

# John Calvin and the Prophetic Curriculum of Jeremiah

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On 15th April 1560, Calvin began his lectures on the book of Jeremiah. Lecturing three times per alternating week, Calvin worked his way through the entire book of Jeremiah in just over two years. The last of his commentaries on Old Testament prophets, save the first twenty chapters of Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Lamentations was dedicated to Prince Frederick III, Lord Palatine of the Rhine, on 23 July 1563. Two points concerning the dedicatory letter are of note. First, a great deal of the dedication is taken up with a discussion and defence of an evangelical understanding of the nature of Christ and the sacrament of the Holy Supper. Written in the wake of the ecumenical Colloquy of Poissy (1561), the inclusion of the salient points concerning the body of Christ and the Holy Supper in the dedication is not unexpected. Second, toward the end of the letter Calvin makes mention of Frederick III's deception by one François Bauduin. Calvin relates the circumstances wherein Bauduin came into Frederick III's good graces. Under Frederick III, Bauduin was granted patronage and a professorship at the University of Heidelberg only to abandon it in 1561 when he left for France. There, siding with the 'enemy,' he offered his services to Cardinal Charles van Lotharingen. Up until this point, Bauduin is reported to have displayed a fickle allegiance to both Protestantism, namely 'Calvinism,' and Catholicism. It is said that he moved between the two no less than seven times. Beza refers to him as the 'Changeling'.

The dedicatory letter, like the commentary itself, displays Calvin's urgency to contend for what he deems worthy causes of truth. In light of the following commentary on Jeremiah, Calvin's dedication assumes a prophetic tone as he both encourages the faithful Frederick, urging him to persevere, and decries those unprincipled men who bark against true Religion and its defenders. The major players of the religio-political landscape of 1563 Reformation Europe appear to be ready-made examples of prophetic confrontation similar to those found in the book of Jeremiah. Noting Bauduin's clandestine consorts with the Cardinal, Calvin perhaps has in view those false prophets with whom Jeremiah—and by transference, Calvin—will concern himself in the subsequent commentary.

References to the Jeremiah commentary regarding Calvin's supposed principles of interpretation are sparse throughout the secondary literature. This is surprising considering his lectures filled over two tomes. Our main concern in this study is not methodological. That is to say, we will not intentionally proof-text Calvin's Jeremiah commentary for fodder that supports or refutes claims made regarding Calvin's exegetical method. Rather, we will be observing Calvin as he deals contextually with the question of false prophets. More directly, we will examine in detail Calvin's construal of true and false prophets in relation to the Law. This includes the implicit assumption—a veritable hallmark of precritical/Early-modern Old Testament interpretation—that the prophets referenced and indeed intended to evoke pre-existent, known commands that had been and were ever before the people. This for Calvin is the spring upon which true prophecy draws. A forthcoming study will explore in more detail the reformer's self-identification with the prophets of the Old Testament, particularly in the face of competing truth claims, as he sought to call his sixteenth-century flock back to covenantal fidelity.

### The 'Law' in Jeremiah

When Calvin makes mention of the 'law' or 'Law' throughout his commentaries, God's contractual obligations as contained in the final four books of the Pentateuch are in view. As evinced by the re-arrangement of Exodus through Deuteronomy by subject matter grouped according to the ten heading of the Decalogue in his penultimate commentary proper, the Mosaic Harmony, all the material contained therein constituted those covenantal duties God demanded of his people. Calvin refers to this ranging corpus as 'the Law': 'Moses in this passage [Deut. 31:9] calls by the name of "the Law," not the Ten Commandments engraved on the two tables, but the interpretation of it contained in the four books.' As to when it was given, Calvin sees a two-tiered transmission. First, he believes the law was initially given in the incubatory form of the Decalogue very soon after the Israelites' exodus from Egypt. 'In order the better to remove all ambiguity, we must briefly calculate the time. In the third month from their exodus the people reached Mount Sinai. On what day the Law was given is nowhere stated, unless we may probably conjecture that it was promulgated about the end of that month.' Then, thirty-nine years after God had spoken from Mt. Sinai, Moses (Deut. 31:9) entrusted the Levites with the duty of expounding and teaching people according to the book of the law.

Relying primarily upon the Jeremiah commentary for the remainder of our study, the prophet's self-understanding of and role in interpreting the law is evident throughout. In an effort to demonstrate this, we must first determine what law Calvin held to be normative for the prophet Jeremiah. Calvin understood Jeremiah to be using the term 'law' generally, that is, it was intended to encompass the covenant obligations demanded of the people by God. Elsewhere he writes, 'There were indeed in the law these two distinct things—doctrine, or a rule of life; and threatenings, which were added as stimulants to rouse the sloth of men, or rather to subdue their perverseness.' This was the authoritative law of Moses given to Israel's fathers. Calvin writes, '[Jeremiah] doubtless claims here authority for the law on the ground of time.' According to Jeremiah, through it the very authority of Moses, the archetypal prophet, was brought to bear on the people. As seen in God's demand that Jeremiah publically call the people to return to the obedience of the law, even the form of Jeremiah's transmission of the law's precepts aligns with Moses'.

The law given to the fathers was understood by Jeremiah as the 'way'. The crime for which the prophets demanded repentance, then, was a deviation from this way. Calvin ties this to the antiquity of the law, noting that the law's long-standing presence among the people should have had the opposite effect, namely shoring up their faith in God's law. The people's exposure throughout Israel's history to the paths of ages rendered them all the more guilty 'for they had not only been taught, but had also been led as it were by the hand, so that the way of the law ought to have been well known by them'. Moses, in the law, had set before the people the 'way of life' and the 'way of death'. However, in the mouth of Jeremiah, the choice between life and death was no longer that of avoiding correction. Rather, it was whether the people would submit their neck to the yoke of bondage willingly, or rebelliously defend themselves. For Calvin, the law's final authority does not derive from its age. Nor does he see Jeremiah grounding the authority of the law on the fact that it was transmitted and proclaimed by the fathers and prophets of old. Rather, the law was foundationally normative due to its divine origin: '[T]herefore this principle ought to be maintained, that there is no right way but what God himself has pointed out. Had any one else come and boasted antiquity, the Prophet would have laughed to scorn such boasting.'

Throughout the book of Jeremiah Calvin is keen to note those passages wherein some precept or particular duty is commanded of the people. Calvin sees Jeremiah, when referencing some facet of the law, as speaking, “according to what was commonly thought.” The prophet’s references to such cultic practices as first-fruit offerings, gleaning laws, the prohibition of the construction of high places or the offering of sacrifices to God near graves, the observance of the Sabbath, and the release of servants at the end of seven years serve as grist for Calvin as he portrayed Jeremiah as an executor of this law. At other times, the law was used to frame the people’s culpability by drawing their sorry state into relief with the righteousness of the law. At Jeremiah 7:21-24, Calvin highlights how the Jews of Jeremiah’s day, attentive merely to the rote, mechanical practice of animal sacrifice, had incurred God’s anger due to their lack of faith. True, God had given the law and it did demand slaughter, but God had not commanded sacrifices for their own sake. His intent was and had always been, ‘to remind the Jews of their sin, and also to show to them the way of reconciliation’. In this way Calvin explains Jeremiah’s puzzling statement at 7:22, ‘...I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices’. Calvin understood the law as a mirror in which the Israelites beheld their deserved judgment. Thus he credits Jeremiah with grasping the spiritual nature of the law, capping off this comment by noting that, once his, Calvin’s, views on the law are taken into account, then the reader is able to ‘understand the meaning of the Prophet’.

### **The ‘Prophet’ in Jeremiah**

Calvin has identified Jeremiah’s prophetic purpose to be restorative, calling the people ‘back to the pure doctrine of the law, which the greater part were then treading under their feet’. When those initially entrusted with the keeping of the law—the priests—were found derelict in their duty, ‘God raised up prophets in their place’. If those appointed by God would not fulfil their duty, God would make prophets of herdsmen. The prophets were then called upon to tend the people with the rod of the law, interpreting and applying it in an accommodating manner to their lives and times in obedience to the Divine will. They were God’s ‘substitutes’.

Throughout the commentary Calvin stresses this explicative function of the prophetic office. Jeremiah 26:4-6 is an example of Calvin’s coupling of the law with the prophets, distilling Jeremiah’s message to the people. ‘If God’s law was

sufficient,' asks Calvin, 'why were the prophets to be heard?' Noting what appear to be mutually exclusive means of direction and punishment—the law and prophets—Calvin attempts to fuse the two together. 'The law alone was to be attended to, and also the prophets, for they were its interpreters.' Since the unalterable law was perfect from its inception, what exactly were the prophets to do? Calvin answers—'To make more manifest the law, and to apply it to the circumstances of the people.' What was not permissible was the invention or avocation of new or deviant doctrines. The law dictated what the prophets could and could not authoritatively preach.

For Calvin, the two—law and prophets—can best be understood as belonging to one another. Calvin writes, 'the Jews had been plainly taught by the Law and by the Prophets, God had continued morning and evening to repeat the same things to them'. '[E]very one who rejected the prophets must surely ascribe no authority to the Law' because 'these two things well agree together'. In fact, God's commissioning of prophets who continually exhorted the people to repentance unto salvation condemns the people's rejection of the law all the more. 'Even if prophets had not been sent, one after the other, the Law ought to have been sufficient.'

Before turning to Jeremiah's treatment of false prophets, a look at Calvin's discussion of them in the Harmony is in order, since the two belong inextricably together. Then, returning to Jeremiah 23–29, a more complete composite of Calvin's handling of the question will take shape. Explaining the signs of Moses and the magicians of Pharaoh's court at Exodus 7:10, Calvin references Matthew 24:24, noting that Jesus and the scriptures teach that false prophets shall be empowered by God to signs while Satan takes the credit. Referencing Deut 13:3, Calvin writes, 'God elsewhere testifies that when He permits false prophets to deceive, it is to prove men's hearts.' Preferring a simple explanation for the magicians' turning the water to blood at Exodus 7:22 over Augustine's subtle philosophising, Calvin believes that the deeds wrought by Pharaoh's sorcerers were most likely to be understood as illusions. Addressing the staff-turned-snake earlier, Calvin understands Moses and Aaron's signs to be real. But those of the magicians were illusory. Why else, Calvin asks, would Moses refer to them as 'enchantments'? Here we gain another insight into Calvin's understanding of the question. Relying on Paul (2 Thess. 2:11), Calvin believes that the signs of the prophets along with the

supposed actions of the false prophets were actually God's just vengeance enacted upon a people who, like Pharaoh, refused to believe the truth. While the faithful observed the identical deeds of the magicians and their faith was no doubt shaken, Calvin is sure God finally 'opened [His people's] eyes, so that they should regard with contempt the tricks and deceptions of the magicians'.

At his comments on Deuteronomy 13, Calvin expands his discussion of the testing nature of the false prophets' retributive role in the hands of the just God. On the surface, Deuteronomy 13's message is straight-forward: 'God espoused His ancient people to Himself, and bade them close their ears against impostors, who are, as it were, the seducers of Satan tempting them to violate that sacred and special bond of marriage whereby God would be united with His people.' However, he warns it is not as simple as it appears, since there were those who accurately predicted future events—an ability belonging solely to God (Isa. 45:27)—and yet led the people astray. Calvin concedes, then, that Deuteronomy 13 appears to cast doubt on the final discernment of a prophet's legitimacy based on their accurate predictions. True, unfulfilled prophecy is a sure sign of a prophet's falsity. Deuteronomy 18 is clear concerning this falsehood criterion. In fact, Calvin sees Deuteronomy 18 as problematic in its apparent utilisation of such a litmus test in distinguishing between true and false. In response he writes, 'Thus I resolve the difficulty, God's claiming to Himself the glory of foretelling events does not prevent Him from occasionally conferring even on the ministers of Satan the power of prophecy respecting some particular point.' Accurately predicted and fulfilled prophecies come from God alone. Calvin writes, 'The principle, therefore, is established, that those speak in God's name who predict what really comes to pass; for they could not declare the truth respecting things unknown to man unless God Himself should dictate it to them.' As for those false prophets who predicted truly, Calvin is happy to consign them to the role of God's agents of judgment. These imposters are 'the ministers of God's vengeance, in order that the reprobate may be taken in their snares'.

This naturally means the business of discernment is further muddled rather than simplified. Any attempt to read these passages in the hopes of finding an easy answer, some ready-made criteria, is misguided. In light of humanity's propensity to be so easily misled, Calvin asks if it was fair for God to test as he did. Not surprisingly, he answers yes, since 'all the good are sure to

overcome, so that the wiles of Satan are to them nothing but the exercises of their virtue'. Moses never demanded unmitigated credit and acceptance be granted those prophets whose prophecies are fulfilled. Rather Calvin believes the litmus test of fulfilment is the touchstone from which further criteria can be applied. And, in the people's vigilant observance of those prophets who appear to be true, there is an admonition for them to trust God as he further affirms or exposes the prophet in question. For Calvin the issue turned on the mind of God, 'for we must take into consideration His intention'. God desired to test his people by means of 'true' false prophets in an effort to shore up their faith (Deut. 13) and at the same time meant to protect them from those who would lead them astray by abusing his name, promising to expose those prophets that did (Deut. 18).

Having alluded to Balaam throughout his exposition of Deuteronomy 13 and 18, we now turn briefly to Calvin's comments on non-Israelite prophets to shed light on the question of 'true' false prophets. Those 'true' false prophets, such as Caiaphas or Balaam, are considered imposters, yet are 'still endowed at the same time with a particular gift of prophecy'. This prophetic gift can originate from no other place than God. In a discussion concerning Balaam where he contrasts those outside of Israel on whom God temporarily bestowed the gift of true prophecy with authentic prophets, Calvin writes, 'In a word, they were the organs of the Holy Spirit.' While directed by the Holy Spirit, divine inspiration rendered Balaam no less culpable in Calvin's eyes: 'Balaam was worse than any hireling crier, wishing as he did to frustrate the eternal decrees of God, and yet we know that his tongue was directed by the divine inspiration of the Spirit so as to be the proclaimer of that grace which he had been hired to quench.'

As we have seen, the office of prophet was not restricted to the Israelites alone. God appointed prophets for the heathen nations as well and they operated in several capacities. First, their very existence, much like the created order, rendered the nations excuse-less. 'God willed, indeed, that [prophets] should exist even among heathen nations, so that some sparks of light should shine amidst their darkness, and thus the excuse of ignorance should be taken away.' This phenomena, Calvin notes, was particularly the case prior to the promulgation of the law, since by the burgeoning emergence of Israelite prophets God was increasingly distinguishing his people from neighbouring

countries. Second, Gentile prophets—even ‘true’ false prophets—shared, albeit unknowingly, in the proliferation of God’s grace. Extolling the mysterious purposes of God, Calvin says—

It is wonderful that God should have determined to have anything in common with the pollutions of Balaam.... But, however hateful to God the impiety of Balaam was, this did not prevent Him from making use of him in this particular act. He well knows how to apply corrupt instruments to His use, so by the mouth of this false prophet, He promulgated the covenant, which He had made with Abraham, to foreign and heathen nations.

### **The Law, the Prophets, and False Prophecy in Jeremiah**

Turning to Jeremiah 23-29, paying particularly close attention to the Hananiah narrative of chapter 28, we can now collate what we have observed of Calvin from his comments on Deuteronomy 13, 18, and Balaam. Calvin understands Jeremiah’s remarks at 23:9, 10, 22, and 28 against false prophets in light of the prophets’ assuming the mantle of interpreters of the law in the face of the priests’ abdication of their duty. The false prophets spoken of “ought to have been the expounders of the law,” however, deluded and rebellious, “they were dumb!” Not only does Calvin see Jeremiah indicting the false prophets on their silence regarding the law, they are guilty of corrupting the law by misinterpreting it. Explaining the ‘wheat and the chaff’ of 23:28, Calvin writes, ‘And by this comparison [Jeremiah] shows how foolishly and absurdly many detract from the authority of the Law on this pretense, that there are many who falsely interpret it.’ Reading Jeremiah to be at great pains to convince the people that the wrath of God could be stayed only by repentance and adherence to the law, Calvin underlines the centrality of the law for Jeremiah’s prophetic existence. ‘Were God then to descend a hundred times from heaven, he would bring nothing but this message, that he has spoken what is necessary to be known, and that his Law is the most perfect wisdom.’ By both muzzling and corrupting or altering the message of the law, the false prophets stood guilty of leading the people astray.

Having pointed up the particular emphasis Calvin sees Jeremiah placing on the role of the law informing a true prophet’s words, the testing nature of prophetic opposition as far as the people are concerned, and the reality that God occasionally conscripted false prophets to deliver true messages, a few

points specific to the narrative of chapter 28 are in order. First, Calvin saw false prophets' (i.e., Hananiah) title of prophet as purely expedient. At Jeremiah 26:7-8 Calvin writes, '[Jeremiah] then allowed them an honourable title, but esteemed it as nothing.' The title held no intrinsic merit; false prophets were called prophets merely 'with regard to the people'. Hananiah, while labelled prophet in the Hebrew 'had no proof of his own call...and, as it were, avowedly obtruded himself that he might contend with the Prophet'. Calvin is not only sure that Hananiah knew himself to be parading as a true prophet driven by a 'satanic impulse', he wonders at his insensitivity. 'Hananiah ought to have been touched and moved when he heard Jeremiah speaking.' As to how the faithful saw Hananiah, they considered him an 'awful spectacle of blindness and of madness'. In one fell swoop it seems Calvin answers the question of Jeremiah 28 before he engages the remainder of the story by crediting the obedient present with discernment. 'It was easy for [the obedient] to distinguish between Jeremiah and Hananiah; for they saw that the former announced the commands of God, while the latter sought nothing else but the favour and plaudits of men.' As for Jeremiah, Calvin says that whenever the prophet called Hananiah by the name prophet, he attached his own name and title to the statement. This had the double effect of reminding those present of his valid title and of warning 'us in due time, lest novelty should frighten us when any boasts of the title of a prophet'.

### The Nature of Prophetic Signs

The second element of importance evinced in Jeremiah 28 is the prophetic sign. Hebrew commentators in and prior to Calvin's day clearly demarcated between prophetic signs that were akin to props or expressions, such as those utilised by Isaiah (20:2) or Jeremiah (28:10), and signs of a miraculous or magical nature. Due to their questionable signatory value, Calvin raises the possible objection that, signs being what they are, might not they 'be as well dangerous deceptions as confirmations of the truth?' He writes, 'I reply, that such license has never been accorded to the devil, as that the light of God should not in the end shine forth from the midst of the darkness.' So we see Calvin tethering the nature of the sign to God's perseverance of his people amidst tests he himself inflicts upon them by way of false prophets.

We come, then, to the contentious sign of the Jeremiah's yoke. Fashioned in chapter 27, 'it was a sad spectacle to see on the neck of Jeremiah, when he went

forth, the symbol of the bondage of all kings and nations'. The yoke served a dual purpose. It was a useful sign to the teachable, like a sacrament that established the credit of Jeremiah's message. It was also a signifier of coming judgment to those hardened in obstinacy. With the grievous act of desecrating Jeremiah's symbol (and therefore his message) aside, Calvin notes the selfish nature of Hananiah (28:10-11). By breaking the yoke he 'attracted the attention of men'. Then, succumbing further to his delusion, Hananiah fashioned a new yoke, thereby 'imitating the true prophets of God'. Central for Calvin is the proposition that no prophetic sign is complete without an accompanying doctrine. Hananiah's doctrine was plausible, therefore Calvin says it had found much purchase in the Temple. That the accompanying message substantiates the sign was more forcibly shown in Jeremiah's recast yoke of iron. Calvin notes that when Jeremiah added his explanation of the iron-cast yoke, one of two responses was the result. Either the people believed his prophecy, or the hardened obstinate rendered themselves further inexcusable.

### **Fulfilment and the Discernment of False Prophecy**

Calvin understands the test by which the people discern God's prophet and indeed the true prophet's very definition to be one and the same. 'For when the event corresponds with the prophecy, there is no doubt but that he who predicted what comes to pass must have been sent by God.' So, we see that the fulfilment of a prophecy is grounds upon which the people may stake confidence.

However, as noted earlier, fulfilled prophecy does not preclude ill intent. 'But we cannot hence conclude, that all those who apparently predict this or that, are sent by God...for one particular prophecy would not be sufficient to prove the truth of all that is taught and preached.' fulfilled prophecy holds limited discriminatory value for Jeremiah; it does not secure a prophet's veracity. In fact, for Calvin, Jeremiah is less intent on proving his own authenticity than Hananiah's falsehood: '[Jeremiah's] design was not to prove that all were true prophets who predicted something that was true...he took up another point,—that all who predicted this or that, which was afterward found to be vain, were thus convicted of falsehood.' Calvin sees in Jeremiah a confidence that, after the predicted two years, peace would not reign, as Hananiah projected. In this way, Calvin sees Jeremiah employing a form of the prophetic warning at Deuteronomy 18.

Calvin is insistent that Jeremiah's primary object in the Hananiah episode was to prove his opponent false. How then does Calvin understand Jeremiah to discern a true prophet?

As to the ancient people, they could not, as it was said yesterday, be deceived, for the prophets were only interpreters of the Law. With regard to future things, this or that was never predicted by the prophets, unless connected with doctrine, which was as it were the seasoning, and gave a relish to the prophecies; for when they promised what was cheering, it was founded on the eternal covenant of God; and when they threatened the people, they pointed out their sins, so that it was necessary for God to execute his vengeance when their wickedness was incurable.

As we saw with Jeremiah's yoke, Calvin is quick to point out the futility of a doctrine-less sign. The basal doctrine Calvin understands to be operative for the prophet is the covenant, the Law of Moses. Only to the degree that a prophet's message of peace accorded with the law's promises of glad tidings was that prophet of peace said to be sent from God. Likewise, when the law was transgressed, the guilty were to be called to account. Jeremiah's contention with Hananiah, then, has to do with his message: falsely predicted peace. As Calvin goes on to show in Jeremiah 37:1-2, those who rejected Jeremiah, rejected the law: 'for if [the Israelites] had examined the doctrine of Jeremiah, they would have found that it had certain marks by which they could have easily seen that it was altogether consistent with the law.' Therefore, Hananiah's open defiance towards Jeremiah constituted deviance from a true prophet's duty: proper interpretation of the law.

### The Prophetic Lineage

Calvin writes of the prophets throughout Israel's history: '[T]he Jews had been plainly taught by the Law and by the Prophets, God had continued morning and evening to repeat the same things to them.' For Calvin, the law constitutes what the Israelites were taught; the prophets were, in a sense, supplemental. He refers to the prophets' messages of warning and repentance as 'reproofs' which were appended to the law's lessons. Calvin sees a common thread, or similarity, running through the messages of Israel and Judah's prior prophets, originating in Moses, the prototypical prophet. That Calvin understood Moses in this way is evident from numerous places throughout both the Harmony and the

Jeremiah commentary. His statements from the final paragraph of his Harmony (on Deut 34:10) clearly show that Calvin considered Moses the font from which all prophecy (and law) sprung. '[F]or although prophets were from time to time raised up, still it was fitting that the superiority should remain with Moses, lest they should decline in the smallest degree from the rule of the Law. It must be concluded, therefore, that Moses was here placed in a position of supremacy, so as to be superior to all the prophets.' Calvin notes two 'signs of [Moses'] excellency': his familiar intimacy with God, and his miraculous signs. These two facets of Moses' prophetic office find happy analogs in the subsequent prophets' dual roles of interpreter of the Law in the absence of regular, direct divine communication, and exhibitors of signs, whether descriptive, predictive, or miraculous. When a prophet spoke the law to the people, it was actually Moses doing the reprimanding. This is evident in Calvin's discussion of the spiritual nature of the sign of circumcision at Jer 9:25-26. 'When, therefore, the Jews presented only the sign, they were justly derided by Moses and the prophets.'

Calvin believes Jeremiah sees himself furthering this universal message. Concerning the people's wickedness on account of which impending judgment from the North loomed, Calvin writes, 'what other prophets had denounced Jeremiah now confirms more strongly'. While vengeance made up the bulk of Jeremiah's message, thereby linking him with past prophets, Jeremiah's commission—the extension of a pardon—was one of mercy as well. In both the harsh words of punishment and the hope of reprieve, Jeremiah's message toes the historical line of God's prophets. 'The Prophet, then, does not here simply teach, but reminds the Jews of what they had before heard from Isaiah, and also from Micah, and from all the other prophets.' Calvin sees Jeremiah particularly indebted to the prophet Isaiah's message. 'As then Isaiah reproached the people with tardiness in learning the law, so Jeremiah shows now that they were not to think it strange that God commanded his law to be proclaimed to them, because it had been hitherto despised by them.' Calvin further shows Jeremiah's dependency upon Isaiah by highlighting Jeremiah's prophecy against the Babylonians at the hand of the Medes. Calvin comments that it echoes Isaiah's (13:17), though the latter had been dead for some time.

Isaiah is not the only prophet whom Calvin identifies as a direct predecessor of Jeremiah. Ezekiel and Hosea are both mentioned as having proclaimed the

threat of God like Jeremiah. In this same vein, the near-execution of Jeremiah at chapter 26 warrants closer examination. Having incited those present at the temple with words of destruction for the temple and curses for Jerusalem, the priests and prophets demand Jeremiah's death. Putting Psalm 132:14—'This is my resting place forever, here I will reside'—in the mouths of his accusers, Calvin says Jeremiah's opponents charged him with what amounts to novelty. By condemning the temple and the city, God's chosen possession, they alleged Jeremiah's heretofore unheard-of prophecy 'made void God's promises; [Jeremiah] regarded as nothing the sanctity of the Temple'. At some point during the ordeal, some elders came to Jeremiah's defence. Interestingly, Calvin goes on to describe these elders as kind, wizened men of authority who urged the people to 'submit themselves calmly to prophetic instruction'. This raises the question of whether Calvin, holding up the most reputable of characters with whom the congregants of his day could identify, seeks to garner support for his own 'prophetic' ministry of reform from Scripture. These elders' testimonies on behalf of Jeremiah were built on precedent, namely the prophets Micah of Moresheth and Uriah the son of Shemaiah. Micah, prophesying under king Hezekiah, foretold Jerusalem's destruction (Micah 3:12). This had the desirable result of bringing about repentance, most notably the king's. And as Micah had been spared his life, the elders argued, so should Jeremiah. Calvin writes, 'Jeremiah is defended, because ... he had others as the originators, from whose mouths he had spoken, who were also the acknowledged servants of God, from whom credit could not be withheld, such as Micah.' The elders then posit the case of Uriah, a prophet killed under the reign of Jehoiachim for prophesying identical calamities against Judah. In the commentary, of primary note to Calvin are the respective responses of the kings: repentance on the part of Hezekiah; obstinacy and the murder of a prophet by Jehoiachim. However, Calvin is insistent that the elders' defence is again one of precedent: 'They took their argument from example...Jeremiah was not the first witness and herald of dreadful vengeance, for God had before that time, and in time past, been wont to speak by his other prophets against the city and the temple.' For Calvin, only true prophets' messages could align so neatly over such a span of time. Jeremiah's prophetic message proved that, as a prophet, he cognitively accounted for and recognised this accordance.

Briefly, discernment on the part of the people is not without mention in Calvin's treatment of false prophets. Calvin is sure God always leads his people

to the truth, allowing them to finally, if not immediately, discern God's messenger. Take the elders in the above example. Regardless of the means, Jeremiah was saved and a contingent was preserved that listened to and heeded (in some degree) Jeremiah's message. Calvin has more to say about those who were 'willfully blind', who did not inquire into a prophet's message. These, he said, 'willfully put on nooses and also wished to be deceived'. They are unmoved even by 'an event so memorable' as Hananiah's foretold and realized death sentence. Alongside these, a 'third' group can be identified. Pleading ignorance in the face of such an ambiguous choice, Calvin describes these as undecided. It was for these, Calvin says, that God ratified Hananiah's death sentence. '[I]t was God's purpose to have regard to the ignorance of many who would have otherwise stumbled, or made their ignorance a pretext, for they could not determine which of the two had been sent by God, Hananiah or Jeremiah.'

### Conclusion

Our study has modestly sought to extract Calvin from the Christian interpretive tradition as he grapples with Jeremiah's construal of false prophets. Calvin understood his own exegesis as growing in the tradition's shade: 'The common consent of almost all interpreters also influences me, from which I wish not to depart, except necessity compels me, or the thing itself makes it evident that they were mistaken.' Although he rarely mentions by name his interlocutors save Jerome, his interaction with them is nonetheless evident by his steady references to 'some' or 'other' interpreters.

Assessing Calvin's reading of the question, embryonic signs of a shift in the interpretation of prophets start to take shape. Looking ahead to the nineteenth century, Old Testament prophets' 'foretelling' ability—until then their hallmark characteristics—all but dismissed. However, with Calvin this trait was still alive and well; indeed formative and requisite. Organs of the Holy Spirit, Old Testament prophets were granted a 'special gift to predict future and hidden events'. Before Calvin, Aquinas understood the prophets' intellect to be inspired with the charism of prophecy, enabling the prophets' authentic knowledge of future events. This resulted in a true prophet's ability to judge or interpret those future representations presented him. Calvin's understanding of the Old Testament prophet's office casts the prophet more in the role of pupil. Perhaps the most programmatic treatment of prophetic knowledge *per se* in his

commentary, Calvin's comments at Jeremiah 32:16-18 afford us a closer look at its limits. Noting what he considers a confused response from Jeremiah in the face of the vision ('Houses, and fields, and vineyards shall yet be bought in this land'), Calvin seeks to hold together prophetic knowledge and ignorance. Calvin maintains Jeremiah was perplexed at the nature of the vision of restitution and ignorant to the reason lying back of it. He then extrapolates a general prophetic principle: 'It hence appear that God's counsel was not always made known in everything to the Prophets, but as far as it was expedient.' There remained a level of ambiguity for Calvin concerning the degree of the prophets' knowledge concerning future events. The prophets knew as much of the future as God deemed fit, no more. 'Such was the height or the depth of this mystery, that [Jeremiah] was constrained to confess that it was a work of God which surpassed all his thoughts.' What could be deduced was the reason the vision was given: 'that the Jews might know their calamity would not be perpetual.' Calvin also stresses the prophet's restrained comportment. God's prophets were not 'seized with ecstasies' or 'carried away'. Rather, they soberly received what the Lord 'discovered to them', their prophetic 'curriculum.' This curriculum, unsurprisingly, was not neoteric. Granted, Calvin says, the Israelites had been furnished with prophets, 'through whom God published new oracles which were added to the law'. The important thing Calvin wishes to highlight, however, is the delimited nature of new prophecy. A prophecy, such as Jeremiah's vision of restitution (Jer. 32), may be unheard of in its particularities, but never so new that it did not 'flow from the law and hark back to it'. This returns us to Calvin's insistence that a prophet's primary function was the interpretation of the Law. 'As for doctrine, they were only interpreters of the law and added nothing to it except predictions of things to come. Apart from these, they brought nothing forth but a pure exposition of the law.'

Tying doctrine to prediction in the face of the rise of the prominence of the role of the law, Calvin sees the decline of prophecy being defined by foretelling and prediction. Prior to the publication of the law, Calvin understands the dominant feature of the prophetic office to have been its predictive element. Much in the role of preachers, the prophets were responsible for the application of these predictions to the surrounding circumstances. After the law's promulgation, 'they were its interpreters'. Prediction did not fall to the wayside. True prophets, if inspired to do so, were able to foretell future events.

Once they had the law, however, Calvin understands the majority of prophets to be working from the same source. This explains Calvin's insistence that prophetic signs to be heeded must be accompanied by doctrines. A sign must accompany a message that accords with God's will as revealed through Moses in the law. Conversely, those prophets, like Balaam, who may have predicted 'this or that', did so 'without any admixture of doctrine'. True prophets' messages 'harkened back' to doctrine; the doctrine operative in the time of Jeremiah (since Moses) was the law.

On the hermeneutical front, Calvin's humanist predilection for a textual appraisal of biblical prophecy could perhaps serve to explain, at least in part, his insistence to shift the epicenter of the interpretation of prophecy away from discussions of ecstasy and fanaticism. Particularly innovative is Calvin's relocation of the centre of interpretation of prophecy to a written tradition, the Book of the Law. Thus, Calvin's insistence that the role of the prophets was more closely akin to teacher than dramatic persona lends a measure of support to the above claim.

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#### ENDNOTES

1. CO XXI:90. See Peter Wilcox, "The Lectures of John Calvin and the Nature of his Audience, 1555-1564," ARG 87 (1996): 139f., and Wilcox, "Calvin as Commentator on the Prophets," in *Calvin and the Bible*, ed. Donald K. McKim, (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), 111. For a useful chronology, see Erik A. de Boer, *John Calvin On The Visions Of Ezekiel: Historical and Hermeneutical Studies of John Calvin's sermons inédits, especially on Ezek. 36-48* Kerkhistorische Bijdragen, vol. 21, (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 3.
2. Colladon (CO XXI:93) reports that Calvin concluded Jeremiah on 9 September 1562. Taking two weeks off, Calvin began Lamentations on September 21 (cf. Wilcox, *Calvin and the Bible*, 111, n.22 concerning exact dating), only requiring a few months to finish it (Lamentations' lectures ended on Jan. 19, 1563). On 20 January 1563, Calvin started his to-remain unfinished lectures on Ezekiel. He anticipated, due to his declining health, that this exposition would see completion at the hands of 'a more competent commentator' (Wilcox, p. 111). Richard Stauffer, *Creator et rector mundi. Dieu, la creation et la providence dans l'uvre homilétique*

*de Calvin* (Lille: Atelier de reproduction des theses, 1978), reports Calvin as having preached twenty-five sermons on Jeremiah in 1549, beginning on Friday, 14 June through Friday, 16 August. A critical edition of these can be found in Rudulphe Peter, ed., *Sermons sur les Livres de Jérémie et des Lamentations*, Supplementa Calvinia; Sermons inédits, vol. VI (Neukirchen–Vluy: Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, 1971). The sermons run virtually verse-by-verse from Jer. 14:19 to 18:23. Calvin himself put no pen to paper in the creation of his commentary on Jeremiah. As has been amply demonstrated, all of his commentaries on the OT prophets except Isaiah were products of the collaboration of detailed transcripts of a corpus of secretary–scribes who attended his lectures at the Academy (the title page to the first edition of Lectures on Jeremiah and Lamentations reads, ‘Ioannis Budaei et Caroli Jonvilaeo labore et industria exerptae’), CO XXXVII:13-14, and XL:23-24; cf. T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin’s Old Testament Commentaries*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986; reprint, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), pp. 26-28; David L. Puckett, *John Calvin’s exegesis of the Old Testament*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), pp. 147-51; and Wilcox, pp. 108-10). These ‘amanuenses’ were Jean Budé, son of Calvin’s humanist ‘hero’ Guillaume Budé, Jean’s brother-in-law Charles de Jonvillier, Calvin’s secretary Nicholas des Gallars, and perhaps one or two anonymous others (on these cf. CO XLII:183-184, 189-190; Wilcox, *Calvin and the Bible*, p. 109, n.8). Immediately following a lecture, the notes were collated and a master was presented for Calvin’s personal approval. The authenticity of the finished product has been argued for on the basis of printers’ commendations of the ‘scheme’ (cf. Wilcox, *Calvin and the Bible*, 108f.).

3. Wulfert de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide*, trans. Lyle D. Bierma, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), p. 109.
4. Here too Calvin laments the fact that the pejorative moniker ‘Calvinism’ has been applied to Prince Frederick III in an effort to brand the prince.
5. See the brief synopsis of this episode in Bernard Cottret, *Calvin: A Biography*, trans. M. Wallace McDonald, (Grand Rapids/Edinburgh: W. B. Eerdmans T & T Clark, 2000), pp. 248-50; cf. also de Greef, pp. 207-208; a more complete treatment can be found in Mario Turchetti, *Concordia o tolleranza? F. Bauduin e i “Moyenneurs”* (Milan: F. Angeli, 1984) and “Religious Concord and Political Tolerance in Sixteenth–and Seventeenth–Century France,” *SCJ* 22 (1991): 17.
6. De Greef (207) notes that at this point his relationship with Calvin ‘came to a definite end’. For a synopsis of Calvin, Beza, and Bauduin’s correspondence, see Cornelis Augustijn, Christoph Burger, and Frans P. van Stam, “Calvin in the Light of the Early Letters,” in *Calvinus Praeceptor Ecclesiae*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis,

- DROZ 388 (Geneva: Librairie Droz S.A, 2004), pp. 155-56.
7. Bauduin and the Cardinal's secret treachery may assist in shedding light on Calvin's interpretation at Jer. 23:30-32, 'Many explain this verse as though God condemned the false prophets, who borrowed something from the true prophets...I rather think that their secret arts are here pointed out, that they secretly and designedly conspired among themselves, and then that they spread abroad their own figments according to their usual manner' (CTS 3:201).
  8. *Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. Wilhelm Baum, Edward Cunitz, and Edward Reuss, 59 vols., Corpus reformatorum 29-87 (Brunsvigae: Schwetschke [Bruhn], 1863-1900). His commentary on Jeremiah can be found at Praelectiones in librum prophetiarum Ieremiae et Lamentationes, Ioannis Budaei et Caroli Ionuillaei labore et industria exceptae, CO 37:469-39:646. Upon completion, this study will work from the 1562 *Vignon Secunda editio*.
  9. Zachman has demonstrated that such a study can be done, and rewardingly so, utilizing Jeremiah; cf., Calvin as Teacher, 109ff.
  10. *Mosis Libri* v, cum Iohannis Calvini Commentariis. Genesis seorsum: reliqui quatuor in formam harmoniae digesti (Geneva: Henr. Stephanus, 1563). The French appeared the following year. Cf. De Greef, 105f.
  11. Parker, *Old Testament Commentaries*, 122. Parker's chapter on the Law remains a standard, extensively engaging with Calvin's Harmony. For a helpful bibliography of recent works on Calvin's Harmony, see Raymond A. Blacketer, "Calvin as Commentator on the Mosaic Harmony and Joshua," in *Calvin and the Bible*, ed. Donald K. McKim, (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), 30n1.
  12. Mo. Harm. on Deut. 31:9, CTS 2:231. Calvin understands the prophet/psalmist David to employ 'law' in the same way: "[U]nder the term law, he not only means the rule of living righteously, or the Ten Commandments, but he also comprehends the covenant by which God had distinguished that people from the rest of the world, and the whole doctrine of Moses, the parts of which he afterwards enumerates under the terms testimonies, statutes, and other names." Comm. on Psalms 19:7-9, CTS 1:318.
  13. Mo. Harm. on Ex. 25:25; CTS 2:145.
  14. 'The circumstances took place thirty-nine years after God had spoken on Mount Sinai...the Book of the Law was given in trust, as it were, to the Levites, that the people might learn from them what was right.' Mo. Harm. on Deut. 31:9, CTS 2:231.
  15. 'The word Law is general; and one of those which are special and often occurs in Scripture, is the statute.' Comm. on Jer. 10:3, CTS 2:13. The term 'covenant' is also

used, but often in the context of threats: ‘He indeed mentioned before the words of the covenant for the commands of God; but now, on finding that he had to do with refractory men, who were not capable of receiving any doctrine, he comes to threatenings.’ Comm. on Jer. 11:6-8, CTS 2:84; cf. Comm. on Jer. 34:18-19.

16. Comm. on Jer. 11:6-8, CTS 2:84.
17. Comm. on Jer. 17:22, CTS 2:382.
18. Calvin sees Jeremiah effectively saying, ‘I have taught nothing at variance with Moses; there has been nothing additional in my doctrine: but as I cannot convince you of this, I now give over speaking to you; Moses himself speaks, hear him.’ Comm. on Jer. 11:1-5, CTS 2:72-73. “Here the Prophet borrows his words from Moses, in order to secure authority to his prophecy; for the Jews were ashamed to reject Moses, as they believed that the Law came from God.” Comm. on Jer. 24:9; CTS 3:235-36.
19. Comm. on Jer. 11:1-5, CTS 2:72-73.
20. ‘We hence see that, by the ways of his people, we are not to understand those glosses which the Jews had devised, but the law itself, which God had delivered to them.’ Comm. on Jer. 12:16, CTS 2:157.
21. Comm. on Jer. 18:14-15, CTS 2:411-412.
22. Comm. on Jer. 18:14-15, CTS 2:411-412.
23. Comm. on Jer. 18:14-15, CTS 2:411-412.
24. Comm. on Jer. 21:8-9, CTS 3:63.
25. Comm. on Jer. 21:8-9, CTS 3:62.
26. Comm. on Jer. 18:14-15, CTS 2:412. This leads to the question of whether a prophet can actually add to what is contained in the law, or rather if the law is to be understood as ever fresh. We will discuss this in more detail below.
27. Comm. on Jer. 5:4-5, CTS 1:265.
28. Comm. on Jer. 2:3, CTS 1:72-73.
29. Comm. on Jer. 6:9, CTS 1:325.
30. Comm. on Jer. 7:31, CTS 1:410-411.
31. Comm. on Jer. 7:32, CTS 1:415.
32. Comm. on Jer. 17:19-21, 22, CTS 2:377.
33. Comm. on Jer. 34:8-17, CTS 4:281-282.
34. Comm. on Jer. 7:21-24, CTS 1:393. Calvin says the same in his Comm. on Ps 50:8, CTS 2:267.
35. Comm. on Jer. 7:21-24, CTS 1:393.
36. Comm. on Jer. 1:1-3, CTS 1:31. In the context of the confrontation with Hananiah, Calvin writes, Now Jeremiah had been furnished with a twofold message, to expose

- the vices of the people, to show that the Jews were unworthy to inherit the land, as they were covenant-breakers and despisers of God and of his Law; and then, as they had been so often refractory and perverse, he had another message, that they would not be suffered to escape unpunished, as they had in so many ways, and for so long a time continued to provoke God's wrath.' Comm. on Jer. 28:5-6, CTS 3:391.
37. 'As then [the priests] were the guardians of the Law and of knowledge, as they were messengers from God himself to the people, how was it that their stupidity was so monstrous, that they did not distinguish between truth and falsehood, but were led astray, together with the most ignorant, by what the false prophets delivered!' Comm. on Jer. 27:16, CTS 3:376.
  38. Comm. on Jer. 32:32, CTS 4:194.
  39. 'As then they had neglected their office, it was necessary to choose other prophets... even of herdsmen, as in the case of Amos.' Comm. on Jer. 29:24-27, CTS 3:454-55. Interesting to note, this abdication of the priests' duties will serve to bolster Calvin's self-identification with OT prophets.
  40. 'And we know that the Spirit has not spoken in the Law and the Prophets with rigorous exactness, but in a style suited to the common capacities of men.' Comm. on Jer. 10:12-13, CTS 1:35.
  41. Mo. Harm. on Deut. 18:21, CTS 1:448.
  42. Comm. on Jer. 3:13; 9:13-15; 24:9; 36:9-10; and 50:41. Perhaps nowhere else in Calvin's commentaries does he more clearly outline his understanding of the prophetic task than in the argument leading into his commentary on Hosea. 'But with regard to the Prophets, this is true of them all, as we have sometimes said, that they are interpreters of the law. And this is the sum of the law, that God designs to rule by his own authority the people whom he has adopted. But the law has two parts,—a promise of salvation and eternal life, and a rule for a godly and holy living. To these is added a third part,—that men, not responding to their call, are to be restored to the fear of God by threatening and reproofs. The Prophets do further teach what the law has commanded respecting the true and pure worship of God, respecting love; in short, they instruct the people in a holy and godly life, and then offer to them the favour of the Lord. And as there is no hope of reconciliation with God except through a Mediator, they ever set forth the Messiah, whom the Lord had long before promised.' Comm. on Minor Prophets. Hosea. Argument, CTS 1:36.
  43. Comm. on Jer. 26:4-6, CTS 3: 314.
  44. Comm. on Jer. 26:4-6, CTS 3:314.
  45. Comm. on Jer. 26:4-6, CTS 3:314.

46. Mo. Harm. on Num. 12:6, CTS 4:47, where Calvin notes true prophets' assurance in themselves and their prophecies, based on their acknowledgment of their heavenly appointment as 'God's lawful interpreters'.
47. Comm. on Jer. 6: 18-19, CTS 1:343; cf. Comm. on Jer. 19:14-15.
48. Comm. on Jer. 26:4-6, CTS 3:314. Cf. Comm. on Jer. 9:13-15; 19:14-15; and 22:9.
49. Comm. on Jer. 26:4-6, CTS 3:314.
50. Comm. on Jer. 44:20-23, CTS 4:552.
51. In his Harmony (CTS 1:438-49) Calvin treats Deut 18:21-22 immediately after commenting on Deut 13:1-3, seeing the two as comprising the prescriptive portion of the Law's teaching on true and false prophecy. Only in a harmony such as he attempts here could a topical arrangement allow for the complementary (or conflicting) nature of the two passages to be highlighted.
52. Mo. Harm. on Ex. 7:10, CTS 1:146.
53. Mo. Harm. on Ex. 7:12, CTS 1:149.
54. Mo. Harm. on Ex. 7:22, CTS 1:155-56.
55. Mo. Harm. on Ex. 7:8-13, CTS 145-46.
56. Mo. Harm. on Ex. 7:22, CTS 1:155-56.
57. Mo. Harm. on Ex. 7:22, CTS 1:155-56.
58. Mo. Harm. on Deut. 13:1, CTS 1:440.
59. Mo. Harm. on Deut. 13:1, CTS 1:441.
60. Mo. Harm. on Deut. 13:1, CTS 1:441.
61. Mo. Harm. on Deut. 13:1, CTS 1:442.
62. Mo. Harm. on Deut. 13:1, CTS 1:443. Elsewhere Calvin alludes to either Ezek 14:9 (so thinks the editor) or Jer 20:7 noting that false prophets are deceived by God so that "by them he may inflict just vengeance on the reprobate, who eagerly go in search of their destructive deceit." Mo. Harm. on Deut. 13:2, CTS 1:446.
63. Mo. Harm. on Deut. 13:2, CTS 1:446.
64. Mo. Harm. on Deut. 18:21, CTS 1:449. Cf. Calvin's similar warning: '...for when the event corresponds with the prophecy, there is no doubt but that he who predicted what comes to pass must have been sent by God. But we must bear in mind what is said in Deut 13:1, 1, where God reminds the people that even when the event answers to the prophecy, the prophets are not to be thoughtlessly and indiscriminately believed.' Comm. on Jer. 28:7-9, CTS 3:396.
65. Mo. Harm. on Deut. 13:1, CTS 1:442.
66. Mo. Harm. on Deut. 13:1, CTS 1:442.
67. Referencing Isa. 44:7 Calvin writes 'We see that God ascribes to himself alone this peculiarity, that he foreknows future events and testifies respecting them'. Comm.

- on Jer. 28:7-9, CTS 3:397.
68. Mo. Harm. on Num. 22:8, CTS 4:185; cf. Num. 23:4, CTS 4:203.
  69. Mo. Harm. on Deut. 13:1, CTS 1:441.
  70. Mo. Harm. on Num. 22:8, CTS 4:185. In the Psalms Calvin similarly writes, '[T]he Gentiles, to whom God has spoken only by the dumb creatures, have no excuse for their ignorance.' Comm. on Ps. 19:7-9, CTS 1:317-18.
  71. Mo. Harm. on Num. 23:4, CTS 4:203.
  72. Comm. on Jer. 23:9, CTS 3:153
  73. Comm. on Jer. 23:10, CTS 3:157.
  74. Comm. on Jer. 23:28, CTS 3:197.
  75. Comm. on Jer. 26:4-6, CTS 3:313.
  76. Comm. on Jer. 26: 7-8, CTS 3:318.
  77. Comm. on Jer. 26: 7-8, CTS 3:318.
  78. Comm. on Jer. 28:1-2, CTS 3:388.
  79. Comm. on Jer. 28:1-2, CTS 3:385.
  80. Comm. on Jer. 28:1-2, CTS 3:388; cf. 'Ought not Hananiah then to have trembled when any other had alleged God's name?' CTS 3:386.
  81. Comm. on Jer. 28:1-2, CTS 3:386.
  82. Comm. on Jer. 28:1-2, CTS 3:386.
  83. Comm. on Jer. 28:10-11, CTS 3:402.
  84. Mo. Harm. on Deut. 13:1, CTS 1:443. The editor believes Calvin consulted Sebastian Munster (CTS 1:443n1).
  85. Mo. Harm. on Deut. 13:1, CTS 1:443.
  86. Comm. on Jer. 27:1-5, CTS 3:352.
  87. Comm. on Jer. 28:10-11, CTS 3:401.
  88. Comm. on Jer. 27:1-5, CTS 3:352. Calvin notes the yoke was useless as long as no word accompanied it. In the same way, Calvin condemns the lack of sound doctrine accompanying the Papists' plethora of symbols as deplorable.
  89. Comm. on Jer. 28:10-11, CTS 3:401.
  90. Comm. on Jer. 28:10-11, CTS 3:401.
  91. Comm. on Jer. 28:10-11, CTS 3:403.
  92. Comm. on Jer. 28:14, CTS 3:405.
  93. Comm. on Jer. 28:7-9, CTS 3:396.
  94. Comm. on Jer. 28:7-9, CTS 3:398.
  95. Comm. on Jer. 28:7-9, CTS 3:398-99.
  96. Comm. on Jer. 28:7-9, CTS 3:399.
  97. 'And the same thing Moses had in view, as I have already explained.' Comm. on Jer.

- 28:7-9, CTS 3:399.
98. Comm. on Jer. 27:15, CTS 3:373.
99. Comm. on Jer. 37:1-2, CTS 4:363.
100. Comm. on Jer. 6:18-19, CTS 1:343.
101. De Boer has brought to light Calvin's final address to the congregations in 1564 on Isaiah 1:1-3, in which he maintains the prophets 'taught the people even more than is retained in their books'. Then, following Calvin's own flow of argument, de Boer highlights the prophets' foretelling of future events. Calvin himself insists that the value of the prediction of future events lay in their application: 'the visions alone would be quite poor and sterile, but the main thing was to make them known. There is no doubt that it was only as a supplement that the prophets have revealed the things to come. The main thing was that they would instruct the people in the fear of God' (Ms.fr. 40b.f. 159b; cited and trans. in de Boer, *Visions of Ezekiel*, 6).
102. Comm. on Jer. 16:10-13, CTS 2:313-18.
103. Mo. Har. on Deut. 34:10, CTS 4:408-409.
104. Comm. on Jer. 9:25-26, CTS 1:508.
105. Comm. on Jer. 1:13-14, CTS 1:54.
106. Comm. on Jer. 2:1-2, CTS 1:69-70.
107. Comm. on Jer. 2:25, CTS 1:121.
108. Comm. on Jer. 11:6-8, CTS 1:80. For Calvin, Isaiah (55:9) exemplifies Jeremiah's contrast between the council of God and the vain imaginations of the Israelites at Jer. 29:11; Jeremiah proof-texts Isaiah (58:9) when he promises the discovery of the Lord rewards those who earnestly seek Him (29:13); and Isaiah 22:12,13) is quoted as representative of those prophets who, like Jeremiah, 'continually threatened' the people in their insensible immoderation (Comm. on Jer. 25:10, CTS 3:255).
109. 'And the same thing is expressed also by Isaiah; and you ought to compare this prophecy with that of Isaiah for the two Prophets wholly agree, though Isaiah was dead when Jeremiah uttered this prophecy and wrote it.' Comm. on Jer. 50:42, CTS 5:186.
110. Comm. on Jer. 32:1-3, CTS 4:153.
111. Comm. on Jer. 27:16, CTS 3:375.
112. Comm. on Jer. 26:17-19, CTS 3:332.
113. Comm. on Jer. 26:17-19, CTS 3:332.
114. Here Calvin reminds the reader, 'Scripture does not always exactly preserve order in narrating things' (Comm. on Jer. 26:17-19, CTS 3:331-32).
115. Comm. on Jer. 26:17-19, CTS 3:335.
116. Calvin helpfully notes the similarity and difference of the two examples. After

discussing Micah, Calvin comments concerning the elders' second example: 'Another example is brought forward, partly different, and partly alike,—different as to the king, the like as to a Prophet. Uriah, mentioned here, faithfully discharged his office, but Jehoiachim could not bear his preaching, and therefore slew him.' (Comm. on Jer. 26:20-23, CTS 3:339).

117. Comm. on Jer. 27:17-19, CTS 332.
118. Comm. on Jer. 27:17-19, CTS 332.
119. Comm. on Jer. 27:15, CTS 3:372.
120. Comm. on Jer. 28:16, CTS 3:410.
121. Comm. on Jer. 28:16, CTS 3:410.
122. Comm. on Jer. 26:2-23, CTS 3:345.
123. Comm. on Jer. 27:15, CTS 3:372.
124. Comm. on Jer. 32:16-18, CTS 4:167-74.
125. Cf. Parker, *Old Testament Commentaries*, pp. 206-207.
126. Comm. on Jer. 32:16-18, CTS 4:168.
127. Comm. on Jer. 32:16-18, CTS 4:168.
128. Comm. on Jer. 32:16-18, CTS 4:167. Throughout the commentary, Calvin points out Jeremiah's 'special care' for his own, chosen people, following prophecies of ruin with those of restoration (esp. Comm. on Jer. 25:34, CTS 3:298).
129. Comm. on Jer. 32:16-18, CTS 4:168.
130. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles. 2 vols. Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 4.8.6.
131. Inst., 4.8.6.
132. Inst., 4.8.6.
133. Mo. Harm. on 22:8, CTS 4:185.
134. Mo. Harm. on 22:8, CTS 4:185.
135. Mo. Harm. on 22:8, CTS 4:185.

John Calvin, (1509-1564) was born in Noyon, the son of a notary, Gerard Cauvin, and his wife, Jeanne LeFranc. Although Calvin's father displayed no particular piety, his mother is recorded as having taken him to visit shrines, and on one such occasion he is supposed to have kissed a fragment of the head of St. Ann. Calvin was the fourth of five sons in a family that was definitely not of the aristocracy. Instead of simply reprinting it, Calvin revised it, and the edition of 1539 expanded substantially the original work. This would be Calvin's pattern throughout the subsequent Latin editions of 1543, 1550, and 1559. French editions were printed in 1545 and 1560, and Calvin's French is easily as influential as Luther's German for the formation of the modern vernacular. John Calvin, theologian and ecclesiastical statesman. He was the leading French Protestant reformer and the most important figure in the second generation of the Protestant Reformation. Learn more about Calvin's life and significance in this article. Sather Professor Emeritus of History, University of California, Berkeley. Author of *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* and others. See Article History. Alternative Titles: Jean Calvin, Jean Cauvin. Calvin produced commentaries on most of the books of the Bible. His commentaries cover the larger part of the Old Testament, and all of the new excepting Second and Third John and the Apocalypse. His commentaries and lectures stand in the front rank of Biblical interpretation. The Commentaries On Jeremiah, like those on The Minor Prophets, were delivered as Lectures In The Theological School At Geneva, taken down by some of the Pupils, and afterwards read to Calvin, and corrected. We find in them the production of the same vigorous and expansive mind: The Divine Oracles are faithfully explained. Jeremiah then says, that he had been called by God, for this end, that he might on this account gain a hearing from the people. God declares that he knew Jeremiah before he formed him in the womb. And the second part is a repetition, when he says, Before thou camest forth from the womb I sanctified thee. Sanctification is the same as the knowledge of God: and thus we perceive that knowledge is not mere prescience, but that predestination, by which God chooses every single individual according to his own will, and at the same time appoints and also sanctifies. John Calvin was born as Jehan Cauvin on 10 July 1509 in Noyon, a town located in the Picardy region of France. His father, Gerard Cauvin, was the apostolic secretary to the Bishop of Noyon and also the proctor in the Chapter of the diocese and the fiscal procurator of the county. His mother, Jeanne Le Franc, was noted for her beauty and piety. John was their second surviving son. His elder brother was Charles and younger, Antoine. On November 1, 1533, Nicolas Cop, one of Calvin's close friends and also a protestant reformer and the Rector of the Collège, gave a speech. In it, he stressed the need for reforms within the Roman Catholic Church and defended the doctrine of the Sola fide (the justification by faith alone).