

INSTITUTES OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION

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

JOHN CALVIN

*Translated by Henry Beveridge
with an Introduction by Ben Merkle
& Discussion Questions and Answers by Douglas Wilson*

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION BY BEN MERKLE.....	i
SUMMARY.....	1
1: THROUGH THE FALL AND REVOLT OF ADAM THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE MADE ACCURSED AND DEGENERATE. OF ORIGINAL SIN.....	3
2: MAN NOW DEPRIVED OF FREEDOM OF WILL, AND MISERABLY ENSLAVED.....	21
3: EVERY THING PROCEEDING FROM THE CORRUPT NATURE OF MAN DAMNABLE.....	63
4: HOW GOD WORKS IN THE HEARTS OF MEN.....	91
5: THE ARGUMENTS USUALLY ALLEGED IN SUPPORT OF FREE WILL REFUTED.....	103
6: REDEMPTION FOR LOST MAN TO BE SOUGHT IN CHRIST	135

7: THE LAW GIVEN, NOT TO RETAIN A PEOPLE FOR ITSELF,
BUT TO KEEP ALIVE THE HOPE OF SALVATION IN CHRIST
UNTIL HIS ADVENT147

8: EXPOSITION OF THE MORAL LAW171

9: CHRIST, THOUGH KNOWN TO THE JEWS UNDER THE LAW,
YET ONLY MANIFESTED UNDER THE GOSPEL.249

10: THE RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN THE OLD TESTAMENT
AND THE NEW.257

11: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO TESTAMENTS ...287

12: CHRIST, TO PERFORM THE OFFICE OF MEDIATOR,
BEHOVED TO BECOME MAN309

13: CHRIST CLOTHED WITH THE TRUE SUBSTANCE OF
HUMAN NATURE.323

14: HOW TWO NATURES CONSTITUTE THE PERSON OF THE
MEDIATOR.333

15: THREE THINGS CHIEFLY TO BE REGARDED IN CHRIST—
VIZ. HIS OFFICES OF PROPHET, KING, AND PRIEST.349

16: HOW CHRIST PERFORMED THE OFFICE OF REDEEMER
IN PROCURING OUR SALVATION. THE DEATH,
RESURRECTION, AND ASCENSION OF CHRIST.363

17: CHRIST RIGHTLY AND PROPERLY SAID TO HAVE MERITED
GRACE AND SALVATION FOR US.395

ANSWERS TO STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS405

INTRODUCTION

Book II is a systematic walk through who Jesus Christ was. Calvin's goal is to leave the reader with a clear understanding of Jesus' nature and the work that he performed as our Savior. But in order to do that, he is going to take a few unexpected turns to give you the background that will give you a much deeper understanding of who Jesus was.

The full title of book II reads "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." If you recall Calvin's opening observation from book I, then you will remember that knowledge of God and knowledge of self are necessarily intertwined. So this knowledge of God the Redeemer is all tied up with man's knowledge of himself, and his rightful understanding of his own desperate need for redemption. Men must know themselves and their sinful condition if they are to understand who Christ their Savior is. All men are fallen as a result of original sin—"... a hereditary corruption and depravity of our nature, extending to all the parts of the soul, which first makes us obnoxious to the wrath of God, and then produces in us works which in Scripture are termed works of the flesh" (14).¹ The

1. All quotes are taken from this edition unless otherwise noted.

effect of this sin on Adam and on all of his descendants was total, leaving him in need of not just a savior, but a sovereign Savior.

In this book Calvin sketches out the soteriology, or doctrine of salvation, that has become synonymous with his name—what we now know as “Calvinism.” Calvin explains that man’s fallen condition is so severe that it amounts to a prison of the will, such that man can’t even decide on his own to turn to God. He moves from his description of fallen man (ch. 1) to a careful explanation of how an enslaved will is still capable of a free choice since it is free from external compulsion (ch. 2-5). This section is really worth a very close read and a good bit of reflection. Calvin’s detractors, who think his doctrine of salvation turns men into robots, tend to miss his distinction between compulsion and necessity—two terms that must be carefully defined to understand Calvin’s argument. As you read this section, note how much Calvin is actually appealing to the earlier work of Augustine. You can see why, from Calvin’s perspective, he was arguing nothing new, but simply recovering the ancient faith. Calvin’s soteriology differed very little from that of Martin Luther at this point, though later Lutheranism would diverge significantly from Reformed soteriology.

With this understanding of man’s dire situation understood, Calvin turns to the revelation of Jesus Christ, our Savior who came to rescue man from this doomed condition. Jesus came as our “Redeemer,” that is a person who came to “redeem” or to pay a penalty owed by man. Considering Christ from this angle takes Calvin first of all to the law of God (ch. 7-8), as summarized by the Ten Commandments. This is another strange turn. Why would you put a summary of the Ten Commandments in a book that is supposed to be about describing Jesus?

Well, consider that these laws describe the moral perfection of God which Adam violated and which Jesus Christ, the second Adam, came to fulfill. So, if Jesus was the fulfillment of the law that mankind has continually fallen short of, then it follows that to understand who Jesus was, we must understand God’s law. It is actually a description of Jesus.

SUMMARY

*To his most Christian Majesty, the most mighty and illustrious
monarch, Francis, King of the French, his sovereign; John Calvin prays
peace and salvation in Christ*

The First Part of the Apostles' Creed—viz. the knowledge of God the Creator, being disposed of, we now come to the Second Part, which relates to the knowledge of God as a Redeemer in Christ. The subjects treated of accordingly are, first, the Occasion of Redemption—viz. Adam's fall; and, secondly, Redemption itself. The first five chapters are devoted to the former subject, and the remainder to the latter.

Under the Occasion of Redemption, the Fall is considered not only in a general way, but also specially in its effects. Hence the first four chapters treat of original sin, free will, the corruption of human nature, and the operation of God in the heart. The fifth chapter contains a refutation of the arguments usually urged in support of free will.

The subject of redemption may be reduced to five particular heads:

I. The character of him in whom salvation for lost man must be sought, Chap. 6.

II. How he was manifested to the world, namely, in a twofold manner. First, under the Law. Here the Decalogue is expounded, and some other points relating to the law discussed, Chap. 7 and 8. Secondly, under the Gospel. Here the resemblance and difference of the two dispensations are considered, Chap. 9, 10, 11.

III. What kind of person Christ was, and behaved to be, in order to perform the office of Mediator—viz. God and man in one person, Chap. 12, 13, 14.

IV. For what end he was sent into the world by the Father. Here Christ's prophetic, kingly, and priestly offices are considered, Chap. 15.

V. In what way, or by what successive steps, Christ fulfilled the office of our Redeemer, Chap. 16. Here are considered his crucifixion, death, burial, descent to hell, resurrection, ascension to heaven, and seat at the right hand of the Father, together with the practical use of the whole doctrine. Chapter 17 contains an answer to the question, Whether Christ is properly said to have merited the grace of God for us.

CHAPTER 1

Through the fall and revolt of Adam, the whole human race made accursed and degenerate of original sin.

Outline:

How necessary the knowledge of ourselves is, its nature, the danger of mistake, its leading parts, sections 1, 2, 3. II. The causes of Adam's fearful fall, section 4. III. The effects of the fall extending to Adam's posterity, and all the creatures, section 5, to the end of the Chapter, where the nature, propagation, and effect of original sin are considered.

1. The knowledge of ourselves most necessary. To use it properly we must be divested of pride, and clothed with true humility, which will dispose us to consider our fall, and embrace the mercy of God in Christ.

2. Though there is plausibility in the sentiment which stimulates us to self-admiration, the only sound sentiment is that which inclines us to true humbleness of mind. Pretexts for pride. The miserable vanity of sinful man.

3. Different views taken by carnal wisdom and by conscience, which appeals to divine justice as its standard. The knowledge of ourselves, consisting of two parts, the former of which having already been discussed, the latter is here considered.

4. In considering this latter part, two points to be considered; 1. How it happened that Adam involved himself and the whole human race in this dreadful calamity. This, the result not of sensual intemperance but of infidelity (the source of other heinous sins), which led to revolt from God, from whom all true happiness must be derived. An enumeration of the other sins produced by the infidelity of the first man.

5. The second point to be considered is the extent to which the contagious influence of the fall extends. It extends, 1. To all the creatures, though unoffending; and, 2. To the whole posterity of Adam. Hence hereditary corruption, or original sin, and the deprivation of a nature which was previously pure and good. This deprivation communicated to the whole posterity of Adam, but not in the way supposed by the Pelagians and Celestians.

6. Deprivation communicated not merely by imitation, but by propagation. This proved, 1. From the contrast drawn between Adam and Christ. Confirmation from passages of Scripture; 2 From the general declaration that we are the children of wrath.

7. Objection, that if Adam's sin is propagated to his posterity, the soul must be derived by transmission. Answer. Another objection—viz. that children cannot derive corruption from pious parents. Answer.

8. Definition of original sin. Two parts in the definition. Exposition of the latter part. Original sin exposes us to the wrath of God. It also produces in us the works of the flesh. Other definitions considered.

9. Exposition of the former part of the definition—viz. that hereditary depravity extends to all the faculties of the soul.

10. From the exposition of both parts of the definition it follows that God is not the author of sin, the whole human race being corrupted by an inherent viciousness.

11. This, however, is not from nature, but is an adventitious quality. Accordingly, the dream of the Manichees as to two principles vanishes.

It was not without reason that the ancient proverb so strongly recommended to man the knowledge of himself. For if it is deemed disgraceful to be ignorant of things pertaining to the business of life, much more disgraceful is self-ignorance, in consequence of which we miserably deceive ourselves in matters of the highest moment, and so walk blindfold. But the more useful the precept is, the more careful we must be not to use it preposterously, as we see certain philosophers have done. For they, when exhorting man to know himself, state the motive to be that he may not be ignorant of his own excellence and dignity. They wish him to see nothing in himself but what will fill him with vain confidence, and inflate him with pride. But self-knowledge consists in this, first: when reflecting on what God gave us at our creation, and still continues graciously to give, we perceive how great the excellence of our nature would have been had its integrity remained, and, at the same time, remember that we have nothing of our own, but depend entirely on God, from whom we hold at pleasure whatever he has seen it meet to bestow; secondly, when viewing our miserable condition since Adam's fall, all confidence and boasting are overthrown, we blush for shame, and feel truly humble. For as God at first formed us in his own image, that he might elevate our minds to the pursuit of virtue, and the contemplation of eternal life, so to prevent us from heartlessly burying those noble qualities which distinguish us from the lower animals, it is of importance to know that we were endued with reason and intelligence, in order that we might cultivate a holy and honorable life, and regard a blessed immortality as our destined aim. At the same time, it is impossible to think of our primeval dignity without being immediately reminded of the sad spectacle of our ignominy and corruption, ever since we fell from our original in the person of our first parent. In this way, we feel dissatisfied with ourselves, and become truly humble, while we are inflamed with new desires to seek after God, in whom each may regain those good qualities of which all are found to be utterly destitute.

2. In examining ourselves, the search which divine truth enjoins, and the knowledge which it demands, are such as may indispose us to every thing like confidence in our own powers, leave us devoid of all means of boasting, and so incline us to submission. This is the course which we must follow, if we would attain to the true goal, both in speculation and practice. I am not unaware how much more plausible the view is, which invites us rather to ponder on our good qualities, than to contemplate what must overwhelm us with shame—our miserable destitution and ignominy. There is nothing more acceptable to the human mind than flattery, and, accordingly, when told that its endowments are of a high order, it is apt to be excessively credulous. Hence it is not strange that the greater part of mankind have erred so egregiously in this matter. Owing to the innate self-love by which all are blinded, we most willingly persuade ourselves that we do not possess a single quality which is deserving of hatred; and hence, independent of any countenance from without, general credit is given to the very foolish idea that man is perfectly sufficient of himself for all the purposes of a good and happy life. If any are disposed to think more modestly, and concede somewhat to God, that they may not seem to arrogate every thing as their own, still, in making the division, they apportion matters so, that the chief ground of confidence and boasting always remains with themselves. Then, if a discourse is pronounced which flatters the pride spontaneously springing up in man's inmost heart, nothing seems more delightful. Accordingly, in every age, he who is most forward in extolling the excellence of human nature is received with the loudest applause. But be this heralding of human excellence what it may, by teaching man to rest in himself, it does nothing more than fascinate by its sweetness, and, at the same time, so delude as to drown in perdition all who assent to it. For what avails it to proceed in vain confidence, to deliberate, resolve, plan, and attempt what we deem pertinent to the purpose, and, at the very outset, prove deficient and destitute both of sound intelligence

and true virtue, though we still confidently persist till we rush headlong on destruction? But this is the best that can happen to those who put confidence in their own powers. Whosoever, therefore, gives heed to those teachers, who merely employ us in contemplating our good qualities, so far from making progress in self-knowledge, will be plunged into the most pernicious ignorance.

3. While revealed truth concurs with the general consent of mankind in teaching that the second part of wisdom consists in self-knowledge, they differ greatly as to the method by which this knowledge is to be acquired. In the judgment of the flesh man deems his self-knowledge complete, when, with overweening confidence in his own intelligence and integrity, he takes courage, and spurs himself on to virtuous deeds, and when, declaring war upon vice, he uses his utmost endeavor to attain to the honorable and the fair. But he who tries himself by the standard of divine justice, finds nothing to inspire him with confidence; and hence, the more thorough his self-examination, the greater his despondency. Abandoning all dependence on himself, he feels that he is utterly incapable of duly regulating his conduct. It is not the will of God, however, that we should forget the primeval dignity which he bestowed on our first parents—a dignity which may well stimulate us to the pursuit of goodness and justice. It is impossible for us to think of our first original, or the end for which we were created, without being urged to meditate on immortality, and to seek the kingdom of God. But such meditation, so far from raising our spirits, rather casts them down, and makes us humble. For what is our original? One from which we have fallen. What the end of our creation? One from which we have altogether strayed, so that, weary of our miserable lot, we groan, and groaning sigh for a dignity now lost. When we say that man should see nothing in himself which can raise his spirits, our meaning is that he possesses nothing on which he can proudly plume himself. Hence, in considering the knowledge which man ought to have of himself, it seems proper to divide it thus,

first, to consider the end for which he was created, and the qualities—by no means contemptible qualities—with which he was endued, thus urging him to meditate on divine worship and the future life; and, secondly, to consider his faculties, or rather want of faculties—a want which, when perceived, will annihilate all his confidence, and cover him with confusion. The tendency of the former view is to teach him what his duty is, of the latter, to make him aware how far he is able to perform it. We shall treat of both in their proper order.

4. As the act which God punished so severely must have been not a trivial fault, but a heinous crime, it will be necessary to attend to the peculiar nature of the sin which produced Adam's fall, and provoked God to inflict such fearful vengeance on the whole human race. The common idea of sensual intemperance is childish. The sum and substance of all virtues could not consist in abstinence from a single fruit amid a general abundance of every delicacy that could be desired, the earth, with happy fertility, yielding not only abundance, but also endless variety. We must, therefore, look deeper than sensual intemperance. The prohibition to touch the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a trial of obedience, that Adam, by observing it, might prove his willing submission to the command of God. For the very term shows the end of the precept to have been to keep him contented with his lot, and not allow him arrogantly to aspire beyond it. The promise, which gave him hope of eternal life as long as he should eat of the tree of life, and, on the other hand, the fearful denunciation of death the moment he should taste of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, were meant to prove and exercise his faith. Hence it is not difficult to infer in what way Adam provoked the wrath of God. Augustine, indeed, is not far from the mark, when he says (in *Psal.* 19), that pride was the beginning of all evil, because, had not man's ambition carried him higher than he was permitted, he might have continued in his first estate. A further definition, however, must be derived from the kind of temptation which Moses describes. When,

by the subtlety of the devil, the woman faithlessly abandoned the command of God, her fall obviously had its origin in disobedience. This Paul confirms when he says that by the disobedience of one man, all were destroyed. At the same time, it is to be observed that the first man revolted against the authority of God, not only in allowing himself to be ensnared by the wiles of the devil, but also by despising the truth, and turning aside to lies. Assuredly, when the word of God is despised, all reverence for Him is gone. His majesty cannot be duly honored among us, nor his worship maintained in its integrity, unless we hang as it were upon his lips. Hence infidelity was at the root of the revolt. From infidelity, again, sprang ambition and pride, together with ingratitude; because Adam, by longing for more than was allotted him, manifested contempt for the great liberality with which God had enriched him. It was surely monstrous impiety that a son of earth should deem it little to have been made in the likeness, unless he were also made the equal of God. If the apostasy by which man withdraws from the authority of his Maker, nay, petulantly shakes off his allegiance to him, is a foul and execrable crime, it is in vain to extenuate the sin of Adam. Nor was it simple apostasy. It was accompanied with foul insult to God, the guilty pair assenting to Satan's calumnies when he charged God with malice, envy, and falsehood. In fine, infidelity opened the door to ambition, and ambition was the parent of rebellion, man casting off the fear of God, and giving free vent to his lust. Hence, Bernard truly says that in the present day a door of salvation is opened to us when we receive the gospel with our ears, just as by the same entrance, when thrown open to Satan, death was admitted. Never would Adam have dared to show any repugnance to the command of God if he had not been incredulous as to his word. The strongest curb to keep all his affections under due restraint would have been the belief that nothing was better than to cultivate righteousness by obeying the commands of God, and that the highest possible felicity was to be loved by him. Man, therefore, when carried

away by the blasphemies of Satan, did his very utmost to annihilate the whole glory of God.

5. As Adam's spiritual life would have consisted in remaining united and bound to his Maker, so estrangement from him was the death of his soul. Nor is it strange that he who perverted the whole order of nature in heaven and earth deteriorated his race by his revolt. "The whole creation groaneth," saith St Paul, "being made subject to vanity, not willingly" (Rom. 8:20, 22). If the reason is asked, there cannot be a doubt that creation bears part of the punishment deserved by man, for whose use all other creatures were made. Therefore, since through man's fault a curse has extended above and below, over all the regions of the world, there is nothing unreasonable in its extending to all his offspring. After the heavenly image in man was effaced, he not only was himself punished by a withdrawal of the ornaments in which he had been arrayed—viz. wisdom, virtue, justice, truth, and holiness, and by the substitution in their place of those dire pests, blindness, impotence, vanity, impurity, and unrighteousness, but he involved his posterity also, and plunged them in the same wretchedness. This is the hereditary corruption to which early Christian writers gave the name of Original Sin, meaning by the term the deprivation of a nature formerly good and pure. The subject gave rise to much discussion, there being nothing more remote from common apprehension, than that the fault of one should render all guilty, and so become a common sin. This seems to be the reason why the oldest doctors of the church only glance obscurely at the point, or, at least, do not explain it so clearly as it required. This timidity, however, could not prevent the rise of a Pelagius with his profane fiction—that Adam sinned only to his own hurt, but did no hurt to his posterity. Satan, by thus craftily hiding the disease, tried to render it incurable. But when it was clearly proved from Scripture that the sin of the first man passed to all his posterity, recourse was had to the cavil, that it passed by imitation, and not by propagation. The orthodox, therefore, and more especially Augustine, labored to show, that we are not corrupted by acquired wickedness, but

bring an innate corruption from the very womb. It was the greatest impudence to deny this. But no man will wonder at the presumption of the Pelagians and Celestians, who has learned from the writings of that holy man how extreme the effrontery of these heretics was. Surely there is no ambiguity in David's confession, "I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5). His object in the passage is not to throw blame on his parents; but the better to commend the goodness of God towards him, he properly reiterates the confession of impurity from his very birth. As it is clear, that there was no peculiarity in David's case, it follows that it is only an instance of the common lot of the whole human race. All of us, therefore, descending from an impure seed, come into the world tainted with the contagion of sin. Nay, before we behold the light of the sun we are in God's sight defiled and polluted. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one," says the Book of Job (Job 14:4).

6. We thus see that the impurity of parents is transmitted to their children, so that all, without exception, are originally depraved. The commencement of this depravity will not be found until we ascend to the first parent of all as the fountain head. We must, therefore, hold it for certain that in regard to human nature, Adam was not merely a progenitor, but, as it were, a root, and that, accordingly, by his corruption, the whole human race was deservedly vitiated. This is plain from the contrast which the Apostle draws between Adam and Christ, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned; even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:19-21). To what quibble will the Pelagians here recur? That the sin of Adam was propagated by imitation! Is the righteousness of Christ then available to us only in so far as it is an example held forth for our imitation? Can any man tolerate such blasphemy? But if, out of all controversy, the righteousness of Christ, and thereby life, is ours by communication, it follows that both of these were lost in Adam that they might be recovered

in Christ, whereas sin and death were brought in by Adam, that they might be abolished in Christ. There is no obscurity in the words, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Accordingly, the relation subsisting between the two is this: as Adam, by his ruin, involved and ruined us, so Christ, by his grace, restored us to salvation. In this clear light of truth I cannot see any need of a longer or more laborious proof. Thus, too, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, when Paul would confirm believers in the confident hope of the resurrection, he shows that the life is recovered in Christ which was lost in Adam (1 Cor. 15:22). Having already declared that all died in Adam, he now also openly testifies that all are imbued with the taint of sin. Condemnation, indeed, could not reach those who are altogether free from blame. But his meaning cannot be made clearer than from the other member of the sentence, in which he shows that the hope of life is restored in Christ. Everyone knows that the only mode in which this is done is when by a wondrous communication Christ transfuses into us the power of his own righteousness, as it is elsewhere said, "The Spirit is life because of righteousness" (1 Cor. 15:22). Therefore, the only explanation which can be given of the expression, "in Adam all died," is that he by sinning not only brought disaster and ruin upon himself, but also plunged our nature into like destruction; and that not only in one fault, in a matter not pertaining to us, but by the corruption into which he himself fell, he infected his whole seed. Paul never could have said that all are "by nature the children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3), if they had not been cursed from the womb. And it is obvious that the nature there referred to is not nature such as God created, but as vitiated in Adam; for it would have been most incongruous to make God the author of death. Adam, therefore, when he corrupted himself, transmitted the contagion to all his posterity. For a heavenly Judge, even our Savior himself, declares that all are by birth vicious and depraved, when he says that "that which is born of the

flesh is fleshly” (John 3:6), and that therefore the gate of life is closed against all until they have been regenerated.

7. To the understanding of this subject, there is no necessity for an anxious discussion (which in no small degree perplexed the ancient doctors) as to whether the soul of the child comes by transmission from the soul of the parent. It should be enough for us to know that Adam was made the depository of the endowments which God was pleased to bestow on human nature, and that therefore, when he lost what he had received, he lost not only for himself but for us all. Why feel any anxiety about the transmission of the soul, when we know that the qualities which Adam lost he received for us not less than for himself, that they were not gifts to a single man, but attributes of the whole human race? There is nothing absurd, therefore, in the view, that when he was divested, his nature was left naked and destitute that he having been defiled by sin, the pollution extends to all his seed. Thus, from a corrupt root corrupt branches proceeding, transmit their corruption to the saplings which spring from them. The children being vitiated in their parent, conveyed the taint to the grandchildren; in other words, corruption commencing in Adam, is, by perpetual descent, conveyed from those preceding to those coming after them. The cause of the contagion is neither in the substance of the flesh nor the soul, but God was pleased to ordain that those gifts which he had bestowed on the first man, that man should lose as well for his descendants as for himself. The Pelagian cavil, as to the improbability of children deriving corruption from pious parents, whereas, they ought rather to be sanctified by their purity, is easily refuted. Children come not by spiritual regeneration but carnal descent. Accordingly, as Augustine says, “Both the condemned unbeliever and the acquitted believer beget offspring not acquitted but condemned, because the nature which begets is corrupt.” Moreover, though godly parents do in some measure contribute to the holiness of their offspring, this is by the blessing of God; a blessing, however, which does

not prevent the primary and universal curse of the whole race from previously taking effect. Guilt is from nature, whereas sanctification is from supernatural grace.

8. But lest the thing itself of which we speak be unknown or doubtful, it will be proper to define original sin. (Calvin, in *Conc. Trident.* 1, Dec. Sess. 5). I have no intention, however, to discuss all the definitions which different writers have adopted, but only to adduce the one which seems to me most accordant with truth. Original sin, then, may be defined a hereditary corruption and depravity of our nature, extending to all the parts of the soul, which first makes us obnoxious to the wrath of God, and then produces in us works which in Scripture are termed works of the flesh. This corruption is repeatedly designated by Paul by the term sin (Gal. 5:19); while the works which proceed from it, such as adultery, fornication, theft, hatred, murder, revelings, he terms, in the same way, the fruits of sin, though in various passages of Scripture, and even by Paul himself, they are also termed sins. The two things, therefore, are to be distinctly observed—viz. that being thus perverted and corrupted in all the parts of our nature, we are, merely on account of such corruption, deservedly condemned by God, to whom nothing is acceptable but righteousness, innocence, and purity. This is not liability for another's fault. For when it is said that the sin of Adam has made us obnoxious to the justice of God, the meaning is not that we, who are in ourselves innocent and blameless, are bearing his guilt, but that since by his transgression we are all placed under the curse, he is said to have brought us under obligation. Through him, however, not only has punishment been derived, but pollution instilled, for which punishment is justly due. Hence Augustine, though he often terms it another's sin (that he may more clearly show how it comes to us by descent), at the same time asserts that it is each individual's own sin. And the Apostle most distinctly testifies, that "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12); that is, are involved in original sin, and polluted

by its stain. Hence, even infants bringing their condemnation with them from their mother's womb, suffer not for another's, but for their own defect. For although they have not yet produced the fruits of their own unrighteousness, they have the seed implanted in them. Nay, their whole nature is, as it were, a seed-bed of sin, and therefore cannot but be odious and abominable to God. Hence it follows, that it is properly deemed sinful in the sight of God; for there could be no condemnation without guilt. Next comes the other point—viz. that this perversity in us never ceases, but constantly produces new fruits, in other words, those works of the flesh which we formerly described; just as a lighted furnace sends forth sparks and flames, or a fountain without ceasing pours out water. Hence, those who have defined original sin as the want of the original righteousness which we ought to have had, though they substantially comprehend the whole case, do not significantly enough express its power and energy. For our nature is not only utterly devoid of goodness, but so prolific in all kinds of evil, that it can never be idle. Those who term it concupiscence use a word not very inappropriate, provided it were added (this, however, many will by no means concede) that everything which is in man, from the intellect to the will, from the soul even to the flesh, is defiled and pervaded with this concupiscence; or, to express it more briefly, that the whole man is in himself nothing else than concupiscence.

9. I have said, therefore, that all the parts of the soul were possessed by sin, ever since Adam revolted from the fountain of righteousness. For not only did the inferior appetites entice him, but abominable impiety seized upon the very citadel of the mind, and pride penetrated to his inmost heart (Rom. 7:12; Book 4, chap. 15, sec. 10-12), so that it is foolish and unmeaning to confine the corruption thence proceeding to what are called sensual motions, or to call it an excitement, which allures, excites, and drags the single part which they call sensuality into sin. Here Peter Lombard has displayed gross ignorance (Lomb., lib. 2 Dist. 31). When investigating the seat of

corruption, he says it is in the flesh (as Paul declares), not properly, indeed, but as being more apparent in the flesh. As if Paul had meant that only a part of the soul, and not the whole nature, was opposed to supernatural grace. Paul himself leaves no room for doubt, when he says, that corruption does not dwell in one part only, but that no part is free from its deadly taint. For, speaking of corrupt nature, he not only condemns the inordinate nature of the appetites, but, in particular, declares that the understanding is subjected to blindness, and the heart to depravity (Eph. 4:17-18). The third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is nothing but a description of original sin; The same thing appears more clearly from the mode of renovation. For the spirit, which is contrasted with the old man, and the flesh, denotes not only the grace by which the sensual or inferior part of the soul is corrected, but includes a complete reformation of all its parts (Eph. 4:23). And, accordingly, Paul enjoins not only that gross appetites be suppressed, but that we be renewed in the spirit of our mind (Eph. 4:23), as he elsewhere tells us to be transformed by the renewing of our mind (Rom. 12:2). Hence it follows, that that part in which the dignity and excellence of the soul are most conspicuous, has not only been wounded, but so corrupted, that mere cure is not sufficient. There must be a new nature. How far sin has seized both on the mind and heart, we shall shortly see. Here I only wished briefly to observe, that the whole man, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, is so deluged, as it were, that no part remains exempt from sin, and, therefore, everything which proceeds from him is imputed as sin. Thus Paul says that all carnal thoughts and affections are enmity against God, and consequently death (Rom. 8:7).

10. Let us have done, then, with those who dare to inscribe the name of God on their vices, because we say that men are born vicious. The divine workmanship, which they ought to look for in the nature of Adam, when still entire and uncorrupted, they absurdly expect to find in their depravity. The blame of our ruin rests with our own carnality,

not with God, its only cause being our degeneracy from our original condition. And let no one here glamour that God might have provided better for our safety by preventing Adam's fall. This objection, which, from the daring presumption implied in it, is odious to every pious mind, relates to the mystery of predestination, which will afterwards be considered in its own place (*Tertull. de Praescript.*, Calvin, *Lib. de Predest.*). Meanwhile let us remember that our ruin is attributable to our own depravity, that we may not insinuate a charge against God himself, the Author of nature. It is true that nature has received a mortal wound, but there is a great difference between a wound inflicted from without, and one inherent in our first condition. It is plain that this wound was inflicted by sin; and, therefore, we have no ground of complaint except against ourselves. This is carefully taught in Scripture. For the Preacher says, "Lo, this only have I found, that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (*Eccl. 7:29*). Since man, by the kindness of God, was made upright, but by his own infatuation fell away unto vanity, his destruction is obviously attributable only to himself (*Athanas. in Orat. Cont. Idola.*).

11. We say, then, that man is corrupted by a natural viciousness, but not by one which proceeded from nature. In saying that it proceeded not from nature, we mean that it was rather an adventitious event which befell man, than a substantial property assigned to him from the beginning. We, however call it natural to prevent any one from supposing that each individual contracts it by depraved habit, whereas all receive it by a hereditary law. And we have authority for so calling it. For, on the same grounds the apostle says, that we are "by nature the children of wrath" (*Eph. 2:3*). How could God, who takes pleasure in the meanest of his works be offended with the noblest of them all? The offense is not with the work itself, but the corruption of the work. Wherefore, if it is not improper to say, that, in consequence of the corruption of human nature, man is naturally hateful to God, it is not improper to say, that he is naturally vicious and depraved.

Hence, in the view of our corrupt nature, Augustine hesitates not to call those sins natural which necessarily reign in the flesh wherever the grace of God is wanting. This disposes of the absurd notion of the Manichees, who, imagining that man was essentially wicked, went the length of assigning him a different Creator, that they might thus avoid the appearance of attributing the cause and origin of evil to a righteous God.

Study Guide Questions

Section 1

1. What ancient proverb does Calvin commend?
2. What echo of an earlier point in Calvin does this make?
3. What are the two essential parts of self-knowledge?

Section 2

1. Instead of true self-knowledge, what do we tend to seek out instead?
2. What does this flattery appeal to?

Section 3

1. Does reflection on our original nobility create pride in us?
2. How are we then to divide our knowledge of ourselves?
3. What will this do?

Section 4

1. Does Calvin believe that Adam was allowed to eat from the tree of life?
2. Was Adam's sin simply gluttony?
3. What was the root of Adam's sin?
4. What was the progress of Adam's rebellion?

Section 5

1. How does Calvin define the "death of [Adam's] soul"?

2. How does Calvin define “original sin”?
3. What was Pelagius’ “profane fiction”?

Section 6

1. When are children defiled by original sin?
2. What is Adam’s position with regard to the human race?
3. What is, for Calvin, “out of all controversy”?
4. How does Calvin define that communication of righteousness from Christ?

Section 7

1. What should we be content to know with regard to all this?
2. Does the contagion spread through the substance of flesh or soul?

Section 8

1. How does Calvin define original sin?
2. Do infants bear the curse of original sin?
3. Is this original sin nothing more than the absence of righteousness?

Section 9

1. How far does original sin extend in a man?
2. Is it true that the flesh is fallen, but the soul is not?

Section 10

1. What is Calvin’s response to those who would write God’s name upon their faults?
2. What is wrong with asking the question “Why did God not prevent the Fall?”

Section 11

1. In what way is sin unnatural?
2. In what way is sin natural?

CHAPTER 2

Man now deprived of freedom of will, and miserably enslaved.

Having in the first chapter treated of the fall of man, and the corruption of the human race, it becomes necessary to inquire, Whether the sons of Adam are deprived of all liberty; and if any particle of liberty remains, how far its power extends? The four next chapters are devoted to this question. This second chapter may be reduced to three general heads: I. The foundation of the whole discussion. II. The opinions of others on the subject of human freedom, sections 2-9. III. The true doctrine on the subject, sections 10-27.

Outline:

1. Connection of the previous with the four following chapters. In order to lay a proper foundation for the discussion of free will, two obstacles in the way to be removed—viz. sloth and pride. The basis and sum of the whole discussion. The solid structure of this basis, and a clear demonstration of it by the argument a *majori ad minus*. Also from the inconveniences and absurdities arising from the obstacle of pride.

2. The second part of the chapter containing the opinions of others. The opinions of philosophers.

3. The labyrinths of philosophers. A summary of the opinion common to all the philosophers.

4. The opinions of others continued—viz. The opinions of the ancient theologians on the subject of free will. These composed partly of Philosophy and partly of Theology. Hence their falsehood, extravagance, perplexity, variety, and contradiction. Too great fondness for philosophy in the Church has obscured the knowledge of God and of ourselves. The better to explain the opinions of philosophers, a definition of Free Will given. Wide difference between this definition and these opinions.

5. Certain things annexed to Free Will by the ancient theologians, especially the Schoolmen. Many kinds of Free Will according to them.

6. Puzzles of scholastic divines in the explanation of this question.

7. The conclusion that so trivial a matter ought not to be so much magnified. Objection of those who have a fondness for new terms in the Church. Objection answered.

8. Another answer. The Fathers, and especially Augustine, while retaining the term Free Will, yet condemned the doctrine of the heretics on the subject, as destroying the grace of God.

9. The language of the ancient writers on the subject of Free Will is, with the exception of that of Augustine, almost unintelligible. Still they set little or no value on human virtue, and ascribe the praise of all goodness to the Holy Spirit.

10. The last part of the chapter, containing a simple statement of the true doctrine. The fundamental principle is, that man first begins to profit in the knowledge of himself when he becomes sensible of his ruined condition. This confirmed, 1. by passages of Scripture.

11. Confirmed, 2. by the testimony of ancient theologians.

12. The foundation being laid, to show how far the power both of the intellect and will now extends, it is maintained in general, and in conformity with the views of Augustine and the Schoolmen, that the natural endowments of man are corrupted, and the supernatural almost

ANSWERS TO STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS

Chapter One

Section 1

1. What ancient proverb does Calvin commend?

Know thyself.

2. What echo of an earlier point in Calvin does this make?

Calvin begins the *Institutes* by saying that man must know God and know himself.

3. What are the two essential parts of self-knowledge?

We must know the loftiness of our original estate, and we must also know the magnitude of the Fall.

Section 2

1. Instead of true self-knowledge, what do we tend to seek out instead?

We seek out flattery.

2. What does this flattery appeal to?

It appeals to the “pride spontaneously springing up” in our “inmost heart.”

Section 3

1. Does reflection on our original nobility create pride in us?

No, just the opposite. It creates humility.

2. How are we then to divide our knowledge of ourselves?

We should meditate on the greatness of man's condition before the Fall, and we should weigh our own subsequent lack of ability to do anything right given the Fall.

3. What will this do?

It will cause us to cast ourselves upon God.

Section 4

1. Does Calvin believe that Adam was allowed to eat from the tree of life?

Yes.

2. Was Adam's sin simply gluttony?

No. What God so severely punished cannot have been "a trivial fault."

3. What was the root of Adam's sin?

Unfaithfulness.

4. What was the progress of Adam's rebellion?

Unfaithfulness led to pride and ambition, along with ingratitude, which resulted in disobedience.

Section 5

1. How does Calvin define the "death of [Adam's] soul"?

He defines it as estrangement from God.

2. How does Calvin define "original sin"?

He defines it as "the depravation of a nature formerly good and pure."

3. What was Pelagius' "profane fiction"?

It was that Adam sinned to his own hurt, and that his sin did not harm his descendants.

Section 6

1. When are children defiled by original sin?

At their begetting.

2. What is Adam's position with regard to the human race?

He is the root of human nature.

3. What is, for Calvin, “out of all controversy”?

That if Christ’s righteousness and life is ours by communication, then we receive sin and death from Adam the same way.

4. How does Calvin define that communication of righteousness from Christ?

As the power of righteousness being transfused into us.

Section 7

1. What should we be content to know with regard to all this?

That God gave to Adam what He intended the human race to have, and so when Adam lost those gifts, he lost them for us all.

2. Does the contagion spread through the substance of flesh or soul?

No. The contagion takes its origin because it has been so ordained by God.

Section 8

1. How does Calvin define original sin?

As a hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature, diffused into all parts of the soul.

2. Do infants bear the curse of original sin?

Yes. Their “whole nature is ... a seed-bed of sin.”

3. Is this original sin nothing more than the absence of righteousness?

No, it includes the active presence of every evil.

Section 9

1. How far does original sin extend in a man?

To every part of his nature.

2. Is it true that the flesh is fallen, but the soul is not?

No. No part of a man remains “exempt from sin.”

Section 10

1. What is Calvin’s response to those who would write God’s name upon their faults?

He calls them perverse and says, “Let us have done [with them].”