

JOHN CALVIN

*Response To Questions
And Objections Of A
Certain Jew*

Translated By Clement Pulaski

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RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS AND
OBJECTIONS OF A CERTAIN JEW

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AD QUAESTIONES ET OBIECTA IUDAEI
CUIUSDAM

By John Calvin

Translation, Commentary and Notes by
Clement Pulaski

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I. Introduction

Martin Luther's opinion on Judaism is infamous, while the view of John Calvin on the subject is not as widely known. This translation is offered to help change this situation. Luther's *On the Jews and Their Lies* is characteristic of the man. It is bold, hyperbolic and emotional, qualities that are found throughout Luther's writings. Calvin's *Response to Questions and Objections of a Certain Jew* is equally characteristic. It is precise, systematic, and intellectually penetrating. Today, when the Church faces the mounting threat of persecution at the hands of the Jews, the insights of this great reformer are invaluable.

AGAINST THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN PHILO-SEMITISM

In this work Calvin does not address practical measures to be taken against the Jews, but he does effectively undermine the foundation of Christian philo-Semitism: the idea that the Jews still possess a special position even after murdering the Messiah. Calvin maintains the Biblical view that the special favor shown to the Jews under the Old Covenant is no longer a blessing, but rather has become a curse. It has become a curse because this gracious favor should have led the Jews to accept the Messiah more warmly than any other nation, but the exact opposite happened. The Jews were instead the first to reject Christ, and unlike the Greeks and Romans who initially persecuted the Church but eventually turned to Christ in large numbers, the Jews have been unique in their perpetual obstinacy. Reading the *Response* should convince any reasonable person that there is no spiritual common ground shared by Christians and Jews, as the Jew stands opposed to the redemptive work of Jesus at every point. For those of us living under the Jewish yoke in the 21st century, it is certainly important to understand the workings of Jewish power and ideology, topics that are not covered by Calvin. But Jewish control is only possible because of the fatal deception that Christians should embrace Jews as fellow worshipers of the same God. The *Response* is an antidote to this deception. As soon as one

grasps the antichrist nature of Judaism, one begins to question why this antichrist tribe is allowed to possess such disproportionate influence in the media, government, economy, educational system and entertainment industry of a supposedly Christian nation.

A CERTAIN JEW

Calvin's *Response* is organized as a series of questions and answers between Calvin and a Jewish critic of Christianity. This Jewish critic poses a total of twenty-three objections to our faith, each of which is met by a two-fold refutation from Calvin. The first part of the refutation is a series of counter questions, showing that the objection of the Jew is undermined by numerous Old Testament passages. The second part gives a reasoned solution to the problem raised by the Jew, which often involves a detailed explanation of the Christian understanding of the incarnation. Some earlier scholars assumed that Calvin fabricated the Jewish objections himself, but in an article entitled *Calvin's Jewish Interlocutor: Christian Hebraism and Anti-Jewish Polemics During the Reformation* (Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance, T. 55, No. 1 [1993], pp. 113-123), Stephen G. Burnett makes a compelling case that this Jewish critic was not a straw-man invented by Calvin. According to Burnett:

Calvin's interlocutor was neither one of Calvin's contemporaries nor Calvin himself writing in a different persona, but the author of *Sefer Nizzahon*, which translated means *The Book of Victory*. *Nizzahon* is a Jewish polemical anthology probably written in Germany during the fourteenth century. It had acquired a particularly evil reputation among Christians even before the Reformation began. (page 117)

It is not surprising that Calvin chose to refute such an infamous and vile Jewish attack on Christianity. The author of the *Nizzahon* is unknown, which explains why Calvin describes him as "a certain Jew".

SELECTIONS FROM CALVIN'S COMMENTARIES

When dealing with the strong anti-Semitism of the Church's foremost saints, many philo-Semitic Christians will attempt to minimize this aspect of their own spiritual heritage. One of

their common tactics is to suggest that texts like Calvin's *Response* are of little importance and do not have any fundamental connection with the theological systems of their authors. In anticipation of this objection, I have included as an appendix to this translation a collection of passages taken from Calvin's commentaries on the Bible. Most of these passages comment on verses from Scripture that are used in the *Response* to counter the Jewish position. When compiling these passages from Calvin's commentaries, it struck me that one finds in them the exact same hostility as in the *Response*. Here are a couple of examples from the numerous and lengthy anti-Jewish passages:

"...now, when, through nearly fifteen centuries, they have been scattered and banished from their country, having no polity, by what pretext can they fancy, from the prophecy of Jacob, that a Redeemer will come to them? Truly, as I would not willingly glory over their calamity; so, unless they, being subdued by it, open their eyes, I freely pronounce that they are worthy to perish a thousand times without remedy." (Commentary on Genesis 49:10)

"We all know in what a wicked and shameful manner the Jews abused the divine promise which is here made, under the impression that it necessarily laid God under an obligation to favor them, taking occasion from it, in the pride of their hearts, to despise, and even cruelly persecute the Prophets." (Commentary on Psalm 132:13-14)

It is noteworthy that elsewhere in his commentaries Calvin makes explicit reference to the rabbinical interpretation of Scripture and goes to great lengths to disprove the Jewish position. While it is true that the *Response* was not one of Calvin's more prominent works, his passion for undermining Judaism is just as evident in his commentaries. It is also important to understand how Calvin's anti-Semitism was an integral part of his overall theological system. Those of us on the far right who hold to Protestantism are often met with the accusation that our faith is inherently Judaic and too focused on the Old Testament, while Catholicism and paganism have much less in common with Judaism. In Calvin's mind, the exact opposite was the case. To Calvin, Judaism and Roman Catholicism are both carnal corruptions of the pure religion revealed by Christ. Both Judaism and Roman Catholicism cling to outer appearances, ritual, and a human priesthood, while the reformed religion knows only the one high-priest Jesus. Salvation is given only by God and it cannot be mediated by either Pope or rabbi. The kindred nature of Roman Catholicism and Judaism helps to explain why Calvin so fervently attacked Judaism both in the *Response* and in his commentaries.

BIBLICAL CITATIONS

As is to be expected, the bulk of Calvin's *Response* focuses on Biblical interpretation. The text is full of Biblical citations and allusions. Given that the original was written in Latin, I expected that at least some of these citations would closely match the text of the Vulgate. This is not the case. There are seldom any citations that are direct quotes from Scripture. They are almost all paraphrases. This made me reluctant to put these citations in quotation marks, but on the other hand leaving out quotation marks sometimes made it unclear where the Scripture citation ends and the words of Calvin begin. Therefore the reader will find that some Scripture paraphrases (especially those that match the original wording more closely) are contained in quotation marks, while some simply begin with a capitalized letter. I directly translated the paraphrases from the Latin, so the reader should not expect that the English rendering of these paraphrases will directly match any common English Bible translation. The Latin text used for this translation includes chapter and verse citations for only some of the numerous Bible passages referenced by Calvin. These citations are included in the body of the text as they are found in the original. I have provided chapter and verse citations for some additional passages and these citations are found in the footnotes. The reader should also be aware that the citations found in the Latin text seem to follow the Vulgate reckoning of chapter and verse, and therefore some of them are slightly different from most English translations.

THE LATIN TEXT

This English translation is based on the Latin text found on pages 658-674 of the *Corpus Reformatorum Volumen XXXVII*, edited by Baum, Cunitz and Reuss, published in 1870.

THE FRANK TRANSLATION

To my knowledge, Calvin's *Response* has only been translated into English once before. This translation was done by Rabbi Susan Frank and was included as an appendix to the doctoral dissertation of Mary Sweetland Laver entitled *Calvin, Jews and intra-Christian Polemics* (Temple University, 1988). It does not appear that this dissertation was ever published in book

form and it is therefore not widely available. I must admit that the fact that a rabbi was responsible for this translation led me to suspect its accuracy. However, I have closely compared the Frank translation to my own, and while it differs in some very minor points, the Frank translation is on the whole quite accurate. Because Frank's version is unlikely to ever become easily accessible to the public, I do not include any detailed discussion of the differences between the two translations.

AN OFT-REPEATED QUOTE

There is a quote about the Jews attributed to Calvin that is found on several different websites (for an example, see the John Calvin [page](#) on Wikiquote). The quote is as follows:

"Their [the Jews] rotten and unbending stiffneckedness deserves that they be oppressed unendingly and without measure or end and that they die in their misery without the pity of anyone."

The Wikiquote page, as well as other online postings, claim that this quote comes from the *Response*. However, this exact quote is not found in the text. It seems to be a mistranslation of a sentence that appears in the twenty-third section of the work. Below is the original Latin and my translation of this sentence:

"Primo meretur eorum perdita obstinatio et indomabilis, ut immensa miseriarum congerie sine fine et modo oppressi omnes exhilarant suis malis, nemo autem eorum misereatur."

"First of all, their depraved and indomitable obstinacy merits that none of them be pitied, as they all delight in their evils while being oppressed by a great mass of miseries without end or measure."

In the popular online version, it sounds as if Calvin is saying that the Jews should be oppressed and that they deserve to die, while the actual text says that the Jews are foolish to persist in their rejection of the Messiah in the face of the oppression that they have experienced. The sentiment that the Jews should not be pitied certainly is found in Calvin's original words, and while the mistranslation does not in the least stray from the overall tenor of the *Response*, it is still desirable to correct an inaccurate rendering that has been repeated so many times.

II. Translation

QUESTION 1

JEW: I ask you, how can you say that Jesus came in order to cleanse men of their sins and to lead them out from Gehenna, when by his murder he increased the sin of the Jews who fastened him to the cross? For no greater sin can be discovered than the hanging of God.

CALVIN: In return I ask you, how is the law said to have been given for the purpose of salvation, when it increased transgressions and guilt? For it is evident that the Jews at once made the covenant of God useless, and provoked the anger of God against themselves by violating the justice of the law. Indeed, I ask you how the compact of God, which was the singular testimony of goodness and the adoption by which he received the sons of Abraham to be his peculiar possession, could have been the cause of a two-fold destruction for many: for Ezekiel (16:53)¹ pronounces that Israel is more wicked than Sodom and Gomorrah for this reason alone, that she scorned the salvation that was offered to her. Hence it is obvious that there is no object of concern for these shameless dogs that they do not revile.

Furthermore, the answer to their question is easy: indeed the son of God came in order to bring the light of life first to the Jews and then to the whole world. But as the Jews did from the beginning, so the greater part of men turned the light into darkness through their malice. And it is neither extraordinary nor novel for men to misuse the grace of God in this way, that they turn what was meant for their salvation into destruction. Surely when God promises that he will be the redeemer of the people, at the same time he threatens that he will be a stone of stumbling to the kingdom of Israel and Judah. How do these facts harmonize, unless God truly and not falsely offers his gift, on which the entire happiness of the people depends? But unbelievers, as

¹ See section III, page 40.

long as they spurn this gift, invite upon themselves a two-fold destruction, proof of which appears in David, who was made king in order that from him the Messiah would come forth, and yet is called a stone rejected by the chief architects (Psalm 118:22). Moreover there is nothing which happened concerning Jesus, our Messiah, which the prophets did not foretell to the Jews. Especially Isaiah, who, wanting to praise splendidly how he was to give grace to his people through his hand, prophesies thus (Isaiah 53:1), "Who will believe our word? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" A little further on he says that the Messiah will reconcile men to God in order that they be saved, but first he exclaims that he was to deprive a large number of men of such a blessing on account of their blindness, because the strength of the Lord will be buried and unknown to them. Elsewhere (Isaiah 49:6) he joins these two ideas together even more clearly, for it is not sufficient that the Messiah merely restore the desolations of Israel, but the salvation of Jehovah shall stretch unto the ends of the earth. However, there will not be a full restoration of Israel, because many of them will not return to God. In short, the Jews speak as if their race had never been ungrateful to God, and had never made a deadly poison out of a medicine. Surely in promising to them departure and the freedom to return from the Babylonian captivity, God declared a remarkable token of his favor unto their salvation. Yet the greater part of them doubled their guilt and blame by their impious contempt: for it would have been far better for them not to be redeemed than to throw away and value so little such kindness from God. But it was necessary that the prophecy of Isaiah be fulfilled, Although your people be as numerous as the sand along the sea, a remnant will be saved (Isaiah 10:22)². In short, the redemption of the Israelites indicates clearly that when the grace of God is offered it is not always useful to men: on the contrary it is made doubly harmful when it is shamefully profaned. Surely God brought forth his people by the hand of Moses in order that he be the deliverer of all. But we know from the dreadful examples of his vengeance that he more often thundered against many thousands, and that in the end that great multitude, except for two, wasted away wretchedly and perished in the desert³. Would it not have been better for the reprobate never to have come out of Egypt? Nay, better never to have been born than to be struck down by the hand of God?

² See section III, page 42.

³ Numbers 14:30

QUESTION 2

JEW: I ask you, since it is written in Matthew⁴, I did not come to destroy (the law), etc., and in the law of Moses it is held, "On the eighth day he will circumcise the flesh of the foreskin", and likewise that, "Every command which I give to you today, you observe and do: you will not add nor subtract from it". But if it is thus, then is it not certain that Christ destroys the law of Moses?

CALVIN: In return I ask you, since the law of Moses forbids that any work be done on the seventh day, how is it that he orders male infants to be circumcised on that very same day? Likewise, how does Moses order one day out of seven to be sanctified to God, but Isaiah (66:23)⁵ prophesies that under the reign of Christ there will be a continual sabbath and continual new moons, unless God exhibits in circumcision that his works are free of the general law? Truly Isaiah, when prophesying something more excellent than what was presented to the Jews under the law, shows that the command about the sabbath is a shadow of things to come.⁶

And here is a fuller solution to the question: even though God wanted sacrifices to be offered to himself in just one altar, Ezekiel nonetheless prophesies that under the reign of the Messiah there will be altars in Egypt and Assyria. Although it was unlawful to seek the face of God or offer sacrifices elsewhere than at Jerusalem, Isaiah (19:19) nevertheless says that there will be a temple in Egypt. And Malachi (1:11)⁷ does away with every distinction of location with these words, "Incense will be offered in my name throughout the entire world". Without a doubt it appears that under the reign of the Messiah there is a clear change in external worship. This does not mean, however, that the law is destroyed, or that one tittle is subtracted from it. Rather this is the true decree of the law, not an empty spectacle cast before the eyes in ancient figures, but the essence exhibited in Christ which these figures signified. Now it is seen to what

⁴ Matthew 5:17. See Section III, page 43.

⁵ See Section III, page 45.

⁶ Cf. Hebrews 10:1. See Section III, page 46.

⁷ See Section III, page 47.

end God established the sabbath, namely that it be a symbol of sanctification, as he teaches through Moses and Jeremiah. Therefore it follows that that command is to be reckoned among the shadows. For what wonder is this if the light of the stars ceases when the sun rises? And this is the newness of heaven and earth which Isaiah (51:16, 65:17) declared.

QUESTION 3

JEW: I ask you, if Jesus is God, why does he call himself the son of man, when in many passages of scripture the law warns us not to liken God to man, such as, "God is not a man, that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent". Moreover David says, "Put not your trust in princes, in men", etc. Likewise, "Cursed is he who trusts in man". But we see all these things in the account of Jesus, who is called the son of man.

CALVIN: I ask you, why is God called a warlike man in the song of Moses (Exodus 15:3)? Why does Ezekiel, in that remarkable vision of his, relate that the judge sitting on the throne is similar to the son of man? Why does God so often attribute to himself nostrils, eyes, hands and feet? Why does Jeremiah⁸, when speaking about the son of David, proclaim that the name of Jehovah belongs to him? Why does Isaiah (7:14, 9:6)⁹ call the Messiah "Immanuel", "father of a future age", and "mighty God"? And why is the Messiah under the person of Solomon furnished in the psalm (45:7)¹⁰ with the name Elohim?

The solution to the question is not at all difficult. The law forbids that God be likened to man, assuredly in order that his majesty not be depicted with a human image. In other respects he compares himself to fire, to the sun, to a lion, to a bear and to a stone, all of which things are either brute animals or lifeless elements. Besides, in the Messiah God is not made like man, but in assuming human flesh he was made man in such a way that he remained untouched in his eternal and immutable nature. For we do not believe, as the Jews dream we do, that God has been changed, but that he has been manifested in the flesh, and all the while he was like unto himself. Thus God was not a liar from the vulgar class of men, nor guilty of fickleness, but because of his deity his truth has stood firm in eternity. Nor do we place our trust in him as

8 Jeremiah 23:6. See Section III, page 49.

9 See Section III, page 51.

10 See Section III, page 53.

though in a mortal man, but because his body is the temple of the deity, in which dwells the whole glory of God. And since God is there, his Spirit pours out its life-giving power into the human nature. For surely in several places God shows his servants that the assurance of salvation is to be found nowhere else than in the Messiah, thus in the prophecy of Jacob related by Moses, In you the nations will hope (Genesis 49:10)¹¹. Whence follows what I have said, that this very same man is mighty God and true Immanuel, and the son of man, who is from the progeny of David.

¹¹ See Section III, page 54.

QUESTION 4

JEW: I ask you, it is written in Isaiah (66:17)¹², "They who eat swine, or the abomination, or the mouse or the weasel, they will be destroyed together, says the Lord". Therefore swine is not allowed in any circumstances.

CALVIN: In return I ask you, since it is written in Isaiah (66:3) that he who slays an ox is just as he who kills a man, and he who sacrifices a sheep is just as he who kills a dog, if anyone infers from this that God always abhorred sacrifices, by what cavil will the Jews escape?

But the explanation depends upon the abrogation of the legal worship, the ignorance of which causes the Jews to talk nonsense quite stupidly. The following principle was to be held in all the ceremonies which Moses commanded: that the form of the rule which God had revealed on the mountain would be an exemplar to him (Exodus 25:40). Now that this exemplar has been exhibited in the Messiah, it is not at all strange if by his advent he effaced all the shadows.

¹² See Section III, page 61.

QUESTION 5

JEW: I ask you, why do you mourn on the sixth day, the day on which he was crucified, as it is said, when it is by his crucifixion that you are freed from Gehenna? You had ought rather to hold a festival, feast, and rejoice.

CALVIN: In return I ask you, why do the Jews prostrate their spirits on the day of expiation in accordance with the law, when on this day they are celebrating their reconciliation to God? For they themselves also ought to rejoice with happiness.

Moreover their scoffing is refuted without any difficulty. If it is proposed by anyone to sanctify the day of Christ's death with fasting and grieving, then we admit that they falsely and superstitiously institute an artificial form of worship. Nor indeed do we defend the corruption which reigned in the papacy; but nevertheless, nothing hinders the faithful from celebrating the memory of their redemption with songs and rejoicing their entire lives, and at the same time humbly lamenting their guilt before God with sorrowful groaning.

QUESTION 6

JEW: I ask you, what did Jesus do greater than the ancient saints? For Enoch and Elijah ascended above. Moses turned water into blood, he made bitter water sweet, he led Israel through the middle of the sea. Elisha made a fountain of oil, from which many vessels were filled, he cured the leper Naaman, and he raised two men from the dead; nevertheless we do not believe them to be gods, but righteous men.

CALVIN: I ask you, did Moses raise a man from the dead, which Elisha did, who was inferior to Moses? They will also be forced to confess that Moses was greater than Joshua his disciple, while Moses did not delay the course of the sun so as to make one day out of two. Whence it follows, it is wrong to make a judgment about a person's excellence from bare miracles.

Moreover this puerile objection is easily dismissed, because we must not only ask what miracles the prophets performed, but by what power they performed them. And Christ, when he said that his disciples would perform greater miracles than those which he himself had done, did not wish to place them above himself or make them his equals. The glory of the works which he carried out through the hands of men, remains in the possession of the one God, as he alone was truly their author. Yea indeed, we say that properly speaking whatsoever miracles Moses and the prophets did proceeded from Christ: because he was the messenger whom Moses predicted would be the leader and protector of his people (Exodus 23:20)¹³. If there were any trace of healthy discernment amongst the Jews, they would at once recognize how far the excellence and dignity of Christ is beyond Moses, even in miracles. For Moses did not feed the fathers the heavenly bread with which Christ nourishes us unto eternal and spiritual life. But since men are profane, nay are impure dogs, it is no wonder that they are absolutely without taste when it comes to partaking of heavenly delights. Therefore they are to be left alone with their own brutish stupidity.

¹³ See Section III, page 62.

QUESTION 7

JEW: I ask you, you say that this man is the son of God, but either this is by no means true, or all Israelites are gods, since we learn in many places that the Israelites are called the sons of God, such as, You are sons of the Lord (Psalm 82:6).

CALVIN: I ask you in turn, since all Israelites are indiscriminately sons of God, why is David furnished with the peculiar designation, when concerning him God proclaims: You are my son (Psalm 2:7). Also, why does he elsewhere exalt Solomon above the other ancients with these words, I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to me (2 Samuel 7:14)?

This silly question of theirs would already be sufficiently refuted, except that it is agreeable to add a few words to instruct the simple. The angels are called the sons of God. This same name is transferred to kings and judges: but to David a rank of special privilege is assigned, by consideration of which he surpasses even the angels. It thence follows that there are many distinct grades amongst the sons of God. Wherefore it is no wonder if the Messiah excels above others. Truly we say the son to be only-begotten, and indeed to be son of God by nature, through whom we obtain the grace of adoption in order that we ourselves may also be reckoned amongst the sons of God.

QUESTION 8

JEW: I ask you, how was your Messiah the king of peace when there was strife throughout his time and since then the world has not rested from war? For it is written, Of the increase of his dominion and of peace there is no end (Isaiah 9:6). And Jesus said, I did not come to bring peace on earth, but a sword (Matthew 10:34). But if this is so, then his words contradict the words of the prophets.

CALVIN: In return I ask you, when did the kings come from the far off lands and become tributary to the people of Israel? When did the wealth of all the nations become amassed, so as to become spoils for the Jews? How does Isaiah say that they will return to their fatherland from exile with their banner unfurled? Where is the splendor of that second temple, which Haggai¹⁴ promised? Surely, were all the prophets and all religion not a joke to those rascals, they would consider with a very different reverence whatever God proclaims concerning his favors.

The solution to the question is that, although the world does not enjoy the peace brought forth through Christ, the blame for this belongs to no one else than to the very men who find it more pleasing to throw themselves into confusion by waging a sacrilegious war against God. But their depravity does not hinder the Messiah from maintaining both his office and the title of his office ("king of peace"). Indeed, he is not deprived of his power by the fact that the impious do not enjoy peace. On the contrary, because reconciliation with God was spurned by them, it was right for them to be forced into a blind rage by the horrible vengeance of God, so that they enter into conflict with one another. By their obstinacy the Jews were the first of men to show that they did not want peace with God. Therefore the Jews deservedly tore up their insides until the final destruction of their fatherland. Afterwards others followed, each one in his turn: for no nation was beyond this offense. But the faithful have proved quite well that Christ is the prince of peace, because in the midst of the oppressive and cruel disturbances of war they nevertheless

14 Haggai 2:9. See Section III, page 64.

called upon God with calm and tranquil souls. And it is this peace which is commended by Isaiah, with whom all the apostles agree, while they teach that this is the chief reward of faith, that we, trusting in a gracious God, might no longer be agitated, but stand still with peaceful souls in the midst of the agitations of the world (Luke 21:36). But when Christ says that he brings war rather than peace, this is due not to his essence but to the impiety of the world which kindles discord, whence oppressive conflicts arise.

QUESTION 9

JEW: I ask you, if he is God, why does he cover himself with flesh, and why did he not come openly, in order to alter his law publicly, so that the men of his age would not be destroyed? For the number of men who perish because of their ignorance of him is greater than the number who are redeemed. For they are separated from him in darkness, lest they believe in him.

CALVIN: In return I ask you, why did God, who dwells in the heavens, wish to be concealed amongst the cherubim? And why did he choose for himself a dwelling place under the hides of animals? Why did he wish the holy symbol of his covenant to be carved on men's private parts? Why did he choose a king for his people from an ignoble hut and a sheepfold, a man who was rejected by others, being held in little regard even in his own home? Why did he choose the obscure and insignificant rivulet Shiloah (Isaiah 8:6) rather than famous and rushing rivers? And why does he upbraid the Jews for seeking the ostentation of outward greatness?

Moreover this impudence of theirs is easily refuted by the words of Isaiah, who declared the Messiah to be base in appearance and dishonored by many reproaches, a man without any comeliness who is afflicted by blows, and brought low by the divine will, from whom nearly all men turn away their eyes (Isaiah 53:2-6)¹⁵. Certainly the Jews will not dare to deny that the Messiah is the living image of the glory of God. And who is made king (a king through whose hand God wishes to reveal his power) in such a way that he appears so filthy, nay appears like an unsightly leper? But because of their arrogance these beasts desire to bind God to their own laws. As if he could not see what would have been the best thing to do, or it could please him to prophesy thoughtlessly. But at the very least the temperance of piety requires this, that men defer to the judgment of God much more than to their own imagination. These dogs bark that the greater part of mankind perishes because, having been put off by the mean appearance of Christ, they shrink back from him. As if Isaiah (53:1) cried out in vain that the Messiah's fame

¹⁵ See Section III, pages 66-67.

would be ignoble, because the strength of God is to be revealed to the few. And yet it is true what the apostle teaches (John 1:14), that in him shines the glory worthy of the only-begotten son of God. Likewise the Gospel, in which shines the celestial majesty of God, certainly does not appear ignoble, except to the reprobate who perish. Moreover it is extraordinary that they should ask why the splendor of God was not more visible in Christ, when their fathers could not tolerate the gaze of Moses until his face was veiled.

QUESTION 10

JEW: I ask you, how can you say that Jonah was in the fish for three days and three nights just as Jesus was in the earth three days and three nights¹⁶? This is not true. For even according to your words Jesus was in the earth for only three days and two nights.

CALVIN: In return I ask you, how do the prophets often reproach the entire population, without any exception, for faithlessness and impious rebellion? For if this is true, where is the remnant? How is the entire population said to have demanded Jeremiah's death, when nevertheless it was certain that there would be at least a few who wished for him to be saved?

To the question I give a brief and pithy response. It is enough to note that even in the law and the prophets it is common to find synecdoche, where the part is used for the whole, or the whole for the part. Not even the Jews themselves dare to raise a dispute with us about the number of days. They think that this calumny is more plausible when reckoning the number of nights, because Christ rose again before the beginning of the third night. But since the night is as it were an addition to the day, Christ did not hesitate to say three days and just as many nights when referring to the three day period, making the example of Jonah more applicable to the present occasion. Moreover there is no ambiguity in this matter, so it is futile to quibble about words. If they should state expressly that the similitude does not fit because Jonah spent about half a day more inside the fish than Christ did in the tomb, once again the response is simple: in examples it is not necessary to have absolute conformity, and it is not absurd if some dissimilarities should be observed.

16 Matthew 12:40

QUESTION 11

JEW: I ask you, since it is written, No man will see me and live¹⁷, how was Jesus God, when all men saw him, and not even one of all those who saw him died?

CALVIN: In return I ask you, how did Jacob see God face to face, but did not die? How did God distinguish Moses from the other prophets by speaking with him face to face in a familiar fashion, rather than through visions and dreams? How did he appear to the whole population in a cloud and a column of fire? How did he show the visible form of his glory to Ezekiel and Isaiah, who did not on that account die a sudden death?

If these utterly lost men had some ingenuousness, they would be ashamed to carry on a debate using such stupid objections, such sickening nonsense that is entirely unworthy of a refutation. God denies that the immense glory of his divinity can be grasped by human sense, something which everyone admits without controversy. Therefore he adjusts the conception of himself to fit the comprehension or capacity of the pious, in order that they see him, but not in order that they possess him in his full appearance. But in Christ he appeared in his living image, to the extent that the ability of the pious could bear. Then they will see him as he is, when they will be similar to him. Those Jews babble brutish stupidity, who say that God was visible in the person of Christ, as if his divine essence could be seen by carnal eyes.

¹⁷ Exodus 33:20

QUESTION 12

JEW: I ask you, it is written that whoever has faith in Jesus, even as great as mustard seeds, would be able to move a mountain from its place by his word¹⁸. But we see that the holiest of them are not able to do even trivial things. How much less is the remaining multitude (able to work wonders)? But if this is the case, there is in their hands no dominion, no power, by which they are able to effect anything, although they believe in him.

CALVIN: I ask you, since it is written about Mount Zion, This is my resting place forever and ever, here I will dwell, because I have chosen it¹⁹, what is the meaning of the ruin and desolation of Zion, which has now already lasted for centuries? Again I ask you, what is signified by the fact that they wretchedly wander, dissipated throughout the whole globe, and lie prostrate in their ruin, when Isaiah announced that they would be redeemed from the Babylonian exile in order that they restore the the ruins of the entire world, and gather those dispersed into their body?

If there were a trace of wit or right thinking amongst these cattle, without dispute they would recognize that the saying of Christ is most true, in which they hunt for nonsense. As for their objection, it is to be noted why Christ told this to his disciples, as surely he was reproaching them and showing that it is by their own fault that they attempt in vain to produce miracles. What of it, then, if we should confess that by our own sin we are robbed of the gift of miracles, the gift in which Christ instructed his disciples? Indeed this confession is shameful to us; but why drag him into accusation, he who is the eternal truth of God, and who, by brilliant proofs, has shown himself to be truthful in this saying; and why cover our infidelity with empty excuses, an infidelity which has blocked the path to God's grace? But another thing must be grasped at once: the faith, about which we are now disputing, is not that common faith which

18 Matthew 17:19

19 Psalm 132:14. See Section III, page 67.

the spirit of adoption brings to all the pious members of Christ, but that faith by which it was proper for the apostles to embrace the office enjoined to them, in order that they establish by miracles the new doctrine of the Gospel, which had not yet been received by public consent. To be sure, the same gift in no way belongs to everyone promiscuously. For just as it was sufficient for the law to be confirmed by signs and prodigies on Mount Sinai when it was promulgated, in the same way it ought to suffice amply that the Gospel accrued faith and authority through thirty years of continuous miracles. For we do not read that every prophet was endowed with this power, because it did not seem expedient to God. But truly, whatever spiritual gifts Christ bestows upon his followers, it is not surprising that they are counted for nothing by these profane men, who are utterly without sense when it comes to partaking of every aspect of the celestial life.

QUESTION 13

JEW: I ask you, if your Messiah is God, why did he ride on an unclean animal, when it is written in the law, Neither sheep nor cows will graze opposite that mountain (Exodus 34:3)? What then? If he forbade even the clean animals from grazing, how much more would he disapprove of the unclean? But your Messiah himself sat on an unclean animal.

CALVIN: In return I ask you, did the holy king and prophet David pollute himself by riding on a mule? Or all the other holy men, of which there are examples throughout Scripture, did they incur a stain whenever they were carried by donkeys?

First of all, since their petulance spared not even the divine prophecies, it does not seem worth the effort to refute it with more words. Whatever Messiah they finally invent for themselves, it will not be possible to explain that passage of Zechariah as referring to anyone else but the Messiah, "Rejoice daughter of Zion, behold, your king comes to you, riding upon a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9). What can they accomplish by quarreling with the prophet? Nay more, does not this filthy mockery of theirs sufficiently prove what I said earlier, that it is not so much our Christ who is a laughing stock to these Jews, but the law and all the prophets? For if they are disciples of Zechariah, let them untie this not for us. This sophistry of theirs is stupid beyond measure, arguing from the fact that in the promulgation of the law animals were prohibited from approaching the mountain. If God wanted to segregate that spot for himself for the space of a few days, that neither man nor any other animal would approach thither, the Messiah would not therefore be excluded from sharing our human nature. But what contagion will they discover in this, if the son of David will mount a donkey? Truly it is not to be doubted that Zechariah was looking towards the coming redeemer, who would not shine with royal pomp and trappings, but who would be poor, and as if one taken from the common people.

QUESTION 14

JEW: I ask you, how did Jesus experience hunger? If you should say that it was on account of his flesh that he hungered, then how is it that we saw Moses, who was flesh and blood, fast forty days and forty nights when he drew near to the Godhead, and not experience hunger, while the flesh of this man Jesus, who was God himself, did experience hunger?

CALVIN: I ask you, why did the angels eat with Abraham? In what way were they insultingly harassed by the Sodomites? Why did God tell Moses to stand against him, in order that he not exercise the vengeance which he established?

The solution to this problem, which is of no importance to these pigs, is that Christ experienced hunger, because in taking on our flesh, at the same time he took on hunger and all other human passions, except for sinful corruption. They bring forth this argument because the same thing is not said about Moses. But do they think the holy prophet afterwards returned to his usual nourishment, for any reason other than that the infirmity of his nature forced him? For had Moses not needed food at all, his consumption of food would have been a superfluous waste, and thus a form of luxury. Also, what do they think about Elijah? For certainly when the spirit clearly announced that both of them fasted for forty days, it shows that it was enough for them to endure their fast no longer than this. Therefore Christ, making himself ready for the preaching of the Gospel, began with a forty day fast, in order that he not be inferior to Moses or Elijah. Thus it seems clear that by a celestial power he was free of the necessity of food and drink, to which all mortal men are made subject. But because it was expedient to be recognized by us as a brother, who shared with us the condition of human life, he at once reverted to those things which are characteristic to men. Not because human infirmities ruled in him, except so far as he submitted himself by his pure will in order to be similar to us.

QUESTION 15

JEW: I ask you, if the passover lamb denoted Jesus, then Jesus follows after many other lambs that had to be born and then killed. For God did not instruct the sons of Israel to accept only one passover lamb.

CALVIN: I ask you, did all the victims, which were sacrificed in the temple, signify nothing? For if this were the case, they would in no way surpass the superstitions of the Egyptians. Further, we know that Moses was commanded to make everything after the example he saw on the mountain (Exodus 25:40). And yet they will not dare to deny that the example was divine. Or perhaps on that account they will concede that there are many, nay innumerable gods. Furthermore, I ask you, since the passover was a memorial and a token of redemption, will they say that there are just as many redemptions as there are lambs commanded by God to be sacrificed by each family?

But indeed we profess freely what piety itself declares, that not only the paschal lamb but every sacrifice was a figure of Christ; while the Jews too grossly dream that with the stench of fat, or the sprinkling of blood, or the slaying of cattle God is reconciled to men, and that sins are purged by such offerings. In the whole work of the law God represented in shadow something more excellent. But from this cause they more than stupidly infer that there are very many Christs to be discovered by us. For as the fathers knew that under the law they did not yet stand in perfection, God wanted them to flee repeatedly to these same remedies when seeking reconciliation. If the immolation of a cow or a calf had been effective for expiation, it would have been sufficient to perform just one sacrifice. But the repetition reminded them that in these figures nothing is perfected. For the same reason we say that all the priests bore the person of Christ; therefore there were many, because death deprived each one of the honor. But Christ, who was resurrected from the dead in order to perform the office of an everlasting priesthood, is one. Lest I be longer in a matter that is beyond easy, it will be allowed by all sane men to

acknowledge that the kingdom God raised up in the family of David, from David himself right through all of his successors, was a prelude of the future Messiah. Yet no one will be so foolish to reproach us on that account, arguing that therefore there must be many Christs.

QUESTION 16

JEW: I ask you, the words, Take this bread, this is my body, and this wine is my blood of the new covenant; how is this done? Either he broke off a morsel of his flesh and gave it to them, or his body was made of bread and wine, and he gave to them out of the remainder, and this is the body they consumed and drank.

CALVIN: In return I ask you, when God invited all through Isaiah (55:1) to have their fill of milk, wine and honey free of charge, did he want to fatten their bellies with corruptible milk and honey? I also ask you, when it is said in the Psalm (36:9-10), "You will nourish them with the abundance of your house and you will give them drink from the stream of your delight", did the prophet understand the heavenly life to be supported by food?

The solution to this question depends on the pure and right interpretation of the words of our Lord. These words have been corrupted by a stupid contrivance under the papacy, but the ignorance of men is not a reason for these dumb animals to scoff at the true faith. Surely Christ neither cut his body into small pieces, nor did he form it out of bread and wine. Rather in a spiritual manner he fed the apostles, just as every day the Spirit, by its hidden power, makes its flesh our food. Therefore we say that the apostles really consumed the flesh of Christ, not in the way that flesh purchased from a butcher is consumed, but because Christ nourished their souls (as he daily nourishes ours unto spiritual life) in no other way than the body is fed by bread and other nutriment.

QUESTION 17

JEW: I ask you, to what purpose did his soul suffer distress because of death? If you say he was frightened on account of his flesh, didn't he say, "the distress of my soul", not "the distress of my flesh"? Besides, everyone knows that the flesh does not speak, nor does it know anything, but is like a stone unless the strength of the spirit is present.

CALVIN: I ask you, if flesh is devoid of all feeling and emotion, how does Isaiah say, All flesh will see the glory of God (40:5)? Why does Moses say, All flesh has corrupted its way of life (Genesis 6:12)? Indeed why does the law everywhere impute to the flesh everything whatsoever that properly belongs to man?

From this it is certainly made plain how these rabid dogs gnaw without discretion at whatever they hear from the New Testament. Nothing is better known or more familiar than that men are denoted by the word "flesh", and that the soul just as much as the body is expressed by it. Therefore insofar as we say that Christ trembled at death in the flesh, this refers to his human nature, because there is no way that a true man would not by nature flee from death. Nevertheless, he bore this sorrow and distress in his soul, because by putting on the body he at the same time took up a soul capable of sensation.

QUESTION 18

JEW: I ask you, if he is the son of God, and if the father and son are but one, by necessity their will is the same. But when he prayed before his father he said, My father, if it is possible that I should not drink this cup, make it so, but if not, do what is good in your eyes. May it not be according to my will, but according to your will²⁰. Therefore their wills are not the same.

CALVIN: In return I ask you, how did God pronounce that he did not wish the death of a sinner²¹, but consigning the reprobate to destruction, he said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will show compassion to whom I will show compassion"? For the difference between those who are to be saved and those who are to be damned depends entirely on his judgment, and he does not show himself to give the spirit of repentance to all. Furthermore, I ask you, how does God attribute regret to himself, as if he were changeable, or as if he had limited foresight? What will escape their impudence when they allow themselves to clamor against the mysteries of God so wantonly?

The solution to this question depends upon a principle that is unknown to the Jews, because they have been struck by a spirit of dizziness and madness. The fact that Christ is also God together with the father, does not hinder him from taking up human passions after being made man. Therefore his will was separate from the father's, because he wanted nothing proper to man to be foreign to him. In truth, neither hope, nor fear, nor joy, nor sadness belong to God. To sum up, unless they overthrow this foundation of our faith—that Christ is God and man—they dispute stupidly and in vain about a double will.

20 Luke 22:42

21 Ezekiel 18:32

QUESTION 19

JEW: I ask you, if he was God, when he prayed why did he say to his father, Your will be done? From this it appears that he did not have in his own hand the power to do anything: whatever he did from the will of the father was not from his own power.

CALVIN: I ask you, when the angel who descended to Abraham and Lot made himself the judge of Sodom, and claimed for himself the whole power of God, but a little later he denied that he was able to do anything until Lot had come forth, had the strength of God been fettered by the will of man, and were his hands bound until a mortal man assented?

To be sure they throw against us nothing which the apostle did not declare, that Christ died from the infirmity of the flesh and was raised from the dead in the strength of the spirit (1 Peter 3:18). In Christ we must always observe the office of the mediator, which could not stand forth without abasement, just as he could not perform this abasement without humbling himself. Therefore Christ not only endured to be weak on account of man, but he even made himself desolate after assuming the form of a servant, not because he was at all lacking in his own strength from eternity, and not because he was weakened, but because his divinity kept itself silent until in the person of man he offered full obedience to his father. This is how these two verses harmonize: I lay down my life to take it up again (John 10:17), and, Father glorify your son (John 17:1).

QUESTION 20

JEW: I ask you, how did he say, All power in heaven and earth has been given to me²²? For who gave it to him? If he is the son of God and God, as you say, then there was no need to grant him this power, for surely the whole world is his already.

CALVIN: I ask you, how are the people of Israel said to have been the sanctification of God, when they were redeemed from Egypt, if the sanctity of God is not at all derived from men, nor does it have a beginning or an end? Furthermore, I ask you, why is God—in whose hand is the abundance of all things—said to receive gifts from conquered men, as if he could enrich himself with the spoils of his enemies (Psalm 68:19)? I also ask you, how in Psalm 45:8 is the king said to have been anointed by the oil of gladness beyond his fellows, the king who in that very place is called Elohim, who sits on the eternal throne?

Surely, if Christ had not taken up in himself our poverty or our nakedness along with the human person, that gift which is spoken of would be superfluous. Nor indeed does Christ claim to have this authority by consideration of his own divinity: but he proclaims by what glory of authority he will be adorned according to the conception of men, just as elsewhere he says, Father glorify your son with the glory which he possessed with you before the world was created (John 17:5). The following words are more than enough to refute this foul objection: God sought to reveal clearly in the flesh the glory which was before hidden from the eyes of men. Also, Paul most excellently explains it in the same way: because he emptied himself, a name was given to him which is above every name, so that every knee would bend in his presence (Philippians 2:7 ff.).

22 Matthew 28:18

QUESTION 21

JEW: I ask you, you say that the Messiah is both divinity and humanity just as man is both flesh and spirit. But if this is true, then when the humanity is slain, the divine nature is slain. For according to your words, Jesus was both God and man, and he was slain. Therefore his divinity was slain. But if his divinity was slain, he was not God. For God cannot be not slain.

CALVIN: I ask you, because all the holy fathers are dead, do they (the Jews) believe that the souls of the fathers are extinguished together with their bodies? And because Scripture says so many times that the holy ones sleep, do they believe souls to be enveloped in the same death along with bodies? Indeed, since Scripture says that Absalom was of tall stature, but that David was of short stature compared with his brothers, does it at once transfer the measure of bodies to souls?

It is true what is laid out in the common saying: nothing similar is the same²³. But these pigs so subvert all the principles of nature, that no trace of reason can be found amongst them. We say just as a soul and a body make up one man, thus Christ consists of two natures, not because the similitude agrees in every respect but because it is suitable and fit for expressing the unity of his person. As for the rest—so that we may grant what they demand—there is no logical conflict; they merely infer in a preposterous manner that the divinity of Christ was killed with his flesh. For in times past, did tyrants destroy the souls of the saints while raging against them? Did Abel perish altogether when he was struck down by Cain? But if his soul survived and was uninjured after death, the soul which was nevertheless a part of a man, how much more would the divinity of Christ have been intact in death, even if it was united with his human nature?

23 The Latin phrase here translated, "nullum simile esse idem", is still used in legal contexts today.

QUESTION 22

JEW: I ask you, he came into the world in order to betray himself to chains and to death for your sake, so why does it say that Judas Iscariot betrayed him, if he had come for the very purpose of being judged and condemned?

CALVIN: I ask you in turn, how did Job say that his goods were taken away by the Lord, when thieves were the ones who deprived him of them? How does God say that he stirs up the Egyptians with a hiss, and arms the Assyrians by his nod, and that they are all like an ax in his hand, but nevertheless he condemns their crooked designs, and pronounces that he will be an avenger (Isaiah 7:18)? And finally I ask you, what do they themselves think about their Messiah? For Isaiah announces that he will lay down his soul as a sacrifice, in order to bear the infirmities of the people. He says that he will be smitten by God and wounded (Isaiah 53:5 ff.). Surely they will be forced to admit that either he will perish by their own hands, or his death will be brought about by other assailants.

From the passage in Isaiah which I have mentioned, it is clear that there is nothing contradictory in these two statements, that the Messiah voluntarily offers himself up to death, and that nevertheless he is slain by the wicked. For by his death he reconciled us to God, by his obedience our iniquities were buried and blotted out. Therefore it was proper that the sacrifice be voluntary, but it was accomplished by the secret and wonderful counsel of God that the same one who voluntarily met his death was dragged by wicked men to the cross. Thus God, who determined that his people be redeemed from Egypt, charged Moses with this duty, and at the same time stirred up Pharaoh, by whose stubbornness he glorified his name the more. Therefore Christ rendered obedience to his father to expiate the sins of the world, but he did not thereby join in the crime of the traitor.

QUESTION 23

JEW: I ask you, there are those who say that we are in exile because we killed Jesus, which is not true since we were in exile before his death. But even if this were true, it is written that in the hour of his death he entreated his father, saying, "My Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing." But if the father and the son are the same, and the same will belongs to them both, certainly this injustice has been forgiven, since he forgave it himself?

CALVIN: I ask you in turn, since God desired the Jews to have a sound mind in order to comprehend their end (Deuteronomy 32:29), how is it that they remained blind and mad, when it rested in God's hand to restore the sound mind of which they were deprived? I also ask, since he says in Isaiah that he is content with an exile of seventy years, wanting to attend to the Jews with perpetual compassion, why does he now take vengeance on their sons so severely?

First of all, their depraved and indomitable obstinacy merits that none of them be pitied, as they all delight in their evils while being oppressed by a great mass of miseries without end or measure. How absurd is this stupidity, that now after so many centuries of continually and openly being worn down by the hostile hand of God they feel so secure in their case? It is evident from the prophets how the horrible filth of all their crimes was advancing amongst that people long before the exile. Already one hundred years before, Isaiah called the leaders Sodom and the people Gomorrah (Isaiah 1:10); from that time they did not cease from provoking the vengeance of God against themselves with their diabolical hardness. But God, after he punished them with seventy years of exile, said that he had exacted double punishment for their sins (Isaiah 40:2).

III. Selections from Calvin's Bible Commentaries

NOTE: The following passages are taken from the Calvin Translation Society edition available [online](#) at the Christian Classics Ethereal library.

When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then [will I bring again] the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them. (Ezekiel 16:53)

He here confirms again what we lately saw, that the Jews were doomed and devoted to final destruction, nor was it possible for them to escape any more than for Sodom to rise again and Samaria to be restored to her original dignity. The Jews foolishly corrupt this passage, since they think that restoration is promised to Israel and Sodom. But by Sodomites they mean the Moabites and Ammonites, the descendants of Lot who dwell at Sodom: but a child may see that this is trifling. There is no doubt that the Prophet here deprives the Jews of all hope of safety by reasoning upon an impossibility: as if he had said, you shall be safe when Sodom and Samaria are. We now understand the Prophet's meaning. But the inquiry arises — how can he pronounce none of the Israelites safe, when their return home is so often promised? But we must bear in mind, what we saw elsewhere, and what it is often necessary to repeat, since many passages in the prophets would otherwise give rise to scruples. Therefore we have sometimes said, that the prophets speak of the people in two ways; for they sometimes regard the whole body of the nation promiscuously: but the Israelites were already alienated from God; afterwards the Jews also cut themselves off from him. Since therefore each people, considering them in a body and in the mass, to speak roughly, was outcast, it is not surprising if the prophets use this language — that no hope of mercy remained — since they had excluded themselves from God's mercy.

But afterwards they change their discourse to the remnant: for God always preserves a hidden seed, that the Church should not be utterly extinguished: for there must always be a Church in the world, but sometimes it is preserved miserably as it were in a sepulcher, since it is nowhere apparent. God, therefore, when he denounces final vengeance on the Jews, regards the body of the people, but then he promises that there shall be a small seed which he wishes to remain safe. Hence it is said in Isaiah, (Isaiah 8:16), seal my law, bind up my testimony among my disciples; that is, address my disciples as if you were reading in a hidden corner any writing which you did not wish to be made public. Do you therefore collect my disciples together, that you may deliver to them my law and my testimony like a sealed letter. But now God cites to his tribunal those degenerate Jews who had nothing in common with Abraham, since they had made void and utterly abolished his covenant: Now, therefore, we see how the Jews perished together with Sodom and Samaria, and were never restored, that is, as far as relates to that. filth and dregs which were utterly unworthy of the honor of which they boasted. *I will restore, therefore, their captivities; namely, the captivity of Sodom and of its cities, and the captivity of Samaria and its cities, and the captivity of thy captivities*, that is, and the captivity of all thy land; I will restore you, says he, altogether; but he speaks ironically, and, as I have said, he shows that God's taking pity upon the Jews was impossible.

And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. (Isaiah 8:14)

The Jews ignorantly and improperly tear asunder this verse, instead of dividing it. "God will be," say they, "partly a *sanctuary* and partly a *stone of stumbling*; as if by the two families he distinguished between the godly and the unbelievers. On the contrary, he enjoins believers, though nearly the whole multitude of both kingdoms should dissuade them from obedience to God, not to be discouraged, but to disregard everything else, and break through all opposition. The Prophet might have simply said, *he will be for an offense to Israel*; but he intended to

express more, for he includes the whole nation, and declares that God will be their destruction. The nation was divided into two kingdoms, Ephraim and Judah; and, therefore, he mentioned both. There were, indeed, some exceptions, but he speaks here of the whole body...

For a snare to the inhabitant of Jerusalem. This is the second circumstance introduced for heightening the picture; for, after having mentioned the two kingdoms, he names the metropolis itself. Although the whole country was crippled, yet it seemed that the Lord kept his abode there. He therefore means that God became *a snare*, not only to the common people who were scattered throughout the fields and villages, but to the nobles themselves, and to the priests who dwelt in *Jerusalem*, who dwelt in that holy habitation in which God intended that the remembrance of his name should be chiefly preserved. That was testified also by David, that *those builders* whom the Lord appointed *rejected the chief corner-stone*. (Psalm 118:22.) Christ quotes this passage against the Jews, and shows that it applies to himself. (Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10.) This happened, indeed, in the time of Isaiah, but still more in the time of Christ; for ungodliness and rebellion gradually increased till they came to a height. Accordingly, both the highest and the lowest, who always had obstinately disobeyed God, at that time broke out against him still more with unrestrained indulgence, and therefore their destruction also reached its height; for they were altogether rejected by God, whose Son they had refused. Hence also we infer the eternal divinity of Christ, for Paul shows that it is God of whom the Prophet here speaks. (Romans 9:33.) Now, he speaks not of a pretended God, but of that God by whom heaven and earth were created, and who revealed himself to Moses. (Exodus 3:6.) It is, therefore, the same God by whom the Church has been always governed.

For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, [yet] a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness. (Isaiah 10:22)

He casts down hypocrites from foolish confidence; for they reckoned it enough to be the descendants of holy Abraham according to the flesh, and, therefore, on the sole ground of their

birth, they wished to be accounted holy. Yet he exhorts the godly to patience, that they may learn to await calmly that calamity and diminution of their number, lest, when it took place, it should be unexpected, and give them uneasiness. He therefore comforts them, that they may not be grieved at so great desolation; for the Lord will at least collect *a remnant* of it.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. (Matthew 5:17)

With regard to the perfection of his life, Christ might justly have maintained that he *came to fulfill the law*: but here he treats of doctrine, not of life. As he afterwards exclaimed, that “*the kingdom of God is come,*” (Matthew 12:28,) and raised the minds of men with unusual expectation, and even admitted disciples by baptism, it is probable, that the minds of many were in a state of suspense and doubt, and were eagerly inquiring, what was the design of that novelty. Christ, therefore, now declares, that his doctrine is so far from being at variance with *the law*, that it agrees perfectly with *the law and the prophets*, and not only so, but brings the complete *fulfillment* of them.

There appear to have been chiefly two reasons, which induced him to declare this agreement between *the law* and the Gospel. As soon as any new method of teaching makes its appearance, the body of the people immediately look upon it, as if everything were to be overturned. Now the preaching of the Gospel, as I mentioned a little ago, tended to raise the expectation, that the Church would assume a totally different form from what had previously belonged to it. They thought that the ancient and accustomed government was to be abolished. This opinion, in many respects, was very dangerous. Devout worshippers of God would never have embraced the Gospel, if it had been a revolt from *the law*; while light and turbulent spirits would eagerly have seized on an occasion offered to them for entirely overthrowing the state of religion: for we know in what insolent freaks rash people are ready to indulge when there is any thing new.

Besides, Christ saw that the greater part of the Jews, though they professed to believe the Law,

were profane and degenerate. The condition of the people was so decayed, every thing was filled with so many corruptions, and the negligence or malice of the priests had so completely extinguished the pure light of doctrine, that there no longer remained any reverence for the Law. But if a new kind of doctrine had been introduced, which would destroy the authority of *the Law and the Prophets*, religion would have sustained a dreadful injury. This appears to be the first reason, why Christ declared that *he had not come to destroy the Law*. Indeed, the context makes this abundantly clear: for he immediately adds, by way of confirmation, that it is impossible for *even one point of the Law to fail*, — and pronounces a curse on those teachers who do not faithfully labor to maintain its authority.

The second reason was, to refute the wicked slander which, he knew was brought against him by the ignorant and unlearned. This charge, it is evident, had been fastened on his doctrine by the scribes: for he proceeds immediately to direct his discourse against them. We must keep in mind the object which Christ had in view. While he invites and exhorts the Jews to receive the Gospel, he still retains them in obedience to *the Law*; and, on the other hand, he boldly refutes the base reproaches and slanders, by which his enemies labored to make his preaching infamous or suspected.

If we intend to reform affairs which are in a state of disorder, we must always exercise such prudence and moderation, as will convince the people, that we do not oppose the eternal Word of God, or introduce any novelty that is contrary to Scripture. We must take care, that no suspicion of such contrariety shall injure the faith of the godly, and that rash men shall not be emboldened by a pretense of novelty. In short, we must endeavor to oppose a profane contempt of the Word of God, and to prevent religion from being despised by the ignorant. The defense which Christ makes, to free his doctrine from slanders, ought to encourage us, if we are now exposed to the same calumnies. That crime was charged against Paul, that he was an apostate from the law of God, (Acts 21:21) and we need not, therefore, wonder, if the Papists endeavor, in the same manner, to render us odious. Following the example of Christ, we ought to clear ourselves from false accusations, and, at the same time, to profess the truth freely, though it may expose us to unjust reproaches.

I am not come to destroy. God had, indeed, promised a *new covenant* at the coming of Christ; but had, at the same time, showed, that it would not be different from *the first*, but that, on the

contrary, its design was, to give a perpetual sanction to the covenant, which he had made from the beginning, with his own people.

“I will write my law, (says he,) in their hearts, and I will remember their iniquities no more,” (Jeremiah 31:33, 34.)

By these words he is so far from departing from the former covenant, that, on the contrary, he declares, that it will be confirmed and ratified, when it shall be succeeded by the new. This is also the meaning of Christ’s words, when he says, that *he came to fulfill the law*: for he actually fulfilled it, by quickening, with his Spirit, the dead letter, and then exhibiting, in reality, what had hitherto appeared only in figures.

With respect to doctrine, we must not imagine that the coming of Christ has freed us from the authority of the law: for it is the eternal rule of a devout and holy life, and must, therefore, be as unchangeable, as the justice of God, which it embraced, is constant and uniform. With respect to ceremonies, there is some appearance of a change having taken place; but it was only the use of them that was abolished, for their meaning was more fully confirmed. The coming of Christ has taken nothing away even from ceremonies, but, on the contrary, confirms them by exhibiting the truth of shadows: for, when we see their full effect, we acknowledge that they are not vain or useless. Let us therefore learn to maintain inviolable this sacred tie between the law and the Gospel, which many improperly attempt to break. For it contributes not a little to confirm the authority of the Gospel, when we learn, that it is nothing else than *a fulfillment of the law*; so that both, with one consent, declare God to be their Author.

And it shall come to pass, [that] from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. (Isaiah 66:23)

The Prophet again points out what shall be the difference between the nature of the spiritual worship of God which shall be under the reign of Christ and of the carnal worship which was under the Law. Sacrifices were offered every month at the new moon. There were Sabbaths, and

other festivals, and solemn days, which they carefully observed. But under the reign of Christ there shall be a constant and uninterrupted solemnity; for there are not fixed and stated days of sacrifices on which we must go to Jerusalem, or offer anything in one place or in another; but our oblations, festivals, and rejoicings are continued from day to day in unbroken succession. Yet he alludes to the ancient custom of sacrifices as we have already said that the prophets are frequently accustomed to do.

So then the Lord wishes to have “pure sacrifices” offered to him daily, (1 Peter 2:5,) not such as were formerly offered under the Law or are now offered by Papists, who either rely foolishly on their ceremonies, as if they were expiations of crime, or basely venture to sacrifice Christ, but spiritual sacrifices, that we may reverence and adore God with a pure and sincere worship. (John 4:24.) As to the opinion held by some, that this passage proves the abrogation of the Law and of ancient ceremonies, it does not appear to me to rest on sufficient grounds, it is indeed certain that those legal ceremonies have been set aside, and that may be gathered from this passage; but in proof of that point I would choose to employ other passages which contain stronger evidence. There is only here a contrast between the Sabbath and festivals which were celebrated under the Law, and the perpetual Sabbath which we have at the present day. (Hebrews 4:9, 10.)

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, [and] not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. (Hebrews 10:1)

The difference...which the Apostle makes between the Law and the Gospel is this, — that under the Law was shadowed forth only in rude and imperfect lines what is under the Gospel set forth in living colors and graphically distinct. He thus confirms again what he had previously said, that the Law was not useless, nor its ceremonies unprofitable. For though there was not in them the image of heavenly things, finished, as they say, by the last touch of the artist; yet the

representation, such as it was, was of no small benefit to the fathers; but still our condition is much more favorable. We must however observe, that the things which were shown to them at a distance are the same with those which are now set before our eyes. Hence to both the same Christ is exhibited, the same righteousness, sanctification, and salvation; and the difference only is in the manner of painting or setting them forth.

For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name [shall be] great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense [shall be] offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name [shall be] great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts .

(Malachi 1:11)

Here God shows that he no longer cared for the Jews, for he would bid altars to be reared for him everywhere and through all parts of the world, that he might be purely worshipped by all nations. It is indeed a remarkable prophecy as to the calling of the Gentiles; but we must especially remember this, — that whenever the Prophets speak of this calling, they promise the spread of God’s worship as a favor to the Jews, or as a punishment and reproach.

The Prophets then promised to the Jews that the Gentiles would become allied to them; so does Zechariah,

“In that day lay hold shall ten men on the skirt of the garment, and will say to a Jew, Be thou our leader; for the same God with thee will we worship.” (Zechariah 8:23.)

It would have been then the highest honor to the Jews had they become teachers to all nations, so as to instruct them in true religion. So also Isaiah says, that is, that those who were before aliens would become the disciples of the chosen people, so that they would willingly submit to their teaching. But as the Jews have fallen from their place, the Gentiles have succeeded and occupied their position. Hence it is that the Prophets when speaking of the calling of the Gentiles, often denounce it as a punishment on the Jews; as though they had said, that when they were repudiated there would be other children of God, whom he would substitute in their

place, according to what Christ threatened to the men of his age,

“Taken away from you shall be the kingdom of God, and shall be given to another nation.”
(Matthew 21:43.)

Such is this prophecy: for our Prophet does not simply open to the Gentiles the temple of God, to connect them with the Jews and to unite them in true religion; but he first excludes the Jews, and shows that the worship of God would be exercised in common by the Gentiles, for the doctrine of salvation would be propagated to the utmost extremities of the earth.

This difference ought to be noticed, which interpreters have not observed, and yet it is what is very necessary to be known; and for want of knowing this has it happened that passages wholly different have been indiscriminately blended together. The Prophet then does not here promise, as we have often stated in other places, that the whole world would be subject to God, so that true religion would everywhere prevail, but he brands the Jews with reproach, as though he had said, “God has repudiated you, but he will find other sons for himself, who will occupy your place.” He had repudiated in the last verse their sacrifices, and we know how haughtily the Jews gloried in the holiness of their race. As then they were inflated with so much pride, they thought that God would be no God except he had them as his holy Church. The Prophet here answers them, and anticipates their objection by saying, that God’s name would be celebrated through the whole world: “Ye are a few people, all the nations will unite in one body to worship God together; God then will not stand in need of you, and after he rejects you his kingdom will not decay. Ye indeed think that his kingdom cannot be safe, and that his glory will perish except he is worshipped by you; but I now declare to you, that the worship of God will flourish everywhere, even after he shall cast you out of his family.”

We now then see what the Prophet means when he says, that *Great will be the name of God from the rising to the setting of the sun*. It is simply said in Psalm 113:3,

“From the rising to the setting of the sun wonderful shall be the name of God.”

There indeed it is only a promise, but here the Prophet includes the punishment which the Jews had deserved, as though he had said, that after they were rejected by God on account of their ingratitude, the Gentiles would become holy to God, because he would adopt them instead of that wicked and ungodly people.

In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this [is] his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Jeremiah 23:6)

By these words the Prophet shews more clearly that he speaks not generally of David's posterity, however excellent they may have been, but of the Mediator, who had been promised, and on whom depended the salvation of the people; for he says that this would be his name, *Jehovah our Righteousness*.

Those Jews, who seem more modest than others, and dare not, through a dogged pertinacity, to corrupt this passage, do yet elude the application of this title to Christ, though it be suitable to him; for they say that the name is given to him, because he is the minister of God's justice, as though it was said, that whenever this king appeared all would acknowledge God's justice as shining forth in him. And they adduce other similar passages, as when Moses calls the altar, "Jehovah my banner," or my protection. (Exodus 17:15.) But there is no likeness whatever between an altar and Christ. For the same purpose they refer to another passage, where it is said, "And this is the name by which they shall call Jerusalem, Jehovah our peace." (Ezekiel 48:35)

Now Moses meant nothing else than that the altar was a monument of God's protection; and Ezekiel only teaches, that the Church would be as it were a mirror in which God's mercy would be seen, as it would shine forth then, as it were, visibly. But this cannot for the same reason be applied to Christ; he is set forth here as a Redeemer, and a name is given to him, — what name? the name of God. But the Jews object and say, that he was God's minister, and that it might therefore be in a sense applied to him, though he was no more than a man.

But all who without strife and prejudice judge of things, can easily see that this name is suitably applied to Christ, as he is God; and the Son of David belongs to him as he is man. The Son of David and Jehovah is one and the same Redeemer. Why is he called the Son of David? even because it was necessary that he should be born of that family. Why then is he called Jehovah? we hence conclude that there is something in him more excellent than what is human; and he is called Jehovah, because he is the only-begotten Son of God, of one and the same essence, glory,

eternity, and divinity with the Father.

It hence appears evident to all who judge impartially and considerately, that Christ is set forth here in his twofold character, so that the Prophet brings before us both the glory of his divinity and the reality of his humanity. And we know how necessary it was that Christ should come forth as God and man; for salvation cannot be expected in any other way than from God; and Christ must confer salvation on us, and not only be its minister. And then, as he is God, he justifies us, regenerates us, illuminates us into a hope of eternal life; to conquer sin and death is doubtless what only can be effected by divine power. Hence Christ, except he was God, could not have performed what we had to expect from him. It was also necessary that he should become man, that he might unite us to himself; for we have no access to God, except we become the friends of Christ; and how can we be so made, except by a brotherly union? It was not then without the strongest reason, that the Prophet here sets Christ before us both as a true man and the Son of David, and also as God or Jehovah, for he is the only-begotten Son of God, and ever the same in wisdom and glory with the Father, as John testifies in Jeremiah 17:5, 11.

We now then perceive the simple and real meaning of this passage, even that God would restore his Church, because what he had promised respecting a Redeemer stood firm and inviolable. Then he adds what this Redeemer would be and what was to be expected from him; he declares that he would be the true God and yet the Son of David; and he also bids us to expect righteousness from him, and everything necessary to a full and perfect happiness.

But by saying, God *our righteousness*, the Prophet still more fully shews that righteousness is not in Christ as though it were only his own, but that we have it in common with him, for he has nothing separate from us. God, indeed, must ever be deemed just, though iniquity prevailed through the whole world; and men, were they all wicked, could do nothing to impugn or mar the righteousness of God. But yet God is not our righteousness as he is righteous in himself, or as having his own peculiar righteousness; and as he is our judge, his own righteousness is adverse to us. But Christ's righteousness is of another kind: it is ours, because Christ is righteous not for himself, but possesses a righteousness which he communicates to us. We hence see that the true character of Christ is here set forth, not that he would come to manifest divine justice, but to bring righteousness, which would avail to the salvation of men, For if we regard God in himself, as I have said, he is indeed righteous, but is not our righteousness. If, then, we desire to have

God as our righteousness, we must seek Christ; for this cannot be found except in him. The righteousness of God has been set forth to us in Christ; and all who turn away from him, though they may take many circuitous courses, can yet never find the righteousness of God. Hence Paul says that he has been given or made to us righteousness, — for what end? that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (1 Corinthians 1:30.) Since, then, Christ is made our righteousness, and we are counted the righteousness of God in him, we hence learn how properly and fitly it has been said that he would be *Jehovah*, not only that the power of his divinity might defend us, but also that we might become righteous in him, for he is not only righteous for himself, but he is our righteousness.

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)

This passage is obscure; but the blame lies partly on the Jews, who, by much cavilling, have labored, as far as lay in their power, to pervert the true exposition. They are hard pressed by this passage; for it contains an illustrious prediction concerning the Messiah, who is here called *Immanuel*; and therefore they have labored, by all possible means, to torture the Prophet's meaning to another sense. Some allege that the person here mentioned is Hezekiah; and others, that it is the son of Isaiah.

Those who apply this passage to Hezekiah are excessively impudent; for he must have been a full-grown man when Jerusalem was besieged. Thus they show that they are grossly ignorant of history. But it is a just reward of their malice, that God hath blinded them in such a manner as to be deprived of all judgment. This happens in the present day to the papists, who often expose themselves to ridicule by their mad eagerness to pervert the Scriptures.

As to those who think that it was Isaiah's son, it is an utterly frivolous conjecture; for we do not read that a deliverer would be raised up from the seed of Isaiah, who should be called *Immanuel*; for this title is far too illustrious to admit of being applied to any man.

Others think, or, at least, (being unwilling to contend with the Jews more than was necessary,) admit that the Prophet spoke of some child who was born at that time, by whom, as by an obscure picture, Christ was foreshadowed. But they produce no strong arguments, and do not show who that child was, or bring forward any proofs. Now, it is certain, as we have already said, that this name *Immanuel* could not be literally applied to a mere man; and, therefore, there can be no doubt that the Prophet referred to Christ.

But all writers, both Greek and Latin, are too much at their ease in handling this passage; for, as if there were no difficulty in it, they merely assert that Christ is here promised from the Virgin Mary. Now, there is no small difficulty in the objection which the Jews bring against us, that Christ is here mentioned without any sufficient reason; for thus they argue, and demand that the scope of the passage be examined: "Jerusalem was besieged. The Prophet was about to give them a sign of deliverance. Why should he promise the Messiah, who was to be born five hundred years afterwards?" By this argument they think that they have gained the victory, because the promise concerning Christ had nothing to do with assuring Ahaz of the deliverance of Jerusalem. And then they boast as if they had gained the day, chiefly because scarcely any one replies to them. That is the reason why I said that commentators have been too much at their ease in this matter; for it is of no small importance to show why the Redeemer is here mentioned.

Now, the matter stands thus. King Ahaz having rejected the sign which God had offered to him, the Prophet reminds him of the foundation of the covenant, which even the ungodly did not venture openly to reject. The Messiah must be born; and this was expected by all, because the salvation of the whole nation depended on it. The Prophet, therefore, after having expressed his indignation against the king, again argues in this manner: "By rejecting the promise, thou wouldest endeavor to overturn the decree of God; but it shall remain inviolable, and thy treachery and ingratitude will not hinder God from being, continually the Deliverer of his people; for he will at length raise up his Messiah."

To make these things more plain, we must attend to the custom of the Prophets, who, in establishing special promises, lay down this as the foundation, that God will send a Redeemer. On this general foundation God everywhere builds all the special promises which he makes to his people; and certainly every one who expects aid and assistance from him must be convinced

of his fatherly love. And how could he be reconciled to us but through Christ, in whom he has freely adopted the elect, and continues to pardon them to the end? Hence comes that saying of Paul, that all the promises of God in Christ are Yea and Amen. (2 Corinthians 1:20.)

Whenever, therefore, God assisted his ancient people, he at the same time reconciled them to himself through Christ; and accordingly, whenever famine, pestilence, and war are mentioned, in order to hold out a hope of deliverance, he places the Messiah before their eyes. This being exceedingly clear, the Jews have no right to make a noise, as if the Prophet made an unseasonable transition to a very remote subject. For on what did the deliverance of Jerusalem depend, but on the manifestation of Christ? This was, indeed, the only foundation on which the salvation of the Church always rested.

Thy throne, O God, [is] for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom [is] a right sceptre.
(Psalm 45:6)

In this verse the Psalmist commends other princely virtues in Solomon, namely, the eternal duration of his throne, and then the justice and rectitude of his mode of government. The Jews, indeed, explain this passage as if the discourse were addressed to God, but such an interpretation is frivolous and impertinent. Others of them read the word אלהים, *Elohim*, in the genitive case, and translate it *of God*, thus: *The throne of thy God* But for this there is no foundation, and it only betrays their presumption in not hesitating to wrest the Scriptures so shamefully, that they may not be constrained to acknowledge the divinity of the Messiah. The simple and natural sense is, that Solomon reigns not tyrannically, as the most of kings do, but by just and equal laws, and that, therefore, his throne shall be established for ever. Although he is called *God*, because God has imprinted some mark of his glory in the person of kings, yet this title cannot well be applied to a mortal man; for we nowhere read in Scripture that man or angel has been distinguished by this title without some qualification. It is true, indeed, that angels as

well as judges are called collectively אלהים, *Elohim, gods*; but not individually, and no one man is called by this name without some word added by way of restriction, as when Moses was appointed to be a god to Pharaoh, (Exodus 7:1.) From this we may naturally infer, that this psalm relates, as we shall soon see, to a higher than any earthly kingdom.

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him [shall] the gathering of the people [be.] (Genesis 49:10)

Though this passage is obscure, it would not have been very difficult to elicit its genuine sense, if the Jews, with their accustomed malignity, had not endeavored to envelop it in clouds. It is certain that the Messiah, who was to spring from the tribe of Judah, is here promised. But whereas they ought willingly to run to embrace him, they purposely catch at every possible subterfuge, by which they may lead themselves and others far astray in tortuous by-paths. It is no wonder, then, if the spirit of bitterness and obstinacy, and the lust of contention have so blinded them, that, in the clearest light, they should have perpetually stumbled. Christians, also, with a pious diligence to set forth the glory of Christ, have, nevertheless, betrayed some excess of fervor. For while they lay too much stress on certain words, they produce no other effect than that of giving an occasion of ridicule to the Jews, whom it is necessary to surround with firm and powerful barriers, from which they shall be unable to escape. Admonished, therefore, by such examples, let us seek, without contention, the true meaning of the passage. In the first place, we must keep in mind the true design of the Holy Spirit, which, hitherto, has not been sufficiently considered or expounded with sufficient distinctness. After he has invested the tribe of Judah with supreme authority, he immediately declares that God would show his care for the people, by preserving the state of the kingdom, till the promised felicity should attain its highest point. For the dignity of Judah is so maintained as to show that its proposed end was the common salvation of the whole people. The blessing promised to the seed of Abraham (as we

have before seen) could not be firm, unless it flowed from one head. Jacob now testifies the same thing, namely, that a King should come, under whom that promised happiness should be complete in all its parts. Even the Jews will not deny, that while a lower blessing rested on the tribe of Judah, the hope of a better and more excellent condition was herein held forth. They also freely grant another point, that the Messiah is the sole Author of full and solid happiness and glory. We now add a third point, which we may also do, without any opposition from them; namely, that the kingdom which began from David, was a kind of prelude, and shadowy representation of that greater grace which was delayed, and held in suspense, until the advent of the Messiah. They have indeed no relish for a spiritual kingdom; and therefore they rather imagine for themselves wealth and power, and propose to themselves sweet repose and earthly pleasures, than righteousness, and newness of life, with free forgiveness of sins. They acknowledge, nevertheless, that the felicity which was to be expected under the Messiah, was adumbrated by their ancient kingdom. I now return to the words of Jacob.

Until Shiloh come, he says, the scepter, or the dominion, *shall remain in Judah*. We must first see what the word שִׁלוֹה (*shiloh*) signifies. Because Jerome interprets it, “He who is to be sent,” some think that the place has been fraudulently corrupted, by the letter ה (*he*) substituted for the letter ח (*cheth*;) which objection, though not firm, is plausible. That which some of the Jews suppose, namely, that it denotes the place (*Shiloh*) where the ark of the covenant had been long deposited, because, a little before the commencement of David’s reign, it had been laid waste, is entirely destitute of reason. For Jacob does not here predict the time when David was to be appointed king; but declares that the kingdom should be established in his family, until God should fulfill what he had promised concerning the special benediction of the seed of Abraham. Besides the form of speech, “until Shiloh come,” for “until Shiloh come to an end,” would be harsh and constrained. Far more correctly and consistently do other interpreters take this expression to mean “his son,” for among the Hebrews a son is called שִׁיל (*shil*.) They say also that ה (*he*) is put in the place of the relative ו (*waw*;) and the greater part assent to this signification. But again, the Jews dissent entirely from the meaning of the patriarch, by referring

this to David. For (as I have just hinted) the origin of the kingdom in David is not here promised, but its absolute perfection in the Messiah. And truly an absurdity so gross, does not require a lengthened refutation. For what can this mean, that the kingdom should not come to an end in the tribe of Judah, till it should have been erected? Certainly the word *depart* means nothing else than to *cease*. Further, Jacob points to a continued series, when he says the scribe shall not depart from between his feet. For it behoves a king so to be placed upon his throne that a lawgiver may sit between his feet. A kingdom is therefore described to us, which after it has been constituted, will not cease to exist till a more perfect state shall succeed; or, which comes to the same point; Jacob honors the future kingdom of David with this title, because it was to be the token and pledge of that happy glory which had been before ordained for the race of Abraham. In short, the kingdom which he transfers to the tribe of Judah, he declares shall be no common kingdom, because from it, at length, shall proceed the fullness of the promised benediction. But here the Jews haughtily object, that the event convicts us of error. For it appears that the kingdom by no means endured until the coming of Christ; but rather that the scepter was broken, from the time that the people were carried into captivity. But if they give credit to the prophecies, I wish, before I solve their objection, that they would tell me in what manner Jacob here assigns the kingdom to his son Judah. For we know, that when it had scarcely become his fixed possession, it was suddenly rent asunder, and nearly its whole power was possessed by the tribe of Ephraim. Has God, according to these men, here promised, by the mouth of Jacob, some evanescent kingdom? If they reply, the scepter was not then broken, though Rehoboam was deprived of a great part of his people; they can by no means escape by this cavil; because the authority of Judah is expressly extended over all the tribes, by these words, “Thy mother’s sons shall bow their knee before thee.” They bring, therefore, nothing against us, which we cannot immediately, in turn, retort upon *themselves*

Yet I confess the question is not yet solved; but I wished to premise this, in order that the Jews, laying aside their disposition to calumniate, may learn calmly to examine the matter itself, with us. Christians are commonly wont to connect perpetual government with the tribe of Judah, in the following manner. When the people returned from banishment, they say, that, in the place of the royal scepter, was the government which lasted to the time of the Maccabees. That afterwards, a third mode of government succeeded, because the chief power of judging rested

with the Seventy, who, it appears by history, were chosen out of the regal race. Now, so far was this authority of the royal race from having fallen into decay, that Herod, having been cited before it, with difficulty escaped capital punishment, because he contumaciously withdrew from it. Our commentators, therefore, conclude that, although the royal majesty did not shine brightly from David until Christ, yet some preeminence remained in the tribe of Judah, and thus the oracle was fulfilled. Although these things are true, still more skill must be used in rightly discussing this passage. And, in the first place, it must be kept in mind, that the tribe of Judah was already constituted chief among the rest, as preeminent in dignity, though it had not yet obtained the dominion. And, truly, Moses elsewhere testifies, that supremacy was voluntarily conceded to it by the remaining tribes, from the time that the people were redeemed out of Egypt. In the second place, we must remember, that a more illustrious example of this dignity was set forth in that kingdom which God had commenced in David. And although defection followed soon after, so that but a small portion of authority remained in the tribe of Judah; yet the right divinely conferred upon it, could by no means be taken away. Therefore, at the time when the kingdom of Israel was replenished with abundant opulence, and was swelling with lofty pride, it was said, that the lamp of the Lord was lighted in Jerusalem. Let us proceed further: when Ezekiel predicts the destruction of the kingdom, (Ezekiel 21:26,) he clearly shows how the scepter was to be preserved by the Lord, until it should come into the hands of Christ: "Remove the diadem, and take off the crown; this shall not be the same: I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, until he come whose right it is." It may seem at first sight that the prophecy of Jacob had failed when the tribe of Judah was stripped of its royal ornament. But we conclude hence, that God was not bound always to exhibit the visible glory of the kingdom on high. Otherwise, those other promises which predict the restoration of the throne, which was cast down and broken, were false. Behold the days come in which I will "raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof, and I will raise up his ruins." (Amos 9:11.)

It would be absurd, however, to cite more passages, seeing this doctrine occurs frequently in the prophets. Whence we infer, that the kingdom was not so confirmed as always to shine with equal brightness; but that, though, for a time, it might lie fallen and defaced, it should afterwards recover its lost splendor. The prophets, indeed, seem to make the return from the Babylonian

exile the termination of that ruin; but since they predict the restoration of the kingdom no otherwise than they do that of the temple and the priesthood, it is necessary that the whole period, from that liberation to the advent of Christ, should be comprehended. The crown, therefore, was cast down, not for one day only, or from one single head, but for a long time, and in various methods, until God placed it on Christ, his own lawful king. And truly Isaiah describes the origin of Christ, as being very remote from all regal splendor:

“There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.”
(Isaiah 11:1.)

Why does he mention Jesse rather than David, except because Messiah was about to proceed from the rustic hut of a private man, rather than from a splendid palace? Why from a tree cut down, having nothing left but the root and the trunk, except because the majesty of the kingdom was to be almost trodden under foot till the manifestation of Christ? If any one object, that the words of Jacob seem to have a different signification; I answer, that whatever God has promised at any time concerning the external condition of the Church, was so to be restricted, that, in the mean time, he might execute his judgments in punishing men, and might try the faith of his own people. It was, indeed, no light trial, that the tribe of Judah, in its third successor to the throne, should be deprived of the greater portion of the kingdom. Even a still more severe trial followed, when the sons of the king were put to death in the sight of their father, when he, with his eyes thrust out, was dragged to Babylon, and the whole royal family was at length given over to slavery and captivity. But this was the most grievous trial of all; that when the people returned to their own land, they could in no way perceive the accomplishment of their hope, but were compelled to lie in sorrowful dejection. Nevertheless, even then, the saints, contemplating, with the eyes of faith, the scepter hidden under the earth, did not fail, or become broken in spirit, so as to desist from their course. I shall, perhaps, seem to grant too much to the Jews, because I do not assign what they call a real dominion, in uninterrupted succession, to the tribe of Judah. For our interpreters, to prove that the Jews are still kept bound by a foolish expectation of the Messiah, insist on this point, that the dominion of which Jacob had prophesied, ceased from the time of Herod; as if, indeed, they had not been tributaries five hundred years previously; as if, also, the dignity of the royal race had not been extinct as long as the tyranny of Antiochus prevailed; as if, lastly, the Asmonean race had not usurped to itself both the rank and power of

princes, until the Jews became subject to the Romans. And that is not a sufficient solution which is proposed; namely, that either the regal dominion, or some lower kind of government, are disjunctively promised; and that from the time when the kingdom was destroyed, the scribes remained in authority. For I, in order to mark the distinction between a lawful government and tyranny, acknowledge that counselors were joined with the king, who should administer public affairs rightly and in order. Whereas some of the Jews explain, that the *right* of government was given to the tribe of Judah, because it was unlawful for it to be transferred elsewhere, but that it was not necessary that the *glory* of the crown once given should be perpetuated, I deem it right to subscribe in part to this opinion. I say, in part, because the Jews gain nothing by this cavil, who, in order to support their fiction of a Messiah yet to come, postpone that subversion of the regal dignity which, in fact, long ago occurred. For we must keep in memory what I have said before, that while Jacob wished to sustain the minds of his descendants until the coming of the Messiah; lest they should faint through the weariness of long delay, he set before them an example in their temporal kingdom: as if he had said, that there was no reason why the Israelites, when the kingdom of David fell, should allow their hope to waver; seeing that no other change should follow, which could answer to the blessing promised by God, until the Redeemer should appear. That the nation was grievously harassed, and was under servile oppression some years before the coming of Christ happened, through the wonderful counsel of God, in order that they might be urged by continual chastisements to wish for redemption. Meanwhile, it was necessary that some collective body of the nation should remain, in which the promise might receive its fulfillment. But now, when, through nearly fifteen centuries, they have been scattered and banished from their country, having no polity, by what pretext can they fancy, from the prophecy of Jacob, that a Redeemer will come to them? Truly, as I would not willingly glory over their calamity; so, unless they, being subdued by it, open their eyes, I freely pronounce that they are worthy to perish a thousand times without remedy. It was also a most suitable method for retaining them in the faith, that the Lord would have the sons of Jacob turn their eyes upon one particular tribe, that they might not seek salvation elsewhere; and that no vague imagination might mislead them. For which end, also, the election of this family is celebrated, when it is frequently compared with, and preferred to Ephraim and the rest, in the Psalms. To us, also, it is not less useful, for the confirmation of our faith, to know that Christ

had been not only promised, but that his origin had been pointed out, as with a finger, two thousand years before he appeared.

And unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Here truly he declares that Christ should be a king, not over one people only, but that under his authority various nations shall be gathered, that they might coalesce together. I know, indeed, that the word rendered “gathering” is differently expounded by different commentators; but they who derive it from the root (הקה) to make it signify the *weakening* of the people, rashly and absurdly misapply what is said of the saving dominion of Christ, to the sanguinary pride with which they puffed up. If the word *obedience* is preferred, (as it is by others,) the sense will remain the same with that which I have followed. For this is the mode in which the gathering together will be effected; namely, that they who before were carried away to different objects of pursuit, will consent together in obedience to one common Head. Now, although Jacob had previously called the tribes about to spring from him by the name of *peoples*, for the sake of amplification, yet this gathering is of still wider extent. For, whereas he had included the whole body of the nation by their families, when he spoke of the ordinary dominion of Judah, he now extends the boundaries of a new king: as if he would say, “There shall be kings of the tribe of Judah, who shall be preminent among their brethren, and to whom the sons of the same mother shall bow down: but at length He shall follow in succession, who shall subject other *peoples* unto himself.” But this, we know, is fulfilled in Christ; to whom was promised the inheritance of the world; under whose yoke the nations are brought; and at whose will they, who before were scattered, are gathered together. Moreover, a memorable testimony is here borne to the vocation of the Gentiles, because they were to be introduced into the joint participation of the covenant, in order that they might become one people with the natural descendants of Abraham, under one Head.

They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one [tree] in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the LORD. (Isaiah 66:17)

He now describes those enemies of whom he said, that God's anger would be kindled against them; for it might have been doubtful whether he spoke of foreign and avowed enemies, or directed his discourse to the despisers of God, although they had been mixed with those who were elect and holy; and therefore he plainly addresses the false and degenerate Jews. Nor have I any doubt that, in the first place, he rebukes hypocrites, and, in the second place, when he says, "Who eat swine's flesh," he describes men of immoral lives, that is, those who were openly wicked and grossly licentious. Hypocrites sanctified themselves, that is, assumed false disguises of holiness, and deceived many under this pretense.

He that killeth an ox [is as if] he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, [as if] he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, [as if he offered] swine's blood; he that burneth incense, [as if] he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. (Isaiah 66:3)

Isaiah, in this passage, treats of the same subject of which he had formerly treated in the first and fifty-eighth chapters, and does not absolutely condemn sacrifices, but rather the blemishes and corruptions of them, because the Jews thought that God was satisfied with a deceitful and empty appearance, and at the same time cared not about the true fear of God and a pure conscience. He does not speak, therefore, of the thing itself, but censures men who abused sacrifices; because this was as much as to offer to God the shell of an empty nut. In a word, no sacrifices are acceptable to God but those which proceed from a pure heart and an upright will.

Yet it is probable that the Prophet alludes to the sacrifices of the Gentiles, which were shocking

and monstrous; for they killed men, or buried them alive. Neither the Romans, (who reckoned themselves to be more religious than other nations,) nor even the Jews, abstained from this crime. Nay more, (κακὸζῆλοι) wicked imitators polluted themselves by many child-murders, thinking that they followed their father Abraham. Isaiah says that, “when they kill an ox, they do the same thing as if they slew a man;” and thus he shews that the Jews, though they had a religion which was peculiar and which God had appointed, yet were in no respect better than the Gentiles, among whom everything was polluted and profane, and were not more highly approved by God; because the name of God is profaned by hypocrisy of religion not less than by corrupted and false worship. How necessary this admonition was, we have formerly seen; for, while the Jews were convicted of all crimes, yet, so long as they concealed themselves under this shadow, they thought that they were safe. Justly therefore does the Prophet meet them by saying, that they gain nothing more by their attempts to appease God than if they sought to offer sacrifices from the abominable sacrileges of the Gentiles.

Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. (Exodus 23:20)

God here reminds the Israelites that their wellbeing is so connected with the keeping of the Law, that, by neglecting it, they would sorely suffer. For He says that He will be their leader by the hand of an angel, which was a token of His fatherly love for them; but, on the other hand, He threatens that they would not be unpunished if they should despise such great mercy and follow their own lusts, because they will not escape the sight of the angel whom He had appointed to be their guardian. Almost all the Hebrew rabbins, with whom many others agree, too hastily think that this is spoken of Joshua, but the statements, which we shall consider more fully just beyond, by no means are reconcilable with his person. But their mistake is more than sufficiently refuted by this, first of all, that if we understand it of Joshua, the people would have

been without the angel as their leader as long as they wandered in the desert; and, besides, it was afterwards said to Moses, “Mine Angel shall go before *thee*,” (Exodus 32:34;) and again, “And I will send an Angel before thee,” (Exodus 33:2.) Moses, too, elsewhere enlarges on this act of God’s goodness, that He should have led forth His people by the hand of an angel. (Numbers 20:16.) But what need is there of a long discussion, since already mention has been so often made of the angel of their deliverance? This point ought now to be deemed established, that there is no reference here to a mortal man; and what we have already said should be remembered, that no common angel is designated, but the chief of all angels, who has always been also the Head of the Church. In which matter the authority of Paul should be sufficient for us, when he admonishes the Corinthians not to tempt Christ as their fathers tempted Him in the desert. (1 Corinthians 10:9.) We gather this, too, from the magnificent attribute which Moses immediately afterwards assigns to Him, that “the name of God should be in him.” I deem this to be of great importance, although it is generally passed over lightly. But let us consider it particularly. When God declares that He will send His angel “to keep them in the way,” He makes a demand upon them for their willing obedience, for it would be too base of them to set at nought, or to forget Him whose paternal care towards them they experience. But in the next verse, He seeks by terror to arouse them from their listlessness, where He commands them to beware of His presence, since He would take vengeance on their transgressions; wherein, also, there is a delicate allusion to be observed in the ambiguous meaning of the word employed. For, since שׂמֵר, *shamar*, in Hebrew signifies “to guard,” after He has said that an angel shall be their guardian, He warns them, on the other hand, that they should guard themselves. Herein the Angel is exalted above the rank of a human being, since He is appointed to be their judge, if the Israelites should offend in any respect; not in the way that judgment is deputed to the Prophets with reference to their doctrine, the power of which is supreme, but because nothing shall be hidden from Him. For Scripture assigns to God alone as His peculiar attribute, that we should walk before His face. What follows is to the same effect, “provoke him not,” which is everywhere spoken of God. But, as I have just said, this seems to me to be of most importance, that the name of God was to be in Him, or in the midst of Him, which is equivalent to this, that in Him shall reside my majesty and glory; and, therefore, He shall possess both the knowledge

of hearts, as well as dominion, and the power of judgment. Besides, we have already said that there is no absurdity in designating Christ by the name of the Angel, because He was not yet the Incarnate Mediator, but as often as He appeared to the ancient people He gave an indication of His future mission.

The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts. (Haggai 2:9)

He at length declares that *the glory* of the second *Temple* would be *greater* than that of *the first*, and that there would be *peace in that place*. As to the words there is nothing obscure; but we ought especially to attend to what is said.

It must, indeed, be first observed, that what is said here of the future glory of the Temple is to be applied to the excellency of those spiritual blessings which appeared when Christ was revealed, and are still conspicuous to us through faith; for ungodly men are so blind that they see them not. And this we must bear in mind, lest we dream like some gross interpreters, who think that what is here said was in part fulfilled when Herod reconstructed the Temple. For though that was a sumptuous building, yet there is no doubt but that it was an attempt of the Devil to delude the Jews, that they might cease to hope for Christ. Such was also, probably, the craft of Herod. We indeed know that he was only a half-Jew. He professed himself to be one of Abraham's children; but he accommodated his habits, we know, to those of the Jews, oddly for his own advantage. That they might not look for Christ, this delusive and empty spectacle was presented to them, so as almost to astound them. Though this, however, may not have entered into the mind of Herod, it is yet certain that the Devil's design was to present to the Jews this deceptive shade, that they might not raise up their thoughts to look for the coming of Christ, as the time was then near at hand.

God might, indeed, immediately at the beginning have caused a magnificent temple to be built:

as he had allowed a return to the people, so he might have given them courage, and supplied them with materials, to render the latter Temple equal or even superior to the Temple of Solomon. But Cyrus prohibited by an edict the Temple to be built so high, and he also made its length somewhat smaller: Why was this done? and why also did Darius do the same, who yet liberally helped the Jews, and spared no expense in building the Temple? How was it that both these kings, though guided by the Spirit of God, did not allow the Temple to be built with the same splendor with which it had been previously erected? This did not happen without the wonderful counsel of God; for we know how gross in their notions the Jews had been, and we see that even the Apostles were entangled in the same error; for they expected that the kingdom of Christ would be no other than an earthly one. Had then this Temple been equally magnificent with the former, and had the kingdom become such as it had been, the Jews would have acquiesced in these outward pomps; so that Christ would have been despised, and God's spiritual favor would have been esteemed as nothing. Since, then, they were so bent on earthly happiness, it was necessary for them to be awakened; and the Lord had regard to their weakness, by not allowing a splendid Temple to be built. But in suffering a counterfeit Temple to be built by Herod, when the manifestation of Christ was nigh, he manifested his vengeance by punishing their ingratitude, rather than his favor; and I call it counterfeit, because its splendor was never approved by God. Though Herod spent great treasures on that building, he yet profaned rather than adorned the Temple. Foolishly, then, do some commemorate what Helena, queen of Adiabeniens, had laid out, and think that thus a credit is in some measure secured to this prophecy. But it was on the contrary Satan who attempted to deceive by such impostures and crafts, that he might draw away the minds of the godly from the beauty of the spiritual Temple.

For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, [there is] no beauty that we should desire him. (Isaiah 53:2)

This must be understood to relate not merely to the person of Christ, who was despised by the world, and was at length condemned to a disgraceful death; but to his whole kingdom, which in the eyes of men had no beauty, no comeliness, no splendor, which, in short, had nothing that could direct or captivate the hearts of men to it by its outward show. Although Christ arose from the dead, yet the Jews always regarded him as a person who had been crucified and disgraced, in consequence of which they haughtily disdained him.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were [our] faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (Isaiah 53:3)

This verse conveys the same statement as the preceding, namely, that Christ will be “rejected” by men, in consequence of their beholding in him nothing but grief and infirmity. These things needed to be often repeated to the Jews, that they might not form a false conception of Christ and his kingdom; for, in order to know his glory, we must proceed from his death to his resurrection. Many stumble at his death, as if he had been vanquished and overwhelmed by it; but we ought to contemplate his power and majesty in the resurrection; and if any one choose to begin with the resurrection, he will not follow the order laid down by the Prophet, nor comprehend the Lord’s strength and power.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)

We see that here none are excepted, for the Prophet includes “all.” The whole human race would have perished, if Christ had not brought relief. He does not even except the Jews, whose hearts were puffed up with a false opinion of their own superiority, but condemns them indiscriminately, along with others, to destruction. By comparing them to sheep, he intends not to extenuate their guilt, as if little blame attached to them, but to state plainly that it belongs to Christ to gather from their wanderings those who resembled brute beasts.

For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired [it] for his habitation. This [is] my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. (Psalm 132:13-14)

Thus *he dwelt in Zion*, in the sense that there his people worshipped him according to the prescription of his law, and found besides the benefit of the service in his favorable answer to their requests. It was eventually seen, in a very striking manner, that this was the promise of an infallible God, when, after the Temple had been overthrown, the altar cast down, and the whole frame of legal service interrupted, the glory of the Lord afterwards returned to it once more, and remained there up to the advent of Christ. We all know in what a wicked and shameful manner the Jews abused the divine promise which is here made, under the impression that it necessarily laid God under an obligation to favor them, taking occasion from it, in the pride of their hearts, to despise, and even cruelly persecute the Prophets. Luther on this account calls it “the bloody promise;” for, like all hypocrites who make God’s holy name a covert for iniquity, they did not hesitate, when charged with the worst crimes, to insist that it was beyond the power of the Prophets to take from them privileges which God had bestowed. With them to assert that the Temple could be stripped of its glory, was equivalent to charging God with falsehood, and impeaching his faithfulness. Under the influence of this spirit of vain confidence they proceeded such inconceivable lengths in shedding innocent blood.