

CALVIN ON ALLAH, MUHAMMAD, QURAN, AND CHRISTIANIZING MUSLIMS

(by Rev. Professor-Emeritus Dr. Francis Nigel Lee)

Regarding Genesis 1:1-3, Calvin himself explained:¹ "The [Islamic] Turks in the present day... proclaim...with full throat that the Creator of Heaven and Earth is their God -- yet by their rejection [of the Deity and Saviourhood] of Christ, substitute an idol in His place."

In Deuteronomy 4:8, God said to Ancient Israel: "What nation is there so great, which has God so nigh to them?" Here Calvin observes:² "Let me look at the [Islamic] Turks! They have some reverence to their religion, and so have the Papists too. Yet both of them are cut off from the Church of God through their own fault."

In Deuteronomy 13:1-11, God warns against a false-prophet or a dreamer of dreams who gives out signs and attempts to win converts – and prescribes capital punishment against such. Here, Calvin again observes:³ "If the Christian Faith be impugned by the wicked who do not pretend to come to [the Triune] God – like the [Islamic] Turks, [polytheistic] Pagans, and [Unitarian] Jews [or rather Judaists] – they blaspheme with open mouth. Forasmuch as they be utterly cut off from the Church like rotten Members – their resisting of the Gospel and their resisting is no great wonder to us....

"We see false-prophets step up.... We see that such as [falsely] call themselves 'Christians' and take that title most upon them, are the worst enemies of God that a man can find. For the [Islamic] Turks and [unitarian Judaists] or] Jews are not more fiery and venomous at this day against God to deface the whole doctrine of salvation, than are the Papists....

"Although the [Islamic] Turks still hold their Mahomet's Al-Coran; although the Papists still be entangled in their superstitions – all is one.... They hold fast this principle, that 'there is a God'...and in the meantime...worship a puppet.... The Roman[ist]s...have transformed the majesty of God, though their intent was to worship the living God.... Likewise the [Islamic] Turks, who say the same thing; and so also do the [Judaistic unitarian] Jews, notwithstanding that they abhor Jesus Christ....

"The [Islamic] Turks set their Mahomet in the place of God's Son, not knowing [or acknowledging] that God has manifested Himself in the flesh (which is one of the chief articles of our Faith).... Behold, a hypocrite comes to me that would devise a new religion – as it were to set up a popedom here again, or to bring in the Al-Coran or Mahomet! Now ought such a one to be put to death, without forbearing. For so hath God ordained. And if any man say 'that is cruelty' – let him find fault with God for it, and we shall see if he can prevail!"

Islam claims that not Christ but Muhammad is the Prophet like Moses promised at Deuteronomy 18:15. But there, Calvin held⁴ that "Mahomet" was one of "the two horns of Antichrist" – and at 18:20 that false-prophets shall die. Indeed, at First John 2:22-23, Calvin adds⁵ that the [Islamic] "Turks, [Judaistic] Jews, and such like [Unitarians] -- have a mere idol in place of God."

Yet God has predestined many Muslims to come back to the Triune God of the Holy Bible. That Calvin believed this, is seen from his view of Deuteronomy 23:7-8 and Isaiah 19:21-25. It is seen also from his views of the Great Commission -- and of the preaching of the Gospel to Muslims, and the baptizing of all of them who convert to Christ (as required thereby).

In Deuteronomy 23:7-8, God tells His People: "You shall not abhor an Edomite [alias a Jordanian descendants of Esau]; for he is your brother! You shall not abhor an Egyptian; because you were a stranger in his land!"

This, argues Dr. John Calvin, means that the baptized Romanist is our brother -- just as the circumcised Edomite was the brother of the Israelite. Interestingly, the Islamic Jordanians *etc.* as Neo-**Edomites** -- being Muslims -- have at least been circumcised. The same applies today also to the modern **Egyptians**, most of whom are circumcised **Muslims**. And the same applies also to the **Muslim Arabs**, as descendants of the circumcised **Ishmael** the son of **Abraham**.

Thus, on Deuteronomy 23:7-8, Calvin insists:⁶ "Moses says that if the Edomites would yield themselves into the [truly Christian alias the godly Protestant] Church of God -- they might be received...and be incorporated therein altogether. For he who offered himself to be circumcised, was always received...."

"Let us therefore diligently note here of the children of [the circumcised] Esau...that if any of them would renounce his own kindred" -- as converted Ex-Muslims should renounce their kindred Muslims -- "he would be accounted in the number of this blessed flock" of God's True People.

"Now we are here to call to mind that when God made His promise [Gen. 17:12-26f cf. 21:4-20 & 25:1-17], it was unto the whole stock of Abraham.... God had a certain regard and bare a special favour unto all that house and unto them which were to issue from it. Accordingly...we see how He says: 'As concerning **Ishmael**, I have heard you' [Gen. 17:20f]. And indeed, it was not for nought that God commanded Ishmael should be circumcised.

"We know what Circumcision imports. It is a sign of the favour of God. Now seeing it was given unto Ishmael, it is great reason that he should approach more near unto God than the Pagans who were altogether defiled and who had no sign that God loved them.... But here [with Ishmael and the Ishmaelites], the case is of having some warrant of adoption. Now **Ishmael had it**...."

"And so it was with **Esau**. For he was then a son of **Isaac**. Yes, he and he brother **Jacob** were twins.... Likewise at this day, we [Calvinistic Protestants] be far nearer neighbour to the [co-baptized] **Papists** than to the [unbaptized yet still circumcised **Islamic**] **Turks**.... For they [the Papists] have Baptism, which is a visible sign whereby we see that God held those of His House and of His Fold. You see then, how the Papists are as it were the Edomites" who had received Circumcision which Baptism has now replaced (*cf.* Colossians 2:11-13).

Calvin elsewhere gives us yet another comment on Deuteronomy 23:7. There he states⁷ that "although **Esau** had cut himself off from the prerogative of believers, yet the door was again opened to his children -- provided they returned to their source and origin, and in the humility of faith admitted the primogeniture of Jacob who had been chosen when their father was passed by."

Calvin stated further in a kindred sermon,⁸ "we ought notwithstanding to call to mind the brotherhood which they had with us. And therefore let us endeavour as much as is possible for us to bring them back again, so that we may be knit together again! And how knit together again? I do not mean that we should turn aside from the pure truth of God..., but that they should enter.... They should approach near unto God, and we all of us thus be reconciled -- yielding obedience unto our heavenly Father, so that we may all have one Head, Jesus Christ, Who will defend us under His wings...."

"We are to receive them with all gentleness, by reason of the brotherhood which God has set between them and us. And we must not only do so; but we also must seek them as much as is possible for us to do so...."

"As touching the **Egyptians**, it is said that they also shall be received into the Church.... When God gave an entrance unto the Egyptians to be received into the Congregation in the third generation, it was not to

the intent that the people of Israel should defile themselves with the abominations of Egypt or meddle any whit at all with them. But rather that the Egyptians should not remain in so desperate a case as they were in, but be brought to worship the living God and to **dedicate themselves wholly** unto Him.... If the Egyptians would forsake all their own corruptions, they might be grafted...unto the **Church of God** [cf. Luke 23:26 and Acts 2:10 & 8: 27-39 & 11:20 & 13:1 & 18:24f and Rom. 11:11-32]....

"Let us therefore note that God's **opening of the gate into His Church**, both to the **Edomites and the Egyptians**, was not to have them bring in their infections to pervert this service, or to make any medley, but rather that the Edomites and Egyptians should come and agree in **all points** unto **His Law**, and **yield their consent** unto that **pureness of doctrine** which is therein contained. And therefore nowadays, seeing that God has showed Himself so gracious unto us, as to make us His **Church** -- let us be **ready to receive them** who would be reclaimed thereunto! Yes, let us have our arms stretched out...also to such as are our kinsfolk afar off -- **endeavouring, for all that, to win and to gain them!**"

In Isaiah 19:21-25, God predicts: "The Lord shall be **known to Egypt**, and **the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day**.... The Lord shall smite **Egypt and heal it**; and **they shall return to the Lord**.... In that day, there shall be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria.... **The Assyrian shall come into Egypt**, and the Egyptians into Assyria, and **the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians**. In that day, **Israel shall be the third** with Egypt and with Assyria -- even a blessing in the midst of the land.... The Lord of hosts shall bless, saying: '**Blessed be Egypt, My People**; and **Assyria, the work of My hands**; and **Israel, My inheritance!**'"

Here, Rev. Dr. John Calvin comments:⁹ "The Prophet says that the Lord will be gracious and reconciled to the **Egyptians**. He at the same time shows that as soon as they have been **converted**, they will obtain forgiveness.... It will therefore be a **true conversion** – when it is followed by a calling upon God.... There is no man who ought not to acknowledge in himself what Isaiah here declares concerning the Egyptians, in whom **the Lord holds out an example to the whole World**. The Prophet now foretells that **the Lord will diffuse His goodness throughout the whole World!** As if he had said: 'It will not be shut up in a corner or be known exclusively, as it formerly was, by [but] a single nation.'

"Here, he speaks of two nations [**Assyria and Egypt**] that were **the most inveterate enemies of the Church** [both in Old and in New Testament times].... And if the Lord is so gracious to the **deadly enemies of the Church** -- that He **pardons and adopts them to be[come] His children!** – what shall be the case with **other nations?** This prophecy thus includes the calling of **all nations**" – and hence of even **diehard Islamic nations, like Iran!**

"Through the undeserved goodness of God," explains Calvin, "**the Assyrians and Egyptians shall be admitted to fellowship with the chosen People of God**.... There is a mutual relation between God and His People, so that they who are called by His mouth 'a Holy People' (Exodus 19:6) -- may justly in return call Him their God. Yet this designation is bestowed indiscriminately on Egyptians and Assyrians....

"By **calling the Egyptians the People of God** -- He means that they will share in the honour which God designed to bestow in a peculiar manner on the Jews [meaning the Older Testament's Israelites] alone. When He calls **Assyrians 'the work of His hands'** – He distinguishes them by the title peculiar to **His Church**."

What a great day is coming! For the **Muslims of Egypt**, the **Judaists of Israel**, and the **Islamic nations** of the **Neo-Assyrian Iraq and Iran**, will yet come to Christ and join His Church!

God makes a precious promise also in Isaiah 59:18-20. There, it is predicted that the Lord "will repay according to their deeds -- fury to His adversaries; recompense to His enemies -- **to the islands He will**

repay recompense! So shall they **fear the Name of the Lord from the West, and His glory from the rising of the sun [in the East]**. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. **'Then the Redeemer shall come to Zion,** and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob' -- says the Lord."

Here, Calvin comments:¹⁰ "This work of redemption shall be so splendid and illustrious -- that **the whole World shall...praise and celebrate....** Struck with fear, it shall render glory to God.... **He means the conversion of the Gentiles....** Even to the **utmost** boundaries of the **Earth**, the Name of God shall be revered and honoured, so that **the Gentiles** shall not only tremble but shall serve and **adore Him** with **true repentance....**

"A Redeemer shall come to Zion' [Isaiah 59:20].... Paul quotes this passage (Romans 11:26-29), to show that there is still some remaining **hope** among the **Jews....** Because God is continually mindful of His Covenant, and 'His gifts and calling are without repentance' -- Paul justly concludes that it is impossible that there shall not at length be some remnant that **come to Christ** and obtain that salvation.... **The Jews [too] must at length be collected, along with the Gentiles** -- so that out of both, 'there may be one fold' **under Christ** (John 10:16).... He could not be the Redeemer of the **World**, without belonging to...[also the] **Jews!**"

Endnotes

- 1) Calvin's *Inst.* II:6:4.
- 2) J. Calvin: *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1987, p. 124a 50-60.
- 3) *Ib.*, pp. 528b 55-63, 529a 58-66 to 529b 1-2, 544b 67 to 545a 1-40, & 545b 1-8.
- 4) *Ib.*, p. 666b [25-28].
- 5) J. Calvin: *The Gospel according to St. John*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1961 ed., II:261.
- 6) J. Calvin: *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, 1987, pp. 809a 19-60 & 809b 47-48 & 55-57.
- 7) J. Calvin: *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, n.d., II:402.
- 8) J. Calvin: *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, 1987, pp 810a 1-21 & 62-66 and 810b 1-5 & 15-19 & 36-56.
- 9) J. Calvin: *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961, II:79-83.
- 10) *Ib.*, IV:267f.