JOHN CALVIN (1509-1564)

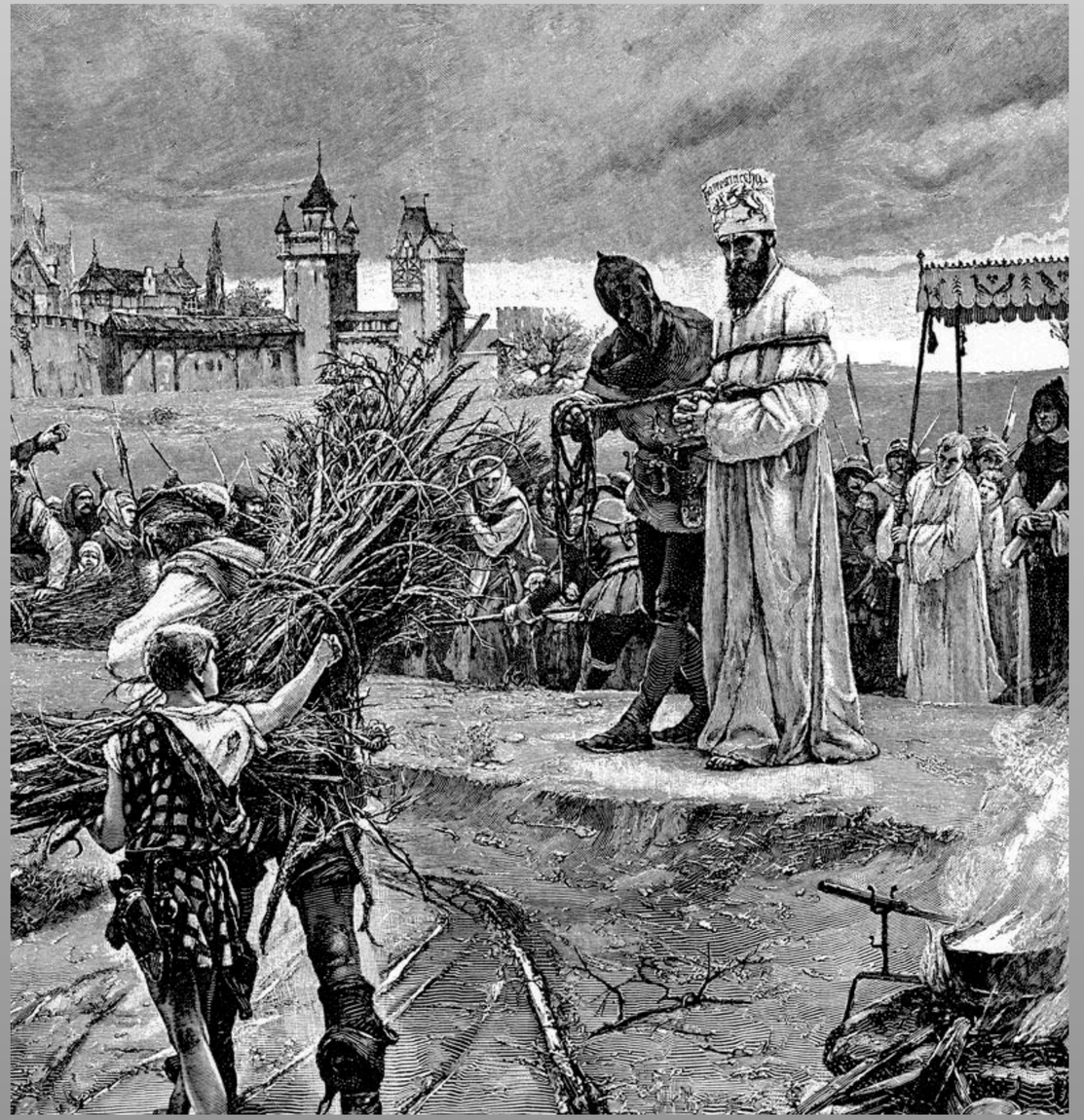
'My Heart I offer to you, Lord. Promptly & Sincerely.'

Reformation Series: New Covenant Christian Church

RIPE FOR REFORMATION

PRE-REFORMATION (ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH)

- The Scriptures were obscured and irrelevant
  - The Latin Vulgate was the primary text (and the people didn't speak it)
    - A woman disciplined for 'murmuring' in the Church during the Latin service
  - The Scripture was subservient to the church
    - Pre-Reformers attempted to bring the Bible back to the people (and the doctrine of the Bible) but were condemned, persecuted and/or killed
      - John Wycliffe, John Hus (pictured)



RIPE FOR REFORMATION

PRE-REFORMATION (ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH)

- The people had multiple intermediaries
  - Priests, the Virgin Mary, dead saints all came before Christ
- Legalism & Self-Righteousness of the Monasteries
- Sins of the Papacy, the Priests, & Indulgences
  - The invention of the printing press (1440)
  - The impending rise of nation-states (greater freedom from the church and the Holy Roman Empire)



MARTIN LUTHER (1483-1546)

- A former monk, struggling with the justice of God
  - Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith."-Galatians 3:11
- Posted 95 Theses on the door of the Wittenburg Church on October 31st, 1517—All Hallows Eve before All Saints Day
  - Luther knew there would be a large influx of people coming to visit the relics in Wittenburg
  - This is why the last Sunday in October is Reformation Sunday



MARTIN LUTHER (CONT.)

- The Roman Catholic Church would not discuss his 95 Theses, only condemn him
- He split with Roman Catholic Church (decisively) at the Diet of Worms in 1521
- ‘Here I stand, I can do no other. God help me.’ – Luther on his inability to recant his beliefs and writings
  - Calvin was 12 at the time



ULRICH ZWINGLI (1484-1531)

- A scholar, priest, and mercenary chaplain from Switzerland
- A contemporary of Luther
  - The Swiss and German Reformation grew in parallel
- Zwingli led the Swiss Reformation with a devotion to the word of God and against the abuses of the Catholic Church
  - Zwingli is the father of the Swiss Reformation, of which Calvin organized and ‘perfected’



JOHN CALVIN (1509-1564)

- Born in Noyon, France to a distinguished family
  - His father was a clerk to a local bishop
- He was trained as a priest, then as a lawyer
  - His father wanted him to take a position that could earn him more money
- Calvin was a dutiful and obedient son and listened to his father



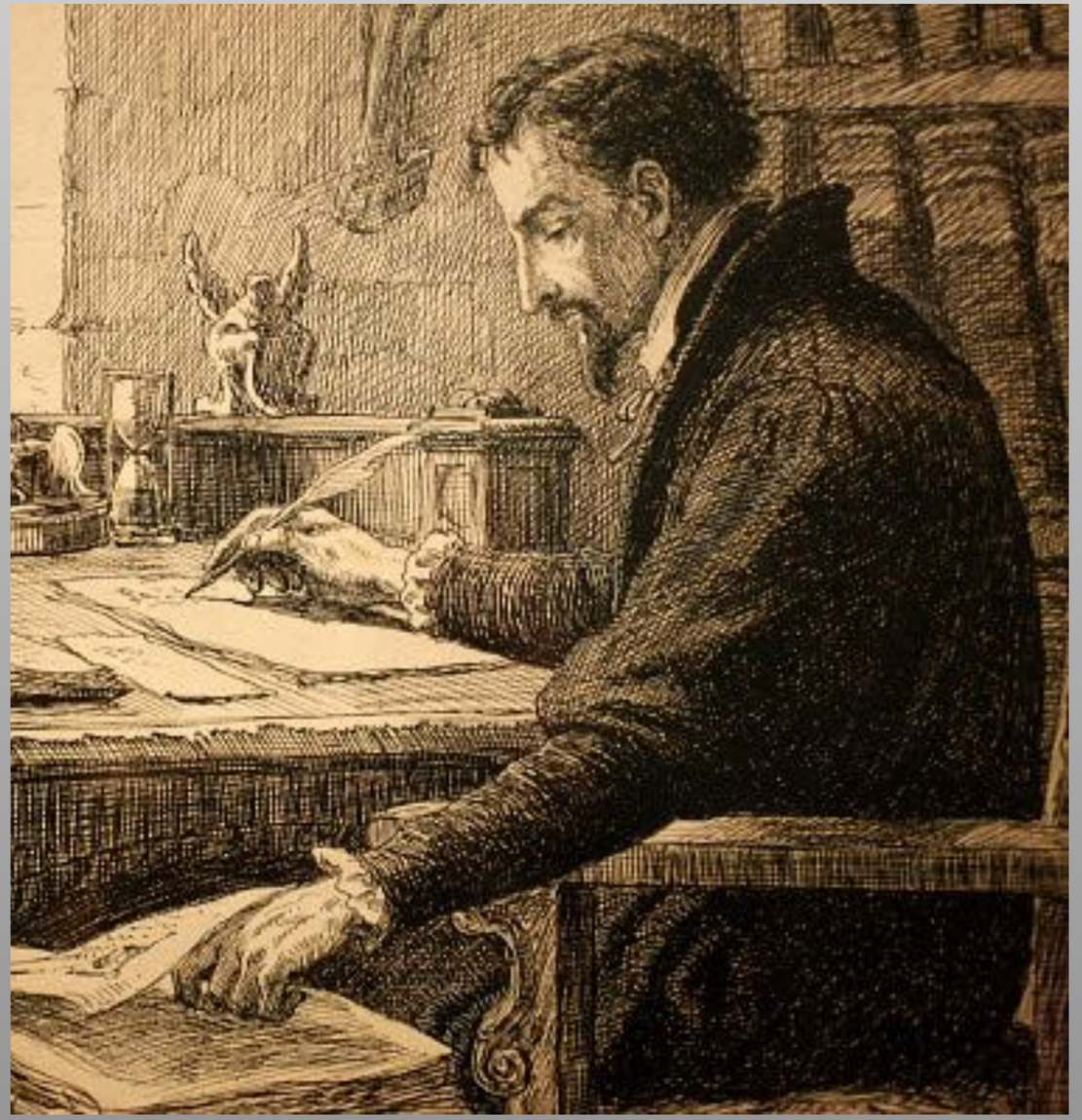
PLURALISM & ABSENTEEISM

- Calvin received a chaplaincy and a post from both the Cathedral of Noyon (12 yrs old) and the charge of S. Martin de Marteville (18 yrs old) with the aid of his father
  - Calvin was both too young and unprepared for these positions
  - In addition, he did not hold either of the positions (ABSENTEEISM) and held multiple roles (PLURALISM)
    - These charges were the most common abuses against the ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
- He eventually disavowed his posts (1529 and 1534)



CALVIN'S STUDIES & CONVERSION

- His first published work was a commentary on Seneca, a Roman Stoic philosopher
  - It did not give him either fame or influence
    - He was notably disappointed
- He continued his studies in the University of Paris and there he was converted



To this pursuit I endeavored faithfully to apply myself, in obedience to the will of my father; but God, by the secret guidance of his providence, at length gave a different direction to my course…God, by a sudden conversion, subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame…

John Calvin, on his conversion

THE INAUGURAL ADDRESS (1533)

- As a convert (and an able scholar and communicator), he was approached by Nicolas Cop (the rector of the University of Paris
  - Cop and Calvin planned the inaugural oration together (Cop would deliver the oration, Calvin wrote it)
- It lamented the false teaching of the scholastic priests and promoted faithfulness to the New Testament
  - It infuriated the King and local authorities

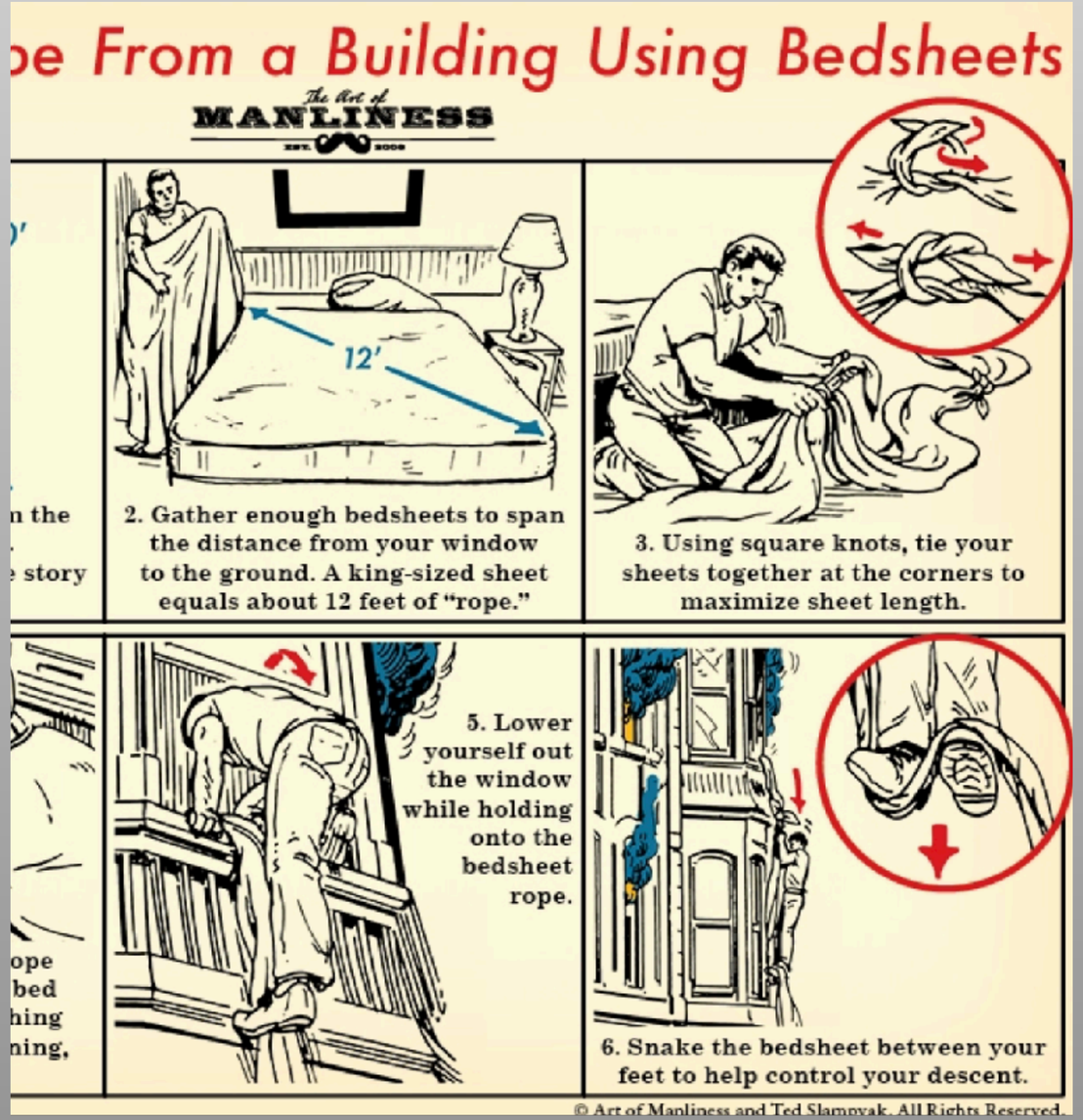


They teach nothing of faith, nothing of the love of God, nothing of the remission of grace, nothing of justification—or, if they do so, they pervert and undermine it all by their laws and sophistries. I beg of you, who are here present, not to tolerate any longer these heresies and abuses.

Excerpt from the Inauguration Address, 1533 University of Paris

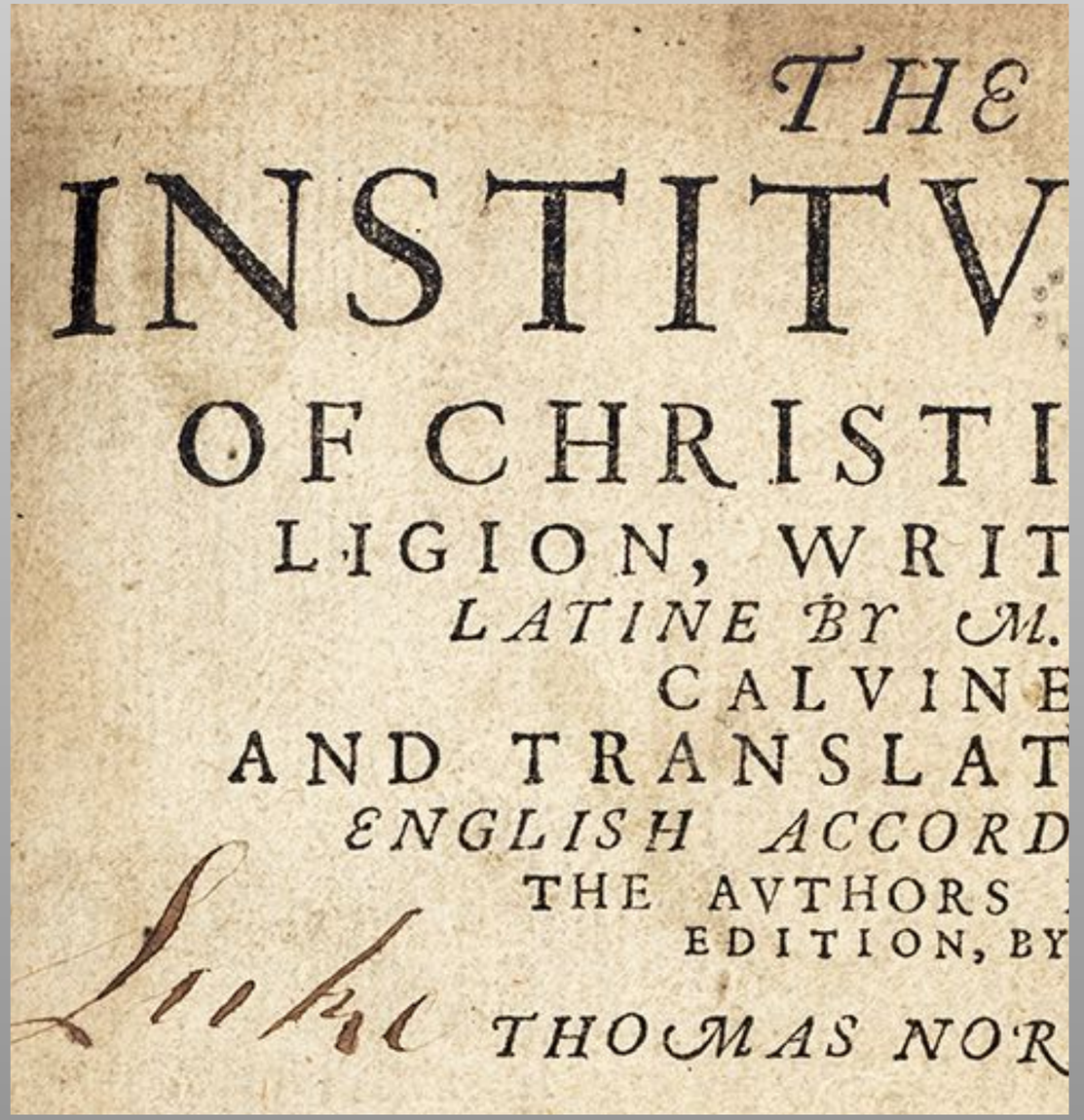
CALVIN FLEES TO BASEL (1533-1536)

- Calvin and Cop flee Paris for Basel
  - Reformation is in the air, and France never broke from Roman Catholicism
  - The French Reformers (the Huguenots) were consistently persecuted in France
- Calvin escaped out of a window using sheets and left Paris disguised as a Vineyard worker



FIRST PUBLISHING OF THE INSTITUTES (1536)

- While Calvin is in exile in Basel, he publishes the first volume of his 'Institutes of the Christian Religion'
  - He wrote 5 editions between 1536 and 1559
    - It started as 150 pages and was expanded to over 1000 pages
  - It was not an argument from the Fathers, the classics, or dialectical theology as much as it was an argument devoted to, and finding its reason in, Scripture



a book designed to…”**hand on some elementary teaching by which anyone who had been touched by an interest in religion might be formed to true godliness**”

Description of the purpose of the 1st Published Institutes of the Christian Religion

ON HIS WAY TO STRASBOURG (1536)

- Calvin left Basel and is on his way to Strasbourg to pursue a life of scholarly tranquility
- A war between Charles V (Holy Roman Emperor) and Francis I (the King of France) broke out and he had to take a detour through Geneva
  - ‘The Divine Detour’



WILLIAM FAREL (1489-1565)

- William Farel, an evangelical preacher, finds out that Calvin is in town, and seeks him out
  - A ‘hot gospeler,’ a fiery red-headed preacher
- Farel asks Calvin to stay and be a pastor and teacher in the church in Geneva
  - Farel was much older than Calvin, but he saw in Calvin a pastor and organizer of the church
- Calvin declines Farel’s invitation, Farel responds with a curse



You are simply following your own wishes; and I declare in the name of Almighty God that if you refuse to take part in the Lord’s work in this church, God will curse the quiet that you want for your studies.

Farel to Calvin upon his refusal to stay in Geneva

CALVIN STAYS IN GENEVA

- Calvin was so fearful of this curse that he agreed to stay in Geneva with Farel
- Geneva is not unilateral in it's devotion to either Roman Catholicism nor the Reformed Faith
  - some city council members were evangelical, and some were traditional
- The council welcome Calvin and Farel partially because some were sympathetic to the cause of the Reformation and also others wanted to separate with Rome



CONFLICT IN GENEVA

- Much of Calvin's life is defined by his relationship with the Geneva city council
  - We do have Calvin to thank for beginning the separation between Church and State
- Calvin and Farel wanted to reform the sacramental traditions of the church, but the city council did not want the same reforms
- Who has authority over the church?
  - The Bible and the leaders of the church, or the state?



EXPELLED FROM GENEVA (1538)

- The city council won the dispute, and both Calvin and Farel were expelled from Geneva
  - Calvin and Farel were overzealous and inflexible in their reforms
- Calvin felt liberated, and he went to Strasbourg to pursue a life of scholarship
  - These are called ‘the Golden Years’ in Calvin’s life
- He spent 3 years in study and learning



CALVIN & MARTIN BUCER

- He met Martin Bucer in Strasbourg, and Bucer convinced Calvin to pastor a small (~500) french congregation
  - Calvin there learned how preach, teach, and pastor a flock
  - He lost some of his ideological theologian proclivities and became a more realistic pastor
- He edited and published the second edition of his Institutes of the Christian Religion



GENEVA'S SITUATION (1539)

- When the Roman Catholic Church heard of Geneva's expulsion of the Reformers, they put Cardinal Sadolet to the task of winning Geneva back
  - Sadolet wrote several letters exhorting the council from tradition and scripture on why they should return to the Roman Catholic Church
- Geneva had no one capable of responding to Sadolet's argument, so they sent the letters to Calvin, asking him to respond
  - The relationship between the city council and Calvin was beginning to mend



Your zeal for heavenly life is a zeal which keeps a man entirely devoted to himself, and does not, even by one expression, arouse him to sanctify the name of God.

Calvin, in response to Cardinal Sadolet

CALVIN & MARRIAGE (1540)

- Calvin married Idalette de Bure in 1540
  - She was a former Anabaptist & widow
  - Their marriage lasted for 9 years
    - Idalette brought 2 children to the marriage (Jaques and Judith)
- He was previously engaged to 2 women before Idalette
  - A noblewoman (whom Calvin left because he knew she would not be prepared for the life he had to live)
  - Another woman (set up by his brother Antoine) whom Calvin said, 'he would have to be bereft of his wits if he ever married her'"



This only is the beauty which allures me, if she be chaste, obliging, not fastidious, economical, patient, and careful for my health.

Calvin’s view of Beauty and desire for Marriage

THE REFORMERS & MARRIAGE

Martin Luther & Katharina Von Bora: 1525

- She was an escaped nun looking for refuge
- married her to ‘please his father, who also wanted grandchildren’
- to spite the pope (because marriage was forbidden for the priesthood)
- Luther’s love for his children led him to see that central to the joys of marriage was the gift of sons and daughters



People who do not like children are dunces and blockheads, not worthy to be called men and women, because they despise the blessings of God, the creator and author of marriage.

Luther on Marriage and Children

THE REFORMERS & MARRIAGE

Ulrich Zwingli and Anna Reinhard: 1522

- Anna was a widow with two children
  - They married in secret and it caused an international sensations
- He called her his dearest housewife, a useful helpmeet to him
- He read his translations of the Bible to her in the evening before bed

- She is called the ‘Reformation’s Weeping Mother’ because she lost her son, a brother, a cousin, a son-in-law, and her husband at the same battle



A SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE

1509: Born in Noyon, France

1525-1533: Studied philosophy, then law

1533: Wrote the inaugural address delivered by Nicolas Cop at the University of Paris

1533-1536: Fled to Basel, published the 1st volume of the Institutes of the Christian Religion

1536: On his way to Strasbourg, the ‘divine detour’ sent him to Geneva for the 1st time



A SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE

1536-1538: Calvin and Farel worked in Geneva attempting to reform it

1538: Calvin was expelled from Geneva and finally went to Strasbourg

1538-1541: He prospered as a pastor of a french congregation under Martin Bucer, married Idalette de Bure



RETURN TO GENEVA (1541)

- Geneva was in political turmoil at the time and there was meager church attendance
- William Farel and the council recalled Calvin to Geneva to help restore the church there

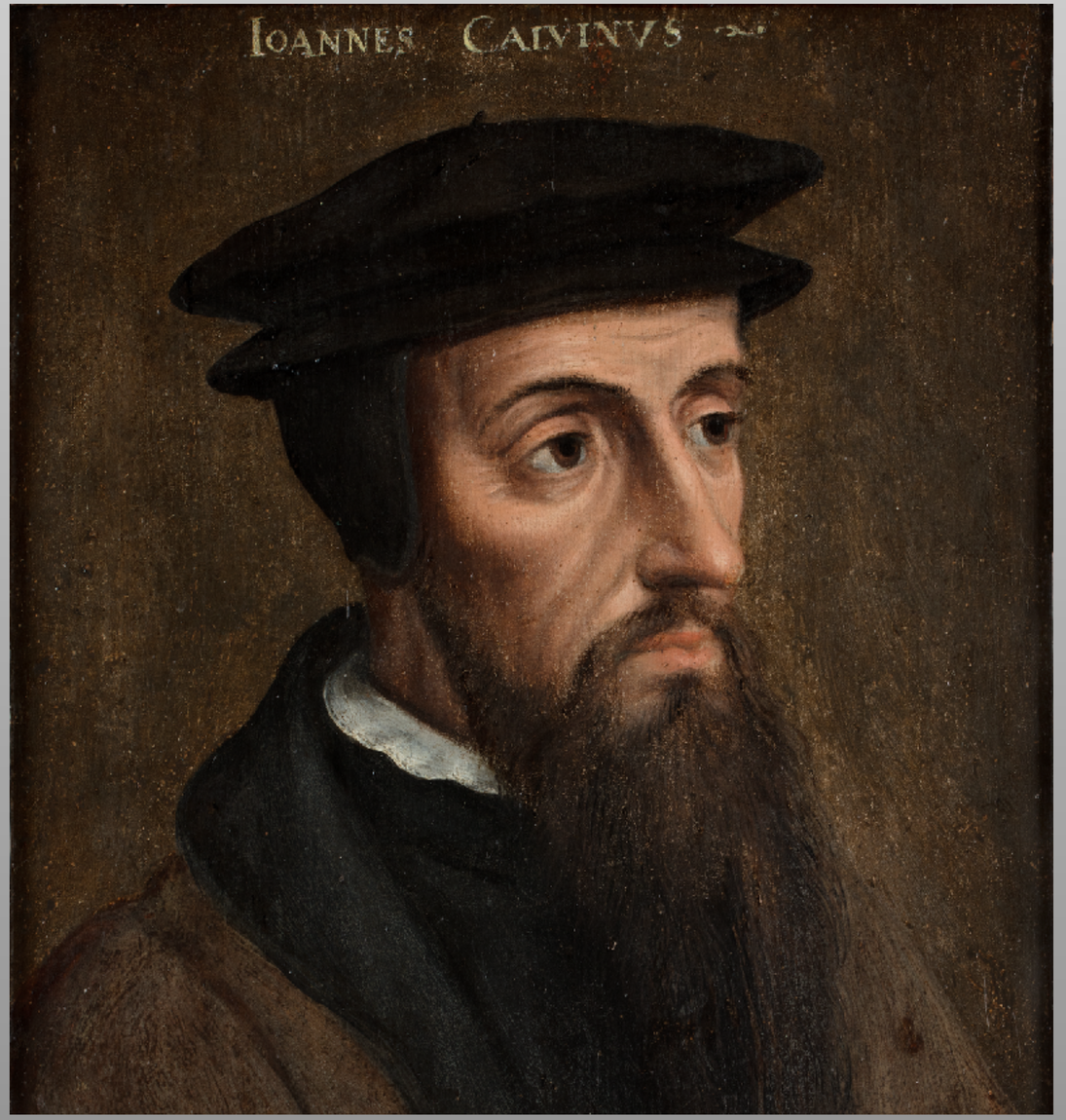


Rather would I submit to death a hundred times than to that cross on which I had to perish daily a thousand times over.

Calvin on his desire to return to Geneva

RETURN TO GENEVA (1541)

- Geneva was in political turmoil at the time and there was meager church attendance
- William Farel and the council recalled Calvin to Geneva to help restore the church there
- He returned in a regal procession to a cheering crowd
- The following Sunday morning he began with the last passage he left off 3 years prior
- Calvin labored at Geneva for 23 more years, preaching, teaching, and organizing the church



When I remember, that in this matter I am not my own master, I present my heart as a sacrifice and offer it up to the Lord.

Calvin, on relenting and returning to Geneva (after his motto)

CONFLICTS IN GENEVA

- Church discipline in the church had a new emphasis
  - An older woman (who was used to the Latin ceremony-was admonished for ‘mumbling in church’)
    - She would be reciting what she thought was Latin because of her familiarity with the old latin service



CONFLICTS IN GENEVA: LIBERTINES

- Protestant group that lived immoral lifestyles yet still wanted to take communion at the church
- Calvin forbade them from the table
  - The city council wanted to let them take communion
- Libertines named their dogs 'Calvin' and would kick them
- They shot guns outside his house at night



LIBERTINES & COMMUNION: 1553

- The libertines decided to forcefully take communion
- The church forbade one Libertine, Berthelier, to take the Lord's Supper
  - He appealed to the city council and they overturned the ruling
- Calvin had a crisis because he would not yield to the state's right of excommunication, nor would he admit a Libertine to the Lord's table



I…took an oath that I had resolved rather to meet death than profane so shamefully the Holy Supper of the Lord… My ministry is abandoned if I suffer the authority of the Consistory to be trampled upon, and extend the Supper of Christ to open scoffers.

Calvin, on allowing the Libertines to take communion

The Lord’s day of testing arrived. The Libertines were present to eat the Lord’s supper. It was a critical moment for the Reformed faith in Geneva. The sermon had been preached, the prayers had been offered, and Calvin descended from the pulpit.

The bread and wine were duly consecrated by him, and he was now ready to distribute them to the communicants. Then on a sudden a rush was begun the troublers in Israel in the direction of the communion table…Calvin flung his arms around the sacramental vessels as if to protect them from sacrilege, while his voice rang through the building:

Conflict with the Libertines

‘These hands you may crush, these arms you may lop off, my life you may take, my blood is yours, you may shed it; but you shall never force me to give holy things to the profaned, and dishonor the table of my God.”

Calvin, at the communion table

‘After this, the sacred ordinance was celebrated with a profound silence, and under solemn awe in all present, as if the Deity himself had been visible among them.’

Theodore Beza, Calvin’s Biographer

MICHAEL SERVETUS CONDEMNED ON 10/26/1553

- Michael Servetus was a spaniard and a Renaissance Man
  - A doctor, lawyer, and theologian
- He held (and taught) a heretical doctrine of the Trinity
- By 1553, Servetus was in prison in Spain, awaiting his execution by the Catholics
  - He escaped, appeared in Geneva, and the city tried and arrested him



MICHAEL SERVETUS CONDEMNED ON 10/26/1553

- He had written to Calvin earlier, presumably asking for help
- Calvin was the prosecutor on the case in Geneva
  - He tried to convince him to repent, took pity on him, and also asked for a lighter penalty for him



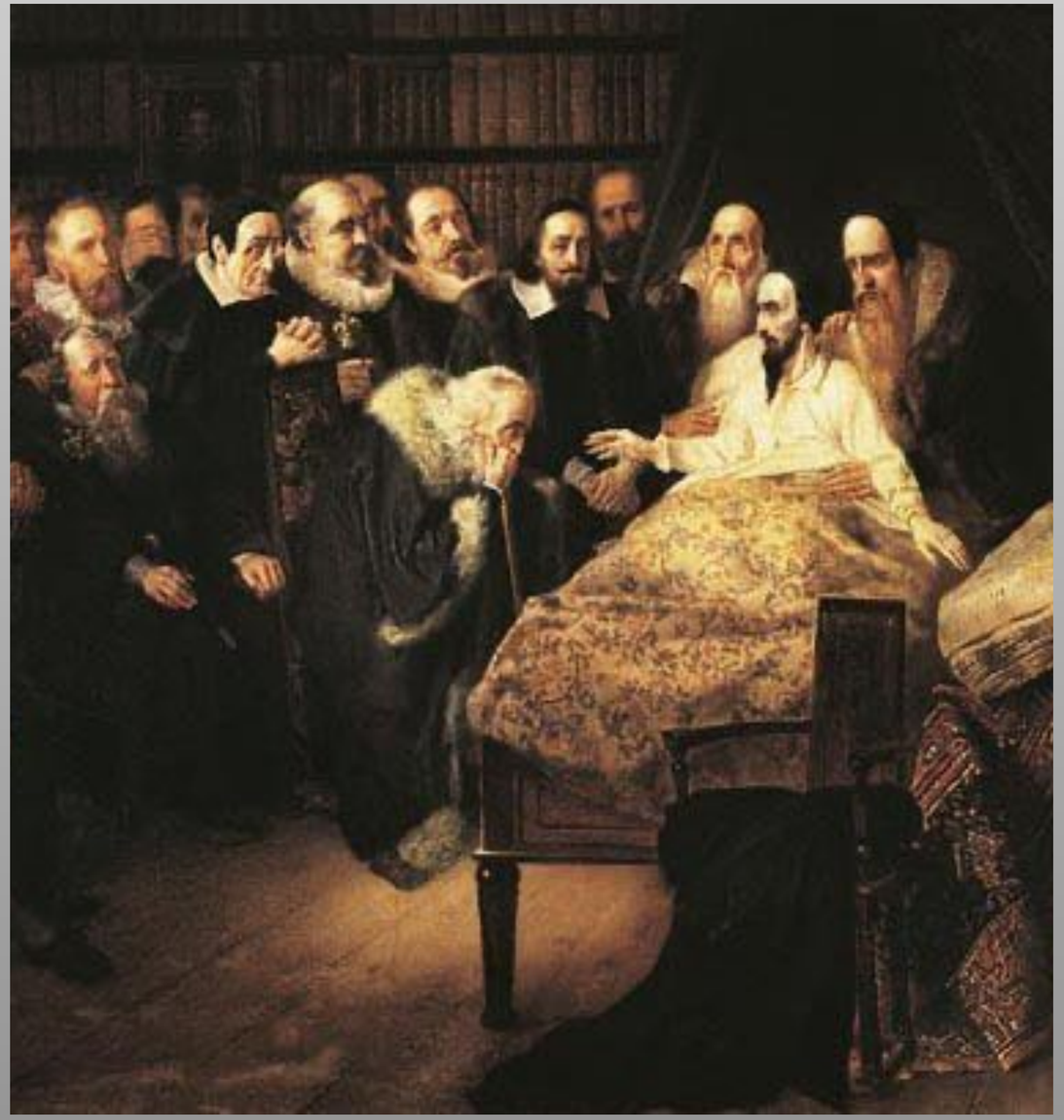
SERVETUS & CALVIN

- Servetus was burned at the stake on 10/27/1553
  - His opponents (the Libertines), made the burning and condemnation of Servetus the major problem with Calvin
- It is Calvin's most consistent blight on his character



CALVIN'S FINAL YEARS

- He published the final edition of the Institutes of the Christian Religion in 1559
  - from 150pp in 1536 to over 1000pp in 1559
- He died in 1564
  - He wished to be buried in an unmarked grave so that his tomb would not be a memorial spot



Geneva was, ‘the most perfect school of Christ that was ever on earth since the days of the apostles.’

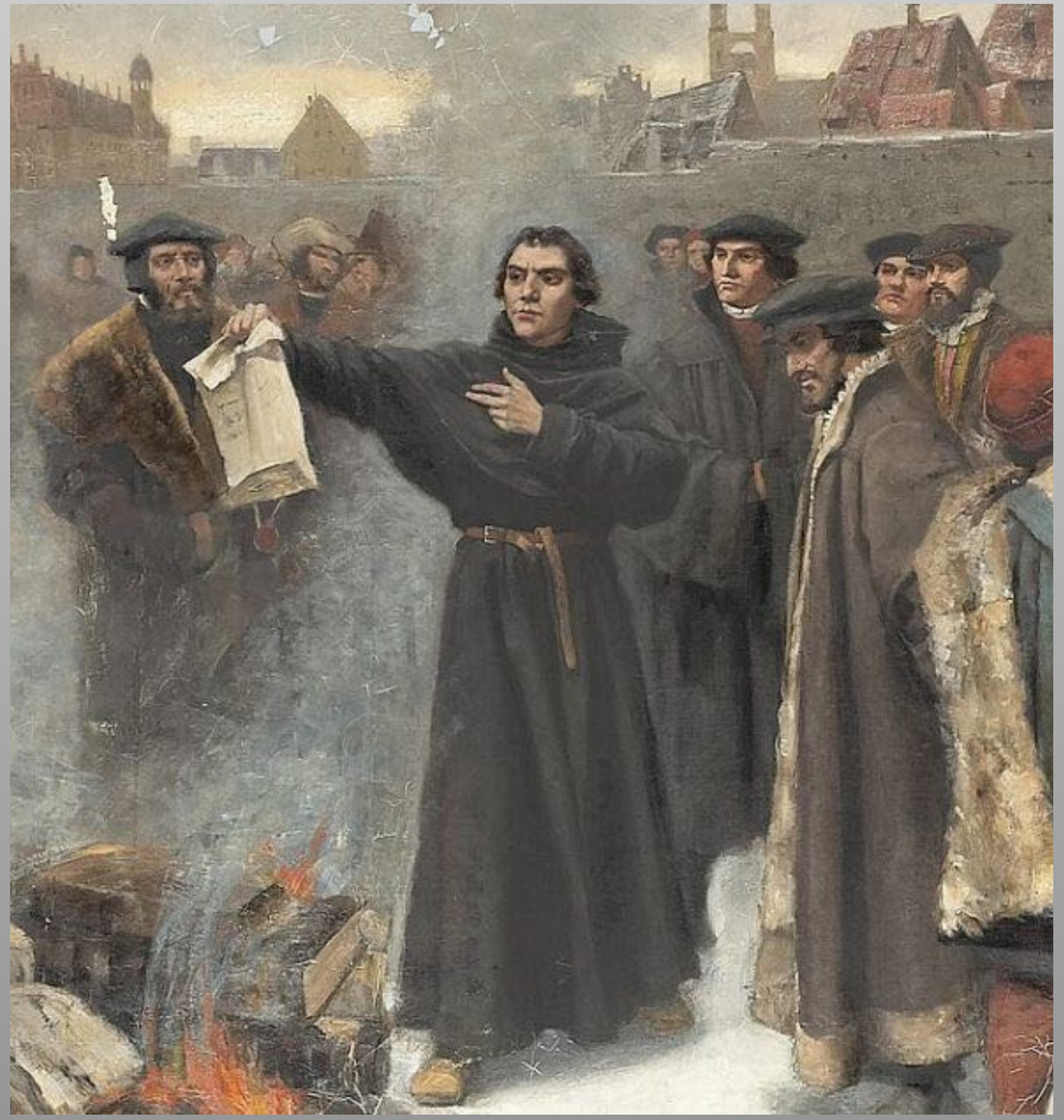
John Knox on his visit to Geneva

In other places I confess Christ to be truly preached; but manners and religion so sincerely reformed, I have not yet seen in another place.

John Knox to Anne Locke on his visit to Geneva (December 1556)

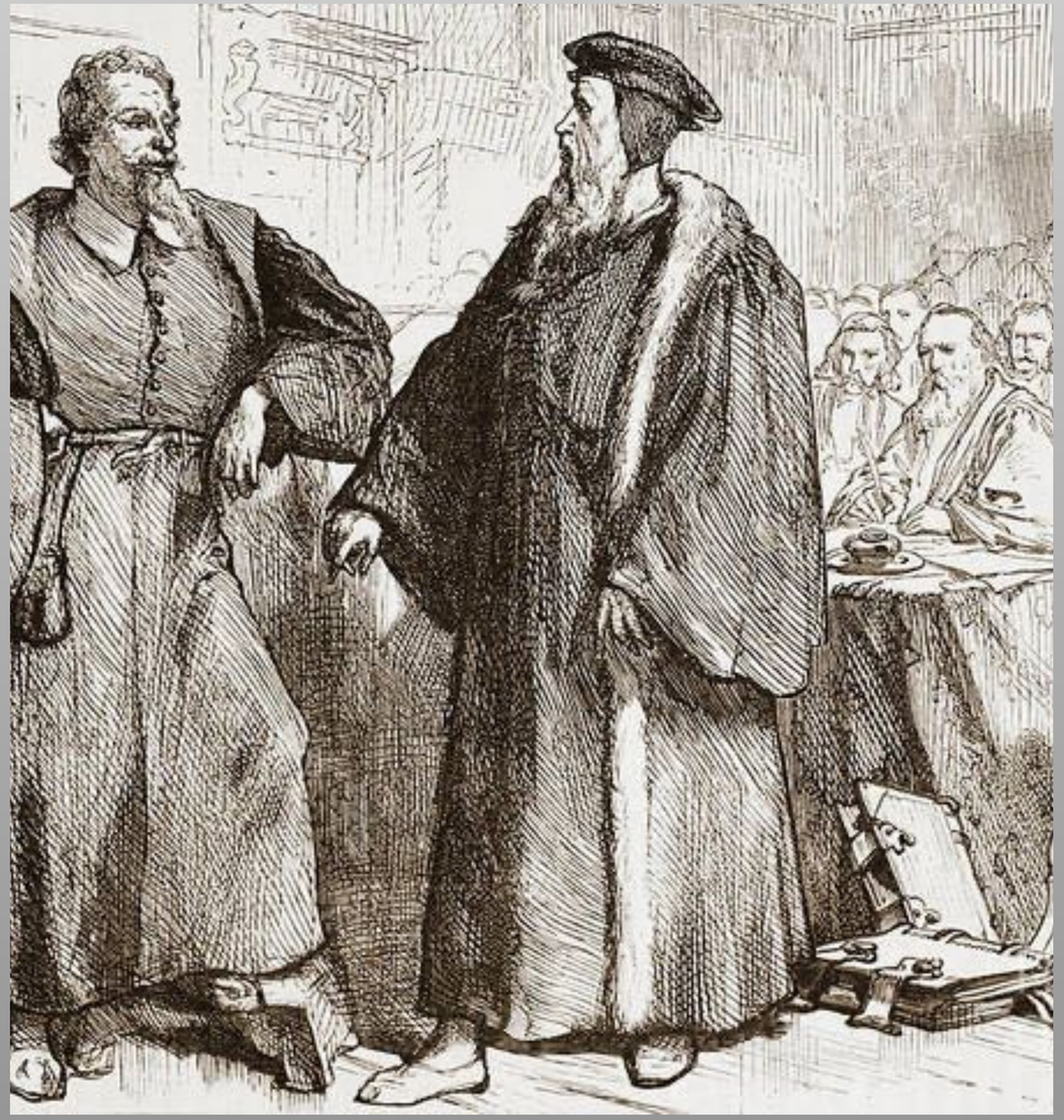
LUTHER AND CALVIN COMPARED

- Luther was a firebrand, breaking up the fallow ground
  - He was passionate, personable, and had real genius
- Calvin was cool, consistent, and a great organizer for the church and the movement



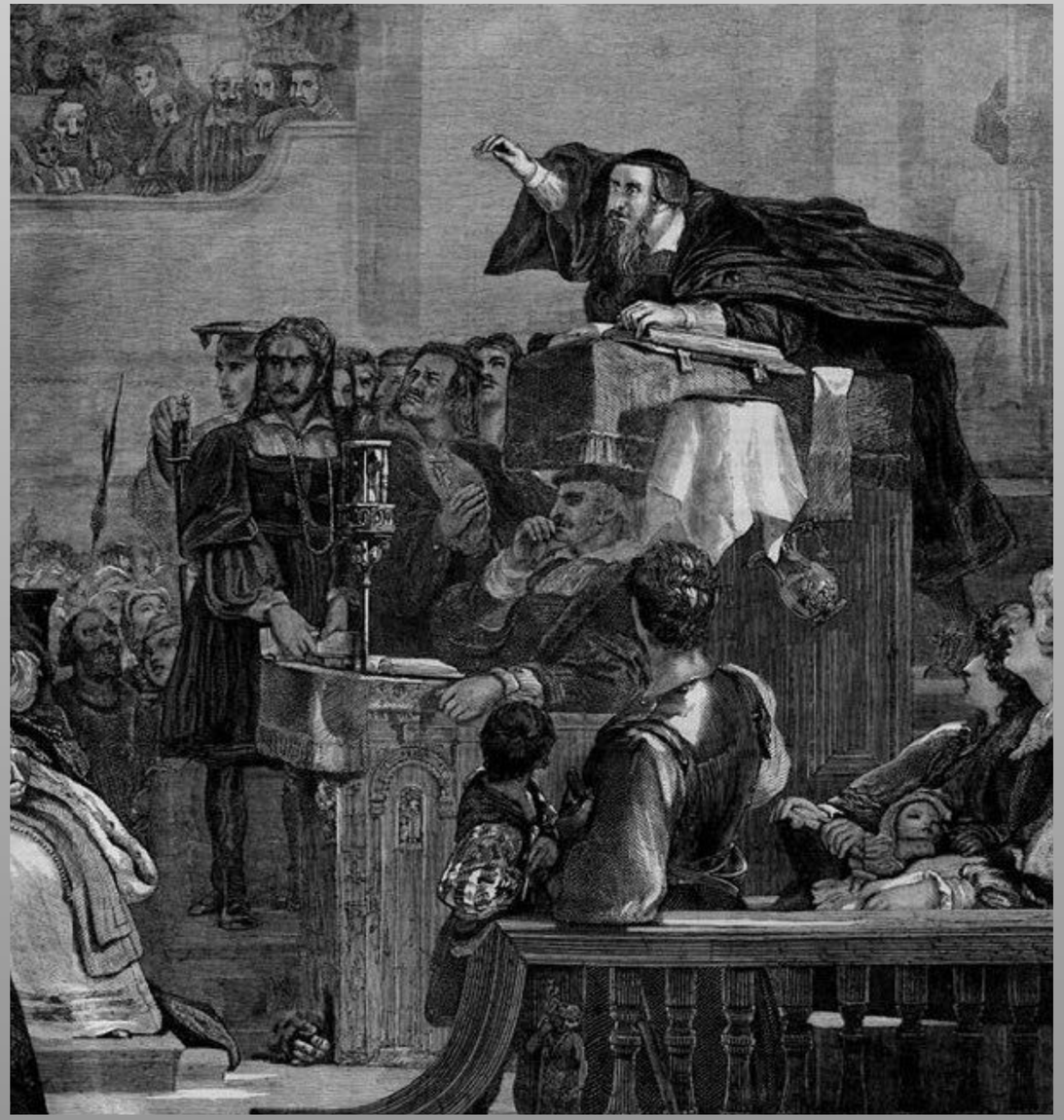
CALVIN'S FAITHFULNESS

- Despite all his wants and desires, Calvin was a man 'mastered by God'
  - He lived his life, not according to his own wishes, but upon the necessity of the word of God and the needs of the church



CALVIN'S FAITHFULNESS

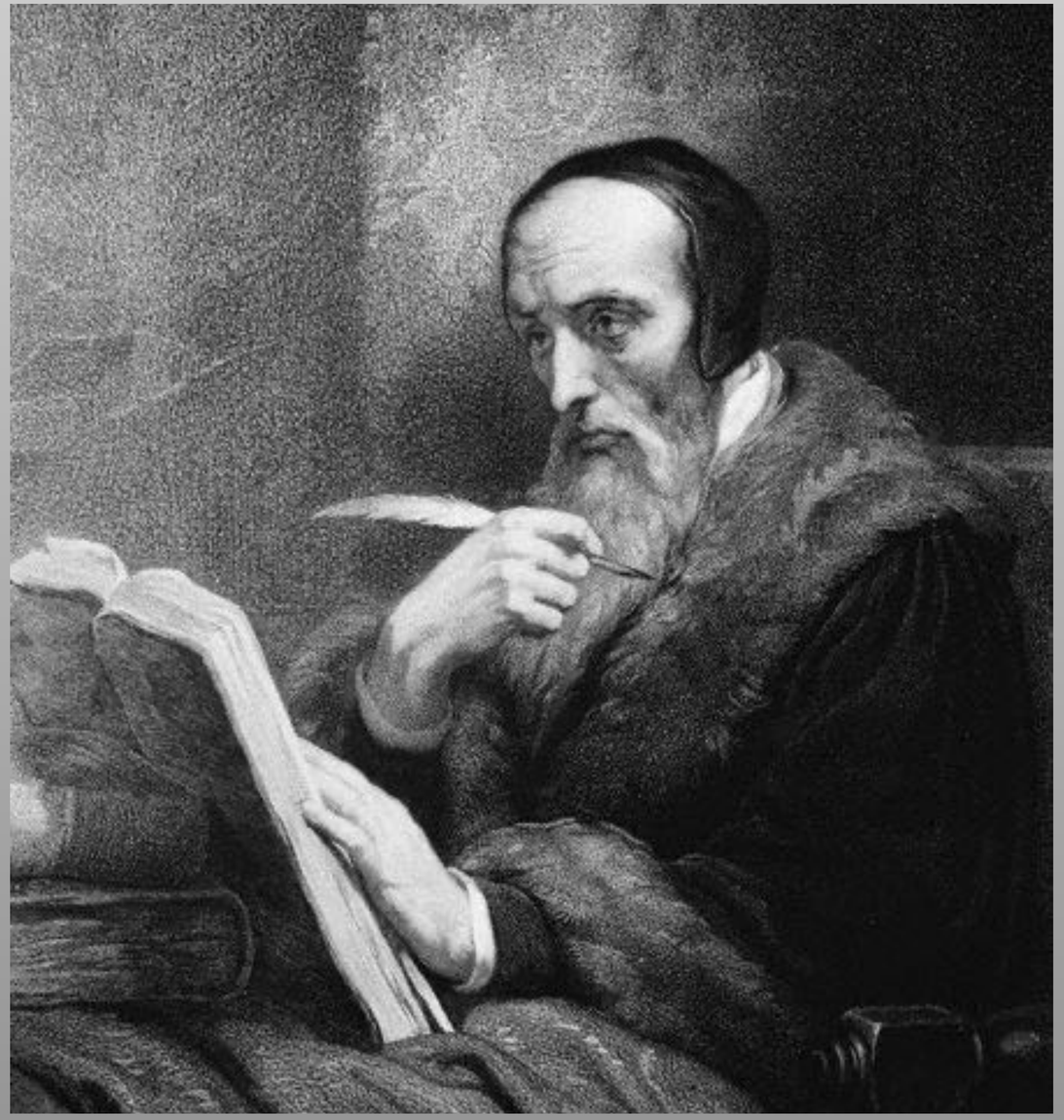
- He wanted to be a scholar, and he would have been good at it
  - He would have encouraged the church through his scholarship
    - He stayed in Geneva (when he wanted to go to Strasbourg)
    - He returned to Geneva (even though he would rather die a 100 deaths than return)
    - He continued in his ministry of preaching & teaching
- He is a model of faithfulness, endurance, and obedience



DEVOTION TO THE BIBLE AS THE WORD OF GOD

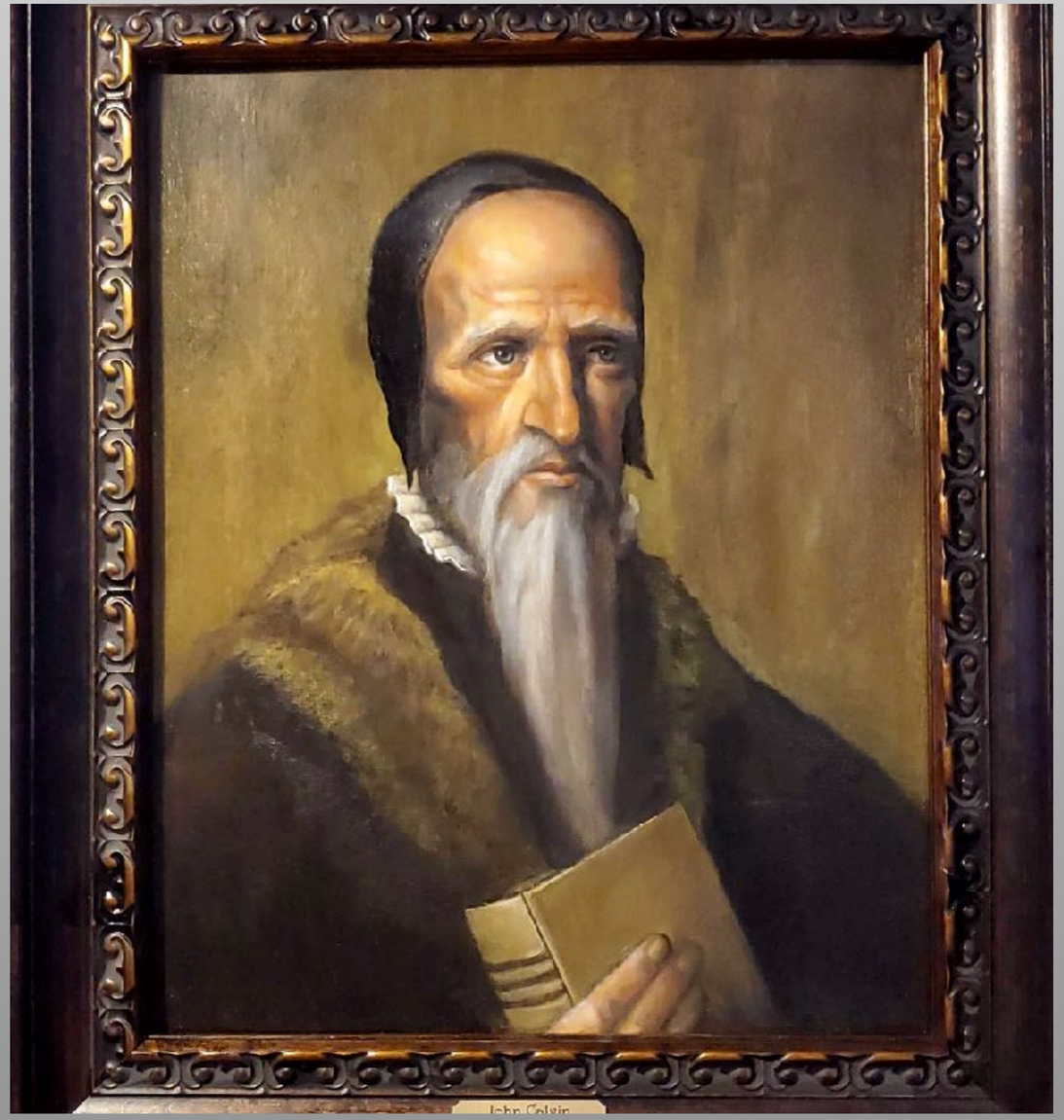
- The Bible was not a collection of historical statements and summaries, but rather a communication of a living Christ to us

- In his return to Geneva after his exile, he got up, stated his intention of preaching, then said, ‘As you remember, we will continue in the 9th chapter of the book of Job.’



DEVOTION TO THE BIBLE AS THE WORD OF GOD

- He was devoted to the word of God as a method of moral change
  - As opposed to legislative rule
- The faithful, consistent, preaching of the word of God really did change these people



We should not investigate what the Lord has left hidden in secret … nor neglect what he has brought out into the open so that we may not be convicted or excessive curiosity on the one hand, or of excessive ingratitude on the other.

John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion Book 3.21.4

GOD CENTERED WORSHIP

- Preaching became the central tenet of the church service
- Preaching was seen as the ‘voice of God to the people’



THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

- Calvin clarified and revived the understanding of God's sovereign will and choice as taught in Scriptures
- Calvin was following Augustine (and Paul and Christ) in this teaching



CHURCH AND STATE SEPARATION

- Geneva was a model city to understand how the church and state interact and it paved the way for Religious freedom from the State
- Calvin's conflicts with the council set a precedent for how the church should interact and separate from local government (and national government)

