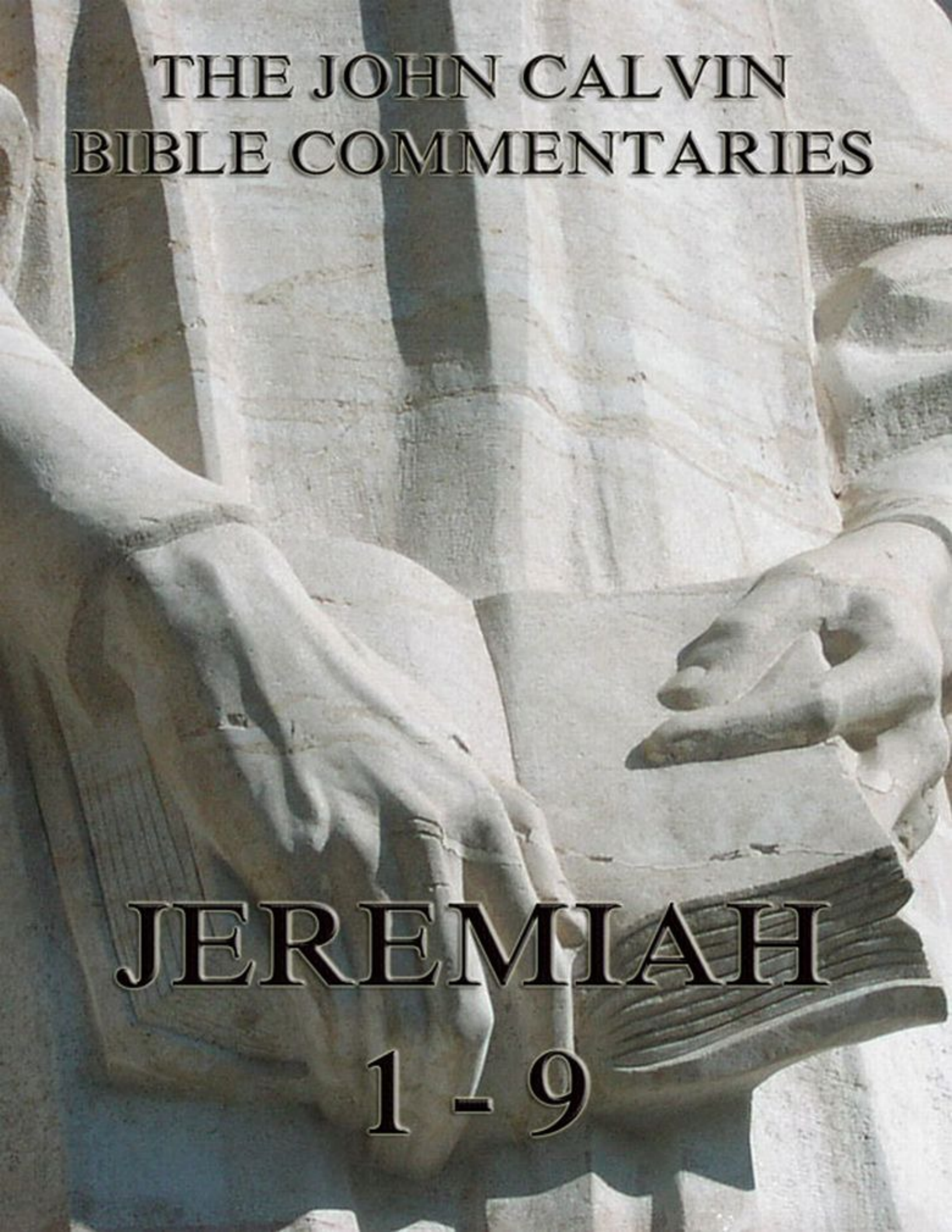

THE JOHN CALVIN BIBLE COMMENTARIES

JEREMIAH 1 - 9

Commentaries On Jeremiah 1- 9

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 JEREMIAH 1- 9

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

The Commentaries On Jeremiah, like those on The Minor Prophets, were delivered as Lectures In The Theological School At Geneva, taken down by some of the Pupils, and afterwards read to Calvin, and corrected. We find in them the production of the same vigorous and expansive mind: The Divine Oracles are faithfully explained, the meaning is clearly stated, and such brief deductions are made as the subjects legitimately warrant. Though the Lectures were extemporaneously delivered, there is yet so much order preserved, and such brevity, clearness, and suitableness of diction are found in them, that in these respects they nearly equal the most finished compositions of Calvin as proof that he possessed a mind of no common order.

The Ministry Of Jeremiah extended over a large space of time from the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign till after the final overthrow of the nation; but for how long after that period, it is not known. [fA1] Between the thirteenth year of Josiah and the destruction of the city and Temple, there were about *forty* years. This was a remarkable period, and Jeremiah nearly alone labored among the people. Their sins had been for the most part the same for a long time — for nearly two centuries, as it appears from the testimonies of his predecessors, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Joel, Micah, Nahum, and Zephaniah; for these *seven* had in this order preceded him. Zephaniah And Habakkuk were probably for a time his contemporaries, the first at the commencement, and the other near the end of his ministry. The contumacy with which Jeremiah often charged the Jews was here evident,

as they continued in their evil courses after so many urgent remonstrances by the former Prophets.

What an example of blindness and of the power of superstition does the history of the Jews at this period exhibit! No past nor present calamities, and no threatenings of still greater calamities, and no promises of Divine favor and of temporal blessings, were sufficient to keep them from idolatrous and immoral practices — and such practices, too, as were plainly and explicitly condemned by that very Law which they professed to receive! Such inconsistency might have been deemed impossible, had it not been exemplified in the Jews: but it is an inconsistency which is still exhibited in the conduct of many calling themselves Christians.

As to The Style Of Jeremiah, the opinion of the accurate and elegant *Lowth* is as follows:

"Jeremiah, though not wanting either in elegance or sublimity, is yet in both inferior to Isaiah. Jerome seems to charge him with some measure of rusticity as to his expressions; but of this, I truly confess, I have found no traces. In thoughts, indeed, he is somewhat less elevated, being for the most part more loose and diffuse in his sentences, as one more conversant with the more tender feelings, being especially capable of expressing sorrow and sympathy. This, indeed, appears mainly in The Lamentations, where these feelings alone predominate; but it is also often found in his Prophecies, and particularly in the first part of his Book, which is chiefly poetical. The middle part is nearly all historical; and the last, consisting of six chapters, is altogether poetical, and contains several oracles plainly expressed, in which the Prophet nearly approaches the sublimity of Isaiah. But of the whole Book

of Jeremiah, hardly the half do I consider to be poetical." — *Proel,* 21.

Venema mainly agrees with *Lowth:* he blames *Jerome* for ascribing rusticity of diction to our Prophet, and says that he was no good judge (*peritus Judex*) of such matters. Speaking of Jeremiah's style, he says, "His diction is not so lofty and sublime as that of Isaiah, though in the six last chapters, 46-51., it seems to me to be nearly equal to it, being no less pure, expressive, and copious, besprinkled also with tropes and metaphors as with lights, and fitted to move the feelings and to stimulate the heart to repentance, for which it was designed. The Lamentations alone are sufficient to defend Jeremiah against the charge of ignorance and rusticity; for antiquity, as *Sanctums* rightly observes, has nothing more grave, more harmonious, more expressive." *Com. ad Jer.*, p. 8.

"He is admirably pathetic," says *Scott; "*his descriptions of approaching judgments are peculiarly vivid; and his eloquence is very vigorous and impressive, when inveighing against the shameless audacity of the people in rebellion against God."

Of Jeremiah as a Prophet, *Henry* mentions these particulars: 1. That he was made a Prophet when young;-2. That he continued long a Prophet;-3. That he was a reproving Prophet;-4. That he was a weeping Prophet; — and, 5. That he was a suffering Prophet, having been persecuted by his own nation more than any other.

There are several references in the New Testament to Jeremiah and to his writings. See Matthew 2:17, 18; Matthew 16:14; Hebrews 8:8-13; Hebrews 10:15-17. "These last references, "observes *Scott, "are* peculiarly

important; for in one of them God himself is mentioned as speaking the words referred to; and in the other it is said, 'Whereof the Holy Ghost is a witness to us.' This is decisive, as to the judgment of the inspired Apostles, respecting the Book on which we now enter, and is peculiarly suited to put us on our guard against those professed friends of the Scriptures, who speak of these books as venerable, authentic, or genuine remains of antiquity, of great value and high authority, but hesitate to vindicate them as divinely inspired." *Pref. to Jer*.

Nothing is with any certainty known as having been written by Jeremiah, except this Book and the Lamentations. Ascribed to him has been a funeral song on the death of Josiah, (2 Chronicles 35:25) which, *Josephus* says, was extant in his day. It has been also said by some that he wrote the 137th Psalm (Psalm 137), and in connection with Ezekiel, the 46th Psalm (Psalm 46). His Letter to the captives in Babylon in the Apocrypha, appended to the book of Barite, is no doubt spurious: its style is very different from that of Jeremiah.

It is universally admitted that the Chapters in this Book are not in their right order. How this has happened, none have been able to conjecture; but the fact is evident. According to *Blayney,* whose account seems correct, the twelve first chapters contain prophecies delivered in the reign of Josiah. Those in the thirteenth, and in the following chapters to the twentieth inclusively, were delivered in the reign of Jehoiakim. Now begins the disorder; the twenty — first contains what was spoken in the time of Zedekiah, the last king: and afterwards we have what was delivered in a former reign. The kings of Judah, during Jeremiah's ministry, were these: Josiah; Shallum or Jehoahaz, his second son; Jehoiakim, his eldest son; Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim; and Zedekiah, the youngest son of Josiah.

Blayney thinks that no prophecies were delivered in the reigns of Shallum and of Jeconiah. Then his classification may be stated as follows:-During the reign of

Josiah, were delivered, chapters 1-12, inclusively.

Shallum, none.

Jehoiakim, chapters 13-20, inclusively, 22, 23, 25, 26, 35, 36, 45, 46, 47, 48, and 49 to verse 33 inclusively.

Jeconiah, none.

Zedekiah, chapters 21, 24, 27 -34, 37-39, 49: from verse 34 to the end, 1, and 51.

The 40-44, inclusively, were written after the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the people; and the 52, the last, during the same time, or as it is commonly supposed, by Ezra; it is an epitome of the progressive and final overthrow of the kingdom.

There were several circumstances worthy of notice, with regard to The Jews, during the ministry of Jeremiah:

1. The *means* which God employed to lead them to repentance, and to a reformation of their conduct, both as to religion and morals: he gave them a pious and a reforming king in Josiah; the Book of the Law was providentially discovered and widely made known; a reformation was carried on according to its requirements, while idolatrous practices were in a great measure put an end to; the people had also before their eyes the awful judgment of God on their brethren, The Israelites, in banishing them from their country; and the powerful preaching of Jeremiah sounded in their ears.

2. The manifest *evidences* of God's displeasure: their good king, Josiah, was suddenly taken from them, no doubt as a judgment for their ingratitude; his successor, Suallum, was, after three months' reign, taken prisoner by the Egyptians, and the country was put under tribute; the country was visited with grievous famine, as recorded in chap. 14.; and Jeremiah, by God's command, denounced on them the punishment of an entire extinction as a nation.

3. The extremely *corrupted state* of the people: they were both most idolatrous and most immoral, unfaithful to God and to man in a degree hardly credible. During Josiah's reign they pretended to cast away their gross superstitions, but after his death they returned to them, as it were, with increased avidity; and with these superstitions was combined the prostration of every moral principle, and of every natural feeling. Superstition ever destroys morality, and enfeebles all the social and natural sympathies of men. What a picture of the effects of superstition is given by Jeremiah in chapter 9!

4. Notwithstanding this extremely degenerated state of things, The Jews harbored the *conviction* that their ruin, as denounced by Jeremiah, was impossible. While practically denying God, they yet rested their confidence on his promises respecting the perpetuity of David's kingdom, and on their outward privileges; taking as unconditional what was conditional, and regarding the mere possession of divine institutions as a sufficient security. And in this vain confidence they were encouraged and confirmed by false Prophets and corrupt Priests, in opposition to God's messages by his Prophet Jeremiah, and to the plain declarations of that Law, the authority of which they still ostensibly acknowledged!

These things have been recorded for our instruction.

Some of Jeremiah's Prophecies were fulfilled in the days of many of those who heard them; such as those which refer to the Captivity of the people, and to the destruction of the neighboring nations by the king of Babylon. Other prophecies extend farther, to times more remote, to the destruction of Babylon, to the restoration of the Jews after the term of seventy years, and to the destinies of various nations. There are also Prophecies respecting The Messiah, as The Lord Our Righteousness, The Evangelical Covenant, The Call of the Gentiles, and final Restoration of The Jews. So that there are in this Book some Prophecies which were soon fulfilled, others at a more distant time, and some which are still to be fulfilled. Who but GOD, the Sole and the Supreme Ruler of the world, and the regulator and disposer of all events, could have announced such Prophecies? All those which refer to the past have been fulfilled, fully and completely; and with no less certainty shall all such as refer to what is future be in due time fulfilled. Nothing can intercept the exercise of Divine Faithfulness; nothing can obstruct the working of Infinite Power.

Facsimile copies of the old Latin, French, and English title — pages follow this Preface, with a reprint of the Dedication by Clement Cotton to the Countess Of Bedford, prefixed to his English Translation of 1620.

J. O.

Thrussington, September 1850.

THE PRINTER TO THE CHRISTIAN READER

HEALTH.

Though Readers were sufficiently reminded, when the Lectures of the beloved and learned John Calvin, on The Minor Prophets and on Daniel, were published, by what means and by whom they had been attained, so that it is to no purpose to sing the same song, for so would I seem to do, were I again to explain at large what has been before set forth; it is yet necessary, if I am not mistaken, to add now, that these Lectures On Jeremiah and the Lamentations were taken down by our two brethren, *John Budeus* and *Charles Jonville,* with the same care, fidelity, and diligence as the former Lectures, which cannot but appear to every one who will attentively read them.

The Hebrew Text has not been inserted; and among other things, for this reason, because it is already possessed by those who understand the language, and to others it would be of no advantage. We were also afraid, that by increasing the Volume and the expense, we should unnecessarily charge the buyer.

But that I may not be prolix and tedious, I pass by the great and manifold benefit that may be derived from this Volume, which will appear to each one better when it is read: for it is so replete with the precious wealth of heavenly Truth, that from it, as from a storehouse, may be drawn the sum and substance of Religion; and so it will no doubt be of great service to the whole Church of God.

It remains for you, Christian Reader, to ascribe to God alone whatever benefit you may derive from these Commentaries; and to pray for Calvin, who well deserves this from all the godly, until he shall at length enjoy his

eternal inheritance. Make use also thankfully of this so valuable a treasure, and judge kindly and impartially of what is cordially presented to you.

GENEVA, *July* 23, 1576.

THE PRAYER

WHICH JOHN CALVIN WAS WONT TO USE AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS LECTURES:

MAY the Lord grant, that we may engage in contemplating

the mysteries of his heavenly wisdom with really increas —

ing devotion, to his glory and to our edification. AMEN.

CALVIN'S PREFACE TO THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET JEREMIAH.

Lecture First.

After having explained The Twelve Minor Prophets, we reached at length to the end of Daniel. I now undertake to explain The Book Of Jeremiah, provided life be spared and leisure be given me. But if through God's grace time will be allowed, there will remain still one Prophet, that is, Ezekiel; which I hope will be undertaken by a more competent Interpreter.

As to Jeremiah, it must be first observed, that he commenced his office as a Prophet under Josiah, and in the thirteenth year of his reign, who was a sincere servant of God, and yet the state of things was then very confused: the Book of the Law was unknown; so that every one indulged his fancy in inventing many impious forms of worship. No doubt at a time when such liberty prevailed, there were many turbulent men laboring to pervert the worship of God and pure doctrine, and fabricating for themselves many absurd things. For if the priests taught rightly, they must have derived all their knowledge from the Law: and though it is probable, that the memory of it was not wholly lost, yet a few fragments only remained, so that they could not with certainty learn how the Church was to be regulated according to what had been received from above. For it is related in sacred history, that the Book was found in the eighteenth year of Josiah, (2 Chronicles 34:8, 15;) so that Jeremiah had been then teaching for four, and even for five years.

Now this fact clearly proves how great is the carelessness and sloth of men in the great concerns of Religion. God had commanded Moses, that a copy of the Law should not only be kept reverently and carefully in the Temple, but also by the kings themselves, (Deuteronomy 17:18;) and there was also added a command, that the whole Law should be read to the people at their festivals. (Deuteronomy 31:11.) But when the kings departed from the true worship of God, no copy of the Law was preserved by them: and at length the whole Law became as it were extinct. No doubt this happened through the tyranny of King Manasse, who cruelly raged against the priests and against all the other servants of God. Wherever only a spark of religion appeared, he was intent on slaughter; so that blood, as sacred history testifies, flowed through all the streets of Jerusalem. (2 Kings 21:16.) It was then no wonder, if he

took away from the Temple all the copies of the Law found there, in order to extinguish all memory of true doctrine. However, a book, which had been hid, was found, as we are told, by the priest Hilkiah.

The first thing then to be observed is the time when he began to teach: as religion was then so corrupted, and every one invented errors to suit his own humor, the office of Jeremiah must have been hard and arduous.

Secondly, the termination of his ministry must be noticed. He says, that from that time he pursued his office until the transmigration. He therefore continued in his course for forty years. We shall hereafter see what hard contests he had to undergo during his life. But had the people been teachable, he could not have performed what God had commanded him without great pain and even weariness: for we shall presently see what was the doctrine which he was commanded to proclaim. As then he was assiduous in his labor for forty years, we hence perceive with what a courageous spirit he was endued. If we further consider what storms had been raised, calculated to cast him down from his high station, and even wholly to drive him from the right way, more clearly still will shine forth the invincible firmness of his mind and his zeal; for he never desisted from executing the office committed to him.

We must further observe, that after the city was cut off, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were led captives into Babylon, Jeremiah still continued to discharge his office. He was indeed drawn into Egypt, as we learn from the end of his Book, especially from chapter 44 (Jeremiah 44); nay, he was taken there by force, while yet he pronounced a curse on all the Jews who sought hiding — places in Egypt. Though he was forced to go there, yet it much lessened his authority; for we know that ungodly men lay hold on any

pretense for evil — speaking. There was here a specious pretense; "He cursed, "they said, "all who went to Egypt, and now where does he dwell himself? In Egypt with the other refugees." No doubt the faith of the holy man was shaken by these banterings: ungodliness has been wanton in all ages. There, then, after the destruction of the city, Jeremiah was constrained to bend his course: and it may be, that he persevered in his work and labor beyond fifty years. It is said, that he was stoned to death, and not unlikely, for he inveighed with no less severity against the Jews who had fled into Egypt, than against the city while it was standing; and despair might have roused them into madness. It is hence probable that they slew the holy Prophet, and thought this lawful because he upbraided them with their miseries, while his object was to correct their perverseness, which was untamable; and this they did not consider.

I come now to The Contents of the Book. As Isaiah and the other Prophets spent their labor almost in vain, nothing remained for Jeremiah but briefly to announce this sentence, — " There is now no pardon, but it is the time of extreme vengeance, for they have too long abused God's forbearance, who has borne with them, kindly and even sweetly exhorted them to repent, and testified that he would be exorable and propitious, provided they returned to the right way." Since then God's kindness had been despised by them, it became necessary for Jeremiah to fulminate against them as men lost and in a hopeless state of perverseness. The main thing then in his teaching was this:

> "It is all over with the kingdom and the priesthood; for the Jews have so often and in such various ways, and for so long a time, provoked God's wrath and rejected the pious warnings of his servants."

Isaiah also in his time used threatenings; but we see that to mitigate what was terrible, some hope of pardon was added whenever he spoke with severity. But after the ten tribes had been carried into exile, and the kingdom had been visited with various calamities, while the Jews still continued impenitent, and even hardened themselves more and more under God's scourges, it was necessary, as I have said, that he should deal more sharply with them. God had contended with them by Isaiah and the other prophets; by Jeremiah and also by Ezekiel, he proved them guilty, and denounced on them the sentence of condemnation. This difference between the teaching of Isaiah and that of our Prophet, ought to be noticed. [fA5] At the same time, that Jeremiah's teaching might not be imperfect, it was God's purpose that he should be also the herald of his grace and of the salvation promised in Christ. This exception, however, ought to be borne in mind, that he offered them no hope of mercy until they had suffered the punishment due to their sins.

We now then understand what Jeremiah mainly taught: but particulars will be better and more distinctly understood by readers by following the course of the text. And I do not now treat in general of what is to be found in the prophets; for this is what I have done elsewhere. I now then say only, that Jeremiah was sent by God to proclaim to the people their last calamity; and also to speak to them of their future redemption, and at the same time, ever to remind them of the interposition of seventy years in exile. I come now to the words.

CHAPTER 1

Jeremiah 1:1-3

1. The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that *were* in Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin: **1**. Verba Jercmiae filii Helkiae, ex sacerdotibus qui erant in Anathoth, in terra Benjamin,

2. To whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. **2**. Nempe (rça *explicative* hic ponitur) fecit sermo Jehovae ad ipsum, in diebus Josiea, filii Amon, regis Jehudah, decimo tertio anno regm ejus;

3. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh ear of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month. **3**. Et fuit (*hoc est, perrexit in, cursum vocationis suae*) diebus Joakim, filii Josiae, regis Jehudah, usque ad complementum undecimi anni Zedechiae, filii Josiae, regis Jehudah, ad transmigrationem Jerusalem, mense quinto.

I Have said that the time, when Jeremiah began to discharge his office of a Prophet in God's Church, is not stated here without reason, and that it was when the state of the people was extremely corrupt, the whole of Religion having become vitiated, because the Book of the Law was lost: for nowhere else can be found the rule according to which God is to be worshipped; nor can right knowledge be obtained from any other source. It was then, at the time when impiety had by a long custom prevailed among the Jews, that Jeremiah suddenly came forth. There was then laid on his shoulders the heaviest burden; for many enemies must have risen to oppose him, when he attempted to bring back the people to the pure doctrine of the law, which the greater part were then treading under their feet.

He calls himself the *son of Hilkiah*. The Rabbins think that this Hilkiah was the priest by whom the Book of Moses was found five years after: but this seems not to me probable. The conjecture also of *Jerome* is very frivolous, who

concludes that the Prophet was a boy when he began to prophesy, because he calls himself r[n (*nor*,) a child, a little farther on, as though he did not use the word metaphorically. [fA6] At what age he was called to the prophetic office, we do not know; it is, however, probable that he was of mature age, for it was a work of high authority; and further, had he been a youth, doubtless such a miracle would not have been passed over in silence, that is, that he was made a prophet before the age of maturity.

With regard to his father, it is nothing strange that the Rabbins have regarded him as the high priest; for we know that they are always prone to vain boastings. Ambition possessed them, and hence they have said that Jeremiah was the son of the high priest, in order to add to the splendor of his character. But what does the Prophet himself say? He declares indeed that he was the son of Hilkiah, but does not say that this was the high priest; on the contrary he adds, that he was *from the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin*. Now we know that this was a mean village, not far from Jerusalem; and Jeremiah says, that it was in the tribe of Benjamin. Its nearness to Jerusalem may be gathered from the words of Isaiah, who says that small Anathoth was terrified. (Isaiah 10:30) He threatened Jerusalem by saying that the enemy was near.

> "What," he says, "is your security? Ye can hear the noise of your enemies and the groans of your brethren from your very gates; for Anathoth is not far from you, being only three miles distant."

Since then Jeremiah only says, that he came from Anathoth, why should we suppose him to be the sort of the high priest? And frivolous is what the Chaldee paraphraser adds