

## JOHN CALVIN ON THE GENESIS OF GENESIS -- by Rev. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee

"**History**," asserts Calvin, "is traced back through a **long series of past ages**.... Moses testifies.... He does not here put forward divinations of his own, but is the instrument of the **Holy Spirit** for the **publication** of those things which it was of importance for all men to know.... He does **not** transmit to memory **things before unheard of**, but...consigns to **writing facts which the Fathers had delivered** [principally **in writing**] from **hand to hand** to their children through a long succession of years....

"Can we conceive that man was so placed on the Earth as to be **ignorant** of his own origin, and of the origin of those things which he enjoyed? **No sane person doubts that Adam was very well-instructed respecting them all.**" Thus Calvin.

Genesis 5:1f mentions "**the Book of the generations of Adam**." Carefully note once more: "**the Book of the generations of Adam**"! Yes, "**the Book**" -- "**the Book**" written either by God for Adam and his descendants, or written under in-**Spir**-ation from God by Adam for himself and his descendants.

Continues Calvin: "**Did Noah, warned by a divine judgment so memorable, neglect to transmit it to posterity?**" No! Genesis 7:11f and 10:1f.

Indeed, it is almost inconceivable that the precise dates mentioned in the Flood Narrative **could** have been transmitted to posterity **without** a **written** record! Genesis 8:3-13. And the same applies to the transmission of **the lists of the precise ages** attained by both the antediluvian and the postdiluvian patriarchs. Genesis 5:1-32 & 11:10-32.

Calvin then goes on. Apparently still presuming a series of inspired **written** records, he notes that also "**Abraham is expressly honoured with this eulogy, that he was the teacher...of his family.**" Genesis 18:19."

Indeed, the entire **inspired** Book of Genesis is largely a compilation of a whole succession of shorter **inspired** books -- viz. "[the **Book** of] the generations of Heaven and Earth" (Genesis 1:1 to 4:26, according to 2:4); "the **Book** of the generations of Adam" (Genesis 5:1 to 6:8); "[the **Book** of] the generations of Noah" (Genesis 6:9 to 9:29); "[the **Book** of] the generations of the sons of Noah" (Genesis 10:1 to 11:9); "[the **Book** of] the generations of Shem" the son of Noah (Genesis 11:10-26); "[the **Book** of] the generations of Terah" (Genesis 11:27 to 25:11); "[the **Book** of] the generations of Ishmael" (Genesis 25:12-18); "[the **Book** of] the generations of Isaac" (Genesis 25:19 to 35:29); "[the **Book** of] the generations of Esau" (Genesis 26:1-8); "[the **Book** of] the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in Mount Seir" (Genesis 36:9-43f); "[the **Book** of] the generations of Jacob" (Genesis 37:2 to 38:30); and also what might be called '[the **Book** of] the generations of Joseph' (Genesis 39:1 to 41:52f).

Thus John Calvin very rightly indeed concludes: "**Long before the time of Moses**, an acquaintance with the Covenant which God had entered with their fathers [Hosea 6:7 and

Genesis 6:18 & 17:1-7 *etc.*], was common to the whole people.... He does not propound it as something new, but only commemorates what **all** held -- what **the men of old** themselves had **received** from their **ancestors**....

"We ought not to doubt that 'The Creation of the World' as here described [in Genesis chapter one] was already known **through the ancient and perpetual traditions [both written and oral] of the Fathers**.... It pleased the Lord to commit the history to **writing**, for the purpose of preserving its purity....

"After the World had been created, **man** was placed in it as in a theatre.... He **was endued with understanding and reason** so that, being distinguished from brute animals, he might **meditate** on a better life and might even tend directly towards **God Whose image he bore engraven** on his own person."

Carefully observe the word "**engraven**"! Compare the word "**written**" in Romans 1:17-20 and 2:14-15!! **Romanists and other rejecters of sola Scriptura, note well!!!**

Continues Calvin: "After Adam had by his own desperate fall ruined himself and all his posterity..., all the pious who have since lived, were sustained by the very same promise of salvation by which Adam was first raised from the fall.... It behoves us, with the holy Fathers, to press on toward the mark of a happy immortality....

"God appointed man, it is true, lord of the World.... This authority was not given only to Adam, but to all his posterity as well.... Adam was, by divine appointment, an inhabitant of the Earth -- in order that he might, in passing through his earthly life, **meditate** on heavenly glory.... He had been bountifully enriched by the Lord with innumerable benefits, from the enjoyment of which he might infer the paternal benevolence of God....

"What the state of those times was..., may in some degree be gathered from a naked narration.... '**The Book**,' according to the Hebrew phrase [in Genesis 5:1], is taken for a **catalogue**. '**The generations**' signify a **continuous succession of a race**.... The design with which this **catalogue** was made, was to inform us that...there was always a number...who worshipped God....

"**Scripture**, gathering together the impressions of Deity -- shows us the true God clearly.... The **course** which God followed...**from the very first**, was...by the **addition** of **His Word**.... It was by **this** help [that] **Adam, Noah, Abraham and the other Patriarchs attained to that familiar knowledge** which in a manner distinguished them from unbelievers....

"It is necessary to apply to **Scripture** -- in order to learn the sure marks which distinguish God as the **Creator** of the World from the whole herd of fictitious gods.... God, the Maker of the World, is manifested to us in **Scripture**....

"God, foreseeing the inefficiency [or ineffectiveness] of His image imprinted on the fair form of the Universe, has given the assistance of His **Word** to all whom He has ever been pleased to instruct effectually....

"We must go, I say, to the Word.... The Scriptures are the only records in which God has been pleased to consign His truth to perpetual remembrance....

"A most pernicious error has very generally prevailed [in Romanism] -- viz. that Scripture is of importance -- only in so far as conceded to it, by the suffrage of the Church. As if the eternal and inviolable truth of God could depend on the will of men!...

"When the Church receives it and gives it the stamp of her authority, she does not make that authentic which was otherwise doubtful or controverted. But, acknowledging it as the truth of God -- she, as in duty bound, shows her reverence by an unhesitating assent.... Scripture bears upon its face as clear evidence of its truth as white and black do of their colour....

"Scripture exhibits clear evidence of its being spoken by God.... Those who are inwardly taught by the Holy Spirit, acquiesce implicitly in Scripture.... It came to us, by the instrumentality of men, from the very mouth of God.

"Those who...rejecting Scripture [as the sole sufficient source of religious knowledge], and imagine that they have some peculiar way of penetrating to God, are to be deemed to be...under the influence not so much of error as of madness. For certain giddy men [among the Anabaptists] have lately appeared who...make a great display of the superiority of the Spirit.... I wish they would tell me what 'spirit' it is whose 'inspiration' raises them to such a 'sublime' height!.... Satan transforms himself into an angel of light....

"The Lord has so knit together the certainty of His Word and His Spirit, that our minds are duly imbued with reverence for the Word -- when the Spirit, shining upon it, enables us there to behold the face of God.... Christ explained to the two disciples (Luke 24:27) not that they were to...trust to their own wisdom, but that they were to understand the Scriptures!"

-- J. Calvin: *Argument in his Commentary on Genesis* (and on 1:26 & 2:8 & 5:1 therein), and in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I:6:1-3 & I:7:1-5 & I:9:1-3.

Dr. Francis Nigel Lee was born in 1934 in the Westmorland County of Cumbria (in Great Britain). He is the great-grandson of a fiery preacher whose family disintegrated when he backslid. Dr. Lee's father was an Atheist, yet he married a Roman Catholic who raised her son Nigel in that faith. Yet, when Nigel was seven, his father led him into Atheism.

Preacher, Theologian, Lawyer, Educationist, Historian, Philosopher and Author, Lee has produced more than 330 publications (including many books) -- and also a multitude of long unpublished manuscripts. Apart from an honorary LL.D., he has 21 earned degrees -- including eleven earned doctorates for dissertations\* in Education, Law, Literature, Philosophy and Theology.

Lee had the privilege of leading both of his parents to Christ, and seeing them embrace Calvinism. After his father's murder, Lee joyfully led his father's murderer in jail (and later also the latter's parents) to Christ. Though loving to study, Lee prefers to preach and lead folk to Christ.

A diehard predestinarian, Lee now lives in the Commonwealth of Australia -- where he was for twenty years the Professor of Systematic Theology and Caldwell-Morrow Lecturer in Church History at the Queensland Presbyterian Theological College. He and his wife Nellie retired in 2000. They have two children, Johanna Paulina who teaches at Parkridge High School and Anna Marie who teaches at Earnshaw State College.

