



THE
KNOWLEDGE OF GOD,
OBJECTIVELY CONSIDERED.

BEING
THE FIRST PART OF THEOLOGY

CONSIDERED
AS A SCIENCE OF POSITIVE TRUTH,
BOTH INDUCTIVE AND DEDUCTIVE.

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CHAPTER I.

THE ACTUAL CONDITION OF MAN—INDIVIDUALLY CONSIDERED.

1. Concerning the Nature of Man.—2. His Individualism.—3. Personality.—4. Personal Destiny.—5. Sense of Accountability.—6. Perversion of these Elements.—7. Sense of Blameworthiness.—8. Sense of True and False.—9. Sense of Good and Evil.—10. Our Faculties Incompetent to the complete Application of these Distinctions.—11. Our Nature Depraved. Fallen, but Susceptible of Recovery.—12. Our Evil Passions, and their Indulgence. Universal Pollution.—13. Our State of Sinfulness a State of Misery also. The Hope from Thence.—14. Nature and Universality of that Misery.—15. The Condition of Man in Contrast with that of Irrational Creatures, of Lost Spirits, and of Devils.—16. The Bearing of the Original Elements of his Nature upon its Present Pollution and Misery.—17. Conclusion.

1. In examining the condition of man, as he exists before us, we are to form an estimate of him, according to the received chronology, after nearly six thousand years of progress. If after all the vicissitudes of that vast period, we find in him distinguishing and universal traits, which have existed through all time and in all conditions, and have survived every influence which has borne upon him, we need not hesitate to pronounce them necessary and indestructible parts of his nature.

2. The simplest view which can be taken of him, is as an individual being—acting by himself and for himself, upon his own responsibility and to his own ends, in the midst of innumerable beings like himself. Wants, which, however they may press on others, are peculiarly his: passions, which, however they may be common to all, burn in him with a special fervor: purposes, which, though they may actuate all, urge him with an intimate force: hopes, which every one may cherish, but to accomplish which, is, with him, the very end of his being. And so in every thing, the separate action, the intense individualism, the personal development, the immediate responsibility of each particular being, in one word his separate life and personality is

his most obvious, as it is his most inherent and fruitful characteristic.

3. The Scriptures teach us that God created man in his own image. If this be true, the result already noticed is the one most certain to occur. In all the universe there is no absolute and purely independent existence, but God only. And it is only so far as created and dependent existences are made in his image, and conform to the mode of his being, that each one would be a separate power in the universe, precisely proportionate to its resemblance to him. On the other hand, this fundamental peculiarity of man affords a kind of evidence at once striking and particular, of the mode of that unsearchable existence in the image of which his own was fashioned—an existence, namely, absolutely personal, and wholly distinct from the universe which he has created. These are truths of the highest importance, and will demand careful attention hereafter.

4. One of the most distinct and unalterable conditions of this separate and yet dependent existence of man, is that his eminent responsibility should be a personal responsibility—each one answering for himself directly to his Creator. However much and however variously we may be involved with others, and whether in their blessings or their miseries—still our destiny is pre-eminently a personal destiny. It is our personal freedom, our personal intelligence, our personal dependence, our personal accountability—terminating, at last, in a personal destiny, shaped under the personal dealing of God with each one of us.

5. The corresponding indwelling sense of our personal accountability is one of the most marked and universal characteristics of our nature. Even in our intercourse with our fellow-creatures, we habitually and continually proceed upon the truth, as though it was indisputable and universally accepted, that they are responsible to us, and we to them, not only for such things as human laws take cognizance of—but for all things. And that inherent conviction, which lies in the very depths of our being, that we are personally accountable to a power separate from us and infinitely superior to us, which men in all ages and places have called God ; opens before us the whole field of the religious history of the human race. Our dependence on him is felt to be absolute : his dominion over us to be illimitable. Endowed, as we feel ourselves to be, with freedom and intelligence ; to be

Moreover, such imperfect knowledge of God as we can attain to is not a mere speculative knowledge, but must be accompanied by devotion and worship. When a man dies he has to do with God alone, and if we have to live with a person, our happiness entirely depends on the degree of affection we feel towards him. Love is the seed of happiness, and love to God is fostered and developed by worship. Such worship and constant remembrance of God implies a certain degree of austerity and curbing of bodily appetites. Not that a man is intended altogether to abolish these, for then the human race would per 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 takeQ (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 w