

The Doctrine of Creation

Having derived the triune nature of God from the Scripture, Calvin next turns to describe this God in two sections: God of providence, but first of all God of creation. God is Trinity. God is the God who created all things, and God is the God who preserves and governs all things. Today, we come to Calvin's treatment of creation. Ford Lewis Battles has taken sections of this material and arranged those writings of Calvin in what he calls "a hymn to creation." It was adapted from the *Institutes* and is in the book, *The Piety of John Calvin* by Dr. Battles who is the translator of the edition of the *Institutes* that we are using. I would like to use a part of that hymn to creation, which are really words from the *Institutes*. I have added some words to make it a prayer. We will use that for our prayer before we begin our lesson. Let us pray.

"God has set all things for our good and for our salvation. In our very selves, we feel His power and grace, His great unnumbered benefits freely conferred upon us. All praise and thanks be unto God. What else can we then do but stir ourselves to trust, to praise, and to love Him. For all God's handiwork is made for man. Even in the six days He shows a father's care for His child as yet unborn. All praise and thanks be unto God. Away, ingratitude and forgetfulness of Him. Away with craven fear He may fail us in our need. For He has seen to it that nothing will be lacking to our welfare. All praise and thanks be unto God. Whenever we call on God, creator of heaven and earth, we must be mindful that all He gives us is in His hand to give. Our every trust and hope we hang on Him alone. All praise and thanks be unto God. Whatever we desire, we are to ask of Him and thankfully receive each benefit that falls to us. Let us then strive to love and serve Him with all our hearts. All praise and thanks be unto God." Amen.

First, I am going to talk about the place and significance of the doctrine of creation in Calvin's ordering and arrangement of the 1559 edition of the *Institutes*. You will notice that Calvin moves from his treatment of the doctrine of God to creation and providence. What seems to be missing there? Or, what could be placed between the doctrine of God and the doctrine of creation? If you think about the ordering of topics in the Westminster Confession of Faith, it will give you a hint as to what the answer is. It is God's decrees. Calvin passes over God's decrees. In the Westminster Confession, it is Scripture, God, decrees, and then creation and providence. So, the ordering in the Confession is quite similar to Calvin's, but Calvin does not yet deal with the doctrine of God's decrees. In fact, he will keep telling us in Books I, II, and even in Book III, basically, "We could talk about this now, but we are not going to." He keeps putting it off. Later, we will see why he puts it off so long. It is a little bit surprising because Calvin is usually viewed as the theologian of the decrees of God. Yet, it does not come early but later in his treatment of theology. That does not mean that Calvin does not think it is important. He has a particular reason for putting it off. I will not talk about that yet. I just want to alert you to the fact that you will see Calvin saying along the way, "We could talk about it now, but we will not."

Calvin says, "Creation is not the chief evidence for faith, but it is the first evidence in the order of nature to be mindful that wherever we cast our eyes, all things they meet are works of God." He is saying that the doctrine of creation is not the chief evidence for faith. In other words, this—how God created the heavens and earth—is not the most important thing you need to know in order to be saved. This is not a soteriological order that he is talking about. The doctrine of creation does not come first in that sense. However, in a logical sense it does. As soon as we think of God—God the triune God—we think of the God who created all things. You might say, "Well, logically we think of the God who decreed all things." I think Calvin would admit that but postpones his treatment of the doctrine of the decrees until later. Calvin wants to turn to the doctrine of creation now to fill out what we know from Scripture about

God the Creator, which is the topic of Book I. Remember, when he talks about God the Creator, it is not just the Father. It is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who is the Creator. The triune God is the Creator.

Let me mention some characteristics of Calvin's treatment of this doctrine. These are points that we have now come to expect from Calvin: practical and personal. He wants his treatment of the doctrine of creation to be very practical and very personal. He tells us that the object of Scripture, in giving us the history of creation, is not to answer all of our questions. So, right up front, Calvin says that there are going to be many things that we might want to know, but he is not going to answer them because Scripture does not address those topics.

Remember the episode that Calvin describes in the *Institutes* when someone asks a wise man, "What was God doing before He created all things?" (This story comes from Augustine.) Calvin quotes Augustine's answer to that question by saying, "He was making hell for the curious." I noticed that Timothy George in writing about that in the *Theology of the Reformers* that Calvin told this story no doubt with a twinkle in his eye. Well, perhaps there was a twinkle in his eye, but Calvin took this as a pretty good answer. Augustine did not think much of the answer. He wanted to explore these things further. However, Calvin seems to view this answer as a proper answer at least to flippant questions that he would not take seriously. I am not sure how many of Calvin's students dared to ask him a question in class. Here, at least, he is saying what he often says, and that is, "Do not go beyond the evidence. Do not speculate. Do not ask questions and seek answers to questions that we cannot answer. That is just being flippant and irresponsible. The doctrine of creation, the history of creation as set forth in the Bible, does not answer all the questions, but it is there to strengthen our faith in God. That is really why we have the Genesis account of creation."

Regarding the reason for the Genesis account of creation, Calvin says, "Therefore, it was God's will that the history of creation be made manifest in order that the faith of the church resting upon this might seek no other God but Him who was put forth by Moses as the Maker and Founder of the universe." So, this is to help us know that the God of the church, our God and Savior, is the same one who made the heavens and the earth. Because God is giving us the history of creation for this purpose, we, therefore, do not expect that it is going to be given in scientific language. This is not a scientific treatise. It is an account of something that happened—the creation of all things—to draw us closer to God and to enable us to know that it was our Father, our Savior, our God, our loving and kind heavenly Father, who created all things. It is not a scientific treatise, and as Calvin tells us, "It does not compete with the great art of astronomy." (That is not in the *Institutes* but in his commentary on Genesis.) In other words, this account in Genesis is not trying to describe the creation of the heavens and the earth in the way the astronomers would do it. Calvin is not saying the astronomers are wrong. They could be wrong, but they could be right. He is saying that the purpose of the account in Genesis is different from a scientific explanation of creation.

Let me read to you a sentence or two from his commentary on Psalms 136:7, which talks about the same thing. He says, "The Holy Spirit had no intention to teach astronomy and in proposing instruction meant to be common to the simplest and most uneducated persons, He made use by Moses and other prophets of language that none might shelter himself under the pretext of obscurity as we will see men, sometimes very readily, pretend an incapacity to understand when anything deep or recondite is submitted to their notice. Accordingly, the Holy Spirit would rather speak childishly than unintelligibly to the humble and unknown." So, we come back to the idea we looked at earlier. Calvin says that God speaks childishly here in Genesis. Earlier, Calvin said that a little differently by saying that in the Scripture, "God lisps or talks baby talk to us." I already made the comment that we cannot jump from that idea to fallibility. It is not that childish talk is inaccurate talk. Childish talk communicates on our

level. It is not inaccurate. It does not tell us something that was not true but neither does it give us an explanation of all these things in scientific language.

We could take some time to talk about Calvin and his view of science, but we are not going to do that at the moment. I may come back to that in more detail if there is time at the end of the class. Alister McGrath, making the same point that I have just been making, said, "Calvin's treatment of the doctrine of creation in Genesis 1 teaches that God accommodated Himself to the abilities and horizons of a relatively simple and unsophisticated people." He is talking about the Jews and the very beginning of their history. We can even apply that to ourselves. We know a great deal more about science today, but we still do not know enough to grasp a treatise that God could have written on the scientific ordering of the universe—in other words, His creation of all things put in more technical language. It would leave most of us, if not all of us, behind. So, the presentation that God gives us in Genesis is a very practical one, and we should not expect it to be what it is not. It is true but simple, and Calvin said it is very personal.

There is another question that Calvin deals with, and he takes this one seriously. The question is "Why did the omnipotent God take six days to create the heavens and the earth?" He thinks this is a question that we can answer. God could have created everything in a moment. Why does He spread it out over six days? Perhaps you have thought about that. Today, there is debate over those six days and the lengths of those creative days. Calvin says, "God took six days to create not because He needed six days to create, but He took six days to create for our benefit so that reading this account, our minds would not be overtaxed. We would not get it all at once. This way, we can think about day one, day two, day three, and so on. He is like a sympathetic teacher who spreads out the assignments so you have time to do them day by day." I do not require you to read all of Calvin's *Institutes* in one day. You have a whole semester in which to do this. Calvin says, "God took His time not because He needed that time but because He wanted to do it in a way that would benefit us and not only so that our minds would not be overtaxed but to show His love for us in so carefully preparing the world for us." The climax of it all was the creation of Adam and Eve. As we go through those six days, we see how God carefully and wonderfully prepared for the creation of man and woman. As we read this, we are overwhelmed with the fact that the triune God did this for us. You might say that the six days are there for our benefit so that we could get a better idea of what God did. As we study through those six days, our hearts are filled with love, adoration, and thanksgiving to Him for what He has done for us. So, the next time you read Genesis 1 and read through those six days, read it with that in mind. We are trying to find out what happened on each day, of course. But, just think of how God took His time and how He prepared the world for us. In Book I, chapter 14, part 2, Calvin says, "In the very order of things, we ought diligently to contemplate God's fatherly love toward us." We have seen the place and significance of the doctrine of creation and some characteristics of Calvin's treatment of the doctrine. This is all somewhat introductory but very important to Calvin's presentation of this material.

Next, we come to the creation itself. Calvin's main interest is in the creation of mankind. But, at first, he describes the creation of angels and demons. He does not find that in the opening chapters of Genesis because it is not there. However, as you continue to read the Bible, angels begin to appear. The devil appears quite early, and demons also appear. So, these things have to be accounted for before Calvin returns to the creation of mankind in the opening chapters of Genesis. Here, Calvin's treatment, as we expect, is scriptural, practical, and non-speculative. He takes to task Dionysius the Areopagite, as he used to be known. Now he is Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite. He wrote not in the first century as a convert of Paul at Athens (that is why we now call him the Pseudo-Areopagite) but in the fifth century. He wrote a number of very influential books that impacted the church in the Middle Ages and, to some extent, all the way down to the present. One of his books has to do with angels. Dionysius has a very

detailed account of the angels. He arranges the angels in nine specific orders from highest to lowest (three triads of three each). Calvin refers to this book, but he calls it "that foolish wisdom" because he thinks (and we do as well) that Dionysius went far beyond what Scripture tells us. Scripture does not clearly set forth the cause, the manner, or the time of the creation of the angels or the fall of the devil. So, we dismiss speculation and stay with what we can actually know from Scripture. Let us take angels first and then demons.

Calvin says we can know that angels are real spirits characterized by perception and intelligence. We are not dealing with just vague influences here. We are dealing with real, created beings who know, think, see, and understand. We also know that the angels are servants of God. Calvin uses a beautiful expression to describe the angels. He calls them "the hands of God." He says, "The angels are the hands of God not which work instead of Him but by which He works" (Book I, chapter 14, part 12). So, it is not that God needs angels to help in His work. We should not think of the angels working instead of God. The angels are instruments that God chooses to work through just as God chooses to work through us. We are the hands of God. We do not work instead of God, but God chooses to work through us. These angels are servants of people. That is one of the tasks that the angels have. God uses them and works through them to serve us, keep us, protect us, and guard us. You might think of it this way: the angels were created not for God's sake but for our sake. It is not that God needed angels to do everything He was going to do. As Calvin puts it, "They were created to comfort our weakness that we may lack nothing at all that raises up our minds to good hope or confirm them in security." God works through angels because He wishes to give us not only His protection but also a sense of His protection.

Perhaps we have lost a good bit of that. I have a Catholic friend to whom angels are very real. He is always talking about angels. He almost feels the angels around him. We should have some of that too. I do not know how real angels are to us, but they were real to Calvin. Calvin thought that the reason God created the angels and the reason the Bible talks about angels is to give us that sense of God's protection. Remember the question he raises: "Does each one of us have a guardian angel?" How does he answer that? We do not have one guardian angel. We have a lot of angels. It takes a lot of angels to take care of us, not just one. Book I, chapter 14, part 7 says, "The care of each one of us is not the task of one angel only." If we really get a sense that the angels really do camp around us, then we not only know that God is caring for us, but we also have a sense of His protection. The angels are here.

Next, we will discuss the demons. Here again, there is a practical emphasis. Calvin says, "An enemy relentless threatens us." So, when we think about demons, we think about enemies. When we think about angels, we think about friends and God's hands keeping and protecting us. According to Calvin, the devil is God's adversary and ours. We will not find anything in the *Institutes* or anywhere else in Calvin as to the cause, manner, or time of the fall of the devils. You have to read Milton's *Paradise Lost* to get that information. Two passages that are often used to point to the fall are Isaiah 14:12 and Ezekiel 28. Isaiah 14:12 says, "How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn." Some people see that as a reference to the fall of an angel who is the devil. However, when you turn to Calvin's commentary on that he says that this refers to the king of Babylon. There is no reference at all to the devil in that verse. The other reference is Ezekiel 28, which says, "Your heart became proud so I threw you to the earth." We do not have Calvin's commentary on that because his life ended as he was writing a commentary on the book of Ezekiel; he only made it to chapter 20, verse 44. However, it is almost certain that he would not have seen this either as a reference to the fall of Satan but as a prophecy against the king of Tyre, as it seems to be in that context. So, there is no speculation as to when, how, or why this happened.

Calvin had two chief concerns. God created all things, and God is a good God who creates all things good, but by introducing the devil and the demons we have the introduction of an evil force in the universe. How could it be that there is an evil force? One big concern of Calvin throughout this section is to emphasize that the evil of the devils is not of God but of themselves. He says over and over again, "They ruin themselves." God created these spirits, whom we can call angels, with perception, intelligence, and freedom. Some of these angels who were created to be good ruined themselves. Evil is not from nature but from corruption of nature. It was not an evil nature created, but a good nature was corrupted. We will see that to be true not only of the fall of the angels but also of the fall of man. Calvin never talks about an evil nature but nature that has been corrupted by evil choice. Calvin tells us, "We must not ascribe to God what is utterly alien to Him—that is, the creation of that which is evil." We cannot ascribe that to God. It is alien to Him because He is good. So, one important point about the demons is that they ruin themselves. The second important point about the demons or the devils is that they stand under God's power. The devil can do nothing unless God wills and asents to it. The devil is not independent. The way Luther said this was, "The devil is God's devil, and God uses the devil to do what He chooses to do." Calvin says, "The devil can do nothing unless God wills and asents to it." We will see the devil doing a lot—creating chaos in the universe, in human lives, and in the church. But, Calvin believed that God wills and asents to it.

Calvin seems to use both ideas of God's will and His permission, which is characteristic of Calvin. Permission can never be mere permission. God wills willingly, not unwillingly. So, if the devil does something, it is God's willing permission. As we go through Calvin's treatment, we will also see some glimpses of how God uses the devil. He uses the devil to punish the wicked. He uses the devil to exercise and develop the patience, fortitude, and faith of the faithful.

When Calvin uses the phrase "creation in the image of God" for the angels and even later for mankind, he defines that in so many different ways that it is hard to get a firm handle on what he means. But, one of the best ways to understand it is given by Gerald Bray. Bray said, "The image extends to everything in which the nature of man surpasses that of all other species of animals." That is in terms of the image of God in man. The image of God in the angels, who we assume have been created before the creation of anything else, would reflect things like intelligence and perception. These points, Calvin tells us, are characteristics of the angels. Perhaps the key to all of the various ideas that Calvin uses in talking about the image of God is that the angels were created with the possibility of fellowship with God—meeting God as person to person. Angels are persons in a certain sense, and God is a person in a certain sense. There is a potentiality of communion and fellowship between the two, which is also true with the creation of man and woman.

The question has been asked, "How would Calvin view Hebrews 1:2 in the context of Genesis 1:1?" It confirms Calvin's conception that God, the Creator, is the Trinity. You can speak of the Father creating, you can speak of the Son creating, and you can speak of the Holy Spirit creating. But, it is really the one triune God who is the Creator of all things. As we come to chapter 2, "God the Redeemer in Christ," we will have the same trinitarian basis for that. So, Calvin does not really see the Father alone as the Creator, but the Trinity as Creator. You can speak accurately, then, of God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit creating.

Let us move on to the creation of the world. Calvin's basic orientation here is against dualism and pantheism. Against dualism, Calvin taught that God created all things out of nothing. Before God there was nothing. There was not an existing substance. There was nothing, so there was not dualism. Against pantheism, Calvin said that God is separate from His creation. Creation is not an emanation that flows

out of God. When we come to the actual creation of the world, we need to talk about Calvin's view of that as he read it in Genesis.

I also want to say a word about how Calvin viewed the six days. We have already said that this is not scientific talk. This is baby talk, so we expect things to be simplified or put in a way we understand. We know what a day is. We know what six days are. We can understand that language. Did Calvin mean six literal days with 24 hours each? Alister McGrath in *Christian Theology* says, "Six days does not designate six periods of 24 hours in Calvin but accommodation to designate an extended period of time." This was McGrath's view of Calvin because of his idea of accommodation. McGrath goes beyond the evidence there. I prefer Jack Collins' comment on Calvin at this point. Dr. Collins says, "In Calvin's commentary and in the *Institutes*, Calvin seems to assume that these are ordinary days, but he does not discuss the question." That is about as far as we can go on that. Calvin seems to assume these are ordinary days. He does not say anything to lead us to think otherwise, but he does not discuss the question. There is quite an interesting point here.

Dr. Warfield, in his treatment of Calvin's doctrine of creation, talks about Calvin's doctrine of evolution. Warfield, as you might know, was more open to theistic evolution—evolution that was guided and directed by God—than some others were in his time and most evangelical Christians are today. Warfield was not convinced that evolution was correct, but he was sympathetic to the idea that it could well be the way God had worked in creation. With his sympathy to that point of view and with his very great love for Calvin, Warfield could see in Calvin more than he should when he talked about a doctrine of evolution.

Let me explain what Warfield meant by that. We will try to decide if it is right or not. Calvin puts a great deal of emphasis on the initial creation of all things out of nothing. He uses the Hebrew word *bara*, meaning "create" when God created the heavens and the earth. Then, out of that initial creation, God forms or shapes everything else that comes, except for the soul of man, which is another *bara ex nihilo* feat. So, Warfield sees it this way: God first makes all of this (Calvin calls it the seed or the seed bed), and then from this creation of world stuff, God forms everything else that comes into being. This is how Warfield puts it for Calvin: "All that has come into being since that initial act of creation except the souls of men alone has arisen as a modification of this original world stuff by means of the interaction of its intrinsic forces"—not these forces apart from God, of course—"and then God's superintending, guiding, directing, using this world's stuff and modifying it in various ways to create everything else or to form everything else that is formed." Warfield sees this as a very pure evolutionary scheme. Later, theologians (not in Calvin but in later theologians) talked about mediate and immediate creation. We are trying to understand what Calvin is teaching. This is Warfield's view of Calvin. God created all things out of nothing and then superintended, through providence we could say, the development of all that came into existence during the six created days by the interaction of God's will and purpose on that substance, which intrinsically within had that which was necessary to support and develop all of these life forms.

I am going to contrast Warfield's view with the view of another Reformed theologian, John Murray, who feels that Warfield has misunderstood Calvin. Murray points out that Calvin does use creation for that initial act of creation. God created the heavens and the earth. Contrary to Warfield, Murray believes (and I think he is right) that Calvin can use creation for other steps along the way as well. Reformed theologians (not John Calvin but others) have called this first creation "immediate creation" and these other steps "mediate creation." Murray does not like those terms. He prefers to talk about the original creation and subsequent creations. Another way to describe that would be "creation one" and "creation

two.” Murray thinks that these terms are confusing because on one side you have God creating immediately and directly. On the other side you have God creating indirectly, but it is still direct creation.

Another difference between Warfield and Murray on Calvin is that Warfield tends to assume that, within this initial creation of world stuff, there were intrinsic factors that God used to develop all that comes to pass. Murray and most of the Reformed tradition, on the other hand, would say that within this immediate, created world stuff (whatever that is) are not intrinsic factors, but God just develops. One illustration would be the creation of the body of Adam. God makes it out of dust. The Warfield view would assume that within the dust is that which God could use to make a human body. Murray and others in the Reformed tradition (and Murray thinks Calvin too) would view that world stuff as not having within it intrinsic qualities that could be but together in order to create a human body. That world stuff is stuff, but it is inactive and intrinsically invalid. It does not have the potentiality that would be necessary for that kind of development. Murray’s view of Calvin is that God creates all things out of nothing, and then through subsequent creative acts, He uses this stuff that does not have within itself the potentiality to become what apparently Warfield believed it could become through providence.

After all the creation is over, we move into providence as God preserves and keeps that which He has created. It seems to me that in this issue, John Murray is closer to Calvin’s thought than Warfield is. Warfield is a wonderful Calvin scholar, but occasionally I think that he goes beyond the evidence, as he does here. Warfield’s view of what Calvin believed would have been closer to Warfield’s own ideas, and Murray’s view of what Calvin believed was certainly closer to Murray’s. Let me read a sentence from Murray that sums this up: “Calvin conceived of creative factors as entering into the process by which the heavens and the earth were perfected”—he is talking about creation two here—“so that we are not able to characterize the process as Warfield conceived of it, as a very pure evolutionary scheme. It is still God’s creative acts, not God’s superintending, governing, and producing through that which is already created through the intrinsic forces available within that created material, which actually comes into being.” That statement is a little complicated, but I think that is the way to read Calvin here.

Let us move on to the creation of man, because that is the big point that Calvin actually wants to come to. Calvin’s plan is to give us a twofold knowledge of ourselves as well as a twofold knowledge of God. The twofold knowledge of God is that God is Creator and God is Redeemer. We know God as both Creator and Redeemer. We know God is Creator because He made all things. We know God is Redeemer because of our sin. We know ourselves as created—that is chapter 15 of Book I. And, we know ourselves as fallen and sinful—that will be the first five chapters of Book II. Here, in Book I, chapter 15, we see ourselves as created. Later, we come to ourselves as fallen in Book II, chapters 1 through 5. Calvin is very concerned about this because he says, “Philosophy confuses fallen and created man and so seeks in a ruin for a building.” He says, “Philosophy does not understand the difference between man is created and man is fallen. Philosophy is looking at man, and what we have in man and mankind is a ruin of what was created. Philosophy seeks in the ruin for a building, but we will not be able to find it because philosophy seeks in fallen man that which is integral and unfallen.

Let us look at the practical emphasis again in the Genesis account of the creation of man and woman. We have that which produces gratitude as we see what God did and how He made us. It is the noblest and most remarkable example of God’s justice, wisdom, and goodness, Calvin says in Book I, chapter 15, part 1. There is a lot of praise of unfallen man here—how good, how fine, how beautiful, how amazing this creation was. When we see how God made us, it produces gratitude. However, it also produces humility. Even though we will come to a discussion of fallen mankind in Book II, chapters 1-5, these things have a way of coming in earlier because Calvin does not want to be abstract about this. He

is talking about the creation of man and woman—unfallen, before sin. But he is talking to sinful people like us. So, even though he wants to make a point that this is what unfallen humanity was like, he does not wait to make the application until Book II.

One application is that when we see what we have become (a majestic building that is now a ruin), it produces humility and prevents our blaming God for our present, sad ruin. We know what we were, we know what we are, and we will come to see why we have become what we are as we will see later in Book II. There is no escape from inexcusability. We cannot blame God. Every escape route, Calvin says, is blocked.

The doctrine itself says that man is created body and soul. Calvin talks about body and soul. To Calvin, the soul is the much greater part, and some people have thought that Calvin was influenced too much by Platonic philosophy—that the body is evil, not good—and it is the soul that is good. Calvin never says the body is evil, but he does contrast the greatness of the soul with the body in a way that worried some people that Calvin may be going too far here. He talks about the body as the “prison house” of the soul. The soul is our nobler part; the body is the inferior part. This is not an absolute contrast. Calvin says, “God, in His glory, also shines in the outer man.” In other words, there is some reflection of the glory of God in the body—some sparks of the image of God even in the body. We will talk about the image of God in a moment, but there are some sparks of the image of God even in the body. One way in which Calvin thinks that happens is that we walk around with uplifted faces. We do not creep around on the ground like my cat with its head down, although, my cat does look up sometimes. We, however, look up normally and naturally. You might wonder if that is really part of the image of God, but Calvin seems to want to say something good about the body. So, he does that. The Scripture, of course, speaks about the body in words like “house of clay” and “tabernacle of flesh.” Paul never uses the word “prison” for the body. He does not use the idea that the body is a prison of the soul.

It seems to me that Calvin goes too far when he does that. He talks about the body being a prison of the soul. I am not overly concerned that Calvin has fallen into Platonic philosophy here. He is trying to be scriptural, but it could be that in some of his terms and designations of the body he has erred here. The soul is an immortal yet created essence. There are two ideas that Calvin wants to deal with—that is, the immortality of the soul and its separateness from the body. Calvin seems to believe that if he can prove that the soul exists separate from the body, he has proven the immortality of the soul. He uses a number of arguments to support his assertion that the body is separate from the soul. He talks about conscience and the possibility of the knowledge of God, but he would indicate something going on that was separate from the body. He also includes in the soul something he calls the “nimbleness of the mind” and even dreams because something is happening as we dream that seemed to indicate to Calvin that there is a part of us that is active that is separate from the body. While dreaming, the body is closed down and asleep, but another part of us is still very busy.

Well, those arguments probably lack something. I am not sure that Calvin succeeds in doing what he was trying to do. Gerald Bray says that modern medicine and psychology have demonstrated that much of what Calvin attributed to the soul belongs, in reality, to the sphere of flesh and blood. I am not sure if Calvin in these arguments succeeds in proving that the soul is separate and immortal—immortal because it is separate from the body. Calvin also tries to prove this in Scriptures. He is on much safer ground there. His arguments for man’s many preeminent gifts are not that strong, but his arguments that the soul exists separate from the body and is immortal—that is, it will not die—are teachings of Scripture.

The question has been asked, “What would Calvin think of the new body of the resurrection?” I am sure Calvin would not call that a prison house. I would have to look at his commentaries on passages in 1

Corinthians and other places where he would describe the resurrected body. I am not sure how he would exactly answer that.

So, the soul is created to be immortal. I think there are a couple of points that go with that. The soul is not eternal. Its immortality is a gift of God, made by God. Each soul is a direct creation of God. Calvin is not a tradutionist. There is a creationist/tradutionist debate that Calvin would have known about, and we know about it as well. Tradutionism teaches that the soul is formed in conception as the body is. Calvin believed that each soul is a direct creation of God and rejects the tradutionist point of view. Each soul is a direct creation of God, and it is the creation out of nothing, not derivative of God's substance. It is just as much *ex nihilo* creation as the creation of the heavens and the earth in the beginning of Genesis 1.

Man was created in the image of God. What is the image of God? That is what we need to ask now. We have talked about how man is created body and soul. Man is created in the image of God, and man was created with two faculties: understanding and will. So, those are the main ideas that Calvin discusses here. Where is the image of God to be found in mankind? It is found primarily in man's soul. However, there are some sparks of God's image even in man's body. It is hard to know exactly how to understand what would be the image of God in these sparks. Perhaps it is in the uplifted face, but that seems a bit speculative to me. Calvin is trying to find something in the body that would be described as the image of God. If Gerald Bray is right, though, and Calvin defines the image of God in a lot of different ways, Gerald Bray says, "The image extends to everything in which the nature of man surpasses that of all other species of animals." You may be able to argue that the human body surpasses other animals. We are not the same as animals. We are not animals in the sense that we have souls. Even so, it is a little problematic to think about that. Do we really surpass all the animals in our physical being? I do not know. I suppose when you watch the Olympics you are pretty impressed with the ability of the human body, but I doubt that human beings normally are more graceful in our movements than some of the animals are. So, Calvin does not spend much time on that, and we will not spend much time on it either, because the image of God is to be found primarily in the soul.

Let me read to you some of the ways Calvin attempts to say what this is. He says, "It is the integrity with which Adam was endowed—the uprightness, the integrity" (Book I, chapter 15, part 3). Then he comes back to it in Book I, chapter 14, part 4 and says basically the same thing, but he spells it out in more detail. He says, "It is the light of the mind, the uprightness of the heart, the soundness of all the parts." Then, in Book I, chapter 15, section 4 he says, "It is true knowledge, it is righteousness, and it is holiness," and finally, "It is an inner good of the soul." Somewhere in all of that, Calvin finds the image of God. Once again, Bray's comment was "The image extends to everything in which the nature of man surpasses that of all other species of animals." That may be the best way to sum up all of Calvin's thinking. Another way he approaches this is to say that the image of God is that which was lost but then reclaimed. It was lost in Adam but reclaimed in Christ.

Finally, man is created with two faculties. It is important to grasp this here because Calvin will work with this later on. There are different ways of understanding the human being and our faculties. Calvin prefers a simple approach, he says. Philosophers are much more complicated on this point. Calvin says there are just two parts: one is understanding, and one is will. Understanding is the leader and governor of the soul. Will is the follower. We will not debate at the moment whether or not that is right because we will have to come to that later. Basically, Calvin says, "This is how mankind works. The will follows the understanding. The understanding comes first. We understand something, and then we act on it."

Let me close by making two points. In Book I, chapter 15, section 8, Calvin says, “We are not yet ready to raise the question of God’s secret predestination.” Here is one of those times when he says we could talk about God’s election or God’s predestination here. The point, of course, is that Adam and Eve were made good. They fell into sin. Was that God’s purpose, God’s will? They were not made evil but became evil because of their own misuse of their understanding of their will. Calvin hints, at least, that this would be a place where you could ask that question, but he says that we are not yet ready for it. He says, “Our present concern is what man’s nature was like.” He was saying, “We are trying to see how God made us. Let us not talk about predestination yet. We have not even come to the Fall.” He was asking how God made us, and it is important for us to see that because it produces in us gratitude and humility. It closes off all escape routes so that we are inexcusable. We cannot say, “Well, God made me this way—weak, sinful, fallible.” We cannot use that argument.

My second point in closing is that Calvin does raise the question, “Why did God not make a man who either could not or would not sin at all?” Why did God make us the way He made us with the possibility of sinning (with the possibility of loving and serving Him but also with the possibility of not loving and serving Him)? Why did God not make a man who either could not or would not sin at all? Calvin’s answer is quite different from the answer that is normally given. Calvin’s answer is “Such a nature would indeed have been more excellent.” So, it is his view, strangely, that God could have done it another way and made a more excellent creature than He made. The answer to that question that is given by Francis Schaeffer, C. S. Lewis, and almost everybody else I can think of is that God made us the way He made us because it goes beyond the creation of the animals. If He had made us in a way that we could have not sinned, then neither could we have freely and voluntarily loved Him. So, that answer is a popular, but Calvin did not go that way. He lacks that kind of theodicy. God simply chose to do it this way. He could have done it some other way, but He chose to do it this way. Mankind fell, and we are responsible for our fall. You might ask, “How am I responsible for what Adam and Eve did?” This is a later question that Calvin will get to. However, we are responsible, we are inexcusable, and from it all, God will get glory, and this is as far as Calvin is willing to go.

The triune God made all things, but we do not stop there. Calvin is not a deist. The triune God who made all things is very intimately associated with all of His creation and His works of providence, and that is what we will look at next.