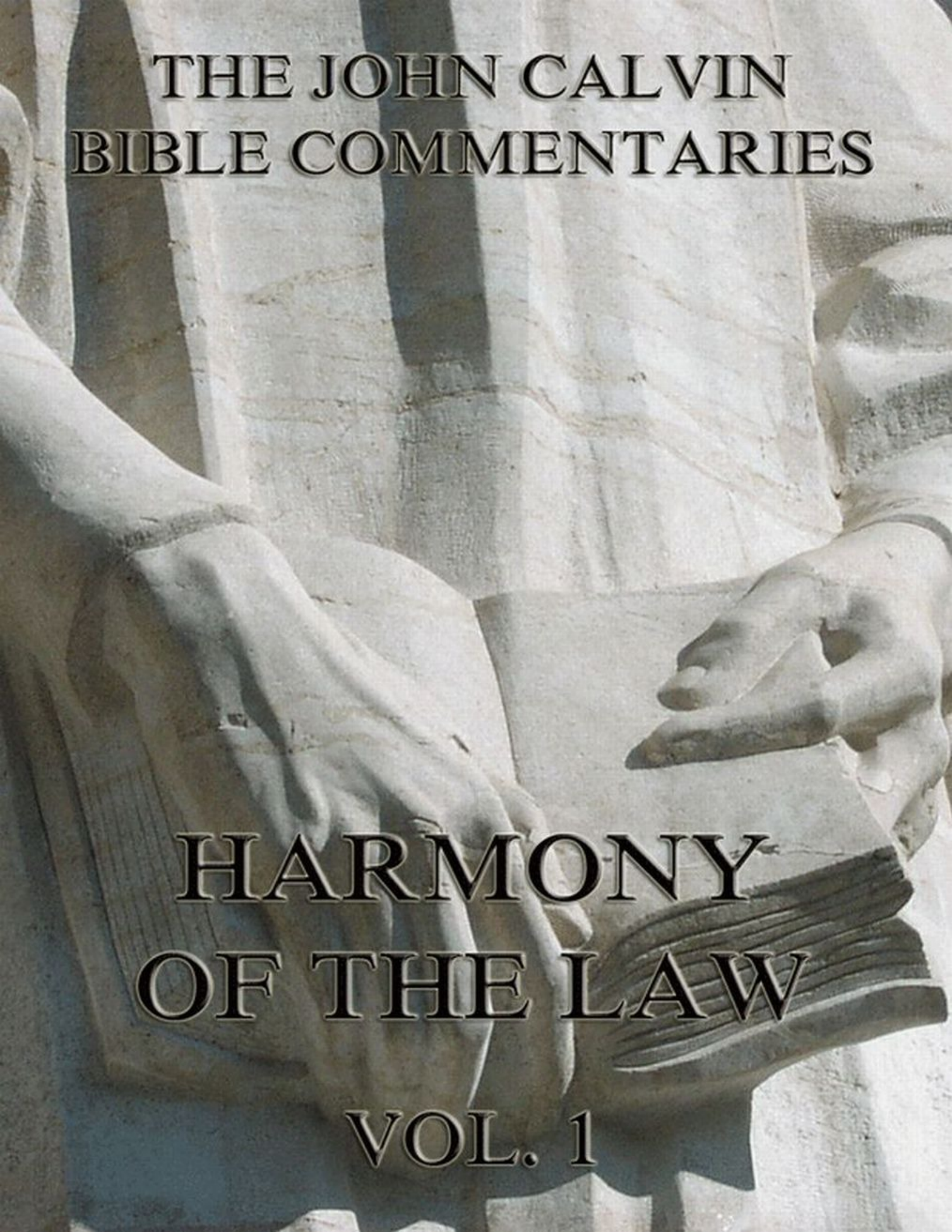

THE JOHN CALVIN BIBLE COMMENTARIES

HARMONY OF THE LAW

VOL. 1

Commentaries On The Harmony Of The Law Vol. 1

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 THE HARMONY OF THE LAW VOL. 1

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Coming into the field as a Translator of Calvin so late as I do, and after the various able Preliminary Notices of my predecessors in the task, it would ill become me to offer any lengthened remarks, either generally on the personal character and theological system of our illustrious author, or more particularly on his merits as a Commentator upon Scripture. It may not, however, be deemed superfluous that I should refer my readers to the brief but interesting Memoir of Calvin, written by his associate and friend Theodore Beza, and translated by Henry Beveridge, Esq., in Volume I. of Calvin's Tracts in this Series. It would, I presume, be scarcely possible to produce within a similar compass any Biography of the great Reformer which could at all be brought into competition with this. That the colouring of partiality may be discerned in it, the circumstances of the case would lead us to expect; but as to the main facts of his life, whilst there can be little ground for supposing Beza to be ignorant of them, so is he above the suspicion of having intentionally falsified them. "Every reasonable person," says Bayle "will agree with me, that, with respect to the historical sequence of Calvin's travels, no author is more credible than Theodore Beza when the occurrences are of such a nature as neither to injure nor enhance the glory of Calvin."

It would at any rate appear to be peculiarly unseasonable, at the present moment, to attempt any new Life of Calvin, when an announcement has recently been made of a large amount of materials having been discovered, which, when published, will probably throw much additional light on the subject. I allude to a statement of the French correspondent of the "*Evangelical Christendom*" for December 1851, vol. 5. p. 494, to the following effect: — "A young man, equally distinguished by his piety and learning,

M. Jules Bonnet, had been commissioned, in the reign of Louis Philippe, to collect the unpublished Letters of Calvin in the Public Libraries of France, Geneva, etc. He has found 497, of which 190 are written in the French language, and 307 in Latin. This correspondence promises the greatest interest. It commences in 1524, when Calvin was yet on the benches of the University, and continues up to 1564, the period when the illustrious Reformer died. The greater part of these letters are addressed to Farel, Melancthon, Theodore Beza, and other distinguished theologians. The French letters are written to the King of Navarre, the Duchess of Ferrara, the Prince of Conde, etc. One is addressed to the Duke of Somerset, who exercised then high authority in England, and contains twenty-three pages."

It may not be impossible that a more accurate examination of these documents will prove that some of them are already before the public; yet few, I think, into whose hands this work may fall will abstain from uniting in the hope expressed by our informant, that this correspondence should be published; or, if they are at all acquainted with the writings of Calvin, will fail to agree in the opinion that "it will present to literature some excellent models of style; to the historian, some precious documents; to the theologian, some interesting ideas; and to simple Christians, some edifying sentiments."

I would even venture here to record my own fervent aspiration, that it may please God to dispose men's hearts to afford such renewed encouragement to those who have undertaken the great national work of which this volume forms a portion, that it may not be abandoned until the whole Remains of Calvin, including the above-mentioned letters, shall have appeared in an English dress, and until every emanation from his almost miraculously fertile mind

shall have enriched the religious literature of our age and country. I believe, however, I am correct in saying, that it will be impossible to put the top-stone on this monument of his Christian sagacity and industry, unless every exertion be made to obtain supporters by those who are desirous of its completion.

The Work, which it is now my privilege for the first time to introduce to the English Reader, is confessedly by no means the least worthy of its Author. One of the ablest and most laborious of our own Theological critics, Mr. Hartwell Horne, has especially singled it out for eulogy from amongst the whole series of Calvin's commentaries. "His Harmony of the four last books of the Pentateuch (he says) has been much and deservedly admired for its ingenuity. The *History* contained in them forms a distinct part. The rest is comprised under the following divisions: —

1. Those passages which assert the excellency of the Law by way of *Preface*;

2. The *Ten Commandments*, under each of which are comprehended all those parts of the Law which relate to the same subject; and this forms the great body of the Harmony;

3. The *Sum of the Law*, containing those passages which enjoin Love to God, and Love to our Neighbor;

4. *The Use of the Law*; and lastly, its *Sanctions* of Promises and Threats."

I have quoted Mr. Horne's compendious account of the Book, in order that its character may at once be understood; and surely the very idea of thus combining and

arranging this portion of Scripture, so as to present its contents in one simple and consistent whole, must strike us as indication of no ordinary grasp and originality of mind. With this Harmony before him, it is somewhat strange that Lightfoot should have thus expressed himself in the Epistle Dedicatory to his "Chronicle of the Times, and the Order of the Texts of the Old Testament;" "I do not remember that I ever heard or saw this kind of task undertaken in any language, namely, 'to harmonize the Old Testament,' and to lay the current of it in a proper series; and, therefore, I acknowledge I have made a very bold venture in attempting to break this ice, and to tread in these untrodden paths, for which foolhardiness I have no other plea than my own ignorance and the reader's gentleness." It was, one would suppose, hardly within the range of possibility that his ignorance could have extended to unacquaintance with this considerable work from the pen of Calvin; and yet, though his own plan was far more comprehensive, and at the same time less artificial in its management than that of Calvin, at least the boast of such absolute originality as he claims, seems to be barred by the existence of the Book I have translated. It is perhaps even still more remarkable that it should be passed over altogether by Dr. Townsend, in the account of previous Harmonies prefixed to his own valuable "Connexion of the Old Testament!"

The only solution I can give of this omission on the part of these two eminent writers — neither of whom would have been at all likely to do intentional injustice to the *clarum et venerabile nomen* in question — is that at which I have above hinted, viz., that whilst there are undoubtedly manifest points of similarity in their undertaking, there was still a considerable difference in the mode of its performance.

The object which Calvin had in view, and which he has so efficiently executed, was not so much to present the narrative of each of the four last books of the Pentateuch in its regular order of occurrence, though it necessarily happens that, with respect to a great part of them, this must incidentally be the case. His aim was a far higher one than that of a mere Chronologist. He sought not mainly to arrange the facts of Scripture, but rather to systematize its doctrines, and to bring out the mind of the Spirit of God in the revelation of His just, and good, and holy Law in a complete and harmonious form. His work was intended as an auxiliary in that important process of generalization, which every diligent and devout reader of the Bible must to a certain extent, though sometimes even unconsciously, carry on in his own mind; not satisfying himself with the notions conveyed by isolated texts, but "comparing spiritual things with spiritual," until he arrives at a nearer comprehension of that perfect order which reigns in the midst of their apparent discrepancies.

The ingenuity of his arrangement it is impossible to gainsay. That it is open to objections, even of a graver character than have sometimes been alleged against ordinary Harmonies, he seems himself to have felt; but with his usual candor and ability, he meets them in the Preface, to which the reader is referred as the best apology for his motives, and the clearest exposition of his design.

But whatever may be thought of its execution, it is certain that we have here the opinions of a master-mind on various topics of paramount interest and importance, when it had attained its fullest maturity and development. We expressly learn from Beza, *vide* Life of Calvin, p. 82, that both the Commentary itself, and its Translation into French, which was made by himself, were amongst the labors of 1563, the penultimate year of his mortal existence, and this

statement is confirmed both by Senebier, as quoted in the Translator's Preface to Genesis, vol. 1. p. 18, and by Calvin's own Dedicatory Epistle to the French Translation of the Commentaries on the whole Pentateuch, which is given in the latter work, p. 27, and which bears the date of Geneva, "le dernier jour le Juillet, M.D. LXIII."

One can scarcely here forbear from a passing allusion to the gigantic, and almost incredible labor involved in these publications. "Calvin's diseases (says his friend and biographer) had so much increased, and were so numerous, as to make it impossible to believe that so strong and noble a mind could be any longer confined in a body so fragile, so exhausted by labor, and, in fine, so broken down by suffering. But even then he could not be persuaded to spare himself. Nay, if at any time he abstained from public duty, (and he never did so without the greatest reluctance,) he still at home gave answers to those who consulted him, or wore out his amanuenses by dictating to them, though fatigued himself." Making every allowance for the assistance he received in the mere mechanical portion of his Work; and viewing this arrangement, and its Commentary purely as an intellectual effort, it is surely a marvelous production under the circumstances here detailed, and, in itself, a remarkable evidence of the vast resources, and highly disciplined powers of the mind which gave it birth. Nay, more than this, may it not be fairly questioned whether it must not have been made "a labor of love" with him, and whether any less powerful impulse than love towards Him, who hath first so freely and so abundantly loved us, working in dependence upon strength from above, could have carried it through?

We may indeed well imagine, that it was an undertaking after his own heart, conceived, it may be, in earlier years, but reserved for execution as the appropriate solace of his

declining age. As life wore on, or rather, in his ease, we may say, as life wore out; as daily experience increasingly taught him the imperfection of human wisdom; as the difficulties of his position [f1] in the van of the Reformation thickened around him, doubtless the Scriptures of God grew more and more precious to his soul, and were still more highly valued as the counsellors of his mind and the delight of his heart.

There were certain subjects, too, necessarily brought before him in his meditation upon these particular Books, which must have been very congenial to him. It was not unnatural that he should take pleasure in soberly and calmly reviewing those doctrines which had so largely exercised his earlier thoughts, and that the distinctive tenets, which are usually associated with his name, and which, as the Article of the Church of England testifies, are "full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ," should once more pass before him in his latter days, and demand his serious consideration. Here, then, was the opportunity. The Election of Israel, their Predestination, and Calling to be the Lord's peculiar people, and the judicial blindness of wicked Pharaoh's heart, led him to reflect and speak with more than ordinary fullness upon the divine decrees of our heavenly Father; and, perhaps, some of his most prejudiced opponents might be surprised to find the limitations which his system recognized, and the moderate tone of his statements, if they could be induced to examine them here in their particular application, rather than in the cruder and harsher form of general deductions and logical definitions. At any rate — if, according to Bishop Burnet, "the common fault on both sides (in this controversy) is, to charge one another with the consequences of their opinions, as if they

were truly their tenets" — it must be confessed by all, that our Author is by no means guilty of denying the responsibility of the sinner, or the need of personal holiness in the righteous. If, elsewhere, he may have seemed to dogmatize too accurately, and too closely to confine the dealings of Almighty wisdom within the narrow tracks of human apprehension, they will perceive but little of such a spirit here. They will find him here, as in all his other Commentaries, a faithful and honest Expounder of God's Word, seeking to build upon it no theories of his own, but to elicit in all sincerity and godly simplicity the instruction it was intended to impart. The error into which he may most justly be accused of falling, is not the making it assert too much but too little. The fancies of the Rabbins and of the Allegorists were his aversion; and it may be that he sometimes ran into the opposite extreme, and cleaved too rigidly to the literal interpretation.

But there is yet another reason why so firm an upholder of the truth and authenticity of the Bible should have been greatly interested in an exposition of the Pentateuch. Even before the days of Calvin these precious Books had been a favorite point for the unbeliever's assaults. They had not, indeed, been so systematically impugned as in these latter times; but still their credit had even then been assailed with no inconsiderable subtlety, and particular points in them had been subjected to severe and unfavorable criticism. Calvin's remarks are not unfrequently leveled directly against these adversaries; but, apart from this direct advocacy of the truth, his labors indirectly furnish one of the best barriers possible against the acceptance of the notion, that the books of the Pentateuch were but a collection of fragments, and by no means the production of a single Author. Nothing can more satisfactorily prove the unity of these Books than that homogeneous body of Truth into which Calvin has here resolved them.

I had intended to offer some observations upon the writers who have preceded and followed Calvin in his illustration of this part of the Bible. I find, however, that the necessity of the case would prevent me from presenting anything more than a mere Bibliographical Catalogue, which it would be easy enough to draw up, but which would here be somewhat out of place. It will be seen, that in the brief illustrative notes appended to the text, many of them have been referred to.

For the Notes on the Hebrew words, etc., signed W., I am indebted to my dear and venerable friend and neighbor, the Rev. Henry Walter, B.D. and F.R.S., Rector of Hasilbury Bryan, Dorset, formerly Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, and Professor of Natural Philosophy in the Honourable East India Company's College at Haileybury. It is no slight personal gratification to me to have my name thus publicly associated with his; and I feel that it will operate with those, who are acquainted with his valuable Writings, as a high recommendation of the work.

In the Notes, *C.* will signify Calvin; *L.*, Luther; *S.M.*, Sebastian Munster; LXX, the Septuagint; *A.V.*, our own Authorized Version; and *V.*, the Latin Vulgate.

C. W. B.

Bingham's Melcombe,

May 12, 1852.

THE PREFACE OF JOHN CALVIN

TO THE FOUR LAST BOOKS OF MOSES;

Arranged By Him In Form Of A Harmony,

And Illustrated By Commentaries.

If I do not at once begin by stating my reasons for the plan I have adopted in the composition of this Work, it will undoubtedly incur the censures of many. Nor will it be attacked only by the malevolent and the envious, (a matter of little consequence,) but some will perhaps be found, who, with no other cause of disapproval, and without any malignity, will still think that I have inconsiderately, and therefore unnecessarily, altered the order which the Holy Spirit himself has prescribed to us. Now, there cannot be a doubt that what was dictated to Moses was excellent in itself, and perfectly adapted for the instruction of the people; but what he delivered in Four Books, it has been my endeavor so to collect and arrange, that, at first sight, and before a full examination of the subject, it might seem I was trying to improve upon it, which would be an act of audacity akin to sacrilege. I pass by those critics with indifference whose object is to frame causes of detraction out of nothing, and whose greatest pleasure it is to invent occasions of railing; but there will be no difficulty in conciliating those who are only unfavorable through misunderstanding, if they will but listen calmly to the course I have pursued. For I have had no other intention than, by this arrangement, to assist unpracticed readers, so that they might more easily, more commodiously, and more profitably acquaint themselves with the writings of moses; and whosoever would derive benefit from my labors should understand that I would by no means withdraw him from the study of each separate Book, but simply direct him by

this compendium to a definite object; lest he should, as often happens, be led astray through ignorance of any regular plan.

These four books are made up of two principal parts, viz., the Historical Narrative and the Doctrine, by which the Church is instructed in true piety, (including faith and prayer,) as well as in the fear and worship of God; and thus the rule of a just and holy life is laid down, and individuals are exhorted to the performance of their several duties. [f2] This distinction Moses does not observe in his Books, not even relating the history in a continuous form, and delivering the doctrine unconnectedly, as opportunity occurred. I admit, indeed, that whatever refers to the regulation of the conduct is comprehended in the ten commandments; but, since all have not sufficient intelligence to discern the tendency of what is elsewhere taught, or to reduce the different precepts to their proper class, there is nothing to prevent such assistance being afforded them, as, by setting before them the design of the holy Prophet, may enable them to profit more by his writings.

Moreover, the use and application of the narrative in the four Books is twofold; for the deliverance of his ancient people reflects, as in a bright mirror, the incomparable power, as well as the boundless mercy, of God in raising up, and as it were engendering his Church. But that the most gracious Father should have followed up this same people with his continual bounty even unto the end, and have so contended with their gross impiety, their detestable iniquity, and foul ingratitude, as not to cease to be more than liberal towards the unthankful and the evil, is a manifest proof of his inestimable loving-kindness; whilst we may perceive in his constant government of them, how

unwearied is the course of his grace in cherishing, defending, honoring, and preserving those whom he has once embraced with his love. Hence may we obtain a source of confidence; hence, too, may we learn to be bold in prayer; while, lest we should be in doubt whether these exertions of God's grace, which Israel experienced as well in their original calling as in their successive history, have any relation to ourselves also, Moses has stated their cause to have been that gratuitous adoption, which is common to us with them, from the times that the only-begotten Son, having "broken down the middle wall of partition," vouchsafed to become our head. On the other hand, the terrible and memorable punishments, which are everywhere recounted, instruct us in reverence towards God, and inspire our hearts with awe, lest we should falsely boast ourselves to be his children, whilst indulging in the liberty of sin. For, since God so severely punished idolatry, evil affections and lusts, rebellion and other crimes, we may learn that he nowhere more evidently inflicts his judgments than upon his Church, and thus we may appropriate to the deceivers of our own day whatever happened to the hypocritical Jews.

I. The doctrine is divided into four principal Heads. In order to prepare their minds for its reception, Moses commends the authority of the Law by many eulogies. Whatever statements, therefore, occur as to the Dignity of the Law are set down by way of *Preface*, [f3] that God may be duly reverenced. Consequently, they precede in order the precepts of the Law, and will occupy the *first* place.

II. The Ten Commandments follow, in which God has briefly, but comprehensively summed up the Rule of a Just and Holy Life; yet so as not to separate from them those interpretations which the Lawgiver has added

unconnectedly. For many Precepts, which are not found in the Two Tables, yet differ not at all from them in sense; so that due care must be taken to affix them to their respective Commandments in order to present the Law as a whole.

III. The Third Head Of Doctrine consists of [f4] Supplements; by which word I mean, with respect to the First Table, the Ceremonies and the outward Exercises of Worship; with respect to the Second Table, the Political Laws, for the object of both these parts is merely to aid in the observance of the Moral Law; and it is not a little important, that we should understand that the Ceremonies and the Judicial Ordinances neither change nor detract from the rule laid down in the Ten Commandments; but are only helps, which, as it were, lead us by the hand to the due Worship of God, and to the promotion of justice towards men. We are aware that of old there was a constant controversy of the Prophets against the Jewish people; because, whilst strenuously devoting themselves to Ceremonies, as if True Religion and Holiness were comprised in them, they neglected real righteousness.

Therefore, God protests that he never enjoined anything with respect to the Sacrifices: and he pronounces all External Rites but vain and trifling, if the very least value be assigned to them apart from the Ten Commandments. Whence we more certainly arrive at the conclusion to which I have adverted, viz., that they are not, to speak correctly, of the substance of the law, nor avail of themselves in the Worship of God, nor are required by the Lawgiver himself as necessary, or even as useful, unless they sink into this inferior position. In fine, they are appendages, which add not the smallest completeness to the Law, but whose object is to retain the pious in the