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CALVIN ON THE MEDIATOR

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This booklet is a reprint from the 1559 edition of John Calvin's theological masterwork, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 2, Chapters XII-XV. Chapel Library desires to introduce the *Institutes* to a modern generation of readers. Therefore, we have carefully edited the punctuation and the text of the 1845 English edition, translated by Henry Beveridge. We have made every effort to remain true to Calvin's original meaning. To ensure accuracy, we have consulted the translations of Thomas Norton (1634 edition), John Allen (1813 edition) and Ford Lewis Battles (Westminster Press, 1960 edition) when resolving questions of wording and meaning.

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PUBLISHER'S INTRODUCTION

Who wants to read an ancient theological debate filled with unpronounceable names and movements? Especially one littered with theological terms and mysterious concepts that are sometimes hard to understand? Who wants to be mentally stretched, challenged, and occasionally left wondering, "What in the world is the author talking about here"?

You should. At least the publisher believes so. If you are reading this booklet, you probably profess to be a Christian. A title such as *Calvin on The Mediator* will hardly appeal to non-Christians. Therefore, while we will be delighted that anyone reads this booklet, Christians will most likely be its readers. So if you are a believer, we urge you to read and even study *Calvin on The Mediator*.

The obvious question arising from such a statement is "Why?" We answer: to understand more clearly, to love and obey more fervently, and to worship more reverently the "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1Ti 2:5).

This booklet consists of Chapters 12-15 of Book 2 of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559 ed.). These four chapters are a careful, passionate, Biblical defense of the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Modern readers may find some portions of this work difficult to read. The reason is simple: Calvin was engaged in focused doctrinal warfare as he wrote these chapters. Calvin refers to people and movements that are strangers to some of us: Osiander, Simons, Mani and Manichaeans, Marcion and Marcionites, Nestorius, Eutyches, and Servetus. Calvin uses theological terms that are foreign to many: expiation, propitiation, communicating of properties, *homoousia*, hypostatic union, and others. Furthermore, this translation of Calvin's *Institutes* dates back to 1845: it is not contemporary English.

For these reasons, Chapel Library has provided definitions for archaic and difficult words, section summaries, explanations of theological terms, biographical and historical notes, and a careful revision of punctuation to help our readers profit from Calvin's rich discussions. We have even moved Greek and Latin terms from the Beveridge text to footnotes.

Another question may arise at this point: "Why bother?" Because this ancient treasure chest is worth digging into. Consider the following: Christ the Mediator is the subject of the Bible. Christ the Mediator is the object of faith. Christ the Mediator is the heart and soul of God's eternal purpose of redemption. Christ the Mediator is the Eternal Son of God made flesh. Christ the Prophet reveals God's way of salvation for sinners. Christ the Priest offered up the only acceptable sacrifice for His people and intercedes for them. Christ the King governs, protects, and preserves His people until they join Him in eternal glory. Christ the Mediator is the only hope for sinners to receive eternal life.

So while this may not be an easy read for some, it will be a profitable one. Even if one does not grasp everything Calvin says, prayerful and careful study will be like digging in a gold mine. We pray that you will find eternal treasures as you read Calvin's presentation and defense of Christ the Mediator.

Part One

Christ Had to Become Man in Order to Fulfill the Office of Mediator

Sections 1-3

Reasons Why It Was Necessary That the Mediator Should Be God and Should Become Man

Section 1 Only He Who Was True God and True Man Could Bridge the Gulf between God and Ourselves¹

It deeply concerned us² that He Who was to be our Mediator³ should be very God and very man. If the necessity be inquired into, it was not what is commonly termed simple or absolute, but flowed from the divine decree⁴ on which the salvation of man depended. Our most merciful Father determined what was best for us. Our iniquities, like a cloud intervening between Him and us, utterly alienated us from the kingdom of heaven (Isa 59:2). None but a person reaching to Him could be the medium of restoring peace. But who could thus reach to Him? Could any of the sons of Adam? All of them, with their parents, shuddered at the sight of God (Gen 3:8). Could any of the angels? They had need of a head, by connection with which they might adhere to their God entirely and inseparably (Eph 1:22; Col 2:10). What then? The case was certainly desperate if the Godhead itself did not descend to us, it being impossible for us to ascend. Thus, [it was necessary that the Son of God should] become our Emmanuel, that is, “God with us” (Isa 7:14; Mat 1:23), and in such a way that by mutual union His divinity and our nature might be combined. Otherwise, neither was the proximity near enough nor the affinity strong enough to give us hope that God would dwell with us, so *great* was the repugnance⁵ between our pollution and the spotless purity of God! Had man remained free from all taint, he was of too humble a condition to [approach] God without a Mediator. What then must it have been, when by fatal ruin,⁶ he was plunged into death and hell, defiled by so many stains, made loathsome by corruption, [and] overwhelmed with every curse?

It is not without cause, therefore, that Paul, when he would set forth Christ as the Mediator, distinctly declares Him to be *man*. There is, says he, “one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1Ti 2:5). He might have called Him “God”; or at least omitting to call Him God, he might also have omitted to call Him “man.” But because the Spirit, speaking by his mouth, knew our infirmity, He opportunely⁷ provides for it by the most appropriate remedy, setting the Son of God familiarly before us as one of ourselves. That no one therefore may feel perplexed where to seek the Mediator, or by what means to reach Him, the Spirit by calling Him “man” reminds us that He is near, nay, contiguous to⁸ us, inasmuch as He is our flesh. And, indeed, he intimates the same thing in another place, where he explains at greater length that He is not a high priest who “cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15).

Section 2 The Mediator Must Be True God and True Man⁹

This will become still clearer if we reflect that the work to be performed by the Mediator was of no common description: to restore us to the divine favor—to make us, instead of sons of men, sons of God; instead of heirs of hell, heirs of a heavenly kingdom. Who could do this unless the Son of God should also become the Son of man and so receive what is ours as to transfer to us what is

¹ **SUMMARY 1.1:** Calvin begins with reasons why it was necessary for Christ to be fully God and fully man. God decreed it because this was best for us. No human being or angel could have brought us to God. God had to come down to us because we could not go up to Him. Only a Mediator that was both God and man could bridge the gulf between man’s sinfulness and God’s holiness. God therefore provided the appropriate remedy, our Mediator: “the man Christ Jesus.” God’s Son became one of us—a human being—to be near us and to become High Priest for us.

² **It deeply concerned us** – It was of the greatest importance to us.

³ **Mediator** – one who comes between two parties to reconcile them: “It pleased God in His eternal purpose to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus His only begotten Son, according to the Covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and Man; the Prophet, Priest and King; Head and Savior of His Church, the Heir of all things, and Judge of the world: unto Whom He did from all eternity give a people to be His seed and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified. (*Second London Baptist Confession* 8.1)

⁴ **decree** – “What are the decrees of God? The decrees of God are His eternal purpose according to the counsel of His own will, whereby for His own glory He has foreordained whatever comes to pass.” (*Spurgeon’s Catechism* Q. 7)

⁵ **repugnance** – disagreement; contradiction.

⁶ **fatal ruin** – Adam’s fall into sin.

⁷ **opportunely** – at the right moment.

⁸ **contiguous to** – touching.

⁹ **SUMMARY 1.2:** Our Mediator had to be true God and true man to restore us to God. Only the Son of God Himself could accomplish this: the Son of God became Son of man, so that sons of men may become sons of God. Our adoption as God’s children is a reality only because the Son of God became a true man, sin excepted. Only He Who is “Life” could swallow up death. As God, Christ possesses life, righteousness, and governing power over all things. Therefore, God in infinite mercy determined to redeem us: He became our Redeemer in the Person of His Son.

His, making that which is His by nature to become ours by grace? Relying on this earnest,¹⁰ we trust that we are the sons of God because the natural Son of God assumed to Himself a body of our body, flesh of our flesh, bones of our bones that He might be one with us (Gen 2:23-24; Eph 5:29-31). He declined not to take what was peculiar to us that He might in His turn extend to us what was peculiarly His own, and thus might be in common with us both Son of God and Son of man. Hence that holy brotherhood that He commends with His own lips when He says, “I ascend to my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God” (Joh 20:17). In this way, we have a sure inheritance in the heavenly kingdom because the only Son of God, to Whom it entirely belonged, has adopted us as His brethren; and if brethren, then partners with Him in the inheritance (Rom 8:17).

Moreover, it was especially necessary for this cause also that He Who was to be our Redeemer should be truly God and man. It was His to swallow up death: who but Life could do so? It was His to conquer sin: who could do so save Righteousness itself? It was His to put to flight the powers of the air and the world: who could do so but the mighty power superior to both? But who possesses life, righteousness, and the dominion and government of heaven, but God alone? Therefore, God in His infinite mercy having determined to redeem us became Himself our Redeemer in the Person of His only begotten Son (Rom 5:8).

Section 3 Only He Who Was True God and True Man Could Be Obedient in Our Stead¹¹

Another principal part of our reconciliation with God was that man, who had lost himself by his disobedience, should by way of remedy oppose to it¹² obedience, satisfy the justice of God, and pay the penalty of sin. Therefore, our Lord came forth very man, adopted the person of Adam, and assumed his name that He might in his stead obey the Father; that He might present our flesh as the price of satisfaction to the just judgment of God and in the same flesh pay the penalty that we had incurred. Finally, since as God only He could not suffer and as man only could not overcome death, He united the human nature with the divine that He might subject the weakness of the one to death as an expiation¹³ of sin, and by the power of the other—maintaining a struggle with death—might gain us the victory. Those, therefore, who rob Christ of divinity or humanity either detract from His majesty and glory or obscure His goodness. On the other hand, they are no less injurious to men, undermining and subverting their faith, which cannot stand, unless it rest on this foundation.

Moreover, the expected Redeemer was that son of Abraham and David Whom God had promised in the Law and in the Prophets. Here believers have another advantage. Tracing up His origin in regular series to David and Abraham, they more distinctly recognize Him as the Messiah celebrated by so many oracles. But special attention must be paid to what I lately explained, namely, that a common nature is the pledge of our union with the Son of God. Clothed with our flesh, He warred to death with sin that He might be our triumphant conqueror. The flesh that He received of us, He offered in sacrifice, so that by making expiation He might wipe away our guilt and appease¹⁴ the just anger of His Father.

[EDITOR’S NOTE: Sections 4-7 below make up Calvin’s defense of the *purpose* of Christ’s incarnation against the errors of Andreas Osiander (1498-1552). Osiander was a Jesuit priest who became a Lutheran reformer in Nuremberg, Germany. He appears in three of the *Institutes’* four Books.¹⁵ Calvin refutes Osiander’s view of the image of God (Book 1) and of Christ the Mediator (Book 2) because of their connection to justification by faith and imputed righteousness (Book 3). This was the heart of the issue: Osiander rejected the doctrine of justification by imputed righteousness. This emphasis radically changed the purpose, the Person, and the work of Christ the Mediator.

Osiander was a mystic.¹⁶ The essence of his doctrinal system, generally speaking, was mystical union with Christ the Eternal Word. This is clear in his understanding of Adam and “God’s image” in him. We may summarize Osiander’s views this way: The “image of God” was not a part of Adam in his natural state as a creature. Rather, the “image of God” is the eternal Son Himself. Adam was created in “the image of God”: by this, Osiander meant that the incarnate Christ Who would someday come was the model by which God fashioned Adam. This was tied to God’s eternal purpose: before the creation of the world, God determined that His eternal Son would become Christ, the incarnate man. In other words, the future Christ was the prototype of Adam and humanity. Christ’s incarnation was necessary as the “First Man,” not as the Redeemer. Thus, for Osiander, the primary purpose of the incarnation was not redemption. Christ would therefore have become a man even if Adam had not sinned. God’s goal for human beings was union with them, that is, the Eternal Son dwelling in them. This became reality when God created Adam “in His image”: this meant that the eternal Son dwelled *in* Adam before Adam sinned. This is a crucial point: Adam was righteous because *the Son dwelled in him*. When Adam sinned, he lost his righteousness, that is, Christ’s presence in him. God’s way of justifying sinful

¹⁰ **earnest** – a pledge of anything afterwards to be received in greater abundance; in this case referring to God’s Son becoming man to save us.

¹¹ **SUMMARY 1.3:** Only One Who was true God and true man could obey God as our substitute. As the new Adam, Christ perfectly obeyed the Father: He sacrificed His humanity to satisfy God’s judgment upon our sins. As God, He could not die; as man, He could not overcome death. As the God-man, His humanity paid for the guilt of our sins; His deity triumphed over death. Therefore, those who minimize Christ’s deity or His humanity undermine the faith. We may clearly recognize Him as Messiah because He was Abraham’s and David’s descendent, promised in the Law and Prophets. Christ sacrificed His humanity to wipe away our guilt and appease God’s anger.

¹² **oppose to it** – counter it with.

¹³ **expiation** – “Expiation has reference to the *guilt* of sin. To expiate is to remove or cover the guilt of sin.” (Morton H. Smith, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, 382.)

¹⁴ **appease** – pacify.

¹⁵ Book 1.xv.3-5; Book 2.4-7; and Book 3.11.5-12.

¹⁶ **mystic** – one who believes in and practices seeking a direct knowledge of and personal experience with God through spiritual union with Him.

mankind was God's Son dwelling in them again. God's restoration of the human race began when the eternal Son became the man Christ Jesus. Osiander's view of salvation had two aspects: redemption and justification. For our redemption, Christ kept the Law for us and died upon the Cross. By this, Christ obtained forgiveness of sins for us. However, this is not our righteousness. Sinners become righteous in this way: when they hear and believe the words of Christ and the Apostles, Christ's divine nature enters them. Christ's divine nature dwelling in them is their righteousness. God therefore does not declare us righteous because of Christ's work for us: God justifies us because of *Christ's divine nature in us*.

Calvin and the Reformers understood from Scripture that the ground of our justification was the imputed righteousness of Christ, not His indwelling presence. God's purpose for Christ's incarnation was redemption, not as the prototype of mankind. Osiander's view changed the reason for Christ's incarnation, minimized His sacrifice on the Cross, and distorted God's way of justification. For these reasons, Calvin argues passionately that the Old and New Testaments testify to the necessity of Christ's incarnation for the sole purpose of redeeming sinners.]

Sections 4-7

Objections to This Doctrine Answered

Section 4 The Sole Purpose of Christ's Incarnation Was Our Redemption¹⁷

He who considers these things with due attention will easily disregard vague speculations that attract giddy¹⁸ minds and lovers of novelty. One speculation of this class is that Christ, even though there had been no need of His interposition¹⁹ to redeem the human race, would still have become man. I admit that in the first ordering of creation, while the state of nature was entire, He was appointed head of angels and men. For [this] reason, Paul designates Him "the first-born of every creature" (Col 1:15). But since the whole Scripture proclaims that He was clothed with flesh in order to become a Redeemer, it is presumptuous to imagine *any other cause or end*. We know well why Christ was at first promised: that He might renew a fallen world and succor²⁰ lost man. Hence, under the Law He was typified by sacrifices to inspire believers with the hope that God would be propitious²¹ to them after He was reconciled by the expiation of their sins. Since from the earliest age, even before the Law was promulgated,²² there was never any promise of a Mediator without blood, we justly infer that He was destined in the eternal counsel of God to purge the pollution of man, the shedding of blood being the symbol of expiation.

Thus, too, the prophets, in discoursing of Him, foretold that He would be the Mediator between God and man. It is sufficient to refer to the very remarkable prophecy of Isaiah (Isa 53:4-5), in which he foretells that He was "smitten for our iniquities"; that "the chastisement of our peace was upon him"; that as a priest "he was made an offering for sin" (Heb 9:11-12); "that by his stripes we are healed"; that as "all we like lost sheep have gone astray," "it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief," that He might "bear our iniquities" (Isa 53:5-6). After hearing that Christ was divinely appointed to bring relief to miserable sinners, whose overleaping these limits gives too much indulgence to foolish curiosity, then when He actually appeared, He declared the cause of His advent to be that by appeasing God He might bring us from death unto life.

To the same effect was the testimony of the Apostles concerning Him. Thus John, before teaching that the Word was made flesh (Joh 1:14), narrates the fall of man (Joh 1:9-11). But above all, let us listen to our Savior Himself when discoursing of His office: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Joh 3:16). Again, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (Joh 5:25). "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (Joh 11:25). "The Son of man is come to save that which was lost" (Mat 18:11). Again, "They that be whole need not a physician" (Mat 9:12). I should never [be] done were I to quote all the passages.

Indeed, the Apostles, with one consent, lead us back to this fountain. Assuredly, if He had not come to reconcile God, the honor of His priesthood would fall, seeing it was His office as priest to stand between God and men and "offer both gifts and sacri-

¹⁷ **SUMMARY 1.4:** Having explained the *necessity* of the Incarnation, Calvin now defends the *purpose* of the Incarnation against the errors of Andreas Osiander. Osiander taught that God predestined Christ to become a man, even if Adam had not sinned. Calvin's reply was that Christ's sole purpose for becoming a man was to redeem sinners. In this section, Calvin demonstrates that "the whole Scripture"—the Law, the Prophets, and the Apostles—refutes Osiander. Scripture says Christ became a man for *one* purpose: to be the Mediator between a holy God and sinful men. Christ became a man to turn away God's wrath as a sacrifice for sinners.

¹⁸ **giddy** – not inclined to serious thought.

¹⁹ **interposition** – stepping in between God and man.

²⁰ **succor** – aid; help.

²¹ **propitious** – favorably disposed.

²² **promulgated** – published.

fices for sins” (Heb 5:1); nor could He be our righteousness, as having been made a propitiation²³ for us in order that God might not impute to us our sins (2Co 5:19). In short, He would be stripped of all the titles with which Scripture invests Him. Nor could Paul’s doctrine stand: “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom 8:3). Nor what he states in another passage, “The grace of God that bringeth salvation has appeared to all men” (Ti 2:11).

In fine,²⁴ the only end that the Scripture uniformly assigns for the Son of God voluntarily assuming our nature, and even receiving it as a command from the Father, is that He might propitiate the Father to us by becoming a victim.²⁵ “Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer...That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name” (Luk 24:46-47). “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again...This commandment have I received of my Father” (Joh 10:17, 18). “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up” (Joh 3:14). “Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name” (Joh 12:27-28). Here He distinctly assigns as the reason for assuming our nature that He might become a propitiatory victim to take away sin. For the same reason Zacharias declares that He came “to perform the mercy promised to our fathers...to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death” (Luk 1:72, 79). Let us remember that all these things are affirmed of the Son of God, “in whom”—as Paul elsewhere declares—“are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” and [apart from] Whom it was his determination “not to know anything” (Col 2:3; 1Co 2:2).

Section 5 Would Christ Have Also Become Man If Adam Had Not Sinned?²⁶

Should anyone object that in this there is nothing to prevent the same Christ—Who redeemed us when condemned—from also testifying His love to us [in a state of integrity and safety], by assuming our nature, we have the brief answer: when the Spirit declares that by the eternal decree of God the two things were connected together, i.e., that Christ should be our Redeemer and at the same time a partaker of our nature, it is unlawful to inquire further. He, who is tickled with a desire of knowing something more, not contented with the immutable ordination of God, shows also that he is not even contented with that Christ Who has been given us as the price of redemption. Indeed, Paul not only declares for what end He was sent, but rising to the sublime mystery of predestination, seasonably represses all the wantonness and prurience²⁷ of the human mind. “He has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved: In whom we have redemption through his blood” (Eph 1:4-7).

Here certainly the fall of Adam is not presupposed as [preceding] in point of time; but our attention is directed to what God predetermined before all ages, when He was pleased to provide a cure for the misery of the human race. If again it is objected that this counsel of God depended on the fall of man, which He foresaw, to me it is sufficient and more to reply that those who propose to inquire or desire to know more of Christ than God predestinated by His secret decree are presuming with impious audacity to invent a new Christ! Paul, when discoursing of the proper office of Christ, justly prays for the Ephesians that God would strengthen them “by his Spirit in the inner man,” that they might “be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge” (Eph 3:16, 18-19). [It is] as if He intended of set purpose to set barriers around our minds and prevent them from declining one iota²⁸ from the gift of reconciliation whenever mention is made of Christ. Wherefore, seeing it is as Paul declares it to be, “a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1Ti 1:15), in it I willingly acquiesce.²⁹ And since the same Apostle elsewhere declares that the grace that is now manifested by the Gospel “was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2Ti 1:9), I am resolved to adhere to it firmly even to the end.

²³ **propitiation** – “Propitiation has reference to the wrath or displeasure of God. To *propitiate* is to satisfy the divine justice and thus to appease His wrath. In the Biblical usage of the term, the justice of God is satisfied by the propitiatory sacrifice.” (Morton H. Smith, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, 382.)

²⁴ **in fine** – in short; in summary.

²⁵ **becoming a victim** – Calvin does not use the word *victim* to imply that Christ suffered powerlessly at the hands of men. Scripture teaches that He willingly laid down His life as a sacrifice for His children (Joh 10:17). Calvin’s uses “victim” only to highlight that Christ was indeed a sacrifice.

²⁶ **SUMMARY 1.5:** Calvin rebukes Osiander for speculating that Christ would have become a man, even if Adam had not sinned. Scripture reveals that God’s predestination links Christ’s Incarnation and redemption. To speculate about Christ beyond what Scripture says is to invent a new Christ! God always wants our minds associating Christ and redemption. The Word says that Christ came into the world to save sinners, and Calvin willingly agrees with this. Osiander, having stirred up this controversy, claimed that earlier theologians held his view. He arrogantly criticized those who disagreed with him and boasted that Scripture nowhere opposed his view. Calvin, however, suggests that Paul refuted speculations such as Osiander’s when he wrote, “Avoid foolish questions” (Ti 3:9)!

²⁷ **wantonness and prurience** – lack of self-restraint and itching curiosity.

²⁸ **one iota** – the smallest letter in the Greek language, meaning therefore, “in the least.”

²⁹ **acquiesce** – agree.

This moderation is unjustly vituperated by Osiander,³⁰ who has unhappily in the present day again agitated this question, which a few had formerly raised. He brings a charge of overweening confidence³¹ against those who deny that the Son of God would have appeared in the flesh if Adam had not fallen because this notion is not repudiated by any passage of Scripture. As if Paul did not lay a curb on perverse curiosity when after speaking of the redemption obtained by Christ, he bids us [to] “avoid foolish questions” (Ti 3:9). To such insanity have some³² proceeded in their preposterous eagerness to seem acute³³ that they have made it a question whether the Son of God might not have assumed the nature of an ass. This blasphemy, at which all pious minds justly shudder with detestation, Osiander excuses by the pretext that it is no where distinctly refuted in Scripture; as if Paul, when he counted nothing valuable or worth knowing “save Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1Co 2:2), were admitting that the author of salvation is an ass. He who elsewhere declares that Christ was by the eternal counsel of the Father appointed “head over all things to the church” (Eph 1:22), would never have acknowledged another to whom no office of redemption had been assigned.

Section 6 Osiander’s Doctrine of the Image of God³⁴

The principle on which Osiander founds³⁵ is altogether frivolous. He will have it that man was created in the image of God, inasmuch as he was formed on the model of the future Messiah, in order to resemble Him Whom the Father had already determined to clothe with flesh. Hence, he infers that, though Adam had never fallen from his first and pure original, Christ would still have been man. All men of sound judgment at once discern how silly and distorted this view is. Still, he thinks he was the first to see what the image of God was: that not only did the divine glory shine forth in the excellent endowments with which [Adam] was adorned, but God dwelt in him “essentially.”

I grant that Adam bore the image of God, inasmuch as he was united to God (this being the true and highest perfection of dignity). Yet I maintain that the likeness of God is to be sought for only in those marks of superiority with which God has distinguished Adam above the other [creatures]. Likewise, with one consent, [all men] acknowledge that Christ was even then the image of God. Accordingly, whatever excellence was engraved on Adam had its origin in this: by means of the only begotten Son, he approximated to the glory of his Maker. Man, therefore, was created in the image of God (Gen 1:27). In him, the Creator was pleased to behold His own glory, as in a mirror. To this degree of honor, [Adam] was exalted by the kindness of the only begotten Son. But I add: as the Son was the common Head of both men and angels, so the dignity that was conferred on man belonged to the angels also. For when we hear them called the “sons of God” (Psa 82:6), it would be incongruous³⁶ to deny that they were endued with some quality in which they resembled the Father. But if He was pleased that His glory should be represented in men *and* angels and made manifest in both natures, it is ignorant trifling in Osiander to say that angels were postponed³⁷ to men because they did not bear the image of Christ. They could not constantly enjoy the immediate presence of God if they were not like to Him. Nor does Paul teach (Col 3:10) that men are renewed in the image of God in any other way than by being associated with angels (Mat 22:30), that they may be united together under one head. In fine, if we believe Christ, our felicity³⁸ will be perfected when we shall have been received into the heav-ens and made like the angels. But if Osiander is entitled to infer that the primary type of the image of God was in the man Christ, on the same ground may anyone maintain that Christ [had] to partake of the angelic nature, seeing that angels also possess the image of God.

³⁰ **This moderation...vituperated by Osiander** – Osiander harshly criticized Calvin’s modest view of simply believing Scripture regarding the purpose of Christ’s incarnation.

³¹ **overweening confidence** – unrestrained arrogance.

³² **William of Ockham** (c. 1285-c. 1347/49) – English Franciscan philosopher, theologian, and political writer; considered one of the major figures of medieval thought.

³³ **acute** – witty; clever.

³⁴ **SUMMARY 1.6:** Osiander said that Adam was created in “God’s image.” “God’s image,” he taught, was the future incarnate Christ. He reasoned from this that even if Adam had not sinned, Christ would still have become man. He also believed he was the first to understand “God’s image in man.” By this, he meant Christ’s divine nature dwelled in Adam “essentially.” That is, Adam was infused with Christ’s divinity. Calvin agrees that Adam bore God’s image, but this meant intellectual and moral gifts, which were a reflection of God’s deity, not “essential” deity united to man. Calvin then demonstrates that men *and* angels bear God’s image and says Osiander shows his ignorance by teaching that angels do not bear the image of Christ.

³⁵ **founds** – other editions read *of which Osiander boasts*.

³⁶ **incongruous** – inappropriate.

³⁷ **postponed** – put in an inferior position.

³⁸ **felicity** – happiness.

Section 7 Point-by-Point Refutation of Osiander³⁹

Osiander has no reason to fear that God would be found a liar, if the decree to incarnate the Son was not previously immutably fixed in His mind. Even had Adam not lost his integrity, he with the angels would have been like God. It would not therefore have been necessary that the Son of God should become either a man or an angel. In vain does [Osiander] entertain the absurd fear that unless it had been determined by the immutable counsel of God before man was created, that Christ should be born, not as the Redeemer, but as the “First Man,” He might lose His precedence, since He would not have been born except for an accidental circumstance, namely that He might restore the lost race of man. In this way, [He] would have been created in the image of Adam. For why should [Osiander] be alarmed at what the Scripture plainly teaches: “He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15)? Hence Luke also hesitates not to reckon Him as a son of Adam in His genealogy (Luk 3:38). I should like to know why Christ is termed by Paul the “Second Adam” (1Co 15:47), unless it be that a human condition was decreed Him for the purpose of raising up the ruined posterity of Adam. For if in point of order, that condition was antecedent to creation, [Christ] ought to have been called the “First Adam.” Osiander confidently affirms that, because Christ was in the purpose of God foreknown as man, men were formed after Him as their model. But Paul, by calling [Christ] the “Second Adam” gives that revolt that made it necessary to restore nature to its primitive condition an intermediate place between its original formation and the restitution that we obtain by Christ. It follows that it was this restitution that made the Son of God be born and thereby become man. Moreover, Osiander argues ill and absurdly that as long as Adam maintained his integrity, he would have been the image of himself, and not of Christ. I maintain, on the contrary, that although the Son of God had never become incarnate, nevertheless the image of God was conspicuous in Adam, both in his body and his soul; in the rays of this image, it always appeared that Christ was truly Head and had in all things the pre-eminence. In this way, we dispose of the futile sophism⁴⁰ put forth by Osiander that the angels would have been without this Head had not God purposed to clothe His Son with flesh, even independent of the sin of Adam.

He inconsiderately assumes what no rational person will grant that Christ could have had no supremacy over the angels, so that they might enjoy Him as their Prince, unless in so far as He was man. But it is easy to infer from the words of Paul that inasmuch as He is the eternal Word of God, He is the first-born of every creature (Col 1:15). [This is] not because He is created or is to be reckoned among the creatures, but because the entire structure of the world, such as it was from the beginning—when adorned with exquisite beauty—had no other beginning. Then, inasmuch as He was made man, He is the first-born from the dead (Col 1:18). For in one short passage, the Apostle calls our attention to both views: (1) that by the Son all things were created (Col 1:16) so that He has dominion over angels; and (2) that He became man in order that He might begin to be a Redeemer (Col 1:14).

Owing to the same ignorance, Osiander says that men would not have had Christ for their king unless He had been a man. As if the kingdom of God could not have been established by His eternal Son, though not clothed with human flesh, holding the supremacy while angels and men were gathered together to participate in His celestial life and glory! But he is always deluded—or imposes upon himself by this false principle—that the church would have been “without a head”⁴¹ had not Christ appeared in the flesh. In the same way as angels enjoyed Him for their Head, could He not by His divine energy preside over men, and by the secret virtue of His Spirit quicken and cherish them as His body, until they were gathered into heaven to enjoy the same life with the angels?

The absurdities that I have been refuting, Osiander regards as infallible oracles. Taking an intoxicating delight in his own speculations, his wont⁴² is to extract ridiculous plans out of nothing. He afterwards says that he has a much stronger passage to produce, namely, “the prophecy of Adam,” who, when the woman was brought to him, said, “This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23). But how does he prove it to be a prophecy? Because, in Matthew, Christ attributes the same expression to God, as if everything that God has spoken by man contained a prophecy. On the same principle, as the Law proceeded from God, let Osiander in each precept find a prophecy. Add that our Savior’s exposition would have been harsh and groveling had He confined Himself to the literal meaning (Mat 19:4-6). He was not referring to the mystical union with which He has honored the church, but only to conjugal fidelity, and states that the reason why God declared man and wife to be one flesh was to prevent anyone from violating that indissoluble tie by divorce.

If this simple meaning is too low for Osiander, let him censure Christ for not leading His disciples to the hidden sense by interpreting His Father’s words with more subtlety. Paul gives no countenance to Osiander’s dream, when, after saying that “we are

³⁹ **SUMMARY 1.7:** Osiander believed that God immutably decreed Christ to be the “First Man,” the prototype of humanity. To say that Christ came primarily as a Redeemer would mean God had changed His plan. This would make Him a liar. Calvin replies that Christ would have had no reason to become man if Adam had not sinned. Osiander’s concern is this: if Christ came only as a Redeemer, then He would not have been born except for “an accidental circumstance,” that is, Adam’s Fall. He would also lose His privilege as the “First man.” Worse, if Christ were born because of Adam’s fall, then Christ would have been created in *man’s* image (the opposite of his view). Calvin says that Scripture clearly reveals that Christ *was* born in man’s image as the “Second Adam” to redeem lost men. Furthermore, Osiander thinks Christ would have had supremacy over angels only as the God-man. Calvin shows that Paul refutes this. Again, Osiander thinks that Christ could not have been Head of His church, unless He became a man. Calvin says that if Christ had not become a man, He could easily have reigned over angels and men as the Eternal Son of God. Finally, Osiander sets forth “the prophecy of Adam”: “bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23). Calvin argues that this is no prophecy, but only refers to marital faithfulness. Both Christ and Paul refute Osiander’s absurdities.

⁴⁰ **sophism** – an argument correct in form or appearance but actually invalid.

⁴¹ **without a head** – *Greek*: ἀκεφαλον (Beveridge text).

⁴² **wont** – habit.

members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones,” he immediately adds, “this is a great mystery” (Eph 5:30-32). For he meant not to refer to the sense in which Adam used the words, but sets forth, under the figure and similitude of marriage, the sacred union that makes us one with Christ. His words have this meaning: for reminding us that he is speaking of Christ and the church, he, by way of correction, distinguishes between the marriage tie and the spiritual union of Christ with His church. Wherefore, this subtlety vanishes at once. I deem it unnecessary to discuss similar absurdities: for from this very brief refutation, the vanity of them all will be discovered. Abundantly sufficient for the solid nurture of the children of God is this sober truth, that “when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them who were under the law” (Gal 4:4-5).

Part Two

Christ Assumed the True Substance of Human Flesh

Sections 1-2

Referring to Ancient Heresies, Calvin Answers Menno Simons⁴³

Section 1 Proof of Christ’s True Manhood⁴⁴

Of the divinity of Christ, which has elsewhere been established by clear and solid proofs, I presume it were superfluous again to treat. It remains, therefore, to see how He fulfilled the office of Mediator, when clothed with our flesh. In ancient times, the reality of His human nature was impugned by the Manichees⁴⁵ and Marcionites,⁴⁶ the latter figuring to themselves a phantom⁴⁷ instead of the body of Christ and the former dreaming of His having been invested with celestial⁴⁸ flesh. The passages of Scripture contradictory to both are numerous and strong. The blessing is not promised in a heavenly seed or the mask of a man, but the seed of Abraham and Jacob (Gen 12:3; 17:2, 7; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4); nor is the everlasting throne promised to an aerial man,⁴⁹ but to the Son of David and the fruit of his loins (Psa 45:6; 132:11).

Hence, He is called the Son of David and Abraham (Mat 1:1), when manifested in the flesh, not because He was born of a virgin and yet created in the air, but because, as Paul explains, He was “made of the seed of David, according to the flesh” (Rom 1:3). The same Apostle elsewhere says that He came of the Jews (Rom 9:5). Wherefore, our Lord Himself, not contented with the name “man,” frequently calls Himself the “Son of man,” wishing to express more clearly that He was a man by true human descent. The Holy Spirit having so often, by so many organs,⁵⁰ with so much care and plainness, declared a matter that in itself is not abstruse,⁵¹ who could have thought that mortals would have had the effrontery to darken it with their glosses?⁵²

⁴³ **Menno Simons** (1496-1561) – a Dutch Catholic priest who resigned his priesthood to join the Anabaptists and who later founded the Mennonites. Calvin never met Simons; but Martin Micron (1523-1559) asked Calvin to help him refute Menno’s erroneous views of the incarnation. Simons did not believe that Christ could be born of Mary without being born with a sinful humanity. He therefore taught that Christ became human by taking “heavenly flesh” with Him as He went to earth: Menno emphasized that Jesus was born *in* Mary but not *of* Mary. (Verduin/Wenger, *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, 432.) Simons wrote, “It was disgraceful to believe that Christ, as the Eternal Word of God, had so united Himself to a human nature that He permitted Himself to be contained by and born of the virgin’s womb.” (Stephen Edmonson, *Calvin’s Christology*, 213.) Calvin actually has Simons in view, as he wages war against opponents of Christ’s humanity in this chapter.

⁴⁴ **SUMMARY 2.1:** Calvin emphasizes Christ’s humanity in this chapter. He had presented Biblical proof for Christ’s *deity* in the *Institutes* Book 1.13. Now he Scripturally proves Christ’s *humanity*, which is as important for the salvation of sinners as His deity. Heretics from long ago, Manichaeans and Marcionites, attacked the Biblical doctrine of Christ’s incarnation with their false views. Nevertheless, Calvin shows that Scripture abundantly demonstrates the reality of Christ’s manhood.

⁴⁵ **Manichees** – disciples of **Mani** (A.D. 216-277), an Iranian philosopher who synthesized Persian, Christian, and Buddhist ideas to form Manichaeism. This Persian (Iranian) Gnostic religion was one of the major religions of the ancient world. Augustine was a Manichaean before his conversion to Jesus Christ.

⁴⁶ **Marcionites** – followers of **Marcion of Pontus** (c. 85-160), a heretic who taught in Rome about A.D. 150. He rejected the Old Testament, denied the material body of Jesus, and taught that Jesus, an emissary of the Father, was a mere appearance and suddenly appeared as a full-grown man in the fifteenth year of Tiberius. Marcionism was a heresy of the 2nd and 3rd centuries and, like Gnosticism, taught that matter was evil and that asceticism (extreme self-denial) was the only way of salvation.

⁴⁷ **phantom** – something that appears to the sight, but has no substance.

⁴⁸ **celestial** – heavenly.

⁴⁹ **aerial man** – a “man of air”; phantom.

⁵⁰ **organs** – persons or things by which some particular purpose is carried out; instruments.

⁵¹ **abstruse** – difficult.

⁵² **glosses** – deceptive interpretations.

Many other passages are at hand, were it wished to produce more: for instance, that one of Paul that “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman” (Gal 4:4) and innumerable others, which show that He was subject to hunger, thirst, cold, and the other infirmities of our nature. But from the many, we must chiefly select those that may conduce to build up our minds in true faith, as when it is said, “Verily, he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham” (Heb 2:16), “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death” (Heb 2:14). Again, “Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb 2:11). “Wherefore in all things it behoved⁵³ him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest” (Heb 2:17). Again, “We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb 4:15), and the like. To the same effect is the passage to which we lately referred, in which Paul distinctly declares that the sins of the world [had] to be expiated⁵⁴ in our flesh (Rom 8:3). And certainly everything that the Father conferred on Christ pertains to us for this reason, that “he is the head,” that from Him the whole body is “fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth” (Eph 4:16).

Nay, in no other way could it hold true as is said, that the Spirit was given to Him without measure (Joh 1:16), and that out of His fullness have all we received; since nothing could be more absurd than that God, in His own essence, should be enriched by an adventitious⁵⁵ gift. For this reason also, Christ Himself elsewhere says, “For their sakes I sanctify myself” (Joh 17:19).

Section 2 Against the Opponents of Christ’s True Manhood⁵⁶

The passages that they produce in confirmation of their error are absurdly wrested.⁵⁷ Nor do they gain anything by their frivolous subtleties when they attempt to do away with what I have now adduced in opposition to them. Marcion imagines that Christ, instead of a body, assumed a phantom because it is elsewhere said that He was made in the likeness of man and found in fashion as a man (Phi 2:7-8). Thus, he altogether overlooks what Paul is then discussing: his object is not to show what kind of body Christ assumed. [Rather,] when He might have justly asserted His divinity, He was pleased to exhibit nothing but the attributes of a mean and despised man. For, in order to exhort us to submission by His example, He shows that, when as God He might have displayed to the world the brightness of His glory, He gave up His right and voluntarily emptied Himself; that He assumed the form of a servant and, contented with that humble condition, suffered His divinity to be concealed under a veil of flesh (Phi 2:5-7).

Here, unquestionably, he explains not what Christ was, but in what way He acted. Nay, from the whole context, it is easily gathered that it was in the true nature of man that Christ humbled Himself. For what is meant by the words, He was “found in fashion as a man” (Phi 2:8), but that for a time, instead of being resplendent with divine glory, the human form only appeared in a mean and abject condition?⁵⁸ Nor would the words of Peter, that He was “put to death in the flesh, but quickened⁵⁹ by the Spirit” (1Pe 3:18), hold true unless the Son of God had become weak in the nature of man. Paul explains this more clearly when he declares that He “was crucified through weakness” (2Co 13:4). Hence His exaltation. For it is distinctly said that Christ acquired new glory after He humbled Himself. This could fitly apply only to a man endued with a body and a soul.

Mani dreams of an aerial body⁶⁰ because Christ is called “the second Adam, the Lord from heaven.” But the Apostle does not there speak of the *essence* of His body as heavenly, but of the spiritual life that derived from Christ quickening us (1Co 15:47). This life Paul and Peter, as we have seen, separate from His flesh. Nay, that passage admirably confirms the doctrine of the orthodox as to the human nature of Christ. If His body were not of the same nature with ours, there would be no soundness in the argument that Paul pursues with so much earnestness: If Christ is risen, we shall rise also; if we rise not, neither has Christ risen (1Co 15:12-20). Whatever be the cavils⁶¹ by which the ancient Manichees or their modern disciples endeavor to evade this, they cannot succeed.

It is a frivolous and despicable evasion to say that Christ is called “the Son of man” because He was promised to men. It [is] obvious that in the Hebrew idiom “the Son of man” means “a true man.” Christ, doubtless, retained the idiom of His own tongue. Moreover, there cannot be a doubt as to what is to be understood by “the sons of Adam.” Not to go farther, a passage in the Eighth Psalm, which the Apostles apply to Christ, will abundantly suffice: “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Psa 8:4). Under this figure is expressed the true humanity of Christ. For, although He was not immediately descended of an earthly father, yet he originally sprang from Adam. Nor could it otherwise be said in terms of the passage that we have already quoted: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same” (Heb 2:14). These words plainly prove that He was an associate and partner in the same nature with us. In this sense, it is also said, “He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one” (Heb 2:11a). The context proves that this refers to a com-

⁵³ **behoved** – was necessary for.

⁵⁴ **expiated** – paid for.

⁵⁵ **adventitious** – added from an outside and unexpected source.

⁵⁶ **SUMMARY 2.2:** Calvin refutes in detail the false views of Christ of Marcion and Mani because both denied that Jesus partook of Mary’s human nature, which was Menno Simons’ error. Calvin analyzes the way each has twisted Scripture and corrects their wrong interpretations of the “Son of Man”; “first born”; Christ’s human, not angelic nature; and finally demonstrates that Genesis 3:15 resolves the dispute: Christ—the Seed of woman—is a descendent of the human race.

⁵⁷ **wrested** – turned from the true meaning or natural application.

⁵⁸ **mean and abject** – lowly and humbled.

⁵⁹ **quickened** – made alive.

⁶⁰ **aerial body** – body of air.

⁶¹ **cavils** – trivial and frivolous objections.

munity of nature; for it is immediately added, “For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb 2:11b). Had He said at first that believers are of God, where could there have been any ground for being ashamed of persons possessing such dignity? But when Christ, of His boundless grace, associates Himself with the mean and ignoble,⁶² we see why it was said, “he is not ashamed” (Heb 2:11b).

It is vain to object that in this way the wicked will be the brethren of Christ. For we know that the children of God are not born of flesh and blood (Joh 1:13), but of the Spirit through faith. Therefore, flesh alone does not constitute the union of brotherhood. Although the Apostle assigns to believers [alone] the honor of being one with Christ, it does not however follow that unbelievers have not the same origin according to the flesh. [For example,] when we say that Christ became man that He might make us sons of God, the expression does not extend to all classes of persons. The intervention of faith [is] necessary to our being spiritually engrafted into the body of Christ.

A dispute is also ignorantly raised as to the term *first-born*. It is alleged that Christ ought to have been the first son of Adam in order that He might be the first-born among the brethren (Rom 8:29). But [*first-born*] refers not to age, but to degree of honor and pre-eminence of virtue. There is just as little color for the frivolous assertion that Christ assumed the nature of man, and not that of angels (Heb 2:16) because it was the human race that He restored to favor. The Apostle, to magnify the honor that Christ has conferred upon us, contrasts us with the angels, to whom we are in this respect preferred. And if due weight is given to the testimony of Moses (Gen 3:15), when he says that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent, the dispute is at an end. For the words there used refer not to Christ alone, but to the whole human race. Since the victory was to be obtained for us by Christ, God declares generally that the posterity of the woman would overcome the devil. From this, it follows that Christ is a descendant of the human race, the purpose of God in thus addressing Eve being to raise her hopes and prevent her from giving way to despair.

Sections 3-4

The Human Descent and True Humanity of Christ

Section 3 Christ’s Descent through the Virgin Mary: An Absurdity Exposed⁶³

Those persons, with no less folly than wickedness, wrap up in allegory the passages in which Christ is called “the seed of Abraham” and “the fruit of the loins of David.” Had the term *seed* been used allegorically, Paul surely would not have omitted to notice it, when he affirms clearly and without figure, that the promise was not given “to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal 3:16). With similar absurdity they pretend that He was called “the Son of David” for no other reason but because He had been promised and was at length in due time manifested. For Paul, after he had called Him “the Son of David,” by immediately subjoining “according to the flesh” (Rom 1:3), certainly designates His nature. So also, while declaring Him to be “God blessed for ever” (Rom 9:5), he mentions separately that, “as concerning the flesh” (Rom 9:5), He was de-scended from the Jews. Again if He had not been truly begotten of the seed of David, what is the meaning of the expression that He is the “fruit of thy womb” (Luk 1:42)? What [is] the meaning of the promise, “Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne” (Psa 132:11; 2Sa 7:12; Act 2:30)?

Moreover, their mode of dealing with the genealogy of Christ as given by Matthew is mere sophistry.⁶⁴ For though he reckons up the progenitors⁶⁵ not of Mary, but of Joseph (Mat 1:16), yet as he was speaking of a matter then generally understood, he deems it enough to show that Joseph was descended from the seed of David, since it is certain that Mary was of the same family. Luke goes still farther, showing that the salvation brought by Christ is common to the whole human race, inasmuch as Christ, the Author of salvation, is descended from Adam, the common father of us all (Luk 3:38). I confess, indeed, that the genealogy proves Christ to be the Son of David only as being descended of the Virgin. But the new Marcionites,⁶⁶ for the purpose of giving a gloss to their heresy⁶⁷—to prove that the body that Christ assumed was unsubstantial⁶⁸—too confidently maintain that the expression “as to seed” is applicable only to males. Thus, [they] subvert the elementary principles of nature.

⁶² **mean and ignoble** – low in the social scale and not noble in respect of birth, position, or reputation.

⁶³ **SUMMARY 2.3:** The opponents of truth interpret the term *seed of Abraham* in a non-literal symbolic way. Calvin responds that Paul’s use of *seed* points to a literal, flesh-and-blood kinship. The heretics argue that Matthew’s genealogy of Christ goes back to Joseph, but Calvin answers that Mary is of the same family. Menno believed the error that “women are without seed,” that is, they biologically do not contribute to conception. Calvin argues that women obviously do and that Simons and others “overturn the elementary principles of nature.” The privilege of male headship—displayed in male-only genealogies—does not “prevent the female from having her proper share in the descent.” Furthermore, Matthew does not describe Mary as a mere “channel” of Christ (Simon’s view): Christ’s birth was a miracle.

⁶⁴ **sophistry** – argumentation that is intentionally deceptive.

⁶⁵ **progenitors** – ancestors in the direct line.

⁶⁶ **new Marcionites** – Calvin viewed Menno Simons and those of his view as Marcionites.

⁶⁷ **giving a gloss to** – disguising.

⁶⁸ **unsubstantial** – lacking material substance.

But as this discussion belongs not to theology, and the arguments that they adduce are too futile to require any labored refutation, I will not touch on matters pertaining to philosophy and the medical art. It will be sufficient to dispose of the objection drawn from the statement of Scripture, that Aaron and Jehoiada married wives out of the tribe of Judah (Exo 6:23; 2Ch 22:11), and that thus the distinction of tribes was confounded, if proper descent could come through the female. It is well known, that concerning civil order, descent is reckoned through the male; yet the superiority on his part does not prevent the female from having her proper share in the descent.

This solution applies to all the genealogies. When Scripture gives a list of individuals, it often mentions males only. Must we therefore say that females go for nothing? Nay, the very children know that they are classified with men. For this reason, wives are said to give children to their husbands, the name of the family always remaining with the males. Then, as the male sex has this privilege, that sons are deemed of noble or ignoble birth according to the condition of their fathers, so, on the other hand, in slavery, the condition of the child is determined by that of the mother, as lawyers say, “The offspring follows the womb.”⁶⁹ Whence we may infer that offspring is partly procreated by the seed of the mother. According to the common custom of nations, mothers are deemed “progenitors.” With this the divine Law agrees, which could have had no ground to forbid the marriage of the uncle with the niece if there was no consanguinity⁷⁰ between them. It would also be lawful for a brother and sister uterine⁷¹ to intermarry when their fathers are different. But while I admit that the power assigned to the woman is passive, I hold that the same thing is affirmed indiscriminately of her and of the male. Christ is not said to have been made *by* a woman, but *of* a woman (Gal 4:4). But some of this herd, laying aside all shame, publicly ask whether we mean to maintain that Christ was procreated of the proper seed of a virgin. In my turn, I ask whether they are not forced to admit that He was nourished to maturity in the Virgin’s womb.

Justly therefore, we infer from the words of Matthew that Christ, inasmuch as He was begotten of Mary, was procreated of her seed, as a similar generation is denoted when Boaz is said to have been begotten of Rahab (Mat 1:5, 16). Matthew does not here describe the Virgin as the channel through which Christ flowed, but distinguishes His miraculous from an ordinary birth, in that Christ was begotten by her of the seed of David. For the same reason for which Isaac is said to be begotten of Abraham, Joseph of Jacob, Solomon of David, is Christ said to have been begotten of His mother. The Evangelist has arranged his discourse in this way. Wishing to prove that Christ derives His descent from David, he deems it enough to state that He was begotten of Mary. Hence, it follows that he assumed it as an acknowledged fact that Mary was of the same lineage as Joseph.

Section 4 True Man—and Yet Sinless! True Man—and Yet Eternal God!⁷²

The absurdities that they wish to fasten upon us are mere puerile cal-umnies.⁷³ They reckon it base and dishonoring to Christ to have derived His descent from men because, in that case, He could not be exempted from the common law that includes the whole offspring of Adam, without exception, under sin. But this difficulty is easily solved by Paul’s antithesis, “As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin...even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life” (Rom 5:12, 18). Corresponding to this is another passage, “The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven” (1Co 15:47). Accordingly, the same apostle in another passage, teaching that Christ was sent “in the likeness of sinful flesh...that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us” (Rom 8:3-4), distinctly separates Him from the common lot as being true man, and yet without fault and corruption.

It is childish trifling to maintain that if Christ is free from all taint and was begotten of the seed of Mary by the secret operation of the Spirit, it is not therefore the seed of the woman that is impure, but only that of the man. We do not hold Christ to be free from all taint merely because He was born of a woman unconnected with a man, but because He was sanctified by the Spirit, so that the generation was pure and spotless, as it would have been before Adam’s fall. Let us always bear in mind that wherever Scripture adverts⁷⁴ to the purity of Christ, it refers to His true human nature, since it would have been superfluous to say that God is pure. Moreover, the sanctification of which John speaks in his seventeenth chapter is inapplicable to the divine nature (Joh 17:19). This does not suggest the idea of a twofold seed in Adam, although no contamination extended to Christ, the generation of man not being in itself vicious or impure, but an accidental circumstance of the fall. Hence, it is not strange that Christ, by Whom our integrity was to be restored, was exempted from the common corruption.

Another absurdity which they obtrude⁷⁵ upon us—i.e., that if the Word of God became incarnate, it must have been enclosed in the narrow tenement of an earthly body—is sheer petulance.⁷⁶ For although the boundless essence of the Word was united with human nature into one Person, we have no idea of any “enclosing.” The Son of God descended miraculously from heaven, yet with-

⁶⁹ *Latin: partus sequitur ventrem.*

⁷⁰ **consanguinity** – a close relation of connection.

⁷¹ **uterine** – born of the same mother but by a different father.

⁷² **SUMMARY 2.4:** The opponents (especially Simons) considered the notion of Christ having a human origin to be shameful because they believed Christ could not escape having a sinful nature. Calvin refutes this notion with Pauline arguments: Christ had a human birth, but was preserved from sin, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

⁷³ **puerile calumnies** – childish misrepresentations intended to injure another’s reputation.

⁷⁴ **adverts** – makes reference to.

⁷⁵ **obtrude** – thrust.

⁷⁶ **petulance** – arrogant speech.

out abandoning heaven. [He] was pleased to be conceived miraculously in the Virgin's womb, to live on the earth, and to hang upon the Cross, and yet always filled the world as from the beginning!⁷⁷

Part Three

How the Two Natures of the Mediator Make One Person

Sections 1-3

Explanation of the Human and Divine Natures in Christ

Section 1 Duality and Unity⁷⁸

When it is said that the Word was made flesh (Joh 1:14), we must not understand it as if He were either changed into flesh or confusedly intermingled with flesh, but that He made choice of the Virgin's womb as a temple in which He might dwell. He Who was the Son of God became the Son of man, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of Person. For we maintain that the divinity was so conjoined and united with the humanity that the entire properties of each nature remain entire, and yet the two natures constitute only one Christ.

If anything analogous⁷⁹ to this great mystery can be found in human affairs, the most apposite similitude⁸⁰ seems to be that of man who obviously consists of two substances, neither of which however is so intermingled with the other as that both do not retain their own properties. For neither is soul body, nor is body soul. Wherefore, that is said separately of the soul that cannot in any way apply to the body; and that, on the other hand, of the body that is altogether inapplicable to the soul; and that, again, of the whole man, which cannot be affirmed without absurdity either of the body or of the soul separately. Lastly, the properties of the soul are transferred to the body and the properties of the body to the soul—yet these form only one man, not more than one. Such modes of expression intimate both that there is in man one person formed of two compounds, and that these two different natures constitute one person. Thus, the Scriptures speak of Christ. They sometimes attribute to Him qualities that should be referred specially to His humanity, sometimes qualities peculiarly⁸¹ applicable to His divinity, and sometimes qualities that embrace both natures and do not apply specially to either. This combination of a twofold nature in Christ they express so carefully that they sometimes communicate them with each other, a figure of speech which the ancients termed “*the communicating of properties*.”⁸²

⁷⁷ **Another absurdity...from the beginning:** This entire paragraph displays an important part of Calvin's doctrine of Christ, called the *extra-Calvinisticum*. Lutheran theologians coined this term for the Calvinist doctrine that Christ's deity exists and works outside the limitations of Christ's humanity. The “extra” means “outside of.” Calvin taught that Christ's deity was fully *united to* His humanity, but it was not fully *contained in* it. In other words, Christ's deity *filled* His humanity, but was also *outside of* it. As Calvin says above, “Although the boundless essence of the Word was united with human nature into one Person, we have no idea of any ‘enclosing.’” Simons had said that if the eternal Son became a man, then “He was confined within the narrow prison of an earthly body.” Calvin argues against this view in this paragraph. He believed that the God at work *in* Christ the Mediator was at the same time the God at work “outside” of Christ, governing and maintaining the universe. This is why Calvin says, “[Christ] was pleased to be conceived miraculously in the Virgin's womb, to live on the earth, and to hang upon the Cross, and yet always filled the world as from the beginning!”

⁷⁸ **SUMMARY 3.1:** Throughout this chapter, Calvin faithfully presents the doctrine of Christ declared at the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451). Known as the **Chalcedonian Formula**, it confesses “one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, made known in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation, the difference of the natures being by no means removed because of the union [of the divine and the human].” Calvin therefore begins with “The Word was made flesh,” which means that the Son of God became the Son of man: Christ was fully God and fully man with each nature remaining distinct in one Person. Calvin believed that the best comparison for this is man's soul and body. Some characteristics are distinct, others are similar, and some can be transferred. Nevertheless, these two different natures make up one person.

⁷⁹ **analogous** – similar or equivalent in some ways.

⁸⁰ **apposite similitude** – strikingly appropriate parallel; some theologians, such as Donald Macleod, take exception to Calvin's analogy (Macleod, *The Person of Christ*, 190.)

⁸¹ **peculiarly** – particularly.

⁸² **communicating of properties** – [*Greek*: ιδιωμάτων κοινωνία in the Beveridge text]. This theological idea is important to Calvin's defense of the Mediator against the heretics. It means attributing to one nature of Christ what properly belongs to His other nature. For example, Calvin refers to the Biblical statements about the deity of Christ that strictly refer to His humanity, such as Acts 20:28 “the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Our Lord's divine nature had no blood. Vice versa, John says that he “handled the Word of life” (1Jo 1:1): John handled Christ's *body*, but not “the Word,” His deity.

Section 2 Divinity and Humanity in Their Relation to Each Other⁸³

Little dependence could be placed on these statements, were it not proved by numerous passages throughout the sacred volume that none of them is of man's devising. What Christ said of Himself—"Before Abraham was I am" (Joh 8:58)—was very foreign to His humanity. I am not unaware of the cavil⁸⁴ by which erroneous spirits distort this passage: that He was before all ages, inasmuch as He was foreknown as the Redeemer in the counsel of the Father, as well as in the minds of believers. But seeing He plainly distinguishes the period of His manifestation from His eternal existence and professedly founds on His ancient government to prove His precedence to Abraham, He undoubtedly claims for Himself the peculiar attributes of divinity. Paul's assertion that He is "the first-born of every creature," that "he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col 1:15, 17), His own declaration that He had glory with the Father before the world was (Joh 17:5), and that He works together with the Father (Joh 5:17) are equally inapplicable to man. These and similar properties must be specially assigned to His divinity.

Again, His being called "the servant of the Father" (Isa 42:1), His being said to grow in stature, wisdom, and favor with God and man (Luk 2:52), not to seek His own glory (Joh 8:50), not to know the last day (Mat 24:36; Mar 13:32), not to speak of Himself (Joh 14:10), not to do His own will (Joh 6:38), His being seen and handled (Luk 24:39) apply entirely to His humanity, since as God He cannot be in any respect said to grow. He works always for Himself, knows everything, does all things after the counsel of His own will, and is incapable of being seen or handled. Yet He not merely ascribes these things separately to His human nature, but applies them to Himself as suitable to His office of Mediator.

There is a "communication of characteristics or properties," when Paul says that God purchased the church "with his own blood" (Act 20:28) and that the Jews "crucified the Lord of glory" (1Co 2:8). In like manner, John says that the Word of God was "handled" (1Jo 1:1). God certainly has no blood, suffers not, and cannot be touched with hands. But since Christ, Who was true God and true man, shed His blood on the Cross for us, the acts that were performed in His human nature are transferred improperly, but not ceaselessly, to His divinity. We have a similar example in the passage where John says, "[God] laid down His life for us" (1Jo 3:16). Here a property of His humanity is communicated with His other nature. On the other hand, when Christ, still living on the earth [and] certainly regarded as man, in the flesh that He had put on, said, "No man has ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven" (Joh 3:13), He was not then in heaven. But, inasmuch as He was both God and man, He attributed to the one what properly belonged to the other because of the union of a twofold nature.

Section 3 The Unity of the Person of the Mediator⁸⁵

But, above all, the true substance of Christ is most clearly declared in those passages that comprehend both natures at once. Numbers of these exist in the Gospel of John. What we there read as to His having received power from the Father to forgive sins (Joh 1:29); His quickening Whom He will; His bestowing righteousness, holiness, and salvation; His being appointed judge both of the quick and the dead; His being honored even as the Father (Joh 5:21-23)—are not peculiar either to His Godhead or His humanity, but applicable to both. In the same way, He is called "the light of the world" (Joh 9:5), "the door...the good shepherd" (Joh 10:9, 11), "the true vine" (Joh 15:1). The Son of God was invested with such prerogatives on His manifestation in the flesh. Though He possessed the same with the Father before the world was created, it was not in the same manner or respect. Neither could they be attributed to one who was a man and nothing more.

In the same sense we ought to understand the saying of Paul: at the end, Christ shall deliver up "the kingdom to God, even the Father" (1Co 15:24). The kingdom of God assuredly had no beginning and will have no end. But because He was hid under a humble clothing of flesh, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and humbled Himself, and—laying aside the insignia of majesty—became obedient to the Father (Phi 2:7-8); and after undergoing this subjection was at length crowned with glory and honor and exalted to supreme authority that at His name every knee should bow (Heb 2:7; Phi 2:10); so, at the end He will subject both the name and the crown of glory—*whatever* He received of the Father—that God may be all in all (1Co 15:28). For what end were that power and authority given to Him, save that the Father might govern us by His hand? In the same sense also, He is said to sit at the right hand of the Father (Mar 16:19; Rom 8:34). But this is only for a time, until we enjoy the immediate presence of His Godhead. Here we cannot excuse the error of some ancient writers, who, by not attending to the office of Mediator, darken the genuine meaning of almost the whole doctrine that we read in the Gospel of John and entangle themselves in many snares.

Let us, therefore, regard it as the key of true interpretation: those things that refer to the office of Mediator are not spoken of the divine or human nature simply. Christ, therefore, shall reign until He appears to judge the world, inasmuch as, according to the measure of our feeble capacity, He now connects us with the Father. But when we, as partakers of the heavenly glory, shall see

⁸³ **SUMMARY 3.2:** Calvin now demonstrates how Christ's deity and humanity relate to one another. He explains Biblical texts that testify to Christ's deity and humanity. He also explains the meaning of the theological term "the communication of properties" [theological term in Latin: *communicatio idiomatum*].

⁸⁴ **cavil** – trivial and frivolous objection.

⁸⁵ **SUMMARY 3.3:** Having discussed Christ's deity and humanity, Calvin now discusses texts that embrace both of His natures at once. He examines texts from John's Gospel and then Paul's writings. He concludes that when Scripture speaks of the Mediator, it does not refer simply to deity or humanity: it embraces both in one Person. This will continue until Christ comes to judge the world. The same applies to the word *Lord*.

God as He is, then Christ, having accomplished the office of Mediator, shall cease to be the vicegerent⁸⁶ of the Father and will be content with the glory that He possessed before the world was.

Nor is the name of *Lord* especially applicable to the person of Christ in any other respect than in so far as He holds a middle place between God and us. To this effect are the words of Paul: “To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him” (1Co 8:6). That is, to the latter a temporary authority has been committed by the Father, until His divine majesty shall be beheld face to face. His giving up of the kingdom to the Father, so far from impairing His majesty, will give a brighter manifestation of it. God will then cease to be the head of Christ, and Christ’s own Godhead will then shine forth of itself, whereas it is now in a manner veiled.

Sections 4-8

Condemnation of the Errors of Nestorius, Eutyches, and Servetus

Section 4 The Two Natures May Not Be Thought of as Either Fused or Separated⁸⁷

This observation, if the readers apply it properly, will be of no small use in solving a vast number of difficulties. For it is strange how the ignorant, nay, some who are not altogether without learning, are perplexed by these modes of expression that they see applied to Christ, without being properly adapted either to His divinity or His humanity—not considering their accordance with the character in which He was manifested as God and man, and with His office of Mediator. It is very easy to see how beautifully they accord with each other, provided they have a sober interpreter, one who examines these great mysteries with the reverence that is meet.⁸⁸ But there is nothing that furious and frantic spirits cannot throw into confusion. They fasten on the attributes of humanity to destroy His divinity, and, on the other hand, on those of His divinity to destroy His humanity. Those that—spoken conjointly of the two natures—apply to neither, they employ to destroy both. But what else is this than to contend that Christ is not man because He is God, not God because He is man, and neither God nor man because He is both at once!

Christ, therefore, as God and man, possessing natures that are united but not confused, we conclude that He is our Lord and the true Son of God, even according to His humanity, though not by means of His humanity. For we must put far from us the heresy of Nestorius.⁸⁹ [He,] presuming to *dissect* rather than distinguish between the two natures, devised a “double” Christ. But we see the Scripture loudly protesting against this: the name of the Son of God is given to Him Who is born of a Virgin, and the Virgin herself is called the mother of our Lord (Luk 1:32, 43). We must beware also of the insane fancy of Eutyches,⁹⁰ lest, when we would demonstrate the unity of person, we destroy the two natures. The many passages we have already quoted in which the divinity is distinguished from the humanity, and the many other passages existing throughout Scripture, may well stop the mouth of the most contentious.

I will shortly add a few observations that will still better dispose of this fiction. For the present, one passage will suffice: Christ would not have called His body a temple had not the Godhead distinctly dwelt in it (Joh 2:19). Wherefore, as Nestorius had been justly condemned in the Council of Ephesus, so afterwards was Eutyches in those of Constantinople⁹¹ and Chalcedony,⁹² it being not more lawful to confound the two natures of Christ than to divide them.

[EDITOR’S NOTE: Sections 5-8 contain Calvin’s refutation of the errors of the “monster,” Michael Servetus (1509/11-1553). Servetus was an anti-Trinitarian Spanish physician whose studies in theology led to secret correspondence with Calvin. He had profound religious convictions and a brilliant mind. Nevertheless, he believed that the doctrine of the Trinity was unscriptural and that it hindered evangelizing Muslims and Jews. In fact, his first book was *Concerning the Errors of the Trinity*, written when he was 20. He argued that the terms related to the Trinity—*hypostasis*, person, substance, essence—did not appear in Scripture and should be rejected. Servetus believed that the Holy Spirit was a “power” to help believers, but not a Person. He taught that Jesus Christ was the Savior, but was created in time and therefore not true deity. Rather, Servetus maintained that an essentially un-

⁸⁶ **vicegerent** – a person appointed by a ruler to act as an administrative deputy.

⁸⁷ **SUMMARY 3.4:** When speaking of the Mediator as two natures and one Person, a sober interpreter will not think of Christ’s deity or humanity as either fused or separated. He will reverence the mystery, unlike the heretics who destroy His unity. Christ’s deity and humanity are united, but not mixed and mingled. As such, he is God’s true Son, even as a human being: not *because* of His humanity, but because of the unity of *both* natures in one Person. We must then avoid the errors of Nestorius—he destroyed Christ’s unity by pulling His natures apart—or of Eutyches—he destroyed Christ’s unity by mixing His natures.

⁸⁸ **meet** – suitable; proper.

⁸⁹ **Nestorius** (A.D. 386-451) – Archbishop of Constantinople; his erroneous view of Christ presented such a separation between Christ’s human and divine natures that it threatened the unity of Christ’s Person; the Synod of Ephesus (A.D. 431) declared this to be heresy.

⁹⁰ **Eutyches** or **Eutychianus** (A.D. c 378-454) – abbot in the Eastern Orthodox faith at Constantinople, who opposed the views of Nestorius. Eutyches’ doctrine of Christ is considered *Monophysite* (*monos* = “single”; *physis* = “nature”); he maintained that Christ was “two natures *before*, one nature *after* the incarnation.”

⁹¹ **Council of Constantinople** (A.D. 448)

⁹² **Council of Chalcedony or Chalcedon** (A.D. 451).

knowable deity was manifest as Word and communicated as Spirit. The supreme manifestation of the Word was the historical Jesus, the Son of God, Whose existence was limited to His earthly life. Condemned as a heretic by both Roman Catholic and Protestant authorities, Servetus was burned at the stake in Geneva in 1553.]

Section 5 Christ Is the Son of God from Everlasting⁹³

But in our age, also, has arisen a not less fatal monster, Michael Servetus, who for the Son of God has substituted a figment composed of the essence of God, spirit, flesh, and three uncreated elements. First, indeed, he denies that Christ is the Son of God, for any other reason other than because He was begotten in the womb of the Virgin by the Holy Spirit. The tendency of this crafty device is to make out—by destroying the distinction of the two natures—that Christ is somewhat *composed* of God and man, and yet is not to be deemed [both] God and man. His aim throughout is to establish that before Christ was manifested in the flesh, there were only shadowy figures in God; the truth or effect of which existed for the first time when the Word, Who had been destined to that honor, truly began to be the Son of God.

We indeed acknowledge that the Mediator, Who was born of the Virgin, is properly the Son of God. And how could the man Christ be a mirror of the inestimable grace of God had not the dignity been conferred upon Him both of being and of being called the only-begotten Son of God? Meanwhile, however, the definition of the church stands unmoved: He is accounted the Son of God because the Word begotten by the Father before all ages assumed human nature by “hypostatic union”⁹⁴—a term used by ancient writers to denote the union which of two natures constitutes one person. [It was] invented to refute the dream of Nestorius, who pretended that the Son of God dwelt in the flesh in such a manner as not to be at the same time man.

Servetus calumniously⁹⁵ charges us with making the Son of God double, when we say that the eternal Word, before He was clothed with flesh, was already the Son of God—as if we said anything more than that He was manifested in the flesh. Although He was God before He became man, He did not therefore begin to be a new God! Nor is there any greater absurdity in holding that the Son of God, Who by eternal generation ever had the property of being a Son, appeared in the flesh. This is intimated by the angel’s word to Mary: “That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luk 1:35); as if he had said that the name of “Son,” which was more obscure under the Law, would become celebrated and universally known. Corresponding to this is the passage of Paul that, being now the sons of God by Christ, we “have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15; also Gal 4:6).

Were not also the holy patriarchs of old reckoned among the sons of God? Yes, trusting to this privilege, they invoked God as their Father. But, because ever since the only-begotten Son of God came forth into the world, [God’s] celestial paternity⁹⁶ has been more clearly manifested, Paul assigns this to the kingdom of Christ as its distinguishing feature. We must, however, constantly hold that God never was a Father to angels and men save in respect of His only-begotten Son, that men especially, who by their iniquity were rendered hateful to God, are sons by gratuitous⁹⁷ adoption because He is a Son by nature. Nor is there anything in the assertion of Servetus that this depends on the filiation⁹⁸ that God had decreed with Himself. Here we deal not with figures,⁹⁹ as expiation by the blood of beasts was shown to be; but since they could not be the sons of God in reality, unless their adoption was founded in the Head, it is against all reason to deprive the Head of that which is common to the members.

I go farther: since the Scripture gives the name of sons of God to the angels (Psa 82:6), whose great dignity in this respect depended not on the future redemption, Christ must in order take precedence of them that He may reconcile the Father to them. I will again briefly repeat and add the same thing concerning the human race. Since angels as well as men were at first created on the condition that God should be the common Father of both; if it is true, as Paul says, that Christ always was the Head, “the first-born of every creature,” “that in all things he might have the pre-eminence” (Col 1:15, 18), I think I may legitimately infer that He existed as the Son of God before the creation of the world.

⁹³ **SUMMARY 3.5:** Calvin now examines the errors of Servetus. Instead of the Biblical Christ, Servetus has substituted an imaginary being composed of God’s essence, spirit, flesh, and three uncreated elements. Servetus denies the God-man, saying there were only “shadowy figures” in God before the Word began to be the Son of God. Calvin refutes Servetus with the Biblical and historic view of the church, expressed by the Council of Chalcedon. Calvin speaks of Christ’s “hypostatic union” and offers further refutation.

⁹⁴ **hypostatic union** – the Greek word *hypostasis* means “person.” Hypostatic union then means that in Christ, godhead and manhood unite (*union*) in one Person (*hypostasis*).

⁹⁵ **calumniously** – slanderously.

⁹⁶ **celestial paternity** – heavenly fatherhood.

⁹⁷ **gratuitous** – freely bestowed.

⁹⁸ **filiation** – sonship.

⁹⁹ **figures** – representations or symbols of something to come.

Section 6 Christ as Son of God and Son of Man¹⁰⁰

But if His filiation (if I may so express it) had a beginning at the time when He was manifested in the flesh, it follows that He was a Son in respect of human nature also. Servetus and others, similarly frenzied, hold that Christ, Who appeared in the flesh, is the Son of God, inasmuch as He could not have possessed this name, but for His incarnation. Let them now answer me, whether according to both natures and in respect of both He is a Son? So indeed they prate,¹⁰¹ but Paul's doctrine is very different. We acknowledge, indeed, that Christ in human nature is called a "son," not like believers by gratuitous adoption merely, but the true, natural, and therefore only Son, this being the mark that distinguishes Him from all others. Those of us who are regenerated to a new life, God honors with the name of "sons"; the name of "true and only-begotten Son" He bestows on Christ alone. But how is He an "only" son in so great a multitude of brethren, except that He possesses by nature what we acquire by gift?

This honor we extend to His whole character of Mediator, so that He Who was born of a Virgin and on the Cross offered Himself in sacrifice to the Father is truly and properly the Son of God, but still in respect of His Godhead. Paul teaches [this] when he says that He was, "separated unto the gospel of God, (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power" (Rom 1:1-4). When distinctly calling Him the Son of David according to the flesh, why should he also say that He was "declared to be the Son of God," if he meant not to intimate that this depended on something else than His incarnation? For in the same sense in which he elsewhere says, "Though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God" (2Co 13:4), so he now draws a distinction between the two natures. They must certainly admit that, as on account of His mother He is called "the Son of David," so on account of His Father He is "the Son of God," and that in some respect differing from His human nature.

The Scripture gives Him both names, calling Him at one time the Son of God, at another the Son of Man. As to the latter, there can be no question that He is called a Son in accordance with the phraseology of the Hebrew language, because He is of the offspring of Adam. On the other hand, I maintain that He is called a Son on account of His Godhead and eternal essence because it is no less congruous¹⁰² to refer to His divine nature His being called "the Son of God," than to refer to His human nature His being called "the Son of Man."¹⁰³

In fine, in the passage that I have quoted, Paul does not mean that He Who according to the flesh was begotten of the seed of David, was declared to be the Son of God in any other sense than he elsewhere teaches: Christ, Who descended of the Jews according to the flesh, is "over all, God blessed forever" (Rom 9:5). But if in both passages the distinction of two natures is pointed out, how can it be denied that He Who is the Son of Man according to the flesh is also, in respect of His divine nature, the Son of God?

Section 7 Servetus' Flimsy Counterevidence¹⁰⁴

They indeed find a blustering defense of their heresy in its being said that "God spared not his own Son" (Rom 8:32), and in the communication of the angel that He Who was to be born of the Virgin should be called the "Son of the Highest" (Rom 8:32; Luk 1:32). But before pluming¹⁰⁵ themselves on this futile objection, let them for a little consider with us what weight there is in their argument. If it is legitimately concluded that at conception He began to be the Son of God because He Who has been conceived is called "Son," it will follow that He began to be the Word after His manifestation in the flesh because John declares that the Word of life of which he spoke was that which "our hands have handled" (1Jo 1:1). In like manner, we read in the prophet, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Mic 5:2; Mat 2:6). How will they be forced to interpret if they will follow such a method of arguing?

I have declared that we by no means assent to Nestorius, who imagined a twofold Christ, when we maintain that Christ, by means of brotherly union, made us sons of God with Himself. [For] in the flesh, which He took from us, He is the only-begotten Son of God. Augustine¹⁰⁶ wisely reminds us that He is a bright mirror of the wonderful and singular grace of God because as man

¹⁰⁰ **SUMMARY 3.6:** Servetus claimed that Christ could only be "the Son of God" *after* He took on human nature. Calvin proves from Paul's writings that Christ is God's Son in both natures. Christ, the "only-begotten Son" is "Son" in His human nature; we are "sons" only by God's grace and adoption. While Christ is God's Son in both natures, it is primarily so because of His deity. Scripture makes a clear distinction between His natures: according to His mother, Christ is the Son of David; according to His Heav-enly Father, Christ is the Son of God. The Son of Man according to the flesh is the Son of God according to His deity.

¹⁰¹ **prate** – speaking much to little purpose; chatter.

¹⁰² **congruous** – appropriate.

¹⁰³ **Son of Man** – some theologians recognize that "Son of Man," Christ's preferred self-designation, does not apply only to Christ's human nature, but points to His royalty, divinity, and preexistent glory. In his night visions, Daniel saw "one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days." Here a divine figure receives "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion" (Dan 7:13-14).

¹⁰⁴ **SUMMARY 3.7:** Servetus looks to Romans 8:32 and Luke 1:32 to prove that Christ became the Son of God only because of His incarnation. Calvin refutes his weak reasoning and then points to Christ's eternal nature in Malachi 5:2 and Matthew 2:6. Servetus also says that Christ is only called the Son of God before His incarnation in a figurative sense. Calvin refutes this by appealing to Scripture and early theologians such as Augustine, Irenaeus, and Tertullian.

¹⁰⁵ **pluming** – congratulate; pride.

¹⁰⁶ **Aurelius Augustine** (A.D. 354-430) – Bishop of Hippo; early church theologian; viewed by some as the father of orthodox theology; born in Tagaste, North Africa.

He obtained honor that He could not merit. With this distinction, therefore, according to the flesh, was Christ honored even from the womb, i.e., to be the Son of God. Still, in the unity of person, we are not to imagine any intermixture that takes away from the Godhead what is peculiar to it. Nor is it more absurd that the eternal Word of God and Christ, uniting the two natures in one person, should in different ways be called “the Son of God,” than that He should in various respects be called at one time the Son of God, at another the Son of Man.

Nor are we more embarrassed by another cavil of Servetus, i.e., that Christ is nowhere called the Son of God before He appeared in the flesh, except under a figure. For though the description of Him was then more obscure, yet it has already been clearly proved that He was not otherwise the eternal God, than as He was the Word begotten of the eternal Father. Nor is the name applicable to the office of Mediator that He undertook, except in that He was God manifest in the flesh. Nor would God have thus from the beginning been called “Father,” had there not been even then a mutual relation to the Son, “of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named” (Eph 3:15). Hence, it is easy to infer that under the Law and the Prophets, He was the Son of God before this name was celebrated in the church. But if we are to dispute about the word merely, Solomon, speaking of the incomprehensibility of God, affirms that His Son is like Himself, incomprehensible: “What is his name, and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell?” (Pro 30:4).

I am well aware that with the contentious, this passage will not have sufficient weight. Nor do I found much upon it, except as showing the malignant cavils of those who affirm that Christ is the Son of God only as far as He became man. We may add that with one mouth and consent all the most ancient writers testified the same thing so plainly that the effrontery is no less ridiculous than detestable, which dares to oppose us with Irenaeus¹⁰⁷ and Tertullian,¹⁰⁸ both of whom acknowledge that He Who was afterwards visibly manifested was the invisible Son of God.

Section 8 Comprehensive Presentation and Rebuttal of Servetus’ Doctrine¹⁰⁹

Although Servetus heaped together a number of horrid dogmas to which, perhaps, others would not subscribe, you will find that all who refuse to acknowledge the Son of God except in the flesh are obliged when urged more closely to admit that He was a Son, for no other reason than because He was conceived in the womb of the Virgin by the Holy Spirit. [This is] like the absurdity of the ancient Manichees: the soul of man was derived by transfusion from God, from its being said that He breathed into Adam’s nostrils the breath of life (Gen 2:7). For they lay such stress on the name “Son” that they leave no distinction between the natures, but babblingly maintain that the man Christ is the Son of God because He was begotten of God according to His human nature. Thus, the eternal generation of Wisdom celebrated by Solomon (Pro 8:22) is destroyed; and no kind of Godhead exists in the Mediator, or a phantom is substituted instead of a man. It [would be] useful to refute the grosser delusions of Servetus, which he imposed upon himself and some others. Pious readers might be warned by the example to confine themselves within the bounds of soberness and modesty. However, I deem it superfluous here, as I have already done it in a special treatise.¹¹⁰

The whole [of Servetus’ doctrine] comes to this: (1) the Son of God was from the beginning an idea and was even then a preordained man, who was to be the essential image of God. (2) Nor does he acknowledge any other Word of God except in external splendor. The generation [of Christ], he interprets to mean that from the beginning, a purpose of generating the Son was begotten in God, and that this purpose extended itself by act to creation. Meanwhile, he [confuses] the Spirit with the Word, saying that God arranged the invisible Word and Spirit into flesh and soul. In short, in his view, the typifying of Christ occupies the place of generation; but he says that He Who was then in appearance a shadowy Son was at length begotten by the Word, to which he attributes a generating power. From this, it will follow that dogs and swine are not less sons of God because created of the original seed of the Divine Word. Although he compounds Christ of three uncreated elements that He may be begotten of the essence of God, [Servetus] pretends that He is the first-born among the creatures, in such a sense that *stones* have the same essential divinity, according to their degree. But lest he should seem to strip Christ of His Deity, [Servetus] admits that His flesh is of the same substance¹¹¹ with God, and that the Word was made man by the conversion of flesh into Deity. Thus, while he cannot comprehend that

¹⁰⁷ **Irenaeus** (A.D. c. 130-202) – Bishop of Lyons in Southern France and apologist best known for his writings attacking Gnosticism.

¹⁰⁸ **Tertullian** (A.D. 160-220) – African theologian and apologist who lived in Carthage; his use of the Latin *trinitas* was the first application of the term *trinity* to Deity.

¹⁰⁹ **SUMMARY 3.8:** Calvin now gives a comprehensive refutation of Servetus. He first compares Servetus’ doctrine—Christ was God’s Son only according to the flesh—to the absurd heresy of the Manichees. This destroys the Mediator’s deity. Calvin next systematically summarizes Servetus’ views: (1) From the beginning, God’s Son was just an idea, preordained to become a man and the essential image of God. (2) There was no eternal Word except an outward splendor. (3) He interprets God’s begetting His Son this way: a purpose arose in God’s mind to beget the Son and this purpose became reality by God’s creative act. (4) He confuses the eternal Word and the Holy Spirit: God allegedly arranged the Word and Spirit into flesh and soul. (5) He claims that the Word has a generating power: the Word begot a “shadowy Son.” (6) In order to prove that Christ is begotten of God’s nature, he views Christ as a combination of three uncreated elements. (7) So that Christ may be viewed as deity, Servetus claims that His flesh is the same substance of God. The Word became man when his flesh was converted into God! (8) Because he thinks that Christ did not become the Son of God until His flesh came from God’s essence and was then converted into Deity, Servetus destroys the deity and the humanity of our Mediator, robbing us of our Redeemer. Calvin trusts that “sane readers” will understand that if flesh is deity itself, it cannot be a human temple for deity.

¹¹⁰ Five years prior to this 1559 edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin had written the book *Defense of the Doctrine of the Trinity against Servetus*.

¹¹¹ **same substance** – in the Beveridge text, Calvin uses the Greek ὁμοούσιον (*homoousion*), which means “of the same substance.” This was a crucial term in the 3rd and 4th century debates concerning Christ’s relationship to God the Father. Was Jesus *homoousios*—“same in substance”—and therefore deity? Or was Jesus *homoiousios*—“similar in substance” and therefore, *not* deity? The debate hung on the letter

Christ was the Son of God until His flesh came forth from the essence of God and was converted into Deity, he reduces the eternal personality¹¹² of the Word to nothing and robs us of the Son of David, Who was the promised Redeemer. It is true, he repeatedly declares that the Son was begotten of God by knowledge and predestination, but that He was at length made man out of that matter which, from the beginning, shone with God in the three elements and afterwards appeared in the first light of the world in the cloud and pillar of fire (Gen 1:3; Exo 13:21). It were too tedious to relate how shamefully inconsistent with himself he [sometimes] becomes.

From this brief account, sound readers will gather that by the subtle ambiguities of this infatuated man, the hope of salvation was utterly extinguished. For if the flesh were the Godhead itself, it would cease to be its temple. Now, the only Redeemer we can have is He Who, being begotten of the seed of Abraham and David according to the flesh, truly became man. But [Servetus] erroneously insists on the expression of John, “The Word was made flesh” (Joh 1:14). As these words refute the heresy of Nestorius, so they give no countenance to the impious fiction of which Eutyches was the inventor, since all that the Evangelist intended was to assert a unity of person in two natures.

Part Four

Christ as Mediator—His Prophetic Office, Kingship, and Priesthood

Sections 1-2

The Prophetic Office

Section 1 The Need of Understanding This Doctrine: Scriptural Passages Applicable to Christ’s Prophetic Office¹¹³

To know the purpose for which Christ was sent by the Father and what He conferred upon us, we must look above all at three things in Him: the Prophetic Office, Kingship, and Priesthood.

Though heretics pretend the name of Christ, truly does Augustine affirm that [He is not a foundation to them in common] with the godly: but [He] belongs exclusively to the church. For if those things that pertain to Christ be diligently considered, it will be found that Christ is with them in name only, not in reality. Thus in the present day, though the Papists have the words *Son of God and Redeemer of the world* sounding in their mouths, yet, because contented with an empty name, they deprive Him of His virtue and dignity. What Paul says of “not holding the head” is truly applicable to them (Col 2:19).

Therefore, that faith may find in Christ a solid ground of salvation and so rest in Him, we must set out with this principle: the office that He received from the Father consists of three parts.¹¹⁴ For He was appointed Prophet, King, and Priest—though little were gained by holding the names unaccompanied by a knowledge of the end and use. These too are spoken of in the Papacy, but frigidly and with no great benefit, since [they do not understand] the full meaning comprehended under each title.

We formerly observed that though God, by supplying an uninterrupted succession of prophets, never left His people destitute of useful doctrine [that was sufficient] for salvation; yet the minds of believers were always impressed with the conviction that the full light of understanding was to be expected only on the advent of the Messiah. This expectation, accordingly, had reached even the Samaritans, to whom the true religion had never been made known. This is plain from the expression of the woman, “I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things” (Joh 4:25). Nor was this a mere random presumption that had entered the minds of the Jews. They believed what sure oracles had taught them. One of the most remarkable passages is that of Isaiah, “Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people” (Isa 55:4)—that is, in the same way in which he had previously in another place styled Him “Wonderful, Counselor” (Isa 9:6). For this

iota—“i” or the English “i.” “Same in substance,” which meant that Jesus is true deity, became the orthodox teaching. Calvin argues that Servetus makes Christ’s flesh “same in substance” as God: this mixes Christ’s natures and robs us of our Redeemer.

¹¹² **personality** – Calvin used the Greek *hypostasis* for “personality”; see Footnote 94.

¹¹³ **SUMMARY 4.1:** In order to understand this doctrine, Calvin presents a survey of Scriptural passages that display Christ’s Prophetic Office. Augustine said that heretics may preach the name of Christ, but they do not share Him in common with believers. He is the property of the church! Papists may use Christ’s names, but He is only a name to them, not a reality. So that our faith may find the solid ground of salvation in

Christ, we must understand the purpose and titles of His three-fold office of Mediator: Prophet, King, and Priest. God supplied an uninterrupted succession of prophets to teach salvation. Believers understood that full understanding would only come with the arrival of Messiah.

¹¹⁴ **the office...three parts** – Christ’s threefold office is known as *munus triplex*. Calvin’s view is that the three anointings of the OT—prophets, kings, and priests—came to fulfillment together in the Messiah. This plays an important part in Calvin’s *Institutes* and commentaries in his understanding of Christ’s Person and redemptive work.

reason the Apostle, commending the perfection of Gospel doctrine, first says that “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,” and then adds that He “hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son” (Heb 1:1-2). But as the common office of the prophets was to hold the church in suspense¹¹⁵ and at the same time support it until the advent of the Mediator, we read that the faithful during the dispersion complained that they were deprived of that ordinary privilege. “We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long” (Psa 74:9). But when Christ was now not far distant, a period was assigned to Daniel “to seal up the vision and prophecy” (Dan 9:24), not only that the authority of the prediction there spoken of might be established, but that believers might patiently submit to the [absence] of the prophets for a time, the fulfillment and completion of all the prophecies being at hand.

Section 2 The Meaning of the Prophetic Office for Us¹¹⁶

Moreover, it is to be observed that the name *Christ* refers to those three offices: for we know that under the Law, prophets as well as priests and kings were anointed with holy oil. Whence, also, the celebrated name of “Messiah” was given to the promised Mediator. But although I admit (as, indeed, I have elsewhere shown) that He was so called from a view to the nature of the kingly office, still the prophetic and sacerdotal¹¹⁷ unctions¹¹⁸ have their proper place and must not be overlooked. The former is expressly mentioned by Isaiah in these words: “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD” (Isa 61:1-2; Luk 4:18). We see that He was anointed by the Spirit to be a herald and witness of His Father’s grace—not in the usual way, for He is distinguished from other teachers who had a similar office. Here again, it is to be observed that the unction He received in order to perform the office of teacher was not for Himself, but for His whole body, [so] that a corresponding efficacy of the Spirit might always accompany the preaching of the Gospel.

This, however, remains certain: by the perfection of doctrine that He brought, an end was put to all the prophecies. So [then], those who, not contented with the Gospel, annex somewhat extraneous¹¹⁹ to it, derogate¹²⁰ from its authority. The voice that thundered from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, hear him” (Mat 17:5; Mat 3:17), gave Him a special privilege above all other teachers. Then from Him as Head, this unction is diffused through the members, as Joel has foretold, “Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions” (Joe 2:28). Paul’s expression that He was “made unto us wisdom” (1Co 1:30), and elsewhere that in Him “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3), have a somewhat different meaning—namely, that out of Him there is nothing worth knowing, and that those who by faith apprehend His true character possess the boundless immensity of heavenly blessings. For which reason He elsewhere says, “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1Co 2:2). And most justly, for it is unlawful to go beyond the simplicity of the Gospel. The purpose of this prophetic dignity in Christ is to teach us, that in the doctrine that He delivered is substantially included a wisdom that is perfect in all its parts.

Sections 3-5 The Kingly Office

Section 3 The Eternity of Christ’s Dominion¹²¹

I come to the Kingly office...it [would be] vain to speak without previously reminding the reader that its nature is spiritual: it is from thence we learn its efficacy, the benefits it confers, its whole power and eternity. Eternity, moreover, which in Daniel an angel attributes to the office of Christ (Dan 2:44), in Luke is justly applied to the salvation of His people (Luk 1:33). But this is also twofold and must be viewed in

¹¹⁵ **suspense** – a state of waiting for something expected; expectation.

¹¹⁶ **SUMMARY 4.2:** The name *Christ* refers to the three offices of prophet, priest, and king. In the Old Testament, all who held these offices were anointed with oil. The name *Messiah*, which means “anointed,” mainly connects to Christ’s Kingship; but we must not overlook the prophetic and priestly offices. Christ was anointed with the Spirit as a Prophet to testify of His Father’s grace. He received the anointing of the Spirit, not only to carry out the office of teacher, but that the Spirit’s power might always accompany the preaching of the Gospel. As Prophet, He teaches us doctrine that is perfect in all its parts.

¹¹⁷ **sacerdotal** – priestly.

¹¹⁸ **unctions** – anointings.

¹¹⁹ **extraneous** – foreign; unrelated to that to which it is added.

¹²⁰ **derogate** – detract.

¹²¹ **SUMMARY 4.3:** Christ’s Kingly office is *spiritual*. Christ’s eternal Kingship is powerful and beneficial; we must view it in two ways: Christ’s Kingship pertains 1) to the *church*. Christ is the eternal governor and defender of His church: no matter what harassments, commotions, or disasters threaten her, she will endure. Not all the power of the devil and the world can destroy the King’s church. His Kingship pertains 2) to each *member* of the church. We see by the eternity of His Kingdom that the world is temporary and will pass away. He raises our hopes to heaven, not this world. The hand of our great King protects our hope of eternal life.

two ways: the one pertains to the whole body of the church, the other is proper to each member. To the former is to be referred what is said in the Psalms, “Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven” (Psa 89:35-37). There can be no doubt that God here promises that He will be, by the hand of His Son, the eternal governor and defender of the church. In none but Christ will the fulfillment of this prophecy be found, since immediately after Solomon’s death, the kingdom in great measure lost its dignity and was transferred to a private individual, with ignominy¹²² to the family of David (1Ki 12). Afterwards decaying by degrees, it at length came to a sad and dishon-orable end (2Ki 24). In the same sense are we to understand the exclamation of Isaiah: “Who shall declare his generation?” (Isa 53:8). For he asserts that Christ will so survive death as to be connected with His members. Therefore, as often as we hear that Christ is armed with eternal power, let us learn that the perpetuity of the church is thus effectually secured—that amid the turbulent agitations by which it is constantly harassed and the grievous and fearful commotions that threaten innumerable disasters, it still remains safe. Thus, when David derides the audacity of the enemy who attempt to throw off the yoke of God and His anointed, and says that kings and nations rage “in vain” because He Who sits in the heaven is strong enough to repel their assaults (Psa 2:2-4), assuring believers of the perpetual preservation of the church, he animates them to have good hope whenever it is occasionally oppressed.

In another place, when speaking in the person of God, he says, “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Psa 110:1). He reminds us that, however numerous and powerful the enemies who conspire to assault the church, they are not possessed of strength sufficient to prevail against the immortal decree by which He appointed His Son eternal King. Whence it follows that the devil, with the whole power of the world, can never possibly destroy the church, which is founded on the eternal throne of Christ. Then concerning the special use to be made by each believer, this same eternity ought to elevate us to the hope of a blessed immortality. For we see that everything that is earthly and of the world is temporary and soon fades away. Christ, therefore, to raise our hope to the heavens, declares that His kingdom is not of this world (Joh 18:36). In fine, let each of us, when he hears that the kingdom of Christ is spiritual, be roused by the thought to entertain the hope of a better life and to expect that as it is now protected by the hand of Christ, so it will be fully realized in a future life.

Section 4 The Blessing of Christ’s Kingly Office for Us¹²³

That the strength and utility of the kingdom of Christ cannot, as we have said, be fully perceived without recognizing it as spiritual, is sufficiently apparent even from this: having to war under the cross during the whole course of our lives, our condition here is bitter and wretched. What then would it avail us to be ranged¹²⁴ under the government of a heavenly King, if its benefits were not realized beyond the present earthly life? We must, therefore, know that the happiness that is promised to us in Christ does not consist in external advantages—such as leading a joyful and tranquil life, abounding in wealth, being secure against all injury, and having an affluence of delights, such as the flesh is wont to long for—but properly belongs to the heavenly life. As in the world the prosperous and desirable condition of a people consists partly in the abundance of temporal good and domestic peace, and partly in the strong protection that gives security against external violence; so Christ also enriches His people with all things necessary to the eternal salvation of their souls and fortifies them with courage to stand unassailable by all the attacks of spiritual foes. Whence we infer that He reigns—both within us and without us—more for *us* than for Himself. [Thus,] being replenished, as far as God knows to be expedient, with the gifts of the Spirit, of which we are naturally destitute, we may feel from their first fruits that we are truly united to God for perfect blessedness. Then, trusting to the power of the same Spirit, [we] may not doubt that we shall always be victorious against the devil, the world, and everything that can do us harm. To this effect was our Savior’s reply to the Phar-isees, “The kingdom of God is within you...The kingdom of God cometh not with observation” (Luk 17:21, 20). It is probable that on His declaring Himself to be that King under Whom the highest blessing of God was to be expected, they had in derision asked Him to produce His insignia.¹²⁵ But to prevent those who were already more than enough inclined to the earth from dwelling on its pomp, He bids them enter into their consciences, for “the kingdom of God” is “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom 14:17). These words briefly teach what the kingdom of Christ bestows upon us. Not being earthly or carnal, and so subject to corruption, but spiritual, it raises us even to eternal life.

Therefore, we can patiently live at present under toil, hunger, cold, contempt, disgrace, and other annoyances contented with this: our King will never abandon us, but will supply our necessities until our warfare is ended, and we are called to triumph—such being the nature of His kingdom that He communicates to us whatever He received of His Father. Since then He arms and equips us by His power, adorns us with splendor and magnificence, enriches us with wealth. We here find most abundant cause of glorying and are inspired with boldness, so that we can contend intrepidly with the devil, sin, and death. In fine, clothed with His right-

¹²² **ignominy** – public disgrace, shame, reproach.

¹²³ **SUMMARY 4.4:** Having to war under the cross in this life makes our existence here full of misery. Why would we serve a heavenly King without earthly benefits? Because the happiness God has promised us in Christ lies not in this world or its prosperity. Christ enriches our souls with everything we need for eternal salvation and with the courage to withstand all the attacks of our spiritual enemies. By the power of His Spirit, we can live patiently under our afflictions, knowing that our King equips, adorns, and enriches us with gifts from the Father. He richly replenishes us to bring forth fruit to His glory.

¹²⁴ **ranged** – gathered together; ranked.

¹²⁵ **insignia** – the distinguishing marks of office; tokens indicating His Kingship.

eousness, we can bravely surmount all the insults of the world; and as He replenishes us liberally with His gifts, so we can in our turn bring forth fruit unto His glory.

Section 5 The Spiritual Nature of His Kingly Office: The Sovereignty of Christ and the Father¹²⁶

Accordingly, His royal unction is not set before us as composed of oil or aromatic perfumes; but He is called “the Christ” of God because “the spirit of the Lord” rested upon Him—“the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD” (Isa 11:2). This is the oil of joy with which the Psalmist declares that He was anointed above His fellows (Psa 45:7). For, as has been said, He was not enriched privately for Himself, but that He might refresh the parched and hungry with His abundance. For as the Father is said to have given the Spirit to the Son without measure (Joh 3:34), so the reason is expressed that we might all receive of His fullness and grace for grace (Joh 1:16). From this fountain flows the copious supply (of which Paul makes mention, Eph 4:7) by which grace is variously distributed to believers according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Here we have ample confirmation of what I said, that the kingdom of Christ consists in the Spirit, and not in earthly delights or pomp, and that hence, in order to be partakers with Him, we must renounce the world.

A visible symbol of this grace was exhibited at the baptism of Christ, when the Spirit rested upon Him in the form of a dove. To designate the Spirit and His gifts by the term “unction” is not new and ought not to seem absurd (see 1Jo 2:20, 27) because this is the only quarter from which we derive life. But especially in what regards the heavenly life, there is not a drop of vigor in us save what the Holy Spirit instills, Who has chosen His seat in Christ, that thence the heavenly riches, of which we are destitute, might flow to us in copious abundance. But because believers stand invincible in the strength of their King and His spiritual riches abound towards them, they are not improperly called Christians.

Moreover, from this eternity of which we have spoken, there is nothing derogatory in the expression of Paul, “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father” (1Co 15:24); and also, “Then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all” (1Co 15:28)—for the meaning merely is that in that perfect glory the administration of the kingdom will not be such as it now is. For the Father has given all power to the Son that by His hand He may govern, cherish, sustain us, keep us under His guardianship, and give assistance to us. Thus, while we wander far as pilgrims from God, Christ interposes that He may gradually bring us to full communion with God.

Indeed, His sitting at the right hand of the Father has the same meaning as if He was called the vice-regent of the Father, entrusted with the whole power of government. For God is pleased mediately,¹²⁷ so to speak, in [Christ’s] person to rule and defend the church. Thus also His being seated at the right hand of the Father is explained by Paul, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, to mean “he is the head over all things to the church, which is his body” (Eph 1:22-23). Nor is this different in purport¹²⁸ from what He elsewhere teaches: God has “given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phi 2:9-11). For in these words also, He commends an arrangement in the kingdom of Christ that is necessary for our present infirmity. Thus, Paul rightly infers that God will then be the only Head of the church because the office of Christ in defending the Church shall then have been completed. For the same reason, Scripture throughout calls Him Lord, the Father having appointed Him over us for the express purpose of exercising His government through Him. For though many lordships are celebrated in the world (1Co 8:5), yet Paul says, “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him” (1Co 8:6). Whence it is justly inferred that He is the same God, Who by the mouth of Isaiah declared, “For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us” (Isa 33:22). For though He everywhere describes all the power that He possesses as “the benefit and gift of the Father,” the meaning simply is that He reigns by divine authority because His reason for assuming the office of Mediator was that, descending from the bosom and incomprehensible glory of the Father, *He might draw near to us*. Wherefore, there is the greater reason that we all with one consent should prepare to obey and with the greatest alacrity¹²⁹ yield implicit obedience to His will. For as He unites the offices of King and Pastor towards believers who voluntarily submit to Him, so, on the other hand, we are told that He wields an iron scepter to break and bruise all the rebellious like a potter’s vessel (Psa 2:9). We are also told that He will be the Judge of the Gentiles, that He will cover the earth with dead bodies, and level down every opposing height (Psa 110:6). Of this, examples are seen at present; but full proof will be given at the final judgment, which may be properly regarded as the last act of His reign.

¹²⁶ **SUMMARY 4:5:** Jesus is called “Christ,” that is, the “Anointed.” God the Father anointed Him with “the oil of gladness,” i.e., the Holy Spirit, not with physical “oil.” He was given the Spirit without measure for the church’s benefit, so that we might receive His fullness and grace. At His baptism, Christ received the visible symbol of the Holy Spirit—a dove descending and resting upon Him. The heavenly riches of which we are destitute flow copiously to us through Christ’s Spirit. Paul speaks of Christ turning over His kingship to His Father: the future, perfect administration of Christ’s Kingdom will not be as it is now. Christ is the Father’s vice-regent, seated at the Father’s right hand, ruling the church on His Father’s behalf. He is the Head of the church, the Lord, the King, and the Pastor of believers and the Judge of the wicked.

¹²⁷ **mediately** – through a mediator; by means of a go-between.

¹²⁸ **purport** – intended meaning.

¹²⁹ **alacrity** – eagerness.

Section 6

The Priestly Office

Section 6 The Priestly Office: Reconciliation & Intercession¹³⁰

With regard to His Priesthood: we must briefly hold its [purpose] and use to be that as a Mediator—free from all taint—by His own holiness, He may procure the favor of God for us. A deserved curse obstructs the entrance, and God in His character of Judge is hostile to us. [Therefore, an] expiation must necessarily intervene that, as a Priest employed to appease the wrath of God, [Christ] may reinstate us in His favor. Wherefore, in order that Christ might fulfill this office, it behooved¹³¹ Him to appear with a sacrifice. For even under the Law of the priesthood, it was forbidden to enter the sanctuary without blood (Heb 9:7), to teach the worshipper that God could not be propitiated, however the priest might interpose to deprecate,¹³² without the expiation of sin (Lev 16:2-3). On this subject, the Apostle discourses at length in the Epistle to the Hebrews, from the seventh almost to the end of the tenth chapter. The sum comes to this: the honor of the priesthood was competent to none but Christ because, by the sacrifice of His death, He wiped away our guilt and made satisfaction for sin. Of the great importance of this matter, we are reminded by that solemn oath that God uttered, and of which He declared He would not repent: “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Psa 110:4). For doubtless, His purpose was to ratify that point on which He knew that our salvation chiefly hinged. For, as has been said, there is no access to God for us or for our prayers until the priest, purging away our defilements, sanctifies us, and obtain[s] for us that favor of which the impurity of our lives and hearts deprives us. Thus, we see that if the benefit and efficacy of Christ’s priesthood is to reach us, the commencement must be with His death.

Whence it follows, that He by Whose aid we obtain favor must be a perpetual intercessor.¹³³ From this again arises not only confidence in prayer, but also the tranquility of pious minds, while they recline in safety on the paternal indulgence of God and feel assured that whatever has been consecrated by the Mediator is pleasing to Him. But since God under the Law ordered sacrifices of beasts to be offered to Him, there was a different and new arrangement in regard to Christ: He should be at once victim *and* priest because no other fit satisfaction for sin could be found, nor was any one worthy of the honor of offering an only begotten son to God. Christ now bears the office of priest (Rev 1:6), not only that by the eternal law of reconciliation He may render the Father favorable and propitious to us, but also admit us into this most honorable alliance. For we, though in ourselves polluted, in Him being priests, offer ourselves and our all to God, and freely enter the heavenly sanctuary, so that the sacrifices of prayer and praise that we present are grateful and of sweet odor before Him. To this effect are the words of Christ, “For their sakes I sanctify myself” (Joh 17:19); for being clothed with His holiness, inasmuch as He has devoted us to the Father with Himself—otherwise we were an abomination before Him—we please Him as if we were pure and clean, nay, even *sacred*. Hence that unction of the sanctuary, of which mention is made in Daniel (Dan 9:24). For we must attend to the contrast between this unction and the shadowy one that was then in use; as if the angel had said that when the shadows were dispersed there would be a clear priesthood in the Person of Christ. The more detestable, therefore, is the fiction of those who, not content with the priesthood of Christ, have dared to take it upon themselves to sacrifice Him, a thing daily attempted in the Papacy, where the mass is represented as an immolation¹³⁴ of Christ. ❧

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¹³⁰ **SUMMARY 4.6:** The purpose of Christ’s Priestly office is to reconcile us to God by His holiness. Our deserved curse keeps us from God. We need a priest to offer a sacrifice that will turn away God’s wrath from us. The Priestly office belongs to Christ alone. Only the death of Christ the Priest wiped away believers’ guilt and made satisfaction for sin. Christ is also our perpetual intercessor. Our confidence in prayer and our peace of mind arise from knowing that the Father accepts whatever our Mediator consecrates. Under the Law, God commanded the sacrifice of animals. But there was a new arrangement when Christ came: He was both priest *and* sacrifice. Only Christ the Priest could make the acceptable sacrifice and be worthy of offering an “only begotten Son.” Christ makes us companions in priesthood: His sacrifice makes us acceptable to God. We freely enter God’s presence by Christ, making ourselves and our all, our prayers and our praise sweet smelling to God. The Priesthood of Christ is all we need: the Papal priesthood is the creation of those not content with Christ’s Priesthood.

¹³¹ **behooved** – necessary for.

¹³² **interpose to deprecate** – stand between God and sinners to pray for deliverance.

¹³³ **intercessor** – one who pleads with someone in authority on behalf of someone else.

¹³⁴ **immolation** – sacrificial offering.

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