

**David B. Calhoun, *Knowing God and Ourselves: Reading Calvin's Institutes Devotionally*.
Banner of Truth Trust**

The goal of *Knowing God and Ourselves* is to help students, especially beginning students, of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* to better understand what they are reading and to encourage them to persist in working through this important but challenging book.

Calvin intended the *Institutes* to be a guide in reading Scripture and a theological companion to his commentaries. Above all, he wanted his readers to respond to biblical truth with love for God and obedient lives. The subtitle of this book is *Reading Calvin's Institutes Devotionally*. Reading the *Institutes* devotionally is not merely one way of reading Calvin's book. It is the only way to read it.

The sections in the *Institutes* to be read with each chapter of this book are clearly indicated. The reading assignments are from the McNeill-Battles edition of the 1559 *Institutes*; but if one prefers to use the briefer but ample 1541 French edition of the *Institutes*, translated by Robert White (and also published by the Banner of Truth Trust), the relevant chapter and page numbers for that edition have also been added to the 'Read' section at the head of each chapter in this guide.

'By nature I love brevity', Calvin wrote. The length of the *Institutes* may not seem to justify Calvin's claim, but compared with many theologies, past and present, Calvin's book is remarkable for its lucid brevity. David Calhoun has sought to follow Calvin's advice in *Knowing God and Ourselves*. It is a short and lucid guide to Calvin's *Institutes*, which, in turn, is a guide to the Bible.

'I did not read Calvin's Institutes until I was in my doctoral studies at Princeton Theological Seminary. I have been reading this book ever since, along with other writings by Calvin and books about Calvin. For twenty-five years, I taught a course in the Institutes at Covenant Theological Seminary. I do not idolize Calvin, but my respect for him as a teacher and pastor has grown through the years. Facing the daily task of living, with its many demands and pressures, struggling with incurable cancer, and trying to find a way to understand the chaos and grimness of world events unfolding around me, I have found Calvin a source of solidity and strength. Enjoying the gift of life, the blessing of love of family and friends, the joy of food and drink, the beauty of nature, and the wonder of it all, I have discovered in Calvin a fellow pilgrim whose words often reflected and focused my feelings and helped me to fix my eyes on heaven and to give thanks. Calvin also challenges me, rebukes me, and leads me on, gently but firmly, toward greater love for God and obedience to his word. I pray that your study of Calvin's Institutes will bring you great blessing also.' - David B. Calhoun

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