

Church History II

(Pre-Reformation to Modern Day)

Week 3 – Calvin, The English, and Catholic Reformation

I. The French Reformer

1. Background

- A. John Calvin was a young scholar from France living from 1509 to 1564.
- B. Calvin was trained up as a lawyer. **PTQ**
 - i. By the age of 19, Calvin had completed his Master of Arts at the University of Paris in 1528. **PTQ**
 - ii. When Calvin's father died in 1531, Calvin went back to school in an attempt to study the classics.
 - iii. This study caused him to come to an incredible interaction with God.
 - 1) “He called it an “unexpected conversion.” We can’t be certain about the date, but it was clearly more than just spiritual enlightenment or recognition of the supreme authority of the Scriptures. Calvin surrendered his will to God. He gave up his career as a classical scholar and identified with the Protestant cause in France.”¹ **PTQ**
 - 2) Calvin was singled out early and often for his intelligence and expression of the Christian faith in protestant forms.
 - a) According to Schaff, “Calvin was the best theologian and exegete among the Reformers.”²

2. Calvin’s Theological Career

- A. In 1536 Calvin was heading to Strasbourg and on the way found himself in Geneva, where the preacher named William Farrel pulled Calvin into action.
 - i. The preach told Calvin who protested to stay in Geneva and help the cause of Protestantism there, “You are only following your own wishes! If you do not help us in this work of the Lord, the Lord will punish you for seeking your own interest rather than His.”³
 - ii. In March of this same year, Calvin had published his highly influential Institutes of the Christian Religion in its original form. Luther continued to expand on this volume over the next twenty years, resulting in what we would read today. ⁴ **PTQ**

¹ Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, ed. Marshall Shelley, 5th Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 305.

² Philip Schaff and David Schley Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 7 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910), 32.

³ Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 303.

⁴ Ibid., 305.

- iii. John who had been asked to stay and help manage the city was given an illustrious teaching position and a role as a councilman. The only issue was his ways were very cut and dry people had a hard time with how particular he was.
 - B. Calvin's life was turbulent and back and forth in regard to those who supported and opposed him.
 - i. Thus, he was actually thrust out of Geneva after a couple of years, and he went and lived pretty peacefully in Strasbourg for a few years. During this time, he married a widow and cared for a church of French refugees.⁵
 - ii. Calvin was eventually encouraged back into Geneva when those who liked his ways came back into power. He then stayed in Geneva for the rest of his life, though he had several periods of potential exile. This is when his famous interaction with the heretic Servetus is brought to bear.
 - “Michael Servetus sought refuge in Geneva. Servetus was fleeing Catholic persecution for his heresy of denying the doctrine of the Trinity. He arrived in Geneva just as Calvin’s enemies were challenging his authority. While Calvin wanted a more merciful death than burning for the heretic, he did support the silencing of the ill-balanced thinker. Servetus was burned at the stake,”⁶
3. Calvin’s Theology
- A. Calvin had a very particular set of theology which can be broken down into a few key defining points.
 - i. Calvin’s leadership in “the game” shaped a third Reformation tradition. Today we call it Reformed or Calvinistic Christianity. It includes all Presbyterians, Dutch and German Reformed churches, and many Baptists and Congregationalists⁷ **PTQ**
 - ii. “If Luther’s ultimate text was “The just shall live by faith,” Calvin’s was “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”⁸
 - B. Scripture – Below is an excerpt from Calvins institute
 - i. “Though the light which presents itself to all eyes, both in heaven and in earth, is more than sufficient to deprive the ingratitude of men of every excuse, since God, in order to involve all mankind in the same guilt, sets before them all, without exception, an exhibition of his majesty, delineated in creatures—yet we need another and better assistance, properly to direct us to the Creator of the world...So the Scripture, collecting in our minds the

⁵ Shelley, [Church History in Plain Language](#), 306.

⁶ Ibid., 307.

⁷ Ibid., 304.

⁸ Ibid., 308.

otherwise confused notions of deity, dispels the darkness, and gives us a clear view of the true God.”⁹ **PTQ**

- C. Predestination – Below is an excerpt from Calvins institute
 - i. “Let them remember that when they inquire into predestination, they penetrate the inmost recesses of divine wisdom, where the careless and confident intruder will obtain no satisfaction to his curiosity, but will enter a labyrinth from which he will find no way to depart. For it is unreasonable that man should scrutinize with impunity those things which the Lord has determined to be hidden in himself”¹⁰
 - D. Sacraments – Below is an excerpt from Calvins institute
 - i. “We have ascertained, therefore, that a spiritual promise, the very same which is given to us in baptism, was given to the fathers in circumcision; which represented to them remission of sins and the mortification of the flesh. Moreover, as we have shown that Christ, in whom both these things are achieved, is the foundation of baptism,”¹¹
 - ii. “I grant that the breaking of the bread is symbolical, and not the substance itself: yet, this being admitted, from the display of the symbol we may justly infer the display of the substance; for, unless any one would call God a deceiver, he can never presume to affirm that he sets before us an empty. Therefore, if, by the breaking of the bread, the Lord truly represents the participation of his body, it ought not to be doubted that he truly presents and communicates it.”¹² **PTQ**
 - E. Civil Government – Below is an excerpt from Calvins institute
 - i. “Civil government is designed, as long as we live in this world, to cherish and support the external worship of God, to preserve the pure doctrine of religion, to defend the constitution of the Church, to regulate our lives in a manner requisite for the society of men, to form our manners to civil justice, to promote our concord with each other, and to establish general peace and tranquility”¹³
4. Calvins influence outside of Switzerland
- A. France
 - i. “In France Calvinism remained a minority, but thanks to influential converts among the nobility, the movement gained an importance out of all proportion to its numbers. Known as Huguenots, French Calvinists were threatening to

⁹ C. Douglas Weaver and Rady Roldán-Figueroa, eds., [*Exploring Christian Heritage: A Reader in History and Theology*](#), Second Edition (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 115.

¹⁰ Ibid.,116.

¹¹ Ibid., 117.

¹² Ibid., 118.

¹³ Ibid., 119.

seize leadership of the country when thousands of them were ruthlessly massacred on St. Bartholomew's Day in 1572."¹⁴ **PTQ**

- ii. **"Jeanne d'Albret** (1528–72) grew up to make a bold, public profession of her Reformed faith as Queen of Navarre and made Calvinism the official religion of the realm. "Although I am just a little princess, God has given me government of this country so that I may rule it according to his gospel," Jeanne said. "I rely on God." Jeanne's son, Henry IV, king of France (1553–1610), issued the Edict of Nantes, a milestone of religious freedom three generations in the making."¹⁵ **PTQ**

B. Netherlands

- i. "Calvinism offered a rallying point for opposition to the oppressive rule of Catholic Spain. Calvinist ministers were among the earliest leaders of resistance groups. Today we would call them freedom fighters or perhaps guerrillas. The liberation leader of the national party in the northern province of the Netherlands was William the Silent. He joined the reformed church in 1573."¹⁶

C. Scotland

- i. "In Scotland the Calvinists created something unique in sixteenth-century Europe: a land of one religion ruled by a monarch of another."¹⁷
- ii. John Knox, who initially started trying to reform the church in England towards Calvinism, was forced to make an exit. Knox, at this time, came to believe that Protestants could resist the coercion of the Catholic Church by force if necessary. Knox travelled home during a time of Civil war and worked tirelessly to promote what he understood as the truth of Scripture. Knox ended up getting Catholicism abolished with the drafting of the Articles of Religion. **PTQ**
- iii. Over the next few years Knox, the passionate preacher of Calvinism, and Mary, the young queen of Scotland, came to symbolize the Reformation conflict: Protestant against Catholic, but also the democratic claims of Calvinism against the monarchy's power to appoint bishops¹⁸
- iv. Knox is well known for his quote "Give me Scotland or I die." Expressing his immense desire for the preaching of the Gospel to go out and be accepted in place of the Catholic error.¹⁹ **PTQ**

¹⁴ Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 309.

¹⁵ Ibid., 310.

¹⁶ Ibid., 309.

¹⁷ Ibid., 310.

¹⁸ Ibid., 311.

¹⁹ Burk Parsons, "'Give Me Scotland, or I Die' by Burk Parsons," Ligonier Ministries, November 25, 2022, <https://learn.ligonier.org/articles/give-me-scotland-or-i-die>.

- v. Knox did effectively win Scotland over to Protestantism for the next few hundred years. **PTQ**

II. The English Reformation

1. England's reformation was two-fold.

A. The first part of the reformation came from Political turmoil and religious necessity in the Monarch's mind.

i. The Monarch in question is Henry VIII 1509-1547.

- 1) Had been an avid follower of the Catholic Church.
- 2) He wrote during the uprising of Luther a defense of the 7 sacraments.
- 3) He was even given the title "defender of the faith."²⁰

ii. Henry found himself with a problem. He had no heir to sit on the throne. **PTQ**

- 1) Although often being described as a man who just couldn't control his sexual appetite, his problem was truly more political than just desiring to be sexually fulfilled.
- 2) Henry certainly had mistresses and even a son among them, but none that had a clear line to the throne. Having previously had a queen in England, the country ended up in bloody wars of succession. Thus, he did not desire this and wanted to keep the throne in his line.²¹
- 3) Thus began the problem. Henry had been married to Cathrine of Aragon (The Daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain and aunt of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V) for 18 years, and during this time she had had five children, with only one daughter surviving past infancy.²² This daughter later became known to many as Bloody Mary. **PTQ**
- 4) Henry wondered if he had God's curse on his life because Catherine had actually been his brother's wife. In order to skirt this problem, he sought the papacy in 1527 to delegitimize his marriage so he could marry Anne Boleyn, a lady in waiting at the court.
 - "At that moment, the pope could ill afford to offend the emperor, so he stalled. Henry's personal reasons for desiring the annulment were matched by the pope's political reasons for refusing the request."²³

PTQ

iii. Henry's solution, given to him in secret by an advisor, Thomas Cranmer, was to marry Anne secretly and have an English church court call the marriage to Catherine invalid.

- 1) What came from this was a beautiful baby girl named Elizabeth
- 2) And a writing of Excommunication from the pope.

²⁰ Shelley, [*Church History in Plain Language*](#), 315.

²¹ Ibid., 313.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 314.

- 3) In order to fix his new problem, Henry used a 14th-century law to separate the clergy in England from interaction with Rome, and then shortly after, passed a law called the Act of Supremacy in 1534.
 - The Act of Supremacy declared, “The king’s majesty justly and rightly is and ought to be and shall be reputed the only supreme head in earth of the Church of England called *Anglicana Ecclesia*.”²⁴ **PTQ**
 - 4) This made the King the head of the church in England with the Archbishop of Canterbury to be the highest religious authority in England.
- iv. The Church of England became essentially catholic in everything but name.
- 1) “Only two serious changes marked the new way within the Church of England. The first was the suppression of the monasteries; the second was the publication of the English Bible for use in the churches.”²⁵
 - a) The desire for an English Bible, although seemingly positive, continued an old Catholic problem; it needed to be a Bible authorized by the church, especially seeing as how proper understanding of difficult translated words like due penance versus repentance was part of the cause of some protestant reformations.
 - b) That said, Tyndale sought to bring in English Bibles to accomplish this task back was eventually burned at the stake because it was not the accepted versions. Several other Bibles were produced in England, including the Coverdale Bible and the Matthew Bible, and many others.
 - c) Eventually, the authorized version of the Bible in England became the King James Version under King James I in 1611. **PTQ**
 - 2) Anglicanism is difficult to define often times because the church can swing so wildly towards either Catholicism or high church Protestantism.
 - a) The initial Ruler after Henry was a board of advisors during the time of his eventual son Edward VI. During Edwards' short life and reign, the church turned relatively protestant.
 - “During Edward’s brief years, England saw the Six Articles repealed, priests allowed to marry, and the old Latin service of worship replaced by Cranmer’s *Book of Common Prayer* in English. In 1553 Cranmer also produced the Forty-Two Articles, which defined the faith of the Church of England along Protestant lines.”²⁶ **PTQ**
 - b) After His death, a violent shift occurred in 1553 back to Catholicism when the Eldest daughter, Mary, a devout woman of catholic faith, began condemning protestants at the stake.

²⁴ Shelley, [*Church History in Plain Language*](#), 314.

²⁵ Ibid., 315.

²⁶ Shelley, [*Church History in Plain Language*](#), 318.

- c) In the late 1550s, when Mary had died, her sister Elizabeth I came in, bringing forth the “Via Media” or the Middle Way. She made the church neither intensely Calvinist protestant nor completely catholic.

PTQ

- “In accepting the Bible as the final authority, and in recognizing only baptism and the Holy Eucharist as Christ-instituted sacraments, Elizabeth’s Thirty-Nine Articles (1563) were essentially Protestant, but many articles were worded in a way that would satisfy both Catholics and Protestants. The liturgy of the church retained many Catholic elements, and bishops in apostolic succession governed the church.”²⁷ **PTQ**

B. The second reformation was far more theological and occurred about a century later, and will be further expressed in week 4.

III. The Catholic Counter-Reformation

1. The Catholic Counter-Reformation existed in both an actual, although semi-minor reformation and a necessary response to protestants.
 2. The Catholic Reformation seems to have been slow to some degree, but the reasoning for this was due to difficulties across Europe. There were threats of conquering from the Muslims, warning countries, protestant reformations occurring at several locations almost all simultaneously, and the Catholic church took about 30 years to truly catch its breath and respond fully. **PTQ**
- A. Initial responses began under Pope Paul III (1534-49)
- i. “He appointed to the college a number of champions of reform. Among them were leaders in the Oratory of Divine Love: Sadoletto, Pole, and Caraffa.”²⁸
 - ii. “Paul then appointed nine of the new cardinals to a reform commission. The head of the commission was another former member of the Oratory, Gasparo Contarini.”²⁹
 - iii. “The commission issued in 1537 a formal report, *Advice ... concerning the Reform of the Church*. Disorder in the church, the report said, could be traced directly to the need for reform. The papal office was too secular. Both popes and cardinals needed to give more attention to spiritual matters and stop flirting with the world. Bribery in high places, abuses of indulgences, evasions of church law, prostitution in Rome: these and other offenses must cease.”³⁰
 - iv. “The pope’s new rigor was apparent in the institution of the Roman Inquisition and in the Index of prohibited books—the reading of which

²⁷ Shelley, [Church History in Plain Language](#), 318.

²⁸ Ibid., 322.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 322.

- caused any Catholic to risk damnation. All the books of the Reformers were listed, as well as Protestant Bibles.”³¹ **PTQ**
- v. The Pope also called for a General Council at Trent, but this wouldn’t be accomplished for many years, and in 3 major sections of approximately 25 meetings.
- B.** The First big institutional change was the Society of the Jesuits and their leader, Ignatius of Loyola.
- i. “Martin Luther emerged from his spiritual struggle convinced that the human will is enslaved, that no one can save himself. God, and God alone, must deliver him. Loyola came out of his struggle believing that both God and Satan are external to oneself, and a person has the power to choose between them. By the disciplined use of his imagination, a person can strengthen his will so as to choose God and his ways.”³²
 - ii. “For Ignatius personally, surrender to the will of God meant more education. He entered a school in Barcelona...Out of it came his conviction that learning must be organized to be useful. The idea eventually grew into the Jesuits’ famed plan of studies, which measured out heavy but manageable doses of classics, humanities, and sciences.”³³ **PTQ**
 - iii. Ignatius intended a path to spiritual perfection: rigorous examination of conscience, penance, and a resolute amnesia about guilt once the spiritual pilgrim confronted God’s forgiveness. The *Exercises* became the basis of every Jesuit’s spirituality. Later popes also prescribed them for candidates for ordination, and Catholic retreats applied them to lay groups³⁴
 - iv. In regard to the Jesuits, there were four oaths and one main goal. The oaths were of poverty, chastity, obedience to superiors, and special loyalty to the pope. The Goal was to return the catholic church to the power and prestige it enjoyed centuries earlier. **PTQ**
 - v. That first generation under Loyola’s zealous leadership rode full gallop into their new assignments: convert the heathen, reconvert Protestant Europe.³⁵ **PTQ**
- C.** The second was the Council of Trent itself.
- i. Everything the Protestant Reformation stood for was vigorously—one could almost say violently—rejected at Trent³⁶ **PTQ**

³¹ Shelley, [Church History in Plain Language](#), 323.

³² Ibid., 323–324.

³³ Ibid., 324.

³⁴ Ibid., 325.

³⁵ Ibid., 326.

³⁶ Ibid., 327.

- ii. Trent emphatically linked justification to the process of becoming righteous, leaving the notion of being declared righteous to be a Protestant heresy³⁷
- iii. Thus the Council of Trent guaranteed that modern Roman Catholicism would be governed by the collaboration between God's grace and human efforts. The pope remained, the seven sacraments remained, the sacrifice of the mass remained. Saints, confessions, indulgences remained. The council's work was unmistakably anti-Protestant.³⁸ **PTQ**

Conclusion: The reformation had cast a shadow over the Roman Catholic Church; instead of hearing and acknowledging the criticism, it doubled down on its decisions. They regained a militant fervor to convert the world to the Roman Catholic faith, and the Protestant camp went from surviving to thriving and eventually to expanding across the known world as well. **PTQ**

³⁷ Shelley, [*Church History in Plain Language*](#), 327.

³⁸ Ibid.

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