

THE VERY OLDEST CALVINISM – by Prof. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee

In his *Institutes* I:14:1 to II:1:7, Calvin remarks: "It is of importance to attend to the history of creation.... God, by the power of His Word and His Spirit, created the Heavens and the Earth out of nothing.... Thereafter, He produced things inanimate and animate of every kind..., giving each kind its proper nature.... As all things were liable to corruption, (God was) providing for the perpetuation of each single species...(by)...bestowing...a power of continuing their race -- so preventing it from perishing at their own death...."

"At length, man was made -- man, by the beauty of his person and his many noble endowments, the most glorious specimen of the works of God.... The Lord Himself, by the very order of creation, has demonstrated that He created all things for the sake of man...."

"The many noble faculties with which the human mind is endued, proclaim that...they are so many evidences of an immortal essence.... Such sense as the lower animals possess, goes not beyond the body.... But the swiftness with which the human mind glances from Heaven to Earth, scans the secrets of nature -- and, after it has embraced all ages with intellect and memory, digests each in its proper order and reads the future in the past.... The image of God extends to everything in which the nature of man surpasses that of all other species of animals...."

"When Adam lost his first estate, he became alienated from God.... Our deliverance begins with that renovation which we obtain from Christ, Who is therefore called the Second Adam.... The end of regeneration, is to form us anew in the image of God...."

"John (1:4)...says that the Light which was from the beginning in the eternal Word of God, was the light of man. His object being to extol...God, in making man excel the other animals.... Man was undoubtedly created to meditate on the heavenly life -- so it is certain that the knowledge of it was engraven on the soul...."

"God has provided the soul of man with intellect, by which he might discern good from evil.... To this, He has joined will -- to which choice belongs.... [This] not only sufficed for the government of his earthly life, but also enabled him to rise up to God and eternal happiness.... In this upright state, man possessed freedom of will -- by which, if he chose, he was able to obtain eternal life...."

"It was chiefly for the sake of mankind, that the world was made.... When reflecting on what God gave us at our creation and still continues graciously to give, we perceive how great the excellence of our nature.... God at first formed us in His Own image, so that He might elevate our minds to...the contemplation of eternal life -- so as to prevent us from heartlessly burying those noble qualities which distinguish us from the lower animals.... We were endued with reason and intelligence, in order that we might cultivate a holy and honourable life -- and regard a blessed immortality as our destined aim...."

"It is impossible for us to think of our first origin...or the end for which we were created, without being urged to meditate on immortality.... The prohibition to touch the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was a trial of obedience so that Adam by observing it might prove his willing submission to the command of God.... The promise which gave him hope of eternal life as long as he should eat of the tree of life..., was meant to prove and exercise his faith...."

"Adam's spiritual life would have consisted in remaining united and bound to his Maker.... Adam was made the depository of the endowments which God was pleased to bestow on human nature." But mankind, 'like Adam, transgressed the covenant!' Hosea 6:7.

In his *Commentary on Genesis* 1:26 to 9:10, Calvin adds: "Man is...a certain pre-eminent specimen of divine wisdom.... He is deservedly called by the ancients *mikrokosmos*, 'a world in miniature'.... Chrysostom...refers to the dominion which was given to man in order that he might...act as God's vicegerent in the government of the World.... Spiritual regeneration is nothing else than the restoration of the same image (Colossians 3:10 and Ephesians 4:23)....

"He (God) decreed to honour man..., so that he should have authority over all living creatures. He appointed man...lord of the World.... The use of the plural number ('let them have dominion') intimates that this authority was not given to Adam only, but to all his posterity as well as to him.... Adam with his wife was formed for the production of offspring, in order that men might replenish [or fill] the Earth....

"God intends the human race to be multiplied by generation.... That pure and lawful method of increase which God ordaining from the beginning, remains firm. This is that law of nature which common sense declares to be inviolable....

"God claims for Himself the meditations and employments of men on the seventh day. This is indeed the proper business of the whole life, in which men should daily exercise themselves.... God rested.... He blessed this rest, so that in all ages it might be held sacred among men.... This is to be the common employment not of one age or people only, but of the whole human race.... The Sabbath...was commanded to men from the beginning, so that they might employ themselves in the worship of God. It is right that it should continue to the end of the World....

"Adam was, by divine appointment, an inhabitant of the Earth in order that he might -- in passing through his earthly life -- meditate on heavenly glory.... Men were created to employ themselves in some work, and not to lie down in inactivity and idleness.... Let him who possesses a field, so partake of its yearly fruits that he may not suffer the ground to be injured by his negligence!... Let him endeavour to hand it down to posterity...even better cultivated!...

"Man...was in every respect, happy.... His earthly life truly would have been temporal [or subject to the passage of time]. Yet he would have passed into Heaven, without death....

"God's bringing the animals to Adam signifies...He endued them with the disposition to obedience.... They would voluntarily offer themselves to the man in order that he, having closely inspected them, might distinguish them by appropriate names agreeing with the nature of each.... In the person of the woman, the human race was...like a building just begun."

Despite man's fall into sin, "victory is promised to the human race through a continual succession of ages.... The human race...would at length be victorious.... The whole Church of God, under [Christ] its Head, will gloriously exult.... Truly, the first man would have passed to a better life, had he remained upright.... There would have been no separation of the soul from the body....

"Adam, animated by the hope of a more happy condition because God had promised that the head of the serpent should be wounded by [Christ] the Seed of the woman [Eve], called her by a name [*Chavvaah*] implying life.... When he heard the declaration of God concerning the prolongation of life -- he began again to breathe and to take courage....

"As one revived, he gave his wife [Eve] a name derived from *life*.... Notice that the benediction of God -- 'Increase and multiply!' -- was not abolished by sin....

"With you will I (re-)establish My covenant!" (Genesis 6:18)... Thus was Noah encouraged to obey God.... Noah would be safe.... The covenant with him is confirmed.... His family shall be preserved for his sake..., for the replenishing of the new world....

"When Moses...says that God blessed Noah and his sons (Genesis 9:1), he does not simply mean that the favour of fruitfulness was restored to them.... The new restitution of the world was revealed to them.... The Lord prescribed...their future condition of life.... They shall raise up mankind from death to life.... He not only renews the World by the same Word by which He before created it. But He directs His Word to men, in order that they may recover the lawful use of marriage...so that a progeny shall spring from them which shall diffuse itself through all regions of the Earth....

"This...has chiefly respect to the restoration of the World, in order that the sovereignty over the rest of animals might remain with men.... That dominion over them which God had conferred on him in the beginning, was still left.... The same dominion shall continue.... The fact that oxen become accustomed to bear the yoke...; that cows give milk, and suffer themselves to be milked; that sheep are mute under the hand of the shearer -- all these facts are the result of this dominion....

"God, making His covenant with the sons of Noah, commands them to hope for the best.... It was not therefore a private covenant confirmed with one family only, but one which is common to all people and which shall flourish in all ages to the end of the world (Psalm 8:3-8).... God...makes a covenant with Noah and his family.... He transmits His covenant to posterity..., so that as by continual succession the effect may reach to other ages.... God promises salvation to a thousand generations" -- for 1000 times one generation to the next, meaning 20000 years!

"God...shall bruise Satan [under your feet shortly!], in Romans 16:20]," comments Calvin, "is a promise to **strengthen**.... He exhorts...to fight against Satan without fear, and promises...a speedy victory.... He not only speaks of the last day when Satan will be trodden openly underfoot.... He promises that the Lord will subdue him and make him to be trodden under your feet" -- speedily, and **now**!