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*A Quarterly Journal for Church Leadership*  
Volume 10 • Number 4 • Fall 2001

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*T*hat God pays any attention to us is entirely the result of his grace.

JOHN CALVIN

*T*he restoration of the church proceeds only from the grace of God.

JOHN CALVIN

*M*aster: We are not therefore to think that the good works of believers are useless?

*S*cholar: Certainly not. For not in vain does God promise them reward both in this life and in the future. But this reward springs from the free love of God as its source; for he first embraces us as sons, and then burying the remembrance of the vices which proceed from us, he visits us with his favor. . . .

*M*aster: Hence it follows that faith is the root from which all good works spring, so far is it from taking us off from the study of them.

*THE GENEVAN CATECHISM, JOHN CALVIN*

## INTRODUCING JOHN CALVIN: THE REFORMER'S PREPARATION

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*James Edward McGoldrick*

*F*rench Switzerland around Lake Geneva first received the Protestant faith through the preaching of William Farel (1489-1565) who had studied at the University of Paris and had begun proclaiming the Reformed doctrines about 1521. Farel's manner was acidic and bombastic, as he fearlessly denounced ecclesiastical corruptions and unscriptural teachings in the late medieval Catholic Church. His preaching in Basel had led to his expulsion in 1524, but he soon gained support in Berne, and that allowed him considerable freedom to preach in French Switzerland. Due to his influence, several cities adopted Protestant programs for reform. In 1532 Farel led a large group of Waldenses into the Protestant camp.

William Farel's zeal was admirable, but his tactless speech and rude behavior offended many people. At one point he had to leave Montbeliard after he seized a statue being carried in a Catholic procession and threw it into a river. In another town he snatched a Eucharistic wafer from a priest during mass and ridiculed the doctrine of transubstantiation, the belief that the bread and wine of the sacrament become the actual body and blood of Christ. Farel was exceptionally courageous, but he had little talent as an organizer of reformation.

Geneva rebuffed Farel's first approach, but he tried again. That city was then a thriving center of trade and notorious for vice. The city was engaged in a struggle to pre-

serve its independence against the Duke of Savoy, and to obtain support for its cause, Geneva allied with other Swiss cities. Berne and Fribourg aided Geneva in a successful defense against an attack from Savoy in 1530. Since Berne was a Protestant city, it fostered the spread of the reform to Geneva, and the Protestant cause slowly gained adherents there. Roman Catholic Fribourg, however, complained about that openness to Protestantism and prepared to attack Geneva. The city councils thereupon defied Fribourg by declaring the city's Catholic bishopric vacant and by giving encouragement to William Farel. In 1535 Geneva abolished the mass and expelled monks from its territory. The next year the city government officially embraced the Protestant Reformation, although the motive was as much political as religious. Farel then initiated a vigorous effort to make reformation a reality in the city, and he called John Calvin to assist him.

John Calvin (1509-64) came from a *bourgeois* family, and his father worked as a notary and accountant for the cathedral at Noyon. The older Calvin's ecclesiastical connections made it possible for him to obtain subsidies for the education of his children, and he directed John to prepare for the priesthood. John Calvin therefore enrolled at the University of Paris when he was about fourteen years old. There he demonstrated great scholarly ability, and he absorbed some humanist impulses from the influence of Desiderius Erasmus (c. 1469-1536), the foremost Greek and Latin scholar in Western Christendom, who had often criticized the ignorance of the Catholic clergy and the corruptions in his own church.

After receiving the bachelor of arts degree, Calvin appears to have studied theology briefly, but by 1527 his father had become alienated from the church hierarchy and directed John to transfer to the study of law, which he undertook at the universities in Orleans and Bourges.

While at Bourges, Calvin studied Greek with Melchior Wolmar (1496-1561), a scholar with Lutheran affinities. Calvin mastered the law so well, that he sometimes substituted for professors when they were absent from class. Although he graduated with a degree in law, Calvin did not become an attorney. Instead, he pursued the Greek language to which he eventually added Hebrew. Calvin's association with humanist scholars who often criticized the Roman Church seems to have aroused his curiosity about Protestantism.

After his father died, Calvin entered into the study of classical literature in the ancient languages, and in 1532 he published a *Commentary on Seneca's Treatise on Clemency*, which was a fine demonstration of his learning but not one which expressed any Protestant ideas. The grammatical-historical method of scholarship displayed in this work, however, equipped him well for the study of the Bible and the creation of his theological system to come soon after his conversion.

It appears that Calvin became interested in the cause of reformation through listening to the preaching of Gerard Roussel (c. 1500-55), a competent scholar who had mastered the ancient classical languages and had been proclaiming the supreme authority of Scripture and Christ as the sole mediator between God and man. His doctrine seems to have had much in common with Luther's teachings, but he remained within the Roman Church, even though Paris theologians condemned his writings.

Another influential figure in Calvin's life was Nicholas Cop (c. 1501-40), a philosopher who became rector at the University of Paris in 1533. Cop's inaugural address on that occasion aroused a storm of complaints because members of the theology faculty claimed that Cop's proposals for reform of education contained Lutheran ideas. The reaction to his lecture was so powerful that Cop fled from Paris, and Calvin did, too, because of a rumor that he had

collaborated with his friend in composing the offensive address. Calvin then lost the financial support he had enjoyed as subsidies for his academic work, and he soon left France to find refuge elsewhere.

The conversion of Calvin occurred sometime between 1520-32, but there is no account of his experience. In the preface to his *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, he wrote:

Since I was too obstinately devoted to the superstitions of Popery to be easily extricated from so profound an abyss of mire, God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame, which was more hardened in such matters than might have been expected from one of my early period of life. Having then received some taste and knowledge of true godliness, I was immediately inflamed with so intense a desire to make progress therein, that, although I did not altogether leave off other studies, I yet pursued them with less ardour.<sup>1</sup>

Not long after Calvin's conversion, French King Francis I (r. 1515-47) accused his Protestant subjects of anarchism and began persecuting them. Calvin obtained protection from the king's remarkable sister Margaret of Navarre, a queen and scholar in her own right, who shared some of the concerns of the reformers to cleanse church and society of superstitions and corruption. After a few months in Navarre, Calvin went to Basel, where he composed the first edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, the work which would secure his reputation as Protestantism's foremost theologian.

### THE REFORMER'S LABORS

In order to enjoy leisure to write, Calvin desired to settle in Protestant Strasbourg, but a visit to Geneva changed his plans. There in July 1563 he met William Farel, who

persuaded him to join in the work of reforming the city. At first they enjoyed considerable freedom, but eventually opposition became intense. A faction Calvin called Libertines resisted the Reformer's call for a moral cleansing of Geneva, and disputes within the city government injured the standing of Farel and Calvin, both of whom left the city in April 1538. Calvin then went to Strasbourg and became pastor of a French speaking congregation, a position he held for three years. While in Strasbourg he enlarged the *Institutes* and published Latin and French editions of that work.

In Strasbourg Calvin became acquainted with Martin Bucer (1491-1551), the major Protestant leader in that city. Bucer conveyed Martin Luther's conception of Christianity to Calvin, who readily commended Luther's work and considered him a comrade in the same cause. Many of Calvin's parishioners in Strasbourg were believers of a Lutheran persuasion. Eventually Calvin's influence spread into Germany, and a German Reformed Church arose, which, to some extent, eclipsed the Lutheran Church.

By 1541 supporters of Calvin gained control of the city government, and they asked him to return. All of his instincts recoiled at the prospect, for he regarded Geneva a dangerous place, one which he feared. Despite his alarms, Calvin went back into an arena of controversy, since many Genevans did not welcome him. During his first ministry in the city, church-state relations had been tense, and no satisfactory arrangement had yet been devised. The city councils had at times interfered with church discipline, and when Calvin protested, they had forced him to leave. After 1541 the Reformer struggled for fifteen years to free the church from state interference.

As Calvin's influence grew, his pattern for church and society gradually gained acceptance in Geneva. While he maintained that church and state should be separate, he

retained the medieval view that government should protect the church so as to prevent the dissemination of false doctrine. He insisted that the state conform its laws to the laws of God and that officers of the state be subject to the church in moral and spiritual matters, since civil officials were members of the Reformed Church. Church and state were to cooperate in achieving a Christian society, each supporting the other in the execution but not the legislating of its tasks.<sup>2</sup>

Calvin's concept of church government featured popular election of elders who then formed a consistory in which elders and pastors participated as equals and exercised authority over church discipline. Teachers of doctrine and deacons were to assist the elders in the work of education and charity respectively. The formal structure of the church came into being legally by enactment of the Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1541, which recognized the right of the church to administer its own affairs, but the city councils continued at times to intrude into church matters.

Although Calvin's position in the consistory was a powerful one, his authority was far from complete, so depictions of him as the tyrant of Geneva are unjust caricatures. In the consistory elders outnumbered pastors by a ratio of three to one, and that body did not always concur with Calvin's wishes. He desired the celebration of the Eucharist every Sunday, but the consistory decided for quarterly observance of the sacrament. The Reformer's books and those of all pastors were subject to the approval of the consistory, and that body could censure any pastor. Calvin wanted the ceremony of ordination to the gospel ministry to include laying on of hands, but the consistory refused. John Calvin never held any civil position in Geneva, and he did not become a citizen there until 1559, five years before he died.

Even though Calvin's position in Geneva was not that

of a dictator, the form of church government which he employed sometimes led to an authoritarian scrupulosity inconsistent with the Protestant subscription to the sole authority of Scripture. A measure of legalism became apparent in Geneva, as the consistory put the lives of church members under continuous review and applied discipline to offenders. Church attendance was compulsory. Eating fish on Fridays was forbidden, as were attendance at theaters, dancing, card playing, and criticism of pastors. All heretical teaching was deemed subversive and subject to penalties under criminal law. Flagrant infractions could lead to banishment, imprisonment, and in extreme cases, death. Judicial torture was common procedure. In these matters the policy in Geneva was but a reflection of the practice in Europe as a whole, in both Catholic and Protestant lands.

In Reformation Geneva objections to established doctrines sometimes incurred severe penalties, as when Jerome Bolsec (c. 1524-84), a former Carmelite monk, rejected the Reformed teaching about predestination on the ground that it makes God the author of evil. He advocated the view that God has elected all human beings for salvation, but many people refuse God's choice and so perish in sin. His proclamation of this position led to imprisonment and trial for heresy in December 1551. The court banished him for life. Bolsec eventually returned to Catholicism and wrote a bitter polemic against Calvin and leaders of the church in Geneva.<sup>3</sup>

While the non-conformity of Jerome Bolsec led to expulsion, that of Michael Servetus (c. 1509-53) led to execution. Servetus, a Spanish physician and amateur theologian, in 1531-32 had published treatises in which he denied the doctrine of the Trinity and ridiculed it as a form of polytheism. In 1553 he produced the *Christianismi Restitutio*, his major composition, by which he proposed to correct the errors of Calvin's *Institutes*. Roman Catholic author-

ities within the Hapsburg Empire had earlier arrested him and condemned him to death for heresy, but Servetus escaped and went to Geneva. Why the notorious heretic went there remains a mystery, but it appears that Calvin's enemies encouraged him to go there to create an incident which might embarrass the Reformer. Soon after Servetus arrived, someone recognized him, and civil authorities arrested him. The law code of Geneva prescribed death for denial of the Trinity. At his trial the accused heretic assailed Calvin and asked the city government to banish him and to award Calvin's possessions to him.

In October 1553 the court condemned Servetus to death by burning. Calvin requested that the execution be by decapitation, an almost painless method, but the magistrates refused. Although Calvin agreed with the court and consented to the execution, he had no authority to pass sentence upon Servetus. That was the work of the city magistrates, with whom Calvin's influence was minimal at that point. Calvin was as much afraid of the support his enemies gave to Servetus as he was of the heretic's doctrine. Other Protestant cities in Switzerland endorsed the action against Servetus, as did Philip Melancthon, leader of the reform in Wittenberg, since the death of Martin Luther in 1546. If his enemies expected this tragic affair to undermine Calvin's position, they were disappointed. He emerged from this experience stronger than ever.

Under Calvin's leadership Geneva became the fountainhead of Protestant scholarship, as students from many countries went there to enroll at the Academy. This institution provided education for all ages and levels of society at public expense. Many missionaries of the Reformed faith studied there, the most famous of which was Scotland's John Knox (1505-72), who referred to Geneva as the "most perfect school of Christ that ever was on earth since the days of the apostles."

### THE REFORMER'S TEACHING

John Calvin never met Martin Luther, but he was familiar with the German Reformer's writings. On almost all questions of doctrine they agreed, although there was a difference of emphasis on some points. There was mutual respect between Luther and Calvin, as each approved of the other one's work. In a letter to Martin Bucer, Luther wrote, "give my respectful regards to Calvin, whose book I read with special pleasure." In a tribute to Luther, Calvin wrote, "Remember what a great man Luther is. How marvelous are his gifts. How bravely, how firmly, how ably, how scholarly, how effectively, he has constantly labored in the destruction of anti-Christ and in the spread of the doctrine of salvation."<sup>4</sup>

The evident theological agreement between the two Reformers they reinforced with affection and a sense of comradeship in a common cause, and Calvin's theology bears evidence of Luther's influence in the crucial matters of *sola Scriptura*, *sola gratia*, and *sola fide*. Like Luther, he was strongly anti-Pelagian in the manner of St. Augustine, to whom both scholars acknowledged a great debt. The only conspicuous disagreement between Luther and Calvin pertained to the sacraments, but this did not become an acrimonious dispute, as it did between Luther and Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), the chief Reformer in Zürich. In that case the theologians of Wittenberg and Zürich argued about the nature of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. Since Calvin never denied the real presence of Christ in that sacrament, Luther did not find his view as objectionable as he did the symbolism of Zwingli.<sup>5</sup>

Calvin assumed the posture of a grateful but not uncritical disciple of Luther. Only one letter from Calvin to Luther is extant, and none from Luther to Calvin has survived. The Genevan theologian was a forceful supporter of Luther's *Bondage of the Will*, though he thought some of the

language in that treatise was imprecise. Calvin believed his work as a Reformer was continuous with that of his German contemporary.

As a Bible scholar Calvin was outstanding. He entertained no doubts about the canon of Scripture or the inerrancy of its contents. He regarded acceptance of the Scripture as a fruit of regeneration which brings an inward testimony from the Holy Spirit. "Those who are inwardly taught by the Holy Spirit acquiesce implicitly in Scripture," and therefore they receive it as "from the very mouth of God."<sup>6</sup> Calvin wrote commentaries on all the books of the Bible except the Apocalypse, and he interpreted Scripture in a Christocentric manner. He depicted the Old Testament as a shadowy outline and the New Testament as a colorful picture of Christ through whom humans must approach God.

Calvin's understanding of sin and salvation affirms universal human depravity and the sovereignty of divine grace. The human condition since the fall is one of spiritual death, so people by nature cannot and will not love and obey God. They sin eagerly and thereby merit damnation. Since God is sovereign, salvation cannot be a coincidence but must be a deliberate intervention of grace on behalf of hopeless sinners. Calvin held strongly to the doctrine of original sin as actual guilt, that is, liability to punishment, and he contended that the fall has left humans without genuine freedom. "The will is enchained as the slave of sin; it cannot make a movement toward goodness."<sup>7</sup> Salvation then must be *sola gratia*, by grace alone, and God discriminates in the application of his grace by bestowing it upon his chosen people alone. Recipients of unmerited divine favor believe the gospel, embrace Christ, and repent for their sins through the gift of faith. Justification is *sola fide*, through faith alone in Christ alone, for he is the only Savior, and he saves only his elect.

As a champion of divine grace, Calvin wrote much about the means of grace, that is, the Word of God and the sacraments he has given to his church. He concurred with Augustine that the sacraments make the Word of God visible. The sacraments derive their efficacy from the Word. They are signs and seals of God's favor as displayed in the gospel. They attest to God's promises in a visible manner, much as a seal is affixed to an official document to confirm its authenticity.<sup>8</sup>

With regard to baptism the Reformer of Geneva held that it does not produce regeneration, but it strengthens spiritual life in believers. For them baptism is a token of purification and forgiveness. The recollection of their baptism should encourage believers to depend upon God's love. It is a means of sanctifying grace which operates throughout the lives of Christians.

The sacrament of baptism is for believers and their children. It is for children because of their covenant position, a reminder that the promises of God pertain to believers and their offspring (Acts 2:39). Although baptism does not accomplish regeneration, it should be administered to all who profess regeneration and to their covenant children. When elect children come to faith in Christ, baptism will avail to strengthen their faith.<sup>9</sup>

As indicated above, Calvin disagreed with Luther about the Lord's Supper. He maintained that Christ is truly present in this sacrament but only in a spiritual manner, whereas Luther insisted that Christ's presence is a bodily one. Because Christ ascended bodily into heaven, Calvin believed that his sacramental presence must be of a spiritual character. In this sacrament the Holy Spirit unites believers with Christ, and only people who possess saving faith enjoy this union. Others who may receive the bread and wine do not commune with Christ, for he is present only to his people.<sup>10</sup>



The name of John Calvin has been for centuries almost a synonym for the doctrine of predestination, as though he were the first Christian scholar to advocate it. Although that is not so, he did defend this teaching vigorously when he encountered opposition to it. In dealing with this somewhat mysterious matter, Calvin admonished Christians to remain within the bounds of Scripture and not to resort to speculation. In the Reformer's words: "The moment we exceed the bounds of the Word, our course is outside the pathway and in darkness, and . . . we must repeatedly wander, slip, and stumble. . . . When the Lord closes his holy lips . . . [the Christian] shall at once close the way to inquiry."<sup>11</sup>

Calvin taught that reprobation as well as election originated in God's sovereign decree and is not a consequence of God's foreknowledge of man's condition. In election God displays his grace, in reprobation his justice. The will of God can have no cause antecedent to itself. "God's will is so much the highest rule of righteousness that whatever he wills, by the very fact that he wills it, must be considered righteousness."<sup>12</sup>

Calvin categorically denied that God is the author of sin, but he could not explain God's exact relationship to evil. The Reformer did not accept the concept of God's *permissive* and his *decretive* wills, because the Bible teaches that God has ordained all that occurs. Calvin did insist on the universal proclamation of the gospel, since God alone knows his elect, and he has commanded his church to preach to everyone. This is the means to bring the elect to their Savior. When critics accused him of making God the author of sin, Calvin became incensed,<sup>13</sup> and he expressed special disdain for anyone who denied predestination.<sup>14</sup>

#### THE REFORMER'S LEGACY

Like Martin Luther, John Calvin emphasized God-centered belief and practice. *Soli Deo Gloria* is an apt summary

of Calvin's theology and his entire world-view. As J. I. Packer has remarked, "Calvinism is a theocentric way of thinking about all of life under the direction and control of God's Word."<sup>15</sup> Calvin's motto appears on a seal which portrays a pair of human hands presenting a heart to God, and the inscription is *Cor meum tibi offero, Domine, prompte et sincere*—"My heart I give to thee, O Lord, promptly and sincerely." Theology for Calvin was not a detached academic discipline for the benefit of erudite minds alone but the greatest privilege and the most satisfying pursuit for all who love God and seek to understand his ways. The theocentricity of his faith appears in Calvin's last will and testament, which he dictated on April 25, 1564.

In the name of God, I, John Calvin, servant of the Word of God in the Church of Geneva, weakened by many illnesses, . . . thank God that he has shown not only mercy toward me, his poor creature, and . . . has suffered me in all sins and weaknesses, but what is much more, that he has made me a partaker of his grace to serve him through my work. . . . I confess to live and die in this faith which he has given me, inasmuch as I have no other hope or refuge than his predestination upon which my entire salvation is grounded. I embrace the grace which he has offered me in our Lord Jesus Christ and accept the merits of his suffering and dying, that through them all my sins are buried; and I humbly beg him to wash me and cleanse me with the blood of our great Redeemer, . . . so that I, when I shall appear before his face may bear his likeness.

Moreover, I declare that I endeavored to teach his Word undefiled and to expound Holy Scripture faithfully, according to the measure of grace which he has given me. In all the disputations which I led against the enemies of the truth, I employed no cunning or any sophistry, but have fought his cause honestly. But, oh my will, my zeal, were so cold and sluggish that I know myself guilty in every respect; without

his infinite goodness all my passionate striving would be only smoke. . . . Thus my only confidence is that he is the Father of mercy, who . . . desires to reveal himself to such a miserable sinner.

As for the rest, I desire that after my passing my body be buried according to the customary form in expectation of the day of blessed resurrection.<sup>16</sup>

In accord with his own wish, the burial was in an unmarked grave, the site of which no one knows. The translation of Calvin's writings into several languages, however, has kept his legacy alive. He remains the single most influential figure in the history of the Reformed faith. Even people who reject his doctrine often admire his vast learning and the courage and resolution with which he conducted his ministry. His understanding of the requirements for Christian living is especially applicable in this era of superficial religiosity.

In explaining the character of a truly Christian life, Calvin emphasized the believer's relationship to God as primarily that of a servant to his sovereign, but the Reformer maintained that God is a fatherly sovereign who wills only good for his children. Gratitude, therefore, must be a powerful motive in the Christian life: "Since God has revealed himself to us as a father, we would be guilty of the basest ingratitude, if we did not behave as his children."<sup>17</sup> Calvin held that obedience to biblical teachings is the only basis for the assurance of salvation. As he stated this matter, "Only if we walk in the beauty of God's law do we become sure of our adoption as children of the Father."<sup>18</sup> The ability to obey God is a fruit of his grace, for "holiness is not a merit by which we can attain communion with God, but a gift of Christ which enables us to cling to him and to follow him"<sup>19</sup>

The Reformer of Geneva believed ardently in the social

character of Christian ethics, so he called upon believers to render all necessary spiritual and material aid to people in want. "Since our goodness cannot reach the Lord, . . . we must exercise it towards the saints who are on earth."<sup>20</sup> Meeting such needs requires tolerance and patience toward weaker brethren, so Calvin asserted, "If we cover and obliterate man's faults and consider the beauty and dignity of God's image in him, then we shall be induced to love and embrace him."<sup>21</sup> In order to implement this principle of brotherly love, Calvin led the way in establishing a systematic approach to social problems in which civil and ecclesiastical authorities cooperated.

Due to persecution in other lands, thousands of refugees fled to Geneva, some of them with little more than a few meager items they could carry. Some were widows with children, and many were elderly or ill, although there were wealthy *bourgeois* among them. The population of Geneva swelled greatly because of this influx which strained the resources of the city to meet urgent needs. In this connection the deacons of the Reformed Church took responsibility to care for such people. Protestant governments almost all abolished begging and insisted that able-bodied people work, and sometimes that meant providing employment in the public sector. For those unable to toil, there had to be facilities for care. The Genevan diaconate administered two hospitals, which provided health care at public expense, and orphanages as well. Physicians contributed their services to impoverished people at no charge, and pastors visited the sick and infirm on a regular basis, while deacons inspected the facilities for social welfare and reported to the pastors about specific needs. The city treasury paid part of the cost for charity, while the deacons solicited additional funds from the populace. A law in 1546 designated one-third of the fines collected in the city for the care of the poor and a second third for the deacons

to fund their ministries.<sup>22</sup> Civil and church leaders in Reformed Geneva thus cooperated in the work of charity as a way to demonstrate their commitment to brotherly love.

As important as the ministry of charity in Geneva was, finding ways to reduce poverty had even greater significance. In this connection the desire to instruct all citizens in the fundamental truths of Christianity led to a major expansion of education which, in the long run, brought material as well as spiritual benefits to the populace. When Geneva abolished the Roman Catholic mass in 1536, its government resolved to create schools and to make attendance mandatory. Classes opened soon in a former monastery.

When Calvin returned to Geneva in 1541, he urged the city magistrates to erect a college, completion of which occurred in 1563, although classes had begun in other facilities in 1559. Calvin's love for learning and his subscription to the humanist methods of research in ancient languages prompted him to seek high academic standards for the college and for all schools in Geneva. As a result of his efforts, almost everyone in the city had an opportunity for at least an elementary education at public expense. In higher education the Academy flourished as an institution to prepare men for the work of the ministry, and it gradually enlarged its curriculum and became the University of Geneva.<sup>23</sup>

The enduring influence of John Calvin upon the development of education can scarcely be exaggerated. The Reformed churches since his day have been in the forefront in demanding a learned ministry well equipped to expound Scripture and to defend the faith against its enemies. Calvin understood that education in truth meant exploring all areas of creation in the light of God's Word. That is, applying the special revelation in Scripture to the investigation of general revelation as that appears in the

created universe. Reformed believers in many lands have heeded this advice and have created Christian schools on all levels of instruction. In societies unlike Geneva, where church and state mutually subscribed to biblical principles, Reformed believers have asserted the rights of parents to determine who will teach their children and what they will teach them. Like their Genevan mentor, they decry alleged neutralism in education and insist that all truth is God's truth.

Although the realistic view of human sinfulness which undergirds Calvin's appraisal of human nature has led to the complaint that his theology encourages a profound pessimism, he and those who agree with him have always been the ultimate optimists. As the late John Gerstner has written:

They are not Calvinists because they are optimists but optimists because they are Calvinists. Calvinism teaches that every picayune event which occurs in the least important circumstance of the most trifling occasion to the most insignificant creature is the perfect outworking of the infinitely wise and good will of an eternal, sovereign God. A person who believes that is, by definition, an optimist. . . . He [the Calvinist] goes on confidently assured that this is the best possible universe and "all things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to his purpose" (as the greatest Calvinist of all once wrote).

The Reformed Faith is still a mighty instrument which God is pleased to use for the good of mankind. . . . This influence pervades all areas of thought, and the fertility of that ranging mastermind of the Reformation still powerfully penetrates the total human situation. It shows that the Calvinist, being human, is interested in all things human and, being Christian, is interested in every point where

Christianity touches human life, namely, every point.<sup>24</sup>

### Author

Dr. James Edward McGoldrick was recently appointed as professor of church history at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Taylors, South Carolina (2001). He received B.S. and M.A. degrees from Temple University (1961 and 1964), and a Ph.D. in history from West Virginia University (1974). After pastoring several churches he served as professor of history at Cedarville University, 1973-2001. Articles by Dr. McGoldrick have been published in numerous journals and periodicals. He is the author of *Luther's English Connection* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1979); *Luther's Scottish Connection* (Madison, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1989); *Baptist Successionism* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 1994), and; *God's Renaissance Man: The Life and Work of Abraham Kuyper* (Darlington, United Kingdom: Evangelical Press, 2000). He is a frequent contributor to *Reformation & Revival Journal*.

### Notes

1. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, I. Translated and edited by James Anderson (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1845), xl-xli.
2. Helpful analyses of church-state relations in Geneva appear in Albert Hyma, *Christianity & Politics* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1938), and J. Marcellus Kik, *Church and State: The Story of Two Kingdoms* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1963).
3. Philip C. Holtrop, *The Bolsec Controversy on Predestination* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen, 1963) is a thorough study of this matter.
4. Quoted by Emmanuel Stickelberger, *Calvin, a Life*. Translated by Georg Gelzer (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1954), 70.
5. See James Atkinson, *Martin Luther and the Birth of Protestantism* (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1968), 275 n.
6. John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Translated by Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1957), I:vii:4-5.

7. *Institutes*, II:iii:5.
8. *Institutes*, IV:xiv-xix is Calvin's comprehensive explanation of the sacraments.
9. *Institutes*, IV:xv-xvi, especially xvi, for Calvin's defense of infant baptism.
10. *Institutes*, IV:xvii:32-33.
11. *Institutes*, III:xxi:2; cf. Fred H. Klooster, *Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1977), 23.
12. *Institutes*, III:xxiii:2; Klooster, *Calvin's Doctrine*, 64.
13. Edward Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), 219.
14. Leroy Nixon, *John Calvin—Expository Preacher* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1950), 86-87.
15. J. I. Packer, Introduction to John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1959 reprint of 1852 edition), 5.
16. Quoted by Stickelberger, *Calvin*, 148.
17. John Calvin, *The Golden Booklet of the Christian Life*. Translated by Henry J. Van Andel (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Guardian Press, 1952), 15.
18. *Golden Booklet*, 11.
19. *Golden Booklet*, 13.
20. *Golden Booklet*, 32.
21. *Golden Booklet*, 35.
22. A helpful coverage of these matters appears in W. Fred Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary* (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1971), 95-115; for a somewhat different appraisal of the diaconate, see William G. Naphy, "Calvin and Geneva," in *The Reformation World*. Edited by Andrew Pettegree (London: Routledge, 2000), 309-22.
23. William Monter, *Calvin's Geneva* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1967), contains substantial information about Calvin's contributions to education.
24. John Gerstner, "Calvinism Four Hundred Years After," in *John Calvin, Contemporary Prophet*. Edited by Jacob T. Hoogstra (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1959), 16-17. Cf. Alister McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1990). The last chapter of this fine book is an appraisal of Calvin's enduring significance for Western civilization.