

## John Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion



*Next to Luther, John Calvin was the most influential leader of the Protestant Reformation. Calvin broke completely with the Catholic Church in his rejection of papal authority and Catholic ritual. In his **Institutes of the Christian Religion**, written in 1536, Calvin set down the first theological system of Protestants. The following selection from the **Institutes** presents Calvin's views on economic practices:*

The Scriptures teach us about how we should use our earthly blessings. There are two kinds of goods which God has given us. The first are those necessities we must have to live on earth before passing to our heavenly reward. Second, in addition to the goods we must have in order to live, we obtain goods which we use primarily for our own pleasure. Whether the goods we obtain are for necessities or for pleasure, we must use them in moderation. This is what the Lord teaches us in the Scriptures when He states that life on earth is like a pilgrimage. Christians travel through life on their way to God's heavenly kingdom. If we are only passing through life on earth to eternal life in heaven, we ought to make use of earth's blessings to assist us in our journey.

We state the principle, then, that we ought to use God's earthly gifts, so long as we use them for the same purposes for which God created them. After all, He created them for our benefit and not for our injury. Moreover, He has provided these gifts for more than existence; He has created them for our pleasure and delight, as well...

Let us discard that inhuman philosophy which states that we should use God's gifts for only those things that are necessary to live. In the first place, this philosophy deprives us of the lawful enjoyment of the Divine gifts. Secondly, this philosophy turns man into a senseless block. We should, therefore, use goods for pleasure, but we must oppose extravagant use of these goods to satisfy the pleasures of the flesh...

Lastly, the Lord commands every one of us to take his vocation seriously. He has appointed each of us to particular duties, or callings. Every individual's occupation, therefore, is a post assigned to him by God....Hence, no vocation is so lowly that it is not important and respectable in the sight of God.