

THE HISTORY OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

John Calvin, Pt. I

JOHN CALVIN



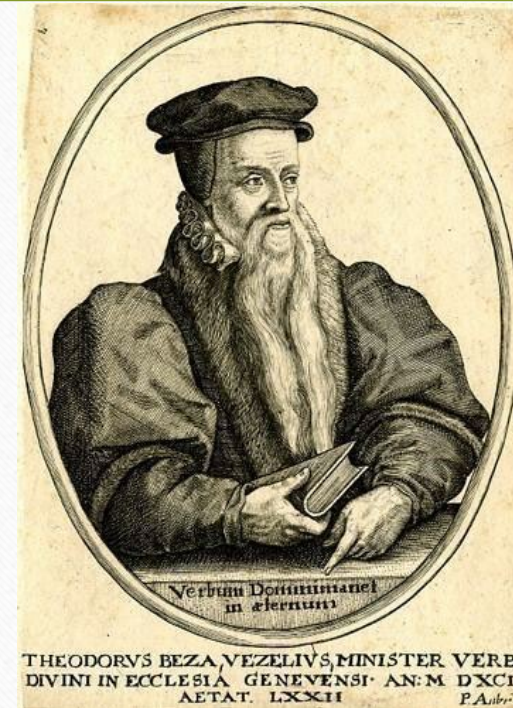
THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

- The Church that needed to be Reformed: the Roman Catholic Church with its elaborate system of saints and sacraments
- Martin Luther: Reformer of Wittenberg who reclaimed the biblical gospel, which includes justification by grace alone through faith in Christ.
- The Augsburg Confession: penned by companions of Luther, intended for Charles V.
- Ulrich Zwingli: Reformer of Zürich whose efforts of reform involved bringing biblical data to bear upon *worship* in particular.



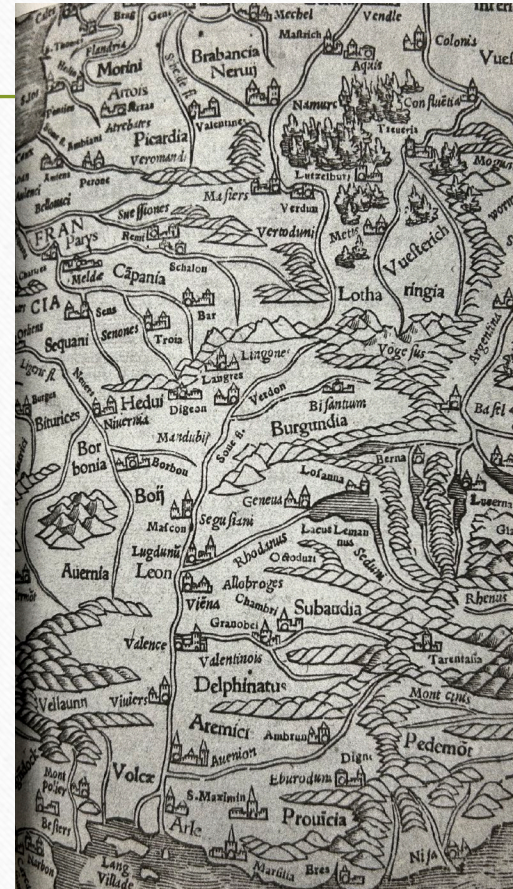
LUTHER, ZWINGLI, and CALVIN

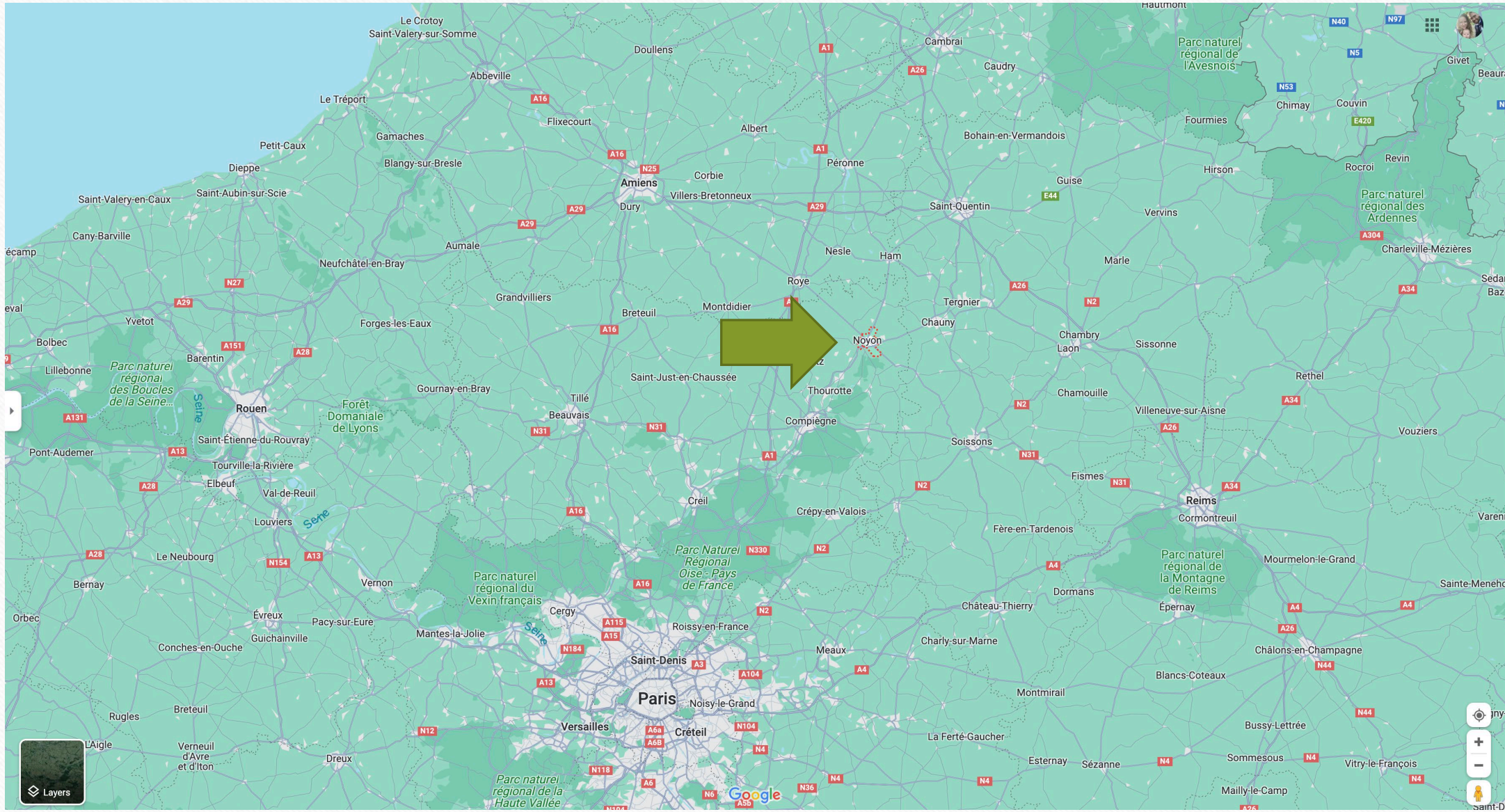
- Pictured: Theodore Beza, pupil of Calvin, and later his successor at Geneva and earliest biographer.
- Beza: “Let men cry out that Luther, Zuinglius, and Calvin are regarded by us as gods, though we are continually charging the worshippers of saints with idolatry. Let them, I say, cry out as much as they please—we are prepared with our answer, viz., that to commemorate the labours which holy men have undertaken in behalf of religion, together with their words and actions ... is a very different thing from doing as they do, when they either bring disgrace on the lives of men who were truly pious ... or compose fabulous histories filled with vilest falsehoods ...”



CALVIN: BIRTH and UPBRINGING

- John Calvin [*Jean Cauvin*] born 27 July 1509 to Girard Cauvin and Joan Franc in Noyon, Picardy, France.
- Pictured: the 1550 cosmography of Sebastian Münster, map of France. Notice the region of “Picardia.”





STUDIES

- The young Calvin studied first in his native region of Picardy, before being sent to Paris, Orleans, and eventually Basel.
- Pictured: Sorbonne, the premier university in Paris



CALVIN'S CONVERSION

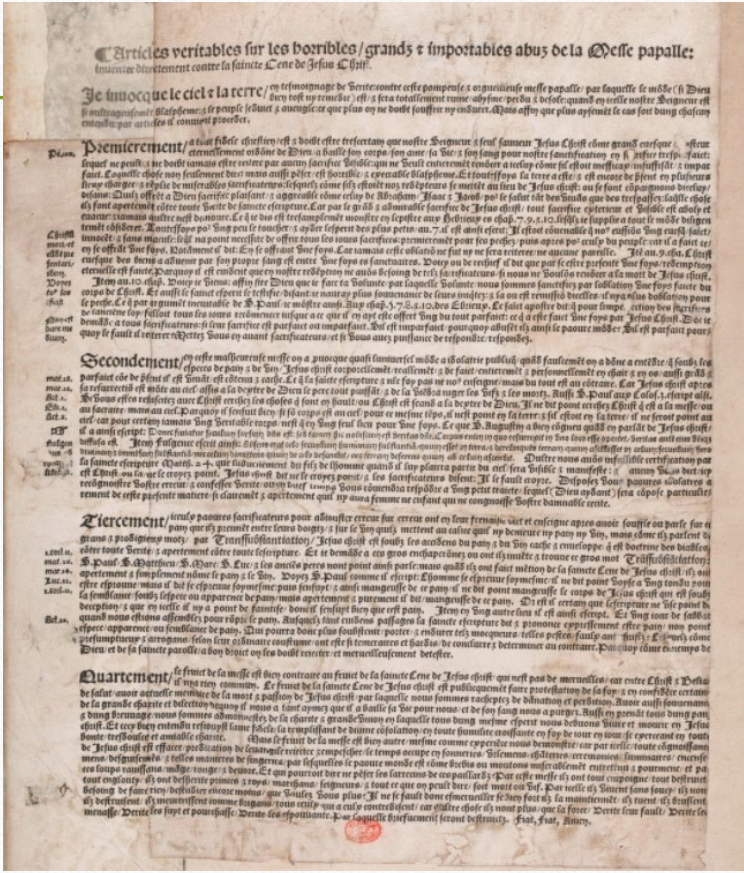
- From Calvin's Commentaries on the Psalms:
God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame, which was more hardened in such matters than might have been expected from one at my early period of life. Having thus received some taste and knowledge of true godliness, I was immediately inflamed with so intense a desire to make progress therein, that although I did not altogether leave off other studies, I yet pursued them with less ardour.



THE FRENCH REFORMATION

- Beza: “The person who at this time held the office of Rector at the University of Paris was Nicholas Cop, son of William Cop of Basel, physician to the king. He, according to custom, having to deliver an oration on the 1st of November, the day on which the festival of All Saints is celebrated by the Papists, Calvin furnished him with one in which religion was treated more purely and clearly than it was previously wont to be. This could not be tolerated by the Sorbonne, and being also disapproved by the Senate, or Parliament, that body cited the Rector to appear before them. He accordingly set out with his officers, but being warned on the way to beware of his enemies, turned back, and afterwards quitting the country, retired to Basel.”

- Pictured: From the Placards Affair of 1533-4



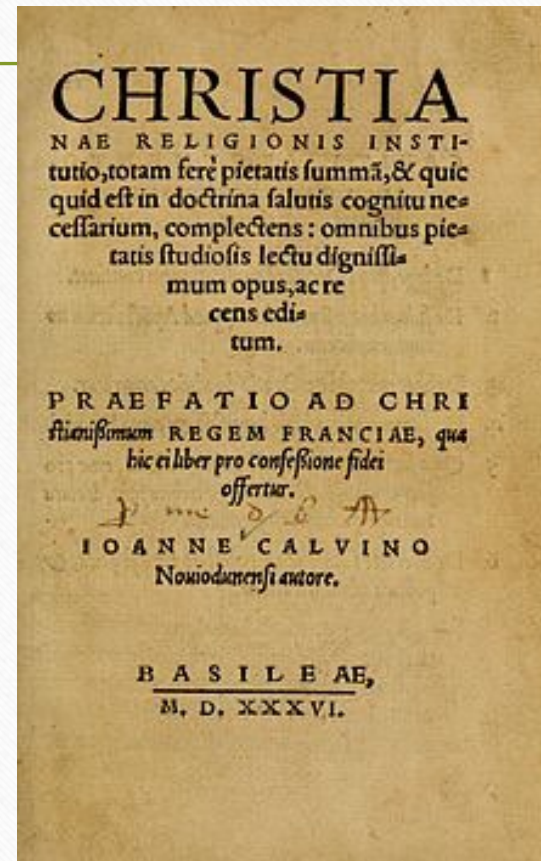
CALVIN at BASEL

- Forgoing Strasbourg, Calvin quit himself to Basel in pursuit of a sanctuary for further study and writing.
- Pictured: Basel, ca. 1493



INSTITUTES of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION

- The first edition of the *Institutes* was published at Basel in 1536.
- The first *French* edition was published in 1541.
- The expansive final edition of the *Institutes* appeared in Latin in 1559.



INSTITV

TION DE LA RELI-
GION CHRETIENNE: EN LA

quelle est compris vne somme de pieté,
& quasi tout ce qui est necessaire a congnoi-
stre en la doctrine de salut.

Composée en latin par JEAN CALVIN, &
translatée en françois, par luy mesme.

AVEC LA PREFACE ADRES-
sée au Treschrestien Roy de France, François
premier de ce nom, par laquelle ce present liure
luy est offert pour confession de Foy.

avec Capucins d'orléans

Idem. s.

IVS QVE A QVAND
SEIGNEVR:

M. D. XLI.



INSTITVTIO CHRI-

tianæ religionis, in libros qua-
tuor nunc primùm digesta, certisque distincta capitibus, ad aptissimam
methodum: aucta etiam tam magna accessione vt propemodum opus
nouum haberi possit.

IOHANNE CALVINO AVTHORE.



Oliua Roberti Stephani.

GENEVÆ.

M. D. LIX.

INSTITUTES I.xvii.2

2. God's rule will be observed with respect!

Therefore no one will weigh God's providence properly and profitably but him who considers that his business is with his Maker and the Framer of the universe, and with becoming humility submits himself to fear and reverence.

INSTITUTES I.xvii.2

Hence it happens that today so many dogs assail this doctrine with their venomous bitings, or at least with barking: for they wish nothing to be lawful for God beyond what their own reason prescribes for themselves. Also they rail at us with as much wantonness as they can; because we, not content with the precepts of the law, which comprise God's will, say also that the universe is ruled by his secret plans. As if what we teach were a figment of our brain, and the Holy Spirit did not everywhere expressly declare the same thing and repeat it in innumerable forms of expression. But, because some shame restrains them from daring to vomit forth these blasphemies against heaven, they feign it is with us they are contending, that they may rave more freely.

But if they do not admit that whatever happens in the universe is governed by God's incomprehensible plans, let them answer to what end Scripture says that his judgments are a deep abyss [Ps. 36:6]. For since Moses proclaims that the will of God is to be sought not far off in the clouds or in the abyss, because it has been set forth familiarly in the law [Deut. 30:11-14], it follows that he has another hidden will which may be compared to a deep abyss; concerning which Paul also says: "O depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and how inscrutable his ways! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?'" [Rom. 11:33-34; cf. Isa. 40:13-14] And it is, indeed, true that in the law and the gospel are comprehended mysteries which tower far above the reach of our senses. But since God illumines the minds of his own with the spirit of discernment [Job 20:3 or Isa. 11:2] for the understanding of these mysteries which he has deigned to reveal by his Word, now no abyss is here; rather a way in which we ought to walk in safety, and a lamp to guide our feet [Ps. 118:105, Vg.; 119:105, EV], the light of life [cf. John 1:4; 8:12], and the school of sure and clear truth. Yet his wonderful method of governing the universe is rightly called an abyss, because while it is hidden from us, we ought reverently to adore it.

INSTITUTES I.xvii.2

Moses has beautifully expressed both ideas in a few words: “The secret things,” he says, “belong to the Lord our God, but what is here written, to you and your children [Deut. 29:29p.]. For we see how he bids us not only direct our study to meditation upon the law, but to look up to God’s secret providence with awe.

Also, in the book of Job is set forth a declaration of such sublimity as to humble our minds. For after the author, in surveying above and below the frame of the universe, has magnificently discoursed concerning God’s works, he finally ads: “Behold! These are but the outskirts of his ways, and how small a thing is heard therein!” [Job 26:14]. In this way he distinguishes in another place between the wisdom that resides with God and the portion of wisdom God has prescribed for men. For when he has discoursed on the secrets of nature, he says that wisdom is known to God alone, but “eludes the eyes of all the living” [Job 28:21]. But he adds a little later that His wisdom has been published to be searched out, because it is said to man: “Behold, the fear of the Lord is wisdom” [Job 28:28].

INSTITUTES I.xvii.2

To this point the saying of Augustine applies: “Because we do not know all the things which God in the best possible order does concerning us, we act solely in good will according to the law, but in other things we are acted upon according to the law, because his providence is an unchangeable law.”

Therefore, since God assumes to himself the right (unknown to us) to rule the universe, let our law of soberness and moderation be to assent to his supreme authority, that his will may be for us the sole rule of righteousness, and the truly just cause of all things. Not, indeed, that absolute will of which the Sophists babble, by an impious and profane distinction separating his justice from his power—but providence, that determinative principle of all things, from which flows nothing but right, although the reasons have been hidden from us.

NEXT TIME: CALVIN'S GENEVA

