

## **The Knowledge of God, II**

Before I come to the prayer, let me summarize briefly the first five chapters that we have looked at so far. In those chapters, Calvin tells us that God has not left Himself without a witness. There is a twofold witness that He has placed within every person. It is there, it is instinctive, and it is ineradicable. That twofold witness within every person bears witness to the fact that God exists, which is *sensus divinitatis*. There is a God, a God of majesty, who exists. The second part of that twofold witness within us is that we know that this God is a God of holiness and righteousness. The seed of religion is there, which expresses itself in natural law or in conscience. Not only has God placed that twofold witness within every person, but God has also placed before every person a twofold witness. We see the greatness of God in creation. Whether we look up at the stars or deep within ourselves, we see the marvels and wonders of what God has done in creation. Then, as we survey the flow of history or the work of God's providence, that, too, is a "dazzling theatre," Calvin says, in which we can see the mercy and the judgment of God. That witness is there. It remains, but it is ineffective not because it lacks in power or in significance but because of the blindness of our own hearts—because of Adam's sin and because we are also sinners. We constantly negate, confuse, and reject the very clear witness that God has placed in us and before us in the world. That witness remains, but it serves now not to lead us to a true knowledge of God. It leads us to confusion and superstition and to all kinds of errors. However, it remains to hold us inexcusable. The witness is there, but it does not bear good fruit because of our sin. Therefore, Calvin says, "There is no pure and approved religion founded upon common understanding alone"—that is, through the natural revelation of God in creation. Calvin also says, "All excuse is cut off because the fault of dullness is within us." That is a pretty bleak picture in chapter 5 of Book I. But, Calvin goes quickly to what he calls "a special gift," and that is Scripture. He is going to show us how, through Scripture, we are able to recover the knowledge of God in creation that we would have seen through creation itself if Adam had not sinned. As we study this topic, we will use a prayer from Calvin related to Scripture. Let us pray.

*"Almighty God, Thou showest Thy glory for us to see not only in heaven and earth but also in the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel and have so intimately revealed Thyself and Thine only begotten Son that we cannot excuse ourselves out of ignorance. Grant that we may advance in this teaching where with Thou so kindly invitest us to Thyself and may thus steadfastly cleave to Thee that no errors of the world may lead us astray but may stand firmly fixed in Thy work, which cannot deceive us; at last reaching heavenly blessedness that we may enjoy Thy glory face to face, conformed completely to Thee. In Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen."*

Calvin introduced the doctrine of Scripture—when and where it begins—to function in his theology. You might say, "Calvin has been quoting Scripture all along," and that is true. But, he has been using it incidentally and illustratively, because prior to this point, the knowledge of God that he is talking about is not the knowledge of God through Scripture but the knowledge of God that would have been available to us in the creation if Adam had not sinned. However, that way is closed now. It is there to hold us inexcusable, but it does not give to any person a true understanding of who God is. So, Scripture is now introduced in chapter 6 as "a better means," "another and better help," "a special gift," and "a more direct and certain mark." These are all Calvin's words to describe the gift of Scripture to us to enable us to see what we cannot see because of our sin but would have been able to see in nature had we not sinned. Scripture allows us to see more than that. It does not just enable us to see what would have been available to us in the general revelation, but it tells us more.

Calvin gives a very helpful and often referred to illustration here. He compares Scripture to spectacles. We cannot gain access to the knowledge of God because of our sin. That knowledge is completely lost to us, but God, in His mercy through the Holy Spirit, gives us the spectacles (that is, the Bible). Through those spectacles we are able to gain knowledge not only of God, the Creator, but also other aspects of God—that He is triune, for instance. The natural revelation would have never enabled us—even if Adam had not sinned—to know that God was Trinity. However, the Scripture teaches us that God is Trinity, and it teaches us many other things as well. After renouncing the general revelation in nature, from the point of view of the unregenerate person, Calvin points the believer to it again as directed by Scripture. So, as believers, we know all of those things talked about in the first five books. However, we do not know all of it through our natural understanding but because God has revealed it to us in His Word. That special revelation repeats first and then supplements the knowledge of God that would have been available to us in the general revelation if Adam had not sinned.

Now, having come to Scripture, we need to talk about Calvin's doctrine of Scripture. Book I is the primary place in the *Institutes* where Calvin will discuss Scripture, although, in Book III, chapter 2, and in Book IV, chapter 8, we will come to this topic again. Calvin does not develop a long treatise at this point on the authority of Scripture, the inspiration of Scripture, or the nature of Scripture. He does do something with those topics. Let us stop and consider those points, before we move further, looking not only at what Calvin does in Book I, but also at his general teaching throughout the *Institutes* and elsewhere. These are points I would like to make in connection with Calvin's doctrine of Scripture: the Bible is the inspired Word of God, the Bible is the Word of God revealed in human language, and the Bible is confirmed to the believer by the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. Those are the three important points I would like to make.

First of all, the Bible is the inspired Word of God. There are two persistent expressions that Calvin uses throughout his writings when he talks about the Bible. One expression is "the mouth of God." Over and over again, Calvin says something like, "Scripture has flowed to us from the very mouth of God" (Book I, chapter 7, part 5). You could search through the *Institutes* and read his commentaries, and you would find expressions like that over and over again. Calvin's first point is the divine origin of the Bible. The Bible comes from God. It is the very word of God. The Bible is God speaking to us. Calvin says this in Book I, chapter 7, part 5 of the *Institutes*, in his commentary on 2 Timothy 3:16, and in many, many other places.

The second point I want to make concerning Calvin and his view of the Bible as the inspired Word of God is that that Word comes from the very mouth of God, but it is accommodating to us. That is an important word for Calvin—"accommodation." The Word of God is accommodated to us. In Book I, chapter 13, part 1, we see Calvin saying this, "As nurses commonly do with infants, God is wont in a measure to lisp in speaking to us." So, he describes the Bible as to us as a nurse, mother, or father, will talk baby talk to an infant so that the child will understand. You all do that with your children if you have little children. You talk differently to those children than you talk to your classmates. You talk baby talk, and that is accommodation. That is what Calvin says the Bible is. The message of the Bible not only comes from the very mouth of God, but it comes from the mouth of God who is Father and who, in His love to us so that we can understand what He has to say, stoops to talk baby talk to us.

People have used that in various ways. Some people have insisted that this means that Calvin is denying what we would call plenary verbal inspiration or inerrancy. After all, if God is talking baby talk, can we assume that the text of the Bible is inerrant? John T. McNeill, the editor of our version of the *Institutes* and the person responsible for most of the footnotes, makes the point in the introduction and in some of

the footnotes that Calvin does not hold to an inerrant text. I will say a little bit more about that in a minute, but I want to get back to the baby talk idea.

I noted the other day in reading John Gerstner on Calvin that he makes exactly the same point that God accommodates Himself to us by using our language, by talking baby talk—by putting things in the Bible like stories, illustrations, parables, poems, and things like that. That does not necessarily imply an errant text. It is baby talk, but it is God's baby talk. And, God's baby talk does not deceive. It helps us to understand. I do not really see the linkage between accommodation and errancy. It seems to me that baby talk can be errant or inerrant depending on the person who is doing the baby talking. When God lisps or speaks baby talk to us, God is perfectly capable of knowing how to do that in a way that puts forth pure truth. He does not lead us astray or deceive us. So, it is a wonderful image of the Bible. Calvin will often use it because we will read in the Bible things about God walking or God having hands and arms. Calvin says that that is accommodation. We do not actually think that God walks on two feet, but it helps us understand. It is God coming down to our level and communicating to us in a way that we can understand. God does that because he is concerned about us and loves us.

Somewhere, I think it is his commentary on Romans, Calvin takes this idea of accommodation another step. He says, "If we love the people to whom we minister, we will do the same thing. We will accommodate our understanding to the level that they can appreciate it and receive it." You see, it is totally possible for a seminary student to preach or teach in a way that nobody will have the slightest idea what you are talking about unless you take the knowledge that you gain here and make it accessible to the level of the people to whom you minister through the hard work of accommodation. It does not mean that they are not smart people. We learn our own vocabulary, and we have our own way of saying things and our own terminology for things. Unless we are able to express that in a way that others can grasp, we will fail in our communication. So, God accommodates, and we should accommodate also.

The Bible is the inspired Word of God, it comes from the mouth of God, it is accommodated to our capacity, and it is revealed in human language. Calvin is certainly aware of the fact that the Bible comes from the very mouth of God. It is the words of God, but Calvin knows also that it comes through human beings. It is revealed in human language. Calvin himself is very much aware of this. As a student of humanism and language, he sensed the different styles between the different biblical writers much more than I do. He could speak about the style of Isaiah and the style of another Old Testament writer and compare those, some better than others. It does not affect his view of the Bible that one writer is a more eloquent writer than another. A writer might be rather crude, direct, and rough in his expression, but it is still the Word of God. That is what God wanted for that book. Another writer, particularly Isaiah, is of high eloquence and beauty. So, there are diverse styles among writers in the Bible.

Calvin also deals not so much in the *Institutes* but in his commentaries with problems and apparent discrepancies in the Bible. He is aware of the human element not only in diverse styles but also in different ways in which the Bible and Bible writers seem to contradict themselves or not be precisely accurate. Calvin is always aware of these problems, and he will spend considerable time in the commentaries dealing with them.

There has been a lot of discussion about this. Some people think that Calvin's treatment of discrepancies shows a kind of looseness in regard to his view of the inerrancy of the Bible. In other words, even though he says the Bible is from God and is the very words of God, when he gets down to working with the text, he finds problems and mistakes and has a kind of free use of these passages in which he denies what he has implied about inerrancy of the Scripture by using expressions like "the very Word of God." Calvin also uses an expression like this: "The Scriptures were dictated by God to these various Bible

writers.” This creates a little concern not only for people who deny inerrancy but also for people who would affirm it because it seems, to us, to go too far. When Calvin uses the language of dictation, Warfield said that Calvin was not creating a theory of inspiration. He was stating that the product of the writing is as though God dictated it. It is not that God is dictating every word and the human writer has no freedom to express himself in his own language or style. God is so superintending the process of inspiration that the product that is produced on the written page is as though God dictated those words. Warfield says, “It is not unfair to urge that his language of dictation is figurative and that what Calvin has in mind is not to insist that the mode of inspiration was dictation but that the result is as if it were by dictation—that is, the production of a pure Word of God, free from all human admixtures.”

Let us get back to the problems of apparent discrepancies in the Bible. It seems to me that, in every case, Calvin does attempt to harmonize and solve the problem. If he fails to do so, he simply says, “I do not know what to do with this. Maybe somebody else does.” He does not then draw a conclusion that one text or the other is inerrant. He simply confesses the limits of his own understanding of how to deal with that particular problem. Calvin will also quite often say, “This error or problem comes from errors in the copies.” I do not see Calvin ever admitting an error in the autographs, in the original writings of Scripture. He will either say that the error comes in the process of copying, he will try to harmonize, or he will say, “I do not know what to do with it.” That is a confession not of an errant text but of a limited interpreter.

Did Calvin view the Bible as inerrant? Calvin does not use the word “inerrant.” In fact, that word was not commonly used for Scripture until the nineteenth century, although one writer has successfully shown that some of the Westminster Divines used the word “inerrant” for Scripture. So, the word is older than the nineteenth century. It goes back at least to the seventeenth century. The concept, we believe, goes back much further, indeed back to the Scripture itself. Some Calvin scholars have adamantly rejected this point. Bondell says, “Calvin himself never affirmed literal inspiration.” Bondell uses this word “literal” here in the sense of “inerrant” or “plenary verbal inspiration.” On page 160 of his book, Bondell says, “The authors of the books of the Bible wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They were nonetheless liable to introduce human errors into it upon points of detail, which do not affect the doctrine.” Calvin thought that the Holy Spirit inspired the writers but permitted these small errors of detail to come in. That is Bondell’s view. John T. McNeill insists that Calvin was not concerned to assert verbal inerrancy. You can see that in his introduction and notes to Book IV, chapter 8, part 8 of the *Institutes* and in his other writings as well. So, McNeill agrees with Bondell. Then, the most extensive argument along this line comes from Rogers and McKim in the book *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*. They have quite a long section, pages 89 through 116, in which they argue that Calvin did not believe in an inerrant text.

Let me add one writer to that list: Alister McGrath. He was an English writer who is very highly respected by us. McGrath is an evangelical scholar who teaches at Oxford and writes a book about every day or two. I appreciate so much about McGrath, but I am afraid that he is on the wrong side of this issue. He wrote the book *Christian Theology*. On pages 180 through 181, McGrath said, “The Reformers did not see the issue of inspiration as linked with the absolute historical reliability or factual inerrancy of the biblical truths. Calvin’s doctrine of accommodation implied that God revealed Himself in forms tailored to the abilities of the communities that were to receive this revelation. Thus, in the case of Genesis 1, Calvin suggests that a whole series of ideas such as the ‘days of creation’ are simply accommodated ways of speaking—a kind of divine baby talk. The development of biblical infallibility or inerrancy within Protestantism can be traced to the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century.” He is talking about the Princeton theology. Rogers and McKim argue that, too, that the idea of inerrancy is a Princeton invention. There are plenty of scholars who have countered that. It was

primarily John Woodridge at Trinity and others who showed that Princeton did not invent the doctrine of inerrancy. It was not created by A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield in their book on inspiration, but rather it reaches back through church history. So, some scholars say, "No, Calvin did not hold to inerrancy." But, there are others who say, "Yes, Calvin did hold to inerrancy."

In *Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, B. B. Warfield says on page 162, "Scripture as given by God is free from all error." John Murray wrote a little book called *Calvin's Doctrine of Scripture* in which he says that Calvin's characteristic dictum is that Scripture speaks with a veracity and authority equal to that of God speaking to us directly from heaven. Kenneth Kantzer, editor for some time of *Christianity Today* and longtime professor at Trinity Seminary wrote in "Calvin and Holy Scriptures," "Calvin held to a rigidly Orthodox verbal type of inspiration." Ed Dowey, in a book I referred to earlier in lesson one, *The Knowledge of God and the Theology of John Calvin*, says, "Calvin can see the Scriptures as literally dictated by God. Dowey was one of my teachers at Princeton, and he did not like the doctrine of inerrancy. He opposed it very much. He felt it was destructive and harmful and the teaching of fundamentalism, which he disliked very much. Dowey did like Calvin, but Dowey's own admission is all the more important. Here you have a person opposed to the doctrine of inerrancy who would very much like to have Calvin on his side, but he admits that Calvin can see the Scriptures as literally dictated by God. He does deal with that problem of dictation then and decides that Warfield has the best solution to that problem with the quotation that I read to you a few minutes ago. Dowey says, "If Calvin betrays his position at all, it is apparently assuming *a priori*, that no errors can be allowed to reflect upon the inerrancy of the original documents." Unfortunately, in his second edition of *The Knowledge of God and the Theology of John Calvin*, Dowey retracts a bit his rather strong statements that appear in the first edition concerning Calvin's view of inerrancy largely due to the influence of John T. McNeill. Dowey worked with McNeill in producing the footnotes for the edition of the *Institutes* we are using.

The question has been asked, "What are the individual views of inerrancy of the first four authors who said Calvin did not believe in inerrancy?" They would all be opposed to it. McGrath certainly holds a very high view of Scripture but would not use the word inerrancy. He thinks the word is unnecessary, confusing, and problematic. I saw an interview not long ago with John Stott in which the question was asked, "What are the five books that have most influenced you in your life?" The first book that he named was *Revelation and Inspiration* by B. B. Warfield. It pleased me very much that John Stott would take Warfield as being the best writer on the doctrine of Scripture. That puts John Stott a bit out of step with general British, evangelical thought, which, like F. F. Bruce and others, while holding to a high view of the inspiration of Scripture, would shy away from the idea of inerrancy.

I have been asked what McNeill meant in the introduction when he said, "Calvin admits a flaw in Paul's quote of an Old Testament passage." That is in McNeill's introduction with a list of problems. Calvin is trying to recognize that some passages do not admit to a claim of inerrancy on the verbal level. In 1 Corinthians 2:9, Paul quotes Isaiah 64:4, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him." This is what Calvin says about that: "Two very great difficulties present themselves. The first is that the words that are here quoted by Paul do not correspond with the words of the prophet. If you look at Isaiah 64:4, that is not what it says. So, is Paul misquoting? The second is that it seems as though Paul had perverted the prophet's declaration to a purpose quite far unto its design." The second problem is that Paul not only misquotes Isaiah, but he also misuses Isaiah, which is a pretty serious problem. What is Calvin's solution to this? He says, "Where shall we find a surer and more faithful interpreter than the Spirit of God of this authoritative declaration, which He Himself dictated to Isaiah in the exposition which he furnished by the mouth of Paul." I think that is a brilliant answer. Calvin was saying, "The Holy Spirit inspired Isaiah, and the same Holy Spirit inspired

Paul. The Holy Spirit can comment on his own writings. Paul's comment, then, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is an authoritative statement based on what appears to us a misquotation and a misuse of the statement as it appears in Isaiah 64:4." Calvin does not really solve the problem. It still looks like a misquotation and misapplication. But, Calvin says, "The Holy Spirit, who inspired Isaiah, inspired Paul, and we accept both as inspired Scripture even though, to our minds and to our limited understandings, there may still seem to be a problem. The words of Scripture cannot contradict one another because the Holy Spirit, who dictated both of the passages, cannot contradict Himself." Is that a solution or is it not? It is an assertion. You might say that it is not a real solution. However, Calvin's confidence in the infallibility of the Bible overcomes his concerns about what appears to him to be an inconsistency.

Well, we are only partway through what Calvin says about Scripture. We have an inspired Scripture. The Holy Spirit has given it to us. I would argue, as I think Calvin does, that it is not only inspired but also inerrant. It is a perfect revelation, but it is still not enough. We believe it to be the Word of God. Its authority is there because it is the Word of God, but how does it become authoritative to us? How do we come to know that it is the Word of God? How do we come to believe that it is the Word of God? You see, we really have two problems. Because of sin, we cannot know God the Creator. However, God gives us the spectacles of Scripture so that through the spectacles we can see what we could not see. That is Calvin's illustration. I wear spectacles, and when I take them off, I can see something. I know there are people out there, but I do not recognize any of you. I am not sure how many people are here, and I have no idea what is on the back wall. I cannot see things at a distance very well at all. I can read all day without my glasses.

Without the spectacles of Scripture, I look out at creation, but I do not see anything. I see something, but it is confused, and it does not help me to know what is there. However, when I put on the spectacles of Scripture, everything focuses and I can see. God has given us the Scriptures so that we can see. We can see that the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handy work. I should have been able to see that without the Bible, but because of my sin, I cannot see that. It could be as Robert Frost said in one of his poems, "The heavens scare me / They do not declare the glory of God / The vast expanse and emptiness of space frightens me." In a sense, that witness is still active in an unregenerate heart, holding him inexcusable, because he does see that much but does not see more. The problem is that not only do we need an objective cure, which is the Bible, but we also need to know that the Bible is the Word of God. Book I, chapter 7, part 1 says, "Hence the Scriptures obtain full authority among believers only when men regard them as having sprung from heaven as if there the living words of God were heard." These are the words of God, but they are going to have no force or impact in my life until I accept, believe, and know that.

So, the objective cure is the Bible, but the authority of the Bible is the question now. Calvin says, "How do we know?" He will reject two ways and suggest a third way. He rejects the authority of the church. In Calvin's time, there were people who would say, "The Bible is the Word of God because the church says it is the Word of God." Calvin disputes that. It is not the church that makes the Bible the Word of God. The church bears witness to the fact that it is the Word of God, but it is not the action or the declaration of the church that gives the Bible its authority. He also rejects the idea that we can use rational proofs. In a few minutes, we will talk about how those rational proofs actually function—things like Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled in the New Testament, we have all of these diverse writers setting forth one message, we have the majesty of the style of the Bible even though there are diverse styles (even the cruder styles of someone like Amos serve the purpose of setting forth the majestic Word of God), and other arguments for the authority of the Bible. Calvin says those play a part, but they do not come first. They have a role, but they are not primary. It is not the authority of the church, and it is not from the so-called proofs. Those persons act foolishly who wish to prove to infidels that Scripture is

the Word of God. I am not going to be able to get our evidences and arguments for the authority of Scripture, read them off to somebody, and prove thereby that Scripture is the Word of God. So, the objective cure is there, but there needs to be a subjective cure as well because even with the spectacles, we cannot see unless God enables us through His Holy Spirit to see.

Calvin's illustration gets a little problematic here. He changes it two or three times. Here, the illustration is more of a person who is blind, not just a blurry-eyed old man, as he first described him, who cannot see unless he has spectacles. As a spiritually blind person, when I pick up the Bible, I do not see anything. I see a book, and maybe even a book to admire. Or I might see a book that is full of errors and nonsense, but I do not see the Word of God until the Holy Spirit works within my mind and heart. The same Holy Spirit who gave the Scripture and who gave the spectacles works a miracle within me. In terms of the illustration, my blind eyes can now see. In terms of the theology of what Calvin is talking about, my regenerate heart now accepts the Bible as God's inspired, authoritative word. That is the subjective cure.

There are some famous passages about this in the *Institutes*. Book I, chapter 7, part 2 says, "Scripture exhibits fully as clear evidence of its own truth as white and black things do of their color or sweet and bitter things do of their taste." How do we know that the Bible is the Word of God? We know the Bible is the Word of God because it impresses us as the Word of God. Just as it is when we taste something sweet, we know it is sweet; when we taste something bitter, we know it is bitter. We read the Bible and we know it is the Word of God. Book I, chapter 7, part 4 says, "The same spirit who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what had been divinely commanded." Book I, chapter 7, part 5 says, "Scripture is"—here is the important term—"self-authenticated. It is sealed upon our hearts through the Spirit." The French translation of that passage, done by Calvin, says, "The Scripture carries within itself its own credentials." This is the same idea as "self-authenticated." So, how do we know the Bible is the Word of God? Well, we know the Bible is the Word of God because we know the Bible is the Word of God. It comes with its own credentials. It authenticates itself. The testimony of the Spirit, bearing witness to the truth to the Bible in our heart, allows us to see and receive the Bible as the authoritative Word of God. Although Calvin does not say it here, that is part of regeneration. So, when God regenerates us—gives us a new heart and a new spirit—that enables us to embrace the Bible as the Word of God.

What about the proofs? He goes on in chapter 8 to deal with what he calls "sufficiently firm proofs, which confirm in the Christian the testimony of the Holy Spirit. The proofs, what Warfield calls the *indicia*, the arguments for the authority of the Bible, are sufficiently firm, Calvin says. There might be some debate among us as to how strong they really are, but they make a point. Calvin thinks they make a strong point. Those arguments do not come first. They follow. They confirm in the Christian. So, they are not ways in which we can convince the unregenerate person of the authority of the Bible. They are ways that confirm, interest, and encourage us to see that our faith is well placed. Calvin calls them secondary aids to our weakness. If our faith never fluctuated, we would not need aids. However, we are feeble people as Christians, and sometimes our faith (as we will see later in Calvin) can become embattled and grow very weak. These secondary aids then come to support us. I will not go through the *indicia*. They are proofs from the Old Testament: great antiquity of the Bible, the miracles that took place, fulfilled prophecy, the fact that the Bible has been preserved through all of these years when so many books of antiquity have been lost. There are also proofs from the New Testament: the heavenly character of the teaching, the simplicity of its message, and the authority by which it sets forth that message. Proofs from church history include the testimony of the church to the Scriptures and the testimony of the martyrs, people who gave their lives in defense of and held firmly to the Word of the Bible as the Word of God.

Now, let us come back to the matter of the function of these proofs. There are two ways to look at them. One way is fully accurate as reflecting Calvin's teaching, but we will look at both ways. We have the Holy Spirit, who brings conviction directly, and we have the proofs. One way to see it is that the Holy Spirit takes those proofs and uses those proofs to produce conviction. This is the view Dr. Warfield held and very much wanted to find in Calvin. The other way of seeing it is that the Holy Spirit produced conviction. Sweet things taste sweet. The Bible is the Word of God. Those proofs, then, follow conviction as secondary aids to our feebleness. They back up and confirm what we have already learned directly from the witness of the Holy Spirit. Warfield argued that the Holy Spirit illumines by means of the proofs, but I think that even Warfield recognizes that he is not really sure about this. He said, "Calvin speaks of the ineffectiveness of the *indicia* of producing sound faith in the unbeliever and of their value as corroborations to the believer. His language would sometimes seem to suggest that therefore it were just as well not to employ them until after faith had formed itself unto the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Of their part in forming faith under the operation of the testimony of the Spirit, he does not appear to explicitly speak." So, Warfield recognizes that even though he would very much like for Calvin to say that the Holy Spirit uses proofs to produce conviction, Calvin does not explicitly say that. In fact, it seems that Calvin very much explicitly says that the Holy Spirit produces conviction directly. This is one of the few times that I have ever disagreed with B. B. Warfield, so note that. B. B. Warfield is a marvelous expositor of Calvin. Of all the writers on Calvin, ancient and modern, I still think he is the best. However, at this point, I believe he missed it. The Holy Spirit "illumines directly," as Dowey and J. I. Packer say, and the proofs are secondary aids to our feebleness.

The question has been asked, "Is this what makes that the current debate in apologetics on presuppositional versus classical apologetics? Well, it has some relation to that, although that debate is the modern form. We really cannot impose it on Calvin. However, if you are going to use that language, Calvin is a presuppositionist, not an evidentialist. He says the arguments come later. They cannot come first. Think about this in terms of your own experience. How did you come to believe the Bible was the Word of God? Did somebody tell you, "Here is a prophecy in Isaiah that was fulfilled in Matthew hundreds of years later"? Or did somebody tell you that the Bible was written by 40-some writers over a period of centuries and yet has one message from beginning to end? I have had plenty of people say, "That is not true. There are a lot of different messages." Of course, we still think there is one basic message, and all these different messages confirm and illustrate the one central message of the Bible. But, you can get a lot of debate, as you well know. I suppose I came to believe the Bible was the Word of God because my mother told me it was. It is sort of like the church, but it was more than that. The church can bear witness. Other people can say, "This is the Word of God," but at some point I had to believe it for myself, not just because my mother said it was. I do not remember the proofs, even though I studied those and looked at those many times, as having any formative effect in producing conviction in me that the Bible was the Word of God. In fact, that came so early in my life, I do not know how it came. Maybe it came just like Calvin said. Perhaps I learned as a child that sweet things are sweet. I believed the Bible to be authoritative because it bore witness to itself.

There is just a little bit more in Calvin's treatment of Scripture, and I can comment on that briefly. Once Calvin has brought together Word and Spirit, Calvin is very concerned to maintain the unity of the Word and the Spirit against a number of errors. One would be the Catholic error of subordinating the Scriptures to the church. So, he comes back to this and says that Catholics are wrong because they downplay the role of the Spirit in illumination by subordinating the Scriptures to the church. He has already dealt with that, and we will deal with it again much later in the *Institutes* in Book IV. The work of the Spirit in inspiration and the work of the Spirit in illumination are both works of the Spirit. It is not



enough just to say that we accept the Bible because the church says that it is the Bible. We have within us the same Holy Spirit who gave the Scripture now opening our eyes to see the truth of the Scripture.

But the other error that Calvin is concerned about, particularly in this closing section in chapter 9, is the error from people he calls “fanatics who elevate the Spirit over the Scriptures.” These would be people like the Radicals of the Reformation—people in Luther’s camp like Karlstadt and Munzer who taught that revelation now comes directly through the Holy Spirit. Luther and Karlstadt had a great debate on this topic. That was when Luther said that Karlstadt had swallowed the Holy Spirit, the feathers and all with an allusion to the dove because of Karlstadt’s insistence that it is the Word of the Holy Spirit directly that is the Word of God. Calvin says, “These people are so enamored of the Spirit that they saw little need for the written Word.” So, his concern here is to hold together the Spirit and the Word. Calvin said, “So these rascals (his language is beginning to heat up) will tear apart those things that the prophet joined together with an enviable bond.” Calvin says, “The Holy Spirit does not invent new and unheard of revelation but seals our minds with the very doctrine that is commended by the Gospel.” He also says, “He is the author of Scripture. He cannot vary and differ from Himself. Hence, He must ever remain just as He once revealed Himself there.”

So, there is one Holy Spirit and one Word of God. That Holy Spirit, who is certainly active now in bringing illumination to us so that we can read and believe the Bible, is speaking what He has already revealed through inspiration to the writers of the Bible. There are not two messages: an old message and a new message. There are not two messages: a written one and a living one. The Bible is the living Word of God. Any attempt to put a wedge between the Spirit and the Bible, Calvin rejects as found to fail. All of Calvin’s theology was carried out within these bounds: the objectivity of God’s revelation in Holy Scripture and the confirming, illuminating witness of the Holy Spirit in the believer. Unity and necessity are both the Bible and the Spirit. Testimony of the Holy Spirit is necessary to believe the Bible. The Word is the instrument by which the Lord dispenses the illumination of His Spirit to believers. So, the Holy Spirit is active—teaching us, leading us, speaking to us—but only through the truth of the Bible, which is itself the Word of God, the Word of the Holy Spirit.

Warfield and some others have called Calvin “the theologian of the Holy Spirit.” Perhaps, at first, people think that is a little far-fetched because Calvin seems to be the theologian of the sovereignty of God or something else. However, there is much to be said for that designation of Calvin as the theologian of the Holy Spirit, even though there is not a huge section on the Holy Spirit in the *Institutes*—only the first chapter of Book III of the 1559 version that we are reading, and that was put in for 1559. It deals directly with the Holy Spirit. All four books are about the Holy Spirit. There are many times, for instance today, when we are going to be talking about the Spirit even though the teaching of and the work of the Spirit come in Book III—the way in which we are united to Christ. The three books—Book I, God the Creator, Book II, God the Redeemer in Christ, Book III, The Way, Book IV, The Church. All three are trinitarian instruction. Not only are Christ and the Holy Spirit present in Book I in creation, but the Father and the Holy Spirit are present in Book II in redemption. The whole Trinity is present in Book III in the application of redemption to us, and in Book IV, the Christian community.

Now we have the Scriptures so we can turn to the Scriptures to see what those Scriptures tell us about God the Creator. We have the Scriptures, our glasses are on, the Holy Spirit is at work in our hearts, and now we can look and see what we are told about God the Creator. That is our work for next time. God is God, God is Trinity, God is one, God is triune, and God is the creator and preserver of all things.

I have been asked to speak for a moment in relation to Noah, Abraham, and Moses in regard to the Holy Spirit in the absence of the written Word. Before there was a written Word in Calvin and the

Westminster Confession, God was speaking in various ways to these people. There, you might say, the work of revelation and illumination was together. However, God determined to put that revelation in written form at a certain point in history for us so that we could have the whole message of the Bible. You still have the work of the Spirit in producing it and in illumination, but those two are not simultaneous now. The Bible is there first, and then when I pick it up, I am illuminated by the Holy Spirit. God was always speaking but in diverse ways and at sundry times according to the Westminster Confession.