

## **Institutes of the Christian Religion by John Calvin**

(Translation by Henry Beveridge)

Men's Theology Study – July 1, 2020

### **Book 1 – Chapter 3: The Knowledge of God Naturally Implanted in the Human Mind**

#### **3.1. God has given everyone some kind of knowledge about himself. How?**

- a. In the mind and by natural instinct.
- b. Enduing all men with some idea of his Godhead.
- c. The memory of which he constantly renews and occasionally enlarges.
- d. That man will be aware that there is a God and that he is their Maker.
- e. A sense of deity is inscribed on every heart.

#### **3.1. Why has God done this?**

- a. To prevent any man from pretending ignorance.
- b. That man may be condemned by his own conscience when he neither worships God nor consecrates his life to God's service.

#### **3.1. Consider Psalm 19 and Romans 1**

- a. Psalm 19:1-3, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard."
  - i. "How strongly must the traces of God's glory be impressed upon them (the heavens), when they need no speech to make Him known as their Creator, when they need only to be dumb-heralds of the Divine greatness, and notwithstanding declare and show forth (E.W. Hengstenberg)!"
- b. Romans 1:19-20, "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."

#### **3.2-3. What evidences does Calvin provide that the knowledge of God has been naturally implanted in the human mind?**

- c. Idolatry: "...it is evident how very strong this impression of a deity must be; since it is more difficult to obliterate it from the mind of man, than to break down the feelings of his nature—these certainly being broken down, when, in opposition to his natural haughtiness, he spontaneously humbles himself before the meanest object as an act of reverence to God (Calvin, p. 9)."
- d. Atheists and Wicked Men: The more they despise God the more it is a witness that they violate their conscience against the knowledge of God.
- e. Fear of God: the more the wicked fight against fearing God the more it shows they do fear him. "...the worm of conscience, keener than burning steel, is gnawing them within (Calvin, p. 10)."
- f. Aspiring Pride: The atheist seeks to exalt himself to the place of deity.