

THE CONTRIBUTION OF JOHN CALVIN

TO

NEW TESTAMENT EXEGESIS

by

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

THE CONTRIBUTION OF JOHN CALVIN  
TO  
NEW TESTAMENT EXEGESIS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Subject.

1. The Subject Stated and Explained.

"No name in church history--not even Hildebrand's or Luther's or Loyola's--has been so much loved and hated, admired and abhorred, praised and blamed, blessed and cursed, as that of John Calvin."<sup>(1)</sup> These words written by a modern historian suggest something of the conspicuous position this man's life and work have occupied in the history of the Church. Certainly no one could have called forth such a vast amount of

. . . . .

(1)Schaff: History of the Christian Church, Vol. VII. p. 270. On the variations in the spelling of this name, occasion is taken to refer to and to quote in full the excellent note given on it by the authors of the article on Calvin in the Ency. Brit.: "The family name of Calvin seems to have been written indifferently Cauin, Chauve, Chauvin, Calvus, Calvinus. In the contemporary notices of Gerard and his family, in the capitular registers of the cathedral at Noyon, the name is always spelt Cauuin. The anagram of Calvin is Alcuin, and this in its Latinized form Alcuinus appears in two editions of his Institutio as that of the author (Audin, Vie de Calvin, i. 520). The Syndics of Geneva address him in a letter written in 1540, and still preserved, as 'Docteur Caulvin'. In his letters written in French he usually signs himself 'Jean Calvin'. He affected the title of 'Maitre', for what reason is not known." William Lindsay Alexander and Alexander James Grieve.

expression with such a variety of opinion unless he had exerted a powerful influence in the life and development of his own and subsequent centuries. Testimony to this influence is found in abundance coming from his enemies as well as from his friends.(1) Without begging the question it can be said that Calvin is commonly recognized as the theologian of the Reformation. "Melancthon, himself the prince of Lutheran divines and 'the Preceptor of Germany', called him emphatically 'the Theologian'".(2) A recent writer also concedes that Calvin was the leading theologian of the Reformation.(3)

But the primary interest of this study is not Calvin the theologian. This thesis has to do, rather, with the manner in which his theology was derived. Like the other leaders of the Reformation, Calvin went to the Scriptures. But Calvin went to the Scriptures and emerged from them with different results from those of many or even most of his predecessors. It is a matter of common knowledge to the student of the history of interpretation that exegesis had fallen into by-paths. Of this more will be said later in considering the

. . . . .

(1) See the compilation of "Opinions and Testimonies Respecting the Writings of John Calvin" in the edition of Calvin's Commentary on Joshua published by the "Calvin Translation Society" 1854, p. 376 ff. Cf. also Schaff: History of the Christian Church, Vol. VII. p. 272 ff.

(2) Cited on the authority of Schaff, Vol. VII. p. 260.

(3) P. Smith: Essays in Biblical Interpretation, p. 82.

exegetical heritage of Calvin. Suffice it to say at this point, that a new impulse was given to Scripture interpretation through the Reformation.(1)

The domain of our quest lies, therefore, between the Scriptures and Calvin's theology. Our interest is in the process by which his theology came to be what it was. The subject of this study has to do with Calvin the exegete. The question for which the answer is to be sought is: What was the contribution of John Calvin to the Exegesis of the New Testament?

## 2. The Subject Justified.

Prof. Thomas K. Davis once wrote these words:

"To read the Bible without understanding it, is to waste one's time; and to undertake to expound it to others without understanding it, is to be a blind leader of the blind. A misinterpreted Bible is a principal source of error in the Christian world. It is indeed, the stronghold of much of the error that is abroad. A rightly interpreted Bible is the only means of 'saving knowledge and healthful civilization'. Many, not to say most, persons, who believe that the Bible contains a revelation from God, seem to cease exercising their reason as soon as they take up the sacred volume. They appear to regard everything contained in it as a direct address from the Almighty to themselves, and they feel as if the statements or directions are to be applied, in every case, literally to themselves and to their own circumstances." (2)

An interest therefore in the Bible and its interpretation would be justification enough for the venture

. . . . .

(1) Cf. Immer: Hermeneutics of the New Testament, p. 31 ff.

(2) Bibliotheca Sacra, April 1903. p. 1.

before us.

But this thesis takes its rise for more specific reasons. In the first place, the influence of this great Reformer would be ample justification for a consideration of his exegetical works. Of this influence we have already spoken.

In the second place, the need for the present inquiry has presented itself as a result of certain attacks upon the methods of interpretation of the early leaders of the Protestant movement. Calvin is variously charged with having allowed his exegesis of Scripture to be subject to the authority of the traditional orthodox dogmas. Is this true? If this is true, we should know to what extent. At what point, for instance, does Calvin abandon the work of the exegete and allow his ideas as a theologian to take control?

Thirdly, we find that on the one hand, he is commended for having abandoned the allegorical method of interpretation that had prevailed for centuries to take up a more literal, historical and grammatical method of interpretation; and yet on the other hand, he is condemned for having interpreted certain passages literally.(1)

Furthermore, it is not the purpose of this

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(1) See Gilbert: *The Interpretation of the Bible*, p. 208 ff. Also Fullerton: *Prophecy and Authority*, p. 133 ff.

study to make a case for or against John Calvin's theology; however, such a study in this fundamental field ought to contribute much to the one who seeks to evaluate his doctrinal position. It should provide the inquiring theologian with the answer to the question: Was Calvin's theology based on a sound exegetical foundation?

Finally, this investigation would be adequately justified if it answered such a question as this: Are the exegetical works of Calvin of sufficient value to merit consideration by the modern student of the Scriptures?

### 3. The Subject Delimited.

In the first place it has been thought best to restrict the field of research primarily to Calvin's work on the New Testament. This has been done for two reasons: first, because it has been found inadvisable to attempt an investigation of his voluminous writings on both Testaments; and secondly, because it is the New Testament that is of chief importance in his theology.

It will also be observed that our treatment of Calvin's New Testament work centers principally in the Epistles of Paul and the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is commonly recognized among students of the Reformation that these doctrinal books took the leading part

in Reformation thinking. It is necessary then that careful consideration be given to such works of Calvin as his commentaries on Romans, Galatians, Ephesians and Hebrews. Yet, his commentaries on the Gospels have also been found very illuminating with respect to his exegetical methods.

However, the setting of these bounds does not mean to preclude occasional and perhaps frequent reference to Calvin's Old Testament works. This has often been found necessary and profitable because of the connection and interrelation between the two portions of Scripture. Furthermore, since the primary concern is with principles and methods of exegesis, is it not reasonable to expect that Calvin used the same principles and methods in his New Testament work as in that on the Old Testament? In view of this relation, we shall find it advantageous in studying the former to cite occasional illustrations of the same methods and principles in the latter.

In considering the life of Calvin, it is outside the scope of this study to include an account of his life except as certain facts about it are directly related to our study of the man as an interpreter of Scripture. In those facts we shall be interested. A chronology of his life indicating the date of important events and the time of publication of his principal

writings has been included at the end along with the bibliography.

#### B. Sources for the Study.

The primary sources for this study are the works of John Calvin, and of these we are chiefly interested in his exegetical writings. He wrote commentaries on the Pentateuch and Joshua, on the Psalms, on the Major and Minor Prophets, homilies on First Samuel and Job, and commentaries on all the books of the New Testament except the Revelation.(1)

Besides these works which are more properly called "exegetical", use will be made of his "Institutes of the Christian Religion", his personal correspondence and any other of his writings that may throw light on his principles and methods of interpretation and on the man himself as an interpreter. In connection with his life and times there is a variety of sources which shall be consulted and indicated as used and also included in the bibliography at the close.

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(1) "With the exception of Judges, Ruth, Kings, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Solomon's Song, and the Apocalypse, his comments, expository lectures, and homilies extend over the whole Bible." Terry: Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 676.

### C. The Method of Procedure.

This thesis will take its start in a study of Calvin's life and character to see what qualifications he possessed that would make him an exegete. What by nature fitted him for this work? How would his spiritual experience add to his qualifications as an interpreter? In addition to these biographical considerations we shall investigate Calvin's relation to the times in which he lived and to the times which he followed. What in the situation in which Calvin lived would assist or hinder him as an exegete? What in the heritage which Calvin received from preceding ages would help to qualify or disqualify him for his task? Along with this, it will be well to consider his view of the Scripture together with his exegetical aims. These will be important factors in understanding and evaluating his principles and in criticising his methods. This study of Calvin's qualifications constitutes Part One of the discussion.

Attention shall then be turned in Part Two toward a study of Calvin's exegetical methods. This will necessitate a rather careful and somewhat extended treatment of his exegetical works, with especial emphasis on the more doctrinal books of the New Testament and upon those passages which particularly bear upon Reformation and Post-Reformation theology. This

This discussion will proceed along two lines: first, we shall consider what may be called Calvin's general exegetical methods; and secondly, we shall consider his methods as applied to various types of passages, such as narrative or historical, argumentative, and doctrinal passages; also Old Testament quotations and references, parables, and miracles.

Throughout these chapters we shall constantly be seeking to evaluate and criticise Calvin as an exegete. In doing this we shall endeavor to keep in mind two points of view; that is, we shall seek to estimate him both from the point of view of the time in which he lived and also from that of our own time.

In conclusion, we shall summarize our answer to the question: What was the contribution of John Calvin to New Testament exegesis?

PART ONE

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF JOHN CALVIN  
AS AN EXEGETE

CHAPTER II

CALVIN'S PHYSICAL QUALIFICATIONS

PART ONE  
THE QUALIFICATIONS OF JOHN CALVIN  
AS AN EXEGETE

CHAPTER II  
CALVIN'S PHYSICAL QUALIFICATIONS

A. Introduction.

In attempting to know and to understand, as well as to estimate John Calvin as an exegete, it may be well first of all to ask the question: How was he qualified to perform the work of a truly great interpreter of Scripture? It has been said that, "In order to be a capable and correct interpreter of the Holy Scriptures, one needs a variety of qualifications, both natural and acquired".(1) The first consideration will be Calvin's physical qualifications.

B. His General Health.

It is a commonly accepted principle that the body has a direct influence on the mind. "Common experience shows that a tired brain means a slow mind; that a rested brain means a quick mind,----."(2)

. . . . .

(1)Terry: Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 151.

(2)See Horne: The Philosophy of Education, Chapter III. p. 57 ff. Cf. Gates: Psychology for Students of Education, p. 379 ff.

The case, however, of Calvin seems to be one in which the mind and spirit were able to triumph in spite of a feeble earthly dwelling. For the most part, this weakness of body seems to have been a result of the severe discipline to which Calvin, the indefatigable student, subjected himself, rather than to any inherent or hereditary weakness. Beza in his life of Calvin has recorded the fact that:

"Some persons, still alive, who were then on familiar terms with him, say, that, at that period, his custom was, after supping very frugally, to continue his studies until midnight, and on getting up in the morning, to spend some time meditating, and, as it were, digesting what he had read in bed, and that while so engaged, he was very unwilling to be interrupted. By these prolonged vigils he no doubt acquired solid learning, and an excellent memory; but it is probable he also contracted that weakness of stomach, which afterwards brought on various diseases, and ultimately led to his untimely death."(1)

Beza, toward the end of his account makes another more extended reference to his health and habits which tended to wear him out:

"His diseases, the effect of incredible exertions of body and mind, were various and complicated, as he himself states in a letter which he addressed to the physicians of Montpellier. Besides being naturally of

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(1) Beza: Life of Calvin, p. xxiii. The edition of Beza referred to on this and the following pages is that which is published in Vol. I. of "Tracts Relating to the Reformation by John Calvin" by the Calvin Translation Society, Edinburgh, 1844. This Biography of Calvin by Beza is one of the earliest, having first been published with Calvin's posthumous commentary on Joshua in the year of Calvin's death, 1564.

a feeble and spare body, inclining to consumption, he slept almost waking, and spent a great part of the year in preaching, lecturing, and dictating. For at least ten years he never dined, taking no food at all till supper; so that it is wonderful he could have so long escaped consumption. Being subject to hemicrania, for which starvation was the only cure, he, in consequence, sometimes abstained from food for thirty-six hours in succession. Partly also from overstraining his voice, and partly from the immoderate use of aloes, a circumstance not attended to till it was too late, he became afflicted with ulcerated haemorrhoids, and occasionally, for about five years before his death, discharged considerable quantities of blood. When the quartan fever left him, his right limb was seized with gout; every now and then he had attacks of colic; and, last of all, he was afflicted with the stone, though he had never been aware of its existence till a few months before his death. The physicians used what remedies they could; and there was no man who attended more carefully to the prescriptions of his physicians, except that in regard to mental exertions he was most careless of his health, not even his headaches preventing him from taking his turn in preaching. While oppressed with so many diseases, no man ever heard him utter a word unbecoming a man of firmness, far less unbecoming a Christian. Only raising his eyes towards heaven, he would say, 'O Lord, how long;' for even when he was in health this was an expression which he often used in reference to the calamities of his brethren, which night and day affected him much more than his own sufferings. We advising and entreating him that while sick he should desist from all fatigue of dictating, or at least of writing,--'What,' he would say, 'would you have the Lord to find me idle?'"(1)

The significance of the facts of Calvin's health to which attention has been called is simply this: that Calvin allowed not even his health to stand in the way of his loyalty to a great cause. When one follows him through those years of almost constant

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(1)Beza, p. lxxxiii.

suffering and observes the courage, perseverance, and cheerfulness of the man, one cannot but feel that here was one who presented himself "a living sacrifice". In 1558 and 1559 when for eight months he was confined by a fever, although he refrained from preaching and lecturing, he spent days and nights dictating. Although weak and feeble of body, his resources of mental energy seemed to be almost inexhaustible. In 1563, the year before he died, Beza tells us that:

"Calvin's diseases had so much increased, and were so numerous, as to make it almost impossible to believe that so strong and noble mind could be any longer confined in a body so fragile, so exhausted by labour, and, in fine, so broken down by suffering. But even then he could not be persuaded to spare himself. Nay, if at any time he abstained from public duty, (and he never did so without the greatest reluctance,) he still at home gave answers to those who consulted him, or wore out his amanuenses by dictating to them, though unfatigued himself." (1)

Although at times quite irritable and sharp-tempered, yet his physical condition appears to have hindered or warped in no way his exegetical results but rather to have wrought in the man those inner qualities of fidelity, constancy, self-forgetfulness and affectionate devotion which are invaluable qualifications for the one who would be an interpreter of sacred writings.

### C. His Capacity for Work.

Something of this has already been suggested

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(1) Beza, p. lxxxii.

in various ways, yet it may be profitable to set forth from other points of view the physical qualifications of John Calvin. Let us consider his capacity for work.

1. As Judged by the Extent of his Writings.

Although Calvin aimed at conciseness and brevity--as he tells us in his Preface to his Commentary on Romans (1), and in the attainment of which he may be considered fairly successful,--yet his academic lectures, elaborate treatises, commentaries, correspondence and polemic discussions, together with his earlier writings, make in the English edition of his works more than fifty octavo volumes. One writer remarks that, "It is not too much to say, that no contemporary of his had a circle of readers so wide; and that none had readers so eager, whether they were allies, or disciples or opponents."

(2) Beza reckoned his sermons at two hundred and eighty-six annually and his lectures as only a hundred less in number.(3) One edition of his correspondence fills four large volumes and this is by no means complete.(4)

. . . . .

- (1)"The principle point of an interpreter did consist in a plain briefness."  
(2)Article on "Calvin, The Man" by John DeWitt, in Princeton Theological Review, July 1909, Vol. VII. p. 376.  
(3)Kampschulte, ii. p. 376, from Beza, Tract theol., ii. 353. Cited on the authority of W. Walker: John Calvin, p. 432.  
(4)The edition referred to is the English translation by D. Constable and M. R. Gilchrist of Jules Bonnet's Lettres Françaises. The last and best edition of his letters is that in Calvini Opera which extends through Vol. X. Part II. to Vol. XX.

Regardless of what may be said as to the physical qualifications of this man, his voluminous works stand as an incontrovertible witness of his extraordinary energy and endurance.

2. As Judged by the Variety of his Labors.

To have filled an eight-foot shelf with large volumes ought to be ample evidence of the capacity for work of any man. But there are other facts concerning his labors that make John Calvin even more remarkable.

"In these writings he has discussed almost every great subject touching the church's doctrine, discipline or cultus; the Christian rule of faith; the Christian life of worship and of duty; practical ethics; and the moral and religious relation of civil government and human society." (1)

In his exegetical writings, it would have shown an unusual capacity for work had Calvin concerned himself with only the books of the New Testament. But as we have seen above, (2) his writings cover almost the entire Bible. As shall be seen at a later point, Calvin's knowledge of both Hebrew and Greek was of no mediocre sort. In addition to this he wrote as well in Latin as in his native French tongue. And not a few of his works did he write in both languages. It is a question among some scholars whether his Institutes were written

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(1) John DeWitt: "John Calvin, The Man", Princeton Theol. Rev., July 1909, Vol. VII. p. 376.  
(2) Ante p. 8.

first in French or in Latin but it is known for certain that Calvin published his last edition (1559) in both languages.(1)

In the second place, the writings of Calvin are only one phase of his many sided activity. One writer has summed up his other labors as follows:

"Nor was it only in religious matters that Calvin busied himself; nothing was indifferent to him that concerned the welfare and good order of the state or the advantage of its citizens. His work embraced everything; he was consulted on every affair, great and small, that came before the council,--on questions of law, police, economy, trade, and manufactures, no less than on questions of doctrine and church polity. To him the city owed her trade in cloths and velvets, from which so much wealth accrued to her citizens; sanitary regulations were introduced by him which made Geneva the admiration of all visitors; and in him she reverences the founder of her university. This institution was in a sense Calvin's crowning work. It added religious education to the evangelical preaching and the thorough discipline already established, and so completed the reformer's ideal of a Christian commonwealth." (2)

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(1) See Translator's Preface to the English Edition of his Institutes published by the Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1930.

(2) Article on Calvin in Ency. Brit. by William Lindsay Alexander and Alexander James Grieve, p. 75. Cf. also W. Walker: John Calvin, p. 359. Schaff, *ibid.* p. 443 has this interesting statement: "Calvin combined the offices of theological professor, preacher, pastor, church-ruler, superintendent of schools, with the extra labors of equal, yea, greater, importance, as author, correspondent, and leader of the expanding movement of the Reformation in Western Europe. He was involved in serious disciplinary and theological controversies with the Libertines, Romanists, Pelagians, Antitrinitarians, and the Lutherans. He had no help except from one or more young men, whom he kept in his house and employed as clerks."

"I have not time", Calvin writes to a friend after his return to Geneva, "to look out of my house at the blessed sun, and if things continue thus I shall forget what sort of appearance it has. When I have settled my usual business, I have so many letters to write, so many questions to answer, that many a night is spent without any offering of sleep being brought to nature." (1)

Beza has given a good picture of the busy life of Calvin, speaking with particular reference to the period after Calvin's return to Geneva in September 1541.

"What his ordinary labours at this time were will be seen from the following statement. During the week he preached every alternate and lectured every third day, on Thursday he met with the Presbytery, and on Friday attended the ordinary Scripture meeting, called 'The Congregation', where he had his full share of the duty. He also wrote most learned Commentaries on several of the books of Scripture, besides answering the enemies of religion, and maintaining an extensive correspondence on matters of importance. Any one who reads these attentively, will be astonished how one man could be fit for labours so numerous and so great. ----In addition to these employments, he had many others, arising out of circumstances domestic and foreign. For the Lord so blessed his ministry, that persons flocked from all parts of the Christian world, some to take his advice in matters of religion, and others to hear him. Hence, we have seen an Italian, an English, and, finally, a Spanish Church at Geneva, one city seemingly scarcely sufficient to entertain so many guests. But though at home he was courted by the good, and feared by the bad, and matters had ~~matters had~~ been admirably arranged, yet there were not wanting individuals who gave him great annoyance." (2)

This question of those who annoyed him leads us to our next point, his capacity for work,

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(1) Cited on the authority of the article in the Ency. Brit., p. 74.

(2) Beza, p. xxxix.

3. As Judged by the Conditions under Which he Worked.

Further reference scarcely needs to be made to the handicap under which Calvin worked due to the conditions of his health except by way of associating that point in this connection. We would add but this one illustration. Henry Beveridge in the Preface of his translation of Calvin's Commentary on Joshua has called attention to the circumstances surrounding Calvin's composition of that work in a very striking manner:

"The Commentary on Joshua was the last literary labour of its venerable Author. When he engaged in it, his constitution, which had never been strong, was completely worn out by excessive exertion, and almost every line of it must have been dictated to his amanuensis during momentary intervals of relief from severe bodily pain. On this point we possess authentic documents which leave no room for doubt.

"In a letter dated 30th November 1563, not quite six months before his death, after alluding to the difficulty he felt in continuing his studies, while both mind and body were exhausted by sickness, he states that he had undertaken a Commentary on Joshua, in compliance with the wishes of his friends, but had not then been able to advance beyond the third Chapter, though he had endeavoured to be as brief as possible.

Little more than two months after this letter was written, on 6th February 1564, he made his appearance in the pulpit for the last time; and on 10th March following, the complication of diseases which too plainly indicated that his earthly career was about to close, had become so alarming as to cause an entry in the Register of Geneva in the following terms:--'Arrêté que chacun prie Dieu pour la santé de M. Calvin, qui est indisposé depuis longtemps, et même en danger de mort:--'Decreed that every one pray to God for the health of Mr. Calvin, who has been indisposed for a long time and even in danger of death.'

Such are the circumstances in which this commentary was composed, and it is impossible, in reflecting on them, not to admire the indomitable energy which

Calvin displayed in proceeding with his task, and in meeting the remonstrances of those who would have withdrawn him from it, with the heroic exclamation, 'Would you that the Lord, when He comes, should find me idle!'"(1)

We recall how during his long illness in the winter of 1558-59 he refrained from preaching but spent his days and nights dictating.(2)

But Calvin's health might be called the least of his difficulties. There was all manner of opposition, annoyances, plots, heresies, factions, strife, contentions, not only in Geneva and Switzerland, but in surrounding countries which heaped upon the Genevan Reformer burden upon burden.

On March 14, 1542, Calvin wrote to his friend Myconius, minister at Basle:

"The present state of our affairs I can give you in a few words. For the first month after resuming the ministry, I had so much to attend to, and so many annoyances, that I was almost worn out; such a work of labor and difficulty has it been to upbuild once more a fallen edifice (collapsum edificium instaurare)."(3)

In February 1543 he wrote to Melanchthon:

"As to our own affairs, there is much that I might write, but the sole cause which imposes silence upon me is, that I could find no end. I labor here and do my utmost, but succeed indifferently. Nevertheless, all are astonished that my progress is so great in the midst of so many impediments, the greater part of

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(1)See Calvin's Comm. on Joshua, p. v.

(2)Ante, p. 14.

(3)Constable's translation of Bonnet's collection of Calvin's Letters, Vol. I. p. 289.

which arise from the ministers themselves. This, however, is a great alleviation of my troubles, that not only this Church, but also the whole neighborhood, derive some benefit from my presence. Besides that, somewhat overflows from hence upon France, and even spreads as far as Italy."(1)

The following selection of quotations from Beza will sum up the conditions under which Calvin worked and will reflect something of his extraordinary capacity for work.

"In the following year, (1542) Calvin had no few sources of annoyance. For, in addition to those which he had at home, the inflamed fury of the enemies of the gospel expelling numbers of persons from France and Italy, and bringing them into a neighboring city of so much celebrity, it is wonderful with what zeal he exerted himself to counsel and refresh the exiles, by every kind of attention, to say nothing of the letters which he wrote for the consolation of those who continued in the very lion's jaws. The same year, two very grievous evils were added, viz., a scarcity of corn, and its usual attendant the plague." (2)

"-----The next (year) (1543) was in no respects of a milder nature." (3)

"While Calvin was worn out with all the labours of this year (1544), the following year (1545) commenced with contests, and these by far the most grievous in which he had been involved. For, as if the plague sent from heaven had not sufficiently exhausted the city and its neighborhood, avarice prevailed to such a degree in some poor wretches, whom the richer class had employed to take care of the sick, and purify their houses, that having entered into a horrid conspiracy together, they besmeared the door-posts and thresholds, and all the passages of houses, with a pestilential ointment, which immediately produced a dreadful plague." (4)

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(1) Constable's translation of Bonnet's collection of Calvin's Letters, Vol. I. p. 289.

(2) Beza, pp. xli-xlii.

(3) Ibid., p. xliii.

(4) Ibid., p. xlvi.

"Calvin had, moreover, this same year, a double cause of anxiety both at home and abroad. An individual, old in wickedness, though still young in years, having returned to Geneva, his native place, after he had for some time counterfeited the hermit in France, began with making a great profession of piety." (1)

"The succeeding year (1546) was in no respects milder than its predecessor." (2)

"In the following year, viz., 1548, the old faction again burst forth----." (3)

One might think in looking over the respective dates of his works that Calvin--as Beza says--wrote his "most learned Commentaries on six of Paul's Epistles as if he had been living in retirement", (4) "while in reality he lived amidst scenes, which would have incapacitated any ordinary mind for such pursuits." (5)

The contribution of all these experiences is of real import in estimating the man as an exegete. They go far to account for the remarkable spiritual insight that is not infrequently displayed by Calvin.

Pringle in his Preface to his translation of Calvin's Commentary on II Corinthians has called attention to the fact that Calvin's devout mind, while engaged in careful study of "these interesting portions of the Volume of Inspiration" must have found real re

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(1) Beza, see p. xviii for fuller context.

(2) Ibid., p. xlix.

(3) Ibid., p. lii.

(4) Ibid., p. liii.

(5) John Pringle's Preface to his translation of Calvin's Commentary on II Corinthians, p. 99.

refreshment amidst such scenes of turmoil.

"We cannot doubt, that while preparing, under circumstances like these, his Commentaries on the Epistles to the Corinthians, and most of Paul's other Epistles, he had ample experience of what he himself so beautifully expresses, when commenting on Psalm cxix. 50, This is my comfort in my affliction, for thy word hath quickened me: 'The Prophet----had good reason for stating, that in the time of affliction the faithful experience animation and vigour solely from the word of God inspiring them with life. Hence, if we meditate carefully on his word, we shall live even in the midst of death, nor will we meet with any sorrow so heavy for which it will not furnish us with a remedy. And if we are bereft of consolation and succour in our adversities, the blame must rest with ourselves; because, despising or overlooking the word of God, we purposely deceive ourselves with vain consolation'" (1)

As the last consideration in connection with his physical qualifications, we pass on to his capacity for work,

#### 4. As Judged by the Length of his Life.

Although the facts already presented have revealed a man of unusual ability, they become even more remarkable when considered in the light of the chronology of his life.(2)

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(1) II Cor., p. 99. Cf. Calvin's Commentary on Psalms, Vol. IV. p. 437.

(2) See Chronology in the Appendix of this study. Schaff, Vol. VII. p. 267 says of Calvin in this respect: The literary activity of Calvin, whether we look at the number or at the importance of works, is not surpassed by any ecclesiastical writer, ancient or modern and excites double astonishment when we take into consideration the shortness of his life, the frailty of his health, and the multiplicity of his other labors, as a teacher, preacher, church ruler, and correspondent."

It is to be noted that when he was barely twenty-six years of age he had published the first edition of his "Institutes of the Christian Religion".(1) And it is significant that this first edition of his Institutes was essentially the same in substance as those revised and enlarged editions which came later. As Schaff has said: "His Institutes came like Minerva in full panoply out of the head of Jupiter."(2) Beza remarks that, "In the doctrine which he delivered at the first, he persisted steadily to the last, scarcely making any change."(3)

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(1) Calvin was born July 10, 1509; the Letter addressed to King Francis which prefaced it was dated Aug. 23, 1535. See Walker: John Calvin, pp. 128-129. There is of course, some question as to when the first edition was published but we take Aug. 23, 1535 as an evidence that the work of composition was by that time complete. See the extended Introductory Notice by H. Beveridge in the Calvin Translation Society's edition of the Institutes, Edinburgh, 1845.

(2) Schaff, Vol. VII. p. 262.

(3) Beza, p. xcvi. The authors of the article in Ency. Brit. point to this circumstance as follows: "In this work, though produced when the author was only twenty-six years of age, we find a complete outline of the Calvinist theological system. In none of the later editions, nor in any of his later works do we find reason to believe that he ever changed his views on any essential point from what they were at the period of its first publication. Such an instance of maturity of mind and opinion at so early an age would be remarkable under any circumstances; but in Calvin's case it is rendered peculiarly so by the shortness of the time which had elapsed since he gave himself to theological studies. It may be doubted also if the history of literature presents us with another instance of a book written at so early an age, which has exercised such a prodigious influence upon the opinions and practices both of contemporaries and of posterity." Ency. Brit. p. 73.

Calvin published his Commentary on Romans in 1539 when he was in his thirty-first year. This was the first of his commentaries. In the next twenty-four years he did most of the work to which reference has been made in the preceding pages. Thus it is seen how much was packed into the small space of so few years.

It is interesting to compare the lives of the three leading Reformers with respect to the length of their public careers. Luther's public career began in 1517 and lasted twenty-nine years until his death in 1546. Zwingli's began with his preaching at Einsiedeln in 1516 and extended until his untimely death in the battle of Kappel in 1531, a period of only fifteen years. Calvin took up his work in Geneva in 1536. With the exception of a few years he continued his work at that place until his death in 1564, his public career therefore covering twenty-eight years. Luther had reached an age of sixty-two; Zwingli, of forty-seven; and Calvin, an age of fifty-four.

#### D. Summary and Conclusion.

As we conclude this chapter, we cannot help but marvel at the character of this man who has demonstrated such a tremendous capacity for work. This he has done in spite of a body that from early years had been reduced to frailty and weakness by the excessive

strain of most rigorous and severe discipline. Calvin was loyal to his work. Even in pain and sickness he could not be persuaded to leave off his studies. When we come to treat more fully his moral and spiritual qualifications, together with his intellectual and educational qualifications, we shall see how such fidelity of spirit went far to beget in him those inner qualities of thoroughness, accuracy, loyalty, sympathy, power and at the same time meekness of spirit, that are so highly prized in the exegete. If a robust body and general good health are made prerequisites of the exegete, then there is not much that can be said in Calvin's favor. But if he pursued his labors to a triumphant conclusion in spite of handicaps, or if he made of his handicaps an asset so that his work became of a finer quality because of them, then we can only admire the man and give the more careful attention to those works of his in which he deals with spiritual things. In such a case we have no objections to make to his physical qualifications.(1)

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(1) John DeWitt has said of Calvin: "Certainly, we have the right to say that no man in his century did larger work than he did, or did what he did with more ability, or was more nearly equal to every exigency, or was called suddenly to meet exigencies more critical. The mind of no contemporary moved more easily over a wide area of knowledge and thought, or seized with surer eye the great subjects it embraced." Princeton Theol. Rev., July 1909, Vol. VII. pp. 377-378.

CHAPTER III

CALVIN'S INTELLECTUAL QUALIFICATIONS

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A. Introduction.

Intellectual education has been defined as "the development of the mind's power to know the truth". (1) It has to do with such matters as observation, perception, memory, imagination, grasp, judgment, taste, reason, etc. Other associated factors are independence in thinking, order and system in habits of work, and aptness to teach or to convey truth to others. We shall now proceed to consider Calvin's mental powers, or his ability to know the truth.

B. The Quality of His Mind.

One can scarcely read a small portion from Calvin without being impressed with his habits of observation, powers of perception, the capacity of his memory, his use of imagination, his judgment, and his ability to reason. The truth of this statement is supported by the frequent and specific mention of these very points in the literature on Calvin.(2) It may be said that the fuller evidence revealing the quality of

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(1)Horne: Psychological Principles of Education, p. 83.  
(2)Cf. Ante, p.3, note (1).

his mind will be found in the succeeding pages and chapters; however it seems well at this time to touch briefly upon certain points in this connection.

1. His Habits of Observation.

In work such as that of the one who excels in the interpretation of Scripture, it is necessary that the mind be alert and ready to learn at every moment from direct contact with objective truth.(1) Calvin has manifested this quality of the mind in his ability to recognize significant words, phrases and passages. In commenting on the name "Jesus" in Matthew 1:21, he points out that "the words of the angel set aside the dream of those who derive it from the name of God, Jehovah; for the angel expresses the reason why the Son of God is so called, 'Because he shall save his people; which suggests quite a different etymology from what they have contrived.'"(2) On Romans 8:9 he makes the following observation: "Now, verily, let the readers mark here, that the Spirit is indifferently sometimes called the Spirit of God the Father, sometimes

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(1) Cf. the work of Horne referred to above for a discussion of principles bearing on the subject at hand, p. 83 ff.

(2) Harmony of the Evangelists, I. p. 97. Hereafter when reference is made to this work of Calvin on Matthew, Mark and Luke, it shall be referred to simply as the Harmony.

of Christ---".(1) In passing to John 3:1, Calvin, as Tholuck has remarked, "begins with the acute observation, that this passage is intimately connected with the preceding."(2) Only brief mention need be made at this point of Calvin's alertness to sieze upon the exact significance of Greek words. This is especially important to the interpretation of Scripture.(3) That Calvin must have been an alert student of classic literature is evident from the many references which may be traced to those sources.(4)

## 2. His Ability to Perceive.

Calvin's remarkable insight into the meaning of a passage is frequently demonstrated.(5) Commenting on John 4:24 he strikes the heart of the passage in a few words:

"What it is to worship God in spirit and truth appears clearly from what has already been said. It is to lay aside the entanglement of ancient ceremonies, and to retain merely what is spiritual in the worship of God; for the truth of the worship of God consists in the spirit, and ceremonies are but a sort of appendage. And here again it must be observed, that truth is not compared with falsehood,

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(1)Romans, p. 205.

(2)Calvin on Joshua, p. 369.

(3)See below p.166 ff.

(4)See the sections below on his attention to the meaning of words, p. 166.

(5)Gates in his Psychology for Students of Education speaks of perception as having to do with the "awareness or recognition of the stimulating object or event." p. 80.

but with the outward addition of the figures of the Law; so that--to use a common expression--it is the pure and simple substance of spiritual worship."(1)

All of Calvin's notes on the Beatitudes are worthy of mention in the present connection. We quote from his comments on Happy are the poor in spirit.

He says in part:

"Luke gives nothing more than a simple metaphor: but as the poverty of many is accursed and unhappy, Matthew expresses more clearly the intention of Christ. Many are pressed down by the distresses, and yet continue to swell inwardly with pride and cruelty. But Christ pronounces those to be happy who, chastened and subdued by afflictions, submit themselves wholly to God, and, with inward humility, betake themselves to him for protection."(2)

His powers of perception are to be seen in connection with his comments on Galatians 5:1. Calvin thus describes the liberty of which the Apostle is speaking:

"The liberty of which Paul speaks is exemption from the ceremonies of the law, the observance of which was demanded by the false apostles as necessary. But let the reader, at the same time, remember, that such liberty is only a part of that which Christ has procured for us: for how small a matter would it be, if he had only freed us from ceremonies? This is but a stream, which must be traced to a higher source. It is because 'Christ was made a curse, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law,' (Gal. iii. 13;) because he has revoked the power of the law, so far as it held us liable to the judgment of God under the penalty of eternal death; because, in a word, he has rescued us from the tyranny of sin, Satan, and death."(3)

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- (1) John, I. pp. 163-164.
- (2) Harmony, I. p. 260.
- (3) Galatians, p. 147.

What better evidence is there for his mental insight than the fact that while he was a law student at Orleans in 1528, being at that time only eighteen years of age, "he made such astonishing progress, that he very often officiated for the professors, and was considered rather a teacher than a pupil."(1) Even at that time Beza says that "all in that city who had any desire to become acquainted with a purer religion, often called to consult him", and he adds, "were greatly struck both with his learning and his zeal."(2)

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(1) Beza, p. xvii.

(2) Ibid., p. xxiii.

Winer gives the following testimony to Calvin in the third edition of his commentary on Galatians: "Calvin has displayed a sagacity in perceiving, and a perspicuity in expounding the meaning of the Apostles, which are truly wonderful." Cited on the authority of Tholuck: Calvin as an Interpreter, in Calvin's Comm. on Joshua, p. 346.

Joseph Scaliger (1540-1609), whom Tholuck says was "rarely pleased with anybody" (Ibid. p. 351) has said of Calvin's Old Testament works: "Endued with a divine genius, he penetrated into many things which lie beyond the reach of all who are not deeply skilled in the Hebrew language, though he did not himself belong to that class." Ibid. p. 379. Opinions and Testimonies. At another point he exclaims: "O how well Calvin apprehends the meaning of the prophets! no one better." Ibid. p. 380. Schaff gives this note on Scaliger: "This judgment of the greatest scholar of his age, who knew thirteen languages, and was master of philology, history, chronology, philosophy, and theology, is all the more weighty as he was one of the severest of critics." VII. p. 273.

Lindsay has remarked about Calvin's "acute and penetrating intellect". Lindsay: The Reformation, Vol. II. p. 154.

### 3. His Memory.

The quality of Calvin's memory is attested by the fact that his writings manifest such an unusual store of knowledge. In his comments on the third chapter of First Corinthians--a chapter which has been selected at random from his works, and a chapter which was taken from the second commentary to be published by him--there are no less than thirty-three Scriptural references which have been identified by the translator. These references are from the following different books of the Bible: I Peter, Luke, Ephesians, Hebrews, Mark, Galatians, Titus, II Corinthians, Matthew, I Corinthians, Romans, John, Colossians, I Timothy, Psalms, Job, I John, Philippians,--eighteen books. In these same pages he has referred to Augustine, the Sophists, Cyprian, Ambrose, Gregory and Bernard, besides frequent references to the Papists. In addition to these direct references, the language of Calvin is saturated with the phraseology of the Bible so that it is often difficult to draw a line between what comes from Calvin and what from the Scriptures.(1)

An incident from his life attests and illustrates the point in a very direct way. One day Jerome Balsec, an enemy of Calvin, openly dared to interrupt

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(1)For further evidence, the following passages are suggested: Luke 1, Matt. 1, John 19, Hebrews 11 and 12.

in the congregation and to contend for his views.

Beza says: "He even added insult and mere seditious  
invective against the true doctrine." Beza continues:

"He is thought to have acted with the greater boldness, because, from not seeing Calvin in his place, he thought he was absent. And so, indeed, he was, at the commencement; but coming in after he had begun his harangue, had kept standing behind some other persons. The monk's oration being ended, Calvin suddenly appeared, and although it was obvious he had nothing premeditated, he certainly then showed, if ever, what kind of man he was. For he so confuted, mauled, and overwhelmed him with proofs from Scripture, quotations from authors, especially from Augustine, and, in fine, by numerous weighty arguments, that all felt exceedingly ashamed for the brasen-faced monk, except the monk himself." (1)

Near the end of his Life of Calvin, Beza makes this comment directly upon the subject at hand:

"---He had such an astonishing memory, that any person whom he had once seen he instantly recognised at the distance of years, and when, in the course of dictating, he happened to be interrupted for several hours, as often happened, as soon as he returned he commenced at once to dictate where he had left off. Whatever he required to know for the performance of his duty, though involved in a multiplicity of other affairs, he never forgot." (2)

Thus we see that Calvin was remarkably gifted with one of the important qualifications of the true exegete.

#### 4. His Use of Imagination.

Terry has remarked: "A strong intellect will not be destitute of imaginative power. Many things in

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(1) Beza, p. lvii-lviii.

(2) Ibid., p. xcvi.

narrative description must be left to be supplied, and many of the finest passages of Holy Writ cannot be appreciated by an unimaginative mind."(1) Thus it would not be well to pass by the Reformer without attending to this qualification.

Lindsay says that Calvin lacked "what might be called artistic imagination, and neither poetry or art seemed to strike any responsive chord in his soul." Yet he adds this note: "Calvin did not lack imagination. The sanctified imagination has never made grander or loftier flight than in the thought of the Purpose of God moving slowly down through the Ages, making for redemption and for the establishment of the Kingdom, which is the master-idea in the Christian Institution." (2)

Calvin's mind does find a freedom which is not always to be had within the limits of the visible. For instance, in describing the occasion of the wedding feast at Cana of Galilee in John 2, he suggests in connection with the words of Jesus' mother to her Son-- "They have no wine"--that "it is possible, that, without expecting any remedy of this sort, she advised him to give some pious exhortation which would have the

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(1)Terry, p.152.

(2)Lindsay: The Reformation, Vol. II. p. 154.

effect of preventing the guests from feeling uneasiness, and at the same time relieving the shame of the bridegroom."(1)

We find such a passage as this in <sup>his</sup> comments on Matt. 11:26 (2);

"He (God) frequently repeats, that his judgments are a deep abyss, (Ps. 36:6;) but we plunge with headlong violence into that depth, and if there is anything that does not please us, we gnash our teeth, or murmur against him, and many even break out into open blasphemies."(3)

The comment on Peter's answer to the question of the toll-takers (Matt. 17:25) is as follows:

"Peter's reply contains a modest excuse to satisfy them: 'he will pay', says he; from which we infer that Christ had formerly been accustomed to pay, for Peter promises it as a thing about which there was no doubt. That they address him rather than the other disciples was, as I conjecture, because Christ lived with him; for if all had occupied the same habitation, the demand would have been made on all alike."(4)

Thus it is seen that Calvin was not without imaginative power but it is to be noted that he held himself within proper bounds. Thus as an interpreter he is able by narrative description to supply many things that increase one's appreciation of scenes of ancient times. But the absence of a large amount of

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(1)Comm. on John, Vol. I. p. 83.

(2)The R. V. reads: "Yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight."

(3)Harmony, II. p. 39.

(4)Ibid., p. 369.

imaginative material and the character of that which is introduced would certainly prevent the accusation that he was highly imaginative or that his fancies ran away with him. His mind as well as his character was of the sterner type.

5. His Mental Grasp.

It has appeared to the writer that Calvin's ability to grasp an idea or the contents of a passage is no less remarkable than his capacity to remember. Of his powers of perception we have already spoken. It is one thing to perceive, to have insight into an idea, and it is another thing to lay hold on it, to make it one's own, and to express it in one's own words. And not only this, he is able to draw out the general or underlying principles.(1)

In his treatment of the "rest" passage in Hebrews 4, he has given this remarkable summary, incidentally revealing how clear the thought of the passage is in his own mind:

"The chief difficulty of this passage arises from this, that it is perverted by many. The Apostle had no other thing in view by declaring that there is a rest for us, than to rouse us to desire it, and also to make us to fear, lest we should be shut out of it through unbelief. He however teaches us at the same time, that the rest into which an entrance

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(1)See Horne, p. 155 ff.

is now open to us, is far more valuable than that in the land of Canaan. But let us now come to particulars.-----"(1)

The "Argument" which is prefaced to almost all of his commentaries is a good example of Calvin's grasp of the subject before him. Almost every page of his works, especially those on the Pauline Epistles, contains some example of the point under discussion.

On Romans 1:18, The wrath of God is revealed, he begins: "Nor, he argueth from the comparing of contraries, whereby he proveth, that righteousness happeneth nor, neither cometh otherwise than by the gospel; for out of this he showeth all men are condemned; therefore, in it only is salvation to be found." He goes on with such words as these: "And he bringeth for the first argument of condemnation,---" and later, "Some men think----; but my mind is,----".(2)

#### 6. His Judgment and Delicacy of Taste.

Terry in his "Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics" has said that "Above all things, an interpreter of Scripture needs a sound and sober judgment. ----Correctness and delicacy of taste will be the

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(1)Hebrews, p. 95.

(2)Romans, p. 24. For further illustration of this point see his comments on Rom. 1:17,18; 3:4,5; 5:1,17; John 6:44; II Cor. 5:18; 8:7; Gal. 2:14; Eph. 3:1; etc. It might be added that these passages have been selected at random.

result of a discriminating judgment."(1) What can be said about Calvin's judgment and taste?

We are to speak in other places of several points which are related to the present question, but which we have seen fit to include under other heads, i.e., such points as, his intellectual independence(2), his aversion to subtleties(3), his refusal to argue interpretations(4), and his insistence on simplicity(5). For the present purpose, suffice it to present a few examples, and to leave it to the reader as he comes in contact with Calvin throughout these pages to decide for himself whether or not he possessed the qualification of a sober judgment and proper taste.

On Hebrews 3:3(6) we find Calvin taking care of possible objections in the following way:

"If any one objects and says that Christ is also a part of the building because he is the foundation, because he is our brother, because he has a union with us, and then that he is not the master-builder, because he himself was formed by God: in reply to these things we say, that our faith is so founded on him that he still rules over us, that he is in such a way our brother that he is yet our Lord, that he was so formed by God as man, that he nevertheless by his Spirit revives and restores all

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(1) P. 153.

(2) See below p. 46.

(3) See below p. 247.

(4) See below p. 247.

(5) See below p. 247.

(6) The R. V. reads: "For he hath been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by so much as he that built the house hath more honor than the house."

things as the eternal God. The Scripture employs various metaphors to set forth Christ's grace towards us; but there is no one which derogated from his honour mentioned here by the Apostle; for what is stated here is, that all ought to be brought down to their own state, because they ought to be in subjection to the head, and that Christ alone is exempt from this submission, because he is the head." (1)

He considers another objection after the same fashion:

"If it be again objected and said that Moses was no less a master-builder than Paul who gloried in this title: to this I reply that this name is applied to prophets and teachers, but not with strict correctness; for they are only the instruments, and indeed dead instruments, except the Lord from heaven gives efficacy to what they do; and then they so labour in building the Church, that they themselves form a part of the structure; but the case is wholly different as to Christ, for he ever builds up the Church by the power of his own Spirit. Besides, he stands far above the rest, for he is in such a way the true temple of God, that he is at the same time the God who inhabits it." (2)

On verse 4 he begins as follows: "Though these words may be extended to the creation of the whole world, yet I confine them to the present subject." (3)

On Ephesians 4:24(4) we read:

"If righteousness be taken as a general term for uprightness, holiness will be something higher, or that purity which lies in being devoted to the service of God. I am rather inclined to consider holiness as referring to the first table, and righteousness to the second table, of the law, as in the song of Zacharias, 'That we may serve him in holiness

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(1) Hebrews, pp. 79-80.

(2) Ibid., p. 80.

(3) Ibid., p. 80. Heb., 3:4.

(4) The R. V. reads: "And put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth."

and righteousness, all the days of our life.' (Luke i. 74,75.) Plato lays down the distinction correctly, that holiness (ἁγιότης) lies in the worship of God, and that the other part, righteousness, (δικαιοσύνη,) bears a reference to men. The genitive, of truth, (τῆς ἀληθείας,) is put in the place of an adjective, and refers to both terms; so that, while it literally runs, in righteousness and holiness of truth, the meaning is, in true righteousness and holiness." (1)

We quote Terry again on the qualifications of an exegete:

"His mind must be competent to analyze, examine, and compare. He must not allow himself to be influenced by hidden meanings, and spiritualizing processes, and plausible conjectures. He must weigh reasons for and against a given interpretation; he must judge whether his principles are tenable and self-consistent; he must often balance probabilities, and reach conclusions with the greatest caution." (2)

This evidence shows that Calvin grades quite high on sound judgment and proper taste. Should the reader desire still further illustrations of this point we refer him to Calvin's comments on Acts 20:32; Rom. 5:6; I Cor. 7:14; and Eph. 5:4.

We conclude this point with these words taken from William Pringle's Preface to his translation of Calvin's Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists:

"This extraordinary sagacity was accompanied by another quality not less needed in an interpreter, a sound judgment, which leaned neither to ancient usage nor to ingenious novelties, which refused to bow to the authority of great names, and sternly

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- (1) Ephesians, p. 296. For further examples see Gal. 4:1; 3:20; II Tim. 1:18; Titus 2:15.  
(2) Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 153.

rebuked the most plausible sophistry when opposed to the plain and obvious meaning of Scripture. He took a dispassionate and wide survey, not only of the passage immediately under consideration, but of kindred expressions or sentiments that were found in any of the inspired writers. It was left to the industry of later times to collect parallels, and arrange them on the margin of our Bible, as an invaluable aid to interpretation. But his own perusal of the sacred volume supplied him largely with such materials, and enabled him to draw them out with instinctive readiness as occasion required."(1)

#### 7. His Ability to Reason.

To quote Terry again:

"It behooves the expounder of God's word to see that all his principles and processes of reasoning are sound and self-consistent. He must not commit himself to false premises; he must abstain from confusing dilemmas; he must especially refrain from rushing to unwarranted conclusions. Nor must he ever take for granted things which are doubtful, or open to serious question. All such logical fallacies will necessarily vitiate his expositions, and make him a dangerous guide. The right use of reason in biblical exposition is seen in the cautious procedure, the sound principles adopted, the valid and conclusive argumentation, the sober sense displayed, and the honest integrity and self-consistency everywhere maintained. Such exercise of reason will always commend itself to the godly conscience and the pure heart."(2)

Our question here is, How did Calvin qualify in this respect?

It has been said that "learning, analysis, and sagacity make good reasoners".(3) As to the first, there can be little question but that Calvin had a well stored

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(1)P. xi. Schaff says of Calvin that, "His judgment is always clear, strong, and sound". Vol. VII. p. 531.

(2)Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics, pp. 153-154.

(3)Horne: The Psychological Principles of Education, p. 183.

mind. We need only refer to what has been said before about his memory(1), and to what will be said later in other connections about his acquaintance with various branches of learning(2), to bring to mind that in this respect he was well equipped.

One cannot read Calvin, especially his works on the Epistles of St. Paul, without being impressed by the fact that he had an analytical type of mind. A glance at the table of contents of his Institutes will further confirm this opinion. They are the more remarkable because they were written at so early an age; and also because they remained essentially the same in substance in his 1558 edition.

In treating Romans 3:10(3), There is none righteous, he says:

"Seeing the apostle allegeth rather the sense than the words absolutely, before he would descend unto the particulars, he seemeth first to have put down in general what is the sum of those things which are noted by the prophet to be in man, namely, that none is just; and afterward, to reckon up particularly the fruits of this unrighteousness: and the first is, that there is none that understandeth. And this foolishness is straightway reprov'd, because they seek not God; for vain is that man in whom the knowledge of God is not, what knowledge soever he have besides." (4)

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(1)Ante, p. 34 ff.

(2)See below p.74.

(3)The R. V. reads: "---As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one."

(4)Romans, p. 73.

On Romans 4:3, Calvin begins: "This is the probation of the minor or second proposition in the former argument---."(1) On the 14th verse of the same chapter he writes:

"By an argument taken from that (which) is impossible or absurd, he proveth that that grace which Abraham obtained of God, was not promised unto him in regard of the legal pact, or in respect of works: for if---; for what---; then---, because---; but also---; so the effect---, because---except----."etc.(2)

Again we find such analysis as this: "Two things are said here:---"(3)

It is to be noted that all these examples thus far--and countless more of them could be produced (4)--are from his first commentary on Scripture, published when he was only thirty years of age.

Of his acuteness of intellect, his ability to perceive and to grasp, and the soundness of his judgment, we have already written.(5)

Now all of these qualities combined to give Calvin a logical, systematizing type of mind, one in which reason was much used as well as rightly used. The fact that Calvin had a reasoning and systematizing

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(1)Romans, p. 96.

(2)Ibid., p. 109.

(3)See Romans, p. 178. 7:10.

(4)See for instance on the first chapter of Romans, verses, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, etc. Practically every verse is analyzed!

(5)Ante, p. 31 ff.

type of mind, doubtless contributed essentially to his deserved reputation as the theologian and exegete of the Reformation.(1) We shall come to understand more fully the secret of his mental powers when we consider his training as a youth, especially his training for law.(2) In view of all these facts the conclusion forces itself upon us that Calvin brought a mind of no mediocre quality to the work of interpreting the Bible.

### C. His Intellectual Independence.

Calvin has been variously accused of having relied upon and followed in the footsteps of Augustine and others of the Church Fathers. It is true that Calvin was well read in the literature of the Fathers and frequently mentions them in his exegetical works. But had he read them to be made a follower rather than an independent leader? Let us see. The question is: Was Calvin intellectually independent? The following tabulation of references to the works of others has been made. It is not presented as being complete but rather representative. However it is fairly complete on such books as John's Gospel, Romans, Corinthians, Galatians and

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(1)An address by William Adams Brown at Union Theological Seminary at the Calvin Anniversary Celebration, May 3, 1909, is interesting in this connection.

See pp. 26-27. Published in New York.

(2)See below, p.60 ff.

Ephesians. Some books have not been consulted in this respect and those that have been included have not been treated with partiality. Because this tabulation will serve a helpful purpose elsewhere as well, it is included at this point.

	Agrees	Indifferent or goes beyond	Disagrees
Augustine 354-432	John, I. p. 28 p. 139 p. 145 p. 266 p. 404 p. 406 Rom., p. 175 p. 184 p. 189 Cor., I. p. 77 p. 122 p. 151 p. 159 p. 185 p. 231 p. 387 p. 405 Gal., p. 63	John, I. p. 142 John, II. p. 142 Cor., I. p. 205 p. 444 Cor., II. p. 355	John, I. p. 38 p. 443 p. 114 p. 177 p. 319 John, II. p. 37 p. 255 p. 286 Rom., p. 80 p. 116 p. 130 Cor., I. p. 203 Cor., II. p. 193 Gal., p. 79 Eph., p. 279
Chrysos- tom 350-407	Har.,*II. p. 22 p. 215 John, I. p. 65 p. 383 John, II. p. 37 Cor., I. p. 54 p. 191 p. 192 p. 369 p. 420 Cor., II. p. 148 p. 181 p. 199 p. 257 Gal., p. 140	Har., I. p. 329 p. 406 John, I. p. 114 Cor., I. p. 202 p. 309 p. 402 Cor., II. p. 11 p. 152 p. 189 p. 244 p. 250 p. 280 p. 339 p. 373 Eph., p. 279	Har., I. p. 90 p. 129 p. 322 p. 347 John, I. p. 177 p. 273 p. 334 Cor., I. p. 56 p. 64 p. 162 p. 184 p. 197 p. 201 p. 400 p. 416 p. 455 p. 457

\*Harmony of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

	Agrees	Indifferent or goes beyond	Disagrees
Chrysos- tom  (contin- ued)			Cor., II.p. 11 p. 34 p. 119 p. 149 p. 193 p. 218 p. 251 p. 268 p. 384 p. 392 Gal., p. 54 p. 662 p. 665 p. 71 p. 139
Origen  185?-254?		Rom., p. 77	Rom., p. 138 p. 182 Cor., II.p. 172 p. 174 Gal., p. 67 p. 68 p. 96 p. 100
Eusebius  260?-340			Har., I. p. xxxix p. 85 Cor., I. p. 291
Jerome  340-420	John, I. p. 371 Har., I. p. 385 p. 423  (These are geographical references)		Har., I. p. xxxviii p. 107 Har., II.p. 117 p. 386 p. 403 John, I. p. 145 Cor., I. p. 222 p. 236 p. 266 Cor., II.p. 81 Gal., p. 54 p. 62 p. 65 p. 68 p. 67 p. 96 p. 139

	Agrees	Indifferent or goes beyond	Disagrees
Ambrose 340?-397	Gal., p. 140	Cor., II.p. 199 p. 392 Gal., p. 54	Har., II.p. 90 Cor., I. p. 191 p. 293 p. 444 Cor., II.p. 35 p. 128 p. 149 p. 193 Eph., p. 263 p. 279
Erasmus 1466?- 1536	John, I. p. 28 p. 178 Rom., p. 191 Cor., I. p. 253 Cor., II.p. 144	Har., I. p. 92 Cor., I. p. 191 p. 422 Cor., II.p. 162 p. 213 p. 319 Gal., p. 79	Har., I. p. 322 p. 459 Har., II.p. 162 p. 136 John, I. p. 109 p. 179 Rom., p. 18 p. 120 p. 195 Cor., I. p. 56 p. 60 p. 62 p. 188 p. 234 p. 258 p. 275 p. 325 p. 364 Cor., II.p. 40 p. 78 p. 116 p. 118 p. 164 p. 186 p. 206 p. 278 p. 306 p. 341 p. 372 Gal., p. 39 p. 178 p. 182 p. 187 Eph., p. 248 p. 260 p. 311

Although the above tabulation does not include all the writers to which Calvin has referred in his commentaries, yet it does include those who are most frequently mentioned. Mention will be made of others at a later point.(1) But it is very evident from the above that Calvin preserved the individuality of his own mind. He seems to agree with Augustine more frequently in proportion to the number of times mentioned than any other commentator. But at that he agrees with him eighteen times, is indifferent toward him, adds or prefers another interpretation, six times, while he comes out in open disagreement fifteen times. Calvin may be said to have been intellectually independent of Augustine at least twenty-one times out of the thirty-nine instances cited. Besides, in the eighteen instances of agreement it is entirely possible that Calvin may have arrived at the same conclusion most or all of the time by his own independent study. Indeed one would have real grounds to be suspicious of Calvin as an exegete if he did not frequently agree with that great interpreter of the fourth and fifth centuries.

In the case of Chrysostom, Calvin is more likely to add to or to disagree with him; he agrees fifteen times, he is indifferent sixteen times, but opposes

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(1)See below p.82.

him openly thirty-two times.

Calvin finds little of use in Origen. He mentions him primarily to show others the danger of following him. Origen of course was a leader of the allegorical school at Alexandria.(1) Calvin refers to Eusebius, Jerome and Ambrose in practically the same way, disagreeing with them on almost every occasion. The eight instances in which Calvin has been listed as in agreement with Jerome are really not insignificant in this connection because they pertain to geographical matters and are not concerned with problems of interpretation in the sense now under consideration.

It is of interest to note the disagreement between Calvin and Erasmus. To Calvin the chief value of Erasmus was philological and textual which accounts for occasional agreement; Calvin also found support occasionally in some of Erasmus' interpretations but Calvin demonstrates the fact that he had gone far beyond even the good beginning of Erasmus in the matter of better principles and methods of exegesis.(2)

Before leaving this point attention is called to Calvin's impartial, open, and independent attitude as reflected by the language in which he couches his

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(1)See Waterman: The Post-Apostolic Age, pp. 342,424;  
Fisher: History of the Christian Church, p. 72; and  
Immer: Hermeneutics of the N. T., p. 31.

(2)See Terry, p. 670; also Immer, p. 38.

objections.

On Romans 5:15 he says of an interpretation of Augustine: "This is verily a godly saying; but it cometh not near the mind of Paul."(1) On Romans 5:14 he makes this reference: "---lest thou fall foully with Origen, and into that pernicious error."(2) In the same connection he also remarks: "Whereby, Erasmus is by so much less excusable, who taketh so great pains to excuse so gross a dotage."(3) Of an explanation by Ambrose of I Cor. 9:6 he says, "it is exceedingly forced".(4) "Frivolous, however, is the cavil of Chrysostom---" he points out in connection with II Cor. 6:6.(5) "Augustine" says Calvin on Eph. 3:18, "is quite delighted with his own acuteness, which throws no light on the subject."(6) Thus there appears to be little support for any contention that Calvin was intellectually dependent on others. Of the question of bias in his writings we shall have occasion to speak in a later chapter.(7)

#### D. His Orderly and Systematic Habits of Work.

There is not much that needs to be said on

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(1)Romans, p. 130.

(2)Ibid., p. 138.

(3)Ibid., p. 138.

(4)Corinthians, I. p. 293.

(5)Corinthians, II. p. 251.

(6)Ephesians, p. 263. For other illustrations see the references given in the tabulation, Ante, p. 47.

(7)See below, p.262ff.

this particular point except to record the impression that must surely come to any one who surveys the works of John Calvin, and that is that he must have been a systematic and orderly worker. Calvin's logical mind and his ability to systematize theology have already been mentioned. There is this to be added which Beza has written of him and in it we get a picture of the man that must be somewhat typical of his habits of life and of the discipline to which he subjected his own mind:

"Some persons, still alive, who were then (referring to the time when Calvin was a law student at Orleans, being about eighteen years of age) on familiar terms with him, say, that, at that period, his custom was, after supping very frugally, to continue his studies until midnight, and on getting up in the morning, to spend some time meditating, and, as it were, digesting what he had read in bed, and that while so engaged, he was very unwilling to be interrupted."

Beza goes on to say, however:

"By these prolonged vigils he no doubt acquired solid learning, and an excellent memory; but it is probable he also contracted that weakness of stomach, which afterwards brought on various diseases, and ultimately led to his untimely death." (1)

Calvin must have been orderly and systematic or he could not have handled the variety of labors that were his and handled them with such a degree of success.

(2) Surely, in this is a valuable qualification for the exegete.

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(1) Beza, p. xxiii. The parenthesis is ours. Cf. Ante, p. 13.

(2) Ante, p. 15 ff.

E. His Aptness to Teach.

Since the work of the exegete is to explain, to throw light upon, to ascertain the author's meaning, it involves at least two parties, himself and his intended hearer or reader. Now an exegete may possess many rare qualities of mind and may be thorough and proper in his methods but may lack that power of expression which will convey the results of his own study to others. How did Calvin qualify in this respect? Did he possess those qualities that would make him a good teacher?

That his professors of law at Orleans saw in him those qualities doubtless accounts for their entrusting their classes to the care of one who was so young in years. Of course the mental qualities already described would be invaluable. But we find him displaying frequently in his works many of those points toward which the one who would be a good teacher aspires. For instance, he summarizes, he paraphrases, he repeats, often. He always begins his commentaries with a section which he designates as the "Argument". Not infrequently does one find such expressions as "The sum, therefore, is---"(1), or, "Hereupon also it followeth"(2), or,

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(1) Cf. Romans pp. 108, 132, 237; Cor., I. pp. 60, 88.  
(2) Romans, p. 108.

"I will repeat it again in other words"(1) or again,  
"The meaning is---"(2), "But that this sentence may be  
more clear, resolve it thus---"(3) and "the substance  
of the passage amounts to this".(4)

As has already been discussed, Calvin had a  
logical mind(5); he also manifested an unusual ability  
to perceive the meaning of a passage(6); and to lay  
hold on it and make it his own(7). Thus it is that Cal-  
vin's clarity of understanding and his sure mental grasp  
lays the foundation for good teaching: Calvin is easy to  
follow; his legally trained mind sets things in order;  
and he is constantly marking each turn of thought and  
each new step with some appropriate phrase, conjunction,  
or adverb. The truth of this might be demonstrated from  
almost any page of his commentaries. Take for instance  
his discussion of I Cor. 8:1. Before entering upon the  
more detailed exegesis of verse 1, he takes an entire  
paragraph to introduce the new chapter and to show its  
relation to the chapter (and chapters) preceding.(8)  
Let us follow him as he considers the first verse. We

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- (1)Romans p. 112.
- (2)Ibid., pp. 65, 271, 38; Cor., I. pp. 52, 56, 57, 58.
- (3)Romans p. 113.
- (4)Cor., I. p. 97.
- (5)Ante, p. 43 ff.
- (6)Ante, p. 31 ff.
- (7)Ante, p. 38 f.
- (8)See Cor., I. p. 271 ff.

shall give in full his first paragraph and then sketch the rest of his comments on the verse which cover in addition about one and one-half pages:

"1. Concerning things offered unto idols. He begins with a concession, in which he voluntarily grants and allows to them everything that they were prepared to demand or object. 'I see what your pretext is: you make Christian liberty your pretext. You hold out that you have knowledge, and that there is not one of you that is so ignorant as not to know that there is but one God. I grant all this to be true, but of what avail is that knowledge which is ruinous to the brethren?' Thus, then, he grants them what they demand, but it is in such a way as to show that their excuses are empty and of no avail."

----"He shows, from the effects, how----" and then he paraphrases. Calvin continues: "This passage, which otherwise is somewhat obscure, in consequence of its brevity, may easily be understood in this way--" and he paraphrases again using such connectives as: "nay more", "and much more so", "now", "for", "and", "while", "and", "while", "and", "then", "and". And all these in the space of nine lines!

He goes on, "Paul, however, did not mean---- Nor did he but simply---; for---, thus---; because---. Nor is it always so; for we see---and---and---, nevertheless,---for in the first place; and farther,---. My meaning is this---" and Calvin sums up in his own words.

The remaining paragraph partakes of the same clear-cut style as may be seen from its topic sentence which begins: "We must, therefore, lay it down as a

settled principle, that----"etc.(1)

One can almost feel that what Immer has said about the exegete finds a good illustration in Calvin:

"The ideal of the explanation is this: that the hearer be led step by step, and in an inventive way, to the perfect understanding of the author, so that he may believe, as it were, that he has found it out himself. True exegesis is a DIALECTIC PROCESS that conducts to the object with a sort of inner necessity. It must be known not only WHAT the right sense is, but also WHY it is so."(2)

#### F. Summary and Conclusion.

In this chapter we have considered Calvin's intellectual qualifications. His writings are refreshing and stimulating because he shows himself to be an alert and accurate observer. This faculty of his mind brings the facts before him. We next saw that he had an extraordinary power to perceive the meaning and significance of facts. We add to this a memory of unusual power by which he preserved for ready use the results of his studies; a practical imagination by which he gave a life-like touch to past events, people and places; a mental grasp by which he assimilated new ideas; a sound and discriminating judgment together with a delicacy of taste with which to weigh evidence and make decisions; and an ability to reason that places his

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(1)Cor., I. p. 272.

(2)Immer, p. 11.

exegesis on substantial foundations. Thus John Calvin is seen to have been the possessor of a mind of unusual quality.

Furthermore, it has been shown that Calvin was dependent on no one. He made use of the work of others but never failed to declare frankly and openly his own opinion even though it might cut squarely across the opinions of such a venerable Father as Augustine.

When we add to all of these most excellent qualities the fact that he was orderly and systematic in his work, and that he had the qualifications of a teacher, we cannot but conclude that as far as intellectual qualifications are concerned Calvin was exceedingly well fitted for the work of a first class exegete.(1)

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(1) John DeWitt has spoken of Calvin as follows: "It is hard, without seeming exaggeration, to speak of his special gifts of intellect: his quick perception of truth, his great power of acquisition, his capacious memory which held and retained large stores of knowledge, his ease of recollection which called out what was needed for immediate use, his faculty of large discourse, that is to say, the faculty of marshalling the elements of his knowledge in due order, relating them to principle and combining them in a system-- the great gift in virtue of which he is the greatest of modern theologians--and his sympathetic insight into other minds and his power of interpreting them, in virtue of which, he is the founder of modern Biblical Exegesis." From an article on "John Calvin, the Man", Princeton Theol. Rev., July 1909, Vol. VII. p. 378.

CHAPTER IV

CALVIN'S EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

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### CALVIN'S EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

#### A. Introduction.

It might be said at the outset of this chapter that we shall attempt to set forth Calvin's qualifications as respects his educational equipment or acquirements. We have been considering the quality of his mind; the question now is, Of what knowledge was he in possession, or with what branches of learning was he familiar that would contribute to his work as an exegete?

#### B. His Training as a Youth.

Of his experience as a youth, little needs to be said. Calvin himself tells us that,

"When I was as yet a very little boy, my father had destined me for the study of theology. But afterwards, when he considered that the legal profession commonly raised those who followed it to wealth, this prospect induced him suddenly to change his purpose. Thus it came to pass, that I was withdrawn from the study of philosophy, and was put to the study of law. To this pursuit I endeavoured faithfully to apply myself, in obedience to the will of my father; but God, by the secret guidance of his providence, at length gave a different direction to my course.----God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame, which was more hardened in such matters than might have been expected from one at my early period of life. Having thus received some taste and knowledge of true godliness, I was immediately enflamed with so intense a desire to make progress therein, that although I did not altogether leave off other studies, I yet pursued them with the less ardour."(1)

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(1) Calvin: Preface to Comm. on the Psalms, Vol. I.  
p. xl.

This "intense desire" to learn and make progress may be taken as characteristic of Calvin's entire life.

Beza tells us that Calvin "from a boy was very liberally educated, though at his father's expense, in the family of the Mommors, one of the most distinguished in that quarter."(1) At this time he made rapid progress in learning, and, as Schaff suggests, "acquired a refinement of manners and a certain aristocratic air, which distinguished him from Luther and Zwingli."(2)

He later went to Paris and had for his master in the College of La Marche, Maturinus Corderius, "a man of great worth and erudition".(3) Here he studied grammar and rhetoric and learned to think and write in Latin under Corderius. We find that later Calvin dedicated his Commentary on First Thessalonians to Corderius in order "to testify to posterity, that, if any advantage shall accrue to them from my writings, they shall know that it has in some degree originated with you."(4)

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(1)Beza, p. xxi.

(2)Schaff, Vol. VII. p. 300.

(3)Beza, p. xxi. Schaff says his entrance into this school was in August, 1523, Calvin being 14 years of age. See Schaff's note on this date, Vol. VII. p. 301.

(4)This dedicatory epistle is so fine and since it is short it is fitting that it be included in its entirety:

Allowing Beza to continue the account, we find:

"Calvin afterwards removed to the College of Mont Aigu, and there had for his master a Spaniard, a man of considerable attainments. Under him Calvin, who was a most diligent student, made such progress, that he left his fellow-students behind in the Grammar course, and was promoted to the study of Dialectics, and what is termed Arts."(1)

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THE AUTHOR'S DEDICATORY EPISTLE  
to  
MATURINUS CORDERIUS,

A Man of Eminent Piety and Learning,  
Principal of the College of Lausanne.

"It is befitting that you should come in for a share in my labours, inasmuch as, under your auspices, having entered on a course of study, I made proficiency at least so far as to be prepared to profit in some degree the Church of God. When my father sent me, while yet a boy, to Paris, after I had simply tasted the first elements of the Latin tongue, Providence so ordered it that I had, for a short time, the privilege of having you as my instructor, that I might be taught by you the true method of learning, in such a way that I might be prepared afterwards to make somewhat better proficiency. For, after presiding over the first class with the highest renown, on observing that pupils who had been ambitiously trained up by the other masters, produced nothing but mere show, nothing of solidity, so that they required to be formed by you anew, tired of this annoyance, you that year descended to the fourth class. This, indeed, was what you had in view, but to me it was a singular kindness on the part of God that I happened to have an auspicious commencement of such a course of training. And although I was permitted to have the use of it only for a short time, from the circumstance that we were soon afterwards advanced higher by an injudicious man, who regulated our studies according to his own pleasure, or rather his caprice, yet I derived so much assistance afterwards from your training, that it is with good reason that I acknowledge myself indebted to you for such progress as has since been made. And this I was desirous to testify to posterity, that, if any advantage shall accrue to them from my writings they shall know that it has in some degree originated with you."

"Geneva, 17th February 1550."  
Comm. on Phil., Col., Thess., p. 234.

We come now to the place when in March, 1528, at the age of eighteen, he removed from Paris to Orleans to study law.

C. His Training for Law.

One cannot but feel on reading Calvin's commentaries that his training for law went far in fitting him for the work of interpreting the Scriptures. Calvin never seems more at home, than when dealing with an argumentative passage or with a passage in which evidence, arguments, proofs, etc., are involved. Take for instance these few lines of his on Romans 3:9:

"For we have already alleged, or promised to prove. The Greek verb ἀλλογιάζομαι, which Paul useth here, is a word appertaining to judgment; therefore it hath pleased us to translate it, we have alleged, (determined, or purposed,) to prove. For the accuser, in his action, is said to allege the crime, which he is ready to prove by other testimonies and proofs. And the apostle had cited all mankind generally before the tribunal-seat of God, that he might include all under the same condemnation. And in vain is it for any man to object, that the apostle doth not only accuse her, but rather prove; for no accusation is true but that which is grounded upon firm and sure proofs: as Cicero, in a certain place, distinguisheth between an accusation and a reproach."(1)

Calvin reflects in his writings a familiarity with the technical language of law and of composition.

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(1)Beza, p. xxi.

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(1)Romans, p. 72; see also pp. 148, 124.

He shows that he is trained in detecting errors in reasoning. We find references to such figures as metonymia(1), synecdoche(2), hypallage(3), synchysis(4), anacoluthon ( ἀνακόλουθον )(5), prosopopeia(6), παρόνομα (7), antithesis and antitheta (contrariety or contrarieties)(8), aphairesis(9), anastrophe(10), pre-occupation(11), anapodotum(12), and ἐπιχείρημα(13). Perhaps some of these would better be considered as figures of speech, yet the point under discussion ought

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- (1)Romans, p. 271--the figure there is in putting the effect for the cause. See also Romans pp. 161, 291, 299.
- (2)Romans, p. 21; Harmony, I. p. 193, and p. 323. "Synecdoche is, when by one many, or by a part the whole, or by a special the general, is understood." Cf. Romans, pp. 291, 342.
- (3)Romans, p. 25. Hypallage is, when in speech the order of things is turned. Cf. Romans pp. 60, 279.
- (4)Romans, p. 146. "Synchysis is when the order is every way confused.
- (5)Romans, p. 138. An anacoluthon refers to the omission of a non sequel or consequent.
- (6)Romans, p. 217. Prosopopeia is, when we give that to things without life which is proper to living things.
- (7)Romans, p. 251. "παρόνομα is, when a word is repeated, again not altogether the same, but somewhat changed."
- (8)Romans, pp. 91, 283.
- (9)Romans, p. 287. "Aphanesis is, the taking away of a letter or syllable from the beginning of a word."
- (10)Romans, p. 292. "Anastrophe is, an inversion of words, when that is first (which) should be last."
- (11)Romans, pp. 47, 57, "anticipation".
- (12)Romans, p. 62. "Anapodotum is a fault in speaking or writing, when that followeth not which might answer that which went before, as, here is first, and there followeth not second."
- (13)Romans, p. 96, "an imperfect argument".

to be sufficiently clear. We find Calvin analyzing a syllogism in Romans 4:2.(1)

Calvin, while a student of law, was fortunate in having some of the outstanding jurists of his day as his teachers, such as Peter De l'Etoile, whom Beza says was "by far the first French lawyer of that period", and Andrew Alciat, the Italian lawyer who had made the Academy of Bourges famous and whom Beza ranks above all as "undoubtedly the first lawyer of his age."(2) It was during this time as has been suggested before that he disciplined himself very rigorously by studying late and by rising early to review the preceding days work. (3) Attention has already been called to the fact that he made such progress that he was frequently called upon to take the class in the absence of some of the professors. Beza says, "he was considered rather a teacher than a pupil", and that "on his departure, he was presented with a Doctor's degree, free of expense, and with the unanimous consent of all the professors, as a return for the services which he had rendered to the Academy."(4)

#### D. His Knowledge of Languages.

For a person to be qualified as an interpreter

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- (1)Romans, p. 96.
- (2)Beza, pp. xxii and xxiii.
- (3)Ante, p. 53.
- (4)Beza, p. xxiii.

of Scripture, it would be admitted by anyone that he should be a master of at least two languages--his own mother tongue and the original language of the passage under consideration; namely, Hebrew if working in the Old Testament, or Greek, if working in the New Testament. The first remarkable fact therefore that confronts one in Calvin is that he had a double advantage with respect to each of these. He was equally at home in the use of Latin as he was with French. And in like manner in the study of either the Old or New Testament, he had the advantage of knowing both Hebrew and Greek.

1. Calvin's French.

Lindsay, basing his judgment on the authority of an eminent French authority, says of Calvin that,

"he was a very great writer, one of the founders of modern French prose---. He wrote all his important works in French for his countrymen; as well as in Latin for the learned world. His language and style were fresh, clear and simple; without affected elegance or pedantic display of erudition; full of vigour and verve; here, caustic wit which attracted; there, eloquence which spoke to the hearts of his readers because it throbbed with burning passion and strong emotion."(1)

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(1)Lindsay, Vol. II. pp. 155, 156. He quotes the following passage from Emile Faguet, *Seizième Siècle: Études Littéraires*, pp. 188-189: "Calvin fut un très grand écrivain. Je dirais même que ce fut le plus grand écrivain du 16<sup>e</sup> siècle si j'estimais plus que je ne fais le style proprement dit---Encore est-il qu'il me faut bien reconnaître que le style de Calvin est de tous les styles du 16<sup>e</sup> siècle celui qui a le plus de style---Reste qu'il parle l'admirable prose,

Schaff comments on Calvin's use of French in much the same way as Lindsay, calling attention to the fact that,

"He occupies a prominent position in the history of the French language, as Luther, to a still higher degree, figures in the history of the German language. ----Calvin created the theological and polemical French style,--a style which suits serious discussion, and aims at instruction and conviction. Rabelais created the secular style, which aims to entertain and to please." (1)

. . . . .

si claire, limpide et facile, du 15<sup>e</sup> siècle, avec ce quelque chose de plus ferme, de plus nourri et de plus viril que l'étude des classiques donne à ceux qui ne poussent pas jusqu'à l'imitation servile et à l'admiration des menus jolis détails. Reste qu'il parle la langue du 15<sup>e</sup> siècle avec quelques qualités déjà du 17<sup>e</sup>. C'est précisément ce qu'il a fait, et il est un des bons, sinon des sublimes, fondateurs de la prose française.

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(1) Schaff, Vol. VII. pp. 266-267. He gives the following excellent note which we include here: "Bossuet (in his Histoire des Variations) says: 'Rien ne flattait davantage Calvin que la gloire de bien écrire. Donnons lui donc, puisqu'il le veut tant cette gloire, d'avoir aussi bien écrit qu'homme de son siècle--- Sa plume était plus correcte, surtout en latin, que celle de Luther; et son style, qui était plus triste, était aussi plus suivi et plus châtié. Ils excellaient l'un et l'autre à parler la langue de leur pays.' Martin, in his Histoire de France (Tom. VIII. 185 sq.), discusses at some length the merits of Calvin for French prose, and calls him the first writer of the sixteenth century 'par la durée et l'influence de sa langue, de son style.' Pierre Larousse, in his Grand Dictionnaire (Tom. III. 186), calls Calvin 'fondateur de la Réforme en France et un des pères de notre langue. Equally favorable are the judgments of Sayous, Lacroix, Nisard, and Marc-Monnier." Schaff, Vol. VII. pp. 266-267, note 2. Attention is also called to the "Testimonies by Later French Writers" in Schaff, Vol. VII. pp. 274 ff.

## 2. Calvin's Latin.

As has already been mentioned,(1) before he began studying under the great teacher Corderius, he had "simply tasted the first elements of the Latin tongue". But under this great teacher Calvin found the "true method of learning". He writes later in his epistle dedicating his commentary on First Thessalonians to his old teacher, "I acknowledge myself indebted to you for such progress as has since been made."(2) With this excellent start Calvin became a master of Latin. Bousset in comparing Calvin and Luther remarks that "the pen of Calvin was more correct, especially in Latin, and his style, though severe, was much more conservative and chaste,"--and Bousset wrote one of the greatest polemical works in French against the Reformation.(3) Etienne Pasquier, a Roman Catholic says that, "He (Calvin) wrote equally well in Latin and French, the latter of which languages is greatly indebted to him for having enriched it with an infinite number of fine expressions."(4) Calvin, says D'Alembert, wrote "in Latin as well as one could do in a dead language."(5)

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(1)Ante, p. 62.

(2)Commentary on Phil., Col., and Thess., p. 234.  
Cf. Ante p. 62.

(3)Cited on the authority of Schaff, Vol. VIII. p. 275.

(4)Ibid., p. 273.

(5)Ibid., p. 277.

As shall be seen later Calvin had a wide and extraordinary familiarity with the ancient Latin writers which undoubtedly was the foundation of his own use of the language.(1)

Thus in both French and Latin, Calvin was well equipped with not one, but two media through which to convey the results of his exegesis.

### 3. Calvin's Greek.

As he had the fortune of studying Latin under Corderius, so also was Calvin fortunate in beginning his study of Greek under Melchior Wolmar, a German humanist of Rothwell, and professor of Greek at the Academy of Bourges. "On his suggestion and with his assistance, Calvin learned Greek," says Beza.(2) As a result of this experience together they became great friends and Calvin later (in 1546) dedicated his Commentary on Second Corinthians to his friend and former teacher Wolmar. Thus Calvin was about eighteen when he began the study of Greek. This study he continued, reading widely the Greek writers, and with no small degree of assimilation. Of this more shall be said presently(3), and of his use of the Greek in interpreting the Bible

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(1) See below p. 84.

(2) Beza, p. xxiii.

(3) See below, p. 83.

occasion shall be taken to treat more fully and specifically in ~~allater~~ chapter. It is also known that at the College Fortet in Paris he "pursued eagerly the study of Greek", "under the guidance of the marvellously wide-read 'Royal Lecturer', Pierre Danes."(1)

In evidence of Calvin's familiarity with the Greek language, that it was more than just a limited and superficial knowledge, we need only refer for the present to the many Greek words, of which he makes use in his commentaries by way of illustration, or explanation,--words which are either not found or are rarely used in the New Testament, and therefore must have become a part of Calvin's vocabulary as a result of his persistent and careful study of classical Greek. In his commentaries on the two Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians alone, he uses the following words:

*μωροσόφοις*-Cor. I, p. 84(2); *πρωτότυπον*-Cor., I. p. 350; *κακοῦ γλώσσου* -Cor., I. p. 350; *ἀκολωνήτοι* -Cor., I. p. 362; *ἀτεξία* -Cor., I. pp. 231,365; *πρὸς αὐξήσιν* -Cor., I. p. 366(3); *μνημόσυνον*

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(1)Walker, p. 55.

(2)References are given according to volume and page of the Calvin Translation Society Edition.

(3) *αὐξήσις* is found in Eph. 4:16 and Col. 2:19 but not in the idiomatic form in which Calvin refers to it in this passage on Cor. 11:19. In this sense of amplification in rhetoric it is found in Aristotle's Rhetoric 3.12,4. See Liddell and Scott, p. 249.

-Cor., I. p. 381(1); αὐτόπτας  
 -Cor., II. p. 10(2); ἐπεξεργασία -Cor., II. pp. 61,  
 216; ἐμφατικῶς τέρρα -Cor., II. p. 198; ἀντιπελαργίαν  
 -Cor., II. p. 256; ἐπιείκεια -Cor., II. p. 294(3);  
 and φιλαυτία -Cor., II. p. 389(4). This familiarity  
 with Greek terminology will be more fully accounted for  
 when his references to Greek authors is discussed.

4. Calvin's Hebrew.

Calvin first began the study of Hebrew while he was in the College Fortet, while he was yet only about twenty-two years of age. He had for his teacher Francois Vatable, a colleague of Pierre Danes, under whom Calvin was at the same time pursuing his studies in Greek.(5) This was in the year 1532. Not much is known about Calvin's study of Hebrew until the year 1534, when at Basle "he lived on intimate terms with those two distinguished men," as Beza tells us, "Simon Grynaeus and Wolfgang Capito, and devoted himself to the study of Hebrew"(6) We find that a few years later

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- (1) This word occurs only in Matt. 26:13; Mark 14:9; and Acts 10:4. This term *μνημόσυρον* occurs in the LXX in Exodus 12:14 where it is used in the sense of a memorial. It occurs frequently in that sense in Herodotus and occasionally in other classical authors.
- (2) Found only in Luke 1:2. In this case Calvin refers to Luke, but the word is found in Greek writers from Herodotus down. Cf. Thayer.
- (3) Occurs in the N. T. only in Acts 24:4 and II Cor. 10:1.
- (4) See also Harmony, II. p. 69; III. p. 60; also Institutes, I. p. 313. Used only in II Tim. 3:2. Found frequently in classical authors, Aristotle, Plutarch, and others. Cf. Thayer.
- (5) Cf. Walker, p. 55.
- (6) Beza, p. xxvii.

(1539) Calvin dedicated his Commentary on Romans to Grynaeus. It is probable that he studied Hebrew "under the eminent guidance of Sebastian Münster".(1)

Since this study is focused primarily on Calvin's New Testament work, and since it has not prepared the writer to judge in more than a general way of Calvin's knowledge and use of Hebrew, we pass on from this section with this one observation: i.e., that Calvin did make use of his Hebrew in his New Testament writings. When we come to consider his treatment of Hebraisms, and Old Testament quotations as well as references to the prophets and the books of the law, we shall find that Calvin was at home in the Old Testament as well as in the New and that he knew its original language. But in a general way we note such passages as the following in which he refers specifically to the Hebrew: Romans p. 261; p. 276; Harmony of the Gospels, I. pp. 15, 17, 35, 78, 98, 121, 240, 444, 446; II. pp. 35, 129, 426.(2)

Taking for instance, the first passage cited from Romans (9:15, p. 261), Calvin finds in the two words used by Moses in Exodus 23:15 that "the only cause of salvation is expressed; for  $\text{חָנָן}$  (chanan,) is to favour, or give a benefit freely and liberally; but  $\text{רַחֵם}$  (racham,) is

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(1) Cf. Walker, p. 128.

(2) See also John, I. p. 185; II. pp. 155, 223; Corinthians, II. pp. 51, 153.

to show mercy. So that is brought to pass that Paul intendeth; namely, that the mercy of God, because it is free, is not tied, but he may show it where he lists."

E. His Knowledge of the Scripture.

It seems unnecessary to say much about Calvin's knowledge of the Scriptures at this point as that will be shown indirectly as we proceed with our discussion. Furthermore it has already been mentioned in connection with what was said about his memory.(1) Two or three remarks will suffice, therefore, for the present.

The first is this: while Calvin was yet in school he "diligently cultivated sacred literature".(2) Sometime after his father's death it is said of him that "renouncing all other studies, (he) devoted himself to God."(3) Beza toward the close of his account in looking back upon the whole of Calvin's life writes:

"The thing to be wondered at----is, that a single man, as if he had been a kind of Christian Hercules, should have been able to subdue so many monsters, and this by that mightiest of all clubs, the Word of God."(4)

A second fact bearing on this point is most obvious: how could a man have commented on almost the

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- (1)Ante, pp. 34 ff.
- (2)Beza, p. xxiv.
- (3)Ibid.
- (4)Ibid., p. xcix.

whole Bible, and not have been mighty in the Scriptures? A third observation naturally follows and that is this: Almost every page of his writings contains many Scripture references, both indirect as well as direct for his language and style is saturated with Biblical phraseology as well as containing many direct quotations. Proof of this may readily be found by turning to almost any page of his writings.(1) So much, then, for Calvin's knowledge of the Scriptures. It will become more apparent as this study proceeds.

#### F. His Acquaintance with Other Branches of Learning.

Terry has called attention to the fact that,

"The professional interpreter of Scripture needs more than a well-balanced mind, discreet sense, and acuteness of intellect. He needs stores of information in the broad and varied fields of history, science, and philosophy. By many liberal studies will his faculties become disciplined and strong for practical use; and extensive and accurate knowledge will furnish and fit him to be the teacher of others."  
(2)

What can be said of Calvin in this respect? What was the range of his knowledge? In the answer to this question, in view of our purpose and of what might be considered proper proportions, we shall endeavor to be brief, and yet give sufficient facts and references to reveal Calvin's

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(1) See the Institutes, for instance; and they were first written when Calvin was barely twenty-six years old!

(2) Terry, p. 154.

qualifications on this point.

1. His Knowledge of History.

This might be considered under two heads, secular and sacred. As to the first, certainly anyone who was familiar with so many ancient authors, both Latin and Greek could not have been in dangerous ignorance of history. In fact we find not infrequently references which reflect his background in this subject.

(1)

Naturally one would expect sacred history to be more evident in his writings. To gain an idea of his knowledge of this field we shall simply list different persons, movements, heresies, events, etc., to which he has referred. This by no means claims to be a complete list but ought to be sufficient for our purpose: Arians(2); Manichaeans(3); Donatists(4); Novatians(5); Nestorians(6); Eutyches(7); Appollinaris(8); Marcion and the Marcionites(9); Pelagians(10); Ebion(11);

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- (1) See references to Quirinius, Harmony, I. p. 110, to the Persians, Ibid., p. 137; to Herod and the Maccabees, Ibid., p. 8.  
(2) Harmony, III. p. 153; Cor., II. pp. 192, 197.  
(3) Harmony, I. p. 35; II. p. 120; Cor., II. pp. 54, 55, 193, 194; Hebrews, p. 74; John, I. p. 350; II. p. 104.  
(4) John, I. p. 145.  
(5) Rom., p. 88.  
(6) John, I. pp. 46, 97; Hebrews, p. 74.  
(7) John, I. p. 46.  
(8) Cor., II. p. 52; John, I. p. 45.  
(9) Harmony, I. p. 35; Eph., p. 243; Hebrews, p. 74.  
(10) Cor., I. p. 159; Eph. pp. 223, 231, 259.  
(11) John, I. p. 22.

Cerinthus(1); Cathari(2); Monothelites(3); and Mahomet (4). Additional reference will be made later to the writers and the literature of church history with which he was familiar.

It is not difficult to see the importance of Calvin's knowledge of history as a qualification for exegetical work as many a passage of Scripture and many a doctrine is associated in one way or another with the groups indicated.

## 2. His Knowledge of Geography.

There is not very much that can be said about Calvin's knowledge of geography. Although only a few centuries before the Holy Land had been the objective of the Crusades, yet Calvin's knowledge of the land, in any intimate sort of way was rather limited. His was not the privilege of the modern traveler to set foot on its shores and to roam its hills in comparative freedom. Although Calvin moved about considerably in Central Europe he never was near Palestine. Yet it cannot be said that he was indifferent to geographical matters for we find such references not infrequently. He speaks with interest and with a few significant details concerning

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- (1) John, I. p. 22.
- (2) Romans, p. 193.
- (3) Harmony, III. p. 233.
- (4) John, I. pp. 165, 166.

the sources of the Jordan(1), Cana of Galilee(2), Emmaus which the Romans afterwards called Nicopolis "and was not at a great distance from Jerusalem---"(3), the town in which Zacharias dwelt(4), Bethlehem in Zebulun (5), Enon, Salim and Scythopolis(6), Sichar and Mount Gerrizzim(7), Capernaum(8), the Sea of Galilee(9), and other places. He even touches on more remote places such as Corinth(10), Chaldea(11), and Persia(12). The chief sources for his geographical knowledge seem to be Pliny, Josephus, and Jerome.(13) Thus it is seen that Calvin's commentaries could not have that enrichment which comes from a knowledge of the land, such as may be had by the modern writer--although it must be recognized that in this respect Jerome was of considerable help to him.

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- (1)Harmony, I. ;76.
- (2)John, I. p. 82.
- (3)Harmony, III. p. 354.
- (4)Ibid., I. p. 48.
- (5)Ibid., p. 134.
- (6)John, I., p. 130. He mentions "geographers" in this passage.
- (7)John, I. p. 145.
- (8)Ibid., p. 239.
- (9)Ibid., p. 236.
- (10)Cor., I. p. 37.
- (11)Harmony, I. p. 127.
- (12)Ibid., p. 128.
- (13)See Ante, p. 48; also Harmony, I. pp. 110, 111, 164, 176, 177, 222, 223; II. 96, 220, 227, 375, 396; III. 116, 122, 294.

### 3. His Knowledge of Chronology.

The writer does not presume to speak with regard to Calvin's work on the Old Testament where chronology is probably of greater importance, yet he records the fact that Calvin does not make much of a contribution in this respect, because in his day he lacked that light on those problems which has been shed only in more recent years. Yet he is not unmindful of the time element. By the aid of Josephus he makes an effort to date the birth of Christ(1), but it is a matter of common knowledge how much trouble this same problem still gives the student of the Bible. Calvin simply lacked the knowledge and therefore does not have much to contribute on matters of chronology.

### 4. His Knowledge of Antiquities.

Very much the same thing must be said about this topic as was said about that which preceded. Such knowledge as he found in Jerome and Josephus and a few others he used. In John, I. p. 87 he speaks about the waterpots but there it is to attack "some Popish scoundrels (who) have manifested an amazing degree of wickedness, when they had the effrontery to say that they had among their relics those water-pots with which Christ

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(1)Harmony, I. p. 110.

performed this miracle in Cana, and exhibited some of them." He casts a sharp thrust at those who impudently boast "that they have this very napkin in five or six different places".(1) It is not difficult to understand why Calvin would take so little stock in such things, since they had been the source of so much abuse and superstition. Occasionally he manifests that he was alert to any customs of the people. An illustration of the application of his knowledge of the conditions and of the times, may be found in his Harmony of the Gospels, I. p. 398.(2) Here he speaks of the custom-house as having been a place that was "noted for plundering and for unjust exactions".

#### 5. His ~~K~~nowledge of Politics.

Here however, we might change the word knowl-  
edge and make it read his experience in politics, because in his work in Geneva he had not only problems of church discipline and moral and religious questions, but he found it necessary to take a part in civic and political affairs of the city. In addition to this Calvin was a keen observer and had much to do with princes, and kings, dukes and lords as will be seen by referring to the dedicatory epistles of some of his

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(1)John, II. p. 251  
(2)Cf. p. 378 also.

commentaries. But what does this have to do with Calvin the exegete? Simply this: it enriched his mind, it broadened his experience, it aided his understanding, and because of the burden of his soul for the welfare of the world, it sharpened his interest and deepened his insight into spiritual truth.

#### 6. His Knowledge of Philosophy.

When it comes to this subject we find Calvin more fully qualified again. However the scope of our investigation does not permit of much more than an outward glance of his knowledge of philosophy. Reference to the following are often found: the Stoics(1), the Epicureans(2), the Sophists(3), Plato(4)--in one place Calvin accuses Augustine of being "addicted to the philosophy of Plato"(5), Pythagoras(6), Aristotle(7), and also to "philosophers" in a general way(8). Of course one should not omit Seneca, the Roman philosopher as Calvin's first book was his Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia", and was published when he was only twenty-two years of age! It is evident that Calvin could

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(1)Rom., p. 36; Harmony, I. pp. 260, 261, 465.

(2)Harmony, I. p. 21; Cor., II. p. 41.

(3)Harmony, II. p. 124; III. p. 313; Cor., I. p. 420.

(4)John, II. p. 160; see under Greek literature below, p.83.

(5)John, I. p. 31.

(6)John, I. pp. 111, 366; Harmony, I. p. 20.

(7)Harmony, II. p. 142; see under Greek literature below, p.83.

(8)Romans, p. 176; Harmony, I. p. 333.

not be charged with failing to qualify with a knowledge of philosophy.

7. His Knowledge of General Literature.

Since we have just mentioned Calvin's first book on Seneca's "De Clementia" it is appropriate to introduce this section with a few remarks based on that book. Being written at so early an age and manifesting such wide reading and thorough scholarship, it reflects in a remarkable way the precocity of its author. Walker has given a very good list of the sources Calvin has used in it which we take the liberty to include at this point:

"The text is illuminated by citations from fifty-six Latin and twenty-two Greek classical writers, seven Fathers of the Church, and the humanists of his own age. Many of these references are to a number of works by the same author; for instance to thirty-three of the orations, treatises, and letters of Cicero, or to five of the plays of Terence.

Walker goes on to remark,

"Certainly those long hours of study and reflection at Orleans and Bourges, and of work under the 'Royal Lecturers' at Paris, had had their abundant fruitage in the erudition of which the young humanist revealed himself so easily the master. Nor is the work less remarkable for its maturity and poise of judgment. There is in it almost no suggestion of a youthful effort." (1)

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(1) Walker, p. 59. On p. 96 he says of Calvin's Commentary that it reveals on every page unwearied zeal in "the mastery of the Greek and Latin classics".

This is indeed a remarkable tribute and one which could not fairly be disputed by anyone. When one considers that it was more than seven years until Calvin's first commentary on the Bible was to be published(1) and that thirty-two of the fifty-four years of his life remained for the further growth and maturing of his scholarship, he cannot help being convinced that, at least in so far as concerns the classics, here was one who was qualified as an exegete in no ordinary way.

In view of that which has already been said it seems almost unnecessary to record our own findings from his exegetical works on the Bible. However, in brief form we include them as follows:

a. The writings of the Church Fathers. In addition to the more frequent references to Augustine, Chrysostom, Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, and Ambrose before mentioned(2), Calvin shows a familiarity with the following: Cyprian(3), Tertullian(4), Cyril(5), Lactantius(6), Epiphanius(7), Papias(8), Hilary(9), and Gregory

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(1) His Commentary on "De Clementia" was published in April 1532 and his Commentary on Romans did not come out until November 1539.

(2) Ante, pp. 47 ff.

(3) Cor., I. p. 160; Harmony, II. p. 296; Eph., p. 281.

(4) Cor., I. p. 369; John, I. p. 404.

(5) John, I. pp. 109, 114, 177; Harmony, III. p. 227.

(6) Father of Latin Church in Africa (260?-325?), Rom., p. 30.

(7) Greek father, Harmony, I. pp. 91, 110.

(8) Greek father, John, I. p. 362.

(9) Of Portiers probably, John I. p. 29; Cor., II. p. 192.

of Nazianzen(1).

That Calvin had more than just a passing acquaintance with these writers is shown by the incident already referred to when Calvin all unpremeditated surprised Balsec before the congregation and from memory "so confuted mauled, and overwhelmed him with proofs from Scripture, quotations from authors, especially from Augustine, and, in fine, by numerous weighty arguments, that all felt exceedingly ashamed for the brased-faced monk, except the monk himself."(2)

b. His familiarity with Greek literature.

The following are to be found among those frequently quoted or referred to: Plato(3), Aristotle(4), Homer(5), Strabo(6), Polybius(7), Pythagoras(8), Herodotus(9), Menander(10), Demosthenes(11), Lucian(12), and Josephus

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(1)John, I. p. 29.

(2)Beza, p. lvii; Ante, p. 35.

(3)John, II. p. 160; Romans, p. 30; Harmony, I. pp. 74, 302; II. 380; Cor., I. pp. 339, 440; II. 337; Eph. pp. 290, 296.

(4)Harmony, II. p. 142; Cor., I. p. 441; Cor., II. p. 294; Gal. pp. 140, 165.

(5)John, I. p. 430.

(6)Greek geographers, Harmony, I. p. 422; Cor., I. p. 442; Gal. p. 13.

(7)Greek historians, Cor., II. p. 306.

(8)John, I. pp. 111, 366.

(9)John, II. p. 256.

(10)Cor., II. p. 42.

(11)Harmony, I. p. 7

(12)Harmony, II. p. 283.

the Jewish historian who wrote in Greek(1). Occasionally one finds general references such as to the "Grecians"(2), or to "Attic" writers(3). Calvin's familiarity with Greek and hellenistic philosophy has already been indicated.(4)

c. The Latin writers. In speaking of his Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia", Calvin's knowledge of Roman authors was given an important place. At this point we record some of the references which he made to these in his Biblical writings: Ovid(5), Virgil (6), Horace(7), Pliny(8), Cicero(9), Macrobius(10), Fabius(11), Livy(12), and Suetonius(13). As Schaff says: "He was at home in classical antiquity".(14)

d. The Schoolmen and the Papists. One need only turn to the index of one of his commentaries to see how frequently Calvin has to deal with these, especially

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(1)Rom., p. 52; Harmony, I. pp. 110, 111; II. pp. 96, 220, 396; III. p. 252, 294; John, I. p. 155; II. p. 197.

(2)Rom., pp. 45, 85.

(3)Harmony, II. pp. 139, 295.

(4)Ante, p. 80.

(5)Rom., p. 56.

(6)Harmony, I. p. 6; Cor., II. p. 22; Hebrews, p. 75.

(7)Harmony, II. p. 182; Cor., II. p. 42.

(8)Rom., p. 74; John, I. p. 236; Cor., I. p. 447; Gal., p. 13.

(9)Rom., p. 45; John, II.p. 107; Eph., p. 300.

(10)Latin grammarian, Harmony, I. p. 158.

(11)Cor., II. p. 39.

(12)Cor., I. p. 405

(13)Roman historian, John, I. p. 376.

(14)Vol. VII. p. 529.

the latter.(1) It is natural that Calvin was familiar with these for it was many of their doctrines and abuses that Calvin in his own day had to combat.

G. His Travels and Wide Acquaintance.

Not the least of Calvin's educational qualifications is that to be found in his travels and in his wide acquaintances. Walker in his "Life of Calvin" has summarized these in an admirable way and we take the liberty to quote his passage on this topic:

"As a preparation for Calvin's far-reaching acquaintance with the position and the possibilities of the Evangelical cause the circumstances of Calvin's life previous to his return to Geneva in 1541, were most fortunate. Acquainted as a student of law and of the humanities with a considerable circle in France outside of that moved by the religious impulse which became dominant in him by 1533, he rose to recognized leadership as the spokesman of French Protestantism by his letter to Francis I., in 1536. His life at Basel brought him familiarity with Northern Switzerland, his journeyings to Ferrara showed him a little of Italy, his stay at Strassburg strengthened his hold upon the Protestantism of his native France, while bringing to him ample knowledge of the parties and leaders of Germany. By the time of his return to Geneva, he had become the most widely travelled and the most variously engaged of the reformers. Thenceforth his journeys were few; but Geneva became at once a city of refuge, and the future religious leaders of France, the Netherlands, England, and Scotland, in no small numbers came thither to him.

"Calvin's personal acquaintance was maintained and supplemented by a correspondence of remarkable extent. Even aided as he was by the constant employment of amanuenses, the number and importance of the

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(1) See index to Romans for Schoolmen.

epistolatory demands upon his strength, especially during the later years of his life, are such as to make evident the value which he attached to this means of serving the Evangelical cause and its time-consuming burden. The variety and significance of his correspondents are equally impressive. Besides his familiar and frequent letters to Farel, Viret, Bucer, Bullinger, and Beza, the roll of his correspondents contains such names of reformers as those of Melancthon, Hedio, Brentz, Sturm, Jonas, Olevianus, and Sleidan of Germany; Cranmer, Grindal, Hooper, Coverdale, Norton, Cox, and Whittingham of England; Knox of Scotland; Blaurer, Grynaeus, Haller, Musculus, Myconius, and Sulzer of Switzerland; a Lasco of Poland, Friesland, and England; the Italian refugees, Peter Martyr, Ochino, and Zanchi; the radicals Laelius Socinus and Servetus; besides many in France, including Admiral Coligny, Condé, and Anthony of Navarre. Many of his correspondents were of great social and political distinction. He wrote to Marguerite d'Angoulême, Renée of Ferrara; Somerset, the Lord Protector of England, and Edward VI. of that realm; Frederick III., the elector Palatine; Philip of Hesse, and Sigismund August, king of Poland. They are letters of a writer fully acquainted with the usages of the cultivated world, clear, tactful, energetic, seldom of much personal emotion, but penetrated by a profound conviction of the truth of his cause, a marvelous grasp of the situation, and a transparent appeal to the reason and will. He warns, he comforts, he intercedes, he gives the news of the hour, he endeavors to foster the Evangelical cause, and to bring victory in the contests in which he was engaged in Geneva and beyond the borders of the city." (1)

#### H. Summary and Conclusion.

In passing to the next section, so far as concerns Calvin's educational qualifications, his training in law, his knowledge of languages, his knowledge of the Scriptures and his acquaintance with other branches

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(1)pp. 378,380.

of learning, it can fairly be said that in his day there was not his equal. Furthermore if viewed from our modern educational standards and attainments, Calvin would compare favorably even though he lacked much of modern learning, especially in such fields as natural science and comparative philology. But that lack cannot be attributed to any want of persistence on Calvin's part--those developments have come in the more recent centuries; and perhaps, as not a few historians believe, our present scientific age found its liberty and received its impetus because of the work of the Reformers, not the least of whom was John Calvin.

Let us now turn to Calvin's moral and spiritual qualifications.

CHAPTER V

CALVIN'S SPIRITUAL AND MORAL QUALIFICATIONS

## CHAPTER V

### CALVIN'S SPIRITUAL AND MORAL QUALIFICATIONS

#### A. Introduction

"Intellectual qualities", says Terry, "though capable of development and discipline, are to be regarded as natural endowments, educational or literary acquirements are to be had only by diligent and faithful study; but those qualifications of an interpreter which we call spiritual are to be regarded as partly a gift, and partly acquired by personal effort and proper discipline."<sup>(1)</sup> In this section it is proposed to investigate and estimate Calvin in the latter respect. The contribution of his religious experience will be considered first.

#### B. The Contribution of His Religious Experience.

As regards his early religious experience, there is not much that can be said that is of particular importance for our purpose. In fact his religious development up to and including his "conversion" is somewhat obscure. The best source we have is that which Calvin himself has left us in his Preface to his Commentary on the Psalms, and that is contained in a few lines:

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(1)p. 156.

"My condition, no doubt, is much inferior to his (David's), and it is unnecessary for me to stay to show this. But as he was taken from the sheepfold, and elevated to the rank of supreme authority; so God having taken me from my originally obscure and humble condition, had reckoned me worthy of being invested with the honourable office of a preacher and minister of the gospel. When I was as yet a very little boy, my father had destined me for the study of theology. But afterwards, when he considered that the legal profession commonly raised those who followed it to wealth, this prospect induced him suddenly to change his purpose. Thus it came to pass, that I was withdrawn from the study of philosophy, and was put to the study of law. To this pursuit I endeavoured faithfully to apply myself, in obedience to the will of my father; but God, by the secret guidance of his providence, at length gave a different direction to my course." (1)

The words "I endeavoured faithfully to apply myself, in obedience to the will of my father" would seem to strike the keynote of those early days.

When his "conversion" came it was by a "sudden" act of "God" and with the result that God "subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame". He goes on to state the result that followed:

"Having thus received some taste and knowledge of the true godliness, I was immediately inflamed with so intense a desire to make progress therein, that although I did not altogether leave off other studies, I yet pursued them with less ardour." (2)

Within a short time, as he tells us, "all who had any desire after purer doctrine were continually coming to me to learn---". (3) From that time on it was

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(1) Calvin's Preface to Psalms, Vol. I. p. xl.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid., p. xli.

a constant struggle with Calvin to get away into seclusion where he would not be known and where he could devote all his energies to his studies which he so much loved. But "God so led me about", he says, "through different turnings and changes, that he never permitted me to rest in any place, until, in spite of my natural disposition he brought me forth to public notice." (1) While he lay hidden in Basle, known only to a few people, many faithful and holy persons were burned alive in France. "---It appeared to me, that unless I opposed them to the utmost of my ability, my silence could not be vindicated from the charge of cowardice and treachery." This was the consideration which induced him to publish his Institutes of the Christian Religion. (2) This experience is typical of the many others which followed, crowded one upon another in the few brief years that remained to him, from the solemn "imprecation" of Farel which constrained him to stay at Geneva, to the obligation which he laid himself under to keep at his work in the midst of his diseases and suffering almost to the very end. When some of his friends advised and entreated him to desist from all fatigue of dictating and at least of writing, he replied, "What, would you

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(1) Calvin's Preface to Psalms, Vol. I. p. xli.

(2) Ibid., pp. xli, xlii.

have the Lord to find me idle?"(1)

The contribution of his whole experience to his exegetical work is well summed up in another passage from his Preface to the Psalms in which he says:

"Now, if my readers derive any fruit and advantage from the labour which I have bestowed in writing these Commentaries, I would have them to understand that the small measure of experience which I have had by the conflicts with which the Lord has exercised me, has in no ordinary degree assisted me, not only in applying to present use whatever instruction could be gathered from these divine compositions, but also in more easily comprehending the design of each of the writers."(2)

Terry speaks of Calvin in the following manner:

"His exegesis breathes everywhere--especially in the Psalms--a most lively religious feeling, indicating that his own personal experience enabled him to penetrate as by intuition into the depths of meaning treasured in the oracles of God."(3)

### C. His Honesty, Fairness and Desire for Truth.

To name these qualities is to see their importance for one who is to handle sacred writings. In a very large measure, it may be said that the secret of Calvin's impartiality and fairness is that he is willing to let, or rather that he insists that Scripture be allowed to speak for itself. In Romans 5:6 in speaking

of the sentence, ἔτι γὰρ χριστοῦ ὄντων ἡμῶν ἀσθενῶν ἔτι κατὰ καρπὸν ὑπὲρ ἀσεβῶν ἀπέθανεν,

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(1)Beza, p. lxxxiv.

(2)Preface to Psalms, p. xxxix.

(3)Terry, p. 676 f.

he says, "In translating, I durst not take so much upon me as to turn it 'according to the time wherein we were weak', which sense notwithstanding liked me rather".(1) In the next verse he writes, "Reason forced me to set down this particule, ~~καρ~~, for, rather affirmatively, or by the way of declaration, than causatively."

(2)

On Romans 4:6 he answers the cavil of them "which would hem in the works of the law within the compass of ceremonies" by calling attention to Paul's words, "seeing he now calleth them simply, and without any addition, works, which he called before the works of the law". On the next page he follows, "In like sort, by the same words of the Prophet, the folly of the schoolmen is refuted touching half remission."(3)

Calvin reflects his own habits in this lesson which he inserts on Romans 3:10 when he says,

"And here let ecclesiastical persons learn what is their office; for, if Paul here affirm no doctrine which he also confirmeth not by certain testimony of Scripture, much less is this thing to be attempted of them whose whole charge is this, to preach that gospel which they have received by the hands of Paul and others."(4)

In his last will and testament, made on April

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(1) Romans, p. 130.

(2) Ibid., p. 131.

(3) Ibid., pp. 100, 101, See also p. 74.

(4) Ibid., p. 73.

25, 1564, just about one month before his death, he makes this declaration:

"----According to the measure of grace and goodness which the Lord hath employed towards me, I have endeavoured, both in my sermons and also in my writings and commentaries, to preach His Word purely and chastely, and faithfully to interpret His sacred Scriptures. I also testify and declare, that, in all the contentions and disputations in which I have been engaged with the enemies of the Gospel, I have used no impostures, no wicked and sophistical devices, but have acted candidly and sincerely in defending the truth." (1)

Two days later in his farewell to the syndics and senators of Geneva he said to them:

"--In regard to the doctrine which I have delivered in your hearing, I declare that the Word of God, entrusted to me, I have taught, not rashly or uncertainly, but purely and sincerely." (2)

The day following he received the Genevan ministers and among other things spoke to them:

"As concerns my doctrine: I have taught faithfully, and God has given me grace to write. I have done it with the utmost fidelity, and have not to my knowledge corrupted or twisted a single passage of the Scriptures; and when I could have drawn out a far-fetched meaning, if I had studied subtilty, I have put that (temptation) under foot and have always studied simplicity. I have written nothing through hatred against any one, but have always set before me faithfully what I have thought to be for the glory of God." (3)

Thus there is ample grounds for such a statement as that made by William Pringle, one of his translators:

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(1) Beza, p. lxxxvi, f.

(2) Ibid., p. xc.

(3) Letters of John Calvin by Jules Bonnet, trans. by Gilchrist, Vol. IV. pp. 372-377. Cited also by Walker, p. 437.

"When he places in a just light--as he frequently does--those texts which had been wrested for the confutation of heretics, none but eager and unscrupulous controversialists will complain. Every honourable mind will admire the unbending integrity of our Author, which, even in the defense of truth, disdains to employ an unlawful weapon, and devoutly bows to the dictates of the Holy Spirit."(1)

Such high regard for fairness and sincere loyalty to truth would be an admirable quality in any man but especially is it to be prized in the exegete.

#### D. His Tender Affection.

Calvin has been thought by some to have been cold and unsympathetic, probably because of his lofty intellect, his severe and rigorous life, and somewhat stern view of faith and doctrine.(2) But there is much in his life that proves the reverse. In 1540 he was married to Idelette de Bure and until her death in 1549 lived in happy wedlock. Shortly after her death early in April, Calvin wrote to his friend Viret (April 7, 1549):

"----And truly mine is no common source of grief. I have been bereaved of the best companion of my life, of one who, had it been so ordered, would not only have been the willing sharer of my exile and poverty, but even of my death. During her life she was the faithful helper of my ministry. From her I never experienced the slightest hindrance."(3)

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(1)Trans. Preface to John, I. p. 7.

(2)Cf. Schaff. Vol. VII. p. 417.

(3)Given by Schaff, Vol. VII. p. 419.

Only one child had been born to them, a son, but he lived only a few days. Thus Calvin had tasted of the joys and the sorrows of life. We see his deep sympathy for others--and Calvin's was a time when there was more than an ordinary amount of affliction because of the terrible plague, famine and wars that raged in Geneva and elsewhere(1)--in this letter to a friend who had lost his two sons by the pestilence:

"When I first received the intelligence of the death of Claude and of your son Louis, I was so utterly overpowered that for many days I was fit for nothing but to weep; and although I was somehow upheld before the Lord by those aids wherewith He sustains our souls in affliction, yet among men I was almost a nonentity; so far at least as regards my discharge of duty, I appeared to myself quite as unfit for it as if I had been half dead."(2)

It may be said that although Calvin had a very wide circle of acquaintances, his intimate friends were few. Farel, Viret, Bullinger and Beza were perhaps the closest to him.(3) An interesting little sidelight is found in his will where he bequeaths ten gold pieces to one "Joanna, the daughter of Charles Constans, and myself by affinity".(4) Thus Calvin appears to have been thoroughly human, possessed with those tender affections

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(1)See Beza, pp. xlii ff.

(2)Letter to the lord of the village of Richebourg, dated April, 1541. Given by Schaff, Vol. VII. p. 421.

(3)Walker names his brother Antoine, the Colladons, Trie, des Gallas, Michel Cop, Laurent de Normandie, together with a few of the refugees and magistrates as enjoying his full confidence.

(4)Beza, p. lxxxvii.

which reach out after that which is of the highest, purest, and truest,--that which is lovely and morally ennobling. Thus he ought to be better qualified to understand, enter into <sup>fellowship</sup> and sympathize with the men and women of the Bible.

#### E. His Enthusiasm for the Scriptures.

It goes without saying that he who would truly appreciate the works of another must imbibe the spirit of that writer. As Terry has pointedly remarked:

"What fellowship with such lofty natures (Homer, Demosthenes, Shakespeare or Milton, for instance) can he have whose soul never kindles with enthusiasm in the study of their works? So the profound and able exegete is he whose spirit God has touched, and whose soul is enlivened by the revelations of heaven." (1)

Now in view of all that has been said and of that which will follow, there is left little room to doubt that Calvin was a great enthusiast for the Word. Therefore, anything more than a few words is unnecessary. With this one illustration from his Preface to his Commentary on the Psalms we shall pass on to the next topic. In it he gives expression to his appreciation of that book, which is typical for the most part of his attitude toward the whole <sup>of</sup> Scripture; although in all fairness it may be admitted that the Epistles of Paul and the

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(1) Terry, p. 157.

book of Psalms were probably his favorite portions.

"The varied and resplendid riches which are contained in this treasury it is no easy matter to express in words; so much so, that I well know that whatever I shall be able to say will be far from approaching the excellence of the subject. But as it is better to give to my readers some taste, however small, of the wonderful advantages they will derive from the study of this book, than to be entirely silent on the point, I may be permitted briefly to advert to a matter, the greatness of which does not admit of being fully unfolded. I have been accustomed to call this book, I think not inappropriately, 'An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul;' for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror." (1)

F. His Reverence for God, His Love of Christ, and His Communion with the Holy Spirit.

This subject alone is worthy of an extended study, but the scope of our investigation allows only a brief reference to it. One or two citations will suffice for our purpose. For these there is perhaps no better place to turn than to those closing events of his life. What was true then had been true ever since his "sudden conversion" which had come about by the hand of God. In his last will and testament he gives this testimony believing that "the Lord God has determined shortly to call me away out of this world-- --." (2)

"First of all, I give thanks to God, that taking

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(1) See Preface to Psalms, p. xxxvi ff.

(2) Beza, p. lxxxv.

mercy on me, whom he had created and placed in this world, he not only delivered me out of the deep darkness of idolatry in which I was plunged, that he might bring me into the light of his Gospel, and make me a partaker in the doctrine of salvation, of which I was most unworthy; and not only, with the same mercy and benignity, kindly and graciously bore with my faults and my sins, for which, however, I deserved to be rejected by him and exterminated, but also vouchsafed me such clemency and kindness that he has deigned to use my assistance in preaching and promulgating the truth of his Gospel. And I testify and declare, that it is my intention to spend what yet remains of my life in the same faith and religion which he has delivered to me by his Gospel; and that I have no other defence or refuge for salvation than his gratuitous adoption, on which alone my salvation depends. With my whole soul I embrace the mercy which he has exercised toward me through Jesus Christ, atoning for my sins with the merits of his death and passion, that in this way he might satisfy for all my crimes and faults, and blot them from his remembrance. I testify also and declare, that I suppliantly beg of Him that he may be pleased so to wash and purify me in the blood which my Sovereign Redeemer has shed for the sins of the human race, that under his shadow I may be able to stand at the judgment-seat." (1)

Not infrequently in his writings does he make mention of the Spirit of God.(2) A glance at chapter VII. of Book I. and chapter I. of Book III. of Calvin's Institutes shows something of Calvin's emphasis on the Holy Spirit. In his farewell to the Little Council he urged them to supplicate the assistance of the Spirit.(3) Beza says that the interval from May 11th to his death on the 27th, "he spent in almost constant prayer".(4)

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(1) Beza, p. lxxxv.

(2) See for instance, Rom. pp. 22, 80, 81, 91, 128, 129, 130, etc.

(3) Beza, p. xciii.

(4) Ibid., p. xciv.

G. The Integrity of His Life.

Again on this point, much might be said.

But we shall endeavor to confine ourselves to two or three points. The genuineness of the man is seen in his conduct at the time (1542) when the plague was raging fiercely in Geneva. The custom was to send the victims of the disease to hospitals outside the city. But as the assistance of a pastor was needed, and as Beza tells us, "the greater part declined from fear of infection, these volunteered themselves, viz., Calvin, Sebastian Castellio, and Peter Blanchet. Lots were cast, but when the lot fell upon Castellio, he changed his mind and impudently declined to undertake the office. Calvin wished to do it, but the Senate interposing to prevent him, Blanchet, who still volunteered, was appointed." (1) We are told that Blanchet fell a victim

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(1) Beza, p. xlii. Calvin wrote to Viret, Oct. 1542: "The pestilence also begins to rage here with greater violence, and few who are at all affected by it escape its ravages. One of our colleagues was to be set apart for attendance upon the sick. Because Peter (Blanchet) offered himself all readily acquiesced. If anything happens to him, I fear that I must take the risk upon myself, for, as you observe, because we are debtors to one another, we must not be wanting to those who, more than any others, stand in need of our ministry. And yet it is not my opinion, that while we wish to provide for one portion we are at liberty to neglect the body of the Church itself. But so long as we are in this ministry, I do not see that any pretext will avail us, if, through fear of infection, we are found wanting in the discharge of our duty when there is most need of our assistance." Bonnet-Constable, I. p. 334.

to his philanthropy in a few months.(1)

Calvin's enemies made many fruitless attempts to find a charge on which to attack his character. After showing the absurdity of several charges, such as heresy and expulsion from Geneva, Beza continues:

"Other charges are brought against him, but of what kind? He was ambitious, forsooth, nay, he even aspired to a new popedom--he who, above all things, preferred this mode of life, this republic, in fine, this Church, which I may with truth describe as the abode of poverty. But he was a hoarder of wealth!--he, whose whole effects, including the proceeds of his library, which was well sold, scarcely amounted to 300 gold pieces. Hence, when refuting this impudent calumny, he observed, not less shrewdly than truly, 'If some will not be persuaded while I am alive, my death, at all events, will show that I have not been a money-making man'. The Senate can testify that though his stipend was very small, yet he firmly refused any increase."(2)

The tributes paid him after his death by his enemies and by those who would have no sympathy with his theological position are sufficient to confirm the point under discussion. When Pope Pius IV., heard of his death he is said to have remarked: "The strength of that heretic consisted in this,--that money never had the slightest claim for him. If I had such servants, my dominions would extend from sea to sea."(3) Ernest Renan, the skeptic, pays a striking tribute: comparing him with Luther and others, "Calvin succeeded more than

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(1)Schaff, Vol. VII. p. 441.

(2)Beza, p. xcix.

(3)Cited on the authority of Schaff, VII. p. 839.

all, in an age and in a country which called for a reaction towards Christianity, simply because he was the most Christian man of his century."(1)

It is fitting to conclude with the closing testimony of Beza:

"Having been a spectator of his conduct for sixteen years, I have given a faithful account both of his life and of his death, and I can now declare, that in him all men may see a most beautiful example of the Christian character, an example which it is as easy to slander as it is difficult to imitate."(2)

#### H. Summary and Conclusion.

In this section of our study we had set out to investigate the spiritual qualifications of Calvin. His religious experience, his desire for truth coupled with his honesty and fairness, his emotional nature, his enthusiasm for the Scriptures, his reverence for God, love of Christ and fellowship with the Holy Spirit, together with evidence of and testimonies to the integrity of his life, have all been considered. In view of the evidence, is it not a proper conclusion, that, so far as spiritual qualifications are concerned, there is very little that is found wanting in John Calvin? Of his severity with his enemies and the question of dogmatic bias we shall have occasion to speak in a later chapter. We now pass on to consider certain indirect qualifications.

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(1)From his *Études d'histoire religieuse*, 7th ed. Paris 1880, p. 357. Cited by Schaff, VII. p. 280.

(2)Beza, p. c.

CHAPTER VI  
INDIRECT QUALIFICATIONS OF CALVIN

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INDIRECT QUALIFICATIONS OF CALVIN

A. Introduction.

In the present chapter it is our purpose to deal with certain matters which are not exactly direct qualifications, but matters which had much to do by way of influencing the sixteenth century interpreter. We have chosen to list them as indirect qualifications. Inasmuch as each one will be introduced in its place we proceed to consider first,

B. Calvin's Exegetical Heritage.

The question may properly be asked, what has exegesis previous to Calvin to do with Calvin's qualifications as an exegete? As we have already attempted to indicate, the connection is an indirect one, but it is nevertheless a real one. The answer in part is this: as any man is usually guided or influenced by what he takes over from his predecessors, so would Calvin tend to be molded according to the exegetical methods of the past. According as these were sound or unsound would Calvin tend to be qualified or disqualified for his work. If his exegetical heritage were a good one, then Calvin can fairly be said to have a great advantage; that in itself would help to properly qualify him for his work.

If the methods of past interpreters proceeded along dangerous and questionable lines, then Calvin stands at a great disadvantage. In order to make a really valuable contribution he must be discriminating and overcome the weakness and limitations of those before him. If in the face of a disqualifying heritage, if it may be so called, he laid hold of and developed a proper method which produced trustworthy results, then his contribution should be recognized to be the greater, however small or great it may be. In view of these factors it may be well to take note of the favorable and unfavorable circumstances into which John Calvin came. In brief the history of the situation is as follows:

Farrar in his "History of Interpretation" lists seven main periods and systems of Biblical exegesis as follows: 1. The Rabbinic, from Ezra to almost 500 A.D.; 2. The Alexandrian, from the epoch of Aristobolus about 180 B.C. to the death of Philo, and which was practically continued in the Christian schools of Alexandria, from Pantaenus (200 A.D.) down to Pierus; 3. The Patristic, from Clement of Rome, 95 A.D. to the twelfth century; 4. The Scholastic, from the days of Abelard, in the twelfth century to the Reformation. The other three are: 5. The Reformation era in the sixteenth century; 6. The Post-Reformation period which continued to the middle of the eighteenth, and, 7. The

Modern Epoch.(1) For our present purpose we are not concerned with the last three. Neither is the first of much import in this connection. But a brief statement about the second, third, and fourth periods is in order. Furthermore, only those points will be selected which have a more direct bearing upon the fifth or Reformation period of exegesis.

Considering first the Alexandrian system of interpretation, we find that it adheres to the allegorical method. One of the early leaders of this school was Philo. Farrar says of him that his works "are the epitome and the development of the Allegorists.----On allegory the whole Philonian philosophy entirely depends. ----Philo professes to respect the literal sense. It is, however, clear from the tenor of his works, as well as from his special observations, that he regards the literal sense as a sort of concession to the weak and ignorant."(2) Yet as he says later, "The Alexandrians, widely as they erred in exegesis, had still high truths to teach."

Since in the next or Patristic period of exegesis there are many more exponents of this kind of interpretation, it shall be well to pass on to that period, making this additional explanation, however, of

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(1) See Farrar, p. 12.

(2) Farrar, pp. 137, 139; cf. also P. Smith: Essays in Biblical Interpretation, p. 39 ff.

the Allegorical method. Immer has described it as follows:

"The Allegorical interpretation----presupposes that the Scriptures contain the truth; but since between the spirit of the Scriptures and that of the interpreter a considerable difference exists, the allegorist seeks to remove this difference by regarding what opposes him in Scripture as mere form, as external  $\sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha$ , and searches behind this for the deeper sense, which must be identical with that of the interpreter. The element of truth in this method is, that the Scriptures have a sense and spirit which does not always lie upon the surface, but must be sought for. But the error is the presupposition that this sense and spirit must be in accord with that of the interpreter and his time."(1)

Patristic exegesis presents more of a variety of method. In the writings of such men as Clement of Rome, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus there is much of value but they are often farfetched and fanciful in their interpretations.(2)

The Fathers of the third and later centuries may be divided into three exegetical schools. Those schools are the literal and realistic as represented by Tertullian and Cyprian. The value of their works is limited by their literal methods, their "arrogant dogmatism" and their rigid adherence to tradition.(3)

The second school is the allegorical whose

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(1) Immer, p. 84.

(2) Cf. Terry, p. 63 ff; Farrar, p. 166 ff; see The Ante-Nicene Fathers, VIII. p. 200 ff.

(3) Cf. Farrar, p. 177 ff.

foremost exponent was Origen. Athanasius and Cyril were also of those who perpetuated the methods of the Alexandrian system. Hilary of Gaul and Ambrose of Milan were dependent upon Origen. The third group was that which flourished at Antioch and adhered to the historic and grammatical in sharp anatagonism to the allegorical method of Alexandria. Of the Antiochian school, Farrar says that they "possessed a deeper insight into the true method of exegesis than any which preceded or succeeded it during a thousand years."(1) Of course he is speaking only of exegetical method and not theological questions. The rest of his statement is very much worth quoting:

"All that I here affirm is that their system of Biblical interpretation approached more nearly than any other to that which is now adopted by the Reformed churches throughout the world, and that if they had not been too uncharitably anathematized by the angry tongue, and crushed by the iron hand of a dominant orthodoxy, the study of their commentaries, and the adoption of their exegetical system, might have saved church commentaries from centuries of futility and error."

The outstanding representatives of this school were, Diodorus of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, John Chrysostom, and Theodoret of Cyrus. The latter two are probably the most celebrated. They made the verbal sense the starting point, and regarded it as the foundation

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(1) Farrar, p. 210; cf. also Neander: General History of the Christian Religion and Church, III. pp. 212 and 497 ff.; cf. also Ayer: A Source Book for Ancient Church History, pp. 15, 120, 199.

of exegesis. Yet they have recourse to allegory and the type. One of the chief criticisms against Antiochian exegesis is its barrenness.(1)

There are two other names to be mentioned in connection with patristic exegesis before proceeding to the scholastic period, and those are the names of Jerome and Augustine. These are especially significant for the purpose of this investigation because Calvin makes frequent reference to both of them, especially to Augustine.(2)

In a general way, the Western Church was far behind the Eastern in Biblical study and exegesis. The Latin fathers were lacking a knowledge of Greek. But Jerome is an outstanding exception. He knew Hebrew and Greek. However, according to Immer,

"His merit as an exegete rests less upon his investigation of the sense than upon a multitude of linguistic, historical, and especially archaeological notices.--- Jerome was not a deep and original, but a learned and many-sided spirit. His principal merit consists in his translation (Vulgate) of the Old and New Testaments from the original texts,----."(3)

"Augustine" says Immer, "was the counterpart of Jerome. He was a profoundly religious and speculative spirit; and sought to penetrate to the very depths of Scripture also. But he lacked not only a knowledge of the original languages of the Bible, but also historical and critical perception. He set forth, indeed, many good hermeneutical principles, as e.g. when he lays stress on the verbal sense; when he demands of his interpreter, above all things, love

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(1) See Immer, p. 33.

(2) Ante, p. 47.

(3) Immer, p. 35; cf. Farrar, p. 222 ff.

for his author; but he also did much harm by laying the foundation for the view (predominant throughout the Middle Ages) of a fourfold sense of Scripture.  
(1)

Terry and Farrar are agreed that Augustine's place as an exegete in no way compares with his rank as a theologian.(2)

Now in the years and centuries that follow Augustine, up to the beginnings of scholasticism in the middle of the eleventh century, the outstanding observation is that as far as any prominent interpreters of Scripture are concerned, there were none, or at least were few and far between. Farrar in his Chronology which is prefixed to his "Biblical Interpretation" lists only seven items between Theodoret who died in 457 to Anselm who died in 1109. Thus the glimmers of light from the Scriptures during these "Dark Ages" were few. Farrar has so well described this period that we shall use his words:

"Gregory the Great died in the year 604. With him the age of theological originality ceased for five centuries; and for four centuries more the study of the Bible was fettered by narrow restrictions, and misdirected in unprofitable efforts. We approach the subject of mediaeval exegesis with every desire to judge it in the kindest spirit; but we are compelled to say that during the Dark Ages, from the

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- (1) Immer, p. 35. The four senses referred to are the historical, the aetiological, the analogical, and the allegorical.  
(2) Terry, p. 657. Farrar, p. 234 ff.

seventh to the twelfth century, and during the scholastic epoch, from the twelfth to the sixteenth, there are but a few of the many who toiled in this field who added a single essential principle, or furnished a single original contribution to the explanation of the Word of God.----Not one writer in hundreds showed any true conception of what exegesis really implies. Sometimes, indeed, they repeat correct principles borrowed from Jerome and Augustine, but in practice they abandon these principles as soon as they are enunciated, and give us folio volumes of dogmas, morality, and system, which profess to be based on Scripture, but have for the most part no real connection with the passages to which they are attached. The Papal system had established a secure despotism over the minds of men." (1)

Such names as John of Damascus, the Venerable Bede, Alcuin, Strabo, Anselm of Laon are recognized but as to there being any exegetical value to their works, there is almost none. In the ninth century Johannes Scotus Erigena did show signs of independence and originality but he wrote no commentaries. "It was not until the twelfth century that the slightest breath of fresh life blew over the faded fields," says Farrar.(2) Although the Middle Ages added nothing yet in all fairness they rendered their successors this service, that they collected and preserved the results of the past.

Although the scholastics of the twelfth and thirteenth century did much writing and such names as those of Bernard, Abelard, Peter Lombard, Alexander

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(1)Farrar, pp. 245-246.

(2)Ibid., p. 255.

Hales, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventura and many others are familiar, yet so far as concerns Biblical interpretation they made no advance. Their exegesis was characterized by farfetched, extravagant, dogmatic, allegorical interpretations. Scripture was lifted out of its setting and turned into an "amulet or fetish with which the hierarchy---could do as they liked".(1)

Such was the exegetical heritage that came down to John Calvin's age. With the exception of Augustine and a few others of the earlier centuries there was little that would be helpful to one who stood out for better methods. In fact, it put forth many pitfalls and set up a wall of opposition. It made the demand for courage, independence, and originality that much greater.

We shall now view Calvin's nearer surroundings to see what favorable or unfavorable factors may be found in his own age.

### C. The Spirit of Calvin's Age.

In a sense this is a continuation of the preceding section on Calvin's exegetical heritage, this section continuing the account up to and into Calvin's

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(1)Farrar., p. 283 ff.; see Terry, p. 665 ff.; Immer, p. 36; also Schaff, Vol. V. Part I. p. 591 ff.

own life time. We have however set it apart because it marks a new era, not only a new era in exegesis but a new era in general learning and scientific discovery, in the church, and in national and international affairs. A new spirit was abroad which contributed to biblical interpretation as well as to other activities.

The movement known as the Renaissance had consisted in part of a revival of interest in classical literature. With it was a new interest in the Greek and Hebrew languages. As Beard has said, the Reformation was "the life of the Renaissance infused into religion under the influence of men of the grave and earnest Teutonic race; a return to nature which was not a rebellion against God, an appeal to reason which left room for loyal allegiance to the Bible and to Christ." (1)

In the sixteenth century the whole Papal system had sunk to such a state of formalism and corruption that there were those who were reacting against it and dared to stand out for a purer religion. There was a new interest in the Scriptures. The Waldenses had turned to them as their authority; Wycliff had translated them; the Brethren of the Common Life had engaged in their study; while Hus had inaugurated the Bohemian

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(1) Hibbert Lectures, p. 2.

Reformation. Note should be made of the spirit and contribution of such men as Lorenzo Valla, who insisted that Scripture be interpreted according to the law of grammar and the laws of language; Jacques Le Fevre, who also helped break the yoke of ecclesiastical and scholastic tradition and who published in 1523 the first French version of the Scriptures; Reuchlin, who did for the Old Testament what Erasmus did for the New-- published a Hebrew grammar and thus opened the way and stimulated interest in the study of the Old Testament in the original; and Erasmus, who put in place a foundation stone of the Reformation when he published in 1516 an edition of the Greek New Testament, being <sup>in addition</sup> ~~in~~ no mean theologian. Erasmus has been regarded as one of the chief founders of modern textual and Biblical criticism. To him Calvin was much indebted for he had done a piece of pioneer work.

Above all one should place the great German reformer, Martin Luther. He openly declared war on papal bondage. He gave the Germans their Bible and made a contribution to exegesis comparable to that of Calvin's. Besides Luther, there were Melanchthon and Zwingli, Oecolampadius and Bucer, Bullinger and Beza.

"Among all of these", says Farrar, "there was a general agreement in principles, a rejection of scholastic methods, a refusal to acknowledge the exclusive dominance of patristic authority and

tradition; a repudiation of the hitherto dominant fourfold meaning; an avoidance of allegory; a study of the original languages; a close attention to the literal sense; a belief in the perspicuity and sufficiency of Scripture; the study of Scripture as a whole, and the reference of its total contents to Christ." (1)

Thus we have before us the exegetical world into which Calvin came: although there had been hopeful signs in the early centuries it had fallen into the bypaths of the allegorical method. Throughout the Middle Ages and even through the scholastics of the later period little or no progress had been made. But the light had begun to dawn. Better methods were being used. It now remained for the man to come who would combine in larger measure the good qualities that were appearing and to continue the work that had not much more than been started.

Such were the disqualifying and qualifying factors in the situation in which Calvin found himself. Could he choose wisely and independently from the mixture of good and bad in his predecessors? Would he be able to make a contribution of his own that would make him worthy of a foremost place among the interpreters of Holy Writ? We are now ready to turn again to Calvin himself and to his works for two further considerations before entering directly into the treatment of his exegetical methods.

D. Calvin's View of the Scriptures.

It is commonly recognized that the particular view of the Scriptures held by an interpreter has much to do with his manner and method of treating them. What then, may it be asked, was Calvin's view of the Scriptures?

Before answering this question, we give the following statement by Immer which is helpful in understanding the point before us and which may be of use in estimating Calvin:

"Not a doctrinal presupposition, but an inner affinity on the part of the interpreter with the general spirit of Scripture, is indispensable to the understanding of Scripture .

He adds this further comment:

"Usually, however, this condition is found insufficient and another condition set up, viz. unconditional belief in the authority and inspiration of Scripture must be the key to the right understanding. ---If this unconditional belief in inspiration is, as a result of doubtful value for interpretation, as a  $\pi\rho\omicron\lambda\gamma\psi\iota\varsigma$  or presupposition it can only be deleterious.---Every presupposition which would in any way anticipate the exegetical result is inadmissible."  
(1)

It is true that Calvin lays down the premises of unconditional belief in no uncertain terms. This may be found in his Institutes. Men, learned men and talented men, "if they are not possessed of shameless effrontery, they will be compelled to confess that the

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(1) Immer, pp. 92-93.

Scripture exhibits clear evidence of its being spoken by God, and, consequently, of its containing his heavenly doctrine."(1) In the following section he says: "Let it therefore be held as fixed, that those who are inwardly taught by the Holy Spirit acquiesce implicitly in Scripture."(2) Calvin has already said in a preceding section that, "---the full authority which they ought to possess with the faithful is not recognized, unless they are believed to have come from heaven as directly as if God had been heard giving utterance to them".(3)

Now in this chapter there is nothing to be found which would indicate that Calvin was bound to a rigid defense of Scripture in every word and letter. He is concerned rather with the general content and truth of Scripture. Calvin's interest for his reader is a practical one having to do with the broader issues of life and faith. In fact one only needs to turn to his very next chapter to realize that Calvin allows for a larger view of the Scriptures, although insisting that the ultimate and higher source of confidence in them cometh only through the testimony of the Spirit in the human heart. But he does allow for that belief

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- (1)Book I. chap. VII. Sect. 4.
- (2)Ibid., Sect. 5.
- (3)Book I. chap. VII. Sect. 1.

in Scripture which comes as a result of "dogmatic reflection upon the impression which Scripture makes in the reader." (1) To quote Calvin:

"In vain were the authority of Scripture fortified by argument, or supported by the consent of the Church, or confirmed by any other helps, if unaccompanied by an assurance higher and stronger than human judgment can give. Till this better foundation has been laid, the authority of Scripture remains in suspense. On the other hand, when recognizing its exemption from the common rule, we receive it reverently, and according to its dignity, those proofs which were not so strong as to produce and rivet a full conviction in our minds, become most appropriate helps. For it is wonderful how much we are confirmed in our belief, when we more attentively consider how admirably the system of divine wisdom contained in it is arranged--how perfectly free the doctrine is from everything that savours of earth--how beautifully it harmonizes in all its parts--and how rich it is in all the other qualities which give an air of majesty to composition. Our hearts are still more firmly assured when we reflect that our admiration is excited more by the dignity of the matter than by the graces of style. For it was not without an admirable arrangement of Providence, that the sublime mysteries of the kingdom of heaven have for the greater part been delivered with a contemptible meanness of words. Had they been adorned with a more splendid eloquence, the wicked might have cavilled, and alleged that this constituted all their force. But now, when an unpolished simplicity, almost bordering on rudeness, makes a deeper impression than the loftiest flights of oratory, what does it indicate if not that the Holy Scriptures are too mighty in the power of truth to need the rhetorician's art?" (2)

One only needs to turn to his exegetical writings to see that variations in textual readings, minor discrepancies, and inconsistencies, were no stumbling-block to Calvin. In commenting on Mark 1:29

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(1) Immer, p. 92.

(2) Institutes, Bk. I. chap. VIII. Sect. 1.

and Matt. 8:14 ff., he points out that,

"There is reason to conjecture, that Matthew does not relate this history in its proper order: for Mark expressly states, that there were only four disciples who attended Christ. Besides, when he left the synagogue, he went straight to Peter's house; which also shows clearly, that Matthew did not observe, with exactness, the order of time."(1)

On Matt. 5:1 he writes: "---But in attending to the order of time, which I saw that the Spirit of God had disregarded, I did not wish to be too precise."(2)

Calvin is not troubled in the least when he finds that the Evangelists "were not very exact in arranging Christ's discourse, but frequently throw together a variety of sayings uttered by him." On Matt. 13:12 he says, "Luke mixes this sentence with other discourses of Christ spoken at different times, and likewise points out a different purpose for which Christ used these words."(3)

On Matt. 27:27 Calvin observes that, "Mark uses the word purple instead of scarlet; but though these are different colors, we need not trouble ourselves much about the matter."(4)

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(1)Harmony, I. p. 250

(2)Ibid., p. 259; see also p. 357

(3)Harmony, II. p. 105; see p. 154 also. On p. 271 Calvin notices what might appear to be a contradiction but gives a very natural explanation. III. p. 259, Calvin says, "Either Luke has inverted the order of the narrative, or our Lord twice endured this highly contemptuous treatment." He notes a similar difficulty in Matt. 28:2, III. p. 343.

(4)Harmony, III. p. 291.

He has already called attention to Matt. 27:9:

"How the name of Jeremiah crept in, I confess that I do not know, nor do I give myself much trouble to inquire. The passage itself plainly shows that the name of Jeremiah has been put down by mistake, instead of Zechariah; for in Jeremiah we find nothing of this sort, nor anything that even approaches to it." (1)

Thus it is seen that Calvin did not hesitate to admit incidental errors which did not touch the essentials of faith. But it should not be forgotten that he looked to the Spirit as having been the author of Scripture in the larger sense. For instance on II Cor. 7:8 he hesitates, because "if we admit, that Paul had felt dissatisfied with what he had written, there would follow an inconsistency of no slight character--that the former Epistle had been written under a rash impulse, rather than under the guidance of the Spirit." (2)

As suggested above, Calvin's interest is practical. He is interested in the salvation of men and he realizes the important part that faith and doctrine play as means to the greater end. This is to be seen in such passages as the following from his Commentary on John:

"In short we ought to believe that the doctrine of Scripture is so full and complete in every respect, that whatsoever is defective in our faith ought justly to be attributed to ignorance of the Scriptures." (3)

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- (1) Harmony, III. p. 272.
- (2) Cor., II. p. 272.
- (3) John, II. p. 253.

Calvin concludes this Commentary with the following paragraph:

"Yet we ought to remember what we formerly stated, that the summary which the Evangelists have committed to writing, is sufficient both for regulating faith and for obtaining salvation. That man who has duly profited under such teachers will be truly wise. And, indeed, since they were appointed by God to be witnesses to us, as they have faithfully discharged their duty; so it is our duty, on the other hand, to depend wholly on their testimony, and to desire nothing more than what they have handed down to us; and especially, because their pens were guided by the sure providence of God, that they might not oppress us by an unlimited mass of narratives, and yet, in making a selection, might make known to us all that God knew to be necessary for us, who alone is wise, and the only fountain of wisdom; to whom be praise and glory for ever. Amen."  
(1)

On questions of authorship of some of the New Testament books, Calvin does not hesitate to exercise the freedom of the Early Church. On the Epistle to the Hebrews he says:

"I, indeed, can adduce no reason to shew that Paul was its author; for they who say that he designedly suppressed his name because it was hateful to the Jews, bring nothing to the purpose; for why, then, did he mention the name of Timothy? as by this he betrayed himself. But the manner of teaching, and the style, sufficiently shew that Paul was not the author; and the writer himself confesses in the second chapter that he was one of the disciples of the Apostles, which is wholly different from the way in which Paul spoke of himself. Besides, what is said of the practice of catechising in the sixth chapter, does not well suit the time or age of Paul. There are other things which we shall notice in their proper places."  
(2)

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(1) John, II. pp. 299-300.  
(2) Hebrews, p. xxvii.

Calvin is inclined to doubt that the Second Epistle of Peter was written by the Apostle, yet he saw nothing in it "unworthy of Peter".(1)

We have thus tried to give a fair presentation of Calvin's view of the Scriptures. It is beyond doubt that Calvin possessed that "inner affinity" with the general spirit of the Scriptures which is so essential a qualification for the exegete. But did Calvin go beyond that and allow his implicit faith in them to pre-determine his exegetical results? The answer to this question will be reviewed in a later chapter and so we pass on to the consideration of Calvin's exegetical aims.

#### E. Calvin's Exegetical Aims.

The purpose or goal that an interpreter sets before himself is also a matter of no small importance in understanding and estimating him. According as his aims are consistent, according as his aims are adequate, according as his aims are worthy and are in harmony with Scripture is he properly fitted to undertake the work of the exegete. It is for this reason that Calvin's exegetical aims are included in the list of indirect qualifications.

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(1) See Catholic Epistles, p. 363.

Calvin's aims in his exegetical works might best be described in three groups, his ultimate aim, what we have chosen to call his intermediate aims, and his immediate aim.

1. His Ultimate Aim.

Considering first Calvin's ultimate aim, it may quite well be summed up in his Preface to the Psalms. Although Calvin has in mind that one particular book, yet it is typical of his aim in his other exegetical writings.

"In one word, not only will we here find general commendations of the goodness of God, which may teach men to repose themselves in him alone, and to seek all their happiness solely in him; and which are intended to teach true believers with their whole hearts confidently to look to him for help in all their necessities; but we will also find that the free remission of sins, which alone reconciles God towards us, and procures for us settled peace with him, is so set forth and magnified, as that here there is nothing wanting which relates to the knowledge of eternal salvation." (1)

This practical aim of Calvin's must not be lost from sight. Indeed, it will not be forgotten by the reader of his commentaries, for on almost every page Calvin draws some lesson. Such expressions as "let us", "we are admonished", "we must remember", "they instruct us", "here, then, we are taught", "we learn", etc., are very frequent. In fact, a large proportion

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(1) Preface to Psalms, p. xxxix.

of Calvin's lines is given over to application. This may be observed as indicated.

It is to be remembered that Calvin was a pastor, and as such was zealous for the spiritual, moral and social welfare of his flock. He was as ready to share their burdens as he was to take up his pen in defense of purer doctrine. And what could be more desirable in the exegete, than that he have the burden for the salvation of men ever upon his heart? This brings us naturally to what we have chosen to call Calvin's intermediate aim.

## 2. His Intermediate Aim.

One of the battles which Calvin and all the reformers had to fight was that for pure and sound doctrine. Theirs was the task to destroy the superstitions, to rescue the truth of Scripture from erroneous interpretations imposed upon it, to defend that which they believed to be true and to construct anew from Scripture that faith which would satisfy their hearts and minds and meet the needs of their time. In this battle, John Calvin might well be assigned the position of commander in chief. Of them all he was foremost as the theologian of the Reformation.(1)

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(1)Schaff, Vol. VII. p. 260, says, "Calvin was, first of all, a theologian". Melanchthon called him

Calvin's interest in doctrine is seen in such a passage as this which is taken from the dedicatory epistle of his Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists; yet it is very significant to note that it is secondary and incidental. He writes to the Burgomasters and Council of the Noble City of Frankfort,

"With regard to yourselves, most noble Lords, as you detest every kind of leaven, by which the native purity of the Gospel is corrupted, and show that you have nothing more at heart than to defend and maintain the pure doctrine, as it was delivered by Christ, I feel assured that this production, which opens up the treasure of the Gospel, will receive your warmest approbation,----."(1)

That Calvin is concerned with doctrine, but first of all with the Scriptures, we cite from his words on Romans 4:23: "Wherefore if we will handle the sacred histories purely and godly, we must remember they are to be so handled, that we may reap thence the fruit of sound doctrine---."(2) He speaks of "labouring faithfully to open up this treasure for the use of the people of God"--this contains his ultimate and immediate aims

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emphatically "The Theologian". Scaliger wrote, "Calvin is alone among theologians." See Schaff, VII. p. 260. P. Smith would ascribe the name of the leading theologian of the Reformation to Calvin. Essays in Biblical Interpretation, p. 82. Gilbert says of him, "He was not only the theologian of his century, but also the expositor." The Interpretation of the Bible, p. 208.

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(1)Harmony, I., p. xxxiii.  
(2)Rom., p. 121.

and shows how this intermediate aim is but incidental. Let us turn now to his immediate aim.

### 3. His Immediate Aim.

This aim, and for our purpose it is the most important of all, Calvin had clearly set forth in the opening paragraph in his dedicatory epistle of his Commentary on Romans. He writes to his friend Simon Grynaeus:

"I remember that, three years ago, when we communed familiarly between ourselves of the best kind of expounding the Scripture, that reason which pleased you greatly was also, at the same time, before all others approved of me; for we were both of this mind, that the principal point of an interpreter did consist in a plain briefness. And truly, seeing this is in a manner his whole charge to show forth the mind of the writer whom he hath taken upon him to expound."  
(1)

This statement is seen to involve two things: to be brief, and to reveal the mind of the author. We are not so much concerned with the first, except to say that this desire for brevity probably accounts for the fact that Calvin passes over much, and also omits much of the process or evidence that he himself used in arriving at his exegetical conclusion. For the student who is interested in that process and in evaluating his conclusions this is somewhat of a loss. Yet Calvin kept before him his ultimate aim of being of "service

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(1) Rom., p. xvii.

to the Church" as he often expresses it.(1) It is only fair that Calvin be judged in this light.

As to the second part of Calvin's statement, "the whole charge (is) to show forth the mind of the writer", there is ample evidence to show that he endeavored faithfully to carry out this purpose. As the chapters which follow will be more fully concerned with this point, we shall pass it by with the citation of one or two examples. For instance it is for this very reason that he sharply criticises Augustine on John 1:16. Speaking of Augustine's interpretation of the phrase "and grace for grace", he says it "is piously and judiciously said, but has nothing to do with the present passage", and then goes on to give his own reasoned explanation of the passage.(2)

In explaining Romans 4:19 Calvin enters at length into that which was in the Apostle's mind, trying to reconstruct the Old Testament background which was involved in Paul's reasoning, and thus to show the various steps and turns in his thought process.(3) Such phrases as these are not infrequently found, "the apostle's mind is"(4), "this sentence, therefore, is as much as if Paul had said"(5), "the natural sense of Paul"(6), "as though

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- (1)Romans, p. xix; cf. Preface to Psalms, p. xlix; Harmony, I., p. xxxii.
- (2)John, I. p. 51.
- (3)See Rom., p. 116.
- (4)Ibid., p. 159.
- (5)Ibid., p. 195.
- (6)Ibid., p. 197.

Paul's mind were" (1), etc.

Calvin is seen therefore, to be proceeding along such lines as those laid down by Immer: "The interpreter must, above all, never forget that the sense of the author is a historical fact, and that the interpretation is properly nothing else than a piece of historical inquiry." That Calvin was not infallible in his application of this principle, we shall have occasion to show later, but at least this much can be said at this point, that as far as his immediate aims were concerned he showed a tremendous improvement over those who for centuries had been the victims of the allegorical method. This did much to qualify him to become the leading exegete of the Reformation.

These lines from the closing paragraph to his dedicatory epistle of his Commentary on Romans are interesting for certain other sidelights which they throw on Calvin's motives, and with them we conclude this section on Calvin's exegetical aims as well as our discussion of indirect qualifications:

"Wherefore, seeing it is not to be looked for in this present life, albeit it were greatly to be wished, that there were a perpetual consent amongst us in expounding the places of Scripture; we must do our endeavour, that (we be) neither stirred with desire of innovation, nor compelled through lust of

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(1) Rom., p. 248.

n defaming others, nor moved by any hatred, nor yet tickled with any ambition, but only constrained thereunto of necessity, seeking nothing else than the public profit of the Church, (when) we depart from the judgments of those (who) were before us; and, again, that the same be done in the exposition of the Scripture; for concerning the points of religion, wherein chiefly God would have his to be of one mind, less liberty is to be taken. The readers shall easily find in me care of both these. But because it is not seemly for me either to judge or pronounce of myself, I do willingly permit this office to you----." (1)

#### F. Summary and Conclusion.

In this chapter we have considered four subjects which have an indirect bearing upon Calvin as an exegete. In the first place we noted the unfavorable heritage which he had received from the past. The fact that during the Middle Ages men had become so addicted to the allegorical and scholastic methods constituted a real danger to any one who should undertake to expound the Holy Writings. An interpreter would be required to demonstrate an unusual amount of independence and sound judgment in order to make a dependable contribution.

On the other hand there was much in Calvin's own time which was favorable to him and contributed to his success. The renewed interest in the classical studies

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(1) Romans, p. xxi.

as well as in New Testament study gave a real impetus to Calvin in addition to supplying him with new editions of Greek authors and of the Greek New Testament.

In the third place it was seen that Calvin's sympathetic and loyal, yet open minded and grammatico-historical attitude toward the Scriptures placed him in a position to make a vast improvement over previous authors and even to make a contribution that would stand for years to come.

Our last section endeavored to show how Calvin was indirectly qualified by reason of his sound exegetical aims. Inasmuch as these have much to do in determining the nature of his work it should be remembered that his aim was first of all a practical one. As a means to this end he was interested in doctrine. But as an exegete his aim was to reveal the mind of the author. In these we have that which is in accord with the best exegetical principles.

In conclusion we may say that a study of our author in these four respects has shown him to be the better fitted for his work.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS OF PART ONE

## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS OF PART ONE

Thus far it has been our purpose to estimate John Calvin's qualifications as an exegete. His physical, intellectual, educational, moral and spiritual qualifications have been considered together with certain indirect qualifications. These have been reviewed while both his life and his exegetical works have been constantly before us.

In conclusion it may be said that in spite of the frailty of his health, he demonstrated a capacity for work that has seldom, if ever, been surpassed, all things being considered. That he was gifted with a mind of unusual powers, his enemies as well as his friends are willing to admit. His education, training and general acquirements were such as to place him in the forefront of his time and to cause him to compare favorably with those who preceded and those who have succeeded him. Although he lacked certain opportunities and advantages and the light of more recent discoveries, nevertheless, in spite of this, he was unusually qualified and commands the respect of those of our own age. Morally and spiritually he presents an example of Christian character that is "as difficult to slander as it is difficult to emulate". Besides, in order to be

properly qualified he had to defy much of the past and to properly orient himself in and estimate the times in which he lived, in order to build upon and carry on that which had been begun. With a leaning toward a rather dogmatic view of Scriptures, he shows many evidences of preserving that freedom from presupposition which is so detrimental to the results of an exegete. Calvin also continues to stand in a favorable light when his exegetical aims are considered, the chief ones of which are his desire, first of all, to reveal the mind of the author, and to open up the treasures of the Word that they may be of service to men.

Now taken all in all it might seem to the reader that the author is prejudiced in favor of Calvin and that he has fallen from the position of the impartial investigator and has tried to make a case for Calvin. It is true for the most part that as we have sifted his qualifications, very little has been found that is adverse. But we would not stop here to argue our case. We are entirely willing to have our findings judged in the light of the evidence. For us, that evidence demands the conclusion that, so far as qualifications were concerned, John Calvin commands the deepest admiration.

In that which follows we shall have occasion to consider more definitely and fully his exegetical works. In this part we shall see that Calvin made his

mistakes as well as his helpful contributions, that he himself fell into ways for which he condemned others, that he was not always true to the principles which he had himself laid down, and that Calvin is to be tested and evaluated as we would any other human agent that has undertaken to interpret the Sacred Word. Let us turn immediately to this task.

PART TWO

THE EXEGETICAL METHODS OF JOHN CALVIN

CHAPTER VIII

THE GENERAL EXEGETICAL METHODS OF CALVIN

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### THE EXEGETICAL METHODS OF JOHN CALVIN

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#### THE GENERAL EXEGETICAL METHODS OF CALVIN

##### A. Introduction.

##### 1. The Plan and Method of Part Two.

At the outset it should be stated that the chapters which are before us are a result of two lines of procedure: the first was a careful study of the principles and methods of hermeneutics. This was done in order that the eye might be sharpened and the understanding quickened for the investigation of Calvin's works. At the same time Calvin's exegetical writings were being read, weighed and the results carefully recorded. This latter process, being concerned with the very center of this inquiry, naturally assumed the more important place and has therefore been pursued with time and care focused upon it.

The plan and method of this part of our discussion is a result therefore of the process described. But it is primarily a product of the second line of procedure: that is, we are concerned with Calvin's exegetical methods and not with the science of hermeneutics in general. Furthermore, those points shall be emphasized

which have been found to be of greater importance in the source materials. And likewise lesser points will be given a proportionate place. It is only fair to Calvin, as well as the more scientific method of procedure, to discover and to represent Calvin as he really is.

The methods of Calvin will be treated in the order that would be most natural to Calvin himself; that is, we shall begin where our author usually began, considering first the attention given to the general plan and purpose of the writing.

## 2. Calvin's Method in Relation to His Practical Purpose.

It seems appropriate and necessary that a word should be said at this point about one rather important and conspicuous characteristic of Calvin's writings. In view of his practical purpose and his desire for brevity, which was treated in the preceding chapter, Calvin often passes over many things that other writers have found significant. In addition to this he often gives the reader the fruit of his work without detailing to him the process or for what reasons he arrived at his conclusions. This is seen at once to be both a virtue and a disadvantage--a virtue for the one interested only in the spiritual benefits to be derived from him, a disadvantage to the one desiring to test Calvin's

results in order to ascertain their dependability, or to the one interested in learning the art of exegesis.

Yet how often it is found that Calvin has hit the point of a word or a passage without calling attention directly to it. For instance, in his remarks on John 3:2 where it reads that Nicodemus came to him by night, Calvin dwells particularly on the fact that this meeting took place at night and not in the daytime.(1) Nicodemus because of timidity or shame came under cover of darkness. Now as we note the Greek text, we find that it is the genitive case that is used,  $\nu\upsilon\kappa\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$  , thus describing night as to kind of time. Modern grammarians emphasize this use of the genitive.(2) Whether or not Calvin had this point in mind we shall not attempt to say, but he must be given credit for his results.

One cannot help feeling sometimes that Calvin might have done better and have made a more permanent contribution had he curtailed his applications and given more space to exegesis. Yet he must be judged in the light of both his ultimate and immediate aims. We turn now to his exegetical methods.

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(1)John, I. p. 105.

(2)Cf. Robertson, pp. 493, 495; Dana and Mantey, p. 77.

B. His Attention to the General Plan  
and Purpose of a Writing.

The importance of ascertaining the course of thought in an entire writing is commonly recognized by students of the science of hermeneutics.(1) Immer remarks that, "The ascertaining of the intention of a writing is the highest, but in part also the most difficult, task of exegesis."(2)

It is a significant fact that Calvin prefaces his commentaries with a section which is, in most cases, "the argument", but in some books, it is called a "preface". This "argument" is found to precede every one of his commentaries on the New Testament except Philemon, and there we find an introductory paragraph which takes its place.

In his argument it is customary for Calvin to consider such matters as the occasion of the writing, the intention of the writing, the people addressed, and the plan and scope of the writing. Take, for instance, his argument to I Corinthians. Calvin begins with a brief paragraph urging the advantages to be gained from the study of this epistle. This he follows with a paragraph intended to orient the reader with respect to city of Corinth, giving a bit of its history, describing

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(1)Terry, p. 219; Immer, p. 210.  
(2)P. 310.

its location, connecting it with Paul's visit there, portraying something of the history of the situation in the church there that called forth this letter from the Apostle. Calvin takes up the situation itself, pointing out and describing the problems with which Paul must deal. Along with this Calvin shows an ability to inject here and there a sentence which cannot but stimulate the reader to make practical use of what he is reading. He does this in such a way as not to make it appear "preachy". In short, he introduces one to the atmosphere and to the values as well as to the writer and those for whom the epistle was first written.

After Calvin has put his reader "in possession of the design that Paul had in view in writing this Epistle," he says "I shall now take in the sum of the argument----,"(1) and this he proceeds to do section by section and chapter by chapter. His "argument"s to the Pauline Epistles are especially fine, particularly Romans, the two Corinthians, and the letters to the Galatians and the Ephesians. His argument on the synoptic Gospels as prefaced to his Harmony is interesting for its splendid explanation of the word "gospel". In this he places the word "gospel" in its New Testament setting, thus preparing his reader to understand these books in

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(1)P. 40.

their Old Testament background and their New Testament foreground.

By his method he demonstrates that he has in hand that larger context or environment which is so frequently of great value for the proper understanding of a smaller portion.

C. His Attention to Textual Problems.

1. The Text Which Calvin Used.

One of the greatest debts that the Protestant church owes to those of the Reformation time, outside of the Reformers themselves, is that to Desiderius Erasmus for his edition of the Greek New Testament, which he published first in 1516, with a second edition in 1519, a third in 1522, a fourth, much improved in 1527, and a fifth in 1535. Luther had used Erasmus' second edition as the basis of his translation.(1) That Calvin possessed and used a copy of Erasmus' Greek New Testament is highly probable, both from the circumstance of its wide circulation previous to Calvin's time, and because of Calvin's occasional references to it.(2)

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(1) Cf. Schaff: Companion to the Greek Testament and English Version, p. 229 ff.

(2) See Calvin's Commentary on Romans, p. 8 where he points out that Erasmus supplies  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$ ; see also Calvin's frequent references to Erasmus' interpretations, ante, p. 49. It is very likely that Calvin was familiar with Erasmus' Greek Testament.

But there were other editions of the New Testament in the original. Erasmus had put forth his first edition in less than six months, in great haste and full of errors, in order that he might anticipate the publication of the Complutensian Polyglot, which was actually printed in 1514 but not given to the public until 1522.(1) Whether Calvin had the use of this production by Cardinal Ximenes we are not able to say with certainty. But it is highly probable that he did, for one with Calvin's enthusiasm for the New Testament and liking for Greek would hardly have gone without any such book as this, even though only about six hundred copies were printed and sold for the rather high price of six and one-half ducats per copy (about \$19.50). Today, we are told, copies are exceedingly rare and dear.  
(2)

Simon Colinaeus, step-father of Robert Stephanus, brought out an edition of the Greek New Testament at Paris, in 1534; but of more importance are those by Robert Stephanus (or Stephens) himself,

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- (1) See Schaff: Companion to the Greek New Testament and English Version, p. 232; also Vol. V. Pt. II., p. 638 of his History of the Christian Church. Cf. also A. T. Robertson: An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament, pp. 268 and 269.  
(2) Cf. Schaff's Companion to the Greek Testament, p. 234; also Kenyon: Textual Criticism of the New Testament, p. 267.

published at Paris in 1546 and 1549. His "royal edition", as it was known, came out in 1550 from Paris. His last edition appeared the year following from Geneva, the adopted city of Calvin. This edition of 1551 is remarkable for the versicular division which here appears for the first time, and which Robert Stephanus is said to have made on horseback on a journey from Paris to Lyons.(1)

Theodore de Beza, Calvin's friend and successor at Geneva, also published four editions of Stephen's Greek text with some changes in 1565, 1582, 1588 and 1598. But all of these came out after Calvin's death. Yet the fact that his first one appeared the year following the great Reformer's death shows that Geneva had become much interested in the Greek Testament.(2)

That Calvin had access to these editions and to other manuscripts of the New Testament is evident from such references as the following: "though some copies, instead of ἐλεημοσύνην alms, read δικαιοσύνην righteousness", Matt. 6:1(3); "Robert Stephens quotes

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(1)Kenyon: Textual Criticism of the New Testament, pp. 270-271; cf. also Schaff: Companion to the Greek Testament, pp. 236-237.

(2)Schaff: Companion to the Greek Testament, p. 237 ff.

(3)Harmony, I. p. 309.

a Greek manuscript, in which the name Jehoiakim is introduced", Matt. 1:6(1); on John 1:3 concerning the reading of *καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἐν ὃ γέγονεν* continuously rather than connecting *ὃ γέγονεν* with verse 4, Calvin says, "Though there is a variety of readings in this passage, yet for my part, I have no hesitation in taking it continuously-----and in this almost all the Greek manuscripts, or at least those of them which are most approved, are found to agree"(2); and II Cor. 1:20, "Here also the Greek manuscripts do not agree"(3)

## 2. Textual Problems Recognized and Considered.

That Calvin was alert to the text itself is seen from the references already given. We need only supplement with additional examples and show how Calvin treated such problems.

On John 3:31 he notes that "In the second clause the old Latin translation has only once the words, is of the earth; but the Greek manuscripts agree in repeating the words twice." Calvin explains the disappearance of the words from the Latin manuscript by saying that he suspected that "ignorant men considered

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(1)Harmony, I. p. 91.

(2)John, I. p. 30.

(3)Cor., II. p. 138. See also Cor., II. pp. 197, 312; Eph., p. 213.

the repetition superfluous, and therefore erased it." He goes on then to give the meaning of the verse.(1)

Concerning the doubtful passage in John 8:1-11, Calvin admits that "It is plain enough that this passage was unknown anciently to the Greek Churches; and some conjecture that it has been brought from some other place and inserted here. But as it has always been received by the Latin Churches, and is found in many old Greek manuscripts, and contains nothing unworthy of an Apostolic spirit, there is no reason why we should refuse to apply it to our advantage."(2)

Calvin's method of dealing with such problems is typically illustrated in the lines just quoted. Calvin makes use of the best light he can get from the manuscripts and other ancient authority and then he applies the test of harmony with the spirit and with the whole of the New Testament. Where the problem concerns only a word or a phrase he is usually guided by the context, trying to search out what was probably in the mind of the writer. Thus in I Cor., 15:49 he says, "Some have thought, that there is here an exhortation to a pious and holy life, into which Paul was led by way of digression; and on that account they have changed

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(1)See John, I. p. 136. This is the reading adopted by the Revisers; the other is given in the margin.  
(2)John, I. p. 319.

the verb from the future tense into the hortative mood. Nay more, in some Greek manuscripts the reading is φορέσωμεν (let us bear) but as that does not suit so well in respect of connection, let us adopt in preference what corresponds better with the object in view and the context".(1) Other examples of this same method of treatment may be found on I Cor. 15:51, II Cor. 1:6 and 1:11, Matt. 6:1.

On I Cor. 7:34, on the phrase καὶ μεμέρησται Calvin rejects the old Latin translation, and the literal reading of the Greek, saying that, "as this interpretation is somewhat at variance with the simple meaning of the word, I do not approve it, especially as the meaning of the other reading (which is found also in some Greek manuscripts) is more suitable and less forced. We may, accordingly, understand it in this manner-- that a man who is married is divided, inasmuch as he devotes himself partly to God and partly to his wife, and is not wholly and exclusively God's."(2) Thus Calvin appeals both to the meaning of the word as well as to

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(1)Cor., II. p. 55. It is interesting that Meyer after reviewing the textual evidence for the reading φορέσωμεν which as far as the number of manuscripts is concerned has the preponderance of evidence in favor of φορέσωμεν, chooses to retain the very ancient Recepta because "it is necessary in the connection". See Meyer, p. 338.

(2)Cor., I. p. 261.

the connection for a decision when manuscript evidence is not clear or decisive.(1)

### 3. His Lack of Critical Apparatus.

Now it cannot be said that Calvin has made much of a contribution to the science of textual criticism. In fact that science had not yet been developed. It could not begin its operations before a collection of textual material from manuscripts, ancient versions, and patristic writers had been made. Yet as can be seen, a beginning had been made and the Reformers contributed at least their own interest, increasing the spirit of inquiry which would in the succeeding years advance textual study.(2) Calvin may be said to have made use of the best knowledge then to be had, but in this respect he has not much of value for the modern student, for he has been far surpassed by more recent authors.

By way of conclusion it may be added that because of Calvin's interest in the text--and he very frequently solved such problems aright, as has been shown--he has made himself a more dependable and more highly respected exegete in the eyes of those who

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(1)For other textual problems recognized and considered see Cor., I. pp. 65, 295, 396; Cor., II. p. 59; Rom., pp. 52, 95, 116, 250; John, II. pp. 297. 238. 37; and Heb., p. 194.

(2)Cf. Schaff, VII. p. 529.

consider the criticism of the text the starting point for the interpreter.

D. His Attention to the Grammatical Sense of a Passage.

Terry in his "Biblical Hermeneutics" has the following paragraph which is very much to the point in relation to the study now before us. It reads:

"The grammatical sense is to be always sought by a careful study and application of the well-established principles and rules of the language. A close attention to the meaning and relations of words, a care to note the course of thought, and to allow each case, mood, tense, and the position of each word, to contribute its part to the general whole, and a caution lest we assign to words and phrases a scope and conception foreign to the usus loquendi of the language--these are rules, which, if faithfully observed, will always serve to bring out the real import of any document." (1)

In another place Terry has remarked that,

"---especially is it necessary to ascertain the correct grammatical construction of sentences. Subject and predicate and subordinate clauses must be closely analyzed, and the whole document, book, or epistle, should be viewed, as far as possible, from the author's historical standpoint." (2)

It appears most natural to consider first,

1. His Attention to the Grammatical Structure of Sentences.

The following are examples of this method as used by John Calvin:

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(1) Terry, p. 210.

(2) Ibid., pp. 204-205.

On Romans 6:23 which reads: τὰ ὀψώνια τῆς ἁμαρτίας θάνατος, τὸ δὲ χάρισμα τοῦ Θεοῦ ζωὴ αἰώνιος ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ Κυρίῳ ἡμῶν,

Calvin says that "They are deceived which translate this proposition (the last one) thus, life eternal is the gift of God, as though righteousness were the subjectum, (subject,) and gift of God predicatum, (predicate;) because that sense should make nothing unto the contra-position---". He goes on to further support and explain his stand. Calvin's conclusion is the natural one in view of the article τὸ with χάρισμα and in view of the connection.(1) Nothing has been found in modern commentators but what is in harmony with Calvin's interpretation.(2)

Calvin is particularly careful to observe the relation of clauses. In Luke 2:34-35, Simon has said unto Mary that "this child is set for the rising and falling of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against; 35 yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul; that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." Calvin in referring to the last clause of verse 35 objects to those who would connect this clause with verse 34 and who make the first clause about a sword a parenthesis. He says, "It is better, I think,

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(1)Romans, p. 167.

(2)Cf. Meyer, Samday, Godet ad loc.

to refer it to the whole passage." The particle  $\delta\tau\omega\varsigma$   
 $\delta\tau\omega\varsigma$  he regards as expressing not a cause but merely  
a consequence.(1)

Commenting on John 1:5, he calls attention  
to the two clauses, and explains them in their relation  
to one another and to the context.(2) Calvin notes that  
in John 2:17 only the first clause of Psalm 69:9 is  
quoted but that the second clause corresponds to the  
first, or rather is nothing else than a repetition  
explaining what had been said. The amount of both  
clauses is---."(3) In John 12:38 he deals with the  
clauses to advantage showing how in the first clause  
from Isaiah, the prophet foresees that Christ will be  
generally rejected by the Jews, and then in the second  
clause assigns the reason why they are so few who will  
accept him.(4)

We pass on by noting a very fine illustration  
of the way in which Calvin appreciates the grammatical  
construction and balance of sentences. It is to be  
found in his treatment of the opening verses of the

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(1)Harmony, I. p. 150.

(2)John, I. p. 33.

(3)John, I. p. 94. John 2:17 reads (R.V.): "His disciples  
remembered that it was written, Zeal for thy house  
shall eat me up." Psalm 69:9 has the additional  
clause, "And the reproaches of them that reproach  
thee are fallen upon me."

(4)Ibid., II. p. 41.



it that personal reference or interest which is so characteristic of the dative case.(1)

The very interesting use of the genitive of kind of time that is found in  $\nu\upsilon\kappa\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$  in John 3:2 has already been mentioned in another connection.(2) In John 8:25 Calvin accepts an interpretation more in accord with the accusative  $\tau\grave{\eta}\nu \acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta\grave{\nu}$  . Those, he says, who would take it as nominative are greatly mistaken, as though it were I am the beginning. He agrees that a preposition must be supplied and proceeds to interpret it as from the beginning.(3) This indeed is the rendering given to it by the Revisers. However this is a very difficult passage which it is not our purpose to settle. Calvin rejected other interpretations and accepted the one given because it seemed to be more in harmony with the case used. Meyer, nevertheless, calls Calvin's interpretation impossible after commending him for rejecting certain others. Westcott also regards that interpretation as questionable which Calvin gives. Yet modern commentators are far from agreed.(4) Calvin at least eliminated those which according to his knowledge of grammar were unsuitable and allowed for that one

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(1)See Dana and Mantey, p. 83 ff.

(2)Ante, p. 138.

(3)John, I. p. 334.

(4)Cf. Meyer and Westcott ad loc. Each gives an Additional Note on this particular problem.

which might fit in with the context; for a study of the context is not opposed to his interpretation. The chief argument which may be urged against it is that the verb would have been ἐλάλησα instead of λαλῶ.

In explaining the condensed antithesis in Romans 8:25, Calvin has arrived at that interpretation which others have succeeded in finding only with difficulty. Although Calvin does it by resolving two genitives into nominatives--in itself a rather hazardous step--yet he has given the sense. He translates the verse, "Therefore, as by the offense of one condemnation (came) upon all men; so, by the justification of one, justification of life (is come) upon all men." It is to be noted that he takes ἐνὸς as masculine, instead of neuter, as Sanday, Meyer, and Gifford prefer it.(1)

On Romans 6:5 he is able to decide between two opinions, rejecting the one that hath "a fuller sense" because it would require another case and because the other "agreeth better to the simplicity of the word."(2)

On Hebrews 9:1 Calvin has placed himself in such a position as to be in agreement with recent commentators of note, such as Westcott, by his choosing to

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(1) Romans, p. 142; cf. Sanday adloc.

(2) Romans, p. 150.

connect the two words, δικαίωμα λατρείας.(1)

Calvin appears to go astray however on ὄρκον in Luke 1:73. He would give it the place of an accusative of more precise definition. The reason he gives is "A common and well understood principle of language, that when the accusative case is put absolutely, there is a preposition to be understood by which it is governed." Now his principle may be all right but it does not work in this case for it is far more simple to take ὄρκον as in apposition to διαθήκης in the preceding verse. It has been attracted to the accusative by δὲ. This is more in harmony with the common style of Hebrew parallelism and is more agreeable to the context. Meyer, Godet, and Plummer are agreed as to this interpretation.

Calvin has made his occasional errors. But these are to be found in every interpreter. In spite of this Calvin shows himself to be both alert to and capable of handling matters of syntax having to do with case.

b. Mode. Inasmuch as mode has to do with "manner of affirmation"(2) and represents "an attitude of mind on the part of the speaker"(3), the exegete who observes and properly renders these qualities of the

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(1) Cf. Westcott's Note at end of Hebrews, Chap. 8, p. 232.

(2) It has been thus defined by Robertson, p. 912.

(3) Thus described by Moulton, p. 164.

Greek verb has gone far in apprehending the mind of the author with much of the original atmosphere of the passage.

Calvin on Matt. 7:1, although he does not apply the grammatical term, nevertheless in explaining the phrase *Μὴ κρίνετε* gives the true grammatical explanation. The grammarian would say, here is an instance of a prohibition expressed with the present tense of the imperative and forbids the continuance of an act. This is to be distinguished from that type of prohibition which is expressed by the aorist subjunctive and commands never to do a thing.(1) Calvin, on the passage cited writes: "These words of Christ do not contain an absolute prohibition from judging, but are intended to cure a disease, which appears to be natural to us all."(2) Thus Calvin without intruding the mechanics of the process had set forth in clear and lively fashion the sense most probably intended by its author.

The counterpart of the foregoing illustration is found a little later in Matt. 10:9. There the Greek reads *μὴ κερύσθητε*, do not provide, and is a plain illustration of a prohibition expressed by the aorist subjunctive forbidding a thing before it has begun.

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(1) Cf. Dana and Mantey, p. 301.

(2) Harmony, I. p. 345.

Calvin renders it true to its mode and grammatical construction: "Our Lord simply intended to forbid them to take anything for the journey."(1)

On the other hand one wonders if Calvin is justified in his preference for the imperative instead of the indicative in rendering the verb *συνδοκοδομεῖτε* in Ephesians 2:22. Although, as he says, the context will admit either, yet he prefers the imperative. He considers it an exhortation to the Ephesians to grow "in the faith of Christ, after having been once found in it, and thus to form a new part of the temple of God, the building of which through the gospel was then in progress in every part of the world."(2) It is strange that Calvin should have taken this position in view of verses 19 and 20 where the Apostle is clearly speaking of what the readers are, not what they ought to be. It is not likely that Paul intended any reference of exhortation to the future.(3)

On II Cor., 10:7 one is inclined to question Calvin's statement that *βλέπετε* might be taken either in the imperative or in the subjunctive mood. One can understand how it might be imperative, as indeed others have so taken it.(4) But one is puzzled how it might

(1) Harmony, I. p. 444.

(2) Ephesians, p. 245.

(3) Cf. Meyer and Abbott ad loc.

(4) Cf. Meyer ad loc.; cf. also Calvin in Cor., II. p. 326.

(5) Cf. Meyer ad loc.

be subjunctive. Calvin is right when he says it might be read either affirmatively or interrogatively. The R.V. reads it affirmatively and in the margin indicates the possibility of the interrogative form. Calvin himself however takes it affirmatively as a judgment of censure. He is not alone in this view.(1)

One cannot accuse Calvin of being too meticulous over small and unimportant things, at least from his point of view, for he remarks on I Cor. 1:26, "As the mood of the Greek verb ( βλέπετε ) is doubtful, and the indicative suits the context equally as well as the imperative, I leave it to the reader's choice which of them he may prefer."(2)

c. Tense. Modern students of the Greek New Testament are agreed that there is no element of the Greek language of greater importance than that of tense. As Dana and Mantey have said, "A variation in meaning exhibited by the use of a particular tense will often dissolve what appears to be an embarrassing difficulty, or reveal a gleam of truth which will thrill the heart with delight and inspiration."(3) Any one who has given

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(1)Cf. Meyer ad loc.

(2)Cor., I. p. 89. Cf. also John, II. p. 123.

(3)Dana and Mantey, p. 176.

thought to this matter at all knows how difficult it is to render adequately in English that which is oftentimes contained in a Greek tense. A. T. Robertson in a section on the "Bad influence of the Latin on Greek Grammarians" has these significant lines:

"Most of the older Greek grammars were made by men who knew Latin better than Greek. Even today the study of the Greek tenses is hampered by the standpoint of Latin idioms which developed under very different conditions. This is true of school grammars in particular, whereas Latin has had no influence on the Greek tenses themselves by the time of the Κοινή. The perfect and aorist blend in Latin, while that is not true in Greek till a very late date (1000 A.D.). The separate Greek development (cf. the Sanskrit) was due to the genius and spirit of the Greek people and has continued throughout the history of the language, though in modern times the Greek tenses have suffered serious modification." (1)

Therefore the point now up for consideration with respect to John Calvin's work is of no little importance and we turn to it with much interest.

In the light of what has been said, one would not be surprised to find <sup>that</sup> Calvin had failed to comprehend the significance of that which was so deeply wrought into the Greek language. Our first impressions were that Calvin had considerably confused the Greek tenses, especially the aorist and the perfect. But after more careful study our conclusion has been somewhat modified. Calvin's treatment of the tense of a verb often lacks

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(1) Robertson, p. 822.

that clear-cut interpretation which it might have had had he been able to divorce himself more completely from the Latin conception of tense and to understand it as the Greeks themselves understood and used it. Nevertheless, Calvin often approaches near to the meaning and not infrequently shows that he has sensed it clearly. It is appropriate and fair to add that it has been only in more recent times that the perfect and aorist have come back nearer to their original places. Robertson suggests that even Winer had not been altogether free from mistakes on tenses.(1)

That Calvin had the proper conception of the aorist is reflected by his remarks on Romans 8:30: "Paul according to the phrase of the Hebrew tongue, hath used the preter (aorist) tense in the verbs for the present tense." Mark what follows: "Surely, it is out of question, that a continual action is noted to this sense."

(2) The punctiliar idea of the aorist seems to hold true in what Calvin says about ἐβασίλευσεν in Romans 5:20.(3)

An interesting example is found in connection with John 18:24. Here Calvin goes against his own understanding of tense and chooses to render an aorist

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(1)Robertson, p. 821.

(2)Rom., p. 230.

(3)Ibid., p. 146.

as a pluperfect because the tense of ἔστειλε , he says, "has led many people into a mistake." The verse reads, ἀπέστειλεν οὖν αὐτὸν ὁ Ἄγγελος δεδεμένον πρὸς Καϊάφαν τὸν ἀρχιερέα. Now where Calvin makes his mistake is in reading this verse with that which follows. Indeed, if this is done, the pluperfect would be necessary. But this verse was evidently intended to conclude the paragraph which precedes in which case the aorist fits in perfectly. Our conclusion is that if the Reformer had held more strictly to the principle that the New Testament writers distinguished carefully by using the tense which would convey the exact idea(1), he would not have made this mistake.

A good test of an exegete's method and proficiency may be found in examining his treatment of the Greek perfect. Much of its richness lies in its presentation of action as having reached its termination in the past and existing in its finished results. Whether the emphasis lies on the completion of the action or on its finished results depends upon the meaning of the verb or upon the context. In Luke 1:27 the perfect participle μεμνηστευμένην is used. The verse is speaking of the angel Gabriel who was sent "to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph--".

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(1) Cf. Dana and Mantey, p. 177.

On this participle Calvin makes the significant remark that it "signifies that the virgin had then been engaged to her bridegroom, but was not yet given as a wife to her husband." (1) Calvin has called specific attention to those "existing results" implied in the tense used.

On John 3:18 Calvin may not refer very accurately to the tense by name yet he appears to have sensed its full import; "The past tense of the verb, is condemned already, ( ἤδη κέκριται , ) was used by him emphatically, ( ἐμφατικῶς , ) to express more strongly that all believers are utterly ruined." (2) Later, on μεταβέβηκε in 5:26 Calvin shows real discrimination. He remarks on the ignorance and rashness of some person who took more liberty than he ought and placed the verb in the future tense in one of the Latin copies. But the Greek word μεταβέβηκε (hath passed) has no ambiguity whatever. There is no impropriety in saying that we have already passed from death to life; for---they (the children of God) already sit in the heavenly glory with Christ by hope (Col. 3:3,) and they have the kingdom of God already established within them, (Luke 17:21)." (3)

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(1)Harmony, I. p. 32.

(2)John, I. p. 127.

(3)Ibid., p. 204.

On Luke 7:47 Calvin reflects the opinion of his day on the form ἀφέωνται. It seems that ancient grammarians are not agreed in accounting for this form, some apparently making it a present.(1) But Calvin reveals his independence and his penetration by resolving it "into a preterite"! The woman's sins are forgiven, "the mercy of God was so abundant toward her, that she ought no longer to be regarded as a sinner."(2)

That Calvin probably had the right conception of the imperfect may be referred from his remarks on Romans 7:8-9.(3)

We have noted several interesting references to the future tense. On Romans 6:10 Calvin refers to the future tense of the verb ζῆ which is nothing more than a simple progressive or durative present. Yet we have no fault to find with Calvin's rendering of it: "The verb, live, doth not appertain unto the last resurrection; but simply noteth the perpetual course of a new life so long as we live in this world."(4) On Romans 6:2 his reference to the future tense of the same verb, ζάω, is correct, the form being ζήσομεν. By it, Paul "showeth what manner of change should follow

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- (1) Cf. Winer, Section 14, 3a.
- (2) Harmony, II. p. 139.
- (3) Romans, p. 177.
- (4) Ibid., p. 155.

righteousness."(1)

Although the future tense is generally regarded as akin to the aorist as to the kind of action yet Calvin has emphasized the progressive or durative nature of ἐξέρχεται in John 8:12.(2) Westcott and Godet take it more in its indefinite sense.(3)

Many other examples might also be adduced(4), but these ought to be sufficient to give a fairly complete understanding of Calvin's treatment of the Greek tenses. The outstanding impression left upon the writer is the degree to which Calvin has penetrated into the meaning of the tenses, in spite of the inadequate and unsound grammatical knowledge of his day. Although Calvin shows evidence of the influence of these circumstances by his lack of clear-cut grammatical definitions, and by occasional errors of interpretation, yet in a remarkable way has he interpreted the inner meaning. One cannot help referring back to his wide acquaintance with Greek literature. This must have given him a feeling and sense for the language which helped to make the

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(1)Romans, p. 148.

(2)Cf. Dana and Mantey, pp. 191-192. Calvin: John, I. p. 325.

(3)Cf. ad loc.

(4)See, Rom., p. 28; p. 36 where a more exact rendering of ἐπιγινώσκεις is given in the R.V.; Rom., p. 120; Harmony, I.p. 37; II. p. 136; III. p. 105; John, I. pp. 65, 49, 158, 179; Cor., II. p. 145 (where he has erred); p. 17; and Gal., p. 29.

language his own in the same way in which it was possessed by those who in times past had spoken it. This, from the point of view of exegetical results, made up for his lack of advanced and scientific grammars.

d. Person and number. There is little that need be said on these points because of their more obvious nature. They do not usually cause the exegete any very serious difficulty. But we are interested to find that Calvin was alert to observe important changes in person and number; and also to see that he gave attention to places where such facts have a particular significance in their connection. On Romans 1:6 and 7 Calvin notes the second person running throughout, and therefore would keep it in mind on the phrase *κλητοῦς ἀγίου* .(1) In Matt. 1:23, in the quotation from Isaiah, Calvin notes the change in person and number. The angel has spoken to Joseph *καὶ κλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν* but the prophet Isaiah says *καὶ καλέσουσιν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ*. "From the time that this name was published, all the godly have an equal right to make this confession, that God has given himself to us to be enjoyed in Christ."(2)

On Matt. 2:23 Calvin makes the observation that

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(1) Romans, p. 10.

(2) Harmony, I. p. 106.

the noun *προφητῶν* is plural in number.(1) He notes the plural in I Cor., 14:13 and calls attention to the implication that Paul seems to speak "not of himself exclusively, but also of the others who were his associates."(2) He points out and dwells on the plural *τὰ ἔργα* in John 9:3, throwing in interesting sidelights and enriching the passage.(3)

e. Gender. Oftentimes some very significant points lie concealed in the gender of a Greek noun or pronoun, participle or adjective. In Hebrews 1:2 the word *πάντων* is capable of being rendered either in the masculine or the neuter. If taken in the masculine it refers to God's people, that they have been given to him by the Father. Calvin has chosen, however, the more probable and the more commonly accepted interpretation which reads it as neuter, saying, "it means that we are driven from the legitimate possession of all things, both in heaven and on earth, except we be united to Christ."(4) On I Cor. 2:15 after rendering *ὅπ' οὐδενός* as masculine, as it is in the Revised and Authorized Versions and is interpreted by Lange, Robertson and Plummer, Meyer and others(5), Calvin goes on to suggest

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(1)Harmony, I. p. 165.

(2)Cor., I. p. 166.

(3)Cf. John, I. p. 367.

(4)Hebrews, p. 34. Cf. Lunemann, Westcott, Davidson ad loc.

(5)Cf. Hodge, Ellicott, Olshausen ad loc. See Calvin, Cor., I. p. 119.

that at the same time it might be taken in the neuter as referring to a thing, and not to a man. It is probable that Calvin added this remark more by way of magnifying or emphasizing the truth of the passage. He first gave the obvious meaning of the passage, and then follows with the suggestion which makes the contrast in the passage more complete. Although we cannot be certain that the author had the larger idea in mind, and it may be probable that he did not, yet the truth expressed is in harmony with the spirit and truth of the context. Our point is that Calvin was alert to matters of gender, and appears to have understood and made the proper use of the grammatical principles pertaining thereto.

On I Cor. 5:13 Calvin clears the ground of one erroneous interpretation by calling attention to the masculine article ( $\tau\acute{o}\nu$ ). It could not mean therefore "Put away evil or wickedness".(1) It is unnecessary to cumber our writing with many examples as such matters may be investigated further in his writings.(2) The illustrations selected are presented as typical.

### 3. His Attention to the Meaning of Words.

a. His interest in words. The reader of Calvin's commentaries can scarcely help but be impressed

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(1)Cor., I. p. 196.

(2)See Cor., I. p. 304; Cor., II. p. 124.

by the attention that is given to the meaning of words. In Matt. 1:12 Calvin notes the word *μετοκεσία* "which the old translator renders transmigration, and Erasmus renders exile, (which) literally signifies a change of habitation." He then takes the word in its context and gives the meaning that "the Jews were compelled to leave their country, and to dwell as 'strangers in a land that was not theirs'."(1)

In Luke 1:31 he points to the word *conceive* (*συλλήμψη*) as being "enough to set aside the dream of Marcion and Manichaeus: for it is easy to gather from it that Mary brought forth not an ethereal body or phantom, but the fruit which she had previously conceived in her womb."(2)

Romans 3:25 offers several illustrations of Calvin's method. In the first place there is the word *προτεθέναι*. Calvin explains that it sometimes signified to determine or appoint before, and sometimes to bring forth into the light.(3) He then interprets the passage in the light of either meaning and shows

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(1)Harmony, I. p. 92.

(2)Cf. Thayer. The word is a compound word, *σύν + λαμβάνω*. It often means to seize, to seize for one's self, to make a prisoner, etc. Harmony, I. p. 35.

(3)Thayer gives what might be considered equivalent to Calvin's classification: 1. to place before, set forth, to set forth to be looked at, expose to view, etc; 2. to set before one's self, to purpose, to determine, etc.

that whether one meaning or the other is taken, the same sense stands, "that God in his time made him (his son) manifest, whom he had decreed with himself to be the Mediator."(1) Another word in the same verse is ἱλαστήριον . Calvin takes this as "an allusion unto the old propitiatory; for he teacheth how that is exhibited in Christ which was figured there." He is quite willing to allow however, for other interpretations. In this interpretation he appears to have taken essentially that which has been set forth by Meyer, i.e., that it means an expiatory sacrifice.(2)

In I. Cor. 1:9 Calvin objects to Erasmus' translation of the word κοινωνία as meaning partnership and also to that of the old interpreter(3) as society, because he feels that these do not adequately bring out the force of the Greek word. He renders it fellowship and goes on to make plain his idea. His translation has been followed by the Authorized and Revised Versions as well as by most commentators.(4)

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(1)Romans, p. 86.

(2)Ibid. Cf. Meyer, Sanday, Godet, Lange and Gifford ad loc. Meyer, Lange and Godet, represent three leading interpretations of ἱλαστήριον : Meyer, that it refers to an expiatory sacrifice, sin-offering; Godet, that it stands for a means of propitiation; and Lange, that it refers to the mercy seat. Sanday has an extended discussion on this problem.

(3)This seems to be a reference to the Vulgate.

(4)Cor., I. p. 60. Cf. Robertson and Plummer, Thayer, Ellicott, Lange and others, ad loc.

Then there is that interesting verb *καταρτίζω* which is found in the 10th verse of the same chapter. This verb, says Calvin, "properly signifies, to be fitted and adjusted, just as the members of the humansbody are connected together by a most admirable symmetry." From this verb comes the participle *κατηρτισμένοι* which, he explains, denotes those things which are fitly and suitably joined together. This is the word used in Matthew 4:21 and Mark 1:19 of mending nets. In Hebrews 11:3 it has the sense of put in order, arrange, framed in the Revised Version. Thayer in I Cor. 1:10 gives it the sense of strengthen, perfect, complete, especially of those who have been restored to harmony. It is seen that the interpretations of the word fall into two groups: those which give it the metaphorical turn and those which give it an ethical significance. Calvin has followed the former. This is taken also by Robertson and Plummer, and Lange. The latter interpretation is chosen by Thayer and Ellicott because in many New Testament passages such as II Cor. 13:11, Gal. 6:1, I Thess. 3:10, etc., it does not seem to "present any conception based on the physical aspect of the word."<sup>(1)</sup> But it is not our purpose to decide between these two interpretations. Our interest is in Calvin's method.

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(1) Cf. Ellicott ad loc.

It would appear from this passage that Calvin had not, at least, recognized the possibility of an ethical usage of the word.(1) However, on I Cor. 1:10, inas-  
much as in the context Paul has been speaking of σχίσματα, divisions, it is not difficult to see the suitability of Calvin's choice. This much can be said, that he stated his own position and he gave his reasons. His reasons may not take into account all of the evidence, yet other commentators of equal skill are not agreed among themselves. Bengel followed Calvin on this passage.(2)

Now in this which has been said the purpose has been to call attention in a general way to the fact that Calvin was alert to the possibilities of words; and not only that, but that he also reveals unusual learning and the marks of the real exegete in his method of treating them. Calvin was interested in words. This ought to become more evident as we take up some of the ways in which he set forth the meaning of individual words. Additional illustrations of the foregoing may be found in the following words: ἔνεργήματα (3), ἀνακρίνεσθαι (4), παιδαγωγός (5), ἀναγινώσκω

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- (1) He shows the more physical aspect of the word in Gal. 6:1.  
(2) Cf. Ellicott ad loc.  
(3) Cor., I. p. 399.  
(4) Ibid., p. 343.  
(5) Gal., p. 108.

and ἐπιγινώσκω (1), σαθήκη (2), φιλανθρωπία (3), ἀντλαμβάνεσθαι (4), ἀπαύγασμα and χαρακτήρ (5), ἀπόλεσαι (6), ἀνακλιθήσονται (7), ἐθελοθησκεία (8), ἀναλήψια (9), προσεκυνήσει (10), and ὑπάγω (11). We would suggest the following as instances in which Calvin is probably mistaken in his explanation: τελεωσαι (12), πάρεσιν (13), and ἀνατολή (14). The first consideration will be Calvin's attention to the derivation of words.

b. His attention to the derivation of words.

It is<sup>a</sup> plain fact in any language that it is constantly undergoing change and modification. To understand a language it is necessary to know the meaning of its words. It is necessary for the interpreter, then, to keep in mind the changes that have taken place in words. It is helpful and only natural therefore to inquire after the original meaning of a word.(15)

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- (1) Cor., II. p. 128.
- (2) Heb., pp. xxvii and 208.
- (3) Harmony, I. p. 73.
- (4) Ibid., p. 60.
- (5) Heb., p. 36.
- (6) John, II. p. 29.
- (7) Harmony, I. p. 383.
- (8) Harmony, II. p. 253; Col. 2:23.
- (9) Harmony, II. p. 374.
- (10) John, I. p. 389.
- (11) Harmony, II. p. 302.
- (12) Heb., p. 63.
- (13) Rom., p. 87.
- (14) Harmony, II. p. 77.
- (15) Cf. Terry, p. 175.

It is interesting to see that Calvin has made use of this principle. There is the little word "Amen", so frequently used and yet with so little appreciation. When our interpreter came across it in I Cor. 14:16 he noted it was used "to intimate, that the prayer offered up by that one person was that of all of them in common." Then he adds, "It is known, that Amen is a Hebrew word, derived from the same term from which comes the word that signifies faithfulness or truth." (1)

On Matt. 2:1 he observes that "Magi (μάγοι) is well known to be the name given by the Persians and Chaldees to astrologers and philosophers." (2) Thayer makes a very similar note: "the name given by the Babylonians (Chaldeans), Medes, Persians, and others, to the wise men, teachers, priests, physicians, astrologers, seers, interpreters of dreams, augurs, soothsayers, sorcerers, etc." It is found from Sophocles and Herodotus down. Calvin makes use of this to suggest, "hence it may readily be conjectured that those men came from Persia."

On the meaning of the word virgin (παρθένος) in Matt. 1:23, Calvin finds its etymology helpful. "The etymology too agrees with Matthew's translation of the

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(1) Cor., I. p. 448. Cf. Thayer on ἀμήν.  
(2) Harmony, I. p. 128.

word: for it means hiding, which expresses the modesty that becomes a virgin." (1)

Calvin's knowledge of Hebrew often stands him in good stead as in the derivation of the name Jesus. "It is derived from the Hebrew word יְשׁוּעַ, salvation, from which comes יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, which signifies to save. It is a waste of ingenuity to contend that it differs from the Hebrew name יְהוֹשׁוּעַ, (Jehoshua or Joshua)." (2)

As is frequently the case, Calvin gives the interpretation of a passage without letting it be known what lay behind his explanation in the way of an exegetical process. A typical instance is found on the word in Romans 6:5 which he renders grafted. He points out the significance of the word and uses the figure of the grafting of trees to develop the meaning of the passage. The word σύνφυτος which the Revised Version renders "united with" comes from the verb συμφύω which is used by Plato and Aristotle in the sense of "to cause to grow together". σύνφυτος was the common word of Pindar, Plato, Aeschylus, Aristotle and Philo to describe that which is planted together, congenital,

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(1)Harmony, I. p. 103. Calvin is evidently speaking of the Hebrew word. Liddell and Scott in their Lexicon of Classical Greek say that the root of παρθένος is unknown.

(2)Harmony, I. p. 35; cf. also pp. 97-98.

innate, implanted by birth or nature.(1) Here is further evidence in concrete form that Calvin brought to the work of New Testament interpretation an intimate knowledge of the Greek language which enabled him to know something of the historic background of the *κοινή*.

(2) Inasmuch as this is the only use of this word in the New Testament it is a real indication of the extent and readiness for use of his knowledge of classical Greek literature.

In Romans 5:20 Calvin reveals that he has caught the force of the preposition *ὑπέρ* as compounded in the word *ὑπερπερίσσευσεν* : "---the greatness of grace was by so much the more apparent, as that when sin abounded it did pour out itself so abundantly, that it did not only overmatch that deluge of sin, but also swallow it up."(3)

Additional examples of Calvin's use of etymological facts may be found in connection with such words as the following: *ἐγκάιννα* (4), *παρακολουθεῖν* (5), *γραμματεὺς* (6), *ἐσκήνωσεν* (7), *πέτρος* (8),

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(1) Cf. Thayer, Liddell and Scott.

(2) See ante, p. 69.

(3) Romans, p. 145.

(4) John, I. p. 412.

(5) Harmony, I. p. 7.

(6) Cor., I. p. 81.

(7) John, I. p. 47.

(8) Harmony, II. p. 295.

ἑφφαθά (1), ὠσαννά (2), Γολγοθᾶ (3),  
Ραββουεὶ (4), etc.

c. His attention to linguistic usage. We begin first of all by noting the use Calvin made of his knowledge of classical Greek. Something of this has already been suggested in the section immediately preceding. We only call attention to it in the present connection and present two or three additional illustrations. On Matthew 6:2, Calvin remarks on the word ὑποκριταί, hypocrites, that profane authors give that name "to those who personated assumed characters in plays and on the stage; and Scripture has applied this term to men who are double in heart and insincere." (5) And thus it is used by Aristophanes, by Plato in his Republic, by Xenophon, etc. (6)

The word θυμός used in Romans 2:8, Calvin says, "with the Grecians signifieth that which Cicero teacheth excandescantiam to note with the Latins, namely, a sudden inflammation of wrath." (7) Indeed it is used in this sense by Sophocles, Euripides, Thucydides, Plato,

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- (1) Harmony, II. p. 272.
- (2) Ibid., p. 452; cf. John, II. p. 18.
- (3) John, II. p. 227.
- (4) Ibid., p. 258.
- (5) Harmony, I. p. 309.
- (6) Cf. Liddell and Scott.
- (7) Romans, p. 45.

Herodotus, Aristophanes and others. In the plural of fits of anger or passion it is found in Plato, Protagoras, and Aristotle.(1)

On II Cor. 8:18 Calvin calls attention to "the mode of election--that which was customary among the Greeks— *χειροτονία*, (a show of hands) in which the leaders took the precedence by authority and counsel, and regulated the whole proceeding, while the common people intimated their approval."(2) To see that Calvin is exactly right on this word, it is only necessary to consult a classical lexicon. This was the method among the Athenian *ἐκκλησία* of giving one's vote. It was so used by Lucianus, Plutarchus, Aristophanes, Demosthenes, Zenophon and Isocrates.(3).

Thus Calvin is often able to portray a word in its historical richness by calling forth its usage by the Greeks themselves. For other illustrations of this method we refer the reader to the word *ἀφέωνται* in Luke 7:47 (4) and the word *ἐστραπέλια* in Ephesians 5:4 (5).

The next observation has to do with Calvin's use of the Septuagint. It is significant that the first

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- (1) Cf. Liddell and Scott.
- (2) Cor., II. p. 300.
- (3) Harmony, II. p. 139.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Ephesians, p. 305.

printed text of the whole Septuagint is that which forms the third column in the Old Testament of the Complutensian Polyglot.(1) This was finally published in 1521. Another edition of the Bible in Greek had come from the Aldine press about the year 1519 under the direction of Andreas Asolanus.(2) Thus from external sources there is little room to doubt that Calvin had access to and probably made use of the Greek version of the Old Testament.

Turning to Calvin's works there is ample evidence that Calvin frequently consulted and drew upon his knowledge of that source. In commenting on Matthew 1:16 he says: "So long as any splendour of royalty continued in the family of David, the kings were wont to be called χριστοί, anointed."(3) This is undoubtedly a reference to the use of the word in the Septuagint. The Lord's anointed ( τὸν χριστὸν Κυρίου ) and similar phrases occur frequently.(4)

In discussing the name "Jesus" and its derivation Calvin points out that in the writings of Moses, and in the other books of the Old Testament, the Hebrew

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(1) Cf. H. B. Swete: Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek, p. 171.

(2) Ibid., p. 173.

(3) Harmony, I. p. 92.

(4) Cf. LXX: II Sam. 19:21; I Sam. 2:10, 35; Lev. 4:5; 6:22; II Sam. 1:14; Ps. 2:2; 17(18):51; Hab. 3:13; Lam. 4:20, etc.

word for Jehoshua or Joshua, is rendered by the Greek translators Ἰησοῦς, Jesus.(1)

In I Cor. 2:6 Calvin points out that the Hebrew word כָּלִיל "is always rendered in the Septuagint by τέλειος (and) means complete."(2)

In II Cor. 4:14 where Paul evidently refers to Psalm 116, Calvin observes that he has followed the common Greek translation and used the preterite instead of the future. And so it is in the Septuagint, ἐπίστεινα δὲ ἐλάλησα. But Calvin goes on to say that no point is to be made of this and that in either case the meaning is essentially the same.(3)

Other references to the Greek version of the Old Testament are to be found among Calvin's comments as follows: Harmony, I. pp. 142, 133; II. p. 289; Romans, pp. 276, 281. A question might be raised as to Calvin's accuracy on II Cor. 6:2 where he refers to the word εὐπρόσδεκτον (acceptable) as being the rendering of the Greek interpreter of Isaiah 49:8. Now Paul has quoted the Septuagint word for word in this case and εὐπρόσδεκτον does not occur. The precise word is δεκτῶ. It may be however, that the occurrence of the adjective εὐπρόσδεκτον in the latter part of the

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(1)Harmony, I. p. 98.

(2)Cor., I. p. 102.

(3)Ibid., p. 209.

verse led Calvin to make the reference in this manner.

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We come now to a consideration of the way in which Calvin studied into or made use of the New Testament usage of a word in order to advance his exegetical process. The importance of the usus loquendi, or current usage of words has been emphasized in a splendid passage by Davidson. Among other things he says: "The great object to be ascertained is the usus loquendi, embracing the laws or principles of universal grammar which form the basis of every language." (2)

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(1) Cor., II. p. 246.

(2) Davidson; Sacred Hermeneutics, pp. 225-226. He continues: "These are nothing but the logic of the mind, comprising the modes in which ideas are formed, combined, and associated, agreeably to the original susceptibilities of the intellectual constitution. They are the physiology of the human mind as exemplified practically by every individual. General grammar is wont to be occupied, however, with the usage of the best writers; whereas the laws of language as observed by the writers of Scripture should be mainly attended to by the sacred interpreter, even though the philosophical grammarian may not admit them all to be correct. It is the usus loquendi of the inspired authors which forms the subject of the grammatical principles recognized and followed by the expositor. The grammar he adopts is deduced from the use of the language employed in the Bible. This may not be conformed to the practice of the best writers; it may not be philosophically just; but he must not, therefore, pronounce it erroneous. The modes of expression used by each writer--the utterances of his mental associations, constitute his usus loquendi. These form his grammatical principles; and the interpreter takes them as his own in the business of exegesis. Hence, too, there arises a special as well as a universal grammar.

The reader of Calvin's commentaries often comes across such references as these: "He used the word delivered, according to the perpetual manner of the Scripture"(1); "But the word harden, when in the Scriptures it is attributed to God, it doth not only signify (as certain tempering moderators would have it) a permission or suffering, but also the action of God's wrath."(2) "Sleep is everywhere in Scripture employed to denote death"(3); and "At the same time I should prefer to understand the expression in<sup>a</sup> more simple way, agreeably to the common usage of Scripture---"(4).

Let us take two or three instances and put Calvin's conclusions to the test. On Matthew 2:16 he

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Now we attain to a knowledge of the peculiar usus loquendi in the way of historical investigation. The religious, moral, and psychological ideas, under whose influence a language had been formed and moulded; all the objects with which the writers were conversant, and the relations in which they were placed, are traced out historically. The costume of the ideas in the minds of the biblical authors originated from the character of the times, country, place, and education, under which they acted. Hence, in order to ascertain their peculiar usus loquendi, we should know all those institutions and influences whereby it was formed or affected."

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- (1) Rom., p. 32.
- (2) Ibid., p. 265.
- (3) On Mark 5:39, Harmony, I. p. 415. Cf. also Cor., I. p. 270.
- (4) Cor., I. p. 105.

comments: "The adverb then ( $\tau\acute{o}\tau\epsilon$ ) does not always denote in Scripture uninterrupted time, but infrequently occurs, when there is a great distance between the events." (1) Are there passages in Scripture where this is true of  $\tau\acute{o}\tau\epsilon$ ? As this word is characteristic of Matthew, being used some ninety-one times, it is most natural to inquire into his use of it. One needs only to turn to the twenty-fourth chapter where  $\tau\acute{o}\tau\epsilon$  occurs nine times, verses 9, 10, 14, 16, 21, 23, 30 (twice), and 40. Now throughout this chapter it is speaking of a period in which one thing must not necessarily be taken as following immediately upon another. This is indicated by verse 8, "But all these things are the beginning of travail". The "then"s of 9 and 10 evidently follow that which is indicated in 5, 6, 7, and 8, but they cannot be said to follow immediately, in the sense of a brief space of time. This might be true, but not to the exclusion of a larger meaning. In verse 23  $\tau\acute{o}\tau\epsilon$  might be rendered "after that" as marking a sequence, as well as time, but yet not be pressed into the sense of the moment after.  $\tau\acute{o}\tau\epsilon$  therefore in this chapter appears to make clear a succession of events but a succession which extends over a considerable period of time.

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(1)Harmony, I. p. 160.

Therefore from this one chapter there is ample evidence to confirm Calvin's statement with regard to the Scripture's usage of the word that it may mark a time which comes at considerable distance from another event.(1)

On Luke 1:46 Calvin records his observation that "The words soul ( ψυχή ) and spirit ( πνεῦμα ) are used in Scripture in various senses, but, when employed together, they denote chiefly two faculties of the soul; spirit being taken for the understanding, and soul for the seat of the affection." Now these two words occur together in the following passages, Luke 1:46; I Cor. 15:45; I Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12.(2) The first is the one already under consideration. In I Cor. 15:45 Paul says, partly quoting Genesis, that "The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit." In I Thess. 5:23 the apostle simply says, "and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire," etc. In Heb. 4:12 we read: "For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Now it is not easy to evaluate Calvin on this

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(1) Cf. Thayer on τóτε, Meyer on Matt. 24 and Broadus on the same.

(2) See Moulton and Geden under ψυχή .

point for the problem is not a small one. Yet a few remarks can be made and the remainder left to the reader to judge. It is probable that Calvin may have taken his cue from the third passage. There, if the phrase ἐνθυμήσεων καὶ ἐννοιῶν καρδίας be taken as parallel to ψυχῆς καὶ πνεύματος it is not difficult to see that the θυμός which is a part of the word has more to do with the feelings or passions or emotions of the mind while the νοῦς of the second word has more to do with the intellect or faculty of understanding, although sometimes its cognates might well be rendered affections or feelings. This may have been one of Calvin's reasons for his position. Another reason might be that ψυχῆ is the word that represents the "energy of life", (1) an "animated organism" (2), while πνεῦμα is the word that often has more to do with the rational, the intelligent being (3). This distinction is evidently involved in I Thess. 5:23. (4)

There is therefore evidence in support of Calvin's reference to these words in connection with Luke 1:46. Without attempting to exhaust this subject, let us gather together those points which are already

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(1) Cf. Westcott's note p. 114 ff.

(2) Cf. Olshausen on I Cor. 15:45; also Westcott on Heb. 4:12.

(3) Ibid. Cf. Thayer also under πνεῦμα .

(4) Cf. Thayer under ψυχῆ .

sufficiently clear and which are relevant to Calvin's knowledge of the general New Testament use of words. In the first place Calvin must have had in mind all four of these passages to have made the statement which he set down on the first of them. Since there are only four passages it indicates rather careful and exhaustive work. Further, he is not without evidence in support of his position with respect to the distinction between  $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$  and  $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$  when they occur together. In fact, he shows not only a proper method and a thoroughness of treatment but also a remarkable insight into the various meanings of these words.

Let us examine one more reference. In Romans 5:4 (1), Calvin makes the observation that Paul has said  $\eta\ \delta\epsilon\ \acute{\upsilon}\pi\omicron\mu\omicron\nu\eta\ \delta\omicron\kappa\iota\mu\eta\nu$ , and stedfastness (worketh) approvedness, while James (1:3) turns it around and says  $\tau\omicron\ \delta\omicron\kappa\iota\mu\iota\omicron\nu\ \acute{\upsilon}\mu\omega\nu\ \tau\eta\varsigma\ \pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\omega\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\tau\epsilon\rho\gamma\acute{\alpha}\zeta\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota\ \acute{\upsilon}\pi\omicron\mu\omicron\nu\eta\varsigma$ , the proving of your faith worketh patience (stedfastness). Now speaking of the word  $\delta\omicron\kappa\iota\mu\iota\omicron\nu$  used by James, Calvin has marked exactly its sense. This word refers to that by means of which anything is tried, the proof, the testimony. Thus the word applies more to the act.(2) The word  $\delta\omicron\kappa\iota\mu\eta$  applies more to the state of that which has

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(1) Rom., p. 128.

(2) Cf. Thayer, also Bagster's Analytical Lexicon.

been tried. It is approvedness, tried character.(1) It also is used of trial, a proving. Calvin is thus able to reconcile Paul and James by understanding the divers acceptation of the word. Paul taketh trial or probation for experience in which "through patient sufferance they abide firm, for so they prove what value the power of God is.----James uses the same word for tribulation itself, according to the common usage of Scripture; because by them God proveth and examineth his servants; whereupon they are often called temptations."

(2) For other uses of the word such as that of James, we refer the reader to II Cor. 8:2, although there it is a form of *δοκιμή*. Calvin was mistaken if he had in mind a wide usage of *δοκίμων* in the New Testament. Besides James 1:3 it is found only in I Peter 1:7. He probably had in mind both words.

What is shown by these examples? They make clear the fact that Calvin made use of one of the most important methods of the exegete. He compared various passages. It is also significant to note, at least as far as our examples have taken us, that Calvin's work was accurate and thorough. And it is not out of place to repeat an observation which has been made before,

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(1) Cf. Thayer, also Bagster's Analytical Lexicon.

(2) Rom., p. 128.

that it is quite common for Calvin to give us his exegetical results and not say much about how he obtained them except in general terms. One would have reason to think him superficial were it not for the fact that his results and his general statements usually stand up under first hand investigation. It is not unreasonable to suppose therefore, that Calvin himself went through the exegetical process applying carefully and thoroughly the principles and methods of interpretation. Otherwise it is difficult to see how his exegetical results could be so sound.(1)

Occasionally it becomes necessary for the exegete to pay attention to the use of a word by one particular author. It is well known that every writer has individual characteristics and even in his use of language there may be certain peculiarities.

On John 15:18 Calvin cites two different interpretations of the phrase *πρῶτον ὑμῶν*.(2) The question is as to whether he is before the disciples in time or in rank. Calvin says that the first has been accepted by many making the sentence mean that "Christ was hated by the world before the Apostles were

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(1) For other examples of his reference to New Testament usage see: Harmony, I. p. 33; I. p. 350; III. p. 69; Rom., pp. 20 (salvation), 21 (righteousness), 114 (καλέω).

(2) John, II. p. 123.

hated." But he prefers the second, "namely, that Christ, who is far exalted above them, was not exempted from the hatred of the world, and therefore his ministers ought not to refuse the same condition;" that is, giving our own translation, if the world hate you, ye know that it hath hated me, the one above you. Calvin gives as his reason the use of this phraseology in the 27th and 30th verses of chapter one of the same gospel. Calvin might have added 1:15. Although most versions give it a temporal significance(1), yet there are those who give to it, or call attention to, the meaning preferred by Calvin. Among the latter are Westcott, Plummer and Lange. In this case, although the author's usage of the phrase is unquestionably in favor of the rendering given it by Calvin, yet it is entirely possible that Jesus may have had only a temporal relation in mind. Calvin's position is therefore not without support and may be more favorable to the passage than the other. His method is sound regardless of whether or not it is conclusive.

It is evident from what he says on Romans 6:2 that Calvin has caught the spirit and meaning of Paul when he uses the phrase  $\mu\grave{\eta}\ \gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$  . This phrase

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(1) Meyer and Godet evidently take it temporally. Ryle is evidently aware of the possibility of the rendering with the idea of rank. Jacobus notes it also but prefers the other.

is used fifteen times in the New Testament but only once outside of Paul, Luke 20:16.(1) Ten of these are to be found in Romans. We shall allow Calvin to speak for himself:

"Some think that the apostle doth only, by the way of a sharp correction, reprehend so unreasonable a madness; but, by other places, it doth appear how familiar an answer this is with him, yea, in much disputation, (or many arguments,) as here also he will shortly with great diligence refute the objected obloquy; yet, first, by this particle of one detesting he doth reject it, that he might admonish the readers there is nothing more unlike than that the grace of Christ, the repairer of our righteousness, should nourish our vice." (2)

It is difficult to find a better exposition of this formula than that just given. Others explain it much as Calvin but not with the same understanding and clarity. Compare Hodge, Beet, Liddon, Sanday, and Meyer ad loc. The author is of the opinion that not one of these excellent expositors has equaled the passage given above, and believes that the reader who will compare them on this point with Calvin will be of the same opinion. Calvin shows that he has made himself familiar with Paul's usage of this phrase and in so doing has manifested one of the marks of the truly great interpreter of Scripture.

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(1) Luke 20:16; Romans 3:4,6,31; 6:2,15; 7:7,13; 9:14; 11:1,11; I Cor. 6:15; Gal. 2:17; 3:21 and 6:14. Cf. Moulton and Geden.

(2) Romans, p. 147. Cf. also Burton: Moods and Tenses, p. 79.

Other instances of this same method of procedure might be presented (1), but we pass on to give one or two examples of Calvin's regard for the use of a word in the particular passage. On Luke 1:9 Calvin observes that there the word temple ( $\nu\alpha\acute{o}\varsigma$ ) is put for the holy place.(2) He adds that this "deserves attention, for it sometimes includes the outer court." He goes on then to explain the passage in that light. Is Calvin correct in thus understanding  $\nu\alpha\acute{o}\varsigma$ ? There is little doubt but that this is the proper rendering, for while  $\acute{\iota}\epsilon\rho\acute{o}\nu$  applied to the whole temple, the entire consecrated enclosure,  $\nu\alpha\acute{o}\varsigma$  was the word used in the Septuagint and elsewhere for the sacred edifice only, consisting of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.(3)

On John 1:47 Calvin calls attention to the fact that "In this passage  $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\eta\theta\acute{\omega}\varsigma$  (truly) means something more than certainly. The Greek word, no doubt, is often used as a simple affirmation; but as we must here supply a contrast between the fact and the mere name, he is said to be truly, who is in reality what he

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(1) See his reference to  $\lambda\epsilon\iota\tau\upsilon\rho\upsilon\gamma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  in Harmony, I. p. 28; to  $\phi\rho\acute{o}\nu\eta\mu\alpha$ , Rom. p. 201;  $\nu\acute{o}\mu\omicron\varsigma$ , Ibid., p. 170; and the reference to the outward man, Ibid., p. 190.

(2) Harmony, I. p. 13.

(3) Cf. Thayer; cf. Plummer ad loc; see also Ex. 30:7 ff.

is supposed to be."(1) Certainly there is no one who would object to Calvin's observation; but not all expositors have caught the force of the word.(2)

At the beginning of Matthew 13:43 stands the little adverb τότε .(3) Calvin makes the following reference to it: "The adverb then ( τότε ) is emphatic; for it contains an implied contrast between their present state and the ultimate restoration," etc. This becomes a means of entrance into a fuller understanding of the passage.

For further illustration of Calvin's attention to the usage of a word in a particular passage see the word βίβλος in Matthew 1:1 (4), the word συνάστασις in Luke 1:52 (5), the word ἀδικία in Romans 1:18 (6), and the word προσκυνεῖν in Matthew 8:2 (7).

d. His attention to idioms and Hebraisms.

Any student of language will readily agree that the mastery of the idioms of a language often presents one

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(1)John, I. p. 78.

(2)Westcott passes over it without much emphasis. Meyer and Plummer make a better showing.

(3)Harmony, II. p. 124.

(4)Harmony, I. p. 89.

(5)Ibid., p. 58.

(6)Rom., p. 25.

(7)Harmony, I. p. 372. See also: Harmony, I. p. 368; John, II. p. 237; Romans, p. 15. We cite Romans, p. 35-36 as a passage in which Calvin gives particular attention to the meaning of the word.

of the most difficult tasks. Calvin however has been fortunate. With his knowledge of Hebrew and his excellent knowledge of Greek literature he is usually at home with those forms, words and phrases commonly referred to by grammarians as idioms and Hebraisms. On Romans 2:2 he is able to add: "And it is a Hebrew phrase, for verity is oftentimes as much with the Hebrews as the inward integrity of the heart; and so it is opposed not only against gross lying, but also against the external show of good works." (1) On Ephesians 2:2 Calvin says: "By the children of disobedience, according to a Hebrew idiom, are meant obstinate persons." (2) Abbott mentions by way of agreement the Reformer's interpretation of Ephesians 5:6, the phrase ἔρχεται ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ Calvin writes: "If we consider the present tense to be here used, agreeably to the Hebrew idiom, for the future, these words are a threatening of the last judgment." He goes on to agree with those however who take the word cometh in an indefinite sense "as reminding them of the ordinary judgments of God which were executed before their own eyes." (3) Calvin's knowledge of the Hebrew idiom also leads him to the commonly accepted explanation of the phrase

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(1) Romans, p. 39.

(2) Ephesians, p. 221. Cf. Abbott and Meyer ad loc.

(3) Ephesians, p. 308. Cf. Abbott and Meyer ad loc.

τῆ δὲ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων in John 20:1, on the first day of the week.(1) These examples are presented as typical (2) and with them we pass on to the next topic.

e. His attention to synonyms. Archbishop Trench in his Preface to the eighth edition of his "Synonyms of the New Testament" in urging the value of the study of such words, says of the Greek language--

"---a language spoken by a people of the subtlest intellect; who saw distinctions, where others saw none; who divided out to different words what others often were content to huddle confusedly under a common term; who were themselves singularly alive to its value, diligently cultivating the art of synonymous distinction; and who have bequeathed a multitude of fine and delicate observations on the right discriminations of their own words to the after-world." (3)

It is with interest, therefore, that we turn again to the commentaries of Calvin to see how they measure up in this respect.

This passage from I Cor. 4:11 is to the point here. Speaking of the verse he says:

"In the words themselves there is no obscurity, except that we must take notices of the distinction between those two participles-- *λοιδόρουμενοι* και *βλασφημούμενοι* (reviled and defamed.)

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(1) John, II. p. 249. Cf. Westcott, Plummer and Lange (Schaff) ad loc.

(2) For other illustrations see: Cor., II. p. 176; Eph., p. 300; Harmony, I. pp. 259, 407; II. pp. 149, 215, 261; III. pp. 25, 340; John, I. pp. 109, 278, 325; II. pp. 31, 38.

(3) P. vii.

As λοιδορεια means--that harsher sort of raillery, which does not merely give a person a slight touch, but a sharp bite, and blackens his character by open contumely, there can be no doubt that λοιδορεια means--wounding a person with reproach as with a sting. I have accordingly rendered it--harassed with revilings. βλασφημια signifies a more open reproach, when any one is severely and atrociously slandered."  
(1)

It is interesting that Trench has included this very passage from Calvin in section cvii of his book as containing "a contribution toward the illustration of some other synonyms for a fuller dealing with which I have not found place in this volume." (2)

In Luke 1:6 we read πορευόμενοι ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐντολαῖς καὶ δικαίωμασιν τοῦ κυρίου ἁμεμπτοί . On the two words commandments and ordinances Calvin makes the following distinction: "The latter term relates strictly to exercises of piety and of divine worship of God and to duties of charity." (3) He goes on to say in support of his explanation of δικαίωματα that this is the rendering given by the Greek translators to the Hebrew word meaning ordinances, which in Scripture usually denotes "those services which the people were accustomed to perform in the worship of God and in the profession

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(1) Cor., I. p. 165.  
(2) Cf. Trench, pp. 390 and 392.  
(3) Harmony, I. p. 11.

of their faith."(1) A comparison of Calvin's results with the usage and meaning of these words as given by Thayer corroborates the above without any question.

A most interesting pair of synonyms in the New Testament is ἐλέγχω and ἐπειμάλω . They occur together in only one place, II Tim. 4:2. As before we have had to gather the evidence from Calvin rather indirectly, so must we do on these two words. However, one of these words, ἐλέγχω, has been mentioned quite frequently by Calvin. Whether he had the two words in mind when speaking of ἐλέγχω, one cannot be altogether sure; but let us mark with what understanding he has explained this one. In connection with Matt. 18:15-16 he has just spoken about the calling of witnesses and the employment of greater authority and then he goes on to say:

"That Christ's discourse ought to be understood in this sense is evident from the word used, ἐλεγξον , reprove, or argue; for to argue is to convince by demonstration. And how could I argue with a man who boldly denies the whole matter? For he who has the effrontery to deny the crime which he has committed shuts the door against a second admonition."(2)

On John 8:9 where it speaks of the accusers of the adulterous woman "being reprovved by their conscience"(3) Calvin has remarked:

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(1)Harmony, I. p. 11.

(2)Harmony, II. p. 355.

(3)According to Nestle's text.

"Here we perceive how great is the power of an evil conscience. Though those wicked hypocrites intended to entrap Christ by their cavils, yet as soon as he pierces their consciences by a single word, shame puts them to flight. This is the hammer with which we must break the pride of hypocrites. They must be summoned to the judgment-seat of God. Though it is possible that the shame, with which they were struck before men, had greater influence over them than the fear of God, still it is a great matter that, of their own accord, they acknowledge themselves to be guilty, when they thus fly away as if they were confounded." (1)

Calvin points out the word in John 8:46 again.

"And such is the import of the Greek word ἐλέγχεν, as the Latins use coarguere, (to convict,) when a person is held convicted of the fact." (2) Likewise in John 16:8, a key-passage for the understanding of this word, Calvin has sensed its meaning and its importance. (3)

There is not much evidence to show that Calvin paid particular attention to the other word ἐπιτιμάω. In certain respects one is not surprised as it is the more simple word of the two. It is the common word meaning to censure, to lay under penalty, to charge, command. (4) In commenting on Matthew 18:15 he does not even observe that Luke has ἐπιτίμησον in the parallel passage, whereas Matthew has ἐλέγξον. (5)

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(1) John, I. p. 321.

(2) Ibid., p. 353.

(3) John, II. p. 139; cf. also John, I. p. 129 and Eph., p. 311.

(4) See Matt. 19:13; 20:31; 8:26; Mark 9:25; 10:48; see also Moulton and Milligan's "Vocabulary of the Greek N. T."

(5) Harmony, II. p. 352.

However, inasmuch as ἐλέγχο is by far the more significant word, it is fair enough to estimate Calvin in the light of his insight into its meaning. From what has been said, it is very probable that Calvin's knowledge of classical Greek must have helped him, as well as his own training for law, for he brings out the legal aspects of the word. It is associated with a trial, with arguments, witnesses, conviction, judgment, as may be seen from the passages of Calvin cited above. And more than that he has associated this word with the work of the Holy Spirit--a most significant observation.(1)

From a number of passages such as Romans 9:21 (2), John 5:27 (3), Matthew 8:9 (4), and Matthew 10:1 (5), he shows that he has the proper distinction in mind with respect to the word ἐξουσία, authority, as compared with other words which are used in the sense of power. In this connection mention might be made of another synonym for power, δύναμις, as found in

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- (1) See especially Calvin's Commentary on John, II. p. 139. Cf. on these words, on the various passages: Trench, Vincent's "Word Studies", Hare in his "Mission of the Comforter", Plummer, Tholuck, Westcott, Godet, Meyer, Lange, Milligan (on John), Ryle, Jacobus and others; also Thayer, and Liddell and Scott.
- (2) Rom., p. 269.
- (3) John, I. p. 207.
- (4) Harmony, I. p. 382.
- (5) Ibid., p. 439.

Calvin's remarks on Matthew 25:15. In this passage he makes it clear that the word is properly translated power or ability. Although *δύναμις* is perhaps a more general and inclusive word for power, yet by rendering it ability Calvin has come near to its derivative idea and most common use in the sense of inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature.(1)

It is worthy of note how exactly Calvin, in the passage in I Corinthians 15:12-19, has sensed the meaning of the word *κενός*.(2) It is twice used in verse 14 (v. 10 also), and then in verse 17 *ματαιά* and *κενός* is found. Both of these words in the Authorized and Revised Versions are translated by the word vain. But on *κενός* Calvin speaks of "an empty fallacy", "for what remains if Christ has been swallowed up by death?", "for what solidity of faith will there be, where no hope of life is to be seen? But in the death of Christ, considered in itself, there is seen nothing but ground of despair,---" etc. On *ματαιά* in verse 17 Calvin does not speak directly. Yet he emphasized the results of Christ's victory. He speaks of: the uselessness of faith, the lack of advantage to the Christian, no purpose in faith, if Christ were not raised. Thus he appears to have been

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(1) Cf. Thayer, Liddell and Scott.  
(2) Cor., II. pp. 18, 20.

guided by the word *ματαιία* which has to do with the lack of results as contrasted with *κενός*, the lack of the inner quality of reality. Trench has described these two words thus: "In the first (*κενός*) is characterized the hollowness, in the second (*ματαιία*) the aimlessness, or, if we may use the word, the resultlessness----". He refers to the *κενὰ ἑλπίδες* in classical authors and in the Septuagint as meaning "an empty hopes, such as are built on no solid foundation; and in the N. T. *κενὸς λόγος* are words which have no inner substance and kernel of truth, hollow sophistries and apologies for sin,----."(1)

The scope of this study does not permit of further consideration in detail of such examples. It is hoped that those brought forth have helped to give an idea of this pioneer exegete. Attention should be called to the fact that in all these passages Calvin never loses sight of his practical purpose. He is primarily interested in spiritual values. Often one cannot tell whether or not he has done the work of an exegete before giving the interpretation of a passage, but to do so one's self usually discloses the fact that Calvin's interpretations stand on sound exegetical foundations. Occasionally one finds instances in which

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(1)Trench: Synonyms of the New Testament, p. 180 ff.  
Ninth Edition.

Calvin appears to be mistaken or at least not aware of the distinctive character of a word. On Romans 3:23 he appears to give to παρέσις (pretermission, or passing over, of foregone sins, putting aside), that meaning which belongs properly to ἀφεσις (putting away, complete and unreserved forgiveness).<sup>(1)</sup> In John 3:20-21, Calvin does not appear to have brought out the words πρασῶν and πολιῶν, πονηρὰ and φαῦλα.<sup>(2)</sup> In Romans 1:1 he does not seem to be aware of the idea of bond-servant in connection with δοῦλος, yet in his Commentary on Ephesians, written over eight years later he appears to be perfectly clear on the ancient use of the word (Eph. 6:5).<sup>(3)</sup> We pass on to consider Calvin's attention to prepositions.

f. His attention to prepositions. A. T. Robertson in a little book entitled, "The Minister and His Greek New Testament", has a chapter on "Pictures in Prepositions". He opens it with this interesting paragraph:

"All language was originally pictographic. The picture was first seen and then the effort was made to describe it. Some of the words retain the picturesque origin and in some it fades away. Prepositions

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(1) Romans, p. 81. Cf. Trench: Synonyms, pp. 114 ff; also Sanday ad loc.  
(2) See John, I. p. 129.  
(3) Eph., p. 329.  
(4) S. 43.

are essentially words of location employed to help out the meaning of the oblique cases and then later used in composition with verbs. Often the original concept survives in composition when it has vanished elsewhere. One cannot afford to slur over the prepositions in the sentence if he wishes to understand the Greek New Testament."(1)

It is now our purpose to record our observations with respect to Calvin's treatment of prepositions. In Luke 1:9 it says that Zacharias "executed the priest's office before ( ἐναντι ) God in the order of his course". Calvin remarks: "It ought to be observed also that Luke says before God: for whensoever the priest entered into the holy place, he went, as it were, into the presence of God, that he might be a mediator between him and the people."(2) Thus he appears to have caught the force of those two prepositions compounded together, ἐν and ἀντι. (3) Thayer says: "ἐναντι means properly, in that part of a space which is opposite". Although this preposition occurs only twice in the New Testament (4), it is a very common word in the Septuagint, occurring over two hundred times.(5) The phrase ἐναντι κυρίου is very common.(6) Calvin was probably

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(1)P. 43.

(2)Harmony, I. p. 13.

(3)Robertson in his Grammar lists ἐναντι as an adverbial preposition. See p. 640.

(4)Luke 1:9 and Acts 8:21. See Thayer on the textual variations.

(5)See Bagster's "Handy Concordance to the Septuagint".

(6)See Gen. 19:13; Num. 3:4; 5:16, 18, 25, 30; 32:13, 20, 21, 22, 22, 23, 17, 29, 30, 32; etc.

familiar with this Old Testament use of it and thus was not able to pass by this word in Luke without pointing out its significance.

The idea of fellowship or cooperation in the preposition σὺν is set forth in this sentence, "The particle σὺν may also be taken as referring to the endeavours of ministers in common; for if they do the Lord's work in good earnest, they must mutually lend a helping hand to each other, so as to give assistance to each other."(1)

From what is said on Romans 3:25 Calvin seems to have apprehended the force of the prepositions in the phrase διὰ πίστεως ἐν τῷ αἵματι "God is reconciled unto us, so soon as we have our confidence reposed in the blood of Christ; because through faith we come into the possession of his benefit. While he nameth blood only, he excludeth not the other parts of our redemption, but rather under a part he comprehendeth the whole sum, and named the blood wherein we have our washing." Has Calvin not wrought into this interpretation that reference to instrumentality which

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(1) Cor., II. p. 244. The other interpretation referred to by the "may also" in this sentence does not affect the meaning of the preposition σὺν as compounded in συνεργούντες but rather changes its reference from ministers to God "or to the embassy, which he assigns to his servants."

is so characteristic of  $\delta\acute{\alpha}$ , and that idea of the sphere in which a thing is said to exist or be found, of the preposition  $\epsilon\upsilon$ ? (1) We cannot be at all sure that he may have thought of these words in these terms--probably not--but his interpretation of the passage appears to have taken the prepositions into account in some such manner.

of  $\delta\iota' \acute{\alpha}\kappa\rho\beta\upsilon\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$  in Romans 4:11, Calvin says that the Gentiles, being content with their estate, are not to interpose the seal of circumcision, "and so this preposition  $\delta\acute{\alpha}$ , by, is put instead of  $\epsilon\upsilon$ , in." (2)

For other instances of Calvin's attention to prepositions we would refer the reader to Romans 3:30 (3), Matthew 11:19 (4), Hebrews 5:7 (5), 7:19 (6), 12:2 (7), Philippians 1:21 (8), 1:27 (9), and I Thessalonians 1:4 (10). We would call attention, however, to such references as the following, Luke 12:21 (11), I Corinthians 10:1 (12), Philippians 2:11 (13), and I Peter 1:13

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- (1) See Thayer and Robertson on these prepositions.
- (2) Rom., p. 106.
- (3) Rom., p. 93.
- (4) Harmony, II. p. 21.
- (5) Hebrews, p. 122.
- (6) Ibid., p. 172.
- (7) Ibid., p. 172.
- (8) Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, p. 42.
- (9) Ibid., p. 47.
- (10) Ibid., p. 241. See footnote also on same page.
- (11) Harmony, II. p. 150.
- (12) Cor., I. p. 313.
- (13) Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, p. 63.

(1), where Calvin makes some such statement as this "the particle  $\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\varsigma$  is often used in place of  $\epsilon\upsilon$ ". Now we do not doubt but that there may be occasions--perhaps "often"--when these two words are used interchangeably (2), but the repetition of such a generalization as the above causes one to question whether or not Calvin may have passed by these words too easily. In fact, in the first passage mentioned above, Luke 12:21, it appears to the writer that Calvin's interpretation would have been clearer, more accurate, and more to the point had he brought out the directive or resultant idea of the preposition  $\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\varsigma$ . We should lay up riches not for ourselves or toward our own ends, but rather toward God, riches in the direction of God that will be well-pleasing unto Him.(3) Yet Calvin has not missed the sense of  $\epsilon\upsilon$  in Ephesians 4:15 (4) and in John 13:31 (5). The use of  $\kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\alpha}$  in composition, as understood by Calvin is also worth noting in conclusion. On I Corinthians 7:31 where  $\kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\alpha}$  occurs in composition with  $\chi\rho\acute{\omega}\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$  he says; "Now the preposition  $\kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\alpha}$  in a compound state is generally taken in a bad sense, or at least denotes intensity." He goes on to interpret the participle

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- (1) Catholic Epistles, p. 45.
- (2) Cf. Robertson, p. 584 ff., p. 592 in particular.
- (3) Cf. Plummer ad loc.
- (4) Galatians and Ephesians, p. 287.
- (5) John, II. p. 73.

more in line with the idea of intensity, however. In doing so he avoids coming under the criticism of such commentators as Robertson and Plummer, Lange, Olshausen, Ellicott, and others.(1)

#### E. Summary and Conclusions.

We have now reached a point in our investigation and evaluation of Calvin's exegetical methods where it may be helpful to pause in order that we may bring together the conclusions reached thus far.

The first matter to come to our attention was the orderly and systematic way in which Calvin approached all of his exegetical works by giving a summary of the "argument" of a book, calling attention to the occasion of its writing, making mention of any significant facts about the author or the people to whom it was addressed, and finally giving a summary of its contents, either chapter by chapter or section by section. By so doing he prepared his own mind as well as that of his reader with the proper environment and atmosphere for the understanding of detailed passages which were to follow. Certainly by this method he has claimed for himself the right of a fair hearing from students of Scripture.

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(1) Cf. ad loc. Ellicott has a very fine summary of this point.

The next matter of Calvin's procedure to come before us was his regard for textual problems. An effort was made first of all to ascertain what text or texts Calvin may have used. It was seen that he came late enough to receive the advantage that had come through a great revival of interest in the Greek New Testament. However Calvin came too soon to be able to make much of a contribution on textual problems. The most that can be said is that he gives evidence of having recognized and considered such problems to the best of his ability and to the extent of the limited critical apparatus of his times. The significant point is that his method was sound, and as far as he was able, he endeavored to place his interpretation of Scripture on a sound textual basis.

But the larger part of this investigation has centered upon Calvin's attention to the grammatical sense of a passage. His attention to the structure of sentences, his treatment of cases, modes, tenses, person and number, gender, and most of all his regard for the meaning of words, have all been a part of this discussion. It has been found that the Reformer manifests a familiarity with words and a method of ascertaining their meaning that gives him a high standing as an exegete. His acquaintance with classical Greek literature, his familiarity with <sup>the</sup> Old Testament in both Hebrew and Greek, and

his careful and long continued studies of the Greek New Testament, have all combined to give him an intimate and thorough knowledge of words and phrases. In all of this, Calvin's method has been that of first hand contact with the words of the New Testament in those various fields which show their common usage. By so attending to this now well-established principle of language he deserves the right to stand in the foremost rank of interpreters of Scripture. The credit due him is all the greater when one considers the centuries of exegetical wanderings in the wilderness of allegorical and scholastic interpretations which he followed. Calvin was a pioneer who did not stop short of the gold-fields, the hidden treasures of the Holy Scriptures.(1)

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(1) Patrick Fairbairn in his Hermeneutical Manual, p. 72, has emphasized the attention that should be given to the grammatical sense as follows: "The principles, however, of abiding in interpretations of Scripture by the grammatical sense, not only requires a spirit of fairness, as opposed to a doctrinal bias or polemic interest, but also a spirit of discrimination in regard to the various elements, the Lexical and Syntactical peculiarities, by the observance of which the real grammatical sense is to be ascertained. It is obvious, that if no proper discrimination is made between the later and the more classical Greek--if due respect is not had to the Hebraistic element, which appears in some of the phrases and constructions of New Testament Scripture--if either the more distinctive meanings of particular words, of the characteristic peculiarities of individual writers are overlooked, failures and mistakes in a corresponding degree will inevitably be made the exhibition of the correct meaning."

As the next chapter is to be a continuation of this study of his methods of exegesis we are now ready to take up our study again.

CHAPTER IX  
THE GENERAL EXEGETICAL METHODS OF CALVIN  
(Continued)

CHAPTER IX  
THE GENERAL EXEGETICAL METHODS OF CALVIN  
(Continued)

A. Introduction.

In continuing the study of the general exegetical methods of John Calvin, we shall observe, first of all, his attention to the context and connection of thought. In order to emphasize the importance of this section it might be said that this is one of the most characteristic features of Calvin's exegetical method. In the use of this method he excels his use of all others. The truth and the importance of this will appear as the discussion proceeds.

We shall also be interested in the use Calvin made of exegetical helps, lexicons, grammars, commentaries, etc.

Finally we shall review what we have chosen to call, "some contributory methods". For instance, does he seek to know and understand for himself, as well as to present to his reader, the mind and spirit of the author whom he is interpreting? Is he aware of the background of a passage? What is the order of his exegetical procedure? Does Calvin take into account the character of the audience for whom his exegetical writings are intended? And lastly, what is the general attitude and

spirit of Calvin as an exegete? These are referred to as contributory methods because of their secondary importance and more indirect connection.

B. His Attention to the Context and Connection of Thought.

1. The Importance of the Context and Connection of Thought.

The interpretation of a word, phrase, verse or passage in the light of its context is readily admitted to be one of the most fundamental principles of the science of hermeneutics. Samuel Davidson in his treatise on "Biblical Interpretation" begins his section on the "Study of the Context" with this sentence

"After a good knowledge of the original languages is acquired, including etymology and syntax by means of which peculiarities belonging to grammar in its widest sense are readily detected in the texts of the Bible, the next source of interpretation is the context."(1)

Another has said of this method "This is unquestionably the most reliable aid for the interpretation of passages of Scripture."(2) Terry writes:

"Too much stress cannot well be laid upon the importance of closely studying the context, scope, and plan. Many a passage of Scripture will not be understood at all without the help afforded by the context" for many a sentence derives all its point and force from the connexion in which it stands."(3)

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(1) In his volume on the "Text of the O.T.", p. 221.

(2) Raven "Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 54.

(3) Terry, p. 219. Immer expresses it thus "All single investigations must labor towards the goal of the most perfect possible understanding of the whole."

While considering Calvin, therefore, it will be well to keep the importance of this method in mind in order to be able to appreciate as well as to estimate his contribution to New Testament exegesis.

## 2. The Immediate Context.

### a. His analysis of the development of thought.

In the preceding chapter we have already written of Calvin's ability to perceive(1), his mental grasp(2), and his ability to reason(3). We refer the reader to the examples given in these pages as illustrating the present point.(4) In addition we call attention to Calvin's comments on the words  $\alpha\pi\acute{o}\ \tau\acute{o}\tau\epsilon$  which mark a division at Mark 1:14.(5). There he resolves a synoptical difficulty by referring them, not to what immediately precedes, but to the whole course of the narrative. His comment on Romans 1:8 f. is interesting for the way in which it follows the course of thought marking the articulation of the various ideas.(6) On the 16th verse of the same chapter is another illustration of the excellent way in which he analyzes the thought of the apostle.

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(1)Ante, p. 31

(2)Ante, p. 38

(3)Ante, p. 43

(4)See in particular the treatment of I Cor. 8:1, Ante, p. 55

(5)Harmony, I. p. 224.

(6)Romans, p. 11.

One only needs to note the various turns of Calvin's own thoughts as indicated by such words and phrases as: "This is a preoccupation", "wherein", "wherein also", "lest", "while", "thereby", "and so", "while", "but, on the contrary", "first-----secondly", "if", "therefore", "for", "but", "whereupon it followeth", etc.(1)

Calvin is ever alert to parentheses to place them in their proper relation to the context. For examples of this see his comments on Luke 1:55 (2), John 18:24 (3), Romans 1:26 (4), 5:13 (5), and 7:1 (6). Calvin speaks of Paul's digression in Romans 3:5 (7) and to his circumlocutions in Romans 4:5, 17, 24 and 8:11.(8)

His regard for conjunctions is demonstrated in such passages as Luke 1:35 where he insists that the clause introduced by  $\delta\epsilon$  be taken as a confirmation of the preceding clause. Calvin seriously objects to the manner in which heretics take it, who seize on the particle therefore as meaning that he would be called the

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- (1) See Rom., p. 19.
- (2) Harmony, I. p. 62.
- (3) John, II. p. 203.
- (4) Romans, p. 33.
- (5) Ibid., p. 135.
- (6) Ibid., p. 169.
- (7) Ibid., p. 67.
- (8) Ibid., pp. 99, 114, 122, and 207 respectively.

Son of God because he was conceived in a remarkable manner by the power of the Holy Spirit, in support of their contention that he became the Son of God after his human generation.(1) In Romans 4:20 there are clear indications that he has caught the force of the adversative conjunction  $\alpha\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ , "But he was strong. This is opposed against that sentence which went before---".(2) As to the  $\delta\tau\iota$  in Romans 5:5 he refers it not only to the word that went last before, but to the whole sentence. (3) In I Peter 4:1 he says that the particle  $\delta\tau\iota$  does not denote here "the cause, but is to be taken as explanatory" for Peter sets forth what that thought or mind is with which Christ's death arms us, even that the dominion of sin ought to be abolished in us, so that God may reign in our life."(4)

These illustrations of his attention to conjunctions are typical of what may be found frequently in Calvin.(5) Examples of his analysis of passages for their development of thought may be found on almost any page; especially is this true of his works on the Pauline epistles. To trace the thought of a passage is almost a

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(1)Harmony, I. p. 43

(2)Romans, p. 118. On the translation of  $\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\delta\upsilon\upsilon\alpha\mu\acute{\omega}\theta\eta$   
cf. Sanday ad loc.

(3)Ibid., p. 129

(4)Catholic Epistles, p. 121.

(5)See also Harmony, I. pp. 355, 150, 160; III. p. 268;  
Thess. p. 264; Cor., I. pp. 65, 396, 368, etc.

habit with the Reformer.

b. Calvin's use of the immediate context for exegetical purposes. Illustrations of this point are abundant. We find such instances as II Cor. 1:6 and 11 where he appeals to the context for help in deciding on certain variations in textual readings.(1) Calvin has given a splendid interpretation of the words enter into thy closet in Matthew 6:5. These words are not to be taken literally, he says, "as if he ordered us to avoid the presence of men, or declared that we do not pray aright, except when there are no witnesses. He speaks comparatively, and means, that we ought rather to seek retirement than desire a crowd of men to see us praying. It is advantageous, indeed, to believers, and contributes to their pouring out, with greater freedom, their prayers and groans before God, to withdraw from the gaze of men. ----- (Note especially that which follows)- But this is not the present subject, which is only to correct the desire of vain-glory."(2) A little later in 6:11 he draws upon the context to refute the opinion of Erasmus and others that τὸν ἄρτον means our supersubstantial bread. Calvin replies: "That Christ speaks here of

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(1) See Cor. II. pp. 114 and 124.

(2) Harmony, I. p. 312.

bodily food may easily be inferred: first, because otherwise the prayer would be defective and incomplete". He then goes on to give additional reasons drawn from other sources.(1)

On John 5:30 he puts aside "abstruse reasonings" as to "whether the Son of God can do anything of himself or otherwise, so far as relates to his eternal Divinity, for he did not intend to keep our minds employed about such trifles.-----Christ does not speak of his Divinity simply, but warns us that, so far as he is clothed with our flesh, we ought not to judge of him from the outward appearance, because he has something higher than man. Again, we ought to consider with whom he has to deal. His intention was, to refute the Jews who were endeavouring to contrast him with God. He therefore affirms that he does nothing by human power, because he has for his guide and director God who dwells in him."(2)

That the context was a great source of illumination as well as a helpful guide to Calvin we refer the reader to his comments on John 8:58, the clause  $\pi\rho\acute{\iota}\nu$  Ἀβραάμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμὶ.

"-----Yet these words may be explained in two ways. Some think that this applies simply to the eternal

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(1) Ibid., I. p. 322.  
(2) John, I. p. 210.

Divinity of Christ, and compare it with that passage in the writings of Moses, I am what I am, (Exod. iii. 14.) But I extend it much farther, because the power and grace of Christ, so far as he is the Redeemer of the world, was common to all ages. It agrees therefore with that saying of the apostle, Christ yesterday, and today, and for ever, (Heb. xiii. 8.) For the context appears to demand this interpretation. He had formerly said that 'Abraham longed for his day with vehement desire,' and as this seemed incredible to the Jews, he adds, that he himself also existed at that time. The reason assigned will not appear sufficiently strong, if we do not understand that he was even then acknowledged to be the Mediator depended on his eternal Divinity; so that this saying of Christ contains a remarkable testimony of his Divine essence."(1)

Here it may be observed that Calvin draws not only upon the immediate context but upon its larger context-- the whole of Scripture.

In Romans 5:7 our author says that the meaning of the sentence demands that  $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$  be taken affirmatively by way of declaration rather than causatively.

(2) In verse 13 of the same chapter he suggests that "if you translate the particle adversative  $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ , although, albeit, the text shall run better-----."(3)

An interesting illustration is found on Ephesians 1:10 where Calvin sets aside the old translator as well as Erasmus and says that he has "chosen to abide closely by the meaning of the Greek word,  $\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\kappa\epsilon\phi\alpha\lambda\alpha\iota\acute{\omega}\sigma\alpha\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$  because it is more agreeable to the context."(4) He

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(1) John, I. p. 362.

(2) Romans, p. 131. Sanday has interpreted it substantially the same. See Dana and Mantey, p. 243 for the uses of  $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$ .

(3) Romans, p. 137.

(4) Ephesians, p. 204.

gives the meaning: "----Out of Christ all things were disordered, and that through him they have been restored to order.----The proper condition of creatures is to keep close to God. Such a gathering together (ἀνακεφαλαιώσις) as might bring us back to regular order, the apostle tells us, has been made in Christ. Formed into one body, we are united to God, and closely connected with each other."(1)

Let us now sum up our impressions on the basis of our study of this topic thus far. The first is that Calvin has made much use of the context in his exegetical work. This fact stands out almost above all others. Moreover, with the aid of his legally trained mind he has manifested an ability in this respect that would be difficult to equal. As a result of his own grasp of the development of thought in a passage and of the object and intent of the writer he has placed many of his interpretations of individual words, phrases, verses, and passages on a sound exegetical foundation. The context is both a sword of offense against frivolous and irrelevant interpretations that have been imposed by others, and a shield of defense for his own position. Furthermore, Calvin makes use of the context as a source of enrichment for his presentation of a passage. The passage

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(1)Ephesians, p. 205. Cf. Thayer on ἀνακεφαλαιώσις

on prayer from Matthew 6:5 and the passage on the power of Christ from John 5:30 are good examples of this. It might indeed be said that if one is seeking a clear-cut, understandable, sympathetic, and wholesome presentation of the development of thought of a passage he might well turn to the works of John Calvin and do so with the expectation of finding the help which is sought.

We now pass on to consider a few examples of his attention to the larger context--to the relation of a passage to the whole of Scripture.(1)

### 3. Harmony with Scripture.

It is only fair to expect that a book which came out of the experiences of one people, a people that held in common such great traditions from the past and such great expectations for the future, would, as a whole, be one of the best sources of light upon its various parts. There is a real sense therefore in which the Scriptures constitute a self-interpreting book. As Terry has said: "The old rule that 'Scripture must be interpreted by Scripture', is a most important principle of hermeneutics".(2) Of course there is danger of over-

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(1) For further examples of his attention to the immediate context see: Harmony, I. pp. 306, 376; John, I. pp. 37, 43, 295, 341; and Romans, pp. 43, 97, 99, 143; Cor. I. p. 139; II. p. 218.

(2) See Terry, p. 222 ff. A little later he adds: "These different books may---be fairly expected to interpret themselves. Their spirit and purpose, their

stepping and going too far in this matter, but it is certainly a line of exegetical procedure which can be a great stabilizing as well as a guiding influence in Scriptural interpretation. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Calvin viewing a passage in the light of other parts or of the whole of Scripture.

On Romans 1:9 in connection with the phrase God is my witness Calvin takes occasion to refute the dreams of the "superstitious Anabaptists" that Christ had meant altogether to put down oaths.(1) Calvin clears the issue by saying that what Christ meant was rather "to call us unto the true observation of the law". He points out that the law permitted an oath and forbade only perjury and superfluous swearing. In the passage in Romans certainly it is mere foolishness to contend that Paul's calling of God to witness is not an oath--for that is the very nature of an oath--and at the same time who will maintain that he has transgressed

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modes of thought and expression, their doctrinal teachings, and, to some extent, their general subject-matter, would be naturally expected to have a self-conformity. When, upon examination, we find that this is the case, we shall the more fully appreciate the importance of comparing all parallel portions and reading them in each other's light."  
p. 222 f.

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(1)Romans, p. 13. See Matt. 5:33 ff.

the commandment of Christ? Calvin adds: "----Let us follow the sobriety and reverent discretion which appeared in the apostles. And to the end thou mayest understand this rule, know thou that God is so called to be a witness, that he is also called to be a revenger, if we do deceive. Which thing Paul expresseth in another place, in these words, Now I call God for a record unto my soul."(1) Thus Calvin had drawn upon various parts of Scripture in order to set the matter right with respect to swearing. Certainly, there is no objection to be found in his solution; rather does he reveal his insight into and breadth of grasp of spiritual truth.

On Romans 8:16 we find the following interesting use of Scripture which is to the point in this discussion:

"But this certainly (speaking concerning salvation and the proving of our faith) proceedeth not from man's brain, but is the testimony of the Spirit of God, as he handleth more at large in his former Epistle to the Corinthians, whence also the fuller exposition of this place is to be gathered. Therefore, this sentence standeth sure, That none can be called the son of God who doth not acknowledge himself to be such (an) one; which knowledge is called science of John, to show forth the certainty thereof."(2)

Such phrases as "Scripture everywhere proclaims", (3) or "Scripture proclaims throughout"(4), are

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(1) Romans, p. 13. See II Cor. 1:23 for the verse referred to by Calvin.

(2) Romans, p. 214.

(3) See Cor., II. p. 220.

(4) See Ibid., p. 232. In this he is probably referring only to the N. T. Cf. Ibid., p. 237+238.

characteristic of Calvin's method.

In interpreting the phrase the righteousness of God in Romans 3:21 Calvin reaches out into the experience of Abraham, and of David; he refers to other letters of Paul, II Corinthians and Galatians; he speaks of the manifestation in the Old Testament and the fulfilling of the New Testament; and also mentions Scripture in general. In this passage and in the similar one on chapter 1:17, Calvin's interpretation of the phrase  $\delta\epsilon\kappa\alpha\lambda\omicron\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu\eta\ \Theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  is worthy of attention. Although he has given an interpretation which is more in line with that which Sanday refers to as the traditional one, i.e., "a righteousness of which God is the author and man the recipient", yet without forcing Calvin or reading into him something that is not there, one cannot help feeling that he has associated along with the aforesaid interpretation, the larger idea advanced by Sanday in his excellent treatment of the phrase, i.e., that this is also "the righteousness of God".(1) Such a sentence as this would lead one to think that Calvin so viewed this idea: "---We cannot obtain salvation otherwise than in the gospel; because God doth not elsewhere manifest unto us his righteousness, which only de-

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(1) See Calvin on Romans, pp. 21, and 79 ff. Cf. Sanday ad loc.; also special note on "The Righteousness of God", p. 34 ff.

livereth us from destruction". However, a few lines below he explicitly states that, "By the righteousness of God I understand that righteousness which is approved before the tribunal seat of God", but then he adds, "and yet I doubt not but Paul alludeth unto many prophecies, where the Spirit of God often celebrateth the righteousness of God in the kingdom of Christ to come." Later he remarks that "our righteousness, which is grounded upon faith, doth wholly depend upon the mercy of God."(1)

Now the purpose of our dwelling on this example is not to prove that Calvin has anticipated Barmby, or Robertson, or Abbott or Sanday(2) in the wider interpretation--perhaps he did--but rather to call attention to the fact that John Calvin had an insight into and a grasp of spiritual truth as contained in the whole of Scripture that, by and large, is seldom, if ever, equaled. An exegete may be thoroughly grounded in linguistic studies; he may be familiar with classical and Old Testament as well as New Testament phraseology and grammar; he may make the proper use of lexicons,

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(1) See Romans, p. 21 ff. For further evidence of Calvin's use of Scripture to interpret Scripture see index of Scripture passages quoted, or incidentally illustrated, to be found at the close of most of his commentaries. See Cor. II. p. 406, for instance.

(2) See Sanday, p. 24. See also Barmby in Pulpit Commentary ad loc.

concordances and other helps; but if he lacks that sympathetic, comprehensive insight and grasp of the inner realities of spiritual truth, then he falls short of being the kind of an interpreter that men have a right to expect, and which the Scriptures themselves demand. It is a matter of high credit to John Calvin that he possessed to such a remarkable degree these qualities. As has been seen in these most important passages on the righteousness of God, there is little that has been added to the understanding of this magnificent idea that could be considered foreign to the mind and spirit if not also the words of the sixteenth century Reformer.

It is also of real importance, if the reader has not already observed it, that frequent reference has been made to Calvin's Commentary on Romans. It is only natural as well as by deliberate choice, that this work should receive most thorough treatment. This Epistle of Paul, we believe, will be admitted to be a "key" book both for understanding the Scriptures as well as for our purpose of testing an exegete. Calvin expresses himself on this very point in his Epistle dedicating his Commentary to his friend Grynaeus. He is making his apology for another commentary on this book, since there were so many "Commentaries upon this Epistle, both of the elder and later writers." With regard to those writers before him he says: "And surely they

could no where better have bestowed their labour; seeing if a man understand it (Romans), he hath a certain way opened unto him to the understanding of the whole Scripture."(1)

All of these conclusions are the more amazing when we recall the fact that Calvin published his Commentary on Romans in October 1539 when he was only a little more than thirty years of age! And not only that, but it was his first commentary on Scripture. Twenty-four of the most fruitful years of his life remained to him.

Thus in this section we have endeavored to show how Calvin made use of the context as a method of interpretation. It is one of the most characteristic features of his method. Calvin seems ever to have in hand the thread of thought. By this he is frequently guided into the riches as well as away from the pitfalls of Scriptural interpretation. It has been said in comparing Calvin with Bengel, the great interpreter of the eighteenth century, that, "The difference between Calvin's exegesis and that of Bengel is, that Calvin is occupied predominantly with the connection of thought while Bengel bestows most of his labor on individual

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(1)Romans, p. xviii.

words and thoughts."(1) As has been already shown Calvin was no amateur on individual words and thoughts. We would allow such a contrast only by way of emphasizing his expertness in dealing with the context.

### C. His Use of Helps.

#### 1. The Importance of the Right Use of Helps.

It is self-evident that exegetical investigation cannot be carried on without the use of helps. It is only proper that the exegete should profit by the work of others. This is as true of commentaries as it is of grammars, lexicons, concordances, versions, texts, etc. But in the use of commentaries there is one requirement which we have a right to demand of the interpreter, and that is that he give himself first of all to a thorough study of his author without a commentary. By so doing he will become conscious of the questions that are to be asked of other writers and, as one has said, "Only in this way will a man be truly profited by commentaries, and only in this way does the exegetical judgment remain clear and uncorrupted."(2)

In the brief consideration which follows we

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(1) Immer, p. 47. Immer says that Bengel "may well be designated the most important exegete since Calvin".  
p. 47. Bengel lived from 1687 to 1751.  
(2) See Immer, p. 190, also pp. 8 and 9.

shall be interested in Calvin's use of helps from two points of view, first of all what helps he used and secondly how he used them. We shall take up first his use of general exegetical helps.

## 2. His Use of General Exegetical Helps.

a. Manuscripts and versions. We would refer the reader back to our section in the preceding chapter on the texts used by Calvin.(1) Calvin of course had the Vulgate or Latin Version which was at that time the standard version of the Roman Church and had been throughout the Middle Ages.(2) Doubtless Calvin had his own copy or had access to a copy of the Complutensian Polyglot.(3) In the New Testament it had the Greek and Latin Vulgate in parallel columns. Of the Old Testament there were three columns, on one side was the Greek Septuagint and on the other the Hebrew original, while the Vulgate held the place of honor in the middle.(4) From rather frequent references to "manuscripts"(5) we conclude that he had access to at least a limited number of textual helps. Calvin's use

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(1)Ante, p. 141

(2)For instance in Cor., I., it is quoted or referred to on pp. 54, 60 ("the old interpreter"), 188, 253, 261 ("the old Latin translation"), 307 ("the old translation").

(3)Ante, p. 142.

(4)Schaff: Companion to the Greek Testament and English Version, p. 234.

(5)See Cor., I. p. 307; Cor., II. p. 280.

of these has been treated in the section already referred to.

b. Lexicons and Concordances. Of one thing we may be sure, Calvin did not have a "Thayer" or a copy of Moulton and Geden's Concordance at his right hand. Not very much can be said about what help he may have had of this nature. Yet we do know that Calvin lived and did his work late enough to benefit by the first fruits of the printer's art. From 1475 on, and before Calvin's death in 1564, there had been a number of lexicons, vocabularies, and word books published in various places. These were of both Greek and Latin. Aldus, the great printer, was responsible for bringing out editions of various old authors. Some of his products came out as early as 1500. Others followed in 1503, 1514, and so on. (1) These are only a few of those that came out during this period; but on the basis of this it is a fairly safe conjecture that Calvin had some help in the way of lexicons or concordances.

But when it comes to estimating their value to him, we are very doubtful. We have found no reference in any of Calvin's works that could, with certainty, be taken as a reference to a lexicon or concordance. What then are we to make of this fact? Simply this,

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(1) See the article entitled "Dictionary" in the Ency. Brit. by Rev. Ponsonby A. Lyons and Benjamin E. Smith.

that Calvin's faithful and persistent studies of classical Greek and sacred literature coupled with his extraordinary capacity to remember, had provided him with a store of knowledge that took the place of concordances, word books, etc. The general nature of his references and the manner in which he brings together various passages of Scripture are entirely in harmony with this view. They appear to come right out of his own mind and he usually does not stop to give their source. This however does not diminish in the least our estimate of Calvin as an exegete. Rather it gives us better and truer appreciation of the man and his work. His exegetical results are on solid foundations in spite of his handicaps. His contribution to New Testament exegesis was, therefore, the greater. Whether he accomplished his results by intuition or by dint of hard labor and extended study or both, we are not attempting to prove here. Nevertheless in such an instance as the verb  $\sigma\upsilon\upsilon\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\eta\sigma\epsilon$  in Romans 5:8 he has pierced through a word that was of doubtful signification in his day and has interpreted it as meaning to confirm. In this he is followed by such modern commentators as Beet, Sanday, Meyer, Godet, Hodge, Liddon and probably many others.(1) Whether Calvin had before

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(1)Cf. ad loc.

him its usage in such passages as Rom. 3:5, II Cor. 6:4, Gal. 2:18, and II Cor. 7:11 as well as its classical usage, we know not, but he must be given credit for what appears to be a most suitable rendering in the above mentioned passage.

c. Grammars. Not much more can be said about grammars than was said about lexicons and concordances. There are many recent grammarians of note who are indebted to Calvin, but Calvin could not profit by them. Yet Calvin did know grammar. We need only turn back over the pages of this study to see many examples of it.(1) His was a first-hand knowledge of grammar. On Matthew 11:11 he notes that "The Greek word *μικρότερος* which I have rendered least, is in the comparative degree, and signified less; but the meaning is more clearly brought out, that all the ministers of the Gospel are included."(2) Calvin has therefore perceived that it was not uncommon for a comparative to be used for a superlative.(3) With this we pass on to his use of commentaries.

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- (1) See the section on cases, modes, tenses, person, number, gender, etc. Ante, p. 151, ff.
- (2) Harmony, II. p. 14.
- (3) Cf. Blass, p. 107, Robertson, p. 667. Robertson notes this very passage, i.e., Matt. 11:11.

### 3. His Use of Commentaries.

The following find a place among Calvin's references: Augustine, Chrysostom, Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, Ambrose, Cyprian, Tertullian, Cyril, Lactantius, Epiphanius, Papias, Hilary, Gregory of Nazienzen, the Schoolmen, and the Papists.(1) That Calvin had consulted the writings of some of his contemporaries is evident from occasional references to them. We find such names as Osiander (2), Melancthon (3), Bullinger (4), and Bucer (5). Erasmus is among those most frequently mentioned.(6)

As to Calvin's use of these we refer to the section in an earlier chapter on Calvin's intellectual independence.(7) It was found that in a large majority of cases Calvin referred to the interpretations of others in order to point out their errors and that he might direct his readers aright. Especially was this true of Chrysostom, Origen, Jerome, Ambrose and Erasmus. As for Augustine, Calvin finds in him more occasion for agreement, but at that he disagrees with or shows himself independent of him more often than he

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- (1)For the exact references to these see Ante, pp. 47, 48, 49, 82 and 84.
- (2)Harmony, I. p. 160. See footnote. See also II. p.428.
- (3)Romans, p. xix
- (4)Ibid.
- (5)Ibid. See also Calvin's "Argument" to his Harmony, I. p.xl; also I. p. 164, III. pp. 194, 361.
- (6)Ante, p. 49.
- (7)Ante, p. 46 ff.

agrees with him. This in fact speaks well for both Calvin and Augustine in view of Augustine's contribution to Biblical studies, especially on doctrinal matters. Once in a while Calvin finds help in Erasmus, but although Erasmus had made a good beginning, he had not gone far enough to be free from a great many errors. The Schoolmen and the Papists are mentioned frequently but they are brought in so that their errors may be refuted.(1) Thus Calvin appears to have made a legitimate use of the interpretations of others and there is little ground for any charge that he was dependent upon them.

One other fact finds an appropriate place in this connection. Not infrequently is it evident that Calvin has compared various writers on a passage. This is to be seen in such a phrase as "There are divers interpretations of this place"(2), or this, "the diversity of interpretations being omitted."(3)

From the evidence of this section we can say in conclusion, that so far as concerns Calvin's use of exegetical helps he has done exceedingly well with the very limited resources at his command; and furthermore in his use of them there has been nothing unworthy of

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(1) See Harmony, III. pp. 84, 87, 88, 89, 95, 97, etc.

(2) Rom., p. 214; see also p. 223.

(3) Rom., p. 276.

the true interpreter of Scripture.

D. Some Contributory Methods.

1. The Plan and Purpose of this Section.

As we draw near the close of these two chapters on the general exegetical methods of Calvin there remain some more or less general observations on his methods which have not found a proper or an adequate place in our discussion thus far. Although they are of lesser importance, they deserve to be taken into consideration. We have therefore chosen to speak of them as contributory methods.

2. His Attention to the Mind and Spirit of the Author.

We have already considered at greater length Calvin's attention to the context and connection of thought.(1) Although the present subject is somewhat related, it has seemed worthwhile, in a brief space, to call attention to it separately. Fairbairn sets down as the first rule to be followed in the interpretation of a passage, that the interpreter "must endeavour to attain to a sympathy in thought and feeling with the sacred writers, whose meaning he seeks to unfold."(2)

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(1)Ante, p.210.

(2)Patrick Fairbairn: Hermeneutical Manual, p. 63.

Indeed Tholuck in his article on "Calvin as an Interpreter" has made especial mention of this point with regard to the Reformer. "In the Pauline Epistles", says Tholuck, "he merges himself in the spirit of the Apostle, and becoming one with him, as every one clearly feels, he deduces everywhere the explanation of that which is particular from that which is general.----The whole history of the New Testament becomes in his hand alive and vivid. He lives in every person who comes forward, either speaking or acting, in the wicked as well as in the good, and explains every discourse from the circumstances, and from the soul of him who speaks."(1)

Let us recall first Calvin's remark to Grynaeus as to the office of the interpreter: "And truly, seeing this is in a manner his whole charge, to show forth the mind of the writer whom he hath taken upon him to expound-----."(2) For Calvin this meant more than simply the thought of the writer. Inasmuch as the preceding section concerned itself more with the thought of the writer we purpose here to emphasize Calvin's attention to the spirit of the writer.

It has seemed best to allow Calvin to speak for himself on this matter. We therefore give the fol-

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(1)Tholuck: Calvin as an Interpreter of the Holy Scriptures, published in the same volume with Calvin's Commentary on Joshua, pp. 368+369.

(2)Rom., p. xvii; See Ante, p. 126.

lowing paragraph taken from his comments on Romans 3:5.

(1) It is given in its entirety in order that the reader may have ample opportunity to catch its spirit.

"Although this is a digression from the principal cause, yet was it necessary the apostle should add it, lest he should seem to have given unto the wicked that occasion of speaking evil, which he knew to be voluntarily sought for of them. For, seeing they were ready to take every occasion that might make to the defamation of the gospel, they had in the testimony of David what they might catch to the framing of their false detraction. If God seek nothing else at the hands of men than to be glorified of them, wherefore doth he punish them when they offend, seeing by their offence they glorify him? Undoubtedly he is angry without cause, if he take occasion at that to be angry whereby he is glorified. Neither is it to be doubted but this surmised accusation was vulgar, and very common, as shall straightway be said again. Therefore, Paul might not pass it over obscurely; and lest any should think he speaketh here according to the persuasion or censure of his own mind, he first showeth how he taketh on him the person of the wicked; and withal he nippeth or sharply reproveth man's reason, whose property he noteth to be always to chat and prate against the wisdom of God; for he saith not, I speak as the wicked, but I speak as a man. And it is certainly so, seeing all the mysteries of God are strange or absurd unto the flesh. It is so bold, that it doubteth not to rise up against them; and which of them it cannot conceive those it wantonly pursueth. Whereby we are admonished, if we will become capable of the mysteries of God, first of all we must labour that our own sense (or sensual judgment) being laid apart, we may give ourselves into the obedience of the Word. This word, wrath, which is used for judgment here, hath respect unto the punishment; as if he had said, is God unrighteous in punishing iniquities, which set forth his righteousness?"(2)

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(1)The R.V. reads: "But if our unrighteousness commendeth the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who visiteth with wrath; (I speak after the manner of men.)"

(2)Rom., p. 67-68.

If the reader should desire further evidence of Calvin's ability to reflect the spirit and feelings of the sacred writer we believe that he will not have to turn many pages before he will be satisfied of the truth of our point. As passages especially worth noting we would suggest the following: his comments on the meeting of Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3 (1); his exposition of the beatitudes in Matthew 5 and Luke 6 (2); his treatment of I Corinthians 2:3 (3); and his paragraphs on II Timothy 4:6 ff. (4). We would also refer the reader to Calvin's Commentary on the Psalms. (5)

### 3. His Attention to the Background of a Passage.

It is not an easy task for one to disengage himself from his own times and to place himself in a past age. It is not easy for us to lay hold on the surrounding circumstances in which a portion of Scripture may have been written. It is only by broad and careful study that a passage can be given its proper setting.

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- (1) John, I., p. 103 ff.
- (2) Harmony, I., p. 260 ff.
- (3) Cor., I., p. 93.
- (4) Timothy, Titus and Philemon, p. 259.
- (5) Terry has spoken especially of Calvin's work on the Psalms saying that "His exegesis breathes everywhere ---a most lively religious feeling, indicating that his own personal experience enabled him to penetrate as by intuition into the depths of meaning treasured in the oracles of God." p. 677.

But Calvin in dealing with the story of Jesus and Zaccheus has given it a very lively touch when he says: "We know how hateful, nay, how detestable the name of publican at the time was;----It is therefore astonishing kindness in the Son of God to approach a man, from whom the great body of men recoil, and that before he is requested to do so."(1)

In his "argument" which is prefaced to I Corinthians, Calvin calls attention to certain significant facts pertaining to the history of the city and its condition at the time of the Apostle's writing. These contribute greatly to the understanding of the content of the Epistle.(2)

Throughout his treatment of the chapters in Matthew and Luke on the birth of Jesus, Calvin gives particular attention both to the Old Testament background, and to the expectant situation which existed in the minds and hearts of God's people Israel at the time in which our Lord was born. For instance, in connection with Luke 1:32, Calvin supplies the references from the Old Testament that would illumine the statement of the angel to Mary that "The Lord will give unto him the throne of his father David."(3) Calvin is guided in

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- (1)Harmony, II. p. 434.
- (2)See Cor., I. p. 37.
- (3)Harmony, I., p. 38.

his interpretation of the participle *μνηστευμένην* in Luke 1:27 by the custom of Jewish parents to keep their daughters for some time in their own home, after they had been betrothed to men; otherwise the law relating to the seduction of a "betrothed damsel" in Deuteronomy 22:23 would have been unnecessary. (1) On Matthew 2:3 where it says that Herod the king was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him, Calvin gives a whole paragraph to each clause, describing what lay behind these words as to the knowledge and expectation of the Messiah both in the mind of Herod and in the minds of the people. Calvin remarks in closing that "Matthew intended, I have no doubt, to express their ingratitude, in being so entirely broken by the long continuance of their afflictions, as to throw away the hope and desire of the grace which had been promised to them." (2)

As far as the geographical and chronological background of a passage is concerned Calvin has not a great deal to contribute because of the limited knowledge of those matters in his day. But any background which may be supplied from Scripture or other sources which reflects the customs, the spirit of the people, the current ideas, etc., is not found to be wanting in

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(1) See Ibid., p. 32.

(2) Harmony, I. p. 38.

the exegetical works of Calvin. This background goes far toward giving vividness and interest to his work.

#### 4. His Order of Procedure.

It is only fair to the one who may read an exegetical work, to require of its author that he manifest a certain orderliness not only in the presentation of his exegetical results, but also in the process by which he arrived at those results. This latter is even more important. We propose here to sum up our observations on Calvin in this respect.

In order to illustrate this point we have chosen Calvin's comments on the very brief epistle of Paul to Philemon.(1) We have chosen this because the comments cover only about fourteen pages. It is therefore more easily and briefly covered in its entirety. Although it is short, it is none the less typical of Calvin's other commentaries.

We must note at the outset, however, what seems to be an exception in the Reformer's method. To every one of his New Testament Commentaries, Calvin has given a summary or an introduction which he calls the "argument". At first sight this appears to be missing from his treatment of Philemon. But when one

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(1) Timothy, Titus and Philemon, pp. 347-361.

begins to examine his commentary, the first thing he discovers is that the first paragraph contains the "argument" which Calvin is accustomed to include separately. Thus our first observation about Calvin's order of procedure is that by a synopsis or an introduction he demonstrates the fact that he has a clear grasp on the contents of a writing as a whole. He is aware of its occasion. In Philemon Calvin points out that it is to supplicate pardon for "a runaway slave and thief" whom Paul is sending back to his master. Calvin reveals also that he has caught the spirit of the Apostle in such words as these, "While he handles a subject otherwise low and mean, he rises to God with his wonted elevation." Moreover, Calvin shows that he has sensed the development of thought and the articulation of various portions in such a sentence as: "But in pleading this cause he discourses about Christian forbearance with such ability, that he appears to speak about the interests of the whole church rather than the private affairs of a single individual." (1) We would refer the reader to his "argument" preceding Galatians and Ephesians as furnishing other examples of the points mentioned. There, of course, it is on a larger scale.

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(1) Timothy, Titus and Philemon, p. 348.

In the next place it is expected of the exegete that he consider any textual problems. Even on this short letter Calvin gives evidence of his attention to this point. In verse 7 he notes that the majority of Greek copies read  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\epsilon\nu$  but he thinks it ought to be read  $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\alpha}\nu$ . In so doing he has chosen the reading which has been adopted by Nestle, Westcott and Hort, Meyer, and others.(1) As has been said before (2), we do not urge the point of Calvin's contribution to textual criticism because it was only in its infancy in his day. However he was scientific in his method and did much to give that method a good start in the days of its beginnings.

There is ample evidence that Calvin next applied himself to ascertain the grammatical sense. On verse 1 he considers the sense in which Paul uses the phrase  $\delta\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\mu\iota\omicron\varsigma \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon \text{ } \text{'}\text{I}\eta\sigma\omicron\upsilon$ . In verse 4 he endeavors to ascertain the proper connection of the adverb  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\omicron\tau\epsilon$ . On verse 6 he mentions the phrase  $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu$ .  $\tau\omicron\grave{\omicron} \acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{\omicron}\nu$  in verse 14 as well as  $\acute{\alpha}\nu\acute{\alpha}\pi\alpha\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$  back in verse 7 are particularly mentioned.

Now all through, Calvin has been adding the real explanation, trying to put the thought as well as

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(1) Tischendorff still holds to  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\epsilon\nu$ .

(2) Ante, p. 147.

the spirit of the Apostle into words so that it will be understood and appreciated by his readers. For instance, on verse 5 he uses this phrase, "The meaning may be brought out in this manner" and then he goes on to give his explanation. Interestingly enough, as is often his custom, he gives also a second way of interpreting it. Calvin leaves his readers "at full liberty to judge for themselves" and in conclusion simply indicates his own preference.(1) In verses 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, etc., the reader may find other examples of his summing up the meaning in his own words. Such examples may be found on almost any page of his commentaries.

As a concluding observation we would mention the fact that Calvin is ever alert to establish the truth, which has been gathered from the passage, in the heart and life of his reader. His is a practical purpose. He is not out simply for exegetical exercise by itself. In his commentary on Philemon, we find such phrases as "teachers---ought--"(2), "we should honor" (3), "pastors are reminded"(4), "we must believe"(5), "we ought"(6), "all believers ought"(7), "here we be-

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(1) Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, p. 350.

(2) Ibid., p. 348.

(3) Ibid., p. 349.

(4) Ibid., p. 353.

(5) Ibid., p. 354.

(6) Ibid., p. 355.

(7) Ibid., p. 355.

hold"(1), etc.

We have included this section on Calvin's order of procedure in order to emphasize the fact that his method was orderly and scientific. Calvin has not dispensed with those steps which are recognized as essential for the interpreting of Scripture,(2) neither has Calvin gone about his work in a haphazard or disorderly way. His work bears the indelible stamp of a legally trained mind; it reflects his orderly and scientific habits of work.(3)

#### 5. His Attention to the Character of the Audience Addressed.

The audience for whom a writing is intended cannot help making considerable difference in the language and style in which an author couches his exegetical results. It should not make much, if any, difference in his own preparatory investigations or in his exegetical methods, but only in the manner of presenting them to his hearers or readers.

Some of Calvin's commentaries like those on

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(1) Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, p. 350.

(2) Immer has said: "Whatever may be the nature of the public for which the explanation is designed, and whatever may be the object of the explanation, the exegete can never dispense with, at least, what is essential to previous investigation of his own, viz. textual criticism, verbal explanation, explanation of the subject-matter, and logical explanation, together with religious comprehension of the thought." p. 103.

(3) See Ante, pp. 43 ff., 52 ff., and 63 ff.

Jeremiah and those on the Minor Prophets were delivered as lectures in the Theological School at Geneva. They were taken down by some of his pupils, afterwards read to Calvin, and corrected.(1) Although one might expect them to be more technical and detailed, nevertheless they partake of that same simplicity which one finds in his other works.(2)

The outstanding observation to be recorded here, then, is that Calvin wrote for the people, for the Church at large. In fact he makes this clear in the epistle in which he dedicates his first commentary (Romans) to Simon Grynaeus. He says:

"I could not choose but make a trial what good I might do herein to the Church of God; not as though I had already obtained that which then seemed best to us, either thought when I began that I could obtain it; but I endeavored so to order my style or form of writing, that I might seem to apply my mind towards that example."

In justifying the need for his own work he criticizes that of Bucer because it is too large to be hastily read of "those (who) are tied to other business, and also higher, than that easily----can be understood of the simple, and those (that) are not very circumspect (attentive). ----He hath such store of matter, that he knoweth not where to leave off."(3)

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(1)Jeremiah, I. see pp. v, xxii, and xxv.

(2)See his comments on the first chapter of Jeremiah for instance.

(3)Romans, pp. xviii and xx.

Calvin has therefore written with his audience in mind. This accounts for several features of his work. To begin with, he has not cumbered his pages with much of Greek and Hebrew. For instance, in his entire commentary on Ephesians we have counted only about fifty+seven <sup>51</sup> places in which he has actually introduced the Greek words into the text and only thrice did he introduce Hebrew words. However we are not to conclude, as we have already had occasion to show, (1) that Calvin had not gone through the exegetical process himself.

One is also impressed by the absence of direct quotations from the Fathers. Although they are referred to frequently, they are seldom quoted. In fact, in the entire 149 pages of his commentary on Ephesians, Calvin has made only one reference to a church Father that may be considered a direct quotation. (2)

The fact that he was writing for the church at large also accounts for his giving no small share of the space to what might be called application.

All of these features combined with Calvin's lively and logical style go to make Calvin's works interesting and understandable as well as edifying to the reader. (3)

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(1) See Ante, pp. 137, 194.

(2) Cf. the reference to Cyprian, Eph., p. 281.

(3) Prof. William Adams Brown in an address at Union Theological Seminary, May 3, 1909 (published in New

6. The General Attitude and Spirit of Calvin as an Exegete.

It has seemed appropriate as we draw toward the close of this consideration of Calvin's general exegetical methods to record certain characteristics of his attitude and spirit which bear upon this subject.

We have already discussed in a preceding chapter his honesty, fairness, and desire for truth.(1)

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York--we quote from p. 24), said of Calvin as a theologian--and what was true in this respect of Calvin the theologian was also true of Calvin the exegete?  
"---This brings me to the first point in Calvin's title to greatness as a thinker; I mean, his skill as a simplifier of theology. Theologians who have been able to deliver their message in simple and intelligible terms have been rare. This power Calvin possessed in supreme degree. Before his day doctrine had been the affair of the specialist. He made it the common interest of the man on the street. He translated its elaborate formularies into plain speech which the man without technical training could understand, and what is more important, he simplified the ideas to which the words correspond. He cleared away a vast mass of accumulated rubbish, interesting only to the antiquarian, and he put the points that remained in their logical relation as parts of a consistent and coherent system. He grounded each in the Bible, the common text-book of religion which the Reformation had reclaimed from its obscurity, and put into the hands of all the people. Above all, he showed the practical bearing of each truth upon personal life and pointed out its appropriate fruit in practice. Thus, he made theology, for the first time in its history, a popular study, the concern of the layman as well as of the minister, and so set the ideal which, in theory at least, has ever since been dominant in Protestantism. This is his great and enduring title to fame."

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(1)Ante, p. 92.

We recall here Calvin's statement to the Genevan ministers on one of those last days:

"As concerns my doctrine: I have taught faithfully, and God has given me grace to write. I have done it with the utmost fidelity, and have not to my knowledge corrupted or twisted a single passage of the Scriptures; and when I could have drawn out a far-fetched meaning, if I had studied subtilty, I have put that (temptation) under foot and have always studied simplicity. I have written nothing through hatred against any one, but have always set before me faithfully what I have thought to be for the glory of God."(1)

In addition we would note first of all Calvin's unwillingness to force interpretations. In connection with the temptation in Matthew 4, as to whether Christ was actually transported to each spot mentioned or whether it was a vision, Calvin says there were many who obstinately asserted that the body was actually conveyed. But, he says, it is easy to dispose of that objection. "In a matter that is doubtful, and where ignorance brings no risk, I choose rather to suspend my judgment, than to furnish contentious people with an occasion of debate."  
(2)

On the metaphor having to do with sifting in Luke 22:31, he warns against trying to make it applicable in every respect. It ought to be taken in its most simple meaning.(3)

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- (1) Letters of John Calvin by Jules Bonnet, translated by Gilchrist, Vol. IV. pp. 372-377.
  - (2) Harmony, I. p. 217.
  - (3) Ibid., III. p. 217. For other illustrations see John, I. p. 266.

Not infrequently does Calvin refuse to argue interpretations. On John 1:4 he remarks, "The other interpretations, which do not accord with the meaning of the Evangelist, I intentionally pass by."(1) On I Corinthians 1:26 where the mode of the verb βλέπετε is doubtful, he leaves it to the reader's choice.(2)

On the other hand, Calvin sometimes finds it necessary to take up individually the various interpretations of a passage. In his comments on I Corinthians 5:10 we find a good illustration of this method: "Some say----Ambrose, on the other hand says,-----Erasmus turns it,----Chrysostom's exposition-----." After considering each of these we read:

"For my own part, as I do not willingly adopt interpretations which cannot be made to suit the words, otherwise than by twisting the words so as to suit them, I prefer one that is different from all these, ----."

This is indeed an outstanding characteristic of Calvin; he insists on the proper grammatical explanation first of all.(3)

But another outstanding feature of Calvin's exegesis is his opposition to allegory, his aversion to subtleties and his insistence upon simplicity. In connection with Galatians 4:22 ff., he severely condemns

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(1)John, I. p. 32.

(2)Cor., I. p. 89. Cf. also Harmony, I. pp. 129, 329.

(3)Cor., I. p. 191. Cf. also Cor., II. p. 199.

"Origen, and many others along with him, (who) have seized the occasion of torturing Scripture, in every possible manner, away from the true sense."(1) Calvin repudiates Augustine's allegory that the position of the angels- one at the head, and the other at the feet, in John 20:12, pointed out that the Gospel would be preached from East to the West.(2) A little later Calvin again censures Augustine for his "ingenius reasonings", and "childish trifling".(3) In like manner he refutes the "folly of the schoolmen" in connection with some of their ideas on Romans 4:6.(4) Other examples are abundant but we hasten on.(5)

Although Calvin manifests a spirit toward his enemies, particularly toward the Papists, that would not be considered proper for a modern exegete, yet we must remember the spirit of the times in which he lived. Although we would rather Calvin had not given his consent to the burning of Servetus, nevertheless we do not feel that we can condemn him for so doing. We may be glad that, at least in this respect, the times have changed.

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(1)Gal., p. 135.

(2)John, II. p. 255.

(3)P. 286.

(4)Rom., p. 101.

(5)See the following: Harmony, I. pp. 107, 136; II. pp. 187, 191, 150, 117; John I. pp. 210, 371, 430; II. pp. 239, 255, 219; Romans, pp. 22, 276; and Gal., p. 54.

In connection with Luke 1:32, Calvin says "the tense of the verb.----is tortured by that filthy dog Servetus to prove that Christ is not the eternal Son of God, ---."(1) The Papists in almost every chapter receive their share of refutation and condemnation.(2) Along with them to a lesser extent are the Manichaeans (3), the Arians and others.(4)

Lastly, one wonders whether Calvin does not sometimes pass over difficulties too lightly. We would refer the reader to his explanation of the differences among the Evangelists on the resurrection accounts.(5)

So much then for the spirit and attitude of Calvin. We may say that he was as stern and severe with others as he was with himself. If he saw what he believed, on the basis of the best evidence, was a mistake or misuse of Scripture, he never hesitated to point it out and condemn it. On the whole we may say that Calvin was not out to criticise, but rather to be constructive. When we recall his exegetical heritage and even much of the exegesis of his own times, it is not to be wondered that Calvin often took up an offensive against the enemies of "sound doctrine".

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(1)Harmony, I. p. 37.

(2)See for instance: Harmony, I. pp. 21, 28, 185, 229; John, II. p. 272.

(3)See John, I. p. 350.

(4)See John, II. p. 278. Cf. Ante, p. 75 ff.

(5)See John, II. p. 248 ff.

### E. Summary and Conclusion.

In this chapter we have continued and brought to a conclusion the treatment of Calvin's general exegetical methods begun in the chapter preceding. Our attention centered first of all upon Calvin's attention to the context and connection of thought. This was found to be one of his most characteristic methods, and a method in the use of which he may be said without any hesitation whatever, to excel. Not only by the use of the immediate context, was he guided in his interpretation, but also by the use of the whole of Scripture.

It was observed in the second place that as far as many of the helps are concerned- which modern interpreters consider as indispensable tools- Calvin was very much handicapped. Nevertheless his own wide reading, together with his systematizing mind and an unusual memory, went far to take the place of first rate lexicons, concordances, and grammars. As for the exegetical writings of others, the facts show that he used them, but that he used them independently and discriminately. Calvin based his decision on reasons and allowed nothing to lead him consciously to twist or warp his conclusion.

In the last part we have spoken of some contributory methods. Evidence has been brought forward to show that Calvin went deeper than just the words and

thoughts of the writer or speaker whom he was interpreting; he sought to understand his feelings and his spirit. In addition he often brought forward various items to fill in the background of a passage.

Our next step was to observe Calvin's order of procedure in the exegetical process. It was found to be along those general lines which would satisfy even the modern self-styled scientific interpreter.

It was found also in the next section that Calvin constantly had in mind his readers. This, it was shown, accounts for many characteristics of his exegetical works, such as their lack of extensive attention to Greek and Hebrew words; their clear cut, simple and direct style; the emphasis on spiritual truth and its application.

Finally, we endeavored to summarize some of the points which reflect the attitude and spirit of the man as an interpreter. His openness, frankness, and simplicity; his aversion to subtleties and opposition to allegory; and his strict adherence to what seemed to him the mind and spirit of the author were found without any doubt, to be characteristic of Calvin as an interpreter.

In concluding the second of these two chapters on the general exegetical methods of our author,

we may say again with even greater confidence, that he has shown himself to be so sound in his methods and so faithful in his application of them that he deserves a place in the foremost ranks of those who are truly great interpreters of Scripture.

In the chapter which follows we shall see how Calvin applied his principles and methods to particular types of passages. We are now ready to turn to that study.

CHAPTER X

THE EXEGETICAL METHODS OF CALVIN AS APPLIED  
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A. Introduction.

There remains one further line of procedure in this treatment of Calvin's exegetical methods. In the present chapter we propose to test Calvin's exegesis of various types of passages, such as narrative or historical passages, argumentative passages, doctrinal passages, Old Testament quotations and references in the New Testament, parables, and miracles. The reason for this chapter is to be found in the special problems and particular principles connected with the interpretation of such portions of Scripture, especially of doctrinal and prophetic passages, and of parables. These problems and principles will be more definitely indicated as the discussion proceeds. Let us consider first,

B. His Interpretation of Narrative or  
Historical Passages.

Because of the very nature of a narrative passage there is not much that need be said in addition to that which has been given in the preceding chapters. That is, the exegesis of such a passage may be accom-

plished through the application of the general methods which we have already shown were commonly used by Calvin. However, inasmuch as the Acts of the Apostles is one of the best examples of a narrative or historical book, we propose to record certain observations with respect to Calvin's treatment of this book.

We are interested first of all in Calvin's estimate of the purpose or intention of the writer in the book of Acts. This point finds a very clear answer in Calvin's own words which are to be found in the "argument" preceding the Commentary:

"----Here are set down certain sermons of the apostles which intreat in such sort of the great mercies of God, of the grace of Christ, of the hope of blessed immortality, of the calling upon God, of repentance and the fear of God, and also of other principal points of Christian doctrine, that we need not seek the whole sum of godliness anywhere else. But that I may now omit the declaration of sound and pure doctrine,--if that be a thing most needful to be known, namely, to understand how the Church of Christ first began; how the apostles began to preach the gospel; what success they had in the same; what cruel combats they suffered; how manfully they passed through so many lets and impediments; how courageously they triumphed over all the pride of the world under the reproach of the cross; how wonderfully God was present with them; then must we highly esteem of this book, which, unless it were extant, the knowledge of so great things should either be quite buried, or greatly obscured, or wrapped in divers doubts."(1)

Thus it is seen that Calvin's view of this historical book is in harmony with what one would expect

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(1)Acts, I., p. xxviii.

to find in this kind of a writing. That is, he does not make of it a doctrinal book. It is true <sup>+</sup> and we can well agree with him - that he finds doctrine in it, but this is only secondary. In treating the sermon of Peter in chapter two, Calvin's discussion is remarkable for its simplicity, its stimulating observations, its refreshing attitude, and its appeal to the reader to receive it and apply it to his own life. He says of the Spirit, that it is "the key which openeth unto us the door, that we may enter into all the treasures of spiritual good things; and that we may also have entrance into the kingdom of God."(1) On Peter's refutation of the charge that they were drunken Calvin observes: "Therefore, whereas Peter doth only lightly remove the opinion of drunkenness, he doth it for this cause, because it had been superfluous to have stood about any long excuse. Therefore, as in a matter which was certain and out of doubt, he doth rather pacify those which mocked, than labour to teach them."(2)

When Calvin reaches chapter eight, which may be considered a turning point in the history of the Church, as well as in the book itself, he introduces it with this appropriate paragraph:

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(1) Acts, I., p. 85.

(2) Ibid., p. 83.

"In this history we may first see the state of the godly in this world, to wit, that they are like sheep appointed to be slain, as it is in the Psalm, (Psalm xliv.22;) and especially when the Lord letteth loose the bridle to his enemies, that they may put that cruelty in execution which they have in mind conceived. Secondly, here is set down the end of persecutions, to wit, that they are so far from breaking off the course of the gospel, that they are rather made helps to further the same through the wonderful counsel of God. Like as it was a manifest miracle, that the scattering abroad, mentioned by Luke, gathered many unto the unity of faith who were estranged from God before. Now, let us consider every thing in order."(1)

When Calvin arrives at chapter 13 where Barnabas and Saul are separated for mission work, he begins: "Here followeth an history, not only worthy to be remembered, but also very profitable to be known, how Paul was appointed the teacher of the Gentiles."(2)

In the later chapters of the book which have to do with the journeys of Paul, Calvin does not stop to describe the cities which were touched in the Apostle's travels but refers his readers to the "describers" of countries. He adds: "It is sufficient for me to show Luke's purpose."(3)

But Calvin does not always leave it to his reader to supply the additional materials. That he did fill in historical background and supplement the narrative with materials drawn from other sources, can

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(1) Acts, I. p. 322.

(2) Ibid., p. 496.

(3) Ibid., II. p. 267. Cf. also pp. 269-270.

be seen in such instances as in chapters 24 and 25, where he speaks of Felix and his wife Drusilla (1), of the judgment-seat of Caesar (2), and of King Agrippa and Bernice. (3)

It is to be noted how rapidly our author passes over the chapters of the last part of the book. His comments on the last eight chapters cover 166 pages while he took 335 pages to cover chapters 1 to 8. This is probably due, no doubt, to the more purely narrative character of these later chapters. May it not be said by way of conclusion that this is an indication of sound method and true perspective? He did not attempt to draw out teachings or doctrines where none had been intended by their author. Neither did he make the mistake of stopping to dwell on the meaning of passages which in themselves were obvious. Calvin's treatment of this narrative is presented as typical of his method in other historical passages.

#### C. His Interpretation of Argumentative Passages.

Calvin excels in the treatment of argumentative passages. With his ability to perceive (4), to grasp (5),

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- (1) Acts, II, p. 353.
- (2) Ibid., p. 361.
- (3) Ibid., p. 364.
- (4) See Ante, p. 31.
- (5) See Ante, p. 38.

and to reason (1); with his legally trained mind (2); and with his constant habit of following the connection of thought and interpreting in the light of the context (3), it is only reasonable to expect that Calvin would be at his best when dealing with an argumentative passage. This statement is here made deductively on the basis of the conclusions that we have established earlier inductively. Therefore it appears sufficient for our present purpose simply to refer to that which has preceded and in addition to take one typical passage and show how Calvin's method is illustrated.

This time we turn to his Commentary on Galatians. We have chosen the first part of the third chapter in which to examine Calvin's treatment of the argument therein.

On verse 1, he notes that an "expostulation (O foolish Galatians) is here interwoven----amidst his doctrinal statement." Calvin says that Paul accuses the Galatians "not only of having suffered themselves to be deceived, but of having been carried away by some sort of magical enchantment, which is still a more serious charge."(4) Calvin then proceeds to consider matters

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- (1) See Ante, p. 43.
- (2) See Ante, p. 63.
- (3) See Ante, p. 210.
- (4) Gal., p. 78 ff.

which are disputed among the interpreters. In estimating the opinions of other commentators, Calvin does not do so by assertion but by weighing the evidence and giving the reasons for his own decision. In so doing, he refers to the context, to the grammatical structure of the sentence, and to the meaning of words for guidance. He shows also that he is not only trying to understand the thoughts of Paul but also to apprehend his feelings and emotions. Calvin says of the phrase, "before whose eyes", that "this is intended, as I have already hinted, to express an aggravation." He gives a very interesting sidelight on the word *προεγράφη*. He says the Greeks "borrow from this verb the word *προγράμματα* to denote boards on which property intended to be sold was published, so as to be exposed to the view of all. ----To show how energetic his preaching was, Paul first compares it to a picture, which exhibited to them, in a lively manner, the image of Christ."(1)

On verse 2 Calvin observes that the Apostle "now proceeds to support his cause by additional arguments." Our author points out the first of these and goes on to expound that argument. He shows how it is the same that has been used by Peter, Barnabas and Paul

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(1)Gal., p. 80. It is to the credit of Calvin to note that Burton shares this same interpretation. Cf. Burton ad loc.

on other occasions thus making use of the light which comes from other portions of Scripture. Calvin calls attention to the opportunity to reply which Paul offers the Galatians as indicating no doubt the greater confidence on his part. He explains faith and the Spirit and then proceeds to answer various possible objections.

In verse 4 Calvin finds "another argument" which he then traces through its various turns and proofs in the verses which follow. He marks the Old Testament references and quotations explaining them in the light of their original setting.(1) In this manner he proceeds throughout the entire passage, and even throughout the entire book.

We need not go further. Additional evidence may be found on almost any page of Calvin's works where he is dealing with argumentative material. The clarity of his presentation and the ease with which one follows him, show not only his genius as an interpreter but also the value of his work for the modern student of Scripture.

#### D. His Interpretation of Doctrinal Passages.

Our interest here is not simply in Calvin's ability to perceive doctrinal values in, or to draw sound doctrine from, a passage. The fact that Calvin has been

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(1)Gal., p. 84.

ranked as the foremost theologian of the Reformation is evidence of his unusual ability in this respect.(1) His Institutes of the Christian Religion when estimated according to their content, and also with regard to their influence upon Protestantism, stand as incontrovertible evidence of his contribution in the field of doctrine.

Our present interest has to do, rather, with the relation between Calvin's theology and Calvin's exegesis. That is, did Calvin allow his exegesis to be warped or hindered by certain doctrinal preconceptions? In other words, was he biased in his work as an interpreter? Inasmuch as this has been the subject of attacks launched against his exegesis by some of his critics it is of particular importance in this investigation. However, we reserve our treatment of specific charges against Calvin for the section which follows.

Before proceeding we take occasion to explain that in this study we propose to cover three aspects of this problem of bias. The first, having to do with his view of the inspiration of the Scriptures, has already been considered in an earlier chapter.(2) In this present section we shall attempt to treat the question

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(1) See Ante, p. 3.

(2) See Ante, p. 116 ff.

of the influence upon Calvin's exegesis of his ideas of the sovereignty and the grace of God, of election and free will, and other related doctrines. In the section which follows, the third aspect of the problem of bias will be considered, namely, that having to do with the relation between the Old and the New Testaments.

It should also be said, that it is our purpose to understand Calvin as he is. We propose that Calvin shall have adequate opportunity to speak for himself. This is especially important in view of the conflicting opinions which tend toward gross exaggeration on both sides of the question.

Our first observation is that Calvin does emphasize the grace of God. He does exalt the sovereignty of God; or more properly, he exalts God.

In connection with Romans 4:3 which reads that "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness", Calvin repeatedly emphasizes the grace of God. Among many statements which in one way or another bear upon this subject is this one: "And we are to note that neither salvation is promised without the grace of God, nor yet the grace of God without salvation." He adds this further statement: "Again, we are neither called into the grace of God, nor into the hope of salvation, but righteousness is also offered."(1)

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(1) Rom., p. 97.

Thus grace and righteousness are inseparably connected. But it is not righteousness by man's work; it is righteousness which is from God.

On Romans 3:22 our author writes: "That we may---be justified, the efficient cause is the mercy of God: Christ is the matter or material cause; the word and faith is the instrument or instrumental cause."

(1) Thus it is all traced to the grace of God.

In the 25th verse of the same chapter on the word προτιθέναι Calvin recognizes the right to interpret it either in the sense of appoint afore, or to bring forth into the light. But in either case, he says, "the same reason (to the passage) shall stand, that God in his time made him (his Son) manifest, whom he had decreed with himself to be the Mediator."(2)

Our author points to the grace of God in connection with the words of Luke when he speaks of John the Baptist (1:12) that he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.(3) On verse 28 he says of the angel's words to Mary, that they are opened with a commendation of the grace of God, for "the participle κεχαριτωμένη, which Luke employs, denotes the undeserved favour of God.(4)

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(1)Ibid., p. 83. The R.V. reads: "---Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe, for there is no distinction", etc.

(2)Rom., p. 86

(3)Harmony, I., p. 18

(4)Ibid., p. 33.

Along with this emphasis on grace is the emphasis on God's sovereignty. His grace is for those whom He has chosen. On Romans 7:5 we read that the phrase to be in the flesh, is "to be indued only with the gifts of nature, without that special grace wherewith God vouchsafeth his elect."(1)

When Calvin attacks free-will it is usually in order that the grace and the power of God may not be obscured. So it is on John 1:12, and Romans 8:7. In this latter passage he really gives a very strong emphasis to his position. He concludes with this sentence: "Let every man acknowledge himself to be the servant of sin, that being manumised by the grace of Christ he may be free; and it is altogether folly to glory in another liberty."(2)

Now in these passages to which reference has been made we have found nothing that could be criticized because it is untrue to the grammatical sense or even to the context. It is true that the grace and sovereignty of God are greatly emphasized. But it is emphasized in all of its Scriptural freshness and vitality. No one could accuse Calvin of dealing with dry bones of dead doctrine. With him, as he finds doctrine in Scripture, it is a real and living thing.

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(1)Rom., p. 173.

(2)Rom., p. 203.

It should not be forgotten that his own life and religious experience bear witness to these doctrines which are so outstanding in his commentaries. In his Preface to the Psalms we have seen that it was by the secret providence of God that his "sudden conversion" was brought to pass. It was not by his own choice that he settled in Geneva. If his own will had ruled in the matter he would not have returned to Geneva after his exile. Calvin submitted himself to the severest discipline, he gave himself to most persistent labors, he burned up the energies of his body in most unselfish service, because he believed they were directed and commanded by the almighty and everliving God.

The spiritual and moral qualifications of Calvin should be recalled in this connection. To do so helps the critic of his exegesis and of his theology to understand his emphasis. The problem, for the most part, is one of sufficiently understanding and properly interpreting the man himself.

In such a passage as Calvin's comments on I Cor. 1:1 we find essentially this same problem of the grace of God on the one hand, and the part to be played by man on the other hand. But it gives the Reformer no difficulty and his answer ought not give difficulty to anyone. We quote:

"Let us learn, therefore, to take these two things together when we wish to ascertain what kind of persons we ought to esteem as ministers of Christ,-- a call to the office, and faithfulness in the discharge of its duties. For as no man can lawfully assume the designation and rank of a minister, unless he be called, so it were not enough for any one to be called, if he does not also fulfil the duties of his office. For the Lord does not choose ministers that they may be dumb idols, or exercise tyranny under pretext of their calling, or make their own caprice their law; but at the same time marks out what kind of persons they ought to be, and binds them by his laws, and in fine chooses them for the ministry, or, in other words, that in the first place they may not be idle, and, secondly, that they may confine themselves within the limits of their office. Hence, as the apostleship depends on the calling, so the man who would be reckoned an apostle, must show himself to be really such: nay more, so must every one who demands that credit be given him, or that his doctrine be listened to."(1)

In summing up this point and giving our conclusion we would say that here is a man who, by his own religious experience, and because of the times in which he lived, together with faithful and reverent study of the Scripture, was led to magnify the goodness and sovereignty of God in all his work. It has not been done at the expense of those exegetical methods described in the preceding chapters but rather by means of them. As far as his exegetical methods are concerned he has been true to them and they have been effective instruments in his skillful hands.(2)

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(1) Cor., I. p. 48.

(2) In Harmony, III. p. 207, is to be found a very good illustration of Calvin's treatment of a passage which is an important one for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In connection with it he states the principle by which he interprets a sacramental passage, or rather,

Now in all this we do not mean to say that Calvin may not occasionally have gone too far. At times he seems to be almost over-ready to bring up this subject of God's providence. In connection with Acts 28:1 one is taken somewhat by surprise when he says about the viper that fastened itself to Paul's hand: "Neither did the viper come out of the sticks by chance; but the Lord did direct her by his secret counsel to bite Paul, because he saw it would turn to the glory of his Gospel."

(1) Now what Calvin says may be true enough, but one can understand how the skeptical reader might find an opportunity to criticize.

If the reader should desire further evidence of Calvin's fairness in the treatment of doctrinal passages we would refer to the following pages of his works: Harmony, I. p. 255; John, II, pp. 64, 119, 219; Cor. II. p. 192 ff.; Romans, pp. 142, 183. On the problem of faith and works we would suggest: Harmony, II. p. 174

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he gives his definition of a sacrament: "It must be acknowledged, that a sacrament consists of a visible sign, with which is connected the thing signified, which is the reality of it. It must be well known on the other hand, that the name of the thing signified is transferred to the sign; and therefore, no person who is tolerably well acquainted with Scripture will deny that a sacramental mode of expression ought to be taken metonymically."

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(1) Acts, II. p. 409.

where he calls it a "useless controversy"; Romans, pp. 90 and 91; and Galatians, p. 152.

It might be added that on most points of doctrine there would be no reason for bias in Calvin's time as the issues in his day were not those of our time as found in the so-called "modernist-fundamentalist" controversy.(1) Calvin's battle was against the allegorists, against the doctrine of works, and above all simply against spiritual darkness and human wickedness which was due to a great extent to a dearth of Scriptural teaching. Calvin's aim was, therefore, first of all a practical one. With the exception of his dealing with a few individual heretics, it was unnecessary for him to make his primary exegetical aim the defense of a doctrine. He may have defended doctrines in his other works but his commentaries are remarkably well-balanced in this respect. His goal was to bring men into fellowship with God--that they might know his grace and his power.(2)

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(1) Schaff, VII. p. 533 says: "Calvin emancipated exegesis from the bondage of dogmatism. He was remarkably free from traditional orthodox prepossessions and prejudices, being convinced that the truths of Christianity do not depend upon the number of dicta probantia."

(2) J. Vernon Bartlet and A. J. Carlyle in their study of "Christianity in History" make this significant reference to Calvin, p. 512: "Calvin's real service to theology was not his system but his method, in deliberately making the idea of God determinative in theology."

E. His Interpretation of Old Testament Quotations and References in the New Testament.

Calvin's understanding of Hebrew idioms in the New Testament has been discussed in an earlier chapter.(1) The present investigation will be limited to his treatment of passages which contain quotations from the Old Testament and those which refer to the fulfillment of prophecy.

In explaining the use of Psalm 102:25 ff. in the first chapter of Hebrews Calvin remarks:

"This testimony at first sight may seem to be unfitly applied to Christ, especially in a doubtful matter, such as is here handled; for the subject in dispute is not concerning the glory of God, but what may be fitly applied to Christ. Now, there is not in this passage any mention made of Christ, but the majesty of God alone is set forth. I indeed allow that Christ is not named in any part of the Psalm; but it is yet plain that he is so pointed out, that no one can doubt but that his kingdom is there avowedly recommended to us. Hence all the things which are found there, are to be applied to his person; for in none have they been fulfilled but in Christ, such as the following,--'Thou shalt arise and have mercy on Sion, that the heathens may fear thy name, and all the kings of the earth thy glory'. Again,--'When the nations shall be gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord'. Doubtless, in vain shall we seek to find this God through whom the whole world have united in one faith and worship of God, except in Christ."(2)

This appears to be a most sane interpretation, showing Calvin's care in determining the connection of the pas-

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(1)Ante, p. 190.

(2)Heb., p. 47.

sage in its original context as well as its application in Hebrews.

On the use of Psalm 45:6 ff. in verse 8 Calvin takes into account its historical setting. "It must indeed be allowed, that this Psalm was composed as a marriage song for Solomon; for here is celebrated his marriage with the king of Egypt." Then Calvin goes on to add: "But it cannot yet be denied but that what is here related, is much too high to be applied to Solomon.----- Whosoever will read the verse, who is of a sound mind and free from the spirit of contention, cannot doubt but that the Messiah is called God.-----Farther, that I may not contend about a word, whose throne can be said to be established for ever, except that of God only? Hence the perpetuity of his kingdom is an evidence of his divinity."

(1)

The saneness and the genius of Calvin as an interpreter of such passages finds no better demonstration than in verses 5, 6, and 7 of chapter two of the same book:

"He again proves by another argument that Christ ought to be obeyed; for the Father has conferred on him the sovereignty of the whole world, while the angels are wholly destitute of such an honour. It hence follows that none of the angels should stand in the way of his pre-eminence who alone possesses supremacy.

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(1)Heb., pp. 45, 46. Cf. Westcott ad loc. in Hebrews.

"But first, the Psalm which he quotes must be examined, for it seems to be unfitly applied to Christ. David there mentions the benefits which God bestows on mankind; for after having contemplated God's power as manifested in heaven and the stars, he comes to man, among whom the wonderful goodness of God appears in a peculiar manner. He does not, then, speak of any particular person, but of all mankind. To this I answer, that all this affords no reason why the words should not be applied to the person of Christ. I indeed allow that man was at first put in possession of the world, that he might rule over all the works of God; but by his own defection he deserved the loss of his dominion, for it was a just punishment for ingratitude as to one thus favoured, that the Lord, whom he refused to acknowledge and faithfully to worship, should have deprived him of a right previously granted to him. As soon, then, as Adam alienated himself from God through sin, he was justly deprived of the good things which he had received; not that he was denied the use of them, but that he could have had no right to them after he had forsaken God.-----

"This foundation being laid, it is evident that God's bounty belongs not to us until the right lost in Adam be restored by Christ.-----

"-----If men, then, are precluded from all God's bounty until they receive a right to it through Christ, it follows that the dominion mentioned in the Psalm was lost to us in Adam, and that on this account it must be restored as a donation. Now, the restoration begins with Christ as the head. There is, then, no doubt but that we are to look to him whenever the dominion of man over all creatures is spoken of."(1)

On the difficulty in connection with the exact explanation of the words in verse 7, Calvin answers those who object to the turn given them by the Apostle by saying, "It was not the Apostle's design to give an exact explanation of the words. For there is nothing improperly done, when verbal allusions are made to embellish a subject in hand, as Paul does in quoting a passage in

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(1)Heb., pp. 56-58.

Rom. x.6, from Moses, 'Who shall ascend into heaven', etc., he does not join the words 'heaven and hell' for the purpose of explanation, but as ornaments."(1) Tholuck in his discussion of Calvin's doctrinal impartiality has already observed his method and commended him for the freedom with which he judges such Old Testament citations.(2)

Let us turn now to several passages in the Gospels and Pauline Epistles to see Calvin's method of interpreting the Messianic prophecies associated therewith.

That Calvin held to no narrow view of the function of the prophet is seen in his comments on that word in I Cor. 12:28. As used in that passage he takes it to mean, "not those who were endowed with the gift of prophesying, but those who were endowed with a peculiar gift, not merely for interpreting Scripture, but also for applying it wisely for present use." Calvin gives his reason for thinking so as this: "he (the Apostle) prefers prophecy to all other gifts, on the ground of its yielding more edification--a commendation that would not be applicable to the predicting of future events."(3)

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(1) Heb., p. 58. See also p. 60.

(2) See Calvin's Commentary on Joshua to which Tholuck's dissertation has been appended, p. 359.

(3) Cor., I. p. 415 ff.

Now that which Calvin expressed in Corinthians, about the work of a prophet, is also true of his view of the Old Testament prophecies which are mentioned in the New Testament. That is, Calvin insists first of all on the proper understanding of the words of a prophet in their historical setting. Take for instance the quotation in Matthew 1:23 from Isaiah 7:14. Calvin begins by putting the verse in its original context which has to do with the siege of Jerusalem and the distress of Ahaz the king. Calvin continues:

"The prophet is sent to assure him that God will protect the city. But a simple promise is not sufficient to compose his agitated mind. The prophet is sent to him, saying, 'Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above,' (Isaiah vii. 11.) That wicked hypocrite, concealing his unbelief, disdains to ask a sign. The prophet rebukes him sharply, and at length adds, 'The Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel,' (Isaiah vii. 14.)

"We expound this as relating to Christ in the following manner: 'You, the whole posterity of David, as far as lies in your power, endeavor to nullify the grace which is promised to you;' (for the prophet expressly calls them, by way of disgrace, the house of David, Isaiah vii. 13;) 'but your base infidelity will never prevent the truth of God from proving to be victorious. God promises that the city will be preserved safe and unhurt from its enemies. If his word is not enough, he is ready to give you the confirmation of such a sign as you may demand. You reject both favours, and spurn them from you; but God will remain steady to his engagement. For the promised Redeemer will come, in whom God will show himself to be fully present to his people.'"(1)

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(1)Harmony, I. p. 101.

Thus Calvin gives to the passage its immediate application as well as its larger significance which was to be realized in the Redeemer who was to come.

Calvin's remarkable exegetical tact and impartiality are shown in his treatment of that difficult quotation from Micah 5:2 in Matt. 2:6. He is frankly aware of the difference in reading between the words as found in the Gospel and those of either the Hebrew or Septuagint. He goes on to say:

"It ought always to be observed that, whenever any proof from Scripture is quoted by the apostles, though they do not translate word for word, and sometimes depart widely from the language, yet it is applied correctly and approximately to their subject. Let the reader always consider the purpose for which passages of Scripture are brought forward by the Evangelists, so as not to stick too closely to the particular words, but to be satisfied with this, that the Evangelists never torture Scripture into a different meaning, but apply it correctly in its native meaning. But while it was their intention to supply with milk children and 'novices' (I Tim. iii. 6) in faith, who were not yet able to endure 'strong meat', (Heb. v. 12,) there is nothing to prevent the children of God from making careful and diligent inquiry into the meaning of Scripture, and thus being led to the fountain by the taste which the apostles afford."(1)

He then proceeds to deal with the prediction itself.

Now from such examples as this it is evident how far Calvin has gone in applying scientific exegetical methods, even in places where the tendency to

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(1)Harmony, I. p. 133.

dogmatic bias is perhaps greatest. No less a writer than Broadus has called attention to the same point that we have found in the Reformer when he remarks, "It was common among the Jews of that age to interpret in quoting."(1)

On such a passage as Matt. 8:17 Calvin openly calls attention to the fact that Isaiah was not there speaking of miracles, but of the death of Christ. He says, "This prediction has the appearance of being inappropriate, and even of being tortured into a meaning which it does not bear." He then goes on to give the explanation:

"Now, what is undoubtedly spoken about the impurities of the soul, Matthew applies to bodily diseases. The solution is not difficult, if the reader will only observe, that the Evangelist states not merely the benefit conferred by Christ on those sick persons, but the purpose for which he healed their diseases. They experienced in their bodies the grace of Christ, but we must look at the design: for it would be idle to confine our view to a transitory advantage, as if the Son of God were a physician of bodies."(2)

In connection with the ὄψως πληρωθῆ  
of Matt. 13:35 Calvin declares that, "Matthew does not mean, that the psalm, which he quotes, is a prediction which relates peculiarly to Christ, but that, as the majesty of the Spirit was displayed in the discourse of the Prophet, in the same manner was his power mani-

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(1) Cf. Broadus ad loc.  
(2) Harmony, I. p. 251.

fested in the discourse of Christ."(1)

On John 12:38, ἵνα ὁ λόγος Ἡσαΐου  
τοῦ προφήτου πληρωθῆ etc., Calvin writes:

"John does not mean that the prediction laid a necessity on the Jews; for Isaiah (liii. 1; Rom. x. 16) uttered nothing but what the Lord revealed to him from the secret treasures of his purpose. Indeed, it must have happened, though the prophet had not spoken of it; but as men would not have known what should take place, if God had not testified by the mouth of the prophet, the Evangelist places before our eyes in the prediction, as in a mirror, what would otherwise have appeared to men obscure and almost incredible."(2)

In Romans 9:27 where Paul refers to Isaiah 10:22 f., Calvin proceeds to expound the passage in the light of both its original and its present contexts.

"Because the prophet prophesied that of his time, we are to see how Paul doth rightly apply it to his purpose."

(3)

For other illustrations of Calvin's method of interpreting Old Testament references in the New Testament we would refer to his comments on the following passages: Matt. 2:18, 23; Luke 1:17; 24:27; Matt. 27:35; John 2:16; 19:36, 37; Rom. 4:17; 5:14; 9:28, 29; I Cor. 1:19; 2:9; II Cor. 4:13; and Hebrews 5:5; 10:1.

Let us now sum up our observations with respect to Calvin's interpretation of such passages. First of

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(1)Harmony, II. p. 129.

(2)John, II. p. 40.

(3)Romans, p. 275.

all, it is clear that he insists on a proper historical understanding of prophecy. He believed that the words of the prophets had a practical application for their own times and then the larger fulfilment in Christ.(1) In the second place Calvin does not attempt to force the New Testament writers but seeks to understand them. Sometimes, indeed, they make a quotation or reference merely for embellishment using a passage in a sense somewhat different from that which was given it in its original setting. Furthermore it causes Calvin no trouble or anxiety to find that some passages are not quoted exactly or even correctly. However, he does proceed to show that the use which the New Testament writers have made of the Old Testament has been in all cases a legitimate one and that the problem of the exegete is to understand rightly their thought and purpose.

In all of this it will be seen how far Calvin has gone in the way of anticipating modern views on Messianic prophecies. It is clear that while he insisted on the reality of Messianic prophecy he also required that a passage should be allowed a significance for those to whom the prophets addressed their words.

Lest anyone be led to think that the Reformer

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(1) Cf. Farrar, p. 346 ff. and Schaff, VII. p. 534, who especially emphasize this point.

never made any mistakes or that he is a perfect model we only need to refer to Gilbert who urges the charge that Calvin was "much too desirous to get from Scripture the doctrines he had been taught at Paris or had later learned from the writings of Augustin."(1) In support of this charge he refers to Calvin's use of Scripture in setting forth the doctrine of the person of Christ in his Institutes. Of the six New Testament references cited (we have counted eleven) Gilbert objects to three of them because of their obscurity.(2) With two of these Gilbert appears to be justified in his objection but we are unable to see that Acts 20:28 has any connection with the passage cited in the Institutes.(3) Gilbert's only other ground is the difference of opinion of modern commentators over the proper reference of the pronoun "this" in I John 5:20. He admits that John 20:28

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- (1) Gilbert: The Interpretation of the Bible, p. 213.
- (2) Ibid., p. 216. We are in doubt as to Gilbert's reference that there are only six texts used by Calvin. We have counted no less than eleven with the possibility of a twelfth. We note them as follows: Rom. 9:33; 14:10, 11; Eph. 4:8; Heb. 1:6, 10; John 1:1, 14; II Cor. 5:10; Rom. 9:5; I Tim. 3:16; Phil. 2:6; I John 5:20; I Cor. 8:5, 6 and John 20:28. See Institutes, I. 13.11.
- (3) The three cited by Gilbert as obscure are Rom. 9:5; I Tim. 3:16, and Acts 20:28. It is not without reason that he eliminates the first two but we are unable to see that Acts 20:28 has anything to do with the passage. It may be a typographical error but we have not found the solution of the reference in connection with any of Calvin's other citations.

and Phil. 2:6 "appear to give some support to the traditional doctrine". To this we would add Rom. 9:33, 14:10 and 11; Eph. 4:8; Heb. 1:6 and 10; John 1:1 and 14; II Cor. 5:10, and I Cor. 8:5 and 6, which are also cited by Calvin; and not without good reason as an examination of these passages will show. Thus the force of Gilbert's statement is somewhat lessened when his reasons and proofs are put to the test.

However it is not our purpose to show that Calvin was entirely free from dogmatic bias. Such would be very difficult if not impossible. In fact, such an attempt would only arouse suspicions as to the impartiality of the investigator. We are frank to admit that occasionally Calvin departs from the excellent principles which he usually follows.

We are interested in the conclusion of Fullerton, who has made a rather careful study of Calvin's interpretation of Old Testament prophecies referred to in the New Testament. His conclusion is that "he (Calvin) confined his typologizing to theoretical statements and general examples, whereas his exegesis was always concerned with the literal and historical meaning of the passage." Fullerton then adds: "This means that Calvin's principle of exegesis really triumphed over his dogmatic theories. Too much emphasis can scarcely be laid upon

this fact."(1)

Considering the times which he followed, and the times in which he lived, it is remarkable that the exegetical works of the Reformer are so free from dogmatic bias.

We are now ready to consider,

F. His Interpretation of Parables.

It is a commonly recognized principle that in the interpretation of a parable the intention and fundamental thought are to be sought first of all. In the light of this, one is then ready to proceed to the interpretation of its several parts.(2) Trench in "Notes on the Parables" in discussing the principles to be followed says:

"It will much help us in this matter of determining what is essential and what not, if, before we attempt to explain the particular parts, we obtain a firm grasp of the central truth which the parable would set forth, and distinguish it in the mind as sharply and accurately as we can from all cognate truths which border upon it; for only seen from that middle point will the different parts appear in their true light."(3)

Now this is exactly the rule laid down by Calvin. On John 15:1 the Reformer cautions his reader:

"First, let him remember the rule which ought to be observed in all parables; that we ought not to examine

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(1) Fullerton: Prophecy and Authority, pp. 159, 160.

(2) Cf. Immer, p. 220 ff.; also Terry, pp. 281, 282.

(3) Trench: Notes on Parables and Miracles, p. 35.

minutely every property of the vine, but only to take a general view of the object to which Christ applies that comparison."(1)

In connection with the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15, Calvin remarks:

"Although in parables (as we have frequently observed) it would be idle to follow out every minute circumstance, yet it will be no violence to the literal meaning, if we say that our heavenly Father not only pardons our sins in such a manner as to bury the remembrance of them, but even restores those gifts of which we had been deprived; as, on the other hand, by taking them from us, he chastises our ingratitude in order to make us feel ashamed at the reproach and disgrace of our nakedness."(2)

Calvin has already pointed out the setting and the intention of the parable.

"This parable is nothing else than a confirmation of the preceding doctrine. In the first part is shown how readily God is disposed to pardon our sins, and in the second part----is shown the great malignity and obstinacy of those who murmur at his compassion."  
(3)

Calvin has observed Christ's principle in His interpretation of the parable of the Sower.

"Christ explains the parable to his disciples simply ----. The general truth conveyed is, that the doctrine of the Gospel, when it is scattered like seed, is not everywhere fruitful; because it does not always meet with a fertile and well cultivated soil."(4)

So with the parable of the tares, Calvin begins by ascertaining the object which Christ had in

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(1) John, II. p. 107.

(2) Harmony, II. p. 349.

(3) Ibid., p. 343.

(4) Ibid., p. 113.

view. Of course he goes on in each case to consider the various parts, but not with a view to finding a meaning or an application for every minor detail.(1) In interpreting the parable of the Prodigal Son Calvin is tempted to draw a certain analogy from one of its parts but he desists:

"But as I am afraid that this allusion may be thought overstrained, I shall satisfy myself with the literal meaning; not that I disapprove of the opinion,---, but that I now confine myself within the limits of a Commentator."(2)

We need not go further. We believe the examples cited adequately and properly represent our author. Other illustrations may be found in connection with almost any of the parables of our Lord. We would refer to the following parables in particular: the hidden treasure (3), the talents (4), and the good Samaritan (5). The chief point which we would emphasize in Calvin's method with parables is his insistence upon and adherence to that principle which is well established and commonly accepted, namely, that a parable should be interpreted in the light of its intention and its fundamental thought.

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(1)Harmony, II. p. 118 ff.

(2)Ibid., II. p. 344.

(3)Ibid., p. 131.

(4)Ibid., p. 439

(5)Ibid., III. p. 55.

G. His Interpretation of Miracles.

We come now to a brief consideration of Calvin's interpretation of miracles. Our first observation is that Calvin, true to his exegetical methods, accepted the records as he found them and made no effort to find a natural explanation for that which, as he saw it, was intended by the author as being supernatural. In discussing the star in the second chapter of Matthew, Calvin is not at all satisfied with explanations which make it a natural star because "it may be inferred from the words of Matthew, that it was not a natural but an extraordinary star."<sup>(1)</sup>

In Christ's stretching out his hand and healing the leper in Matt. 8, Calvin saw "an expression and token of infinite grace and goodness. What we indolently read, and coldly pass by, cannot be duly weighed without great astonishment. The Son of God was so far from disdain-  
ing to talk to a leper, that he even stretched out his hand to touch that uncleanness."<sup>(2)</sup>

On the raising of the son of the widow of Nain, Calvin observes that "The reason which induced Christ to restore the young man to life was, that he saw the widow bereft of her only son, and had compassion

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(1)Harmony, I. p. 129.

(2)Ibid., p. 374.

on her."(1) One, however, might seriously question an additional meaning which Calvin draws from it: "We have here a striking emblem of his freely bestowed compassion in raising us from death to life." This much might be legitimately drawn from the passage by way of application but one doubts that Jesus had any such thought in mind when he healed the young man. When Calvin adds, "By touching the coffin he intended perhaps to show, that he would by no means shrink from death and the grave, in order to obtain life for us," he comes very near to laying himself open to the charge of spiritualizing or allegorizing--a thing which we have already seen he so much detested in others.

But that Calvin's interpretation of a miracle was usually in harmony with his method, we refer in conclusion to his comments on the feeding of the five thousand in John 6. In summing up the meaning of the miracle he makes three points. The first is that this miracle "has this in common with the other miracles, that Christ displayed in it his Divine power in union with beneficence." The second, "Besides, Christ plainly showed that he not only bestows spiritual life on the world, but that his Father commanded him also to nourish the body." And lastly, "Again, Christ did not provide great deli-

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(1)Harmony, I. p. 385.

ceries for the people, but they who saw his amazing power displayed in that supper, were obliged to rest satisfied with barley-bread and fish without sauce."

(1) We find nothing in these that is out of harmony with his general exegetical methods or with any special points to be considered in interpreting miracles. He ever keeps in mind Christ's immediate purpose in performing miracles. This comes first of all, as we have seen. After that come other related as well as significant points, such as the proof of his Deity, or certain demonstrations of his Father's will and character, or some lesson to the people on humility, faith, sin, etc.

#### H. Summary and Conclusion.

In this chapter we have endeavored to set forth Calvin's exegetical methods as applied to various types of passages. In his treatment of narrative and historical passages it was shown that Calvin does not try to make of them doctrinal passages; but by the application of his general methods he seeks to set forth in a clear and interesting style the intention of the author as developed and demonstrated in his writing. In so doing Calvin finds many points by way of application which are entirely in accord with the narrative.

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(1) John, I. pp. 230-231.

His sense of perspective and his appreciation of the relative value of various portions of Scripture, as well as his general method, were especially in evidence in his Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles.

In considering his interpretation of argumentative passages, Calvin was found to be very much at home. With his keen intellect and well trained mind he shows extraordinary ability in grasping and expounding those portions of Scripture which are argumentative in character.

The result of our investigation of Calvin's interpretation of doctrinal passages was that Calvin has shown himself to be remarkably free from any bias that warps or twists his exegetical procedure. It is true that he exalts the grace of God; but if it is rightly understood in the manner in which Calvin himself presents it and in connection with the times in which he lived, this is to his credit rather than discredit. Because of his unusual spiritual and moral qualifications, and by means of his sound exegetical methods, he has thus made a splendid contribution not only in exegesis but also in theology.

Our next point had to do with Calvin's treatment of Old Testament quotations and references in the New Testament. It was seen that the Reformer followed a proper line of procedure in insisting on studying

such references in their historical connection. He did not hedge on difficulties, but rather took an open and reasoning stand on such matters, often finding the key to the solution of such problems in a study of both the old and new contexts. In fact we must admit that in many respects Calvin has anticipated the more recent view of Messianic prophecies in requiring that a passage be allowed a real meaning for its original speaker and audience as well as its more remote and perhaps fuller meaning as demonstrated in the New Testament dispensation.

The fifth point of our discussion brought out the fact that in the interpretation of parables, the Reformer has followed the common and well established principle that details of a parable should be subordinated to and understood in the light of its intention and fundamental thought.

Lastly, we have seen how Calvin gave to miracles the place naturally accorded them by the writer or by the one who performed them. Calvin noted first of all how they were often the natural expression of Christ's love and compassion when he came into contact with human need. Along with this other points were made by way of interpreting their significance in relation to the whole of Scripture and of doctrine and faith.

We have now concluded our study of Calvin's exegetical methods. Inasmuch as we shall review our conclusions more completely in the chapter which follows, it is sufficient to say for the present that this study of his methods in their particular application has resulted in an additional confirmation of our previous estimate of his general methods. Truly we have found in John Calvin an exegete of the foremost rank.

CHAPTER XI  
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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As stated at the outset, the aim of this thesis has been to estimate the contribution of John Calvin to the exegesis of the New Testament. Having pursued our investigation according to the delimitations set forth at the beginning, we are now ready to sum up our findings and record our conclusions.

This study has been divided into two parts. In the first part was sought the answer to the question, How was Calvin qualified for the work of interpreting the New Testament? In the second part we took up the quest in order to ascertain, What were Calvin's exegetical methods and how did he apply them? Throughout the entire study we have constantly been in contact with the life and writings of the Reformer. Even in studying his qualifications frequent reference was made to his exegetical writings and thus we were placed in a position to estimate and criticize the man as an interpreter.

Furthermore, we have been measuring Calvin with respect to the times which preceded him, the times in which he lived, and with respect to those which followed. We have had occasion to note more than once how this sixteenth century interpreter used the very methods

which modern exegetes insist are to be applied in expounding Holy Writ. Let us now hastily retrace the various steps of our study in order that with our minds refreshed on the important points, and the breadth of our view extended, we may be prepared to draw our final conclusions.

Our first line of inquiry was to discover Calvin's physical qualifications. To our amazement it was found that, in spite of a frail body that endured much pain and sickness as well as continuous and rigorous discipline, John Calvin was able to rise above his physical infirmity, and to produce an amount of work of a quality that has seldom, if ever, been surpassed. That he had a tremendous capacity for work is seen by the extent of his writings, the variety of his labors, the conditions under which he worked, as well as by the length of his life. Taken all in all, there can be no doubt but that the physical handicaps, the trying conditions under which he worked, and the tribulations of his ministry went far to qualify our author in an extraordinary way for his task as an exegete. In them we may find the source of much of his spiritual insight into and sympathetic appreciation of the Sacred Writers.

Coming to the next chapter we set ourselves to determine Calvin's intellectual qualifications. The

quality of his mind was revealed in his constant readiness to observe, in his extraordinary ability to perceive, in the excellency of his memory, in his effective use of imagination, in his most unusual mental grasp, in his sound judgment and delicacy of taste, and by no means least, in his powerful use of reason. When one adds to this the fact that Calvin showed himself to be, to a remarkable degree, an independent and discriminating thinker, who was orderly and systematic in his habits of work, and who demonstrated an aptness to teach that was uncommon, he has ample justification for the conclusion that John Calvin was qualified in a superior manner to be an illuminating as well as a reliable interpreter of Scripture.

His educational qualifications were our next concern. Calvin had a body that showed an amazing capacity for work and a powerful mind; how did he use them to prepare himself with a store of knowledge that would stand him in good stead as an exegete? As a youth he was faithful and obedient to his father who provided him with opportunities for study in accord with his fair social position and moderate financial resources. He was fortunate as a student in having some of the best teachers of his time as his instructors, among whom were: Maturinus Corderius, who gave him a good grounding in

Latin grammar and rhetoric; a certain Spaniard (unknown) of considerable attainments, under whom Calvin made such progress that he left the rest of the class behind in the Grammar Course; Peter De l'Etoile, the first French lawyer of that period; Andrew Alciat, the Italian lawyer who was ranked by Beza as the greatest lawyer of his age; and Melchior W<sup>o</sup>lmar, a German humanist who gave Calvin his start in the study of Greek. We were especially interested in Calvin's training for law because it went far to qualify him for the handling of exegetical and theological arguments.

As to Calvin's linguistic attainments, they were fourfold. He wrote as well in Latin as in his native French. As a writer of the latter he is recognized as one of the founders of the modern French prose style. His Latin was admirable for its purity and accuracy. With regard to the original languages of the Bible he was a master of Hebrew as well as of Greek. This gave him a double advantage when working with either Testament. That he made use of his knowledge of both of these languages when working in either field we have already shown.

Our next consideration was Calvin's knowledge of the Scriptures. His knowledge in this respect may be characterized as broad and general as well as specific and detailed. Calvin seldom if ever lost sight of the

context of a passage and was continually drawing on other portions of Scripture for help in understanding a particular passage. A set of commentaries covering most of the Bible ought to be recognized as a witness to his familiarity and grasp of the Sacred Word. Our whole study has been as another voice increasing this volume of testimony to the extent and character of the Reformer's acquaintance with the Bible.

To the foregoing we added also his acquaintance with other branches of learning. His knowledge of history, of geography, of chronology, of antiquities, of politics, and of philosophy was such as to be a considerable asset to him as an interpreter; as for the writings of the Church Fathers, he was perfectly at home in them; his knowledge of Greek literature was thorough, intimate, and constantly ready for use. The same can be said of the Latin writers. Calvin refers to the Greek and Latin writers frequently, and to the Church Fathers even more often. It is only to be expected that he would know the Schoolmen and Papists. Of this there is almost more evidence than one would desire. Nevertheless, we are indebted to Calvin for the manner in which he withstood the errors and opposition of his enemies and thus helped to preserve for us a better heritage of liberty and truth.

As a concluding observation on his educational qualifications we were interested to note his travels and wide acquaintance. It cannot be doubted but that these gave a breadth of vision to his mind and a variety to his sympathies and interests that went far to set him in a position of influence not only in his own times, but in the centuries which were to follow. His times helped to produce him; conversely, he did much to change his times. In view of the valuable changes which he wrought, he has, therefore, made a permanent and worthwhile contribution to the succeeding centuries. Educationally, Calvin, although lacking the advantage of more recent discoveries, was well qualified for his task.

In Chapter V we undertook to set forth Calvin's spiritual and moral qualifications. It was seen first of all that in his religious experience are to be found those elements that are so essential for the one who is to expound a religious book. In his "conversion", in the utter devotion and loyalty of the man to God, in his relations with his friends as counselor and guide, in his position as pastor and shepherd of the "sheep", in his work as a reformer in the city of Geneva,--in these is to be found the secret of much of his understanding of the trials, the opposition, the sorrows,

the disappointments, the joys, and the blessings of life as experienced by the men and women in the Holy Scripture as well as by those who wrote about them in those books.

If we add to this Calvin's honesty, fairness, and desire for truth, his tender affection, his overflowing enthusiasm for the Scripture, his reverence for God, his love of Christ, his communion with the Holy Spirit, and last, but by no means least, the integrity of his life, we realize that in Calvin we have the saint as well as the scholar. A man who could die with his conscience free of having twisted or used a single passage of Scripture out of its proper connection, as he himself said, and one of whom it could be said that his life was "as easy to slander as it was difficult to emulate", deserves to be recognized as having to a very unusual degree that qualification which is too frequently neglected in the interpreter of Scripture.

In Chapter VI we discussed four indirect qualifications of Calvin as an interpreter. In the first it was seen that he had many obstacles to overcome in the traditions and methods that had come down from the past. Even in the Fathers of the Early Church there was much that was unsound in matters of method.

To this the Middle Ages had made little or no contribution so that before there could be a Reformation of the Church there had to be first of all a reformation as to principles and methods of exegesis.

For this change there were certain favorable circumstances in the spirit of Calvin's own age. This was our second point. The Renaissance had brought a revival of interest in the Greek and Latin classics. The printing press had contributed by making possible new editions of Greek authors, and especially significant was the publication of the Greek New Testament. This, together with the pioneer work of Erasmus and Reuchlin, the leading Greek and the leading Hebrew scholars, had opened the way for a new study of the Scriptures in the original. If we add to this the spirit of liberty and the quickening of religious life that was spreading through western Europe from the impulse that it had received from Luther in Germany, we have a situation well prepared for one to come on the scene and produce a piece of work that would contribute to the value and permanence of the Reformation itself. In this way Calvin was indirectly qualified for his work. Looking back to his exegetical heritage, we would say that it tended to disqualify anyone for the work of interpreting the Bible. Calvin, therefore, had to be independent and discriminating in his use of the past.

The third indirect qualification took us back again to the writings of Calvin. The question was raised as to whether Calvin's view of the Scriptures was of such a nature as to hinder his exegetical process and bias his results. On the basis of Calvin's statements in his Institutes and on the basis of his treatment of Scripture in his commentaries, it was clear that Calvin did lay down the premise of unconditional belief in them; but that this was not the rigid view that others have sometimes represented him as holding, is seen by the fact that variations in textual readings, minor discrepancies and inconsistencies, and questions of authorship, give him no trouble. His is the grammatico-historical method. It appears also to be a fair statement that Calvin looked upon the Scriptures as a means to an end. That end was a practical one having to do with life and especially man's relation to God. Because of this open and reasonable, yet deeply sympathetic, attitude toward Scripture we believe he has fulfilled a most necessary qualification for the true interpreter of the Bible.

As a final consideration we attempted to show that with regard to his exegetical aims he would measure up to the standards that even the modern exegete would lay down. His ultimate aim, as already suggested, was a practical one. His intermediate aim might be considered

that of formulating and teaching sound doctrine, but his immediate aim was "to show forth the mind of the writer".

In view of the evidence, we cannot but conclude that John Calvin was admirably qualified to make a contribution to the exegesis of the New Testament.

Having discussed the problem of his qualifications in Part One, in Part Two we attempted to follow Calvin as he performed his work. Our investigation was concerned with his exegetical methods.

In Chapter VIII we observed that Calvin usually begins his commentaries by a section entitled the "argument" in which he introduces the reader to the book, giving the general plan and purpose of the writing. By so doing he reveals his own grasp of its contents and demonstrates a sound principle of exegetical procedure. With regard to Calvin's attention to textual problems, not much can be said because in his day textual criticism was only in its infancy. However, our author was alert to textual problems and treated them as far as his limited textual apparatus would allow. His method at least was sound and within the limits indicated his attention to such questions helped to place his exegetical work on a sounder textual basis.

A most important part of our study had to do with Calvin's attention to the grammatical sense of a passage. Frequently our author applied the method of analyzing a sentence into its various parts. From this he would proceed to take up matters related to case, mode, tense, person and number, and gender. We would mention especially the fact that with the tenses Calvin has shown a remarkable degree of penetration. He has often sensed their meaning, in spite of inadequate and much unsound grammatical knowledge of his day.

A very significant discovery was the amount of attention given to, and the skill which he displayed, in revealing the meaning of words. Not infrequently is he aided in understanding a word by searching into its derivation. But most important is the fact that it is his habit to investigate the usage of a word for its particular meaning. At this point his intimate, thorough, and first-hand knowledge of classical literature, of the Septuagint, and of the Greek New Testament, all combine to make the method of attending to linguistic usage a very reliable and valuable tool in his hands. Because of his familiarity with Hebrew forms and phraseology he is prepared to render adequately Hebrew idioms in the New Testament. Likewise his practical understanding of grammar and his extended studies in profane as well as sacred literature went far in assisting him

to interpret properly the prepositions used by the New Testament writers. The same may be said of his rendering of synonyms.

Although there are indeed not a few limitations to Calvin's works, and not infrequently he passes over significant words and phrases, and sometimes is mistaken in the conclusions which he draws, yet on the whole Calvin has made a real contribution to New Testament exegesis in the matter of sound exegetical methods. Especially is this perceived when one compares the systematic process, and for the most part trustworthy results of the Reformer, with the allegorical wanderings and the hair-splitting inventions of the centuries which preceded. We have also shown that Calvin has frequently anticipated the interpretations of modern exegetes, besides demonstrating a method that stands in a very favorable light when judged by modern principles of hermeneutics.

Chapter IX was a continuation of the study of Calvin's general exegetical methods. The first section was given over to a discussion of one of the most outstanding methods if not the most outstanding method, of the Reformer's exegesis; his attention to the context and connection of thought. It was seen that Calvin almost never loses sight of the context. He usually

begins with the immediate context. Then, if necessary, he draws upon the object and intention of the entire writing. Finally, he often finds very valuable light by turning to other parts of Scripture. All of these methods have commended themselves to us as being not only sound but profitable. These methods would not be disputed by any true exegete. In the application of them, it is recognized that Calvin excels. The reason for this, in part at least, may be traced to his keen intellect and his logical mind which by long and rigorous discipline in classical and other studies, and in the study of law, had been developed and especially prepared to grasp the line of thought of a writing. Truly this is an outstanding feature, if not also one of the most conspicuous excellencies of Calvin as an exegete.

From this we passed on to observe and comment on Calvin's use of helps. As to manuscripts and versions he was limited. His Greek text was probably a copy of the Complutensian Polyglot or one of the other editions published in the early part of the sixteenth century. The lexicons, concordances and grammars were undoubtedly very inadequate and in no way compare with the facilities at the disposal of the twentieth century student. Calvin made use of the works of others but he used them independently and discriminatingly.

Other contributing methods of Calvin were found to be his attention to the mind and spirit of the author, his attention to the background of a passage, his systematic order of procedure, and his attention to the character of the audience for whom his commentaries were intended. We were also interested in the scholarly attitude of the man, his regard for the opinion of others, his insistence upon holding to facts and sound reason, his frankness and directness, his unwillingness to be led astray into subtleties, and his simplicity, sympathy, and fairness.

In Chapter X it was our aim to follow Calvin as he dealt with various types of passages. The results of this study of his methods as he applied them to narrative or historical passages, to argumentative and to doctrinal passages, to Old Testament references and quotations in the New Testament and to parables and miracles, went far to lend support to those conclusions which had been recorded in the earlier stages of our study.

In this chapter we were especially interested in the question of dogmatic bias. It is very evident to the reader of Calvin's commentaries that he does emphasize the grace and sovereignty of God. But on the whole, when it is considered in the light of its Scriptural freshness and in the light of Calvin's life and times,

this emphasis is to Calvin's credit rather than to his detriment.

It was observed also that one of the outstanding contributions of Calvin was his application of the grammatico-historical method to the interpretation of Messianic prophecies and other Old Testament references. Although he may not have been altogether free from dogmatic presupposition in handling such passages, nevertheless in most cases his exegetical principles and methods have won a great victory over the tendency of his own and preceding times to read into Scripture that which its interpreters desired to find there.

In conclusion let us sum up briefly our answer to the question, What was the contribution of John Calvin to New Testament exegesis? We shall answer this question from three points of view: the times which preceded him, his own times, and those which have followed.

With regard to the first Calvin's exegetical works with their grammatical and historical method stand out in sharp contrast to the allegorical and scholastic interpretations of preceding centuries. He was qualified for his work as no other person had been

since Augustine, and in many respects he surpasses the early Fathers in linguistic and scholarly attainments. Calvin was able to benefit by the advantage offered by the renewed interest in the Greek and Hebrew languages. We have seen how he seized this opportunity and made good use of it.

In his day Calvin was without a rival as an interpreter of Scriptures. He is the outstanding exegete as well as the leading theologian of the Reformation. In his intellectual, educational, moral and spiritual, as well as in certain other indirect qualifications, he was equipped for his work as no other person of that time. His contribution was a practical one as the church historian well knows. Not only in Geneva but in many places throughout Western Europe was the transforming influence of the Reformer felt. Calvin had interpreted the Scriptures for the man in the street as well as for the scholar in the pulpit and classroom. By his attention to the grammatical sense, by his attention to the context and connection of thought, and by his use of other sound methods of exegetical procedure, he was able to lay open the treasures of the Bible that all might share them and that the Holy Writings might do their work of bringing light into dark places. Luther and Beza came nearest to Calvin, but in comparison the first made only a beginning, and the latter,

who followed Calvin, was greatly indebted to him and fell far short of being his equal.

Finally, what is Calvin's contribution to the succeeding centuries and to our own times? Are his works of permanent value? Are they worthy of attention by the twentieth century student of the New Testament?

It stands to reason that a man who has shown himself to be such an able pioneer is worthy to be consulted by those who come after him. Moreover, as we have shown, John Calvin has followed the very principles and methods that are considered most important by New Testament scholars of our own time. His method was a most valuable and permanent contribution and because of the soundness of his procedure his exegetical results are worthy to stand in company with those of more recent writers. In fact Calvin has not infrequently anticipated the work of the nineteenth and twentieth century interpreters. On his use of the context and connection of thought in expounding Scripture it is most difficult to find his equal.

Furthermore, when one considers the man, his personal character, his religious experience, his various qualifications, together with his scholastic and practical attainments, he commands the deepest respect and admiration and deserves therefore to be given a fore-

most place among the exegetes of all times.

In the light of our findings, the assertion of Preserved Smith, that "Calvin's exegesis slumbers in fifty volumes in deserved neglect," is not only unfair to Calvin, but is unworthy of its author, and misleading to the student of Scripture and the student of history.(1)

Such commentaries as those of Calvin on Romans, the Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, and Hebrews, and on his Harmony of the Gospels, as well as his others, are worthy of a place in an expositor's library and can be consulted frequently with profit.

In the field of New Testament exegesis it may be said, therefore, that John Calvin has made a most valuable and noteworthy contribution.

. . . . .

(1) See Preserved Smith: The Age of the Reformation, (1920), p. 569. From his reference to Calvin in his "Essays in Biblical Interpretation" (1921), p. 83, we would judge that in this later writing his former statement should be somewhat modified.

That Calvin is not neglected, neither deserving of neglect is indisputably attested by the fact that he has been so frequently consulted by modern exegetes. One does not have to turn many pages before the name of Calvin appears in the works of such interpreters as Meyer, Westcott, Lange or Sanday.

APPENDICES

Year	Date	Age	Event
1531	May 26	21	Death of Calvin's father. Received degree of Licentiate in Law. Left Bourges, went to Paris. Entered College Fortet, Paris.
1532	April	22	Up to this time he was "far more concerned about classical scholarship than about religion." Read Greek with Pierre Danes and began Hebrew with François Vatable. Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia." Returned to Orleans and read law.
1533	August	24	Visited Noyon.
	October	24	Back in Paris.
	Nov. 1	24	Cop's Inaugural Address. Cop and Calvin fled to escape seizure. "Conversion" probably took place between April 1532 and November 1533.
1534	May 4	24	Visited Lefevre who had just published his revised translation of the Bible in French. Resigned chaplaincy At Noyon and his rectorship at Pont l'Eveque.
	May		Arrested but released shortly. Published "Psychopannychia". Fled to Strassburg and thence to Basel. Received by Myconius, Viret and Bullinger.
		25	Under guidance of Sebastian Munster, Calvin gave himself to the study of Hebrew.

APPENDIX I

CHRONOLOGY OF CALVIN'S LIFE  
1509---1564

Year	Date	Age	Event
1509	July 10		Born at Noyon, in Picardy, France.
1521	May	12	Appointed to a chaplaincy in the cathedral at Noyon.
1523	August	14	Sent to Paris.  Attended the College de la Marche, at that time under the regency of Mathurin Cordier.  Removed to College de Montaigu, where he studied under a renowned Spaniard to whom he was indebted for much sound training in dialectics and scholastic philosophy.
1527	Sept.	18	Given the church of St. Martin de Marteville. Had begun to study Scriptures and dissent from Roman worship.
1528	March	18	Removed from Paris to Orleans to study law under l'Etoile. Advanced particularly in classical knowledge. "Among his friends here was Melchior Wolmar, a German schoolmaster and a man of exemplary scholarship and character."
1529	July  Autumn	20	Changed to the cure of Pont L'Eveque.  Went to Bourges to continue studies under the brilliant Italian lawyer, Andrea Alciati, professor of law in the university.
1530		21	Wolmar followed Calvin to Bourges where he taught him Greek and introduced him to the study of the New Testament in the original. See Preface to Calvin's Commentary on II Cor.

Year	Date	Age	Event
1535	Aug. 23	26	First edition of his Institutes of the Christian Religion.
1536	April	26	Visit to court of Renée, duchess of Ferrara.
	August	27	Began his work in Geneva. Alliance between Berne and Geneva. Drew up his Catechism.
		27	Articles on Holy Supper, Public Singing, Religious Instruction for Children, and on Marriage.
1537	Jan. 15	27	Articles on Holy Supper, Public Singing, Religious Instruction for Children, and on Marriage.
	March		Anabaptists driven out of Geneva.
	July 20	28	Senate and people of Geneva declared their adherence to leading doctrines and discipline of the Christian religion.
28		Published letters on Shunning Idolatry and on the Popish Priesthood.	
1538	Jan. 12	28	Geneva School Program. Trouble between Geneva and Berne over certain ritual matters.
	Apr. 23		Calvin and three of his colleagues ordered to quit the city for refusing to administer the sacrament in the Bernese form.
		28	Calvin went to Strassburg.
	Sept. 8	29	Preached first Strassburg sermon and remained three years.
	1539		Attended Charles V's conference on Christian reunion at Frankfort.
	Sept. 1	30	Reply to Cardinal Sadolet. Revised and enlarged his Institutes.

Year	Date	Age	Event
1539	Nov. 18	30	Commentary on Romans. Tract on the Lord's Supper.
1540			Appeared at Hagenau and Worms as delegate from Strassburg. Present at diet at Regensburg where he deepened his acquaintance with Melanchthon and formed with him a friendship which lasted throughout life.
	Aug.	31	Married Idelette de Bure (widow with a son and a daughter).
1541	Sept. 13	32	Yielded and returned to Geneva where he was received with enthusiasm. Revised edition of Catechism in French.
	Nov. 20		Geneva adopted the Ordinances of 1541.
1542		32	Persecution of Protestants in France. Plague and famine in Geneva. Controversy with Sorbonnists.
	July 28	33	Only son, Jacques, born to Calvins--lived only a few days.
1543		33	Plague and famine in Geneva. Published four books on free will.
1544			Trouble with Sebastian Castello.
	June 30	34	Castello ordered to quit city. Wrote short treatise (100 pp.) on the Necessity of Reforming the Church. Wrote treatise against Anabaptists and Libertines.

Year	Date	Age	Event
1545		35	Diabolical conspiracy of plague spreaders in Geneva, 28 burned, 3 quartered.  Waldensian persecution.  Dispute with Osiander over Lord's Supper.  Other troubles.
1546	Jan. 24	36	Commentary on I Corinthians.  Trouble makers convicted.
	August 1	37	Commentary on II Corinthians.
1547			Burden for churches in Germany which had been reduced to dire extremities.  Trouble with Perrin--incident in the Court of the Two Hundred.  Wrote his antidote to the Council of Trent.
	July 26	38	Gruet, a free-thinker beheaded in Geneva.
1547	Dec. 16	38	Calvin secured the release of Maigret who was convicted of plotting with French government.
1547	to 1550		Years of defense by Calvin and of much ridicule and meanness by his opponents.
1548		38	More trouble with Perrin and his party.
	Feb. 1		Commentaries on six of Paul's Epistles.  Treatise called the Interim.  Exposure of Judicial Astrology.
1549	March 29	39	Death of Calvin's wife.
	May 23		Commentary on Hebrews.

Year	Date	Age	Event
1549	Nov. 29	40	Commentary on Titus.
1550		40	"Tranquil enough, insofar as regards the Church."
	Feb. 17		Commentary on I Thessalonians.
	July 1		Commentary on II Thessalonians.
	Dec. 25	41	Commentary on Isaiah.
1551	Jan. 24	41	Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles. Death of Calvin's friend Bucer. "The wickedness of the factions broke out the more furiously."
	Dec. 23	42	Bolsec banished for opposing predestination.
1552		42	More trouble from the Bolsec affair.
1553	Jan. 1	43	Commentary on John's Gospel.
	Oct. 27	44	Servetus burned as a heretic. "The whole of the year spent in contention with the wicked."
1554		44	Working on Commentary on Genesis. More trouble from Bolsec, Castellio and others.
1555		45	Strife in Geneva died out. Aided in establishing churches in Poland.
	March		Calvin secured ejection of Bolsec from Berne. Bernese threatened to burn his books. Burdened by the martyrdom of Latimer, Ridley, and Crammer in England. "Five devoted martyrs---burned with great cruelty at Cambray."

Year	Date	Age	Event
1555			More trouble from a certain lawyer and heretic, Matthew Gribald.
	August 1	46	Commentary on a Harmony of the Gospels.
1556		46	Calvin seized with ague while preaching.
			Trip to Frankfort to allay dissensions in French church.
	July 25	47	Commentary on I and II Timothy.
1557		47	Poor health
	Feb. 13		Commentary on Hosea
	July 22	48	Commentary on Psalms "with a truly valuable Preface".
			Grieved by cruel persecution of the godly at Paris--21 martyrs.
1558	Jan.	48	Perpetual confederation entered into by Geneva and Berne.
			More persecution in France.
			Heresy of Tritheists arose.
	October	49	Calvin seized with fever which continued 8 months and exhausted his body. Refrained from preaching or lecturing but spent days and nights dictating.
1558		49	Last Edition of the Institutes in both Latin and French.
1559	June 5	49	The Academy organized in Geneva.
			Bohemian Waldenses sought his counsel.
	June	49	Geneva fortifications strengthened. Pope Paul IV. had said, "to smother the snake in its nest."
			Commentary on the Minor Prophets.

Year	Date	Age	Event
1560	July 10	50	Death of Henry II. on Calvin's 50th birthday saved Geneva from attack. A year full of difficulties.
	August 1	51	Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles.
1561		51	Commentary on Daniel.
1562		52	Huguenot wars in France. Calvin's step-daughter, Judith, dishonored him by her immoral conduct.
1563		53	Calvin's diseases had increased. "Wore out his amanuenses by dictating to them, though unfatigued himself." Beza, p. 82.
	July 23	54	Commentary on the Four Last Books of Moses. Commentary on Jeremiah and Lamentations.
1564		54	Began Commentary on Joshua.
		54	Finished Commentary on Joshua.
	Feb. 6		Delivered his last sermon.
	Mar. 10		Beza and friends called on him in a body. Calvin spoke to them; "My dearest brethren, I feel much obliged to you for your great anxiety on my account, and hope that in fifteen days I will be present for the last time at your meeting; for I think that by that time the Lord will manifest what he has determined to do with me, and that the result will be that he is to take me to himself." Beza, p. lxxxiv.
	Mar. 24	54	Present at the "censure of manners" referred to above.
	Mar. 25		Much fatigued from the previous day.

Year	Date	Age	Event
1564	March 27		Went up to senate-house: "I feel that I am now in this place for the last time." Beza, p. lxxxv.
	March 31		Last appearance among the congregation.
	April 2		Carried to church in a chair (Easter Day). Beza says: "He received the Lord's Supper from my hand, and sung the hymn along with the others, though with tremulous voice, yet with a look in which joy was not obscurely indicated on his dying countenance." p.lxxxv.
	April 25		Made his will.
	April 26		His will signed by a group of friends.
	April 27		Little Council visited Calvin's sick-room.
	May 11		Wrote to his old friend Farel.
	May 19		Ate with his brother ministers for last time.
	May 27		At about 8 o'clock in the evening he quietly passed away.
	May 29		After a simple service attended by the senators, pastors, professors "and almost the whole city" he was buried in the common cemetery of Plein Palais, "with no extraordinary pomp, and, as he had commanded, without any grave stone."
			Age --54 years, 10 months, and 17 days.

Notes:

1. See Senebier's list of Calvin's Commentaries which may be found in Calvin's Commentary on Genesis, Vol. I, p. xviii.
2. Most of the commentaries have been dated according to the date of their dedicatory Epistle.
3. Beza has been followed for many of the other dates and events. Cf. also Walker's "Life of Calvin".

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