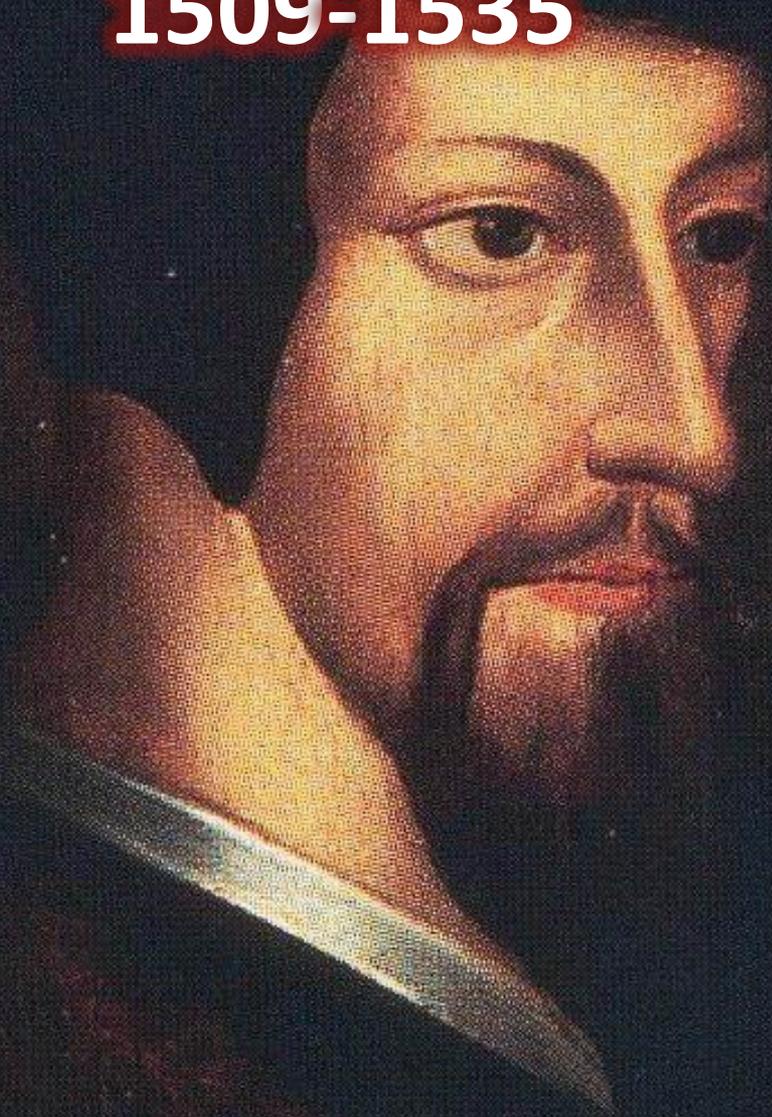


Review

- What practice are the Hutterites known for in terms of their handling of their physical possessions?
 - The Hutterites pooled their money and possessions in a common treasury, in keeping with what they believed to be the early Christian practice (from Acts 2).
- What area of belief makes the Anabaptists the forerunners of practically *all* modern Protestants?
 - Their belief in the *separation of church and state*
- What city did Bucer minister in for nearly 25 years?
 - Strasbourg, France
- Bucer disagreed with the idea that the state controlled the Church – an idea that had characterized the Reformation up to that point. Who did Bucer believe should rule over the church?
 - Christ, through special offices of ministry which were set down in Scripture – Pastor, elder, deacon, etc.

The Young John Calvin

1509-1535



The Young John Calvin

- Martin Bucer was a theological giant by any standard, and the fact that his present-day reputation is almost totally eclipsed by the more celebrated John Calvin must not blind us to his significance as a founding father of the Reformed faith, nor cause us to give an undue prominence to Calvin.
- Calvin never was to Reformed Protestantism the dominating figure that Luther was to Lutheranism.
- Nonetheless, it remains true that if any single person among the Reformed pioneers had ultimately the most far-reaching influence on the Church and the world, it was surely Calvin.

The Young John Calvin

- John Calvin was born at Noyon in Picardy, north-eastern France, in 1509, the son of a Church lawyer attached to Noyon Cathedral.
- His social background was more “upper class” than Luther’s, something that helps to account for the mature Calvin’s rather aloof, aristocratic personality.
- When a Protestant refugee met Calvin after the latter had become the Reformer of Geneva, he addressed him as “brother Calvin”, only to be told that the correct form of address was “Monsieur Calvin”.
- Calvin’s father Gérard intended him to enter the Roman Catholic priesthood, so the youthful Calvin prepared himself by studying at Paris University from 1523 to 1528, first at the College de la Marche where he learned Latin from one of its greatest teachers of the day, Mathurin Cordier.

The Young John Calvin

- Cordier must have made an impression on young Calvin; many years later, the Reformer dedicated to his old Latin teacher his commentary on 1 Thessalonians. It is worth quoting:
 - *It is only right that you should come in for a share in my labors, since under your patronage, having entered on a course of study, I gained a proficiency which prepared me to be useful, in some degree, to the Church of God. When my father sent me, while yet a boy, to Paris, after I had simply tasted the first elements of the Latin tongue, providence arranged that I had, for a short time, the privilege of having you as my instructor. I was taught by you the true method of learning, in such a way that I might be prepared afterwards to acquire a somewhat better competence... I gained so much help afterwards from your training, that it is with good reason that I confess myself indebted to you for whatever progress I have since made. And this I desired to testify to posterity, so that, if any advantage is added to them from my writings, they will know that it has in some degree originated with you.*

The Young John Calvin

- The mature Calvin's Latin was unusually pure and beautiful; we can see in his time at the College de la Marche under Cordier the beginnings of the Reformer's future brilliant style.
- Calvin then moved to the College de Montaigu in Paris where Calvin formed a close friendship with Nicholas Cop, a zealous Christian humanist whose father was physician to the French king, Francis I. This friendship was to have important consequences.
- In 1527, Calvin's father got into a dispute with the leaders of the Noyon Cathedral and decided that his son should not become a priest after all, but a lawyer.

The Young John Calvin

- So Calvin now terminated his theology studies and became a law student.
- Here he also took pains to acquire the riches of the new humanist culture, learning Greek.
- When his father died unexpectedly in 1531, this left Calvin free to abandon law and dedicate himself to Christian humanism at the College de France in Paris.
- At the College, Calvin mastered Hebrew as well as Greek, and also wrote his first book, a commentary on a moral treatise called *De Clementia* (“Concerning Mercy”) by Seneca, the ancient Roman Stoic philosopher.
- It was published in 1532, and Calvin sent a copy to Erasmus.
- The book clinched Calvin’s reputation as a budding humanist scholar; but there was no hint in it that he had yet embraced the Protestant faith.

The Young John Calvin

- However, some time between 1532 and 1534, Calvin passed over (like so many others) from Christian humanism into avowed Protestantism.
- We do not know exactly when or how it happened.
- One important influence may have been a Waldensian merchant, *Etienne de la Forge*, in whose house in Paris Calvin lodged.
- De la Forge and Calvin were good friends, and the Waldensian had embraced the Reformation with enthusiasm
- He used his house and his wealth to give shelter to Protestant refugees from the Netherlands.

The Young John Calvin

- Calvin later described his conversion in the preface to his commentary on the Psalms:
 - *Since I was more stubbornly addicted to the superstitions of the papacy than to be easily pulled out of that deep swamp, by a sudden conversion God subdued my heart (too hardened for one so young) to a teachable spirit. Thus, having gained some taste of true godliness, I burned with great zeal to make progress. Although I did not give up my former studies, I pursued them with less enthusiasm; and a year had not passed when all who desired this purer doctrine flocked to me, newcomer and beginner though I was, in order to learn it.*

The Young John Calvin

- In November, 1533 Calvin's friend, Nicholas Cop, gave a speech as the newly appointed rector of Paris University.
- Cop used the occasion to issue a humanist call for reformation in the Church, attacking scholastic theology and quoting Erasmus and Luther with approval.
- The speech caused an uproar among traditional Catholics, and it provoked King Francis I into adopting a more repressive policy towards Protestants and their sympathizers.
- Cop fled to the Swiss Protestant city of Basel; Calvin escaped from Paris disguised as a gardener and went into hiding in western France.

The Young John Calvin

- France became an even more dangerous country for Protestant sympathizers in 1534, after the citizens of Paris woke up on the morning of October 19th and found the city covered with posters condemning the Roman Catholic mass as blasphemy and the Roman clergy as servants of Antichrist.
- The posters were the work of an extreme Protestant, Antoine Marcourt.
- The result was an outbreak of violent government persecution of French Protestants; in Paris, the authorities burnt twenty-four Protestants at the stake (including Calvin's Waldensian friend, Etienne de la Forge), and imprisoned and tortured many others.
- Now clearly a Protestant himself, Calvin followed in Nicholas Cop's footsteps and fled to Basel, arriving there in January 1535.

16th Century Europe



Institutes of the Christian Religion

1536

CHRISTIA

NAE RELIGIONIS INSTI-
tutio, totam ferè pietatis summã, & quic
quid est in doctrina salutis cognitu ne-
cessarium, complectens: omnibus pie-
tatis studiosis lectu dignissi-
mum opus, ac re-
cens editum.

PRAEFATIO AD CHRI-
stianissimum REGEM FRANCIAE, quæ
hic et liber pro confessione fidei
offertur.

IOANNE CALVINO
Nouiodunensi auctore.

BASILEAE,
M. D. XXXVI.

CATALOGUE
N^o 4815.

Caract. Libr.
2670.

Institutes of the Christian Religion

- To justify his burning of Protestants, Francis I of France issued a public letter in 1535 accusing French Protestants of being political rebels intent on overthrowing the government (perhaps not surprising in the aftermath of Münster).
- Calvin felt he must defend his persecuted brothers and sisters against this slander, and in March 1536 he published a short book which he had begun writing in when he was in hiding in Western France, called the ***Institutes of the Christian Religion***, prefaced by an open letter to Francis I.
- The letter was a masterpiece; with dignity and passion, Calvin set forth the essence of the Protestant position and vindicated French Protestants from Francis I's false accusations.
- From that moment, the world began to regard 26-year-old Calvin as the foremost champion of French Protestantism.

Institutes of the Christian Religion

- The book to which Calvin attached the letter, the *Institutes*, was an orderly summary of Christian doctrine and the Christian life as understood by Protestants.
- It was the clearest, most elegant, and best-organized presentation of Reformation theology and spirituality which had yet appeared.
- *Institutes* is the English form of the book's Latin title *Institutio*, which has a range of meanings – “instruction”, “manual”, “summary”.
- A great success, the book sold well, and a second edition (greatly enlarged) came out three years later in 1539.

Institutes of the Christian Religion

- Throughout his life, Calvin continued to expand and revise the *Institutes*; the final edition was published in 1559, and it became the standard textbook of Reformed theology.
- The *Institutes* was a work of literary as well as theological brilliance, written in beautiful Latin and French (there were editions in both languages)
- The French editions had a notable impact on the future development of the French tongue.

Institutes of the Christian Religion

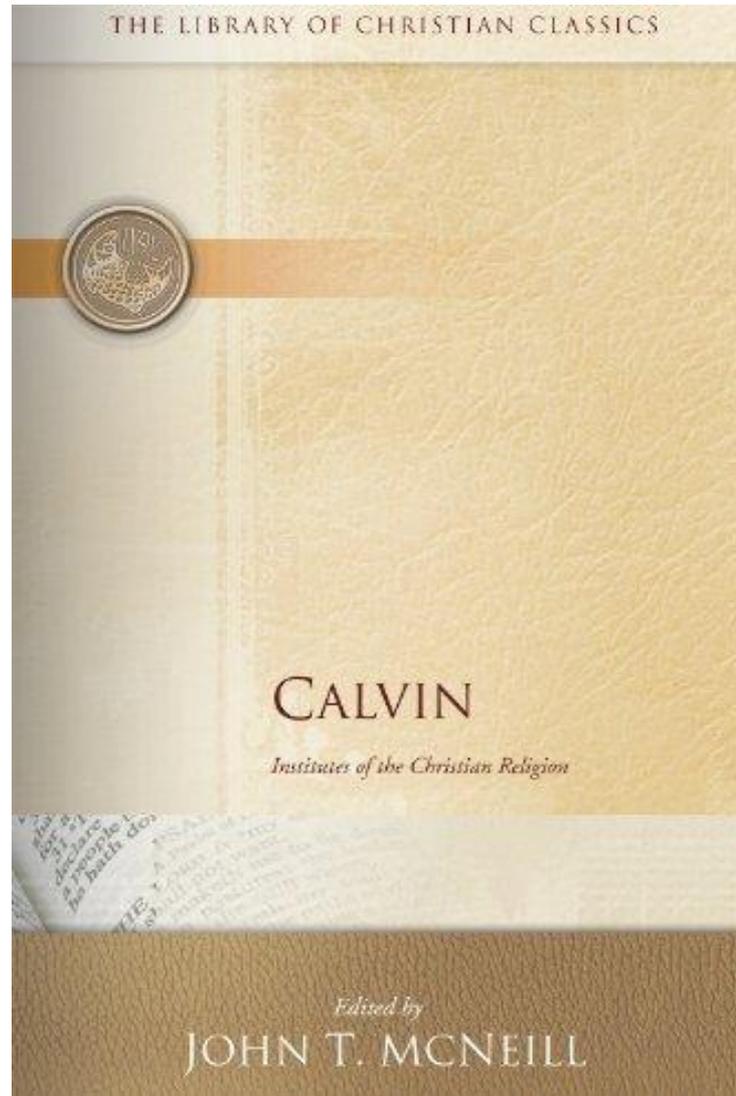
- The final 1559 edition of the Institutes was divided into *four* books. Calvin based this fourfold structure on the Apostles' Creed, with its four central assertions:

Apostles' Creed	Calvin's Institutes
"I believe in God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth"	Book One – "The Knowledge of God the Creator"
"And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord"	Book Two – "The Knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ"
"I believe in the Holy Spirit"	Book Three – "The Way we Receive the Grace of Christ"
"I believe in the holy Catholic Church"	Book Four – "The External Means or Aids by which God Invites us into the Society of Christ"

Institutes of the Christian Religion

- By setting out the Institutes like this, Calvin was making an important point: Protestants had **not** invented **new** doctrines of their own; they were simply rejecting the various errors that had grown up in the Western Catholic Church during the Middle Ages, and returning to the pure apostolic faith of the early Church.
- Calvin himself was one of the 16th century's great students of the early Church fathers; his writings overflowed with patristic quotations, **especially** from Augustine of Hippo.
- Calvin also had some familiarity with the great Catholic theologians of the Middle Ages.
- Frequently Calvin referred to the medieval thinkers only to **criticize** them, but he exempted **Bernard of Clairvaux** from this general condemnation, quoting the famous Cistercian monk with warm approval.

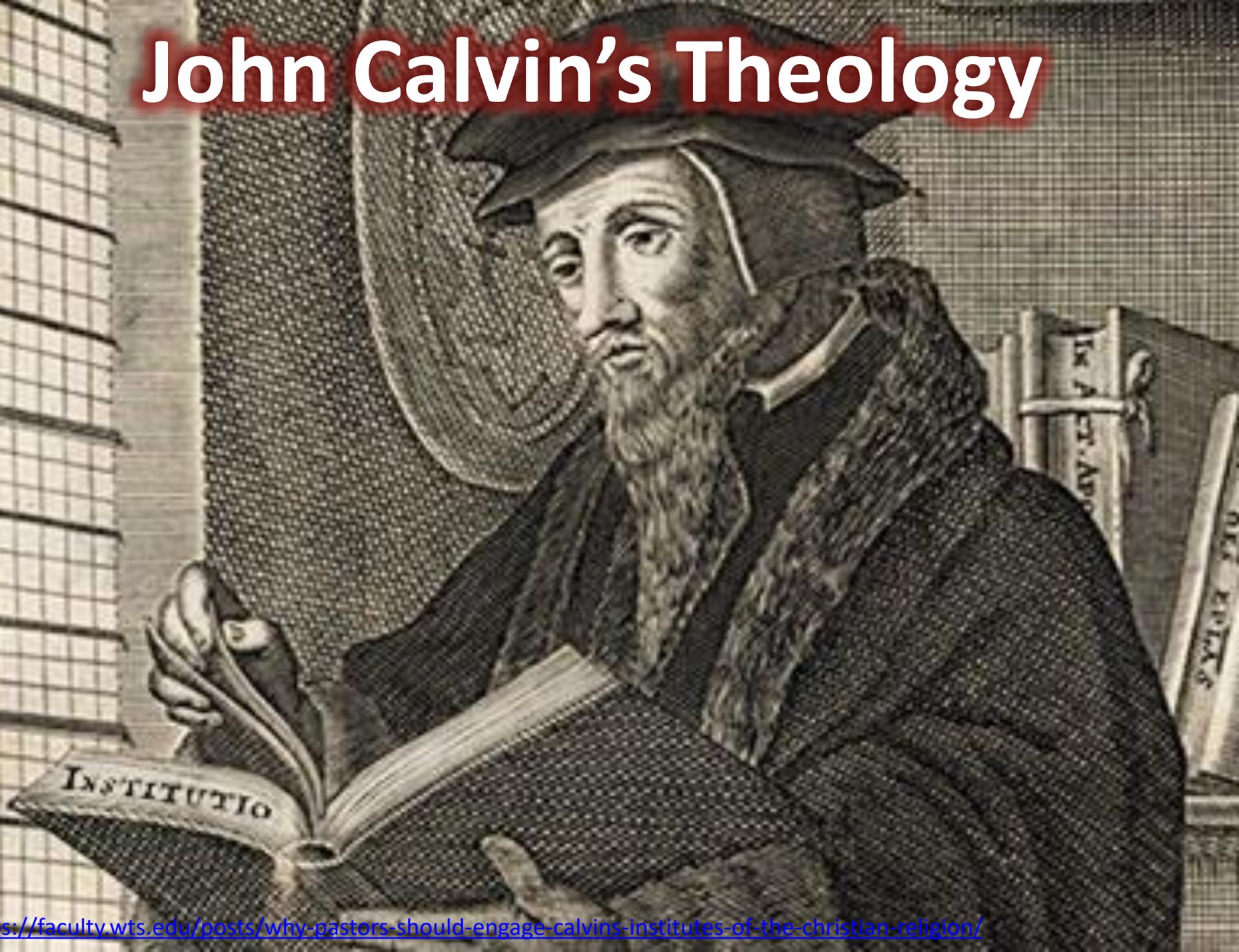
Recommended Translation



Translated by Ford Lewis Battles

https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00IYW227A?pf_rd_r=FS2127RZ73Q3T418WNHH&pf_rd_p=edaba0ee-c2fe-4124-9f5d-b31d6b1bfbee

John Calvin's Theology



Class Discussion Time



*Class Discussion Time

- Part of what prepared Calvin to serve the significant role that did in the Reformation and in church history was the strong education that he received in his youth – much of which he received prior to his conversion.
- This raises a question in my mind – Scripture tells us that God uniquely gifts each member of the body with a spiritual gift in order to serve His purposes in the church: Do you think it's fair to say that some of our gifting is shaped by experiences which God providentially puts us through even *prior* to our conversion?
- Calvin's education was clearly a significant part of what positioned him to be the effective leader that he was. What, if anything, does this say to us about the value of a good education and theological training in order to prepare men for to server as pastors?
- Do *you* have a topic or question that *you* would like to see us to discuss?