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Teaching Notes

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John Calvin on the Knowledge of God the Creator



He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the earth is satisfied by the fruit of his work. - Psalm 104:13

“With what clear manifestations his might draws us to contemplate him! Unless perchance it be unknown to us in whose power it lies to sustain this infinite mass of heaven and earth by his Word: by his nod alone sometimes to shake heaven with thunderbolts, to burn everything with lightnings, to kindle the air with flashes; sometimes to disturb it with various sorts of storms, and then at his pleasure to clear them away in a moment; to compel the sea, which by its height seems to threaten the earth with continual destruction, to hang as if in mid-air; sometimes to arouse it in a dreadful way with the tumultuous force of winds; sometimes, with waves quieted, to make it calm again!” (*Institutes*, 1.5.6)

I. General Outline of Calvin’s *Institutes*

A. Book I: The Knowledge of God the Creator

CHAPTER 1. The Knowledge of God and That of Ourselves Are Connected. How They Are Interrelated

CHAPTER 2. What It Is to Know God, and to What Purpose the Knowledge of Him Tends

CHAPTER 3. The Knowledge of God Has Been Naturally Implanted in the Minds of Men

CHAPTER 4. This Knowledge Is Either Smothered or Corrupted, Partly by Ignorance, Partly by Malice

CHAPTER 5. The Knowledge of God Shines Forth in the Fashioning of the Universe and the Continuing Government of It .

CHAPTER 6. Scripture Is Needed as Guide and Teacher for Anyone Who Would Come to God the Creator.

CHAPTER 7. Scripture Must Be Confirmed by the Witness of the Spirit. Thus May Its Authority Be Established as Certain; and It Is a Wicked Falsehood that Its Credibility Depends on the Judgment of the Church.

CHAPTER 8. So Far as Human Reason Goes, Sufficiently Firm Proofs Are at Hand to Establish the Credibility of Scripture

CHAPTER 9. Fanatics, Abandoning Scripture and Flying Over to Revelation, Cast Down All the Principles of Godliness .

CHAPTER 10. Scripture, to Correct All Superstition, Has Set the True God Alone Over Against All the Gods of the Heathen

CHAPTER 11. It Is Unlawful to Attribute a Visible Form to God, and Generally Whoever Sets Up Idols Revolts Against the True God.

CHAPTER 12. How God Is to Be So Distinguished from Idols that Perfect Honor May Be Given to Him Alone.

CHAPTER 13. In Scripture, from the Creation Onward, We Are Taught One Essence of God, Which Contains Three Persons

CHAPTER 14. Even in the Creation of the Universe and of All Things, Scripture by Unmistakable Marks Distinguishes the True God from False Gods .

CHAPTER 15. Discussion of Human Nature as Created, of the Faculties of the Soul, of the Image of God, of Free Will, and of the Original Integrity of Man's Nature

CHAPTER 16. God by His Power Nourishes and Maintains the World Created by Him, and Rules Its Several Parts by His Providence.

CHAPTER 17. How We May Apply This Doctrine to Our Greatest Benefit .

CHAPTER 18. God So Uses the Works of the Ungodly, and So Bends Their Minds to Carry Out His Judgments, that He Remains Pure from Every Stain.

B. Book II: The Knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ, First Disclosed to the Fathers Under the Law, and Then to Us in the Gospel

1. The Fall in Adam; Original Sin
2. Man deprived of freedom of choice, and bound over as a slave to sin
3. Only damnable things come from man's corrupt nature
4. How God works in men's hearts
5. Refutation of objections commonly put forward in defense of free will
6. Fallen men ought to seek redemption in Christ
7. The Law was given not to restrain the folk of the Old Covenant under itself, but to foster hope of salvation in Christ until his coming
8. Explanation of the moral law (the Ten Commandments)
9. Christ, although he was known to the Jews under the Law, was at length clearly revealed only in the Gospel
10. The similarity of the Old and New Testaments
11. The difference between the two Testaments
12. Christ had to become man in order to fulfill the office of Mediator
13. Christ assumed the true substance of human flesh
14. How the two natures of the mediator make one person
15. Christ's three offices: Prophet, Priest, and King
16. How Christ has fulfilled the function of redeemer to acquire salvation for us; Christ death, resurrection and ascension into heaven
17. Christ rightly and properly said to have merited God's grace and salvation for us

C. Book III: The Way in Which We Receive the Grace of Christ: What Benefits Come to Us from It, and What Effects Follow

General topics discussed: the Spirit's work in us, faith, regeneration, repentance, indulgences and Purgatory, the Christian life, self-denial (cross-bearing), meditation of the future life, the best use of our time here on earth, justification by faith, progress from justification in the Christian life, the evil of boasting about our works, Christian freedom, prayer (the chief exercise of faith), eternal election/predestination, various scriptural proofs of election, the final resurrection.

D. Book IV: The External Means or Aids by Which God Invites Us Into the Society of Christ and Holds Us Therein

General topics discussed: the nature of the true church, a comparison of the false and true church, the office and election of ministers, church government (true and false), the origin and growth of the Roman papacy, the corruption of the life and doctrine of the church by the Roman papacy, church councils, church discipline, the corrupting influence of vows, the sacraments, baptism, how infant baptism best accords with Christ's institution, the Lord's Supper, the profaning of the Lord's Supper by the Papal Mass, the five other ceremonies wrongly called sacraments, civil government.

II. Book I, Chapters 1-5: The Knowledge of God the Creator

A. Opening Statement

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.

1. What do we learn about God?

- a. Calvin consistently brings his readers face to face with the infinite greatness of God's person... His holiness, His power, His sovereignty over all the universe, His goodness
- b. Calvin says its only by gazing at the person of God as revealed in Scripture and in nature that we can see ourselves rightly

2. What do we learn about ourselves?

- a. Only by looking at the greatness and holiness of God can we see ourselves rightly, especially given our depravity and our pride

The miserable ruin, into which the rebellion of the first man cast us, especially compels us to look upward. Thus, not only will we, in fasting and hungering, seek thence what we lack; but, in being aroused by fear, we shall learn humility. [1.1.1]

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. 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. [1.1.1]

- b. We will see no need whatsoever for changing ourselves or our lives until we are brought face to face with the true God and thus see ourselves for who we really are

B. Chapter 1: How the knowledge of God and of self are connected and interrelated

- 1. Without knowledge of God we cannot really know ourselves

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 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. [1.1.2]

- 2. God alone is the standard for humanity... only by comparing ourselves to Him can we rightly assess ourselves

As long as we do not look beyond the earth, being quite content with our own righteousness, wisdom, and virtue, we flatter ourselves most sweetly, and fancy ourselves all but demigods. Suppose we but once begin to raise our thoughts to God, and to ponder his nature, and how completely perfect are his righteousness, wisdom, and power – the straightedge to which we must be shaped. [1.1.2]

- 3. Man before God’s majesty

Hence that dread and wonder ^{f179} with which Scripture commonly represents the saints as stricken and overcome whenever they felt the presence of God. Thus it comes about that we see men who in his absence normally remained firm and constant, but who, when he manifests his glory, are so shaken and struck dumb as to be laid low by the dread of death – are in fact overwhelmed by it and almost annihilated. [1.1.3]

C. Chapter 2: What It Is to Know God, and to What Purpose the Knowledge of Him Tends

- 1. Piety is required to know God properly

- a. Piety = that reverence joined with the love of God which the knowledge of His benefits induces

Psalm 103:1-2 Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. ² Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits

- b. It’s not enough just to know that He exists... but we must love and reverence Him for all the rich blessings He gives to His creation... AND we must seek no good except from Him and Him alone

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 flow 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. [1.2.1]

2. Knowledge of God involves trust and reverence

a. It is wicked corruption not to serve God fully

For, how can the thought of God penetrate your mind without your realizing immediately that, since you are his handiwork, you have been made over and bound to his command by right of creation, that you owe your life to him? – that whatever you undertake, whatever you do, ought to be ascribed to him? If this be so, it now assuredly follows that your life is wickedly corrupt unless it be disposed to his service, seeing that his will ought for us to be the law by which we live. [1.2.2]

b. A pious mind does not dream up for itself any god it pleases

c. Rather a pious mind seeks the God that really exists, and learns to rest in Him alone

It thus recognizes God because it knows that he governs all things; and trusts that he is its guide and protector, therefore giving itself over completely to trust in him. [1.2.2]

d. This is the essence of true religion... to love God as He is and fear Him

...this mind restrains itself from sinning, not out of dread of punishment alone; but, because it loves and reveres God as Father, it worships and adores him as Lord. Even if there were no hell, it would still shudder at offending him alone. [1.2.2]

D. Chapter 3: The Knowledge of God Has Been Naturally Implanted in the Minds of Men

1. The character of this natural endowment

There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity. This we take to be beyond controversy. 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. [1.3.1]

Romans 1:20-21 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-- his eternal power and divine nature-- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

There is ... no nation so barbarous, no people so savage, that they have not a deep-seated conviction that there is a God. [1.3.1]

God actually continually renews this natural endowment with repeated encounters with Him through nature

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. Ever renewing its memory, he repeatedly sheds fresh drops. [1.3.1]

2. Religion is no arbitrary invention

Therefore it is utterly vain for some men to say that religion was invented by the subtlety and craft of a few to hold the simple folk in thrall by this device and that those very persons who originated the worship of God for others did not in the least believe that any God existed. [1.3.2]

NOTE: this is a common line among atheists today!!

My opinion is that there would never have been an infidel, if there had never been a priest. The artificial structures they have built on the purest of all moral systems, for the purpose of deriving from it pence and power, revolts those who think for themselves, and who read in that system only what is really there. -Thomas Jefferson, letter to Mrs. Samuel H. Smith, August, 6, 1816

Concentration of power in a political machine is bad; and an Established Church is only a political machine; it was invented for that; it is nursed, cradled, preserved for that; it is an enemy to human liberty, and does no good which it could not better do in a split-up and scattered condition.
-- Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*

The gods offer no rewards for intellect. There was never one yet that showed any interest in it.
-- Mark Twain, *Notebook*

3. Actual godlessness is impossible

Men of sound judgment will always be sure that a sense of divinity which can never be effaced is 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. [1.3.3]

E. Chapter 4: This Knowledge Is Either Smothered or Corrupted, Partly by Ignorance, Partly by Malice

Romans 1:18-19 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

1. Superstition

As experience shows, God has sown a seed of religion in all men. But scarcely one man in a hundred is met with who fosters it, once received, in his heart, and none in whom it ripens – much less shows fruit in season [cf. Psalm 1:3]. Besides while some may evaporate in their own superstitions and others deliberately and wickedly desert God, yet all degenerate from the true knowledge of him. And so it happens that no real piety remains in the world. [1.4.1]

2. Conscious turning away from God

- a. David said “Fools say in their hearts ‘There is no god’”
- b. These fools harden their own hearts by insolent and habitual sinning... seeking to drive away any remembrance of the true God
- c. They assume that if He exists, He is shut up idle in heaven
- d. But this is impossible!!!

Now there is nothing less in accord with God’s nature than for him to cast off the government of the universe and abandon it to fortune, and to be blind to the wicked deeds of men, so that they may lust unpunished. Accordingly, whoever heedlessly indulges himself, his fear of heavenly judgment extinguished, denies that there is a God. [1.4.2]

3. We are not to fashion God according to our own whim

Thus is overthrown that vain defense with which many are wont to gloss over their superstition. For they think that any zeal for religion, however preposterous, is sufficient. But they do not realize that true religion ought to be conformed to God’s will as to a universal rule; that God ever remains like himself, and is not a specter or phantasm to be transformed according to anyone’s whim. [1.4.3]

4. Hypocrisy

- a. Sinners are sometimes brought to a slavish fear of the true God and His terrible judgments
- b. They dread God’s judgments even to the point of loathing
- c. They wage war against God as they are able
- d. Then they surrender in sullen outward forms of religion

But while they know that his inescapable power hangs over them because they can neither do away with it nor flee from it, they recoil from it in dread. And so, lest they should everywhere seem to despise him whose majesty weighs upon them, they perform some semblance of religion. [1.4.4]

e. This is nominalism... hypocrisy

For where they ought to have remained consistently obedient throughout life, they boldly rebel against him in almost all their deeds, and are zealous to placate him merely with a few paltry sacrifices. Where they ought to serve him in sanctity of life and integrity of heart, they trump up frivolous trifles and worthless little observances with which to win his favor. Nay, more, with greater license they sluggishly lie in their own filth, because they are confident that they can perform their duty toward him by ridiculous acts of expiation. [1.4.4]

F. Chapter 5: The Knowledge of God Shines Forth in the Fashioning of the Universe and the Continuing Government of It

1. The clarity of God's self-disclosure strips us of every excuse

- a. The final goal of everyone's existence is to know God and Christ (John 17:3)
- b. Therefore, God made this knowledge readily abundantly available to everyone
- c. It is obvious in the whole workmanship of the universe

As a consequence, men cannot open their eyes without being compelled to see him. Indeed, his essence is incomprehensible; hence, his divineness far escapes all human perception. But upon his individual works he has engraved unmistakable marks of his glory, so clear and so prominent that even unlettered and stupid folk cannot plead the excuse of ignorance. [1.5.1]

d. Many bible verses teach us this truth

Romans 1:19-20 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-- his eternal power and divine nature-- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

Psalms 19:1-6 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. ² Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. ³ There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. ⁴ Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun, ⁵ which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. ⁶ It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is hidden from its heat.

III. Book I, Chapters 6-10: The Knowledge of God the Creator

A. Chapter 6: Scripture Is Needed as Guide and Teacher for Anyone Who Would Come to God the Creator

1. God Bestows the Actual Knowledge of Himself Upon Us Only In the Scriptures

- a. Despite the universal disclosure of God in the brightness of earth and heaven we require another and better help to direct us to its Creator
- b. This help we have in God's word
 - i) Which first kept the Jews from sinking into oblivion, and now keeps Christians in the pure knowledge of Himself
 - ii) Which dispenses our dullness just as glasses magnify the printed page for weak-sighted readers
- c. Two stages in the knowledge which Scripture gives us
 - i) Knowledge of God as Creator (the present topic): not only that we should worship some God, but that He is the God whom we should worship
 - ii) Knowledge of God as Redeemer (to be dealt with in Book 2)

2. The Word of God as Holy Scripture

- a. The unbroken transmission of truth throughout all ages
 - i) God spoke to the patriarchs through oracles and visions or by the works and ministry of men what they should hand down to posterity
 - ii) These oracles were subsequently recorded when the Law was published
 - iii) Still later, prophets were added as interpreters of the Law
- b. True religion (both faith and right knowledge) has its origin in heavenly doctrine, which we can know only through the reverent study of Scripture and obedient acceptance of what God has there been pleased to witness of Himself

3. Without Scripture, We Fall Into Error

- a. Men's powerful tendencies to move away from God made written proof of heavenly doctrine very necessary
- b. The Word truly and vividly describes God to us from His works
- c. If we leave the Scriptural path, we will always wander in error and never reach our goal

4. Scripture Can Communicate to Us What Revelation in Works Cannot

- a. David teaches us that, since God in vain calls all people to Himself by the contemplation of heaven and earth, the law constitutes the unique school of God's children
- b. This is also the purport of Jesus' teaching to the Samaritan woman

B. Chapter 7: Scripture Must Be Confirmed by the Witness of the Spirit. Thus May Its Authority Be Established as Certain; and It Is a Wicked Falsehood that Its Credibility Depends on the Judgment of the Church

1. Scripture has its authority from God, not from the church
 - a. Scripture has full authority only where men consider it as God's living words sprung from heaven
 - b. It is a pernicious error that the authority of Scripture rests upon the determination of the church
 - c. This is based upon the absurd notion that the promises of eternal life given in Scripture consist in and solely depend upon human judgment
2. The church itself is grounded in Scripture
 - a. Ephesians 2:20
 - b. The claim that the prophetic and apostolic writings remain in doubt until the church decides upon their authenticity is refuted by the fact that the acceptance of Scripture had to precede the founding of the church
 - c. Scripture exhibits clear evidence of its own truths and needs no external witness
3. Augustine cannot be cited as counter-evidence
 - a. Augustine's statement that he would not believe the gospel if the authority of the church did not move him to do so must be interpreted in the light of its context
 - i) He is here refuting the Manichees who used the gospel as a cloak to promote faith in their god Mani
 - ii) What leads unbelievers to the gospel? The church by its authority introduces the gospel to unbelievers, but the certainty of the gospel does not depend upon the church
 - b. In other words, the authority of the church is an introduction through which we are prepared for faith in the gospel; this interpretation of Augustine's statement is borne out by his teaching in other works
4. The witness of the Holy Spirit: stronger than all "proof"
 - a. When we are convinced that God in person speaks in Scripture, we have the highest proof of the credibility of sacred doctrine
 - b. This conviction comes to us not from mere human judgments or conjectures, but from the secret testimony of the Spirit
 - c. Not rational proofs, but the majesty of God shining forth from Scripture teaches us its heavenly origin

- d. Supporting Scripture by disputation is doing things backwards, even though skeptical men demand such proofs to avoid foolish or giddy beliefs, for the Scripture's testimony is more excellent than all reason
- e. The Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts until it is sealed there by the inner testimony of the Spirit, the same Spirit that spoke through the Prophet's lips

5. Scripture bears its own authentication: **αυτοπιστον**

- a. Our conviction that in Scripture we hold the unassailable truth rests upon the testimony of the Spirit in our hearts
- b. "I speak of nothing other than what each one of the faithful experiences within himself..."
- c. Only the elect of God experience this singular privilege, and they, not the multitude, are granted the capacity to comprehend the mysteries of God

C. Chapter 8: So Far As Human Reason Goes, Sufficiently Firm Proofs Are At Hand to Establish The Credibility Of Scripture

1. Scripture is superior to all human reason

- a. Once we accept the authentication of Scripture by the Spirit, the proofs that before were useless become very useful aids in helping us to understand Scripture
- b. Grandeur of subject rather than grace of language draws us to admiration of Scripture
 - i) God wisely expressed great themes in lowly language to remind us that the power of Scripture rests not in human eloquence but in its divine source
 - ii) Delighted as we are by the elegance of such classical authors as Demosthenes or Cicero, Plato or Aristotle, we turn from delight in them to the overwhelming power of Scripture which makes their impression vanish

2. Not style but content is decisive

- a. That some of the prophets had an eloquent style shows that the Spirit did not lack eloquence
- b. Yet in other prophets, despite their unpolished style, the majesty of God is equally present
- c. Satan imitates even this rude and archaic style to trap souls, but even moderately sensible men detect his imposture
- d. Those for whom the prophets are tasteless have no organs of taste

Old Testament Proofs [3-10]

3. The great antiquity of Scripture

- a. Egyptian theology and all other religions are far more recent than the age of Moses
 - b. Moses was actually reiterating a covenant made 400 years before with Abraham
 - c. Thus Scripture surpasses all other writings in antiquity
4. The truthfulness of Scripture shown by Moses' example
 - a. No need to refute the Egyptian claim to a history anteceding the creation by 6000 years
 - b. Moses' outspokenness concerning Levi, Aaron, and Miriam, which went against the feeling of his flesh, his relegation of his own sons to the lowest social station (excluding them from the priesthood), and other instances, prove the divine origin of what he wrote
5. Miracles strengthen the authority of God's messengers
 - a. The miraculous events of the Exodus under Moses demonstrate that Moses was God's undoubted prophet
 - b. Since all these things were published before the congregation, there was no opportunity for fraud among the eyewitnesses of the events
6. Moses' miracles are incontestable
 - a. With miracles are mentioned disagreeable things that would have stirred up the people to hostility if they had not experienced them
 - b. to counter the irrefutable fact that Moses performed the miracles, Satan has falsely attributed them to magic arts—a charge sufficiently refuted by the many severe tests to which God subjected Moses
7. Prophecies [by Moses] which are fulfilled contrary to all human expectations
 - a. The future primacy of Judah: the prophecy looks to the anointing of a lowly herdsman of the tribe of Judah—David
 - b. The eventual sharing by the Gentiles in God's covenant: the prophecy looks to events of almost 2000 years later
 - c. In conclusion, the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32) is a bright mirror in which God clearly appears
8. God has confirmed the prophet's words
 - a. Examples from Isaiah
 - i) Foretold fall of Jerusalem to the Chaldeans
 - ii) Also prophesied deliverance by Cyrus (born 100 years after Isaiah's death) from the Chaldeans

- b. Examples from Jeremiah and Ezekiel
 - i) Prophecy of the 70-year duration of the exile, the return and restoration
 - ii) Though segregated geographically, Jeremiah and Ezekiel agreed in their statements
 - c. Daniel, too, prophesied as if he were writing the history of events generally known
9. The transmission of the law is to be trusted
- a. Some irrationally question the authenticity of the authorship of Scripture, but unquestioningly accept the genuineness of classic authors
 - b. The hand of the divine providence seen in the preservation of the law and its rediscovery by King Josiah after the priests' negligence
 - c. The sacred writings were transmitted by the fathers who experienced the events described therein described, or heard them from their fathers and kept them fresh in memory
10. God has marvelously preserved the law and the prophets
- a. Detractors of Scripture assert that after Antiochus ordered all books to be burned [1 Maccabees 1:56-57], they were subsequently replaced by forgeries
 - b. The care which the Lord took to preserve His Word exposes this as a false accusation
 - i) Armed priests to preserve the Scriptures with their very lives if need be
 - ii) Saw to it that the holy books returned to a vastly enhanced place of honor, now translated into Greek and spread throughout the world
 - iii) Despite the vicissitudes of the Jews, the books were safe and intact
 - iv) While the Jews under the Restoration almost lost the Hebrew language, the ancient Hebrew books remained
 - v) God chose the Jews, Christ's most violent enemies, to preserve for us the doctrine of salvation until it might be made manifest through him

[New Testament Proofs and Those from the History of the Church: 11-13]

11. The heavenly mysteries were transmitted by unlearned men
- a. The first three evangelists, criticized by some for their lowly style, are actually discoursing on heavenly mysteries above human capacity
 - b. This is especially true of John's Gospel; it may also be said of the writings of Paul and Peter

- c. These authors, rude and uneducated men for the most part, suddenly began to speak of heavenly mysteries—proof positive of their instruction in the Spirit

12. Despite opposition, the church in all times and places has clung to Scripture

- a. More than human protection witnessed by the constant obedience to Scripture of men of many times, although Satan and the world have tried their best to overthrow it
- b. Divine power seen also in the acceptance of Scripture by many nations, widely scattered and otherwise having nothing in common

13. The blood of martyrs

- a. Grounds for assurance in the heroic stand of Christian martyrs
- b. Theirs not the faith of fanatic excess, but of firm and constant, yet sober, zeal toward God

14. Summary

- a. While eloquent, these proofs are not of themselves strong enough to provide a firm faith
- b. Until men receive certainty from the inner persuasion of the Spirit, it is useless to try to prove to unbelievers that Scripture is the Word of God

D. Chapter 9: Fanatics, Abandoning Scripture and Flying Over To Revelation, Cast Down All The Principles Of Godliness

1. The fanatics wrongly appeal to the Holy Spirit

- a. The Libertines forsake Scripture in favor of the inspiration of the Spirit, feeling that they have freed themselves from the “letter that kills”
- b. The Apostles in the primitive church, illumined by Christ’s Spirit, did not on that account treat God’s word with contempt
 - i) Their reverent attitude foretold by Isaiah 59:21
 - ii) Witnessed by Paul, who despite his ecstatic experience (2 Cor. 12:2) insists on knowing the law and prophets
- c. The task of the Spirit is not to dream up a new kind of doctrine that leads away from the gospel

2. The Holy Spirit is recognized in His agreement with Scripture

- a. To benefit from the Spirit of God we must apply ourselves to reading and hearing the Scripture
- b. Any spirit that foists another doctrine upon us that that in God’s Word is vain and lying

c. The Libertines contend that it is not worthy for the Spirit (to whom all things should be subject) to be subject to Scripture, but this is to judge the Spirit by standards inferior to His own, when He is to be compared solely to Himself

d. He is the author of Scripture, and on Scripture His image is stamped

3. Word and Spirit belong inseparably together

a. They falsely allege Paul's rejection of "the letter kills"; this statement does not reject the Scriptures but insists that the Holy Spirit so inheres in His truth, which He expresses in Scripture, that only when proper reverence and dignity are given to the Word does He show forth His power

b. Certainty of the Word and certainty of Spirit joined by a mutual bond

i) The light of the Spirit extinguished when prophecies are held in contempt

ii) Contrast between the careless forsaking of God's Word by these haughty enthusiasts and the sobriety of the children of God who rest their assurance upon the illumination of the Holy Spirit and upon His instrument, the Scriptures

E. Chapter 10: Scripture, To Correct All Superstition, Has Set the True God Alone Over Against All the Gods of the Heathen

1. The Scriptural doctrine of God the Creator

a. Is the knowledge of God set forth in the created universe consonant with that expressed in the Word?

i) This question is too long for a thorough discussion here

ii) Present purpose merely to provide an index of what to look for in Scripture and how to seek it out

b. Limits of the present discussion

i) The covenant with Israel eventuating in the coming of the Redeemer will not at present be considered

ii) Rather, those Scriptural passages which describe how God, the Maker of heaven and earth, governs the world—His goodness, His righteous vengeance, and His forbearance—will be pointed out

2. The attributes of God according to Scripture agree with those known in His creatures

a. Scriptural passages show us not as He is in Himself, but as He is toward us in kindness, goodness, mercy, justice, judgment, and truth

i) Exodus 34:6-7

- ii) Psalm 145
- iii) Jeremiah 9:24 (1 Cor. 1:31)
- b. The purpose of this Scriptural knowledge of God: fear resulting in trust, resulting in true worship, resulting in full dependence on Him
- 3. Even worshipers of idols know the unity of God
 - a. Scripture rejects all gods of the heathen
 - b. Polytheists never completely lost the awareness that there really was only one true God
 - i) Thus their persistence in polytheism is evidence of their own vanity and Satan's deceptions, and is inexcusable
 - ii) All, from the rude multitude to the sophisticated philosophers, have corrupted the truth of God

IV. Conclusions

A.

B.