

Lecture 6: Calvin's *Institutes* by Dr. Greg Bahnsen (tape

begins mid-sentence)

" in the introductory words of Book II and at such important junctures as I, xv, 1 and II, viii, 1." Let's look at a couple of those. Turn to p. 181 in your edition, p. 181. Ahh, I wonder if... yes, I must have meant p. 183; I'm sorry, p. 183.

He says, "We must now speak of the creation of man: not only because among all God's works here is the noblest and most remarkable example of his justice, wisdom, and goodness; but because, as we said at the beginning, we cannot have a clear and complete knowledge of God unless it is accompanied by a corresponding knowledge of ourselves."

And the, p. 241. We're at the beginning of Book II.

With good reason the ancient proverb strongly recommended knowledge of self to man. For if it is considered disgraceful for us not to know all that pertains to the business of human life, even more detestable is our ignorance of ourselves, by which, when making decisions in necessary matters, we miserably deceive and even blind ourselves!

But since this precept is so valuable, we ought more diligently to avoid applying it perversely. This, we observe, has happened to certain philosophers, who, while urging man to know himself, propose the goal of recognizing his own worth and excellence. And they would have him contemplate in himself nothing but what swells him with empty assurance and puffs him up with pride [Gen. 1:27].

But knowledge of ourselves lies first in considering what we were given at creation and how generously God continues his favor toward us...

etc.

And so, this first sentence is a really important one. Calvin is starting out by pointing out that what we... what wisdom gives us can be divided into the knowledge of God and knowledge of ourselves, and they are inter-related. He says here at the beginning of Book I, chapter 1, "But while joined by many bonds, which one precedes and brings forth the other is not easy to discern." Calvin *does not* take a position that says, first we know God, and then from that we can descend to a knowledge of ourselves. Or, first we know ourselves, and with that we finally can work up to a knowledge of God. Calvin says the two are interrelated. You can't break them apart. To know myself, I must know God. To know God, I must know myself.

Now, that gets to first of all, this idea that many people have in fact, I'm reviewing a book in apologetics entitled *Classical Apologetics*, which is kind of a sad name for a reformed writer to give to his book on apologetics. What we're defending is the Classical world, the humanism of the Greek philosophy of autonomy. Maybe he is, as a matter of fact, doing that unwittingly, but, ah, Calvin would not agree with the author of that book on apologetics, that first we get certain information about ourselves and the world, and from that we draw inferences about God. Calvin is not saying, Begin with little... you know, particles of truth or bits and pieces about the natural world or about yourself; and from it then, you know, reason from this thing to another, to another, until finally you see there must be a God, or very probably there is a God. He says, rather, to know ourselves, we must simultaneously know God. And to know God, we must know him as we know ourselves as creatures of God. Calvin does not break the two apart. He doesn't take a position that one precedes and brings forth the other. He says that's not easy to discern. "In the first place, no one can look upon himself without immediately turning his thoughts to the contemplation of God, in whom he 'lives and moves' [Acts 17:28]." Calvin says that God has so pervasively shown himself, and because man is the image of God

that it's impossible to consider anything about ourselves-our personality, our emotions, our intellectual abilities, what we know, what we're able to do, our social relationships-it's impossible to think about anything concerning ourselves without simultaneously being confronted with the face of God. After all, if man truly is the image of God, as the Bible teaches, it would be impossible to look at man, or to contemplate man, to reflect on ourselves, without reflecting on what we image, namely God. Is it possible to look at a mirror image of you dog without seeing your dog? I mean, if I look at the mirror because it has an image and it's reflecting my dog, I'm simultaneously learning something about my dog, not just the image of my dog. Likewise, when I look at the image of God in myself, I'm learning something about God. Now, Calvin cites here a text, Acts 17:28, and I thought it might be nice if I pointed out to you from his commentary on Acts what he has to say about that particular passage. He's referring especially to the statement that, "In God we live and move and have our being." He says: "So that we may realize that, strictly speaking, he alone (i.e., God) and that we..." I'm sorry, I'll get this right. "So that we may realize that, strictly speaking, he alone is, strictly speaking, God exists, and that we truly subsist in him, seeing that he quickens and sustains us by his Spirit. For the power of the Spirit is diffused through all parts of the world to keep them in their place and to supply the energy to heaven and earth which we see, and also movement to living creatures. This does not mean the way that crazy men talk nonsense about all things being full of gods, and even the very stones being gods, but that by the wonderful activity and instigation of his Spirit, God preserves all that he has created." And then a little bit further down, "Now, we see that all who do not know God, do not know themselves." "All who do not know God, do not know themselves, because they have God present, not only in the extraordinary gifts of their minds, but in their very beings, because existence belongs only to God; all other things subsist in him. This verse also teaches that the world was not created by God once in such a way that afterwards he abandoned his work, but that it endures by his power, and that the same one, who was once its creator, is its perpetual ruler. We must properly be meditating upon this constant quickening so that God may come into our thoughts every single moment."

What he's getting at is that our very existence *hangs* on God's power and quickening, God's enlivening, that we subsist in God, and that God preserves everything he has created out of nothing. And therefore, we don't know ourselves if we don't know God, because he's... well, Van Til puts it this way, He's the *environment* for man's existence. He's the environment of man's thoughts. Everything I that I am and do is in the context of God. He's the reason for my existence. He's the source of my abilities.. He's the preserver of my life. And so, Calvin is saying here, and I think in the same way that Van Til teaches, that we cannot know ourselves without knowing God as well.

Now, there's two reasons for this/though, and I want you to see Calvin's reasoning. Calvin says that.. he makes the claim that man can look upon himself without immediately turning his thoughts to God. And then he says, "For, quite clearly, the mighty gifts, with which we are endowed, are hardly from ourselves; indeed, our very being is nothing but subsistence in one God. Then by these benefits, shed like dew from heaven upon us, we are led as by rivulets to the spring itself" So the first argument Calvin uses is, When you look at these wonderful abilities-think of them as our skills, or our intellectual abilities-when we look at what man is able to do and what he can know, he says that we must be led to realize that God is the source of this. And then he says, "Indeed, our very poverty better discloses the infinitude of benefits reposing in God." He goes to the contrast. Now, he's.. he's thinking of, You think about this; How.. how could we be the source of our ability? How.. how is it that I'm able to know the world 'round about me? How am I able to build bridges and to cure disease and to cook nice meals or to produce a wonderful play or a poem or what have you. How are these abilities mine? Stop and think about our misery. Think about an imbecile. Obviously not everybody has these abilities, and the people who do have these abilities who aren't imbeciles have them in different degrees, in different ways. And so, clearly, we aren't the source of our abilities. Calvin says, you must be led to the source of all these benefits-to God. And he now moves to the contrast; he says, "The miserable ruin, into which the rebellion of the first man cast us, especially compels us to look upward. This, not only will we, in fasting and hungering, seek thence what we lack; but, in being aroused by fear, we shall learn humility." And this is a constant theme, now, in Calvin, from this point on. He says, We might just look at all the good

things we can do and say, now, Where do we get this ability? We're led to God as the source. But he says we must learn humility. If we're going to know God, we must learn humility. "For, as a veritable world of miseries is to be found in mankind, and we are thereby despoiled of divine raiment, our shameful nakedness exposes a teeming horde of infamies. Each of us must, then, be so stung by the consciousness of his own unhappiness as to attain at least some knowledge of God." Here's the point, "Thus, from the feeling of our own ignorance, vanity, poverty, infirmity, and-what is more-depravity and corruption, we recognize that the true light of wisdom, sound virtue, full abundance of every good, and purity of righteousness rest in the Lord alone. To this extent we are prompted by our won ills to contemplate the good things of God; and we cannot seriously aspire to him before we begin to become displeased with ourselves." Calvin really does a switcheroo here. He says, Start looking at all these great things you're able to do, and he say, but then think about your misery. I mean, you're a pretty good person, right? Well, pretty good. But then start thinking about you're pretty bad too! And you condemn others. You condemn yourself. You're pretty smart, but you make a lot of mistakes. And there are people who are smarter than you too. And there's a lot of vanity, and a lot of error, and a lot of sinful corruption. Now, how is that we are discontent with our lot? Why are we miserable and unhappy? Why don't we get along with other people? Why is there jealousy? Why are there mistakes? Why is there dissension in human race? Calvin say, There must be an absolute standard of rectitude and righteousness and truth against which we are measuring our performance and according to which we so clearly feel and see our misery. And so Calvin says, Our own ills force us to see that God must be the source of whatever good is in us, because we're so bad, as a matter of fact, and we have so much unhappiness 'round about us, God must be the one who enabled us to do those few good things that we can do and know. "For what man in all the world would not gladly remain as his is-what man does not remain as he is-so long as he does not know himself, that is, while content with his own gifts, and either ignorant or unmindful of his own misery? Accordingly, the knowledge of ourselves no only arouses us to seek God, but also, as it were, leads us by the hand to find him." That's a great line. Calvin says, If I know myself, I'm led to seek God, and as a matter of fact, knowing my misery, I'm led by the hand to find him.

Calvin says, You know the grandeur of human nature, knowledge, and man's ability, should lead him to give thanks to God who is the source of all those things. And yet, if we really knew God as the absolute source of righteousness and truth, when we look at ourselves, we'd know ourselves better. We'd have to be humbled by all of our misery and mistakes. And so, as you can see in the editor's heading, Section 2 is *Without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self* Not only must I be led to see God when I start contemplating myself, I don't really know myself right unless I consider God. "Again, it is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God's face, and then descends from contemplating him to scrutinize himself. For," and boy, this was an insight about human nature that was just right on target, "we always seem to ourselves righteous and upright and wise and holy-this pride is innate in all of us-unless by clear proofs we stand convinced of our own unrighteousness, foulness, folly, and impurity. Moreover, we are not thus convinced if we look merely to ourselves and not also to the Lord, who is the sole standard by which this judgment must be measured." Calvin says, If we didn't measure ourselves by anything but ourselves, we'd be very complacent-self-righteous. We'd say, Hey, we're doing fine! But we aren't doing fine. And the way we know that is by comparing were we stand, what we've attained, our accomplishments, abilities and knowledge, against the truth and righteousness and purity of God. He is the sole standard, and so in knowing God in his purity, we see our imperfection.

Now, the third section of Chapter 1 in Book I continues this idea... um, when he points out from Scripture, he says, "Hence, that dread and wonder with which Scripture commonly represents the saints as stricken and overcome whenever they felt the presence of God." And he goes on to give, I think, some very interesting examples of that from Scripture. And it is true that often enough, when the Bible speaks of God's people coming into his presence, they're humbled by the presence of God. Think about Isaiah. Isaiah sees the Lord high and lifted up. Now, Calvin refers here to Isa 6, the passage I'm thinking of, that even the cherubim must hide their face from the holiness of God. But I'm thinking of Isaiah. What did Isaiah do? Woe is me! I am undone! He falls down, and he has to have the coals from the

altar of God come and placed on his lips to purify his lips, because he says that he is a man of impure lips, and he lives in the midst of a people of impure lips. When people come into the presence of God, they *humble* themselves. And now, the history of Calvinist theology, it seems to me, can often be accused of having forgotten what the master, the mentor, pointed out here, because so often, Calvinist theology can be done with such a sense of pride, such sense of academic sophistication. And, you know, I believe in academic sophistication, and I believe in trying to do good work in theology, and I believe in defending our theology. But, you know, it's a shame, in the midst of all that, if we learn that theology brings us into the very presence of God, theology should make us the most humble of people. The true knowledge of God *humbles* people, makes them learn to, you know, just know their place. They kind of back down from being arrogant and pushy and proud of their accomplishments. Calvin saw that very much. Calvin said, Yes, we stop to think about man; we're led to know God, because God's the source of abilities and our knowledge and all that we've accomplished. But on the other hand, we sure fall short of all the things we should have done. We're certainly impure and imperfect in comparison to God. And he points out, then, that before the majesty and holiness of God, God's people are *always* humbled.

The very last paragraph of Section 3, "...however, the knowledge of God and of ourselves may be mutually connected, the order of right teaching requires that we discuss the former first, then proceed afterward to treat the latter." Calvin, say, You can't assign a priority. He says, However, you know, these two are related, the order of right teaching, not the order of the way things are in nature, metaphysically, or even epistemologically, he says, rather, it's just didactically appropriate that I begin with the knowledge of God, rather than the knowledge of ourselves. What's he mean by that? It's a very simple point. Calvin is saying, They're intertwined, they're interrelated, you can't separate the two. However you want to argue about priorities here, the fact is, as I teach, it seems to me appropriate that we begin with the knowledge of God. He's the source of all of our blessing, after all.

And so we come, then, to Chapter II of Book I, and Calvin titles this *What it is to Know God, and What Purpose the Knowledge of Him Tends-an* to what purpose the knowledge of him tends. "Now, the knowledge of God, as I understand it, is that by which we not only concede that there is a God, but also grasp what befits us and is proper to his glory, in fine, what is to our advantage to know of him. Indeed, we shall not say that, properly speaking, God is known where there is no religion or piety." Calvin here is stressing, now, the proper way in which God is to be known. He's going to argue that all men know God, but properly, a knowledge of God must lead us to be religious and pious.

Turn to p. 50 in your version, where we are in Chapter 4, section 4, at the very bottom of p. 50. Calvin says, "This, however, is but a vain and false shadow of religion, scarcely even worth being called a shadow. From it one may easily grasp anew how much this confused knowledge of God differs from the piety from which religion takes its source, which is instilled in the breasts of believers only." And he goes on to talk about that hypocrites tread twisting paths, etc., "so as to seem to approach the God from whom they are actually fleeing." Calvin says, All men know God, but properly, the knowledge of God is conjoined with piety. That is to say, only believers know God as he should be known. Notice this. *** jumps back and quotes from p. 39 & 40 *** "Here, I do not touch upon the sort of knowledge with which man, in themselves lost and accursed, apprehend God the Redeemer in Christ the Mediator; but I speak only of the primal and simple knowledge to which the very order of nature would have led us if Adam had remained upright." And now we're going to need to talk about this sentence for a few minutes.

Calvin says, I'm only speaking here of the primal and simple knowledge to which every... to which the very order of nature would have led us, //Adam had remained upright. Point 1, the knowledge that all men have, but which they don't join with piety, since they don't know the Redeemer, is the knowledge... is a primal knowledge of God the Creator. It's a simple knowledge, to which nature itself testifies and gives the foundation for. But notice that Calvin says that the order of nature would have led us to this knowledge //Adam had remained upright. Notice that it's hypothetical. Calvin notes that Adam didn't remain upright, and for that reason the order of nature does not lead us to the proper

conclusions. Again, what are we to make of those Calvinists, apologists, those defenders of the faith, who hold to a Calvinist theology, who what to say, what Calvin would have us do is go look at nature and show how a knowledge of nature would lead us to God. But Calvin say, Yes, it would do that, *if we were not sinners*. The problem is that we are sinners, and therefore we resist what nature all about us would lead us to if we were like Adam before the fall. But Adam did not remain upright, and therefore those of us who are sinful in Adam are not going to be led to a proper knowledge of God, are not going to be pious before the testimony of nature. "In this ruin of mankind no one now experiences God either as Father or as Author of salvation, or favorable in any way, until Christ the Mediator comes forward to reconcile him to us." Does nature reveal the grace of God? I think Calvin is biblical. He says, No, nature doesn't show us the grace of God. Men *do not* know God as Father or Author of salvation-Father is being used in the loving and family sense of the one who accepts us as his children. God rejects us and his wrath is upon us, we do not know him as Savior when we look at nature.

Now, one of the best known Arminian apologists for the Christian faith in the history of Christian theology was Bishop Butler, who was an Anglican bishop, who wrote *The Analogy*, the analogy of nature to super-nature, i.e., the analogy of nature to grace. Butler argued that if you look at the way nature proceeds all about us, we'll be led to expect that God is a forgiving and loving God. Calvin disagrees. He says, We do not know God as the Author of salvation in *any* way, in any favorable way, until Christ the Mediator comes forward to reconcile us. We only know the grace of God in the gospel; we don't know God's grace in nature.

What does nature reveal to us?

Audience answer: The Creator.

God the Creator, and, because of our sin, the *wrath* of the Creator-the wrath of the Creator. And in this respect, it's interesting to see Calvin's remarks on Rom 1:18. Rom 1:18 says, (read Rom 1:18). And Calvin says, "Paul now argues from a comparison of opposites in order to prove that righteousness is bestowed or conferred only by the gospel, for he demonstrates that, without it, all are condemned. Salvation, therefore, will be found in the gospel alone. The first proof of confirmation, which he adduces is the fact that although the structure world, and the most splendid ordering of the elements, ought to have induced man to glorify God, yet there are none who discharge their duty. This is proof that all men are guilty of sacrilege and of base and iniquitous ingratitude."

Audience comment: So nature was intended to be a very holy thing.

I'm sorry.

Audience comment: So nature was intended to be a very holy thing.

Yes, nature.. .nature reflects the character of God, his holiness and perfection. And so what we learn in looking at the world 'round about us, is of our distance from God, our imperfection, and therefore, God's wrath upon us. Calvin is clear that, if it weren't for sin, we should come to a proper knowledge of God by looking at nature. But all we're going to learn from nature now is that God's wrath is on us. The *gospel* is the only source of the grace of God.

Audience question: He's actually saying here that we don't even get the knowledge because the Creator

*** inaudible***

Yes, and that's another thing we have to add. Now, point by point, we add this: and even the knowledge we have of God the Creator is perverted by our sinful natures. What we should learn properly about the creator, and which comes through to us, is now suppressed and distorted because we are trying to flee from him. That's exactly right. So we will not learn anything of the saving grace of

God from nature, and even what we learn of the Creator is perverted by our own sinful natures.

Okay, the next paragraph, *** continues to quote from p. 40 ***

Moreover, although our mind cannot apprehend God without rendering some honor to him, it will not suffice simply to hold that there is One whom all ought to honor and adore, unless we are also persuaded that he is the fountain of every good, and that we must seek nothing elsewhere than in him. This I take to mean that not only does he sustain this universe (as he once founded it) by his boundless might, regulate it by his wisdom, preserve it by his goodness, and especially rule mankind by his righteousness and judgment, bear with it in his mercy, watch over it by his protection; but also that no drop will be found either of wisdom and light, or of righteousness or power or rectitude, or of genuine truth, which does not flows from him, and of which he is not the cause. Thus we may learn to await and seek all these things from him, and thankfully to ascribe them, once received, to him. From this sense of the powers of God is for us a fit teacher of piety, from which religion is born. I call "piety" that reverence joined with the love of God which the knowledge of his benefits induces.

Reverence joined with love, based on a knowledge of the benefits that God has given us.

For until men recognize that they owe everything to God, that they are nourished by his fatherly care, that he is the Author of their every good, that they should seek nothing beyond him-they will never yield him willing service.

And so, here we have the Christian world and life view, for which Reformed Christianity is known-that's one of it's distinctives. Calvin says, There's not a *drop* of knowledge or goodness that doesn't come from God, and unless men learn that in whatever they do-what they will call their secular pursuits, and their livelihoods, and their agriculture, and their industry, in medicine, in sports, or what have you-unless they learn that in everything they are to seek the glory of God, they'll never.. .how does he put it? They'll "never yield him willing service." Men must.. .true piety begins with seeing that we owe everything to God. We owe everything...true piety begins with the humility that says, God's the source of everything-every good and righteous thing is from God. Steve?

Audience comment: In a book I was reading last night on education, it was being pointed out that man has, in educating, has tried to obliterate the idea of causality altogether.

Uhhuh.

Audience comment: And here he is showing how everything is because what God has done-everything is brought about-God is the cause of it. And, um, I think that's just...

Yeah, that is one of the strategies men may use...

(side 1 ends in mid-sentence)

(begin side 2 of tape 6)

(side 2 begins in mid-sentence)

Yeah, that is one of the strategies men may use: if there is no sense of causation, then we don't have to be led from this to what caused that.. .I mean, from this, which is, uh, enjoyed, to that which is the cause of my enjoyment. They don't have to be led to God who is the source of all the blessings of this life.

Um, not only does, ah, section one, here, point out that piety is necessary to a knowledge of God, in Section 2, Calvin now says knowledge of God involves trust and reverence. *** quotes from p. 41 ***

"What is God? Men who pose this question are merely toying with idle speculations." Well, I'm not so sure of that. I mean, the catechism asks the question, What is God? It's not the asking of the question, what Calvin is reacting against is that, so often, how people just put that out as kind of, Well, what do we mean by God? And where could God be? And that sort of.. he's not against answering the question, it's that he's against this idea of just toying with it. "It is more important for us to know of what sort he is and what is consistent with his nature." That is to say, Don't idly speculate about how God is in himself Rather, what kind of God is he, and how should our...

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... as I say, was the source of the Epicurean school of thought. And Calvin says, "What good is it to profess with him *** misquoted - actual text uses the name Epicurus *** some sort of God who has cast aside the care of the world only to amuse himself in idleness?" What we might call Deism. I mean, what good, you know, is a God like that? He just makes the world and then steps aside. "What help is it, in short, to know a God with whom we have nothing to do? Rather, our knowledge should serve first to teach us fear and reverence; secondly, with it as our guide and teacher, we should learn to seek every good from him, and, having received it, to credit it to his account."

I hope that, as we've looked at these passages in some detail, that you're impressed, as I am, with the -"Tact, that, for Calvin, the, the end of theology is piety, Calvin doesn't seek knowledge for knowledge's sake. He doesn't use theology as a game of academic chess, as it were, that for him theology is vibrant with a relationship to God. And I really wish that were stressed more by people who are professors of theology. I don't mean to belittle their own piety or their lack of devotion to Christ, but, ah... it's just inconceivable that Christian theology can be studied like any other subject. You can study the philosophy of Epicurus, or the philosophy of Kant, for that matter, or, hydraulic engineering-you can study just about anything, and have kind of an ho-hum attitude, and get the answers right on the test, and it never effects your life, you may never get emotionally involved. But you can't study God that way. The knowledge of God is a deeply personal thing. It's a matter of commitment and piety. It must lead us to reverence him and to ascribe to him the source of all blessedness. Yes.

Audience comment: The *word piety* today is not even well regarded. I had a professor remark at school how he noticed that the last few years of students-he's speaking mainly to the Christian students-there at the school were so much more pietistic than before.

Uh, huh.

Audience comment: You could tell his attitude right there.

Well, of course, piety, the *word piety* is used in a lot of different ways, I think. There's a sense in which the Christian church has become *pietistic*, meaning absorbed in religious rituals and devotional attitudes, which is unrelated to the world or to practical godliness. And that might be called, you know, a kind of a pietistic attitude. What Calvin call *piety*, though, is a knowledge of God that involves understanding, has a world and life view-every good thing comes from God, and leads us to be humble before him. And, I suppose there are errors you can fall into. One is to do your theology and have all these truths and not have a heart that's changed by them, and so it's very academic. And the other is to have a pious heart that's, you know, on fire for the Lord, but doesn't have the understanding of this theology too. My guess is you professor was reflecting more on the latter.

Audience comment: *** inaudible ***

Okay, the next paragraph. Calvin says, *** continues quoting from p. 42 *** "For, to begin with, the pious mind does not dream up for itself any god it pleases, but contemplates the one and only true God." Boy, we could take the rest of our time just talking about that. There is a real lack of piety in our

Christian culture 'round about us today. There's a real lack of piety in our Christian churches today, if we follow Calvin here, because he says, The pious mind doesn't dream up for itself any god it pleases. Um, I'm really appalled at how often, when I talk to people about theology, I hear words to this effect-maybe not, quote, these words, but very close-certainly the idea is there: Well, I like to think of God as more loving than that. Or, I like to think of God as giving us freedom to do da, da-da, da-da. All I...

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... God is giving everybody a chance to be saved. Or, I like to think of God as.... And you want to scream out, especially if you have this Calvinist blood flowing in you, *What you want to think of God as is irrelevant! True piety is bowing before who he is and letting him tell us what he's like.* And so Calvin, you know... now he says, The knowledge of God must bring us to that sense of devotion and piety to God. But if we have that devotion and piety, we've got to submit to the theological truth about God. I tell you, there's a balance in this man that you don't find in many of his followers. *Religiojuvas-a^_ heartfelt thing for Calvin, and yet, it wasn't anti-intellectual. It was both. The two work with each other. f/mYbyrdon'thavertfue* piety~withopfa~knowledge of God that-intellectual apprehension of the truth. But you don't have an intellectual apprehension of God that's proper if it doesn't lead you to have a heart that's enflamed with serving him. Alright, go ahead.

Audience question: Would you say that the, um... I don't know which question this is in the catechism, but it says, What does the Scriptures principally teach? I think that deals with both sides of that.

Yes, as long as we don't get the idea that the Scripture... see what the Scripture's principally teach: what we are to believe about God, and what duty God requires of man, as the catechism says; but it isn't as though God teaches us about himself here, and then our duty there. It's like, you know, so many marbles...

Audience comment: They're interrelated...

... that you throw together... right. The knowledge of God and of our duty are all part and parcel of each other. To know God is to know our duty; and to know our duty is to know the God who makes it our duty. Um, but you're right, that balance is found in the catechism in that we don't learn simply kind of an abstract knowledge of God, we also learn the kind of people we should be, when we learn about God.

Well, I do need to get through Chapter III, so let's hurry along, then, to Chapter III.

What have we found out? Chapter I-that to know ourselves we must know God. Chapter II *** he may mean Section 2 of Chapter I ***-but to know ourselves properly we need to know God. Right? The two go hand-in-hand. If we have a true knowledge of self, we'll be humbled before God. And Section 3 just applies that all the more-how the saints are stricken with a sense of dread and wonder when they come into the presence of God. Chapter II-What is it to Know God, and what does the knowledge of God tend toward? Well, to know God requires piety-we've been stressing that. Men may know God in a primal and simple sense, and if Adam hadn't *** he means "had" *** remained upright, you could count on men to come to know God through nature, but we no longer can do that because men are blinded and they are sinful-they aren't led to true piety from their knowledge of the world and the knowledge of God it gives them. Moreover, knowledge of God involves the kind of reverence we've been talking about. The pious mind submits to what God is-the only true God.

Section... or Chapter in, *The Knowledge of God Has Been Naturally Implanted in the Minds of Men.* If I can get this point across to you all before we stop tonight^pre-wrIHKiYe laid the foundation-we've put the platform down for building the Calvinist system^jftthought that is unique from evangelicalism in general and especially from the apologetical school called *evidentialism*. The knowledge of God is naturally implanted in the minds of men.

Listen to this opening sentence, *** quotes from p. 43 *** "There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity." The Latin term *divinitatus sensum*, the sense of deity, is another way of translating it—the sense of deity, the awareness of divinity. Um, the footnote #2 at the bottom of the page says, "This term and 'seed of religion,' used immediately below, (cf. I. iv. 1) refer generally to a numinous awareness of God and are closely related to conscience, which is a moral response to God." Um... on verse 5 on his commentary on Joh 1, Calvin writes, "There are two principle parts of the light that still remains in corrupt nature. First, the seed of religion as planted in all men. Next, the distinction between good and evil is engraved on their consciences." Um, most of you will not be terribly offended by the use of this term "numinous awareness of God," but I want to warn you away from it, because McNeil, who is an existentialist neo-orthodox theologian, is really trying to commend the thought of Rudolph Otto here, who identified with religion with the sense of the numinous—the idea that this is a mysterious, awesome, frightening world out there—a dimension to life that just kind of overwhelms us—a very mystical sort of thing. Well, that isn't what Calvin is talking about when he talks of the sense of deity, but that's the editor's remark, and having said that, just throw that away for right now.

What Calvin is getting at is that all men are aware—not of this kind of there's a deep mysterious sense of life, as Rudolph Otto thought—but all men are aware of God. All men have the seed of religion within them because they can't get away from knowing that they owe their lives to God. What if... what if you were to go through life with somebody constantly pressing on your elbow? You would probably get used to it, and you'd go about your business. You'd watch TV and you'd prepare your dinner, and might go to work, and all that. And you would, you know, kind of confine it to the background of your awareness, but it would always be there. Calvin says no matter what man does, there's a constant pressure on him—an awareness of God. Now, men may say, Oh, I don't think about that. And maybe they don't. Just like you wouldn't necessarily think explicitly about somebody pressing in on your elbow all the time. But it's always there—the pressure is constant. *** quotes from p. 43 *** "This we take to be beyond controversy." Boy, I wish we could say that today. Calvin, in his day, said now, I.. .it's kind of like this is the first premise of my theology. I'm not going to brook any opposition to this. It's beyond challenge. All men know God. All men instinctively, naturally, have an awareness of God. "To prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretense of ignorance, God himself has implanted in all men a certain understanding of his divine majesty." So nobody can claim to be ignorant of God, Calvin says, God has implanted in all men an understanding of his divine majesty so there can be no pretense of ignorance—no *pretense of ignorance*. Now, what do you do? You go to the university, in some anthropology classes, they say, Well now look, the Aborigines don't know about the triune God of Christianity. You can't hold them guilty for rejecting the Christian faith. And Calvin says, *no pretense of ignorance!* All men have the sense of deity. Or, you know, you can go to some Polynesian tribe that doesn't worship gods; they just live their life, they're a kind of *ajajreaflyo^ncnow*. We live for the here and now, and that sort of thing. *No pretense of ignorance*, Calvin says. *All men know God*. *** quotes from p. 44 *** "Since, therefore, men one and all perceive that there is a God and that he is their Maker, they are condemned by their own testimony because they have failed to honor him and to consecrate their lives to his will." I wanna tell you, there's a real quick evangelistic tool. He says, All men know God, and if you want to bring them to their knees, I mean, if they're willing to listen and submit to this, he says, just point out that if they know God, they should have consecrated their whole lives to his service; but they didn't. All men know God, and they know that they are sinners before him. "Yet there is, as the eminent pagan says, no nation so barbarous, no people so savage, that they have not a deep-seated conviction that there is a God." Who is the pagan that he's talking about here? The footnote gives you the answer. Cicero. Exactly. Um, Calvin, as you'll be able to tell, as you read through, made quite a point of showing his knowledge of the Classics. That isn't to say that he was, in all ways, reflecting the thinking of the Classics, but he does show that he knows that the phrases, the slogans, and some of the key thought there. And he says even Cicero points out that no nation is completely devoid of an idea of God. And he says, "...even idolatry is ample proof of this conception." Isn't that interesting? Idolatry proves, in its perversity, that the pagans know the living and true God.

Now, they're not honoring them as they should, and Paul tells us that. They don't seek God properly. They want to make, uh, uh... some form of him they can manage. He can... you know... they can bring him down to their level, and he'll be subject to their whim and wish. But the fact remains, that, in making idols, they show they know God, and that they have to do something to be right with him, and they have to live in a way that pleases him. And so, at the end of this paragraph, "So impossible is it to blot this from man's mind that natural disposition would be more easily altered, as altered indeed it is when man voluntarily sinks from his natural haughtiness to the very depths in order to honor God!" Even in man's perversity, he shows that he knows God.

Now, here's a good question for a quiz some day. Who does Calvin take as the most contemptuous atheist that he can think of? You'll find the answer on p. 45. "If, indeed, there were some in the past, and today not a few appear, who deny that God exists, yet willy-nilly they from time to time feel an inkling of what they desire not to believe. One reads of no one who burst forth into bolder or more unbridled contempt of deity than Gaius Caligula;" and notice how Calvin argues, "yet no one trembled more miserably when any sign of God's wrath manifested itself; thus-albeit unwillingly-he shuddered at the God whom professedly sought to despise." And we don't say this with a sense of smugness, but there is a sense of honoring God when we point out that there are very few atheists in foxholes. That when it comes down... why is it that so many people who live their lives either in indifference or in contempt of God-outward, explicit contempt of God-who nevertheless fear to die? Why should fear to die? Lucretius, the ancient naturalist philosopher was right. If there is no God, there's nothing to fear in death. Why do people fear death? Calvin here is probably thinking... Q. think the editor is right in his footnote) thinking of the reputation Caligula had that he "was so terrified when it thundered that he would leap from his bed and hide under it." Well, if there is no God, what's there to be so, you know, afraid of? So you die? Big deal! It's all over. Now some people... some psychologists like to account for this with saying, Well, it's a sense of the loss of opportunity if we die. Well, do you know people who are terrified at the loss of opportunity?. They may be disappointed. They may be depressed. They be crying, you know, over their opportunity. But people don't usually jump under their bed in fear and trembling. No, people fear to die. And so, Calvin here is pointing to what we call the deception of the atheist. The atheist loudly proclaims that there is no God, and yet there are other aspects of his life, maybe even the verbal testimony, that give evidence that he does believe in God. He does have that sense of deity about him.

And so Calvin says... the title of the section is not from Calvin's Section 3 here the title properly represents the thought of *Actual godlessness is impossible*. Men of sound judgment will always be sure that a sense of divinity which can be engraved upon men's minds. Indeed, the perversity of the impious, who though they struggle furiously are unable to extricate themselves from the fear of God, is abundant testimony that this conviction, namely, that there is some God, is naturally inborn in all, and is fixed deep within, as it were in the very marrow. Although Diagoras and his like may jest at whatever has been believed in every age concerning religion, and Dionysius may mock the heavenly judgment, this is sardonic laughter, for the worm of conscience, sharper than any cauterizing iron, gnaws away within."

Um, what Calvin is saying here, is that there are no atheists. In truth, there are no atheists. Now, outwardly, verbally, by their own representation of their views, there are atheists-people who say they don't believe in God. But, in fact, there are no atheists. I thought it would be of some historical interest, and I'll be brief about this, since it's time to stop, that in Calvin's 1550 work on scandals, he does speak about men in his own day who claim to be atheists, and I thought I might just read this for you. He speaks of the spread of atheistic views.

Furthermore, not only do those corrupt men upset the weak by their own fall or downfall, but they pour out the poison of their ungodliness in all directions, so that they fill the world with atheism This scandal must also be opposed, and the Spirit is doing that when he warns that mockers shall come to attack our hope with mockery. But he also says that fickle souls will be susceptible to their charms

Therefore, in order that we may be beyond danger we must acquire steadfastness in Christ. It is the usual custom of those filthy dogs to play the role of the buffoon in order that they may have greater license for belching out blasphemies. Thus, at feast and in discussions, in their pleasant jocular ways, they overthrow all the principles of religion. But, first of all, indeed, they ingratiate themselves with slanted witticisms. However, what they are after is to obliterate all fear of God from the minds of men, for they finally break through to the point that all religions have their origin in men's brains, that God exists because it pleases men to believe so, that the hope of eternal life has been invented to deceive the simple, and the fear of judgment is childish terror. These siren voices are certainly too inclined to soothe the ears of many people, but the same ears are already being tickled by their own itching. For we see some people who strive and chase so eagerly after things that make for the destruction of a sense of piety, that before they had scarcely had time to hear a few words, they beat a hasty retreat from the eternal and unchangeable truth of God. And of course, anyone who has been even moderately versed in the sacred Scriptures, and who has proved that our faith has been founded on something far removed from opinion, will not waver in his opinion so easily. Indeed, when they are assailed by those stratagems, there is little chance of yielding in those who have the sign of the Spirit engraved on their hearts. But Paul is saying the same thing, that men made shipwreck of their faith when they cut loose from a good conscience. By this, he means, not only that a good conscience is the preserver of right understanding, but also, that it is not to be wondered at, if those, who are tossed this way and that among the varying storms of their passions, are completely lacking in stability. Therefore, there is no cause for atheism to perturb us, even if it is rampant everywhere throughout the world, and, in fact, chiefly holds sway in the courts of kings, and princes, and courts of justice, and in other distinguished walks of life. For if I were to ask people with experience of affairs, thus those very ones who cannot extricate themselves from this temptation, how many would concede that a good conscience is given hospitable treatment in those places? The answer will be an easy one: that it is banished altogether. Then why are we surprised at that shipwreck of faith that Paul teaches that follows inevitably? Moreover, if all who are effected by the love of money keep it hidden so carefully in chests, the man who is no fortified and defended by the fear of God, exposes himself on his own responsibility to being plundered, what excuse will he then plead if he is stripped of faith, the heavenly treasure, particularly when we know nothing so deadly as those little snares of the ungodly. For there is to be no weakening of the spirit because danger threatens from those people. Indeed, I warn and testify that there are no serpents with venom so poisonous. In fact, for that reason, we ought to be more vigilant and alert in keeping guard. However, I say that all who have not neglected to plant firm roots in Christ will be free from this exceedingly pestilential contagion. And of course, that is not my dictum, but Paul's. We must grow in the knowledge of Christ until we attain mature manhood, so that we may no longer be subject to the cunning of men who try to circumvent us. Yet at the same time, we must give heed to another exhortation of Paul, seeing that we have been betrothed to the Son of God on a condition that we may remain completely faithful to that husband, we must especially beware that Satan does not seduce us with his pandering ways. For if a woman who has listened to the voice of seductive allurements is considered to have given some sign of unfaithfulness already, and is evident that souls who find it a delight to be incited to treacherous defection are far from chaste.

Now, these are very strong words that indicate that Calvin took seriously the atheists of his day, who claimed that religion has its source in the brain of man, and there's nothing to fear in judgment, etc. Men... God exists because men choose to believe that God exists. So I don't want you to think that Calvin was some kind of theological Pollyanna who had never run up against, you know, the evil world out there with its philosophical stratagems against the faith. Calvin knew it very well. He said it's part of the scandal of his day that's leading some people into the shipwreck of their faith. But the fact is, that in the *Institutes*, he is maintaining very strongly, that though there are men who claim to be atheists, in reality, no man is an atheist. In reality, all men know God and believe in God.

Okay, I had a point here about Plato, quoted at the end of that section, that isn't important enough to detain us longer tonight.

What we have learned thus far tonight, then, is that Calvin's theology is apologetical in its slant. He begins with the knowledge of God. And that knowledge is based on the revelation of God. He says that all men know God-they can't help but know God. To know themselves, they *must* know God. And to know themselves properly, they must begin with the knowledge of God-that the two are intertwined. The true knowledge of God leads to piety and reverence of life. And it's necessary that our theology be marked by that kind of reverence and piety as we study the nature of God.

When we come back to do the next three chapters, two weeks from tonight, and Calvin will begin talking about how the knowledge of God, which all men have by nature, and cannot escape, is nevertheless being distorted and suppressed by sin.

Any questions before we close tonight's session? Steve?

Audience question: One small one. Uh, in the last sentence of the first chapter, when you were describing what was the proper order of teaching...

...ofteaching. Right.

Questioner: I just had one question. And I don't even know if this is the right question to ask. What is the*** inaudible***

What is that now?

Questioner: You said he wasn't discussing epistemology here, or he wasn't...

No, I think what Calvin is saying is, there may be no way to determine a proper order, uh, epistemologically or metaphysically-the two are intertwined.

Questioner: Oh, I see.

But, I can't teach everything at once, and it seems that the proper deference to begin with the knowledge of God, than with the...

Questioner: But then he.. .but he.. .but he was saying, then, that he didn't... at this point...

He's not taking a position on that. I... I think it is Calvin's position that they're so interrelated that it's not possible to say one precedes the other-the knowledge of God precedes the knowledge of self, or knowledge of self precedes the knowledge of God. Nevertheless, as a teacher, he's gotta talk about one or the other for the most part. To begin with, he says, we should talk about the knowledge of God.

Okay, now, again, tonight's session may not have been long in a lot of different types of detail, but this is just a crucial plank in Calvinist theology and apologetics. He begins with the inalienable knowledge of God which all men have-there are no atheists.

Audience question: But, would Calvin.. .would Calvin's opinion of people who would, like, um, sail out to a south Pacific island and find some natives there, and they would think that unless they (the people who found the natives there-the cultured and sophisticated and etc.), urn, have...unless they would enlighten these Indians, or natives, of God, then would the opinion have been that they would not be saved, but Calvin's opinion is that they knew God anyway, right?

Yeah, but they didn't know the Redeemer.

Questioner: They didn't know Christ.

They didn't know that grace of God. The only knew the wrath of God against their unrighteousness. Remember how he says you can only find the grace of God in the gospel. Nature does not show the way of salvation. For Calvin, men know their Maker, they know his holiness, they know their lack of perfection, and therefore, his wrath upon them; but they do not know the way of salvation, they don't know redemption.

So he would agree that we must send missionaries, because they won't know the way of salvation.

Audience comment: So that's not an elitist attitude...

Oh no, not at all. In fact, he would say that to the degree we try to bring the natives to worship one true God and according to the law that we understand the Scripture to teach the way of righteousness, that we're not giving them something new, it's something they know in their heart of hearts, but have been suppressing and distorting. Howard?

Audience question: Have you heard of John Richardson's book *The Trinity in Their Heart*?

No.

Questioner: No, he...he... he, uh, has written on...now there are certain cultures all over the world where *** unintelligible stammering, this questioner just seems to babbling ***

Yes. There's...there are testimonies, I think, of that sort, everywhere, that Calvin would say are evidence of the sense of deity in people. They know that there is one true God. But even those who don't admit it, still know it. I did work on this concept of self-deception in my doctoral dissertation at USC. To say that people can know things even though they sincerely claim that they don't know *xt-sincerely* claim that they don't know it-and yet they do.