THE JOHN CALVIN BIBLE COMMENTARIES

THE BOOK OF HOSEA

Commentaries On The Book Of Hosea

John Calvin

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John Calvin - A Biography

By William Barry

This man, undoubtedly the greatest of Protestant divines, and perhaps, after St. Augustine, the most perseveringly followed by his disciples of any Western writer on theology, was born at Noyon in Picardy, France, 10 July, 1509, and died at Geneva, 27 May, 1564.

A generation divided him from Luther, whom he never met. By birth, education, and temper these two protagonists of the reforming movement were strongly contrasted. Luther was a Saxon peasant, his father a miner; Calvin sprang from the French middle-class, and his father, an attorney, had purchased the freedom of the City of Noyon, where he practised civil and canon law. Luther entered the Order of Augustinian Hermits, took a monk's vows, was made a priest and incurred much odium by marrying a nun. Calvin never was ordained in the Catholic Church; his training was chiefly in law and the humanities; he took no vows. Luther's eloquence made him popular by its force, humour, rudeness, and vulgar style. Calvin spoke to the learned at all times, even when preaching before multitudes. His manner is classical; he reasons on system; he has little humour; instead of striking with a cudgel he uses the weapons of a deadly logic and persuades by a teacher's authority, not by a demagogue's calling of names. He writes French as well as Luther writes German, and like him has been reckoned a pioneer in the modern development of his native tongue. Lastly, if we term the doctor of Wittenberg a mystic, we may sum up Calvin as a scholastic; he gives articulate expression to the principles which Luther had stormily thrown out upon the world in his vehement pamphleteering; and the "Institutes" as they were left by their author have remained ever since the standard of orthodox Protestant belief in all the Churches known as "Reformed." His French disciples called their sect "the religion"; such it has proved to be outside the Roman world.

The family name, spelt in many ways, was Cauvin latinized according to the custom of the age as Calvinus. For some unknown reason the Reformer is commonly called Maître Jean C. His mother, Jeanne Le Franc, born in the Diocese of Cambrai, is mentioned as "beautiful and devout"; she took her little son to various shrines and brought him up a good Catholic. On the father's side, his ancestors were seafaring men. His grandfather settled at Pont l'Evêque near Paris, and had two sons who became locksmiths; the third was Gerard, who turned procurator at Noyon, and there his four sons and two daughters saw the light. He lived in the Place au Blé (Cornmarket). Noyon, a bishop's see, had long been a fief of the powerful old family of Hangest, who treated it as their personal property. But an everlasting quarrel, in which the city took part, went on between the bishop and the chapter. Charles de Hangest, nephew of the too wellknown Georges d'Amboise, Archbishop of Rouen, surrendered the bishopric in 1525 to his own nephew John, becoming his vicar-general. John kept up the battle with his canons until the Parliament of Paris intervened, upon which he went to Rome, and at last died in Paris in 1577. This prelate had Protestant kinsfolk; he is charged with having fostered heresy which in those years was beginning to raise its head among the French. Clerical dissensions, at all events, allowed the new doctrines a promising field; and the Calvins were more or less infected by them before 1530.

Gerard's four sons were made clerics and held benefices at a tender age. The Reformer was given one when a boy of twelve, he became Curé of Saint-Martin de Marteville in the Vermandois in 1527, and of Pont l'Eveque in 1529. Three of the boys attended the local Collège des Capettes, and there John proved himself an apt scholar. But his people were intimate with greater folk, the de Montmor, a branch of the line of Hangest, which led to his accompanying some of their children to Paris in 1523, when his mother was probably dead and his father had married again. The latter died in 1531, under excommunication from the chapter for not sending in his accounts. The old man's illness, not his lack of honesty, was, we are told, the cause. Yet his son Charles, nettled by the censure, drew towards the Protestant doctrines. He was accused in 1534 of denying the Catholic dogma of the Eucharist, and died out of the Church in 1536; his body was publicly gibbeted as that of a recusant.

Meanwhile, young John was going through his own trials at the University of Paris, the dean or syndic of which, Noel

Bédier, had stood up against Erasmus and bore hard upon Le Fèvre d'Etaples (Stapulensis), celebrated for his translation of the Bible into French. Calvin, a "martinet", or oppidan, in the Collèege de la Marche, made this man's acquaintance (he was from Picardy) and may have glanced into his Latin commentary on St. Paul, dated 1512, which 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 delinguents, established a moral censorship, and punished the unruly with excommunication. There was to be a children's catechism, which he drew up; it ranks among his best writings. The city now broke into "jurants" and "nonjurors" for many would not swear to the "articles"; indeed, they never were completely accepted. Questions had arisen with Berne touching points that Calvin judged to be indifferent. He made a figure in the debates at Lausanne defending the freedom of Geneva. But disorders ensued at home, where recusancy was yet rife; in 1538 the council exiled Farel, Calvin, and the blind evangelist, Couraud. The Reformer went to Strasburg, became the guest of Capito and Bucer, and in 1539 was explaining the New Testament to French refugees at fifty two florins a year. Cardinal Sadolet had addressed an open letter to the Genevans, which their exile now answered. Sadolet urged that schism was a crime; Calvin replied that the Roman Church was corrupt. He gained applause by his keen debating powers at Hagenau, Worms, and Ratisbon. But he complains of his poverty and ill-health, which did not prevent him from marrying at this time Idelette de Bure, the widow of an Anabaptist whom he had converted. Nothing more is known of this lady, except that she brought him a son who died almost at birth in 1542, and that her own death took place in 1549.

After some negotiation Ami Perrin, commissioner for Geneva, persuaded Calvin to return. He did so, not very

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

"I am more deeply scandalized", wrote Gibbon "at the single execution of Servetus than at the hecatombs which have blazed in the autos-da-fé of Spain and Portugal". He ascribes the enmity of Calvin to personal malice and perhaps envy. The facts of the case are pretty well ascertained. Born in 1511, perhaps at Tudela, Michael Served y Reves studied at Toulouse and was present in Bologna at the coronation of Charles V. He travelled in Germany and brought out in 1531 at Hagenau his treatise "De Trinitatis Erroribus", a strong Unitarian work which made much commotion among the more orthodox Reformers. He met Calvin and disputed with him at Paris in 1534, became corrector of the press at Lyons; gave attention to medicine, discovered the lesser circulation of the blood, and entered into a fatal correspondence with the dictator of Geneva touching a new volume "Christianismi Restitutio," which he intended to publish. In 1546 the exchange of letters ceased. The Reformer called Servetus arrogant (he had dared to criticize the "Institutes" in marginal glosses), and uttered the significant menace, "If he comes here and I have any authority, I will never let him leave the place alive." The "Restitutio" appeared in 1553. Calvin at once had its author delated to the Dominican inguisitor Ory at Lyons, sending on to him the man's letters of 1545-46 and these glosses. Hereupon the Spaniard was imprisoned at Vienne, but he escaped by friendly connivance, and was burnt there only in effigy. Some extraordinary fascination drew him to Geneva, from which he intended to pass the Alps. He arrived on 13 August, 1553. The next day Calvin, who had remarked him at the sermon, got his critic arrested, the preacher's own secretary coming forward to accuse him. Calvin drew up forty articles of charge under three heads, concerning the nature of God, infant baptism, and the attack which Servetus had ventured on his own teaching. The council hesitated before taking a deadly decision, but the dictator,

reinforced by Farel, drove them on. In prison the culprit suffered much and loudly complained. The Bernese and other Swiss voted for some indefinite penalty. But to Calvin his power in Geneva seemed lost, while the stigma of heresy; as he insisted, would cling to all Protestants if this innovator were not put to death. "Let the world see" Bullinger counselled him, "that Geneva wills the glory of Christ."

Accordingly, sentence was pronounced 26 October, 1553, of burning at the stake. "Tomorrow he dies," wrote Calvin to Farel. When the deed was done, the Reformer alleged that he had been anxious to mitigate the punishment, but of this fact no record appears in the documents. He disputed with Servetus on the day of execution and saw the end. A defence and apology next year received the adhesion of the Genevan ministers. Melanchthon, who had taken deep umbrage at the blasphemies of the Spanish Unitarian, strongly approved in well-known words. But a group that included Castellio published at Basle in 1554 a pamphlet with the title, "Should heretics be persecuted?" It is considered the first plea for toleration in modern times. Beza replied by an argument for the affirmative, couched in violent terms; and Calvin, whose favorite disciple he was, translated it into French in 1559. The dialogue, "Vaticanus", written against the "Pope of Geneva" by Castellio, did not get into print until 1612. Freedom of opinion, as Gibbon remarks, "was the consequence rather than the design of the Reformation."

Another victim to his fiery zeal was Gentile, one of an Italian sect in Geneva, which also numbered among its adherents Alciati and Gribaldo. As more or less Unitarian in their views, they were required to sign a confession drawn up by Calvin in 1558. Gentile subscribed it reluctantly, but in the upshot he was condemned and imprisoned as a perjurer. He escaped only to be twice incarcerated at Berne, where in 1566, he was beheaded. Calvin's impassioned polemic against these Italians betrays fear of the Socinianism which was to lay waste his vineyard. Politically he leaned on the French refugees, now abounding in the city, and more than equal in energy — if not in numbers — to the older native factions. Opposition died out. His continual preaching, represented by 2300 sermons extant in the manuscripts and a vast correspondence, gave to the Reformer an influence without example in his closing years. He wrote to Edward VI, helped in revising the Book of Common Prayer, and intervened between the rival English parties abroad during the Marian period. In the Huguenot troubles he sided with the more moderate. His censure of the conspiracy of Amboise in 1560 does him honour. One great literary institution founded by him, the College, afterwards the University, of Geneva, flourished exceedingly. The students were mostly French. When Beza was rector it had nearly 1500 students of various grades.

Geneva now sent out pastors to the French congregations and was looked upon as the Protestant Rome. Through Knox, "the Scottish champion of the Swiss Reformation", who had been preacher to the exiles in that city, his native land accepted the discipline of the Presbytery and the doctrine of predestination as expounded in Calvin's "Institutes". The Puritans in England were also descendants of the French theologian. His dislike of theatres, dancing and the amenities of society was fully shared by them. The town on Lake Leman was described as without crime and destitute of amusements. Calvin declaimed against the "Libertines", but there is no evidence that any such people had a footing inside its walls The cold, hard, but upright disposition characteristic of the Reformed Churches, less genial than that derived from Luther, is due entirely to their founder himself. Its essence is a concentrated pride, a love of disputation, a scorn of opponents. The only art that it tolerates is music, and that not instrumental. It will have no Christian feasts in its calendar, and it is austere to the verge of Manichaean hatred of the body. When dogma fails the Calvinist, he becomes, as in the instance of Carlyle, almost a pure Stoic. "At Geneva, as for a time in Scotland," says J. A. Froude, "moral sins were treated as crimes to be punished by the magistrate." The Bible was a code of law, administered by the clergy. Down to his dying day Calvin preached and taught. By no means an aged man, he was worn out in these frequent controversies. On 25 April, 1564, he made his will, leaving 225 French crowns, of which he bequeathed ten to his college, ten to the poor, and the remainder to his nephews and nieces. His last letter was addressed to Farel. He was buried without pomp, in a spot which is not now ascertainable. In the year 1900 a monument of explation was erected to Servetus in the Place Champel. Geneva has long since ceased to be the head of Calvinism. It is a rallying point for Free Thought, Socialist propaganda, and Nihilist conspiracies. But in history it stands out as the Sparta of the Reformed churches, and Calvin is its Lycurgus.

COMMENTARIES ON THE BOOK OF HOSEA

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

PREJUDICE has often deprived many of advantages which they might have otherwise derived: and this has been much the case with respect to THE WORKS OF CALVIN; they have been almost entirely neglected for a long time, owing to impressions unfavorable to the Author. In his own and the succeeding age, the authority of Calvin as a Divine, and especially as an Expounder of Scripture, was very high, and higher than that of any of the Reformers. Though an eminent writer of the present day, Dr. D'Aubigne, has pronounced Melancthon "the Theologian of the Reformation," yet there is sufficient reason to ascribe that distinction to Calvin; and to him, no doubt, it more justly belongs, than to any other of the many illustrious men whom God raised up during that memorable period.

It is not difficult to account for what happened to our Author. Various things combined to depreciate his repute. In this country his views on Church government created in many a prejudice against him; and then the progress of a theological system, not more contrary to what he held than to what our own Reformers maintained, increased this prejudice; and where the former ground of difference and dislike did not exist, the latter prevailed: so that, generally in our Church, and among Dissenting bodies, the revered name of Calvin has been regarded with no feelings of affection, or even of respect; no discrimination being exercised, and no distinction being made between his great excellencies as an Expounder of Scripture, and his peculiar views on Church discipline, and on the doctrine of Predestination.

On the Continent other things operated against his reputation. Poperv owed him a deep grudge; for no one of the Reformers probed the depths of its iniquities with so much discrimination, and with such an unsparing hand as he did. His remarkably acute mind enabled him to do this most effectually; and there is much on this subject in the present work, which renders it especially valuable at this period, when Popery makes such efforts to spread its errors and delusions. The two weapons which he commonly employed were Scripture and common sense, — weapons ever dreaded by Popery; and to blunt their edge has at all times been its attempt, the first, by vain tradition, and the other, by implicit faith, not in God, or in God's word, but in a palpably degenerated Church. But these weapons CALVIN wielded with no common skilldexterity, and power, being deeply versed in Scripture, and endued with no ordinary share of sound and penetrating judgment. In addition to this, his doctrinal views were diametrically opposed to those of Popery, and especially to the papal system, as modified by and concentrated in Jesuitism, which may be considered to be the most perfect form of Popery. For these reasons, the Writings of Calvin could not have been otherwise than extremely obnoxious to the adherents of the Church of Rome: and the consequence has been, that they spared no efforts to vilify his name, and to lessen his reputation.

The first writer of eminence and acknowledged learning in this country, who has done any thing like justice to Calvin, was BISHOP HORSLEY; and when we consider the very strong prejudice which at that time prevailed almost in all quarters against Calvin, to vindicate his character was no ordinary proof of moral courage. There were, no doubt,

some points in which the two were very like. They both possessed minds of no common strength and vigor, and minds discriminating no less than vigorous. In clearness of perception, also, they had few equals; so that no one needs hardly ever read a passage in the writings of either twice over in order to understand its meaning. But probably the most striking point of likeness was their independence of mind. They thought for themselves, without being swayed by authority either ancient or modern, and acknowledged no rule and no authority in religion but that which is divine. The Bishop had more imagination, but the Pastor of Geneva had a sounder judgment. Hence the Bishop, notwithstanding his strong mind and great acuteness, was sometimes led away by what was plausible and novel; but Calvin was ever sober-minded and judicious, and whatever new view he gives to a passage, it is commonly well supported, and for the most part gains at once our approbation.

But something must be said of the present work.

It embraces the most difficult portion, in some respects, of THE OLD TESTAMENT, and of that portion, as acknowledged by all, the most difficult is THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET HOSEA. Probably no part of Scripture is commonly read with so little benefit as THE MINOR PROPHETS, owing, no doubt, to the obscurity in which some parts are involved. That there is much light thrown on many abstruse passages in this Work, and more than by any existing Comment in our language, is the full conviction of the writer. Acute, sagacious, and sometimes profound, the Author is at the same time remarkably simple, plain, and lucid, and ever practical and useful. The most learned may here gather instruction, and the most unlearned may understand almost every thing that is said. The whole object of the Author seems to be to explain, simplify, and illustrate the text, and he never turns aside to other matters. He is throughout an Expounder, keeps strictly to his office, and gives to every part its full and legitimate meaning according to the context, to which he ever especially attends.

The style of Hosea is somewhat peculiar. Jerome has long ago characterized it as being *commatic*, sententious; and those links, the connective particles, by which different parts are joined together, are sometimes omitted. This is, indeed, in a measure the character of the style of all the Prophets, but more so with respect to Hosea than any other. What at the same time creates the greatest difficulty is the rapidity of his transitions, and the change of person, number, and gender. Persons are spoken *to* and spoken *of* sometimes in the same verse; and he passes from the singular to the plural number, and the reverse, and sometimes from the masculine to the feminine gender. To account for these transitions is not always easy.

It has been thought by many critics, that the received Hebrew text of Hosea is in a more imperfect state than that of any other portion of Scripture; but Bishop Horsley denies this in a manner the most unhesitating; and those emendations which Archbishop Newcome introduced in his version, about 51 in number, the Bishop has swept away as unauthorized, and, indeed, as unnecessary, for most of them had been proposed to remedy the anomalies peculiar to the style of this Prophet; and some of those few emendations, which the Bishop himself introduced, founded on the authority of MSS., Calvin's exposition shows to be unnecessary. The fact is, that different readings, collected by the laborious Kennicott and others, have done *chiefly* this great good — to show the extraordinary correctness of our received text. Throughout this Prophet, there is hardly an instance in which the collations of MSS. have supplied

an improvement, and certainly no improvement of any material consequence.

This Work of CALVIN appears now for the first time in the English language. There is a French translation, but not made by the Author himself, as in the case of some other portions of his writings, and can therefore be of no authority. The following translation has been made from an edition printed at Geneva in 1567, three years after Calvin's death, compared with another, printed also at Geneva in 1610.

It has been thought advisable to adopt our common version as the text, and to put Calvin's Latin version in a parallel column. His version is a literal rendering of the original, without any regard to idiom, and to translate it has been found impracticable, at least in such a way as to be understood by common readers. His practice evidently was to translate the. Hebrew word for word, and to make this his text, and then in his Comment to modify the expressions so as to reduce them into readable Latin, and his version thus modified agrees in most instances with our authorized version. The agreement is so remarkable, that the only conclusion is, that this Work must have been much consulted by our Translators.

In making quotations from Scripture, the Author seems to have followed no version, but to have made one of his own; and they are often given paraphrastically, the meaning rather than the words being regarded. The same is often done also with respect to the passages explained, the words being frequently varied. In these instances the Author has been strictly followed throughout in this Translation, and his quotations, and the text when paraphrased, are marked by a single inverted comma. The Hebrew words which occur in the Lectures are not accompanied with the points, and it has not been deemed necessary to acid them. The words are given in corresponding English characters, with the insertion of such vowels only as are necessary to enunciate them, and these vowels, to distinguish them from the Hebrew vowels, are put in Roman characters. The Hebrew vowels are uniformly given the same, and not with that almost endless variety of sounds to which the points have reduced them. The w *vau*, is always represented by u, except when in sonic instances it is followed by a vowel, and then by v. The Hebrews have four vowels corresponding with a, e, u, i, and o, in English.

This work is calculated to be of material help to those engaged in translations. Our Missionaries may derive from it no small assistance, as it gives as literal a version of the Hebrew as can well be made, and contains much valuable criticism, and develops, in a very lucid and satisfactory manner, the drift and meaning of many difficult passages. There is no existing Commentary in which the text is so minutely examined, and so clearly explained. There are also many of the most approved expositions given by others referred to and stated; and the Translator has added, on interesting and difficult passages, what has been suggested by learned critics since the time of the Author.

If it be a right rule to judge of the impressions which the perusal of this volume, now presented to the public, may produce on others, by what one has himself experienced, the Editor will mention one thing in particular, and that is, that he fully expects that those who will carefully read this volume will be more impressed than ever with the extreme propensity of human nature to idolatry, and with the amazing power and blinding effects of superstition. The conduct of the Israelites, notwithstanding all the means employed to restore them to the true worship of God, is here described with no ordinary minuteness and specialty. Though God sent his Prophets to them to remind them of their sins, to reason and expostulate with them, to threaten and to exhort them, to draw and allure them with promises of pardon and acceptance; and though God chastised them in various ways, and then withheld his displeasure, and showed them indulgence, they yet continued obstinately attached to their idolatry and superstition, and all the while professed and boasted that they worshipped the true God, and perversely maintained that their mixed service, the worship of God, and the worship of idols, was right and lawful, and vastly superior to what the Prophets recommended.

Having this case of the Israelites in view, we need not be surprised at the fascinating and blinding influence of Popery, whose idolatry and superstitions are exactly of the same character with those of the Israelites; no two cases can be more alike. Their identity is especially seen in this, — that there is an union of two worships — of God and of images; and this union was the idolatry condemned in the Israelites, and is the very idolatry that now exists in the Church of Rome: and as among the Israelites, so among the Papists, though God is not excluded, but owned, yet the chief worship is given to false gods and their images. That the two systems are the same, no one can doubt, except those who are under the influence of strong delusion; and this is what is often referred to and amply proved in this work.

It may be useful to subjoin here an account of the time in WHICH THE TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS lived. The precise time cannot be ascertained: they flourished between the two dates which are here given. The names of the other four Prophets are also added.

BEFORE THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY

BEFORE CHRIST

I. Jonah,... 856-784.
II. Amos,... 810-785.
III. Hosea,... 810-725.
1. Isaiah,.... 810-698.
IV. Joel,... 810-660.
V. Micah,... 758-699.
VI. Nahum,... 720-698.
VII. Zephaniah,... 640-609.

IMMEDIATELY PREVIOUS TO AND DURING THE CAPTIVITY

Jeremiah,... 628-586.
 VIII. Habakkuk,... 612-598.
 Daniel,... 606-534.
 IX. Obadiah,... 588-583.
 Ezekiel,... 595-536.

AFTER THE CAPTIVITY

X. Haggai,... 520-518.
XI. Zechariah,... 520-518.
XII. Malachi,... 436-420.

In the last Volume, the fourth, will be given the two Indices appended to the original work.

J.O. THRUSSINGTON, September 1, 1816.

POSTSCRIPT

AFTER the preceding PREFACE had gone through the press, it has been discovered that THE TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS cannot be comprised in four volumes of the size generally published in the present Series of THE WORKS OF JOHN CALVIN.

The Translation, though it be as brief and concise as the idiom of the English language will well admit, takes up more space than the Editor at first anticipated. His first calculation was made from the Latin: he was not then fully aware of the *great* disparity in the two languages as to relative diffuseness of style. He has since found, by a minute comparison, that a work in Latin, comprised in five volumes, would require at least *six* of the same size and type in English: and in the present instance, what was calculated would be contained in four, must be extended to *five* volumes, on account of the respective PREFACES and NOTES, &C. by the Editor, besides the LITERAL TRANSLATIONS Of each of the BOOKS OF THE TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS, which it has since been resolved shall be appended to each successive COMMENTARY,

The arrangement of this Work, now made with some degree of certainty, is as follows:

The First Volume is to contain HOSEA; The Second Volume, JOEL, AMOS, and OBADIAH; The Third Volume, JONAH, MICAH, and NAHUM; The Fourth Volume, HABAKKUK, ZEPHANIAH, and HAGGAI; and The Fifth Volume, ZECHARIAH and MALACHI

On this account, the Volumes cannot be all of equal size, some being considerably above, and some below, the average extent of the present Series of CALVIN'S WORKS, being 500 pages on the average. To avoid such inequality, it would have been needful to divide some of the Books — a thing by no means desirable in any case, and which has been studiously shunned in all the other Commentaries.

In addition to what was originally contemplated, there will be given at the end of each Book a continuous LITERAL TRANSLATION OF CALVIN'S LATIN VERSION, as modified by his Commentary; and the Editor is requested to state that a similar plan is to be observed in all the other Prophetical Books of the Old Testament.

EDITOR. THRUSSINGTON, September 1846.

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY

JOHN CALVIN

To The Most Serene And Most Mighty

KING GUSTAVUS, fa1A

The King Of The Goths And Vandals.

WHAT I once said, most excellent king, when the ANNOTATIONS ON HOSEA, taken from my LECTURES, were published, I now again repeat, — that I was not the author of that edition: for I am one who is not easily pleased with works I finish with more labor and care. Had it been in my power, I should have rather tried to prevent the wider circulation of that extemporaneous kind of teaching, intended for the particular benefit of my auditory, and with which benefit I was abundantly satisfied.

But since that specimen, (THE COMMENTARY ON HOSEA,) published with better success than I expected, has kindled a desire in many to see that one Prophet followed by the other eleven MINOR PROPHETS, I thought it not unseasonable to dedicate to your Majesty a work of suitable extent, and replete with important instructions, not only that it may be a pledge of my high regards, but also that the dedication to so celebrated a name might procure for it some favor. It is not, however, ambition that has led me to do this, for I have long ago learned not to court the applause of the world, and have become hardened to the ingratitude of the many; but I wished that some fruit might come to men of your station from the recesses of our mountains; and it has also been my legitimate endeavor, that many to whom I am unknown, being influenced by the sacred sanction of their king, might be made more impartial, and come better prepared to read the work.

And this, I promise to myself, will be the case, as you enjoy so much veneration among all your subjects, provided you condescend to interpose your judgment, such as your singular wisdom may dictate; or, as age may possibly not bear the fatigue of reading, such as your Majesty's eldest son *Heric,* the heir to the throne, may suggest, whom you have taken care to be so instructed in the liberal sciences, that this office may be safely intrusted to him. And that I might have less doubt of your kindness, there are many heralds of your virtues, and even some judicious and wise men, who are entitled to be deemed competent witnesses. It is not, therefore, to be wondered, most noble king, that a present from so distant a region should be offered to your Majesty by a man as yet unknown to you, who, on account of the excellent and heroic endowments of mind and heart in which he has understood you to excel, thinks himself to be especially attached to you.

But though the excellency of the Book may not, perhaps, be such as will procure much favor to myself, you will not yet despise the desire by which I have been led to manifest the high regards I entertain towards your Majesty, nor will you vet find this present now offered to you wholly unworthy, however much it may be below the elevated station of so great a king. If God has endued me with any aptness for the interpretation of Scripture, I am fully persuaded that I have faithfully and carefully endeavored to exclude from it all barren refinements, however plausible and fitted to please the ear, and to preserve genuine simplicity, adapted solidly to edify the children of God, who, being not content with the shell, wish to penetrate to the kernel. What I have really done it is not for me to say, except that pious and learned men persuade me that I have not labored without success. But these Commentaries may not, perhaps, answer the wishes and expectations of all; and I myself could have wished that I had been able to give something more excellent and more perfect, or at least what would have come nearer to the Prophetic Spirit. But this, I trust, will be the issue, — that experience will prove to upright and impartial readers, and those endued with sound judgment, provided they read with well-disposed minds, and not fastidiously, what I have written for their benefit, that more light has been thrown on the Twelve Prophets than modesty will allow me to affirm.

With the industry of others I compare not my own, (which would be unbecoming,) nor do I ask any thing else, but that intelligent and discreet Readers, profiting by my labors, should study to be of more extensive advantage to the public good of the Church; but as it has not been my care, nor even my desire, to adorn this Book with various attractives, this admonition is not unseasonable; for it may invite the more slothful to read, until, by making a trial, they may be able to judge whether it may be useful for them to proceed farther in their course of reading. Indeed, the fruit which my other attempts in the interpretation of Scripture have produced, and the hope which I entertain of the usefulness of this, please me so much, that I desire to spend the remainder of my life in this kind of labor, as far as my continued and multiplied employment's will allow me. For what may be expected from a man at leisure cannot be expected from me, who, in addition to the ordinary office of a pastor, have other duties, which hardly allow me the least relaxation: I shall not, however, deem my spare time in any other way better employed.

I now return again to you, most valiant king. He who knows your prudence and equity in managing public affairs, your moral habits, your whole character and virtues, will not wonder that I have resolved to dedicate to you this work. But as it is not my design to write a long eulogy on what is praiseworthy in you, I shall only briefly touch on what is well known, both by report and public writings: — God tried you in a wonderful manner before he raised you to the throne, for the purpose not only of exhibiting in you a singular proof of his providence, but also of setting forth to our age as well as to posterity, an illustrious example of a steady perseverance in a right course. You have, doubtless, been thus proved by both fortunes, that there might not be wanting a due trial of your temperance and moderation in prosperity, and of your patience in adversity, until it was given you from above to emerge at length, no less happily than in a praiseworthy manner, from so many dangers, perils, difficulties, and hindrances, that having set the kingdom in order, you might publicly and privately enjoy a cheerful tranguillity. And now, by the unanimous consent of all orders, you bear a burden more splendid and honorable to you than grievous, for all venerate your authority, and show their esteem by love as well as by commendations.