THE JOHN CALVIN BIBLE COMMENTARIES

ISAIAH

17 - 32

Commentaries On Isaiah 17-32

John Calvin

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John Calvin - A Biography

By William Barry

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

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

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

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

Meanwhile, young John was going through his own trials at the University of Paris, the dean or syndic of which, Noel Bédier, had stood up against Erasmus and bore hard upon Le Fèvre d'Etaples (Stapulensis), celebrated for his translation of the Bible into French. Calvin, a "martinet", or oppidan, in the Collèege de la Marche, made this man's acquaintance (he was from Picardy) and may have glanced into his Latin commentary on St. Paul, dated 1512, which Doumerque considers the first Protestant book emanating from a French pen. Another influence tending the same way was that of Corderius, Calvin's tutor, to whom he dedicated afterwards his annotation of I Thessalonians, remarking, "if there be any good thing in what I have published, I owe it to you". Corderius had an excellent Latin style, his life was austere, and his "Colloquies" earned him enduring fame. But he fell under suspicion of heresy, and by Calvin's aid took refuge in Geneva, where he died September 1564. A third herald of the "New Learning" was George Cop, physician to Francis I, in whose house Calvin found a welcome and gave ear to the religious discussions which Cop favoured. And a fourth was Pierre-Robert d'Olivet of Noyon, who also translated the Scriptures, our vouthful man of letters, his nephew, writing (in 1535) a Latin preface to the Old Testament and a French one — his first appearance as a native author — to the New Testament.

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

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

who, though by nature timid and shy, committed himself to a war on paper with his own sovereign. The famous letter to Francis I is dated 23 August, 1535. It served as a prologue to the "Institutes", of which the first edition came out in March, 1536, not in French but in Latin. Calvin's apology for lecturing the king was, that placards denouncing the Protestants as rebels had been posted up all over the realm. Francis I did not read these pages, but if he had done so he would have discovered in them a plea, not for toleration, which the Reformer utterly scorned, but for doing away with Catholicism in favour of the new gospel. There could be only one true Church, said the young theologian, therefore kings ought to make an utter end of popery. (For an account of the "Institutes" see) The second edition belongs to 1539, the first French translation to 1541; the final Latin, as revised by its author, is of 1559; but that in common use, dated 1560, has additions by his disciples. "It was more God's work than mine", said Calvin, who took for his motto "Omnia ad Dei gloriam", and in allusion to the change he had undergone in 1529 assumed for his device a hand stretched out from a burning heart.

A much disputed chapter in Calvin's biography is the visit which he was long thought to have paid at Ferraro to the Protestant Duchess Renée, daughter of Louis XII. Many stories clustered about his journey, now given up by the best-informed writers. All we know for certain is that the Reformer, after settling his family affairs and bringing over two of his brothers and sisters to the views he had adopted undertook, in consequence of the war between Charles V and Francis I, to reach Bale by way of Geneva, in July, 1536. At Geneva the Swiss preacher Fare, then looking for help in his propaganda, besought him with such vehemence to stay and teach theology that, as Calvin himself relates, he was terrified into submission. We are not accustomed to fancy the austere prophet so easily frightened. But as a

student and recluse new to public responsibilities, he may well have hesitated before plunging into the troubled waters of Geneva, then at their stormiest period. No portrait of him belonging to this time is extant. Later he is represented as of middle height, with bent shoulders, piercing eyes, and a large forehead; his hair was of an auburn tinge. Study and fasting occasioned the severe headaches from which he suffered continually. In private life he was cheerful but sensitive, not to say overbearing, his friends treated him with delicate consideration. His habits were simple; he cared nothing for wealth, and he never allowed himself a holiday. His correspondence, of which 4271 letters remain, turns chiefly on doctrinal subjects. Yet his strong, reserved character told on all with whom he came in contact; Geneva submitted to his theocratic rule, and the Reformed Churches accepted his teaching as though it were infallible.

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

the two Churches from 30 May to 24 June, 1535 ended in victory for the Protestants. The altars were desecrated, the sacred images broken, the Mass done away with. Bernese troops entered and "the Gospel" was accepted, 21 May, 1536. This implied persecution of Catholics by the councils which acted both as Church and State. Priests were thrown into prison; citizens were fined for not attending sermons. At Zürich, Basle, and Berne the same laws were established. Toleration did not enter into the ideas of the time.

But though Calvin had not introduced this legislation, it was mainly by his influence that in January, 1537 the "articles" were voted which insisted on communion four times a year, set spies on 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 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 explation was erected to Servetus in the Place Champel. Geneva has long since ceased to be the head of Calvinism. It is a rallying point for Free Thought, Socialist propaganda, and Nihilist conspiracies. But in history it stands out as the Sparta of the Reformed churches, and Calvin is its Lycurgus.

COMMENTARIES ON ISAIAH 17-32

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

In preparing the First Volume of the Commentary On Isaiah, many attempts were made, but without success, to procure the French Translation. After much fruitless labor, and some expense, a copy of that rare work, which happens to be in the possession of the Parker Society, has been kindly lent to the Translator, who takes this opportunity of conveying his warmest thanks for this favor. The references in the foot-notes of the present and future Volumes will give some idea of the assistance derived from that source. But it has also supplied materials for a history, more complete than we could formerly give, of this Commentary, and of the forms in which it was successively brought before the public.

Various scribes, on some occasions, united their efforts to obtain a perfect record of what had been uttered by the Reformer in his private Lessons, as they were called, which he delivered to students of theology. But, in the present instance, we are indebted almost exclusively to the earnest, judicious, and unwearied labors of one man, Mr. Nicolas *Des Galars*, a minister of Geneva, from whose notes, after having been revised by the Author, the first Latin edition was printed in 1550. He appears to have executed, under the Author's eye, a French Translation, which came forth almost simultaneously with the Latin copy, and enjoyed the advantage of being known to be well authenticated. After the lapse of several years, Calvin availed himself of a season of leisure for re-writing this Commentary, added more than a third to its original size, ^{F260a} and made such extensive alterations, that he ventured to call it "a new work." ^{F260b} It bears the date of 15th January 1559. The third edition, which is dated 1583, lays claim to still greater accuracy; for it professes to have received corrections from the Author's Manuscript.

While the Commentary was thus extensively circulated, ^{F260c} the benefits of it were chiefly confined to those who were acquainted with the Latin language; for even the French reader was left to struggle with all the imperfections which belonged to the first edition. At least, it was only eleven years before the last mentioned date, and eight years after the Author's death, that a new French translation appeared, which was printed at Geneva by *Francois Perrin*, in 1572. There is reason to believe that the first French translation would be treated by the second translator with great deference, and that he would scarcely consider himself to be at liberty to depart from it, except for the purpose of introducing the extensive alterations and additions which had been made to the original work. Let us hope that some future editor, having obtained access to copies now slumbering in the shelves of our continental neighbors, or perhaps of our own countrymen, will enjoy the satisfaction of collating the earlier and later editions in both languages, and will be enabled to reveal the steps by which this valuable Commentary passed from the first rough notes of the labourious scribe to the form which was imparted to it by the fastidious corrections of the Author.

This Volume contains an "Address to the Readers" by *Nicolas des Gallars,* Latinized *Gallasius,* (which appears to have been prefixed to his French translation of the Commentary,) his Epistolary Dedication of the Latin edition of 1583 to a learned author and eminent printer, John Crispin, and a short "Address to the Readers" by the latest French translator, all of which, it is hoped, will be perused with deep interest. The relation in which *Gallars* stood to Calvin, and to his published writings, has thrown around him many pleasing associations; and his style, both Latin and French, displays such judgment, and taste, and scholarship, as justifies the marked preference given to him by the Reformer, and assures the reader that the responsible office which he held could not have been committed to abler hands.

The Notes added to these Volumes shew that it is the aim of the Calvin Society not only to give exact Translations, but to aid the investigation of dark passages by the labors of modern critics. Among the works which have been consulted with greatest advantage may be named "The Prophecies of Isaiah, Earlier and Later, by Joseph Addison Alexander, Professor in the Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey," an exceedingly valuable addition to the stores of exegetical theology, and not a little enhanced by the care with which the learned editor, Dr. Eadie, has superintended the British edition. Yet we are again and again constrained to remark the extent to which the critical researches of our own age have been anticipated by the sagacity of the Reformer, to whom our greatest men delight in acknowledging their obligations. "Calvin," says Professor Alexander, "still towers above all interpreters in large commanding views of revelation, in its whole connection, with extraordinary insight into the logical relations of a passage, even where its individual expressions were not fully understood. These qualities, together with his fixed belief of fundamental doctrines, his eminent soundness of judgment, and his freedom from all tendency to paradox, pedantic affectation, or fanciful conceit, place him more completely on a level with the very best interpreters of our day than almost any intervening writer."

Auchterarder, 3d September, 1851.

PREFATORY ADVERTISEMENT

BY NICOLAS DES GALLARS TO THE READERS

Though in collecting these Commentaries I was astonished, first, at the labor and difficulty, and next at the various opinions of men, yet I thought, Christian Readers, that I must not refuse to labor or shrink from anything, provided that I can be of any service. With respect to the difficulties, I quickly surmounted them, through the clear method of instruction which the Author has been accustomed to employ, as may be seen in his writings, but still more in his speaking. And if some obscure passages, of which there are many in that Prophet, made me pause, it was not because I had not the benefit of his judgment and advice in clearly explaining and revising the whole; for, in consequence of the familiar and daily intercourse which I had with him, those intricacies which might have retarded or perplexed me were easily disentangled and removed. Besides, at any hour when one could go by stealth, that is, when he had any relaxation from the weighty affairs which almost overwhelmed him, I read to him all that I had written, in order that, if he could not closely examine the whole, he might at least add, or take away, or give me directions, as far as was necessary. All this he did carefully, though hardly ever did I read to him two or three verses when he was not immediately called away, either by persons who wanted his advice, or by his friends. Yet reviewing these things with all the fidelity and diligence that I could, I still returned, and frequently put questions to him.

As to my labor, it was partly relieved by some expository remarks which I had collected from his own mouth, while he was preaching; for it is now four years and more since he explained that Prophet to us, in a highly profitable manner, in public Discourses, before giving us the interpretation in the school. At that time, recording not only the faithful exhortations which relate to the correction of vices, to the condition of that age, and to the restoration of the purity of doctrine and of the Church, but also the exact interpretations on which he dwelt largely, in order to draw from them a solid doctrine to be applied to the use of the people, when I returned to the house, I wrote them down in Latin, so far as I remembered and had leisure. That was of great use to me in collecting these Commentaries; not that I put into them everything that I then wrote, or in the same order and method, but so far as I already understood the sentiments, and had been habituated, by some practice, to that mode of interpretation, I had not so much trouble as if I had come quite raw and ill-prepared to that way of writing.

So far as relates to the judgments of men, who must have very various opinions about this labor of mine, I soon foresaw that there would be many of them who would take no great pleasure in that which cost me pain, because they would have preferred to have this written by the Author himself instead of being collected and arranged by me. And indeed I am very much of their opinion; for the whole would have been sent forth by him in a more complete and finished state. But as he was employed in preparing other works, the advantage of which is so evident that it is unnecessary for me to proclaim it; and as he was harassed by so much business that he scarcely had leisure to read, it would hardly have been possible for him to put his hand to that work.

Accordingly, having been for a long time attached to that Prophet, and wishing clearer expositions of many passages, and now enjoying them, I thought that I would do what was good and profitable, if, while I promoted my own benefit, I had regard also to others whose desire might not be less than mine, and whose minds, even supposing that they had not so strong a desire, might be aroused by reading this Commentary, and might receive from it an increase of knowledge. In order, therefore, that you, believing Reader, might enjoy along with me the explanation of that Prophet, I suddenly undertook this labor, lest if we waited longer for these Commentaries, they might be taken from us by some injury or calamity in these wretched times. For we see every day what snares are laid by Satan for the Church, which is newly born, and for her faithful teachers. We meet with treachery in some, from whom we had expected better things; in others we find fickleness and lightness, and others are blinded by the glimmering of this age. There are very few of them who, in defense of the kingdom of Christ, oppose the tyrannical laws of Antichrist.

Let us therefore welcome those who, through the unspeakable mercy of God, are left to us; or rather let us welcome the gifts which God has given them, that hereafter, as far as we shall have opportunity, we may provide for the Church. While we can enjoy their doctrine, let us seize it eagerly as the armor fitted for repelling our enemies; for there is great reason to believe that the Lord will take vengeance on the malice of men by such punishments as they deserve, and will deprive us of the excellent gifts with which in the present day he has adorned his Church. Many have great gifts of tongues, while others excel in interpretations, and undoubtedly they have strong claims on our attention; but this gift of prophecy, which surpasses all others, and to which we ought to be especially devoted, is generally despised. Hence it arises that many persons are more addicted to ostentation than eager to promote the salvation of the Church, and take more pleasure in vaunting before the people than in edifying the Church of Christ. St. Paul, already perceiving in his time that imminent danger, said,

"Desire to pursue spiritual gifts, but still more that you may prophesy." (1 Corinthians 14:1.)

For in the Christian Church the most important point, and that which we ought above all things to desire, is that the hidden meanings and divine mysteries of Scripture may be explained to us with some advantage. If that is wanting, the rest must gradually be thrown down, as we have found it to be in past ages, to the great injury of the whole Church.

We must therefore devote ourselves to this gift above all others, for fear of abusing those passages of Scripture which have been turned to a wrong purpose, or of being ourselves guilty of torturing those passages to a meaning which is foreign to them. And especially we must throw ourselves on the doctrine of the prophets; for they who are faithfully employed in them open up a road for easily going higher, and lay a firm and solid foundation for salvation. Now, if that exercise was ever necessary, it is at the present time, when we must make war not only against Papists or Jews, but against dreadful monsters which, concealed under the appearance of men, endeavor to overturn all religion and humanity.

Among all the prophets Isaiah justly holds the chief place, because he gives very clear testimonies concerning Christ, and places before our eyes the state and condition of his Church, that is, of his kingdom, as the reading will alone clearly shew, so that it will be unnecessary for me to make a long preface. He who shall have understood him well will be abundantly prepared for reading the other Prophets. The perusal of these Commentaries will enable you better to understand how well adapted the doctrine of Isaiah is to the present time; and if you are diligent and attentive, I am not afraid that you will think that I have labored in vain.

Yet if you compared this work with the Sermons which the Author preached on that Prophet, you might well exclaim,

as AEschines did with regard to Demosthenes, "What would you have thought if you had heard him speak it?" He adjusted his sentences so admirably, touched the hearts of his hearers, explained every thing by familiar and obvious examples, and treated his subjects in so popular a manner, that he seemed actually to place it before their eyes. Very frequently, too, an opportunity presented itself of discoursing on some passage, when it would have been impossible purposely to select out of the whole Scripture a passage better adapted to the place, the persons, and the occasion; so that all were astonished at it, and clearly understood that it had not been directed by the wisdom of a man, but by the Spirit of God; and the advantage which afterwards resulted from it fully verified that conclusion.

If these Sermons can ever be published, (which I should earnestly desire,) you will know these things better, though the truth of what has been said cannot be so clearly perceived by any as by those who have seen them with their eyes. Here you have the substance, however, both of the Sermons and of the Lessons, from which I shall reckon myself to have derived great benefit, if you partake of it as you ought. It was my study, it was the object which I proposed to myself, not to have any favor from men, but to be of advantage to believers; and, so far as my conscience bears me witness, I see not why I ought to dread the judgment of men. I hold it to be certain that they who shall carefully weigh the whole will judge of me with candour; and that, if there be any fault or omission in what I have done, they will cheerfully lay in the balance the benefit which they shall have derived from the work.

Geneva, December 27, 1551

EPISTOLARY DEDICATION

BY NICOLAS DES GALLARS TO HIS ANCIENT FRIEND, JOHN CRISPIN

Whenever I call to remembrance, my dear Crispin, (as I cannot but often do,) that eminent and godly pastor of the Church, John Calvin, I have a feeling of deep grief, and at the same time of joy. For when I bring before my mind the candour and uprightness of that man, his kind disposition towards me, and the pleasant and intimate friendship which I enjoyed with him for sixteen years, it is impossible that I should not be deeply affected by the loss of such a friend, or, I ought rather to say, of such a parent. Nor is it only on my own account that I grieve, but rather on account of the whole Church, which has been deprived of so great a man, and has thus sustained a heavy loss by his death.

What labors, what watchings and solicitudes he endured, with what faithfulness and wisdom he attended to the interests of all, with what frankness and courtesy he received those who visited him, how ready and clear were his replies to those who consulted him even on the weightiest matters, how learnedly, both in private and in public, he solved the difficult and perplexing questions which were proposed to him, with what gentleness he comforted the afflicted and cheered those who were faint and sorrowful, with what firmness he resisted adversaries, and with what energy he was wont to restrain the haughty and obstinate, with what strength of mind he bore adversity, what moderation he exercised in prosperity, and, in short, with what ability and cheerfulness he performed all the duties of a true and faithful servant of God, I certainly cannot find words to express! Lest any one should think that the ardor of my regard for him prompts me to

make these statements, let him consider the actual facts, which truly exceed the power both of speech and of thought. Besides the writings and records which convey a stupendous testimony of his virtues, many things were done and many were spoken by him which cannot be made known to all, as they are known to those who were present when he did or uttered them.

When I recall those remarkable events, my grief is alleviated; and the advantage which is derived from them, and which is shared with me by so many godly men, gives me consolation. My joy is of such a nature, and is so steady and full, that it swallows up all my sorrow and lamentation however great. And on this ground also do I congratulate you, my dear Crispin, that you not only peruse with the highest delight the works and writings of that man whom you ardently loved, but labor to impart them to others. Those treasures of wisdom are thus enlarged, and return with high interest to those from whom they come. You thus cause the regret for the loss of so great a man to be alleviated, and the grief produced by his lamented and early death to be diminished.

For the third time, after having been wrought and polished on your anvil, this book now comes forth, which I may truly call a treasure, because it contains vast riches of heavenly grace, and opens up the path to what is greater. Whoever shall give to it a cheerful and labourious perusal, let him know with certainty that he will not return empty; for he will gather what shall be advantageous with regard not only to this Prophet but to all the other Prophets, and to the whole of Scripture, and if he attend to the directions which are scattered throughout the book, he will undoubtedly possess a strong light for beholding and enjoying those things which were hidden and concealed from many. By frequently applying your hand, therefore, to this work, you not only gratify me, who first sent it forth after long and severe toil, but you gratify all those who have perused or even tasted the work. You might have sufficiently perceived and actually known this from the numerous copies which have been already circulated.

I have not been disappointed in the expectation which I at that time formed, when during the whole period of four years, with unwearied toil, having first heard the public Sermons and afterwards the private Lectures, but employing my own judgment and style, I returned home and committed these things to writing. And whenever I recollect that period, during which this Church, which formerly was small and feeble, received wonderful accessions, I cannot but feel the utmost joy. You also may well remember what was its condition when, banished from your native country, you first came hither; and likewise what large additions had been made to it when you brought your family, and settled down permanently here for the express purpose of assisting the efforts of the godly by your skill and industry.

These things I take pleasure in relating, in order that, by calling to remembrance what you have experienced, I may quicken your zeal, and may stimulate you to perform those things which you have undertaken, and of which it will be impossible for you ever to repent, and may give a fresh impulse even to your cheerful and willing exertions. Proceed then, my dear Crispin, in assisting by your diligence the efforts of those who are devoted to Sacred Literature, and labor not only to promote this work, but also to publish others. You see that many things, though useful in the highest degree, are passed by and almost neglected by those who aim at immediate gain rather than at public usefulness. The smaller Treatises of this Author were edited by me fifteen years ago; and although since that time he wrote many other Treatises, yet no one put his hand to that work, so as to bring out a uniform edition, (I speak of the Latin copies,) either of those or of others which were afterwards added. I therefore earnestly and repeatedly urge my request, that you will take charge of those works, and also of others with which you are well acquainted, and that you will not allow any of the writings of so great a man to be lost; and, in short, that you will grant the request made to you by godly and studious persons, and that you will fulfill and go beyond those expectations respecting you which you have already excited. May God favor your undertakings, and make you prosperous and happy!

Geneva, January 1, 1570

THE FRENCH TRANSLATOR'S PREFATORY ADDRESS TO THE READERS

It is upwards of twenty years, my dear Readers, since the Lessons of Mr. John Calvin, having been collected by *Mr. Nicolas Des Gallars*, were published under the title of a Commentary, and dedicated to that illustrious Prince, of blessed memory, Edward VI., King of England. Long afterwards, the Author himself, revising that collection printed in Latin and in French, was not satisfied with merely revising it, so as to elucidate what might be obscure on account of its brevity, and to arrange better what was confused, but labored so diligently and so successfully, that he enlarged it in Latin, by more than a third, with excellent and necessary matter for understanding the text, putting everything so completely in its proper order, that if any person will take the trouble of comparing the first Commentary, or Collection of Lessons, with this second edition, he will find that what we have said is true.

What is more, it was not in the school that this Commentary was collected for the second time, but it was written in the house, and word for word, under the eve of the Author, who has so skillfully arranged and digested the whole, that when you read it, you will perceive that in this book, as in others which have already come forth from him, he did much good service to the Church of God, and faithfully pointed out the road to those who wish to make progress in the study of theology, especially by these Commentaries, which, when they are read attentively, will not only be very useful for explaining the true meaning of the prophet Isaiah, but will not less contribute to throw light on many passages of the other books of the Holy Scripture. This has induced me to translate them anew into French, in order that those of you who do not understand the Latin tongue may not be deprived of such an advantage. Read, and profit in the fear of the Lord.

CHAPTER 17.

Isaiah Chapter 17

 The burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap.
 Onus Damasci. Ecce Damascus ablata est, ne sit civitas; nam erit acervus ruinae.

2. The Cities of Aroer are forsaken; they shall be for flocks, which shall lie down, and none shall make them afraid. **2.** Derelictae sunt urbes Aroer, in caulus vertentur; accubabunt, nec erit qui exterreat.

3. The fortess also shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom form Damascus, and the remnant of Syria: they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith the Lord of hosts.
3. Et cessabit praesidium ab Ephraim, et regnum a Damasco. Et reliquiae Syriae, quasi gloria filiorum Israel erunt, dicit Iehova exercituum.

4. And in that day it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean.
4. Et erit in die illa, attenuabitur gloria Iacob, et pinguedo carnis ejus macrescet.

5. And it shall be, as when the harvest-man gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of

Rephaim. **5**. Et erit sicut qui colligit messem segitis, qui brachio suo spicasmetit; similiter ut quis colligit spicas in valle Rephaim.

6. Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches therof, saith the Lord God of Israel. **6**. Et relinquetur in ea racematio, sicut excussio oleae, duae illic aut tres baccae restant in cacumine altioris rami, quatuor aut quinque in expansis ramis fructus ejus, dicit Iehovas Deus Israel.

7. At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.7. In die illa respiciet homo ad factorem suum, et oculi ejus adsanctum Israelis intuebuntur.

8. And he shall not look to the alters, the work of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made, either the groves or the images. **8**. Nec respiciet ad altaria opus manuum suarum, non aspiciet quae fecerunt digiti ejus, nec lucos, nec simulachra.

9. In that day shall his strong cities be as a forsaken bough, and an uppermost branch, which they left because of the children of Israel: and there shall be

desolation. **9**. In die illa erunt urbes fortitudinis ejus, quasi derelictio virgultiet frondis, quemadmodum reliquerunt coram filiis Israel; et eritdesolatio.

10. Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength, therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants,

and shalt set it with strange slips: **10**. Quoniam oblita es Dei salutis tuae, nec memor fuisti Dei fortitudinis; idcirco plantabis plantas amoenas, et palmitem alienum conseres.

11. In the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish; but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow
11. Die plantationis tuae crescere facies eam, et mane germinare faciessemen tuum; sed recedet messis in die fruendi, et erit dolor desperatus.

12. Woe to the multitude of many people, which ,ale a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters!12. Hei multitudo populorum multorum; instar sonitus