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# JOHN CALVIN

by LAUCHLAN MACLEAN WATT

**T**HIS poem appeared on the first page of *The Evangelical Quarterly* for January 1936, to commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of the first edition of Calvin's "Institutes". It is fitting that it should reappear in this issue, to commemorate not only the four hundredth anniversary of the last edition of the "Institutes" to come from the Reformer's own hand, but also the four hundred and fiftieth anniversary of his birth, on July 10, 1509. For the sake of our younger readers, we may add that Dr. MacLean Watt was a former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and Minister of Glasgow Cathedral.

**C**LEAR as the snow and solemn as the pines  
Above his mountain solitudes  
Far in the highest heaven his passion shines,  
Beyond the common mists and vulgar moods;  
Yet into his ice-clear reasoning oft intrudes  
The still small voice, the sound of a falling tear,  
Dreadful to see and terrible to hear,  
For that the human soul and the great God are near . . . .  
He shrank not when the whisper bade him rise,  
Till, to his own full stature gather'd, he  
Found pierc'd hands take Rome's napkin from his eyes  
That he might view, far-stretching, broad and free,  
God's thought of man's great need, and Christ his prize.

Lo, while men sleep, God's watchful heart, unsleeping,  
Its vigil keeping,  
Throbs till, like thunder, even the stars it shakes,  
And Thought, in wonder, from her bonds awakes,  
And, like the green withes twined on Samson's wrists,  
Snaps Superstition's chains, in cruel coil and twist,  
That she may wander forth in joy and youth.  
Whispering to weary hearts the word of truth.  
So his soul would have slept, for very sweet  
To him were quiet fields, the calm retreat,  
The solitary glade of silent thought;  
Yet, whither he went his presence with him brought  
Crowds of the seekers, with their souls on fire,  
And shining eyes aglow with love's desire  
For God reveal'd of old, and for His Christ  
Whom gold had never bought, nor greed had priced.

Dragged into fields of conflict, where shone white  
Keen Logic's blades, hot in the stress of fight  
'Gainst wrong and error, there he made his home,  
And shook with prayer and scorn the iron bars of Rome;  
Holding as treasure dearer than mortal breath  
Truth, whom to wrong were worthy the wage of death,—  
Youth, manhood, strength,  
Life's breadth, and depth, and length,—  
Glad unto God with both strong hands he gave,  
Building, through Romish hate and exile's ills,  
A city of God amid the eternal hills,  
Greater than wrong, and stronger than the grave.

If fear he knew, this was his only fear—  
Lest, when the advancing footsteps he should hear  
Of God's Christ coming to judgment of all lands,  
He should be idle found, eyes closed, and folded hands.  
So, till God gave him sleep,  
He toiled as those who keep  
A tryst with One through morning drawing near.