



# Institutes of the Christian Religion: The First English Version of the 1541 French Edition

By John Calvin

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*the first English translation of a classic text of pastoral theology.*

John Calvin (1509-1564) originally wrote his famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in Latin. Beginning with the second edition of his work published in 1541, Calvin translated each new version into French, simultaneously adapting the text to suit lay audiences, shaping it subtly but clearly to teach, exhort, and encourage them. Besides reflecting a more pastoral bent on Calvin's part, this 1541 *Institutes* is also notable as one of the founding documents of the modern French language.

Elsie Anne McKee's masterful translation of the 1541 French Edition -- the first-ever English version -- offers full access to the brilliant mind of John Calvin as he considered what common Christian people should all know and practice.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

##### **Karin Maag, H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, Calvin College and Seminary**

"This sparkling translation of John Calvin's 1541 French Institutes offers modern-day readers in the English-speaking world the opportunity to read Calvin's first version of his masterwork intended for a general audience. Elsie McKee is to be commended for her faithful yet accessible translation of this key text."

##### **Henri Blocher, Faculté Libre de Théologie Evangélique, Wheaton College Graduate School**

"A major event for Calvin students! English-language readers can, at last, access and use the 1541 version of the Institutes. Scholars of repute consider this version the most admirable of all: it combines freshness and maturity, it is not overloaded with polemical developments, and, as the first theological work in the vernacular, it made a decisive contribution toward shaping modern French. It is a landmark in Calvin's corpus. Elsie McKee's translation, checked against the original French, remains scrupulously accurate, while it reads with ease and harmonious fluidity."

##### **Herman J. Selderhuis, Theologische Universiteit Appeldoorn**

"I am impressed with what Elsie McKee has accomplished. It is amazing how she has managed to translate Calvin's smooth French into an English that is a pleasure to read. Even more important, however, is that she has made this important work of Calvin accessible for a wide audience, so all can experience the stimulus that reading Calvin can give to the church and theology today."

##### **I. John Hesselink, Western Theological Seminary**

"The 1541 edition of the Institutes has long been considered a gem among the various editions of Calvin's classic. Its special virtues are that it is more concise than the final 1559 edition and also more pastoral and practical, reflecting Calvin's years in the ministry. Finally we have a superb English translation of this edition by a premier Calvin scholar. Elsie McKee knows Calvin and knows French. The result is a wonderful contribution to Calvin studies in the English-speaking world. Readers of this version will gain fresh perspectives and new insights into the Reformer's theology."

##### **J. I. Packer, Regent College**

"Any who wish to encounter Calvin's systematic theology at its most pastoral, freest from controversial preoccupations, and mediated through superlative translation, should devour this rendering of the Reformer's own French version of the second edition of his Institutes. This volume should win Calvin many new friends."

#### About the Author

(1509-1564) One of the most influential reformers, his work was of significance throughout Europe and beyond.

Elsie Anne McKee is Archibald Alexander Professor of Reformation Studies and the History of Worship at Princeton Theological Seminary.

## Users Review

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#### **Lisa Morgan:**

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