

dismay and paralyse invocation".¹ How then, asks Calvin, can man come to know God? "If the angels tremble at God's glory, if they veil themselves with their wings, what should we do who creep upon this earth?"² "For if the mountains melt at the sight of Him, what must needs happen to mortal man, than whom there is nothing more frail and feeble?"³

It is to be noted that, in his exposition of the Old Testament, when Calvin comes to the discussion of those passages which speak of man as having "seen God", he almost invariably points out that such phrases should not be interpreted to mean that they saw God "as He really is", but only "as far as He can be beheld by mortal man".⁴ "Thus in ancient times God appeared to the Holy fathers, not as He is in Himself but so far as they could endure the rays of His infinite brightness."⁵ "When God exhibited Himself to the view of the fathers, He never appeared such as He actually is, but such as the capacity of men could perceive."⁶ God, in revealing Himself to man, has to transform Himself by covering over that in Himself which man by reason of his sinfulness cannot bear to see, and by modifying that in Himself which man's mind is too small to grasp.

2. God, in revealing Himself, adapts Himself to the capacity of man

The gulf between God and man can be bridged. In this impossible situation in which man cannot bear that God as He

¹Comm. on Ps. 132 : 8, C.R. 32 : 346. *Nam si Deus nullo medio interposito, recta nos in coelum vocet, quia nobis horrorem incutit longa distantia, friget invocationis tudium.* Cf. Serm. on 1 Tim. 2 : 5-6, C.R. 53 : 163-4. *Venons-nous donc devant Dieu? Si nous ne contemplons que ceste haute maiesté et incomprehensible qui est en luy, c'est pour nous espouvanter, il faut que nous soyons confus, et qu'un chacun recule : et mesmes que plustost nous desirions que les montagnes nous couvrent, et nous accablent, que de sentir la presence de Dieu.*

²Comm. on Ezek. 1 : 28, C.R. 40 : 60.

³Comm. on Exod. 24 : 11, C.R. 25 : 77; cf. on Ezek. 11 : 4, and Inst. 1 : 1 : 3.

⁴Comm. on Ezek. 1 : 28, C.R. 40 : 60.

⁵Comm. on Matt. 17 : 2, C.R. 45 : 485. *Sic olim Deus sanctis patribus apparuit, non qualis in se erat, sed quatenus immensi eius splendoris radios ferre poterant.*

⁶Comm. on Isa. 6 : 1, C.R. 36 : 126. *Quoties se patribus spectandum praebeuit Deus, nunquam apparuisse qualis est, sed qualis hominum sensu capi poterat.*

Cf. Serm. on Deut. 4 : 32-5, C.R. 26 : 206. *Il est dit, que les montagnes decoulent devant son regard. Il est dit que si seulement il iette l'oeil sur toute la terre qu'elle tremblera : car la maieste de Dieu en soy est si espouvanable, que ce seroit pour abysmer tout le monde.*