



John Calvin

Megan Ward

"A dog barks when his master is attacked. I would be a coward if I saw that God's truth is attacked and yet would remain silent."



John Calvin

(1509-1564)

Early Life

- John Calvin was born as Jehan Cauvin on July 10, 1509, in the town of Noyon in the Picardy region of France. His father, Gérard Cauvin, had a was the cathedral notary and registrar to the ecclesiastical court.
- At the age 12, he was employed by the bishop as a clerk and cut his hair to symbolize his dedication to the Church. He also won the patronage of an influential family, the Montmors. Through their assistance, he was able to attend the Collège de la Marche, in Paris, where he learned Latin and became a philosophy student there.
- In about 1526, Gérard withdrew Calvin from the Collège de Montaigu and enrolled him in the University of Orléans to study law. Later, he entered the University of Bourges in 1529. During his stay in Bourges, Calvin learned Koine Greek, necessary for studying the New Testament.

Early Life (cont.)

- After his father died in 1531, he studied ancient classics in Greek and Hebrew.
- During the autumn of 1533, Calvin experienced a religious conversion and converted to Protestantism.
- In Paris, in October 1533, tensions rose at the Collège Royal between the humanists/reformers and the conservative senior faculty members. One of the reformers, Nicolas Cop, was rector of the university. On November 1, 1533, Cop devoted his inaugural address to the need for reform and renewal in the Catholic Church.

Early Life (cont.)

- The faculty denounced Cop as heretic, forcing him to flee. Calvin, a close friend of Cop, was implicated in the offence, and for the next year he was forced into hiding. He remained on the move, being sheltered by friends and taking refuge in Noyon and Orléans. He later had to flee France during the Affair of the Placards in mid-October 1534. In January 1535, Calvin joined Cop in Basel, a city under the influence of the reformer Johannes Oecolampadius.
- In 1536, he published his first edition of *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

Calvinism

- Absolute Sovereignty of God- God controls everything that happens and will happen
- Predestination- God “elects” certain people for salvation and others for eternal damnation
- Calvin respected Luther, but they had some differences in their beliefs
- Calvin’s *Institutes* had multiple editions and were translated into many different languages
- He believed that mankind was sinful to its core

Geneva part 1

- Calvin met Guillaume Farel, while staying in Geneva
- Farel had helped turn the city to Protestantism in 1535 through the Council of Two Hundred . Farel thought a lot of work still needed to be done and he begged Calvin for help.
- Calvin said no to Farel, but then Farel had pronounced a curse from God on Calvin if he didn't stay in Geneva.
- In Geneva, Calvin outlawed gambling, dancing, and obscene songs
 - Put up a curfew and shortened tavern hours
 - Rules were hardly observed and were resented by many Genevans
 - Some thought Calvin's rule was a theocracy

Geneva part 1 (cont.)

- The people who were against Calvin called themselves the Libertines and wanted to abolish Calvin's new code of conduct
- By 1538, the council had a majority of Libertines, which led to a conflict between Calvin and Farel and the city council
 - The climax of the conflict came on Easter day, when Calvin and Farel wouldn't give communion to the Libertines
- Calvin and Farel were banished from Geneva by the city council

Strasbourg

- After being banished from Geneva, Calvin traveled to Strasbourg
- In this city, he preached, taught and wrote, even revising his *Institutes*
- Calvin traveled to multiple diets including Hagenau, Wörms, and Regensburg
- Calvin's busy life drained his health and he decided to get married
 - He married Idelette de Bures, a widow from Liège
 - They had one child, Jacques, but he only lived for a few days
 - Idelette died after 9 years of marriage

Geneva part 2

- While Calvin was gone, Geneva was deteriorating quickly
- A Catholic cardinal Jacopo Sadoletto wrote to Geneva and asked if the city would like to be Catholic again
 - The city council asked Calvin to reply to Sadoletto and responded by writing *Reply to Sadoletto* which defended Protestantism
 - Calvin was then asked to return to the city
- Upon returning , Calvin wrote a church constitution, *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*
- His reforms covered all aspects of life
 - He supported a bigger and better infrastructure with the building of quality hospitals and an effective sewage system
 - New industries were introduced and Calvin supported a universal education system for children and adults
 - He also established a system of personal attention to citizens

Geneva part 2 (cont.)

- Calvin wanted to create a “city of God”
- Geneva Consistory was a panel of 12 elders and ministers whose jobs was to oversee disciplinary matters
 - Citizens were charged with the rejection of Calvinist doctrine or engaging in “un-Christian” conduct
 - They sometimes went too far, invading people’s privacy and used torture
 - In 4 years alone, 58 Genevans were executed for heresy, adultery, blasphemy and witchcraft
- Michael Servetus had religious views that conflicted with Protestants and Catholics, he got the death sentence by the Inquisition for opposing the doctrine of Trinity
 - He came to Geneva and was sentenced to death by burning

Calvin's Legacy

- Geneva became a city where persecuted Christians came for refuge and then returned home which helped spread Calvinism to France, the Church of Scotland, and the Reformed Churches of Germany, Hungary, and Holland.
- He died at the age of 54 and was buried in an unmarked grave in Geneva
- His *Institutes* became the basis for most of the non-Lutheran Protestant movement
- He greatly influenced John Knox in Scotland
- He is also believed to have played a role in the establishment of the capitalist system