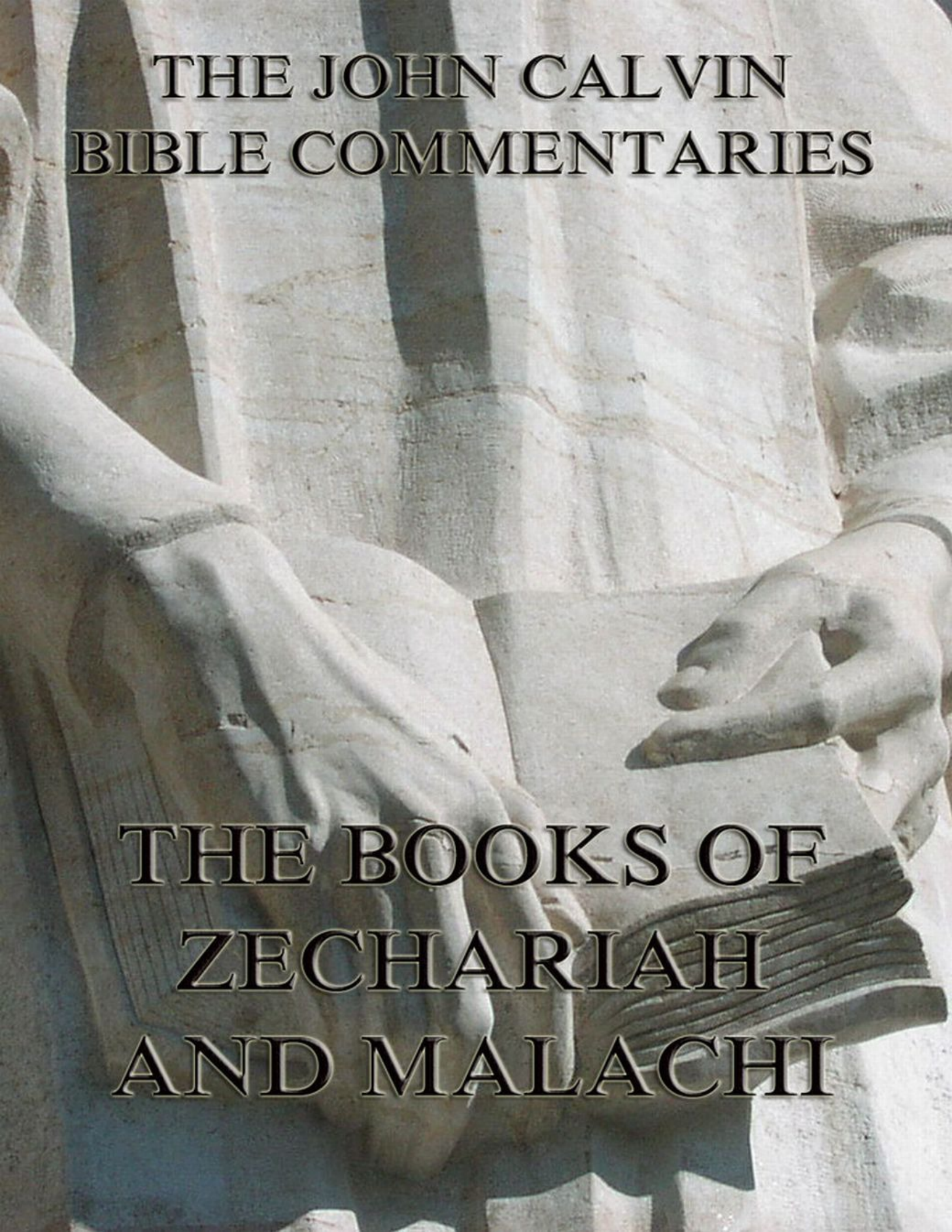

# THE JOHN CALVIN BIBLE COMMENTARIES

# THE BOOKS OF ZECHARIAH AND MALACHI

# Commentaries On Zechariah And Malachi

## John Calvin

## Contents:

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# John Calvin – A Biography

*By William Barry*

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

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

French as well as Luther writes German, and like him has been reckoned a pioneer in the modern development of his native tongue. Lastly, if we term the doctor of Wittenberg a mystic, we may sum up Calvin as a scholastic; he gives articulate expression to the principles which Luther had stormily thrown out upon the world in his vehement pamphleteering; and the "Institutes" as they were left by their author have remained ever since the standard of orthodox Protestant belief in all the Churches known as "Reformed." His French disciples called their sect "the religion"; such it has proved to be outside the Roman world.

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

its head among the French. Clerical dissensions, at all events, allowed the new doctrines a promising field; and the Calvins were more or less infected by them before 1530.

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

Meanwhile, young John was going through his own trials at the University of Paris, the dean or syndic of which, Noel Bédier, had stood up against Erasmus and bore hard upon Le Fèvre d'Etaples (Stapulensis), celebrated for his translation of the Bible into French. Calvin, a "martinet", or oppidan, in the Collèege de la Marche, made this man's acquaintance (he was from Picardy) and may have glanced into his Latin commentary on St. Paul, dated 1512, which Doumergue considers the first Protestant book emanating from a French pen. Another influence tending the same way was that of Corderius, Calvin's tutor, to whom he dedicated afterwards his annotation of I Thessalonians,

remarking, "if there be any good thing in what I have published, I owe it to you". Corderius had an excellent Latin style, his life was austere, and his "Colloquies" earned him enduring fame. But he fell under suspicion of heresy, and by Calvin's aid took refuge in Geneva, where he died September 1564. A third herald of the "New Learning" was George Cop, physician to Francis I, in whose house Calvin found a welcome and gave ear to the religious discussions which Cop favoured. And a fourth was Pierre-Robert d'Olivet of Noyon, who also translated the Scriptures, our youthful man of letters, his nephew, writing (in 1535) a Latin preface to the Old Testament and a French one — his first appearance as a native author — to the New Testament.

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

He is found again at Paris in 1531. Wolmar had taught him Greek at Bourges; from Vatable he learned Hebrew; and he entertained some relations with the erudite Budaeus. About this date he printed a commentary on Seneca's "De Clementiâ". It was merely an exercise in scholarship, having no political significance. Francis I was, indeed, handling Protestants severely, and Calvin, now Doctor of

Law at Orléans, composed, so the story runs, an oration on Christian philosophy which Nicholas Cop delivered on All Saints' Day, 1532, both writer and speaker having to take instant flight from pursuit by the royal inquisitors. This legend has been rejected by modern critics. Calvin spent some time, however, with Canon du Tillet at Angoulême under a feigned designation. In May, 1534, he went to Noyon, gave up his benefice, and, it is said, was imprisoned. But he got away to Nerac in Bearn, the residence of the Duchess Margaret, and there again encountered Le Fèvre, whose French Bible had been condemned by the Sorbonne to the flames. His next visit to Paris fell out during a violent campaign of the Lutherans against the Mass, which brought on reprisals, Etienne de la Forge and others were burnt in the Place de Grève; and Calvin accompanied by du Tillet, escaped — though not without adventures — to Metz and Strasburg. In the latter city Bucer reigned supreme. The leading reformers dictated laws from the pulpit to their adherents, and this journey proved a decisive one for the French humanist, who, though by nature timid and shy, committed himself to a war on paper with his own sovereign. The famous letter to Francis I is dated 23 August, 1535. It served as a prologue to the "Institutes", of which the first edition came out in March, 1536, not in French but in Latin. Calvin's apology for lecturing the king was, that placards denouncing the Protestants as rebels had been posted up all over the realm. Francis I did not read these pages, but if he had done so he would have discovered in them a plea, not for toleration, which the Reformer utterly scorned, but for doing away with Catholicism in favour of the new gospel. There could be only one true Church, said the young theologian, therefore kings ought to make an utter end of popery. (For an account of the "Institutes" see ) The second edition belongs to 1539, the first French translation to 1541; the final Latin, as revised by its author, is of 1559;

but that in common use, dated 1560, has additions by his disciples. "It was more God's work than mine", said Calvin, who took for his motto *"Omnia ad Dei gloriam"*, and in allusion to the change he had undergone in 1529 assumed for his device a hand stretched out from a burning heart.

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

theocratic rule, and the Reformed Churches accepted his teaching as though it were infallible.

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

But though Calvin had not introduced this legislation, it was mainly by his influence that in January, 1537 the "articles" were voted which insisted on communion four times a year, set spies on delinquents, established a moral

censorship, and punished the unruly with excommunication. There was to be a children's catechism, which he drew up; it ranks among his best writings. The city now broke into "jurants" and "nonjurors" for many would not swear to the "articles"; indeed, they never were completely accepted. Questions had arisen with Berne touching points that Calvin judged to be indifferent. He made a figure in the debates at Lausanne defending the freedom of Geneva. But disorders ensued at home, where recusancy was yet rife; in 1538 the council exiled Farel, Calvin, and the blind evangelist, Couraud. The Reformer went to Strasburg, became the guest of Capito and Bucer, and in 1539 was explaining the New Testament to French refugees at fifty two florins a year. Cardinal Sadolet had addressed an open letter to the Genevans, which their exile now answered. Sadolet urged that schism was a crime; Calvin replied that the Roman Church was corrupt. He gained applause by his keen debating powers at Hagenau, Worms, and Ratisbon. But he complains of his poverty and ill-health, which did not prevent him from marrying at this time Idelette de Bure, the widow of an Anabaptist whom he had converted. Nothing more is known of this lady, except that she brought him a son who died almost at birth in 1542, and that her own death took place in 1549.

After some negotiation Ami Perrin, commissioner for Geneva, persuaded Calvin to return. He did so, not very willingly, on 13 September, 1541. His entry was modest enough. The church constitution now recognized "pastors, doctors, elders, deacons" but supreme power was given to the magistrate. Ministers had the spiritual weapon of God's word; the consistory never, as such, wielded the secular arm Preachers, led by Calvin, and the councils, instigated by his opponents, came frequently into collision. Yet the ordinances of 1541 were maintained; the clergy, assisted by lay elders, governed despotically and in detail the actions

of every citizen. A presbyterian Sparta might be seen at Geneva; it set an example to later Puritans, who did all in their power to imitate its discipline. The pattern held up was that of the Old Testament, although Christians were supposed to enjoy Gospel liberty. In November, 1552, the Council declared that Calvin's "Institutes" were a "holy doctrine which no man might speak against." Thus the State issued dogmatic decrees, the force of which had been anticipated earlier, as when Jacques Gouet was imprisoned on charges of impiety in June, 1547, and after severe torture was beheaded in July. Some of the accusations brought against the unhappy young man were frivolous, others doubtful. What share, if any, Calvin took in this judgment is not easy to ascertain. The execution of however must be laid at his door; it has given greater offence by far than the banishment of Castellio or the penalties inflicted on Bolsec — moderate men opposed to extreme views in discipline and doctrine, who fell under suspicion as reactionary. The Reformer did not shrink from his self-appointed task. Within five years fifty-eight sentences of death and seventy-six of exile, besides numerous committals of the most eminent citizens to prison, took place in Geneva. The iron yoke could not be shaken off. In 1555, under Ami Perrin, a sort of revolt was attempted. No blood was shed, but Perrin lost the day, and Calvin's theocracy triumphed.

"I am more deeply scandalized", wrote Gibbon "at the single execution of Servetus than at the hecatombs which have blazed in the autos-da-fé of Spain and Portugal". He ascribes the enmity of Calvin to personal malice and perhaps envy. The facts of the case are pretty well ascertained. Born in 1511, perhaps at Tudela, Michael Served y Reves studied at Toulouse and was present in Bologna at the coronation of Charles V. He travelled in Germany and brought out in 1531 at Hagenau his treatise

"De Trinitatis Erroribus", a strong Unitarian work which made much commotion among the more orthodox Reformers. He met Calvin and disputed with him at Paris in 1534, became corrector of the press at Lyons; gave attention to medicine, discovered the lesser circulation of the blood, and entered into a fatal correspondence with the dictator of Geneva touching a new volume "Christianismi Restitutio," which he intended to publish. In 1546 the exchange of letters ceased. The Reformer called Servetus arrogant (he had dared to criticize the "Institutes" in marginal glosses), and uttered the significant menace, "If he comes here and I have any authority, I will never let him leave the place alive." The "Restitutio" appeared in 1553. Calvin at once had its author delated to the Dominican inquisitor Ory at Lyons, sending on to him the man's letters of 1545-46 and these glosses. Hereupon the Spaniard was imprisoned at Vienne, but he escaped by friendly connivance, and was burnt there only in effigy. Some extraordinary fascination drew him to Geneva, from which he intended to pass the Alps. He arrived on 13 August, 1553. The next day Calvin, who had remarked him at the sermon, got his critic arrested, the preacher's own secretary coming forward to accuse him. Calvin drew up forty articles of charge under three heads, concerning the nature of God, infant baptism, and the attack which Servetus had ventured on his own teaching. The council hesitated before taking a deadly decision, but the dictator, reinforced by Farel, drove them on. In prison the culprit suffered much and loudly complained. The Bernese and other Swiss voted for some indefinite penalty. But to Calvin his power in Geneva seemed lost, while the stigma of heresy; as he insisted, would cling to all Protestants if this innovator were not put to death. "Let the world see" Bullinger counselled him, "that Geneva wills the glory of Christ."

Accordingly, sentence was pronounced 26 October, 1553, of burning at the stake. "Tomorrow he dies," wrote Calvin to Farel. When the deed was done, the Reformer alleged that he had been anxious to mitigate the punishment, but of this fact no record appears in the documents. He disputed with Servetus on the day of execution and saw the end. A defence and apology next year received the adhesion of the Genevan ministers. Melanchthon, who had taken deep umbrage at the blasphemies of the Spanish Unitarian, strongly approved in well-known words. But a group that included Castellio published at Basle in 1554 a pamphlet with the title, "Should heretics be persecuted?" It is considered the first plea for toleration in modern times. Beza replied by an argument for the affirmative, couched in violent terms; and Calvin, whose favorite disciple he was, translated it into French in 1559. The dialogue, "Vaticanus", written against the "Pope of Geneva" by Castellio, did not get into print until 1612. Freedom of opinion, as Gibbon remarks, "was the consequence rather than the design of the Reformation."

Another victim to his fiery zeal was Gentile, one of an Italian sect in Geneva, which also numbered among its adherents Alciati and Gribaldo. As more or less Unitarian in their views, they were required to sign a confession drawn up by Calvin in 1558. Gentile subscribed it reluctantly, but in the upshot he was condemned and imprisoned as a perjurer. He escaped only to be twice incarcerated at Berne, where in 1566, he was beheaded. Calvin's impassioned polemic against these Italians betrays fear of the Socinianism which was to lay waste his vineyard. Politically he leaned on the French refugees, now abounding in the city, and more than equal in energy — if not in numbers — to the older native factions. Opposition died out. His continual preaching, represented by 2300 sermons extant in the manuscripts and a vast

correspondence, gave to the Reformer an influence without example in his closing years. He wrote to Edward VI, helped in revising the Book of Common Prayer, and intervened between the rival English parties abroad during the Marian period. In the Huguenot troubles he sided with the more moderate. His censure of the conspiracy of Amboise in 1560 does him honour. One great literary institution founded by him, the College, afterwards the University, of Geneva, flourished exceedingly. The students were mostly French. When Beza was rector it had nearly 1500 students of various grades.

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

administered by the clergy. Down to his dying day Calvin preached and taught. By no means an aged man, he was worn out in these frequent controversies. On 25 April, 1564, he made his will, leaving 225 French crowns, of which he bequeathed ten to his college, ten to the poor, and the remainder to his nephews and nieces. His last letter was addressed to Farel. He was buried without pomp, in a spot which is not now ascertainable. In the year 1900 a monument of expiation was erected to Servetus in the Place Champel. Geneva has long since ceased to be the head of Calvinism. It is a rallying point for Free Thought, Socialist propaganda, and Nihilist conspiracies. But in history it stands out as the Sparta of the Reformed churches, and Calvin is its Lycurgus.

## COMMENTARIES ON ZECHARIAH AND MALACHI

## TRANSLATOR’S PREFACE

This Volume completes CALVIN’S COMMENTARIES on the TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS, — a Work which, had he written no ether, would have been sufficient to have rendered him illustrious as a faithful, lucid, and practical expounder. In course of time, when his Comments shall be carefully read, his high merits will no doubt be duly acknowledged. The Translator can bear this testimony, that before he read CALVIN on the Minor Prophets, it was to him one of the least interesting and the least instructive portions of the ancient Scriptures; but that he finds it now one of the most interesting. It practically exhibits to us especially two things, which it greatly concerns us all to

know, — what God is, and what man is. It sets before us manifest facts which prove the wonderful mercy and forbearance of God, and also the amazing tendency of man to superstition, and his persistency in his course notwithstanding all the powerful means adopted for his restoration.

ZECHARIAH began to prophesy two months after HAGGAI, as we find by comparing Haggai 1:15, with Zechariah 1:1. Ezra mentions them as the two Prophets who encouraged the rebuilding of the Temple. Ezra 5:1; 6:14.

The greatest part of ZECHARIAH was written, according to *Lowth,* in prose; but he adds that "some parts about the end of his Prophecy (Zechariah 9, 10. and the beginning of 11.) are poetical and highly embellished, and that they are sufficiently perspicuous, though written by a Prophet, who of all is perhaps the most obscure."[fm2a] The testimony of *Jerome,* as to his obscurity, is the same; he says that he is "the most obscure as well as the longest of the Twelve Minor Prophets." *Marckius* concedes a majestic elegance to his diction, and says, that "his enigmatical symbols may be fitly compared with those of AMOS, EZEKIEL, DANIEL, and of JOHN, the Prophet of the New Testament." "His prose," according to *Henderson,* "resembles most that of EZEKIEL; it is diffuse, uniform and repetitious. His prophetic poetry possesses much of the elevation and dignity to be found in the earlier Prophets, with whose writings he appears to have been familiar."

The Book contains *four* parts: the *first* is a short message to the Jews, Zechariah 1:1-6; the *second* includes the rest of the first six chapters, which record a series of eight visions confined to one single night, and vouchsafed to the Prophet three months after the first message; the *third* contains two

chapters, the seventh and the eighth; and the *fourth,* the six remaining chapters.

Since the days of CALVIN a dispute has arisen, originated by *Mede,* respecting this last portion. Owing especially to a quotation in Matthew 27:9, 10, where JEREMIAH, and not ZECHARIAH, is mentioned, many since the time of *Mede,* such as *Hammond, Newcome,* and several German divines, have adopted the notion, that these chapters have somehow been misplaced, and that they belong to the book of JEREMIAH. This view has been strongly opposed by *Blayney* and others, who, together with *Scott, Adam Clarke,* and *Henderson,* consider that there is no sufficient ground for such a supposition, and who for various reasons think that there is a typographical mistake in Matthew.[fm2b]

*"It* is alleged," observes *Blayney,* "that the Evangelist St. Matthew, Matthew 27:9, cites a passage found in Zechariah 11:13, as spoken, not by Zechariah, but by the Prophet Jeremiah. But is it not possible, nay, is it not much more probable, that the word Ieremiou may have been written by mistake by some transcribers of MATTHEW'S Gospel, than that those of the Jewish Church, who settled the Canon of Scripture, of whom ZECHARIAH himself is supposed to have been one, should have been so grossly ignorant of the right author of those chapters as to place them under a wrong name? It is not, I think, pretended that these chapters have been found in any copy of the Old Testament otherwise placed than as they now stand. But in the New Testament there are not wanting authorities for omitting the word Ieremiou*."*

The other arguments urged by *Mede* and others are successfully combated by *Blayney* as well as by *Henderson.*

The first is, that many things are mentioned in these chapters which correspond not with ZECHARIAH'S time; the second, that the prophecy in Zechariah 11:concerning the destruction of the Temple and of the people, is not suitable to the scope of ZECHARIAH'S commission, which was to encourage the people to build the Temple; and the third, that the style of these chapters is different from that of the preceding ones. These reasons, especially the two last, are justly said to be easily accounted for by the supposition that ZECHARIAH wrote the former portions while he was young, (Zechariah 2:4,) and these chapters in his advanced years. And *Blayney* thinks that he is the ZECHARIAH mentioned by our Savior in Matthew 23:35, and that he was slain by the Jews on account of these prophecies which he announced in his old age.[fm2c]

The last of the Old Testament Prophets, as admitted by all, was MALACHI. Who and what he was, we are left without any knowledge. Some have supposed him to have been EZRA under another name, or under the name of his office, as MALACHI means a messenger. But most think that he lived near a century after HAGGAI and ZECHARIAH. *Usher* places him in the year 416 before Christ, and *Blair* in 436. It appears certain from Malachi 3:10, that his time was after the building of the Temple. It is most probable that he was contemporary with NEHEMIAH, especially after his second return from Persia, as the same things are condemned by both, — foreign marriages and the neglect of paying tythes. The Jews are wont to call him the seal (µtwj) of the Prophets.

It is observed by *Lowth* that MALACHI wrote "in a middle sort of style, and evidently in such a style as seems to prove that Hebrew poetry had declined since the Babylonian exile, and that being now in advanced age it was somewhat

verging towards senility."[fm2d] But *Henderson* speaks in a higher strain, "Considering the late age in which he lived, the language of Malachi is pure; his style possesses much in common with the old Prophets, but is distinguished more by its animation than by its rhythmus or grandeur."

The interesting character of the COMMENTARY will be found to be in no degree diminished in this Volume, but on the contrary increased, ,though some of the subjects had been before discussed. The same thoughts, no doubt, sometimes occur, but their different connections ever introduce some variety. The Commentator follows his text, and very seldom deviates from what it strictly requires, and the application of it to present circumstances is generally natural and obvious, and for the most part confined to a few sentences; so the reader's attention is not diverted from the passage that is explained. The main object throughout seems to be to interpret God's Word and to impress it on the mind and heart, and so to apply it as to render it the rule of our life and the support of our hopes.

The curious reader, fond of novelties, and enamoured with speculative and fanciful notions, or one whose chief delight is in dry criticisms, will not find much in CALVIN to gratify him: but those who possess a taste for Divine Truth, who seek to understand what they read, and desire to be fed by "the sincere milk of the Word," will, through a blessing from above, be abundantly compensated by a careful perusal of his Comments. This is not said merely as a matter of inference from the character of their contents, but as the result of personal experience. The testimony which the Translator can fully bear is similar to that of Bishop Horne, when he finished his Commentary on the Psalms, that the labor has been attended with so much pleasure and enjoyment, that the completion of his work

occasions regret as well as joy; for the time during which he has been engaged in translating CALVIN has been the happiest period of his life.

As to the INDICES, added to this Volume, the most important is that to the subjects: and it is more useful than general readers may perhaps consider it to be. The very reading of it may convey no small measure of information. The variety of subjects handled in these Volumes is very great, so that they include almost everything in the wide range of Theology, not indeed discussed at large, but briefly touched upon and explained.

But as an illustration of the usefulness of this Index, let the word *Faith* be taken; and almost everything connected with it will be found mentioned and referred to. Turn again to the word *Faithful, (Fideles,)* which some of my co-workers have rendered *Believers,* and perhaps in some instances more appropriately; and hardly anything belonging to the character, spirit, life, and trials of God’s people, will be found wanting. If there be a wish to know what Popery is, what is found under the word *Papists* will disclose almost the whole character of the system; and by referring to the Comment all its main lineaments will be found clearly exhibited in the character of the superstitions and idolatries of the Jews. The real features of errors are the same in every age, only somewhat modified by a change of circumstances: but an enlightened observer can read Popery in the history of the ancient Jews as clearly as in its own history. This of course cannot be done by the spiritually blind and the deluded; and yet so striking and palpable is the likeness in not a few instances, that it is impossible for any not to see it, except they be totally blind, and their judgment wholly perverted.

There have been many Commentators before and after the time of CALVIN, but it may be doubted whether any of them possessed his combined excellencies, especially the capacity of being so plain as to be understood by common readers, and of being at the same time so profound as to be interesting and instructive to the most learned; so that his Comments do in this respect retain, in a measure, the character of the book he interprets and explains. Of his superiority over his predecessors we have the striking testimony of the learned *Arminius, who,* as he differed from him on several points of no small importance, may justly be considered to have been an impartial witness. His words are remarkable, — "Next to the reading of Scripture, which I strongly recommend, I advise you to read the Commentaries of Calvin, on whom I bestow higher eulogies than Helmichius did; for I consider that he is *incomparable* in interpreting Scripture, and that his Commentaries are of more value than all that the library of the Fathers transmits to us; so that I concede to him even a spirit of prophecy superior to that of most, yea, of all others.[fm2e]

As to posterior Commentators, his comparative merits cannot indeed be rated so high, as there have been in later years Writers in this department of no ordinary character. Not to mention Foreign Divines, our own might with advantage be referred *to,* such as *Henry, Lowth, Whitby, Doddridge, Scott,* and *Adam Clarke.* And yet none of these can be regarded as in all respects equal to CALVIN as a Commentator. Some of them excel him as Critics, and others in the number of their practical deductions; but he surpasses them all in pointing out and illustrating the main drift of a passage, in catching as it were its very spirit, and in the power he possessed of impressing on the mind in a few words both its meaning and its practical lessons. The Comment never diverts us from the Text, it never occupies

as it were its place; but the Text itself, expounded and illustrated, is left fixed and riveted on the mind.

***THRUSSINGTON, July 1849.***

## CALVIN'S PREFACE TO ZECHARIAH

THE PROPHECIES of ZECHARIAH come next. He was a fellow-helper and colleague Of HAGGAI, and also of MALACHI, as it will presently appear. These three, then, were sent by God nearly at the same time, that they might assist one another, and that they might thus by one consent and one mouth confirm what God had committed to them. It was indeed of great service that several bore their testimony: their prophecies gained thus greater authority; and this was needful, for the people had to contend with various and most grievous trials. Satan had already raised up great opposition to them; but there were still greater evils at hand. Hence, to prevent them from despairing, it was necessary to encourage them; by many testimonies.

But what our Prophet had especially in view was, to remind the Jews why it was that God dealt so severely with their fathers, and also to animate them with hope, provided they really repented, and elevated their minds to the hope of true and complete deliverance. He at the same time severely reproves them; for there was need of much cleansing, as they still continued in their filth. For though the recollection of their exile ought to have restrained them, and to have made them careful to fear and obey God, yet it seemed to have been otherwise; and it will appear more fully as we proceed, that being not conscious of having been punished for their sins, they were so secure, that there was among them hardly and fear of God, or

hardly any religion. It was therefore needful to blend strong and sharp reproofs with promises of favor, that they might thus be prepared to receive Christ. This is the substance of the whole [fm1] I shall now proceed to the words.

## CHAPTER 1

***LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FOURTH***

## ZECHARIAH 1:1-3

**1.** 1 In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, **1.** Mense octavo, [fm2] anno secundo Darii, fuit sermo Iehovae ad Zachariam, filium Barachiae, filii Addo (Iddo, ad verbum) prophetae, (vel, prophetam, ) [fm3] dicendo,

**2.** The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers. **2.** Iratus est Iehova erga patres vestros ira.

**3.** Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. **3.** Dices igitur ad eos, Sic dicit Iehova exercituum, Revertimini ad me, dicit Iehova exercituum; et revertar ad vos, dicit Iehova exercituum.

WE here learn what we have already stated, — that Haggai and Zechariah were by God joined together, that they might confirm each other’s doctrine, for they had to do with a

refractory people: besides, the people had to endure hard and arduous trials, so that they needed more than a common testimony to confirm them. Haggai commenced the work of his office in the *sixth* month; Zechariah shortly followed him, in the *eighth* month of the same year. It has already been shown who was the Darius mentioned here; though some interpreters dissent, we may yet learn from certain and indubitable proofs, that he was the son of Hystaspes. We shall again speak of this Darius, when a better occasion will offer itself: I wished only in passing to say thus much.

*The word of Jehovah came to Zechariah*. We have already said that the word of God comes in two ways to men. God addresses all from the least to the greatest; but in the first place he sends his word especially to his Prophets, to whom he commits the office of teaching. The word of God thus comes to private individuals, and it comes also to teachers, who sustain a public character, and become God's interpreters or messengers. It was thus that God's word came to Zechariah, not that he might keep to himself what God had said, but that he might be a faithful dispenser of his truth.

With regard to Zechariah, they are mistaken who regard him as the son of Jehoiadah, they are mistaken by Christ in Matthew 23:35. Zechariah is indeed said there to have been killed between the temple and the altar, and he is called the son of Barachiah: [fm4] but the counting of years will easily prove their mistake, who would have him to be the same Zechariah. The former, who is called in sacred history the son of Jehoiadah the priest, was slain under Joash. Let us now see how many kings succeeded him, and also how many years he reigned. That Zechariah must have been almost two hundred years old at the Babylonian exile,

if he was alive, had be been a boy when he was stoned. Now this Zechariah, of whom we now speak, performed the office of a Prophet after the return of the people from exile. He must then have been not only more than a hundred and fifty years of age, but must have exceeded two hundred years when he died. The idea respecting the renascence of men, being a reverie of the Jews, is not worthy of a record, much less of a refutation. He is however called the son of Barachiah; but the probable conjecture is that Jehoiadah the priest had two names, and it does not appear that he was a prophet. However this may be, the Zechariah who was stoned in the temple by the order of the king, was the son of the high priest, and died more than a hundred years before the Babylonian exile. For we have said that this Darius was not the Mede who reigned with Cyrus, but the son of Hystaspes, who reigned a long time after, that is, after Cambyses and the Magi. Their want of knowledge is easily proved, who think that these Prophets were sent by God before the completion of the time mentioned by Jeremiah. As then the seventy years had elapsed, this Prophet was no doubt born after the time when the city was destroyed, the temple pulled-down, and the people led captive into Babylon. I come now to the doctrine itself.

*Angry was Jehovah with anger against your fathers*. [fm5] The Prophet here refers to the severity of the punishment with which the Jews had been visited, in order that posterity might know that God, who so rigidly punishes the despisers of his word and instruction, ought not to be provoked. For by saying that God was angry with anger, he means, that God was in no common measure offended with the Jews, and that the very grievousness of their punishment was a clear evidence how displeased God was with them. But the object of the Prophet was to rouse the Jews, that they might begin seriously to fear God on seeing how dreadful is

his wrath. The Apostle states it as a general truth, that it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, (Hebrews 10:30:) so also the Scripture speaks everywhere. But Zechariah mentions here to his own people a signal evidence of God's wrath, which ought to justly to have smitten all of them with terror. He does not then speak here of a thing unknown, but reminds them seriously to consider how terrible is God's vengeance; as a proof of this, their fathers had been deprived of their perpetual inheritance, they had suffered many degradations, and had also been harassed and oppressed by tyrants; in short, they had been nearly sunk in the lowest depths. Since then God has so severely dealt with their fathers, the Prophet bids them to know that God ought to be feared, lest they should grow wanton or indulge themselves in their usual manner, but that they might from the heart repent, and not designedly provoke God's wrath, of which their fathers had so severe an experience.

It then follows, *Thou shalt say to them, Return ye to me, and I will return to you*. [fm6] The Prophet now expresses more clearly for what purpose he had spoken of God's vengeance, with which he had visited his chosen people, even that their posterity might take heed to themselves; for the common proverb, "Fools by adversity become wise," ought in this case to have been verified. For where there is really a teachable spirit, men become instantly attentive to what God says: but even when they are sluggish and slothful, it is a wonder, that when they are smitten, the strokes which they feel do not shake off at least in some degree their torpor. Hence the Prophet, after having spoken of the punishments which God had inflicted, exhorts the Jews to repentance.

It ought however to be observed, that our Prophet not only speaks of repentance, but shows also its true character, that the Jews might not seek carelessly to please God, as is commonly the case, but that they might sincerely repent; for he says, *return ye to me, and I will return to you*. And this was not said without reason, when we consider in what sort of delusions the Jews indulged themselves immediately after their return. We have seen that they became devoted to their private concerns, while the temple remained desolate; and we also know what sacred history relates, that they married heathen women, and also that many corruptions prevailed among them, so that religion almost disappeared. They indeed retained the name of God, but their impiety showed itself by clear signs. It is then no wonder that the Prophet sharply stimulates them to repentance.

It must at the same time be noticed, that we cannot enjoy the favor of God, even when he kindly offers to be reconciled to us, except we from the heart repent. However graciously, then, God may invite us to himself, and be ready to remit our sins, we yet cannot embrace his offered favor, except our sins become hateful to us; for God ceases not to be our judge, except we anticipate him, and condemn ourselves, and deprecate the punishment of our sins. Hence we then pacify God when real grief wounds us, and we thus really turn to God, without dissimulation or falsehood. Now the experience of God's wrath ought to lead us to this; for extremely heedless are they who, having found God to be a Judge, do carelessly disregard his wrath, which ought to have filled their hearts with fear. "Let no one deceive you with vain words," says Paul, "for on account of these things comes the wrath of God on the children of unbelief," or on all the unbelieving. (Ephesians 5:6.) Paul bids us to consider all the evidences which God gives of his wrath in the world, that they may instruct us as