

Covenant Life College
History of the Reformation

February 28, 2007

The Reformed Branch of Protestantism

Introduction

The two main branches of the Protestant Reformation are the **Lutheran** and the **Reformed Christian**. They had much in common: a high view of Scripture, belief in man's sin and depravity, the need for salvation by grace apart from works, the centrality of Christ and His Cross. But there were also significant differences.

Some of the differences:

1. Reformed churches were less liturgical and did not retain many trappings of Roman Catholicism, while the Lutheran branch did retain images, and a stronger sacramental emphasis.
2. Lutheran churches politically were more tied to the state, while the Reformed were more independent of the state.
3. Reformed emphasized the sovereignty of God over creation more than did the Lutheran, which after Luther developed an Arminian soteriology.

The main figures we will look at are Ulrich Zwingli (Heinrich Bullinger, his successor) and John Calvin.

I. Ulrich Zwingli (German Swiss) 1484-1531

1. Contemporary with Luther. Son of a mayor, educated at Basel, Bern and Vienna. Degrees from Basel, 1504 (BA) and 1506 (MA)
2. While at Basel, he was influenced by a professor there (Wytttenbach) who eventually became a Protestant. He mentored Zwingli in spiritual matters.
3. Zwingli became a priest in the town of Glarus. 1506-1516 he began to read Augustine, learned Greek and Hebrew and corresponded with Erasmus.
4. An indulgence salesman, Sampson, came to Einsiedlin in 1517 whom Zwingli opposed (parallel to Luther).

5. Reform-minded, he apparently had some doubt whether the doctrine of purgatory was true.
6. In 1519, he became people's priest at the great minster church in Zurich. He preached from Matthew *verse by verse*. At the time considered extraordinary.
7. By 1521, the city had accepted Zwingli's Scriptural approach and reforming changes began. Church and town council were closely interrelated.
8. The Great Sausage Incident- February 1522. During Lent meat was not to be eaten. But Zwingli couldn't see that in Scripture and decided to eat meat during Lent. (Actually he encouraged some friends to do it, who were then imprisoned). But he preached on the subject from Scripture and convinced the council.
9. In 1518-19, he was more of an Erasmian. But then, apparently read Luther and moved from a desire for **moral** reformation to **doctrinal** reformation.

II. Zurich Disputations 1523-25

1. January 1523—Zwingli put forward 67 theses and challenged Catholics publicly to debate him on papal authority, on purgatory, on celibacy. In these articles, he set Roman dogma against the vicarious work of Christ and the authority of Scripture. Zwingli won the debated hands down.
2. October 1523—The mass, should it be abolished? He was thought to have won, but the city council appointed a committee to settle the matter. And Zwingli chaired the committee.
3. January 1524—On the mass—again, Zwingli wins. The council voted to abolish the mass and make Zurich a Protestant city. This kind of reformation is called **magisterial reformation**. It was not a popular uprising, but a persuasion of civil authority (from the top down).

III. Zwingli and the Radicals

1. The Anabaptist movement dates from Zurich at this time.
2. They contended for believers' baptism, a gathered (voluntary) church, the radical separation of church and state and a stricter church discipline.
3. At first, it seemed that Zwingli would be friendly to such efforts, but instead of standing squarely on Scripture, he said that these issues must ultimately be decided by the (secular) town council.
4. His theology is somewhat quirky. Perhaps because of haste, elements of natural theology mar his works. E.g. he wrote, "On the Providence of God" but hardly referred to Scripture. He developed the topic using philosophers (like the Stoic Seneca) as authorities. One of the features of Stoicism is a strict, abstract determinism. No secondary causes, so God is the cause of evil. Yet, he did hold clearly to a justification by grace alone and that good works could only come from faith. Calvin called it paradoxical and immoderate. Zwingli thought moral pagans like Socrates and Seneca would get to heaven.

Zwingli died in 1531 in battle at the 2nd Battle of Capel.

IV. The Marburg Colloquy

1. By 1529, Charles HRE, was in a position to try to deal with the Protestant rebellion. The threat of the Turks from the east and the war with France in the west had sufficiently calmed down for him to attempt to deal with the Protestant problem. He tried to join Catholic forces together.
2. Similarly, there was an attempt to link by political compact all evangelical groups in Germany and Switzerland. The Elector of Saxony made it clear he would not join such an alliance without consent from Luther. And Luther would not consent without doctrinal agreement.
3. So a conference at Marburg was arranged at which Luther and Ulrich Zwingli discussed fifteen doctrinal

points. On fourteen they agreed, but disputed about the Lord's Supper. Zwingli held to a more memorialist or symbolic view while Luther believed the elements did more than merely *signify* the body and blood of the Lord. (Both sides rejected the transubstantiation position held by the Catholics). Luther held to a literal interpretation of "This is my body." The conference ended with Luther saying, "You are of a different spirit."

V. Jean Calvin

1. Seems people either love him or hate him. Unlike Luther, Calvin did not talk about himself. Calvin was more reserved while Luther wore his heart on his sleeve. Calvin represents the second generation of Protestants. He didn't really come on the scene until the mid 30's. Calvin was a great admirer of Luther and said he owed a great debt to him. "The gospel restored in our time."
2. 1509 -- 1564. His mother died when he was young. His father, Girard, was lawyer for the bishop of Noyon. Connections with a local noble family, the De Montmors, enabled Calvin to receive an excellent education and through whom he also acquired a bit of a noble bearing. But he was himself middle class.
3. He went to University of Paris. But then his father had a falling out with the Bishop. Girard was excommunicated. His son had to withdraw and study to become a lawyer. Calvin pursued a law degree at Bourges and then at Orleans, studying under the best teachers and received his law degree in 1532.
4. At this point he was a French Humanist in the literary sense. His mentor was Bude. His first book was on Seneca's Commentary *De Clementia*. It was secular and academic—and it bombed.
5. At this time there was no hint of a future inclination toward Protestantism.
6. When was Calvin converted? T.H.L. Parker puts the conversion at 1528. Others put it as late as 1534. That's

the range. There is one brief biographical note in the 1557 preface to his commentary on the Psalms. “I was obstinately addicted to ... the papacy.” It’s probably good to look around 1532, 33 for conversion, because of two events which occurred.

7. In 1532, Calvin received two scholarships (called chaplainries/educational grants) a source of income. In 1533, he returned to Noyon and gave them up.
8. Then in October 1533 he was in Paris with Nicholas Cop, who was elected Rector of the University of Paris. Cop gave the inaugural address, and at the end of the speech he mentioned salvation by grace. This radical speech required him to run for his life. Rumor was that the speech had been ghostwritten by Calvin. Once the authorities got wind of this, Calvin had to jump out of a window and flee for his life. (Sounds like Paul)
9. He went underground. He crossed the “Rubicon” probably late in 1533.
10. While on the run, he began to write the *Institutes*. By 1535 he was in the home of Du Tillet (a safe house for Protestants). This gentleman was well to do and had a wonderful theological library. While Calvin was there he wrote the 1st edition of the *Institutes*, six short chapters. By 1559 it had become 80 chapters. He spent his life revising this work. He intended that this work provide a theological basis for understanding his commentaries. Calvin’s separation of theological reflection (*Institutes*) from commentary was a break with tradition.

VI. Doctrine—The Institutes of the Christian Religion – 1536-1559
four major books

<u>Book I</u> - Doctrine of God	Father
<u>Book II</u> - Redemption and Christ	Son
<u>Book III</u> - Application of Redemption	Holy Spirit
<u>Book IV</u> - Church	Church

1. The fall has affected our minds—we no longer use them aright.
The fall has affected our wills—we no longer obey God. In Book

III, there is an extraordinary emphasis on the Holy Spirit. B.B. Warfield called Calvin the theologian of the Holy Spirit.

2. Calvin's doctrine of predestination. His writings on this are pastoral and governs his approach. He asks, "Why is it that a pastor finds some respond and some don't?" The answer is the doctrine of predestination. God, in love, chooses some unworthy sinners to be His children. Others, He passes over. His discussion doesn't begin in the abstract. This doctrine had previously been located under the category of the Doctrine of God (decrees; providence) in his first edition, which tended to make the doctrine abstract. But in 1559, he located it in Book III, under the Doctrine of Redemption, linking it with Christology. It is "in Christ" that we have been chosen! It appears that Calvin continued to read his Bible and saw that predestination is "in Christ."
3. This shows how his theology developed. There is nothing of it in the 1536 edition. Early on he was a French humanist. He would not have been fond of this doctrine.
4. When he wrote his commentary on Romans, he began to develop this. But predestination is not Calvin's most important doctrine, God's sovereignty is (most likely).

VII. Calvin in Geneva

1. Calvin desired a quiet life in the study writing books. He wanted to be a scholar in Strasbourg, a free, imperial city. He was on his way there, when a battle flared up (part of the Hapsburg-Valois War). So he had to turn aside to Geneva for only a moment, he thought.
2. Calvin's call to the ministry occurred in a Genevan inn August 1536, when William Farel (1489-1565) confronted him.
3. Farel was instrumental in getting the city council to declare for the Reformation which had just happened in May. Farel felt he was in over his head. He heard that Calvin, the author, is staying at a local inn. Farel decided to get him to stay and help. "Wherever I went, I resolved to keep private that I was the author of the Institutes... Farel burned with an extraordinary zeal."
4. Calvin said he was not interested, but reluctantly stays because Farel has convinced him that God would oppose his retirement. Calvin was not sure of his role or function. His first pastoral experience was not good. First, the council declared Geneva to be a Protestant city, but most of the populace was still Roman

Catholic, so it was a hostile audience. Second, Geneva was embroiled in political intrigue (two major political factions, one pro-France, the other pro-Bern). It was a real hornet's nest. Some didn't like Calvin simply because he was French.

5. Then, in March 1538, the make up of the council changed and Calvin and Farel were banished. Calvin went to Strasbourg and Martin Bucer. Bucer wanted Calvin to be pastor of the French-speaking people and refugees in Strasbourg. Bucer was a father figure for Calvin, who remained there from 1538-1541.
6. Then in 1541, he received a letter from the town council in Geneva asking him to return. Two things had changed:
 1. There was a new council that had been elected which was oriented toward the Reformation.
 2. Cardinal Sadoletto wrote a letter to the council hoping to win Geneva back to Rome in early 1541.
7. "Who can answer Sadoletto?" They called for Calvin, who reluctantly went back. He returned, assuming he would not last long. One of the conditions he delivered to the council was that he be given a freer hand in setting up church structures. He wrote Ecclesiastical Ordinances (a plan of action for the church) in which he defined the responsibilities of pastors to preach, encourage, admonish and reprove.
8. Many think of Calvin as the dictator of Geneva who tried to establish a theocracy. But Calvin never held a position in the city government. He never even was allowed to become a citizen until late in his life. The authority he had derived from his pastoral influence, his preaching, he unparalleled work ethic and personal persuasiveness. That his life and work are still influential this day is a testimony to his greatness.
9. Michael Servetus—heretic who wrote books which denied the Trinity. While he was in jail, Calvin went 10 times to try to help him. Calvin appealed for mercy for him. A more humane way of execution, that is. Request rejected in 1553. Calvin went to him in jail one last time on the day of execution. Calvin's relationship with him went back 16 years. Calvin is usually portrayed as killing Servetus.

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The Reformed branch of the Reformation in Switzerland would significantly influence Scottish Presbyterianism, the French Huguenots, the English Puritans, the early Congregationalists, the Dutch Reformed and many other streams of the Christian faith.