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Our Knowledge of God according to John Calvin by T. A. Noble

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One of the main themes of the theology of John Calvin is 'Our Knowledge of God.' Its importance has been recognized in a series of books and articles by Edward A. Dowey, T. H. L. Parker, T. F. Torrance and others specifically devoted to it, and by the primacy accorded to it in such studies of Calvin's theology as those by Niesel and Wendel. Its importance in Calvin's theology is evident too from a casual glance at the Institutes. It is the theme of the famous opening sentence:

Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid wisdom consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.

And its importance for the structure of the work is evident in the title of Book I:

2 Of the Knowledge of God the Creator
and Book II

Of the Knowledge of God the Redeemer, in Christ, as first manifested to the Fathers under the Law, and thereafter to us under the Gospel.

'Our knowledge of God' may then be taken (without adducing any more of the massive amount of evidence) as a basic theme in Calvin's thought. According to Bauke, 'The theology of Calvin has in fact no basic principle.'¹ Yet here is a theme which if not a basic principle in the sense that it determines all Calvin's substantive doctrines is nevertheless a perspective or horizon within which Calvin's theology may be seen as a whole. Specific doctrines may then be seen in their context. The interpretation of Calvin's doctrine of scripture, for example, may be saved from idiosyncrasy if it is remembered that Calvin's fundamental concern is not that we should know scripture, but that we should through scripture know God. The Institutes are a key to the scriptures, but the contents of scripture must be related to an end — not idle speculation, but edification.

If you ask in what this whole edification consists which we are to receive thereby, in a word, it is a question of learning to place our trust in God and to walk in the fear of Him, and — since Jesus Christ is the end of the law and the

¹ Hermann Bauke, *Die Probleme der Theologie Calvins* (Leipzig, 1922).

prophets and the essence of the Gospel — of aspiring to no other aim but to know Him.²

And just as the doctrine of scripture has to be seen within the context of our knowledge of God, so also Calvin's Christology and Soteriology, his doctrine of the Christian life and even the vexed question of election are seen in truest perspective when seen as aspects of our knowledge of God.

Since this theme opens up such a wide area, I cannot attempt to review it exhaustively, or even comprehensively in a short discussion paper. My intention therefore is first to draw attention to the general character of our knowledge of God, and secondly to expound this general character in terms of the specific approach of the *imago dei* as Calvin sees it. For neither of these two sections do I claim any originality since I shall largely be dependent on various scholars and presenting the consensus while working simultaneously from the text. Thirdly, I shall examine more critically one area — the twofold knowledge of God.

I. THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Edward A. Dowey identifies four general characteristics of the doctrine of the knowledge of God in Calvin.³ (i) The first is the accommodated character of all knowledge of God, the process by which God reduces or adjusts to human capacities. There are two kinds of accommodation. There is first God's accommodation to our finite comprehension. God's essence is inaccessible to us, for man must keep his thoughts within limits imposed by temporal and spatial creation⁴, and therefore we can only know his work, power, or activity in so far as it is directed towards us. But also there is God's accommodation to human sinfulness. This occurs exclusively through the self-abasement that God undertook when the Eternal Son assumed the office of Mediator. (ii) Secondly, there is the correlative character of our knowledge of God expressed in the first sentence of the *Institutes*, which is thus seen as one of Calvin's basic epistemological propositions. It is as men that we know God, and it is though knowing God, that we truly know ourselves. (iii) Thirdly, there is the existential character of our knowledge of God. That is to say, our knowledge of God is not speculative (Calvin has no preliminary philosophic or scientific epistemology), but practical. There is no merely mental or disinterested knowledge of God. All true knowledge of him issues in worship and obedience. 'We cannot, properly speaking, say that God is known where there is no religion or piety.' (iv) Fourthly, there is

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² CO 9, 826.

³ Edward A. Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology* (London, 1952), 3-40.

⁴ *Institutes*, I, xiv, 1.

the clarity and comprehensibility of our knowledge of God. This is the objective success of God's accommodation to our limited abilities. His revelation thus overcomes the noetic effects of sin sufficiently to give the believer a clear and comprehensive understanding of his will. And yet, it is a *sufficiently* clear understanding, not *absolutely* clear, and it only becomes sufficiently clear to the diligent believer capable of exegesis and application. Hence the systematic interrelationship of apparently incompatible doctrines may be relegated to the incomprehensible so that Calvin's theology may be seen by Hermann Bauke as a *complexio oppositorum*.

4 I am inclined to think that Dowey's four characteristics can in fact be reduced to two — or least put in two groups. He already links (i) and (iv). The clear and comprehensive understanding of God's will results from his accommodation to our finiteness and our sinfulness. Both points are concerned with knowledge *about* God, the appropriation and understanding of concepts, theological statements. Points (ii) and (iii) on the other hand are concerned not so much with knowledge *about* God, as with knowledge *of* God. It is, to use Dowey's word, *existential*. It is *correlative* — that is, we know God, not abstractly, but in the actual relationship which exists between God and man. To know God is not simply to know at the conceptual level — to know propositions about God — it is to know God personally in the living encounter of faith and to respond with praise and gratitude.

This, it seems to me, is the central thrust and concern of Calvin's doctrine of our knowledge of God. Dowey calls it *existential* or *correlative*. Parker calls it a *scopus duplex*.⁵ T. F. Torrance calls it *intuitive* knowledge.⁶ In opposition to Ockham who asserted that there was no intuitive or experiential knowledge of God for man on earth, but only abstractive knowledge, revealed truths, Calvin asserted that while there was abstractive knowledge of revealed truths, there was much more than that. The revealed truths may be accommodated to our understanding, the 'Word' may 'prattle' to us as to little children, yet it is 'heavenly teaching', the testimony which God has been pleased to give of himself.⁷ Yet beyond this abstractive knowledge of revealed truths in

⁵ T. H. L. Parker, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God: a Study in the Theology of John Calvin* (Edinburgh, 1952).

⁶ T. F. Torrance, 'Intuitive and Abstractive Knowledge: from Duns Scotus to John Calvin', *De doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti: Acta tertu Congressus Scotistici Internationalis* (Rome, 1972), 291-305. See also T. F. Torrance, 'Knowledge of God and Speech about Him according to John Calvin', *Theology in Reconstruction* (London, 1965), 76-98.

⁷ I, vi, 2.

Scripture, we do have direct intuitive knowledge of God himself. It is not merely 'vain', 'frigid' or 'empty speculation' which only 'flutters in the brain'.⁸ Real knowledge of God can only take place within an actual relationship with him, for, 'What avails it to know a God with whom we have nothing to do?' When we truly know God, we do so in reverence and fear, acknowledging that every good gift comes from him.

Of all the possible terms which might be used to refer to this central characteristic of our knowledge of God, the best, I think, is *relational*. Our knowledge of God takes place within a personal relationship established by God in his grace.

And for Calvin, this relationship of knowledge was not accidental — it was essential to man. This can best be seen perhaps as we turn to the outworking of this relational concept of man's knowledge of God in the doctrine of man as made in the image of God.

II. THE 'IMAGO DEI' IN CALVIN

Two senses may be detected in Calvin's usage of *imago dei*.⁹ First, in a general sense, he uses it to describe all creation which serves as 'a kind of mirror in which we may behold God'.¹⁰ The glory of God is reflected in 'the elegant structure of the world' — not only in the heavens but also in the earth, in fact, in all we apprehend in the natural sciences. Man himself is a microcosm of this, 'as being a rare specimen of divine power, wisdom, and goodness'.¹¹ He, like all creation, is God's handiwork. Not only his body, but his gifts and faculties of thought and imagination, transcending the body and reaching out to heaven and earth, past, present, and future, reflect the glory and wisdom of God.

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Secondly, in addition to this, there is a narrower sense of *imago dei* used in reference to man alone. He images God in a peculiar fashion in that he lives on the communication of God's Word. The Word is his very life. God subordinates the insensate works of his hands by secret laws, but he teaches men with 'articulate language, so that they may obey him intelligently and with consent'.¹² Man thus reflects as in a mirror the glory of God by an intelligible response to the Word.

At times it may seem as if this twofold usage is an overfine distinction imported into Calvin's thought. After his exposition of the general sense of the *imago* in I, v, he returns to the subject in I, xv, — the chapter on

⁸ I, ii, 2; I, iv, 1; I, v, 9.

⁹ For this section, see T. F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man* (London, 1949), 35-82.

¹⁰ I, v, 1.

¹¹ I, v, 3.

¹² Commentary, Psalm 147:19.

man as originally created — and gives his most extended treatment of the *imago* in the Institutes. At first sight it seems as if he is saying no more than in I,v, *i.e.* equating the image of God with the qualities or faculties in which man excels. He states, 'But our definition of the image seems not to be complete until it appears more clearly what the faculties are in which man excels, and in which he is to be regarded as a mirror of the divine glory.'¹³ This may be compared with a sentence in the first paragraph of Book II (where he begins a section of five chapters on fallen man) in which he seems to connect very closely the fact that 'God at first formed us in his own image' with 'those noble qualities which distinguish us from the lower animals' specified as 'reason and intelligence'.¹⁴ But closer reading of the context of these sentences, particularly the whole of I,xv, makes it clear that we cannot interpret the image statically as qualities or functions inhering in man. The soul and its faculties — intellect and will¹⁵ — are not the image itself, but the 'seat' of the image.¹⁶ He repeats this term later in the same paragraph: 'The primary seat of the divine image was in the mind and the heart or in the soul and its powers.' The image itself which is not part of the soul but rather 'seated' in the soul is described by distinction as 'spiritual'.¹⁷ It 'comprehends everything which has any relation to the spiritual and eternal life.'¹⁸ What he means by 'spiritual' is made clear by the accompanying statements that the image of God constitutes not human nature itself (*i.e.* the soul substantially) but 'the entire *excellence* of human nature'.¹⁹ 'By this term (*i.e.* image),' he writes, 'is denoted the *integrity* which Adam was endowed with when his intellect was clear, his affections subordinated to reason, all his powers duly regulated, and when he truly ascribed all his excellence to the admirable gifts of his Maker.'²⁰

Calvin further details this as 'knowledge — true righteousness and holiness,' or as 'light of intellect, rectitude of heart, and soundness of every part'. In other words, when Calvin states that the *imago* is spiritual, he means, first, that it is not the soul substantially in itself with its faculties, but the good of the soul, its *bonum internum*, or highest nobility. Secondly, he understands this 'spiritual' image primarily in terms of knowledge or 'light of intellect'. The soul itself is not the image,

13 I, xv, 4.

14 I, i, 1.

15 I, xv, 7.

16 I, xv, 3.

17 I, xv, 3.

18 I, xv, 4.

19 I, xv, 4.

20 I, xv, 3.

but, as it were, the mirror which reflects the image. The image is rather the spiritual relationship of knowledge between the mirror (the soul-body, man) and that which it images (God). The image of God is thus for Calvin a *relational* concept which expresses the correlative nature of knowledge as expressed in the opening sentence of the Institutes: 'Our wisdom . . . consists almost entirely of two parts; the knowledge of God and of ourselves.'

A key text for Calvin in his understanding of the spiritual or relational nature of the *imago dei* is John 1:4: 'And the life was the light of men.' This is the text he refers us to in I,xv,4 in the middle of his extended discussion of the *imago*, saying that it declares the same thing in different terms. In his commentary on the text, he develops his thought:

As it is not in vain that God imparts His *light* to their minds (i.e. the minds of men), it follows that the purpose for which they were created was, that they might acknowledge Him who is the Author of this so excellent a blessing. And since this *light* of which the Word was the source, has been conveyed from Him to us, it ought to serve as a *mirror*, in which we may clearly behold the divine power of the Word.

7

Here the source of 'light of intellect' is identified as the Word of God, Christ himself. The Word shines on man like a light, as it were, and man reflects the glory of God thus knowing or 'acknowledging' God as the source of this blessing. This is man's true *life*, or the purpose for which he was created. His true *esse* is in *cognoscere*. Man's true life consists in the light of his understanding in so far as that is reflexive of the glory of God revealed through His Word. Only when a man knows himself to be a creature utterly dependent on the grace of God (i.e. self-knowledge) is he able in his knowledge of God so to live in a thankful fashion corresponding to the motion of grace that he reflects in the mirror of his intelligent life the glory of God.

Yet this is only half the story. This description of the *imago dei* peculiar to man is the substance of Calvin's chapter on man as created.²¹ But at the beginning of Book II of the Institutes, he makes it clear that this is only the first part of 'self-knowledge'. The second is to see our miserable condition as fallen men. To have a full account therefore of Calvin's understanding of the *imago dei* we must ask how it is affected by the Fall.

For Calvin, the root cause of the Fall was 'infidelity'. Man despised the Word of God. 'From infidelity sprang ambition and pride together

²¹ I, xv.

with ingratitude.²² Thus, since spiritual life consisted in man's relationship with God ('remaining united and bound to his Maker') so the end of that relationship ('estrangement') meant spiritual death. The relationship was disrupted that is to say, 'the heavenly image in man was effaced'. This involved Adam's posterity in Original Sin, which Calvin defines as 'hereditary corruption', 'depravity', 'innate corruption', 'instilled pollution', 'concupiscence', 'viciousness', or 'perversity'. Yet, elsewhere, Calvin appears to retract this total aspect of man's fall. Alongside the statement of II,i,5 that 'the heavenly image was effaced,' we must place the statement of II,ii,17 that 'we can trace some remains of the divine image, distinguishing the whole human race from other creatures,' — or that of III,iii,9, that regeneration forms us anew in 'the image of God, which was sullied, and all but effaced by the transgression of Adam'. In short, Calvin seems to say on one hand that the image was totally obliterated, and, on the other, that some remnant of it remains.

8. To make sense of this apparent contradiction, it is necessary to recall the double sense we detected in Calvin's usage of *imago dei*. Man reflects the glory of God, firstly in that he is the handiwork of God — soul and body — so that his natural gifts of reason and will reflect the glory and wisdom of God. But secondly, man peculiarly reflects the glory of God by articulately and intelligently responding to the communication of God in his Word. This is his 'spiritual' life in relationship with God which produces the 'supernatural gifts — knowledge, purity, righteousness, and true holiness'.²³ The wider *imago dei* refers to the 'natural gifts', the attributes of the soul — reason and will — without which man would cease to be man and would be reduced to an animal. The narrower *imago dei* refers to the 'supernatural gifts' which are the function of a living intelligent response to the Word of God.

At II,ii,12, Calvin gives us a clear statement of this distinction in the gifts, and indicates how the apparent contradiction about the *imago* may be resolved. He expresses agreement with Augustine's statement 'that man's natural gifts were corrupted by sin, and his supernatural gifts withdrawn'. Clearly then when Calvin says that 'the heavenly image was effaced' he is to be interpreted as referring to what we have called the narrower sense of the *imago dei*. What remains is that wider *imago dei* — those natural gifts 'distinguishing the whole human race from other creatures'. Nevertheless, these have been corrupted. In the latter part of II,ii, Calvin expounds the corrupted state of these natural gifts.²⁴

²² II, i, 4.

²³ I, xv, 4.

²⁴ II, ii, 18-21.

As far as earthly concerns are involved — the mechanical arts, liberal studies and civil government — ‘no man is totally devoid of the light of reason’. As far as heavenly things are concerned, human reason has no knowledge of God or of his paternal favour toward us, but does have some knowledge of the method of regulating our conduct in accordance with the Divine Law.

And yet, it must not be thought that the natural gifts, the remnants of the *imago dei*, give man anything to plead before God. Calvin quickly disabuses us of any such notion by insisting that man is affected as a whole by depravity: ‘There is no part which is not perverted and corrupted.’²⁵ Here it becomes evident from which standpoint Calvin makes these assertions. There is certainly a problem here to be faced — for if true knowledge of ourselves is correlative to our knowledge of God, and if our knowledge of God is totally obliterated since we are fallen men, how do we know the truth about ourselves that we are made in his image? The answer to this becomes clear in II,iii, where — after the chapter in which he expounds the remnants of the *imago*, the natural gifts — he proceeds to expound the totality of our corruption. For it becomes clear that for Calvin total perversity is a corollary of grace. Re-birth, he argues, involves the whole man. If a man requires to be born again, therefore, it is not just his lower sensual nature which is corrupt, but also his mind, and ‘a mind is not born again merely by having some portion of it reformed. It must be totally renewed.’ It follows therefore that ‘there is no part in which it (human nature) is not perverted and corrupted’.

9

Indeed, it is from the perspective of grace that Calvin develops not only his doctrine of total perversity, but also his exposition of the original *imago dei*. Since ‘the end of regeneration is to form us anew in the image of God,’²⁶ we must argue back from this renovation of grace to man’s original creation. The principle is that ‘the leading feature in the renovation of the divine image must also have held the highest place in its creation’. Thus, since renovation takes place in Christ ‘we now see how Christ is the most perfect image of God’. It is only through Christ, the Word of God, that we can be renewed in the image of God, for only through him can we have knowledge of God and thus reflect his glory. Calvin sums this up for us in his commentary on John 17:3 —

There is no other way in which God is known but in the face of Jesus Christ, who is the bright and lively image of Him . . . It is not every kind of knowledge which is described here, but that knowledge which forms us anew into the image of God from faith to faith.

²⁵ II, iii, 1.

²⁶ I, xv, 4.

Knowledge of God is thus for Calvin essential to human being and nature. Only as we know him are we true to our being in the image of God. And, as fallen men, our knowledge of God can only be restored through the renovation and renewing, the redemption, which is in Christ, the image of God.

If this is a true understanding of the broad scope of Calvin's doctrine of our knowledge of God, and if that knowledge can only be restored through the redemption in Christ, then there is one feature of Calvin's doctrine of our knowledge of God prominent in Books I and II of the Institutes which is a puzzling misfit; that is Calvin's teaching on the *duplex cognitio*.

III. THE 'DUPLEX COGNITIO'

According to Edward A. Dowey, it is the *duplex cognitio* and not the Apostles' Creed which is the really significant ordering principle of Calvin's Institutes. It is stated in I, ii:

10 Since, then the Lord first appears, as well in the creation of the world as in the general doctrine of Scripture, simply as a Creator, and afterwards as a Redeemer in Christ, a twofold knowledge of him hence arises: of these the former is now to be considered, the latter will afterwards follow in its order.

T. H. L. Parker, on the other hand, criticizes Dowey severely (and Köstlin before him) for 'an illegitimate piece of textual criticism', and insists that the key structure of the Institutes is, as it appears, the Apostles' Creed.²⁷ Oddly enough, both scholars find support for their claims in the developing structure of successive editions of the Institutes. Parker points out that the one chapter on 'Knowledge of God and Ourselves' in the 1536 edition had become two chapters by 1539, 'Knowledge of God' and 'Knowledge of Man and Free Will,' but that in 1559 a profound development in Calvin's thought is evidenced by the change in structure. Knowledge of God, formerly one chapter, now gives the overall structure of the work, so that Book I concerns knowledge of God the Creator, Book II, knowledge of God the Redeemer. The material formerly in the second chapter on Knowledge of Man is redistributed between the two books. For Dowey, however, this development is evidence that although Calvin adopted the outer form of the Apostles' Creed, this did not fundamentally alter his thought which was now given clear expression for the first time in the *duplex cognitio*. It is most significant, we may note, that both the Apostles' Creed structure and the *duplex cognitio* appeared at the same time. It is not that the *duplex*

²⁷ T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, (Edinburgh, 1969).

cognitio was the earlier structure, later overlaid by the structure of the Apostles' Creed — but both appeared in the later development. The earlier structure was the division into Knowledge of God and Knowledge of Ourselves — still important in the later editions and expressed, of course, in the key initial sentence of the whole work. For Parker, this is the true 'twofoldness' in Calvin's thought, not a *duplex cognitio*, but a *scopus duplex*.

Now it would appear, in fact, that in spite of all the sound and fury, the two scholars are not in disagreement at all. First of all, as far as the *scopus duplex* is concerned, Dowey does not deny its importance. In fact what he calls the 'correlative' character of our knowledge of God is one of the basic characteristics for him of Calvin's doctrine. But secondly, and more importantly, there is no dispute between the *duplex cognitio* structure, and the Apostles' Creed structure. Certainly Dowey has set it up as if there were. He states quite definitely that the *duplex cognitio* and 'not' the Apostles' Creed is the fundamental structure,²⁸ and that consequently there are two basic divisions in the Institutes and not four. But by stating his case in this way, he provokes an unnecessary controversy. The two are not in fact contradictory. On the contrary, the *duplex cognitio* is a function of the structure of the Apostles' Creed, which speaks of creation relative to the Father, and redemption relative to the Son. Hence, the First Book of the Institutes is entitled, 'Of the Knowledge of God the Creator,' the Second Book 'Of the Knowledge of God the Redeemer, in Christ . . .' The statement of the *duplex cognitio* comes in I,ii right at the beginning of the book dealing with God the Creator (excepting, of course, the preliminary chapter which states the correlative character of Knowledge of God and Ourselves). The *scopus duplex* gives a second division, within each book. Book I, part 1 (Chapters 1-13) expounds Knowledge of God the Creator as revealed in creation (albeit unavailingly) and in Scripture (plus an excursus, chapters 7-9, on Scripture). The second part of Book I (chapters 14-18) expounds Knowledge of Ourselves as Creatures — taking 'Ourselves', as Dowey suggests, as a synecdoche for all creation. In Book II, the order is reversed. Knowledge of Ourselves as fallen forms the first part (Chapters 1-5), and Knowledge of God as Redeemer in Christ the second (Chapters 6-17). We see in this structure how the material from Chapter 2 of the 1539 edition (Knowledge of Man) has been distributed and subsumed under the two divisions in Knowledge of God.

When this structure of the first two books is clear, then it becomes clear too how the repeated statements of the *duplex cognitio* are ex-

²⁸ Edward A. Dowey, *op. cit.*, 42.

pressions of the Creator/Redeemer distinction. Several times in the first part of Book I — in fact each time his readers might mistakenly think that Calvin is dealing or ought to be dealing with God's redeeming activity — Calvin reminds us that he is as yet only expounding knowledge of God as Creator. Thus in I,vi, where he leaves the revelation of God in creation and begins to speak of Scripture, and of the Word of God coming to the patriarchs, he reminds us:

I am not now speaking of the peculiar doctrines of faith by which they were elevated to the hope of eternal blessedness. It was necessary, in passing from death to life, that they should know God, not only as a Creator, but as a Redeemer also; and both kinds of knowledge they certainly did obtain from the Word. In point of order, however, the knowledge *first* given was that which made them acquainted with the God by whom the world was made and is governed. To this first knowledge was *afterwards* added the more intimate knowledge — by which God is known . . . also as a Redeemer, in the person of the Mediator.

12 Again at I,x,1, where he compares the revelation of God in creation with that in Scripture, he reminds us that although God did act as Redeemer in his adoption of Abraham,

At present, however, we are employed in considering that knowledge which stops short at the creation of the world, without ascending to Christ the Mediator.

And again at I,xiii,9, in his chapter on the Trinity, he reminds us he is 'not now treating of the office of the Mediator having deferred it till the subject of redemption is considered'. Here he does actually for the sake of convenience look ahead as it were, and deal with the divinity of Christ — but only by adducing Scriptural evidence, not by expounding redemption in any way.

The structure of the first two books outlined above also makes it plain why it is at II,vi,1 (*i.e.* the beginning of the second part of Book II) that Calvin makes what Dowey calls the 'transition' by stating:

Therefore, since our fall from life unto death, all that knowledge of God the Creator of which we have discoursed, would be useless, were it not followed up by faith, holding forth God to us as a Father in Christ.

From this point, according to Dowey, Calvin's doctrine has a whole new orientation. He has passed from the revelation of the Creator to the redemptive revelation. Parker criticized Dowey for marking the transition both at the beginning of Book II and here at II,vi. But as the structure outline shows, both are in a sense right. The whole of Book II is about 'Knowledge of God as Redeemer in Christ', but 'Knowledge of

Ourselves' as fallen is dealt with first in Chapters 1 to 5 — so that 'Knowledge of God as Redeemer' strictly speaking begins at I,vi. It is significant that Calvin includes 'Knowledge of Ourselves' as fallen under the general rubric of 'Knowledge of the Redeemer,' since in fact our fallenness is known, according to Calvin, from grace.

It should perhaps be emphasized at this point that *duplex cognitio* means a twofold knowledge of God as Creator and Redeemer as I,ii makes perfectly clear, and does not mean a twofold knowledge of God by general and special revelation. It is twofold in that it is knowledge of God in his twofold character towards us as Creator and Redeemer, not a twofold way of knowing. It should thus be clear that the *duplex cognitio* does not imply that God may be known from his general revelation, and that Calvin therefore regarded natural theology as valid. Dowey denies this as clearly as Parker. Both make clear that all that appears as a natural theology in 1,3-5 is preceded by the minus sign, '*si integer stetitset Adam*'.

Finally, however, some criticism must be made of this so-called 'twofold knowledge', not of Dowey's presentation of it (which I find more acceptable), but (if we may dare!) of Calvin's own use of it. Basically, it must be objected to on this ground — that we do not know God as our Creator apart from our knowing him as our Redeemer. The knowledge as such is not twofold, for it is knowledge of one and the same God. Calvin is only led to express it in this misleading way because he tries to combine the credal structure with the already established essentially noetic concern of the Institutes. The Creed proceeds in ontological order — Creation before Redemption — making it clear, if we may coin a phrase, that 'There was a time when the Son was not Incarnate'. But the noetic order is from Redemption to Creation — only by faith in the Redeemer can we know him as our Creator, and it was the noetic approach which had characterized Calvin's theology. Thus two unfortunate results follow: (a) the doctrine of Scripture is separated from his treatment of faith-knowledge in the Holy Spirit in Book II and especially Book III, and (b) he posits the rather misleading division of the *duplex cognitio*.