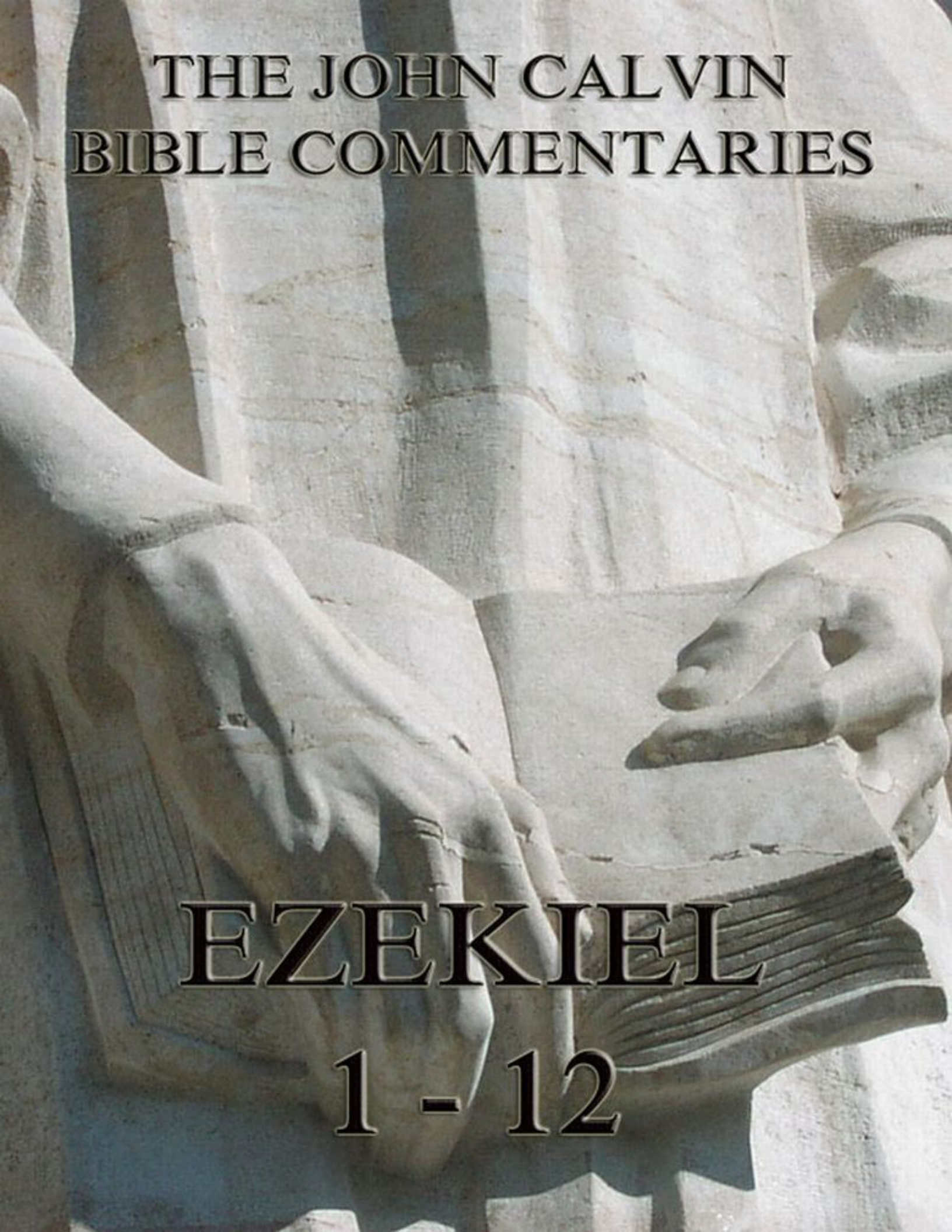

THE JOHN CALVIN BIBLE COMMENTARIES

EZEKIEL 1 - 12

Commentaries On Ezekiel 1- 12

John Calvin

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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 EZEKIEL 1- 12

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. [f1] 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.

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 [f2] 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 [F3] has necessarily given rise to some discussion, which EICHHORN has set at rest as satisfactorily as the data will allow. [f4]

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 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.” [f5]

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; 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, [F6] 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, [F7] and "manifest the wild shoots of a heated imagination." [F8]

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 into discussions about the Prophet's "polite genius" [F9] 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 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.