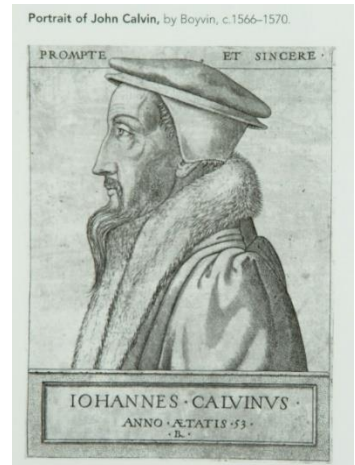


7. JOHN CALVIN (1509-1564): SCRIPTURE, SUFFERING AND SOVEREIGNTY

Romans 8:28: “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

Almighty God,
Thou hast deigned to show Thyself so intimately to us
Also daily deignest to confirm us un Thy truth.
Grant that we may turn aside neither to the right nor to the left,
But depend wholly on Thy Word
And so cleave to Thee
That no errors of the world may lead us astray.
May we stand firm in that faith
which we have learned from Thy law
From the prophets and the gospel...
That we may finally enjoy Thy full and perfect glory,
Being transfigured into it,
At last attained that inheritance acquired for us
by the blood of Thine only begotten Son. Amen.



1. CALVIN'S CONVERSION AND CALL TO GENEVA

The world in 1509...

Jean Cauvin – b.10 July 1509, in Noyon

University of Paris, a loyal Catholic... but converted by 24:

“God, by the secret guidance of his providence, at length gave a different direction to my course... since I was too obstinately devoted to the superstitions of Popery to be easily extricated from so profound an abyss of mire, God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame... I was immediately inflamed with so intense a desire to make progress therein... [And] I was quite surprised to find that before a year had elapsed, all who had any desire after purer doctrine were continually coming to me to learn, although I myself was as yet but a mere novice...”

Resigns holy orders... runs... briefly imprisoned... begins pastoral ministry... flees from France

The Institutes of the Christian Religion

How did he end up in Geneva?

“William Farel detained me at Geneva, not so much by counsel and exhortation, as by a dreadful imprecation, which I felt to be as if God had from heaven laid his mighty hand upon me to arrest me... after having learned that my heart was set upon devoting myself to private studies for which I wished to keep myself free from other pursuits, and finding that he gained nothing by entreaties, he proceeded to utter an imprecation that God would curse my retirement, and the tranquillity of the studies which I sought, if I should withdraw and refuse to give assistance, when the necessity seas so urgent. By this imprecation I was so stricken with terror, that I desisted from the journey which I had undertaken...”

2. CALVIN'S CITY: THE WHOLE OF LIFE REGULATED BY SCRIPTURE

In Geneva (mainly) from 1536-1564

The question: how to build a model Christian community?

Through PREACHING and through CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

The *Ordonnances* (1541)

“God bestows the acknowledge knowledge of himself upon us ONLY in the Scriptures... [where] “opens his own most hallowed lips...” [so] “reverently embrace what it pleases God there to witness of himself.”

The local church

Schools and education

The Consistory

John Knox: it was “the most perfect school of Christ that ever was on the earth since the days of the Apostles.”

3. CALVIN'S SUFFERING: HE TRUSTED HIS SOVEREIGN GOD

Many, many, many hardships

Preaching the word, in season and out of season

How then did he carry on? Because he was a Calvinist!!!

From Calvin's letter to Viret (1542), following the death of Calvin's son, Jacques:

"The Lord has certainly inflicted a severe and bitter wound in the death of our infant son. But he is himself a Father, and knows best what is good for his children."

From Calvin's *Institutes* (I.17.11):

"Yet, when that light of divine providence has once shone upon a godly man, he is then relieved and set free not only from the extreme anxiety and fear that were pressing him before, but from every care. For as he justly dreads fortune, so he fearlessly dares commit himself to God. His solace, I say, is to know that his Heavenly Father so holds all things in his power, so rules by his authority and will, so governs by his wisdom, that nothing can befall except he determine it. Moreover, it comforts him to know that he has been received into God's safekeeping and entrusted to the care of his angels, and that neither water, nor fire, nor iron can harm him, except in so far as it pleases God as governor to give them occasion."

"ignorance of providence is the ultimate of all miseries; the highest blessedness lies in the knowledge of it."

Dies 1564, unmarked grave: "I speak of myself unwillingly."

4. WHY IS CALVIN SO CONTROVERSIAL?

His (wonderful!) theology

His austere personality

Misunderstandings about Geneva: it was not a theocracy, Calvin was not its dictator

Followers of John Calvin

He was a sinner! Totally depraved (just like you and me):
a temper... Michael Servetus (?)