvin.
[510] Or, "devoured." — Calvin.

without deserving it. But he uses, as I have said, a simile taken from lions. He calls the nation itself a lioness: for when he treats of the mother of the people, we know that the offspring is considered. He says, therefore, that the people was full of insolence. The comparison to a lion is sometimes taken in a good sense, as when Moses uses it of the tribe of Judea, as a lion's whelp shall he lie down, (Genesis 49:9,) a, phrase used in a good sense. But here Ezekiel denotes cruelty, as if he had said that all the Jews were fierce and savage beasts. For under the name of mother, as I said, he embraces the whole nation. At the beginning he orders his Prophet to take up a mournful wailing: for thus I interpret the word {קינה}, kineh, but there is in my judgment an indirect opposition between this lamentation which God dictated to them by his Prophet, and the common complaints which sounded constantly from their tongues. For when their condition was not only ruinous, but utterly deplorable, they made many groanings and bewailings. But at the same time no one extended his thoughts beyond the pressure of present evils they all exclaimed that they were wretched, but no one was anxious to inquire why they were so or whence their miseries arose; nay, they avoided this contemplation. The Prophet then indirectly reproves them, by stating that this mournful complaint was suggested by God, but yet was very different from that ordinary lamentation and howling in which the Jews stopped at blind grief, and never inquired why God was so hostile to them. Take up, therefore, a lamentation, says he, regarding or against the princes of Israel. In this way God does not excuse the people from blame, he only means that not only the common people were lost, but the very flower of the nation and all who were held in honor.

He says next, that their mother lay down among lions, alluding to the people's origin from lions, as we said before, when the Prophet calls Judea the descendant of Canaan, and the sister of Sodom and Samaria. When he now says, their mother lay down among lions, he means that they were shamefully mixed with the corruption of the Gentiles, so that they did not differ from them. But God had chosen them as his peculiar people on the very condition of being separate from all the filth of the Gentiles. There was, therefore, a certain withdrawing of God's favor when the mother of the people lay down among the lions, that is, when they all promiscuously gave themselves up to the perverse morals and superstitions of the Gentiles. He says, that she brought up whelps, or young lions, which she produced to these lions; since their origin was impure, being all Abraham's children, but, as I have said, a degenerate race. He afterwards adds, that the lion's whelp, or young lion, grew up till it became a lion: then it learnt to seize prey, says he, and to devour men. He refers to King Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, (2 Kings 23:30-32:) but he had before asserted that the whole people had a lion's disposition, and that the princes, who were more exalted, were like whelps. As only one lion is here brought forward, it ought to be referred to the violence by which that wicked king manifested his real disposition. But if it be asked whence the lion went forth, the reply is, from amidst his brethren, for they were all lions' whelps, or young lions. They could not administer the government either together or singly, but each devoured his brother, and was devoted to robbery and rapine. The king only, because freed from all fear, could

surpass the rest in rapine and robbery with impunity. We see, then, that not only the king was here condemned, but that he becomes the type of the whole nation; because, since no one could restrain his passions, he could rob and devour mankind with unbridled freedom.

He afterwards adds, that the nations had heard, and were taken in their pit-fall. Here Ezekiel states that Jehoahaz was hurled from the royal throne, and taken captive by the Egyptians, not only because God had beheld his cruelty, but because the Gentiles had observed it; and it was notorious among them all. In this way he signifies that the cruelty of King Jehoahaz was intolerable: and he mentions him, since all the neighboring nations had heard of his fame, and had conspired to destroy him; and so he was taken in their pit, and confined by chains, and led away into Egypt. He means, as I said, Jehoahaz, whom King Pharaoh-nechoh took captive. (2 Kings 23; 2 Chronicles 36.) For when he thought that the Egyptians were distracted by foreign wars, he took the opportunity of collecting an army, and endeavored to seize on certain neighboring cities. But Pharaoh, after he was disengaged from other business, entered Judea, and since Jehoahaz was unable to resist, he was taken. We now understand the Prophet's meaning, namely, when this first calamity and destruction happened to the Jews they were justly chastised, because they were young lions; and a lion had sprung from them whose cruelty was already intolerable to the profane Gentiles: this is the sense of the passage. Now if we consider who was the father of Jehoahaz this will be more detestable. For we know, that if ever any king excelled in piety and every virtue, Josiah was among the number: and from the son being so unlike his father, we perceive his perverse disposition. There can be no doubt that his father desired to instruct him in the fear and worship of God, and to train him to the discharge of the royal office. But if we descend to the whole people, the prodigy will be yet more detestable. For we know with what fervor and zeal Josiah strove to form the morals of the people, so that the kingdom should be entirely renewed. But the people soon declined, so that the Holy Spirit says, their mother was a lioness, and lay down among lions, whence we see their depraved nature. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 19:5

5. Now when she saw that she had waited, and her hope was lost, then she took another of her whelps, and made him a young lion.

5. Et vidit quod sperasset, perdita esset [511] spes ejus: et sumpsit unum ex catulis suis leonem constituit eum. [512]

I cannot proceed futher.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since we are all so depraved by nature that we are not only most deserving of being cast into the midst of lions, but are unworthy of being reckoned among thy creatures, that you may extend thy hand to us, and manifest thy wonderful power in reforming us; and may your image be so renewed in us, that we may daily make more and more progress in true piety and righteousness, until at length all the corruption's of the flesh may be abolished, and we may be partakers

[511] "Had perished." — Calvin.

[512] That is, "educated or brought him up till he was a lion." — Calvin.

of that eternal glory which your only-begotten Son has acquired for us. --- Amen.

Lecture Fifty-Ninth.

We yesterday read over that sentence in which the Prophet says that Judea produced another lion after the former had been captured and led into Egypt. Now this ought to be referred to King Jehoiakim, who was appointed by King Nebuchadnezzar, when he had laid waste a part of Egypt, possessed the whole of Judea, and imposed laws by establishing a king, according to the rights of conquest. But since he also acted perfidiously, he was led away into captivity. The Prophet, therefore, means that the nation did not repent through this single chastisement; nor did it change its disposition, since its mother was a lioness: and not only did it bring forth young lions, but taught them to seize upon their prey till they became grown up. He says, therefore, that she saw what she had hoped, and her hope was futile. Some think that the noun ``hope'' is here repeated by the Prophet --- she saw that her hope was lost; lost hope, I say. But the other reading is better --- she saw that she had hoped; that is, she saw that her hope had not produced any fruit for some time, because the royal throne remained deserted; therefore she took another of her whelps, says he, and made him a lion. The Prophet again briefly teaches that the whole royal offspring was like young lions. Although, therefore, the lion alone is called king, yet he is said to be taken from a number of whelps; and hence it follows that this denotes the depraved and cruel nature of all. Thus we see that the Jews are indirectly reproved for not returning to soundness of mind, when God punished them severely, and King Jehoahaz was taken. Since, therefore, that punishment did not result in their correction, it follows that their dispositions were depraved; and the Prophet means this when he says, that she took one of her whelps, and again made it a lion. It follows ---

Ezekiel 19:6

6. And he went up and down among the lions, he became a young lion, and learned to catch the prey, and devoured. men.

6. Et incessit in medio leonum, leo fuit, et didicit praedari praedam, [513] homines voravit.

Ezekiel confirms what I have already briefly touched on, that this second lion was no less savage and cruel than the former, of which he had spoken. As to the phrase, he walked among lions, it means that his government was tyrannical, since there was then such foul barbarity in those regions, that, kings were scarcely human in their conduct. Since, therefore, kings were then everywhere like lions, the Prophet says that Jehoiakim was not different from them, but in every sense their ally. He walked, therefore, he says, in the midst of lions, since he imitated their ferocity, which at length he expresses more clearly, that he became a lion, and was taught to seize his prey, so as to devour not only animals, but men, thus marking his extreme cruelty. He afterwards adds ---

Ezekiel 19:7

7. And he knew their desolate palaces, and he laid waste their cities; and the land was desolate, and the fulness thereof, by the noise of his roaring.

[513] Or, “to seize booty” — an expression more in agreement with the Latin idiom. — Calvin.

7. Et contrivit, [514] palatia ejus, et urbes eorum destruxit, et redacta fuit in solitudinem terra, et plenitudo ejus a voce rugitus illius.

He again confirms what he said of the cruelty of King Jehoiakim: but the phrase is mixed, since he retains but a part of the simile, and then speaks without a figure of palaces and cities. Although interpreters incline to a different opinion, and translate --- and took notice of his widows: and if the remaining words had suited, this reading would have been better; but I do not see how things so different can be united, as destroying cities and noticing widows. First, those who adopt this comment are obliged to adopt the notion that Jehoiakim destroyed the men and deflowered their widows, since he could not possess them in freedom till they were widows. Every one will admit that this is far-fetched. But the word ``afflict'' suits tolerably well. And truly the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, where Christ is said to be bruised for our grieves, cannot be better explained, (Isaiah 53:3.) Some translate, that he experienced sorrows, or knew them, or was acquainted with them, in the passive signification. But those who say that he saw sorrows, or experienced them, do not consider how it suits the passage; and those who say that he was cognizant of grieves, meaning his own, also distort the Prophet's words. I doubt not, therefore, that in this passage it means to afflict. Respecting the noun, I suppose the letter, {ל} (l) taken for {ר} (r); and in Isaiah (Isaiah 13:22) this word is used for palaces: wild beasts shall howl, says the Prophet, {באלמנותיו}, bal-meno-thiv, that is, in her palaces. The word cannot here mean widows, and all are agreed to take it for palaces; and when the Prophet adds, that he destroyed cities, the subject shows us that in the former clause the palaces were afflicted, and then the cities destroyed: the Prophet asserts this simply, and without a figure, though he soon returns to the simile, that the land was reduced to a desert by the voice of roaring. Again, he compares King Jehoiakim to a lion; whence it follows, as I said, that the Prophet's language is mixed. Elsewhere, also, the prophets reprove the pride of their king. (Jeremiah 22:15; Jeremiah 36:30.) For although he was contemptible, yet he raised himself above other kings; hence he is derided, since he was not content with the condition and moderation of his father, who ate and drank, --- that is, lived like mankind, --- but he desired to raise himself above the race of men. For this cause the Prophet now says, that cities were destroyed by him, and palaces afflicted by him. There is a change of number in the pronouns, because the singular number is put in the word ``palaces,'' and the plural in cities. But we know how frequently this change occurs in the Hebrew Language; while as to the sense there is no obscurity, for King Jehoiakim was like a fierce and cruel beast, because he destroyed cities and pulled down palaces. But afterwards he adds, the land was laid waste and made solitary by the voice of his roaring. Here the Prophet enlarges upon the atrocity of that king, since by his roaring alone he had reduced the land to a desert. He does not speak of claws or teeth, but says that they were all so frightened at the sound of his roaring that the land was waste and solitary. He adds, the fullness of the land, by which expression Scripture usually denotes the ornaments of a country. The word comprehends trees, and fruits, and animals, as well as inhabitants; for a land is empty and bare without that clothing; that is, if

[514] Or, “afflicted.” — Calvin.

trees and fruits are taken away as well as men and animals, the face of the land is deserted and deformed, and its state displays its emptiness. It afterwards follow: ---

Ezekiel 19:8

8. Then the nations set against him on every side from the provinces, and spread their net over him: he was in taken in their pit.

8. Et posuerunt [515] super eum gentes in circuitu, et regionibus, et expanderunt super ipsum rete suum: in fovea ipsarum captus est.

Since the word {נתן}, nethen, is often taken for ``to utter a voice,'' some explain this passage, that the nations came with great clamor against King Jehoiakim, as when an attack is made against a wild beast, the assailants mutually excite and encourage each other. They understand it, that such a clamor was raised on all sides that they rushed with one consent against King Jehoiakim. But since the same word means ``to put,'' it may, in my opinion, be properly applied to counsel, since they took counsel, that is, determined among themselves to take him captive. The passive sense does not suit at all. Now, then, we understand the Prophet's meaning when he says, that the Gentiles had resolved against him, that is, had conspired to take him. No doubt the Chaldaeans were assisted by all their neighbors. First, we know that the Jews were hated by other nations; then the audacity and rashness of this king provoked many to send for the Babylonians, and eagerly to assist them; and because they scarcely dared to engage in the war by themselves, they conspired against King Jehoiakim under the protection of others. Thus far concerning other nations, for this cannot, be meant of the Chaldaeans alone; because, although they had other tribes under their sway, yet that monarchy had devoured the Assyrians, whose people made a portion of the Chaldaean army. Then the Prophet speaks of a circuit, and says, that King Jehoiakim was shut in on all sides: hence this must be ascribed to the neighboring nations, who not only favored the Babylonians, but assisted them with troops and wealth, as is sufficiently gathered from other passages.

At length he says, they expanded their net, by which metaphor he means plans, desires, and efforts. For before the neighboring nations openly declared war against the Jews, there is no doubt that they took secret counsel as to the best way of attracting the Chaldaeans to their side, and of insinuating themselves by various arts, as if they were laying snares; although by the word net we may also understand whatsoever apparatus they used for destroying King Jehoiakim. In fine, he says that he was taken in the pit of the nations, that is, was oppressed as well by snares as by open violence. He uses the word pitfall, in accordance with the resemblance of the king to a lion; but there is nothing absurd in extending the phrase to any hostile violence by which Jehoiakim was oppressed. It follows ---

Ezekiel 19:9

9. And they put him in ward in chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon: they brought him into holds, that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel.

9. Et posuerunt eum in clausuram [516] et adduxerunt in cathenis ad regem Baby-

[515] Or, "uttered a cry;" some take it passively, "were set against." — Calvin.

[516] "In ward, or custody, or prison:" an old interpreter translates "into a cave." — Calvin.

lonis, deduxerunt in munitiones [517] ut non audiatur vox ejus amplius in montibus Israel.

He pursues the same subject, saying that King Jehoiakim, after being taken captive, was bound with fetters and chains, adding, that he was brought to the king of Babylon; and thirdly, was cast into prison. He shows, therefore, how severely God punished the vicious obstinacy of that nation: for when King Jehoiakim was chastised, it thought to have been enough to correct then; but since the people were not improved by this, the severity was doubled; and here Ezekiel says, that King Jehoiakim was cast into a fortified dungeon. He adds, that his voice, that is, his roaring, should be no longer heard in the mountains of Israel. For although he was reduced to straits, through a great part of his kingdom being cut off, yet he did not desist from his ferocity. The Prophet, therefore, sharply derides his insolence, since he did not cease to cry out, and to roar even in the mountains of Israel. It follows ---

Ezekiel 19:10-12

10. Thy mother is like a vine in thy blood, planted by the waters: she was fruitful, and full of branches by reason of many waters.

10. Mater tua tanquam vitis in sanguine tuo super aquas plantata fuit: fructifera et ramosa [518] fuit ob aquas multas.

11. And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches.

11. Et fuerunt illi virgae roboris [519] ad sceptra dominantium: et elevata fuit statura ejus supra, [520] et apparuit in altitudine sua, in multitudine ramorum suorum.

12. But she was plucked up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up her fruit: her strong rods were broken and withered; the fire consumed them.

12. Et evulsa fuit in furore, [521] terram projecta: et ventus Orientalis arefecit fructum ejus discerpti sunt, [522] et arefacti; virga robusta, [523] ignis voravit eas.

Here Ezekiel places before our eyes the twofold state of the Jews, that they may acknowledge themselves fallen into extreme misery, because they had provoked God. For they did not sufficiently consider their present state, unless the former dignity and happiness with which they were adorned was brought to their remembrance. Now, in some way they had grown callous to all evils: although scarcely anything remained safe but Jerusalem, they did not look back, but were just as wanton as when their affairs were prosperous. Since they had not yet been humbled by so many slaughters, the Prophet, therefore, on the one hand, reminds them of their former condition, and then shows them how they had fallen. This comparison, then,

[517] That is, "into a close and well-guarded prison." — Calvin.
[518] Or, "leafy," as some translate it. — Calvin.
[519] That is, "strong or robust." — Calvin.
[520] That is, "on high among the boughs or vine-branches." — Calvin.
[521] Or, "burning wrath." — Calvin.
[522] Or, "broken up." — Calvin
[523] "Its twigs were broken up and withered." — Calvin.

thought to prick their consciences sharply, that they may at length feel that God was hostile to them. We now understand the Prophet's intention in saying, that the people's mother was at first like a flourishing and fruit-bearing vine. It is not surprising that he says, the vine was planted near the waters: for there the vines do not require lofty and dry situations, as in cold climates, but rather seek their nourishment from water, as we gather from many passages of Scripture. The Prophet, therefore, stays, that the people at, the beginning was like a vine planted in a mild and choice situation. He says, that the vine was flourishing, or branching, and fruitful, since it drew its juices from the waters.

Respecting the word ``blood,'' I think those who take it for vigor are mistaken; it rather refers to birth: he says, the mother of the people in her blood, that is, in bringing forth the people. Thus Ezekiel recalls the Jews to their first origin, as we previously saw the word used in this sense. When you was in thy blood, meaning, when you was born, as we know this to be the state of the young offspring, as the metaphor was explained in the sixteenth chapter. Live in thy blood, said God, (Ezekiel 16:6,) since the Jews were still defiled through not being cleansed from pollution. In fine, blood is taken for birth, as if it had been said, that the Jews, when first brought to light, were planted so as to take root, since God led them into the land of Canaan. Here he says they were brought to light when God restored them. He omits the intervening space of time which we saw elsewhere, because he passes directly from the end to the beginning. On the whole, he means that the Jews at their nativity were placed in the land of Canaan, which was very fruitful, so that they should bring forth their own fruit, that is, spend their time happily, and enjoy an abundance of all things. Now we understand the meaning of the phrase, the mother of the people was planted near the waters, as a flourishing and fruitful vine

He adds, she had branches, that is, vine twigs, for the scepters of those who bear rule. Those who translate with or above the scepters of rulers do not seem to me to comprehend the Prophet's meaning. I have no doubt he intends that scepters were gathered from these vine branches, or rather that they were so formed as to be like royal scepters. Although this translation seems rather rough, yet the sense is not doubtful; because the Prophet means that kings were taken from the people just as branches from the vine, as God chose king's from David to Zedekiah. In this sense he says that the vine branches became scepters of the rulers. He afterwards adds, her stature was conspicuous, that she was remarkable for her loftiness even in the multitude of the vine branches. This is extended to the whole body of the people. Since mention is made of the king, there is no doubt that God commends his grace towards the whole people, whose safety and happiness were placed in the king, as we saw elsewhere. But he asserts more clearly that the people had increased, so that they excelled in population, power, and wealth. On the whole, the Prophet teaches that the Jews were adorned from the beginning with all kinds of advantages, since God's best gifts shone forth there, and their dignity was conspicuous, and their opulence great, since he unites the multitude of the boughs or vine branches with their height.

Let us come now to the second clause. He says that the vine was torn away in

wrath, thrown on the ground, and dried by the east wind, and that its boughs were broken off and withered, and consumed by fire. I have now briefly explained the Prophet's meaning. As the Jews had grown stupid in their calamity, and were not humbled so as suppliantly to fly to God's mercy, the Prophet corrects their torpor when he shows them their origin. He now says that they were reduced to extreme wretchedness by a sudden assault; for a change which took place in a short space of time ought to affect them to the quick; but if they had been slowly diminished, the change had not been so remarkable: but when the vine was struck by lightning, torn up, withered, and burnt, that instantaneous slaughter, as I have said, showed that it was not by chance, but by the evident wrath of God. For this reason he says that the vine was violently torn up, and cast upon the ground. If the vine had been dried up by degrees, it, would not have been so wonderful; but its sudden tearing up ought to have made them sensible of the wrath of God, towards which they had grown callous. This is the reason why the Prophet adds one simile to another. The plucking up would have been sufficient; but he adds, it was cast upon the ground, that it should wither away completely. He adds, the east wind, which destroys both fruits and trees, as is sufficiently evident from many passages; and not only so, but he says that the boughs were broken, or plucked off, and withered: lastly, they were consumed with fire In fine, the hand of God appeared visibly in that horrible slaughter of the people, when they were torn up, cut off, withered, and burnt. It follows ---

Ezekiel 19:13

13. And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground.

13. Et nunc plantata est in deserto, in terra siccitatis et sitis. [524]

The Prophet seems here inconsistent with himself, since these two clauses are openly at variance, that the vine was not, only withered, but burnt up, and yet planted in a desert place; for if it was withered, it could not take root again; but the burning removed the slightest hope; for when the twigs were reduced to ashes, who ever saw a vine spring up and grow from its ashes? But when the Prophet says that the vine was withered and burnt up, he refers to the conclusion which men must arrive at by their own senses when the city was utterly ruined; for that was in truth a horrible spectacle, when the people were made tributary after their king was taken, the temple, plundered, the city ruined, and their safety dependent on the lust of their conqueror. Since, therefore, neither the royal name and dignity, nor freedom and security, remained, and especially when they were led to the slaughter-house, was not their ruin very like a burning? Now, therefore, we see why the Prophet said that the vine was torn and burnt up, for that most severe destruction took away all hope of restoration for a short time. Hence he spoke according to common sense: then he kept in view that form of horrible ruin, or rather deformity, which was like a burning and a final destruction of the people. But now, when he says that the vine was planted again, he commends the mercy of God, who wished some seed to remain for the production of young plants; as it is said in the first chapter of Isaiah, Lest you should be in like Sodom and Gomorrah, some small seed has been wonderfully preserved. Although, therefore, the people were burnt up after being violently

[524] That is, “dry and barren.” — Calvin.

plucked up, and all their lives subjected to the will of the proudest, of conquerors, yet God took some twigs or vine branches, which he planted, that he might propagate a new nation, which was done at the people's return.

But he says that those vine branches were planted in the desert in the dry and thirsty land, since God preserves the religion of his people even in death. Hence he compares their exile to a desert and a wilderness. It may seem absurd at first sight that, Chaldaea should be likened to a desert, since that district we know to be remarkable for its fertility and other advantages; we know, too, that it was well watered, though called dry. But the Prophet here does not, consider the material character of the country, but the condition of the people in it. Although Chaldaea was most lovely, and full of all kinds of fruits, yet, since the people were cruelly oppressed and contemptuously treated, hence the land was called a desert. We say that no prison is beautiful, so that their exile could not be agreeable to the children of Israel; for they were ashamed of their life, and did not dare to raise their eyes upwards. Since, then, they were drowned in a deep abyss of evils, the land was to them a desert; hence there was no splendor, dignity, or opulence; and liberty, the most precious of all boons, was wrested from them. Now we see the sense of the words. It follows at length ---

Ezekiel 19:14

14. And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devoured her fruit, so that she hath no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

14. Et egressus est ignis a virga ramorum ejus, fructum ejus voravit, [525] et non fuit in ea virga fortitudinis, [526] sceptrum ad dominandum. Lamentatio haec, et erit in lamentationem.

Here the Prophet comes down to the close of their woes, when Zedekiah was dragged into captivity, and so the people's independence was abolished. God had formerly planted that vine, or at least some of the branches, in a desert spot, since first four tribes, and afterwards seven, were led away, and last of all, the greater part of the tribe of Judea; but the little that remained with King Zedekiah perished. He says, therefore, that the fire went forth from the vine branches: thus he shows that the last slaughter proceeded only from the people themselves; and lest they should utter their accustomed complaints, the Prophet meets them by saying that they were consumed by intestine fire; that is, their slaughter could not be ascribed to their Chaldaean conquerors, but to themselves; because King Zedekiah, by his own perfidy, had stirred up the king of Babylon against himself; for he might have spent his time in his kingdom, but he could not refrain himself from throwing off the yoke; for this reason he armed himself against the king of Babylon, because he was a breaker of treaties: and thus the Prophet says, with propriety, that a fire went forth from one rod, or twig of its branches, and hence the fruit of the whole vine was consumed; that is, the remnant was lost by the fault of that perfidious king. He now adds, there was no scepter for ruling among its rods. Hence it appears that the

[525] Or, "consumed." — Calvin.
[526] That is, "strong." — Calvin.

exposition which I have advanced suits best, and is entirely genuine. He said first that the rods were for a scepter of the rulers; but he here says there was no scepter for them among these rods. What follows we will treat tomorrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since you have once deigned to insert us into the body of thy Son, that we may be such vine-branches as you have undertaken to cultivate: that by the power of thy Spirit we may be so watered as never to be deficient in spiritual rigor: and may we so bear fruit to the glory of thy name, that we may at length arrive at the fountain of our faith when we enjoy the celestial glory to which you have adopted us in the same, your only-begotten

Lecture Sixtieth.

Time did not permit us yesterday to explain the words at the close of this nineteenth chapter: this is a lamentation, and it shall be a lamentation. Some think this to be said of the Jews, that is, of all the, Israelites, since they should all be lamentable, because God would not cease to inflict his judgments upon them until he had utterly consumed them. But I had rather refer it to the prophecy, and this is the more correct sense This lamentation: thus the Prophet designates this sad and mournful prophecy because it contains the last slaughter of the people. Secondly, he adds, it shall be for a lamentation, because it suggests material for wailing, since remarkable miseries are accustomed to be more celebrated. If anything usual occurs, men soon forget it; but if any slaughter happens worthy of notice and of remembrance it is everywhere spread abroad, nay, it supplies posterity with material for their poems. Hence the Prophet signifies not only that this prophecy was mournful, but that God's wrath would fly about in common conversation through so rare and memorable an example. I now come to the twentieth chapter.

Ezekiel 20

CHAPTER 20

Ezekiel 20:1

1. And it came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth month, the tenth day of the month, that certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the LORD, and sat before me.

1. Et fuit anno septimo, quinto mense, decimo mensis venerunt viri e senioribus Israel ad consulendum Jehovam: et sederunt coram facie mea. [527]

Here he does not narrate a vision but an event which really happened. It is a simple historical narrative, that some of the elders of Israel were chosen to interrogate him. We know this to be customary, and when God separates His people from the profane nations, he opposes his prophets to the soothsayers and magi, augurs and astrologers. For he says that the Gentiles inquire what concerns them in various ways, and so interrogate their deities; but that he prescribes to the chosen people but one method: I will raise for them a prophet from the midst of their brethren, says Moses, (Deuteronomy 18:18;) that is, they need not wander about, like the wretched gentiles, destitute of counsel, first to their soothsayers, then to magi, and then to astrologers: there is no end to them' but I will meet them, says he, by my prophets, who shall always exist among the people. In this sense Ezekiel says that the elders of Israel came to consult God. The verb, {דרש}, deresh, properly signifies ``to seek'' but it is here received for ``to consult'' or ``inquire into,'' as in many other places. Now it is not surprising that the elders came by public consent to the Prophet: for the Israelites were already worn out by long weariness, and thought that they had almost perished through their long exile. But there was another reason, since false prophets, as we saw, tickled the ears of the simple by offering them daily some new hope. Since therefore they were agitated between hope and fear, and the devil

[527] Or, "before me." — Calvin.

scattered false prophecies which distracted the minds of the vulgar, it is probable that the elders of Israel came and were sent to inquire concerning either the prosperous or disastrous event of their captivity. They come therefore to the prophets; he says it happened in the seventh year, that is, after the captivity of Jehoiakim. They reckoned the years from that change, and deservedly so: for so remarkable an act of God's vengeance ought to be kept constantly in remembrance. There was also another reason, since God gave some hope of restoration. The reckoning of the years, then, which the Israelites dated from Jehoiakim's exile, had a twofold use and end, first, that God's judgment might remain fixed in their minds, and next, that they might nevertheless refresh their spirits by the hope of good. Hence as often as they dated the first year or the second, it was just as if they kept before their eyes that slaughter by which God testified himself grievously offended. But for another reason they ought to cheer their spirits by good hopes, because if the kingdom had been utterly abolished and no promise added to lighten their sorrow, that reckoning was superfluous, since in a state of desperation we do not take an account of years: but when seventy years were fixed, they nourished and cherished hope in this way, because they renewed the remembrance of their liberty, which had been promised them by the mouth of Jeremiah. (Jeremiah 25:12, 13, and Jeremiah 29:10.) Now therefore we understand why he simply says the seventh year he mentions also the day and the month.

Now the Clause which I have noticed contains some useful instruction, --- the elders of Israel came to consult God and sat before the Prophet. We see, then, as far as concerns outward forms, that they followed what God had commanded in his law; lest you should say, Who shall ascend above the clouds? who shall descend into the abyss? who shall cross the sea? The word is ever there, in thy heart and in thy mouth. (Deuteronomy 30:12-14; Romans 10:6-8.) Since therefore God in some way brought himself forward whenever he instructed his servants by the spirit of prophecy, so when the elders of Israel came to the Prophet, they are said to come to God himself, because God was unwilling to utter his own oracles either from heaven or by means of angels, but he appointed his servant by whom he would speak, and suggested what he should say. Hence we gather that our faith is not rightly founded unless when we listen to God alone, who only deserves and claims us as listeners. But at the same time, we must remark that faith was joined with humility and modesty. Hence if any one desires to ascend to the clouds to inquire what God will answer, he departs far from him, although he pretends to approach him. Hence this moderation is to be observed, that our faith may acquiesce in the authority of the one God, and not be carried hither and thither by the will of men; and yet it should not object to here God speak through his servants, but calmly submit itself to the prophets. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 20:2-3

2. Then came the word of the LORD unto me, saying,

2. Et fuit sermo Iehovae ad me dicendo,

3. Son of man, speak unto the elders of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Are ye come to inquire of me? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be

inquired of by you.

3. Fili hominis, loquere ad seniores Israel, et dic illis, Sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, An ad quaerendum me, [528] venistis? Vivo ego si quaerar a vobis, dicit Dominator Iehovah.

Here the Prophet is ordered to blame those elders, although they pretended to rare piety in inquiring of him: God says that they did not come with a right disposition. Many translate otherwise --- if I shall be found, or be en-treated by you, or if I shall answer: thus they take the word, {דרש}, deresh, in a double sense: in the first clause, for to seek or interrogate; but when it is added, as I live, etc., they do not take the word by ``to be sought'' or ``interrogated,'' but by ``to answer'' or ``be entreated.'' But this seems far-fetched and in Ezekiel 14:3, a phrase not unlike this was explained; and hence we may gather, that God rather inveighs against the people's hypocrisy than rejects them, and refuses to answer. There the Prophet said that the elders came to consult him, as if they had been his best disciples; but as Ezekiel might be deceived by that deceptive picture, God meets him, and says, Do you think that they come to inquire of me? They are fixed upon their idols; for their heart is towards them, and they raise their eyes to their own abominations: As I live, if they seek me, says he; that is, it is easy to convict them of bad faith, when they come suppliantly to inquire of thee. For if they truly and heartily sought me, they would renounce their idols, and would no longer partake of their abominations; but they do not repent, but remain obstinate in their wickedness. It is certain, therefore, that they are by no means sincere: there is no reason why you should delay them, or trouble yourself about them, since their conduct is mere dissimulation. So, therefore, in this passage God pronounced by his Prophet, are you come to seek me? that is, to consult me. I will not be inquired of by you, says he: the reason is, because, as we saw in the Ezekiel 14th, they always remained the same, since therefore they were at the greatest distance from God, and remained wrapped up in their own abominations, their seeking God was only fallacious. The conclusion is, that God rejected them, because, though they pretended a holy zeal, they were still perverse in their disposition; hence God refuses to discharge the office of a master towards them since they did not come to learn: this is one point. He then says, if I shall be inquired of by you. And because their hypocrisy was stained by various colors, God swears that their disposition was perverse, and that they did not come with pious and holy affections, and were neither docile nor obedient, nor desirous of making progress, and hence were unworthy of having him for a teacher. Now let us go on.

Ezekiel 20:4

4. Wilt thou judge them, son of man, wilt you judge them? cause them to know the abominations of their fathers:

4. An judicabo eos? an judicabo eos, fili hominis? abominationes patrum ipsorum indica [529] illis.

The context flows very well if we embrace this sense, that God swears that the

[528] That is, “to consult me.” — Calvin.
[529] Or, “explain.” — Calvin.

Israelites did not come to be subject to his Prophet, and to submit themselves modestly to his instructions. If this sense pleases, it is well added, shall you judge them? that is, shall you spend thy breath in arguing with them? He means that they are rather to be dismissed than instructed; as Christ says, You shall not cast pearls before swine. (Matthew 7:6.) And we know what God pronounces: My Spirit shall not always strive with man, because he is flesh. (Genesis 6:3.) He now means that there was no need of any dispute, since there was no means of carrying it on; so in this passage, since the Prophet was dealing with men utterly broken down, who never listened to wise counsels, nor obeyed any admonitions, nor were softened by any chastisement, he adds, therefore, shall you judge them? Some indeed coldly and insipidly explain this of taking away the part of a judge, since God rather wishes them to be called to repentance than to be condemned. But here judging embraces within itself all reproaches and threats. On the whole, since they acted deceitfully, and by no means proposed to submit themselves to God, hence he uses this bitterness, What! are they worthy of your judging them? that is, of your contending with them? for the Prophet's duty is to argue with sinners, to threaten them, and to cite them to God's tribunal. God, therefore, pronounces them unworthy of such disputing, because they are not only deaf, but, hardened by abandoned obstinacy. Now, therefore, we understand the sense of the words, wilt you judge them? will you judge them? The repetition is emphatic, that God may strongly express the obstinacy of that desperate people. He afterwards adds, If this be done, then show them the abominations of their fathers. God here mitigates the asperity which he had used, and by means of a correction descends to a reason for it, namely, that he may for once try whether or not they are curable. If then they are to be judged, that is, if he chooses to enter into any dispute, and to argue with them, he says that he ought to begin not with themselves, but with their fathers. God wishes them to be judged, not only on account of the wickedness of a few years, but because before they were born their fathers were obstinately attached to their abominations. In fine, God shows that the wound was deep, and could not be cured, unless the hidden poison was carefully examined, which otherwise would cause putrid matter, from which at length inflammation would arise. For many think that they have properly discharged their duty when they have but lightly probed their wounds: but sometimes it is necessary to penetrate to the inmost parts, as the people had not only provoked God lightly, and for a short time, but their impiety had been growing for ages, and their sins had become a kind of inheritance to them. Since, then, this hidden poison existed, which could not be cured either easily or by any slight remedy, hence God orders them to begin with their fathers. Show them, therefore, the abominations of their fathers. It follows ---

Ezekiel 20:5-8

5. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up mine hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up mine hand unto them, saying, I am the LORD your God;

5. Et dices illis, Sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, Die quo elegi Israelem, et sustuli

manum meam ad semen domus Iacob, et cognitus fui illis in terrae Ægypti, et sustuli manum meam illis dicendo, Ego Iehovah Deus vester;

6. In the day that I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands:

6. Die illo sustuii manum meam ad ipsos, ut educerem eos e terra Ægypti in terram quam prospexi illis fluentem lacte et melle, desiderium [530] prae omnibus terris:

7. Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

7. Et dixi illis, Quisque spurcitias oculorum suorum projicite et in idolis [531] Ægypti ne polluamini: ego Iehovah Deus vester.

8. But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.

8. Et rebelles fuerunt mihi, et noluerunt audire me, et quae sequuntur.

God confirms what I said before, that the Jews were not to be reproved for beginning lately to sin: it was not sufficient to bring recent offenses before them; but God orders the Prophet to begin with their fathers, as if he had said that the nation was abandoned from the very beginning, as Stephen reproaches them: Uncircumcised in heart, you still resist the Holy Spirit, as your fathers always did. (Acts 7:51.) And Christ had said the same thing before: You fill up the measure of your fathers. (Matthew 23:32.) We know also how frequently rebukes of this kind occur in the Prophets. God therefore says, that from the time when he chose the seed of Israel, he had experienced both the wickedness and obstinacy of the people; for he says that they were not drawn aside by either error or ignorance, but because they were unwilling to hear, when they were over and over again admonished as to their duty. Hence three things are to be marked, namely, that the people were bound to God, since he had gratuitously adopted them; for God here commends his gratuitous election, together with the singular benefits which he had conferred on that people: this is one point. The second is, that he not only took them once to himself, but showed them what was right, so that they could not mistake, except knowingly and willfully: this is the second point. Then the third is, that they rebelled purposely, because they would not listen: for if they had been left at the meeting of two roads, their error had been excusable if they had turned to the left instead of the right. But if God by his law so shone before them, that he was prepared to direct them straight to the mark, and they turned aside; thus their obstinacy and rebellion is plainly detected. This is the sense.

Now as far as words are concerned, he says, that he had chosen Israel. But election, as I have already briefly touched upon, is opposed to all merits: for if anything had been found in the people which should cause them to be preferred to others, it

[530] That is, "which is a desire, or desirable." — Calvin.

[531] Though it signifies also "foulness or pollution" — Calvin.

would be improperly said that God had elected them. But since all were in the same condition, as Moses says in his song (Deuteronomy 32:8, 9,) there was scope for God's grace, since he separated them from others of his own accord: for they were just like the rest, and God did not find any difference between them; we see, then, that they were bound to God more sacredly, since he had joined them to himself gratuitously. He now adds, that he lifted up his hand to the seed of Jacob. The lifting up the hand seems to be taken here in different senses. Since it was a customary method of swearing, God is said sometimes to lift up his hand when he swears. That is indeed harsh, since the lifting up the hand does not suit God: for we lift up the hand when we call God to witness; but God swears by himself, and cannot raise his hand above himself. But we know that he uses forms of speech according to the common customs of men: hence there is nothing absurd in this phrase, he lifted up his hand, that is, he swore. Hence, if we may so explain it, this was a confirmation of the covenant, when God by interposing a oath promised himself to be Israel's God. But since he shortly afterwards adds, that he was known, the other sense suits pretty well, since it refers to the benefits which he had conferred upon the people. And truly experimental knowledge is intended, since God really proved himself to be worthy of credit, and thus illustrated his own power in preserving the people. Hence I said that to lift up the hand is to be received variously in this chapter, since, if we read the two clauses conjointly, I lifted up my hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and was made known to them, truly the lifting up the hand will imply a display of power. That also has been said by means of a simile; but shortly afterwards the lifting up of the hand must be taken for to swear, by the figure of rhetoric called catachresis, which is the use of a word in a different signification, and yet there is no absurdity.

I have raised my hand, therefore, to the seed of the house of Jacob, saying, I Jehovah am your God. (Ezekiel 20:5.)

We see, then, that God raised his hand to sanction the covenant which he had made; for when he pronounces himself their God, he binds them to himself, and claims them for his peculiar people, and thus confirms his covenant. But at the same time he had raised his hand or arm by so many miracles performed in freeing the people. He says, in that day I raised my hand to, or towards them, to bring them out. Again, the raising the hand refers to God's power, since he brought them forth by an extended arm from that miserable slavery. Since, therefore, he so raised his hand, he acquired them as his own, that they should no longer be free, but belong altogether to him. He afterwards adds other benefits, since he not only snatched them from the tyranny of Pharaoh, but brought them into a land flowing with milk and honey, which he had espied for them. We see how briefly God enlarges upon that remarkable benefit which he had bestowed upon his people. Not only was he their Redeemer, but he looked out for a place of residence for them, not only commodious, but abounding with plenty; for this phrase is common enough with Moses. In that same day in which I led them out of Egypt, I brought them into a land, the desire of all lands; that is, which is desirable and superior to all other lands. It is true, indeed, that other nations were not less fruitful; but God, in thus praising the land of Canaan. considers it, clothed and adorned by his bounty. But there was no region

under heaven to be compared with the land of Canaan in one point, namely, God's choosing it as his earthly dwelling place. Since the land of Canaan excelled all others in this respect, it is deservedly called the desire of all lands, or desirable beyond all lands.

Another clause now follows, that God instructed the Jews in piety, and withdrew them from all the idolatries to which they had been devoted. Instruction then went before, which showed them the right way of salvation, and recalled them from their superstitions. The meaning is, that when God adopted the people, he gave them the rule of living piously, that they should not be tossed about hither and thither, but. have an aim, to which they might direct the whole course of their life. I said, therefore, to each of them: this seems more emphatic than if he had spoken to all promiscuously and generally: but this familiar invitation ought to penetrate more into their minds, when he speaks to each individually, just as if he said, let each of you cast away your abominations, and not pollute himself anymore with the idols of Egypt. When therefore God thus attached them to himself, he shows that he could not be rightly worshipped by them unless they bid their idolatries farewell, and formed their whole life according to the rule of his law. He calls their enticements defilements or idols of the eyes: but we know that the Prophet often speaks thus, that unbelievers should consider their idols. Hence it is just as if God recalled them from all the wiles of Satan in which they were enticed, and were so devoted to them as to have their eyes exclusively fixed on them. He speaks by name of the idols of Egypt: whence it easily appears that they were corrupted by depraved desires, so as for the most part to worship the fictitious gods of Egypt. Yet they knew themselves elected by the true God, and boasted in circumcision as a symbol of divorce from all nations. Yet though they wished to be thought illustrious on the one hand, they afterwards prostituted themselves so as to differ in nothing from the Egyptians. We see then that the desire of piety was almost extinct in their hearts, since they had so contaminated themselves with the superstitions of Egypt. That he might retain them the better, he says at the same time that he was their God: for without this principle men are tossed hither and thither, for we know that we are lighter than vanity. Hence the devil will always find us subject to his fallacies unless God restrains us in our duty, until he appears to us and shows himself the only God: we see then the necessity for this remedy, lest men should be carried away by idolatries, namely, the knowledge of the true God. The third clause will follow afterwards, but we shall explain it in its turn.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since you have once stretched forth your hand to us by your only-begotten Son, and have not only bound thyself to us by an oath, but have sealed your eternal covenant by the blood of the same, thy Son: Grant, I pray thee, that we in return may be faithful to thee, and persevere in the pure worship of thy name, until at length we enjoy the fruit of our faith in thy heavenly kingdom by the same Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Sixty-First.

In the last lecture I began to explain the eighth verse, where God complains that

he was exasperated by the children of Israel when he had begun to extend his hand to free them. He says, then, that they had rejected his grace. But at the same time we see that all pretense of ignorance was removed, because unless Moses had exhorted them to good hope, they would have pretended. to be so deserted through two centuries, that they had hoped for help from God in vain. But since Moses was a witness of their redemption, hence their ingratitude was the more without excuse, since they were unwilling to embrace the message which they had so greatly desired. Nor is the language of Moses vain, that they often cried out in their calamities. Although their clamor was turbulent, yet they doubtless remembered what they had heard from their fathers, that the end of those evils was at hand to which God had fixed an appointed time. But more is expressed in this passage than Moses relates, who simply says, because they saw themselves treated too roughly, that they were worn down and disgusted: hence those expostulations --- You have made our name to stink before Pharaoh: God shall judge between you and us: Judea you gone from us. (Exodus 5:21.) We do not then clearly collect from Moses that they were rebels against God, since they had not cast away their idols and superstitions, but the probable conjecture is that they were, so rooted in their filth, that they repelled God's hand from succoring them. And truly if they had promptly embraced what Moses had promised them in God's name, the accomplishment would have been readier and swifter: but we may understand that their sloth was the hindrance to the exertion of God's hand in their favor and to the real fulfillment of his promises. God ought indeed to contend, with Pharaoh, that his power might be more conspicuous: but the people would not have been so tyrannously afflicted, unless they had closed the door against God's mercy. They were, as we have said, immersed in their defilement's from which God wished to withdraw them. He now accuses them of ingratitude, because they did not cast away their idols, but obstinately persisted in their usual and customary superstitions. He speaks of the time of their captivity in Egypt, and this passage assures us that while there they were infected and polluted by Egyptian defilement's. For the contagion of idolatry is wonderful: for since we are all naturally inclined to it as soon as any example is offered to us, we are snatched in that direction by a violent impulse. It is not surprising then that the children of Israel contracted pollution from the superstitions of Egypt, especially as they lived there as slaves, and were desirous of gratifying the Egyptians: for if they had been treated liberally, they might have lived freely after their custom, but since they were not free and were oppressed as slaves, it happened that they pretended to worship the gods of Egypt according to the will of those by whom they saw themselves oppressed: and not only did they sin by pretending, but it is probable that they were impelled by their own lusts as well as by fear: for it will soon be evident that they were too inclined to impiety of their own accord.

On the whole, Ezekiel here testifies that they were rebels against God, because they did not listen to God by casting away the idols of their eyes, that is, to the worship of which they were too attentive, nor did they desert the idols of Egypt. When he speaks of the idols of their eyes, we gather what I have touched upon, that they were not impelled to idolatry by fear and necessity, but by their own depraved appetites:

For unless they had been eagerly devoted to Egyptian superstitions, Ezekiel would not have called them idols of the eyes. Hence by this word he means that they were not only superstitious through obedience to the Egyptians, but were spontaneously inclined towards them. Besides, when he adds the idols of Egypt, he points out as the occasion of their corruption their spending time under that tyranny, and their being compelled to bear many evils, since slavery commonly draws with it dissimulation. It now follows, And I said I would pour forth, that is, I determined to pour forth. God here signifies that he was inflamed by anger, and unless they had respect to his name he would not withdraw his hand from the vengeance to which it was armed and prepared. We know that this does not properly belong to God, but this is, the language of accommodation, since first of all, God is not subject to vengeance, and, secondly, does not decree what he may afterwards retract. But since these things are not in character with God, simile and accommodation are used. As often as the Holy Spirit uses these forms of speech, let us learn that they refer rather to the matter in hand than to the character of God. God determined to pour forth his anger, that is, the Israelites had so deserved it through their crimes, that it was necessary to execute punishment upon them. The Prophet simply means that the people's disposition was sinful, and hence God's wrath would have been poured out, unless he had been held back from some other cause. I have already touched upon the obstacle, because he consulted his honor lest it should be profaned.

I have decreed, therefore, to pour forth my burning fury upon them in the midst of the land of Egypt. Some translate, to consume them, but improperly, for the word, {כלה}, keleh, signifies to fill up or accomplish, as well as to consume. But although God sometimes says that he consumes all his weapons or scourges in the punishment of men's sins, yet it is not suitable to transfer this to his wrath itself. Hence another sense will suit better, namely, that God decreed to pour out his wrath until he satisfied himself. For here, as we have said, he puts on the character of an angry man, who cannot appease his mind otherwise than by satiating it by the exaction of punishment: for anger is usually inexhaustible. But God on the whole here expresses that such was the atrocity of their wickedness, that the Israelites deserved destruction through the pouring forth of God's wrath and the filling up of the measure of his indignation; and that in the midst of the land of Egypt; because they had shown themselves unworthy of his redemption, and hence it was enough for them to perish in the midst of the land of Egypt. But he afterwards added ---

Ezekiel 20:9

9. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.

9. Et feci propter nomen meum ne profanaretur in oculis gentium, in quibus ipsi in medio eorum, quibus cognitus fui ipsis in oculis eorum, ad educendum eos e terra Ægypti.

Here God signifies that he was restrained for one reason only from entirely blotting out so ungrateful and wicked a nation, namely, since he saw his own sacred name would be exposed to the Gentiles as a laughing-stock. He teaches, therefore, that

he spared them, and suspended his rigor for the time, rather through being induced by regard to his own glory than by pity to them. Hence, by the word I did it, we ought to understand what will be more clearly explained. The sense is, that he abstained from the final act of vengeance for his name's sake, that it should not be profaned among the Gentiles. Although God here pronounces that he had respect rather to himself than to them, yet there is no doubt that he spared them, because he saw that they could not be otherwise preserved than by his pardoning them even in such hardness and obstinacy; and certainly God's glory and the salvation of the Church are things almost inseparably united. When I speak of the salvation of the Church, I do not comprehend all those who profess to be its members, but I mean only the elect. Since, therefore, God had adopted that nation, he must preserve the remnant in safety, otherwise his truth would have failed, and thus his name would have been much more severely profaned. Hence we may gather, whenever God pardons us, though he regards himself, and wishes in this way to exercise his clemency, yet his pity towards us is another reason for his pardoning us: but when he says that he has withdrawn his hand from vengeance through regard for His own glory, he in this way prostrates still more the pride of this nation, since, whenever he had pity on them, they thought it a concession to their own worthiness and merits. The Prophet therefore shows here that they were snatched from destruction, while they were remaining in the land of Egypt, for no other reason than this, that God was unwilling to expose his name to the contempt of the nations. He says, therefore, in the eyes of the Gentiles, among whom they were, regarding not the Egyptians only, but others.

Yet the question arises, in what sense, he adds by and by, that he was known to them? for as yet he had given no specimen of his power among the Gentiles. He had borne witness by two miracles that Moses should be the agent in their redemption, (Exodus 4:2, and following:) afterwards Moses approached Pharaoh himself: there God put forth the signs of his power, which deservedly frightened all the Egyptians; but his fame had not yet reached other nations. But this knowledge ought not to be simply restricted to past time; for God only means that he had already begun to show, by certain and remarkable proofs, that Moses was chosen, by whose hand he wished to redeem his own people. Since, therefore, God had. already come forward with those remarkable signs, he says, that he was known to those nations, not that his fame had reached them, but because he had gone there himself, so that the event could not be in obscurity, and all must know that miracles had been performed by the hand of Moses, by which it was evident that he wished to claim the Israelites as his own. Now, therefore, we understand in what sense Ezekiel says that God was known. Some explain this relatively thus: I was known to them, meaning the Israelites, in their eyes, meaning the Gentiles: but this sense seems to me forced; for in my opinion this one word ``their,'' in the Prophet's language, is superfluous. He simply means that God was manifested in the eyes of all the nations in leading them forth. This clause shows the kind of knowledge intended, since God showed his power in liberating the people by remarkable miracles. It follows ---

Ezekiel 20:10

10. Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought

them into the wilderness.

10. Et eduxi (eduxi ergo) eos e terra AEgypti, et adduxi in desertum.

After Ezekiel had taught that the Israelites deserved to perish in Egypt, unless God had spared them for his name's sake rather than for their own, he now adds the cause of their coming forth, which was the promotion of his own glory. Hence, therefore, we gather that the Israelites falsely imagined any other cause of their deliverance than that respect of which the Prophet now speaks. But this is more than if he had simply said that they were snatched from the tyranny of Egypt by God's gratuitous pity, since God gratuitously stretched out his hand towards them, and was so induced by feelings of humanity and clemency as to snatch away from their miseries the innocent who were unjustly afflicted; but he here excludes them from God's clemency, because they were unworthy of his notice. I said, indeed, that two things were united, the salvation of the Church and the glory of God; but at the same time I noticed that the Prophet's intention must be considered, since he wished to withdraw all confidence from such a proud people, and to show that, as far as they could, they had always repelled God's favor by their obstacles, unless he had overcome their wickedness by his untiring goodness. It follows ---

Ezekiel 20:11

11. And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them.

11. Et dedi illis decreta mea, [532] et judicia mea patefeci ipsis, qua, qui fecerit homo vivet in ipsis.

Here God enlarges upon his favors, since he had given his law to the Israelites, as if he would prescribe to them a certain rule of living. If they had only been brought out of Egypt, that would have been an inestimable benefit: but God was much more generous, since he deigned to rule them familiarly with his doctrine, lest they should wander to one side or the other; and in this way he testified that he would be their God. He adds a promise: for God might precisely enjoin what he wished on the people of his choice; but he spontaneously adopts the method of indulgence by promising them life. Now, then, we understand why this promise is mentioned; for God might simply command anything, and say, this pleases me, and use but a monosyllable, after the manner of kings issuing a command. Since, then, God not only exacted of the Israelites what he might justly require, but, by annexing a promise, enticed them gently to the pursuit of obedience, this was certainly a mark of his fatherly indulgence. Hence he now exaggerates the people's ingratitude by this circumstances, that neither by commands nor by kindness could he induce these obstinate and perverse dispositions to bend to the yoke. I gave them, therefore, my statutes and my laws; and afterwards, which if a man do, he shall live in them. He thus briefly reminds them, that it was not his fault if the Israelites were not in any sense happy; for when he stipulated with them for the observance of his law, he bound them in turn to himself, that they should want nothing which contributed to a good and happy life; for in the name of life solid happiness is comprehended.

Yet it is here asked how the Prophet testifies that men should live by the works of

[532] "Statutes." — Calvin.

the law, when the law, on the testimony of Paul, can only bring us death. (Romans 4:15; Deuteronomy 30:15.) He took this testimony from Moses, and we shall see immediately that he cites it in a different sense. Moses there pronounces that the life of man rests on the observance of the law; that is, --- life was surely to be expected through satisfying the law. Some think this absurd, and so restrict what is said to the present life, taking he shall live in them politically or civilly: but this is a cold and trifling comment. The reasoning which influenced them is readily answered: they object, that we owe all things to God; that we ourselves and our possessions are all his by the right of possession; so that if we keep the law a hundred times over, still we are not, worthy of such a reward. But the solution is at hand, that we deserve nothing, but God graciously binds himself to us by this promise, as I have already touched upon. And from this passage it is easy to infer that works are of no value before God, and are not estimated for their intrinsic value, so to speak, but only by agreement. Since, then, it pleased God to descend so far as to promise life to men if they kept his law, they ought to accept this offer as springing from his liberality. There is no absurdity, then, if men do live, that is, if they deserve eternal life according to agreement. But if any one keeps the law, it will follow that he has no need of the grace of Christ. For of what advantage is Christ to us unless we recover life in him? but if this is placed in ourselves, the remedy must not be thought anywhere but in ourselves. Every one, then, may be his own savior if life is placed the observance of the law. But Paul solves this difficulty for us when he determines for us a twofold righteousness of the law and of faith. (Romans 10:5, 6.) He says that this righteousness is of the law when we keep God's precepts. Now, since we are far distant from such obedience, nay, the very faculty of keeping the law is altogether defective in us: hence it follows that we must fly to the righteousness of faith. For he defines the righteousness of faith, if we believe Christ to be dead, and to be risen again for our justification. We see, therefore, although God promised salvation to his ancient people, if they only kept the law, yet that promise was useless, since no one could satisfy the law and perform God's commands. Here another question arises. For if this promise does not take effect, God vainly reckons that as a benefit to the Israelites which we see was offered them in vain: hence no utility or fruit would arise from it. But some one may say that the imagination was fallacious, when God promised life, and now by his Prophet blames the Israelites for despising such a benefit. But the reply is easy: although men are not endued with the power of obeying the law, yet they ought not on that account to depart from the goodness of God; for men's declension by no means hinders them from estimating the value of so liberal a promise: God is treating with men: he might then, as I have said, imperiously demand whatever he pleased, and exact it with the utmost rigor; but he treats according to an agreement, and so there is a mutual obligation between himself and the people. No one will surely deny that God here exhibits a specimen of his mercy when he deigns thus familiarly to make a covenant with men. ``Ah! but this is all in vain: God's promise is of no effect, because no one is able to keep the law.'' I confess it: but man's declension cannot, as I have said, abolish the glory of God's goodness, since that always remains fixed, and God still acts liberally in

being willing thus to enter into covenant with His people. We must then consider the subject simply, and by itself: man's declension is accidental. God then put forth a remarkable proof of His goodness, in promising life to all who kept His law: and this will remain perfect and entire. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 20:12

12. Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them.

12. Atque etiam sabbatha mea dedi ipsis, ut essent in signum inter me et ipsos, ut cognoscerent quod ego sim (vel, ego sum) Iehovah, qui ipsos sanctifico.

Besides the law God here commends his Sabbaths, which we know to be only a part of His law: nay, whoever compares the commandments one by one, will at first sight perceive more weight in others than in the fourth. For what is the meaning of that commandment, You shall not have any strange god? You shall not make any idols? Afterwards, Do not take God's name in vain? (Exodus 20:3, 4, 7; Deuteronomy 5:7, 8, 11.) I answer, that the Prophet takes one precept of the law the better to explain what I have already touched on before, namely, that the law was given to the Israelites to bind them more and more to their benefactor. For God was unwilling to cast them away after redeeming them: but he testified by his law that he would be the guide of their whole life. Still the Prophet looked further, meaning, that the law consisted not only of the commandments, but embraced the whole grace of God, on which the adoption of the nation depended. For if God had simply commanded either one thing or another, it would not have been easy to perceive and taste his goodness. Why so? because when he calls upon us to discharge a duty, every one, feels that a greater burden is imposed on him than he can bear. Even if the promise should entice us by its sweetness, --- he who does these things shall live in them; yet when we try, we are deficient through being destitute of all power. But the Prophet means that something else was intended by the Sabbath, that the Israelites might acknowledge themselves separated by God, so as to experience him for their Father in all things. Hence, though the precepts of the law were somewhat distasteful; yet, as the fourth commandment has in it a gratuitous promise, it has a different savor, since the people thus recognizes itself as elected by God for a peculiar nation: and this the Prophet sufficiently expresses by the word sanctifying, for it means that the people were separated from the profane nations to be God's peculiar inheritance. If any one wishes to render sanctify by one word it will be, ``to separate.'' But the meaning of separation ought to be explained. How, then, did God separate a certain people from the whole world? Why, by promising to Abraham that he would be a God to his seed. (Genesis 22:17.) Then he could not otherwise be their God than by gratuitously loving his elect, by regenerating them by his Spirit, and becoming propitious and easily entreated: and besides, a single people could not be separated from others without a mediator. For separation cannot last unless the people be united to God; and what bond of union is there without a mediator?

Now, therefor, we understand why the Prophet speaks of the Sabbath, since he had formerly commended the whole law, of which the Sabbath was a part, namely, because it displayed God's gratuitous adoption; and at the same time the Israelites

might acknowledge that the way of approach to God was open to them, and he was rendered placable; then that they were not adopted in vain, but were sought by God, that he should renew them by his Spirit, and rule the whole course of their life. It was, then, the greatest ingratitude to break the Sabbath, as will be said shortly afterwards. But this passage teaches that God was not pleased with the people's quiet or ease when he commanded them to keep the seventh day holy, but he has another intention. Whence we gather that that precept was shadowy: for there are some things which please God of themselves, and must be performed; but others have a different object. For to worship one God, to abominate idols, to use God's name reverently, these things are, as I have said, the simple duties of piety in themselves: so the honor which sons pay to their parents is a duty pleasing to God in itself, like chastity, abstinence, and such like. But Sabbaths do not please God simply and by themselves. We ought, therefore, to look for another purpose, if we wish to understand the reason of this precept. And hence Paul says, that Sabbaths were shadows of those things of which Christ is the substance. (Colossians 2:16, 17.) This, therefore, is one point. Ezekiel is not the first who says so, though he took it from Moses; for though he does not clearly say in so many words that the Sabbath was the symbol of sanctification, yet he afterwards shows this to be its object, (Exodus 31:13, 14,) and that God commanded the people to rest on the seventh day with this intent. Moses then himself shows that the command had another object, which Ezekiel interprets for us; but the matter is made much clearer in the Gospel, since in Christ the truth and substance of this precept is set forth, which Paul calls the body. I have, then, sufficiently explained this object., namely, that the Israelites might know God to be their sanctifier. But if we desire to understand the matter better, we ought first to lay it down that the Sabbath was the sign of mortification. God, therefore, sanctifies us; because when we remain in our natural state we are there mixed with others, and have nothing different from unbelievers: hence, therefore, it is necessary to begin by dying to ourselves and the world, and by exercising self-denial; and this depends on the grace of God. But I perceive that I cannot complete the subject today so I shall put it off till tomorrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since you have not only deigned to bestow upon us a rule for living rightly, but has so shown thyself our Father in Christ as to be prepared to engrave thy law in our inward parts: Grant, I pray thee, that we may not cast away that inestimable boon through either ingratitude or sloth; but may we offer up ourselves to thee as a sacrifice: and then do you so pardon us that our infirmities may not hinder us from finding thee always propitious whenever we fly to thy mercy in Christ, your only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Sixty-Second.

We said in yesterday's lecture, that God's Church was separated from the profane nations that he might regenerate it by his Spirit: we said also, that the Sabbath was a proof of this favor; but now a confirmation of this teaching must be added. This is easily gathered from the institution of the Sabbath, when God is said to have rested from his work on the seventh day. (Genesis 2:2; Exodus 20:11, and 31:17;

Deuteronomy 5:14.) Now there is no doubt that he wished to bring the faithful to imitate his example: it follows, then, that rest was enjoined upon the ancient people, that they should each rest from their works, and so conform themselves to God's example. For we are said to rest from our works when we are dead to ourselves; and allow ourselves to be governed by God's Spirit, when we live in him, and he in us. Now, therefore, we see that the grace of regeneration was promised to the ancient people when God consecrated the seventh day; and the Apostle also shows this in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where he treats of the true and lawful use of the Sabbath, and refutes the gross supposition with which the Jews were imbued, that God was properly worshipped by an outward rest. (Hebrews 4:5.) he shows them that it was only an outward symbol, and that it contained a spiritual mystery. It now follows, as I lately touched on it, that the Sabbath was a sacrament, since it was a visible figure of an invisible grace. And this also is expressed with sufficient clearness by the Prophet, when he says, the Sabbath was given for a sign. By this word, therefore, he shows that regeneration was promised to the ancient people; and if I may use the expression by a visible word, since God not only spoke, but wished some symbol or pledge or mark of his promise to be perpetual. The phrase between me and you must be noticed: from which we gather that there is a mutual agreement in the sacraments, by which God binds us to himself, and we mutually pledge our faith. And hence also their foolishness is refuted who think the sacraments nothing but marks of outward separation: for if the sacraments concern only the profession of faith, it is inconsistent with the Prophet's teaching that they are a mutual and reciprocal sign, as I may express it, since God requires faith on the part of his people; and he promises in return what he witnesses and prefigures by an outward sign. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 20:13-14

13. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them.

13. Et rebelles fuerunt in me [533] domus Israel [534] in deserto: in decretis meis non ambularunt, et judicia mea spreverunt: qua qui fecerit homo rivet in ipsis: et Sabbatha mea violarunt valde: et dixi [535] effundere excandescentiam meam super eos in deserto ad consumendum eos.

14. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out.

14. Et feci propter nomen meum, ut non profanaretur in oculis gentium, sub quarum oculis eduxeram ipsos.

Here God pronounces that the sons were like their fathers; and that the people, after their deliverance from Egypt, were so obstinate in their wickedness as not to profit in any way. He had complained already before of their rejecting his grace: for

[533] Or, "were bitter against me." — Calvin.
[534] We have often spoken of this word. — Calvin.
[535] That is, "I have decreed." — Calvin.

it is equivalent to rejecting all offers to be corrupted by superstitions, and not to cleanse themselves from that defilement, although they knew it to be abominable before God. But after the law was promulgated, they then might have put away their perverse affections. And surely redemption ought to have conformed them to obey God; when they beheld his hand stretched out as it were from heaven, how was it that this spectacle did not avail to humble them, and to make them submissive to God? But in addition to the teaching of the law, God's promise was given, by which he bore witness to them, that, if they sought from him the spirit of regeneration, the Sabbath would be really given them as a pledge and sign of it; and since all these things produced no effect, that was a proof of astounding contumacy. God says, therefore, that he obtained nothing more in the desert than he had formerly experienced from the people under their Egyptian tyranny: then, also, says he, the house of Israel exasperated me in the desert. The circumstance of place must be noticed, because they were wonderfully rescued by God's incredible power, and they depended every moment on his good pleasure; for there they wanted food and drink: God daily rained down manna from heaven, and brought them water from the rock. (Exodus 16:14; Numbers 11:9; Deuteronomy 8:15, 16.) Since, therefore, necessity compelled them every moment to look to God, was it not more than brutal stupidity to exasperate God? When men grow wanton, it arises from becoming intoxicated by prosperity, and forgetful of their lot through not feeling how much they need God's help. But when death is presented to our view, when terror hems us in on every side, when God is up in arms against us, what madness it is to despise him! We see, then, why the Prophet dwells so on this point.

He says too, they did not walk in God's precepts, and they despised his judgments. He confirms what was said yesterday, that they were not deceived through ignorance, but manifested utter contempt of God, since they knew well enough what was pleasing to him. Since, then, they had a sure rule which could not deceive them, we see how they wandered away after their own superstitions by deliberate wickedness. This is the reason, then, why Ezekiel says that they despised God's judgments. He repeats the promise which I expounded yesterday. For this reason also availed to exaggerate their crime, namely, the mildness of God in deigning to allure, them: he did not command them, exactingly and imperiously, as he might have done, but he entered into a covenant with them, and testified that a reward was prepared for them if they kept the law. Since, therefore, they neglected this promise, we see that they were not only rebels, but ungrateful to God. He adds, they had polluted his Sabbaths; which I refer not only to the outward rite, but rather to the inward spirit. It is true, indeed, that their impiety was sufficiently notorious as to outward desecration, as it appears from the seventeenth chapter of Jeremiah, when he says, that they carried their burdens on the Sabbath, and occupied themselves in common business. (Jeremiah 17:21, 22.) There is no doubt that they broke the Sabbath when they then promiscuously transacted their own business. But when it is added, that they violated the Sabbath greatly or grievously, we may understand that profanation is denoted in the mystery itself, since they struck off the yoke, and gave the rein to their own desires: for Isaiah also shows that the Sabbath was violated in this way, es-

pecially when the will of men is consulted. (Isaiah 58:13.) For hypocrites think they have discharged every duty by abstaining from all work; but the Prophet replies that this is a mere laughing-stock, since they fast on a Sabbath for strife and contention, and then that they gratify their will, which is opposed to self-denial. Hence God not only accuses the ancient people here for not hallowing the Sabbath, but also for neglecting its legitimate object and use. He now repeats what we saw yesterday. I have determined, therefore, to pour out upon them mine anger in the desert to consume them. If it is asked when this was done, it is sufficient to reply, that God's wrath was frequently inflamed by the people's wickedness. For although Moses does not verbally relate every event, yet there is no doubt that God often threatened the people with destruction, as we shall soon see with reference to their dispersion. It follows, I did it for my name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the eyes of the Gentiles. God repeats again that he was appeased, not because he pardoned them, but because he was unwilling to allow his name to become a laughing-stock among the nations. We said that in this way God's twofold pity is commended, as he had already gratuitously adopted the people: hence their redemption could only be ascribed to his sole and gratuitous liberality, since it flowed from the election or adoption which we have mentioned. But though this was one kind of mercy, yet it did not suffice to render the people worthy of the grace offered them. Hence it came to pass that the promise given to Abraham could not profit them, unless God conquered the nation's iniquity. This is the meaning of the Prophet when he says, that the people were preserved, although unworthy of it, since God saw that otherwise his name would be profaned among the nations. Without doubt he had respect to the covenant, since the Israelites had perished a hundred times over without any help from the name of God unless he had adopted them. It was necessary, therefore, that God should spare them, since their preservation was connected with his sacred name and regard for his covenant. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 20:15

15. Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands;

15. Atque etiam ego manure meam sustuli ipsis in deserto, ne inducerem eos in terram quam dederam ipsis fluentem lacte et melle, quae desiderium est cunctis terris. [536]

God here shows that his threats were ineffectual, even when he inflicted severe punishment, yet the people were not broken down and subdued: and this is a sign of a most perverse disposition. The foolish are at length corrected with rods, but when those who are chastised become worse instead of repenting, they betray their desperate character. God therefore here signifies that the Israelites were of an abandoned disposition, because there were no means of bringing them back to good conduct. At first he enticed them by his mercy, then gave them the law, and added a sacrament, as we have seen; but this proved wholly useless: what remained then, except to terrify them partly by threats and partly by punishments? He tried both,

[536] Or, “is desirable.” — Calvin.

for he threatened them when they sinned, without any advantage: then he showed them in reality that theirs was no vain terror, since all those died in the desert who had refused to go forward when he called them into the land of Canaan. (Numbers 32:10.) Since, they were not bent by those signs of God's wrath, their contumacy appears so great, that they ought to perish a hundred times over. I also, says he, raised my hand; he doubtless means that he swore, as we gather from Moses and from the Psalms, I swore in my wrath if they should enter into my rest. (Psalm 95:11.) He says then that he raised his hand; we have explained whence the simile is taken, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them. Here God emphatically shows how formidable that punishment was, as it deprived them of that sure heritage which he had bestowed on them: for before they were born they were lords of the land of Canaan --- since four hundred years before it was promised to Abraham in their name. Since they cast themselves off from this inheritance, they plainly displayed their slothfulness: I had given them an inheritance, says he, for they compelled me to swear: I swore that they should not reach it. He adds, a land flowing with milk and honey, desired by all nations. By these words he enlarges upon the people's ingratitude, since they despised no mean benefit, but a land in which they might dwell happily. For God had so enriched it with his gifts, that they might have been as it were in paradise. Since then such fertility did not attract them to obey God, hence it appears, that they were in every way refractory. It afterwards follows ---

Ezekiel 20:16

16. Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols.

16. Propterea quod in judiciis meis spreverunt: [537] in decretis meis non ambularunt et sabbatha mea polluerunt, [538] quia post idola sua [539] cot eorum ambulavit.

The reason of the oath of which mention has been made is expressed by Moses, because being frightened by a false report they wished to return to Egypt: but here a cause is assigned to their superstitions. (Numbers 13:32, 33, and Numbers 14:1-3.) But it suits each case well, since if they had been sincerely obedient to God, they would never have refused to remove their camp, and fearlessly to proceed where he commanded them. But since they first detested the land, and then terror and despair seized their minds so that they rejected the inestimable blessing of God, it is clear that not a drop of piety existed in their hearts. Although therefore the special reason why they did not enter the land of Canaan was their refusing to obey the call of God, yet the Prophet adds also their superstitions. For impiety and contempt of God was the reason why they so boldly, proudly, and furiously rejected the grace of God, and wished even to stone Moses, and then when penitent they encouraged each other to return to live again under the tyranny of Egypt. We see, therefore, how the Prophet here lays down general causes from which that impious dislike of the land proceeded, as well as the rejection of the grace of God. He says, therefore, because

[537] That is, "they have despised my judgments and my decrees." — Calvin.
[538] Violated, profaned: the word {,חלל chelel, is the same. --- Calvin.
[539] Or, "filth, defilement," as I have elsewhere said. — Calvin.

they had despised my judgments and had not walked in my statutes. He here inverts the order: he had formerly said that they had not walked in his statutes and had despised my judgments; but now he begins with the contempt: and have polluted my Sabbaths, because their hearts went after their idols. The sense is, that they always treated God deceitfully: and although they held that he was to be worshipped formally, yet they were always addicted to various superstitions: as also Stephen reproves them, (Acts 7:40-43,) for he agrees entirely with our Prophet. As he puts Sabbaths in the plural number, I do not interpret it so strictly as some do, thinking that the Prophet means Sabbaths of years, and afterwards the jubilee: for there were three Sabbaths among the Jews; that is, every seventh day was consecrated to God, and every seventh year, and every fiftieth. Although it is true that years were sabbatical as well as days, yet I do not think that the Prophet is making any subtle distinctions here but I take Sabbath to mean the seventh day. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 20:17

17. Nevertheless mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness.

17. Et pepercit oculus meus super ipsos [540] ne perderem ipsos, et ne facerem ipsos [541] consumptionem in deserto.

This is added, because God often afflicted the people with heavy punishments, but he restrained himself, that he should not utterly destroy both their persons and their name. He says, then, that he spared them through respect for his own name, as he formerly said, that he should not execute consumption on them; that is, that he should not utterly blot out the memory of them. He did not spare them entirely to foster their depravity by his indulgence, but as we shall afterwards see, he withdrew his hand that he should not consume them, as he might most justly have done. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 20:18-19

18. But I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols:

18. Et dixi ad filios ipsorum in deserto, In decretis, [542] patrum vestrorum ne ambuletis, et indicia ipsorum ne servetis: et in idolis [543] ipsorum ne polluamini.

19. I am the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them;

19. Ego Iehovah Deus vester, in decretis meis ambulate, et judicia mea servate, et facite ea.

After God has shown that the obstinate wickedness of the people was such that they profited by neither rigor nor clemency, he now says that the sons were altogether like their fathers. For when he says that he turned his discourse to their sons, he obliquely indicates that he was so broken down by their disgust, that he is unwilling to address the deaf. I said, therefore, to their sons: why not to themselves? because they had become obdurate in their impiety, and gave no hope of

[540] "My eye took no notice of them." — Calvin.
[541] "And I did not execute on them." — Calvin.
[542] Or, "statutes." — Calvin.
[543] Or, "pollution's." — Calvin.

repentance. Since then God had experienced their utmost obstinacy, he says that he turned his discourse to their sons; Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers, and do not observe their judgments. Here God does not speak of bad examples and of plain and palpable crimes, but he uses words seemingly favorable --- judgments and statutes. If he had simply said that their fathers were wicked, and hence the sons must take care not to imitate them, that would have been ordinary teaching; but by adaptation he uses honorable expressions, namely, my statutes and judgments. Meanwhile he forbids their posterity to conform to the statutes and laws of their fathers, meaning to their ceremonies and rites. Lest any should object that those statutes were to be observed which tend to a right end, he adds, that you pollute not yourselves with their filth and defilements. Here the former language of accommodation is removed, and God as it were wipes away the coloring, that it may be clearly apparent that those statutes and precepts differed in nothing from thefts, robberies, and adulteries: this is the Prophet's meaning.

Besides, this passage is worthy of notice, because we may learn from it how frivolous is the excuse of those who boast of their fathers, and arrogantly predict that they will be pardoned if they conform themselves to their example. For God not only forbids us to imitate the gross and open wickedness of our parents, but their laws, statutes, and ceremonies, and whatever is apparently plausible, and seems to the common sense of mankind worthy of praise. And thus the foolishness of the papists is detected, who think that they lie safely concealed under the shield of Ajax, when they boast to us of the examples of their fathers, and the value of antiquity: we clearly see how plainly God's Spirit refutes them when he pronounces that they must obey his statutes and precepts, and not listen to open wickedness only, but not even to good intentions, as they say, and devotions, and the traditions of the fathers. But what is the worship of God in the papacy in these days but a confused jumble, which they have thrown together from numberless fictions? for whoever will examine all their trifling, will find them fabricated by the will of man; and they are not ashamed to oppose the traditions of their fathers to the word of God. Now, therefore, we see the whole papacy laid prostrate, and all the remarkable traditions of the fathers in which they boast, when the Prophet says, walk you not in the statutes of your fathers. But since antiquity deserves some reverence, it would be gross and barbarous promiscuously to reject all the examples of the fathers: hence we need prudence and selection here, and God's Spirit suggests this to us when he adds pollution's or idols. Hence the traditions of the fathers must be examined; and it is a mark of prudent discretion to observe what they contain, and whence they proceed. If we discover that they have no other tendency than to the pure worship of God, we may embrace them; but if they draw us away from the pure and simple worship of God, if they infect true and sincere religion by their own mixtures, we must utterly reject them.

Let us proceed then. I, says he, am Jehovah your God; walk you in my statutes, and observe my judgments. God confirms the former sentence, and at the same time provides a remedy for all corruption's when he says, walk you in my precepts, because I am your God: for by these words he claims as peculiarly his own what men

commonly arrogate to themselves. They do not dare, indeed, to despoil God of his authority, but they carry themselves as his allies, and infect his law with their commentaries, as if it was not sufficient for complete and solid wisdom. Here, therefore, God pronounces himself to be the only lawgiver. If, therefore, I am your God, walk you in. my statutes. Hence it follows, that we indirectly deny God when we turn aside even a little from his law. The passage is remarkable, if we only estimate the Prophet's language aright. For the two clauses must be read together, because I am your God, therefore walk you in precepts, and thus show that you are my people. But if they are not content with God's precepts only, but mingle human comments with them, God indirectly teaches that he is not acknowledged, since they deprive him of a portion of his rights; for if God is one, he also is the only lawgiver. It follows ---

Ezekiel 20:20

20. And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God.

20. Et sabbatha mea sanctificate, et erunt in signum inter me et vos, ad cognoscendum [544] quod ego Iehovah Deus vester.

What he had said generally concerning the commandments he now applies again to the Sabbath, and not without reason. For, as we said yesterday, God not only wished by that day of rest to exact from the people what was due to him, but he rather commands it for another purpose, namely, that his Sabbaths should be sanctified. But the manner of keeping it holy was formerly explained, since mere rest was insufficient. God was not satisfied by the people's resting from their occupations, but the inward sanctification was always the chief end in view. And for this reason he also repeats again, that they may be a sign between me and you to show you that I Jehovah am your God. In this passage God bears witness, that if the Jews rightly observed their Sabbaths they should feel the effects of that favor which he wished to be represented thereby. For we said that the Sabbath was a sacrament of regeneration: now therefore he promises the efficacy of his Spirit, if they did not shut the door by their own impiety and contempt. Hence we see that sacraments are never destitute of the virtue of the Spirit unless when men render themselves unworthy of the grace offered them. When papists speak of the sacraments they say that they are efficacious, if we only remove the obstacle of mortal sin: they make no mention of faith. If a person is neither a thief, nor an adulterer, nor a homicide, they say that the sacraments produce their own effect: for example, if any one without a single particle of faith intrudes himself at the table of Christ, they say that he receives not only his body and blood, but the fruit of his death and resurrection, and only because he has not committed mortal sin; that is, cannot be convicted of theft or homicide. We see how they are steeped in blindness, according to God's just judgment. We must hold, therefore, that there is a mutual relation between faith and the sacraments, and hence, that the sacraments are effective through faith. Man's unworthiness does not detract anything from them, for they always retain their nature. Baptism is the laver of regeneration, although the whole world should be incredu-

[544] That is, “that you may recognize, or know.” — Calvin.

lous (Titus 3:5:) the Supper of Christ is the communication of his body and blood, (1 Corinthians 10:16,) although there were not a spark of faith in the world: but we do not perceive the grace which is offered to us; and although spiritual things always remain the same, yet we do not obtain their effect nor perceive their value, unless we cautious that our want of faith should not profane what God has consecrated our salvation. [545]

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since the doctrine of thy Gospel sounds daily in our ears, when you invite us so kindly by thy amazing clemency, and stretch out your hand by your only-begotten Son, --- Grant, I pray thee, that we may be of a teachable and flexible disposition, and that we may sincerely submit to thee: and since thy law contains so many dreadful examples of thy wrath, may we be moved by them, and may we walk with fear and trembling in obedience to thy word, that at length we may enjoy that inheritance which you have promised for us in thy heavenly kingdom, by the same Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Sixty-Third.

[545] At a period when the controversy concerning the efficacy of sacraments is revived with all its former virulence, and the authority of Calvin is often called in to decide between conflicting statements, the language of this passage is worthy of special notice. It would startle some of our modern critics to find Calvin calling the Sabbath "a Sacrament of regeneration." In treating this class of subjects, it is essential to ascertain the exact ideas of the medieval controversialists, and to perceive how very different they were from our own. For example, Protestants of the present day would pronounce any man unsound who allowed of more sacraments than two, while Romanists would require all men to admit them to be seven; yet Calvin would have no objection to the assertion that there are seventy. He used the word for what is now currently expressed by the phrase "the means of grace." All aids and helps to the cultivation of the life of God in the soul have been termed sacramental; and by using the word in a comprehensive sense, the assertion is strictly true. Sabbaths are to us, as well as to the Jews, means of grace, conducive to regeneration. Calvin also asserts that these means of grace are never destitute of the Holy Spirit's virtue, except we render ourselves unworthy of the grace which they contain. He differs from the papists, not with reference to what a sacrament is in itself, but as to the need of faith in the recipient for the personal advantage to be derived from it. The opinion is absolutely expressed, that they always retain their nature, on the principle that spiritual things always remain the same: man's unbelief is said to make no difference as to the reality of the grace inherent in the sacrament; it only affects our reception of it. The spiritual blessing is there: our want of faith is the only cause why the blessing does not pass by the appointed channel to the unworthy recipient. As the sentiments of our Reformer are sometimes quoted in support of views very different from this, the reader's attention is particularly directed to his commentary on this verse, since the greatest errors arise from interpreting controversial phrases by the modern meaning which the words have acquired. The history of opinions which have formerly prevailed on subjects deeply interesting to ourselves is always serviceable towards the formation of accurate opinions. Hence we may here refer to Dr. Lawrence's Bampton Lectures for the year 1804, in which the lecturer has distinctly stated the different views taken by the Papists and the Schoolmen, the Lutherans and the followers of Zwingle and Calvin. In Sermon 6, page 123, he makes the same statement with reference to the papists as Calvin does in his comment on this verse, viz., "asserting, among other extravagancies, that the Sacraments are in themselves efficacious by virtue of their own operation, exclusively of all merit in the recipient." In notes on Sermon 3, page 276, he adds, "The Lutherans contended that the Holy Spirit was efficacious in baptism;" and quotes Calvin's letter to Melancthon, "non inanes esse figuras sed reipsa praestari, quidquid figurant. In baptismo adesse spiritus efficaciam, ut nos abluat et regeneret." See also his opinion on the state of the children of Christians dying unbaptized. Instit., lib. 4. cap. 15, section 22. The view of Zwingle will be found in his Declaratio de peccato originali, Op., volume 2 page 118; and Epist. Urbano Regio, volume 1, p. 383; and of Bullinger, in his treathese adversus Cala-baptistarum prava dogmata, page 57. It will not be expected that the admirers of Calvin will be satisfied with Dr. Lawrence's reasonings and conclusions; but the notes to his discourses form a most valuable digest of the views of the Schoolmen and the various Reformers of celebrity, selected with judgment from the voluminous disputations of those stirring times. See also the Dissertation on this verse at the end of this volume.

Ezekiel 20:21-24

21. Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness.

21. Et rebelles fuerunt [546] me filii: in decretis meis non ambulaverunt, et judicia mea non servarunt, ut ea facerent: quae qui fecerit homo rivet in ipsis: sabbatha mea profanarunt: et dixi [547] effundere iracundiam meam, [548] super eos ad complendum iram meam in ipsis in deserto.

22. Nevertheless I withdrew mine hand, and wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight I brought them forth.

22. Et retraxi [549] manure meam: et feci propter nomen meum, ne profanaretur in oculis gentium e quarum oculis eduxeram eos.

23. I lifted up mine hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries;

23. Etiam ego levavi [550] ad disjiciendos ipsos inter gentes, et spargendos per terras;

24. Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols.

24. Eo quod judicia mea non fecerunt, et statuta mea repudiarunt, et sabbatha mea violarunt, et post idola patrum suorum fuerunt eorum oculi.

I join these four verses together, because they have been already explained, and I do not wish to burden you with useless repetitions. In short, God accuses the whole posterity, because they were by no means more obedient than their fathers. Again, he charges them with rebellion, since they neither obeyed His commands, nor were persuaded by mild promises; for, on the one hand, he demanded the worship due to him, and invited them softly by the promise of reward. He complains that; neither plan succeeded. He adds, what we have already seen, that he proposed to scatter them through various quarters of the world, and utterly to dissipate them. He assigns as a reason for his moderation his unwillingness that his name should be profaned among the nations: he also announces that they had never restrained their impiety from bursting forth, and hence it was only through his own incredible patience and indulgence that they had not perished a hundred, nay, a thousand times. The rest may be gathered from the previous context. It follows ---

Ezekiel 20:25

25. Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live;

25. Ego quoque dedi illis decreta non bona, et judicia in quibus ton vivent.

Here God announces that he had taken vengeance upon people so hard and ob-

[546] Or, “irritated,” or, “exasperated me.” — Calvin.
[547] That is I decreed.” — Calvin.
[548] “Still I drew back” — Calvin.
[549] Or, “my burning wrath.” — Calvin.
[550] Or, “against them.” — Calvin.

stinate, by permitting them to endure another yoke, since they would not be ruled by the doctrine of the law; for we saw that, when God imposed the law upon the Israelites, they would have been extremely happy, had they only considered how honorable it was to be in covenant with God, who deigned to bind them to himself in mutual fidelity. This was a remarkable honor and privilege, since God not only showed them what was right, but promised them a reward which he by no means owed them. But what was the conduct of that unteachable nation? It threw off the yoke of the law; hence it deserved to experience a different government. God, therefore, gave them laws that were not good, when he suffered them to be miserably subjected to an immense heap of errors: such laws as these were not good. Some writers have violently distorted this passage, by thinking the law itself, as promulgated by Moses, ``not good,'' since Paul calls it deadly; but they corrupt the Prophet's sense, since God is comparing his law with the superstitions of the Gentiles: others explain it of the tributes which the people were compelled to pay to foreigners. But, first of all, God does not speak here of only one age; nay, during the, time of the Israelites' freedom his vengeance was nevertheless severe.

Thus, in the next verse, the Prophet confirms what I have briefly touched on, namely, that the laws called not good are all the fictions of men, by which they harass themselves, while they think that God is worshipped acceptably in this way: for we know how miserably men labor and distract themselves when Satan has fascinated them with his toils, and when they anxiously invent numerous rites, because there is no end of their superstitions; hence these statutes are not good: for when they have undergone much labor in their idolatry, no other reward awaits them than God's appearance against them as an avenger to punish the profanation of his own lawful worship. They indeed by no means look for this, but they utterly deceive themselves; hence they must hope for no reward but what is founded on the covenant and promise of God; for all false and vicious forms of worship, all adventitious rites, which men heap together from all sides, have no promise from God, and hence they vainly trust to them for life. God began to show them this in the wilderness; but in succeeding ages he did not fail to exercise the same vengeance. We see how they fell in with the superstitions of the Moabites; and why so? unless God blinded them by his just judgments. (Numbers 25:1-3.) He had experienced their untamed dispositions, and so he set them free from control; and not only so, but afterwards gave them up to Satan, and so he says that he gave them laws that were not good. The Prophet might indeed have said, that they despised God's law through their own wisdom, that they foolishly and rashly legislated for themselves: this was indeed true; but he wished to express the penalty of which Paul speaks, when he says that the impious were delivered to a reprobate mind, and to obedience to a lie, (Romans 1:24-26,) since they did not submit to the truth, and did not suffer themselves to be ruled by God, and thus were given up to the tyranny of Satan and to the service of mere creatures. Now, therefore, we understand the Prophet's meaning, I have given them also, says he, laws not good, as if he had said that the people so threw themselves into various idolatries, that God desired in this way to avenge their incredible obstinacy; for if the Jews had calmly acquiesced in God's sovereignty, he had not

given them evil laws, that is, he had not suffered them to be so tormented under Satan's tyranny; but when they were entangled in his snares, God openly shows them to be unworthy of his government and care, since they were too refractory. It follows ---

Ezekiel 20:26

26. And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through the fire all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I am the LORD.

26. Et contaminavi ipsos in suis muneribus, trajiciendo quidquid aperit vulvam, ut perderem ipsos, ut quod, (sed supervacuum est,) ut cognoscant quod ego Iehovah.

There is no doubt that God here continues the same doctrine' hence we gather that injurious laws were given to the people when they adopted various errors and worshipped idols of their own fabrication instead of God: hence it is added, I polluted them in their gifts. This, then, was added by the Prophet, lest the Jews should object that they had not altogether rejected the worship of God; for they mingled the ceremonies of the laws with the fictions of the Gentiles, as we saw before, and the Prophet will shortly repeat: in this way they thought they discharged their duty to God, though they added mixtures of their own. Here the Prophet meets them, and cuts off all occasion for turning aside, since they were polluted in their gifts, and nothing was pure or sincere when they thus corrupted God's precepts by their comments. However, they daily offered their gifts, and professed to present them to the true God; yet they obtained no advantage, because God abominated mixtures of this kind, as we have previously said; for he cannot bear to be worshipped by the will of men, but wishes his children to be simply content with his commands. Now, we perceive the meaning of the Prophet --- God pollutes them in their gifts; that is, renders their gifts polluting whenever they think that they discharge their duty; --- but how? why, he says, when they cause whatever opens the womb to pass through. [551] Here the Prophet touches on only one kind of superstition, but, by a figure of speech, he means all kinds, by which the Jews vitiated God's pure worship; for this superstition was very detestable, to pass their sons through the fire, and to consecrate them to idols. But in this passage God speaks only of the first-born, so as greatly to exaggerate the crime: that ceremony was indeed general; but since God claimed the first-born as his own, and wished them to be redeemed at a fixed price, (Exodus 13:2, Exodus 22:29, and Exodus 34:19, 20,) and by this act wished the remembrance of their redemption to be kept up, since all the first-born of Israel, as well as of animals, had escaped, while those of the Egyptians perished, (Numbers 3:13, and Numbers 8:16,) was it not monstrous to pass through the fire, and to offer to idols those who were specially devoted and sacred to God? We see, then, that the Prophet does not speak in vain of the first-born.

That I should destroy thou, says he, and they should know that I am Jehovah. God here shows that he had proceeded gradually to the final vengeance; and for this reason the people were the more convicted of stupidity, since they never perceived God's judgments manifest. If God had suddenly and impetuously issued his

[551] Supply "the fire," as in the authorized version.

vengeance from heaven, men's astonishment would not have been wonderful; but when he grants them space of time and a truce that they may weigh the matter at leisure, and admonishes them to repentance, not once only, but often; and then if they remain always the same and are not effected, they show themselves utterly desperate by this slothfulness, as the Prophet now asserts. But when he adds, that they may know that I am Jehovah, he means that as he was not acknowledged as a father by the Jews, he would be their judge, and compel them whether they would or not to feel the formidable nature of that power which they despised. Since we have treated this subject fully before, we now pass it by more lightly. Yet we must notice this, that God is recognized by the reprobate, since, when his fatherly goodness has been for a long time despised by them, he at length appears as a judge, and draws them against their will to his tribunal, and executes his vengeance, so that they cannot escape. It follows ---

Ezekiel 20:27-28

27. Therefore, son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, and say unto them, Thus says the Lord GOD; Yet in this your fathers have blasphemed me, in that they have committed a trespass against me.

27. Propterea loquere ad domum Israel, fili hominis, et dic illis, Sic dicit Dominator Iehovah: Adhuc in hoc contumeliosi in me fuerunt me, patres vestri praevaricando in me praevaricatione.

28. For when I had brought them into the land, for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to them, then they saw every high hill, and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering: there also they made their sweet savour, and poured out there their drink-offerings.

28. Nam introduxi [552] in terram pro qua sustuleram manum meam ad dandum eam ipsis: et viderunt omnem collem excelsum, et omnem arborem frondosam: et sacrificarunt illic sacrificia sua, et obtulerunt illic irritationem oblationis suae, et posuerunt illic odorem bonae fragrantiae suae, et fuderunt illic sua libamina.

He now descends to the wickedness of the people, by which God was provoked after they had taken possession of the land of Canaan, since they despised God after being so carefully warned. He complains, therefore, that this was very disgraceful, since, after he had put them in possession of the land of promise, they had never desisted from purposely insulting him. This disgrace was intolerable, since he had profited nothing by them in the wilderness: this witnessing was sufficiently serious to stir them up. ``Walk you not in the decrees of your fathers: I am your God, observe you my law.'' Since. therefore, God drew them under obedience to himself, what a mark of pride it was not to attend to that witness-bearing, but to pursue their own mad career? In truth, the crime was the more atrocious when at length they entered the land of Canaan, and had obtained so many victories, that they did not learn by experience how God declared his pourer for the very purpose of binding them closer to himself. For the numerous benefits which God had conferred upon them were but so many bonds by which they were bound more closely to him. This

[552] "For the copula ought to be resolved in this way." — Calvin.

expostulation, then, is not in vain, when he reproaches them by saying, when they dishonored me, or rebelled against me. This was not a single crime, or simple perfidy, but a continual delight in wantonly insulting him; for {גדף}, gedef, signifies to reject, treat contumeliously, or disdain. God, therefore, by this word wishes to express the deliberate insolence of the people, while they rose so wickedly against him as if they would spit in his face. The full meaning is, that they were not only breakers of treaties and rebels when they contaminated the land of Canaan with their superstitions, but were so petulant that they professedly threw scorn upon God.

Hence, after I had brought them into the land for which, or concerning which, I had lifted up my hand to give it them, they saw, says he, every high hill, and every green or branching tree, and there they sacrificed. God wished to have one altar built for himself, and sacrifices to be offered in one place; nay, before the people had any certain and fixed station, God was unwilling that any altar should be built to him of polished stones, that no trace of it should remain; but a mound only was to be made of either turf or rough stones. (Exodus 20:25; Deuteronomy 27:5, 6.) Now he says, whenever hills and branching trees were lying before them, there they found enticements to superstition. This, therefore, is the reproach which God now complains was offered to him. But this passage, like many others, teaches, that not only is God's worship corrupted when his honor is transferred to idols, but also when men heap up their own fictions, and contaminate God's commands by the mixture. We must remember, then, that there are two kinds of idolatries; the one being grossest when idols are worshipped openly, and Moloch, or any Baal, is substituted for the living God: that is a palpable superstition, because God is in some sense cast down from his throne. But the other kind of idolatry, although more hidden, is abominable before God, namely, when, under the disguise of a name, men boldly mingle whatever comes into their minds, and invent various modes of worship; as at present we see in the papacy statues adored, and dead men invoiced, and God's honor violated in various ways. Hence, however, the papists chatter, they are self-convicted, and the wonder is that they are not utterly silenced, since their superstitions are so gross that even boys perceive them. But there are other superstitions more specious and refined; for when they have invented many things in honor of God, they will not bring forward the names of either St. Barbara or St. Christopher, but the name of God covers all those abominations. But we see that this excuse is frivolous, when men assert that they have nothing else in their mind than the worship of God. Not only does God wish worship to be offered to himself alone, but that it should be without any dependence on human will: he wishes the law to be the single rule of true worship; and thus he rejects all fictitious rites. Hence the Prophet deservedly excuses the Israelites, because they turned their eyes towards every high hill and every branching tree, and there offered the provocation of their offering. He calls it the provocation of their offering, since they not only foolishly poured forth much money on those vitiated rites, but also provoked God to anger. We see, therefore, that men not only lose their labor when they decline from God's commands, and rashly fatigue themselves with their own superstitions, but they provoke God to a contest, because they snatch from him the right of a lawgiver: for it is in his power to determine how he

ought to be worshipped; and when men claim this power to themselves, it is like ascending to the very throne of God. But if they follow the inventions of others, still it is setting them up as lawgivers, while God is degraded from his tribunal. Thus it is not surprising if God's wrath is provoked by any sacrifices, besides those which the law prescribes. And this is expressed very clearly by Isaiah, when God announces that he will do what will frighten them all as an unexpected prodigy: I will blind the eyes of the wise, says he, and I will take away prudence from the aged. (Isaiah 29:14.) And why so? because they worship me by the precepts of men.

It follows, And they offered their sweet odor, or agreeable fragrance. These two things seem contrary to each other, that their offerings inflamed God's wrath, and yet their savor was sweet. But the Prophet. speaks ironically when he says, their incense was sweet-smelling. By conceding this he derides them, since they falsely supposed God was appeased in this way, although he reproves them at the same time for defiling, by their corruption's, that incense which ought to have been of delightful fragrance. For the language of Moses is repeated: The scent shall reach God's nostrils, and he shall be appeased. (Deuteronomy 33:10.) Since, then, the incense of the law was sweet-smelling, God here bitterly reproaches the Jews for infecting that good odor with their foulness. Hence the phrase is used in a sense contrary to its direct meaning. Lastly, he says, they have poured out their drink-offerings there. Here God reviews the various kinds of oblations which he had fully prescribed in the law but he shows that the Jews were rebellious against them all; and he further detects their unbridled petulance, since they had not only violated the law in one point, but had left no part untouched by their superstitions. God had commanded sacrifices, but these they rendered polluting: he added various oblations, yet all these they defiled: he desired libations to be made, and will to be poured out, but this part of the service was not kept pure from superstitions. Thus he shows that the people purposely took all means of declaring war against God, when they falsely pretended that nothing more was prescribed than to worship him as they pleased. It follows ---

Ezekiel 20:29

29. Then I said unto them, What is the high place whereunto ye go? And the name thereof is called Bamah unto this day.

29. Et dixi illis, ut quid [553] excelsum quod vos ingredimini? [554] et vocatum fuit nomen ejus excelsum usque ad hunc diem.

Although there is no ambiguity in the Prophet's words, yet the sentence seems frigid, and interpreters, in my judgment, have not understood the Prophet's meaning. It may seem spiritless, that God should ask, what is the high place? But it means that they were not deceived through ignorance, since he had often cautioned them against profaning the true and genuine worship, for he often endeavored to draw them back again when he saw them wandering after their own superstitions. Hence they are continually rebuked by the prophets; and their obstinacy is the more apparent, since, nevertheless, they followed their own perverseness. But because all

[553] "Wither," or, "of what kind." — Calvin.
[554] Or, "why do you go there?" — Calvin.

these reproaches were useless, God here enlarges upon their crime, since they were deaf. I have said, therefore; that is, by means of prophets. For we know how constantly the prophets discharged their duty, by urging them to worship at one altar only. For this reason the people's wickedness was greater; whence God says, What is this? and why do you so greatly desire your high places when they displease me, and you know my commands? your ears are deaf, and obstructed by wickedness. On the whole, he asks how could such madness seize upon them as to approach these high places, since he had pointed out a place where he was to be sought and invoked. My temple, says he, is neglected; meanwhile you run to high places, and yet it is known by the name of a high place. There is no mystery in this word; but God means that no reproaches or threats of his prophets could prevent the people from worshipping on these high places. He says, then, that the name was still used, since the same dignity and religious regard for them still flourished, when their remembrance ought to be utterly abolished. If God had only once pronounced that those high places were not approved by him, all ought to have changed their course instantly: he, exclaimed against them long and vehemently by his prophets, and yet the name ``high places'' was constantly in everybody's mouth; it was famous among them, as if God ought to be sought there. Now therefore we see that the Jews were condemned for too much pride, because they not only failed to desert their high places when repeatedly admonished, but they perniciously wished to oppose those places to God's sanctuary, although they were so many pollution's. Hence we gather the condemnation of the people's obstinate malice, since fathers handed down the name to their sons, so that through a continued posterity they opposed these high places to the only sanctuary of God. It follows ---

Ezekiel 20:30

30. Wherefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? and commit ye whoredom after their abominations?

30. Propterea dic ad domum Israel, Sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, An in via patrum vestrorum vos polluti estis? et post idola ipsorum [555] vos scortamini?

Now at length the Prophet openly attacks those by whom he was consulted. After showing that they sprang from impure fathers --- which was sufficiently manifest from their never ceasing to provoke God in every age from the very beginning to the end --- he turns their own language against them, and asks, whether they were polluted after the superstitions of their fathers? The old interpretation is ``truly;'' but {ה}, he, the mark of interrogation, does not allow of that. I am surprised at the rendering of some expositors, are you not polluted?'' as if the word were {הלוא}, hel-va, for in my opinion they pervert the Prophet's sense, for this would make him ask absurdly, what? are you polluted in the way of your fathers? and are you gone astray after their idols? For when they were in exile, that disinheriting ought to subdue them although they had been endued with a more than iron pride: and then they pretended to piety, when they came to the Prophet and desired to receive some consolation from him. Since, therefore, they pretended to some modesty, God here asks them how they

[555] Or, “filthiness.” — Calvin.

could pollute themselves in the way of their fathers? what could it all mean? the things are quite contrary: you approach my servant as if you intended to submit your minds and your senses to my word; but when you so feign yourselves to be attentive to my answers, how does it happen that you pollute yourselves in the way of your fathers? This seems to me the Spirit's meaning. You shall say, then, are you polluted in the way of your fathers? that is, are you so obstinate as not to reflect upon your course, and never to look back? for you see how severely God was revenged on your obstinacy: you now seek me in appearance, as if this were your only refuge; then how is it that you pollute yourselves in the way of your fathers? and why do you commit fornication after their idols? It now follows ---

Ezekiel 20:31

31. For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be inquired of by you.

31. Et offerendo dona vestra, [556] et trajiciendo filios vestros per ignem vos polluimini in omnibus idolis vestris usque hodie: et ego inquirar a vobis, domus Israel? Vivo ego dicit Dominator Iehovah, si inquirar a vobis.

He follows up the same sentiment, that it was a monstrous sin that they so perniciously remained fixed in the perverse imitation of their fathers: for they had been drawn off from their lusts by God's numerous chastisements, and then they pretended to be afterwards disposed to obedience: God therefore here says, why, then, by offering your gifts, do you make your sons pass through the fire, and pollute yourselves with all your idols even to this day? For this question concerns what is quite incredible and worthy of the greatest surprise, since there was no way of reconciling the sufferings of the Israelites in exile with their remaining obstinate in their wickedness. But the Prophet here again deprives them of that vain pretense with which they covered themselves in offering their gifts: he concedes to them what was true, yet, at the same time, he objects, that they passed their sons through the fire, and were polluted in all their idols. He adds, at length, shall I be inquired of by you? I have elsewhere explained that clause, which is now for the third time repeated. Many take it in a different sense, that God will not deign to answer them any more: but, in my opinion, he simply reproaches their perfidy, because, when they approached the Prophet, they wished to blind his eyes. Shall I, says he, be inquired of you? For {דרש}, deresh, means to seek, and to attain the end of our search, when the person asked answers, and the person sought presents himself. But here God simply shows that they do not come in a right mind, and that nothing else was imposed on them except seeking him. But because that was almost incredible, hence he swears that they were merely hypocritical in pretending to true piety in suppliantly applying to the Prophet for an answer in God's name, and then wantonly deriding it, and impiously and wickedly using his name, and thus profaning it.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, since you do not cease thy daily exhortations to repentance,

[556] "By tendering your oblations." — Calvin.

but indulge us, and bear with us, while you correct us by thy word and thy chastisements, that we may not remain obstinate, but may learn to submit ourselves to thee: Grant, I pray thee, that we may not offer ourselves as thy disciples with feigned repentance, but be so sincerely and cordially devoted to thee, that we may desire nothing else than to progress more and more in the knowledge of thy heavenly doctrine, till at length we enjoy that full light which we hope for through our Lord Jesus Christ. --- Amen.

Lecture Sixty-Fourth.

Ezekiel 20:32-33

32. And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.

32. Et ascendit [557] super spiritum vestrum non erit, quia vos dixistis, [558] Erimus sicut gentes, sicut familiae terrarum, ut serviamus ligno et lapidi.

33. As I live, says the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you:

33. Vivo ego, dicit Dominator Iehovah, Si non in manu robusta et brachio extento, et excandescentia effusa dominabor super vos.

Now God discloses what those old men had in their minds who, as well as the rest of the captives, came to the Prophet for the purpose of inquiry, namely, a feeling of despair, since they thought nothing would be more useful to themselves than to revolt utterly from God, and to form themselves after the manner and rites of the Gentiles; for they found themselves specially hated by the profane nations, because they worshipped a peculiar God. Since, therefore, the law separated them from all the rest of the world, that they might escape that hatred and envy, they encouraged the perverse intention of deserting God's worship and passing over to the Gentiles. For they hoped that those who had been formerly hostile would have shown themselves favor-able. Now God not only announces that he would not suffer it, but he asserts with an oath, what you are thinking of shall not come to pass, since I will draw you back with a strong hand, and with an extended arm, and poured out wrath. The meaning is, that although those miserable captives desired to throw off God's yoke and to mingle themselves with the profane nations, yet God would have respect to his covenant and not suffer them to be snatched away from him, just as a master fetches back his fugitive slave; or like a prince who might destroy the perfidious and rebellious, yet only chastises them that they may groan under a hard slavery: this is the complete sense.

But this passage is worthy of observation, since in the present day the same thought makes many anxious; for the name of sincere piety distresses them, and so they consult their love of ease, and satisfy both themselves and others by uniting with the rest of the world, and avoiding the hatred of mankind in consequence of their religion. Others again desire to escape in any way from God, because they feel him hostile to them, for the condition of the Church seems to them much worse than that of the world at large. And truly as God takes special care of it, so he chastises

[557] We must understand the relative, “that which arises.” — Calvin.
[558] It is the participle, “you say.” — Calvin.

its faults more severely. We see then how he spares unbelievers and foreigners, as if he connived at their crimes: meanwhile his hand is always extended to chastise all who profess to be in the number of the pious. But some would desire to bid farewell to God, if they could choose for themselves. Hence I said we must observe this passage. The Israelites thought that nothing would be better than to be joined to the Gentiles and to become in all respects like them, since they imagined that in this way they would enjoy relaxation, since God was more lenient to the Gentiles than he had been to them, and because they perceived themselves exposed to many dangers and troubles, harassed by assaults and subject to daily threats. Hence that perverse deliberation which is here reproved; --- what arises in your mind, says he, shall not come to pass, because you say we shall be as the nations and the families of the earth. But we must also consider the end, because the people's folly was so great that they thought they would be free from God's chastisements, if they utterly rejected all religion. God therefore denies that he would suffer it. Now a clearer explanation follows: As I live, says he, if I will not rule over you with a strong hand and a stretched-out arm; in this sense --- when they had removed all refuges he would yet be an avenger of his rights and empire, so as to compel them to return to him, as we have said, and thus violently to bring back the fugitives. We now see the great stupidity of the people in thinking the only remedy for their troubles to be in declining from true piety. Let us then be careful that we do not harden ourselves when God chastises us, and desire to withdraw from his power and dominion. Meanwhile God shows that he will rule, but in some other way; because we know with what humanity he treated his people, and what patience he exercised towards them, when they so often provoked his wrath. He now announces that he would be the Lord, but with a strong hand and a stretched-out arm, since he would forget his former clemency and subject them to perverse bondage. As when a master sees that he cannot obtain voluntary obedience from his slaves, he compels them to the galleys, or other laborious works, until they become half dead. God denounces that such will be the condemnation which he will use against them, since they never profited by either clemency or pardon. It follows ---

Ezekiel 20:34

34. And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out.

34. Et educam vos e populis, et colligam vose terris per quas fuistis dispersi, in manu valida, (vel robusta,) et brachio extento, et excandescentia effusa.

He confirms the same sentiment, and at the same time marks out the manner of his dominion. For when the Jews were dispersed in captivity, they were like strangers to God's jurisdiction: they were mingled with the Gentiles, and their condition seemed very like an exemption from God's power. Now God signifies when he wishes to recover his right, that he had a place at hand, since he will bring them out from the Gentiles, and gather them from the lands through which they were dispersed. We are aware, as we have often said before, that it was a kind of abdication, when God expelled the ten tribes from the land of Canaan and a part also of that

of Judea. Since then they were disinherited, they thought themselves free on their part, and they no longer regarded the authority of God, since they ceased to be his peculiar heritage when they were deprived of the promised land. Here God reminds them that although he had emancipated them for the time, yet they were in some sense under his hand, since he would collect them again, and so subdue them, that they should not escape his authority. I will draw you back, says he, and gather you with an outstretched arm and with a strong hand. But what he adds concerning the fury of his wrath does not seem consistent with this. For it was a sign of favor to collect them again, although hard and sorrowful slavery awaited them; yet they might perceive some taste of the divine goodness in gathering them from exile. For we know the bitterness of their captivity; especially under the Chaldaeans, by whom they were subdued. But the phrase wrath may relate as much to the Gentiles as to the Israelites themselves: yet I explain it more willingly of the Israelites, because although God in reality shows that he did not altogether neglect them, yet he asserts his right as a master grievously offended. Just as a person who had lost his slave may afterwards receive him into his house, and yet that house may be like a sepulcher, because he is either thrust into a deep dungeon, or three or four times as much is exacted of him as he can bear. So therefore God pronounces, although he may gather the Israelites again under his hand, yet they shall feel him to be displeased with them, since he nevertheless will require the punishment of their impiety; and this will be better understood from the context.

Ezekiel 20:35-36

35. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face.

35. Et introducem vos in desertum gentium, et judicabor vobiscum illic [559] facie ad faciem.

36. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD.

36. Quemadmodum judicatus sum [560] cum patribus vestris in deserto terrae Ægypti, sic disceptabo vobiscum dicit Dominator Iehovah.

He specially marks this reason here, which is a medium between rejection and reconciliation to favor: for God's bringing the Israelites out of Chaldaea might seem a sign of favor, as if he were again their deliverer. But he here defines why he intended to bring them forth, namely, to plead with them in the desert as with their fathers. We know that when the people came out of Egypt they did not possess the promised land, because they shut the door against themselves by their ingratitude: but if there had been no hope left, it was better for the people to spend their time under the tyranny of Egypt than to pine away in the desert. For it was a kind of life scarcely human to wander in a wilderness and to behold nothing pleasant or agreeable; a mere solitude instead of cultivated fields, and nothing but discomfort instead of beautiful flowers and trees and undulating ground: and besides this, to feed on nothing but manna, to taste no wine, to drink only water from the rock,

[559] That is, "I will plead with you by right." — Calvin.
[560] That is, "I have pleaded." — Calvin.

and to endure heat and cold in the, open air. Such freedom then was by no means agreeable, unless they had hoped to become possessors of the land of Canaan. But a whole generation was deprived of that advantage through their ingratitude. God therefore appositely compares them to their fathers, who had gone forth into the wilderness, and he says, I will make you pass into the desert of the nations. Here he compares the desert of Egypt to that of the Gentiles. Although the passage from the land of Canaan to Chaldaea is partly across an unfruitful wilderness, yet I do not doubt that God here metaphorically points out the state of the people after their return from exile.

The complete meaning is, as he surrounded their fathers throughout their whole life in the wilderness, so after they were brought back from Chaldaea their life should be as solitary as if they were banished to an obscure corner of the world, and to a miserable and deserted land. Here, therefore, another region is not intended, but the state of the people when dwelling in the land of Canaan; although he speaks not only of that small band which returned to their country, but of the liberty promiscuously given to all. He calls that state a desert of the Gentiles, to which all were subjected, whether they remained in distant regions or returned home. We must hold, then, that God would be so far the deliverer of the people that the benefit would reach only a few, since, when the multitude wandered in the desert, they perished there, and did not enjoy the promised inheritance. We now see how God established his sway over the Israelites, when he did not suffer them to be perpetually captive, and yet did not show himself appeased when he brought them back, since he still remained a severe judge. I will bring you, therefore, into the desert of the nations; this is the heat of anger of which he had spoken, and I will judge you, or plead with you, face to face. He signifies by these words, that although their return to Judea was evident, yet he was not propitious, since he met them as an adversary. There, says he, I will meet with you face to face, as when contention is rife, adversaries become opposed, and contend hand to hand: thus God here points out the extremity of rigor when he says, that he will dispute with them face to face. But he says, that he was a pleader in the desert of Egypt, and the sense extends to the future; not that it ought to be understood that God descended to plead a cause, and place himself at another's tribunal; still it was a kind of pleading when the people were compelled to feel that their impiety and obstinacy was not excusable; and also when experience at the same time taught them that God was by no means appeased, since his wrath was again stirred up. Isaiah's language is slightly different: Come you, says he, let us reason together, I will plead with you. (Isaiah 1.) He is there prepared to argue his cause, as if with an equal. But the case is soon closed and the sentence passed, since it is evident that the people are deservedly punished by God on account of their sins. Thus he pleaded with their fathers in the Egyptian desert when he deprived them all of entrance into the promised land. And afterwards he often punished them for their murmurs, perverse cravings, lusts, idolatries, and other crimes. Hence, let us learn that God is pleading with us whenever any signs of his anger appear; for we cannot derive any advantage from obstinate resistance: and hence nothing remains but to accuse ourselves for our faults. It follows ---

Ezekiel 20:37

37. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant:

37. Et transire faciam vos sub virga, et adducam vos in vinculo foederis.

He follows up the same kind of instruction, that the people were not permitted to perish because they belonged to him, as if he had said that they should be always his, whether they liked it or not. And yet he seems to promise here what was very agreeable, that he would always esteem them as his flock. This is the meaning of to pass under the rod; for {שבט}, shebet, does not mean a scepter here, nor a staff by which a delinquent is struck, but it means a shepherd's crook. It is, then, a simile taken from a shepherd who numbers and marks his flock; and this phrase often recurs. It means, because God has once acquired the people as his own, he cannot be rightly deprived of them. The exiles, indeed, had imagined themselves free if they could blot out of their minds and memories the name of the true God, and pollute themselves with the defilement's of the Gentiles. But God, on the other hand, pronounces, that as a shepherd notices his sheep, and counts their number, and makes them pass under his staff, like a king reviewing his army, so he would reckon up his people, and not suffer any one to snatch them from him, since he claims authority over them all without exception. Now, therefore, we understand the sense of the words: whence we gather again, that abandoned men gain nothing by their obstinacy, but God's really showing that the dominion which he has once assumed cannot by any means be snatched away from him. So this passage teaches us the kind of reward which awaits all apostates who think themselves emancipated when they brutally indulge in impiety, because God at length will make them pass under the rod, that is, he will call and compel them to render an account, as if their profession of faith was like a brand burnt in to their hearts.

He says, in the bonds of a covenant, but in a different sense from what Hosea denominates a bond of affection. (Hosea 11:4.) He is there treating of reconciliation; but in this passage God pronounces that he will no longer be en-treated by the Israelites. Hence, the bond of the covenant means the constancy of his covenant, as far as he is concerned: and the, simile is suitable, because God had bound his people to himself, on the condition that they should be always surrounded with these bonds. Hence, when they petulantly wandered like untamed beasts, yet God had hidden bonds of his covenant: that is, he persevered in his own covenant, so that he collected them all again to himself, not to rule over them as a father, but to punish their revolt more severely. Here is a tacit comparison between the Israelites and the Gentiles; for the Gentiles, through their never approaching nearer to God, wandered away in their licentiousness without restraint. But the state of the elect people was different, since the end of their covenant was this, that God held them bound to him, even if the whole world should escape from him. It follows ---

Ezekiel 20:38

38. And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

38. Et purgabo [561] e vobis rebelles et perfidos in me: e terra habitationum suarum educam impios, et ad terrain Israel non ingredientur: et cognoscetis quod ego Iehovah.

He continues the discourse which he had commenced, namely, that God would not suffer the exiles to withdraw themselves from him from the time he had adopted them. Then, since they were bound by the blessing of redemption, although they thought themselves far removed from the sight of God, after they were cast into exile, he says he would be present to gather them from the land of their dwellings; that is, wherever they were dispersed to bring them out. Some suppose the phrase to include a promise of favor, because it is said, I will purge you; but the word to choose, as I prefer to render it, or to discern, means, that God will drag to light those who think they have obtained hiding-places in which they can escape his eyes. Although, therefore, they promise themselves complete exemption from God's authority, he, on the other hand, pronounces them deceived, since he would collect them all together from the land of their habitations, although they were dispersed in different places. God's threatenings are sufficiently evident from the second clause of the verse, they shall not come, says he, into the land of Israel, and you shall know that I am Jehovah. He confirms what we saw before, that when liberty was granted them, they did not on that account become God's Church, since he had another reason for ruling over them, namely, to chastise them severely for their wickedness. They shall not come, therefore, into the land of Israel; that is, they shall remain, and grow corrupt in the desert, as we know that to be a most severe punishment, when God swore, that except two persons, Caleb and Joshua, no one should enter the land of Canaan. (Numbers 14:23, 24.) So also in this passage, I will free you, that is, when your return to your country shall be evident, a new light shall seem to have shone forth, but yet reflect on what happened to your fathers; for although redeemed, they perished in the desert, and never possessed the land of Canaan. The same thing shall happen to you also:, since your return is only a prelude to my favor: but you shall never return to the land of Israel. But this is extended to those who returned and dwelt in their native land. But we said that Judea was a place of exile since the course of God's favor was broken off, and God begun to plead with them afresh, even when he had led them from their captivity at Babylon And you shall know that I am Jehovah: as we said yesterday, God is recognized by the reprobate, while they are compelled to acknowledged a judge whose fatherly clemency they had despised. It follows ---

Ezekiel 20:39

39. As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols.

39. Et vos domus Israel, sic dicit Dominator Iehovah, Quisque idolis suis ite servite, postquam non auditis me, et nomen sanctitatis meae, [562] ne profanetis amplius in muneribus vestris, et idolis vestris.

Now again God expressly bears witness that he rejects the Israelites because they

[561] Or, "I will choose." — Calvin.

[562] Verbally, meaning "my holy name." — Calvin.

infected the pure worship of the law with their mixtures; for we said that they were deceived by a vain imagination when they thought God pleased with their obedience, while they worshipped him only half-heartedly. When they heaped up fictions, they thought this diligence would be pleasing to God, because they professed to acknowledge the true God as their redeemer. Here again he announces that he rejects all half-worship, since he wished to have the entire affections, and to admit no rival: Now, says he, O house of Israel, thus says Jehovah, Go each of you and serve your idols, just as if he would cast them off from his family. And yet we see that they were always under his dominion; and thus some kind of inconsistency arises when God rejects them from his sway, and yet retains them as his right. But the liberty which is now granted is to show them that it is in vain to worship God by halves.

This passage is peculiarly remarkable, since at this time many are deceived, while they rest upon their own inventions, and think that they best discharge their duty towards God when they partially obey his commandments, and then pile up a great heap of superstitions, partly received from their fathers and partly fabricated by themselves. Again, scarcely one in a hundred will be found who does not think it better partially to worship God than entirely to devote themselves to idols; and this indeed is true as far as man is concerned; for the impiety is more foul and detestable when men openly reject God, and divorce themselves from him, and devote themselves to idols, than if they partly worshipped God and partly idols. But in the meantime, we see that God pronounces that he cannot bear this profanation; and we must diligently notice the reason which is added; for when gross and palpable impiety is indulged in, God's name is not so profaned as when clever men reconcile the pure worship of God with superstitions: and for this reason, that monstrous Indecision [563] was in God's sight worse than the papacy; and why so? for although the papists profane God's name, yet their madness is at present so detected, that it openly appears that they are idolaters; but that invention mingled darkness with light, and infected the pure doctrine with its leaven. But God here exclaims that he could not endure this deception when men profess to worship him, for they defile themselves with superstitions, since profaneness is added to impiety, and both are the result of hypocrisy. The rest tomorrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since you have once redeemed us by the death of your only-begotten Son, that we may not interrupt the course of thy favor by our ingratitude; but may we so proceed in obedience to thy Gospel, that we may be brought at length to the perfection of that grace which is commenced within us, and may proceed more and more every day in true piety, till at length we are gathered into thy heavenly kingdom, and enjoy the inheritance promised and obtained for us by the same Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Sixty-Fifth.

We yesterday saw the reason why God prefers that men should be entirely de-

[563] Calvin's language is here rather remarkable. He calls the clinging to the worship of God, while bowing down to idols, illud prodigiosum Interim, which is in the French translation ce beau monstre D'interim. The same idea is also expressed by the word commentum, translated ceste belle invention ainsi forgee.

voted to their superstitions rather than mingle them with the resemblance of true piety, since this is but a profanation of his holy name. He wishes to be kept separate from all idols. Hence it is not surprising that he loosens the reins from the Israelites, that they should cast themselves entirely on their idolatries; and he repeats again what he had said, that his name was profaned by gifts and idols, since the unbelievers pretended to worship him, but at the same time transferred his glory to idols. Hence he does not suffer himself to be trifled with in this way; so wherever offerings and idols occur, we should notice that all mixtures by which the pure simplicity of lawful worship is corrupted are condemned. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 20:40

40. For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things.

40. Quia in monte sanctitatis meae, in monte excelso Israel, dicit Dominator Iehovah, illic colent me tota domus Israel, tota inquam in terra, illic propitius ero illis: [564] et illic requiram oblationes vestras et primitias donorum vestrorum in omnibus sanctificationibus vestris.

God now directs his address to the elect, or the remnant in whom he wished his Church to survive. Thus far he has spoken of the whole body of the people: he says, although he should free them from the hand of the Gentiles, yet that redemption would be but partial, because they should perish in the desert, and never enjoy the promised land. On the whole, he shows that those to whom a free return to their own country was given were no less strangers than if they had been exiles at the time, and always remained outlaws, since their impiety prevented their restoration. God now addresses the true Israelites, who were not only naturally descended from their fathers, but were genuine and spiritual children, as Paul distinguishes between those sons of Abraham born according to the flesh and to promise. (Romans 9:7-9.) For this reason also it is said in Psalm 73. --- And surely God is good to Israel --- to those who are upright in heart for the Prophet here asserts that God is gracious towards the Israelites; but since many hypocrites boast themselves to be members of the Church, for the sake of correcting them, he restricts the sentence, and does not reckon any, as true Israelites except the upright in heart. So the same thing is repeated in Psalms 15 and Psalms 24. --- Who shall ascend into the mount of the Lord? But the perfidious and the wicked did mingle themselves with the sincere worshipers; yet the Prophet excludes them from the list of the faithful, since he says that none should have a fixed station in God's sanctuary unless the sound in heart and the clean in hand. In the same sense also the Prophet formerly taught, that although hypocrites proudly boasted themselves to be God's people, yet their names were not written in the secret catalogue of the righteous. (Ezekiel 13:9.) We now see how well those things which seem inconsistent agree together, namely, that the Lord's redeeming Israel from the tyranny of the Gentiles would not profit them, and yet, that they should come into the mountain of Israel and worship him sincerely.

[564] Or, "I will embrace them with my favor." — Calvin.

Israel is here placed before us in a twofold light: for many were Israelites in name; but here the Prophet is treating of the elect, whom Paul calls a remnant of grace. (Romans 11:5.)

In the mountain, says he, of my holiness, in the lofty mountain of Israel. He does not call the mountain high, because it was loftier than others, for we know that there were many lofty mountains in the land of Judea; and Zion was but a small hill; but we have elsewhere seen that it was preferred to lofty mountains, because it excelled in dignity. Here our Prophet does not regard the height of Mount Zion, but the singular glory with which it was adorned; as if he had said that God resided there, and his glory shone forth over all the loftiness of the world. Meanwhile I do not doubt that this epithet is obliquely opposed to the high places, which were consecrated everywhere, as we saw before. Since, therefore, the people had erected altars in all elevated places of all kinds, here God opposes one lofty mountain to all these, whose height had deceived those wretched men who thought themselves when there, nearer to heaven. This, therefore, is the reason why he calls it a high mountain. He says, there shall the whole house of Israel worship me, the whole, I say, in the land. It is not surprising that the whole house of Israel is placed here without exception, because, as I have said, the Prophet does not comprehend all those who boasted in that title, but he only means the pure worshipers of God, who were the spiritual children of Abraham. But here God describes the agreement in faith among all the faithful, as if he had said that the people would be fresh, and would not follow various speculations, as they formerly wandered, each after his own superstitions, but there should be one common rule for all. So we are taught by this passage that our worship does not please God except we are bent upon a simple agreement of faith, and the celebration of his name with our mouth. The impious often subscribe to different modes of belief, but they have no regard to God: but, here we must hold the principle, that God cannot be worshipped unless the doctrine of his law flourishes. The whole house of Israel, I say, in the land. He signifies by these words that the whole land of Israel, so long contaminated by much filth, should be so sacred that the pure and perfect worship of God should alone be beheld there. In the land, then, purged from all defilement's by which it was before polluted, he adds a promise, there will I be propitious to you. We formerly saw that all the people's sacrifices were rejected, and that for one reason, because they mixed them with their own inventions. Now, God pronounces that he would be propitious to them, because he will be purely worshipped, and his service shall no longer be vitiated by the perverse comments of men. We here see, therefore, that God's complacency or favor is accompanied with a detestation of all superstitions, as we have often mentioned previously. As, therefore, God abominates whatever is added to the simple teaching of the law, so he asserts that he will be propitious where he is purely worshipped according to the law. He adds, and there will I require your oblations: the person is changed, but the sense flows on readily: he says, I will require your oblations: he puts one kind of oblation, but he includes them all, as will be seen at the end of the verse. Although I confess that two different kinds of offering are signified by the words, {תרומה}, theromeh, and, {תנופה}, thenopheh, yet they are often taken for any kind

of offering when used separately, a part being put for the whole, as I have said. He says, then, that the offerings were grateful to him, and he implies that by the word requiring, because we have seen that the people's gifts were refused when corrupted by foreign superstitions, and God is said to exact the gifts which he approves. And the first-fruits of your gifts, he says, that is, the flower or excellence of your gifts, in all your sanctifications, that is, in all my worship. It signifies, on the whole, when the Israelites betake themselves to the simple doctrine of the law, their obedience is so grateful to God, that their gifts please him, their offerings are taken into account, and their whole worship is accepted. It now follows ---

Ezekiel 20:41

41. I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen.

41. In odore bonae fragrantiae propitius ero vobis cum eduxero vos e populis, et collegero vos ex terris, per quas dispersi eritis, et sanctificabor in vobis in oculis gentium.

He continues the same sentiment, namely, that the people's worship would be acceptable, when those who had formerly been deceived by their superstitions had bidden them farewell, and follow the law only. He uses the word ``savor,'' according to the customary legal form, not because incense was pleasing to God, but because external ceremonies were no vain discipline for the people when they retained the truth. For surely incense of itself is of no consequence, but God wished in a palpable manner to testify that he did not reject the sacrifices which he had commanded. Hence, by these forms of speech, the Holy Spirit signifies that God was truly appeased when men approach him with sincere faith and repentance, and desire to be reconciled, and suppliantly pray for pardon by ingenuous confession of sin, and look up to Christ this is the savor which Moses everywhere teaches was sweet, to God. But as the incense of the law was always sweet, so all others were offensive, as we have already seen. The Prophet, therefore, adds nothing new here, but confirms his former teaching, that God delights in the pure and sincere worship of the faithful, when they try nothing but by his law. Afterwards, says he, I will lead you out frown the people, and will collect you frown the lands through which you have been dispersed. He repeats the same words which were formerly used, but with another sense and purpose; since, while he redeems alike the hypocrites and his elect, the offered liberty does not profit the hypocrites: because, wherever they might dwell, their station was in the wilderness; and even in the very bosom of the land of Canaan they were exiles, and their life was erratic, and they were without any enjoyment of the promised inheritance, but wandered in the desert, and through distant regions. For although they dwelt in the midst of a crowd, yet such was their condition that God had deservedly threatened them with remaining in the wilderness of the Gentiles even till death. But now, when he speaks of the elect and the faithful, he makes a difference between them and the hypocrites. For a question might otherwise arise, since all were apparently alike, What was the tendency of the promise, that some should be exiles and others return to their inheritance? For Daniel never returned

to his country, and there is no doubt that other pious worshipers of God were at, the same time held back: but we know how sinful a multitude returned to Judea when the edict of Cyrus permitted them. For all were afterwards attentive to their own private business: the temple was neglected; God was defrauded of his first-fruits and offerings; they married strange wives; and mingled polygamy with their sacrifices. (Haggai 1:4.) We have already seen how sharply and severely the three last prophets inveigh against them. Since many returned into the land of Canaan in their unchanged state, and who had better remained in Chaldaea: for this reason the Prophet directs his discourse to the elect, and says that they should not only be brought back, but when restored, as if by stealth, their worship would be pleasing to God in the land. When, therefore, I shall have brought you forth, I shall be sanctified in you before the eyes of the Gentiles. God was in some sense sanctified in the wicked, because they became an illustrious specimen of his power when the Chaldaeans were slain, and his temple erected a second time. But here the Prophet, as I have said, separates the elect from the reprobate, since God was sanctified in them in a special manner, when a new Church emerged again, in which piety, true religion, and holiness of life flourished. When, therefore, such a spectacle was offered to the eyes of the Gentiles, then God asserted his glory among his faithful ones. Lastly, these passages are to be read conjointly, that he will be propitious to them, and will be pleased with their first-fruits and offerings, and he will be sanctified in the eyes of the Gentiles: as it is said in Psalm 114:2, When Israel went out of Egypt, Israel was God's power, and Judea his sanctification, or sanctity. It follows ---

Ezekiel 20:42

42. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers.

42. Et cognoscetis quod ego Iehovah, cum vos introduxero in terrain Israel, in terram [565] pro qua levavi manum meam, ut darem ipsam patribus vestris.

For the sake of frightening them, he threatened that he would be conspicuous to the reprobate, saying, you shall know that I am Jehovah, --- meaning, that he would be their judge: hence he was known to the reprobate by proofs of his anger or wrath. But now another kind of knowledge is denoted, namely, that which brings a sweet taste of paternal love: you shall know, says he, that I am, Jehovah your God, when I shall have brought you in again. He here shows his full and complete benefit towards the faithful, which we saw before was withheld from the reprobate. For they were brought back, because, without exception, all were permitted to return to their country; for then the yoke of an imperious tyranny was broken when they were freed from the dominion of the Chaldees, and the king of the Medes had permitted them to build the temple, and to dwell in the land of Canaan. All were set at liberty, as I have said; but that was the only favor conferred upon the wicked, since they all perished in the desert of the Gentiles: but God's elect were led by the hand to the land of Israel, and there they really possessed the promised inheritance, since they dwelt there as sons and lawful heirs. The hypocrites returned, as I have said, but they never possessed the land by right of inheritance, for they wandered hither and

[565] He had used {,{אדמה admeh, before, but he now uses ,{ארץ} aretz. --- Calvin.

thither in the desert, and although they resided at home, were always wandering exiles. We see, then, that a singular privilege is intended when it is said, I will be known by you, when I shall have brought you back from the nations and the lands through which you were dispersed, into the land concerning which I swore that I would give it to your fathers. Here a mark is inscribed, that the faithful may know that this promise was not common to all: for the dwelling in the land of Canaan of itself was not a matter of much consequence, but here a value is expressed, that they should arrive at that land as God's heirs, and succeed their sacred fathers, to whom the inheritance was promised. As God swore that he would give the land to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, this ought not to be restricted to them personally, as we very well know; and yet they were its true heirs and lords, as their sepulchers bear witness. They suffered vexation by constantly changing their settlements, and were never at rest in one residence. During life they were strangers, but their sepulcher was a proof of true and lawful dominion: and in this way they transmitted the hope of the promised inheritance to their posterity. Now, therefore, we see with what intention the Prophet here says that the land was promised to their fathers, that its value might raise the minds of the faithful to consider the magnitude of the benefit. It follows ---

Ezekiel 20:43

43. And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed.

43. Et recordabimini illic viarum vestrarum, et omnium operum vestrorum, in quibus polluti estis: et eritis excisi [566] in faciebus vestris, in cunctis sceleribus vestris quae perpetrastis.

Here God shows that he would at length be propitious to his elect when they repented. Thus he signifies that there was no other means of reconciliation than by the intervention of repentance. And we must carefully remark this, as I have previously mentioned. For we know with what security all men usually indulge themselves, nor are the pious themselves affected with grief sufficiently serious, when God invites them to the hope of safety and at the same time offers pardon. They embrace indeed greedily what they hear, but meanwhile they bury their sins. But God wishes us to taste his goodness, that the remembrance of our crimes should be bitter, and also that every one should judge himself that he may obtain pardon from him. Now, therefore, we understand the Prophet's intention. We saw a similar passage in Jeremiah: this teaching occurs throughout the Prophets, there, says he, you shall remember me. The circumstance of place is to be noticed, because the Prophet means that after the elect shall have returned to God's favor, and he shall account them as true Members of his Church, then they thought to be mindful of their former life and to repent of their sins. As if he had said, as long as God afflicts you and you remain under the tyranny of the Gentiles in exile, the sense of your evils will compel you to groan, so the remembrance of your sins should return, since, whether you will or not, their punishment will ever be before your eyes, since they would be easily

[566] Or, “abominable.” — Calvin.

persuaded that their sentence was usual and common. But he shows them that the sons of God were not only mindful of their sins, when they feel themselves chastised by him, and experience shows his hostility, but when received into favor and in the enjoyment of their inheritance, they live under God's wings, and he cherishes them as a tender offspring: when, therefore, the faithful are treated so humanely by God, yet the Prophet shows that in their condition they ought to be mindful of their sins, and all your works in which you have been polluted, says he. He now shows to what purpose they were to be mindful. For the wicked are compelled to call their sins to remembrance when God, by forcibly turning their attention to them, draws them to consider what they desire to bury in oblivion. But it is here said, you shall be confounded in your own sight. Since the Hebrew word {וקוט}, kot, signifies to cut off, many interpreters take it for ``ye shall be cut off;'' that is, you shall judge yourselves worthy of destruction among those whom God will cut off and blot out of the earth. But this seems forced. Since the same word sometimes signifies to litigate, and to become abominable, I willingly take this meaning, that they shall be abominable, or contemptible, in their own sight: that is, they shall be so ashamed, as willingly and fully to acknowledge themselves utterly disgraced. Hence Ezekiel means that the faithful should suffer voluntary disgrace, that they may glorify God by the pure and genuine confession of their shame. If any one prefers to expound it, you shall be condemned or convinced, that sense will suit well enough; but I have already brought forward what seemed more simple. For I said that this was the fruit of penitence, when we he confounded before God and are vile and despicable in our own eyes, and when we not only suffer ourselves to be condemned by others, but inwardly reflect upon our own disgrace, and so of our own accord prostrate ourselves before God. This then is the fruit of penitence, this is true humility, flowing from genuine shame. At length it follows ---

Ezekiel 20:44

44. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have wrought with you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.

44. Et cognoscetis quod ego Iehovah, cum fecero vobiscum propter nomen meum, non secundum vias vestras malas, et secundum opera vestra corrupta, domus Israel, dicit Dominator Iehovah.

Here at length God pronounces that his glory would be chiefly conspicuous in the pity which he bestowed upon those who were desperate and abandoned, gratuitously and solely with respect to his own name. Hence Paul so specially celebrates; the grace of God in the first chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, as that mercy by which God deigns to call his own elect in a peculiar sense --- his glory; for his glory extends farther than his pity. (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14.)

As thy name, so thy praise is extended through all lands,
(Psalm 48:10)

for God deserves no less glory when he destroys the wicked than when he pities his own people. But Paul calls that gratuitous favor glory par excellence, by which God embraced his own elect when he adopted them. So also it is said in this pas-

sage, then you shall know that I am Jehovah, since I shall deal with you on behalf of my name, and not according to your sins. But when God wishes his glory to shine conspicuously in gratuitous pity, hence we gather that the enemies of his glory were too gross and open, who obscure his mercy, or extenuate it, or as far as they can, endeavor to reduce it to nothing. But we know the teaching of the papacy to be that God's gratuitous goodness either is buried or enfolded in dark obscurity, or utterly vanish away: for they have invented a system of general merits which they oppose to God's gratuitous favor. For they distinguish merits into preparations, good works acquiring God's favor, and satisfactions, by which they buy off the penalties to which they were subjected. Afterwards they add what they call the suffrages of the saints; for they fabricate for themselves numberless patrons, and various reasonings are concocted for the purpose of obscuring God's glory, or at least of allowing only a few sparks to be visible. Since therefore the whole papacy tends that way, we see that they professedly oppose God's glory, and those who defend such abominations are sworn enemies of God's glory.

For ourselves, then, let. us learn that we cannot otherwise worship God with acceptance unless we adopt whatever pleases him as pertaining to our salvation. For if we wish to come to a debtor and creditor account, or to consider that he is in the slightest degree indebted to us, we in this way diminish his glory, and as far as is in our power we despoil ourselves of that inestimable privilege which the Prophet now commends. Hence let us desire to acknowledge God in this way, since he treats us with amazing clemency and pity out of regard for his own name, and not according to our sins. And since that was said to his ancient people because they returned to the land of Canaan, how much more ought God's gratuitous goodness to be extolled by us, when his heavenly kingdom is at this day open to us, and when he openly calls us to himself in heaven, and to the hope of that happy immortality which has been obtained for us through Christ?

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, since we have already entered in hope upon the threshold of our eternal inheritance, and know that there is a certain mansion for us in heaven after Christ has been received there, who is our head, and the first-fruits of our salvation: Grant, I say, that we may proceed more and more in the course of thy holy calling until at length we reach the goal, and so enjoy that eternal glory of which you afford us a taste in this world, by the same Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

PRAISE TO GOD.

After finishing this last Lecture, that most illustrious man, John Calvin, the Divine, who had previously been sick, then began to be so much weaker that he was compelled to recline on a couch, and could no longer proceed with the explanation of Ezekiel. This accounts for his stopping at the close of the Twentieth Chapter, and not finishing the work so auspiciously begun. Nothing remains, kind Reader, but that you receive most favorably and graciously what is now sent forth to the world.

Historical Scripture Translations

Translation: Ezekiel 1

CHAPTER 1

1 NOW it came to pass in the thirtieth year, [567] in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

2 In the fifth day of the month, in the fifth year of the captivity of King Jehoiakim,

3 The word of Jehovah came to Ezekiel, son of Buzi the priest, in the land of the Chaldreans, near the river Chebar, and the land of Jehovah was upon him there.

4 And I looked, and, behold, tempestuous wind coming from the north; a great cloud, and a fire folding round itself, and a brightness was round about it; and out of the midst there was, as it were, the appearance of Hasmal in the midst of the fire.

5 And in the middle of this, was the likeness of four living creatures, and their aspect was the likeness of a man:

6 They had each four faces and four wings,

7 Their feet were straight, and the sole of their feet like that of a calf's foot, (or round, volume 1,) and they cast forth sparks like the appearance of polished brass:

8 And they had human hands under their wings on their four sides; and they had four faces and wings.

9 And each wing was connected with the next wing: when they moved they did not turn back: each animal went forward in the direction of his face.

10 As to the likeness of their faces, these four had the face of a man and the face of a lion on the right side; and on the left, these four had the face of an ox and the

[567] The thirtieth year. The date at which this reckoning commences is doubful Calvin dates from a Jubilee, (vol. 1, p. 52.,) but Jerome from the 18th year of King Josiah, when the book of the law was found. Origen, Hom. I., understands it of Ezekiel's age; and so does Gregory, Hom. II. Maldonatus interprets it of the captivity, and quotes the authority of Theodoret. Pradus, as quoted by Rosenmfiner, agrees with Jerome. The Editor refers his readers once for all to the valuable commentary of Rosenmuller on this Prophet for all kinds of valuable critical information; while the English student will find the notes to Archbishop Newcome's version very judicious.

face of an eagle.

11 Their faces, then, and their wings were extended [568] from above, and each wing was bound to its neighbor, and two covered their body.

12 And each walked in the direction of its face; and wheresoever the spirit (or will,) proceeded, they proceeded they did not return in their course.

13 As to the likeness of the living creatures, their aspect was like coals of burning fire, like the appearance of lamps passing up and down between the living creatures: and the fire was `bright, and lightning' issued from it.

14 And the living creatures ran and returned like lightning.

15 While I was; beholding' the living creatures, behold one wheel on the earth, near each living, creature, at right angles, [569] at the face of each.

16 The appearance of the wheels and their workmanship was like chrysolite: and they were all alike' and their appearance and their form were like one wheel within another.

17 When they moved forward, they went upon their four sides: they did not turn back when they proceeded.

18 And I beheld their circumferences, and their size, and their terribleness; and their strakes were full of eyes, round about these four.

19 And when the living creatures walked, the wheels moved beside them; and when the living creatures were raised from the earth, the wheels were raised with them. [570]

20 Withersoever the spirit led the living creatures, tither it also led the wheels: the wheels were raised up also with the living creatures, because their spirit was in the wheels also.

21 When the animals moved forward, the wheels did the same: they both were stationary and both elevated together; because the spirit of the animals was in the wheels.

22 Above the heads of the living creatures was the likeness of a firmament, as the appearance of terrible crystal stretched over and above their heads.

23 And under the firmament their wings were straight, each towards its neighbor: and each living creature had two wings, which covered their bodies on this side and on that.

24 And I heard the voice of their wings, like the voice of mighty waters, and like the voice of God' the voice of their speech was like the sound of an army when they moved forward; and when they stood, they let down their wings.

25 And there was a voice from the firmament over their heads when they stood and let down their wings.

26 And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, like

[568] Or, “divided.” See vol. 1, p. 75, note.. The MSS. vary slightly. Calvin has translated very literally; and the Prophet’s language being so elliptical, it is almost impossible to present a perfectly accurate representation of “a cherub” to a modern inquirer.

[569] Explained in a note, p. 82, vol. 1 See Jerome in Comment. ad Heseam, cap. 12, and Chrysos. Orat. 35, p. 448, ed. Morell…Rosen. in ver.

[570] Alexander Knox, who beautifies whatever he touches upon, has applied this verse most happily in illustration of the “exquisitely regular” movements of the almighty, and the “attendant machinery of Providence.” — Remains, Ezekiel 6:9.

the vision of a sapphire stone: and above the likeness of the throne was an image like the aspect of a man upon it.

27 And I saw, as it were, the color of amber, like the appearance of fire round about within it: from the appearance of his loins, both upwards and downwards, I saw the aspect of fire, and a brightness all round about him.

28 Like the appearance of a bow in a cloud on a rainy day, such was the aspect of his brightness round about. This was a vision of the similitude of Jehovah's glory: and I gazed at it, and fell upon my face, and heard a voice speaking unto me. And he said unto me, ---

Translation: Ezekiel 2

CHAPTER 2

1 Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee.

2 And the Spirit came to me when he addressed me, and placed me upon my feet: and I heard him address me; and he said unto me ---

3 Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, To revolting tribes who have rebelled against me: They and their fathers have acted perfidiously against me, Even to this very day.

4 They are children of a hard face, and of a stiff heart. Therefore I send thee unto them; And you shall say to them --- Thus says the Lord Jehovah

5 And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will not, For they are a rebellious house, Yet shall know that a Prophet has been among them.

6 And you, son of man, be not afraid of them; Fear not their words, though they are rebellious, And are thorns towards time, and you dwellest with scorpions. Be not afraid of their language; Be not dismayed at their looks, Since they are a rebellious house.

7 And you shall utter my words unto them, Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; For they are rebels.

8 And you, son of man, hear what I say unto thee: Be not you rebellious like that. rebellious house; Open thy mouth, and eat what I put before thee.

9 Then I looked up, and, behold, a hand extended to me; And lo! a roll of a book was in it:

10 Then he spread it before my face; And lo! The roll was written behind and before, And the writing was lamentations, and morning, and wo.

Translation: Ezekiel 3

CHAPTER 3

1 After that he said to me, Son of man, eat completely what you has found; namely, this roll, And go and speak to the house of Israel.

2 So I opened my mouth, and he fed me with that roll.

3 And said to me, Son of man, Feed thy belly, and fill thy bowels with this roll which I give thee. So I ate it, and it was in my mouth Like honey for sweetness.

4 Then he said to me, Son of man! Go to the house of Israel and address them in my words,

5 Since you art not sent to a people profound in lip and hard of speech, You art sent to the house of Israel:

6 Not to many peoples profound in lip and heavy in speech, Whom you canst not understand; [571] Had I sent thee unto them, they would have hearkened unto thee.

7 But the house of Israel will not hear thee; Because they will not hear me; Since the whole house of Israel are hard of front and stout of heart.

8 Lo! I have made thy face hard against their faces, And thy forehead hard, against their forehead.

9 As an adamant, harder than flint, Have I made thy forehead: fear them not: Be not broken down at their presence, For they are a house of rebellion.

10 Moreover, he said to me, Son of man! All my words which I shall speak to thee, Receive in your heart and hear with your ears:

11 And go --- Judea thee to the captives, to the children of thy people, And speak unto them and tell them, --- Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Whether they will hear, or whether they will not.

12 Then the Spirit raised me up: and I heard behind me A voice of mighty rustling, which said, Blessed be the glory of Jehovah from his place!

[571] See vol. 1, p. 131, note.

13 1 heard also the sound of the wings of the living' creatures, Each kissing that of its companion, And the noise of the wheels beside them --- the sound of a mighty shaking.

14 Then the Spirit raised me, and took me away, And I set forth in bitterness and indignation of spirit, And the hand of Jehovah was strong upon me.

15 Then I came to the captives at Thel-abib, They were seated by the river Chebar: there they sat: And I also sat there seven days desolate in the midst of them.

16 Then it happened at the end of the seven days, Thai the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,

17 Son of man! I have appointed thee a watchman over the house of Israel; Hence you shalt hear words from my mouth, And shall warn them from me.

18 When I say unto the wicked, You shall surely die: And you warnest him not, and speakest not unto him; And warnest him not from his wicked way to save his life: That wicked man shall die in his iniquity; But his blood. will I require at thy hand.

19 Yet if you warn the wicked, and he turn not from his impious and evil way, He shall die in his iniquity; But you has freed your own soul.

20 If a just man shall turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity: And I put a stumbling-block before his face, he shall die: Because you has not warned him, he shall die in his sins, The righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; But his blood will I require at thy hand.

21 Then if you warn the righteous that he sin not, And he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned, You also has delivered your own soul.

22 Then the hand of Jehovah was upon me, and he said to me, Arise, go unto the plain, and there I will speak to thee.

23 Then I arose, and went to the plain, and lo! The glory of Iehovah stood there, As the glory which I had beheld by the river Chebar:

24 And I fell upon my face, and the Spirit entered into me, And placed me upon my feet, and addressed me, and said, Go --- shut thyself within your house.

25 And now --- son of man! --- lo! they shall put chains upon thee, And shall bind thee with them, and you shall not go forth into the midst of them:

26 Then I will make thy tongue cleave to thy palate, And you shall be dumb, and be no longer a reprover to them: Because they are a house; of rebellion.

27 But when I shall speak to thee, and shall open thy mouth, You shall say unto them, Thus says the Lord Jehovah, He who hears, may hear: he who forbears, may forbear; Since they are a house of rebellion. [572]

[572] See vol. 1, p. 168, note.

Translation: Ezekiel 4

CHAPTER 4

1 Thou also, son of man! take thee a tile, And put it before thy face, And paint upon it the city Jerusalem:

2 Lay siege against it, and build a tower against it: Cast a mound against it, and set a camp against it: Set battering rams against it all round.

3 Then take an iron pan, and set it for a wall between thee and the city; Strengthen thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, And you shall besiege it. This is a sign to the house of Israel.

4 He you also on thy left; side, and place the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it; According to the number of the days during which you shall he upon it You shall bear their iniquity.

5 For I have appointed unto thee the years of their iniquity, According to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: Thus shall you bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.

6 And when you have finished those days, Then again you shall he on thy right side, And you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judea forty days; Each day for a year, as I have appointed thee.

7 Then you shall direct thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, And thine arm shall be uncovered, And you shall not prophesy against it.

8 Lo! I have put cords upon thee, And you shall not turn from side to side Until you have fulfilled the days of thy sieges.

9 Take you also wheat; and barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, And put them in one vessel, and make it into bread for time, According to the number of the days on which you shall he on thy side: Three hundred and ninety days shall you eat it.

10 And the food which you shall eat by weight, Shall be twenty shekels a day: from time to time shall you eat it.

11 And water shall thou drink by measure, the sixth part of a hin: From time to time shall you drink it.

12 Then you shall eat barley cake, and shall bake it With human dung before their eyes: And Jehovah said,

13 Even thus shall the children of Israel cat their defiled bread Among the Gentiles wither I have driven them.

14 Then I said, Alas, O Lord Jehovah! Lo! my soul has not been polluted, And from my youth up never have I eaten What died of itself, or was torn to pieces; And abominable flesh has never entered my mouth.

15 Then he said, See! I have given thee The dung of oxen for that of men, And you shall cook thy bread with this. [573]

16 Moreover, he said to me, Son of man! Lo! I break the staff of bread in Jerusalem; And they shall eat bread by weight and with fear; And shall drink water by measure and with astonishment,

17 So that bread and water shall fail them, And they shall be astonished one with another, And consume away in their iniquity. [574]

[573] See vol. 1, p. 186, note.
[574] See vol. 1, p. 187, note.

Translation: Ezekiel 5

CHAPTER 5

1 And you, son of man f take thee a sharp sword, Take thee a barber's razor, and pass it over thy head and thy beard: Then take thee a just balance and divide the hair.

2 A third part you shall burn in the midst of the city, When the days of the siege are fulfilled; A third part shall you smite about with the sword; And another third shall you scatter to the wind; And I will unsheathe the sword after them.

3 Then you shall take a few of them, And bind them in thy skirts.

4 Then take some of them. and cast them into the fire, And burn them; for thence shall fire go forth Upon all the house of Israel.

5 Then says the Lord Jehovah, This is Jerusalem: In the midst of the nations and of the surrounding countries Have I placed her.

6 And she has changed my judgments into wickedness Beyond all the nations, and my statutes beyond all the surrounding people: They have despised my judgments, And have not walked in my statutes.

7 Therefore, thus says the, Lord Jehovah, Because of your multiplication more than the nations round about you, And your not walking in my statutes, and not keeping my judgments, And your not acting like the nations around you,

8 Wherefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I ant against thee, even I: And I will execute my judgments in the midst of thee Before the eyes of the Gentiles.

9 And I will execute against thee what I never yet have done, Nor will ever do in future, On account of all your abominations.

10 Therefore fathers shall devour their sons, And sons their fathers, in the midst of thee: I will execute judgments against thee, And disperse all thy remnants to all winds of heaven.

11 Because I live, says the Lord Jehovah, Since you has polluted my sanctuary [575] With all thy detestable and abominable things, Therefore I will break thee in pieces: My eye shall not spare, neither will I pity thee.

12 A third part shall die of the pestilence, And be consumed by famine in the midst of thee; A third part shall be consumed by the sword round about thee; A third part will I disperse towards every wind, And will draw out a sword after them.

13 Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, And I will cause my burning anger to rest upon them; And I will enjoy consolation; and they shall know that I am Jehovah, Who have spoken in my zeal, when I shall have accomplished my fury on them.

14 Moreover, I will lay thee waste, And make thee a reproach among the nations around thee In the eyes of every passer by.

15 So you shall be a reproach and a reviling, A chastisement and an astonishment to the nations round about thee, While I shall execute judgments against thee In anger and burning, and furious rebukes. I Jehovah have spoken it.

16 When I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famine For their destruction, which I shall dart upon them to destroy them; [576] Then will I add famine against them, And will break their staff of bread.

17 Then will I send against you famine and wild beasts, And they shall bereave you: and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; And I will cause the sword to come upon thee. [577] I Jehovah have spoken it.

[575] The rendering according to note,vol. 1, p. 205.
[576] See vol. 1, p. 213, note.
[577] See vol. 1, p. 215, note.

Translation: Ezekiel 6

CHAPTER 6

1 The word also of Jehovah came to me, saying,

2 Son of man! set thy face towards the mountain of Israel, And prophesy against them, and say,

3 You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord Jehovah: Thus says the Lord Jehovah to the mountains and the inns, To the rivers and the valleys: Behold! I will bring the sword against you, and destroy your high places;

4 And your altars shall be desolate, Your idols shall be broken; And I will cast down your slain before your idols.

5 Then I will place the carcass of the sons of Israel Before your idols; I will scatter them before the idols. I will sprinkle your bones round about your altars.

6 In all your habitations cities shall be desolate, [578] And high places shall be reduced to devastation, That your altars may be wasted and desolated, And your idols may be broken up and abolished, And your images cut. down, and your works blotted out.

7 Then the slain shall fall in the midst of you, And you shall know that I am Jehovah.

8 Still, I will leave a remnant, that you may have some Who shall escape the sword among the nations, When you shall be scattered through the countries.

9 And the remnant shall remember me among the nations, Among which they shall become captives, Because I am. broken down with their adulterous heart, Which has departed from me, and with their eyes, Which are full of lust after their idols; And they shall loathe themselves for all the evils Which they have committed in all their abominations.

10 Then they shall know that I Jehovah said not in vain, I will cause them to suffer this evil. [579]

[578] Explained by Calvin, vol. 1, p. 224, note.

[579] For Calvin's sense of "evil," see vol. 1, p. 232, note.

11 Thus says the Lord Jehovah, Strike with thy hand, and stamp with thy feet, And say, Alas! for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel, For they shall fall by the sword, and famine, and pestilence.

12 He who shall be afar off shall die by the pestilence; He who shall be near shall fall by the sword; [580] He who shall remain and be besieged shall die through hunger; And I will fulfill my indignation upon them.

13 And you shall know that I am Jehovah, When their wounded shall be among their idols round about their altars, Upon every high hill, in, on all the heads of the mountains, Under every green tree and every thick oak, In the place where they offered the incense of sweet fragrance to all their idols.

14 So I will stretch out my hand upon them, And I will make the land desert and desolate --- More than the desert of Diblathah, in all their dwellings; And they shall know that I am Jehovah.

[580] For another rendering, see vol. 1, p. 235, note.

Translation: Ezekiel 7

CHAPTER 7

1 Then the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,

2 You also, son of man, thus says the Lord Jehovah Concerning the land of Israel, All end, an end is come Upon the four quarters of the land.

3 Now an end is come upon thee, And I will send my indignation against thee, And I will judge thee according to thy ways, And I will put upon thee all your abominations.

4 Then mine eye shall not spare thee, nor will I pity thee; Because I will recompense thy ways upon thee, And thy abominations shall be in the midst of thee, And you shall know that I am Jehovah.

5 Thus says the Lord Jehovah, Lo! evil, and only evil shall come. [581]

6 An end is come --- an end is come; It has watched against thee; behold! it is come.

7 The morning is come upon thee, e dweller in the land; The time is come; the day of tumult is near, and not the clamor of the mountains.

8 Now I will shortly pour out my indignation upon thee, And I will accomplish my anger against thee, And I will judge thee according to thy ways, And I will put upon thee all thine abominations.

9 Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I pity; According to thy ways will I put upon thee, And your abominations shall be in the midst of thee; And you shall know that I Jehovah am smiting thee.

10 Behold the day: behold it is come; The morning has advanced, the rod has flourished;

11 Pride has flourished: violence has sprung up into a staff of impiety: None of them, nor yet their opulence, shall remain: There shall be no noise nor any lamentation for them:

[581] Another reading proposed, vol. 1, p. 245, note,Archbishop Newcome adopts the reading of the note, which is supported by more than twenty MSS., “Lo! evil cometh after evil.”

12 The appointed time is come; the day has approached: The buyer shall not rejoice; the seller shall not be sorrowful; Because indignation shall be on all their multitude.

13 Since the seller shall not return to his merchandise, And their life is yet among the living; Because the vision is concerning the whole multitude, [582] It shall not return; and no man shall strengthen his soul in his iniquity.

14 They have blown the trumpet; they have prepared all things; But none is gone out to battle, because my wrath Is upon the whole multitude.

15 The sword abroad; pestilence and famine at home. He that is in the field shall die by the sword; He that is in the city shall be consumed by famine and pestilence.

16 And the escapers of them shall escape, And shall be upon the inns like doves of the valleys, All mourning, [583] every one in his iniquity.

17 All hands shall be loosened; all knees shall flow like water.

18 And they shall gird themselves with sackcloth, And dread shall cover them, And shame shall be upon all faces, And baldness upon all heads.

19 They shall east their silver into the street, And their gold shall be an unclean thing. Their silver and their gold shall not deliver them In the day of. Jehovah's wrath: They shall neither satisfy their souls nor fill their bellies, Because it was; the stumbling-block of their iniquity.

20 As to the beauty of their ornaments, they turned it to pride, And they made the images of their abominations And of their defilement's out of it (i.e., gold) [584] Therefore I have east it from them.

21 And I will deliver it into the hand of strangers for a prey, And of the wicked of the land for a spoil; And they shall profane it.

22 My face also will I turn from them, For they will profane my secret place: And robbers will enter into it and profane it.

23 Make a chain: --- for the, land is fined With a judgment of bloods, The city, too, is full of violence.

24 For I will bring on it the wicked among the Gentiles; And they shall possess their houses: I will also cause their pride to cease, And their sanctuaries shall be polluted.

25 Destruction is come and they shall seek peace when there is none.

26 Calamity shall come upon calamity, and rumor upon rumor; Then they shall seek a vision from a prophet; But the law shall perish from the priest, And counsel from the aged.

27 The king shall mourn, and the princes shall be clothed with desolation, And the hands of the people of the land shall be troubled: According to their ways will I act towards them, According to their judgments will I judge them. And they shall know that I am Jehovah.

[582] See another rendering,vol. 1, p. 255.
[583] See vol. 1, p. 259, note.
[584] See vol. 1, p. 264.

Translation: Ezekiel 8

CHAPTER 8

1 And it happened in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day, I was sitting in my house, and the elders of Judea were sitting before my face, and there the hand of the Lord Jehovah fell upon me.

2 I looked, and behold a likeness as the appearance of fire: From the appearance of its loins downwards, fire; And from its loins upwards, as the appearance of brightness, Like the figure of Hasmal.

3 And he sent the likeness of a hand, And raised ma by a lock of my head; And the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, And led me to Jerusalem in the visions of God, To the door of the inner gate looking towards the north; Where was the seat of the idol jealousy, causing jealousy.

4 Then lo! there was the glory of the God of Israel, According to the vision which I saw in the plain.

5 And said to me, Son of man, lift up your eyes now To the way of the north: So I raised my eyes towards the north, And lo! towards the north at the gate of the altar, That idol --- jealousy --- at the entrance.

6 And he said to me, Son of man, seest you their deeds? The great abominations which the house of Israel perpetrate here, That I should depart far from my sanctuary? But turn thee yet again, and you shall see greater abominations.

7 Then he led m, to the door of the court, And I looked, and lo! an opening in the wall. Then he said to me, Son of man, dig now into the wall; And I dug in the wall, and behold a door.

8 Then he said to me, Enter and see the evil abominations which they do.

9 Then I entered and beheld, and lo! every likeness of a reptile,

10 And abominations of animals, and, all idols of the house of Israel, Were depicted on the wall round about.

11 And seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel, And Jazaniah, son of

Saphan, stood in the midst of them, Who stood before them, and to each r, censer in his hand, And a thick cloud of incense ascended.

12 Then he said to, me, Has you seen, son of mall, What the elders of the house of Israel do in darkness, Each in the hidden places of his imagery? Who say, Jehovah does not see us; Jehovah has deserted the land.

13 Then he said to me, Turn thee again, And you shall see the great abominations which they do.

14 Then he brought me to the door of the gate of Jehovah's house, Which looks to the north: and lo! there sat women Lamenting for Thammuz.

15 Then he said to me, Son of man, turn thee again, And you shall see greater abominations than these.

16 Then he led me to the inner court of Jehovah's house, And lo! at the gate of Jehovah's temple, between the entrance and the altar, About five and twenty men, with their backs towards Jehovah's temple, And their faces towards the east, worshipping the rising sun.

17 Then he said to me, Has you seen this, son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judea To do these abominations which they have done there? Because they have fined the land with violence, And have returned to provoke me, And lo! they put the branch to their nose.

18 I also in return will deal in my fury: Mine eye shall neither spare nor pity; And when they cry in mine ears with a loud voice I will not hear them.

Translation: Ezekiel 9

CHAPTER 9

1 He cried also in mine ear with a loud voice, saying, Let the rulers of the city approach, Every one with his weapon of destruction in his hand.

2 And lo! six men coming from the way of the higher gate, which is towards the north, And each had his slaughter-weapon in his hand; And one man in the midst of them clothed in linen, With a writer's inkhorn at his side: Then they went in and stood near the brazen altar.

3 Then the glory of the God of Israel ascended from the cherubim Above which it rested, to the threshold of the house, And cried to the man clothed in linen, with the inkhorn at his side;

4 Then Jehovah said to him, Pass through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, And make a sign upon the foreheads of the men who sigh And cry for all the abominations which they suffer in the midst of it.

5 But to the others he said in my hearing, Go you after, him through the city, and smite; Let not your eye spare, and do not pity:

6 Old and young, girl, boy, and woman slay to the death; Yet approach not any who bears the sign, And begin from my sanctuary. Then they began at the elders who were in front of the house.

7 And he said to them, Pollute the house, and fill the altars with the slain: Go you forth. And they went forth, and made a slaughter in the city.

8 And it happened while they were slaying that I was left: Then I fell upon my face, and cried out and said, Aha! Lord Jehovah, wilt you slay all the relics of Israel By pouring forth your anger upon Jerusalem?

9 Then he said to me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judea Is great beyond measure, and the land is full of blood, And the city is full of perversity: because they said, Jehovah has deserted the land: Jehovah regardeth it not.

10 As for me also, mine eye shall not spare them, I will not pity them their ways

will I recompense on their heads.

11 And lo! the man clad in linen, who had the inkhorn by his side, Returned and made his report., saying, I have done as you did command me.

Translation: Ezekiel 10

CHAPTER 10

1 Then I looked, and lo! above the firmament, which was above the head of the cherubim, As it were a sapphire-stone, Like the appearance of a throne which was seen above them.

2 Then he spoke to the mall clad in linen garments, and said, Go in to the midst of the wheels under the cherub, And fill thy palms with coals of fire from the midst of the cherubim, And scatter them over the cry. And he went in my sight.

3 And the cherubim stood on the right of the house when the man came. And a cloud fined the inner court.

4 Then the glory of Jehovah was raised above the cherub towards the threshold of the house; And the house was fined with cloud, And the court was fined with the brightness of Jehovah's glory.

5 Then the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard to the outer court, Like the voice of the Omnipotent God when he speaketh.

6 And it happened when he had commanded the man clothed with linen, Saying, Take fire from between the wheels, from the midst of the cherubim; Then he went in and stood beside the wheel.

7 And one cherub stretched His hand from the midst of the cherubim, To the fire which was in the midst of the cherubim, And he took it, and put it into the palms of the man clothed in linen; Then he took it and departed.

8 And there appeared in the cherubim themselves, The likeness of a man's hand under their wings.

9 Then I looked, and lo! four wheels near the cherubhis, One wheel by one cherub, another wheel near another cherub: And the appearance of the wheels was like the stone tharsis.

10 And as for their aspect, the appearance of each was the same, [585] As if a wheel was in the midst of a wheel.

11 When they moved, they went on their four sides; They did not return in going forward, Since they moved towards the direction of their head; They did not return as they went.

12 And their whole body, and backs, and hands, and wings, The four wheels, indeed, themselves were full of eyes all round.

13 He cried to the wheels in my hearing, O wheel!

14 And each living creature had four faces: The face of the first that of a cherub; The face of the second that of a. man; Of the third that of a lion; and the fourth an eagle's.

15 And the cherubim were raised up. This is the living creature which I saw by the river Chebar.

16 Then when the cherubim moved, the wheels moved near them; And when the cherubim raised their wings aloft From the earth, The wheels did not turn away from the side of them.

17 When the living creatures stood, they stood; When they were lifted up, the wheels also were raised: Because the spirit of the living creature was in them.

18 Then the glory of Jehovah went forth from the threshold of the house, And stood over the cherubim.

19 Then the cherubim raised their wings, and went up from the earth in my sight: When they went forth, the wheels also went before them, And each stood above the threshold of the east gate of Jehovah's house; And the glory of the God of Israel was above them.

20 It is the very living creature which I saw Under the God of Israel by the river Chebar; And I knew them to be cherubim.

21 Each had four faces apiece, and four wings; And the likeness of the hands of a man under their wings.

22 And the likeness of their faces was that which I saw at the river Chebar, Both their appearance and themselves: [586] Each moved towards his own face.

[585] See note onvol. 1, p. 330.
[586] See vol. 1, p. 345, note.

Translation: Ezekiel 11

CHAPTER 11

1 Then the spirit raised me up, and brought me To the eastern gate of Jehovah's house; and lo! At the threshold of the gate, five and twenty men; Then I saw in the midst of them Jaazaniah, son of Asur; And Pelthiah, son of Benaiah, princes of the people.

2 Then he said to me, Son of man, these men divine vanity, And plan perverse counsel in this city;

3 Who say, It is not near; let us build houses: The city is the caldron, and we are the flesh:

4 Wherefore, prophesy against them, prophesy, son of man.

5 Then the Spirit of Jehovah fell upon me, and said to me, Say, Thus saith Jehovah, Thus have you spoken, O house of Israel, The mountings of your spirit, I know them:

6 You have multiplied your slain in this city, And you have fined its streets with the slain.

7 Wherefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah, Your slain, Whom you placed in the midst --- they shall be the flesh, And the city the caldron; and I will cast you forth from the midst of it:

8 You have feared the sword, and I will bring the sword upon you, saith the Lord Jehovah:

9 And I will eas, you out of the midst of it. And will deliver you h, to the hand of strangers, And will exercise judgments against you.

10 Then you shall fall by the sword: in the border of Israel Will I judge you; and you shall know that I am Jehovah.

11 It shall not be your caldron, And you shall not be in the midst of it for flesh; In the border of Israel will I judge you.

12 And you shall, Know that I am Jehovah; Because you ha, re not; walked in my statutes, And have not executed my judgments; But you have done according to the

judgments of the nations around you.

13 And it happened, while I prophesied, That Phalatias, the son of Benaiah, died: Then I fell upon my face, and cried with loud voice, and said, Ah! Lord Jehovah! will you consume the remnant of Israel!

14 Then the word of Jehovah came to me again, saying,

15 Son of man, thy brethren, thy brethren, Thy kindred, and all the whole house of Israel, To these the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Depart you far from Jehovah, the land is given as an heritage to us.

16 Wherefore say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Because you have been east far away among the Gentiles, And dispersed through the lands, Therefore will I be to them a sanctuary of fewness [587] In the lands to which they have come.

17 Wherefore you shall say, Thus says the Lord Jehovah, I will gather you out of the peoples, and collect you out of the lands To which you have been driven, and I will give you the land of Israel.

18 And they shall come there, and take away all its idols, And all its abominations out of it.

19 Then I will give them one hear, and will put a new Spirit within them; And I will take away the stony heart from their flesh, And will give them a heart of flesh:

20 That. they may walk in my statutes, And keep my judgments, and do them: Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

21 Then I will repay on their own head the way of those Whose heart walks after, heart of foulness [588] and grossness, Saith the Lord Jehovah.

22 Then the cherubim raised their wings, and the wheels beside them, And the glory of the God of Israel was over above them.

23 And the glory of Jehovah ascended out of the midst of the city, And stood over the mount on the east of the city.

24 Then the spirit raised me, and brought me to Chaldsea, To the captivity, In a vision, in t. he Spirit of God. Then the vision which I saw went up from me.

25 And I spoke to the captivity All the words of Jehovah which he had shown me.

[587] See vol. 1, p. 362, note.
[588] See vol. 1, p. 382, note.

Translation: Ezekiel 12

CHAPTER 12

1 The word of Jehovah came also unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, you dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house: They have eyes to see, and they see not; They have ears to hear, and they hear not, Because their house is revoking.

3 And you, son of man, make thyself vessels for removal, And remove in the day-time before their eyes: Then you shall move from thy place to another in their sight, Since perhaps they may consider, for they are a rebellious house

4 And bring forth vessels like vessels for removal In the day-time in their sight: And you shall go forth at even in their sight, Like a departure into captivity.

5 In their sight; you shall dig thyself a wall, And carry out (thy goods) by it:

6 In their eyes upon thy shoulder shall you carry (them); In darkness shall you go forth: You shall cover thy face, and not look upon the ground, Because I have placed thee as a sign to the house of Israel.

7 Then I did as I was commanded. My vessels I carried forth like vessels for captivity In the daytime; Then in the evening I dug through the wall by my hand; [589] In the darkness I led them forth, Upon my shoulder I carried them in their sight.

8 Then in the morning the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,

9 Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to thee,

10 What doest you? Say to them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: This burden [590] relates to the prince in Jerusalem, And to all the house of Israel in the midst of them.

11 Say unto them, I am your portent: As I have done, so shall it be done to them: They shall be taken away and led into captivity.

12 Then the prince in the midst of them Shall carry on his shoulder in the darkness, And go forth through the wall, Through which they have dug for carrying out by it:

[589] See vol. 1, p. 396, note: "for myself."

[590] See vol. 1, p. 395, note; where Calvin explains the word "burden."

He shall cover his face so as not to look upon the ground.

13 Then I will spread my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare: Then I will lead him away to Babylon in the land of Chaldea; Yet he shall not see it, though he shall die there.

14 And all who are about him to help him, and all his garrison, Will I scatter to every wind, and I will unsheath my sword after them [591]

15 Then they shall know that I ant Jehovah, After I shall have scattered them among the nations, And shall have dispersed them through their lands.

16 And I will make the remnant of them but few By the sword, and famine, and pestilence; That they may narrate all their abominations Among the Gentiles to whom they come; And they shall know that; I am Jehovah.

17 Moreover, the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,

18 Son of man, eat thy bread with trembling, and drink thy water With tumult and anxiety: And you shall say to the people of the land,

19 Thus says the Lord Jehovah to the dwellers at Jerusalem, And on the land of Israel, They shall eat their bread in torture, [592] And shall drink their water in desolation, That the land rosy be spoiled of its fullness, On account of the violence of all its inhabitants.

20 And inhabited cities shall be reduced to solitude, And the land laid waste; and you shall know that I am Jehovah.

21 Then the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,

22 Son of man, What is this proverb of yours in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prostrated, and all prophecy has ceased?

23 Wherefore you shall say to them, Thus says the Lord Jehovah, I will make this proverb cease, And they shall no more use this proverb in Israel; But rather say to them, The days are at hand, And the word of every vision.

24 Because there shall no longer be any lying vision, Nor any flattering divination in the midst of the house of Israel.

25 Since I Jehovah will speak: And the word which I shall speak, I will also perform; It shall no longer be prolonged: Since in your days, O exasperating house, The word which I shall speak, I will perform, says the Lord Jehovah.

26 Then the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,

27 Son of man, behold the house of Israel say, The vision which he saw is extended to many days, And he prophesieth for times afar off.

28 Wherefore you shall say to them, Thus says the Lord Jehovah, It shall not be put off any longer; All the words which I have spoken, even every word, Will I fulfill, says the Lord Jehovah.

[591] See vol. 1, p. 402, note.
[592] See vol. 1, p. 406, note.

Translation: Ezekiel 13

CHAPTER 13.

1 And the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,

2 Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel That prophesy, and say unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear you the word of Jehovah;

3 Thus says the Lord Jehovah, Wo unto the foolish prophets, Who walk after their own spirit, and have seen nothing! [593]

4 Like foxes in the deserts, are thy prophets, O Israel.

5 You have not gone up to the broken places, Nor repaired the hedge around the house of Israel, To stand in the battle in the day of Jehovah.

6 They have seen vanity, they have divined a he, Saying, Jehovah says, and Jehovah has not sent them; And they caused men to hope for the confirmation of their word.

7 Have you not seen a vision of vanity, and spoken a divination of is? And yet you say Jehovah says it, and I have not spoken it.

8 Wherefore thus says the Lord Jehovah, [594] Because you have spoken vanity, and have seen a he, Wherefore behold! I am against t. hem, Says the Lord Jehovah.

9 And my hand shall be against the prophets who see vanity and divine a lie: They shall not be in the counsel of my people, And shall not be written in the catalogue of the house of Israel, And they shall not return to the land of Israel; And you shall know that I am the Lord Jehovah.

10 Because, even because, they have deceived my people, By saying, Peace, and there was no peace: And one built up a wall, and, behold, others daubed it with untempered mortar:

11 Say to those who daub it with untempered mortar, It shall fall: There shall be an inundating shower: And I will send hailstones; And the breath of whirlwinds shall

[593] See vol. 2, p. 9, note.
[594] See vol. 2, p. 14, note.

rend it.

12 Lo! the wall shall fall: shall it not be said to you, Where is the daubing with which you have daubed it?

13 Besides, thus says the Lord Jehovah, I will make it fall: [595] There shall be the breath. of tempests in my wrath, And an inundating shower in my anger, And hailstones in my fury to consume them.

14 Then I will overthrow the wall which you have daubed with untempered mortar, And I will bring it down to the ground; Then its foundation shall be discovered when it shall fall, And you shall be consumed in the midst of it; And you shall know that I am Jehovah.

15 I will also satisfy mine indignation upon the wall As well as upon its daubing, and will say to them, The wall is gone, and the daubers of it are no more.

16 The prophets of Israel prophesied concerning Jerusalem, And saw a vision of peace for it; Yet there is no peace, says the Lord Jehovah.

17 Son of man, do you set thy face against the daughters of thy people, Who prophesy out of their own heart, and prophesy against them,

18 And you shall say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Wo to those who sow pillows to all armholes, And make coverings for the head of every stature, To hunt souls! Will you hunt the souls of my people? And will you preserve your own souls alive?

19 Will you profane me before my people for handfuls of barley and pieces of bread, To slay the souls that were not dying, And to give life to the souls that were not alive, By deceiving my people who listen to your is?

20 Because thus says the Lord Jehovah, Behold! I am against your pillows by which you there hunt souls for their escape; And I will tear them from your arms, And set free the souls which you have hunted, that they may escape.

21 I will also rend your coverings, and deliver my people out of your hands; They shall no longer be a prey in your hands; And you shall know that I am Jehovah.

22 Because you have grieved the heart of the just by falsehood, And I have not grieved him; And you have strengthened the hands of the wicked, So that he should not be converted from his evil way

23 For saving his life: wherefore you shall not see a he Nor divine a divination any more; For I will rescue my people from your hands: And you shall know that I am Jehovah.

[595] See vol. 2, p. 22, note.

Translation: Ezekiel 14

CHAPTER 14

1 Then men came to me from the elders of Israel, And sat before my face.

2 Then came the word of Jehovah to me, saying,

3 Son of man, these men have set their idols up in their heart, And have put a stumbling block of iniquity before their face. Shall I verily be inquired of by them?

4 Wherefore speak unto them, and say, Thus says the Lord Jehovah, Every man of the house of Israel, who setteth up his idols in his heart, And has put the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, And has come to the Prophet; I Jehovah Will answer him according to the multitude of his idols; [596]

5 That I may seize the house of Israel in their own heart, Because they have entirely separated themselves from me by their idols.

6 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord Jehovah, Turn you, Even turn yourselves from your idols; And turn your faces from all your abominations.

7 For every one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers sojourning in Israel, Who is separated [597] from following after me, And has set up his idols in his heart, And put the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, And cometh to the Prophet to inquire of me through him; I Jehovah will answer him for myself.

8 Then will I set my face against that man, And set him for a sign and a proverb, And I will cut him off from the midst of my people; And you shall know that I am Jehovah.

9 And when a prophet is deceived in uttering his speech, I Jehovah have deceived that prophet; And I will stretch forth my hand upon him, And will blot him out of the midst of my people Israel.

10 They shall also bear their iniquity; As the iniquity of the inquirer, so shall be the iniquity of the prophet;

[596] See vol. 2, p. 47, note.
[597] See vol. 2, p. 51, note.

11 That the house of Israel may stray from me no more, Neither be polluted any more with all their wickedness; That they may be my people, and I may be their God, says the Lord Jehovah.

12 Then the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,

13 Son of man, when a land has acted wickedly against me, [598] And I shall stretch out my hand upon it, And shall break the staff of its bread, And shall send famine upon it, and cut off from it man and beast:

14 Though these three men were in it, Noah, Daniel, and Job, They shall deliver but their own souls in their righteousness, Says the Lord Jehovah.

15 If I cause an evil beast to pass through the land, And it bereave it and lay it waste, So that no man can pass through on account of the beast:

16 Though these three men were in it, as I live, says the Lord Jehovah, If they shall deliver their own souls, They alone shall be delivered, and the land shall be laid waste.

17 Or if I make a sword pass through that land, And I say to the sword, Pass through the land, So that: man. and beast may be cut off from it:

18 And these three men are in the midst of it, As I live, says the Lord Jehovah, They shall not deliver their sons and their daughters, Since they alone shall be set free.

19 Or if I shall send a pestilence upon that land, And pour out my wrath upon it in blood, To destroy from it man and beast:

20 And Noah, Daniel, and Job were in the midst of it, As I live, says the Lord Jehovah, They shall not deliver either son or daughter; They shall free their own soul in their righteousness.

21 Therefore thus says the Lord Jehovah, How much more when I send my four grievous judgments against Jerusalem, The sword, and famine, and evil beast, to destroy from it man and beast?

22 And lo! the remnant that is left in it, [599] The remnant of those who go forth, namely, sons and daughters, They shall go forth unto you: And you shall see their ways and their works, And you shall console yourselves for all the evil Which I have brought upon Jerusalem, Yea, all that I have brought upon her.

23 Then shall you be comforted when you shall see their ways and their works: And you shall know that I have not done in vain Whatever I have done in it, says the Lord Jehovah.

[598] "By prevaricating prevarication," vol. 2, p. 67, note.

[599] See vol. 2, p. 79, note.

Translation: Ezekiel 15

CHAPTER 15

1 Then came the word of Jehovah unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, What is the wood of the vine Better than any branching-tree among the trees of the wood?

3 Shall wood be taken from it to form any work? Or will it make a peg to hang any vessel thereon?

4 Behold, it is east into the fire for burning; The fire devoured both ends of it, and its middle is burnt [600] Is it useful for any purpose?

5 Lo! when it was entire, it was not used for any purpose: How much less when the fire has consumed it, And it is burnt up, shall it be useful for any purpose?

6 Therefore thus says the Lord Jehovah, As the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, Which I have cast into the fire for fuel, So have I given the inhabitants of Jerusalem:

7 Then will I set my face against them; They shall pass through fire, and fire shall consume them; And they shall know that I am Jehovah, When I have set my face against them.

8 Then will I make the land desolate, Because they have transgressed with transgression [601] Says the Lord Jehovah.

[600] See vol. 2, p. 84, note.
[601] See vol. 2, p. 91, note.

Translation: Ezekiel 16

CHAPTER 16

1 Then the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, lay open to Jerusalem her abominations.

3 Thus shall you say, Thus says the Lord Jehovah unto Jerusalem, Thy source and thy birth-place was the land of Canaan; Thy father was an Amorite, thy mother a Hittite.

4 Then as to thy nativity, in the day of thy birth, Thy navel was not cut: you was not washed with water To supple thee: you was not salted with salt, [602] Nor wrapped in swaddling clothes.

5 No eye pitied thee, to do unto thee any one of these things, In considering thee; and you was cast forth On the surface of the field, to the disgrace of thy person, in the day of thy birth.

6 Then I passed near thee and saw thy defilement's, And I said to thee in thy bloods, Live; Yea, I said to thee in thy bloods, Live.

7 Then I made thee grow as a germ of the field, And you did increase and flourish; You became remarkably beautiful; [603] Thy breasts became prominent and your hair profuse, Yet you was naked and bare.

8 Then I passed by and saw thee: and lo! the time, the time for love: Then I stretched out my skirt over thee, And covered thy nakedness; and I swore to thee, And made a covenant with thee, And you was mine, saith the Lord Jehovah.

9 Then I washed thee with water, and cleansed thy blood from thee, And anointed thee with oil. and clothed thee in a Phrygian robe;

10 Then I shod thee with badgers' skin, and dressed thee in fine linen; Then I arrayed thee in silk, and adorned thee with ornaments,

11 And put bracelets on thy hands, and a chain round thy Deck.

[602] See vol. 2, p. 96, note.
[603] See vol. 2, p. 100, note.

12 Then I put a ring through thy nose, [604] and earrings in your ears, And a crown of comeliness on thy head.

13 I adorned thee with gold and silver, and clothed thee with fine linen, And silk and broidered work you did eat fine flour, and honey, and oil; And you was beautiful exceedingly, And you did proceed prosperously to thy kingdom.

14 Then thy fame went forth among the nations for beauty, Because you was perfect in the beauty Which I caused unto thee, says the Lord Jehovah.

15 But you did trust in thy beauty, and commit fornication through thy renown, And did pour out thy fornications to every passer by;

16 His it was. --- Then you has taken of thy garments, And made thee high places sprinkled with spots, And has committed fornication upon them: They do not come, and it shall not be. [605]

17 You has also taken vessels of thy beauty of my gold And of my silver which I had given thee; And you has made for thyself images of men, And has committed fornication with them.

18 Then you has taken of thy variegated garments, And has clothed them: and my oil and mine incense Has you set before them.

19 My bread also which, I gave thee, fine flour and oil, And honey with which I fed thee, You has set it before them for a sweet savor; And so it has happened, says the Lord Jehovah.

20 Then you has taken thy sons and thy daughters which you has borne to me, And has slain them to be devoured: Are then thy fornications a small thing?

21 Then you has slain my sons, and caused them to be thrown to idols. [606]

22 And in all your abominations and thy lewdness You has not remembered the days of thy youth, When you was naked and bare, and defiled in thy bloods.

23 So after all thy wickedness it has happened to thee, Wo! wo! unto thee, says the Lord Jehovah.

24 Then you has built a high place for thyself, And has made thee a raised spot in every street.

25 At the head of every way you has built thy high place; Then you has made thy beauty abominable, And has spread thy feet to every passer by, And has multiplied thy lewdness'.

26 You has also committed adultery with the Egyptians Thy neighbors, great of flesh: and over and over again Has committed lewdness to irritate me.

27 Then lo! I stretched out my hand over thee, And I diminished thy portion, and delivered thee up To the lust of the daughters of the Philistines, who hated thee, And were ashamed of your abandoned ways.

28 Then you has committed adultery with the sons of Ashur, Since you was not satisfied, you has been lewd with them; Yet even then you was not, satisfied.

29 Then you has increased thy lewdnesses In the land of Canaan unto Chaldea;

[604] See vol. 2, p. 105, note.

[605] The meaning of this clause is doubtful. See Calvin's Commentary,vol. 2, p. 113. Newcome very judiciously translates, "whither you shouldst not have come, neither should it have been done."

[606] See vol. 2, p. 121, note.

And even this did not satiate thee.

30 How soft is your heart, says the Lord Jehovah, Since you doest all the work of a bold abandoned woman!

31 Since you has raised your high place at the head of every way, And has made thy lofty place in every celebrated spot; And has not been like a harlot in scorning hire. [607]

32 An adulterous woman receiving strangers instead of her husband!

33 To all harlots men give a reward; But you has given thy gifts to all thy lovers, And you has hired them to come to thee from all sides

34 For thy fornications --- for in thy lewdness You have inverted the custom of other women; Since there is no fornication like thine: Because you has given instead of receiving a gift, Then you has acted contrary to others.

35 Wherefore, O harlot, hear Jehovah's word!

36 Thus says the Lord Jehovah, Because thy shamelessness is poured out, And thy baseness detected in thy lewdness towards thy lovers, And towards all the idols of your abominations, And in the bloods of thy children whom you has given to them;

37 Wherefore lo! I will assemble all thy lovers Whom you has attracted, and all whom you has loved and hated; I will assemble them from all around thee, And I will lay bare thy nakedness before them, And they shall behold all thy turpitude.

38 Then will I judge thee with the judgment of adulteresses, And of those who pour out blood; and I will give thee The blood of fury and of jealousy.

39 And I will give thee into their hand, And they shall pull down thy high place, And destroy thy raised places, and shall spoil thee of thy robes; They shall also take the vessels of thy glory, And send thee away, naked and bare.

40 Then they shall stir up a crowd against thee, And stone thee with stones, and thrust at thee with swords.

41 Then they shall burn thy houses with fire, And shall execute judgments against thee in the eyes of many women: Then will I cause thee to cease from fornication, Neither shall you offer a gift any more.

42 And I will cause my fury towards thee to rest, And my jealousy shall depart from thee, And I will rest and be no longer angry.

43 Because you has not remembered the days of thy youth, But has provoked me in all those things; I will even recompense thy way upon your head, Says the Lord Jehovah; since you has taken no thought For all your abominations. [608]

44 Lo! every user of proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, Saying, As the mother is, so is the daughter.

45 You art the daughter of thy mother, who has east away her husband and her sons; And the sister of thy sisters, who loathe their husbands and children; Your mother was a Hittite, and your father an Amorite:

46 And your elder sister is Samaria, and her daughters those who dwell at thy left hand; And thy younger sister, who dwells at thy right hand, is Sodom and her daughters.

[607] Calvin in his comment explains the sense in which “scorning” is used, vol. 2, p. 135; but Newcome justly supposes the original word to be the Chaldee for “to gather.”

[608] See vol. 2, p. 148, note.

47 Yet you has not walked in their ways, And you has not done according to their abominations, As if it had been a very small firing, And you has been more corrupt than they in all thy ways.

48 As I live, says the Lord Jehovah, If Sodom thy sister and her daughters have done As you and thy daughters have done.

49 Lo! this was the iniquity of Sodom thy sister, Pride, fullness of bread, and security of ease Belonged to her and her daughters and she did not lay hold Of the hand of the poor and needy; but she was haughty,

50 And did abomination before me, Hence I took them away as it pleased me. [609]

51 And Samaria has not committed half of thy sins; But you has multiplied your abominations beyond them, And has justified thy sisters in all the abominations which you has done.

52 Bear you, then, thy disgrace by which you has pleaded for thy sister, By thy crimes which you has committed beyond them; They are justified more than you be you then ashamed, And bear thy disgrace, since you has justified thy sisters.

53 Yet will I turn the captivity, yea, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, And the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, And the captivity of thy captivities in the midst of them,

54 That you mayest bear thy reproach, and mayest be ashamed Of all that you has done in consoling them.

55 And thy sisters Sodom and her daughters shall return to their former state, And Samaria and her daughters shall return to theirs, And you and thy daughters shall return to yours.

56 Then thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thee, In the day of thy pride, before thy wickedness was detected;

57 As in the time of thy reproach from the daughters of Syria, And from all around of the daughters of the Philistines, Who despised thee round about.

58 As for thy depraved thoughts and abominations, You has borne them, says Jehovah.

59 For thus saith the Lord Jehovah, I will also do to thee as you has done, Who has despised the oath and broken the covenant.

60 Yet I will remember my covenant with thee In the days of thy youth, and I will establish a perpetual covenant with thee.

61 Then you shall remember thy ways and be ashamed, When you shall receive thy sisters, both elder and younger than thyself; And I will give them unto thee for daughters, But not by thy covenant.

62 For I will establish my covenant with thee, And you shall know that I am Jehovah.

63 That you mayest remember and be ashamed, And not open thy mouth any more because of thy disgrace, When I am propitious to thee for all thy deeds, Says the Lord Jehovah.

[609] See vol. 2, p. 156, note.

Translation: Ezekiel 17

CHAPTER 17

1 Then the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,

2 Son of man, put forth an enigma and utter a proverb to the house of Israel;

3 And say, Thus says the Lord Jehovah, A mighty eagle, with great wings, long feathers, and full of plumage, Of various colors, came to Mount Lebanon, And took the highest branch of a cedar;

4 He cropped off the top of its young twigs, And carried it into the land of the merchant; He planted it in a city of merchants.

5 He took also of the seed of the land, And put it in a fruitful field; He planted it near many waters, like a willow. [610]

6 Then it grew and became a luxuriant vine, low of stature, So that its branches turned towards the eagle, And its roots were under him; and it became a vine, And brought forth branches, and sent out boughs.

7 There was also another large eagle, [611] of great wings and of copious plumage, And lo! this vine bent its roots towards him, And sent forth its branches towards him, That he might water it from the beds of his plantation.

8 In a good soil near many streams was it planted, That it should produce leaves and bring forth fruit, So as to be a magnificent vine.

9 Say you, Thus says the, Lord Jehovah, Shall it prosper? Shall not one pluck up its roots and cut down its fruits, And dry up all its branches, that it may wither? Then it shall not be for a great arm or much people To take it [612] away from its roots.

10 Yet, behold, when planed, shall it prosper? Shall it not completely wither when the east wind has touched it.? Upon the beds of its plantation shall it wither.

[610] Newcome adopts the rendering of the Septuagint and Cocceius, "with much care," curatio, observatio, but quotes Dathe and Golius, page 1362, for the Arabic, in the same sense as Calvin, "a willow."

[611] See vol. 2, p. 192, note.

[612] See vol. 2, p. 193, note.

11 Then the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,

12 Say, I pray thee, to the rebellious house, Know you not what this means? Say, Lo! the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, And has taken away its king and its elders, and carried them with him to Babylon;

13 Then he took from the royal seed, and struck an agreement with him, And made him descend to an oath; Then he took also the mighty of the land;

14 That the kingdom should be low, and not raise itself up, And keep its agreement and stand in it.

15 But he rebelled against him, by sending his ambassadors To Egypt, that horses and much people might be given him: Shall he who doeth these things prosper and escape? Shall he who breaks the treaty get off?

16 As I live, says the Lord Jehovah, if he shall not die In the place of the king who made him reign, Whose oath he has despised, and whose treaty he has made vain, In the midst of Babylon.

17 Neither with a mighty army nor a great host Shall Pharaoh meet with him in battle, By throwing up a mound and by building a tower, to cut off many souls.

18 Through breaking the covenant he has despised his oath, And, behold, he has stretched forth his hand, And has done all this, and shall not escape.

19 Besides, thus says the Lord Jehovah, As I live, If I do not recompense on his own head My oath which he has despised, and my covenant which he has broken,

20 Then I will stretch my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare; And I will lead him to Babylon, and will plead with him there, Concerning the transgression which he has transgressed against me.

21 And all his fugitives,. with all his forces, shall fall by the sword; And the remnant shall be scattered to every wind; And you shall know that I Jehovah have spoken.

22 Thus says the Lord Jehovah, I will take from the top of the lofty cedar, And I will tear off a tender branch from its twigs and will set it: And I will plant it on a lofty and elevated mountain;

23 On a lofty mountain of Israel will I plant it; And it shall bring forth a bough and bear fruit, and shall be a tall cedar; [613] Then every bird shall dwell under it; Every winged thing shall shelter itself under the shadow of its branches.

24 Then all the trees of the field shall know that I am Jehovah, Who humble the high tree and raise aloft the low tree; I dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree fruitful I Jehovah have spoken and have done it.

[613] See vol. 2, p. 208, note.

Translation: Ezekiel 18

CHAPTER 18

1 Then the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,

2 What mean you by using this proverb [614] about the land of Israel, Saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on edge?

3 As I live, says the Lord Jehovah, You shall not hereafter Use this proverb any more in Israel.

4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, So the soul of the son is mine. The soul which has sinned shall die itself.

5 But if a man have been just, and done judgment and justice,

6 And have neither eaten upon the mountains, nor raised his eyes To the idols of the house of Israel, and have not polluted His neighbor's wife, nor approached a female when separated;

7 If he have not afflicted any one, and have restored to the debtor his pledge, Have not seized the prey, have given his bread to the hungry, And have covered the naked with a garment:

8 Have not given upon usury, and have taken no increase, Have withdrawn his hand from iniquity, And have done justice faithfully between man and man;

9 Have walked in my statutes, and kept my judgments, to do the truth [615] He is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord Jehovah.

10 But if he beget a son, who is a robber and a shedder of blood, And who doeth to his brother [616] any one of these things,

11 And has not done all these precepts of the law, But has eaten on the mountains, and defiled his neighbor's wife;

12 Has oppressed the poor and needy, has spoiled by violence, Has not restored

[614] Saying or apothegm; vol. 2, p. 213, note.
[615] Conduct himself faithfully; vol. 2, p. 219, note.
[616] See vol. 2, p. 231, note.

the pledge, has lifted up his eyes unto idols;

13 Has done abomination, has given on usury and taken increase; Shall he live? He shall not live; he has done all these abominations; He shall surely die: his blood shall be on him.

14 And lo! if he beget a son, and he see all the wickedness which his father has committed, And feared, and hath not done according to them;

15 Has not eaten upon the mountains, and has not raised his eyes To the idols of the house of Israel, and has not defiled his neighbor's wife; Hath oppressed no one, has not taken a pledge,

16 Hath not spoiled by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, And has covered the naked with a garment;

17 Has withdrawn his hand from the poor, Has not received increase and usury, has done my judgments, Has walked in my decrees; he shall not die Through the]iniquity of his father; he shall surely live.

18 His father, --- because by oppressing he has oppressed, And has snatched the prey from his brother, And has done that which is not good in the midst of the people, --- Behold, he shall die in his iniquity.

19 And you say, Why? shall not the son bear his father's iniquity? Because the son has done judgment and justice, And has kept all my statutes and has done them, Therefore shall he surely live.

20 The soul which has sinned, that shall die. The son shall not bear the father's iniquity, And the father shall not bear the son's iniquity; The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, And the impiety of the impious shall be upon him.

21 Then, if the wicked man shall withdraw from all the wickedness which he has done, And have kept all my sayings, and have done justice and judgement, He shall surely live --- he shall not die.

22 All the transgressions which he has committed Shall not come into memory to him; But in his righteousness; which he has done shall he live.

23 Do I earnestly desire the death of the wicked, says the Lord Jehovah? Do I not desire that he turn from his evil ways and live?

24 Then, if a just man turn aside from his justice, And do iniquity, according to all the abominations Which the wicked man has done, shall he live? All his righteous deeds shall not come into remembrance? [617] In the transgression which he has transgressed, And in the wickedness which he has wickedly done, In them shall he die --- yet you have said ---

25 The way of the Lord is not upright. Hear you then, O house of Israel, is not my way upright? Are not your ways perverse? [618]

26 If the just man has turned aside from his justice, And has done iniquity, and has died in it, In his own iniquity which he has committed shall he die.

27 And if the wicked man has turned aside from the wickedness which he has done, And has done judgment and justice, he shall preserve his soul alive. [619]

[617] See vol. 2, p. 249, note.
[618] Accurately balanced: vol. 2, p. 252, note.
[619] See vol. 2, p. 256, note.

28 Then, if he have seen and have turned away from all the wickedness Which he has done, he shall surely live --- he shall not die.

29 Yet, the house of Israel have said, The way of the Lord is not upright. Are not my ways upright, O house of Israel? Are not your ways perverse?

30 Wherefore I will judge each of you according to his ways, O house of Israel, says the Lord Jehovah. Turn you, and depart from all your transgressions, And let not iniquity be your snare.

31 Cast away from you all your iniquities whereby you have transgressed; And make you a new heart and a new spirit: For why will you die, O house of Israel?

32 Since I do not delight in the death of the dying, Says the Lord Jehovah --- wherefore turn you, and live.

Translation: Ezekiel 19

CHAPTER 19

1 Wherefore take you up this mournful strain against the princes of Israel,

2 And say, Why did thy mother --- a lioness --- Lie down among lions? she brought up her whelps In the midst of lions.

3 Then she bore one of her whelps, and he was made a lion: Then he learnt to seize his prey, and he devoured men.

4 Then the Gentiles heard of him; he was taken in their pit, And they led him in chains into the land of Egypt.

5 Then she saw what she had hoped for, and how her hope had perished; And she took another of her whelps, and made him a lion.

6 Then he walked in the midst of lions, and became a lion; And he learnt to seize the prey, and devoured men.

7 Then he harassed their palaces and destroyed their cities; And the land was rendered desolate, and all its fullness, By the voice of his roaring.

8 Then the nations set themselves against him From all sides and regions, and spread their net over him. He was taken in their pitfall: and they put him in ward,

9 And brought him in chains to the king of Babylon. They led him into strongholds, that his voice Might be no longer heard in the mountains of Israel.

10 Thy mother, when she bore thee, [620] was planted like a vine near the waters: She was fruitful and branching beside many waters.

11 And the rods of her strength were for scepters for rulers, And her stature was elevated, and appeared aloft In the multitude of her branches.

12 Then she was torn in fury, and cast on the ground; And the east wind dried

[620] Calvin translates with the authorized version in tuo sanguine, “in thy blood,” and explains it as above, dum peperit. Capellus and Pradus, by a slight alteration of the Hebrew letters from {,{בדמך bedemek, to ,{כרמן} keremen, translate ``like a pomegranate.'' Doederlein, in his Annotations on Grotius, prefers this sense; but Jerome, Rab. Solomon, and Rab. David, take it as Calvin does. Both Rosenmuller and Newcome discuss the point with ability.

up her fruit; Her strong rods were broken off and dried up; The fire consumed them; and now she is planted

13 In the desert, in a land of dryness and thirst.

14 Then a fire went forth from the rod of her branches, and devoured her fruit; And there was not a rod of strength in her --- a scepter for ruling. This is the lamentation, and shall be for a wailing.

Translation: Ezekiel 20

CHAPTER 20

1 It occurred in the seventh year, the fifth month, the tenth day of the month, Men from the elders of Israel came to consult Jehovah, And sat before my face. And the word of Jehovah

2 Came to me, saying, Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel,

3 And say unto there, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Are you come. to inquire of me? As I live, If I will be sought by you, saith the Lord Jehovah,

4 Wilt you judge them, wilt you judge them, son of man? Explain to them the abominations of their fathers;

5 Then you shall say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, In the day on which I chose Israel, and lifted up my hand To the seed of the house of Jacob, and was known to them in the land of Egypt, Then I raised my hand to them, saying, I am Jehovah your God:

6 In that day I lifted up my hand towards them, To bring them from the land of Egypt into a land which I espied for them, Flowing with milk and honey, desirable beyond all lands.

7 Then I said to them, Cast you away every one the abominations of his eyes, And pollute not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I Jehovah am your God; and they rebelled against me,

8 And were unwilling to hear me: they did not cast away The idols of their eyes: they did not desert the idols of Egypt: Then I said that I would pour out my wrath upon them; To fill up nay fury against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.

9 But, I acted for my name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the eyes of the nations, In the midst of which they were; in whose sight I was known to them, By bringing them forth from the land of Egypt.

10 Then I led them out from the land of Egypt, and brought them into the desert.

11 And I gave them my decrees, and made known my judgments unto them,

Which if a man do, he shall live in them.

12 Moreover I gave them my Sabbaths for a sign between me and them, That they might know that I am he who sanctifieth them.

13 But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the desert: They walked not in my decrees, And despised my judgments, Which if a mall do, he shall live in them. And my sabbaths they greatly violated: Then I said I would pour out my wrath in the desert to consume them.

14 Then I acted for my name's sake, that it should not be profaned In the eyes of the nations, in whose sight I led them out.

15 Yet I lifted up my hand to them in the desert, That I should not lead them into the land which I had given them, Flowing with milk and honey, the desire of all lands,

16 Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my decrees, And polluted my sabbaths; because their heart walked after their idols.

17 Then mine eye spared them, so that I did not destroy them, And did not consume them in the desert.

18 Then I said unto their sons in the desert, Walk you not in the decrees of your fathers, And keep not their judgments, and pollute not yourselves with their idols:

19 I Jehovah am your God, walk you in my decrees, And keep my judgments, and do them:

20 And hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, That you may know that I Jehovah am your God.

21 Then these sons became rebels against me: They walked not in my decrees, and kept not my judgments To do them, which if a man do, he shall live in them; They profaned my Sabbaths: and I said That I would pour out my wrath upon them, To accomplish my fury against them in the desert.

22 Then I withdrew my hand, and acted for my name's sake, That it should not be profaned in the eyes of the nations, Before whose sight I led them out.

23 I also lifted up my hand to them in the desert To scatter them among the nations, and disperse them through the lands;

24 Because they did not perform my judgments, And despised my statutes, and violated my Sabbaths; And their eyes were after their fathers' idols.

25 I therefore gave them decrees that were not good, And judgments by which they could not live;

26 And I contaminated them in their gifts, By casting away every first-born offspring, To destroy them, that. they may know that I am Jehovah.

27 Wherefore, speak to the house of Israel, son of man, and say to them, Thus says the Lord Jehovah, Hither to your fathers Have dishonored me in this by prevaricating greatly against me:

28 For I introduced them into the land, for which I raised my hand to give it them; And they saw every high inn, and every branching tree: Then they sacrificed there their offerings, And offered there the irritation of their oblation, And placed there the odor of their sweet fragrance, And poured out there their libations.

29 Then said I unto them, What is the high place to which you approach? For its name is called ``Lofty'' unto this day.

30 Wherefore, say unto the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord Jehovah, Are you polluted after the way of your fathers? And do you commit adultery after their idols?

31 For in offering your gifts, and in passing your sons through the fire, You pollute yourselves in all your idols unto this day Then shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel! As I live, says the Lord Jehovah, if I shall be inquired of by you.

32 That also which comes it to your mind shall not happen, Since you say, We will be as the nations, as the families of the lands,

33 To serve wood and stone. As I live, says the Lord Jehovah, If I will not rule over you with a strong hand, and an extended arm, and in fury poured forth.

34 And I will lead you out from the people, and collect you from the lands Through which you were dispersed, by a strong hand, and with an extended arm,

35 And with fury poured forth. Then I will lead you into the desert of the Gentiles, And will plead with you there face to face.

36 As I pleaded with your fathers in the desert of the land of Egypt, So will I dispute with you, says the Lord Jehovah.

37 Then I will make you pass under the rod, And bring you within the bond of a covenant:

38 Then will I purge out from among you the rebels, And the transgressors against me from the land of their habitation Will I bring the impious, and they shall not enter the land of Israel; And you shall know that I am Jehovah.

39 As for you, O house of Israel, thus says the Lord Jehovah, Go you, let each serve his idols, since you do not hear me, And the name of my sanctity profane no longer

40 With your gifts and your idols, since in the mountain of my sanctity, In a lofty mountain of Israel, says the Lord Jehovah, There shall the whole house of Israel worship me; All, I say, in the land there will I be propitious to them; And there will I require your oblations, And the first-fruits of your gifts in all your purification's.

41 In the odor of sweet fragrance will I be propitious to you, When I shall have brought you from the people, And gathered you from the lands through which you will be dispersed; And I will be sanctified in you in the eyes of the nations.

42 Then shall you know that I am Jehovah, When I shall have brought you back into the land of Israel, Into the region about which I raised my hand to give it to your fathers.

43 And there I will remember your ways, and all your works, In which you were polluted; and you shall be confused in face [621] Through all your wickedness which you have committed.

44 Then shall you know that I am Jehovah, when I shall have done among you According to. my name, not according to your evil ways, Nor according to your corrupt doings, O house of Israel, says the Lord Jehovah.

As Calvin's Latin Translation ends here, so the version by the Translator comes naturally to a close. It has not been thought necessary to re-translate from the original the remainder of Ezekiel, as the previously quoted labors of Newcome and Rosenmuller are sufficiently accessible and explanatory.

[621] See vol. 2, p. 342, note.

Notes and Comments

NOTES AND COMMENTS

BY THE EDITOR.

THE PROMISED CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS A COMPLETE APPARATUS CRITICUS HAS BEEN ARRANGED AS FOLLOWS

--- (See Translator's Preface, Volume 1) ---

SECTIONS 1, 2, AND 3, --- **Being Indexes, Are Placed At The End Of The Volume**

SECTIONS 4, 5, 6, AND 7, --- **Now Follow One Another**

SECTION 8 --- **Is Preceded By Its Own ``List Of Contents**.''

A COMPLETE SYNOPSIS

OF THE CONTENTS OF THE WHOLE OF EZEKIEL'S PROPHECIES.

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2. THE PROPHET'S UTTERANCES.
3. THE PROPHET'S CONSOLATIONS.

1. The Prophet's Commission.

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Section 2. The Address --- the Roll --- the Abounding Lamentation, **Ezekiel 2.**

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2. The Prophet's Utterances.

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Section 16. A Vindication of the Divine Justice, and Confutation of Israel's Proverb, **Ezekiel 18:1-32**

Section 17. The Emblem of the Lioness and her Whelps, **Ezekiel 19:1-9**

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Section 19. The Elders of Israel rebuked for their sins, **Ezekiel 20:1-32**

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Section 23. The Sharp Sword and the Great Slaughter, **Ezekiel 21:8-27**

Section 24. The Sword drawn against the Ammonites, **Ezekiel 21:98-32**

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Section 3. Against the Edomites, **Ezekiel 25:12-14**,

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Section 7. Against Pharaoh, **Ezekiel 29:1-7**

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Section 15. A Bitter Lamentation over Assyria., **Ezekiel 32:22, 23**

Section 16. A Bitter Lamentation over Elam, **Ezekiel 32:24, 25**

Section 17. A Bitter Lamentation over Meshech and Tubal, **Ezekiel 32:26-28**

Section 18. A Bitter Lamentation over Edom, **Ezekiel 32:29-32**

These Utterances are all most vividly and graphically portrayed. Allegories, Metaphors, and Parables are most appropriately interspersed with fiery Denunciations and awful Threatenings in consequence of gross iniquities.

3. The Prophet's Consolations.

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Section 26. The Vision of the Rising Waters, **Ezekiel 47:1-12**
Section 27. The Divisions and Limits of the Land, **Ezekiel 47:13-23**
Section 28. The Portions for the Tribes and the Priests, **Ezekiel 48:1-29**
Section 29. The various Gates of the City, **Ezekiel 48:30-35**

These closing Visions and Consolations are singularly striking, and afford scope for copious illustration; but as our Commentator did not live to expound them, it would in become his Translator to obtrude on the reader his own research into these deep things of the Spirit of God.

A minute description of The Temple Scenery has been attempted by a learned Jew, Soloman Bennett, R.A. of Berlin, (Edit. London, 1834.) His work contains a most elaborate account of every interesting particular. Ezekiel 40, Ezekiel 41, and Ezekiel 42 are explained verse by verse; and a ground-plan and bird's-eye view are subjoined.

These chapters are also explained by Fry on The Second Advent, volume 1. Section 13.

List of Major Interpreters

A LIST OF THE CHIEF INTERPRETERS,
ANCIENT AND MODERN.

1. Jewish Commentators.

Schelomoh Jarchi Ben Jizchak, commonly called Solomon Jarchi, son of Isaac, known to the Jews by the word Raschi, made up of the initials of {ירחי} {שלמה} {רבי}, Rabbi Schelomoh Jarchi, was an eminent commentator on the whole of the Old Testament. the was born at Troyes, in Champagne, a province of France, and died A.D. 1180. His chief value arises from his having collected the best traditionary interpretations of his ancestors from the earliest times.

David Kimchi, son of Joseph, known to the Jews by the name of Radak, from the initial letters of {קמחי} {דור} {רבי}, Rabbi David Kimchi, was a Spaniard. Though he lived so lately as the twelfth ten bury, his interpretation is much valued by both Jews and. Christians for its grammatical accuracy. His commentary on Ezekiel is found in the Rabbinical Writings, edited by Buxtorf, A. D. 1618. Basil, 2 volumes.; and also 1724, Amsterdam.

Isaac Abarbanel, a Portuguese Jew, born at Lisbon, A.D. 1437, and died in Apulia, A.D. 1508. His comments on Ezekiel appeared first at Pesaro, in Italy, A.D. 1520; and then again at Amsterdam, A.D. 1641. He is highly esteemed for his extensive erudition and his clear style.

Shelomoh Ben Melech, a Spaniard, who lived at Constantinople in the middle of the sixteenth century. Under the title, The Perfection of Beauty, he wrote an elaborate commentary on the Old Testament, Constantinople, A.D. 1554, It was reprinted at Amsterdam, A.D. 1661 and 1685, fol., with the additions of Jacob Abendana. Tympius and Danzius have illustrated the manner in which he has improved upon or misunderstood D. Kimchi, according to Wolf, Bibliothec. Hebr., volume 4 pages 989, 991.

These references to Jewish interpreters will enable the reader to judge how far

their opinion on the sense of a passage is decisive. It must be remembered that they all lived more than a thousand years after the Christian era., and that consequently they are not to be esteemed of decisive authority.

Further information may be obtained from Jo. Christ. Wolf's Bibliotheca Hebraee, volume 2, page 368, and elsewhere. Le Long and Boerner's Bib. Sac. ab. A. G. Masch, pt. 1, p. 135; and De Rossi's Annal. Hebrews Typ., Parmae, 1795, page 131; and Hartwell Horne, volume 2, part 2, where he has chiefly followed Carpzov.

2. The Early Fathers.

Origin (between A.D. 185 and 254) appears to have commented very voluminously on Ezekiel, as, from the fragments which remain, it appears that the twentieth volume only reached to chap. 11. Jerome has translated fourteen homilies of Origen's on Ezekiel into Latin, which are found in his works. Edit., Vallarsii, Venet. 1736, tom. 5 page 877; and in De La Rue's collected edition of Origen's Works, volume 3, page 325.

Ephrem of Edessa, who lived about A.D. 370, wrote a Commentary on this Prophet in Syriac, which is found in volume H of his works, as edited by Pet. Benedict, in Syriac and Latin, at Rome, 1740, fol.

Eusebius Hieronymus --- the well-known Jerome --- wrote fourteen books of Comments on Ezekiel. See his works, edit. Martiani, volume 3, and Valarsii, volume 5 Rosenmuller esteems his interpretations highly, and often quotes them at length. Smith's Biographical Dictionary, Art. Ineronymus, page 465, states, that the fourteen books of his Comments on this Prophet were written at intervals, between A.D. 411 and 414, having been commenced immediately after his Comments on Isaiah, but repeatedly broken off. See also the prolegomena to the 126th Epistle to Marcellinus, etc.; the Benedictine edition, volume 3, page 1072.

Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus, in Syria, who lived about A.D. 420, wrote a Commentary on Ezekiel, found in his works, edited by Jac. Sirmond, volume 2 page 300; and in the edit. Halen., volume 2 part 2.

3. Commentators of the
Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries.

Jo. Cecolampadh Commentarius in Ezekielem. Argentorati, 1534, 4to; Basileae, 1548, fol.

Victorini Strigelh Ezechiel Propheta ad Ebraicam veritatem recognitus, et argumentis atque scholiis illustratus. Lipsiae, 1564, 1575, 1579, 8vo.

Hectoris Pinti Commentarius in Ezechielem. Salmanticae, 1568, fol.; Antverp, 1570, 1582; Lugduni, 1581, 4to; Ibid. 1584, fol.; Colon., 1615, 4to.

Phil. Heilbrunner Ezechielis Prophetae vaticinia illustrata. Lavingae, 1587, 8vo.

Hieron. Padri Et Jo. Bapt. Villalpandi, in Ezechielem Explanationes. Romae, 1596, 3 vols. fol.

This work is much praised and quoted by Rosenmuller. The first volume contains the Comments of Pradus on the first six-and-twenty chapters: he died before it was published; so that his coadjutor edited it, and compiled the two latter volumes. They had access to a Catena Patrum Graecorum in Ezechielem, preserved in the Vatican Library, which they inserted, translated into Latin by a member of their own order;

and they enriched their work with valuable illustrations of the city and temple at Jerusalem. A full description of the work will be found in den Nachrichten von einer Hallischen Bibliothek, part 8 page 18, and foll.

Amandi Polani A Polansdorf Commentaria in Ezechielem. Basileae, 1601, 4to; and 1608, 4to.

A digest of public lectures delivered in the old Academy at Basil.

Franc. Junh Commentaria in Ezechielem Prophetam. Genevae, 1609, fol.; and 1610, 8vo.

Jo. Maldonati Commentarii in Ezechielem. Moguntiae, 1611, small 4to.

This work, by a learned Jesuit, is very explanatory. The Latin translation is good, and the Jewish interpretations freely used. Many Hebrew words we have found well explained.

Gasper Sancth Commentarius in Ezechielem. Lugduni, 1612, 1619, fol.

Jac. Brandmulleri Commentarius in Ezechielem. Basil. 1621, 4to.

An Exposition of the Prophecy of Ezekiel. By GEORGE GREENHILL. London, 1645. 5 vols. 4to.

Doctrinal and practical lectures delivered to a congregation at Stepney by the writer, a member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. Excellent of its kind, but not critical. Various editions, originally published at different times, from 1645 to 1658.

Jo. Cocceh Commentarius in Ezekielem. 1668, 4to.

4. Later Commentators.

George Calixti Scholae Propheticae ex Prelectionibus in...Ezekielem collectae. Quedlinburgi, 1715, 4to.

Das Zeugniss Iesu aus dem Propheten Ezechiel durch den Geist der Weissagung dargethan von Wilhelm Petersen. Francofurti, 1719, 4to.

Jo. Frid. Starckh, V.D.M., Francofurtani, Commentarius in Prophetam Ezechielem. Francof. ad Moen., 1731, 4to.

A laborious, useful, and practical Commentary.

George Costard Dissertationes H. Critico-Sacrae quarum prima explicata Ezech. ch. 13:18. Oxon. 1752, 8vo.

Ezechiel aufs Neue aus dem Hebraischen ubersetzt, und mit kurgen Anmerkungen fur unstudirte Leser begleitet von Joh. Carl. Volborth. Goett. 1787.

For an account of this work, see Eichhorn's Allgem. Biblioth. der Bib. Lit., volume 1, page 807.

An Attempt towards an Improved Version, a Metrical Arrangement, and an Explanation of the Prophet Ezekiel. By Wm. Newcome, D.D., Bishop of Waterford, and afterwards Archbishop of Armagh. Dublin, 1788, 4to.

This is an invaluable work: to the mere English reader of this Prophet. Tegg, in his edition of 1836, 1 volume 8vo, page 294, has rendered it very accessible: it is safe, sound, and judicious, with excellent notes. See also Eichhorn Bibl., volume 2, page 131; and J. D. Michaelis Neue orient. u. exeget. Bibli., pt. 6 page 87.

Hermanni Venema Lectiones Academicae ad Ezechielem. Part 1 usque ad cap. 21 Edidit. Jo. Hen. Verschuir. Leovard, 1790, 4to, 2 parts. See again, Eich. Bibl.,

volume 3, page 694.

Jo. Godofr Eichhorn die Biblischen Propheten, volume 2 and volume 3. Ezekielis Vaticinia. Gotting. 1818, 1819.

The Temple of Ezekiel; viz., an Elucidation of the 40th and following Chapters. By Solomon Bennett, R.A., of Berlin. London, 1824. 4to.

Em. F. Rosenmuller's Scholia in Ezekielem. 2 vols. 8vo, 2d edition. 1826. Lipsiae.

Invaluable. The Editor is much indebted to it for many references to other valuable works.

Havernick's Introduction to Ezekiel, translated from the German by the Revelation F.W. Gotch, M.A. See Kitto's Journal of Sacred Literature, No. 1, January 1848; also the Article ``Ezekiel'' --- Kitto's Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature.

Ancient Versions and Codexes

A NOTICE OF THE
ANCIENT VERSIONS AND CODEXES
WHICH CONTAIN
EZEKIEL'S PROPHECIES.

The Arabic Version Of Ezekiel. It was made from the Septuagint, and is contained in the London Polyglot,,. It agrees throughout with that Greek text which exists in the Alexandrine Codex, now in the British Museum. It was executed from Hesychius's edition of the Septuagint, and is valuable for the comparison of cognate words and phrases with the Hebrew.

The Chaldee Version, said to have been made by Jonathan, the son of Uzziel, is found in the London Polyglott, and is praised in Buxtorf's Rabbinical Commentaries.

The Alexandrine Codex is esteemed the most ancient MS. existing, written probably in the fourth century, though some authorities place it much later. [622] The book of Ezekiel was translated for this version during the reign of Ptolemy Philometer. Of all the prophets, Jeremiah seems the best executed: then Amos, and Ezekiel, and Isaiah the worst of all, except Daniel. Edited by Jo. Ern. Grabe, 1707-1720. 4 vols. fol. Oxon.

The Codices Of Kennicott And De Rossi. Only some of them contain Ezekiel; that formerly belonging to the learned Reuchlin (No. 154) contains this Prophet, with a Targum also. The Codex Norimburgensis, (No. 198,) written about A.D. 1290, is noticed here only for the order in which Ezekiel is placed: it is neither that of the Masorites nor the Talmudists. Again, in Codex No. 224, the order is Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah.

The Codex Romanus Or Vaticanus is of great antiquity. A facsimile of this MS. was made for Dr. Grabe in 1704, and Horne has given an accurate specimen

[622] See Hart well Horne's Introduction, etc., volume 2, part 1 page 116, edit. 6th, where full information on this and kindred subjects is to be found.

of Ezekiel, Ezekiel 1:1-3. This facsimile is at long the MSS. of the Bodleian Library. Cardinal Anton. Carasa executed an edition under the auspices of Pope Sixtus V. Rome, 1587. Fol.

The Syro. Estranghelae Version is a translation into Syriac of Origen's Hexaplar edition of the Septuagint A MS. exists in the Ambrosian Library at Milan. It contains Scholia of the Greek and Syrian fathers, and various valuable annotations. Matth. Norberg edited from it the Prophecies of Ezekiel and Jeremiah, in 1787, 4to, Londini Gothorum; giving it the title of Codex Syriaco-Hexaplaris Ambrosiano-Mediolanensis. See Eichhorn's account of it in his Allgem. Bib. der Bibl. Lit., volume 1 page 837, and foll.

The Vulgate Version needs mention here only to point out the differences in rendering Ezekiel between the editions of Sixtus 5. and Clement 8. In Ezekiel 14:22, the former has egredientur, which is correct, and the latter ingredientur

Among The Five Gothic Mss. discovered by Ang. Mai, in the Ambrosian Library at Milan, amidst the Codices Rescripti, the homilies of Gregory the Great on this Prophet were found written over various portions of St. Paul's Epistles. These homilies were executed before the eighth century.

Dissertations

DISSERTATIONS

ON IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,

TREATED OF IN THESE LECTURES.

1 --- On The Cherubim **Ezekiel 1:1.**

2 --- Calvinus Judaizans An Orthodoxus?

3 --- Calvin's Severity Towards The Jews

4 --- The Figurative Expressions Of Ezekiel

5 --- On Eating The Roll {α} **Ezekiel 3:1.** The Great Rushing {β} **Ezekiel 3:12** On Tel-Abib {γ} **Ezekiel 3:12.**

6 --- Jerusalem Painted On A Brick {α} **Ezekiel 4:1** The Three Hundred And Ninety Days {β} **Ezekiel 4:5.**

7 --- The Septuagint Order **Ezekiel 7:3-13.**

8 --- The Image Of Jealousy **Ezekiel 8:1-14.**

9 --- The Man In The Linen Garment **Ezekiel 9:2.**

10 --- The Coals Scattered Over The City **Ezekiel 10:2.**

11 --- The Five-And-Twenty Evil Counsellors **Ezekiel 11:1.**

12 --- The False Prophets {α} **Ezekiel 13:1.** On The Principle Of Accommodation. {B} On The Phrase Prostituerunt Deum {γ} **Ezekiel 13:19.**

13 --- Israel An Adulteress {α} **Ezekiel 16:1** Captive Israel And Papal Rome. {β} **Ezekiel 16:20.** On The Word Nephesh, Soul {γ} **Ezekiel 16:27** The Primitive Church And The New Testament {δ} **Ezekiel 16:61.**

14 --- The Great Eagle {α} **Ezekiel 17:3** The Lofty Branch Of The Tall Cedar. {β} **Ezekiel 17:22**

15 --- The Eating Sour Grapes {α} **Ezekiel 18:1.** Usury And Interest. {β} **Ezekiel 18:8.** Perplexing And Thorny Questions {γ} **Ezekiel 18:20**

16 --- The Sabbath A Sacrament And A Mystery. **Ezekiel 20:13, 14.**

Dissertation First.

ON THE CHERUBIM.

THE Visions recorded in the first and tenth chapters of this Prophet have received much illustration, and yet remain involved in great obscurity. It seems desirable to supply some information, even at the risk of being tedious and minute. The living creatures of the first chapter are called in the ninth and tenth --- cherubim. The derivation of the word is a point of some importance. Castell, in his elaborate Lex. Hept., connects it with the Chaldee root {כרב}, kereb, signifying ``to plough,'' and quotes Ezekiel 1:10, where ``an ox'' occurs, ``a strong animal, of great labor, especially in ploughing; and being used for the expiation of sins, becomes a type of Christ, who is there perhaps to be understood; for as the ox is the leader of the herd, so Christ is the head of the faithful.'' Josephus says they were animals never seen by any one. (Antiq., lib. 3. chapter 6, and lib. 8 chapter 2.) The Arabic root of the same three letters, kereb, signifies anxiety and oppressive labor, anxit animum, invertit aratio terram; while the cognate forms of the Syriac signify ploughing and laborious effort. ``The most probable,'' says Gesenius, ``among the many derivations of this word which have been proposed, is that from the Syriac, potens magnus fortis.'' Professor Lee writes, in evident despair, ``It would be idle to offer anything on the etymology: nothing satisfactory having yet been discovered. Castell, Simonis, Gesenius, etc., may be consulted by those who wish to see what has been said on this subject.'' The cherubic form has been fully portrayed by our Commentator; and by engravings in the Cyclopcedia of Biblical Literature we are enabled to compare Egyptian and Persian winged symbols with those of the Hebrews. A sculptured bas-relief of a winged human figure as it existed before the time of Moses, and placed by the Egyptians over their sacred arcs, is worthy of comparison with the descriptions of Scripture. The Persian bas-relief at Moung-Aub, is a human figure arrayed in an embroidered robe, ``with such quadruple wings as the vision of Ezekiel ascribes to the cherubim, with the addition of ample horns, the well-known symbols of regal power.'' The opinions of divines relative to their design and signification are very diversified. Among the ancients Philo supposed them to signify the two hemispheres, the flaming sword showing the motion of the planets, and the lion and the man being Leo and Aquarius, the signs of the Zodiac. Irenaeus (Adv. Heres. 3:11) treats them as emblems of the four elements, the four quarters of the globe, the four gospels, and the four covenants. Tertullian (Apolog. cap. 47.) referred them to the torrid zone, while Justin Martyr treats Ezekiel's figures as relating to Nebuchadnezzar eating grass like the ox, with his hand like a lion's, and his nails like the claws of a bird, (Quaest. et Respons. 44, page 325, edit. Heidelbergae, 1593;) and that they were consolatory to the captive Israelites by setting before them the prospect of their own return, and their oppressor's downfall. The analogy to the four gospels, as presented to us by Irenaeus, is peculiarly ingenious, and worthy of perusal. Spencer, in his Ritual Observances of the Hebrews, has ingeniously explained their form and description. (Lib. 3. Dissert. 5 cap. 3. and 4 section 2.) Grotius considers them to represent ``the properties of God, and his actions towards his people,'' (Annot. in Vet. Test.;) and Doederlin, while conceding the praise of ingenuity to the conjectures of his author, yet treats his speculations as the abortion rather than the legitimate

offspring of a luxuriant fancy. (Vogel's edit. Grot. continued by Doeder., volume 2 page 247.) Further information as to the views of ancient writers has been collected by Rosenmuller, on Ezekiel 1:10, edit. see. Lipsiae, 1826. The translation of Houbigant may be consulted, and Spencer on the Laws and Ritual of the Hebrews, lib. 3. Dissert. 5, chapter 1, and folk The various readings on which different translations are founded are rendered very accessible to the English reader by the simple and comprehensive notes of Archbishop Newcome.

It is interesting to observe the way in which the learned Jesuit Maldonatus comments on this first: chapter. He interprets the four visions separately first, the tempest; next, the figure of the four animals; the third, the form of the wheels; and the fourth, the firmament., and the man sitting on the throne. He objects to the allegorical interpretation of Origen and in school, and considers that the tempest signifies the calamities which the Chaldaeans caused to the Jews and their city. By the whirlwind, the nearness of the calamities is pointed out; and by the north wind, its rapidity and destructive force. Some, he says, refer it to Babylon, making it symbolize the manners of the Chaldaeans, which were rough and boisterous. The great cloud seems to him to signify the army of the king of Babylon; and the fire, his wrath and fury: the surrounding brightness is an indication of the divine majesty, and the amber color is an image of God himself. Jerome takes the amber as a symbol of pity, since amber has an attractive power, and by placing it in connection with the army of the king of Babylon, it implies that God directed every event concerning the captivity. Gregory and others interpret the amber of Christ.

The Second Vision he considers more difficult; he first gives the views of other interpreters, and then brings forward his own formed divino beneficio, meditando, legendo, orando. Origen (Hom. 1. in Ezekiel) takes the four living creatures for the four affections of man's nature: the man representing the reasoning faculty, the lion the inflammable passions, the ox concupiscence, and the eagle, as it soars upwards, the divine spirit, within us. St. Ambrose (Lib. 3. de virinibus) refers them to prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice. Jerome and Gregory understand them of the four evangelists; and the details respecting the wheels, the wings, and the sparks of fire, are consistently interpreted. Catina Syrius refers them to the camp of Israel in the desert: the face of a man meaning all Israel, that of a lion the tribe of Judea, that of an ox the tribe of Levi, and that of an eagle God looking down from above, and taking vengeance on the people. Theodoret (Comment. in loc.) considers them to represent the majesty and glory of God resident in these cherubim. It appears that in his day the opinion of Jerome was most popular; and it was necessary to give many reasons why the four evangelists were not signified by this vision. Philosophical interpreters also existed, no unworthy predecessors of the German rationalists. They supposed all things indiscriminately signified by these representatives of animated nature, while some preferred the changes of the events of providence to the manifestations of external nature. His own opinion he records as follows: that the cherubim represent four heathen kingdoms, Chaldean, Assyrian, Egyptian, and Tyrian. He supposes them placed under the firmament, and under the sapphire throne, to indicate the supreme power of the Almighty over all

things. The wings are the human guards by which kings protect themselves; the hands represent human industry, strength, and labor; the fire indicates the Spirit of God in kings; and the various motions forwards and backwards show the changes in governments and the perturbations of empires, all under the control of a supreme governor. This scheme is well fortified by passages of Scripture, and has the merit of great exactness and ingenuity. [623]

We now turn to a very different interpreter --- Oecolampadius. His comments of this chapter is essentially spiritual. He sees in it a representation of God judging the world through Christ. The great truths of revelation he sees obscurely shadowed forth under carnal and Jewish images; and he is anxious to point out the spiritual reign of Christ as promulgated by these outward and visible representations of God's glory. He refers these visions, first of all, to the Jews and their captivity; but he claims for them the office of tangibly illustrating the abiding glory of the universal assembly of the faithful. ``The universal Church,'' he says, ``has three parts' first, its head is Hasmal, represented as an old man seated on a throne next, animals, the just or living members, are those more perfect in the Church, adorned with a variety of gifts' the wheels are the weaker and more ordinary members, which belong to the body, and form the common herd of believers, who belong to the more solid parts of the Church, since they are under the influence of the same Spirit, although they have not attained that fullness of which St. Paul speaks, and have not drunk into the peculiar and interior spirit of the Gospel.'' [624] He then confesses the great difficulty of ascertaining the correct interpretation' he rejects all Jewish comments, and approves of the spiritualizing method of referring it to the coming kingdom of Christ. The whirlwind, for instance, he asserts to be a figure of the devastation which preceded Christ's first coming, and shall also signalize his second advent- the great cloud expresses God's judgments on the world, and the fire the process of trial through which all things are to pass. Hasmal he regards as the name of an angel or fiery living one speaking, and blames Jerome for following the Septuagint, and translating it electrum.

This spiritually-minded reformer has furnished a valuable exposition of the mystery contained in the vision recorded in the tenth chapter, which is worthy of notice. The likeness of a man upon the throne he assumes to be our Savior, whose reign is supreme ``in the consciences of his elect.'' Most properly is he called Hasmal, ``quod de eo admirabunda taciturnitate, et per cogitationes arcanas magnifica loquamur, opus dei in illo admirantes.'' The cherubim are beneath him, because he is adored by angels, and has spirits for his messengers and attendants. The firmament, he says, is grace offered through Christ, which strengthens the hearts of the elect by being infused with in them. The living creatures, their wheels and machinery for motion, represent the progress of the Church, suffering as yet under corruption, but waiting and groaning for the redemption of the body. In each living creature all qualities are bound together; for the four faces represent the spiritual endowments of advancing Christians; the same animal is a man in judgment, a lion in patient

[623] Maldon. in Ezekiel 1, etc., edit. Moguntiae 1611. Here the reader may see the Jewish comments of Rabb. David, Solomon, and the Chaldee paraphrast; also R. Moses, lib. 3, cap. 6.

[624] Comment. in om. lib. Proph., page 5, Ez., Genev. 1558.

endurance, a calf in usefulness and guileless sincerity, and an eagle in prompt and cheerful obedience to its lord the wings are faith and divine love, which veil the face, which is conscience, and of this there are four kinds corresponding Lo the human, the leonine, the infantile, and the aquiline appearances. ``It is the property of a good conscience to by raised upwards towards God when confirmed in grace, and, forgetful of thing's past to be more and more anxious to reach the firmament of grace.'' The hands under each wing represent those good works by which living faith and active love manifest their divine power; while the wheels signify the inferior members of the Church, who, though not attaining to the same righteous standard, are animated by a similar spirit. The feet being straight and equable, and turning easily and constantly in all directions, are said to signify the messengers of God proclaiming' his salvation throughout the world, and ``bearing'' all things to all men, that they may bring many profitably to Christ.'' The sound produced by the motion of the wings means the fame of salvation arriving at, distant regions; and when the Prophet hears the voice exhorting the wheels, it seems to him to say, ``O wheels, follow with alacrity the spirit of the living creature within you; let; nothing; delay you; let nothing tear you from the fourfold figure, which is the body of Christ; for if you cleave to this, even in its lowest part, you shall be raised up together with it.'' The motion of each animal, in the direction of its face, signifies every Christian acting according to his conscience; and although there are differences of gifts, and each exercises his own independently, yet all follow one common leader, being animated by a common spirit. Thus the companion of Zuingle spiritualizes the passage with much consistency and at great length, affording a singular example of the method of throwing the light of matured Christian experience upon a scene so exclusively Jewish. To enable us to decide whether the view of Calvin or Ecolampadius is the correct one, we must state some general principles, which will be found in the following section.

Dissertation Second.

CALVINUS JUDAIZANS AN ORTHODOXUS?

``Calvinus Judaizans`` was the title of a work published at Wittemberg, A.D. 1595, by AEgidius Hunnius. It contained a sharp censure for applying to the temporal state and circumstances of the Jews those prophecies which were supposed to refer spiritually to the Christian Church. The year, however, did not pass away before David Pareus replied, under the title of ``Calvinus Orthodoxus.'' And all who have perused his comments on this Prophet must vindicate him from the charge of favoring Judaism, and applaud him for wisely neglecting all allegorical significations and mystical expositions. While it will be impossible to discuss the whole question of prophetic interpretation, it will be necessary to state some general views by which we ought to be guided.

The prophecies of the Old Testament were in many instances a divinely provided introduction to the events of the New. In them we may see the outlines of the process by which God was ever educating man for ultimate restoration to His image. They contain a suggestive method of destruction by palpable signs and. wonders, which addressed the soul through their influence on the senses. Their value to the

Jew was very different from that to the Christian. To the former they were the highest revelation attainable, while for us they do not reveal a single attribute or purpose of Deity which is not more fully made known through the Gospel dispensation. The Hebrew visions stand to us in the relation of porch to temple, and of dawn to day. They are to the Christian a divine first lesson-book, and contain a series of condescending instructions suited to a low stage of religious and mental life. They were specially appropriate to the people to whom they were bestowed, and of a structure and material in accordance with the dispensation to which they ministered. They were prefigurative and preformative throughout. They were preparatory and thus far excellent, but not ``chiefest of all'' because not permanent. Like the scaffolding, the growing blade, the finished portrait, they fail in comparison with the stately building, the ripened corn, the living person. Now Calvin avoids the extremes of the merely literal system and of the mystical allegories of the double sense. The former system treats the Old Testament as if it were all written at the same time, and every part of it addressed equally to all men. It excepts the ceremonial observances, and then considers that every sentence is reconcilable with all the rest by a spiritual process of traditionary reasoning. It is sternly opposed to all discrimination between the records of different eras; it admits of nothing gradual, variable, or local. Of the latter system we have an excellent example in the quotation just made from the comparison of Zuingle. He sees Christ and justification by faith everywhere. Not only must Hasmal --- a mere color --- be an emblem of the Son of God, but all who cannot receive this are branded as unenlightened. The truths which he has received through the gospel are so vividly impressed upon his soul and so thoroughly leaven his spirit, that he sees everything scriptural by this bright light of his inner man. His deficiency is of judgment, not of grace. The question thought not to be, what series of Christian doctrine can be grafted upon the cherubic emblem, but what truths it was intended to convey to the soul of the Prophet and the people, --- surely not those of the Augsburgh Confession of Faith. We have to guard against a twofold error: on the one hand, a merely critical and rationalistic interpretation which never proceeds beyond the surface; and, on the other, against a fanciful exposition of figurative language, as if in every case the doctrines, the graces, and the experiences of the New Covenant were intended to be revealed to Hebrew prophets.

Apposite, indeed, was the exclamation of the Jew, when he said of Ezekiel, ``Doth he not speak parables?'' He had to take a the and draw a city upon it; to shave his head, and divide the her into three significant parts; and the Jew might fairly ask, How is all this to benefit his soul? It could only do so by appealing to the spiritual principle in man's soul. As the Prophet must eat the roll, so we must to comprehend the meaning of divine emblems, that they may become to us the bread of life. There is a husk around many a spiritual fruit, and often times a stone within it, which seems devoid of nutriment; but still this is the way in which it pleases our heavenly Father to nourish us. All signs, emblems, and sacraments of any true religion are beneficial to us only when we spiritually perceive their inward and animating grace. All that is outward in form and ceremony and machinery is only the vehicle, not the substance, of our support as God's children, and our growth in his likeness. This

foundation truth must be laid firmly as a basis for every portion of the superstructure. The carnal mind never did and never can comprehend the things of the Spirit of God. The power of understanding the meaning must come from the same Deity who sends the vision. On this broad rock of truth we may build every sound interpretation of all the figurative language of Scripture. This principle we may gather from the way in which the early Christian writers explain the symbols of Holy Writ. St. Chrysostom, for instance, treats clearly the lesson we should learn from the seraph's taking the coal from the altar and touching the Prophet's lips with its hallowed fire. [625] St. Ambrose seems scarcely satisfied with the image --- bread of life: he must ``eat life.'' ``Whoso then,'' says he, ``eateth life cannot die. How should he die whose food is life?'' [626] ``and this bread,'' he adds, ``is the remission of sins.'' St. Augustine speaks of ``angels feeding on the eternal word,'' and of ``men eating angels' food.'' [627] Language like this implies the struggle of the spiritual mind to express itself fully through the medium of carnal language; and what were the Shechinnah and the Seraphim, the Urim and the Thummim, the live goat and the slain goat, but symbols receiving all their significance from the Divine truths which they conveyed to the soul? The worship of the one God through the appointed Mediator was ever the same in its hidden essence, and ever must be, while it is ever varying in its, form, according to the divers needs of our frail humanity. It is flexible exceedingly to the eye and the ear, and unchangeable only in its living spirit. All nature, organic and inorganic, has been used to illustrate it and communicate it, but this never has made, nor can make, the unseen visible. Still the question will recur, Where must we draw the line between the human and the divine in these prophetic visions? No man can draw such a line with accuracy except for himself. Let all who doubt this assertion try to divide mind from matter in the living man. Many have attempted it, and their failures remain to mark the narrow lib, its of their knowledge and the assumed regions of their ignorance. The matured Christian instincts of the cultivate worshipper will be every man's best guide under the promised teaching of the Holy Spirit. An infallible interpreter is not for us in the flesh; the interpreting Spirit must dwell within us, otherwise we shall see nothing but the outward aspect of the gorgeous vision. The inspiration within must harmonize with that without, which is not verbal but ideal. The heaven-wrought ideas of the Hebrew Prophets protect themselves.

We do not require either a verbal or literal theopneustia: the truths themselves by their own imperishableness defeat the mortality of the language with which they are associated. They reverberate and percolate through all the pages of the mighty record; they hide themselves obscurely in one chapter only to emerge more clearly in another; they diverge in one book only to recombine in another; so that to the sympathizing soul Scripture is ever a self-sufficing interpreter. Hence we are not careful to defend Calvin's interpretations as faultless: theology as a science has advanced rapidly during three hundred years; and while some of his expositions have become antiquated, we still uphold him as ``orthodoxus.'' The law of development operates

[625] Hom. 5 section 3, and compare the Litany of St. James, Ass. Cod. Lit. 5:56.
[626] In Psalm 118. Lit. 18, sec. 28, 48.
[627] In Psalm 33 En. 1 section 6, and Psalm 78:26.

in the moral as well as in the physical universe. ``Draw a cordon sanitaire,'' says a modern reviewer, ``against dandelion or thistle-down, and see if the armies of earth would suffice to interrupt this process of radiation, which yet is but the distribution of weeds. The secret implications of the truth have escaped at a thousand points in vast arches above our heads, rising high above the garden wall, and have sown the earth with memorials of the mystery which they envelop.'' [628]

A second principle which we must bear in mind is, that every prophetic revelation was expressly adapted to the capacity of its original recipients. The extrinsic agency is always transitory. We of later generations learn enough if we profit by the latent and permanent essence. Hence the interpretation of the cherubim by the four evangelists is utterly untenable: and all such suppositions are indexes of a state of mind wholly incompetent to unfold prophetic mysteries. The very occurrence of hundreds of crude guesses like this, implies the necessity of submitting the prophetic emblems to some general laws of exposition. The highest criticism and the profoundest scholarship should be applied to them, that we may at once ignore all traditions which are proved to be corruptions. These prophecies presuppose a moral responsibility in the people to whom they were addressed; and hence they were fitted to awaken this feeling when dormant, to frighten it when morbidly perverted, and to animate it when righteously sensitive. Calvin's assertion that the living creatures and the wheels imply that God by his angels guides the physical motions of the earth, the air, and the sea, (Ezekiel 1:21,) is altogether untenable. Revelation does not teach anything which human philosophy can discover. It manifests its whole aim and essence to be moral, lying in that region of our nature which is under the sway of the conscience, and the will rather than of the intellect. These emblematic visions appeal to the affections and aspirations of soul, to the energies of reverence and faith, of wonder and of love. They have to do with what is infinite and unseen, the immeasurable and the unattainable. Hence they are rather divine agencies for quickening, stimulating, and directing man's highest nature. They assist us towards attaining a true idea of God, they show us our own insignificant vileness and littleness, and suggest the possibility of an atonement of these two. They stir up our attention to the threatenings and the promises of an Invisible Person, which can influence us only by being believed, and enforce the commands of ineffable wisdom, which can benefit us only by being obeyed. They present to our thoughts the idea of condescending mediation, the infinitely holy condescending to purify and to abide with the morally unclean. They may further imply the general providence over the chosen race, as well as the special guidance of individuals; the molding into its preordained shape all their future history, and yet not sensibly controlling the will of agents left responsible for their every action. No discoveries of science can ever interfere with such an interpretation as this, and those who adopt it need never fear the necessity for changing it when the progress of physical knowledge must lead us to alter our views of other interpretations. It, belongs to a region of our nature completely separable from that which comprehends either the niceties of language, or the laws of the physical universe. There is a wide gulf, deep and impassable,

[628] Review of "Vindication of Protestant Principles." — Tait's Mag. page 758. 1847.

between the moral and the intellectual departments of our nature. The imperfect state of physical science at the time of the Reformation is a sufficient apology for the mistakes of reformers; but their ignorance is not pardonable in us. We need not Judaize, and yet we may be apt scholars in all Hebrew lore, and orthodox interpreters of the Sacred Word of the Most high.

Dissertation Third.

CALVIN'S SEVERITY TOWARDS THE JEWS.

IN addition to the charge of Judaizing, our author has been accused of dwelling too copiously on our Prophet's severity towards the Jews. And if we can read the signs of the times in modern publications, there is reason to fear that various delusions are abroad on this subject. There are those who treat the Jews as in the present day, so peculiarly favored by God, that they invest them with the halo of a special sanctity. Reverencing as Christians thought the designs of the Almighty in past ages, they entertain far too exalted ideas of the personal holiness of the agents by whom those designs were accomplished. Old Testament characters are too often treated as ``saints,'' when they have few moral or religious qualities which entitle them to that sacred appellation. And regarding the people as a body, it is scarcely possible to find anywhere worse specimens of moral culture. If we estimate responsibility according to the amount of light and guidance and privilege, then, indeed, Tyre and Sidon were far less culpable than Hebron and Jerusalem. How opposite, for instance, is their history to what might have been expected from reading the book of Deuteronomy. Instead of binding their written law ``as frontlets between their eyes,'' no ancient nation were so careless of its sacred books. The Hindus cling tenaciously to their shasters, while Israel utterly neglected their Mosaic code. One would have supposed that they would have been superstitiously careful of the five books of their inspired leaders. Why should they not have multiplied copies of them? Why not have constituted the Levites the authorized guardians and expounders of them? From the time of Joshua to David there is no notice of the existence of any sacred books which now belong to us: and more than this, reference is made to other records not now existing. And after Solomon's temple was solemnly dedicated, how soon ten of the tribes relapsed into the grossest idolatry; and even in Judea, how remarkable is the occurrence in Josiah's time. The very priests seem to have been ignorant of the existence of a written copy of the law. The unexpected discovery of one has such an effect upon the king and the people, that it led to a thorough restoration of the national worship; and you, we find a command that every king should write for himself a copy of the law from that preserved by the priests. Both kings and priests seem to have neglected their duty; and even the prophets do not charge them with this crime among others. The loss of the original autographs is never mentioned; nor have we the slightest hint of what became of the second original of the two stone-tables. During the short period of their captivity they lost their spoken language and the characters in which it was written, so that on their return they were obliged to read Hebrew through an interpreter. Was not this an unmatched instance of want of reverence for the will of Jehovah? When a nation could act with such deliberate carelessness and irreverence in various epochs, can we be surprised at their falling

into the grossest depths of immoral profanity? When the divine records have been thus despised, all folly and all wickedness is possible for such a people, and both are generated with a fearful rapidity. How different, then, is their real history from what one might expect of a people chosen by the Almighty as his earthly representatives of religion before the heathen! They were miraculously trained to typify and receive the Messiah, and yet they constantly appear to be frustrating the very purpose of their choice. If we speak of the mass of the nation, they seem in every respect to have thrown away their privileges, and to have sudiously incurred God's anger, and to have determined to brave his vengeance. Under such a view of the ancient people, no language of Calvin's can be too strong; and it is only to obviate the consequences of modern erroneous suppositions that it becomes necessary to defend him. In stimulating the compassion of the Christian Church towards the salvation of Jews at present existing, the most fallacious views are sometimes presented of their past history and their loveliness in God's sight. To be beloved for their fathers' sake by no means implies ally innate moral loveliness in the conduct of those fathers; and every erroneous view of Jewish history, and every false interpretation of Jewish prophecy, does but Judaize the Christian Church, and prevent it from going onwards to perfection, by keeping it in trammels to either exploded prejudices or to unwise innovations. False views of the Jewish history are now so very common, that they naturally create a distaste for that emphatic condemnation of their conduct which prevails through these Lectures.

Dissertation Fourth.

ON THE FIGURATIVE EXPRESSIONS OF EZEKIEL.

THE most cursory observers of Ezekiel's peculiarities must notice the highly figurative character of his visions. The princes of Israel are whelps, their mother a lioness. A great eagle comes down with one fell swoop upon the mountains of Lebanon, and plucks off the topmost boughs of its lofty cedars. Here we have to connect what logicians call the protasis with the Apodosis, and out of the sensible similitude to ascertain the mystical explanation. The canon laid down by Glasse is of constant utility: --- ``In parabolis, si integre accipiantur, tria, sunt: radix, cortex, et medulla sive fructus. Radix est scopus in quem tendit parabola. Cortex est similitudo sensibilis, quae adhibetur, et suo sensu literali constat. Medulla seu fructus est sensus parabolae mysticus, seu ipsa res ad quam parabolae fit accommodatio, seu quae per similitudinem propositam significatur.'' Philologia Sacra, lib. 2 pars. 1 tr. 2, sect. 5, canon 3: Lipsiae, 1725. It only is it necessary to ascertain the literal meaning of the figurative expression, but we must always proceed one step farther before we can profi, by the metaphor. The medulla --- the res ipsa --- is still to be discovered, and this alone it is which brings profit to the soul. We must not only comprehend the figure and its literal interpretation, but we must take one step beyond this, and comprehend what divines call the mystical sense. We may attain to the ``science of correspondences'' without adopting the fancies of Emmanuel Swedenborg; but what he diligently and erroneously thought we must endeavor to find. With VanMildert, in his Bampton Lectures, we use the word mystical in its true and classical rather than in its present and popular meaning; and though we have no special affection for the

word: we contend earnestly with the lecturer for the idea which it expresses. This inner sense will not, from its very nature, be crippled by the details of the natural allegory. The very essence of spiritual thought is mobility and indefiniteness. The great master of Roman eloquence has wisely observed --- ``Non enim res tota toti rei necesse est similis sit: sed ad ipsum, ad quod conferetur, similitudinem habeat, oportet.'' [629] The same idea is expressed by Saurin in his Historical Discourses --- ``Non seulement il n'est pas necessaire que chacun de leur membres ait une veu particuliere, qui se rapporte directement au but de celui qui la propose: il faut meme que ce but soit en quelque sort cache sous des images etrangeres destinees a l'enveloper.'' [630] As the correct elucidation of these points is of the greatest importance, every light which can be thrown on them has its value. Bishop Warburton, for instance, in the midst of his elaborate and in-digested paradoxes, is led to discuss the nature of types and symbols, visions and figures, and he treats them with clearness, precision, and ability. He lays the foundation for their use in the compound nature of man. He shows how the Egyptians, Mexicans, and Chinese, communicated ideas through the senses by signs, hieroglyphics, and picture-writing of all kinds. He quotes Ezekiel 31 as a striking instance of well-applied metaphor: ``for men,'' says he, ``so conversant in matters, still wanted sensible images to convey abstract ideas.'' [631] He adduces Ezekiel 24, as an instance of a parable purposely used ``to throw obscurity over the information,'' just as the tropical hieroglyphic was turned into the tropical symbol. He treats the ``dark saying'' of Ezekiel 17:2, as a riddle more involved than a parable; ``for the nature of God's dispensations required enigmas, and the genius of those times made them natural.'' The course of his argument leads him to comment at full length on the celebrated vision of the dry bones in Ezekiel 37, [632] and to discuss the logical value of the assertion, ``All words that are used in a figurative sense must be first understood in a literal.'' Perhaps it may be better to say, All figures of speech are intended to convey to the mind an image of something real, and they are useless to us unless we thus apprehend their literal meaning. But Warburton did not see the next step in the process of deriving spiritual destruction from the visions of the Holy Spirit of God. He was not spiritually enlightened, and failed to do more than expound the letter of Scripture. We need, besides this, the divine teaching of the Holy Spirit, that we may apprehend what Bishop Van Mildert calls, in his celebrated Bampton Lectures, the mystical sense. ``The importance'' says Bishop Horne, in his preface to the Psalms, ``of the mystical interpretation can hardly be called in question;'' ``without it, the spirit and power of many passages will almost wholly evaporate.'' The learned Rambach, in his Sacred Hermeneutics, (page 81,) has adduced several instances in confirmation of these observations. The spiritual man only can thus pierce through the letter, and grasp the very marrow of God's word: the carnal mind is in this respect utterly blind, for these things are only spiritually discerned. The word mystical may seem fanatical to some, but, taken in its scholastic sense, it is easily appreciable by all who know anything

[629] M. T. Cicero ad Herennium. Edit. Bipont, volume 1 page 122.
[630] Volume 3. page 405.
[631] Div. Leg., lib. 4, section 4.
[632] Div. Leg., lib. 6 section 2.

of profound criticism. Rambach has justly laid it down --- ``Est regula theologorum, sensum mysticum non esse argumentativum.'' (Just. Hem. Sac., p. 72.) It appeals not so much to the intellect as to the conscience, not to the mental comprehension, but to the heaven-born life of the soul; and if this be wanting, all argument on the point is thrown away. The spiritual interpretation may be abused, like all other good things. Cocceius, for instance, affords a remarkable instance of this error, as well as some of the Puritan Divines; but no sensible man denies the value of a possession because some are foolish enough to misuse it. [633]

On all sides we have to tread with the utmost caution, and may well listen to the voice of Jerome on Galatians 1. ``Nec putemus in verbis Scripturarum esse Evangelium, sed in sensu. Non in superficie, sed in medulla: non in sermonum foliis, sed in radice rationis.'' But even this view, truthful as it seems, may be abused; for in our own day we find the anti-materialism of the universe denied. Who would suppose, that at the close of the first half of this nineteenth century we should hear of a publication, bearing' the ominous title, ``The Anti-Materialist: Denying the reality of Matter, and Vindicating' the Universality of Spirit?'' [634] If this were the whole title, it would not concern us here; but when it is added, ``proved chiefly by a reference to Holy Writ,'' with another sentence, implying that such speculations can settle the points in dispute between those who affirm and those who deny the orthodoxy of Established Churches, such assumptions cause us to sigh over the endless follies of our nature. Such reasoners first of all assume what is Holy Writ., and then apply their own previously-conceived notions to distort and derange it. The very title of such a work implies the greatest possible irreverence for the Divine Oracles; the most unjustifiable assumptions, and the most unfair contrasts. ``The universality of spirit'' is strictly and essentially co-existent with ``the reality of matter.'' Every word which we have uttered in this short epilogue is intended to uphold and illustrate such a proposition' it is only necessary to append to it, that through material existences --- as trees, cities, food, and clothing --- we become capable of comprehending the wants, the nourishment, and the nature of our spiritual manhood. Suitable in every respect; is the judicious reasoning of Origen, which sixteen centuries have rather confirmed than confuted. ``If ever, in reading Holy Scripture, you encounter an idea which becomes to thee a stone of stumbling or a rock of offense, accuse only thyself: doubt not that this stone of stumbling and rock of offense has an important meaning: {νοήματα} --- food for thy mind. Begin by believing, and you shall soon find, under this imaginary source of offense, abundant utility.'' He then compares the skillful interpreter of Scripture to an intelligent botanist, knowing the different uses and properties of various plants, and shows how every ``holy and spiritual botanist of the word of God'' will find the virtue of the word, without esteeming the slightest portion of it either redundant or superfluous. [635] The preceding Lectures are a good illustration of the sagacious wisdom of these remarks.

[633] For Cocceius, see Mosheim, Ecc. Hist. Cent. 17 section 2, page 2; and for cautions against over spiritualizing, see Revelation J. J. Conybeare's Bampton Lectures for 1824; and Bishop Van Mildert's Bampton Lectures, page 241, and following.

[634] By John Dudley, Clerk. 1 volume 8vo.

[635] Hom. 39, in Jeremiah 44:22.

Dissertation Fifth

{α}. ON EATING THE ROLL.

Chapter 3:1

This method of conveying destruction is peculiarly Oriental. Jarchi, for instance, writes: ``Parabolica est locutio, ac si dicat: attende aurem tuam et audi.'' The Septuagint translate, {ספר}-{מגלת}, megleth-sepher, volumen libri by {λις} {βιβλίου}, which does not seem sufficiently accurate. Both Fuller, in his Miscell. S.S., book 2nd, chapter 10, and Vossius de Sept. Int. agree with Jerome in remarking the inaccuracy. Pro involuto libro, he says, 70 capitulum libri transrulerunt; capitulum intelligamus exordium. The opinion of J. H. Maii, Jun., is preferred by Rosenmuller, viz., that, {מנלה}, menleh, signifies the roller on which the volumes of the Ancients were rolled, as we learn from Maimonides, in his {תורה} {ספר}, sepher-toreh, chapter 9:2, 14. The writing on both sides was very uncommon the Greeks call it {ὀπισθόγραφον}, which is illustrated by Juvenal, Sat. 1:5, 6.

--- aut summi plene jam margine libri
Scriptus, et in tergo, necdum finitus Orestes?

The Chaldee paraphrast explains the sense of eating the roll correctly --- ``anima tua saturabitur;'' and in this way the Prophet was to be strengthened to become literally ``firm of forehead, and hard of heart,'' for contending with ``peoples deep of lip and heavy of tongue.'' This firmness is represented by the gem, {שמיר}, shemir, which Bochart terms smiris, adamant according to Jerome, since the corresponding Arabic word is samoor. See also Schindler's Lex. Pentag. col. 1897, and R. Sal. Jarchi in loc., who gives the view of the Jerusalem Targum.

{β}. THE GREAT RUSHING.

Ezekiel 3:12.

The physical disturbances accompanying the prophetic visions are worthy of notice. It is impossible to reduce them to any class of natural phenomena. The Prophet is suddenly removed by the Spirit into the midst of the exiles; in extasi, says Rosenmuller --- ``the mind was separated from the body by a divine instinct.'' Oecolampadius considers that he seemed to be seized as by a wind,'' and ``thought he heard the voice of a great tumult'' ``The glory of the Lord,'' he adds, ``came out of its place, and left the temple and the people,'' ``and the Church and heavenly Jerusalem praise the Lord for this act of his grace.'' He then comments most spiritually on this removal of the visible glory from the natural temple, taking it as an instance of populus credentium, being at all times locus Dei. Maldonatus takes the same view when he writes, ``I seemed to be seized by the Spirit, or an angel, and. to be transferred to Jerusalem.'' He considers it too Rabbinical to treat the Spirit as if it were merely wind, and the voice only thunder, as R. David and Jonathan do. tie prefers the opinion of Jerome to that of the Jewish interpreters. R. Sal. Jarchi implies that the Spirit really raised him: ``Deus praecepit Spiritui ut eum portaret ad locum ubi Judaei exules degebant.'' As to the last word in this verse, {ממקומו}, memkomo, it seems to refer to the place where the vision was seen: scil. personent ejus laudes per mundum universum, uti Malachi 1:5. If the whole scene is treated simply as a vision offered to the Prophet's mind through his senses, it becomes very intelligible and impressive.

{γ} ON TEL-ABIB.

Ezekiel 3:15.

We notice these words simply to caution the reader against over-allegorizing. There can be no doubt that it is the name of a place; as, {חרשא} {תל}, tel chersha, and {מלח} {תל}, tel melech, in Ezra and Nehemiah. Syrian villages often have the name of tel, which simply means inn or mountain. Burckhardt (Travels in Syria, p. 149) observes this: but Jerome and Cocceius, who adopt the allegorizing system, are not content with this. The former takes the words for ``a heap of new fruits,'' which is symbolical of the state of the Israelites: the latter translates ``the time of new fruit;'' both interpretations being systematically erroneous. As the Chebar runs into the Euphrates from Mount Masius, the captives were situated up the river to the north of Babylon. A various reading, too, in this verse has been the source of some perplexity. The common text (chetib) has {ואשר}, vasher, derived from, {שרא}, shera, habitavit, commoratus est; but some MSS. adopt {ואשב}, vasheb, ``and I sat'' (keri); according to Kennicott and De Rossi, ``etiam Hispanici, Soncinensis Bibliorum editio, Brixiensis et Complutensis.'' The Septuagint adopts the former reading; and Vogel, in his edit. of Capell. Crit. Sac., page 231, adopts the latter. The sense will then be, ``And I dwelt, since they dwelt there, I even dwelt.'' Both Dathe and Rosenmuller reject this, and agree with Calvin's version. His critique on the word {שמם}, shemem, Ezekiel 3:15, is quite in accordance with the English version, and with foreign comments. Newcome paraphrases thus: ``Astonished at the commission with which I was entrusted; and affected by the overpowering splendor of the visions.'' The Chaldee has {שתק}, shethek, ``silent.'' Maldonatus adds, ``so that I could not speak for seven days.''

Dissertation Sixth.

{α} JERUSALEM PAINTED ON A BRICK.

Ezekiel 4:1

Bishop Warburton (book 4 section 4 of his Divine Legation) has ably discussed the Oriental and Egyptian methods of symbolical writing. He explains Ezekiel's method of hieroglyphics, volume 2, page 57, edit. 1837. Oecolampadius comments very practically on this exercise of the ars {σκιογραφίκη}. ``The Church is besieged by its enemies, because it is a despiser of God's word. Heretics erect the towers of human traditions, and oppose the tower and doctrine of David, since it is not defended by any shield. They set up human righteousness, and are not subject to that of God.'' The whole passage is worthy of perusal, and is in striking contrast with the sober and unimaginative comment of Calvin. The custom of writing on bricks is thus noticed by Pliny: ``Epigenes informs us that the Babylonians had inscribed their observations on the stars for 720 years on burnt bricks, coctilibus laterculis.'' Hist. Nat., book 8 section 57. The chief point of interest in this narrative is its visionary character. The best commentators agree that none of these actions were real the lying on the left side for 390 days was only in a vision. the left hand is supposed to refer to the ten tribes, as Samaria was situated to the left of Jerusalem. In the 4th verse, ``you shall bear the punishment of their iniquity,'' is correctly interpreted by Newcome, ``you shall presignify the punishment which they shall bear.'' This is the only sense which

similar passages can have --- St. Paul having shown us, that the picture-writing of the Jewish law had its real fulfillment in the work of Messiah.

{β} THE THREE HUNDRED AND NINETY DAYS.

Ezekiel 4:5

There is a difference in the number of days between the Hebrew text and that of the Septuagint. The latter assigns but 190 days to the kingdom of Israel, and yet agrees with the Hebrew in assigning forty days to the kingdom of Judea. Theodoret, in his comment on the passage, explains the Septuagint as follows. Although in the reign of Rehoboam the people were divided, yet they are considered as one nation, being separate, and yet conjoined. When, therefore, the Prophet had assigned 150 days to Israel and 40 to Judea, he combines them again, and makes 190 days. These forty days represent the forty years which remained of the original seventy. Thirty years of captivity were now passed for Ezekiel began to prophesy in the thirtieth year of the captivity; and Jeremiah shows us, that in the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Jeconiah, Evilad-marodach raised his head and led him from his prison-house in the first year of his reign. Then came Baltasar, and Darius the Mede; whence the forty days of Judea signify the forty remaining years and the 150 concerning Israel indicate the 150 years after the building of the city, and its becoming fined with inhabitants. This happened in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, the son of Xerxes, in the time of Nehemiah. Beginning, then, at the fifth year of Jeconiah's captivity, we shall find it forty years to the first year of Cyrus the Persian, then twenty-nine years for the reign of Cyrus, seven for Cambyses, thirty-five for Darius Hystaspes, twenty for Xerxes, and nineteen for Artaxerxes, since in the next year the walls were built. The Israelites participated in this return for though formerly destined from the tribe of Judea, they were afterwards united, and all inhabited their common metropolis together.

Jerome also notices this difference of numbering, being surprised that the common reading in his day was 190 years; while the Hebrew text, and Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, all read 390 years, and even those copies of the Septuagint which are not, vitiated. Some, he adds, compute it from the baptism of our Savior to the end of the world; others again from the destruction of Jerusalem, in the reign of Vespasian, to a period of prosperity for the once favored nation. The events of history have shown the fallacy of these computations. Ephrem, in his comments on this passage, speaks of the 430 years as beginning with the reign of Solomon, and as extending to the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. Jerome's method of computing this period is worthy of notice. He dates its commencement from the reign of Pekah, the son of Remaliah, (2 Kings 15:29,) and its close during the reign of Artaxerxes Mnemon, who is the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther. He reckons the length of the reign of each thing in succession, and satisfies himself that he has computed the number which he finds it the prophets, since he reckons this historical period to consist of 389 years and four months. The sleeping on the right side for forty days he interprets, from Nebuchadnezzar's carrying away Jehoiakim to Babylon, to the first, year of the sway of Cyrus, under whom the Jews obtained their freedom. The writers on Biblical Chronology do not acquiesce in this computation. J. G. Frank commences

the period with the revolt under Jeroboam, and concludes it with the destruction of Solomon's temple. Jeroboam's first year agrees with the year 3215 of the Jubilee period, and the destruction of the kingdom of Israel in 3470. ``If, therefore,'' says he, ``you add 390 years to 3214, the date of Jeroboam's revolt, you will obtain 3604 Jub. per., corresponding to the destruction of Solomon's temple.'' [636]

The Hebrew commentators, R. Solomon and David, do not suppose that a time of punishment for sin is represented, but the time during which it was committed, and so they date the beginning of the period during the early judges, and close it in the reign of Hosea. (Ecolampadius adopts this comment with approval, but Maldonatus pronounces it to be erroneous, ``for the Prophet is not speaking of their sins, but of their punishment.'' Grotius supposes it to represent the time of God's patient endurance of the sins of the people. The settlement of this question depends upon the use of the phrase {עון} {נשא}, nasa ghon, to bear iniquity, or the punishment of iniquity. The word is used in both senses; it occurs in Genesis 4:13, and Genesis 19:15; Psalm 69:27, where the authorized version and the marginal readings imply that our translators were aware of the twofold use of the word. The idea of ``punishment'' seems most suitable here; and the adoption of this translation would cause us to neglect the Jewish interpretation, and to count the years forward from the times of Ezekiel, and to seek for the fulfillment of the prophecy in those events of Israel's history which were then future.

Dissertation Seventh.

THE SEPTUAGINT ORDER.

Ezekiel 7:3-13

These verses are much confused in the Septuagint, and this seems to have been the case in Jerome's time. The Greek Codexes of the Alexandrian version do not agree, as we find from Theodoret and the Arabic version. Theodoret and the Chaldee paraphrast follow the Hebrew order; and the latter, from {גיני}, gnini, ``my eye,'' puts {מימרי}, mimri, ``my word,'' for the sake of avoiding ``these anthropomorphic phrases.'' The thirteenth verse evidently refers to the year of jubilee. Both Theodoret and the Vulgate translate correctly, and Jerome explains it satisfactorily. There is a difference in reading between the Hebrew and the Septuagint here also; the last clause is sufficiently important to note these differences. Jerome explains it thus' ``Non proderit homini iniquitas sua, nec ei praebebit aliquam similitudinem.'' The translation of the Syriac is, ``et vir iniquitate sua non conservabit vitam suam;'' and of the Chaldee paraphrast, ``quisque sibi in peccatis suis sibi placet, et dum viri permanent, poenitentiam non apprehendent.'' The Syriac reading makes the sense as follows: ``Neither shall any strengthen his life by his iniquity.''

Dissertation Eighth.

THE IMAGE OF JEALOUSY.

Ezekiel 8:1-14

THE singularity of the Vision of this chapter renders it worthy of special notice. It illustrates very strikingly the difference between the worship of Judaism and of the Gospel. The contrast is so remarkable, that every inference from it respecting

[636] See Nov. Syst. Chronol. Fund., lib. 1 chapter 4 section 92, page 165.

Christian obligation must be most indirect. These ``visions of God'' occurred to the Prophet in the place of his captivity. Jerusalem and its temple, and its chambers of imagery, are all brought rapidly before his mind. Theodoret and Jerome maintain that the Prophet was not removed to Jerusalem, but that the scene was presented to his mind in a trance. Newcome continues the trance to the twenty-fourth verse of chapter 11, Ezekiel 11:24. The appearance of fire in the second verse (Ezekiel 8:2) is supposed by some to be better changed to ``man,'' by reading {איש}, aish, for {אש}, eesh, with various codexes of the Septuagint, the Complutensian edition of the Arabic version; but, in the second clause, {זהר}, zohar, signifies the brightness of a star, just as zoharat, in Arabic and Amharic, means the planet Venus. In the Complutensian and Aldine editions of the Septuagint it is translated ``breeze,'' or ``light air,'' according to the view of Theodotion. The best translation seems to be, to take the first clause as ``the appearance of a man,'' and the second as ``the appearance of brightness.''

This remarkable vision is a singular instance of the manner in which the Almighty instructed his prophets. The sixth year of (Ezekiel 8:1) is to be understood of the reign of Jeconiah. ``The appearance of fire'' thought most probably to be ``of a man;'' (Ezekiel 8:2) for {אש}, ash, ``fire,'' may have been substituted for, {אוש}, aish, ``a man.'' The Septuagint, Theodoret, the Complutensian and Arabic versions, all take it so; but the De Rossi does not find it in any of the codexes; and only one of Kennicott's (No. 89) has {אוש}, aish. Still the best, modern critics prefer it. Ezekiel 8:3. When the Prophet is taken by a lock of his hair, Kimchi supposes it to signify the violence by which the exiles of Judea would be treated; but all modern writers suppose that this was only a vision: {οὐ} {τοίνυν} {σωματικὴ} {ἦν} {μετάθεσις} {οὐδὲ} {τῶν} {τῶς} {σαρκὸς} {ὀφθαλμῶν} {ἡ} {Θεωρία} ``there was no bodily change of place, nor any real view by the eyes of the flesh,'' says Theodoret. The first object presented to the visionary eye of the Prophet was an idolatrous image, metaphorically denominated ``jealousy,'' from the provocation which the idolatries of the people occasioned. The derivation of the word ``Tammuz'' (Ezekiel 8:14) is obscure. It is supposed to refer to Adonis, as worshipped by the Syrians. Lucian de Dea, Syria, volume 3, and Maerobii Saturnalia, chapter 21., illustrate this point; but what ``The Image of Jealousy,'' which rivaled Jehovah and provoked his anger, really was, cannot be determined; most probably it was a statue of Moloch or Baal. Selden ``on the Syrian Deities'' enters at large on the subject. [637] The whole of this scenery Bishop Warburton pronounces to be Egyptian, and versed as he was in Egyptian antiquities, his judgment is deserving of notice. ``They contain.'' says he, ``a very lively and circumstantial description of the so celebrated mysteries of His and Osiris.'' [638] The rites were celebrated in a subterraneous place by the Sanhedrim or elders of Israel, and the paintings on the wall correspond with the descriptions of the mystic cells of Egypt. The woman ``weeping for Tammuz'' (Ezekiel 8:13) he treats as a Phoenician superstition, while the worship of ``the sun towards the east'' (Ezekiel 8:15) is a Persian custom. ``When the Prophet is bid to turn from the Egyptian to the

[637] Synt. 2 cap. 1 page 195.
[638] Div. Leg., lib. 4 section 6.

Phoenician rites, he is then said to look towards the north, which was the situation of Phoenicia witch regard to Jerusalem consequently, he before stood southward, the situation of Egypt with regard to the same place. And when from thence he is bid to turn into the inner court of the Lord's house, to see the Persian rites, this was east, the situation of Persia. With such exactness is the representation of the whole vision conducted.'' He sees ``these three capital superstitions'' portrayed again in Ezekiel 16, when the Egyptians are described as ``great of flesh.'' This phrase Warburton considers to apply to Egypt, because it was ``the grand origin and invention of idolatry.'' The ``mark upon the forehead,'' in Ezekiel 9:4, he treats as an expression of God's special and particular providence. Jehovah was their Tutelary Deity, and their sin was immeasurably heightened by the theocratic privileges which they preeminently enjoyed. Hence this learned writer is enabled to press into his service Ezekiel 14:13, and Ezekiel 25:8, while he forcibly illustrates both the language and the idea of the Prophet. His view is confirmed by a passage in Diodorus Sieulus, who, in lib. 1 p. 59, edit. Wess., records: ``Round the room in Thebes where the body of King Osymanduas seemed to be buried, a multitude of chambers were built, which had elegant paintings of all the beasts sacred in Egypt.'' Notices of the worship of the Persians will be found in Perronius's Itinerary, p. 665, and D'Auquetil's Voyages, tab. 3. n. 3, 4. Hebenstreit has written a dissertation on the rites of Bacchus to illustrate this chapter; and Hyde's Religion of the Ancient Persians, lib. 1 chap. 27 edit. Oxon., 1760, may be consulted with advantage.

Dissertation Ninth.

THE MAN IN THE LINEN GARMENT.

Ezekiel 9:2

Calvin (Ezekiel 9:2) does not altogether reject the idea that this person prefigured Messiah. Theodoret's view seems judicious. ``The dress of the seventh person was that of a priest: for he did not belong to those who punished, but to those who redeemed those worthy of preservation.'' In Jerome's day it was thought to represent the Savior, ``who is a priest,'' says he, and quotes Psalm 110:4, very appropriately. C. D. Michaelis has remarked the customary method of carrying the inkhorn in the East in the present day. Syl. Com. Theol. Edit. Pott., volume 2, page 75. The fourth verse explains the reason why it was carried. Calvin's allusion to the use of the mark {תו}, tho, (Ezekiel 9:3, 4,) is fully explained by Origen, as quoted by Montfaucon in his notes to the Hexapla. The invention which Calvin calls ``puerile'' is recorded by Jerome, who made good use of Origen, and added other conjectures. Rosenmuller has quoted in full the passages to which Calvin merely alludes. Pradus and Vitringa have also amply illustrated the point.

On Ezekiel 9:9, Calvin translates correctly ``fined with bloods.'' (Ezekiel 9:9,) Although this is the common reading, it is not without exception., {חמס}, chemes, ``violence,'' has been found instead of {דמים}, demim, ``bloods.'' A Jewish critic of some note, R. Sal. Norzi, published a critical commentary in 1742, at Mantua, and states that the reading ``violence'' is found in one accurate and ancient MS., and in one ancient edition. Kimchi attests the same thing; but neither De Rossi nor Kennicott were able to verify the statement. This destruction was to begin at

the sanctuary, or, as the Septuagint and Theodoret understand it, with the holy ones, ({ἀπο} {τῶν} {ἁγίων} {αὐτοῦ},) meaning the priests, who were the leaders in the desecration of the temple worship. Pradus agrees with Calvin in the reason given for the slaughter of the priests and elders first. (Ezekiel 9:6.) Although the person mentioned in Ezekiel 9:11 is clothed as before, yet the Septuagint omits the word ``linen,'' using simply {ποδὴρη}: Theodotion is satisfied with the Hebrew word Baddein, and Aquila has stola. There is a marginal reading, too, suggested by the Masoretes; but most of the codexes of Kennicott and Be Rossi support the received text, as well as the Soncine and Complutensian editions, and the Babylonian Talmud. Calvin's translation and interpretation of this chapter is in accordance with the researches of modern critics. Maldonatus may be consulted for the opinions of Jewish writers on important words and phrases.

Dissertation Tenth.

THE COALS SCATTERED OVER THE CITY.

Ezekiel 10:2

Jerome, explains this scattering of the coals over the city as a symbol of its punishment and cleansing by fire, and quotes Isaiah 10:17, in support of his interpretation; and in accordance with Psalm 120:3, he calls them ``hot burning coals,'' the penalty of ``the false tongue'' --- remedium lingua, atque mendacii, and justifies his idea of purifying by Isaiah 6. S. Jarcin explains as follows: ``Sanctus ine Benedictus dixit Gabrieli, qui petiit a cherubino, ut ine sibi daret prunes quo ini paululum refrigescerent leviusque efticerentur decretum pcena, quoad Judmos sive urbem Heirosolyroam;'' and refers to the commentary of Abarbenel, fol. 170, col. 4 reed. Maldonatus supposes the coals to indicate not the cleansing but the destruction of the city; and their collection by the angel at the command of God, and ``from amidst the wheels,'' implies that this burning did not arise by chance and by man's design, but by God's providence and commandment. At Ezekiel 10, we have already referred to OEcolampadius, but as his comments are most spiritual, and very inaccessible to the ordinary student of prophecy, we shall quote a few explanatory passages here. The sprinkling of the coal, he thinks, to be an image of the burning city,'' quod ex neglecto aut certo male administrando cultu.'' Has real he supposes to represent ``those celestial tabernacles into which the Great high Priest entered once by his own blood, after procuring eternal redemption.'' In the whole vision he sees ``Christ the head of his body, in which the law and spirit of life is included,'' and ``how the golden consummation of the elect turns its face towards Christ. For the are of the Church contains all its parts most elegantly (elegantissime).'' He sees Christ in all parts of the Scriptures, as their end, scope, and spirit; and especially the man clothed in linen he says is ``Christ acting in this dispensation on the outside of the eternal tabernacles which he at length entered with his blood.'' The third verse refers to ``that judgment which Christ as man shall exercise by God's authority.'' The voice of the wings signifies ``horrenda vox mah ingruentis,'' and the motion of the wheels ``summa in administratione concordia.'' To us these comments seem very fanciful, as it is obvious that any writer may put forth similar guesses according to his own private though fallible judgment. The cherubim on the right side Jerome considers as

representing those holy and exalted beings who dwell at God's right hand, while evil spirits dwell on his left hand. Michaelis, however, with less display of fancy, takes a simpler new, not dwelling on reproaching punishment, but upon the departure of God's glory from the temple and city. See Sylog. Corn. Theol., volume 5 page 134; Eichhorn die Bibl. Proph., part 2, page 456; and Pradus in loc. especially on Ezekiel 10:20.

Dissertation Eleventh.

THE FIVE-AND-TWENTY EVIL COUNSELLORS.

Ezekiel 11:1

IT is very probable, says Pradus, that as there were twenty-four rulers, and as many regions into which Jerusalem was divided, and a chief over them all, so the magistracy of the city is here brought before us. He recognizes the analogy to the twenty-four elders in the Apocalypse. But there seems to be no authority for this division of the city into twenty-four ``regions'' or wards. See on this point Jahn Bibl. Arch., part 2 volume 2 section 187. The conduct of these evil counselors is well portrayed by Theodoret. Some commentators take this third verse as a question, so do the Arabic and Syriac versions, ``Is it. not near?'' but Calvin's view is the best, and he is supported by good authorities. Jarcin understands the prophetic denunciations to be intended, ``ina mala de quibus prophetic vaticinantur nec in propinqua est poena.'' The death of Pelatiah (in Ezekiel 11:13,) as well as the 12th verse, (Ezekiel 11:12) are omitted in the Roman and Alexandrian codexes; and in the Arabic version of the London and Paris Polyglotts. See Wakon's Proleg. 14:21. There are some minor variations in the readings of Theodoret, the Complutensian edition, and the Syriac version. From the concluding verses of the chapter, the old commentators understand that the prophets were not bodily transferred to either Jerusalem or Chaldeea. The whole scene is called an ``ecstasy.'' The Spirit of God acting on that of the Prophet, and enduing him with this celestial eye sight.

Dissertation Twelfth.

{α} THE FALSE PROPHETS.

Ezekiel 13:1

The very existence of such a chapter as this suggests some instructive reflections. It may first remind us of the great moral difference between the position of the Jew and our own. The existence of prophets implies the corresponding possession of miraculous witness. A new prophet was a new herald of a fresh truth; and before he could claim attention he was called upon to show his new credentials. The false prophets had in reality no such proofs that they were sent, of God, and yet by speaking smooth things they succeeded in deluding the people. If surprised at the possibility of such complete success, we may be reminded of similar instances in the practice of medicine in our own day among the uneducated. How blindly they rush to any clever impostor who settles among them with no better credentials than his ready skin and his audacious pretensions. The more unenlightened men are the more they catch at any prophet who asserts roundly and audaciously his mission from God. Now the Jew was called upon not to inquire first into the doctrine taught, but into ``the sign'' worked by the teacher --- his first inquiry was to be not what God

had revealed, but whom he has commissioned to teach it. Our position is rather the reverse. St. Paul assures us, that if an angel from heaven were to teach any other gospel than that taught by him we are to reject it. We, then, the readers of the Old Testament prophecies, are not to find in them a revelation of the Gospel, but, pointing to the coming Author of the Gospel. ``Search the Scriptures,'' but for what? ``they testify of Me.'' Types are fulfilled in the great Antitype --- shadows become substance, and dimness splendor. This chapter of Ezekiel makes the teacher and his authority the subject of questioning, not the matter of his instructions. His coming in his own name is his first and all absorbing sin. However smooth his after communications, this is the great test of his unholy imposture. The Reformers, in the earnestness of their zeal, often append such chapters as these directly to themselves and their enemies. This led them to deal forth the wrath of God with too indiscriminating a name, and has given rise to the assertion that their system was a compound of ``Moses and the Inquisition.'' [639] CEcolampadius, for instance, designates the false teachers of his day, ``pinlauti, indocti, stulti, somniatores, caeci, vuloes dolosae, rapaces, in desertis et it neglectis locis agentes, timidi, et canes muti.'' [640] Whenever there is a strict parallel between true and false teachers in our own times, such language may be justifiable, but where the right of private judgment is so largely exercised by ourselves, it is but consistent to allow others an equally extensive sphere for its operation. Contending earnestly for the faith and the truth is possible, without the accumulation of strong epithets on the heads of others.

{B} ON THE PRINCIPLE OF ACCOMMODATION.

Ezekiel 13

Our Commentator, in various passages throughout this Prophet, finds it necessary to introduce the principle of accommodation. And as this necessity has been so largely insisted on by succeeding interpreters, we may well attempt to discover the true method of applying so elastic a principle. For instance, in this thirteenth chapter, on Ezekiel 13:9, he says --- ``Ezekiel here accommodates his language to the common usage of mankind,'' attemperat sermonera; and also, ``pro modulo et ruditate roentis nostrae;'' on Ezekiel 13:16, he asserts that false prophets are so called ``improprie,'' not implying any want of propriety in using the name; but showing that the name only is intended, and that the reality is not asserted. The formidable list. of German writers on this important point, collected by Wegscheider in his Institutiones Theologicae, page 99, Hal. 1826, shows it to be worthy of our attentive notice; for when once we permit ourselves to resolve everything into ``dictio gnomica et parabolica,'' we may refine away the force and meaning of the prophecies altogether. While we confine ourselves to the topic immediately before us, a few general suggestions may be here thrown out. 1. In judging of the correctness of Calvin's language, we should remember the peculiar intellectual tendencies of the Reformers, in consequence of their religious antagonism to the prevailing doctrines of their day. They saw all around them the grosset superstitions; they lived among a people who believed in a real and permanent moral efficacy, proceeding from sa-

[639] See Spectator: January 19, 1850. Review of T. H. Dyer's "Life of John Calvin."
[640] See Com. in Ezekiel 13:5.

cred rites and ceremonies. They naturally supposed an analogy to exist between the false teachers of Rome then rampant, and of Israel once beloved. The majority of the divines of the day were in all their habits of thought and reasoning --- realists; that is, they treated abstract religious ideas as if they were undoubted realities. ``Grace,'' for instance, must be something infused, and must be received only through one holy rite, and communicated fresh and fresh, in union with the elements of another. The schoolmen, who taught that our nature was actually stained and polluted by the propagation of original infection, held also that the laver of regeneration actually washed away this original depravity: if, in after life, fresh pollution was incurred, then through penance and the eucharist, fresh grace was transfused by actual and corporal union with the real body and blood of Christ. The language of Dr. M'Hale in the present day states the peculiarity of a sacrament to be, that it impresses an indelible character. [641] Chateaubriand speaks of those ``who receive their God'' at the altar, ``while each incorporates with his own flesh and blood the flesh and blood of his God.'' [642]

This is Realism run to seed' and against all this the Nominalist contended, not by denying the spiritual realities, but by looking for them in the right places. In the fourteenth century the University of Paris was famous for its learning, its resources, and influence over the mind of Europe. The majority in power and rank were Realists. At length William Occam, an English friar, assailed their philosophy, and damaged their religious influence. Himself a disciple of the great Scotus Erigena, he gathered around him a band of devoted adherents, and became in philosophy what Luther and Calvin afterwards were in religion. He succeeded sufficiently to attract the notice of the reigning pope, John 22nd. who was sharp-sighted enough to see that if Nominalism spread Romanism must perish. Hence by his command in 1339, the University of Paris publicly condemned and denounced the philosophy of Occam. [643] As usual, when the man is denounced, the principles take root and flourish. In another age, Luther and Melancthon own him as their master and their guide. The former calls him ``Carus maister meus;'' the latter ``Deliciae quondam nostrae.'' [644] The next century finds the disputes at Paris as fierce as ever. The famous Gerson and his persevering disciples caused their enemies to respect their mental sway, till Rome again interfered. In 1743, the Bishop of Avrancis felt the philosophy of the schools, on which the false doctrines of Rome were built: in danger, and then he persuaded Louis 11th, the ruling monarch of France, to order their writings to be seized and their persons imprisoned. But as time passed on, the king relented, for about eight years afterwards he revoked his edict, and restored the party to their former philosophical position. The Reformers lived amidst this perversion of ideas on religious subjects, and their writings show them to be unconsciously tinged with the sentiments of the Realists. The schoolmen, for instance, still argued for a corporeal propagation of what was termed fomes or concupiscentia, calling it a qualitas

[641] The Evidences and Doctrines of the Catholic Church, page 402.
[642] Genie du Christianisme.
[643] Boulay Hist. Acad. Par., volume 4 page 257; and volume 5 page 708.
[644] See Admon. Ad Eccl. ap. Coelest., page 261; et Orat. pro M. Luth. Opera, volume 2 page 58.

corporis, derived either from contagione pomi, or afflatu serpentis [645] While the Lutherans took one step in the right direction, the Zuinglians added another: and the influence of the prevailing opinions of their day is very perceptible in the tone in which the Reformers comment on the prophets. Calvin, for instance, is remarkable for his sound common-sense view of difficulties: if an apparent inconsistency occurs, he is ready at once with his phrases, forma loquendi, per concessionem, ironice, {καταχρηστικῶς}, improprie, all implying his own riglit to use his private, judgment in solving a difficulty according to his pleasure. He often finds it necessary to exercise it. In Ezekiel 20:28, he ventures to suppose a phrase used in a sense directly contrary to its obvious meaning; and in verses 5-8, (Ezekiel 20:5-8,) he treats the Prophet's words as ``translatiae locutiones.'' His desire to identify the prophetic teaching with the law of Moses on the one side, and with the precepts of the gospel on the other, leads him to invent these varying schemes for avoiding the literal meaning. The inexperienced student will learn wisdom by allowing the Law, the Prophets, and the Apostles, to speak their own separate language, and gradually to develop the designs and the character of God without either confusion or distortion. Still, the use of the word improprie must not mislead us; it does not signify ``improperly'' in the ordinary sense, but is used as in and proprie in Latin. It implies that a phrase does not bear the meaning which it seems to have it denies the Realist's view of a question, and asserts that of the Nominalist. For instance, righteousness infused is the doctrine of one school; righteousneiss imputed that of the other the text of the fifty-fifth lecture speaks the language of the former; the comment of Calvin that of the latter. The Reformers have taught us to look for spiritual realities where only they can be found, and to deny their necessary connection with outward observances and tangible elements, whether under the temple rites, or the prophetic visions, or the apostolic ordinances.

{γ} ON THE PHRASE ``PROSTITUERUNT DEUM.''

Ezekiel 13:19

The remarks of the last article apply directly to Calvin's language respecting the Almighty he says about the wicked ``defile his glory,'' ``corrupt his justice,'' and ``prostitute even God himself,'' (Ezekiel 13:19,) and then ``drown in the lowest abyss of hell the whole world when disappointed of their gains.'' This is the language of Realists, who suppose it possible for men thus to treat either the Almighty or their fellow-creatures. The anathemas of the Council of Trent are founded on the same fallacious bases, and the strong language of the vulgar savors of the same innate belief. The modern reader at once supplies the word ``name'' after the offensive verb ``to prostitute.'' Calvin probably understood it so, but, he did not write it so. His phraseology is largely tinctured with the errors of his times, though he has written enough to be correctly interpreted by himself. When we moderns think on the subject for a moment, we admit that no man can defile God's glory, or corrupt his justice, or devote his fellow-sinner to the lowest abyss: we take any such expressions as simply denoting the views of the speakers or writers about matters immeasurably beyond them. If we more thoroughly understood the teaching of Locke and the continental Nomi-

[645] See Apol. Confess. ap. Coelest., page 2, and Scotus, lib. 2. destined. 32.

nalists respecting abstract ideas, we should live without any fears of the success of those who unchurch all sects but their own, and who assert the cleansing efficacy of suffering, and the possibility of discovering the whole body of Catholic tradition. With us, for instance, altars are not only prohibited, but impossible. They are now a mere name --- their reality is confined to the one altar, the Cross. It is equally as impossible to prostitute God as to erect an altar. The reader of these Commentaries must have observed that Calvin's idea of God is rather more familiar than infinite he introduces his name into the minutest concerns, and thinks of him not as acting by general and settled laws, but as personally and constantly intervening between the conduct and the destined of men. He naturally transfers the conceptions and instincts of morality and holiness which he finds within himself to the Almighty --- he clothes his idea of an awful Spirit with the attributes of a human conscience he imagines his Deity a divine man, purified, exalted, and unlimitedly endowed. Our acquaintance with the physical sciences leads us to see the Great Supreme acting through the visible universe by fixed and undeviating laws: so we expect that revelation will unfold to us laws of similar harmony, although apparently disturbed by the anomaly of rebellion and the mystery of sin. But Calvin without hesitation supposes]the to interfere perpetually with the ordinary processes of our animal nature. For instance, in the 14th verse of this chapter, he supposes the Almighty to withdraw from the ordinary bread of this life its usual nourishment by way of punishing the wicked. He is said to break the staff of bread by puffing it up, and depriving it of its power of affording aliment to the body. He repeats this singular comment as the correct explanation of the language of Moses in Deuteronomy 8:3. (Ezekiel 14:14.) It may be perfectly true, that ``unless God breathes into the bread the virtue of nourishment the bread is useless;'' but where is the proof that he withdraws this nourishing power when the bread is tasted by the ungodly? The ignorance of the Reformers of those physical laws by which it pleases the Almighty that the natural universe should be governed, was very injurious to them as commentators on sacred writ' they were constantly in danger of being like men who write on glass with diamonds, and thus obscure light with scratches. And not. only so, when Calvin speaks of ``a secret virtue infused into the bread,'' he adopts the language of the Realists: he assumes the existence of a quality which is philosophically incorrect. A disciple of Locke will be aware that this supposed virtue is only an abstract idea existing in the mind of man and not in the bread, and that it is only an admissible form of speech when it is understood as a general term for the aggregate of those chemical agents and properties which are realities. If God then withdraws this ``infused virtue,'' it is only a form of saying that he withdraws or suspends certain chemical agencies' and who will now confidently assert this to be his method of interfering with the never-ceasing operations of his creation? So in Ezekiel 13:14, the action of Pinnehas, Numbers 25, is said to be infectum aliqto vitio. This again is the language of the Realists, and is erroneous. His work could not be infected morally either way it must have been his mind or his affections. The language erroneosly transfers moral attributes to the deed instead of to the man.

And here it may appositely be stated, that a correct exposition of the Prophecies

never requires any violation of either physical or moral truth. Faith in the unity and supremacy of truth is one form of faith in God. The prophecies are rather illustrated than obscured by our increasing knowledge of the material universe. No true success in prophetic interpretations can be attained without a hearty reliance on the unity and majesty of all truth, without a calm confidence that contradictions are only apparent, and if we cannot explain them now, they will become clear hereafter. Reason, in its calmest and clearest vision, can be superseded only by being surpassed; feeling, in its tenderest mood, must still be ennobled by trust; and conscience must witness audibly and reverently to our need of the Spitit's mysterious guidance ``into all truth.''

Throughout the Prophet Ezekiel, Calvin is nobly consistent in pleading for God's justice. There is no instinct more deeply seated in the human soul than this, --- the Godlike must be just nothing can be permanently opposed to this essential principle. It must sooner or later be vindicated, and bring a certain measure of retribution, which must follow hard upon its transgression. Still many traditional modes of thought concerning the Almighty occur in these Commentaries, which modern information has very largely modified. God's handwriting is now legible in many ways, where of old it was a blank. If his interposition is not now recognized in cherubs, and wheels, and burning flame, we are more conscious of the natural wonders developed in the dewdrop and the flower. Our age believes so many things of which the Reformers were ignorant, and disbelieves so much on which they laid stress, that we are in danger of overlooking the existence of great primeval truths, which constitute the essential religious life in man in all ages unchangeably. Veneration for what we believe God to be must be at the foundation of all diety; and imitation of what we believe God to do must ever be the substance of all duty. 'The first qualification for persuing Ezekiel with advantage is the spiritual purification of self; and in this attainment Calvin materially assists us, by setting before us large conceptions of the Almighty's character, and mature judgments of his purposes.

Dissertation Thirteenth.

{α} ISRAEL AN ADULTERESS.

Ezekiel 16:1

The allegory which runs through this chapter is by no means an unusual one in the Prophets. The beginning of Ezekiel 16:3 has occasioned some variety of remark. OEcolampadius takes {מכורה}, mekoreh, meaning ``birth,'' ``origin,'' for {מגורה}, megoreh, meaning ``dwelling;'' as Calvin translates it habitationes. Houbigant derives it from {כרה}, kereh, ``to dig,'' which Newcome prefers: it may come from {מכר}, meker, ``to sell,'' and thus means ``dealings;'' but this is not so appropriate here. Rosenmuller reviews these derivations, adding as another, viz. formationes; but approves of the sense ``origin,'' effossione, from {כור}, cor, ``to dig.'' This is clearly the best, the Jews having constantly before them the digging out of a rock --- as in Isaiah 51:1. Both Theodoret and Jerome explain Ezekiel 16:3 with precision' the former has --- {ἀραῖς} {γὰρ} {ὁ} {Χανααν} {ὑπεβλήθη} {κὰι} {δουλείαν} {ὑπὸ} {τοῦ} {προπάτορος} {Nῶε} {κατεδικάσθη}; the latter writes --- Cham quippe, pater Chanaan, princeps fuit gentis Aegvptiae... radicem Ierusalem

terram AEgypti esse dicemus. In Ezekiel 16:4 the salting and swaddling the body is said to represent the Almighty's care of the people when under Egyptian bondage. The custom of throwing the skirt over the female is alluded to by Theocritus Idyll. 18:19; and a fragment of Euripides preserved by Stobaeus. This cleansing from pollution is explained by the Chaldee paraphrast to mean the deliverance from Egypt. Those who are curious in the various articles of clothing in Ezekiel 16:10 to 14 may consult Schroeder de Vestitu Mul., chapter 14 page 221; Bochart Hieroz., part 1 lib. 3.; Jablonskii Opuscula, t. 1 p 290, etc.; and J. D. Michaelis in Suppl., page 1565. ``The images of men,'' (Ezekiel 16:17,) Jerome interprets of the idols of Bel, Chemosh, and Ashtoreth, which were made out of the sacred gold and silver of the temple. The passing through the fire, (Ezekiel 16:21,) the Vulgate renders consecrans illos; but Aquila, Synmachus, and Theodotion take the same view as Calvin. Theodoret interprets the 26th verse of the grossness of the Egyptian idolatry in worshipping the ibis, the cow and the crocodile. The punishment of the Jews (Ezekiel 16:36-43) is figuratively predicted by similar language, which Theodoret clearly illustrates --- {οὐ} {γυναῖκας} {τὰς} {γυναῖκας} {ὀνομάζει} {ἀλλὰ} {τροπικῶς} {τὰς} {πόλεις} {οὕτω} {καλεῖ} {ἐπαιδὴ} {καὶ} {αὐτὴν} {πόλιν} {οὖσαν} {δίκην} {γυναικὸς} {εἰς} {τὸ} {δικαστήριον} {εἰσάγει} The comment of OEcolampadius on Ezekiel 16:20 and Ezekiel 16: 23 is copious and instructive.

{β} CAPTIVE ISRAEL AND PAPAL ROME.

Ezekiel 16:20

In commenting on this verse, Calvin draws a striking comparison between the Jews of Ezekiel's day and the Romanists of his own. And as the controversy with Rome is at present a subject of absorbing interest, it is very important to ascertain the exact views of the Reformers as to that giant apostacy. The parallel between them seems to our Reformer most complete. He allows both to be true Churches, while he condemns them as breakers of God's covenant. Both Israel and the Papacy are still said to be under covenant with God; so, had ``our baptism requires no renewal'' (Ezekiel 16:20,) yet still the devil reigns in the Papacy without quite extinguishing God's grace. The Church is there amidst all its corruptions; otherwise Antichrist could not sit in God's temple. The papal priests are said to imitate the Jewish in all things, even to the material of which the surplice is made. The priests of Rome are called ``papales sacrifici`` --- the language of the Realists; which is erroneous, bee,, use it admits too much. It asserts that they offer sacrifice: the Protestant denies the fact, and disallows the term. In the controversy with Rome, we should be more careful than even Calvin in the terms we employ. To allow the analogy here pointed out, is to allow too much. While we assert, that the pretense to sacrificial functions is a gross imposture, we must at the same time refuse their claim to be acknowledged as priests. We must instantly erect the standard of nominalism, showing that there is but one high Priest, but one sacrifice, and one altar in the religion of Christ. This is real --- all the rest mere accommodation. On this ground, too, Calvin's view of the covenant actually remaining among them, and of their being such a temple that Antichrist can be seated therein, is very questionable. It is necessary that the reader should see the consequences of allowing too much to the advocates of the papacy:

there are many reasons, on which we cannot enter here, for believing that St. Paul did not refer in any way to Papal Rome by the phrase, ``the temple of God`` and if this be conceded, then Calvin's argument concerning Antichrist falls to the ground. It is very important to be aware of the tinge which the theological language of the sixteenth century gave to all the writings of that stirring age.

{γ} ON THE WORD ``NEPHESH,'' SOUL.

Ezekiel 16:27

Calvin expresses himself rather hastily when he says (Ezekiel 16:27,) this word {נפש}, nepesh, means ``lust,'' or desire, ``appetite.'' It occurs eighteen times in these twenty chapters of Ezekiel; and in every case except this, when our version reads ``will,'' it is properly translated ``soul,'' or ``person.'' As the word is in itself exceedingly important, and occurs some hundred times throughout the Old Testament, it is desirable to ascertain how far it admits of so many various meanings. We thought to lay it down as a general rule, that the usual sense of a word is not to be departed from without extreme necessity; and there seems none here for deviating from the ordinary meaning. Both Castell and Shindler, in their Lexx., give all the various uses of the word at full length; and both Gesenius and Lee fall into the error of stating too great a variety of meanings without giving the reasons for such discordant senses. Its original meaning is ``breath;'' and as ``life'' was supposed to reside in the breath, hence it expresses anything that has life, any living energy or mental activity, so that ``the soul'' is said to hunger and thirst, to fast and become cold. (See Proverbs, Psalms, and Job.) Schroeder de Vestitu Mulierum, and Gesenius, both give the sense of ``fragrance'' on Isaiah 3:20. The Rabbis distinguish three kinds of nepish in man, the vegetative, the brutal, and the intellectual. This description is philosophically correct, since it is now ascertained that ``the life'' of man strictly partakes of the elements of vegetable and animal vitality, together with the intellectual power and the moral sentiments, usually termed, ''soul'' in modern divinity. Connecting this word with {לב}, leb, ``heart,'' we observe that Gesenius agrees with Calvin on Ezekiel 16:30, that it signifies ``the seat of intelligence.'' The Hebrews supposed that the human heart ``was actually the seat of the affections;'' these are now known to 'act through the brain, and hence the old phraseology of ``giving the heart to God'' should be allowed to become obsolete. There is no proof that the word nephesh implied this immortal principle in man; the hunting souls, and slaying them, as in the thirteenth chapter, refer to the destruction of life. In the time of the translators, and in the distant counties of England at this day, the word ``soul'' is used where more refined speakers use the word ``person.'' For instance, in Ezekiel 18, ``the soul that sinneth it shall die,'' may be reduced to modern English by saying, ``the person who sins shall die himself.'' It is by no means necessary, in Ezekiel 16:27, to deviate, with Calvin and our translators, from the ordinary sense; it is readily rendered, ``and delivered thee up to the persons who hate thee, viz., the daughters,'' etc. Thus two English words only are required as the correct equivalent for nephesh throughout Ezekiel --- a point on which we thought to insist, as giving certainty and definiteness to any version of the Prophet's language.

{δ} THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH AND THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Ezekiel 16:61

It is worthy of notice, that in Calvin's time, as in our own, appeals were frequently made to the teaching of ``the primitive Church.'' The Reformers were especially anxious to ascertain what the primitive Church really taught, and to compare it with Holy Scripture they did not repose implicitly on its dicta, because they looked upon the phrase as an idea rather than a reality. Here again the necessary collision between realism and nominalism arises. There is no such thing as the primitive Church in the sense in which it was used in Calvin's day, and has been revived in our own. The words stand for an abstract idea, comprehending many single churches, and stating what is held to be common to all. For instance, the Church at Antioch was in reality the primitive Gentile Church; its doctrines, discipline, and worship, were realities, and, could they be ascertained accurately, would present to our minds a destined and definite object; but any representation of doctrines and ceremonies said to be common to many Churches, and thus spoken of as appertaining to the primitive Church, is a mental deduction after the process of selection and assortment has been carried on. We have to guard against the erroneous view of the Realist, lest we should look to the primitive Church ``to reveal what is to be believed, rather than to teach what has been revealed.'' See an admirable letter of the Archbishop of Canterbury to Rev. W. Maskell.

Although Calvin's language throughout this chapter is precise and correct, yet he inadvertently falls now and then into that of the earliest. On Ezekiel 16:29 he uses the phrase ``guttam pietatis in animis`` --- the erroneous language of his Romanist adversaries. Piety, he knew well enough, was not a thing infused into man --- righteousness infused is the doctrine of realism --- righteousness imputed is nominalism: the former has of late been revived and systematized by Newman and Ward; while the latter has the inspired sanction of the Pauline Epistles. In his comments on this verse, our Reformer uses the word ``testament'' and ``covenant'' for the same idea. It is better to avoid this partial confusion. The word ``testamentum`` should properly be applied to the record, which informs us of the ``foedus.'' Grotius has expressed the difference accurately: with him ``testamentum`` is equivalent to ``libri feoderis,'' and, as accuracy in theological expressions is most desirable, it is wiser to translate {διαθήκη} in every instance by ``covenant,'' and to confine the word testament most strictly to the written record. This will aid us in keeping before our minds the covenant between the Almighty and his living Church; we shall appreciate our position as children of the New Covenant, and avoid the error of regarding the Old Testament, with it's laws, and ceremonies, and sacrifices, as binding upon us, who are no longer ``children of the bond woman, but of the free.''

Dissertation Fourteenth.

{α} THE GREAT EAGLE.

Ezekiel 17:3

The allegory of ``The Great Eagle'' is well sustained throughout this chapter. A golden eagle with extended wings was the standard of the king of Persia in the time of Cyrus, (Xenoph. Cyrop., lib. 7 chap. 1,) and it was probably adopted from the Assyrian empire. The length of its wing is supposed by Grotius to apply to the widely-

extended empire of Nebuchadnezzar. Kimchi interprets ``the variegated color like a peacock'' of the majesty and dignity of his kingdom; but Michaelis agrees with Calvin. The interpretation of Lebanon, to which Calvin objects, is adopted by Jerome and Theodoret; but Rosenmuller agrees with our Author. He also takes the word {כנען}, ken-men, (Ezekiel 17:4,) exactly in Calvin's sense, quoting Proverbs 31:24, ``quod incolae ejus terrae, utpote maris accolae, mercaturae erant deditissimi.'' See also Dathe's edit. of Glass. Phil. Sac., p. 1184. The sense which Calvin disapproves is adopted by the Septuagint, the Roman Codex, the Arabian version, Theodoret, and the Chaldee paraphrast. The criticism in the note to verse 8 is correct; and the interpretation generally is in accordance with the explanations of Jarcin, Kimchi, Jerome, Michaelis, Grotius, and other critics ancient and modern. Newcome has noticed some various readings, and others are easily gathered from De Rossi, and the different versions and codexes; but they are not of sufficient interest, to need further detail.

{β} THE LOFTY BRANCH OF THE TALL CEDAR.

Ezekiel 17:22

The interpretation of Ezekiel 17:22 is worthy of remark. Kimchi and Grotius think that Zerubbabel is intended here, but Rosenmuller agrees with Calvin in referring it to Christ. The Chaldee paraphrast and Jarchi apply it to ``King Messiah.'' (See Talm. Schabba,, fol. 30, and Cholin, fol. 139, b., and R. Abendana ad Michal Jopin.) Calvin's supposition, however, that where the prophets speak of ``this hope of freedom to the elect,'' it should be dated from the rebuilding of the temple, and continued to the end of Christ's kingdom, is incorrect. It causes him, to date this kingdom from the rebuilding of the temple, in forgetfulness of the many disasters which happened to the people between the times of Ezra and of our Lord. The building of the second temple was not an event of any immediate spiritual import to the Jews' it was followed by overwhelming temporal disasters; so that the reign of Messiah did not commence till the Mediator of the New Covenant was revealed, and ``the new kingdom of the heavens'' fully heralded into the world at large.

Dissertation Fifteenth.

THE EATING SOUR GRAPES.

Ezekiel 18:1

THE proverb of the fathers eating sour grapes and the children's teeth being set on edge, requires a few remarks, in consequence of the conjectures of some modern writers on sacred subjects. Andrew Norton, in his elaborate notes on ``The Genuineness of the Gospels,'' [646] has attempted to show a discrepancy between Ezekiel and the Pentateuch. He compares this proverb with the language of Exodus, Exodus 20, where God is said to visit the iniquity of the fathers on the children; he then quotes the Talmud as objecting to Ezekiel's prophecies, as contradictory to the Pentateuch and thus he insinuates that the two passages cannot be reconciled. If this be so, it is further implied that the Divine authority of either Exodus or Ezekiel is doubtful. But there seems no reason to conclude these two passages to be contradictory. The circumstances under which they were spoken give the tone and meaning to each.

[646] Vol 2, page 140.

Moses enunciates a general law of God's moral government, which we see carried out every day before our eyes. Let the parent of a family, by honest industry and religious conduct acquire for himself the esteem and respect of his fellow-men, then it follows by an established law of God's providence, that his family gain honorable advantages by their parent's reputation. But let a parent by intemperance and dishonesty bring disgrace and poverty on himself, and it is equally a law of providential government that his children will suffer by his misconduct. The wickedness of the father will often fall dreadfully on his unconscious offspring. This is an undeviating, an irreversible law applicable at all times, and daily operating before us in ten thousand instances. But the Jews attempted to excuse their own sins by throwing them on their fathers. The generation which Ezekiel addressed were personally blameworthy; the language of this passage was theirs it is the language of a false excuse --- an attempt to charge the Almighty with unfairness, that they might throw the blame from themselves. No argument, then, can be drawn from its occurrence contrary to the Divine authority of the Pentateuch. Ezekiel records the language and chastises it, thereby upholding the authority of the law, and vindicating rather than destroying the unity of the Divine records. The destruction to be received from the chapter has been well pointed out by the present Archbishop of Canterbury, in his ``Apostolic Preaching.'' --- Sixth edit., page 69.

A translation of a work: of the Professor of Biblical Criticism at Heidelberg having been published in London, it becomes desirable to notice the result of his critical labors on this chapter of our Prophet. G. L. Bauer, in his ``Theologie des alten Testaments,'' has the following comment ``The whole book of Ezekiel is an illustration of the Judaic belief, that Jehovah is the King and Governor of his people Israel. He rewards and punishes them: blesses them with prosperity, and afflicts them with adversity. Ezekiel teaches (in direct opposition to the Mosaic doctrine that God will visit the sins of the fathers. upon the children unto the third and fourth generation), that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father that moral conduct will ensure to the individual length of days that the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him, and that the soul that shineth he shall die. The eighteenth chapter is the most beautiful and the most useful in the book, but it has reference exclusively to God's conduct towards his own people.'' Here we have the usual mixture of Neologian wisdom and folly. There is no real contrast between Moses and this Prophet. Moses states a general law of God's moral government of mankind, and Ezekiel protests against an abuse of that doctrine. The Jews of his day wished to throw all the blame on their fathers, and to charge the Almighty with unfairness in punishing' them for the faults of their ancestors. They forgot their own personal share in rebellion against the Most high. Nor is it the slightest objection that ``it has reference exclusively to God's conduct towards his own people.'' Here the Jews are specially addressed, and the principle is readily applicable to all mankind as soon as it is shown that they are under similar relations to the Almighty as the Jews. The writer who cannot see how easily Moses and Ezekiel are reconciled has but very slight pretensions to occupy a divinity chair; he may make hasty assertions, and give shrewd guesses; but his opinion thought to

be well weighed before it is reckoned either valuable or trustworthy. Bauer's criticisms on various passages of this Prophet are by no means so objectionable as those on the other Old Testament writers; though he is open to the charge of exercising that ``fertile imagination'' [647] which he brings so irreverently against Ezekiel.

A question of still larger import arises naturally out of their own defense of this eighteenth chapter; namely, what degree of authority have the laws of the Old Covenant over us, the children of the New? If, on the one hand, the reasonings of Professor Norton, as contained in the notes to his second volume of his ``Evidences of the Genuineness of the Gospels'' are unsound, the following assertion of a writer, in reply to the Queen's Professor of Modern History at Cambridge is unwise --- ``One inspired declaration is all that is needed, and whether it be found in the Old Testament or in the New, is all one to us Christians; it is God's word, and God's word cannot deceive.'' [648] It is clear enough that the Old Testament is God's word --- but is it so to us? Is its authority the same ``to us Christians'' as that of the New? He who would avoid Judaizing must answer in the negative: he who best understands the nature of our New Covenant in Christ Jesus will destined carefully between the authority of the inspired records of the two covenants over the conscience of the disciples of the new kingdom of the heavens. When we speak of Holy Writ collectively, as contrasted with all uninspired compositions, it is emphatically the Word of God; but when we are attempting to define the relation in which each Testament separately stands to ourselves, we must not hastily adopt the mere popular language of the day. By doing so, we are unable to repel the assaults of the worldly wise, and are in danger of lowering the value of the Sacred Oracles in the eyes of the scientific inquirers of our times.

To the scholar who is acquainted with the difficulties which are reviewed by Professor Norton, the following observations will appear elementary; but as there are some simple-minded believers who may be perplexed by the specious arguments of the skeptic, a few remarks may be instructive. First of all, we should not treat the Old Testament as one book all written at the same time. It should be divided into various portions corresponding to the periods in which each book was written. The Pentateuch, for instance, should be studied separately from the Prophets; while the interval of nearly 1000 years, between the death of Moses and the visions of Ezekiel, should be constantly borne in mind. The Pentateuch, but not exactly as we have it, was the Word of God for Jews --- its authority as a law to Christians was never admissible. St. Paul's whole life was a protest against this going back again to Moses, instead of going forward to Christ. The ministration of death was exchanged for a dispensation of life while God's moral law remains unchangeable, its authority rests on other grounds to us than the thunders of Sinai and the tables of stone. Thus, again, the prophetic announcements were direct and special for Israel and Judea; but they contain guidance and warning for us only when we are placed in a similar position morally before God. Ezekiel, for instance, is a watchman to us only so far as it can be shown that our sins, needs, and responsibilities are similar to those of the Hebrews.

[647] See Edit. London. Eng. trans., page 125.

[648] See a Pamphlet by the Revelation W. B. Hopkins, in reply to Sir James Stephen, LL.D., Professor of Modern History in the University of Cambridge, section 2, page 37.

It must be uttered again and again that we are discipled into the New Covenant of which St. Paul was a chief herald unto us Gentiles; and our highest attainment is to stand fast in the liberty wherewith our Redeemer has made us free. Wherever there is a spiritual analogy between our state and that of the captives at Chebar, Ezekiel is for us; his stirring voice is for our reproof and destruction in righteousness; but wherever the difference of condition is so great that this analogy fails, then Ezekiel is only indirectly our monitor from heaven. The light from heaven is reflected directly upon us through Jesus and his Apostles, and only obliquely through Moses and the Prophets. [649]

By the expression of this view of the value of the Old Testament to us, we do but give form and voice to the feelings which exist in the minds of many earnest and thoughtful Christians. They cannot receive all that is in the Old Testament as equally binding on them with what is revealed in the New. Their cannot sympathize with the antagonist of the Queen's Professor of History: they feel that many proposed solutions of acknowledged difficulties are superficial and evasive rather than self-evident and satisfactory. Such obstacles are not necessarily connected with the Christian verities, they are not essential portions of our religion: we may safely confess ourselves ignorant of the true solution, without endangering a single particle of ``the faith once delivered to the saints.'' By upholding the Pentateuch as the Word of God to the Jews of former ages, we defend and enforce its inspiration and suitability for its original time and purpose; by treating the prophecies of the era of the Captivity as spoken originally to the people alive at the time, we vindicate the Divine inspiration of the Prophet, and we prepare our own minds to receive intelligently any indirect destruction which may be applicable to ourselves. The integrity of the Jewish canon is thus acknowledged and preserved, while we are free to inquire how far its sacred books are instructive for all times and all nations. The whole life and ministry of St. Paul taught one invariable truth on this important question, and its significant witness was clear and emphatic to our higher privileges and nobler aims under the New Covenant in Christ Jesus our Lord.

{β} USURY AND INTEREST.

Ezekiel 18:8

The manner in which this subject is treated illustrates our remarks on the non-application of the Jewish law to Christian duties. Calvin is evidently at a loss how to distinguish between lawful and unlawful interest. He does not clearly say that one law was applicable to the Jew and another to us. Usury may be sinful, but not because it was forbidden to Israel of old. The comment on this verse is not based upon principles in accordance with the New Covenant. It may fairly be stated that this eighteenth chapter is not law to us; our duties depend upon another foundation. The law which is to decide what is ``interest'' and what ``usury,'' must rest upon the golden rule of doing unto others as we would that they should do unto us. If we be formed after the image of Christ, we shall educate conscience, and cultivate justice and mercy, and decide these points by a different standard from that of the Jewish law; and when Calvin states ``in lege ea est perfectio ad quam nihil possit

[649] See Augustine De Civit. Dei, lib. 18 chapter 38 page 836. Ed. Paris. 1838.

accedere,'' he does not state the sense in which he uses 'qege,'' and seems to confine it to the Mosaic precepts. This instance is sufficient to show the true use which we are to make of the Old Testament, and to guard us against a misapplication of its statements.

A singular instance of the fallacy of applying the Old Testament directly to the events of the world in the present day occurs in the State Trials in the reign of James the Second. In the case of the East India Company 5 Sandys, a question arose respecting the right of the King's subjects to trade with nations eastward of the Cape of Good Hope without the King's license. Holt, afterwards the celebrated Chief-Justice, argued his point with more, zeal than discretion. He gravely cites the doctrine of Lord Coke, that ``infidels are perpetual enemies;'' and then, in the same breath, quotes the book of Judges, to show by analogy, that as the Jews were restrained from merchandise with the Canaanites, so Christians thought to be restricted in their dealings with Pagans. [650] One instance out of many may suffice to remind us, that the assumption that Christians are in all cases to act according to God's commands to the Jews, is the bashes of modern Judaism; and the frequency of such reasonings, though supported at times by the writings of some of our venerable Reformers, calls loudly for the voice of another Paul to proclaim, ``Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free.''

The imprudent manner in which some commentators have connected the incidents of the Old Testament with the doctrine of the New is readily illustrated by a passage in the first epistle to the Corinthians by Clement of Rome. In quoting the narrative of Rahab receiving the spies before the destruction of Jericho, he adverts to their suggesting the hanging out a scarlet thread from her house, and then adds directly, ``making: it manifest that by the blood of the Lord redemption shall be to all those who believe and trust upon God. You see then, beloved, that there was not only faith, but prophecy in the woman.'' [651] if this method of illustration be considered allegorical, and as only suggestive of a remote comparison, it is tolerable; but if it be intended to imply any typical connection between the accident of the scarlet color and the redemption through Messiah, it is irreverent and inappropriate in the extreme. The learned Wotton defends Clement by the example of his master, Paul, and quotes Justin Martyr, who treats the same event ``as a symbol of the blood of Christ.'' [652] Guided by such illustrious names, the Reformers often adopted the same ``spiritualizing'' system. The sounder and soberer criticism of later days has instructed us not to adopt the imaginations of men as if they were inseparably bound up with the supreme word of God. The following extract is worthy of notice, as illustrating the principles for which we contend: ---

``The same freedom of thought [as that of Luther] on topics not strictly theological formed a prominent feature in the character of Calvin. A curious instance of it occurs in one of his letters, [653] where he discussed an ethical question of no small moment

[650] See State Trials, 10, 519, and Lord Campbell's Lives of the Chief-Justices, volume 2 page 126.

[651] See Wotton's Edit., 1718, Cantab., chapter 12 page 54.

[652] Dial. cum Tryphone.

[653] See also his views expressed in his Tracts.

in the science of political economy, `How far it is consistent with morality to accept of interest for a pecuniary loan?' On this question, which, even in Protestant countries, continued till a very recent period to divide the opinions both of divines and Lawyers, Calvin treats the authority of Aristotle and that of the Church with equal disregard. To the former he opposes a close and logical argument not unworthy of Mr. Bentham: to the latter he replies, by showing that the Mosaic law on this point, was not a moral, but a municipal prohibition --- a prohibition not to be judged of from any particular text of Scripture, but upon the principles of natural equity.'' [654]

{γ} PERPLEXING AND THORNY QUESTIONS.

Ezekiel 18:20

In this and the following verses Calvin pronounces rather too dogmatically upon matters which are beyond human comprehension. He strives to reconcile statements apparently contradictory, and in doing so enunciates principles which cannot be positively determined. For instance, the will of an infant, before its birth, is said to be ``perverse and rebellious against God,'' Ezekiel 18:20. Although we are reminded (Ezekiel 18:23) that God's secret counsels are inscrutable to us, yet the assertion is hazarded that he ``has devoted the reprobate to eternal destruction, and wishes them to perish.'' Some effort is made to reconcile the freeness of this will with the certainty of the destruction the knot is said to be ``easily untied;'' but the experience of nearly three centuries has proved that these exciting disputes have not been satisfactorily settled: they are still what they are called in Ezekiel 18:25, ``perplexing and thorny questions,'' and must remain so till the promise is accomplished, that faith shall be exchanged for sight. It does not seem desirable to enter upon these abstruse points when commenting upon a Hebrew Prophet: the revelation to Ezekiel was far different in its subject-matter from that to St. Paul: there is no necessity for supposing either that the evangelical doctrines were fully made known to the Prophets, or that their language is verbally binding upon us --- the offspring of the far-off Gentiles.

In these ``Dissertations'' we only venture to suggest some general principles of correct interpretation, and to point out some errors into which our Reformer has fallen, partly through the infirmity natural to man, and partly through the philosophical systems and the false divinity current in his times. While he so evidently surpassed his own age in stern and devoted piety, and avoided the fanciful conjectures in which many of the Reformers indulged; Calvin is at times open to the charge of teaching dogmatically questions which have never been decided by Revelation. Let us bear with him on this point, while we profit by his judicious and instructive lectures; remembering that within the fringes of his shadow his modern revilers are not worthy to tread.

Another instance of perplexity occurs in Ezekiel 20:39. The ``Indecision'' refers to the decree of the Emperor Charles V. called ``The Interim.'' Calvin's hatred of it was sincere but injudicious. It was a first step to better things. See Mosheim, cent. 16 sect. 1, and the authorities quoted in Maclaine's note.

Dissertation Sixteenth

[654] Prof. Dugald Stewart's Preliminary Dissertation to the Encyc. Britt.

THE SABBATH A SACRAMENT AND A MYSTERY.

Ezekiel 20:13, 14

We have already cautioned the modern reader of Calvin not to be startled at his assertion, that ``the Sabbath is Sacrament.'' We have in these days become so thoroughly imbued with the notion that; there can be but two Sacraments, that we reject at once the possibility of, third. This causes us again to call the reader's attention in detail to the principles expressed in the note to the 20th verse of this chapter.

A number of words occur in theological discussions which are not met with in Holy Scripture. Among these are the words Sacramentum, Persona, Trinitas, Unitas. If these were merely translations of equivalent Greek words found in the New Testament, all difficulty would cease; but they are not although they express the ideas of the Apostles correctly, if taken in the sense in which they were originally used. The Protestant of these later times, if he would understand them aright, should study their use in the Schoolmen, and by the leading writers of the Church of Rome, and then, approach the writings of the Reformers. Lawrence's Bampton Lectures have already been mentioned: besides these, Bishop Davenant's Determinationes of theological questions, when Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, are a valuable specimen of the subject-matter of theological dispute in the days immediately preceding his own. (See edit. 1634, and also 1639, in Lib. of Queen's Coll., Cam.) The greatest mistakes have been committed by English writers on Theology in consequence of their unconscious subjection to a traditional phraseology. It may fairly be called a slavery to words. They have lost sight of realities, through anxiety for a verbal orthodoxy. This has led them to look for spiritual realities where riley are not to be found. In tracing the cause of this, we find it to arise from our receiving so many of our theological expressions through the Latin Vulgate. And not only are the words, but the ideas, of the Reformers tinctured by their education under the religious philosophy which they rejected. Calvin, for instance, in Ezekiel 20:16, uses the phrase ``guttam pietarts;'' in Ezekiel 20:20, ``guttam fidei;'' and in Ezekiel 20:19, ``suis commentis inficiunt legem ipsius,'' the two former expressions implying that piety and faith are qualities within the soul, measurable by quantity' and the latter, that the fictions of man can in any way affect the purity of the law of God. Instances of this kind are here pointed out, that we may be aware of the principle on which Calvin's expressions on many interesting points frequently rest. Other words as well as sacramentum are used by Calvin in a sense rather different from their modern meaning. For example, virtus and virtutes, doctrina and religio, occur throughout these Lectures, and sometimes need a circumlocution for their English equivalents. In Ezekiel 20:29 religio occurs for respect paid to idols, and ``mysterium`` must be taken rather in its classical than its familiar meaning. The Greek {μυστηριόν} was translated ``sacramentum`` in the copies used by Tertullian, Cyprian, and Ambrose. Tertullian accordingly calls the doctrines of the Trinity and of our Lord's Incarnation ``sacramenta.'' Prudentius uses it for ``the whole Christian doctrine,'' as St. Paul does the word {μυστηρίον} 1 Corinthians 4:1. It is sufficient to point out this difference in the use of terms, that no reader may judge Calvin hastily, but rather be

led to discover the error or the unsoundness in himself. Those Reformers who were more strenuous Nominalists than Calvin, did not deny the realities of the faith but they thought for them where they are only to be found: not in rites, and words, and creeds, and ceremonies, but in the inner soul of man; in our moral and spiritual nature; in the character and revelation of God; in the teachings and guidings of the Holy Spirit; and in the renewed lives and peaceful deaths of all who are new-created in Christ Jesus their Lord.

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- {ἐπιθυμήτικον}: 1
- {ὕστερον} {πρότερον}: 1
- {θύμικον}: 1
- {μόρφη}: 1
- {μετέωρον}: 1
- {στερέωμα}: 1
- {στερεωμα}: 1
- {συντέρεσις}: 1
- {τὸ} {λόγικον}: 1
- {τὸ} {ποίημα}: 1
- {ἀπο} {τῶν} {ἁγίων} {αὐτοῦ}: 1
- {ἀραῖς} {γὰρ} {ὁ} {Χανααν} {ὑπεβλήθη} {κὰι} {δουλείαν} {ὑπὸ} {τοῦ} {προπάτορος} {Νῶε} {κατεδικάσθη}: 1
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- {α}.: 1
- {β}: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
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- {γ}: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
- {δ}: 1 2
- {διαθήκη}: 1
- {καταχρηστικῶς}: 1 2
- {κοίνας} {ἐννοίας}: 1
- {λις} {βιβλίου}: 1

- {μυστηρίον}: 1
- {μυστηριόν}: 1
- {νοήματα}: 1
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- {οὐ} {τοίνυν} {σωματικὴ} {ἦν} {μετάθεσις} {οὐδὲ} {τῶν} {τῶς} {σαρκὸς} {ὀφθαλμῶν} {ἡ} {Θεωρία}: 1
- {ποδὴρη}: 1
- {σκιογραφίκη}: 1
- {στόργη}: 1

Hebrew Words and Phrases

- :{כן} 1
- :{אביב} 1
- :{אחר} 1 2
- :{אחת} 1
- :{איש} 1
- :{אם} 1
- :{לא}-{אם} 1 2
- :{אנה} 1
- :{אנך} 1
- :{אפ} 1
- :{אפיק} 1
- :{אתות} 1
- :{ב} 1
- :{בהפיצי} 1
- :{בזק} 1
- {במאד} :{מאד} 1
- :{בקעה} 1
- :{ברק} 1
- :{גאון} 1
- :{גדופה} 1
- {גדלות} :{מאלהתועבות} 1
- :{גוים} 1
- :{גלולים} 1
- :{גלל} 1
- :{גם} 1 2
- :{ד} 1
- :{דבר} 1

- :{דמות} 1
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- :{הגה} 1
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- :{הרעים} 1
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- :{עבותים} 1
- :{עגל} 1 2
- :{עין} 1
- :{עת} 1
- :{פגול} 1
- :{פלט} 1
- :{פליטיכם} 1
- :{פליטים} 1
- :{פקדות} 1
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- :{צפירה} 1
- :{קט} 1
- :{קנאה} 1
- :{קרוב} 1
- :{קשי} 1
- :{ר} 1
- :{רקיע} 1 2 3
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- :{והשיבו} 1
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- :{כרמן} 1
- :{ל} 1
- :{לאעמי} 1
- :{לב} 1

- {לכל} {אשר} {עשית}: 1
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- {מגלת}-{ספר}: 1
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- {שבט}: 1
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- {שמם}: 1

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- :{שתק} 1
- :{תו} 1
- :{תחת} 1
- {תל} :{חרשא} 1
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- :{תמן} 1
- :{תנופה} 1
- :{תפל} 1
- :{תפלנה} 1
- :{תרבית} 1
- :{תרומה} 1

Latin Words and Phrases

- Christus dominus glorioe: 1
- Deum essentiatum. Deus factitius: 1
- Ex proprio sensu: 1
- Expositio mysterii quod hac visione adumbratur: 1
- Orat. pro Murcena: 1
- Os homini sublime: 1
- Quia nisi nobis arrideat Dei vocatio, et sensus noster subscribat: 1
- Realis: 1
- Unica et perpetua allegoria est, propter contemptum verbi Dei instare captivitatem conscientiarum, et alienationem a Jerusalem, a vero Dei cultu, qui est iu spiritu et veritate; unde servilia opera peccatorum in sabbatismo Christi vetantur: 1
- Virtutes: 1
- ad quatuor adfaciem cujusque: 1
- adminicula: 1
- de Christianis ad Trajanum: 1
- gratia est firmamentum justitioe Christi: 1
- heus: 1
- mala ova malorum corvorum: 1
- merus est fucus: 1
- quaest: 1
- vel: 1
- Apodosis: 1
- Attus Navius, inclitus ea temptestate augur: 1
- CALVINUS JUDAIZANS AN ORTHODOXUS: 1
- Calvinus Judaizans: 1
- Calvinus Orthodoxus: 1

- Carus maister meus: 1
- Catena Patrum Graecorum in Ezechielem: 1
- Cham quippe, pater Chanaan, princeps fuit gentis Aegvptiae... radicem Ierusalem terram AEgypti esse dicemus: 1
- Codex Syriaco-Hexaplaris Ambrosiano-Mediolanensis: 1
- Codices Rescripti: 1
- Commentaria in Ezechielem: 1
- Commentaria in Ezechielem Prophetam: 1
- Commentarii in Ezechielem: 1
- Commentarius in Ezechielem: 1 2
- Commentarius in Ezechielem. Salmanticae: 1
- Commentarius in Ezekielem: 1 2
- Declaratio de peccato originali: 1
- Deliciae quondam nostrae: 1
- Determinationes: 1
- Deus praecepit Spiritui ut eum portaret ad locum ubi Judaei exules degebant: 1
- Disputatio de justitia habituali et actuali: 1
- Dissertationes H. Critico-Sacrae quarum prima explicata Ezech: 1
- Epist. Urbano Regio: 1
- Est regula theologorum, sensum mysticum non esse argumentativum: 1
- Ezechiel Propheta ad Ebraicam veritatem recognitus, et argumentis atque scholiis illustratus: 1
- Ezechielis Prophetae vaticinia illustrata. Lavingae: 1
- Francofurtani, Commentarius in Prophetam Ezechielem. Francof. ad Moen: 1
- In parabolis, si integre accipiantur, tria, sunt: radix, cortex: 1
- Institutiones: 1
- Lectiones Academicae ad Ezechielem: 1
- Nec putemus in verbis Scripturarum esse Evangelium, sed in sensu. Non in superficie, sed in medulla: non in sermonum foliis, sed in radice rationis: 1
- Non enim res tota toti rei necesse est similis sit: sed ad ipsum, ad quod conferetur, similitudinem habeat, oportet: 1
- Non proderit homini iniquitas sua, nec ei praebebit aliquam similitudinem: 1
- PROSTITUERUNT DEUM: 1
- Parabolica est locutio, ac si dicat: attende aurem tuam et audi: 1
- Pro involuto libro: 1
- Sacramentum, Persona, Trinitas, Unitas: 1
- Sanctus ine Benedictus dixit Gabrieli, qui petiit a cherubino, ut ine sibi daret prunes quo ini paululum refrigescerent leviusque efticerentur decretum pcena, quoad Judmos sive urbem Heirosolyroam: 1
- Scholae Propheticae ex Prelectionibus in...Ezekielem collectae: 1
- Scholia in Ezekielem: 1
- Vident lupum venientem et fugiunt: 1
- adversus Cala-baptistarum prava dogmata: 1

- afflatu serpentis: 1
- anxit animum, invertit aratio terram: 1
- attemperat sermonera: 1
- aut summi plene jam margine libri Scriptus, et in tergo, necdum finitus Orestes: 1
- coctilibus laterculis: 1
- commentum: 1
- concupiscentia: 1
- consecrans illos: 1
- contagione pomi: 1
- curatio, observatio: 1
- de Vestitu Mulierum: 1
- de virinibus: 1
- dictio gnomica et parabolica: 1
- dii stercorii: 1
- doctrina: 1
- dum peperit: 1
- effossione: 1
- egredientur: 1
- et vir iniquitate sua non conservabit vitam suam: 1
- etiam Hispanici, Soncinensis Bibliorum editio, Brixiensis et Complutensis: 1
- foedus: 1
- fomes: 1
- forma loquendi, per concessionem, ironice: 1
- formationes: 1
- formed divino beneficio, meditando, legendo, orando: 1
- guttam fidei: 1
- guttam pietarts: 1
- guttam pietatis in animis: 1
- habitationes: 1
- habitavit, commoratus est: 1
- horrenda vox mah ingruentis: 1
- illud prodigiosum: 1
- in: 1
- in extasi: 1
- in lege ea est perfectio ad quam nihil possit accedere: 1
- in tuo sanguine: 1
- ina mala de quibus prophetic vaticinantur nec in propinqua est poena: 1
- infectum aliqto vitio: 1
- ingredientur: 1
- lenimentum: 1
- libri feoderis: 1
- linimentum: 1
- litio: 1

- litura: 1
- locus Dei: 1
- morte: 1
- mysterium: 1
- nebulones: 1
- non inanes esse figuras sed reipsa praestari, quidquid figurant. In baptismo adesse spiritus efficaciam, ut nos abluat et regeneret: 1
- ordinarium ministerium: 1
- papales sacrifici: 1
- pinlauti, indocti, stulti, somniatores, caeci, vuloes dolosae, rapaces, in desertis et it neglectis locis agentes, timidi, et canes muti: 1
- populus credentium: 1
- potens magnus fortis: 1
- principibus et prophetis juxta quadrat: eorum est animam ponere pro ovibus contra pseudoprophets: 1
- pro modulo et ruditate roentis nostrae: 1
- proprie: 1
- protasis: 1
- qege: 1
- qualitas corporis: 1
- quisque sibi in peccatis suis sibi placet, et dum viri permanent, poenitentiam non apprehendent: 1
- quod de eo admirabunda taciturnitate, et per cogitationes arcanas magnifica loquamur, opus dei in illo admirantes: 1
- quod ex neglecto aut certo male administrando cultu: 1
- religio: 1 2
- remedium lingua, atque mendacii: 1
- sacramenta: 1
- sacramentum: 1 2
- scil. personent ejus laudes per mundum universum, uti: 1
- statua Atti capite velato: 1
- stola: 1
- suis commentis inficiunt legem ipsius: 1
- summa in administratione concordia: 1
- testamentum: 1 2
- translatiae locutiones: 1
- ubi litura: 1
- ut inhiarent longis et crassis mentulis: 1
- virtus: 1
- virtutes: 1

German Words and Phrases

- Das Zeugniss Iesu aus dem Propheten Ezechiel durch den Geist der Weissagung dargethan: 1
- Eichhorn die Biblischen Propheten: 1
- Ezechiel aufs Neue aus dem Hebraischen ubersetzt, und mit kurgen Anmerkungen fur unstudirte Leser begleitet: 1
- Theologie des alten Testaments: 1
- den Nachrichten von einer Hallischen: 1

French Words and Phrases

- Dieu essentie. Dieu qui a este fait: 1
- On leur ouvrage ou leur facon: 1
- Pource que si la vocation de Dieu ne nons vient a gre, et que nostre sens l'approuve: 1
- Qui les repreuve: 1
- Une parole par effect, c'est a dire, reelle: 1
- Vertus: 1
- a quatre a la face d' un chacun: 1
- aux quatre: 1
- mats : 1
- maximes: 1
- selon que l'esprit estoit pour cheminer, ils cheminoyent: 1
- Mais ils repliqueront qu'il se pourra bien faire qu'il leur sera eschappe quelque chose mal a propos: 1
- Non seulement il n'est pas necessaire que chacun de leur membres ait une veu particuliere, qui se rapporte directement au but de celui qui la propose: il faut meme que ce but soit en quelque sort cache sous des images etrangeres destinees a l'enveloper: 1
- belistres: 1
- ce beau monstre: 1
- ceste belle invention ainsi forgee: 1
- cordon sanitaire: 1
- fust luy-mesme deschire par picces: 1
- improprie: 1 2 3
- le ministere ordinaire: 1
- neantmoins que ce soit improprentent: 1
- perdition: 1

- un coeur lasche: 1
- une maitresse putain ou painarde: 1