CROWNING LABORS:

Calvin's major works of his last years were his Old Testament commentaries and the final edition of the Institutes in Latin and the translation into French.

From about 1552 some of his younger friends sought to make his work easier. Instead of dictating to a secretary in his room, the friends took down his lectures as he delivered them. They compared their notes and prepared a transcript of each lecture. The resulting transcript was read to Calvin for corrections. The Old Testament commentaries flowed from the presses. Isaiah was followed by Genesis. The Commentary on Psalms was published in 1557; Calvin had given it more careful personal attention. Hosea was published the same year.

In 1559 he published his commentary on the Minor Prophets and a revised commentary on Isaiah, dedicated to Queen Elizabeth of England. Daniel was published in 1561, followed by a harmony of the Pentateuch, Jeremiah and Lamentations in 1563. Two commentaries were published posthumously; Joshua in 1561 and Ezekiel 1-20 in 1565.

When Calvin became very ill with quartan fever in 1558 he feared that he would die with the Institutes unrevised. He forced himself to make the changes he wanted. For the final edition he adopted the form of the Apostles' Creed; the final edition was divided into four books, corresponding to the four sections of the creed. The books were divided into chapters and the chapters into numbered sections. With each successive edition the Institutes had grown: the six chapters of 1536 grew into seventeen in 1539; from seventeen to twenty-one in 1943; the final edition contained eighty chapters. In the first edition of 1536 four chapters had been devoted to the Apostles' Creed. Book I of the final edition was entitled "On the Knowledge of God the Creator." Book II was "On the Knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ." Book III was "On the Mode of Obtaining the Grace of Christ." Book IV was "On the External Means or Helps by which God invites us into Fellowship with Christ and keeps us in it." The form made it plain that Calvin wanted to stand within the tradition of the church. The growth and development came from his broadened and deepened understanding of the scriptures resulting from his years of lecturing, preaching, and writing commentaries, from his study of church history and the great theologians of the church, and from the controversies that caused him to deal more fully with some topics. Chapter 6 of the 1536 edition was entitled "On Christian Liberty" and dealt with Christian liberty, the authority of the church, and civil government.

In 1539 this became three chapters (13, 14, and 15). In 1543 the authority of the church became chapter 7; Christian liberty became chapter 12; the civil government became chapter 20. In the final edition of 1559 "On Christian Liberty" became chapter 19 of Book III; "On Political Administration" became the last chapter of Book IV; twelve chapters of Book IV were devoted to the church.

The Council gave its permission for the publication of the revised edition on May 2, 1559. Robert Stephanus finished printing it on August 16, 1559. Calvin then made a French translation of this final edition.
THE REFUGEES:

By 1557 the refugees who had flocked to Geneva outnumbered the inhabitants. They were a source of strength to Calvin but natives were filled with anxiety for the internal political consequences. Business men like Robert Estienne, Jean Crespin, and Laurent de Normandie created jobs and brought prosperity and honor to the city, but they could not furnish enough jobs for the thousands who flocked to the city. A serious housing shortage resulted. Many failing to find work moved on to other cities such as Frankfurt and Zurich. Many of the English refugees returned to England as soon as they heard of the death of Queen Mary and the coronation of Queen Elizabeth. The refugees tended to form communities of their own with their own churches. The French made up over three-fourths of the refugees.

A noted accomplishment of the English refugees was the publication of the Geneva Bible of 1560, the most widely used Bible in England until the Authorized Version of King James. Among the most noted of the English refugees were the ministers, John Knox and William Whittingham (future Dean of Durham) who worked on the translation, John Bodley (father of the founder of the Bodleian Library); Sir William Strafford, Sir Richard Morrison, and the printer, Rowland Hall.

Among the refugees were French secret agents like Jacques Spifame, who in 1559 secured a house next door to Calvin. He had been Bishop of Nevers. He was accompanied by a woman whom he claimed was his wife. He claimed that he had fled France for the Gospel and he became a pastor. He became a citizen. He was sent as a minister to France. When the Council learned that he was a secret agent, that he had not told the truth about the woman, that he had engaged in intrigues with France and Savoy, and that he was negotiating for a bishopric in France, he was beheaded in 1566.

Among the Italians who were welcomed by Calvin was the first minister of the Italian church in Geneva, Bernardino Ochino, who had been General of the Capuchins. Another was Galeazzo Caracciolo, Marquis of Vico, a great-nephew of Pope Paul IV, and a chamberlain to the Emperor. He left his wife and children to settle in Geneva in 1551. In 1559 he obtained a divorce on the grounds of desertion when his wife refused to join him and he married again. Gentile and Socinian were suspected of Trinitarian heresies but avoided conviction.

On Christmas Day, 1559, Peter Viret and other Lausanne preachers submitted a petition to the Council for Geneva citizenship. The petition was granted and their purchase-money was refunded. It occurred to one of the members of the Council that all the preachers and teachers were citizens except Calvin, the head of the church. Calvin was asked to become a citizen after twenty-one years of labor. He explained that he had never sought citizenship lest some one accuse him of seeking his own interests. He expressed his gratitude for the honor of citizenship.

CALVIN'S LETTERS:
Calvin carried on a tremendous correspondence. Until late in life he refused to use a secretary, fearing people would be offended unless he wrote with his own hand. Finally Jonviller persuaded him to use secretaries. His most intimate correspondence was with Farel and Viret. He kept in close touch with ministers in France. He carried on extensive correspondence with Monsieur de Falais to whom he dedicated the commentary on I Corinthians. Throughout his life he corresponded with Queen Marguerite of Navarre and Duchess Renee. Much of his correspondence was with people of humble station.

THE SPREAD OF CALVINISM:
Calvinism spread over France and Switzerland. English refugees carried Calvinism back to England. Calvin sent letters to the Duke
of Somerset, Protector of Edward VI. He dedicated the commentary on I Timothy to the Duke; the commentaries on Isaiah and the Catholic Epistles were dedicated to Edward. The revised edition of Isaiah was dedicated to Queen Elizabeth who remained cool to Calvin because of Knox's "Blast against the Monstrous Regiment of Women." However, the Institutes and commentaries were widely read and many refugees returned steeped in Calvin's theology.

When Thomas Cranmer wrote Calvin proposing a meeting of Bullinger, Calvin, Melanchthon, and Cranmer to try to reach an agreement on the Eucharist and other doctrines as a counter-poise to the Council of Trent, Calvin praised the scheme and declared, "If I could be of any service, I would not grudge to cross ten seas if it were necessary." Calvin longed to bring the different branches of the Reformation together.

Knox established the model Calvinist church in Scotland and Calvinism continued in Scotland long after it waned in England. Calvin had many followers in Poland and in the Netherlands.

THE HOSTILITY OF THE LUTHERANS:

When Calvin published the Institutes in 1536, Luther still had ten years to live. Luther read the Institutes (probably the 1539 edition) and sent friendly greetings to Calvin through Bucer, "Salute for me respectfully Sturm and Calvin whose books I have read with special delight." Luther read Calvin's Little Treatise on the Lord's Supper (1540) and declared, "This is certainly a learned and godly man, and I might well have entrusted this controversy to him from the beginning. If my opponents had done the same we should soon have been reconciled." After the Colloquy of Marburg in 1529, Luther had little use for Zwingli and Oecolampadius. Calvin preferred Luther to Zwingli; he refused to read the writings of Zwingli and Oecolampadius. After the debates with the Catholics in the early 1540's Calvin was a great admirer of Melanchthon. Melanchthon wrote Calvin that he had acquired great favor in the eyes of Luther. When some of Calvin's critics showed Luther a passage where Calvin had criticized him, Luther said, "I hope that Calvin will one day think better of us; but in any event it is good that he should even now have some proof of our good will towards him." Calvin was moved by the moderation and praised it in the preface to the commentary on Romans. Later Luther turned furiously against all the men of Switzerland, including Calvin. Calvin wrote Bullinger:

Consider how great a man Luther is, and what excellent gifts he has; the strength of mind and resolute constancy, the skillfulness, efficiency and theological power he has used in devoting all his energies to overthrowing the reign of Anti-christ and to spread far and near the teaching of salvation. I have often said that even if he were to call me a devil I should still regard him as an outstanding servant of God.

After the debates with the Catholics many Lutherans suspected Melanchthon of crypto-Calvinism. Joachim Westphal of Hamburg, who was so Lutheran he would not welcome non-Lutheran refugees fleeing persecution in England, in 1552 and 1553 openly attacked Calvin in print. Calvin replied in 1555 with A Defence of the Doctrine of the Sacrament. Westphal answered with his Defence. Calvin replied in his Second Defence (1556). Westphal replied and Calvin answered with his Final Admonition to Westphal (1558). Melanchthon suffered much from his friendship with Calvin. The Lutherans after Luther's death were terribly divided by the Philippist Controversy--Was Philip Melanchthon alien or ally? Hesiodus published works against Calvin in 1560 and
1562. Calvin replied in 1561 with On the True Partaking of the Flesh and Blood of Christ, in which he praised Melanchthon. The Lutheran attitude to Calvin was well expressed in "Rather be a papist than a Calvinist." Even so a Reformed Church grew in Germany.

Farel's Marriage:

Farel shocked his friends, including Calvin, when in September, 1558, he announced he was getting married. Farel was sixty-nine and he was marrying the teenage daughter of his refugee housekeeper. Calvin would not attend either the engagement ceremony nor the wedding. His letters to Farel became infrequent and brief.

Calvin's Final Illnesses:

Calvin had barely recovered from the terrible quartan fever of 1558-1559 when he overstrained his voice preaching in St. Peter's. A violent fit of coughing and a bad hemorrhage were diagnosed as the rupture of a blood vessel in his lungs. Actually it was tuberculosis. His delicate health declined but he continued to work. He suffered much from kidney stones, piles, and gout. In a moving letter to the physicians in Montpellier in February of 1564 he begged for help.

On the morning of February 2, 1564, he preached on I Kings; in the afternoon he gave Lecture 65 on Ezekiel. On Sunday, February 6, he preached his last sermon in St. Peter's on "Harmony of the Gospels." He continued to attend the meetings of the ministers on Fridays, giving brief talks. His health seemed to improve a little in March but the meetings were held in his house. On March 10 special prayers were made for him. On Easter Sunday, April 20, he was carried to St. Peter's where for the last time he received communion, administered by Beza, and he joined in the singing of Psalms.

On April 25 he made his will, distributing his meager possessions. The Little Council visited him on April 27 and Calvin gave them a moving farewell. On April 28 the ministers visited him and in his farewell to them he reflected on his years of work in Geneva. He wrote a final message to Farel on May 2. Farel was so moved that he paid Calvin a final visit and ate with him. Calvin admonished him to carry on the work.

Calvin's Death and Burial:

On May 27, 1564, about 3 P.M. Calvin died in sleep, not yet fifty-five. The secretary recorded in the Register of the Council: "Today about eight o'clock John Calvin has gone to God."

His body lay in state and so many came to see him some feared the creating of the cult of a new saint. His instructions concerning his funeral were followed: he was sewed into a white shroud and laid in a simple pine coffin. At the grave there were no words nor song. A great multitude had silently followed the body to the Cemetery Plain-palais, where he was buried on May 28. He had requested that no tombstone mark his grave. A few months later when some foreign students asked to visit his grave, it could not be identified among the fresh mounds. Later a plain stone with the initials, "J.C." was placed in the cemetery even though the site of his burial was unknown.

An Estimate of Calvin:

For four hundred years Calvin has been bitterly attacked and admiringly praised. He has been accused of a lack of love, of cruelty, and of tyranny. The story of his life and his writings are filled with his love of God, of the church, of Geneva, of persecuted refugees, and of the suffering poor. The charge of cruelty and tyranny pales when he is compared with other leaders of his time. He has been charged with being a foe of the arts. This, too, will not stand up when one looks at the art of his
writings and his love of the Psalms. He had a bad temper but due consideration must be given to his poor health.

Calvin worked while others slept. He was a highly gifted man of great dedication to what he believed was the will of God and the right. His efforts to unite Protestantism stand out in his age. He exerted a great influence on the development of the French language—his was the first important logical, carefully constructed theological and philosophical work in French. His influence on the universities, on exegesis, on theology are beyond measuring. Calvin labored to make the mind of Christ stand out in the study of Scripture. His Reformation became the International branch of Protestantism. His influence on the rise of democracy and capitalism are still debated. His life and work are well represented by his seal: the flaming heart on the extended hand, with the motto, "Promptly and sincerely in the work of the Lord."

CALVIN'S THEOLOGY:
1. The Sovereignty of God: Foremost in Calvin's Theology is the sovereignty of God over all persons and events from eternity to eternity. His will is the ground of all existence. His glory is the object of all creation. He is the sole source of the good.
2. Man's first duty is to know God and himself.
3. God can be known partially from natural theology but can be known adequately only by divine revelation in the Scriptures. The Scriptures must be illuminated by the indwelling Holy Spirit.
4. Man in his present fallen state is wholly bad.
5. God has elected and predestined some men to be saved from their hopeless state by the work of Christ. God's predestination and election are the only trustworthy grounds of a joyous hope of salvation. Election and reprobation both come from God.
6. The church is all the elect of God united in the worship of God and in truly preaching the Word of God and in rightly observing the sacraments.
7. The church is properly governed by the officers made known in the New Testament: pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons.
8. The main object of the church is discipline.
9. The Lord's Supper: the true doctrine is a spiritual doctrine of the Real Presence. Where faith is, there the Lord is. No idea, image, or symbol can speak of his presence where faith is absent. Calvin stood between Luther and Zwingli.
10. It is the duty of the civil rulers to guard the purity of the church. Heresy is a crime to be punished by the state.

Calvin's system no longer commands the allegiance it once claimed. Little by little his followers have modified and reinterpreted. The Reformed branch of the Reformation is made up of many denominations that have split over and over and are continuing to split over orthodoxy. They look to Calvin as one of the great leaders of church history.