

Dr. Roger Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 5, John Calvin Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 5, John Calvin, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Green's lecture on John Calvin begins by outlining the session's focus on textbook study and exam preparation. He then transitions into an overview of **Calvin's life and work**, highlighting his role as a mediator, his efforts to establish Geneva as a model city, and his systematic approach to theology. The lecture proceeds to discuss the **influences on Calvin's thought**, including nominalism, his French background, humanism, legal training, the Reformation, the Bible, and other theological literature. Finally, Dr. Green explains **Calvin's reasons for writing the Institutes**, emphasizing its purpose as a guide to Scripture, a summary of Christian doctrine, a Christian worldview, a defense of the Reformed faith, and an evangelistic tool.

**2. 19 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 5 – Double
click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (Church History → Reformation to the Present).**



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3. Briefing Document: Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 5, John Calvin

Briefing Document: John Calvin's Theology (Based on Dr. Green's Lecture)

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Roger Green in his lecture on John Calvin, the fifth session of his Church History course, "Reformation to the Present." The lecture focuses on Calvin's life, his work, and key elements of his theology, particularly in response to the Roman Catholic Church.

I. Introduction and Context:

- **Focus on Primary Sources:** Dr. Green emphasizes the importance of centering discussions on the assigned textbooks. Students are encouraged to bring their texts to Friday sessions to ensure they are grasping the necessary material.
- *"Basically, the discussion should be centered on the texts. Now, we can ask questions from the lecturers, but we really want to center them on the textbooks and make sure we're getting everything we should out of those textbooks, okay? So you want to bring your texts to those Friday sessions."*
- **Exam Preparation:** The upcoming exam will be discussed in the following week's session. Dr. Green will provide hints about potential exam content.
- *"So, if I say something like, you may see this again in your lifetime, you should take that as a hint. That means it's on the exam."*
- **Prayer and Gratitude:** The lecture begins with a prayer expressing gratitude for God's revelation in Christ and for figures like John Calvin who were faithful to the gospel.
- *"Sometimes, at times of great suffering, we think of John Calvin, and we thank you for his life and for his ministry. And we pray that you will be with us as we study that life and ministry and try to understand it in the times in which he lived and why it was so important to say what he said. So, we thank those people on whose shoulders we stand today."*
- **Lecture Structure:** The lecture will cover Calvin's life (briefly reviewed), his work, and then delve into five key theological elements in response to medieval Catholicism.

II. Life and Work of John Calvin (Review):

- **Contextualization:** Placing important figures like Calvin in their historical context is crucial.
- **Key Aspects of His Work: Mediator/Ombudsman:** Calvin played a role in mediating different viewpoints within the Reformation, unlike the more confrontational Luther.
- *"He did not have the nature of Luther, who was very wealthy. Luther was not organized, and he was a scrapper and a fighter. Calvin wasn't that; he was more of a mediatorial role."*
- **Geneva as a City of God:** Calvin aimed to establish Geneva as an exemplary city embodying Reformation principles.
- **Geneva Academy:** The founding of the Geneva Academy was vital for training individuals in Reformation theology, enabling them to disseminate these ideas.
- *"He founded the Geneva Academy, and that's where people came and studied theology and the basic ideas of the Reformation, which they were able to take back to their own homes. So that was very important."*
- **Systematizer of Theology:** Calvin was a significant organizer of theological thought, building upon the work of others like Luther. His *Institutes* are presented as an orderly account of theology.
- *"Some people don't like the word systematizer. I don't think there's anything wrong with that word. I think he was a good systematizer, a good organizer of theology. So he took what he learned from people like Luther, who was not an organized systematizer, and he put it in order. He tells us that the institutes are an orderly account."*
- **Methodological Approach:** Calvin's theology begins with the knowledge of God and of ourselves.
- *"All the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, begins with a knowledge of God and of ourselves."*

III. Influences on John Calvin's Theology:

- **Nominalism:** This philosophical movement emphasizing the sovereign will of God influenced Calvin, though he tempered its harsher aspects by insisting that God's will is mediated through his justice, wisdom, and love, rejecting the idea of an

"arbitrary sovereign will." * *"Calvin said, you know, that understanding of God really has to be mediated a little bit by God's justice and God's wisdom and God's love. God is not arbitrarily sovereign."*

- **French Background:** Calvin's French upbringing contributed to the precision and clarity of his writing compared to Luther. * *"There was a precision in his writing that you don't find in Luther, for example. There was clarity of thought, and there was clarity of expression in John Calvin that you don't find in Martin Luther."*
- **Humanism:** Calvin was influenced by the Renaissance humanistic reappraisal of Greek and Roman thought. He believed the church could learn from culture and engage in dialogue with it, though he recognized the deficiencies of a culture without reference to God. * *"Calvin did not see culture and the church as necessarily antithetical. So, there are things to be learned from culture. There are things that the church can learn from culture. If the church really wants to speak to the culture, there are things that it can learn from the culture. There can be a conversation with the culture."*
- **Legal Training:** Calvin's background in law shaped his argumentation style, making his theological arguments careful, deliberate, and precise. * *"He argues like a lawyer. He's got a very careful, deliberate, precise argument to make for the sake of the gospel. And it's very hard to argue with Calvin, I'll tell you. Whether you agree with him or not, his arguments are airtight at times, legally tight."*
- **The Reformation:** Calvin was profoundly influenced by the ongoing Reformation, particularly by the writings of Martin Luther, which may have played a role in his conversion.
- **The Bible:** Scripture was the most significant influence on Calvin. He was primarily an interpreter of the Bible. * *"So, the Bible became the most important influence on John Calvin. First and foremost, Calvin is an interpreter of the Bible."*
- **Other Literary Sources:** Calvin was also influenced by theological writers like Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas.

IV. Reasons for Writing the Institutes:

Calvin himself outlined his motivations for writing his seminal work:

- **Key to Understanding the Bible:** Calvin intended the *Institutes* to serve as a hermeneutical tool for a "good and right understanding of the Scriptures."

- *"But the number one reason for writing the Institutes was he wanted the Institutes to be a key to understanding the Bible."*
- **Sum of Religion:** The *Institutes* aim to provide a summary of the most important aspects of Christian belief.
- *"The second reason is what he called, I'm setting forth the sum of religion. I'm giving a summary of religion. I'm giving what is most important in religion."*
- **Christian World Order:** Calvin sought to present a Christian philosophy, outlining how Christians should view and understand the world.
- *"Number three, the Institutes definitely are kind of a... kind of a Christian world order, a Christian philosophy, how you should, as a Christian, how you should view the world and what's in the world."*
- **Apologetic Work:** The *Institutes* function as a defense of the Christian faith as understood through the lens of the Reformation.
- *"Number four is it's an apologetic work. There's no question. Calvin is defending... the Christian faith as understood by the Reformation."*
- **Evangelistic Purpose:** The initial edition of the *Institutes* (1536) was explicitly evangelistic, aimed at reaching those unfamiliar with Christian faith. Later editions, with increased complexity, were intended to equip pastors and teachers for evangelism.
- *"Calvin tells us that he wants to reach the lost in writing this book... the first edition of the Institutes was definitely written for people who had not learned... very evangelistic... trying to lead them into faith in Christ."*

V. Calvin's Theology (Key Elements in Response to Medieval Catholicism):

- **Theology of Humankind (Doctrine of Mankind):**
- **Rejection of "Facere Quod In Se Est":** Calvin rejected the medieval Roman Catholic understanding of human nature encapsulated in the phrase "facere quod in se est" (do what is in you to do), which suggested humans still possessed inherent goodness enabling them to do right.
- *"Calvin comes along, and he denies it; he says this is not true. You cannot do what is in you to do."*

- **Original Sin and the Mutilated Image of God:** For Calvin, original sin, inherited from Adam, has fundamentally corrupted human nature, "mutilating" the image of God within us. This loss is particularly profound in spiritual matters.
- *"By original sin, what he meant is that we all share the sin of Adam, and the word he uses in his institutes is the image of God has been mutilated in us."*
- **Loss of Spiritual Gifts:** Due to original sin, our spiritual abilities are entirely lost.
- *"For Calvin, our spiritual kind of do what you're able to do, spiritual gifts, they are entirely lost for Calvin."*
- **Natural Gifts (Corrupted but Not Mutilated):** While spiritual gifts are lost, humans retain natural gifts like reason and the capacity for some good deeds, though even these are corrupted by sin.
- *"There are, however... natural gifts that we have. We have some ability to reason and to think and to speak... those are natural gifts that are corrupted but not mutilated."*
- **Total Rebellion Against God:** Calvin believed that the natural state of humanity is one of total rebellion against God, for which individuals are without excuse.
- *"For Calvin, the basic life of people from here on in their life, their everyday life, basically for Calvin, is that people are living their lives in total rebellion against God."*
- **The Root of Sin: Pride:** Calvin identified pride as the fundamental obstacle preventing self-knowledge and the knowledge of God, even calling it "stinking pride."
- *"And the root of all of that for Calvin basically is pride. Pride is what keeps us from knowing ourselves and knowing God as we should. And just so that you would get the point, he called it stinking pride."*
- **Responsibility: Confession of Sin:** The primary responsibility of an individual hearing the gospel is to acknowledge and confess their sinfulness and rebellion against God. This is the starting point for self-knowledge and ultimately, the knowledge of God.
- *"My first responsibility is to see myself as a sinner in rebellion against God and to confess those sins. The first responsibility of the listener of the gospel is to acknowledge my sins and to confess my sins."*

- **Universally Understandable Doctrine:** Calvin believed this doctrine of human depravity is understandable by everyone, regardless of their background.
- *"When it comes to the doctrine of mankind, Calvin believed that everybody's able to understand this doctrine when they hear it preached from the pulpit."*
- **Need for Explicit Instruction:** Everyone needs to be explicitly taught this doctrine, hence the importance of church attendance for all citizens.
- **Theology of God:**
- **Sovereignty of God:** Calvin emphasized God's absolute sovereignty over the universe. However, unlike some nominalists, he asserted that this sovereignty is expressed and understood through God's love, justice, faithfulness, and grace. It is not arbitrary.
- *"God is the sovereign Lord of the universe. No doubt about that. But he's not the sovereign Lord of the universe the way the nominalists taught it. He is the sovereign Lord of the universe, and we understand his sovereignty because that sovereignty is demonstrated in love. It's demonstrated in justice. It's demonstrated in his faithfulness toward us and his grace toward us."*
- **Human Response to God:** The appropriate human responses to God's sovereignty and character include fear, honor, and trust.
- *"Here are the kinds of words that you read in our response to that God. We should fear God. We should honor that God. We should trust God."*
- **Glory and Freedom of God:** The glory of God must never be impaired or diminished. Similarly, God's freedom is absolute, including his freedom to choose who will be saved and who will be damned.
- *"The glory of God is never to be impaired in any way... the freedom of God is never impaired. God is free because he is God... God is free to choose those who are going to be saved. And he's free to choose those who are going to be damned. That is the freedom of God."*
- **God as Creator and Redeemer in Christ:** Calvin understood God fully through the person and work of Jesus Christ, who is both creator and redeemer and the complete revelation of God. This contrasts with Unitarian views that posit a detached God.

- *"God is the creator and redeemer. And in order to understand God fully, we can only understand him in Christ, of course. Christ is the full revelation of God... if you want to know who God is, look at Christ. That's how we best understand God."*
- **Interrelation of Knowing God and Self:** The knowledge of God and self are intertwined and mutually inform each other.
- **Doctrine of the Church:**
- **Never Completely Fallen:** Calvin believed the true church never completely falls away from God.
- *"For Calvin, the church is never completely fallen. The church has never completely fallen away from God."*
- **Visible vs. Invisible Church:** He distinguished between the visible church (the observable, imperfect human institution) and the invisible church (the pure body of Christ, comprising the elect). The visible church contains the invisible church.
- *"There's the visible church and the invisible church... The visible church is the church that you see all around you... that visible church is flawed... the invisible church, however, is the pure church. The invisible church is the body of Christ, the righteous body of Christ."*
- **Marks of the True Church:** Calvin identified two essential marks of a true church:
 1. **Pure Preaching of the Word of God:** The Bible must be preached accurately and rightly.
 - *"The word of God is purely preached in the true church."*
 1. **Valid Administration of the Sacraments:** Baptism and the Lord's Supper must be administered according to Christ's institution, typically by ordained pastors.
 - *"The sacraments, are validly administered."*
- **Caution Against Leaving the Church:** While acknowledging legitimate reasons for leaving a flawed visible church, Dr. Green (echoing Calvin's principles) urges careful consideration, as the invisible church exists within it. He also emphasizes that only God knows the elect, and some elect may still be within a seemingly problematic church.
- **Not Anti-Catholic (in the sense of rejecting all individual Catholics or local churches):** Calvin (like Luther) disagreed with the hierarchical structure of the

Catholic Church but did not condemn local Catholic churches outright, acknowledging the possibility of the invisible church being present within them. This contrasts with some contemporary fundamentalist views.

- **No Salvation Outside the Church:** Calvin held a strict view that salvation is found only within the church, where the message of faith in Christ is heard and nurtured. This underscores the importance of belonging to a community of believers.
- *"Outside of the church, there is no salvation."*
- **Ministry in the Church:**
- **Priesthood of All Believers:** All Christians can minister to one another as priests through prayer, confession, and counsel.
- *"The priesthood of all believers means that all believers can minister as priests to one another."*
- **Vocation/Calling:** Every Christian has a vocation, but this does not equate to the specific vocation of ministry.
- *"Every Christian has a vocation. Every Christian has a calling."*
- **Specific Vocation of Ministry:** Preaching, administering sacraments, and interpreting the Bible are specific responsibilities of the ministerial vocation. This vocation is not inherently superior to other callings.
- *"Preaching, giving the sacraments, and interpreting the Bible, had to do with a specific vocation. That is the vocation of ministry... It was no better a vocation."*
- **Authority of the Minister:** The local minister holds significant authority, including preaching, teaching, administering sacraments, church discipline, and the ministry of forgiveness and assurance.
- *"The minister, the local minister in the local church, has a great deal of authority, and it includes these kinds of things. Preaching included teaching, giving the sacraments, administration, disciplining the laity... and a ministry of forgiveness... assure people that they are the children of God."*
- **Two Ministerial Offices:** Calvin recognized two primary ministerial offices based on scripture:

1. **Pastor:** Responsible for preaching and teaching.
2. **Deacon:** Responsible for serving the practical needs of the church.
 - *"In general, Calvin said there were two ministerial offices... The first office is the office of the pastor... The second office is the office of the deacon."*

This lecture provides a foundational understanding of John Calvin's life, work, and key theological contributions, highlighting his responses to the theological landscape of his time and his enduring influence on Protestant thought.

4. Study Guide: Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 5, John Calvin

Study Guide: John Calvin's Theology

Key Concepts

- **Sovereignty of God:** God's absolute power and authority over all creation, yet exercised with justice, wisdom, love, and grace (contrasting with some nominalist views of arbitrary sovereignty).
- **Total Depravity:** The pervasive and corrupting influence of original sin on human nature, rendering individuals incapable of spiritually good actions on their own. The image of God in humanity is considered "mutilated."
- **Facere Quod in Se Est:** A medieval understanding of humanity suggesting individuals still possess inherent goodness and the ability to do what is right within themselves. Calvin rejected this.
- **Original Sin:** The inherited sinfulness of humanity stemming from Adam's transgression, resulting in the corruption of human nature and loss of spiritual gifts.
- **Humanism (in the context of Calvin):** A Renaissance-era intellectual movement emphasizing the study of classical Greek and Roman literature and thought. Calvin engaged with culture and learned from humanism but recognized its limitations without God.
- **Institutes of the Christian Religion:** Calvin's seminal theological work, intended as a guide to understanding Scripture, a summary of Christian doctrine, a framework for a Christian worldview, an apologetic for the Reformation faith, and initially, an evangelistic tool.
- **Visible Church:** The empirical, observable church with its human flaws and imperfections, comprising both true believers and hypocrites.
- **Invisible Church:** The spiritual body of Christ, consisting of all true believers known only to God, residing within the visible church.
- **Marks of the True Church:** According to Calvin, the essential indicators of a genuine church: the pure preaching of the Word of God and the valid administration of the sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper).

- **Priesthood of All Believers:** The concept that all Christians have direct access to God through Christ and can minister spiritually to one another (e.g., through prayer, confession, and counsel). This does not equate to the authority to preach or administer sacraments.
- **Vocation (or Calling):** The idea that every Christian has a specific calling or role in life to serve God and neighbor. The ministerial vocation is distinct and carries specific responsibilities.
- **Assurance:** The certainty of salvation, a key point of contention during the Reformation. Ministers have the authority to assure believers of God's forgiveness.
- **Ministerial Offices (according to Calvin):** Primarily two biblically authorized roles in the church: pastor (responsible for preaching and teaching) and deacon (responsible for serving practical needs).

Short-Answer Quiz

1. According to Dr. Green, what was John Calvin's role or characteristic in relation to other Reformation figures like Martin Luther?
2. Name three non-theological influences that shaped John Calvin's thinking and writing, as mentioned in the lecture.
3. What was the primary purpose behind John Calvin writing his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, according to Dr. Green?
4. Explain the medieval Roman Catholic understanding of human capability summarized by the phrase "facere quod in se est" and contrast it with Calvin's view.
5. What does Calvin mean when he states that the "image of God has been mutilated" in humanity due to original sin?
6. How does Calvin's understanding of God's sovereignty differ from the views held by some nominalist philosophers, according to the lecture?
7. What are the two essential "marks of the true church" identified by John Calvin?
8. Explain the distinction Calvin makes between the "visible church" and the "invisible church."

9. What does the concept of the "priesthood of all believers" mean in Calvin's theology, and what does it *not* imply regarding church leadership?
10. What were the two primary ministerial offices recognized by Calvin, and what were their main responsibilities?

Answer Key for Quiz

1. Dr. Green describes Calvin as more of an "ombudsman" or mediator among different viewpoints within the Reformation, contrasting him with Luther, who was seen as more confrontational and less organized. Calvin aimed to find common ground and bring clarity.
2. Three non-theological influences on Calvin mentioned are nominalism (a philosophy focusing on God's sovereign will), his French background (contributing to precision and clarity in his writing), and humanism (engagement with classical thought and culture).
3. The primary purpose of the *Institutes*, according to Dr. Green, was to serve as a key or guide for understanding the Bible, providing a framework for interpreting Scripture and grasping the core tenets of Christian faith.
4. "Facere quod in se est" suggested humans retain inherent goodness and the ability to do what is right. Calvin rejected this, arguing that original sin has so corrupted humanity that we are incapable of spiritual good on our own.
5. When Calvin says the "image of God has been mutilated," he means that the inherent goodness and likeness to God within humanity have been severely damaged by sin, leaving us spiritually incapacitated, though not entirely devoid of natural abilities.
6. While Calvin affirmed God's absolute sovereignty, he emphasized that it is not arbitrary but is expressed through God's justice, wisdom, love, and grace. This contrasts with some nominalists who stressed a more absolute and incomprehensible sovereign will.
7. The two marks of the true church, according to Calvin, are the pure preaching of the Word of God (preached rightly and truthfully) and the valid administration of the sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper, administered according to Christ's institution by ordained pastors).

8. The visible church is the observable, imperfect community of believers with both genuine Christians and hypocrites. The invisible church is the pure body of all true believers, known only to God, existing within the visible church.
9. The priesthood of all believers means all Christians can minister to one another spiritually through prayer, counsel, and mutual support. However, it does not mean that all believers have the authority to preach, administer sacraments, or officially interpret Scripture, which are specific ministerial vocations.
10. The two primary ministerial offices Calvin recognized were pastor, who was responsible for preaching, teaching, and administering the sacraments, and deacon, who focused on the practical service and needs of the church.

Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze the key influences that shaped John Calvin's theological development, as presented by Dr. Green. Discuss how these influences interacted and contributed to his unique approach to Christian doctrine.
2. Compare and contrast the medieval Roman Catholic understanding of human nature ("facere quod in se est") with John Calvin's doctrine of total depravity. What are the implications of these differing views for understanding salvation and the role of human effort in faith?
3. Discuss John Calvin's understanding of the sovereignty of God. How did he define and qualify this concept, particularly in relation to human responsibility and God's other attributes like justice and love?
4. Explain the significance of Calvin's distinction between the visible and invisible church. How did this understanding address the imperfections and challenges faced by Christian communities during the Reformation and beyond?
5. Evaluate the importance of Calvin's "marks of the true church" for understanding ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church). How might these criteria be applied and potentially debated in contemporary Christian contexts?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Apologetic:** A reasoned defense or justification of a particular belief or doctrine.
- **Catechism:** A summary of religious doctrine, often in the form of questions and answers, used for instruction.
- **Ecclesiology:** The branch of theology concerned with the nature and constitution of the church.
- **Elect:** Those whom God has chosen for salvation by his sovereign grace.
- **Eucharist:** Another term for the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion, a Christian sacrament commemorating Christ's last meal.
- **Hermeneutical Key:** A principle or method used to interpret and understand texts, particularly Scripture.
- **Hierarchy:** A system or organization in which people or groups are ranked one above the other according to status or authority.
- **Laity:** The ordinary members of a religious community as distinguished from the clergy.
- **Nominalism:** A philosophical view asserting that general terms or universals are merely names without any corresponding reality, impacting theological discussions about God's nature and will.
- **Presbyter:** An elder or minister in some Protestant churches, particularly Presbyterianism.
- **Realism (philosophical):** A philosophical view asserting that universals or abstract concepts have an objective or mind-independent existence.
- **Reformation:** A 16th-century movement that aimed to reform the doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic Church, leading to the establishment of Protestant churches.
- **Sacrament:** A religious ceremony or act regarded as an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual divine grace, particularly baptism and the Lord's Supper in Protestant theology.
- **Unitarian:** A theological perspective that emphasizes the single personality of God, rejecting the Trinity.

5. FAQs Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 5, John Calvin, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: John Calvin's Theology (Based on Dr. Green's Lecture)

1. Why does Dr. Green emphasize focusing on the textbooks when studying John Calvin?

Dr. Green wants students to ground their understanding of John Calvin in the assigned readings. He encourages questions based on the textbook material to ensure they are grasping the core concepts and information presented there. The lectures are designed to supplement, not replace, the detailed information found in the textbooks.

2. What were the key aspects of John Calvin's work and ministry highlighted in the lecture?

Calvin was portrayed as an "ombudsman" or mediator within the Reformation. He aimed to establish Geneva as a model "city of God." He founded the Geneva Academy, which played a crucial role in disseminating Reformed theology. Calvin was also characterized as a "systematizer" of theology, bringing order to the ideas of the Reformation, notably in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which he described as an orderly account of theological principles beginning with the knowledge of God and self.

3. What were the four main branches of the Reformation identified in the lecture?

The four distinct branches of the Reformation mentioned were the Lutheran branch (the initial branch), the Calvinist branch (the focus of the lecture), the English Reformation (initiated under Henry VIII), and the Anabaptist wing (also known as the radical or left wing).

4. What were the significant influences on John Calvin's theological development?

Several influences were discussed: * **Nominalism:** A philosophical movement emphasizing God's sovereign will, though Calvin modified this by insisting God's sovereignty is mediated through his justice, wisdom, and love, not arbitrary. * **His French Background:** Contributed to the precision and clarity of his writing compared to some other reformers like Luther. * **Humanism:** A Renaissance intellectual movement focused on classical Greek and Roman thought. Calvin learned from culture and engaged with it, seeing potential for conversation rather than complete opposition between church and culture. * **Training in Law:** Evident in his careful, deliberate, and logically structured arguments. * **The Reformation:** He was significantly influenced by the broader Reformation movement and figures like Martin Luther, even suggesting Luther played a

role in his conversion. * **The Bible:** The most paramount influence, with Calvin primarily viewing himself as an interpreter of Scripture. * **Other Literary Sources:** Including the works of influential theologians like Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas.

5. What were the primary reasons John Calvin wrote his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*?

Calvin intended the *Institutes* to serve several purposes: * **A key to understanding the Bible:** He saw it as a hermeneutical tool for a proper interpretation of Scripture. * **A summary of religion:** Providing a comprehensive overview of essential Christian doctrines. * **A Christian world order:** Presenting a Christian philosophy and framework for understanding the world. * **An apologetic work:** Defending the Christian faith as understood by the Reformation against its detractors, particularly Roman Catholicism. * **An evangelistic tool:** Initially aimed at reaching the unlearned and leading them to faith, later editions were geared towards equipping pastors and teachers for evangelism.

6. How did John Calvin's view of humankind differ from the medieval Roman Catholic understanding?

The medieval Roman Catholic view held the idea of "facere quod in se est," meaning humans could do what is in them to do, possessing inherent goodness to act rightly. Calvin vehemently opposed this, emphasizing the doctrine of original sin. He believed that humanity inherited Adam's sin, leading to the "mutilation" of the image of God within us, resulting in the complete loss of spiritual capabilities. While acknowledging natural gifts (reason, speech, etc.) are still present but corrupted, Calvin argued that humans are in a state of total rebellion against God, rooted in "stinking pride," and are incapable of spiritual good on their own.

7. What are the key characteristics of John Calvin's doctrine of God?

Calvin emphasized God's absolute sovereignty, but unlike some nominalists, he stressed that this sovereignty is expressed through love, justice, faithfulness, and grace. Our appropriate response to this God should be fear, honor, trust, reverence, and love. He also underscored the unimpaired glory and freedom of God, including God's freedom in election and reprobation. Crucially, Calvin understood God as both creator and redeemer, with the fullest revelation of God found in Jesus Christ. Therefore, one cannot have a true understanding of God apart from Christ.

8. According to John Calvin, what are the two essential marks of the true (visible) church?

Calvin identified two indispensable marks of a true visible church: * **The word of God is purely preached:** This signifies that the Scripture is proclaimed accurately, rightly interpreted, and without distortion. * **The sacraments are validly administered:** For Calvin, this meant the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are administered according to Christ's institution and by ordained pastors.