

# First Person Presentation of John Calvin

*Reformation Month 2002*

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## **Faith Free Presbyterian Church**

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Good evening. It has been a long time since John Calvin has visited you. It was almost 20 years ago that he was here. Some of you will perhaps remember about a year ago, you heard a message from this pulpit on the theme "After Darkness, Light," post tenebras lux. That's the motto of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland, which became my last home. Understand that I am here as if I were John Calvin, and I think you know that I am not. Imagine that I'm telling you the story of my life.

France was my home, the country of my birth and rearing. French was my language. I was later to learn others. I was born to a middle class family, Gerard Calvin was my father, in the city of Noyon, it was some 60 miles northeast of Paris, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July in 1509. By then, Martin Luther and Zwingli were about 25 years old. They were the pioneers. I was a builder on foundations that had been well-established.

My father was a church lawyer, a layman, but an attorney for the affairs of the cathedral in Noyon, a rather well-known cathedral with reference to many saints, and as such, he held a lay office of importance in the town, and as such, he was able to acquire for his son, he had sons and daughters, for this son of his, he was able to acquire benefices, ecclesiastical scholarships, one might say, which made it possible for my education.

At the age of 12, I received the tonsure, a circular shave at the top of my head surrounded by a circle of hair. It was the first step toward becoming a priest. That was the intention of my father at the age, I say, of 12.

At the age of 3, I had lost my mother. My father remarried but, again, I was never close to the second mother.

As was customary at the age of 14, I was sent to Paris to school, boarding school, first at the College de la Marche, and then at the College de Montaigu, where Erasmus had briefly studied before me. In the city of Paris, the big city of Paris for a small town, hometown boy to have gone to the big city, was some little thing. I became acquainted there with my cousin who was also studying. I had not known him very much back home, Robert Pierre Olivetan, olive tan, which means midnight oil. He was a studious young man and I followed pretty well in his example. Indeed, I was so critical of my fellow students and their play at studies, that I was dubbed by them the accusative case.

I had a good mind, a ready memory, though I had a frail body, and the careless use of that body in my youth in my studies, was to cost me in later years. I had quite a catalog of maladies by the time I was a grown man: the ague; arthritis; gout; persistent headaches. Eventually died of what you would call tuberculosis. My frame was relatively spare. I was of middle height. Essentially thin. Had a long pointed nose. You smile. I make no effort to come in costume or make-up. This is all imagination, I hope you understand. A piercing eye and a ready tongue.

Well, in Paris, in the studies, I say I prospered. I came to know of Jacques Lefevre. Jacques Lefevre was a professor at the Sorbonne, the theological school at the University of Paris, until he was expelled from that position because of Protestant leanings. He never ultimately left the Church of Rome but he was an influence upon me in later years toward the Gospel.

My cousin was to be involved, Olivetan was to be involved in a translation of the New Testament into French for which I later wrote a preface, and it was published together.

After obtaining my Masters Degree at the age of 19, which was not unusual, I received a letter from my father and I had been accustomed to submitting to my father's will, requiring that I move from theology to law. He had had a brief falling out with the cathedral chapter, the chapter, the officers of the cathedral. There was some concern for irregularity of books which my father denied, but he lost confidence in their support and decided to deny the Church of Rome the services of his emerging son. He also was conscious that law was a more lucrative profession in that time. What it is in your time, I would not venture to say. And he wanted, again, better arrangements for his own care in his own old age.

Dutifully, I moved at my father's request south to Orleans and there studied. There, I had contact with a third influence that was going to lead me in the direction of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He was Melchior Volmar. He had studied with Luther. He was a German. He had Protestant opinions. They were not yet fleshed out but he shared them with me. Lefevre, Olivetan and Volmar, eventually their influence led me to an understanding of the simple Gospel which I had never known til then.

Briefly at Orleans and then to Bourges, another school of law farther south. Then a letter from home informing me of my father's imminent passing. I returned home. My brother, Antoine, Anthony, and I made arrangements. We buried my father. We remained long enough to settle the estate and then I'm back to Paris. Back to Paris, free now from my father's will and free to my own choices, and now I proceed to select lectures from the college of my preference. I'm a kind of a post-graduate special student with no degree purpose, sampling as much as I can.

About this time, I publish the first writing, the first work from my pen. It says something because of the subject it covers. In ancient Rome was a stoic philosopher named Seneca. Seneca had written a treatise on clemency, the concept of mercy in judgment. I studied

Seneca and published a paper which was a commentary on Seneca's treatise on clemency. In retrospect, that subject suggests I was concerned about the issue of forgiveness, the issue of mercy. I knew nothing of the grace of God. I was coming to an understanding but not yet.

It's 1532. The little treatise did not sell well. It produced no memorable consequence and then on All Saints Day, November 1, 1533, a friend, a student friend who was of some significant stature position, the son of the chief physician to the king, the king was Francis I. Francis I was a Romanist Catholic king, as were all others. He was for maintenance of stability and uniformity, but he was not alien to new ideas, and as it turned out, new ideas were about to be presented. It was the 1530s, it was the height of the Renaissance. It was a restored interest in going back to the sources of each discipline, of each subject; rather than reading and studying the commentaries and opinions of others who had read them centuries earlier, going back to the originals. Well, this son of the chief royal physician, the young man's name was Nicholas Cop, was elected rector of the university, an office similar to a lower dean in your context perhaps, and as such, he had the obligation on All Saints Day of presenting an inaugural address, a speech to the faculties of the college. He and I had become friends. We had shared what little understanding we were gaining of mercy and grace and forgiveness in the Gospel, the influence of Lefevre, of Volmar of Olivetan, now our opportunity. I participated in the writing of his speech that he was to deliver to the faculty in which he proclaims the principle in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall inherit the kingdom of God." This was quite in contrast to the nature of the Bishops and the Archbishops, to their wealth, to their prominence, to their demand for respect, recognition. He, in this oration, was proposing a revision of the curriculum of the university long established and the reaction to the speech was visible and audible. It was rejected vociferously and with great threatenings, the speaker and the speech writer fled the land.

I went to Basel, a place I liked very much and wished to spend the rest of my life. Switzerland, right on the border between France and Switzerland, still in French speaking Switzerland, where was established a significant printing industry. It's the 1530s. Less than a century earlier, movable type printing had been introduced, that blessed instrument in the providence of God for the rapid dissemination of ideas, unparalleled, one of the greatest developments, hardly an invention, one of the greatest developments in modern civilization, I say, just some 80 years before this, and it was centered in with several establishments in the city of Basel, but the fame of the, or the notoriety of the speech spread throughout the land and when we were discovered and identified, it was necessary again that we flee. I was let down from a second story window with a cord made of curtains pulled from the windows of that second floor room and escaped the apartment and fled France back to my hometown because as a result of this development, around 1533, early 1534, the date and time are not recorded, God captured my soul. I left no elaborate record of that experience unlike John Wesley and Martin Luther and many others who detailed very elaborately the working of God in their hearts.

I read you just the paragraph. It's in the preface to my commentary on the Psalms. I was eventually to write commentaries on 30 books of the Old Testament, every book of the New Testament except the book of Revelation. It is said that my publications from my pen would cover four feet on a library shelf. One volume, that for which I am most known, was three inches. In the commentary on the Psalms, I relate a parallel with David. I read to you,

"As David was taken from the sheepfold and elevated to the rank of supreme authority; so God having taken me from my originally obscure and humble condition, has reckoned me worthy of being invested with the honorable office of a preacher and minister of the gospel. When I was yet a very little boy, my father had destined me for the study of theology. But, afterwards, when he considered that the legal profession commonly raised those who follow it to wealth, this prospect induced him suddenly to change his purpose. Thus it came to pass, that I was withdrawn from the study of philosophy and religion and was put to the study of law. To this pursuit I endeavored faithfully to apply myself, in obedience to the will of my father; but God, by the secret guidance of his providence, at length gave a different direction to my course. At first, since I was too obstinately devoted to the superstitions of popery to be easily extricated from so profound an abyss of mire, God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame, which was more burdened in such matters than might have been expected from one at my early period of life. Having thus received some taste and knowledge of true godliness, I was immediately inflamed with so intense a desire to make progress therein."

This event is not dated. It is around 1533-1534, and in natural consequence of my sudden conversion, I returned to my home city of Noyon, there meet the cathedral chapter, the officers of the cathedral who had been responsible for my sustenance, the scholarships, the benefices on which I had been sustained. I announce my intention to renounce them. I graciously express my appreciation for their contribution to my growth, but I will no longer receive it.

This was a cutting of the ties. Now, you must understand the times. There was yet no Protestant church in France. Oh, there was a growing movement but it was only a movement. In France, the Protestants came to be known as Huguenots. The origin of that term is unknown. There have been several suggestions. In the city of Trier, the believers typically met at nighttime by St. Hugo's gate, no King Hugo's gate. King Hugo was a mythical king of ancient times and because it was believed that his spirit roamed at nighttime, the connection was made that these were Hugonots, hugo-no, Hugono. It is probably mythical and more likely that the word is a corruption of some form of the Swiss/German ??, confederates. But this is how they were perceived at the time by the authorities in France, as subversive confederates, groups up to no good, and therefore there was nothing for me to join, as it were. I was leaving a very clearly organized system and I was now called of God, as it were, to something that was not yet formed, but by the grace of God the years that were to follow involved my participation in the forming of it.

Having made this break, I go back to Paris in disguise. I meet briefly with Servetus, Michael Servetus, more of him to follow. A Unitarian. A heretic. A well-educated young man. A medical scholar, probably having discovered the circulation of the blood in the human body, long before your William Harvey. A Spaniard. He and I met briefly in Paris. I was aware of his error. He was a Unitarian. He was an anti-Trinitarian. He denied the deity of Christ. And we arranged for a disputation, a debate to be held at a certain time to which he never appeared. That was a very significant meeting and a more significant failure to meet again. We were to meet at the end of his life once more.

The fall of 1534, October in Paris, a remarkable event, a radical action in an country and in an age when such actions were considered irreverent, at least. On a certain night, in one night there appeared all over Paris placards, posters, not exactly billboards but posters denouncing the Mass of the Church of Rome as a diabolical corruption. This was iconoclasm. It was bold. It was radical. It was immoderate and it was profound. The reaction was anger. Someone had the audacity to place one of these posters in the king's royal bedchamber so the first sight upon drawing back the curtains of his bed, the curtains surrounded the bed to keep out the evil humors, the evil drafts, as it was believed. Before his first cup of whatever a Frenchman drinks in the morning, he saw his church and his faith so boldly denounced and, again, it was time for those with Protestant leanings to flee.

I went south to Navarre, to Angouleme, there to meet the king's sister, Marguerite of Navarre. The king's sister. She was kindly disposed toward these budding Protestants and to intercede with her brother the king to relax his efforts to squelch this movement. There I became better acquainted with Lefevre who lived to the age of 100 and was so, I say, so tied to the Church of Rome though he had biblical understanding, but he never left the Church of Rome. But I repeat, he was an influence toward me to do so.

I make my way again to Basel. Basel, my favorite city. Erasmus had lived there for a time as well. Erasmus, the scholar of the age. And here at the age of 27 after a two year stay, I published my book, a kind of a primer to assist a student of the Bible. The basic teachings of the Christian religion, "The Institutes of the Christian Religion," the simple foundational principles of the Christian religion. It was a simple work in four books, four divisions. One volume, four divisions, and followed essentially the outline of the Apostles' Creed where the knowledge of God as Creator, of God as Redeemer in Jesus Christ, as the consequences of the reception of his grace, and then the ordinance and means by which that grace is presented.

It was not a large volume. It became much larger in the subsequent revisions and additions to which I took it, and in the month of my death I was working on a final revision. It proved to be a final revision since it was the month of my death. Yes. But it was interesting that in that first volume, the first publication, the basic outline was there. Unlike my predecessors who were pioneers, I was not an emerging or developing Reformer. God gave me in his providence the training in law after the training in theology and philosophy, so that my mind was organized and I was gifted in this

direction. So the essential outline of the first simple version of "The Institutes," is present enlarged in the final edition.

Now, I'm eager to remain here and I desire a life of study. I believe that God has gifted me with the ability to use my pen and I wish the retiring mode of the scholar. I am on a journey to Strasbourg. I'm going from Basel. It is the month of August. It is 1536. My intention is to become a pastor, if I must, of French refugees on this border city between France and Germany. Strasbourg. The direct route to the city is blocked by the movement of troops. Understand, Switzerland, the country in which Basel lies, was not a nation. There were several cantons. There still are in your time but they have been joined into a confederacy which you call Switzerland. Switzerland was a geographic expression in my time and what was being true was that each of these cantons, Berne, Basel, Lusanne, Geneva, Zurich and others, was making decision about which religion to embrace. The budding Protestantism which Zwingli had established in the land, or Romanism of medieval tradition, and there were inter-cantonal conflicts, a strange thing for you in your generation, in your land. You do not have religious wars that burst out in open conflict. You have verbal religious wars, perhaps, but you do not wield swords as a rule.

The cantons of Switzerland were, therefore, engaged in battle and because of the movement of troops, mercenary troops, hired troops. One of the greatest exports of Switzerland in my time was mercenary soldiers. Swiss Mountaineers were well-known for their ruggedness and their ability to traverse the passes of the mountains. They were for hire. We were not a nation, I say. Switzerland was not a nation and, therefore, did not as a nation fight wars but hired out its sons and this was much opposed by men like Zwingli and others because it exposed the cream of the young men of the land to all sorts of evils and corruptions which they brought back home with them.

Well, the direct route to Strasbourg from Basel was blocked by the movement of troops so I had to take a detour which took me to Geneva. Geneva on the shores of Lake Lemman in the southwestern corner of Switzerland. Beautiful for situation. A lake in the middle of the city. Mountains in the distance. I stayed at the inn, the tavern which was the inn, intending for one night, August 5, 1536. News of my arrival was apparently distributed in the town. In those days, the inn was the source of news. Any traveler was interrogated about the world outside the city where he had been and, therefore, I was told by the keeper of the inn that there was a visitor to see me. Surprised that anyone would know me there, but then realizing that the publication of "The Institutes of the Christian Religion," which were enjoying wide circulation, perhaps gave me a certain degree of prior introduction and there met me at the door of my room a red-haired, fiery evangelist named William Farel. William Farel was the pioneer Reformer of the city of Geneva. He had succeeded a month earlier than my arrival in encouraging the City Council to adopt Reformed teaching, to order that there be no preaching in the city except from the Bible, that the Bible be read regularly from the pulpit, and that gradually they were going to relax the exercise of the sacraments of Rome, but it was going to be done gradually.

Farel was a great destroyer, a good opposer. He was a poor builder. He was my senior by several years but he deferred to me and said that I was needed in this city of Geneva, and

that God had surely called me to this place. I was quite surprised that God had so clearly revealed his will for me to Farel and left me ignorant of it. I thanked him for his confidence but deferred the invitation. He said that I misunderstood. He was not suggesting inviting, asking, he was saying that God would curse the tranquility of the studies I desired if I should fail to respond to his call in this hour of the city's need. I was arrested but I was conscious in that moment that I was arrested of heaven and all the barriers were broken down and I agreed to remain.

I'm 27 years old. Farel is in his 40s. He is taking second place and pushing me forward to lead, to draw up ordinances for the city, a Confession of Faith, a Catechism, to impose upon a people the rule of God in the city. I was young. I was inexperienced. I was impetuous. I moved probably too fast, too far, but for two years, as it turns out, I was a pastor and the one to whom Farel looked for the development of an orderly system of church and state in this city. Understand, you use expressions like separation of church and state, that was unknown in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was considered the responsibility of the civil government to create a legal framework of moral virtue so that the people were to live under the laws of God, the bases of the Commandments, the Ten Commandments. All law as derived from God's law and it was the obligation the state to provide security, protection of the souls of men no less than the bodies of men. You have it very differently in your age. There is much thought for the body and none for the soul. It was quite the reverse then.

So a great deal lay in the choices which the City Council made. There was the City Council of 200. There was a smaller Council of 60. And then there was the little Council of 25 who elected syndics, who were the executives to administer the laws. There was a great controversy over whether the church should have the right to excommunicate erring sinners. The City Council demanded the retention of that right, the right of banishment and excommunication. I insisted that the church have that power. I insisted that everybody in the city sign the Confession of Faith which we drew up and in groups they were brought to the town hall for that purpose. But there was not universal agreement. There was not universal willingness and you see readily the weakness of imposing upon a people within whom it has not been exposed their allegiance to the word and will of God.

There were the Libertines in the city. That was the name of their party, Libertines. Libertarians. They wanted liberty. They did not want the rule of God over them, the discipline, a 9 o'clock curfew in the evening, the requirement that every servant hired by a family be approved by the City Council, approved as to his character and quality. If a marriage was intended, the City Council was to examine the two parties for the appropriateness of their intention. And the Libertines were very vocal in their opposition to this regimen and on Easter Sunday of 1538, April 21, in this state of agitation and argumentation and growing disturbance, indeed as I preached, I could see gleaming from the light of the lanterns the hilts of the swords of those sitting in front of me and the glowering of their faces, and I concluded that they were in no condition to receive the Lord's Supper and I refused to distribute it to them on that Sunday, that Easter Sunday. They had gathered with great expectation and with great self-righteousness some had been dancing on the shores of Lake Geneva the night before and now they came as pious

presenters to receive the Lord's Table. I refused and the reaction of the congregation soon was translated into the expulsion of Farel and me from the city. Farel went to Neuchatel, I went to Basel and would have been happy to have stayed there for the rest of the time.

I was called to Strasbourg against my will again. Representatives from Strasbourg came and said to me, "You are needed here. There are French refugees. They need a pastor. You are able to be their helper." Reluctantly, I went but it was a good going. It was a good three years. Strasbourg, I learned much from that experience. God gave me much. God gave me there acquaintance with Bucer, Henry Bucer. He was an elder. He was an effective spokesman of the Gospel. He had done a good work in that city. He was later to go to Oxford and there to be a professor. Six months after his death, his body was exhumed and its remains burned under order of Mary, Bloody Mary, Mary Tudor. He had lived and died nobly, was ignobly treated in death by men who presumed to effect the soul after its passing. To her credit, Queen Elizabeth reburied the remains or erected a monument where they had been, and restored his memory.

In Strasbourg, I took a wife. Ah, do I have your attention again? A most unexpected arrangement. I had no such plans. Bucer suggested it would be wise if I made such plans. I drew up a list of qualifications which I thought appropriate from such a woman. I will not share that with you lest you be offended thereby, but it carried with it little of romance. A certain young lady, not so young, was proposed of considerable wealth. She knew no French and she refused to learn French and her refusal to do so and the fact of her wealth, I feared would be an impediment to our marriage. I must pause to say God weaned me from earthly riches. I never had concern. I say it not to my credit, I say it to God's honor that he kept me from interest in temporal things. I sought not riches and I received them not. Had a modest salary wherever I was. Died with an estate of 300 crowns, hardly \$400 by your judgment, which I granted to my brother and his children, my nephews, at my death.

She was wealthy, of a wealthy family, and this was not a good omen for our likely, she was not prepared very well to live the life of a preacher's wife in that context. But a widow of an Anabaptist preacher who had been left with three grown children proved to be a good connection, Idelette de Bure was her name. Idelette. We enjoyed a life together. We were married in Strasbourg so in Strasbourg I took a wife. In Strasbourg I learned from Bucer a system of ecclesiastical order which I was later to introduce, and in Strasbourg also, I betrayed my continuing interest in the city which had expelled me by writing a reply to a Roman Catholic Cardinal who had written very obsequiously to the people of Geneva inviting them back into the fold of Rome. Having wisely expelled Farel and Calvin, they showed good judgment and the church was eager to receive them back into the fold. They were very crafty because Sadoletto was an honorable man, an upright, moral Cardinal. Those terms are almost oxymoronic in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but the respectability of this particular Cardinal enhanced the influence of this very ingratiating letter to the people of Geneva.

A friend sent me a copy of that letter. I proceeded to write a reply to Cardinal Sadoletto on behalf of the people of Geneva who had expelled me, and thus betrayed that while I was

happy to have shaken the dust of Geneva off my feet, if they did not want to live under the rule of God, I still cared for those people.

While there, I participated in several Diets of the Emperor, the German Emperor. I was sent as a representative. I accompanied those who went as representatives to see if any common ground of confession could be worked out at four successive annual Diets or convocations where we met with Roman Catholic representatives at Frankfurt, at Worms, at Ratisbon, at Haguenau. While at Worms, I received a delegation from Geneva asking me to return. Thank you, just the same. I'm not interested. They pled and they re-pled and finally I succumbed. Fearful of resisting the will of God, remembering what Farel had done to arrest me in my course, I returned. I returned briefly to Basel to get my belongings and they agreed to send carriages to bring my wife and her children and we returned to Geneva.

It's 1541. Three years in Strasbourg. This was to be my last move. Between 1533 and 1536, I was in 13 cities, not to reside but going back and forth, in and out. No place was my home. Everywhere did I roam and now a settled residence, given a simple house, given a modest stipend, given the duties of pastor, and now soon fathered a son. Idelette gave birth. The son died in two days and it was a great sense of loss. Several miscarriages followed. No living children. Idelette was never well again, died just seven years after our move to Geneva. I lived 15 years alone wrapped up in the work.

My emblem, my motto was a flaming heart and an open hand and the words, "Promptly and sincerely in the work of Christ." God kept me busy preaching or lecturing every day. Writing when I was not preaching or lecturing. Presiding over the consistory made up of the laymen who were elders in the congregation who exercised discipline in the town. An elder was over every several group of families to observe and counsel. There was the venerable company making up the pastors in the town. I was one of them. I was not even a citizen of Geneva until my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. Christmas of my 50<sup>th</sup> year, I was given the freedom of the city, made an honorary citizen of Geneva where I had spent more years than anywhere else. To me this was the highest earthly honor.

Geneva became a thriving city. People who had an affinity for it moved to it and, by the grace of God, people who opposed it moved from it. There was careful watching. There was orderly living and there were conflicts as well. There were theological conflicts. There were moral conflicts. There was the great conflict with Servetus. In your time all some people know about John Calvin is his participating in the execution of Michael Servetus, the Unitarian heretic. This was the blot that the modern world places on my life. I think it is an unworthy blot in the sense that it neglects the perspective that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, heresy was a capital crime. There was almost universal approval of the death of Servetus at the time, as there is almost universal disapproval in your time.

This is the Unitarian. He had written a work in response to "The Institutes of the Christian Religion" entitled "The Restitution of Christianity," restoring it by denying the deity of Christ. He had been condemned as a heretic, condemned to death by the Church of Rome which had allowed him to escape. I say, we had met briefly in Paris. We had

planned for a debate. I had hoped to win him. He did not show up for the debate and now he sends to me a copy of "The Institutes of the Christian Religion," which I had written and sent to him, in which he had made notation of all the errors in my work, of every reference to Christ as Redeemer, Christ as Lord, Christ as God, and then the fool came to Geneva. I say the fool. He came to Geneva. His purpose was not merely to pass through or to reside but to supplant or remove John Calvin.

The City Council tried him on the basis of his teachings, condemned him to be executed. It was the law of the land. It had been the law of Europe since the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the Justinian Code. Any violation, any rejection of the Christian creed is a capital crime. It was so for 1,000 years in Europe.

I went to the cell where he was held. I pled with him, witnessed to him. I encouraged him to renounce his error. I went to the City Council and requested that they substitute when all else had failed, the ax of beheading for the fires of burning to no avail. He went to the burning and he cried at the burning, "O Jesus, thou Son of the eternal God, have mercy on me!" But he would not acknowledge that Jesus was that eternal God and in that century as for centuries before, that was a capital crime.

Geneva became a place of great commerce. Geneva became a place of great immigration. From Italy they came. From Florence they came. Jewelers, craftsmen found work there, but alas did not find a market for their expensive jewelry since any display of the wealth was not welcome in the city. A modest composure and a modest deportment was preferred. Consequently, the Florentine jewelers began to make watches and the industry for which you know Switzerland began to develop.

No children, I say. Passing years. Emaciated body. Weak in health. Established the Academy. Apart from the commentaries and "The Institutes," perhaps the greatest legacy of this preacher was the Genevan Academy and the accompanying college on the principle of the Liberal Arts as the necessary preparation for the ministry. People came eventually from most countries of Europe, 800 and 900 students in the Academy, a secondary school and a Liberal Arts college. Beza, Theodore Beza, my friend and the head of the college, the Academy, and my successor in the city and my most elaborate biographer, built it into a place which when John Knox came to Geneva where he spent three years waiting for the opportunity to transport what he had learned there to his Scotland, John Knox became teacher of the congregation. You see, I recognized in Scripture four regular offices. Pastor, exhorter, teacher, Bible teacher, you tend today to hyphenate those as one, pastor-teacher. Pastor, teacher, elder or presbyter, and deacon. Elder, to assist in the discipline of the congregation and the carrying out of its spiritual work. Deacon, to be involved in the temporal affairs of the congregation. I say, John Knox when he came and was made teacher for the three years he was there before going back to Scotland, he referred to Geneva as the most perfect school of Christ on the earth since the time of apostles, a very generous estimate but somewhat significant, somewhat reflective of the influence which Geneva was to have.

Calvin is not well-received everywhere. He is well loved by many and he is well hated by many more, but he was used of God and on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May in 1564, in my 55<sup>th</sup> year, 55, I succumbed finally after having called to my bedside the members of the City Council and for one last time bid greeting and departure to them, asking forgiveness for any impetuosity and attitudes or actions or words that were inappropriate. I called the city pastors. I had had to be carried in a chair to which staves were added, I had to be carried to the recent meetings of both organizations, the City Council and the city pastors, but this time was too weak for that and they graciously came to me. Having bid them a final goodbye, and it was to be a final goodbye, I received each of them individually and had private words of mutual gratitude with each one.

When the news of my death was announced, people came to my bed, to my bedroom to see my remains one last time, and then after a day, it was decided that the body should be wrapped in linen and put in a simple wooden coffin and carried to the cemetery, which under my orders was to have upon it no marker so that the grave would be never honored. For some time afterward, a simple stone with the initials J. C. had been placed in the vicinity of where they thought I had been buried, but that has disappeared and it was never sure.

After darkness, light. I say to you that he who could command angels to do his bidding, invites human beings, men and women, God uses human agency to accomplish divine purpose. I hope that what I have told you of my life has not seemed boastful but I have so much to boast of in the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ whose honor was my life, the knowledge of whom was my greatest searching, and whose providence my sure defense.

God bless you all.