

- i, Tape five of Dr. Greg Bahnsen on the *Institute of the Christian Religion*.

Having studied in the last couple sessions the life of Calvin and then the production and expansion of *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, we finally get around tonight to the beginning of the study of the *Institutes* itself which turns out to be a systematic exposition of the Christian faith by Calvin in the midst of the 1500's in the Protestant Reformation. As I told you before I believe this book to be perhaps the most important and significant work produced by any of the reformers in terms of the progress of Protestant thought and culture in the Western world

We begin with Book I chapter 1 and section one. However, it will probably take us a while to get to the exposition. I promise you that my exegesis is not going to be this detailed on every point. But there is some preparatory remarks that need to be made about the significance of what Calvin says here and how he begins and why he proceeds the way he does. And I am going to look for a while here at simply the title of Book I. And the title of Book I as you all know. Cover it up and take a little quiz. What is the title of Book I. The knowledge of God the Creator. And we need to look at a couple of things about that.

Notice that Calvin begins with a discussion in all of his systematic theology, of a discussion of the knowledge of God, the Creator. I want you to look at the word knowledge here and think about the importance of that. He is pointing to the inevitability of the epistemological question when he gets around to systematically thinking about Christianity. The epistemological question is one about the theory of knowledge. Epistemology is theory of knowledge. What I am saying is that when Calvin puts his foot forward, his first foot forward in theology, it is an epistemological foot. Its a question and it is an issue in epistemology, the theory of knowledge. He wants to talk about the knowledge of God the Creator. As far as Calvin was concerned metaphysics, which is the study, well, the structure and origin of that which is real. But primarily that which lies behind the natural world, the world of senses. When we think about metaphysical questions like God and the origin of the world and our own human nature, Calvin doesn't think we should be set loose to speculate and draw groundless inferences. In the 1600's, actually about 1640, not exactly but virtually a hundred years after this Decartes will begin writing. And of course the epistemological question is paramount in the philosophy of Descartes. How do I know what I know? This is the sort of thing that he wants to settle. And Descartes is quite concerned about the armchair speculation of the metaphysicians. People who just sit back and say, "Well, now we have certain premises we can begin and from them we can draw inferences about the nature of reality and what the origin of the world must be and what God must be like." Emmanuel Kant later, in the mid-1700's will all the more reprobate the useless speculations and vain babbling of the metaphysicians. Now there is a great contrast between Kant and Descartes on the one hand and Calvin on the other to be sure. But it is interesting to me to note that Calvin doesn't want to talk about the existence or the nature of God apart from the question of how we know these things. And so he begins with the knowledge of God. He wants to have all of his discussion of metaphysics as it were, tied to an epistemological anchor. How do we know these things? In the process of working out these things, Calvin's discussion of how we know God and what we know about God will lead him to the necessity of revelation. In a real sense it is because of that Sola Scriptura theme in Reformation theology that Calvin begins with the knowledge of God. How do we know what we know? On what basis? What is the certifying factor or standard by which we hold those truths which we do? What lies behind our beliefs? And will turn out that we. know these things based on God's revelation.

Well having pointed out then that the theory of knowledge, knowing God rather than some speculation about God in and or Himself, based on you know, first premises of the philosophers or what have you. /The knowledge of God is paramount in Calvin's thinking here. That brings us to the observation as well -£> that Calvin's theology is truly an apologetical theology. And we can't take that for granted as we are reading the Reformers and much as we might today. It is almost inconceivable that somebody would write a theology text today and not take into account that not everybody holds to the Bible as the Word of God and not everybody believes in God. Or not everybody holds to the proper conception of the deity

.. of Christ or what have you. That is, to our way of thinking, especially since we live in a secular age, to our way of thinking, you wouldn't do systematic theology without confronting unbelief and giving an answer for those things which we hold. But in the days of the Protestant reformers that wasn't common thing to do. Calvin especially among all the reformers. You look at any of the others who wrote during this time, whether it be Zwingli or Luther or Bucer or what have you, Calvin among all of them, is the apologetical theologian. The one who is concerned to give a reason for the hope that is in us as Christians. And so his theology takes on a cast and direction which is genuinely apologetical when he begins with the knowledge of God the Creator as well. Okay, so I realize you may think I am packing an awful lot into the fact that he begins with the knowledge of God. But it will turn out in think in the study of his theology that you will see why that has the paramount position in his discussion. Okay, enough for the significance of the fact that he begins with the knowledge of God the Creator.

What does Calvin mean by knowledge? That is going to take us a little bit of time. I have done some work in cross referencing sections in Calvin so that I could point out to you what he means by "knowing God." And I am going to begin by observing that for Calvin the word "knowledge" in its most generic sense, not specifically knowledge of God or knowledge of the price of tea in China or anything, but just what is knowledge wherever its applied, the word "knowledge" most generically is a mental grasp and ^ understanding of something. To mentally grasp or understand something is knowledge. And we see this in Book m, chapter 19 section 15. If you are following in our McNeil edition, that will be found on page 848 of volume one. Page 848 about the middle of the page where we read Calvin saying, "For just as

when through.....so also,"(read along with the professor) and then he goes on to a talk about conscience. So in passing he indicates that most generic sense as he sees it, to know is to grasp, or to have an understanding, "when through the minds and understanding men grasp a knowledge of things." This is what we mean by knowing. And as your editor points out in a footnote here at the very beginning of Book I, Chapter 1, a footnote on this word "knowledge" in Calvin. He used the Latin words *cognitio* and *knoicia* interchangeably. In fact he used one French word to translate both. And where you see for Book I the title, "The Knowledge of God the Creator" and then chapter 1 entitled, "The Knowledge of God and that of ourselves," English has "knowledge" but in Latin he has *cognitio* in one and he has *knoitia* ***sp? in the other. In Latin, and Doug you will correct me being the classics expert here, but as I recall the Latin would stress, "*knoitia*" would be like noticing or being aware of something, "to take cognizance of." And "*cognitio*" would be "to know" or "to apprehend." To be aware of it may be in some meaningful relationship, along with something else. But Calvin uses these two words interchangeably. So there is a sense in which knowledge, in the most general sense, for Calvin, just means to mentally grasp or understand something. Now,

Comment from the audience* **inaudible***

Answer. No, "*knoitia*"****sp? would be to notice and then you have "*cognitio*" which would be "to be cognitive of or "to have a knowledge of," "to think along with something." Um, Calvin says that in "earthly matters fallen men still have a rational power of perception and understanding which distinguishes him from the animals." Look at Book 1, chapter 2, sections 12-17, and for easy reference, just turn to page 271. We will point out some important things that Calvin says.

In the middle of 271, or just above the middle, he says, "Human understanding then possesses some power of perception since it is by nature captivated by love of truth. The lack of this endowment in brute animals proves their nature gross and irrational. Yet this longing for truth, such as it is, languishes before it enters upon its race because it soon falls into vanity. Indeed, man's mind, because of its dullness, cannot hold to the right path, but wanders through various errors and stumbles repeatedly, as if it were groping in darkness, until it strays away and finally disappears. Thus it betrays how incapable it is of seeking and finding truth."

On the one hand it is natural to man, as set over against the animals, to have this power of understanding, this sense of perception, but he is incapable of finding the truth because of his sin. On page 272, he says,

"There is one kind of understanding of earthly; another of heavenly." And the "earthly things" he says, includes government, household management, mechanical skills, and the liberal art. And what Calvin wants to grant is that by the common grace of God, even fallen men, unbelievers, can have a knowledge of such things but they don't have any ability to know heavenly things. That is the grace of God's salvation, a proper relationship with God.

*** inaudible audience comment ***

The purpose of government? Yeah, they can know the purpose and the proper means of government, he would say.

Umm, on page 273, in section 14, he says, "This evidence clearly testifies to a universal apprehension of reason and understanding by nature implanted in men." And then at the bottom of that page, section 15, "Whenever we come upon these matters in secular writers, let that admirable light of truth shining in them teach us that the mind of man, though fallen and perverted from its wholeness, is nevertheless clothed and ornamented with God's excellent gifts." Calvin does not believe that the mind of man is devoid of truth or unable to find truth. He says there are "excellent gifts" which men, even fallen men, even unbelievers, retain. And yet, he wants to hold out ~ and this is something which many of the followers of Calvin today do not hold to -- he is equally adamant that these gifts of God's common grace, these epistemological abilities that men have by God's common grace should draw men to God; that they cannot presume that this is a natural sort of benefit or ability, that it is something that is there only by the grace of God.

You'll notice, page 274, just a few lines above the long footnote that begins there, "But shall we count anything praiseworthy or noble without recognizing at the same time that it comes from God?" and he shames the ingratitude of men who have the ability to know about the liberal arts and to know about government and to know about mechanical skill, and yet they don't give praise to God, that this ability comes from God. And so then notice on page 275, where section 16 begins about 5 lines down, he says, "It is no wonder, then, that the knowledge of all that is most excellent in human life is said to be communicated to us through the Spirit of God." OK, so the Holy Spirit is active in common grace making it possible for men to know things, even things about architecture and agriculture and commerce and what have you.

He had an interesting statement, here, in the very middle of the page, "But if the Lord has willed that we be helped in physics, dialectic, mathematics, and other like disciplines, by the work and ministry of the ungodly, let us use this assistance. For if we neglect God's gift freely offered in these arts, we ought to suffer just punishment for our sloths." Calvin doesn't have this attitude that, "Well, now wait a minute, that's an unbeliever who discovered that quinine helps cure malaria, or it's an unbeliever who has built the bridge that spans this river, or it's an unbeliever who has enabled us to perform some wonder either in medicine or building buildings or what have you." He says, "No, God expects us to make use of the gifts of unbelievers." We are to receive their help in physics, dialectic, mathematics, and all other disciplines.

And then he says this also, going down a few lines, "We should at once add that all this capacity to understand, with the understanding that follows upon it, is an unstable and transitory thing in God's sight, when a solid foundation of truth does not underlie it." Calvin says unbelievers are able to do many things and to accomplish much in the world. They know a lot about these earthly matters, as it were, but he says the solid foundation of truth needs to be put under that knowledge, and so in section 17, at the top of 276, he says, "To sum up: We see among all mankind that reason is proper to our nature; it distinguishes us from brute beasts, just as they by possessing feeling differ from inanimate things. Now, because some are born fools or stupid, that defect does not obscure the general grace of God. Rather, we are warned by that spectacle that we ought to ascribe what is left in us to God's kindness. For if he had not spared us, our fall would have entailed the destruction of our whole nature." Let's skip a sentence. "In this variety God commends his grace to us lest anyone should claim as his own what

flowed from the sheer bounty of God." And so you have one of the clearest statements of the Calvinistic doctrine of common grace in its proper use here, right in Calvin.

Where Calvin says unbelievers can know things about this world, about physics and math and dialectic and medicine and what have you, but they can't know these things 1) apart from a solid foundation of truth. Though they deny the foundation, that foundation must be there for knowledge. And secondly, it is only by the grace of God's Spirit that they are enabled to accomplish epistemologically and in this

world. And so a doctrine of common grace. Men know things, but they only know them because God, ~~x~~by his grace, has enabled them; and they should give thanks to God for it.

Calvin considered knowledge to be foundational to faith. He was appalled at the idea that gullibility or ignorance was foundational to Christian faith. Look at book 3, chapter 2, sections 2 and 3 as we find them on page 545, at the top, "Furthermore, to state truly and frankly the real fact of the matter, this fiction not only buries but utterly destroys true faith. Is this what believing means ~ to understand nothing, provided only that you submit your feelings obediently to the church? Faith rests not on ignorance, but on knowledge." And remember knowledge means "a mental grasp and understanding of ""something." Faith has a fuller understanding character. It is based on knowledge. And look at the bottom of that page, about 8 lines up, he says, "Anything at all," oh no, let me start, yes that's right. "Anything at all, provided it be palmed off on them under the label "church"-sometimes even the most frightful errors-the untutored indiscriminately seize upon as an oracle. This heedless gullibility, although it is the very brink of ruin, yet is excused by them; only on condition that 'such is the faith of the church' does it definitely believe anything. Thus they fancy that in error they possess truth; in darkness, light; in ignorance, right knowledge. Calvin does not believe that men should implicitly believe whatever men in the church tell them; that they have to have a sound foundation. They aren't to be ignorant in their faith.

Now, you can compare in this regard, page 548, which is section 5, page 548 at the very top, "But this teachableness, with the desire to learn, is far different from sheer ignorance that those sluggishly rest who are content with the sort of 'implicit faith' the papists invent. For if Paul severely condemns those who 'are always learning but never arrive at a knowledge of the truth,' how much greater ignominy do those merit who deliberately affect complete ignorance." Calvin says, "Don't try to commend yourself to me by saying ignorance is the foundation of my faith. 'I just believe whatever the priest tells me.'" He says, "No, knowledge and understanding must be at the foundation of your faith."

^In fact, he says that faith is identical with knowledge^Jaith is a kind of knflwifidgej£yj)u will. And this knowledge which is~i3entical withH faith is more than empirical perception, more than just the knowledge of our senses and more than rational truth, more than just the syllogisms that I can work out with the deductive certainty of logic. Look at book 3, chapter 2, section 14, on page 559, toward the bottom of the page, about a quarter of the way up, he says, "When we call faith "knowledge" we do not mean comprehension of the sort that is commonly concerned with those things which fall under human sense perception." And skip a sentence or two, "But while it is persuaded of what it does not grasp, by the very certainty of its persuasion it understands more than if it perceived anything human by its own capacity." Then turn the page, he says, "For very good reason, faith is frequently called 'recognition,' and by John, 'knowledge.'" And then this sentence, "But they are more strengthened by the persuasion *of divine truth than instructed by rational proof." And then at the very end, "The knowledge of faith V*^ consists in assurance rather than in comprehension." Calvin says two things here, he says the knowledge that is identical with faith is more than just what our senses tell us, more than empirical perception and it's greater than rational proof, and yet, though different from beliefs that are based on our experience, what we see or smell or touch, that sort of thing, though faith is different from belief based on experience or based on logical proof, faith is like them in the sense that it gives confidence, constancy of confidence in something. We see that in book 3, chapter 2, section 15, where in the middle of page 560 we read, "Faith requires full and fixed certainty, such as men are wont to have from things experienced and proved." He says men use empiricism and reason, as it were, to learn things. And faith, like those things, brings confidence to us and yet it is a confidence that is based on something more than experience more

„ than logical reasoning.

Now, at this point I'm saying, what else is there if you're not using experience and logical reasoning. What is Calvin going to propose as the alternative to mundane sense experience and logical reasoning as the foundation for faith.

Audience comment: The knowledge of God.

JA-The Word of God. Revelation as it is found in the Scriptures in particular. Umm, and maybe this is the • ^appropriate point to make just a few off-hand remarks and about a few, not a few really, quite a number of people who have considered themselves over the last century during the 20th century to be followers of Calvin, to be reformed in their theology and outlook, but in their apologetic are anything but like Calvin in this regard who believe in their apologetic the foundational, non-negotiable things in defending the truth are the reliability of sense perception and the laws of logic; this sort of thing. Now, Calvin doesn't dispute sense perception and logic but what he says is, the knowledge of faith is certainly based on something more than these. Faith may even use logic. It may use the senses, but faith is founded in the word of God. Calvin gives it a special place. He specifically says it is not to be identified with empirical perception or rational proof and he says that it is different from those truths based on experience or proof and yet it is like that in having a constancy of confidence.

He also says in this section we've been looking at that a knowledgeable faith does not require complete comprehension of what you're studying. Saving faith is surely a persuasion of truths that are beyond human capacity. It is an assurance, he says, rather than a comprehension. To know God and have saving faith doesn't mean that we have it all cased, as it were, that we understand everything about it; but nevertheless, faith is a persuasion that has an understanding foundation, an understanding character. Do you have any questions up to this point? Because I'm going to kind of add now a new thought to this. What I've said thus far is that knowledge is a mental understanding or grasp of something in Calvin. He says, "In earthly matters, by the common grace of God, even unbelievers know about things and that for him knowledge is not based on gullibility and ignorance, it must um." Knowledge must be foundational to faith. And yet the knowledge which is faith, he says, is more than our empirical perception, more than our use of rational proof and logic.

Comment from the audience** He says in chapter one that because man is created in the image of God, that without the knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God. And that all truth and wisdom is knowledge of God and knowledge of self. That places faith within that realm then. Without that relationship of man being created in the image of God, that is what sets it apart and above rationale.

Answer. Actually and we are going to come to this in a few moments in my exposition. Calvin wants to save the word "faith" especially for what we would call saving faith. And in chapter one of Book I where we begin tonight, Calvin is not talking about saving faith. He is talking about a knowledge of God which all men have which all men have whether they are saved or not. And while, well let me go on here because we are almost to point of drawing this distinction. I think you will see what I am getting at.

What I wanted to add, the next point in exposition of what Calvin means by knowledge is that Calvin says that all men have a combination of belief and unbelief within themselves. And this to me anyway in my own education was a real turning point in understanding presuppositional apologetics. Is that according to Calvin and I think Paul before him, all men who are unbelievers, nevertheless, believe in God. And Calvin points this out for instance in Book m chapter 2, section four on page 546 in our version. Pg 546 maybe a quarter of the way down the page, well right at the beginning of section 4. He says, wait a minute that is not what I want. I am looking at the wrong section. It is page 547 about the same place.

At the very end of section 4 the last sentence. "We ought not to seek (read along with the professor) mixed with faith." Unbelief in all men is always mixed with faith." Now you may come to agree with this or disagree with this based on your reading of Scripture. But I will say this. You cannot understand

Calvin's theology and especially his apologetical use of his theology apart from that. He says, "all unbelievers nevertheless, know God." Now although all men have a combination of belief in them, Calvin says a mere knowledge of God's will must be distinguished from saving faith. Saving faith is much more than just a knowledge of God's will. And I am going to give you some passages that we should consider here. In Book III chapter two, section 7 on page 550, maybe a third of the way down now. He says, "It is plain then (read along with the professor) accounted as faith." Unbelievers have a kind of faith or a belief in God and yet he says, "a mere knowledge of God's will is not to be accounted as faith." And in fact, believing certain things about God as a judge must be distinguished from saving faith in the mercy of God toward us. In Book III, chapter 2 section 30, we are going to move up now a few pages to 576 now. In the middle of page 576 notice what Calvin says. I going to read this from the middle on. "We seek a faith.....(read along with the professor) from unbelievers." If someone some one believes that God both justly commands all that He commands and truly threatens, shall he therefore be called a believer?

***end of side one of tape five.

"shall he therefore be called a believer? By no means. Therefore there can be no firm condition of faith unless it rests upon God's mercy. Now what is our purpose in discussing faith? Is it not that we may grasp the way of salvation? But how can there be saving faith except in so far as it ingrafts us into the body of Christ. Accordingly when we define it, there.....from unbelievers." It is a real technical way of saying: though all men believe in God, I am going to distinguish saving faith as that faith in the mercy of God toward us which unites us to Christ. Calvin says, men may believe that whatever God decrees must be just. They may believe that they should tremble at threatenings. But that is not saving faith. To know the will of God and to know that He is a just judge, to even know that they are under His wrath is not saving faith. If you want to see Calvin's definition of saving faith you will find that on page 551 in the middle. This is at the end of section 7 of chapter 2 in Book III. He says "Now shall possess..... certain knowledge (read along with the professor) Notice again that faith is knowledge. He doesn't say you know that faith is somehow apart from understanding. "It is....(read along with the professor)...Holy Spirit." Faith, saving faith is the knowledge of the benevolence of God given to us in Christ and sealed y upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit. That is saving faith. And he contends then that saving faith must be l/more than merely intellectual ascent to certain truths. In Book HI, Chapter 2 section 8 on page 551 about three quarters of the way down the page he says, "First we must refute (read along with the professor) the schools." That is to say, the Thomistic and Roman Catholic schools. "For they (read).... against it." Calvin's definition of saving faith holds that it is more than intellectual ascent. Page 553 at the very top he says, "It follows.....disposition."(read) One may know some facts, historical facts about Christ, about what happened to Him and what people said about Him. But that is not saving faith unless one has a devout disposition that is given with it. In fact, according to Calvin, one can intellectually ascent to certain truths as they are found in the Bible and in that ascent can lead that person into self deception. A person can know things and be no better off than the demons. In Book m, Chapter 2 sections 9 and 10, notice these words at the very bottom of 553. "Of course most....(read) are true." We wouldn't say that in our own culture today. But Calvin says that generally people believe that there is a God and that the gospel history is true. "Such a judgment...(read)...eye witnesses." Calvin says that kind of faith is just on a par with somebody says, "you know there was a fire at such and such a factory last night," and you say, "Oh, well I believe that." He says that you can have that kind of belief but that is not saving faith.

Comment from the audience****Can that effect the soul instead of the mind?

Ah, it is that it must effect the mind in such a way that the whole person is turned around so that his emotions and his spirit are devoutly committed to God now rather than to separating the two. I think where Calvin says that some people go as far as saying, Well, okay, I assent to that truth; but that's not the same as saving faith. Saving... well, the example that I have here is on p. 554, section 10, at the very bottom, I'm going to begin about ten lines up.

Whatever sort of assent that is, it does not at all penetrate to the heart itself, there to remain fixed. And although it seems sometimes to put down roots, there are not living roots. The human heart has so many crannies where vanity hides, so many holes where falsehood lurks, it so decked out with deceiving hypocrisy, that it often dupes itself. (It deceives itself.) Yet let those who boast of such shadow-shapes of faith understand that in this respect they are no better than the devils! Surely those of the former class are far inferior to the devils, for they stupidly listen to and understand things the knowledge of which makes even the devils shudder. The others are like the devils in this respect, that whatever feeling touches them ends in dread and dismay.

Calvin says some people don't...they'll say, Oh yeah, Christ died on the cross, and he's the only way to get to God, and that sort of thing. But they don't have any faith in that. I mean, it doesn't effect them and give them a devout disposition toward the Savior. And others believe that Christ is the Son of God, and the Savior, and the judge of all mankind, and they shudder at that. Calvin says that's not saving faith. Saving faith is not only knowing with the mind these things to be true, it's having a proper heart attitude toward them, responding obediently, if you want to put it, you know, crassly.

Audience comment; Would Calvin see infants being saved by the same kind of faith? Or is that through another means?

No, we'll get to that eventually, but no, I don't think Calvin sees the faith of infants as being of the same sort that we've just talked about, where there's a mental grasp and understanding of the gospel history and who Christ is and a heartfelt devotion to him. What I'm pointing out here, though, is that for Calvin you can assent to certain-the demons assent. They say, Oh yeah, God is one. But notice how they respond to it-and they shudder, they tremble that rather than embracing God and submitting to him and that sort of thing.

Faith is a matter of the heart, not merely the mind, to put it in the language of Calvin. Look at p. 583 which is section 36, now, of this same chapter, p. 583. At the very bottom of that page:

It now remains to pour into the heart itself what the mind has absorbed. For the Word of God is not received by faith if it flits about in the top of the brain, but when it takes root in the depth of the heart that it may be an invincible defense to withstand and drive off all the strategems of temptation.

Saving faith enables you to obey God, to fight temptation, to be devoted to the Savior. It doesn't just, in Calvin's metaphor, "flit about the top of the brain." People can use their brain to say, Yes, there was a man named Jesus, he died on a cross. They can even say there is one God and we'll be judged by him some day. But saving faith means that which we assent to must effect our heart in such a way that we /obey God now; we love him and trust him and....

So, what I'm getting at is that all men know God according to Calvin. All men have a faith in God. All men believe in God. But not all men believe in God's mercy. And even many men who assent to the mercy of God and the historical truths of the gospel do not respond to them properly. So they don't have saving faith.

Umm. Now, I wanted to at least survey this much of Calvin's use of the word *knowledge* for you. We haven't got into the text yet. We're still just in the title *The Knowledge of God the Creator*, so you'd have some idea of how he uses the word *knowledge*. Let me sum up. Knowledge is to mentally grasp and understand something. Fallen men can have an earthly knowledge of physics or medicine or math or what-have-you. And yet, that is by God's common grace; they couldn't know those things apart from the foundational truths of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. Calvin does not believe in gullibility or ignorance as the nature of Christian faith. Christian faith is knowledge according to him. He speaks of that knowledge which is faith and says it's more than empirical perception, more than rational proof; it's based on the Word of God, and gives us persuasion. It may not give us comprehension of the

truth, but it gives us constancy, assurance, and persuasion of the truth. He says all men, even those who don't believe, have a belief in God. Even the unbeliever has a belief in God. Mere knowledge of God's will, or a mere knowledge of God as the judge, is not saving faith. Saving faith knows the mercy of God and embraces it such that we don't tremble at the truth. But we rather have a devotion to Christ, can , fight off temptation, or, if you will, we believe these things in an obedient way, rather than in a *vy* disobedient way. Okay, so much for, then, the title *The Knowledge of God the Creator*.

I'm not done with the title, though, because we've only talked about the word *knowledge*. I want to say a few words about the fact that Calvin begins with the knowledge of God the *creator*. You say, Well, what else would he begin with? Well, stop and think about it. There are a lot of ways you could draw distinctions about God. Right? You could say knowledge of God the *father*, knowledge of God the *shepherd*, knowledge of God, you know, in any of his attributes you might emphasize. Why does Calvin pull out, distinguish, God the *creator*? Now, of course, the discussion that Calvin has here in Book I was meant to be complimented by his discussion of the knowledge of God the *redeemer*, which is the title of chapter two. Umm. In your books, you need to look at footnote number three on p. 40, where the editor speaks of this in Latin, *Duplex... cognitio*, the twofold knowledge. And he says, the distinction, "twofold" knowledge, was added to the *Institutes* in its 1559 edition, the last edition Calvin put out. He says it's basic to the structure of the completed work. "Calvin calls attention to this repeatedly in a striking series of methodological statements, all added..." it's interesting, "...all of them added to the 1559 edition to clarify the course of his argument." By the time he comes to the end and he's satisfied at the way he's laid it out, Calvin makes it very clear that his theology has this twofold division: knowledge of God the creator, then knowledge of God the redeemer. And notice all the places in which the editor cites for you: in Book I, chapter six, chapter ten, chapter fourteen, in Book I, chapter six. And so he says, "... nothing in Book I belongs to the knowledge of the Redeemer, although everything after ch. v is based in the special revelation of Scripture." Though Book I is going to be giving us scripturally based theology, it's going to be what Scripture reflects, what Scripture teaches us and reveals about God the Creator, not specifically God as the Redeemer.

Now, this twofold division is important to Calvin, then. We need to take that to heart. He adds it. He conspicuously wants people to follow the course of the argument in that twofold way by the time he gets to the 1559 edition. The two basic ways in which we should see God, thus, are set down not just as God all-knowing and God as all-powerful, but it's rather God is the one who created, and God is the one who redeems. These two themes are distinct. In fact, notice on p. 40 just a few lines down Calvin says, "Nevertheless, it is one thing to feel that God as our Maker supports us by his power, governs us by his providence, nourishes us by his goodness, and attends us with all sorts of blessings-and another thing to embrace the grace of reconciliation offered to us in Christ." See how important it is to distinguish. Notice how far a person's knowledge will go. You can know that God has power, governs us by providence, nourishes us with his goodness, attends us with all these blessings, and yet he says, that's not to know the grace of reconciliation. That's not to know the Redeemer. It's still only to know God the Creator, the maker. And then this line at the end of the paragraph, "Of the resulting twofold knowledge of God we shall now discuss the first aspect; the second will be dealt with in its proper place." So Calvin introduces us, then, to the knowledge of God the Creator.

Audience comment: You're saying that Calvin said that the person recognizes with his mind first, and then accepts with his soul, is redeemed by his soul?

Well, Calvin wouldn't set the mind over against the soul. The soul encompasses the mind and the heart, the mind and the emotions. And what Calvin is saying is that a person must know certain things about God, must intellectually apprehend certain things about God, and assent to them, but also respond obediently to them, i.e., must submit to them, not fight them, or be indifferent to them, but must have a devout attachment to the Savior, a willingness to fight temptation, to live the Christian life, as it were. But that's saving faith. But all men have a knowledge of God. All men believe in God to a certain extent. And there are even certain people who believe matters about the gospel, but only with an

intellectual assent.

Audience comment: Another think that I can't understand, and that I would think that all men would have knowledge of God through their soul which they are given sometime upon conception or whatever, if not before, you know. But that would be where God would impart the knowledge of himself, but not necessarily through the mind. Anyway, you do run into the problem of the, you know, the infants and mentally retarded people, and all that kind of stuff.

Well, in a sense we're going to... we're going to talk about this tonight, and it wouldn't hurt to get into it even now. Calvin's going to say that all men are born knowing God. I mean all.. .but what that means is not that if you were to ask a question in the German language of some two-day old infant, that the infant could you in German about the knowledge of God. Rather, what Calvin is talking about is the innate knowledge of God, is that, to the degree that an infant learns anything, at whatever level the infant learns and to the degree the infant learns, the infant is simultaneously knowledgeable about God. The infant cannot know itself, cannot its surroundings, cannot know its obligations and how to respond to things, without also knowing that it's a creature subject to the requirements of God, and under his wrath after the fall. So, it's not as though we expect two-day old infants to recite the catechism, but we do expect that, to the degree that an infant can verbalize anything, to that degree the infant would be able to, given the vocabulary, verbalize, I know God, I know I'm under his wrath. That isn't to say that infants are willing to, because we have to deal also with the perversity of the human will and pride that keeps people from admitting the truth. All Calvin is saying, though, is that all men do know God in that way. But that knowledge, which is intellectual, is mental, it's part of the soul, is a knowledge of God in disobedience and curse. It's not a saving knowledge of God. It's not a knowledge that leads men to trust the Savior and commit themselves to following him, but a knowledge, rather, that hardens them and turns them against him. Or, in the case of those who just assent to the gospel truths, has hardened them in the sense that they're callous or indifferent to the truth. They aren't devoted followers of Christ.

Now...so, how. ...how...what kind of knowledge is this? It's a mental knowledge. That's in a sense why we have tried to show the way Calvin uses the word *knowledge-understanding*-*Ws* a mental grasp and understand of truths about God the Creator, and in some cases, even truths about the historical Son of God.. .the ministry and history of God's Son. People might say, The Bible is true, and its Jesus died on the cross, but they don't have a saving knowledge of him. They don't have saving faith.

Well, Calvin does distinguish, then, these themes of God the Creator and God the Redeemer. And we use this kind of distinction ourselves when we speak of knowing God as Creator but not as Savior. You know, you asked the question, Well, did Bertrand Russell know God? And I might reply, Well, he knew him as the Creator, but he certainly didn't know him as the Savior. Or we might say, Do the pagans of India receive blessings from God? And we might answer, They receive blessings from God in virtue of creation, but not in virtue of redemption. God does bless them because they are his creatures, but he does not bless them because they are his saved people. They are not the people of God. So we draw that distinction. And Calvin really had an important insight there, a categorizing, a structuring device for his theology, that is true to, I think, the nature and the heart of the gospel when he draws that kind of distinction-the knowledge of God the Creator, and the knowledge of God the Redeemer.

Well, we've been spending a lot of time on...you haven't missed much if you came in late... we've only been talking about the title of Book I, *The Knowledge of God the Creator*, but I hope that in doing this I put us on the right road with the proper tack as we go down the way.

I want to read through the assignment tonight, and explain the significance of what Calvin is saying and interpret for you anything that may prove to be difficult. The title of Chapter 1 is that the knowledge... and remember that this is Calvin's title now, not the editor's...the knowledge of God and that of ourselves are connected, how they are interrelated. In summary we would say, the knowledge of God and ourselves are interrelated...interrelated.

Now, in Calvin's commentary on Genesis, which he wrote in 1554, so I'm talking about five years before the final edition of the *Institutes*, in the introductory section of it, what he calls the *Argument*, Calvin does something very similar to what he's doing here in Chapter 1 of Book I of the *Institutes* in pointing out that the knowledge of God, the knowledge of ourselves are interrelated, although here he's talking about the knowledge of creation, knowledge of the created world 'round about us. He says, "This is more diligently to be observed, because," and now I pick up the thought, "so few pursue the right method of knowing God, while the greater part adhere to the creatures without any consideration of the Creator himself" Two problems: he says, on the one hand, you have people who don't have the right method of knowing God; on the other hand, there are those who pay attention to the creatures without any consideration of the Creator. "For men are commonly subject to these two extremes; namely, that some, forgetful of God, apply the whole force of their mind to the consideration of nature; and others, overlooking the *works* of God aspire with a foolish and insane curiosity to inquire into his *Essence*. Both labor in vain." Calvin says you cannot know God apart from his world. You can't hope to know God in his essence, but apart from anything he's done, apart from his works. On the other hand, he says you can't know the works of God, the creation or nature about you, without knowing God. He says both are mistaken, in vain. "To be so occupied in the investigation of the secrets of nature, as never to turn the eyes to its Author, is a most perverted study." What does that say about most university education in our days? Calvin says, "To be so occupied in the investigation of the secrets of nature, as never to turn the eyes to its Author, is a most perverted study; and to enjoy everything in nature without acknowledging the Author of the benefit is the basest ingratitude. Therefore, they who assume to be philosophers without Religion, and who, by speculating, so act as to remove God and all sense of piety far from them, will one day feel the source of the expression of Paul, related by Luke, that God has never left himself *without witness*, (Acts xiv. 17.). For they shall not be permitted to escape with impunity because they have been deaf and insensible to testimonies so illustrious. And, in truth, it is the part of culpable ignorance, never to see God, who everywhere gives signs of his presence." That's very strong language. Calvin says, those people who're doing so good in studying nature and learning all these things about earthly knowledge 'round about us, as it were, and never see that God is giving testimony to himself in this, will one day answer for that, because his presence is evident to them everywhere. "But if mockers now escape by their cavils, hereafter their terrible destruction will bear witness to that they were ignorant of God, only because they were willingly and maliciously blinded." God didn't leave himself without a witness. God didn't fail to have evidence all about them. God was making himself in everything they learned about the created world, and yet they maliciously suppressed it and were blinded. They *willingly* did not want to come to the proper conclusions. "As for those who proudly soar above the world...", he turns to the other kind of problem now, "... those who proudly soar above the world to seek God in his unveiled essence, it is impossible that at length they should entangle themselves in a multitude of absurd figments." Here are your armchair metaphysicians who just sit back and speculate, What is God like in and of himself? I don't want to look at the world. I don't want to look at the works of God, or what God has said, but what must God be like in the speculative sense? And he says they just leave...that leads them to absurd figments. "For God-by other means invisible-(as we've already said) clothes himself, so to speak, with the image of the world in which he would present himself to our contemplation. They who will not deign to behold him thus magnificently arrayed in the incomparable vesture of the heavens and the earth, afterwards suffer the just punishment of their proud contempt and their own ravings." He doesn't dare say they're going to be sent to Hell for this, he says, rather, their punishment will come in the contemptuousness of their ravings-all this stupid vain speculation of the philosophers. "Therefore, as soon as the name of God sounds in our ears, or the thought of him occurs to our minds, let us also clothe him with this most beautiful ornament; finally, that the world become our school if we desire rightly to know God." Isn't that a great line! "... let the world become our school if we desire rightly to know God." And this, of course, he does in the beginning of his Genesis commentary which as you know, begins with the account of God's creation.

Calvin is convinced, and this is one of the geniuses, one of the salient points of his theology and apologetics, that to know the world or ourselves, we must know God simultaneously. And to know

God, we must know the world and ourselves. The two are sides of one coin, and you cannot come to a knowledge of the world without knowing the world's maker; and you can't know the world's maker without knowing the world he made. See?

Audience comment: So that's the basis for the presuppositional apologetics.

Exactly. That is the heart of Van Til's presuppositional apologetics. I mean.. there are other things I guess you could call heart of it, too, but I mean, to take that away, presuppositional apologetics is not the same. It's essential to presuppositional apologetics to point out that you cannot know the world or ourselves as creatures in the world without knowing God, and vice versa, we can't know God by just saying, I don't want to know anything about myself or about the world. Let me just jump, as it were, and soar above the heavens and know God as he is in himself. Calvin says, No, we know God through the world he's made and ourselves; and we know ourselves and the world in knowing God. The two are inter-related.

Okay, let's begin, finally, then, with the opening sentence of *the Institutes*, (laughs)-I promised you, I won't give this much detailed attention every time, but these are crucial points, and I think my approach will be vindicated as we go through week by week. You'll see why that's so important. Calvin says, "Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves." If you were to divide up everything that we know, okay, from the price of tea in China, to how to, you know, heal a cold sore, to how to build a bridge, or how to get to Heaven-if you were to take everything we know, you'd find that you could conveniently divide it up into what we know about ourselves, what we know about God. And now, if you'll look at footnote three on p. 36. The editor says that "This statement, thrice revised, stands at the beginning of every edition of the *Institutes*. The French version of 1560 expresses even more strongly the association of the two aspects of sound knowledge:" where Calvin there says (he translates for himself), "'In knowing God, each of us also knows himself.' These decisive words set the limits of Calvin's theology and condition every subsequent statement." The editor's telling you, Let your instructor go on and on about this point, because it's important. And then he says, "They are echoed in the introductory words of Book H and at such important junctures..."

(tape ends mid-sentence)