



# Let's Read *The Institutes* *of the Christian Religion, Class 13*

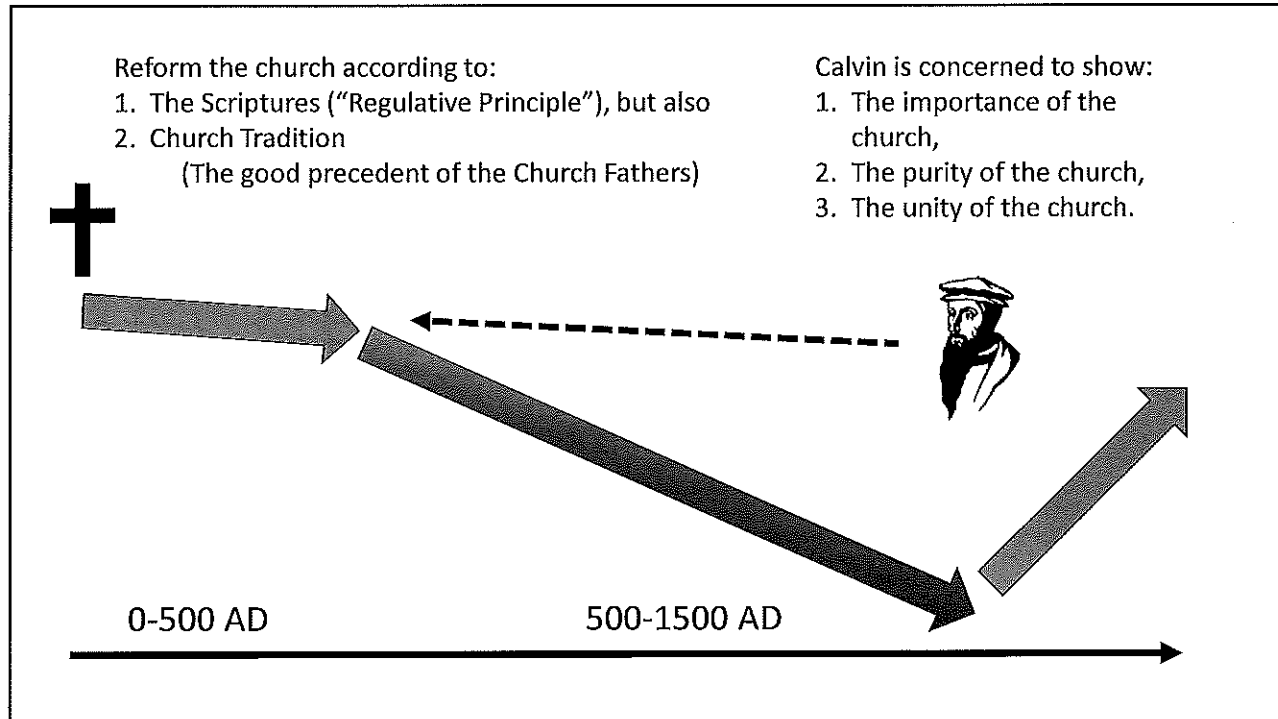
**Book 4:** The External Means Or Aids By Which God Invites Us Into The Society Of Christ And Holds Us Therein.

**Chapters 1-2**



## Section Headings:

- Of the true Church.  
Duty of cultivating unity with her, as the mother of all the godly.
- Comparison between the false church and the true.



## Definition of the Church

### The External Means Or Aids

- Because of our weakness ("prison house of our flesh")
- God's grace and accommodation

### By Which God Invites Us Into The Society Of Christ

- We are eligible, through the gospel, to be one with Christ
- Fellowship/union with Christ is accomplished in the church

### And Holds Us Therein

- Not only salvation but perseverance as well
- Nurtured by the church in our sanctification
- God's blessings are mutually bestowed upon the church
  - God could work without the church, but we cannot.
  - Individual Christians cannot opt out of these outward benefits
  - The Reformed corrective is not "no church" but a more true church

## The Nature of the Church

- The Invisible Church –

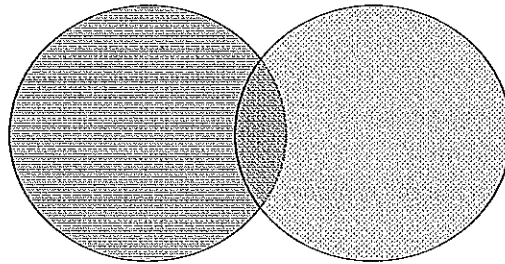
*An Object of faith*

- All of the elect
- Above time/space
- Without corruption/hypocrisy

- The Visible Church –

*An Object of Experience*

- A Mixture of elect/nonelect
- Limited to present time
- A Mixture of devotion/treason



## The Nature of the Church

- The True Church

- Where is it?
  - Where the Bishop is (RC)
  - Where godliness/holiness is (Anabaptists)
  - Where Christ is (Calvin)
- Marks
  - Preaching of the Word (vernacular)
  - Sacraments duly instituted/administered

- Discipline – not a mark

- Marks are objective elements
- Discipline is a subjective response
- Positive discipling as well as punitive correction.
- Compared to the sinews of the human body – holding it together.
- Aim
  - Preserves God's honor
  - Protects the good from wicked
  - Leads offender to repentance
- Steps
  - Private warning
  - Public admonition
  - Exclusion from communion

## The Nature of the Church

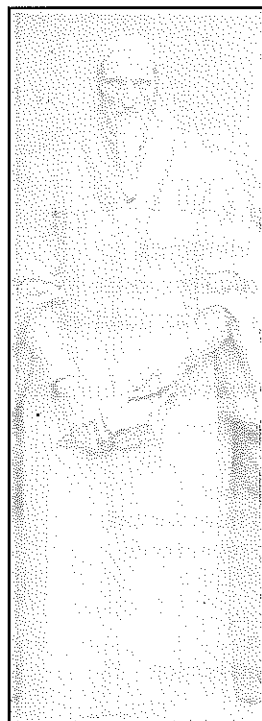
- The True Church

- Marks
  - Preaching of the Word
  - Sacraments duly administered
- If marks are missing, Christ is absent

True-----False-----No church

- RCs reject Protestants
- Calvin does not reject RCs similarly
  - “a faction of wicked men”
  - Still, “traces of the church” remain

- “Even if swarming with faults”
  - In points of nonessential doctrine or practice (rf. Cor. Ch.) (Essential: Unity/triunity of God, Christ’s deity, salvation based on grace through faith, etc.)
  - Opposing the Anabaptists here who sought a pure, perfect church without error in doctrine or profession of faith.
- RC Church?
  - Papacy contrary to church order
  - But traces remain – baptism, remnant, etc.



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