

Lecture 2- Knowledge of God: Creation**Prayer**

Almighty God, Thou didst frame heaven and earth for our sake. Thou didst witness to us through Thy servant Moses that both sun and moon are under us and their resources we are so to use as if they were our servants. Grant, then, by Thy many blessings we may be lifted up and come to Thy true glory; may worship thee in pure simplicity; wholly surrender ourselves to Thee. May more and more be kindled to seek after righteousness and strive to glorify Thy name on earth, at last coming to that blessed glory prepared for us in heaven by Christ our Lord. Amen.

Knowledge of God: Creation**I. Knowledge of God and Ourselves (1, 1 & 2)****A. Opening sentence: "...knowledge of God and of ourselves."**

1. Concept: Cicero? Imitation of Christ? Zwingli, Bude, Bucer?
2. Shift: "sacred doctrine" (1536); "nearly all the wisdom" (1559)

B. Significance for Calvin's *Institutes*

1. Two-fold knowledge: God and ourselves
2. Two-fold knowledge:
 - a. Of God: Creator, Redeemer
 - b. Of ourselves: created, redeemed

C. Calvin's practical concern

1. Applies Scriptural teachings to us in our current condition
2. Discusses how people would have known God if Adam had not fallen

D. Relation between knowledge of God and ourselves

1. "Joined by many bonds" (1, 1, 1)
 - a. True knowledge of self: our emptiness and need
 - b. Knowledge of God: His holiness

2. Right order of teaching (1, 1, 3)**E. Description of true knowledge of God**

1. Practical knowledge: God "as he is towards us" (1, 10, 2)
2. Religious knowledge: God is not known "where there is no religion or piety" (1, 2, 1)

II. Knowledge of God from Creation (1, 3-5)**A. Internal knowledge/revelation**

1. Instinctive
 - a. "Awareness of divinity"
 - b. "Seed of religion"
2. Ineradicable
3. Ineffective
 - a. "Only the worst fruits" (1, 4, 4)
 - b. False religion, marked by superstition (1, 4, 1-3) and hypocrisy (1, 4, 4)
 - c. People "deliberately befuddle themselves" (1, 4, 2)

B. External knowledge/revelation

1. In creation (1, 5, 1-6): "a sort of mirror" (1, 5, 1)
2. In providence/history (1, 5, 7-10) "a dazzling theater" (1, 5, 8)
3. Also ineffective

Due to time constraints, some of the following points are not mentioned on the CD lecture.

C. Summary: Commentary on John (1:5)

D. "Bankruptcy" of the natural knowledge of God

1. Effective only "if Adam had remained upright"
2. Cause of failure is not insufficient light but the corruption of the human heart
3. Actual function is inexcusability
4. Is there a remaining apologetical function?

For Further Study

Dowey, E. A. *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1952.

Helpful and suggestive treatment of the two-fold knowledge of God as creator and as redeemer with reference to the first three books of the Institutes, but marred by the author's bias against the Reformed orthodox understanding of Calvin.

Parker, T. H. L. *Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959.

Similar to Dowey but with important differences of interpretation and emphasis.

Warfield, B. B. "Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God." *Calvin and Augustine*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1956.

Best short treatment of the Institutes 1, 1-5.