

The Scholar as Worshiper

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In his famous *Institutes*, John Calvin begins by detailing a doctrine of the knowledge of God, of which he states,

“The knowledge of God which we are invited to cultivate is not that which, resting satisfied with empty speculation, only flutters in the brain, but a knowledge which will prove substantial and fruitful wherever it is duly perceived, and rooted in the heart.”¹

My former professor, Scott Manetsch—a Reformation historian and Calvin scholar—personally embodies this theology. I didn’t know who Dr. Manetsch was before entering his classroom at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School for the first time. But it didn’t take me long to realize that this man was not only a serious scholar of church history, but much more importantly a man captivated by the God of that history.

As Calvin says, true knowledge of God is more than just information entering our minds for inquisitive contemplation. Genuine apprehension of God—to perceive him as he is—necessarily entails making us worshipers of God, leaving us transformed by the encounter.

The aim of all sound biblical-theological scholarship, then, is this: that as one grows in their knowledge of God, they would increasingly honor him as God. God is not some object of our study, as if he can be tamed and examined in a safe, controlled environment, or as if he’s some subject matter to be

mastered academically. Rather, he masters *us*. *He* is the actor; and *we* are the objects of his transforming, self-revelatory grace.

Dr. Manetsch’s life, I believe, reflects *that* sort of scholarship: the scholar as worshiper. He’s a professor with a pastor’s heart. His care for his students is notable, and his enthusiasm for the subject matter infectious. The way he taught, I felt like I was being *pastored*—or maybe more importantly, *shown* how to pastor.

I’m sure there’s much I learned from his classes (amid much I probably forgot). I can tell you that the Great Schism occurred in AD 1054 or debrief you on the early Christological heresies. But what you, as teachers, pass on to students is more than just the content you teach. Your finest curriculum is the *sort* of scholar you are—one whose life resonates with the impact of having been enraptured by God. **D**

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¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1984), I, V, 9.



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