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Shepherding Ministry**

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Abstract: Many Christians today have distinct impressions of who John Calvin was, but most have never read a single line from his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, or benefited from the careful exegesis found in his *Commentaries* on the Bible, or reflected upon a single salient point from one of his many published sermons. In brief, the reformer John Calvin (1509–1564) has been misinterpreted, misread, and misunderstood.¹ He is, perhaps, best known for his views on the doctrines of election, predestination, and reprobation.² He is also known for his pivotal role in the prosecution of the arch-heretic Michael Servetus (1511–1553) who rejected the Trinity and the deity of Jesus Christ.³ But none of these disconnected pieces of information can demonstrate, in my opinion, the true character of the man. And so, who really was John Calvin? Hughes O. Old, a noted scholar of Calvin's life and theology, states the opinion that, "John Calvin is chiefly remembered as a biblical scholar and a systematic theologian."⁴ Clearly, Calvin distinguished himself through his theological writing and teaching ministry. However, he also was the preeminent pastor of the city of Geneva during the time of the Protestant Reformation. John T. McNeill notes, "Jean Daniel Benoit, the expert on Calvin's work in the cure of souls, states boldly that the Genevan Reformer was more pastor than theologian, that, to be exact, he was a theologian in order to be a better pastor. In his whole reforming work

1. Marilynne Robinson, "The Polemic Against Calvin: The Origin and Consequences of Historical Reputation," in *Calvin and the Church*, Calvin Studies Society Papers 2001, ed. David Foxgrover (Grand Rapids: Calvin Studies Society, 2002), 96–122. Robinson perceptively notes, "The usual charges against Calvin are: predestinarianism and the execution of Servetus." Ibid., 97.

2. Dewey D. Wallace, Jr., "Predestination," in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 291–293.

3. Nathan P. Feldmeth, "Michael Servetus," in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 349.

4. Hugh O. Old, "John Calvin," in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 45–48.

he was a shepherd of souls.”⁵ Thus, it is Calvin’s shepherding ministry that will be explored in this article—in particular, his pastoral care of souls.

Key Words: John Calvin, shepherding, Reformation, pastoral care, pastoral ministry

Introduction: Calvin’s Life

John Calvin was born and raised in Noyon, France (July 10, 1509), and at fourteen years of age was sent away by his father to the University of Paris to pursue the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church.⁶ After finishing his *Bachelor of Arts* degree from the College de Montaigu in 1528, his father encouraged him to shift his focus to the study of law. He obediently moved south and took up his studies at the University of Orleans where in 1532 he completed his *Juris Doctorate*. It was during this formative period of life, that he experienced a “sudden conversion” and fully identified himself with the French Evangelicals.⁷ As a result, he thoroughly rejected the unbiblical doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic Church and embraced a faith based solely upon the Bible. He fled from France as a religious refugee in 1533 and, in God’s providence, he eventually settled in Basle, Switzerland where he finalized his manuscript, the well-regarded *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536).

Clandestinely returning to France in the summer of 1536, he sought to bring his younger brother (Antione) and sister (Marie) to safety. When French troops blocked his way, he took the southern route to Switzerland through Geneva intending to stay only one night. While there William Farel (1489–1565), the fiery missionary-evangelist of western Switzerland, forcefully recruited him to settle in Geneva and to join efforts in furthering the reformation of that key city.⁸ Regarding this event, Calvin wrote, “I felt...as if God had from heaven laid His mighty hand upon me to arrest me from my course...I desisted from the journey which I had undertaken.”⁹ Thus, on September 5, 1536 when the Genevan City Council providentially appointed Calvin to be their “Professor of Sacred Literature” they probably had no idea that they were beginning

5. John T. McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls* (New York: Harper Brothers Publishers, 1951), 198.

6. Theodore Beza, “The Life of John Calvin,” in *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, ed. and trans. Henry Beveridge, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: the Calvin Translation Society, 1844; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), xxi. The personal information contained in Theodore Beza’s seminal biography of John Calvin will be used throughout this paper. Beza succeeded Calvin in Geneva and worked closely with him. The fact that Beza was an eyewitness of Calvin’s conduct puts him in an ideal position to write a comprehensive and reliable biography on John Calvin.

7. John Calvin, “The Author’s Preface,” in *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845; reprint edition, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), xli–xliii.

8. Partee, “William Farel,” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 135–36.

9. Calvin, “The Author’s Preface,” in *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, xlii.

a pastoral relationship with Calvin that would make a significant impact upon the city of Geneva, and, in time, upon the whole Protestant world.¹⁰

Not all citizens in Geneva were enthused about Calvin's arrival, since he was a religious refugee from France, and they snidely referred to him in the minutes of the Genevan City Council as "ille Gallus" (or, "that Frenchman").¹¹ Yet, the sovereign Lord did indeed have a place of on-going ministry for Calvin, although it proved to be a turbulent place filled with many troublesome people. As the early efforts at reformation progressed in Geneva, opposition against the reformers increased. This resistance culminated in the spring of 1538 when the ministers refused to allow the people to receive the Lord's Supper and "profane so holy a mystery." As Easter Sunday approached on April 21, 1538 the tension became so thick that Calvin reported more than sixty musket blasts were shot off in front of his home late one night.¹² Since the ministers stubbornly refused to offer the Lord's Supper, the Little Council of Geneva voted to ban the ministers from their pulpits. Despite this prohibition, they preached and did not serve the Lord's Supper as they had been ordered to do. The next day the Little Council voted to oust the rebellious preachers. They gave them only three days to get their affairs in order and to leave the city. Theodore Beza (1519–1605),¹³ one of the first biographers of Calvin's life, recalls this chaotic time with Calvin's own words:

This decision being intimated to Calvin, "Certainly", says he, ". . . had I been the servant of men I had obtained a poor reward, but it is well that I have served Him who never fails to perform to his servants whatever he has promised."¹⁴

On April 25, 1538, the three unwanted ministers departed the city leaving behind all the angry denunciations, jeers, and threats. After making unsuccessful appeals for mediation of the dispute in Berne and Zurich, Calvin was uncertain of where to go next. He was eventually recruited by Martin Bucer (1491–1551), a mature and seasoned reformer, to come to Strasbourg and serve as pastor to a burgeoning congregation of French refugees.¹⁵ While there Calvin married a lovely French widow, Idelette de Bure, and he adopted her two children, Jacques and Judith, bringing them under his fatherly care.¹⁶

10. Beza, "The Life of John Calvin," in *Selected Works of John Calvin*, vol. 1, xxix.

11. Emanuel Stickelberger, *Calvin: A Life*, trans. David Georg Gelzer (London: James Clarke & Company, 1959), 49–50.

12. *Ibid.*, 60.

13. Holtrop, "Theodore Beza," in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 34–35.

14. Beza, "The Life of John Calvin," in *Selected Works of John Calvin*, vol. 1, xxxiii.

15. David F. Wright, "Martin Bucer" in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 43.

16. Joel R. Beeke, "Practical Lessons from the Life of Idelette Calvin" in *Theology Made Practical: New Studies on John Calvin and His Legacy* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 24.

Except for this short interlude of two and a half years in Strasbourg (1538–1541), Calvin served as the head pastor of the Genevan Church for the remainder of his life. In this role, he sought to reform the doctrines and morality of the Genevan people. The years of 1541–1555 proved to be especially tumultuous. His opponents (the Libertines, or *Enfants de Geneve*) sought to thwart him, oppose him, intimidate him, discourage him, and, when they became truly desperate, to assassinate him.¹⁷ But God in his providential care, protected Calvin's life and the reform in Geneva steadily progressed.

By 1555 the tide of reformation grew so strong that his opponents either came to embrace his position, or they fled the city. His major achievements are as follows: the steady exposition and preaching of several thousand transcribed sermons,¹⁸ the writing and ongoing use of the *Genevan Catechism*,¹⁹ the establishment of the Genevan Academy,²⁰ the recruitment and training of a large number of elders and deacons to administer the affairs of the Genevan church, the publication of the fifth edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*,²¹ the training of numerous missionaries who were sent throughout Europe, the translation and publication of the *Geneva Bible*,²² the translation and publication of the *Genevan Psalter*,²³ and the thorough-going reform of the city—in its constitution, civil defense, hospitals, legal system, morals, assistance of refugees, social welfare, and worship.²⁴ His motto, *Cor meum tibi offero, Domine, prompte et sincere* (or translated into English, “My heart I offer to you, O Lord, promptly and sincerely”) became a reflection of his diligent and

17. Stickelberger, *Calvin: A Life*, 102–105; 122–125; 133–138.

18. T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 65–68. In God's wise providence, on August 25, 1549, the Genevan deacons hired Dennis Raguénier, a French refugee, to transcribe Calvin's sermons for publication. Over the course of twelve years he recorded 2,042 of Calvin's sermons for posterity. This large archive of sermons became the foundation for Calvin's influence throughout Europe and later in America. Thanks to Raguénier's indefatigable efforts we can enjoy the preaching of the great Genevan Reformer today. Hughes O. Old, an expert on Reformed preaching, notes, “John Calvin was a master of the art of biblical interpretation and a skilled craftsman in word usage. His sermons are simple, clear, and informative.” See: Old, “History of Preaching” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 287.

19. Charles Partee, “Geneva Catechism,” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 151.

20. Robert M. Kingdon, “Geneva Academy,” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 150.

21. Hughes O. Old, “Institutes of the Christian Religion,” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 194–195.

22. Dan G. Danner, “Geneva Bible,” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 150–151.

23. Lido Jo H. McKim, “Psalmody,” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 308.

24. David W. Hall, *The Legacy of John Calvin: His Influence on the Modern World* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 11–13.

earnest character.²⁵ Worn out from the many trials of ministry and his poor health, he finally succumbed to death on May 27, 1564 and he was buried in an unmarked grave in Geneva. The entire city mourned. Theodore Beza tells us that, “He lived 54 years, 10 months, 17 days, the half of which were spent in ministry.”²⁶

Over the course of his career he engaged in all of the normal duties that church pastors typically participate in—preaching, teaching, prayer, leadership, and shepherding. The esteemed Calvin scholar Jean-Daniel Benoit offered the following assessment of Calvin’s pastoral ministry:

The work of Calvin is immense and varied. Theologian, churchman, organizer of Protestantism in France, founder of the Academy of Geneva, public lecturer, Bible commentator, preacher at Saint Peter’s—Calvin was all of these. But to forget or to neglect the fact that Calvin was essentially and above all a pastor would be to misunderstand precisely that aspect of his personality which discloses the essential unity of his work, and to overlook the deep source of those waters which fecundate the entire field of his activity. In fact, theologian though he was, Calvin was even more a pastor of souls. More exactly, theology was for him the servant of piety and never a science sufficient unto itself. His thought is always directed towards life; always he descends from principles to the practical application; always his pastoral concern occurs.²⁷

Hence, if a person wants to fully understand John Calvin then they must come to grips with his most prominent responsibility—the care of souls.

Developing a Plan

Calvin’s overall plan for the pastoral care of Geneva is contained in the “Ecclesiastical Ordinances.”²⁸ This brief document was initially drafted by Calvin in 1537, but it was not until his return to Geneva in 1541 that it was finally approved by the City

25. John Calvin, *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, ed. Jules Bonnet, vol. 4 (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844; reprint edition, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 280–281. An allusion to Calvin’s motto can be found in a personal letter he wrote in August of 1541 from Strasbourg to William Farel who invited him to return to Geneva as soon as possible. Calvin was extremely reluctant to return to that tumultuous city. He wrote, “But when I remember that I am not my own, I offer up my heart, presented as a sacrifice to the Lord.”

26. Beza, “The Life of John Calvin,” in *Selected Works of John Calvin*, vol. 1, xcvi–xcvii.

27. Jean-Daniel Benoit. “Pastoral Care of the Prophet,” in *John Calvin Contemporary Prophet*. 450th Anniversary Volume celebrating the birth of John Calvin, edited by Jacob T. Hoogstra (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959), 51.

28. “Ecclesiastical Ordinances” in *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin*, trans. and ed. Philip E. Hughes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 35–49. For another source that may be easier to find, see *John Calvin: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (Scholar’s Press, American Academy of Religion, 1975), 229–244.

Council.²⁹ The actual enforcement of these biblical principles, however, formed the main area of difficulty in Calvin's pastoral ministry until 1555. Although the people may have approved the "Ecclesiastical Ordinances" in theory, they had not reckoned with the application of them to all areas of life.³⁰

Following the elections in 1555, when the opponents of Calvin were soundly defeated, the provisions of the "Ecclesiastical Ordinances" were finally embraced by the City Council and they were able to be regularly enforced by the Genevan Consistory. The main components of Calvin's plan of pastoral care can be broken down into eight specific areas of ministry: (1) Four orders (or offices) in the Church; (2) Concerning the Sacraments; (3) Concerning Marriage; (4) Introduction of Hymns; (5) Concerning Burial; (6) The Visitation of the Sick; (7) The Visitation of Prisoners; and (8) The Preserving of Discipline in the Church. Here we see the organizational genius of John Calvin clearly demonstrated. He developed a plan, a road map as it were, and in his words—"a certain rule and method of living...which our Lord demonstrated and instituted by His Word."³¹ As the years went by he was able to fully implement that plan for the reformation of the city of Geneva. This illustrates the great value of having a plan (i.e. a philosophy of ministry with specific goals) that is clearly written out, understood and embraced by the people, and implemented by the church leaders. Let us deal now with various aspects of Calvin's plan.

Raising-Up Leaders

Calvin understood that the ministry of church leaders is one of the ordinary means for accomplishing spiritual growth in the members of the church. He stated, "If then, we wish to have the church well-ordered and maintained in its entirety, we must observe this form of government."³² In other words, the four officers of the church—pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons—are all used by God to advance the spiritual maturity of every member. Calvin puts forward a similar thought in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* where he observes:

Paul writes that Christ, "that he might fill all things," appointed some to be "apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all reach the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to perfect manhood, to the measure of the fully

29. Ibid., 35. The City Council of Geneva voted on November 20, 1541 to approve the "Ecclesiastical Ordinances." This decision, however, did not end the quarrelsome struggle between the ministers and the magistrates over who had the power of excommunication from the Lord's Supper—that dispute continued until 1555.

30. Robert D. Linder, "Ecclesiastical Ordinances," in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 112–113.

31. "Ecclesiastical Ordinances," in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 35.

32. Ibid., 35.

mature age of Christ” [Eph. 4:10–13, Comm., but cf. also Vg.]. We see how God, who could in a moment perfect his own, nevertheless desires them to grow up into manhood solely under the education of the church.³³

Calvin reasons that the Lord could have supernaturally transformed men and women by means of his Spirit, but instead God has chosen to use the ordinary means of a “ministry of men to declare openly his will to us.”³⁴ This ministerial authority and power is “delegated” by the head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ. Calvin further notes:

Now we must speak of the order by which the Lord willed his church to be governed. He alone should rule and reign in the church as well as have authority or pre-eminence in it, and this authority should be exercised and administered by his Word alone. Nevertheless, because he does not dwell among us in visible presence [Matt. 26:11], we have said that he uses the ministry of men to declare openly his will to us by mouth, as a sort of delegated work, not by transferring to them his right and honor, but only that through their mouths he may do his own work—just as a workman uses a tool to do his work.³⁵

Thus, as pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons carry out their respective ministries, they do so under the watchful eye of the head of the church. They are required to give an account of their ministerial labors to the heavenly Master—have they fed the sheep, rescued those who have strayed, and protected the sheep from wild predators who would do them harm?³⁶ In as much as the officers of the church conduct themselves in an honorable fashion then they are blessed by God for their efforts.

Calvin describes the particular duties of pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons to a great degree in the “Ecclesiastical Ordinances.” Here are his observations concerning the responsibilities of the pastor. He descriptively writes:

With regard to pastors, whom Scripture also sometimes calls overseers, elders, and ministers, their office is to proclaim the Word of God for the purpose of instructing, admonishing, exhorting, and reproving, both in public and private, to administer the sacraments, and to exercise fraternal discipline together with the elders or delegates (*commis*).³⁷

Moreover, pastoral ministry is not to be seen as an itinerant office so that the minister travels from place to place, but it is one in which the pastor cares for a specific flock

33. Calvin, *Institutes*, 4:1:5

34. *Institutes*, 4:3:3.

35. *Institutes* 4:3:3.

36. cf. Ezekiel 34:4–6, 15–16; Acts 20:28–30; Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:1–5.

37. “Ecclesiastical Ordinances,” in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 36. Note that Calvin uses the terms “pastors” and “ministers” interchangeably. He does not distinguish between these two terms, but sees them as the same ecclesiastical office.

of believers in a fixed location. Calvin argues that ministers can “aid other churches” as occasion dictates, but that primarily a pastor focuses his energy upon his own flock.

Although we assign to each pastor his church, at the same time we do not deny that a pastor bound to one church can aid other churches—either if any disturbances occur which require his presence, or if advice be sought from him concerning some obscure matter...Consequently, this arrangement ought to be observed as generally as possible: that each person, content with his own limits, should not break over into another man's province.³⁸

Regarding the duties of the elder, Calvin writes:

Their office is to watch over the life of each person, to admonish in a friendly manner those whom they see to be at fault and leading a disorderly life, and when necessary to report them to the Company, who will be authorized to administer fraternal discipline and to do so in association with the elders.³⁹

In this way, the elders carry out a ministry of admonition and encouragement. They are instructed to not be harsh, but to give their counsel “in a friendly manner.” The elders are to work hand in hand with the ministers in promoting the spiritual well-being of the people under their care. The duties of teachers differ from both pastors and elders. Calvin adds, “The proper office of teachers is to instruct the faithful in sound doctrine in order that the purity of the Gospel may not be corrupted either by ignorance or by false opinions.”⁴⁰

Calvin envisioned that the teachers would be involved in giving public lectures on the Bible and theology in the Auditoire, which is located next to St. Pierre Cathedral. He also envisioned the formation of a future college. The “Ecclesiastical Ordinances” sets forth the following plan:

Establishment of a college: But since it is impossible to profit from such teaching only if in the first place there is instruction in the languages and humanities, and since also there is need to raise up seed for the future so that the Church is not desolate to our children, it will be necessary to build a college for the purpose of instructing them, with a view to preparing them both for the ministry and for the civil government.⁴¹

Years later his dream was finally realized in the founding of the Genevan Academy, which specialized in the training of ministers, evangelists, and missionaries.⁴² In regards to the office of the deacon, Calvin writes:

38. *Institutes* 4:3:7

39. “Ecclesiastical Ordinances,” in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 41.

40. *Ibid.*, 40.

41. *Ibid.*, 41.

42. Robert M. Kingdon, “Geneva Academy,” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 150.

There were always two kinds of deacons in the early Church. The one kind was deputed to receive, dispense, and keep the goods for the poor, not only daily alms, but also possessions, revenues, and pensions; the other kind to care for and remember the sick and administer the allowance for the poor, a custom which we still retain at present.⁴³

Calvin referred to these “two kinds of deacons” as stewards of church finances and those who administered the local Genevan hospitals. He gives a more comprehensive description of their duties in the *Institutes*, where he writes:

The care of the poor was entrusted to the deacons. However two kinds are mentioned in the letter to the Romans: “He that gives, let him do it with simplicity;...he that shows mercy, with cheerfulness” [Rom. 12:8]. Since it is certain that Paul is speaking of the public office of the church, there must have been two distinct grades. Unless my judgment deceive me, in the first clause he designates the deacons who distribute the alms. But the second refers to those who had devoted themselves to the care of the poor and the sick...If we accept this (as it must be accepted), there will be two kinds of deacons: one to serve the church in administering the affairs of the poor; the other, in caring for the poor themselves. But even though the term *diakonia* itself has a wider application, Scripture specifically designates as deacons those whom the church has appointed to distribute alms and take care of the poor.⁴⁴

Calvin argues that any one of the offices of the true church should not be taken upon oneself without the endorsement of a church. These offices necessarily involve receiving an outward call, or public invitation, to minister in a local church by its own members. In addition, ordination signifies that a man is set aside for “sacred service” within Christ’s church.⁴⁵ In these following quotations Calvin explains ministerial calling and ordination.

Therefore, in order that noisy and troublesome men should not rashly take upon themselves to teach or to rule (which might otherwise happen), especial care was taken that no one should assume public office in the church without being called.⁴⁶

There remains the rite of ordination, to which we have given the last place in the call. It is clear that when the apostles admitted any man to the ministry, they used no other ceremony than the laying on of hands...Although there exists no set precept for the laying on of hands, because we see it in continual use with the apostles, their very careful observance ought to serve in lieu of a precept. And surely it is useful for the dignity of the ministry to be commended

43. “Ecclesiastical Ordinances,” in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 42.

44. *Institutes* 4:3:9

45. Thomas D. Parker, “Ordination,” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 263–264.

46. *Institutes* 4:3:10

to the people by this sort of sign, as also to warn the one ordained that he is no longer a law unto himself, but bound in servitude to God and the church.⁴⁷

These statements by Calvin demonstrate the way in which he believes the outward call to ministry is elevated by God. It is a serious matter for a man to be called to serve as an officer in Christ's church, and his calling must be outwardly confirmed by the local congregation. It should never solely be a matter of an inner call, or a "secret call," which is only between that man and God. Church officers should always be confirmed by a public calling.

Administering the Keys

Calvin further explains how all of the ministers and designated elders in Geneva will gather as a Consistory once a week on Thursdays. It is in this context that they administered the "keys of the kingdom" amongst the people of Geneva.⁴⁸

The delegates (*commis*) shall assemble once a week together with the ministers, namely, on Thursdays, to see whether there is any disorder in the Church and to consult together concerning remedies when necessary. Since they have no authority or jurisdiction to coerce, we have decided to give them one of our officers for the purpose of summoning those to whom they wish to give some admonishment. If through contempt anyone should refuse to appear, it is their duty to inform the Council so that remedial steps may be taken.⁴⁹

These ministers and elders had the spiritual responsibility to advance the teaching of biblical doctrine and Christian behavior. Violations of biblical standards would be enforced by the Genevan Consistory; which was made up of representatives from both the church and civil government.⁵⁰ If the violations were of a serious nature and recurrent then a person could be suspended from the Lord's Table.⁵¹

What breaches might lead to suspension from the Lord's Table? Here are seven stipulations listed in the "Ecclesiastical Ordinances:"

(1) "If anyone speaks critically against the received doctrine," (2) "If anyone is negligent to come to church in such a way that a serious contempt of Christians is apparent," (3) "if any one shows himself to be scornful of the ecclesiastical order," (4) "those who mock at the specific admonitions of their neighbor," (5) "for those notorious and public vices which the Church cannot condone," (6) "for those crimes which deserve not only verbal rebuke but

47. *Institutes* 4:3:16

48. cf. Matthew 16:19; Matthew 18:15–20; Hebrews 13:17.

49. "Ecclesiastical Ordinances," in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 48.

50. Robert M. Kingdon, "Geneva Consistory," in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 152.

51. Scott M. Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536–1609* (London, England: Oxford University Press, 2013), 182–188.

correction with punishment,” (7) “If through contumacy or rebelliousness such a person attempts to intrude himself contrary to the prohibition.”⁵²

The length of the suspension, whether it was temporary or permanent, would depend upon the offending person’s repentance.

Moreover, the pastor who was responsible for administering the Lord’s Supper was also responsible to “Fence the Table” so that those who were “unworthy” partakers would not be able to participate in the Lord’s Supper. The minister was required to say:

We have heard, brethren, in what manner our LORD celebrated the Supper among his disciples; whence we see that strangers, who are not of the company of the faithful, may not approach it. Wherefore, in obedience to this rule, and in the name and by the authority of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, I excommunicate all idolaters, blasphemers, despisers of God, heretics, and all who form sects apart, to break the unity of the Church; all perjurers, all who are rebellious against fathers and mothers, and other superiors, all who are seditious, contentious, quarrelsome, injurious, adulterers, fornicators, thieves, misers, ravishers, drunkards, gluttons, and all others who lead scandalous lives; warning them that they abstain from this Table, lest they pollute and contaminate the sacred food which our Lord JESUS CHRIST giveth only to his faithful servants.⁵³

We witness here the serious manner in which the reformers led the people to the Lord’s Table. A careful distinction is made between those who are “despisers of God” and those who are “of the company of the faithful.” Those who are true disciples of Jesus would, by definition, readily confess their sins, repent from their wicked behavior, and embrace the forgiveness of sins found only in Jesus Christ.⁵⁴ Such people were welcome to participate in the Lord’s Supper.

One key area of controversy in Geneva was the subject of excommunication and upon whose authority it was to be exercised. The “Ecclesiastical Ordinances” clearly gives that authority to the Consistory, whose decisions were to be enforced by the civil government, known as the City Council. This disciplinary practice became an area of great controversy in Geneva, with the City Council challenging the authority of the Consistory more than once.⁵⁵ In the end, however, Calvin and the reformers prevailed and it was the Consistory who “administered the keys of the kingdom.”

52. “Ecclesiastical Ordinances,” in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 48–49.

53. Charles W. Baird, *The Presbyterian Liturgies: Historical Sketches* (New York, NY: M. W. Dodd, 1855; Reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publications, 2006), 53–54.

54. cf. Psalm 32:1–2, 3–5; Psalm 51:7–10; Romans 8:1–2; 1 Peter 2:24–25; 1 John 1:7, 9.

55. Stickelberger, *Calvin: A Life*, 122–124.

Leading Worship

The Sabbath day worship services in Geneva began to take a regular form in 1542, following the pattern that Calvin prescribed for the church. Calvin was certainly influenced by the liturgy he found in use at Strasbourg during his two and a half years of service while ministering to a congregation of French exiles (1538–1541). Martin Bucer (1491–1551), as one of the initial Reformers of Strasbourg, had developed his own liturgy for the city and put it into practice since 1525. Constantly making improvements, it was finalized and printed in 1539. Upon Calvin's return to Geneva in November 1541—and perhaps inspired by Martin Bucer's Strasbourg liturgy—he began work on his own form of liturgy in Geneva which was published in 1542 as “Forms of Prayers for the Church.”⁵⁶

Central to Calvin's plan for weekly worship services was his commitment to make certain that the key elements of the worship service were found within Holy Scripture. He purposefully skipped over the numerous “inventions of men” that were to be found in the Roman Catholic Mass. Charles Baird summarizes Calvin's intent:

The ritual of Calvinism, like its creed, was founded, therefore, on the theory of a simple return to the scriptural and primitive pattern. Differing from the systems of Luther and Cramner, it lost sight completely of all practices which had originated in less remote antiquity; it left the missal and the breviary among the rubbish of “idolatrous gear” swept out from its renovated churches; refusing to tamper with the complications of a corrupt ceremonial, whose forms had long enough weighed upon and wearied the souls of men. It went back for authority and inspiration to the law and to the testimony of GOD. Calvin's form of worship is distinguished by a plain and logical structure. The several acts of devotion follow in progressive series, commencing with those which are more primary and preparative, and culminating in the highest exercises of adoration and faith. This systematic character places it in marked contrast with other formularies, taken from the old mass-books; the proper order and connection of whose parts it is sometimes difficult for a mind not educated in their use to discover.⁵⁷

Thus we find Calvin's liturgy to be a thoroughly scriptural form of worship. Moreover, it is also drawn from the earliest known examples of corporate worship in the history of the Church; thereby connecting it with the historic practices of earlier Christians who fervently worshipped their Lord by the use of a liturgy. What follows is an example of a Sabbath Day worship service from St. Pierre Cathedral during the time of John Calvin (1541–1564).⁵⁸

56. Bard Thompson, “John Calvin, The Form of Church Prayers,” in *Liturgies of the Western Church* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1961), 183–224.

57. Baird, *The Presbyterian Liturgies*, 20–21.

58. Thompson, “John Calvin, The Form of Church Prayers,” in *Liturgies of the Western Church*, 183–224.

- Reading of Holy Scripture (an appropriate text was chosen by the reader)
- Recitation of the Ten Commandments (or perhaps, this was sung by the Congregation)
- Call to Worship/Invocation (e.g. Psalm 124:8)
- Exhortation
- Confession of Sins
- Declaration of Pardon (e.g. Psalm 103:8–12)
- Singing of a Psalm (the entire congregation sings in unison)
- Prayer of Illumination and the Lord's Prayer
- The Sermon⁵⁹
- Prayer of Intercession
- The Lord's Supper⁶⁰
- Invocation
- Recitation of the Creed (e.g. the Apostles' Creed in unison)
- Words of Institution (1 Corinthians 11:23–30 is read aloud by the Minister)
- The Warning (or, Fencing the Table)
- Call for Personal Examination
- The Invitation
- Sursum Corda⁶¹

59. Calvin's sermons follow the pattern of *lectio continua*; or one verse after another through an entire book of the Bible. He would take the Hebrew or Greek text into the pulpit and give a free translation of the passage in French, and then proceed to preach on that particular text with an open Bible. His illustrations were sparse, and his applications and exhortations were focused exclusively upon the text of Scripture. His sermons were, therefore, thoroughly filled with the particular Bible passage that was the subject of his exposition, and additional references from the Bible in support. Hughes O. Old, an expert on Reformed worship, notes, "John Calvin was a master of the art of biblical interpretation and a skilled craftsman in word usage. His sermons are simple, clear, and informative" (Old, "History of Preaching" in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 287). Each sermon was roughly thirty to forty minutes in length and produced an effect upon the listeners that was remarkable and profound. God used Calvin's expository preaching to further the reformation of doctrine, family life, and morals.

60. The Lord's Supper was observed four times a year in Geneva, upon the order of the Magistrates, even though Calvin wished for a greater frequency. See: *Institutes* 4:17:43 where Calvin clearly states his preference for weekly communion—"at least once a week."

61. Sursum Corda = "lift up your hearts." The real presence of Jesus Christ is found in the heavens rather than in the physical elements on earth (see: Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church*, 187).

- Distribution of the Bread and the Wine⁶²
- Prayer of Thanksgiving
- The Blessing, or Benediction (Numbers 6:24–26, Geneva Bible)
- An Exhortation to Give Alms

Calvin writes in other books and tracts more specific principles and policies regarding the worship of God. Particularly, his short treatise, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, makes a strong appeal to regulate worship by the Word of God alone; specifically, those who plan corporate worship are to listen “only to his voice.”⁶³ Calvin forcefully argues:

Moreover, the rule which distinguishes between pure and vitiated worship is of universal application, in order that we do not adopt any device which seems fit to ourselves, but look to the injunctions of him who alone is entitled to prescribe. Therefore, if we would have him to approve our worship, this rule, which he everywhere enforces with the utmost strictness, must be carefully observed. For there is a twofold reason why the Lord, in condemning and prohibiting fictitious worship, requires us to give obedience only to his voice. First, it tends greatly to establish his authority that we do not follow our own pleasure, but depend entirely on his sovereignty; and secondly, such is our folly, that when we are left at liberty, all we are able to do is to go astray. And then when once we have turned aside from the right path, there is no end to our wanderings, until we get buried under a multitude of superstitions.⁶⁴

Hence, churches within the Calvinistic tradition have sought to regulate their worship services according to the Scriptural “elements,” and the “forms” that are acceptable to God. Moreover, the “circumstances” of the church, which may require minor variations in liturgy, place, and time, were to be determined by the local church leaders.

Shepherding the Flock

Calvin experienced most of the typical pastoral counseling situations throughout his career as would the modern-day pastor. Influential pastor and Calvin scholar, Ronald S. Wallace, observes the following qualities of Calvin's pastoral emphasis:

62. In Geneva those who were admitted to the Lord's Supper came forward to be served the Bread and the Wine while standing before the Table; they did not kneel. For a detailed analysis of the varied practices of receiving the Lord's Supper in Reformed and Presbyterian churches, see: Benjamin B. Warfield, “The Posture of the Recipients at the Lord's Supper” in *Benjamin B. Warfield: Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. John E. Meeter (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1973), Vol. 2, 353–356).

63. John Calvin, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* (Reprint, Dallas, TX: Protestant Heritage Press, 1995).

64. *Ibid.*, 17.

We find him therefore often directing his ministry towards the individual with a special concern to give pastoral and personal care and guidance where there was a perplexity of heart, doubt, or spiritual darkness. As Thurneysen has pointed out: the Reformation itself was a pastoral care movement growing directly out of care for the salvation of the soul. His theological writing was often pastoral in its aim. The pages of the *Institutes* are studded with sentences and even paragraphs written to help the struggling soul. He says in the preface to the book that initially he “toiled” at the task of writing it, “chiefly for the sake of my countrymen, the French, multitudes of whom I perceived to be hungering and thirsting after Christ. His writing is sometimes entirely pastoral in its direction and motive.”⁶⁵

Calvin’s regular pastoral routine consisted of administering baptisms, preparing and preaching sermons, catechizing children so that they could make a credible profession of faith, working with young couples to prepare them for marriage, performing funerals, and consoling people in their grief and discouragement. T. H. L. Parker provides a fascinating example:

Calvin was not only the architect of the Church in Geneva, bearing, as the leading pastor, the chief responsibility for the Church’s life and organization, but he was also actively engaged in the pastoral work. Undoubtedly he looked upon his life work in Geneva primarily as “proclaiming the Word of God” and “instructing believers in wholesome doctrine.” His time was not spent in sitting in an office and planning, nor was it devoted entirely to committees. He was a pastor, busied with the common run of pastoral duties. For example, glancing through the *Annals of Geneva*, we find that on November 5th, 1553, he married two couples in the Cathedral; that on December 10th of the same year he “blessed a marriage and administered baptism at St. Pierre.” The first quarter of 1554 kept him busy: on January 7th he had a marriage at St. Pierre, on the 28th two, two more on February 4th, three on the 18th, one on the 4th of March, and a baptism on the 18th, and three marriages on April 1st. All in all, for the ten years 1550–1559 for which we have a register, he took about two hundred and seventy weddings and fifty baptisms.⁶⁶

Calvin was extremely busy with all of the details of pastoral ministry, and he was not solely given to study and theological writing. He was concerned to meet people in the midst of their afflictions and to minister to their most pressing needs as disciples of Jesus Christ.

65. Ronald Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva, and the Reformation: A Study of Calvin as Social Worker, Churchman, Pastor and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988; Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1990), 169.

66. T. H. L. Parker, *Portrait of Calvin* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), 81.

Counseling the Broken-Hearted

The reformers in Geneva did not have a specialized counseling ministry with pastors trained to perform only this one aspect of ministry. Instead, all of the pastors saw it as their solemn duty to counsel any whom the Lord might bring to them. Regarding the responsibilities of the pastoral office Calvin wrote:

Here, then, is the sovereign power with which the pastors of the church, by whatever name they be called, ought to be endowed. That is that they may dare boldly to do all things by God's Word; may compel all worldly power, glory, wisdom, and exaltation to yield to and obey his majesty; supported by his power, may command all from the highest even to the last; may build up Christ's household and cast down Satan's; may feed the sheep and drive away the wolves; may instruct and exhort the teachable; may accuse, rebuke, and subdue the rebellious and stubborn; may bind and loose; finally, if need be, may launch thunderbolts and lightnings; but do all things in God's Word.⁶⁷

Thus, the primary text and handbook for all godly counsel was from the Bible alone. Calvin did not advocate an authoritarian, cold, and sterile approach to counseling. He was truly concerned with the "care of souls." This type of individualized pastoral care was introduced to Calvin by Martin Bucer during his brief ministry in Strasbourg (1538–1541).

Bucer, the older and more experienced pastor, disciplined the younger man in pastoral theology and during this time he published a book entitled, *Concerning the True Care of Souls* (1538).⁶⁸ Calvin clearly followed Bucer's example when he wrote his *Commentary* on Acts 20:20:

For Christ hath not appointed pastors upon this condition, that they may only teach the Church in general in the open pulpit; but that they may take charge of every particular sheep, that they bring back to the sheepfold those who wander and go astray, that they may strengthen those which are discouraged and weak, that they may cure the sick, that they may lift up and set on foot the feeble, (Ezekiel 34:4) for common doctrine will oftentimes wax cold, unless it be holpen (*helped*) with private admonitions.⁶⁹

This meant that pastoral counseling was not to be based only upon personal experience, but on a thoroughly comprehensive knowledge of the Bible. In this way, the counsel that was given was capable of addressing every area of human concern—whether it was the need for assurance, overcoming personal anxiety, dealing with covetousness, fear of death, despair, irrational fears, a struggle with lust, pride, sorrow, or excessive

67. *Institutes*, 4:8:9.

68. Martin Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, Peter Beale trans. (Reprint, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009).

69. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. Henry Beveridge, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1855; Grand Rapids: Baker, reprint, 1998), 244.

worry. Calvin firmly believed that the Bible, either by proof-text or by principle, was sufficient to minister to every human need.

Ministering through Letters

Calvin wrote an amazing variety of letters to people throughout his entire ministry and many of these have been preserved.⁷⁰ He wrote to those who were seeking advice, giving them counsel from the Bible. He wrote to those who were troubled, offering them compassion and encouragement. The following consolatory letter, written by Calvin to Monsieur de Richebourg, shows the caring heart of the young minister of the gospel.

Calvin was only thirty-one years old at the time that he penned this letter, and he was away on an important mission to Ratisbon, Germany where he represented the city of Strasbourg at an ecclesiastical gathering. Two deceased men are mentioned in Calvin's benevolent letter; (1) Louis—the young son of Monsieur de Richebourg, and (2) Claude Ferey—the distinguished professor at the Academy of Strasbourg and Louis' personal tutor. Sadly, both men were carried away by the plague that swept through Strasbourg with deadly consequences in April, 1541.

Calvin writes with great compassion and sympathy. Here is a short portion of his lengthy letter:

The son whom the Lord had lent you for a season, he has taken away. There is no ground, therefore, for those silly and wicked complaints of foolish men: O blind death! O horrid fate! O implacable daughters of destiny! O cruel fortune! The Lord who had lodged him here for a season, at this stage of his career has called him away. What the Lord has done, we must, at the same time, consider has not been done rashly, nor by chance, neither from having been impelled from without; but by that determinate counsel, whereby he not only foresees, decrees, and executes nothing but what is just and upright in itself, but also nothing but what is good and wholesome for us...However brief, therefore, either in your opinion or in mine, the life of your son may have been, it ought to satisfy us that he has finished the course which the Lord had marked out for him...May Christ the Lord keep you and your family, and direct you all with his own Spirit, until you may arrive where Louis and Claude have gone before.⁷¹

With these words we see an open window into the heart of Calvin. And surprisingly, for some skeptics, it reveals a heart that is warm and tender towards those who suffer through the many trials of life, rather than one which is cold and hard. It is the heart of a true shepherd and pastor to his people. In this way, Calvin compassionately exercised the "care of souls."

70. John Calvin, *Letters of John Calvin* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1980).

71. Calvin, *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, vol. 4, ed. Jules Bonnet, 246–253.

Caring for Prisoners

The “Ecclesiastical Ordinances” requires the regular visitation of those in prison.⁷² This duty was to be conducted by the ministers of the Company of Pastors.⁷³ Both preaching the Scriptures and godly counsel were to be given. Special care was to be given to condemned criminals who were facing execution. Calvin explains:

We have further ordered that on a certain day of the week there shall be an address to those in prison for the purpose of admonishing and exhorting them; and two members of the Council shall be deputed to be present lest any fraud should be committed. And if there is anyone in irons whom it is not desirable to bring out, a minister may, with the approval of the Council, be allowed to enter in order to console him in person, as above. For when one waits until condemned prisoners are to be led away to death they are often so overwhelmed with horror that they are unable to receive or understand anything. And the day appointed for doing this is Saturday, before dinner.⁷⁴

Calvin, himself, gave this kind of pastoral care over the years of his ministry to many condemned criminals. He made particular efforts to preach the gospel of grace to Michael Servetus, a most difficult and hardened heretic, before his execution in 1553. But after several visits in his cell, he failed in making any notable inroads with Servetus. Since Calvin had been involved in the trial, arrangements were made so that William Farel could travel to Geneva and ride in the cart with Servetus to his death on October 27, 1553.⁷⁵

In this way, Calvin was not put into the awkward situation of being accused of gloating over Servetus' death. This action, however complicated it may be, demonstrates that Calvin was sensitive to the spiritual needs of those who were facing great peril. He not only sought to alter the means of Servetus' death to a more humane method, but he also gave every opportunity for Servetus to repent and place his faith in the eternal Son of God. Despite Calvin's well-meaning efforts, Servetus persisted in his theological errors to the very end and he never repented.⁷⁶

Ministering to the Sick and Visiting Households

One of the central duties of the Pastors, Elders, and Deacons in Geneva was to visit the sick. Calvin strongly urged this duty in the “Ecclesiastical Ordinances” requiring

72. “Ecclesiastical Ordinances” in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 46.

73. Robert M. Kingdon, “Geneva Company of Pastors,” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 151–152.

74. “Ecclesiastical Ordinances” in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 46.

75. Stickelberger, *Calvin: A Life*, 128–130.

76. Hughes ed., *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 290–291.

that the minister visit those who were very ill within the time of “three full days.”⁷⁷ Calvin writes:

Because many are negligent to console themselves in God with His Word when they find themselves in necessity through illness, and consequently many die without any admonition or teaching, which is then more than ever salutary for man, for this reason we have decided and ordered that no one is to remain three full days confined to bed without being that the minister is notified, and that when any wish the minister to come, they shall take care to call him at a convenient hour, so as not to distract him from that office in which he and colleagues serve the Church in common. It is to remove all excuses that we have resolved on this course, and especially we enjoin that relations, friends, and guardians are not to wait until the man is at the point of death, since in this extremity consolations are for the most part of little avail.⁷⁸

During the course of his pastoral duties he regularly visited the sick throughout the city. The plague of 1543, however, put his resolve to the test.

Besides the fear of contracting the disease himself through these visits, his family was harassed by his enemies—they smeared human detritus from those who had died in the plague on the doorknobs of his home! In essence, they sought to infect his entire household with the plague.⁷⁹ But what his enemies intended for evil, God turned to good. When it was discovered what his adversaries had done, rather than making Calvin shrink back in horror it strengthened his resolve to persevere in his pastoral care, to continue improving the established hospitals, and to set up additional clinics that would minister to the sick, to orphans and widows, the poor, and refugees.

In regard to the hospitals, his plan for staffing and structuring them primarily involved the work of the church deacons.⁸⁰ This effort was designed to be a ministry of mercy and compassion run by the church, rather than a secular bureaucracy overseen by the authorities of the city. Now, that there was a compelling need, Calvin labored with the deacons to make it all come to pass. This is a fine example of Calvin’s resolute leadership; he was determined to accomplish his goals and to persevere against all odds until they were met.

The New Testament records that when the Apostle Paul was in Ephesus he busied himself by not only “teaching...in public” but also going “from house to house.”⁸¹ This same pattern of family visitation was regularly performed at Geneva,

77. “Ecclesiastical Ordinances” in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 43–44, 46.

78. *Ibid.*, 46.

79. William C. Innes, *Social Concern in Calvin’s Geneva* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1983), 134–135.

80. “Ecclesiastical Ordinances” in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 43–44.

81. cf. Acts 20:20.

and it has come down through the centuries as a distinct practice of Reformed and Presbyterian pastors and elders. Charles Bridges notes:

Calvin often lays down the Scriptural obligation to this work, and reports the fruitful harvests reaped at Geneva, when the ministers and elders went from house to house, and dealt closely and individually with the consciences of the people.⁸²

Additionally, Ronald Wallace thoughtfully adds:

Like Bucer, he lamented that many preachers in his day were either too short-sighted in their view of the ministry or too lazy to visit the homes of those who listened to them from the pews. Therefore they failed too often in the task of reaching the individual. They looked on the Church building as an auditorium, and the congregation as an audience. They took the easy way of avoiding the sharp evangelistic edge of the Gospel, and the close application of their teaching to the individual soul. Calvin condemned this approach.⁸³

Besides visiting in homes, the visitation of the rural churches by the leading pastors of Geneva was also strongly encouraged. In 1548 Calvin and several other ministers were chastened by their brethren for failing to carry out this duty in a timely manner. The rebuke was recorded in *The Register of the Company of Pastors* and it was, no doubt, a source of some embarrassment to Calvin and the others.⁸⁴ Within a short time, though, new efforts were made and the assignment was brought to its completion.⁸⁵

Conclusion

What was the overall impact of Calvin's ministry; and did it bear good fruit? Wallace suggests a much wider achievement occurred for Calvin's shepherding ministry than just within the walls of Geneva. Wallace asserts an influence with international scope that continues to this very day through the legacy of Calvin's pastoral method and the prominence of his city. He perceptively writes:

Calvin's influence in the sixteenth century however was due not only to his writing, counsel and teaching but also to what Geneva itself became under his influence. The perplexed pastor of today finds much of what is written by experts, and given as advice even at heart-warming church conferences, does not really fit into his own actual situation in the parish ministry. Calvin, however, instead of writing a "Utopia", actually produced it in Geneva. He

82. Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry* (Originally published 1830; reprint, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1959), 348.

83. Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva, and the Reformation*, 173.

84. Hughes ed., *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 82–83; see the entry for January 11, 1548.

85. *Ibid.*, 83–84.

translated his ideas into ecclesiastical and even political institutions. He influenced the kind of individual people could meet as they went about the city. Geneva itself therefore became a fact of great importance. It attracted people. They sent their children so that they could come under the influence of the place. They came to believe it was possible for them to have something like it where they themselves lived and worked.⁸⁶

In this way, Calvin's influence as pastor and shepherd to the church of Jesus Christ emerges. He demonstrated this legacy in three ways: first, by a city that was transformed by the gospel and that served as a beacon of righteousness for many centuries; second, by a church which established patterns for ministry that are still being imitated by churches today; and third, by a worldwide institution that became known in time as the Reformed church. Indeed, John Calvin was a faithful and successful pastor. His closest associate and personal successor, Theodore Beza, gives a fitting tribute to Calvin's life with these stirring words:

Having been a spectator of his conduct for sixteen years, I have given a faithful account both of his life and of his death, and I now declare, that in him all men may see a most beautiful example of the Christian character, an example which it is as easy to slander as it is difficult to imitate.⁸⁷

Calvin's shepherding ministry—"the care of souls"—not only profoundly affected the individuals of his own time, but it also provides an ongoing and reproducible model for effective Christian ministry during our own time. Let us learn how to shepherd the flock from this humble servant of Jesus Christ—John Calvin, pastor of the church in Geneva.

86. Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva, and the Reformation*, 43.

87. Beza, "Life of John Calvin," in *Selected Works of John Calvin*, Vol. 1, c.