THE JOHN CALVIN BIBLE COMMENTARIES

ISAIAH

16

Commentaries On Isaiah 1-16

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 wellknown Georges d'Amboise, Archbishop of Rouen, surrendered the bishopric in 1525 to his own nephew John, becoming his vicar-general. John kept up the battle with his canons until the Parliament of Paris intervened, upon which he went to Rome, and at last died in Paris in 1577. This prelate had Protestant kinsfolk; he is charged with having fostered heresy which in those years was beginning to raise its head among the French. Clerical dissensions, at all events, allowed the new doctrines a promising field; and the Calvins were more or less infected by them before 1530.

Gerard's four sons were made clerics and held benefices at a tender age. The Reformer was given one when a boy of twelve, he became Curé of Saint-Martin de Marteville in the Vermandois in 1527, and of Pont l'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 Doumerque considers the first Protestant book emanating from a French pen. Another influence tending the same way was that of Corderius, Calvin's tutor, to whom he dedicated afterwards his annotation of I Thessalonians, remarking, "if there be any good thing in what I have published, I owe it to you". Corderius had an excellent Latin style, his life was austere, and his "Colloquies" earned him enduring fame. But he fell under suspicion of heresy, and by Calvin's aid took refuge in Geneva, where he died September 1564. A third herald of the "New Learning" was George Cop, physician to Francis I, in whose house Calvin found a welcome and gave ear to the religious discussions which Cop favoured. And a fourth was Pierre-Robert d'Olivet of Noyon, who also translated the Scriptures, our youthful man of letters, his nephew, writing (in 1535) a Latin preface to the Old Testament and a French one — his first appearance as a native author — to the New Testament.

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

He is found again at Paris in 1531. Wolmar had taught him Greek at Bourges; from Vatable he learned Hebrew; and he entertained some relations with the erudite Budaeus. About this date he printed a commentary on Seneca's "De Clementiâ". It was merely an exercise in scholarship, having no political significance. Francis I was, indeed, handling Protestants severely, and Calvin, now Doctor of Law at Orléans, composed, so the story runs, an oration on Christian philosophy which Nicholas Cop delivered on All Saints' Day, 1532, both writer and speaker having to take instant flight from pursuit by the royal inquisitors. This legend has been rejected by modern critics. Calvin spent some time, however, with Canon du Tillet at Angoulême under a feigned designation. In May, 1534, he went to Novon, gave up his benefice, and, it is said, was imprisoned. But he got away to Nerac in Bearn, the residence of the Duchess Margaret, and there again encountered Le Fèvre, whose French Bible had been condemned by the Sorbonne to the flames. His next visit to Paris fell out during a violent campaign of the Lutherans against the Mass, which brought on reprisals, Etienne de la Forge and others were burnt in the Place de Grève; and Calvin accompanied by du Tillet, escaped — though not without adventures — to Metz and Strasburg. In the latter city Bucer reigned supreme. The leading reformers dictated laws from the pulpit to their adherents, and this journey proved a decisive one for the French humanist, who, though by nature timid and shy, committed himself to a war on paper with his own sovereign. The famous letter to Francis I is dated 23 August, 1535. It served as a

prologue to the "Institutes", of which the first edition came out in March, 1536, not in French but in Latin. Calvin's apology for lecturing the king was, that placards denouncing the Protestants as rebels had been posted up all over the realm. Francis I did not read these pages, but if he had done so he would have discovered in them a plea, not for toleration, which the Reformer utterly scorned, but for doing away with Catholicism in favour of the new gospel. There could be only one true Church, said the young theologian, therefore kings ought to make an utter end of popery. (For an account of the "Institutes" see) The second edition belongs to 1539, the first French translation to 1541; the final Latin, as revised by its author, is of 1559; but that in common use, dated 1560, has additions by his disciples. "It was more God's work than mine", said Calvin, who took for his motto "Omnia ad Dei gloriam", and in allusion to the change he had undergone in 1529 assumed for his device a hand stretched out from a burning heart.

A much disputed chapter in Calvin's biography is the visit which he was long thought to have paid at Ferraro to the Protestant Duchess Renée, daughter of Louis XII. Many stories clustered about his journey, now given up by the best-informed writers. All we know for certain is that the Reformer, after settling his family affairs and bringing over two of his brothers and sisters to the views he had adopted undertook, in consequence of the war between Charles V and Francis I, to reach Bale by way of Geneva, in July, 1536. At Geneva the Swiss preacher Fare, then looking for help in his propaganda, besought him with such vehemence to stay and teach theology that, as Calvin himself relates, he was terrified into submission. We are not accustomed to fancy the austere prophet so easily frightened. But as a student and recluse new to public responsibilities, he may well have hesitated before plunging into the troubled waters of Geneva, then at their stormiest period. No

portrait of him belonging to this time is extant. Later he is represented as of middle height, with bent shoulders, piercing eyes, and a large forehead; his hair was of an auburn tinge. Study and fasting occasioned the severe headaches from which he suffered continually. In private life he was cheerful but sensitive, not to say overbearing, his friends treated him with delicate consideration. His habits were simple; he cared nothing for wealth, and he never allowed himself a holiday. His correspondence, of which 4271 letters remain, turns chiefly on doctrinal subjects. Yet his strong, reserved character told on all with whom he came in contact; Geneva submitted to his theocratic rule, and the Reformed Churches accepted his teaching as though it were infallible.

Such was the stranger whom Farel recommended to his fellow Protestants, "this Frenchman", chosen to lecture on the Bible in a city divided against itself. Geneva had about 15,000 inhabitants. Its bishop had long been its prince limited, however, by popular privileges. The vidomne, or mayor, was the Count of Savoy, and to his family the bishopric seemed a property which, from 1450, they bestowed on their younger children. John of Savoy, illegitimate son of the previous bishop, sold his rights to the duke, who was head of the clan, and died in 1519 at Pignerol. Jean de la Baume, last of its ecclesiastical princes, abandoned the city, which received Protestant teachers from Berne in 1519 and from Fribourg in 1526. In 1527 the arms of Savoy were torn down; in 1530 the Catholic party underwent defeat, and Geneva became independent. It had two councils, but the final verdict on public measures rested with the people. These appointed Farel, a convert of Le Fevre, as their preacher in 1534. A discussion between the two Churches from 30 May to 24 June, 1535 ended in victory for the Protestants. The altars were desecrated, the sacred images broken, the Mass done away with. Bernese

troops entered and "the Gospel" was accepted, 21 May, 1536. This implied persecution of Catholics by the councils which acted both as Church and State. Priests were thrown into prison; citizens were fined for not attending sermons. At Zürich, Basle, and Berne the same laws were established. Toleration did not enter into the ideas of the time.

But though Calvin had not introduced this legislation, it was mainly by his influence that in January, 1537 the "articles" were voted which insisted on communion four times a year, set spies on delinquents, established a moral censorship, and punished the unruly with excommunication. There was to be a children's catechism. which he drew up; it ranks among his best writings. The city now broke into "jurants" and "nonjurors" for many would not swear to the "articles"; indeed, they never were completely accepted. Questions had arisen with Berne touching points that Calvin judged to be indifferent. He made a figure in the debates at Lausanne defending the freedom of Geneva. But disorders ensued at home, where recusancy was yet rife; in 1538 the council exiled Farel, Calvin, and the blind evangelist, Couraud. The Reformer went to Strasburg, became the guest of Capito and Bucer, and in 1539 was explaining the New Testament to French refugees at fifty two florins a year. Cardinal Sadolet had addressed an open letter to the Genevans, which their exile now answered. Sadolet urged that schism was a crime; Calvin replied that the Roman Church was corrupt. He gained applause by his keen debating powers at Hagenau, Worms, and Ratisbon. But he complains of his poverty and ill-health, which did not prevent him from marrying at this time Idelette de Bure, the widow of an Anabaptist whom he had converted. Nothing more is known of this lady, except that she brought him a son who died almost at birth in 1542, and that her own death took place in 1549.

After some negotiation Ami Perrin, commissioner for Geneva, persuaded Calvin to return. He did so, not very willingly, on 13 September, 1541. His entry was modest enough. The church constitution now recognized "pastors, doctors, elders, deacons" but supreme power was given to the magistrate. Ministers had the spiritual weapon of God's word; the consistory never, as such, wielded the secular arm Preachers, led by Calvin, and the councils, instigated by his opponents, came frequently into collision. Yet the ordinances of 1541 were maintained; the clergy, assisted by lay elders, governed despotically and in detail the actions of every citizen. A presbyterian Sparta might be seen at Geneva; it set an example to later Puritans, who did all in their power to imitate its discipline. The pattern held up was that of the Old Testament, although Christians were supposed to enjoy Gospel liberty. In November, 1552, the Council declared that Calvin's "Institutes" were a "holy doctrine which no man might speak against." Thus the State issued dogmatic decrees, the force of which had been anticipated earlier, as when Jacques Gouet was imprisoned on charges of impiety in June, 1547, and after severe torture was beheaded in July. Some of the accusations brought against the unhappy young man were frivolous, others doubtful. What share, if any, Calvin took in this judgment is not easy to ascertain. The execution of however must be laid at his door; it has given greater offence by far than the banishment of Castellio or the penalties inflicted on Bolsec — moderate men opposed to extreme views in discipline and doctrine, who fell under suspicion as reactionary. The Reformer did not shrink from his self-appointed task. Within five years fifty-eight sentences of death and seventy-six of exile, besides numerous committals of the most eminent citizens to prison, took place in Geneva. The iron voke could not be shaken off. In 1555, under Ami Perrin, a sort of revolt was

attempted. No blood was shed, but Perrin lost the day, and Calvin's theocracy triumphed.

"I am more deeply scandalized", wrote Gibbon "at the single execution of Servetus than at the hecatombs which have blazed in the autos-da-fé of Spain and Portugal". He ascribes the enmity of Calvin to personal malice and perhaps envy. The facts of the case are pretty well ascertained. Born in 1511, perhaps at Tudela, Michael Served y Reves studied at Toulouse and was present in Bologna at the coronation of Charles V. He travelled in Germany and brought out in 1531 at Hagenau his treatise "De Trinitatis Erroribus", a strong Unitarian work which made much commotion among the more orthodox Reformers. He met Calvin and disputed with him at Paris in 1534, became corrector of the press at Lyons; gave attention to medicine, discovered the lesser circulation of the blood, and entered into a fatal correspondence with the dictator of Geneva touching a new volume "Christianismi Restitutio," which he intended to publish. In 1546 the exchange of letters ceased. The Reformer called Servetus arrogant (he had dared to criticize the "Institutes" in marginal glosses), and uttered the significant menace, "If he comes here and I have any authority, I will never let him leave the place alive." The "Restitutio" appeared in 1553. Calvin at once had its author delated to the Dominican inguisitor 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 explation was erected to Servetus in the Place Champel. Geneva has long since ceased to be the head of Calvinism. It is a rallying point for Free Thought, Socialist propaganda, and Nihilist conspiracies. But in history it stands out as the Sparta of the Reformed churches, and Calvin is its Lycurgus.

COMMENTARIES ON ISAIAH 1-16

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

All who take delight in the Holy Scriptures are familiarly acquainted with the writings of The Prophet Isaiah. Every

variety of taste finds in them its appropriate gratification. Lofty conceptions, illustrated by splendid imagery, and clothed in language usually copious and flowing, some times abrupt, but always graceful, leave no room for hesitation to pronounce him, with Bishop Lowth, to be "the most sublime and elegant of the Prophets of the Old Testament." He is regarded with peculiar veneration as an honest, fearless, and able messenger of the Most High God, boldly reproving nobles and monarchs, denouncing the judgments of Heaven against all transgressors, and asserting the claims of the Divine law and government above all human authority. In his Prophecies he takes a wide range, surveys those nations which power or wealth or learning or commerce had raised to the highest celebrity in those remote times, and describes their rise and fall, and wonderful revolutions, so eagerly traced lay us in the page of history, as the execution of Jehovah's counsels, and the arrangements of unerring wisdom But chiefly does he pour out rich instruction concerning the Messiah, whose life and sufferings, and death and glorious reign, he delineates so faithfully, and with such thrilling interest, that he has obtained the appellation of "The Evangelical Prophet." To the devout reader there is added a still more powerful attraction in his seraphic piety, which, breathing throughout all his communications, and kindling a holy flame in the hearts of the children of God, attests the important fact, not only that in the visions of God he reached the noblest heights of inspiration, but — which was far more valuable — that he enjoyed habitual and intimate fellowship with The Father of Spirits.

The period during which he exercised the prophetical office is declared, in the inscription of his Prophecies, to have been during the reigns of *Uzziah*, *Jotham*, *Ahas*, *and Hezekiah*, *kings of Judah*. Beyond this general indication nothing certain can be obtained; for dates were only beginning to attract the notice of civilized nations, and had not yet been examined with such carefulness, or denoted with such precision, as their importance demands. The Translator of "The Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets" (volume 1) tells us that Isaiah flourished between 810 B.C and 698 B.C. This interval of 112 years leaves a large margin, which chronologers have filled up with considerable diversity of views.

Assuming 763 B.C. to be the year in which the prophetic ministry of Isaiah is believed by some to have commenced, we are led to observe this remarkable coincidence, that about thirteen years earlier began the Grecian or Olympic era, which opens with the First Olympiad; and about ten vears later began the Roman Era, which opens with the founding of the city of Rome. This reminds us to glance at the contemporary history of nations unlike in their origin and progress, and in the effects which they produced on the human race. Historians, to whom the name of despised Palestine was scarcely known, have traced the brilliant career of those gigantic empires by which it was overshadowed. While amidst a long list of warriors, and poets, and orators, and statesmen, who were supposed to have achieved a deathless fame, those empires hastened to decay, Isaiah and his brethren the prophets were laying the foundations of the universal dominion and glorious reign of Him who

hath on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords. (Revelation 19:16.)

During the season of highest prosperity, when the literature of Greece and Rome, which even now exerts a powerful influence on modern Europe, enjoyed its most exalted renown, that undisguised heathenism which disowned the government and denied the perfections of the Most High God, presented a humiliating contrast to those noble and affecting views of the Divine nature and attributes and works which prevailed in the land of Jehovah. The difference reminds us of one of the plagues of Egypt; for there was spread over the nations a moral darkness,

a darkness which might be felt, but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings. (Exodus 10:21, 23.)

Rome was proud of having reduced that favored land to the rank of one of her provinces, and struck medals to represent Judea sitting under a palm-tree bewailing her captivity; but the religion of Judea, instead of being crushed and annihilated, assumed the more lovely aspect of the religion of Jesus, and *went forth conquering and to conquer*.

Many of our Author's published Commentaries were nothing else than reports of his public Lectures. ^{f1a} Budaeus has explained the manner in which these reports were prepared. The language was extemporaneous, and, had we not known his prodigious command of the Latin tongue, we might have wondered at the elegance with which he spoke on such occasions; but his slow and distinct utterance, as Scaliger assures us, was such as to enable an expert writer to take down the very words which Calvin used. Two or three scribes were usually employed, and a copy, drawn out by a comparison of their manuscripts, was submitted to the perusal of the Lecturer, who, after making, any corrections which appeared to be necessary, attested it as a faithful record of what had been uttered.

This Commentary has come down to us in a still more authentic shape. Not only does the Author assert, in his Dedication to King Edward, which was prefixed to the First Edition, that it had been "faithfully and skillfully compiled from his Lectures," but in his Dedication to Queen Elizabeth, prefixed to the Second Edition, he pronounces the revision to have been so thorough and laborious, that "it ought justly to be reckoned a new work." It is highly gratifying to find that, in the exposition of a book so important and extensive as the prophecies of Isaiah, Calvin gave the fruits of his mature judgment, while he was in the full vigor of his age.

Clement Cotton translated this Commentary into English from the French Version, in 1609. His translation, though not altogether suitable to modern taste, is faithful, vigorous, idiomatic, and not inelegant. To this volume is prefixed his Title-page and "Epistle Dedicatorie," together with a curious "Epigram," in which a physician of that period expresses his warm admiration of the great Reformer.

In the concluding volume of this Commentary will be given a Literal Translation Of Calvin Latin Version, and copious Indices similar to those which have already appeared in the other Commentaries.

Auchterarder, 17th May, 1850.

TO THE HIGH AND MIGHTY PRINCE,

HENRIE

PRINCE OF GREAT BRITAIN,

SON AND ELEIRE APPARANT TO OUR

Sovereign Lord, James King of Great Britain, etc

AND TO THE MOST NOBLE AND

VERTVOVS PRINCESS,

THE LADY ELIZABETHS

GRACE, His Highneffe moft deare Sifter; all honour and happineffe, with eternall glorie through Chrift Iesvs.

Most gracious and renowned Princes, having translated out of French into our English tongue the booke of the prophecy of *Isaiah*, interpreted and expounded by Master *John Calvin*, of reverend memory: I humbly eraue that it may be published under your most Princely names and protection. The reason of this my humble petition is, that the honor of so noble a work may not be imbased by the means of my endevours. This Prophet, by birth, was the son of Amos, esteemed by many to have been brother to Azarias King of Judah, and Father in law to King Manasses: which being so, this Prophet was by birth of the blood Royal, and descended of the house of *David*, which for the promise of Christ to come of him, was the most noble house of all the Kings of the earth. Being so borne, his education could not be but Princely, and his bringing up in all good learning, wisdom, virtue, and hollow His spiritual graces, not attained unto by ordinary means, but inspired into hint immediately by the Spirit of God, were excellent. This appeareth particularly in the sixth Chapter of this Prophet, declaring that an Angel of God saith a burning coal taken

from the Lords Altar, and laid to the mouth of the Prophet, refined his lips and his tongue, that they became pure and precious as the finest Gold The same is manifest in all the book of his Prophecy; wherein both the light and the heat of that heavenly fire appeareth. For he not only declared the will of God sincerely, according to the law and testimony delivered to *Moses*, but also foreshewed the future events of the Kingdom of *Judah*, and of all the flourishing states and Kingdoms of his time.

He Prophecied also of the birth of Jesus Christ, as if he had been taught by the Angel Gabriel; who brought the annunciation and message of it to the blessed Virgin his mother. Of his passion and death he spake, as if with the Apostle John he had stood by when he was crucified. His resurrection he described, as if with all the Apostles he had stood upon Mount Olive, where the Lord took the cloud of Gloria as his heavenly Chariot to ascend and goes up to his Father. His zeal and indignation against sin is evident every where, in his sharp reproofs of the offenses of all estates.

Finally, the book of his Prophecy beareth written in the head of it the names of four Kings, in whose time he prophesied; and before whom as a vessel of gold he bare the name of God with great honor. All which things being royal, it seemed to me most convenient that his book should still bear in the front of it the names of Princes. And as he foreshewed that Kings should be Fosterfathers, and Queenes Nurces of the Church of Christ, so my desire was that his book might be published under the names and protection of Christian Princes.

Moreover, I was led hereunto by the example of this Interpreter, whose exposition upon *Isaiahs* prophesie I translate; namely, of *M. John Calvin*, a man in his time of excellent piety and learning; and one of the great lights, whereby it hath pleased God both to chase away the errors of popery, as the darkness of the shadow of death; and to cause his marvelous and comfortable light of the Gospel to shine unto this present age. For he dedicated his first exposition of this book to the young Prince, King *Edward* the sixth, of famous memory, for the princely graces, for the zealous love of true religion, and of al heroical virtues, wherewith in his young years he raised an admirable expectation of future glory, if his precious life had long continued. He was also most worthily renowned with highest glory, for that gracious reformation in religion, which was established by his regal authority, and which our English Church at this day with great comfort doth enjoy, under the happy government of our Sovereign Lord the King, your most noble and renowned Father.

Furthermore, the same Author setting out again this Commentary, amplified and enlarged, he dedicated this second edition to our late most gracious Queen *Elizabeth*, worthy of eternal memory in this Kingdom, for the reestablishing (after a few years alteration) of the zealous reformation of her most virtuous brother. Which example hath led me in most humble manner to seek for the same work, the high patronage and protection of such Princes, like those to whom he presented this his service.

To whom I know none so like as your selves, both in regard of your high estate, and also in like most noble descent from the united houses of Yorke and Lancaster. Besides which resemblance, your Highness also is of like years to the young Prince King *Edward*, and in the eyes of all the kingdom, of like hope of excellent virtue and zealous proceedings in the advancement of Christian religion.

In like manner your Grace resembleth the most gracious late Queen *Elizabeth,* both in her royal name, and also in

the constant expectation of all men, to express in time all the princely virtues and graces that shined in that most renowned Princess, from this Western part of the world, to the furthest East, and to the rising of the Sun.

In which respects, esteeming such a dedication, most like that which my author made of his own work, I have most humbly craved that this my translation of it might bee vouchsafed the honor to have your Princely names written in the beginning of it. For notwithstanding the great difference that is between a reverend learned writer and expounded of the holy Scriptures, and the translator of such all expositions yet this mean service hath also his good use in the Church of God; and is of long and tedious labor to such as take pains therein; which being graciously accepted, may encourage others to travel in this kind, and cause many to give thanks to God for you both, by whose most princely favors and protection, they are made partakers of such worthy writings. And I shall always pray Almighty God, with this new year, to multiply many more upon you, and daily replenish your hearts with all princely and heroical graces, that may enable and adorn Princes of so his estates, amongst this people.

Your Highness, and Graces most humbly devoted, in all loyal and dutiful Affection,

Clement Cotton

An Epigram upon the Translation of M. Calvin's Commentary upon the Prophecy of Isaiah.

Thrice happy (England) if thou knewest thy bliss, Since Christ's eternal Gospel in thee shined Thou art. His beetle-blind that sees not this, Brutishly ingrate that with a thankful mind

Doth not acknowledge Gods great Grace herein. And learn thereby for to forsake his sin. God's word hath long in thee been soundly taught. The sound thereof hath rung throughout the Land, And many a Soul by Fishers net been caught, Which erst lay thrall in Satan's cruel band: This favor great by none can be expressed, But such as have it felt in their own breast. Thy native sons in thine own bowels bred, Like faithful Shepherds have done worthily. And thee with store of heavenly Manna fed. Forcing the Wolves to leave their cruelty. To slink aside, and hide themselves in holes. In caves and dells, like pur-blind Backs and Moles. Tyndall, Frith, Philpot, father Latimer, The Gospel preached by word, by life, by death: Ivel, Fox, Reynolds, Fulk, and Whitaker To second them have spent their vital breath. In hot pursuit of that great Romish Bore, Who spoiled quite this English vine before. I spare to speak of Deerings silver voice, Of Greenhams zeal, of Perkins labors sound, Of hundreds moe of Zion-builders choice. The like whereof can scarce elsewhere be found: Such ground-work they of Gods truth here have placed As never shall by Hels whole force be razt. Besides all these, of Sorrel Lights the chief, Beza, and Vrinus, many other moe, Martyr, Musculus, for thy more relief Are seen in English weed abroad to go From place to place in every Shire and Torwne, To teach the Truth and throw all Errors down. And here presented is unto thy sight The Royal Prophet Esaias Evangel: For so me thinks I may it terme aright, That Prince of holy Prophets doth so well. So likely Christ's whole history presage, As if h' had lived in that same very Age. Whose Oracles great Calvin doth unfold In thine own native Tongue for thy Souls health. Here maist thou gather precious Stones and Gold, And store up heaps of Heavenly lasting wealth; Here maist thou find with very little Pain Which would'st not lose for thousand Worlds again. Here maist thou see the black-mouthed Atheists Confounded quite by Demonstration clear: The cunning Papist put unto his shifts, And made in his right Colors to appear;

Here's Christ, his Truth, and Life, thee set before, Heavens Gates set open wide: what would'st thou more?

By Franchis Hering, Doctor in Physic.

TO HER SERENE HIGHNESS, NOT LESS ILLUSTRIOUS BY HER OWN VIRTUES THAN BY THE SPLENDOR OF ROYALTY,

ELIZABETH, QUEEN OF ENGLAND ETC.

Although, in making improvements on this Commentary, I have bestowed so much care and industry, most noble Queen, that it ought justly to be reckoned a new work, yet, as in the first edition it was dedicated to your brother King Edward, who, though a youth, greatly excelled the men of his age, and whom I wish to be held in remembrance by posterity, as he deserves, I had intended to make no change in that dedication. But since, amidst that wretched and lamentable dispersion of the Church and oppression of pure doctrine, which raged with prodigious violence for a short period, this book, together with the whole doctrine of true godliness, was banished from England for a time, but now, I trust, favored by your happy reign, will be restored to its former privileges, I thought that there would be no impropriety if to the name of a most excellent king I should join your own name, which is regarded by all good men with not less esteem and satisfaction. Not only was an opportunity offered, but necessity appeared to demand, that I should obtain your full protection to this Commentary, the banishment of which, I am aware, was beheld by a great number of your godly subjects with deep sorrow.

Yet it is not so much my object to be favored with your countenance in my personal labors, as humbly to entreat, and by the sacred name of Christ to implore, not only that, through your kindness, all orthodox books may again be welcomed and freely circulated in England. but that your chief care may be directed to promote religion, which has fallen into shameful neglect. And if this is justly demanded from all kings of the earth by the Only-begotten Son of God, by a still more sacred tie does he hold you bound, most noble Queen, to perform this duty; for when even you, though a king's daughters were not exempted from that dreadful storm which fell with severity on the heads of all the godly, by the wonderful manner in which he brought you out safe, though not unmoved by the fear of danger, he has laid you under obligation to devote yourself and all your exertions to his service. So far are you from having any reason to be ashamed of this deliverance that God has given you large and abundant grounds of boasting, by confirming you to the image of his Son, on whom the Prophet Isaiah bestows this among other commendations, that from prison and judgment (Isaiah 53:8) he was raised to the loftiest height of heavenly dominion.

As it is no ordinary honor to resemble such a model, so whenever you recollect, what ought never to be forgotten by you, from what wretched and fearful trembling God rescued you, by openly stretching out his hand, remember also that it was done for the express purpose that you, on the other hand, should, with invincible determination and unshaken firmness of mind, acknowledge your obligation to your Protector and Redeemer, and, laying aside all other kinds of business, a vast number of which I have no doubt, will crowd upon you at the commencement of your reign, labor to have his worship, which for a time was basely and disgracefully corrupted in that kingdom, restored to its former splendor. And if Satan, by presenting many and powerful obstructions, endeavor to produce fear or slothfulness, you are well aware from whom you ought to ask boldness to go steadily forward and to vanguish all opposition; and God, who bestows his blessing on the actions of private individuals, will not fail to grant a happy and desirable issue to his work.

You ought also to be stimulated, venerable Queen, by a sacred regard to duty; for the Prophet Isaiah demands not only from *Kings* that they be *nursing-fathers*, but also from *Queens* that they be *nursing-mothers*. (Isaiah 49:2.3.) This duty you ought to discharge, not only by removing the filth of Popery, and by cherishing the flock which I not long ago lay trembling and concealed, but by gathering the exiles who chose rather to part with the advantages of their native country than to remain in it so long as godliness was banished from it. This will be the crowning proof of your gratitude to God, and a sacrifice of most delightful savor, that the faithful worshippers of God, who, on account of their profession of the Gospel, were constrained to wander far and wide through distant countries, shall now, through tour kindness, be restored to their native country. We, too, in whom that mournful spectacle awakened, as it ought to have done, the most poignant grief, have abundant cause for rejoicing, and for congratulating you, when, through the gracious exercise of your royal will we see the way opened for the return of our brethren, not only to be at liberty to worship God in your Majesty's dominions, but to render assistance to others.

And now, most noble Queen, if you shall be graciously pleased, as I trust you will, not to disdain this testimony of my respect for you, which some would perhaps reckon to be trivial and of little value, I shall esteem it to be no ordinary kindness, and will endeavor through my whole life to testify my gratitude by every means in my power.

May the Lord guide you, most illustrious Queen, by the Spirit of wisdom, uphold you with invincible courage, protect and enrich your Highness with every kind of blessings! Geneva, 15th January; the day which, it was reported, had been fixed for your coronation; on which account I more gladly set myself to write, having partially recovered from an attack of quartan ague.

TO HIS SERENE HIGHNESS, EDWARD SIXTH, KING OF ENGLAND, etc. A TRULY CHRISTIAN PRINCE. JOHN CALVIN.

Though I acknowledge that this Commentary has been faithfully and skillfully compiled from my Lectures, yet, as it was drawn up by another person, I was at first afraid, most illustrious King, that if it should appear in public bearing your name on the Dedication, I might be thought not to have acted properly towards your Majesty. But this doubt was removed chiefly by one consideration, that as a Prophet who was of royal descent, and a most noble ambassador of Christ, the supreme King, is highly appropriate to your rank, so the labor which I had bestowed on the explanation of his Prophecies would be accepted and valued by your Majesty. His experience made him acquainted with five kings exceedingly unlike each other in their dispositions, to whom in uninterrupted succession he officiated as a teacher; and it is unnecessary to inform you which of these you should chiefly select for imitation, or to exhort you to that which you show that you are already sufficiently willing to do.

Uzziah and Jotham were favorable to him; though they were not so courageous as they ought to have been in maintaining the worship of God. His chief contest was with Ahaz, not indeed as an open enemy, but as a cunning hypocrite full of fraud and dissimulation. The servants of

God cannot have a more dangerous class of enemies. His successor, Hezekiah, not only treated the holy man with reverence, but modestly submitted to his doctrine like one of the common people, and, what is still more, endured patiently severe reproof when it was found necessary. Manasseh, who was the last of them, and whom a strongly supported Jewish tradition represents as having been his son-in-law, subjected him to a frightful kind of torture, and wickedly put him to death. But at the very time when he received assistance from those who were not bad kings, and even during the reign of Hezekiah himself, who was so valiant a supporter of godliness, he never ceased to be harassed by sharp and troublesome disputes, and to undergo severe conflicts, so hard and uncommon is it for men to assent to sound doctrine; and not only so, but they who resolve to discharge the prophetical office honestly and faithfully must carry on a continual war with the world. The more earnestly ought godly kings to labor to aid the servants of God by their countenance, that they may not be distressed beyond measure by the insolence of the ungodly.

But as this virtue is excellent and truly heroic, so, if you search the history of all ages from the beginning of the worlds it has been uncommon, and there have been very few by whom it was cultivated. Many have indolently and carelessly, as if it had been a matter with which they had no concern, allowed the truth of God to be crushed without making any resistance. But the greater part have been openly hostile, and have opposed it with violence and rage; and would that they who at the present day profess to be Christians were as earnest in upholding the doctrine of salvation as they are haughty in boasting of the name!

Not to mention others, it may justly be regarded as no ordinary consolation amidst the present distresses of the Church, that God has raised you up and endowed you with