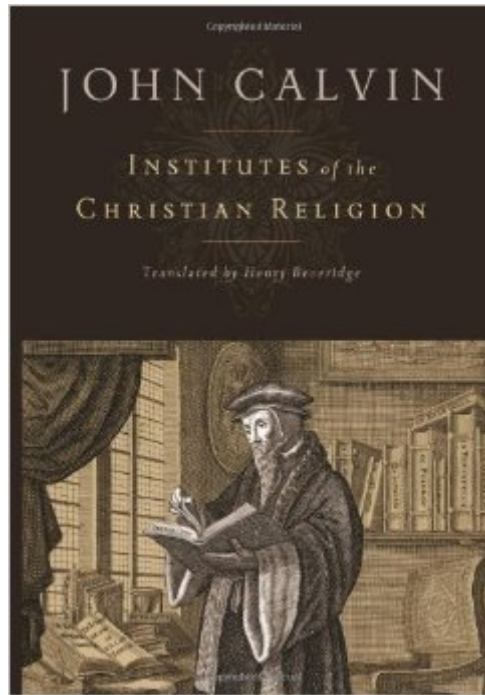


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Institutes Of The Christian Religion



Synopsis

Hendrickson offers a one-volume hardcover edition of one of Western Christianity's foundational works. Re-typeset into a clean and modern typeface, this edition is easy to read for the modern eye. This book will appeal to libraries, seminarians, pastors, and laypeople. *Institutes of the Christian Religion* by John Calvin is an introduction to the Bible and a vindication of Reformation principles by one of the Reformation's finest scholars. At the age of twenty-six, Calvin published several revisions of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, a seminal work in Christian theology that altered the course of Western history and that is still read by theological students today. It was published in Latin in 1536 and in his native French in 1541, with the definitive editions appearing in 1559 (Latin) and in 1560 (French). The book was written as an introductory textbook on the Protestant faith for those with some learning already and covered a broad range of theological topics from the doctrines of church and sacraments to justification by faith alone. It vigorously attacked the teachings of those Calvin considered unorthodox, particularly Roman Catholicism, to which Calvin says he had been "strongly devoted" before his conversion to Protestantism. The over-arching theme of the book--and Calvin's greatest theological legacy--is the idea of God's total sovereignty, particularly in salvation and election.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* is a monumental work that stands among the greatest works of Christian theology and Western literature. It ranks with works such as St.

Augustine's Confessions and City of God in value, insight and significance. The Institutes have molded the church's understanding of Christian doctrine for generations and has had untold influence in the development of Western thought in both the religious and civil arenas. Calvin's Institutes represent his life work in teaching theology. They first appeared in 1536 and went through three significant revisions - each expanding and building upon the previous. This particular edition represents the final form and of which Calvin was very pleased. Originally written to give basic understanding of Christian doctrine, they became one of the earliest systematic theologies of the Reformed tradition. Calvin's stated desire is to give the reader the necessary background to read and accurately handle the great doctrines and promises of the Bible. Calvin sent a copy to the King Francis I to encourage him to stop persecuting the Christians who were embracing the gospel as taught by the Reformers. His basic argument was that if the king understood what these people believed he would stop killing them as heretics but rather see them as faithful adherents of historical Christianity. Calvin was no lover of novelty and throughout the Institutes copiously cites from the early church fathers and the long history of the Church's understanding of doctrine. This two-volume work is broken down into four books that loosely follow the outline of the Apostle's Creed. Book 1 concerns knowledge of God. Book 2 is about Jesus Christ as redeemer. Book 3 is about the Holy Spirit's role in applying Christ's redeeming graces. Book 4 is about the church and practice. This particular edition, translated by Battles and edited by McNeil is more expensive than the one produce by Beverage, but it is worth every extra dollar you spend. While the church is indebted to Beverage for his labor of love in getting many works by Calvin translated into English, his command of both French and Latin were not as strong as Battles. They were originally produced in both Latin and French and Battles' work demonstrates his competency in dealing with both languages. Also, Battles' mastery of Calvin's other writings is reflected in his voluminous footnotes, many of them very helpful to the reader for clarifying, further reading and cross-referencing. In addition, the indexes in the Battles edition are invaluable not only for searching the Institutes for topics but for gleaming Calvin's understanding of the church fathers. Agree or disagree with Calvin, these are a necessary read for anyone who desires an understanding of the development of Western thought, literature and theology. They are not only great theology; they represent excellent writing and development of an argument. They are also highly pastoral and devotional. They are not like reading a modern systematic theology. Calvin understood doctrine to be more than theory, but something to mold our understanding of God, ourselves and the world in which we live. Carefully working through the Institutes is a journey worth taking! Soli Deo Gloria!

John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion is a classic. And the two most frequently suggested English translations seem to be the older Henry Beveridge translation and the newer John McNeill and Ford Lewis Battles translation. But it's hard for a layperson like me to know which English translation is "best." So for what it's worth, if anything, I thought the following quotations from Christian scholars might be helpful to some people:¹. Here's what Reformed Christian scholar and theological philosopher Paul Helm (who himself has studied and contributed several works on John Calvin) says: "Incidentally, if you have the need of a translation of the Institutes, then the reissue of the Beveridge translation (newly published by Hendrickson) may be just the thing. It has new indexes, and has been 'gently edited', which means, I hope, only the removal of typos and other detritus. (I have not yet had the chance to check). Beveridge is superior to Battles in sticking closer to the original Latin, and having less intrusive editorial paraphernalia."². Here's another Calvin scholar, Richard A. Muller, on the two translations (from the preface of *The Unaccommodated Calvin*): "I have also consulted the older translations of the Institutes, namely those of Norton, Allen and Beveridge, in view of both the accuracy of those translation and the relationship in which they stand to the older or 'precritical' text tradition of Calvin's original. Both in its apparatus and in its editorial approach to the text, the McNeill-Battles translation suffers from the mentality of the text-critic who hides the original ambience of the text even as he attempts to reveal all its secrets to the modern reader."³. The following is from J.I. Packer in the foreword to *A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes*: "No English translation fully matches Calvin's Latin; that of the Elizabethan, Thomas Norton, perhaps gets closest; Beveridge gives us Calvin's feistiness but not always his precision; Battles gives us the precision but not always the punchiness, and fleetness of foot; Allen is smooth and clear, but low-key."⁴. Finally, the following is from David Calhoun: "Let me just say a few words about English translations. The first was Thomas Norton back in the sixteenth century. Calvin was very fortunate with his first English translator. Norton did an exceptionally good job. Very soon after the completion of the Institutes in 1559, which was written in Latin, it was translated by Calvin into French and then quite soon into English. John Allen was the second translator. John Allen and Henry Beveridge were both nineteenth-century translators. The Beveridge translation is still in print. It was until fairly recently anyway. Those are not bad but not very good either. Ford Lewis Battles' 1960 translation is the one that we are using. Even though it has been criticized some, it is by far the most superior translation that we have at present." Once again, I hope this might be helpful to some people.

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