

The Reformation

Context, Characters

Controversies, Consequences

Class 7: John Calvin and
the Genevan Crucible

Class 7 Goals

- See how Protestant reforms were institutionalized.
- Trace the life, career, and theology of John Calvin
- Explore the social experiment that Calvin built in Geneva

Opening Poem and Question

If there are a “chosen few”
then I am not one of them,
if an “elect” well then
I have not been elected.
I am one who is knocking
at the door. I am one whose
foot is on the bottom rung.

But I know that Heaven’s
bottom rung is Heaven
though the ladder is
standing on the earth
where I work
by day and at night sleep
with my head upon a stone.

Wendell Berry 2006

What do you think of this poem?

Do you agree with its “theological point”, if it has one?

Thoughts from the Morning Service

- **Romans 8:28-30, 38-39 (NIV)**
- ²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.
- For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Morning Hymns and Sermon

- Hymns
 - Elect from every nation. . .
 - Speak O Lord! Fulfill in us all your purposes for your glory
 - Cause our faith to rise
 - Dressed in his righteousness alone
- Sermon
 - God's grace can't be bought.
 - The journey begins when you turn to him.
 - Let us rise to his summons.

The Contagion of Reformation (Reaction and Institutionalization)

- Once the break with Rome has begun, how far will it proceed?
- Can the original reformers maintain control over their reforms?
- Who defines/defends doctrine within the Protestant Churches.
- Can/should state authority be used to maintain doctrine/discipline within the church
- How much will ideas about authority, deference, and obedience be altered?
- Should the church be completely separated from the state?

Institutionalizing the Reformation

- Communal Reformation to “Prince’s Reformation”
 - Princes became “emergency bishops” to address crises in the church.
 - State churches emerged in Germany to preserve and protect the church.
- Philip of Hesse
 - Founded an Evangelical University in Marburg to train Lawyers and theologians (1527)
 - Summoned the Marburg Colloquy (1529)
- Charles V (Hapsburg Holy Roman Emperor)
 - Concluded the Lutherans caused the peasant war and set out to crush the Reformation (but Lutherans vs. Anabaptists)

Phillip of Hesse and Charles V



Diet of Speyer 1526

- The Edict of Worms (Mandating Catholicism within the Empire) cannot be enforced.
- Princes freed to follow their consciences on religious issues within their territory. (The Right of Reformation)
- Charles V sacks Rome and captures the Pope (1527) as punishment for not helping fight the Turks.
- “The Reformation . . . had to be shorn of its power to create social and political disruption, something the rulers achieved by taking the Reformation away from the communities and making it a matter of the state.” (Blickle)
- Use of “Visitations” to unify religious practice in the state.

Diet of Speyer 1529

- Ferdinand of Austria (HRE after Charles V) attempts to nullify 1526 Diet and enforce the Edict of Worms.
- Lutherans present a “protestation” hence Protestants.
 - Minorities should be protected against unjust majorities.
 - Edict of Worms could only be enforced by war – hence would cause civil unrest and lawlessness.
 - Appeal to follow the prince’s individual conscience (captive to the Word of God).
 - Only princes and cities could claim the right of conscience.
 - (Lutherans can protest against Catholics, but not Anabaptists against Lutherans.)

Diet of Augsburg 1530

- Lutherans invited to present their views – develop the Augsburg Confession
- Confession written by Melanchthon becomes the primary statement of Lutheran Belief – mostly signed by princes.
- Catholic scholars produced a “Confutation” which “proved” the error of the Augsburg Confession
- Charles V had it read and ordered the Lutherans to recant.
- The German Catholic princes refused to go to war with the Protestant princes (feared a growth of Imperial power)
- Zwinglians refused to accept the Augsburg Confession

Peace of Augsburg

- 1546-1555 periodic outbreaks of war between Catholic and Protestant forces in Central Europe.
- By 1555 people recognizes that religious uniformity could not be imposed by force.
 - Still longed for a vision of “one church one empire.”
- Guaranteed personal and legal security for Protestant and Catholic Princes
- “Where there is one ruler, there should be only one religion.”
- “Whose reign, his religion” *cuius region, eius religio*
- Also – “right of emigration” (but must pay debts), prevention of further conversion by princes, preservation of status quo where both religions were practiced, right of princes to retain seized church property prior to 1552.
- Led to Charles V abdication

Considering Predestination

- What stands out to you about Calvin's theology?
- How well does it match with your reading of scripture and experience of the world?

The Real Calvin?

- Dogmatic or ecumenical?
- Inquisitive or caring?
- Authoritarian or compassionate?
- Individualist or communalist?
- Logical or contradictory and inconsistent?
- Capitalist or socialist?
- Tyrant or freedom fighter?
- Dictator or revolutionary?
- Mediocre or great theologian?



Calvin's Background

- Born in Noyon (1509), France son of a lawyer and secretary to the bishop.
- Studied in Paris at Collège de la Marche (general) and Collège de Montaigu (theological) received a MA at 18.
- Studied law at Orléans and Bourges at the insistence of father.
- Returned to Paris and published a humanist commentary of Seneca's *On Clemency*.
- Very private — wrote little about his conversion experience.
- Heavily influenced by Luther and Melancthon — probably converted around 1533-1534
- Essentially a self taught theologian

On to Geneva

- Severe persecution of Protestants in France led many to flee in response to “one king, one law, one faith” (Nicodemites?)
- During this exile Calvin wrote *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536) – revised and expanded until 1559, eventually 1,500 pages. (Letter to Francis I of France)
- Calvin intended to go to Strasbourg but troop movements forced him to Geneva (overnight)
- William Farel, appealed, pleaded, and denounced Calvin to stay.
- Calvin claimed to be a scholar, not a preacher or administrator and unsociable and shy, but felt God’s calling and remained.

GUILL • FAREL



Reformation in Geneva

- Geneva had recently declared independence from the Duke of Savoy, been rescued and evangelized by Bern, ended the mass, and expelled Catholic clergy.
- Calvin and Farel wrote a confession of faith and insisted that everyone adhere. The General Council resisted, denying the right to excommunicate.
- The Council then determined how communion was to be administered.
- Calvin and Farel refused to serve communion under the Council's direction, were fired, and expelled from Geneva.

Strasbourg Interlude

- Calvin taught at the University and pastored a French exile church. (Happiest years of his life)
- While there Calvin learned from Martin Bucer and Matthias and Katharina Schütz Zell.
- He also met Melancthon and attended a number of conferences.
- Calvin also married Idelette de Bure, the widow of an anabaptist.
- By 1540 the magistrates in Geneva pleaded for him to return, and in September 1541 he was back and picked up preaching where he left off.

Reformation in Geneva Part II

- A gradual process over 14 years, Calvin was not a citizen and relied on moral suasion.
- Calvin (the lawyer) drafted Ecclesiastical Ordinances, and laws on justice and political offices. (understood how things got done)
- Offices
 - Doctors – studied Scripture and taught
 - Pastors – preached, taught, administered sacraments
 - Deacons – oversaw poor relief and hospitals
 - Elders – political appointees who maintained discipline
 - Consistory – church court with elders and pastors maintained moral discipline

The Consistory and Moral Reform

- Consistory could excommunicate for:
 - Adultery, illicit marriages, cursing, unauthorized luxury, disrespect in church, seeming too Catholic.
- Typical subjects of cases
 - Catholic beliefs (39), blasphemy (28), disrespect and complaining about Calvin (62), games of chance (36), immorality (13), insulting French immigrants (9), dancing and unseemly singing (12), skipping church (10), issues of faith (7), suicide attempt(1)
- But also used for conflict resolution, to show social concern, integrate all into a caring community, provide counseling.
 - Social Control AND Social Help

Calvin Challenged

- Leading citizens resisted his authority because he challenged elites, blocked them from selling cards, stopped their fun, and, perceived him as pro-French.
- 7,000 immigrants arrived primarily from France (boosting the earlier population of 10,000)
- Jerome Bolsec attacked predestination as unbiblical, and was imprisoned, tried, condemned, and banished for life.
 - In response Calvin developed a much stricter version of predestination.
 - He believed that salvation by grace alone required predestination.
- Michael Servetus questioned the Trinity and was burned at the stake by Calvin and Geneva (ended challenges of Calvin's authority)

Legacies

- Founded the University of Geneva – became an important training ground for Reformed ministers and missionaries.
- Struggled to maintain authority throughout his career
 - Exiled his sister-in-law for adultery – his step-daughter also found guilty
 - His preaching and teaching (control of public media) helped preserve his influence
 - Constantly struggled with numerous physical ailments.
 - Conflict between trust in God and the need to take control and achieve.
- Attempted to reconcile with Lutherans, helped evangelize France, the Netherlands, Scotland and England.

Next Week

- Global Awareness Week +?