THE JOHN CALVIN BIBLE COMMENTARIES

HARMONY OF THE LAW

VOL. 3

Commentaries On The Harmony Of The Law Vol. 3

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 Novon, 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 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 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 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. 3

The Fifth Commandment

EXODUS 20

Exodus 20:12

12. Honor thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.
12. Honora patrem tuum et matrem tuam — ut prorogentur dies tui super terram quam Jehova Deus tuus dat tibi.

ITS REPETITION

DEUTERONOMY 5

Deuteronomy 5:16

16. Honor thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

16. Honora patrem tuum et matrem tuam, quemadmodum praecepit tibi Jehova, Deus tuus: ut prorogentur dies tui et ut bene sit tibi super terram quam Jehova Deus tuus dat tibi.

I am not ignorant that the Tables of the Law are usually divided in a different manner; f1 for those, who make only one of the first two Commandments, are obliged finally to mangle the last. Thus the prohibition of God to covet either our neighbor's wife or his house, is foolishly separated into two parts, whereas it is quite clear that only one thing is treated of, as we gather from the words of Paul, who guotes them as a single Commandment. (Romans 7:7.) There is, however, no need of a lengthened discussion here, since the fact itself explains how one error has grown out of another; for, when they had improperly hidden the Second Commandment under the First, and consequently did not find the right number, they were forced to divide into two parts what was one and indivisible. A frivolous reason is assigned by Augustine why they comprised the First Table in three commandments, viz., that believers might learn to worship God in the Trinity, and thus to adore one God in three persons. By inconsiderately trifling with such subtleties, they have exposed God's law to the mockeries of the ungodly. Josephus ^{f2} indeed rightly enumerates the Commandments themselves in their proper order, but improperly attributes five Commandments to each Table; as if God had had regard to arithmetic rather than to instruct His people separately in the duties of charity, after having laid down for them the rules of piety. For up to this point the rule of rightly serving God has been delivered, *i.e.*, the First Table embraces a summary of piety; and now the Law will begin to show how men ought to live with each other, otherwise one Table would have been enough, nor would God have divided his Law without a purpose. But whereas piety f3 and justice comprise the perfect rule for the direction of our lives, it was necessary to distinguish these two parts, that the people might understand the object of the Law, of which we shall again speak hereafter.

Exodus 20:12. *Honor thy father.* Although charity (as being "the bond of perfectness," Colossians 3:14) contains the sum of the Second Table, still, mutual obligation does not prevent either parents or others, who are in authority, from retaining their proper position. Nay, human society cannot be maintained in its integrity, unless children modestly submit themselves to their parents, and unless those, who are set over others by God's ordinance, are even reverently honored. But inasmuch as the reverence which children pay to their parents is accounted a sort of piety, some have therefore foolishly placed this precept in the First Table. Nor are they supported in this by Paul, though he does not enumerate this Commandment, where he collects the sum of the Second Table, (Romans 13:9;) for he does this designedly, because he is there expressly teaching that obedience is to be paid to the authority of kings and magistrates. Christ, however, puts an end to the whole controversy, where, among the precepts of the Second Table, He enumerates this, that children should honor their parents. (Matthew 19:19.)

The name of the mothers is expressly *introduced*, lest their sex should render them contemptible to their male children.

It will be now well to ascertain what is the force of the word "honor," not as to its grammatical meaning, (for dbk, cabad, is nothing else but to pay due honor to God, and to men who are in authority,) but as to its essential signification. Surely, since God would not have His servants comply with external ceremonies only, it cannot be doubted but that all the duties of piety towards parents are here comprised, to which children are laid under obligation by natural reason itself; and these may be reduced to three heads, i.e., that they should regard them with reverence;

that they should obediently comply with their commands, and allow themselves to be governed by them; and that they should endeavor to repay what they owe to them, and thus heartily devote to them themselves and their services. Since, therefore, the name of Father is a sacred one, and is transferred to men by the peculiar goodness of God, the dishonoring of parents redounds to the dishonor of God Himself, nor can any one despise his father without being guilty of an offense against God, (sacrilegium.) If any should object that there are many ungodly and wicked fathers whom their children cannot regard with honor without destroying the distinction between good and evil, the reply is easy, that the perpetual law of nature is not subverted by the sins of men; and therefore, however unworthy of honor a father may be, that he still retains, inasmuch as he is a father, his right over his children, provided it does not in anywise derogate from the judgment of God; for it is too absurd to think of absolving under any pretext the sins which are condemned by His Law; nay, it would be a base profanation to misuse the name of father for the covering of sins. In condemning, therefore, the vices of a father, a truly pious son will subscribe to God's Law; and still, whatsoever he may be, will acknowledge that he is to be honored, as being the father given him by God.

Obedience comes next, which is also circumscribed by certain limits. Paul is a faithful interpreter of this Commandment, where he bids "children obey their parents." (Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20.) Honor, therefore, comprises subjection; so that he who shakes off the yoke of his father, and does not allow himself to be governed by his authority, is justly said to despise his father; and it will more clearly appear from other passages, that those who are not obedient to their parents are deemed to despise them. Still, the power of a father is so

limited as that God, on whom all relationships depend, should have the rule over fathers as well as children: for parents govern their children only under the supreme authority of God. Paul, therefore, does not simply exhort children to obey their parents, but adds the restriction, "in the Lord;" whereby he indicates that, if a father enjoins anything unrighteous, obedience is freely to be denied him. Immoderate strictness, moroseness, and even cruelty must be born, so long as a mortal man, by wickedly demanding what is not lawful, does not endeavor to rob God of His right. In a word, the Law so subjects children to their parents, as that God's right may remain uninfringed. An objection here arises in the shape of this question: It may sometimes happen that a son may hold the office of a magistrate, but that the father may be a private person, and that thus the son cannot discharge his private duty without violating public order. The point is easily solved: that all things may be so tempered by their mutual moderation as that, whilst the father submits himself to the government of his son, ^{f4} yet he may not be at all defrauded of his honor, and that the son, although his superior in power, may still modestly reverence his father.

The third head of honor is, that children should take care of their parents, and be ready and diligent in all their duties towards them. This kind of piety the Greeks call ajntipelargi>a, f5 because storks supply food to their parents when they are feeble and worn out with old age, and are thus our instructors in gratitude. Hence the barbarity of those is all the more base and detestable, who either grudge or neglect to relieve the poverty of their parents, and to aid their necessities.

Now, although the parental name ought, by its own sweetness, sufficiently to attract children to ready

submission, still a promise is added as a stimulus, in order that they may more cheerfully bestir themselves to pay the honor which is enjoined upon them. Paul, therefore, that children may be more willing to obey their parents, reminds us that this "is the first commandment with promise," (Ephesians 6:2;) for although a promise is annexed to the Second Commandment, yet it is not a special one, as we perceive this to be. The reward, that the days of children who have behaved themselves piously to their parents shall be prolonged, aptly corresponds with the observance of the commandment, since in this manner God gives us a proof of His favor in this life, when we have been grateful to those to whom we are indebted for it; whilst it is by no means just that they should greatly prolong their life who despise those progenitors by whom they have been brought into it. Here the question arises, since this earthly life is exposed to so many cares, and pains, and troubles, how can God account its prolongation to be a blessing? But whereas all cares spring from the curse of God, it is manifest that they are accidental; and thus, if life be regarded in itself, it does not cease to be a proof of God's favor. Besides, all this multitude of miseries does not destroy the chief blessing of life, viz., that men are created and preserved unto the hope of a happy immortality; for God now manifests Himself to them as a Father, that hereafter they may enjoy His eternal inheritance. The knowledge of this, like a lighted lamp, causes God's grace to shine forth in the midst of darkness. Whence it follows, that those had not tasted the main thing in life, ^{f6} who have said that the best thing was not to be born, and the next best thing to be cut off as soon as possible; whereas God rather so exercises men by various afflictions, as that it should be good for them nevertheless to be created in His image, and to be accounted His children. A clearer explanation also is added in

Deuteronomy, not only that they should live, but that it *may* go well with them; so that not only is length of life promised them, but other accessories also. And in fact, many who have been ungrateful and unkind to their parents only prolong their life as a punishment, whilst the reward of their inhuman conduct is repaid them by their children and descendants. But inasmuch as long life is not vouchsafed to all who have discharged the duties of piety towards their parents, it must be remembered that, with respect to temporal rewards, an infallible law is by no means laid down; and still, where God works variously and unequally, His promises are not made void, because a better compensation is secured in heaven for believers, who have been deprived on earth of transitory blessings. Truly experience in all ages has shown that God has not in vain promised long life to all who have faithfully discharged the duties of true piety towards their parents. Still, from the principle already stated, it is to be understood that this Commandment extends further than the words imply; and this we infer from the following sound argument, viz., that otherwise God's Law would be imperfect, and would not instruct us in the perfect rule of a just and holy life.

The natural sense itself dictates to us that we should obey rulers. If servants obey not their masters, the society of the human race is subverted altogether. It is not, therefore, the least essential part of righteousness ^{f7} that the people should willingly submit themselves to the command of magistrates, and that servants should obey their masters; and, consequently, it would be very absurd if it were omitted in the Law of God. In this commandment, then, as in the others, God by *synecdoche* embraces, under a specific rule, a general principle, viz., that lawful commands should obtain due reverence from us. But that all things should not be distinctly expressed, first of all

brevity itself readily accounts for; and, besides, another reason is to be noticed, *i.e.* that God designedly used a homely style in addressing a rude people, because He saw its expediency. If He had said generally, that all superiors were to be obeyed, since, pride is natural to all, it would not have been easy to incline the greater part of men to pay submission to a few. Nay, since subjection is naturally disagreeable, many would have kicked against it. God, therefore, propounds a specific kind of subjection, which it would have been gross barbarism to refuse, that thus, their ferocity being gradually subdued, He might accustom men to bear the yoke. Hence the exhortations are derived, that people should "honor the king;" that "every soul should be subject unto the higher powers;" that "servants should obey their masters, even the froward and morose." (Proverbs 24:21; 1 Peter 2:13; Romans 13:1; Ephesians 6:5; 1 Peter 2:14, 18.)

The Exposition of the Commandment

Leviticus 19

Leviticus 19:3

3. Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father. **3.** Unusquisque patrem suum et matrem suam timeat.

Since this passage unquestionably relates to the explanation of the Fifth Commandment, it confirms what I have before shown, that the honor which God-commands to be paid to parents, does not consist in reverence only, but also embraces obedience. For the reverence which He now prescribes will render children submissive and compliant.

Now, then, we more clearly understand how parents are to be honored, when God exhorts their children to beware of offending them; for this is, in a word, the true manifestation of filial piety, calmly to bear the yoke of subjection, and to prove by acts a sincere desire to obey.

The Supplements of the Fifth Commandment

Exodus 21

Exodus 21:15, 17

- 15. And he that smiteth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death.15. Qui percusserit patrem suum aut matrem, morte moriatur.
- 17. And he that curseth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.17. Qui maledixerit patri suo vel matri suae, morte moriatur.

Leviticus 20

Leviticus 20:9

- **9.** For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood *shall be* upon him.
- **9.** Qui maledixerit patri suo aut matri suae morte moriatur: qui patri suo et matri suae maledixit, sanguis ejus super eum.

The commandment is now sanctioned by the denunciation of capital punishment for its violation, *yet* not so as to comprehend all who have in any respect sinned against their parents, but sufficient to show that the rights of

parents are sacred, and not to be violated without the greatest criminality. We know that parricides f8 as being the most detestable of all men, were formerly sewn up in a leathern sack and east into the water; but God proceeds further, when He commands all those to be exterminated who have laid violent hands on their parents ^{f9} or addressed them in abusive language. For to *smite* does not only mean to kill, but refers to any violence, although no wound may have been inflicted. If, then, any one had struck his father or mother with his fist, or with a stick, the punishment of such an act of madness was the same as for murder. And, assuredly, it is an abominable and monstrous thing for a son not to hesitate to assault those from whom he has received his life; nor can it be but that impunity accorded to so foul a crime must straightway produce cruel barbarism. The second law avenges not only violence done to parents, but also, abusive words, which soon proceed to grosser insults and atrocious contempt. Still, if any one should have lightly let drop some slight reproach, as is often the case ill a quarrel, this severe punishment was not to be inflicted upon such, all inconsiderate piece of impertinence: and the word llq, kalal, from which the participle used by Moses is derived, not only means to reproach, but also to curse, as well as to esteem lightly, and to despise. Whilst, therefore, not every insult, whereby the reverence due to parents was violated, received the punishment of death, still God would have that impious pride, which would subvert the first principles of nature, held in abhorrence. But, inasmuch as it might seem hard that a word, f10 however unworthy of a dutiful son, should be the cause of death; this objection is met, by what is added by God in Leviticus, "his blood shall be upon him, because he hath cursed his father or mother:" as if He would put a stop to what men might otherwise presume to allege in mitigation of the severity of the punishment.

Deuteronomy 21

Deuteronomy 21:18-21

- 18. If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and *that*, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them;
 18. Quum quis habuerit filium perversum et rebellem, non obedientem voci patris sui et matris suae, et castigaverint illum, nec paruerit illis:
- **19.** Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place: **19.** Tum apprehendent cum pater eius et mater eius, educentque ad seniores urbis suae et portam loci sui:
- **20.** And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; *he is* a glutton and a drunkard.
- **20.** Dicentque senioribus urbis, Filius iste noster perversus et rebellis est, non obediens voci nostrae, epulo est ac comessator.
- **21.** And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.
- **21.** Tunc lapidabunt eum omnes homines urbis suae lapidibus, et morietur: atque ita auferes malum e medio tui, universusque Israel audiet, et timebit.

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18. If a man have a stubborn. What God had previously adverted to in two clauses, tie now embraces in a general law, for it cannot be doubted but that by rebellious children all are designated who are abusive or insulting to their father and mother. For if it be a capital crime to be disobedient to parents, much more is it to strike, or beat them, and to assail them with reproachful words. In sum, Moses declares that those are deserving of death who are