INTRODUCTION

THE CELEBRATED TREATISE HERE PRESENTED IN A NEW ENGLISH translation holds a place in the short list of books that have notably affected the course of history, molding the beliefs and behavior of generations of mankind. Perhaps no other theological work has so consistently retained for four centuries a place on the reading list of studious Christians. In a wider circle, its title has been familiar, and vague ideas of its content have been in circulation. It has, from time to time, called forth an extensive literature of controversy. It has been assailed as presenting a harsh, austere, intolerant Christianity and so perverting the gospel of Christ, and it has been admired and defended as an incomparable exposition of Scriptural truth and a bulwark of evangelical faith. Even in times when it was least esteemed, its influence remained potent in the life of active churches and in the habits of men. To many Christians whose worship was proscribed under hostile governments, this book has supplied the courage to endure. Wherever in the crises of history social foundations are shaken and men's hearts quail, the pages of this classic are searched with fresh respect. In our generation, when most theological writers are schooled in the use of methods, and of a terminology, widely differing from those employed by Calvin, this masterpiece continues to challenge intensive study, and contributes a reviving impulse to thinking in the areas of Christian doctrine and social duty.

1

The Christianae religionis institutio (to cite the first form of Calvin's title) sprang from the vivid experience of a gifted young man amid the revival of Scriptural Christianity that marked the Protestant Reformation. We have every reason to believe that Calvin's convictions were born of struggle and anguish, though we cannot be certain of the stages through which he came or of the date of what he calls his "sudden conversion." From a boyhood in the cathedral city of Noyon he went early to the University of Paris and later studied law in Or1eans and Bourges, but turned from the legal profession to give his attention to classical literature. During the decade of

these activities (1523-1533) he must have been increasingly aware of the religious crisis of the age that was now manifesting itself in France in Biblical studies, evangelical fervor, persecution, and martyrdom.

When his friend Nicolas Cop[f1] became rector of the University, Calvin was in some way implicated in the rectorial address he delivered, November 1, 1533. This discourse has been too hastily regarded as a definitely Protestant utterance. Rather, it reflects the Biblical humanism of the party of Marguerite d'Angouleme, inspired by the influential but now very aged scholar, Jacques Lefevre of Etaples (Faber Stapulensis), who had translated the Bible into French. Some acquaintance with Luther is also evident in the address, but it does not bear proof of having been written by one who had espoused Reformation doctrines. Nevertheless, its boldness alarmed the authorities, and because of his association with it Calvin was in flight and hiding through most of the following year. In the spring, after a visit to Lefevre at Nerac, he went to Noyon to act on a new decision. There May 4, 1534, he resigned the clerical benefices that had been provided for him during his childhood, and thus broke off relations with the unreformed church and clergy.[f2] It is possible that the talks with Lefevre, the spent leader of the non-Protestant Biblical movement, formed the occasion of his "conversion," which set him definitely within the Protestant ranks.

A new stage now began. He would never cease thereafter from tireless activity in the cause of evangelical faith. Later in that year he wrote two ardent prefaces that were to appear at the beginning of the Old Testament and of the new Testament in the French Bible prepared by his cousin, Pierre Robert Olivetan, the Waldenses of Piedmont. When this book was published, in June, 1535, Calvin was in Basel and his manuscript of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*[f3] was undoubtedly at an advanced stage. A beginning of the work may have been made in 1534 while he was still in France. The Du Tillet family had then given him shelter and "a quiet nest" at Claix in Angoulteme. To say the least, the extensive library to which he there had access may have furnished materials later to be incorporated in the book.

In France, the situation became more and more precarious for all marked leaders of the new movement. For this reason, and because he was surrounded by inquirers wherever he went, Calvin decided to seek abroad a

safe retreat for study. About the beginning of January, 1535, he left France and made his way to Basel. Many Protestants were at that time taking flight from the growingly intense persecution. The king, Francis I,[f4] had been incensed by the incident of the Placards, October 18, 1534, when copies of a handbill containing crude attacks on the Mass were in the night attached to public buildings and even thrust into the royal bedchamber. Many suspects were imprisoned and burnings took place from day to day.

It is principally in the Preface to his Commentary on the Psalms,[f5] published in 1558, that Calvin informs us of this crucial period in his life. With simple eloquence he tells how, after he left his native land to seek "a quiet hiding place" for his studies, reports reached him of the many burnings taking place in France and the perverse explanations given for these. While Calvin "was hidden unknown at Basel," false statements emanating from the French court were being circulated in German circles to allay the severe anti-French reaction to which the persecutions had given rise. These statements, as Calvin says, represented the sufferers as consisting of "Anabaptists and seditious men." Such a manifesto, supposedly from the hand of Guillaume du Bellay, brother of the bishop of Paris and negotiator for the king with the German governments and theologians, is known to have been issued at the beginning of February.[f6] Convinced that such declarations were intended to excuse greater bloodshed to come, Calvin decided that silence on his part would entail a just charge of cowardice and treachery. He could not be silent while those who had suffered death for their faith, and whom he regarded as faithful and "holy martyrs," were so grossly misrepresented, and while many still living were similarly imperiled. Some of the sufferers were his personal friends, notably the Paris merchant, Etienne de la Forge, a Waldensian from Piedmont, who was burned February 15, 1535. He felt bound, as he says, to "vindicate from undeserved insult my brethren whose death was precious in the sight of the Lord," and, by moving foreign peoples, to help the cause of others exposed to the same sufferings. Under the impact of these events the book took shape. Whatever his previous intentions regarding his work may have been, he now made speed to prepare it for publication.

While he labored at his book from January to August, 1535, he continued to learn of grave events in France. The attempt of the king to suppress all

printing failed, but the persecution was intensified at the end of January and was little abated until July, when the death of the aged Cardinal Duprat, credited with the direction of the king's religious policy, brought a lull. Negotiations with the German Lutherans, begun by the French court two years earlier but interrupted, were now resumed. A pressing invitation was conveyed to Melanchthon and Bucer to come to Paris for consultation on church reform, and this project was not abandoned until August 28, a few days after Calvin completed his manuscript of the *Institutio*.[f7] The fact that the king seemed inconsistent and irresolute in all this probably led many Protestants to hope for a favorable change. In the same period, Calvin had reason to fear that the Protestant cause in Europe would be discredited by the revolutionary Anabaptist movement centering in Munster, whose adherents were after a long siege ruthlessly crushed at the end of June, 1535. Calvin may have hoped to have his book appear at the Frankfurt autumn fair in 1535, but the manuscript was not completed until August 23 of that year, the date that he appends with his name to the Prefatory Address to Francis I, which precedes the treatise. The Basel printers, Thomas Platter and Balthasar Lasius, with the editorial co-operation of Jean Oporin, proceeding without haste, issued it in March, 1536. The Latin title of this first edition may be translated as follows:

> *The Institute of the Christian Religion, Containing almost the Whole Sum of Piety and Whatever It is Necessary to Know in the Doctrine of Salvation. A Work Very Well Worth Reading by All Persons Zealous for Piety, and Lately Published. A Preface to the Most Christian King of France, in Which this Book is Presented to Him as a Confession of Faith. Author, John Calvin, of Noyon. Basel, MDXXXVI.*

2

Both parts of the title have significance. The word *institutio* itself was familiar in the sense of "instruction" or "education." The work was designed both as a compendium of the doctrines of the Christian religion and as a confession offered to a persecuting king in behalf of the author's fellow believers. Not only the Prefatory Address, a powerful and direct plea to the king, but at many points the work itself is alive with realization

of the historic crisis amid which it was written. Themes of fundamental concern for the religious mind, grandly conceived and luminously expounded, are freely linked with the issues of Calvin's age and the struggle of the Reformed church for existence and survival. It is characteristic of his method that the Address to King Francis was retained by Calvin in his later editions of the *Institutio* both before and after the death of the king. Though written with intense realization of contemporary affairs, it is in fact a perpetually cogent defense of persecuted adherents of Scriptural faith. The body of the treatise of 1536 consists of six chapters. Four on topics familiar in the history of Christian instruction and then recently employed in Luther's Catechisms: the Law, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The fifth consists of a denunciatory argument against recognition as sacraments of five rites so regarded in the medieval church (confirmation, penance, extreme unction, priestly orders, and matrimony), and the sixth is a challenging discussion of Christian liberty, involving some elements of political and social teaching. The volume contains (including the short index) 520 octavo pages of about 6 1/8 by 4 inches, and is about the length of the New Testament to the end of Ephesians. It was to be subjected to repeated expansions by the author until it reached its final form in 1559,[f8] when it was about equal in size to the Old Testament plus the Synoptic Gospels. Half a year after the book's appearance, Calvin began his work in Geneva. Within a year from its publication the edition was exhausted and he was asked to furnish a revised text. Amid trying labors he undertook this, but completed the revision only in 1538 during his stay in Basel. After some delay, involving a change of printers, it was published in Strasbourg by Wendelin Rihel in August, 1539.

The title was now altered to read: *Institutio Christianae Religionis*, perhaps to differentiate the edition as much as possible from the former one. The curious phrase that follows, "at length truly corresponding to its title," seems to disparage the large assumptions of the former full title, and certainly conveys a sense of the superiority of the new edition. Calvin had reason to congratulate himself on the changes embodied in it. Instead of six chapters there are now seventeen of similar length. The academic weight of the work is much enhanced by the inclusion of many references to Augustine, Origen, and other church fathers, to Plato, Aristotle, Cicero,

and Seneca, and to some then recent scholarly works. The citations of Scripture are also multiplied. Among the added chapters several are on themes of recognized importance in the structure of Calvin's thought, such as the knowledge of God, the similarities and differences of the Old and New Testaments, predestination and providence, and the Christian life. A brief epistle to the reader, dated August 1, 1539, speaks of the author's surprise at the favorable response to the first edition, defective though it was, and states the purpose of his revision. He now sees it as a textbook to be used in "the preparation of candidates in theology for the reading of the divine Word." In accordance with this idea, the format of the volume is one adapted for desk use. The pages, allowing for errors in their numbering, 346 in all, are 13 by 8 inches and have wide margins for student's notes. In a part of the edition to be circulated in France the letters of Calvin's name were transposed to read "Alcuinus."

The question has been raised whether a French rendering of the first edition was, shortly after its appearance, prepared and published by Calvin. In a letter to Francis Daniel, written October 13, 1536, reporting his settlement in Geneva and subsequent illness, Calvin says he has been continually occupied on the French version of his "little book" *(libellus).* The assumption that the "little book" was the *Institutio* is plausible but not conclusive. It may be questioned whether at this stage Calvin would speak of the treatise as a *"libellus";* the word he uses for the 1536 edition in the 1539 preface is *opus*. About the time of his letter to Daniel, written just after the Disputation of Lausanne, Calvin apparently busied himself with the preparation of his Instruction and *Confession of Faith*[f9] for the use of the Geneva church. The French edition of this appeared early in 1537, the Latin at Basel a year later. But the editors of the *Corpus Reformatorum* edition of Calvin's works have shown reason to think that the French is mainly a translation of a Latin original virtually identical with that of 1538.[f10] This is a simply and vigorously written summary of essential arguments of the *Institutio*. It is truly a "little book," yet its composition in Latin and translation into French would for a few weeks fully occupy the hours Calvin could spare from his new work of church reorganization. Calvin's pressing tasks that autumn can hardly have permitted him to translate a work of the length of the *Institutio*. At any rate, no trace has survived of a French edition of 1536 or 1537. The first of

which we have knowledge is the celebrated edition of 154l, Calvin's own translation from the Latin of 1539.

3

This French edition was from the press of Jean Girard (or Gerard) in Geneva, and forms a compact volume of 822 pages, 7 _ by 4 _ inches, rather inexpertly printed in small type. The book was readily portable and was designed for the lay reader who could not use the Latin work. Since there was little hope of its being permitted in France, the number of copies made was apparently restricted, with a French-speaking Swiss public chiefly in view. In the "Argument" prefaced to it, no reference is made to its academic use. Its purpose is described in the phrase: "to help those who desire to be instructed in the doctrines of salvation." Nevertheless, save for one change in the order of chapters, it is simply the 1539 edition in French dress. By students of the evolution of French prose, including many quite out of accord with Galvin's opinions, it has been very warmly praised for its style.[f11] It is also undeniably the earliest work in which the French language is used as a medium for the expression of sustained and serious thought. It is remarkable that a book so creative in giving character to the language of the French nation should have been itself a translation made by an author who had from boyhood habitually thought in Latin. Every effort was made to prevent its circulation in France and, amid other measures of repression, in July, 1542, and again in February, 1544, copies were piled and burned in front of Notre Dame, Paris.

All the apologetic elements of the first edition were of course retained as the work grew, but the new prefaces and the added materials indicate that instruction, whether of theological students or of a lay public, is increasingly the author's conscious aim. In the third Latin edition, 1543 (the second printed by Rihel in Strasbourg), four new chapters are inserted, bringing the number to twenty-one. This edition was reissued in 1545, and in that year the expanded work appeared in French from Girard's press in Geneva. The Latin edition of 1550, also by Girard, shows only minor changes from that of 1543. A notable improvement introduced in the 1550 edition is the numbering of the paragraph divisions. In the twenty-one chapters are found, in all, 1,217 of these. Two indexes

are appended, the first of the topics treated, the second of Scripture passages and works cited by the author. One of the greatest of Renaissance printers came to Geneva from Paris in 1550 and resumed there, in close association with the Geneva ministers, his lifework in the production of Bibles and religious texts that he had found it impossible to continue in France. This was Robert Estienne (Robertus Stephanus), a distinguished member of the great Estienne family of scholar printers to whom the New Learning and the Reformation owed a measureless debt.[f12] In February, 1553, he brought out the finest edition of the *Institutio* that Calvin had yet seen, a folio volume 13_ by 8 _ inches, almost faultlessly printed in handsome type. It contains 441 pages, exclusive of the Address to the King and the indexes. In content, however, it makes no advance from the edition of 1550. The brothers Adam and Jean Rivery printed the work again in Geneva in 1554, in small octavo format, without change of text but with an improved index.

There are modern readers who would be well content with the first edition, and many who express a preference for that of 1539 or its French version of 1541 over the more expanded work of 1559 that is translated in these volumes. At the earlier stage, they say, the book was less laborious, less controversial, sufficiently comprehensive, and more pleasing to read. It is not necessary, and may not be possible, to refute these opinions. Without question, republication of the earlier editions is legitimate and desirable. But it would be inept to ignore the author's own evaluation of the editions, and to obliterate the fruits of the labor undertaken and pursued through trying days, in which he remade the work to match his own long-cherished ideal. The Latin edition of 1559 must always be held to bear Calvin's most indisputable imprint of authority. Here, in his opening address to the reader, he speaks of the previous revisions by which the work has been enriched, and adds: "Although I did not regret the labor spent, I was never satisfied until the work had been arranged in the order now set forth." He claims that in laboring at the revision through a time of illness with a quartan fever he has furnished clear evidence of the zeal that moved him "to carry out this task for the God's church." The sense of achievement reflected in these words was so far respected by later editors that for the Latin text it was this final edition which, until 1863, was exclusively reprinted, and from which translations and abridgments were made. There is another reason why we cannot escape this definitive

edition. Recent decades have witnessed a rising interest in, and respect for, Calvin's theology, and the effort to understand and interpret his teachings has become a marked feature of theological writing. Naturally it is to the *Institutio* that inquiry has been primarily directed, and in modern studies normally the citations of passages from the work are to the 1559 edition. The numerals that mark out its sections and facilitate reference are to be regarded (like those of the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas) as almost a part of the common language of theological discussion. The work is about 80 percent larger than the edition it superseded. It has been so long habitually in use in all countries that there is now no practical possibility of returning to an earlier edition for purposes of scholarly intercourse.

It was printed in Geneva and came from the press of Robert Estienne, August 16, 1559. Calvin's signature to the address to the reader (quoted above) is dated August 1. The eminent printer and productive scholar, Estienne, died three weeks later, and thus the *Institutio* in its final form is the last product of his technical skill. It bears the title:

> *Institutio Christianae religionis, in libris quatuor nunc primum digesta, certisque distincta capitibus, ad aptissimam methodum: aucta etiam tam magna accessione ut propemodum opus novum haberi possit.*
>
> *Institute of the Christian Religion, now first arranged in four books and divided by definite headings in a very convenient way: also enlarged by so much added matter that it can almost be regarded as a new work.*

The name of the author follows, below it the name of the printer with his well-known emblem of the olive branch, and at the foot: GENEVAE/M.D.LIX.

4

Calvin made no further revision of the Latin *Institutio*. A French translation of the enlarged work from the press of Jean Crespin in Geneva appeared in 1560. It is the opinion of most recent scholars that Calvin himself prepared or closely supervised this translation.[f13] Both in Latin

and in French the work was at in wide demand and was frequently reprinted, even before Calvin's death (1564). There were two new printings of the Latin in 1561, one an attractive folio volume apparently by Calvin's Strasbourg printer Rihel, the other a 980-page octavo by Antoine Reboul (Antonius Rebulius) in Geneva. Reboul explains that he is responding to the request of many readers when he inserts at the end an alphabetic index of topics, with citations to book, chapter, and section. This rather ample index, extending to 59 (unnumbered) pages, was printed with many later editions in French and Latin, in some instances along with the two indexes of Marlorat mentioned below. Reboul's volume is in a readable small type, with the Scripture references neatly set in the margins. Of the later Latin editions, two are especially important for their editorial matter. These are the celebrated folio volume printed by the Elzevir house, renowned printers of Leiden, in 1654, and the one that constitutes Volume IX of the *Opera Calvini* published by J. J. Schipper of Amsterdam in 1667.

The French text of 1560 was reprinted in Geneva twice in 1561. In 1562 there were four printings of this text, one at Geneva, one at Caen, and two without indication of place or printer. There were printings at Lyons in 1563 and at Geneva in 1564. The octavo edition issued by the Geneva printer Jaques Bourgeois in 1562 was the first to incorporate the two indexes prepared by Augustin Marlorat,[fl4] a scholarly minister and minor theological writer whose life ended at the hands of persecutors in Rouen in the same year. The first of these is an index of the principal matters contained in the work; the second is of the Bible passages quoted or referred to in it. Marlorat has an interesting preface in which he indicates that he had found the Bible references of earlier editions seriously inaccurate. He gives the verses of Scripture in full, even where Calvin uses only an identifying phrase. A Latin version of these serviceable indexes appeared with the next subsequent printing of the Latin *Institutes*, that of Francis Perrin, Geneva, 1568, and numerous later editions in Latin, French, English, and Dutch made use of them.

Translations into other languages than French had already begun. The 1536 text probably was rendered into Spanish in 1540 by Francisco Enzinas (Dryander) of Burgos, friend of Melanchthon, protege of Cranmer, correspondent of Calvin, and eminent New Testament scholar and

translator.[f14a] If the first Spanish version actually preceded Calvin's own French rendering, the first Italian version depended on a later French edition. It was in 1557 that Giulio Cesare Pascali, a young Italian poet and religious refugee in Geneva, produced there his Italian translation. Pascali made primary use of the French text, which had been revised in 1551 and reprinted in 1553 and 1554. It was dedicated to the most eminent member of the Italian refugee church in Geneva, Galleazzo Caraccioli, Marquis of Vico, to whom Calvin a year earlier had dedicated his Commentary on First Corinthians.

The numerous translations that followed were from the completed work. As early as December 5, 1560, a Dutch version was issued, apparently at Emden and Dort simultaneously. The translator reveals his name only by the initials "I. D." The initials stand for Johannes Dyrkinus (d. 1592), a minister and writer of some distinction, then at Emden.[f15] In 1572, the first German translation was brought out at Heidelberg, prepared by members of the theological faculty there and with an expository introduction.[f16] This version was republished in 1582 at Heidelberg, and at Hanau in 1597. In that year also the work appeared in a Spanish translation. This was the work of a Spanish refugee, Cipriano de Valera, who, after a stay in Geneva, had spent many years in England and held a master's degree from Cambridge.[f17] A Czech version by Jirik Strejc (Georg Vetter), who died in 1599, remained only partially published: Books I and II appeared in 1617. The Hungarian translation by Albert Molnar (d. 1634), eminent minister, scholar, and poet of the Hungarian Reformed Church, was published at Hanau in 1624.[f18] It has been supposed by qualified scholars, but never verified, that an Arabic version was made by the Zurich Orientalist, John Henry Hottinger (d. 1667).

The editions of the *Institutes* by A. Tholuck (Latin, 1834, 1846, 1872), by F. Baumgartner (1560 French, 1888), and by A. Sizoo (Dutch translation from the Latin, 1931, 1949) have value as texts only. O. Weber's German translation from the Latin (one-volume edition, 1955) and J. Cadier's modernization of the 1560 French (four volumes, 1955-1958) are provided with analytical headings and classified indexes. A Japanese translation from the Latin, by Masaki Nakayama, was published in Tokyo in 1934 and was reprinted in 1949.

5

Readers of the present translation will welcome somewhat fuller reference to the first English form of the *Institutes*. The Latin editions prior to that of 1559 had been circulated in England and Scotland, but only the chapters on the Christian life (Book 3, chapters 4-10, in the final order of the work) had been put into English.[f19] The whole work now appeared in a handsome black-letter folio edition under the following title:

> *The Institution of Christian Religion, wrytten in Latine by maister Jhon Calvin, and translated into Englysh according to the authors last edition. Seen and allowed according to the order appointed in the Quenes Maiesties instructions.*

The printer's emblem, a brazen serpent coiled on a wooden cross upheld by clasped hands, is followed by the colophon: "Imprinted at London by Reinolde Wolfe & Richarde Harison, anno 1561."

On the final page of the book the place is given more exactly as "in Paules Churcheyard," and the date as "1561. The 6 day of Maye." Thus the translation was printed in London less than twenty-one months after the Latin edition left the press of Stephanus in Geneva. Yet the printers insert on the back of the title page a somewhat cryptic paragraph bearing their excuse for the delay in its appearance. The task had been assigned to "John Dawes," and he had presented a manuscript "more than a twelvemonth past," but for "diuerse necessarie causes" they had been "constrayned to entreat another frende to translate it whole agayn."[f20] The initials "T. N." are set at the end of the text, after which six pages are devoted to the list of chapter headings and a short index. In the second edition, 1562, the translator inserts a short preface to which he appends his initials. Only in the improved third edition is the name "Thomas Norton" spelled out on the title page.

Thomas Norton (1532-1584) was about twenty-nine years old when the work appeared. He had already attained some fame as a writer. On Twelfth-night, 1561, *The Tragedy of Gorboduc*, the joint work of Norton and his fellow student at law, Thomas Sackville, had its first performance, and two weeks later it was played by command before the queen. This gory but still impressive drama in blank verse stands at the beginning of

the modern development of English tragedy and is the work by which Norton is best known. But his earlier poems in Latin and English, and his less successful versifications of some of the psalms, were familiar to his contemporaries, together with a variety of translations of religious works and other prose pieces dealing controversially with ecclesiastical issues. He had been a very precocious amanuensis to the Duke of Somerset at a time when the Duke was in correspondence with Calvin. When, after Somerset's death, Calvin wrote to inquire about his children, it was Norton who was deputed to reply. In 1555, he married a daughter of Thomas Cranmer, and he later gave publicity to important manuscripts left by the archbishop. A convinced Calvinist, he was also an advocate of Puritan measures of reform in the church and was at one time imprisoned for criticism of the bishops. Norton became a member of Parliament in 1558 and was frequently thereafter prominent in parliamentary debates and committees. He participated in trials of Roman Catholics, especially those implicated in the Rebellion of 1569, and exhibited in that connection a harsh and blameworthy zeal. Though scholarly, talented, and versatile, Norton never played a major role either in literature or in affairs; but his gifts were such that Calvin was fortunate in his English translator.[f21]

In the third edition of Norton's version, 1574, the original preface, "The Translator to the Reader," is revised and expanded so as to indicate precisely the circumstances in which his work of translation was done. Norton had been asked to undertake it by two well-known printers to the queen. One of these was Edward Whitchurch, who, with Richard Grafton, had published the Great Bible, 1539, and *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1549. The other was Reginald (or Reinolde) Wolfe, a native of Strasbourg who had become an important figure in the English book trade. It was in the house of Whitchurch in Greyfriars that the translator's task was done. Norton does not mention the fact that the wife of Whitchurch was Cranmer's widow and his own wife's mother.[f22] Writing after Whitchurch's death, which took place late in 1561, Norton refers to him as "an ancient zealous Gospeller, as plaine and true a frend as euer I knew living." He also expresses gratitude for the critical advice of numerous "learned men," naming especially David Whitehead who, he states, compared every sentence with the Latin text. Whitehead was a former Marian exile who had been associated with the party favoring the Edwardian *Prayer Book* in the strife at Frankfurt, 1555. An eminent

clergyman of recognized (though privately acquired) learning, he had declined the see of Armagh and possibly also the see of Canterbury.

In 1845, Henry Beveridge, while admitting that "Norton on the whole executed his task with great fidelity," criticized him sharply for an "overscrupulous" preservation of the Latin forms of speech to the serious injury of the English style. Norton himself explains that because of the "great hardness" of the book from its being "interlaced with Schoolmen's controversies," fearing to miss Calvin's meaning, he had decided "to follow the words so neare as the phrase of the Englysh tongue would suffer." It is true that this method sometimes produces a strained effect; but to say with Beveridge that Norton gives us only "English words in a Latin idiom" is surely misleading. The translation is not far from typical, plain, early Elizabethan prose, which was then still, as one authority has remarked, "largely the work of churchmen and translators" and had none of the affectations and embellishments that mark the writing of the next generation.[f23] In his third edition, Norton was happy to be able to rid the book of its many printer's errors. These he attributes to "the evill manner of my scribbling hand, the enterlining of my Copies, and some other causes well-knowen" to printers. He indicates that some three hundred errors had been corrected in the second edition, and believes the third to be virtually free from such faults. The translation is now for the first time provided not only with a version of the index of A. Reboul ("Table of Matters Entreated Of") but also with the two indexes of Marlorat, preceded by the latter's preface. After this revision of 1574, Norton's book was reprinted with slight alterations in 1578, 1582, 1587, 1599, 1611, and 1634. These editions, especially the last mentioned, show an effort to keep abreast of language changes. Thus, in 1634, "Jhon Calvin" has become "John Calvin," "truthe" is written "truth," "glorie" becomes "glory," "geuen" is changed to "given," and the abbreviations used in the first edition have disappeared. The attempt to modernize the work was carried further in the Glasgow edition of 1762, which not only uses the then current spelling but freely alters many Latinized or archaic phrases.

From that date Norton's version was not republished. The next English translation of the entire work was that of John Allen (1771-1839):

> *Institutes of the Christian Religion by John Calvin, translated from the Latin and collated with the author's last edition in French. London: J. Walker, 1813.*

Allen was a layman who had become head of a Dissenting Academy at Hackney. His other writings included an earlier controversial work entitled *The Fathers, the Reformers, and the Public Formularies of England in Harmony with Calvin* . . (1811), and a treatise on modern Judaism (1816). The greater part of Allen's translation was made from the Latin and revised with consultation of the French version; for the remainder he used both versions alike. Although he dismisses Norton's translation as "long antiquated, uncouth, and obscure," his principle of translation differs little from that of Norton. He states that he has "aimed at a medium between servility and looseness and endeavored to follow the style of the original as far as the respective idioms of the Latin and English would admit." The result is a conscientious though not a distinguished translation, marked by a reserved rendering of Calvin's vehement passages and vivid metaphors, but with very few errors seriously affecting the sense of the original. Allen's version has had a continuous circulation especially in America, where it was thirty times republished to 1936. In the edition of 1909, commemorating the four hundredth anniversary of Calvin's birth, B. B. Warfield's valuable essay, "On the Literary History of Calvin's *Institutes*,"[f24] was inserted; and in the 1936 edition (timed with reference to the four hundred years since Calvin's first edition), Thomas C. Pears, Jr., added "An account of the American Editions." Allen's text has undergone several minor revisions at the hands of American editors, notably that of Joseph Paterson Engles in 1841.

Allen's version was not long without competition. In 1845 appeared The Institutes of the Christian Religion by John Calvin. A New Translation by Henry Beveridge. The work was published in Edinburgh under the auspices of the Calvin Translation Society.[f25] Beveridge (1799-1863) had intended to enter the ministry; he later trained for the law, but made

writing his chief employment. His translations for the Calvin Society included a collection of Calvin's *Tracts Relating to the Reformation*, three volumes, 1844. He later turned to other studies and produced *A Comprehensive History of India*. His edition of the *Institutes* came out in three volumes, and contained in the introductory matter items that have been, not without loss, dropped out of later printings in both America and Britain. One is the "Catalogue Raisonne of the Earlier Editions," prepared by Robert Pitcairn, secretary of the Society. This was a useful description of most of the editions we have referred to above, a good number of which Pitcairn had carefully examined; but certain omissions and other defects make his catalog an unsafe guide. In his list three abridgments of the work are included, one of which is mistaken for a full text, and his information on the early Dutch and German translations is far from comprehensive. Another feature of Beveridge's introduction is the well-chosen series of facsimiles of title pages from early editions available to him and his collaborators. These are from the Latin editions of 1536, 1539 (the Alcuin variant), 1545, 1559, 1561, the French of 1545, the Italian of 1557, and the Spanish of 1597. In the last two instances the translator's prefaces as originally printed are also reproduced. [f26]

Beveridge's low opinion of the work of Norton has been noted. Strangely enough, he does not even mention Allen. His own translation is of uneven quality. In parts his early Victorian vocabulary seems more distant from our present usage than does that of Allen's earlier work. There are passages that may well prompt the criticism he himself hurls at Norton: "English words in Latin idiom." He is rather less accurate than either of his predecessors, and is chargeable with numerous minor omissions and a few clearly erroneous renderings. Yet many sections are admirably done, and in the finer passages Beveridge manifestly feels Calvin's rhetorical power and succeeds in conveying much of it to the reader.

7

The cumbrous bulk of the *Institutes*, and the interest aroused in it, led to the early appearance of numerous abridgments. These, like the work itself, were generally first published in Latin and later in vernacular translations. One of the earliest was that compiled by Edmund Bunney (Bunnie) (1540-

1619), a popular itinerant preacher of Calvinist doctrines in England, with the title *Institutionis Christianae Religionis . . . Compendium* (London, 1576). It was translated by Edward May *as The Institutions of Christian Religion* …compendiously abridged by Edmund Bunnie, bachelor of divinity… (London, 1580). The book is not a set of extracts but a condensed abridgment mainly in Bunney's words. It was soon surpassed by the painstaking volume of William Delaune (Laneus, Launeus, Lawne): *Institutionis Christianae Religionis …Epitome* (London, 1583). Delaune (d. 1610) was a Huguenot refugee, and his printer was his fellow religionist Thomas Vautrollier (d. 1587)[f27] who, in 1576, had produced the only Latin edition of the *Institutes* to appear in England.[f28] The *Epitome* is an excellent example of the digest that retains as far as possible the author's language. It contains 371 octavo pages of material from the *Institutes*, following closely and proportionately the arrangement of 1559. Where Calvin reports and confutes the views of his opponents, the text takes the form of objection and reply in the manner of a dialogue. At the beginning, twenty-one unnumbered pages are filled with a "General Table" of the course of argument in the work, presented in an elaborate structure of bracketed divisions and subdivisions.[f29] In his *Epistola Nuncupatoria*, or address of dedication to Richard Martin, Master of the Mint, Delaune speaks of his book as "a nosegay from the pleasant garden of divinity." The margins are utilized for carefully prepared analytical notes. The text is followed by a twenty-five page index. The book appeared in a translation, complete in all details, by Christopher Fetherstone (Edinburgh, 1585), whose admirable translation of Calvin's Commentary on Acts appeared in the same year. As a presentation of the *Institutes* in brief, it must have been a godsend to the hard-pressed student or the eager reader with limited time. There was a Dutch edition of Delaune in 1650, and the English version was reprinted in 1837.

Another widely circulated Latin abridgment was made by John Piscator (Fischer) (1546-1625), a prominent Reformed theologian and Biblical scholar of the Academy of Herborn in Nassau. Piscator was the associate and successor of Caspar Olevianus,[f30] and he utilized an "epitome" arranged by the latter (1586) for classroom use. *His Aphorismi doctrinae Christianae maximam partem ex lnstitutione Calvini excerpti sive loci communes theologici* (Herborn, 1589) was also compiled for convenience in student discussions, and was soon in such demand that by 1615 it was

in its eighth edition. It appeared also in English in a translation by Henry Holland made from the third edition: *Aphorismes of Christian Religion in a verie compendious abridgment of M. J. Calvin's Institutions*, printed by Richard Field, London, 1596. In accordance with Piscator's subtitle, the text is divided into twenty-eight *loci*. Each of these main sections contains a numbered series of "aphorisms," the numbers varying from eight to thirty-four. The length of the aphorisms ranges from a sentence to several pages. Piscator explains that he has chosen the word aphorismi in preference to *theses* since the latter term would suggest debatable uncertainties, and the statements given are not open to doubt or debate.

There soon followed another abridgment of the *Institutes*, the *Analysis paraphrastica Institutionurn theologicarum Johannis Calvini* (Leiden, 1628) by Daniel Colonius (Van Ceulen), regent of the Walloon College at Leiden. Colonius was a son-in-law of the head of the Elzevir printing firm, and a year after the compiler's death a duodecimo edition very neatly printed in minute type was issued by Elzevir (Leiden, 1636). Colonius divides his book into forty-one "disputations," but keeps references to the sections of the original and in the main uses Calvin's language. The *Analysis paraphrastica* is rated highly as a student's manual by Dr. Warfield, but, unlike Delaune's book, it is without marginal headings and index. The 950 small pages contain approximately one third of the *Institutes* — rather too much for a handy abridgment.[31]

8

The great treatise of Calvin is justly regarded as a classical statement of Protestant theology. The work expanded under his hand until the range of its subject matter amounted to the whole field of Christian theology. If in its comprehensiveness it surpasses other theological treatises of its century, its superiority is still greater with respect to the order and symmetry with which it is composed, and the substantial consistency of its detailed judgments. The completed work bears few traces of the fact that it had been subjected to repeated enlargements and much rearrangement of its parts. Orderliness is not, however, gained at the expense of persuasiveness and force. It is a living, challenging book that makes personal claims upon the reader. This is because it presents, with

eloquent insistence, that which has laid hold upon the author himself. Looking back at his conversion, Calvin wrote, "God subdued my heart to teachableness."[f32] As a consequence of that profound and lasting inward change, he lived and wrote as a man constantly aware of God. At the beginning of the *Institutes* he deals impressively with the theme: How God is known. The whole work is suffused with an awed sense of God's ineffable majesty, sovereign power, and immediate presence with us men.

This awareness of God is for him neither a product of speculative thinking nor an incentive to it. He rejects the intellectual indulgence of detached speculation. If he had any talent for this, it was deliberately checked. He never adopts the attitude of the impersonal inquirer. It is not what God is in Himself–a theme in his view beyond human capacity–that concerns his mind, but what God is in relation to His world and to us.[f33] God is not known by those who propose to search him out by their proud but feeble reason; rather, he makes himself known to those who in worship, love, and obedience consent to learn his will from his Holy Word.

One who takes up Calvin's masterpiece with the preconception that its author's mind is a kind of efficient factory turning out and assembling the parts of a neatly jointed structure of dogmatic logic will quickly find this assumption challenged and shattered. The discerning reader soon realizes that not the author's intellect alone but his whole spiritual and emotional being is enlisted in his work. Calvin might well have used the phrase later finely composed by Sir Philip Sidney, "Look in thy heart, and write." He well exemplifies the ancient adage, "The heart makes the theologian." He was not, we may say, a theologian by profession, but a deeply religious man who possessed a genius for orderly thinking and obeyed the impulse to write out the implications of his faith. He calls his book not a *summa theologiae* but a *summa pietatis*. The secret of his mental energy lies in his piety; its product is his theology, which is his piety described at length. His task is to expound (in the language of his original title) "the whole sum of piety and whatever it is necessary to know in the doctrine of salvation." Quite naturally, in the preface to his last Latin edition he affirms that in the labor of preparing it his sole object has been "to benefit the church by maintaining the pure doctrine of godliness."

For him, piety is unavoidably associated with doctrine, and all experience a challenge to thought. But he knows experiences that lie beyond his

powers of thought, and sometimes brings us to the frontier where thinking fails and the mystery is impenetrable to his mental powers. At this point he can only bid us go reverently on if we are able. He would not, he says, have the sublime mystery of the Eucharist measured by his insufficiency — "by the little measure of my childishness";[f34] but he exhorts his readers not to confine their comprehension of it by his limitations, but to strive upward far higher than he can lead them.[f35] Within that recognized frontier, however, he writes with great clarity and conviction.

To the modern mind the word "piety" has lost its historic implications and status. It has become suspect, as bearing suggestions of ineffectual religious sentimentality or canting pretense. For Calvin and his contemporaries, as for ancient pagan and Christian writers, *pietas* was an honest word, free from any unsavory connotation. It was a praiseworthy dutifulness or faithful devotion to one's family, country, or God. Calvin insistently affirms that piety is a prerequisite for any sound knowledge of God. At the first mention of this principle he briefly describes piety as "that reverence joined with love of God which the knowledge of his benefits induces." It exists when men "recognize that they owe everything to God, that they are nourished by his fatherly care, that he is the Author of their every good."[f36] The word *pietas* occurs with great frequency in Calvin's writings, and in the *Institutes* it keeps recurring like the ringing of a bell to call us back from the allurements of a secular intellectualism. "For Calvin," says Emile Doumergue, "religion and piety are one and the same thing."[f37] "Piety," says A. Mitchell Hunter, "was the keynote of his character. He was a God-possessed soul. Theology was no concern to him as a study in itself; he devoted himself to it as a framework for the support of all that religion meant to him."[f38] Gratitude, love, and obedience are involved in this religious attitude which is the indispensable condition of a sound theology. Since we "owe everything to God," in Calvin's pages we are everywhere confronting God, not toying with ideas or balancing opinions about him. As a result of this, regardless of detailed agreement with the author, the reader finds him the companion of his own religious struggles. He is indeed a peculiarly articulate and intelligible reporter of religious insights and spiritual promptings that come at least vaguely to consciousness whenever men strive to frame thoughts of the God with whom they have to do.

Calvin's clarity of expression may at first lead the reader to suppose that his thought is easy to grasp. Actually, he lays heavy demands upon the mind, and some of those best versed in his writings have confessed the difficulty of explaining some elements of his thought. Interpretations of his theology have often clashed, and in our day a persistent debate over important aspects of his teaching in the *Institutes* has been a salient feature of Protestant theological discussion. This is the common fate of a classic treatise. It is an arsenal for later thinkers, and when it has become a means of bringing to expression their nascent ideas the temptation is strong to think of it as a testimonial to the new formulation rather than to allow it to make its own fresh impression. Calvin's treatment of the natural in relation to his doctrine of grace has been much controverted.[f39] Unquestionably, he earnestly affirmed on the one hand that a sense of deity is so indelibly engraved on the human heart that even the worst of men cannot rid themselves of it, and on the other, stressed the evidence of God's handiwork that meets our senses in the beauty and order of the world and in the marvels of man's thought and skill. He does not doubt that the objective world bears ample intimation that God exists, and that he is almighty, just, and wise and exercises a "fatherly kindness" toward his creatures. Yet men are so damaged by the heritage of sin entailed by Adam's fall that they miss this testimony of creation to the Creator, and grope blindfold in this bright theater of the universe with only erroneous and unworthy notions of the God who made it.[f40]

9

But God has not abandoned man in this plight. Since we fail to find Him in his works, he has revealed himself in his Word. Usually when Calvin speaks of God's Word, he does not differentiate it from the canonical Scriptures. Yet if forced to define it, he would not simply point to the words spelled out on the sacred page. It is "the everlasting Wisdom, residing with God, from which both all oracles and all prophecies go forth." By "the everlasting Wisdom" in this context, he intends a reference to Christ, by whose Spirit, he says, the ancient prophets spoke.[f41] Thus Christ, the Word, by whom all things were created (<430101>John 1:1), is the Author of the written Word, by which the eternal Word is known. Holy

Scripture, thus understood, assumes for Calvin unquestionable and infallible authority and is made his constant reliance and resource. His readiness in bringing Scripture passages to bear upon each point of argument is astonishing, and has perhaps never been surpassed. But in his case, familiarity with the text rarely if ever results in a disorderly excess of quotations. Where his quotations seem unduly abundant, it will usually be found that he is meeting an opponent's use of the same texts. With rare exceptions, he does not attempt to force the passages used to yield more of doctrine than they actually contain. Nor does he adduce texts that from the standpoint of Biblical science in his time are alien to his argument, and then (as others do) try to justify their use by capricious allegorical exegesis. He is always alert to expose such "trifling with the Scriptures." In general, he holds faithfully to his principle of simple and literal interpretation. He disdains the use of allegory to confirm dogmas and cites Scripture only as authenticating what it directly says.[f42] The authority of the Bible as God's Word and the source of indisputable truth is never called in question by Calvin, and he assumes that his readers share this assurance. Yet he is not concerned to assert what in later controversy has been spoken of as "verbal inerrancy." His whole emphasis is thrown on the message or content of Scripture rather than on the words. It began in the oracles and visions that God imparted to the patriarchs, whose minds were so impressed with their truth that they passed them down orally to their descendants, until at length God brought it about that the revelations were recorded for the use of later generations.[f43]

The human writers are not automatons but persons whose minds and hearts have embraced the truth of what they write. Even when he is stressing the point of the authority of the sacred writings, he usually appears to have in mind the writer, and he seeks to expound the message itself, not merely the words that convey it. Thus in the oft-quoted description of the apostolic writers as "sure and genuine scribes" (in the French text, "sworn notaries") of the Holy Spirit,[f44] the context does not bear upon the Scripture words as such but refers rather to the inspired teaching they express. He has, in fact, no systematic treatment of the manner of inspiration. If there are passages in his writings in which he seems to associate the inspiration with the words themselves, his prevailing concern is nevertheless to carry the reader beyond the words to the message. To evaluate his position on this, we should need to search the

Commentaries as well as the *Institutes*. It was less a problem to him than to some moderns. Doubtless he would have liked to assert without qualification the complete accuracy of Scripture, but he is frank to recognize that some passages do not admit of the claim of inerrancy on the verbal level. Thus he discusses an inaccuracy in Paul's quotation of <19S104>Psalm 51:4 in <450304>Romans 3:4, and is led to generalize thus: "For we know that in repeating the words of Scripture the apostles were often pretty free [*liberiores*], since they held it sufficient if they cited them in accordance with the matter; for this reason, they did not make the words a point of conscience [*quare non tantum illis fuit verborum religio*]."[f45] The expression here used, *verborum religio*, occurs in the *Institutes*[f46] in a scornful characterization of opponents who wrangle on the basis of an artificially scrupulous insistence on each several word of a passage under interpretation. Calvin's keen sense of style is freely applied to the Bible writers. "John, thundering from the heights" is contrasted with the other Evangelists who use "a humble and lowly style," but this involves no divergence in the message.[f47] The "elegance" of Isaiah and the "rudeness" of Amos are alike employed to express the "majesty" of the Holy Spirit.[f48]

The divine authority of Holy Scripture is not derived from any declaration by the church; rather, it is upon Scripture that the church is built.[f49] That God is the Author of Scripture is capable of rational demonstration, but this would be wholly ineffectual to build up a sound faith. Its authority is self-authenticating to those who yield to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The testimony of the Holy Spirit is more excellent than all reason. Certainty of its divine truth such as piety requires is ours only when the Spirit who spoke by the prophets enters our hearts. Then we realize that the Scripture has come to us "from the very mouth of God by the ministry of men."[f50] The Spirit too is its interpreter, and seals its teaching upon the reader's heart. Thus for Calvin the Bible is the believer's infallible book of truth when it is read under the direction of the Spirit. Furthermore, Holy Scripture has its organizing principle in the revelation of Christ, and has its chief office in enabling us to appropriate the life-giving grace of Christ. "The Scriptures are to be read," says Calvin in his Commentary on John's Gospel, "with the purpose of finding Christ there."[f51] It is important to realize that the focal point of the *Institutes* is not found in God's sovereignty, or in predestination, or in insistence on

obedience to God's Word itself, apart from constant reference to Jesus Christ, whom the written Word makes known.[f52]

In the Bible he identifies the principles that should guide the organization and discipline of the church and govern its public worship. This means that all innovations in these matters since the apostles are subjected to the judgment of Scripture. The Scriptures amply supplied Calvin with munitions by which to assail the superstition that he saw prevalent in the pre-Reformation decline of the church. He also castigates those of his contemporaries who present what he regards as hasty, irresponsible, and slanted interpretations of Scripture passages. In this connection, the treatment of <402626>Matthew 26:26 ("This is my body") in his discussion of the Lord's Supper offers a brief description of his own method:

> "But as for us, we study with no less obedience than care to obtain a sound understanding of this passage, as we do in the whole of Scripture. And we do not with perverted ardor and without discrimination rashly seize upon what first springs to our minds. Rather, after diligently meditating upon it, we embrace the meaning which the Spirit of God offers. Relying upon it, we look down from a height at whatever of earthly wisdom is set against it. Indeed, we hold our minds captive, that they dare not raise even one little word of protest; and humble them that they dare not rebel against it."[f53]

10

Throughout the *Institutes* Calvin's self-confessed debt to Augustine is constantly apparent. Amid the general adoption by the Scholastics of a semi-Pelagian view of man's powers, the age before Calvin had seen the rise of a new affirmation of the teaching of Augustine that man is morally helpless in himself and wholly dependent on divine grace. After Gottschalk of Orbais, who was condemned for heresy in 849, the first eminent representative of an unqualified Augustinianism was the scholarly theologian and ecclesiastic, Thomas Bradwardine, called Doctor Profundus, who died immediately after his consecration as archbishop of Canterbury in 1349. In his long *treatise De causa Dei contra Pelagium*,

Bradwardine tells us that in his early foolishness and vanity he had imbibed the Pelagian notions that prevailed about him, but that he had been "visited" by the conviction of God's initiative "as by a beam of grace." Habitually citing Augustine and the Bible, he argues that "grace is given *gratis*," not on condition of previous works, and that predestination is "according to the free [*gratuitam*] will of God," without reference to works [f54] Similar views were held by Gregory of Rimini, [f55] who died as general of the Augustinian Hermits in 1358. In this area of doctrine, Wycliffe was a disciple of Augustine, and John Hus, though less a Wycliffite than his accusers supposed, was hardly less than Wycliffe an Augustinian.[f56]

It has been said that "the Reformation, inwardly considered, was just the ultimate triumph of Augustine's doctrine of grace over Augustine's doctrine of the church."[f57] The measure of dependence of Luther and Calvin upon Augustine cannot easily be stated, but certainly both Reformers were frank to recognize their debt to him, without in the least exempting his opinions from the test of Scripture. Calvin may be said to stand at the culmination of the later Augustinianism.[f58] He actually incorporates in his treatment of man and of salvation so many typical passages from Augustine that his doctrine seems here entirely continuous with that of his great African predecessor. Yet his occasional dissent from Augustine on minor points marks him as a not uncritical disciple. [f59] Calvin goes beyond Augustine in his explicit assertion of double predestination, in which the reprobation of those not elected is a specific determination of God's inscrutable will. Apparently, the statement of this became a constituent element in Calvin's theology through his never relaxed conviction, borne out by his reading of Scripture and reflection on his own experience, of the unconditioned sovereignty of God. He feels under obligation to close the door to the notion that anything happens otherwise than under the control of the divine will. Man is wholly unable to contribute to his own salvation; nor is election conditioned by divine foreknowledge of a man's faith or goodness.

That some men are eternally damned was a traditionally orthodox and almost uncontested belief. Like some Augustinians before him, but with greater insistence and exactness, Calvin linked this damnation of some with the operation of God's sovereign will. What is to become of every man in

the hereafter has been determined by God's eternal decree; and some are ordained to everlasting woe. In this he may be said to have welded together two theological commonplaces. The result, however, was shocking even to his own mind and has proved unacceptable or distressing to many of his readers. Dreadful (*horribile*) to contemplate though this decree is with respect to the damned, it is not to be denied or evaded.[f60] Calvin states and reiterates this doctrine of reprobation with the greatest precision. He is not content to confine the function of God's will to his having "passed by" the nonelect in bestowing his saving grace: the action of his will is not "preterition" but "reprobation." If Paul says, "Whom he will he hardens" (<450918>Romans 9:18), Calvin makes the similarly laconic assertion, "Whom God passes by, he reprobates."[f61]

Calvin shudders at this conclusion even while expounding and defending it, and he knows well the moral difficulty it involves. He is very impatient with those who hold it to imply that God is the author of sin. God is always both loving and just, though here in ways that escape our feeble understanding. Calvin's prolonged attention to predestination is partly explicable by the fact that he is appalled before the mystery of it. Accordingly, he asks for great caution in the mention of the topic.[f62] Anxiety about our own election he regarded as "a temptation of Satan." Yet he would have mature minds reflect upon "this high and incomprehensible mystery" in thinking of which "we should be sober and humble." The fruits of election are in no respect visible in any outward advantage or prosperity enjoyed in this life, where impiety prospers and the pious are forced to bear a cross. The blessing of the elect lies rather in their assurance of God's sufficiency and unfailing protection amid their afflictions, and in the happy anticipation of the life to come.

11

Calvin stresses that transformation of the soul which is called regeneration. It is attended by sincere repentance which involves "mortification of the flesh and vivification of the spirit." As we participate in Christ's death our old nature is crucified, and as we share in his resurrection we are renewed in the image of God.[f63] We enlist, so to speak, in a new spiritual enterprise, the progressive approach to a perfection that in this life is never fully

attained. This incompleteness is not in the least a counsel of despair; it is associated rather with a glowing sense of the reality of the life to come, toward which our thoughts aspire.[f64]

While this world is not our home, it is to be taken seriously as our place of pilgrimage and probation, and Calvin will have no morose rejection either of its duties or of its boons. In five chapters,[f65] he gives a brief directory for the Christian life that is balanced, penetrating, and practical. God is our Father, and his image is being restored in us. He adopts us as his children on the implied condition that we "represent Christ" in our lives. This involves self-denial and charitable service of others, in whom, however intractable they seem, we must recognize the image of God inviting us to love them.[f66] Very impressive in the light of current discussion of eschatology is the treatment of "meditation on the future life," and not less so the discussion of our use and enjoyment of God's gifts as aids in the present life.[f67]

Sanctification is for Calvin the process of our advance in piety through the course of our life and in the pursuit of our vocation. In his treatment of faith,[f68] repentance, and justification he deals in his distinctive way with these doctrines so much discussed in the Reformation. Faith is more than an assurance of God's veracity in the Scripture; it is also a full persuasion of God's mercy and of his favor toward us. It stands clear of works and of the law, since it has for its primary object Christ and is imparted to us by the Holy Spirit. Calvin denounces certain Scholastic treatments of faith in which it is severed from piety and love.[f69] Although with Luther he uses the phrase "justified by faith alone,"[f70] he is careful to say too that faith does not of itself effect justification, but embraces Christ by whose grace we are justified.

12

Book 4 contains a large amount of new material ingeniously integrated with sections drawn from various parts of the previous edition, so as virtually to constitute a well-ordered treatise in itself. Calvin's title for this book is: "The External Means or Aids by Which God Invites Us Into the Society of Christ and Holds Us Therein." *The Christi societas* is the Holy

Catholic Church. This great theme, highly congenial to Calvin's mind, engages all his power and skill.

He follows Luther in the view that in the Creed, "catholic church" and "communion of saints" are terms that refer to the same entity, in which all Christians are members. The invisible church of the elect, whose membership is known to God alone, is differentiated but not dissevered from the organized church visible on earth, whose members are known to each other. Calvin warmly accepts Cyprian's figure of the church as the mother of believers: as such, she conceives, bears, nourishes, and instructs her children, who, indeed, may never leave her school.[f71] Though we know that there are "many hypocrites" in the visible church, it is our duty by a "charitable judgment" to recognize as members "those who, by confession of faith, by example of life, and by partaking of the sacraments, profess the same God and Christ."

A true church is recognizable by the marks of the true preaching and faithful hearing of the Word, the right administration of the sacraments, and, subordinate to these yet essential, a functioning discipline to guard the sanctity of communion. The peril of departing from such a church is viewed with the utmost gravity. Since all of us have faults and suffer from "the mists of ignorance," we should not renounce communion with others on slight grounds. Much is made here of the fact that the church is the one society in which it is recognized that forgiveness of sins is constantly required. The visible church is holy, in the sense not of its attainment but of its progress and its goal.[f72] Only when the ministry of the Word and sacraments has been perverted and discipline has failed are Christians justified in leaving the organization. This condition Calvin finds in the church adhering to the papacy, although some vestiges of a true church remain within it.[f73] A high doctrine of the ministry, its offices and functions, is amply set forth on the basis of New Testament evidence; and the development and deterioration of the ministry are traced through the patristic age.[f74] Calvin's very considerable knowledge of church history is used in an animated polemic against Roman assertions of Peter's authority in Rome and the rising claim and exercise of papal power in the Middle Ages. If the too abundant invective were removed from these chapters, there would remain a rather impressive body of historical data germane to

the issue; but he views historical changes with too little sense of the complexity of the forces involved.

Since his doctrine of the ministry does not allow a separate order of bishops distinct from presbyters, it is notable that he shows much respect for the ancient hierarchy in their functions of government and discipline. For Calvin, the great defection sets in with the proud claims put forth in the era after Gregory the Great, when Boniface III was allowed to assert the papal headship over all churches, and especially after the pact formed between Pope Zachary and the Frankish ruler Pippin, which he regards as an alliance to seize and divide power. Although he wrote these pages before the appearance of the *Magdeburg Centuries* (1559-1574)[f75] in which the ninth-century Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals were first effectively exposed, Calvin scoffs at those fraudulent documents. He has read Lorenzo Valla's exposure of the Donation of Constantine[f76] and hence regards that eighth-century document also as a forgery. He charges Hildebrand with the unwarranted assertion of a papal imperial authority, which is one of the marks of Antichrist, and he brings Bernard to testify to the growing corruption that ensued. This has continued through the later centuries until the condition under the papacy is one "directly contrary to church order."[f77] Authority, which ought to reside in the Word of God, has been assumed by the decadent church and its councils without respect to the Word. He vehemently attacks the many abuses of jurisdiction that have arisen while the papacy, armed with forged documents, pursues its secular ends.[f78]

Calvin employs historical data also in his constructive treatment of discipline and the sacraments. The modern reader, whose experience of church discipline has little in common with that of early Reformed practice, may be startled by the degree of church and pastoral authority assumed here. He will also be impressed by the careful discrimination, moderation, and hopeful patience expected of those charged with the exercise of discipline. Discipline is a very real and a very necessary thing: it is for the church as the ligaments that hold the body together, or as a bridle for restraint, or as a father's chastising rod.[f79] No rank or station exempts anyone from its procedures, and these are conducted with such religious gravity as to leave no doubt that "Christ presides in his tribunal." The ends in view in the discipline are three: that the church be not

dishonored, the good not corrupted, and offenders brought to repentance.[f80] Discipline, then, should be firm and yet kindly. Calvin dwells upon examples of the brotherly considerateness of Paul, Cyprian, Augustine, and Chrysostom in dealing with offenders. We are not to despair of those whose stubbornness necessitates their excommunication, nor to cease to pray for such persons or "consign them to destruction."[f81]

13

These topics are so treated by Calvin as to exhibit very convincingly his sense of the corporate nature of the church. Five ample chapters are devoted to the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and another to the five rites, "falsely termed sacraments," confirmation, penance, extreme unction, priestly orders, and marriage.[f82] Augustine's characterization of a sacrament as "a visible form of an invisible grace" is approved, but for greater clarity Calvin prefers to say that it is "a testimony of divine grace toward us, confirmed by an outward sign, with mutual attestation of our piety toward him." By various metaphors he creates a clear impression of the relation of Word and sacraments, in which the latter are seals of the divine promises, pledges exchanged between God and the believer, and tokens before men of our discipleship. But these are void and fruitless without faith and the invisible grace ministered by the Holy Spirit. The treatment of baptism is remarkable as a defense of the baptism of infants. In this connection stress is laid on the role of circumcision as a valid Old Testament sacrament of initiation. Calvin also makes the most possible of the New Testament evidence. Since Christ called the little ones to his embrace and said, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven" (<401913>Matthew 19:13-14), it is very sinful to deny to the children of believers access to Christ.[f83] This is especially objectionable in those who teach, as do the Anabaptists, that there is no salvation for the unbaptized. This erroneous opinion is held also by the Romanists. The latter authorize the baptism by lay men and women of those about to die, and in these circumstances allow it to be hastily and crudely administered. This, Calvin regards as a travesty of the sacrament, arising from the false assumption that those who have missed the opportunity of baptism are therefore damned. "God," he says, "declares that he adopts our babies as

his own before they are born." Thus baptism, profoundly important as it is in the economy of salvation, is not a saving rite. He does not say, as Zwingli does, that all who die in infancy are saved, but he points out that Christ is not said to have condemned anyone who was not yet baptized. While discarding the traditional doctrine of baptismal regeneration, Calvin holds that in the covenantal relationship a secret influence operates in the mind of the child as he progressively learns the implications of his acceptance by, and initiation into, the church and comes under its care and teaching. Thus "infants are baptized into future repentance and faith."[f84]

In the discussion of the Lord's Supper he labors to show the real presence of Christ's body and blood, but rejects the localization of these in the elements, along with the related doctrine, developed in Lutheranism, of the ubiquity of Christ's resurrected body. On the analogy of other passages, the words "This is my body" must be taken not literally but as a metonymy. The body of Christ was seen taken up to heaven: it remains in heaven and cannot be enclosed in bread and wine.[f85] Instead, the communicant is spiritually lifted up to heaven to partake of the body. This doctrine of a spiritual partaking of Christ's true body and blood is distinctive of the Calvinist churches.[f86] The mere expression "spiritual presence" is inadequate as an index to Calvin's Eucharistic doctrine. His position is difficult for the modern mind to grasp in its entirety. He has to confess here, as in predestination, that he is confronted by a mystery which he has no words to explain. He can only say, "I rather experience than understand it."[f87] In some way incomprehensible to reason, our communion in Christ's body is made possible through the secret operation of the Holy Spirit. No writer has gone beyond Calvin in his estimate of the importance of this sacrament in the corporate life of the church. He urges its frequent use, fervently depicts the religious experience of the devout communicant, and stresses "the bond of love" created by participation, with its implications of social duty.[f88] The Roman doctrine of the Mass is assailed, especially with respect to the claim that it is an act of satisfaction for sin. This he regards as a negation of Christ's all-sufficient atonement and of the very institution of the Supper. Calvin similarly, with unnecessary vituperation, attacks the arguments used in support of the other five alleged sacraments, rejecting claims that they have the authority of Scripture and of usage in the early church.[f89]

14

The final chapter, "Civil Government,"[f90] is one of the most impressive parts of the work. Like the Prefatory Address to Francis I at the outset, this chapter illustrates the vital contact of Calvin's thought with the world of political action. In the Address, the young scholar ventures to admonish a proud monarch against the evil advice of those who have suggested his policy of persecuting good Christians. Francis is asked to acknowledge the rule of Christ, to whom all earthly kings should bow. In a passage that reflects Augustine's celebrated "mirror of princes," in which those emperors are called happy who "make their power the handmaid of God's majesty,"[f91] Calvin declares that it is "true royalty" in a king to acknowledge himself "the minister of God," and that it is his duty to rule according to God's Holy Word. We may here recall also the chapter on "Christian Freedom" (3.19) at the close of which the topic of political government is introduced, only to be postponed. From the point of view of high theology it might have been expected that the *Institutes* would close on another note than this. In the editions of 1539 to 1554 this section was given the third, and then the second, position from the end; but in 1559 it returned to the place it held in the 1536 edition, at the conclusion of the work. Why did Calvin choose to accord this position of emphasis to the theme of the political society? The answer is found in the chapter itself and in Calvin's other writings bearing on political affairs.[f92] His treatment of politics, like that of Thomas Aquinas and of other Scholastics, makes that topic a province of theology. The chapter abounds in quotations from the Bible, which here as elsewhere is his primary guide. But the subject has pressing importance for Calvin from the fact that he is always deeply aware of the way in which the fluctuating policies of rulers affect the reform of the church and the lot of those who commit themselves to the Reformation. The final chapter is indeed only slightly expanded from that of the first edition. It was mainly written during the excitements of the Munster episode, when the Reformation was being characterized by its opponents as a movement of political subversion. Calvin undoubtedly continued to feel the importance of stating a positive conception of politics as a part of his apologetic for the Reformation, and as a practical defense of the doctrines asserted throughout the treatise. As is well

known, his correspondence is replete with evidence of his interest in those political issues which could affect the course of evangelical religion.

Although it is true that for Calvin the chief issue involved is the service of the political society to the church of Christ, it is nevertheless a little misleading to say, with Wilhelm Niesel, that "he is not concerned about the state as such, nor even about the Christian state."[f93] He vehemently rejects the view of those "fanatics" who in their espousal of a spiritual Christianity loftily withdraw from political interests and obligations. The thought of the extermination of the political state is both repulsive and absurd to him. "Its function among men is no less than that of bread, water, sun, and air; indeed, its place of honor is far more excellent."[f94] It serves the purpose of maintaining man's corporate life, and this has an importance far from negligible. But the state renders its highest service in the assertion of a moral order in the affairs of men, and in the protection of a public form of the Christian religion. The church, for Calvin, is free from the control of the state, but should be able to rely on its favor and support. Calvin is interested not only in the duties of those who govern but also in the forms of government. In his Commentaries he has praise for the few pious kings of the Old Testament, but his references to kings, ancient and modern, are prevailingly unfavorable; and this cannot be dissociated from the implication of a disapproval of kingship itself. Yet he broadly accepts the contemporary variety of governments and asks for co-operation with them where they obey God, and patience where they are oppressive. No one is more anxious than he to discountenance violent revolution. He would like to avoid disputation about the forms of government, but quietly declares his decided preference for "aristocracy, or a system compounded of aristocracy and democracy." This well-known statement was first made in the edition of 1543, and in 1559 he inserted after it a characteristic explanation. Kings are very rarely good and competent, and the defects of men render it best that a number (*plures*) hold sway so that they may help and admonish each other and restrain anyone who wants to domineer.[f95] These principles of plural government and mutual fraternal correction run through the units of organization of church and state. They are illustrated in routine practice in the meetings both of ministers and of magistrates in Calvin's Geneva.[f96]

The eloquent paragraphs with which the work is ended stand unchanged, except for a reinforcing insertion, from the 1536 edition. They include the brief, startling passage which became a commonplace of political treatises, in which Calvin with a delusive gentleness proposes that the "three estates" of contemporary nations take up the functions of the ancient ephors, tribunes, and demarchs as constitutional defenders of the people's liberty against the oppression of kings. This is not presented as an incitement to revolt but as an appeal to an existing magistracy to fulfill its legitimate functions. It would have been superfluous to refer to the fact that the ancient magistrates mentioned were elected by the people. Calvin's closing sections are charged with power, and reflection on them will help to make possible an appreciation of the impact of his teaching on world history. But at the end he banishes any suggestion of reliance upon political action or advantage. Though we are menaced by the wrath of kings, we whom Christ has redeemed at priceless cost must obey God and endure all things rather than compromise piety or become slaves to the depraved desires of men.

15

The wide circulation and acceptance of Calvin's *Institutes*, as of his other writings, cannot be dissociated from the qualities of his style.[f97] When this is discussed it is often his style in French that is held chiefly in view,[f98] but many scholars in his own time and later have also celebrated his success as a writer of Latin.[f99] Calvin's Strasbourg friend, John Sturm, in a commendation that appears on the title page of the 1543 Latin edition of the *Institutes*, aptly characterized the work and its author when he said: "John Calvin has been endowed with a most acute judgment, the highest gift of teaching, and an exceptional memory. As a writer he is diversified, copious, and pure." The prodigiously learned Joseph Scaliger (d. 1609) wrote shrewdly that "his style has greater purity and elegance than is suitable to [*deceat*] a theologian." It is unquestionable that few theologians have wielded so felicitous a pen.

His mastery of Latin grew out of the advantage of his education. In mature years he paid a handsome tribute to Mathurin Cordier, his first Latin teacher at the University of Paris, for having so opened to him the gates of

learning as to make possible all that he had later achieved.[f100] Thus in his fourteenth year he had been initiated into the beauties of Latin and had begun to realize its resources for communication and persuasion. His later classical studies provided him with a Latin vocabulary of exceptional range. Q. Breen speaks of "the precipitate of humanism" carried over into his theology,[f101] and F. Wendel observes that "he remained always more or less the humanist he was in 1532."[f102] These writers are thinking of more than style, but they are aware that the stylistic influence of the Latin classics was never shaken off. "A certain elegance," says Breen, "lies upon all that he wrote, the light of classical clearness."[f103] One has an impression in reading him that when he is unusually eloquent, or sarcastic, he is apt to show a reminiscence of Cicero. Yet Calvin never "played the sedulous ape" to any preceding writer. Cicero and Quintilian would have been pained by the freedom of his divergence from classic models. Attention has been called by A. Veerman to the pronounced influence on his style from postclassical Christian Latin, especially in the extensive use of abstract terms and of vulgarisms, or elements from common speech, by which his vocabulary was extended. Veerman also shows that his sequence of words is shifted at will for emphasis, and that the verb tends to fall in the middle of the sentence rather than at the end. In the *Institutes* he habitually uses long periodic sentences, but these differ from Cicero's in that they lack the latter's artificial, rhythmical structure. Calvin, however, obtains a rhythmical effect by the use of parallel and triple constructions, paired synonyms, and more complicated devices. A concern for the effect upon the ear is further shown in a limited and judicious use of alliteration, assonance, verbal repetition, punning, and similar endings in adjacent clauses.[f104] Calvin clearly discerns the variations of style among the Scripture writers. While he takes delight in Scripture passages of marked elegance and beauty, he insists on the point that a divine quality no less inheres in those portions of Scripture which use rude and unadorned language. The Scripture, indeed, has a "force of truth" independent of rhetoric, while it shows, in parts, a surpassing eloquence.[f105] That his admiration for the Bible as written discourse was an influence balancing the classical tradition in the shaping of Calvin's style cannot be denied; but this appears more in his popular sermons than in his treatises, where the influence of the patristic writers is more in evidence. Very frequently, however, he commends the Biblical writers in general for their clarity,

simplicity, and brevity, qualities that he especially prized and sought to attain. He is not in fact concerned for style as such, but only to write in such a way as to communicate his whole thought clearly and with no waste of words.

Brevity is a quality often praised by him, and in many instances he indicates how this principle excludes some elaboration that he is tempted to practice. He has no patience with prolix writers, especially where the urgent issues of religion are discussed. He even criticizes on this ground his admired friends and associates, Bucer[f106] and Farel. In a letter to Farel he gently but firmly disapproves of the latter's "involved and elaborate" style, points to the difference between it and his own, and involves Augustine himself in the same censure. "You know," Calvin remarks, "how reverently I feel toward Augustine, yet I do not conceal the fact that his prolixity is displeasing to me. Still, it may be that my brevity is too concise."[f107]

His claim to have achieved brevity will not escape question. Can we credit with brevity the author of so long a treatise? There are, in fact, many passages in the *Institutes* that must seem to us tediously extended. Something should be allowed here for certain theological interests of his time to which little emphasis is given today. The real test of brevity as a quality of style has no direct bearing upon the length of a work planned with such a vastness and variety of subject matter as the *Institutes.* It is well remarked by Emile Faguet that although the claim of brevity may seem laughable to modern readers, it is justified in the fact that his phrases are "not overloaded" and that "though he has his wearisome passages, he has no verbiage."[f108] With few exceptions his sentences and paragraphs are packed with thought and have all the condensation possible without sacrifice of constituent matter. Calvin's deep convictions bring to his writing a quality of urgency which in some passages takes on an oratorical character. It is much less by formal logic than by enlisting the emotions that he has power to persuade. Habitually, as Breen has pointed out, his arguments are not formally syllogistic. It is perhaps due to his desire for brevity that where logical sequence is featured he prefers the clipped syllogism, or enthymeme, which leaves one premise to be supplied by the reader;[f109] but this tends to lessen the importance of logic, while the reader is the more rapidly carried on to the point of persuasion.

If there is any habitual violation of the principle of brevity, it consists in the abundance of adjectives and adverbs of emotional content often employed in commendation or condemnation of a position discussed. On occasion, Calvin shows a typically humanist mastery of the language of disparagement and vituperation. His horror of abuses led him at times to use epithets of abuse, and he sometimes resorts to this in assailing the legitimate views of an opponent. This is a deplorable feature by which in parts Calvin's work is marred for the sensitive reader, but it is not so prevalent as some critics have charged; and in his case invective is not a substitute for argument but a misconceived attempt to enhance its force.

It is not upon his antagonisms and negations that Calvin's power and persuasiveness depend, but upon the intensity of his positive convictions and the rich resources of his mind. This work is his greatest legacy to later ages; and even the new interests that captivate our generation do not lessen the relevance and worth of its message. "Today," Calvin once wrote, "all sorts of subjects are eagerly pursued; but the knowledge of God is neglected .... Yet to know God is man's chief end, and justifies his existence. Even if a hundred lives were ours, this one aim would be sufficient for them all."[f110]