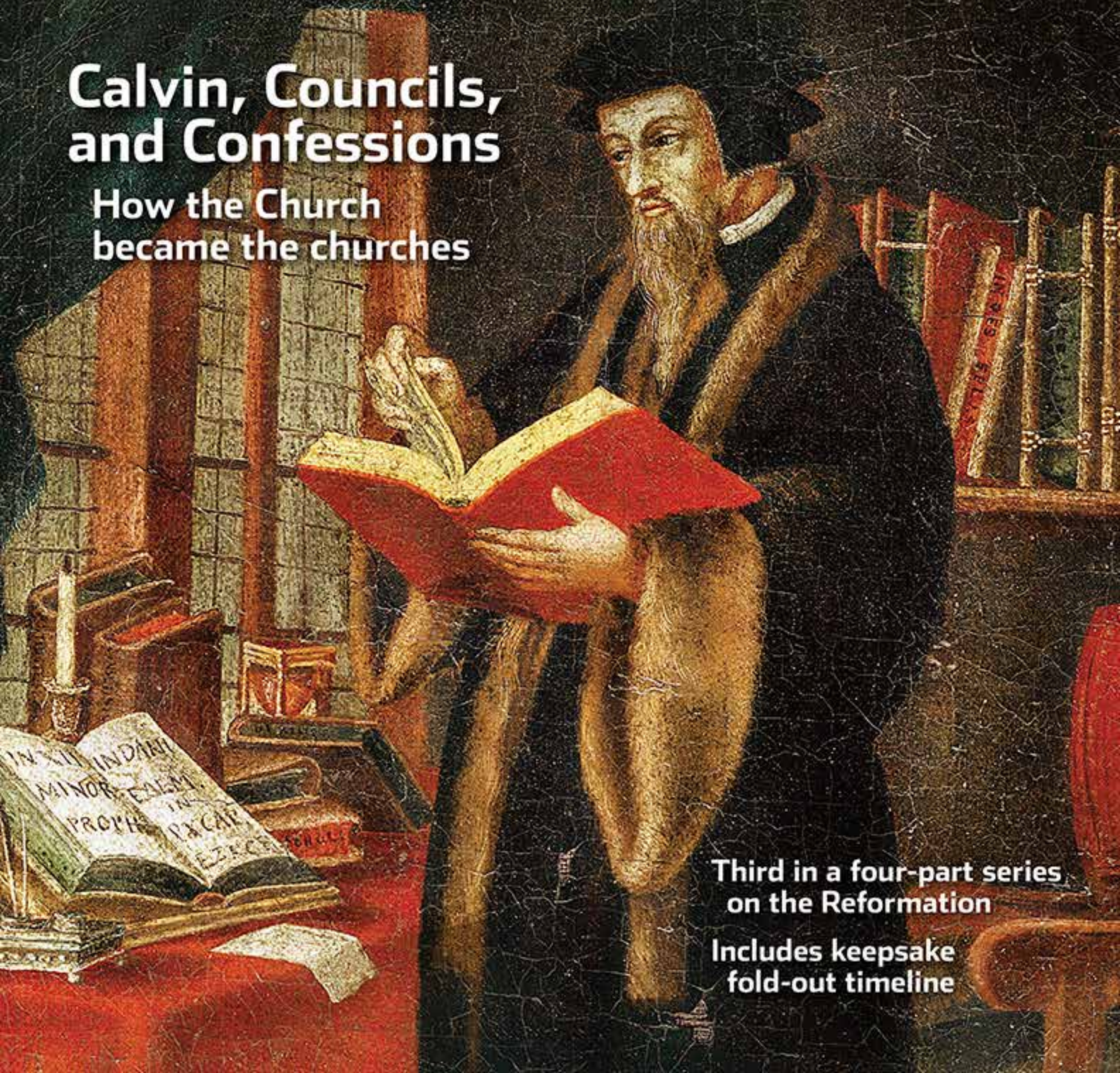


CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 120

Calvin, Councils, and Confessions

How the Church
became the churches



Third in a four-part series
on the Reformation

Includes keepsake
fold-out timeline



FULL OF WORDS Calvin (second from left alongside Farel, Beza, and Knox) wrote commentaries on nearly every biblical book as well as theological treatises. His correspondence fills 11 volumes.

that the second student was jealous at not being the messenger. Calvin quickly dashed off a second letter to Viret containing the request that Viret pretend it was a valuable letter.

Calvin encouraged congregational psalm-singing in the church at Geneva. Like Luther, he viewed music as a gift of God and personally put to music a number of the psalms. During the course of his ministry in Geneva, Calvin lectured to theological students and preached an average of five sermons a week (see p. 9).

Did you know?

CALVIN THE TEACHER, MENNO THE PREACHER, ELIZABETH THE QUEEN, AND THOSE UNPRONOUNCEABLE FRENCH PROTESTANTS

A MOMENTOUS DETOUR

John Calvin trained first as a lawyer; his first published book was an academic commentary on ancient philosopher Seneca. He meant to merely stop in the Swiss city of Geneva for a single night in 1536 (avoiding hostilities raging between the king of France and the Holy Roman Empire). But Guillaume Farel convinced him to stay, which he did for 25 years, becoming the city's most famous person. Even so, he was not granted citizenship until five years before his death. Scottish reformer John Knox visited Geneva in 1554 and wrote to an English friend, "It is the most perfect school of Christ that ever was in the earth since the days of the Apostles."

COLLEAGUE, FRIEND, AND PASTOR

Although he never met Luther, Calvin esteemed him very highly. To Heinrich Bullinger (see p. 48), he wrote: "Even if he were to call me a devil I should still regard him as an outstanding servant of God."

Once when Calvin asked one of a pair of students to deliver a letter to his friend Pierre Viret, he noticed

AN UNMARKED GRAVE

Calvin gave strict instructions that he be buried in the common cemetery with no tombstone. He wished to give no encouragement to those who might make it a Protestant shrine. He continued to work even on his deathbed, though his friends pleaded with him to rest. He replied: "What! Would you have the Lord find me idle when he comes?" Calvin's seal pictured a burning heart in a hand and was accompanied by this motto: "Promptly and sincerely in the work of God."



WE'RE STILL HERE After the Reformed faith was outlawed in France in 1685, Huguenots continued to survive and even (as in this drawing) to mock the king.



SHE LOVED HER MOTHER

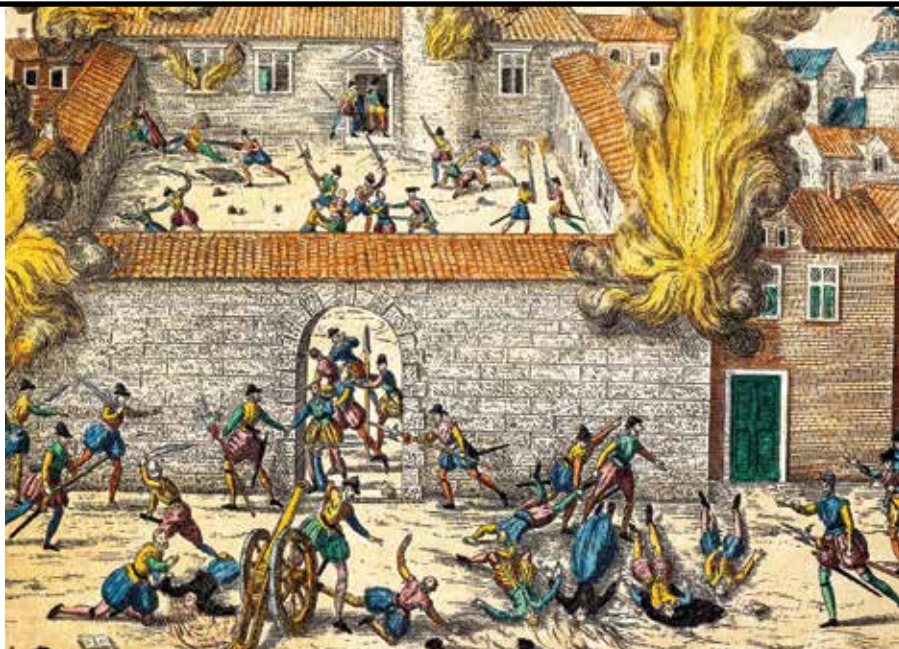
There are few surviving records of Elizabeth I referencing her executed mother, Anne Boleyn. But in a painting from 1545 of Henry VIII showing his third wife, Jane Seymour, and his children, Elizabeth wears her disgraced mother's pendant. She later adopted Anne's heraldic emblem and one of her mother's mottoes, "Always the Same" (*Semper eadem*).

HU-GUE-WHO AND MENNO WHY?

French Protestants' odd nickname, "Huguenots," may come from a spirit called King Huguon, believed to haunt a city gate in Tours at night. Protestants held their illegal religious services near that gate after dark.

And why, like many pop stars, is Menno Simons known only by his first name? "Simons," or "Simonszoon," means simply "son of Simon" and was seldom used. Some Anabaptists gradually took on the label "Mennisten" (followers of Menno), and it stuck. Long years of steady leadership and his many publications sealed the deal. Most Dutch Anabaptists prefer today to be called "Doopsgezinden" ("baptism-minded") to distance themselves from some of his views.

Menno claimed that he had not read the Scriptures until two years after his ordination at age 28: "I feared if I should read them they would mislead me. Behold! Such a stupid preacher was I for nearly two years." But his later writings each begin with I Corinthians 3:11, "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ." He wrote in *The Blasphemy of Jan Van Leiden*, "It is forbidden to us to fight with physical weapons. . . . This only would I learn of you; whether you are baptized on [i.e., in service to] the sword or on the Cross?" ☞



RING AROUND THE QUEEN *Left:* In 1575 Queen Elizabeth I commissioned a ring whose secret locket contained portraits of herself and her mother, Anne Boleyn.


MURDER AROUND THE TOWN *Right:* Even as they grew in influence, Huguenots were subject to persecutions like this massacre at Cahors in 1561.



WHAT ARE THESE GOOD FOR?

Luther wasn't the only one protesting indulgences. Here a Bavarian carnival-goer dresses in a costume made of indulgence letters.

Some of these entries are adapted from CH issues 5, 12, and 71. Mary Sprunger contributed to the entry on Menno.



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Calvinism, and
the Reformation

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Letters to the editor

Readers respond to *Christian History*

EVERY DAY WITH *CHRISTIAN HISTORY*

I find your materials to be one of the few things I intend to pass along to my children when I am gone—they are wonderful!

—Robert Elkins, Corfu, NY

I am president of The Interfaith Council of Greater Sacramento. We have been in existence in California's capital city since 1911. I love your magazine. It informs us of so many good things. I just wanted to say thank you and let you know what good you do for our minds, souls, and hearts.

—Jon B. Fish, Sacramento, CA

Thanks for your magazine and your daily *Christian History* postings. They provide great strength and incentive to me. Reading about these people makes my problems seem paltry in comparison to what they went through.

—E.D. Bogan, Troy, OH

We'd like to encourage all readers to check out our daily postings, which you can find on our website under "This Day in Christian History."

PRaise FOR QUAKERS AND CREATION

Another outstanding issue—117. I have run out of superlatives for your work. Pray, keep amazing me with future issues. I know that the return on investment of what I am able to donate is many, many times the amount and hope other readers feel the same. Lord Bless!!

—Tom Edmunds, Washington, NJ

Just a quick note to say how much I enjoyed the issue of *Christian History* [119] on the Wonder of Creation. I especially appreciate your ecumenical approach: the inclusion of Catholic thought, history and poetry. And above all, I liked the poetry with the beautiful images (Herbert and Hopkins are two of my favorites). —Melinda Zook, contributor to CH 118

I've received the *Christian History* issue on creation — wow, it's just so lovely! You've done a stellar job putting it together, and I feel very privileged to have been invited to take part. Thank you for including me.

—Kathleen Mulhern, contributor to CH 119

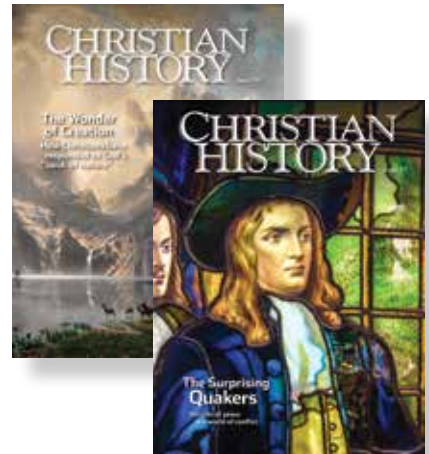
The entire issue [119] is great! *Christian History* is one of the favorite and most used magazines of our students in the Bruderhof. I wish you God's continued blessing in your work.

—Charles Moore, contributor to CH 119

Thanks, Tom, Melinda, Kathleen, and Charles! We'll try to keep amazing you.

IF YOU WANT MORE READING. . .

Doug Anderson of Orange City, IA, wrote in recommending Mark Stoll's *Protestantism, Capitalism and Nature in America* (1997) and *Inherit the Holy Mountain* (2015), and Belden C. Lane's *Ravished by Beauty* (2011) as further resources on the topic of issue 119.



HAIL TO THE WRONG CHIEF

In the article in issue 74, Christians and Muslims, called "Hail to the new chiefs," it says that "The first Islamic caliph (deputy), Abu Bakr, was murdered..." This is not correct as Abu Bakr died of old age after he fell sick, on August 23, 634. This is clearly a confusion between Abu Bakr and Uthman (the 3rd Caliph after Umar).

—James Poh

Thank you for catching this. We're always eager to make sure everything on our website is correct.

AND WHILE WE ARE AT IT. . .

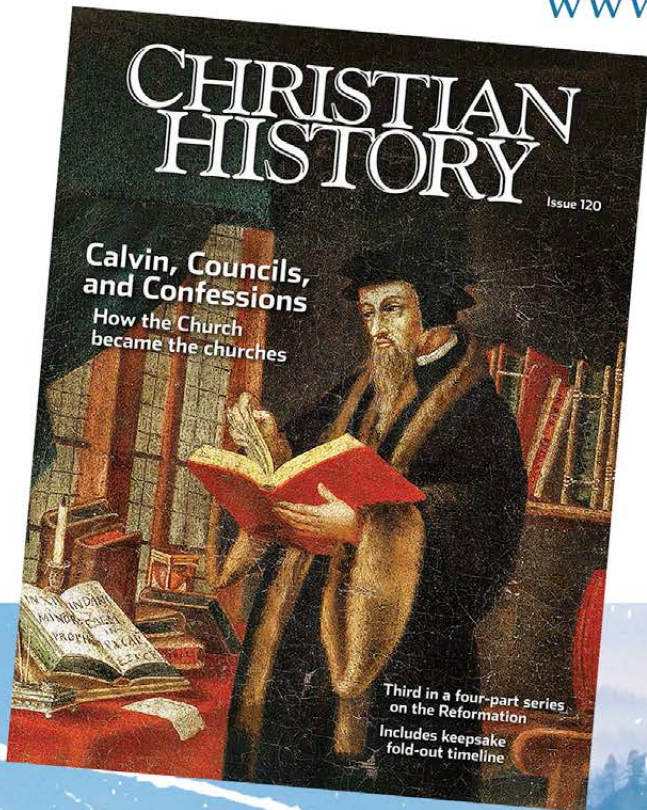
[In CH issue 118] pg. 31 Donatists were in the fourth century, not fifth century; pg. 21 Fredrick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, not John; pg. 44 Jacob Hutter started Hutterites, not Hans Hut; on the back cover, the picture of past issue 3 is Huguenots not Wycliffe.

—Wayne Wright, Wyoming, MI

Thank you for such attentive reading! Donatists indeed arose in the fourth century, but are famous to many readers of church history because of their fifth-century controversy with Augustine. Frederick the Wise, his brother John, and John's son all protected and supported Luther; the sermon on p. 21 is usually thought to have been preached before John. Jacob Hutter gave his name to the Hutterites, but Hans Hut was also associated with their formation in Moravia.

In issue 119, while the photographer of the Niagara Falls image on p. 22 took the picture while standing in Canada, the image is of the American falls. And also in 119, Ellen F. Davis accidentally acquired Edward B. Davis's middle initial.

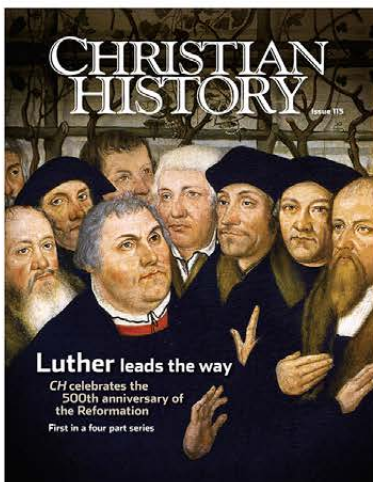
Finally, in the timelines for issues 115 and 118, an error in transposing text meant that we had John Calvin returning to Geneva from exile in Strasbourg in 1540 rather than—as you'll hear at length in this issue—1541. We regret all the errors and have corrected them on the website. —The Editors



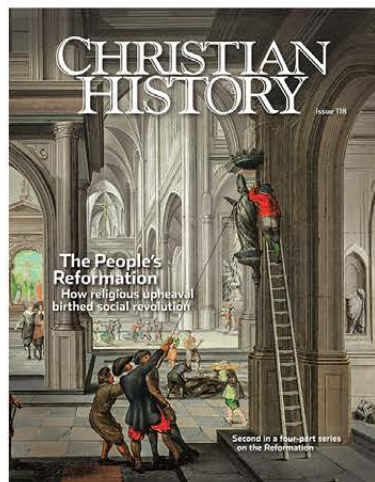
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Other issues in this 4-part Reformation series



Luther leads the way



The People's Reformation

part four coming
in 2017

Editor's note

WHY DO YOU GO to the church you go to? The preaching? The music? The children's program? Because your next-door neighbor does? As our last two issues devoted to the Reformation have explored, sixteenth-century reformers set out to renew the church and ended up dividing it. Even so, they might be surprised today that we sometimes change denominations as quickly as we change favorite flavors of ice cream. How did this happen?

With this third issue in our Reformation series, we begin to answer that question as we explore what scholars call "confessionalization." As the mid-sixteenth century arrived, followers of Luther, followers of Zwingli, Christians in England, and followers of the Anabaptist way all began to sort themselves out into various more-or-less defined confessions. Hopes for reunion or at least cooperation with the Roman Catholic Church, which some had cherished, receded further into the background. Division became the order of the day.

CALVIN THE REFUGEE

Onto that mid-century stage stepped a man whose name, like Luther's, has echoed through the centuries as giving voice to an entire developing strand of Christian faith. He was a hopeful French priest turned reluctant lawyer turned, after a fateful stopover in the city of Geneva, Protestant pastor and Swiss reformer. At birth his name was Jean Cauvin. History knows him as John Calvin.

As with our preceding issues, we focus on a colorful cast of sixteenth-century characters, continued theological debates, roads taken and not taken, and tragic martyrdoms. We've also got a special bonus pull-out timeline with the entire sixteenth century on it. (And some

other goodies! Check it out on pp. 27–31. You can also buy copies of it separately.)

We'll conclude the story of reform in 2017 by talking about the reformers who arose in Catholic ranks and never left; telling the story of the calling of the Council of Trent that would shape Catholicism for the next 500 years; and outlining the tumultuous sixteenth century's final decades.

Almost every time I write you I say, "I learned so much." This issue is no exception: from the story of Calvin's life in the French and Genevan reformations and his long-delayed, tragically brief marriage, to the fights among Luther's spiritual successors, to the way refugees shaped changing religious tides all over Europe.

When we began this project and its corresponding video, *This Changed Everything* (see ad, pp. 56–57), we were motivated by the idea that "getting the Reformation right" (to play off the title of one of my favorite books about the movement, James Payton's *Getting the Reformation Wrong*) would help all of us learn how we got where we are today and how we can cooperate with other Christians—across, and maybe even beyond, the confessional lines that divide us.

Now that I've spent three issues in the sixteenth century, I think so more than ever. In collecting quotes for our reformer quote-fest on p. 32, I ran across this gem from Menno Simons: "True evangelical faith is of such a nature it cannot lie dormant, but spreads itself out in all kinds of righteousness and fruits of love." May it be so. ☛



Jennifer Woodruff Tait
Managing editor, *Christian History*

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Don't miss our next issue, a special double-size issue on faith stories of World War I and World War II. How did the wars change Christians and how did Christians change the wars? Tune in to our new "Refo Thursday" blog posts for a weekly conversation with the reformers at www.christianhistoryinstitute.org/blog/.



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Another accidental revolutionary

THE RISE OF THE REFORMED TRADITION IN FRANCE—AND ITS MOST FAMOUS SON

Jon Balserak

MISSIONARIES SENT INTO THE COUNTRY under assumed names, taking obscure mountain passages in an effort to elude detection by the authorities along the border, provided with false papers and sent out secretly to their destination: sound like North Korea in the twentieth century? No—France in the 1560s.

SECRET AGENT MEN

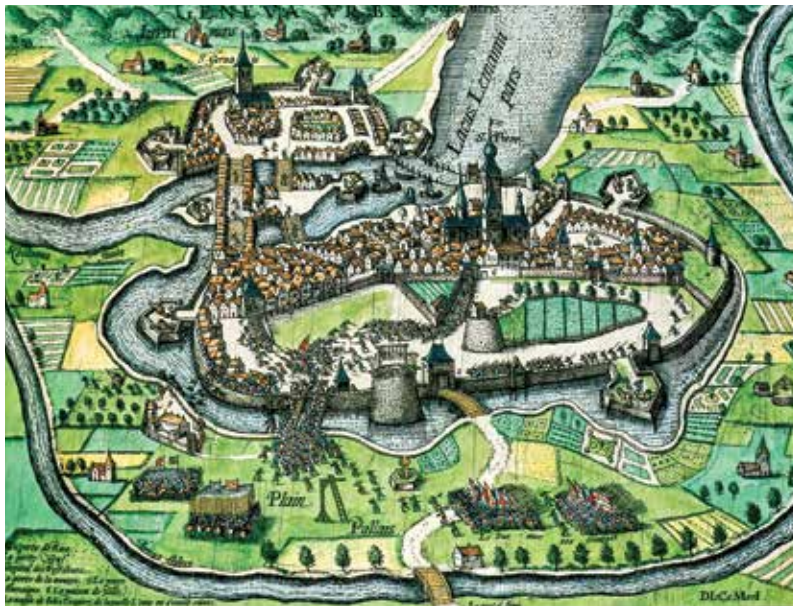
From miles away in Geneva, John Calvin (1509–1564) and Theodore Beza (1519–1605) were discipling French Calvinists. They created and fostered Reformed communities devoted to the Genevan vision by smuggling books on Reformed theology into the country and sending to France Reformed ministers who had been trained in Geneva. Once these ministers arrived at the churches to which they were being sent, they would preach and conduct services, often secretly as Calvin recommended. All of this, of course, was illegal. In fact, professing the Reformed faith in France was illegal.

YOU MUST REMEMBER THIS In this 16th-c. painting, Calvin passes on his wisdom to his followers on his deathbed.

In 1561 Beza, in a letter to fellow reformer Ambroise Blaurer, referred to these Reformed churches in France as “the colonies”; that is, colonies of Geneva. Through all these clandestine activities, Calvin and Beza were trying to recolonize their homeland.

They were both Frenchmen who believed they brought the one true Gospel that they loved into a country that they loved—the land of their births. They saw themselves as ministers of the Gospel. Neither of them represented foreign mercenaries or assassins. They were not Italian or Spanish or English, traditional enemies of the French.

Yet many French people viewed them as sworn enemies—wicked men who sought the destruction of the French nation and were likely to bring upon her the wrath of God because of their “heretical” teachings.



Both men had fled their homeland to escape persecution on account of their religious beliefs. They left at different times, Calvin in 1533 and Beza in 1548, but by the 1550s they were both working for the “evangelical gospel” from the conveniently located city of Geneva.

Geneva sits at the border of eastern France; from there the two pastors and theologians could work effectively to nurture French Reformed churches. Because they knew the French authorities were wholly opposed to their plans for evangelizing the country, they employed various measures designed to hide what they were doing.

The sending of ministers into France and the fostering of “heresy” increased tensions in the country. Local disputes and skirmishes broke out, and eventually blood was shed on a much larger scale, with the first of the so-called French Wars of Religion commencing in the spring of 1562.

France was not their only target. From the relative safety of Geneva, Calvin and Beza also sent ministers to other parts of the continent and the British Isles and wherever the Reformed faith spread. There were, by the 1560s, Reformed churches in Scotland, England, the Netherlands, Eastern Europe (Hungary, specifically Transylvania), and parts of Germany (see “A faith that could not be contained,” pp. 19–23). Within a century English Puritans would carry the Reformed faith to the New World.

This expansion was not by any means solely the work of Geneva, nor solely John Calvin’s movement. It flowed from the work of many individuals, chief among them Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531) and Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575) in Zurich, Johannes Oecolampadius (1482–1531) in Basel, Martin Bucer (1491–1551) in Strasbourg, and, much later, Francis

HOME AWAY FROM HOME Left: Calvin eventually transformed Geneva, his adopted hometown (seen here defeating an attack by the Catholic Duke of Savoy in 1602).

STAY JUST A LITTLE BIT LONGER Right: Guillaume Farel, excited to meet the author of the *Institutes*, succeeded in convincing Calvin to remain in and reform Geneva.

Turretin (1623–1687) and Benedict Pictet (1655–1724) in Geneva. But Calvin formed a central part of its spread. To understand his life, we need first to understand the European reformations occurring by the time he was a teenage boy.

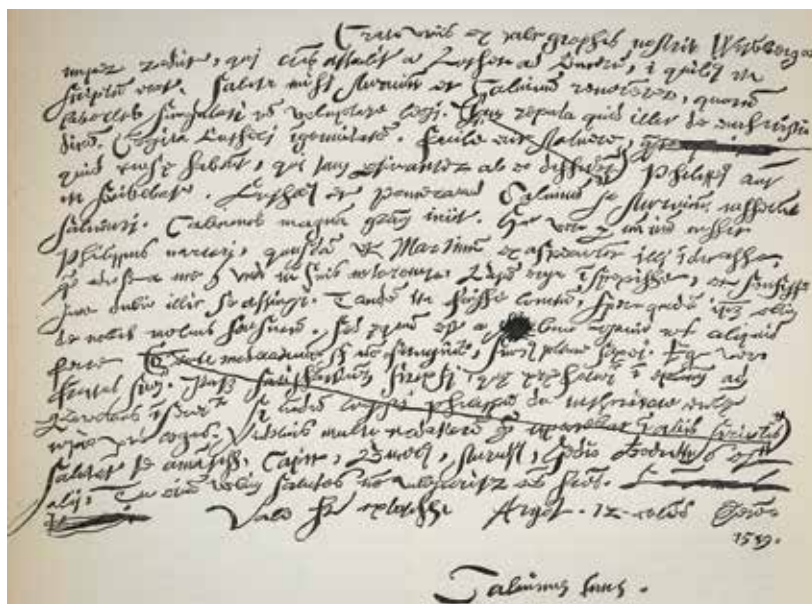
WHICH REFORMATION?

Why the plural “reformations”? Various efforts at reforming the church were going on simultaneously by the mid-1520s and early 1530s, some from within the Catholic Church (*more on that in issue 122—Editors*).

When people think of the Reformation, they think almost instantly of Martin Luther and his posting of the 95 *Theses* on the door of All Saints Church in Wittenberg. But there were others. Around the same time, Zwingli, serving as a priest in Zurich, was working earnestly to purify worship in the Swiss Confederation, having also come to understand (independently of Luther) the gospel of God’s free grace and the doctrine of justification by faith alone which we all associate with Luther and Lutheranism.

Likewise there arose in places like Zurich and Wittenberg other rival movements, or clusters of related movements, which were thorns in the sides of Luther and Zwingli: they were known as Anabaptists (see CH 118).

France was not immune to these ideas. There individuals working for change within the Catholic Church



"IF SUCH MODERATION DO NOT AFFECT US, WE ARE STONES" In a 1539 letter from Calvin to a colleague, he admires Luther for respecting him despite disagreements.

of Meaux, after the town where they met and of which Briçonnet eventually became bishop.

When Luther's writings began to pour into France in the late 1510s, the Circle of Meaux was ready to grab hold of Reformation ideas. Luther's *The Freedom of a Christian, An Open Letter to the German Nobility*, and *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (all published in 1520) spread rapidly and were widely read. Reading Luther became harder after 1521 when he was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church, but it was still possible.

Now inspired by Luther, members of the Circle of Meaux, particularly Jacques Lefèvre, began to translate the Bible into French. His New Testament was published in Paris in 1523 and distributed by Briçonnet and others. In 1535 Pierre Robert Olivétan produced a translation of the whole Bible in French.

Most members of the Circle of Meaux were Catholic and remained Catholic all their lives. But they were Catholics keen to work for the reform of their church and, as such, tended to exhibit concerns for matters similar to the Wittenberg and Zurich reformations. They were critical of the buying of indulgences and the manner in which the sacraments were practiced, of superstitious devotions, and of the moral failings of the clergy and church. They also urged new understandings of the doctrine of justification, the nature of faith, and the purity of devotion.

From 1520 onward their words turned harsher, with more intense and unrelenting criticism leveled at the pope and Roman Catholic bishops. With this harsher turn, divisions began to appear. Essentially three groups emerged: reformist clergy like Bishop Briçonnet, who wanted to see moral change but worked for little else; a group that favored evangelical ideas but stopped short of taking a hard-line stance; and evangelicals such as Farel who decided that devotion to the Christian gospel required separation from the traditional church.

Both Calvin and Beza were born into this France, and Calvin may have been linked with this third group as a young man. It was certainly the group that sided with him and Beza from the 1540s onward.

A "SUDDEN CONVERSION"

John Calvin was born in 1509 outside Paris, in Noyon in Picardy. As a young man, he studied at the Collège de la Marche, in Paris. It is believed that, after completing his coursework there, he entered the Collège de Montaigu.

represented yet another reform movement in Europe, referred to broadly as "French evangelicalism." Out of this movement arose Calvin, Beza, and other important Genevan reformers like Guillaume Farel (1489–1565) who would eventually persuade Calvin to make his home in Geneva (see "The king, the emperor, and the theologians," pp. 48–52).

EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN

These French reformers found their roots in the Italian Renaissance, a recovery of ancient art and culture that swept across southern Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It featured thinkers and artists like Petrarch (1304–1374), Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375), Lorenzo Valla (1407–1457), and Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494). As a result Europeans began drinking from the fresh springs of ancient Greek and Roman thought with renewed vigor.

This enthusiasm for ancient authors and ideas moved north in the early sixteenth century with Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536) and Rudolph Agricola (1443–1485) and made its way into France, where thinkers like Guillaume Budé (1467–1540) picked it up. Budé applied the new rigorous methods of study shaped and honed by Italian humanists to investigating things like antique coinage and to legal history.

But humanism did not stop with coins and laws. With an eye on reforming the French church, a group of influential French scholars and churchmen headed by Farel, Guillaume Briçonnet (1472–1534), Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (1455–1536), Josse van Clichtove (1472–1543), and Gérard Roussel (1500–1550) gathered together, excited to apply these new methods to studying the Bible and the writings of the early church. The group was called the Circle

SUNDAY SCHOOL IN THE 16TH CENTURY *Below: Calvin composed this catechism "for instructing children in Christianity in the manner of a dialogue."*

His travels during the mid-1520s took him from the University of Paris to the University of Orléans, to the University of Bourges, and back to the Collège Royal in Paris—due, in part, to his changing his course of studies, at his father's request, from theology to law.

During these years Calvin developed an interest in Renaissance humanism, which led to his writing one of his first works in 1532, a commentary on *De Clementia* (*On Clemency*) by the Roman philosopher Seneca. Calvin effectively published this book with his own money, which ended up being something of a disaster. He was unable to recoup his losses and was embarrassed by the poor response his commentary received.

But the future course of Calvin's life would not revolve around Seneca. At some point around this time, Calvin experienced an important alteration of his religious views. An unresolvable enigma remains surrounding the timing, the character of, and the influences upon his conversion away from Roman Catholicism. It has been subjected to painstaking study with surprisingly little to show for it.

Calvin wrote extensively, but little about himself. He wrote massive numbers of texts, letters, sermons, and lectures, many of which were published in 59 enormous volumes in the nineteenth century. In all those 59 enormous volumes, only two provide moments of possible autobiography, and one of them is disputed. It seems he was not much interested in leaving behind his own story.

But Calvin's preface to his commentary on the Psalms is unambiguously autobiographical. Written in 1556 it recounts events that took place approximately 30 years earlier. By the time he wrote this preface, he had become internationally renowned, loved and hated by many. It is impossible to imagine how this might have affected the contents of this preface. But, for good or ill, it is all we have from his own pen.

In it, he describes himself as having experienced a "sudden conversion." This experience (*subita conversio* in Latin) has been interpreted by some to mean that he had a Damascus Road conversion like the apostle Paul. But most scholars now do not think that.

Rather his language almost certainly means that he found himself suddenly or surprisingly open to new thinking; open to strains of thought to which

Pastor of Geneva

Calvin was pushed into becoming a pastor one fine day in 1536 by Guillaume Farel. Why did Farel take an interest in this 27-year-old lawyer, humanist, and self-taught theologian? Because for some months, the cultured public could speak of nothing other than Calvin's *Christianae religionis institutio* (1536), what we call in English the *Institutes*.

That first stay in Geneva ended unfortunately; the government drove Calvin and Farel out at Easter 1538. Calvin went to Strasbourg, where Martin Bucer asked him to take care of a community of French-speaking Protestant refugees and to teach at the Strasbourg academy. There he acquired experience in the pastoral ministry, the catechism, and the liturgy.

During his exile, the situation in Geneva bordered on anarchy; in 1540, an official delegation begged Calvin to come back. Reluctantly, he and his new wife, Idelette, returned to Geneva in September 1541, intending to spend a few months, just enough time to put the affairs of the church in order.

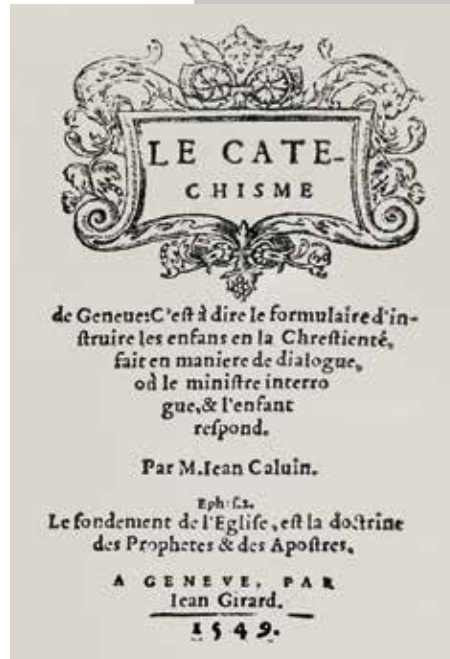
Soon the government adopted Calvin's *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*. In the city's three churches, preaching sounded forth every day of the week (twice on Sunday) with sermons lasting for more than an hour. Eighteen pastors from Geneva and surrounding parishes formed a high-caliber "Pastors Company" that wielded considerable influence.

Calvin and fellow pastors administered baptism and Communion; presided over marriages (which took place during ordinary services); and managed public charity. They participated with church elders in the

meetings of the renowned Consistory, which gathered every Thursday to censure, even excommunicate, believers guilty of offenses against Reformed morality or doctrine.

Calvin also provided pastors with *The Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (1542). It enabled pastors to teach the basics of the Reformed faith by means of questions and answers. Memorized by children at school, repeated and explained before the whole community on Sunday, it became a key element in the formation of the faith of Reformed believers for nearly two centuries. The same year, Calvin composed a liturgy, the *Form of Church Prayers and Hymns*, and introduced the public singing of the Psalms. The Psalter became the heart of Reformed piety.

Exhausted by illness, Calvin passed away May 27, 1564. He died as poor as he had lived, without any other title than that of pastor. —Dr. Olivier Fatio, professor of the history of Christianity at the University of Geneva and founder of the International Museum of the Reformation. This article is adapted from CH 12.





AN UNFORGETTABLE FACE Left: Here is a portrait of Calvin by Titian (c. 1488–1576), one of the 16th-c.’s most important painters...

THIS WILL BE ON THE TEST Below: ... and here is a portrait of Calvin by one of his students doodling in the margin during a lecture in Geneva.

Intending to stay only one night in Geneva, Calvin was reluctant, but Farel was persistent, if unorthodox in his methods. He famously swore a curse on Calvin if he were to depart and go off to read books in a library in Basel (which apparently was Calvin’s plan). The rest, as they say, is history. Calvin stayed and, apart from being expelled for a brief period (1538–1541), remained in Geneva the rest of his life.

“THE COMMON CAUSE OF ALL THE GODLY”

In Geneva Calvin lived the life of a busy pastor (see sidebar, p. 9). He preached on average more than 200 times a year during his more than 30-year ministry. This still, rather amazingly, gave him time to produce new editions of his *Institutes* as well as many other works.

Calvin was prolific and, in both French and Latin,

proved to be a clear and passionate writer. In total he produced five major Latin revisions of his most famous work, the *Institutes* (1536, 1539, 1554, 1550 and 1559; see p. 18 for an excerpt). There was no French translation of the 1536 Latin edition, but the later editions were translated into French, the definitive one in 1560.

The work as published in 1536 consists of six chapters, which discuss the law (*de lege*), faith (*de fide*), prayer (*de oratione*), the sacraments (*de sacramentis*), the five false Catholic sacraments (*quo sacramenta . . . reliqua*), and Christian freedom (*de libertate Christiana*).

The work also concludes with a brief examination of the nature of government and the office of the civil magistrate. The structure has been linked with Martin Luther’s *Small Catechism* of 1529.

The *Institutes*, it has been argued, is a theological work with a political subplot—a position that garners some support from Calvin’s preface to his commentary on the Psalms. In it he claims that he wrote the *Institutes* to explain to the French king, Francis I, the true character of the faith of those the king had put to death in 1534 in an attempt to rid France of heretical groups.

Calvin wished in his *Institutes* to show the French king that French evangelicals posed no threat to the religious and civil order of the realm. In fact he included in every edition a prefatory letter addressed to the king and defending his movement:

he had previously closed his mind. It is doubtful that he suddenly converted wholesale to “Protestantism” (a label that would have been unknown to him at that time).

Whatever happened, it led to the events of All Saints’ Day in 1533. On that day Calvin’s friend, Nicolas Cop (1501–1540), the rector of the University of Paris, delivered an address at the commencement of the academic year that roused suspicion because of its “Lutheran” themes (a generic term for heresy).

King Francis I responded to the incident by attempting to round up everyone in the city associated with “Lutheranism,” including Calvin. In response not only Cop, but also Calvin and numerous others, fled Paris. One story goes that Calvin escaped the day after the lecture by climbing out a window on knotted bedsheets, then disguising himself as a vine dresser and walking out of the city with a hoe slung over his shoulder.

Calvin wandered around various parts of Europe before arriving in Geneva in July of 1536. There he found Farel, a fellow expatriate and preacher who had recently read the newly published first edition of Calvin’s short theological handbook, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. When Farel learned that the author of this latest publishing sensation was in his city, he went to Calvin’s dwellings and urged him to stay and help with reform efforts.



MAMA SAYS On her deathbed, Idelette Calvin entrusted her children to God. When John said he would care for them, she replied, "I know that you would not neglect that which you know has been entrusted to God."

Let it not be imagined that I am here framing my own private defense, with the view of obtaining a safe return to my native land. Though I cherish towards it the feelings which become me as a man, still, as matters now are, I can be absent from it without regret.

The cause which I plead is the common cause of all the godly, and therefore the very cause of Christ—a cause which, throughout your realm, now lies, as it were, in despair, torn and trampled upon in all kinds of ways. . . .

Your duty, most serene Prince, is, not to shut either your ears or mind against a cause involving such mighty interests as these: how the glory of God is to be maintained on the earth inviolate, how the truth of God is to preserve its dignity, how the kingdom of Christ is to continue amongst us compact and secure. The cause is worthy of your ear, worthy of your investigation, worthy of your throne.

CHILDREN OF GENEVA

Calvin soon established Geneva as a major center for the Reformation, with compatriot Beza joining him in the city in 1558. But the period Calvin spent in the city was hardly an unbridled success.

After arriving in 1536, he quickly found himself on the wrong side of powerful families there who regarded him and Farel as foreigners (which they were) and disruptive (which they also were). Accordingly Calvin and Farel were expelled from Geneva on April 23, 1538. But many Genevans began almost immediately asking Calvin to return, which he did more than three years later on September 13, 1541.

But from 1541 until the summer of 1555, many of Calvin's plans for the city were foiled by enemies known as *les enfants de Genève*, or "the children of Geneva." (You can see a picture of Calvin famously refusing Communion to some of them on p. 14.) Finally in June of 1555, they rioted and were all either exiled or put to death.

A change in the character of the population made this turn of events possible. Due to many refugees moving from France to Geneva to escape persecution (just as Calvin himself had done earlier), Geneva was, by the early-to-mid 1550s, populated by many supporters of reform, who purchased citizenship and ended up obtaining voting rights (see "Religion of the refugees," p. 13).

With these enemies gone, Calvin began a more cooperative relationship with the Genevan Little

Seeking and finding

John Calvin knew what he wanted in a wife: "This only is the beauty that allures me: if she is chaste, if not too fussy or fastidious, if economical, if patient, if there is hope that she will be interested about my health." But after three potential engagements fell through, he wrote to Farel, "I have not found a wife and frequently hesitate as to whether I ought any more to seek one." When he stopped seeking, he found.

In his congregation of refugees in Strasbourg was a young widow, Idelette de Bure Stordeur. She, her husband, and their two children had come to Strasbourg as Anabaptists but converted to Reformed views. In early 1540 Jean Stordeur, stricken with plague, died. Idelette grieved the loss of her husband; John sorrowed for the loss of a friend.



Idelette was attractive and intelligent, apparently coming from an upper-middle-class background. She also possessed character and quiet strength. John soon penned another letter to Farel, asking him to come and perform a wedding ceremony in August 1540. John found Idelette to be "the faithful

helper of my ministry" and "the best companion of my life," but trials marked their short marriage.

First was an illness that kept them bedridden for the first weeks of marriage. Then Emperor Charles V called John away for several conferences to discuss how Protestants and Catholics might stop their bickering and form a united front against the menacing Turks. John and Idelette were separated for 32 of their first 45 weeks of marriage.

Then came an even greater challenge—the call to return to Geneva. Neither wanted to go, but the city council showered them with gifts: a new robe of fur-trimmed black velvet and a house overlooking the lake. They sent a herald and two-horse carriage to bring Idelette and her children from Strasbourg to Geneva, furnished the new home, and planted a vegetable garden. Idelette added herbs and flowers which scented the air and became a source of pride for John.

Their three children died prematurely. Then Idelette's physical problems worsened as coughing spells dragged her down. Yet she tried to keep John on an even keel; friends remarked he was in better control of his temper. She died in 1549 at age 40. On the day of her death, her serenity impressed John. "She suddenly cried out in such a way that all could see that her spirit had risen far above this world. These were her words, 'O glorious resurrection! O God of Abraham and of all of our fathers, the believers of all the ages have trusted on Thee and none of them have hoped in vain. And now I fix my hope on Thee.'"

John wrote to his friend Viret, "My grief is very heavy. My best life's companion has been taken from me. Whenever I faced serious difficulties she was ever ready to share with me, not only banishment and poverty, but even death itself." He never remarried. —William J. Petersen, retired senior editor at Revell Books. This article is adapted from CH 12.



SEAT OF POWER Calvin adopted the St. Pierre Cathedral as his preaching home: today it houses a Reformed church—as well as, to this day, Calvin's chair (*below*).

Consistory records range far and wide on religious and moral matters: for example, they record a woman who was asked “about frequenting of sermons, etc. [i.e., attending church], and about the child her son has had by her maid” and admitted that “she says the *Pater* [Lord’s Prayer] in the new Reformed manner, but does not know the *Credo* [creed]”; another woman who was “remanded as outside the faith”

Council (the main force in civil government). From that time onward he managed to build a city praised famously by John Knox (c. 1513–1572) as the “most perfect school of Christ since the time of the Apostles.”

With the *enfants* out of the way, Calvin and his fellow ministers, the Venerable Company of Pastors, could enforce Christian beliefs and practices within the city. This enforcement covered a much wider range than we could realistically imagine today.

They shaped everything from economic matters to legal, cultural, and educational regulations. Taverns were closed, though they were eventually reopened; most forms of dancing were forbidden. People could be, and were, put to death for everything from heresy to homosexuality, divorce, and witchcraft.

Of crucial importance to the work of the ministers was a quasireligious committee called the Consistory, made up of Christian ministers and of members of the civil government, with Calvin usually taking the helm. It served as a morals court for the city.

The Consistory heard cases involving Genevans of all social ranks, high and low, men and women. It dealt with marital disharmony, gambling, slander, adultery, murder, and anything else deemed to have breached the morals appropriate to a Christian commonwealth. It had the ability to dispense punishments of various kinds including excommunication, but it turned over anyone guilty of a capital crime to the civil government to be dealt with.

because she “did not want to renounce the Mass”; an unwed mother who “did not say her *Pater* well, and she goes to sermons on Monday and other days not”; and a man who was asked “about the wizard he had in his house and why.”



SERVING THE CHURCH OF GOD

The Consistory was considered so successful it ended up being imitated throughout France and elsewhere. Which brings us back to where our story began: with the sending out of missionaries from Geneva to the rest of Europe, forever linking Calvin’s name with the Reformed faith and building a world-transforming movement.

John Calvin died in Geneva in 1564, but his spiritual descendants number in the millions and hail from France, the British Isles, Eastern Europe, and everywhere his “missionaries” landed. In his *Institutes* he wrote, “Wherever we find the Word of God surely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there, it is not to be doubted, is a church of God.”

He would no doubt have considered hundreds of thousands of churches preaching the Word of God and administering the sacraments as a pretty good trade-off for listening to Farel and staying in Geneva, even though he didn’t get to read all the books he wanted in Basel. **■**

Jon Balserak is senior lecturer at the University of Bristol and author of John Calvin as Sixteenth-Century Prophet and Calvinism: A Very Short Introduction.

A very minor play from the 1590s about the life of Sir Thomas More has one not-so-minor part: a monologue Shakespeare may have penned about a 1517 event, but sounding ripped from today's headlines. In the play English rioters try to drive out French, Belgian, and Italian refugees, complaining that the strangers will "infect the city with the palsey" by importing their strange new diet (parsnips and pumpkins).

The character More responds: "Imagine that you see the wretched strangers, / Their babies at their backs and their poor luggage, / Plodding to the ports and coasts for transportation, / And that you sit as kings in your desires. . . . Go you to France or Flanders, / To any German province, to Spain or Portugal, / Nay, anywhere that not adheres to England, / Why, you must needs be strangers: would you be pleased / To find a nation of such barbarous temper, / That, breaking out in hideous violence, / Would not afford you an abode on earth?"

The sixteenth century was a century of refugees because it was (like most centuries) a century of war. Early modern rulers fought for personal glory and to forge territories into unified states. Their mercenary armies plundered and terrorized the civilian population, both to gain supplies and for the sheer fun of it.

Raging religious conflict caused trouble too. Rulers felt a duty to, at the very least, ensure the "right" form of public worship; at worst dissenters were hunted down and killed. Each new redrawing of the religious map prompted the flight of those who didn't want to live under the new regime. Anabaptists and other radicals were perpetual refugees, seeking a slightly less lethal place to live than the rest of Europe.

Next to Anabaptists the Reformed most frequently wound up as refugees; Lutherans often agreed to go along with prescribed forms of worship while maintaining "heretical" beliefs underground. Calvin, himself a refugee, condemned this approach as "Nicodemism" (after the member of the Sanhedrin who came to Jesus by night in John 3), saying that since the Mass is blasphemy, no true Christian could participate in it, however passively. As a result Geneva and other centers of "Calvinist" Protestantism filled with refugees.

At Geneva itself the leading group was, naturally, Calvin's French compatriots. But refugees from Queen



Reformation of the refugees

Mary's persecution of English Protestants also found their way to Geneva, with results that would shape internal English conflicts for more than a century.

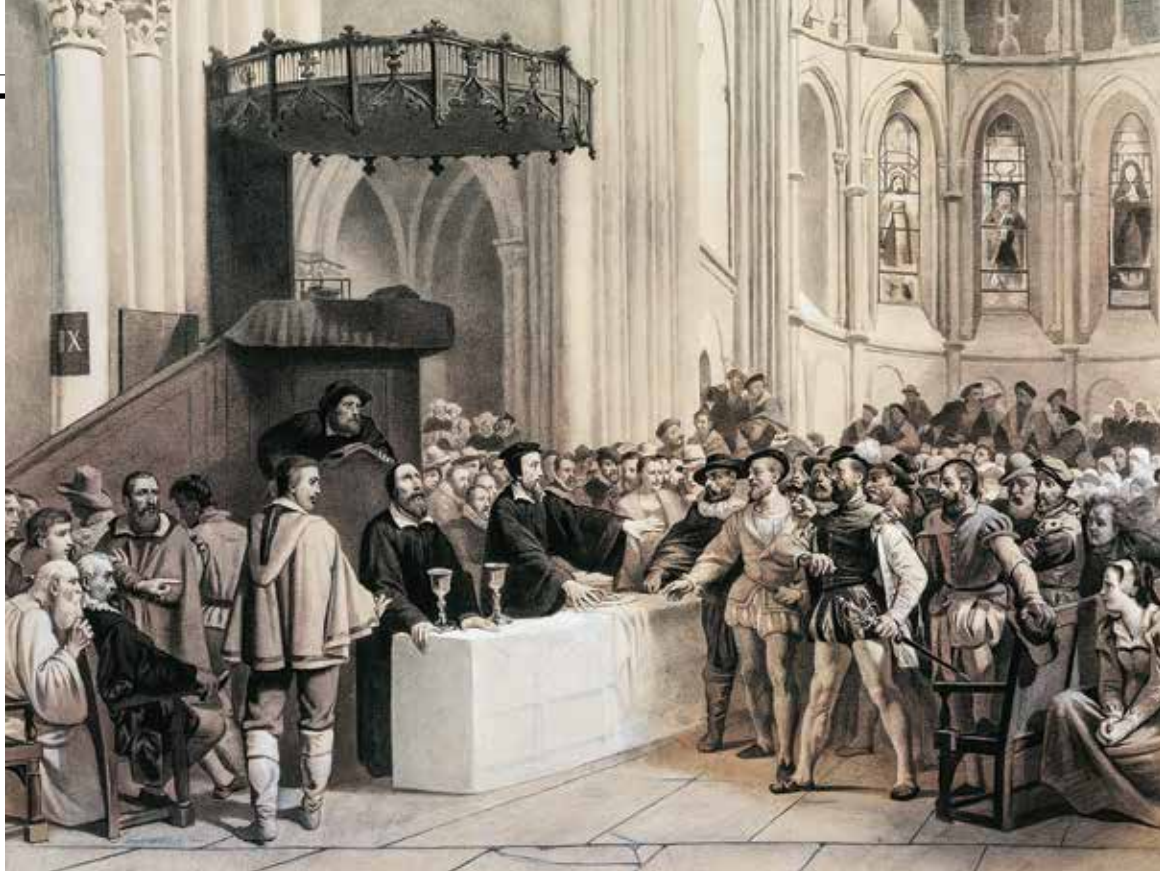
A FAITH THEY CHOSE

Some Lutherans did flee. In the shifting fortunes of German Protestantism, prominent pastors and theologians often left one now-hostile city and took up residence in a friendlier town. German Catholics also sometimes left cities where their religion was no longer openly practiced for one where it was welcomed.

But the most significant Catholic refugees were English. Most ordinary English Catholics simply became Anglicans, but a significant upper-class group became "recusants," refusing to participate in Anglican worship and sheltering "foreign" priests at the risk of their own lives. Many of these priests were actually young Englishmen. Convinced that the "old Religion" was the true one, they left England for shelter in Catholic territories, returning as hunted missionaries to minister to their native country.

Religious refugees, by definition, choose faith over geography. Most other people in the early modern world accepted, however reluctantly, the faith their communities held and the changes imposed by their rulers. Refugees pointed to a different understanding of religious identity: chosen, at great cost to oneself, rather than accepted from one's ancestors and shared with one's neighbors. Eventually the refugee tide flowed to the New World, where multiple denominations developed, enshrining that sense of personally chosen faith. We are all heirs of the refugees. —Edwin Woodruff Tait, contributing editor, *Christian History*

ARE WE SAFE YET? Above: Havens for Reformed refugees (besides Geneva) included Emden, Basel, Strasbourg, Zurich, Frankfurt, and this city, Neuchâtel.



United with Christ in eternity and at the table

CALVIN'S INFLUENTIAL THOUGHTS ON PREDESTINATION AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Raymond A. Blacketer

IF I SAY LUTHER, you say “95 Theses.” If I say Zwingli, you say “sausage in Lent.” And if I say Calvin, you say “predestination!” Predestination is a biblical theme and a perennial topic of Christian theology: how God’s sovereignty interacts with our free will. It was not something Calvin invented. Why has his name become so closely tied to the doctrine?

AMAZING GRACE, HOW SWEET THE SOUND. . .

Some theologians throughout church history, like Augustine, have considered salvation the work of God alone creating faith and spiritual rebirth in a person (scholars call this monergism). Others have contended that while God’s grace is available to all, it is up to the individual to make use of it by believing and living as a Christian (synergism). Some late medieval theologians, like Gabriel Biel (d. 1495), were synergists. In Biel’s view predestination is based on God’s foreknowledge of a person using God’s grace to the best of his or her ability. God elects (chooses for salvation) those whom he foresees will do their best.

NOT THIS TIME, FOLKS Calvin, here denying Communion to a group of “libertines,” thought it mocked God to share Communion with those who had committed grievous public sin.

Martin Luther saw this synergism as a form of the old heresy of Pelagius (c. 360–418). And Luther had other late medieval theologians on his side, as well as his Augustinian mentor, Johannes von Staupitz (1460–1524). They emphasized predestination as God’s determination to give people faith and salvation, based not on God’s foresight of one’s faith or merit, but grounded in God’s grace alone. Biel contended that people must make the most of what is in them; Luther countered that all that is in the sinful person is more sin.

Calvin falls squarely within the Augustinian camp. God’s unconditional election of people, not based on any foreseen faith or merit, means salvation is entirely gratuitous and faith a free gift of God. He makes the traditional Augustinian distinction between election (God choosing who will be saved)

CALVIN'S HOUSE MAY BE GONE.... *Right:* This Geneva memorial notes that Calvin's house was demolished in 1706.

BUT THE WORD ABIDES *Below:* This ornate Geneva Bible is bound with the Psalms.



and reprobation (God rejecting sinners who will not be saved). But to preserve both the goodness and justice of God, as well as the reality of human responsibility and free choice, Calvin needed to either leave certain questions in the realm of mystery (Lutherans commonly did this), or provide distinctions and nuances.

Calvin chose the latter course, and this made him a frequent target of criticism—especially regarding his doctrine of reprobation. But he saw predestination as an eminently practical doctrine that must be taught and preached as being of utmost comfort to the believer. He wrote, “We shall never be clearly persuaded . . . that our salvation flows from the wellspring of God’s free mercy until we come to know his eternal election, which illumines God’s grace by this contrast: that he does not indiscriminately adopt all into the hope of salvation but gives to some what he denies to others.”

Calvin did not deny that human beings make real choices. But he contended that the relatively free choices human beings make fall within the scope of God’s providence. Moreover, like Luther, he took seriously the bondage of the human will that results from sin. Human beings are not as free as they pridefully fancy themselves, because sin affects their desires and choices. If salvation depended on a person’s choice, none would be saved.



Yet Calvin also needed to make clear that God is not the author of sin. People sin freely and voluntarily subject themselves to a bondage from which they cannot escape.

THE SIN AND THE SINNER

Calvin wanted to affirm two biblical givens: that if a sinner is saved, it is solely because of God’s gracious election, and if a sinner is not saved, the only person to blame is the sinner. Calvin distinguished between reprobation and condemnation. He taught that God chooses whom he will elect to salvation and those whom he will leave in their sin (called the “reprobate,” that is, the rejected); but God does not condemn people because they are reprobate, but because they are sinners. Failure to understand this important nuance led many of Calvin’s opponents to conclude that his God was an unjust tyrant.

Calvin also distinguished between God’s eternal decree (the decision to elect some and reject others) and the execution of that decree in real time. God works out his eternal decree in genuine, cause-and-effect events and choices of the created world. Human beings make real choices, though sin limits the freedom of those choices, and in the elect the transforming power of the Holy Spirit motivates those choices.

Calvin warned against inquisitive speculation about God’s decree. One should not ask: why does God elect some and reject others? Or: what if I am one of the reprobate? Rather, one must look to Christ and his promises, and trust in Christ—which is far more reliable than trusting in one’s own decisions and one’s own wavering faith and efforts.



Criticism of his views drew Calvin into numerous controversies. Eventually he turned defense of the doctrine over to his trusted associate and eventual successor in Geneva, Theodore Beza (1519–1605), a gifted humanist scholar and poet whose theological and linguistic skills at least equaled Calvin's own.

JESUS IS HERE, BUT HOW?

What may surprise modern believers is that, in his own day, Calvin was just as engaged in controversies over the Eucharist, a hotly debated topic before and during the Reformation, as he was over predestination.

The dominant view inherited from the late Middle Ages was transubstantiation, Thomas Aquinas's theory that the elements of bread and wine are transformed in their *substance* into the body and blood of Christ, while still retaining the external properties (called accidents) of bread and wine, such as taste and appearance.

None of the Protestant reformers accepted this view, but their alternatives varied widely. Huldrych Zwingli saw the sacrament primarily as a mental exercise of memory, a badge of identity, and a moral imperative to live as a Christian. At the other extreme, Luther sought to preserve a form of the bodily presence of Christ in the Eucharist without resorting to transubstantiation.

Protestant unity was a major motivation for Calvin, and his position between these two camps shifted along with the prospects for unity. When he wanted to find common ground with the Lutherans, he emphasized the presence of Christ in the Supper as a means of grace. But when confessional divides between Lutherans and Reformed began to deepen, he turned toward Zurich.

Calvin and Zurich theologians led by Bullinger forged the *Zurich Consensus* in 1549, and for a while

NOT ALIKE Though Calvin and Luther are pictured together in this Reformation allegory, Calvin's views on the Lord's Supper differed from those of both Luther and Zwingli.

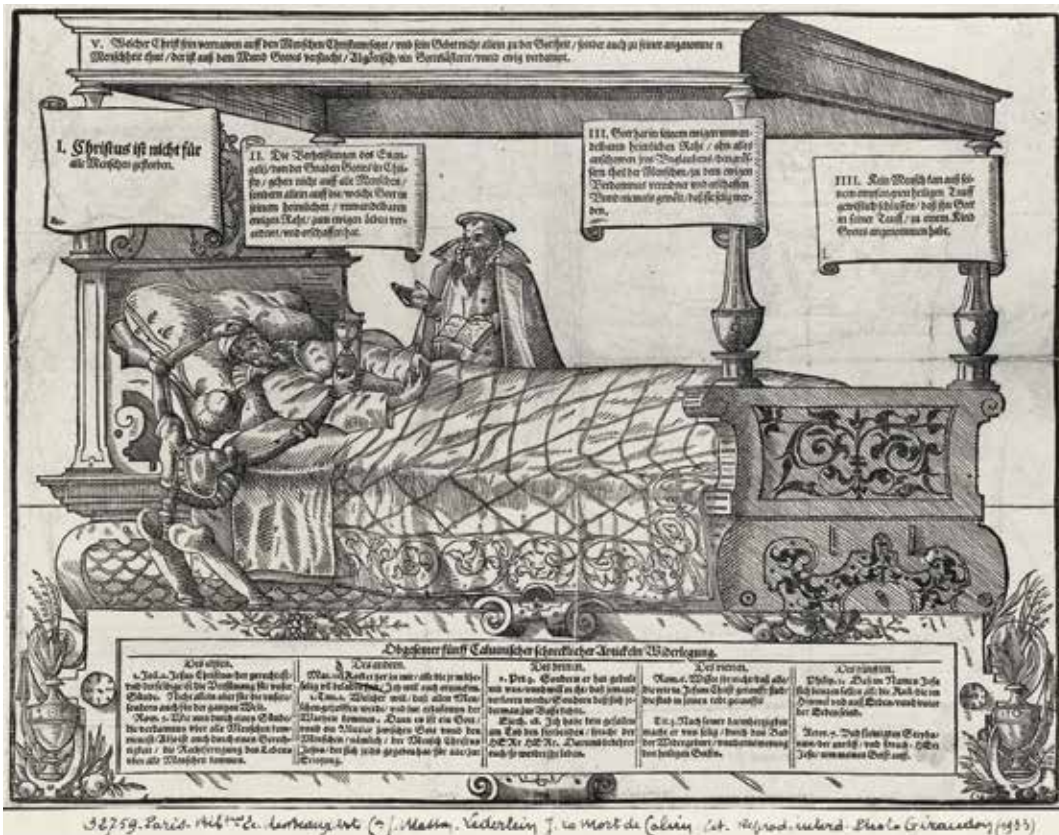
Calvin moved much closer to Zwinglian emphases. Yet, in his last years, he returned to his earlier perspective, coming closer to the Lutherans once again.

Calvin adopted Augustine's interpretation of a sacrament as "a visible sign of a sacred thing, or a visible form of an invisible grace." He denied that sacraments are effective automatically or by their own power. Sacraments, he agreed with Augustine, are "visible words," and their power comes not from the elements, but from the Word of God (rather than the words of consecration in the Mass) and from the Holy Spirit who creates the faith that receives God's Word and promises. The sacraments confirm and strengthen the preached Word and have no effect apart from that Word.

Influenced by Strasbourg theologian Martin Bucer, Calvin developed a perspective that affirmed the true presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Unlike Luther and the Roman Catholics, Calvin did not understand this presence as physical, but mediated through the Holy Spirit. But in contrast to Zwingli, it was not "spiritual" in a human-focused sense.

For Calvin Christ was personally and truly present in the Lord's Supper—but not in a bodily way, for his body remains in heaven at the Father's right hand. When not attempting to conciliate the Zurich reformers, Calvin emphasized the Supper as a means of grace, in which Christ is not only *represented*, but actually *presented* to believers. What one receives through the sacrament, from the Spirit, is Christ himself.

Crucial to Calvin's understanding is the *sursum corda* ("Lift up your hearts/We lift them up to the



Lord”), one of the most ancient pieces of Christian liturgy. For Calvin this implies that one should not seek Christ in the bread and wine; rather, the elements cause us to look to heaven, where the incarnate Christ is seated at the Father’s right hand. The sacrament is a “mystical blessing”: Christ is not dragged down to earth, but in a mysterious way, the Holy Spirit lifts believers up into heaven for Christ to feed their souls, just as bread and wine nourish their bodies.

FIRST, STUDY YOUR CATECHISM

Perhaps because Eucharistic controversies loomed so large in his day, Calvin interpreted Paul’s requirement that believers “discern the body” as having to do with Christ’s physical body or sacramental presence, rather than with discerning that the poor also belong to the body of Christ. Thus he rejected the early church practice of inviting baptized children to the Supper.

After centuries of the church neglecting to teach laypeople the Bible and sound doctrine, Calvin emphasized the importance of knowing what one is doing when one participates. To allow very young children to partake would be tantamount to feeding them poison, he asserted. Children, he argued, must learn the faith from a Reformed catechism and make a profession of faith around the age of 10.

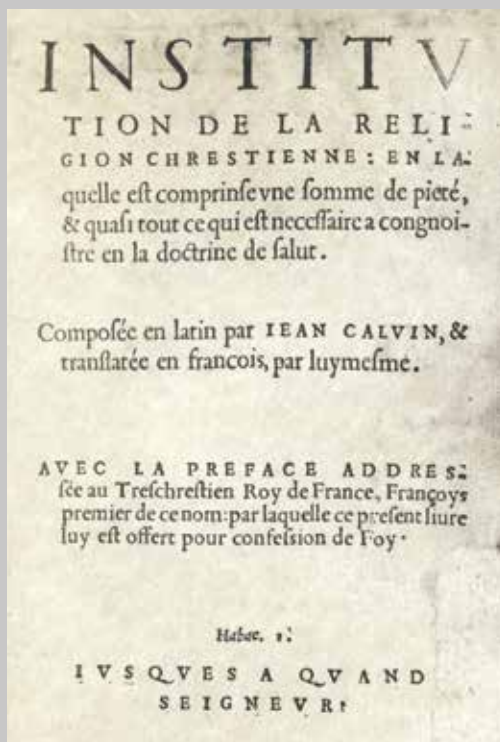
Because he thought that participation in the Lord’s Supper serves to strengthen a person’s faith and to bring him or her toward union with Christ,

BEGGING TO DIFFER In this anti-Calvinist poster, a Lutheran argues that Calvinism prevents looking to the cross and trusting Christ on one’s deathbed.

Calvin urged frequent (at least weekly) celebration of the sacrament. He condemned the medieval Roman Catholic practice of requiring participation only once per year. Calvin could not convince the Genevan authorities, however, who stipulated only quarterly celebration. The Lord’s Supper was, though, integral to the practice of church discipline in Geneva; the elders of the church had the duty to bar seriously erring people from the Lord’s Supper—but they were to do this primarily for the purpose of restoring such people to fellowship.

In the end, for Calvin, the Lord’s Supper was God’s gracious accommodation to our creaturely limitations and physical senses—pointing beyond this world, to the ascended Christ, who is not absent, but present with us; for when we receive the Supper in faith, he said, “we are truly made partakers of the proper substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ.” There, united with Christ by the Spirit, one could find comfort and rest in his promises. **■**

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Words to ponder from Calvin's *Institutes*

Our feeling of ignorance, vanity, want, weakness, in short, depravity and corruption, reminds us, that in the Lord, and none but He, dwell the true light of wisdom, solid virtue, exuberant goodness. We are accordingly urged by our own evil things to consider the good things of God; and, indeed, we cannot aspire to Him in earnest until we have begun to be displeased with ourselves. For what man is not disposed to rest in himself? Who, in fact, does not thus rest, so long as he is unknown to himself; that is, so long as he is contented with his own endowments, and unconscious or unmindful of his misery? Every person, therefore, on coming to the knowledge of himself, is not only urged to seek God, but is also led as by the hand to find him...

Man never attains to a true self-knowledge until he has previously contemplated the face of God, and come down after such contemplation to look into himself. For (such is our innate pride) we always seem to ourselves just, and upright, and wise, and holy, until we are convinced, by clear evidence, of our injustice, vileness, folly, and impurity.—Book 1, Chapter 1, “The Knowledge of God and of Ourselves Mutually Connected”

Whenver God is pleased to make way for his providence, he even in external matters so turns

A “SUMMARY OF SALVATION” The 1541 French edition of the *Institutes* was “composed in Latin by Jean Calvin, and translated into French, by himself.”

and bends the wills of men, that whatever the freedom of their choice may be, it is still subject to the disposal of God. That your mind depends more on the agency of God than the freedom of your own choice, daily experience teaches. Your judgment often fails, and in matters of no great difficulty, your courage flags; at other times, in matters of the greatest obscurity, the mode of explicating them at once suggests itself, while in matters of moment and danger, your mind rises superior to every difficulty.—Book 2, Chapter 4, “How God Works in the Hearts of Men”

Those whom the Lord has chosen and honoured ... must prepare for a hard, laborious, troubled life, a life full of many and various kinds of evils... Having begun this course with Christ the first-born, he continues it towards all his children... How powerfully should it soften the bitterness of the cross, to think that the more we are afflicted with adversity, the surer we are made of our fellowship with Christ; by communion with whom our sufferings are not only blessed to us, but tend greatly to the furtherance of our salvation.—Book 3, Chapter 8, “Of Bearing the Cross”

You may everywhere find, both from the decrees of synods, and from ancient writers, that whatever the church possessed, either in lands or in money, was the patrimony of the poor [i.e., was meant to be given to the poor]. Accordingly, the saying is ever and anon sounded in the ears of bishops and deacons, “Remember that you are not handling your own property, but that destined for the necessities of the poor; if you dishonestly conceal or dilapidate it, you will be guilty of blood.” Hence they are admonished to distribute them to those to whom they are due, with the greatest fear and reverence, as in the sight of God, without respect of persons.—Book 4, Chapter 4, “Of the State of the Primitive Church, and of the Government in Use Before the Papacy”

The office of the sacraments differs not from the word of God; and this is to hold forth and offer Christ to us, and, in him, the treasures of heavenly grace. They confer nothing, and avail nothing, if not received in faith, just as wine and oil, or any other liquor, however large the quantity which you pour out, will run away and perish unless there be an open vessel to receive it.—Book 4, Chapter 14, “Of the Sacraments”

These excerpts were translated by Henry Beveridge. For more on the Institutes, see issue 116, 25 Writings that Changed the Church and the World. It ranked #3 on our list.



A faith that could not be contained

HOW REFORMED CHRISTIANS SPREAD ACROSS A CONTINENT

Jennifer Powell McNutt

THE STORY OF CALVINISM'S emergence and the development of the Reformed tradition is forever tethered to Geneva. And yet Reformed Christianity in Europe reached well beyond those walls of refuge. Even the great reformer of Geneva, John Calvin, was not a Genevan himself, but a French refugee seeking asylum from persecution in his native country.

It is estimated that by 1600 around 10 million people worshiped in Reformed churches, a 2,000 percent increase in just 50 years. Established churches embraced the Reformed tradition in Scotland, England, Béarn (a self-governing province located in modern-day France), and about a dozen German principalities. The Reformed Church was privileged by the state in the United Provinces of the Netherlands, and tolerated churches grew in France, Hungary, Poland-Lithuania, and the Rhinelands, despite being a minority faith.

WE'RE DOING A LITTLE REDECORATING Reformed Christians ransack the churches of Lyon, France, in 1562 and remove Catholic religious images.

As the Protestant torch was passed to the second generation of leaders, the contribution of Reformed Christians to renewing the zeal and reach of the movement throughout Europe was unparalleled. That story is tied most of all to France.

THE SINGING PROTESTORS

Imagine standing in Paris before the royal palace at the Louvre in the year 1558, well before it was transformed into a museum. A crowd of four to five thousand people joins you. Their voices fill the space with the singing of the Psalms—a mark of both their Protestant conviction and their open defiance of royal policies against

the evangelical faith. The Psalms were the only songs sung in French Protestant congregations, and the earliest French martyrs had sung them as they were burned at the stake.

Day after day psalm-singers demonstrated. Soon the movement began to attract the support of powerful people, including Anthony of Navarre of the House of Bourbon (1518–1562), the highest-ranking noble in the land outside of the king's immediate family. Soon Protestant sympathizers surfaced even within the royal family and the Parlement of Paris (which, despite its name, was more like a supreme court).

The very next year, 1559, saw the historic meeting of the first national synod of the French Calvinist churches in Paris. Thanks to the foundational work of John Calvin, Theodore Beza, and Pierre Viret (see “Another accidental revolutionary,” pp. 8–15), the synod embraced the *Gallican Confession*, the official confession of the French Reformed Church.

And soon the French Reformers got another boost with the unexpected (and in their view providential) death of one of their chief persecutors, King Henri II. In a rare jousting accident, splinters from a lance lodged in Henri's brain. He was succeeded by his sickly 15-year-old son, Francis II, who *also* died unexpectedly of an ear infection on December 5, 1560. For French Protestants, called “Huguenots” by this time (see “Did you know?” inside front cover), the sudden death of two persecuting kings confirmed God's plan to establish his “true church” in France. With the nobility of France divided, it was only a matter of time before civil war erupted, known to history as the French Wars of Religion.



A KINGDOM, IF YOU CAN KEEP IT Above: Henri III of France designates the Protestant Henri of Navarre as his successor, though the future Henri IV (pictured on the coin at *left*) had to become Catholic to take his throne, famously saying “Paris is worth a Mass.”

A CHRISTMAS PRESENT



On Christmas 1560 the Reformed cause gained the public support of a noble figure who would prove to be key to Protestant advancement—Jeanne d'Albret, queen of Navarre (1528–1572), daughter of Marguerite d'Angouleme (Francis I's sister and Henri's widow). In 1562, after the death of her husband, Anthony, Queen Jeanne became the sole ruler of the principality of Béarn, just south of France in the Pyrenees Mountains.

There she began to abolish Catholicism in her kingdom, beginning with the turning over to the state of church property in 1566 and culminating with the abolition of the Mass in 1571. During the Third French Civil War of 1568, she herself victoriously led Huguenot troops at La Rochelle. A few years later, she presided over the Synod of La Rochelle where all the secular leaders of French Protestantism and their Dutch

allies gathered. It was this level of leadership that won her the unwavering support of Calvin, who heralded Queen Jeanne as “our Deborah” (a title similarly given to Protestant queen Elizabeth I of England).

Jeanne's son, Henri of Navarre (1553–1610), was crowned King Henri IV of France in 1572. Political intrigue famously forced him to renounce his Protestant convictions to assume the throne, but he nonetheless committed to ending France's religious wars, passing the Edict of Nantes in 1598 which granted Huguenots legal permission to practice their faith. Jeanne's daughter and Henri's sister, Catherine of Bourbon (1559–1604), also emerged as a Reformed leader of France among this new Protestant generation.

Thanks to the Bourbon family, French Protestantism had come a long way since its inception among a small circle of clerics and humanist scholars in Meaux, France, and had persisted despite the royal persecution following the 1534 “Placard Affair.” Even after the horrific massacre of roughly 20,000 Protestants throughout

EXCUSE ME? Below: In the “Placard Affair” of 1534, posters were put up throughout French cities denouncing the Mass. One even appeared on the king’s bedroom door.



France on St. Bartholomew’s Day 1572, Reformed Christians survived to reap the benefits of the Edict of Nantes—for a time.

Their churches thrived in what has been described as the “Huguenot crescent,” reaching from Poitou to Dauphiné and numbering just under one million members. They became increasingly reliant upon the leadership and support of Calvin’s Geneva over the course of the century. But they would face the greatest challenge to their survival in the 1600s, as French kings placed increasing restrictions on their freedom of worship. Though they could not imagine it as they sang their Psalms, in 1685 the Edict of Nantes would be revoked.

“GOD HELP US TELL THE STORY”

These Reformed communities of France were linked to the emergence of the Dutch Reformed tradition, which also developed despite heavy persecution. In 1523 monks at the Augustinian monastery in Antwerp were arrested for embracing Luther’s dangerous ideas; those who refused to recant were executed in Brussels that July and became the first martyrs of the Protestant Reformation. Luther wrote the first Reformation martyr hymn in their memory. It begins: “A new song be by us begun, / God help us tell the story, / To sing what our Lord God hath done . . . at Brussels in the Netherlands



PERMISSION SLIP Above: The Edict of Nantes gave French Protestants permission to practice their faith, but it didn’t last.

/ Hath He made known His wonders / Through two mere boys, right youthful lads. . .”

Many factors made the Netherlands receptive to the spread of the Reformation: similarities between Dutch and the Low German spoken in northern Germany, bustling trade networks, high literacy rates, and booming cities. Luther’s works were quickly translated into Dutch in greater quantities than anywhere else in Europe.

But under the ruthless repression of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (who also ruled Spain and the Netherlands) and his son Philip II, it took many decades for the evangelical movement to take hold. Scholar Philip Benedict once noted, “The Netherlands was one of the first parts of Europe to be touched by Protestantism but one of the last to witness the establishment of a Protestant church.” By 1555 the Netherlands had created more Reformation martyrs than any other country in Europe.



Protestants fled Hapsburg persecution and went abroad to Geneva, Strasbourg, Frankfurt, London, and Emden, embracing Reformed theology and church structures. Queen Elizabeth welcomed them in England, much to the consternation of Charles V. Secret Calvinist churches arose in the Dutch commercial areas of Amsterdam and Flanders; Antwerp became the southern center of the Dutch Reformed movement, and Emden was heralded as “Geneva of the north.”

Meanwhile French-speaking Walloon provinces located in the southern Netherlands were reading Calvin’s works in their original language and circulating large numbers of forbidden religious texts. French-speaking Guy de Bray (1522–1567) became known as the “Reformer of the Netherlands,” penning the *Belgic Confession* in 1561—modeled after the *Gallican Confession* of 1559—which is still the doctrinal standard of Dutch Reformed churches in Holland, Belgium, and America. (He supposedly threw a copy over a castle wall to get the Spanish government’s attention.)

But Dutch Protestants did not stop with writing, reading, and smuggling. In 1566, spurred on by the organization of the Dutch church (in synods, like France’s) as well as the departure from the Netherlands of Philip II and his Spanish army, the Dutch Revolt erupted in Antwerp. Shocking acts of iconoclasm devastated church structures and images throughout the city.

That year came to be known as the “Wonderyear” because of the establishment of religious freedom and



HUNGARIAN HAVEN Above: Debrecen (its Protestant “Great Church” is pictured here) became regarded as the eastern “Calvinist Rome,” and its school gained a reputation as the “Hungarian Geneva.”

DUTCH MUCH? Left: Dutch Reformed believers worship in Amsterdam.

Reformed practices. But this newfound freedom barely lasted the year. Philip regrouped, and his so-called Council of Blood condemned roughly 10,000 people to death for Protestant and anti-Spanish sympathies, though perhaps only about 1,000 sentences were carried out.

Choosing exile over martyrdom, many Dutch Reformed communities continued to fight against persecution. Dutch Reformed Church order and liturgical practices were confirmed at the Synod of Emden in 1571. Meanwhile Dutch prince William of Orange defended the Protestant cause against Philip from the sea—stealing Spanish commerce, seizing coastal cities, and attacking Spanish fleets.

He successfully brought Spain to the brink of recession, and in 1581 seven territories of the Netherlands separated from Spanish rule and became the United Provinces or the Dutch Republic. Not until the end of the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648) and the Treaty of Westphalia would this republic finally be recognized and the Reformed Church made the state-supported church of the region.

WATCH OUT FOR THOSE CALVINISTS

In the Holy Roman Empire itself, Charles V had his hands full from the very first day of his rule with the political and religious turmoil unleashed in the empire by Martin Luther’s actions. Often bound to appease the Lutheran loyalties of certain key princes (see “From Luther to the Lutherans,” pp. 34–38), he could not



KNEEL HERE *Left:* This painting shows the Dutch being oppressed by Spanish Catholic Duke of Alba, who ruled the “Blood Council.”

I’VE BEEN EVERYWHERE, MAN *Below:* John a Lasco’s life and ministry embodies how Calvinism touched a whole network of churches and communities throughout Europe.



implement in German lands the level of persecution he had begun in the Netherlands.

In 1555 Charles passed the famous Peace of Augsburg before abdicating his throne to his brother. That peace legally permitted the existence of Lutherans and Roman Catholics, but excluded both radical reformers and the Reformed faith now sweeping Europe. There was much concern that “crypto-Calvinists,” or Lutherans with Calvinist sympathies, were lurking in every region. As in Holland it was not until the Peace of Westphalia (1648) that Calvinist communities and rulers in the Holy Roman Empire were officially recognized and legally protected.

But in 1561 Reformed Christianity in the Holy Roman Empire gained a prominent supporter: the elector of Palatine, Frederick III (1515–1576), who chose to accept the Reformed faith. Nicknamed “The Pious” he commissioned Reformed professors of theology at the University of Heidelberg to write a catechism to establish a common identity for the churches within his region. Heidelberg would become one of the most important education centers for Reformed pastors, next to Geneva’s Academy. And, in 1563, the *Heidelberg Catechism* was born and became one of the most widely embraced confessional statements of the Reformed Church throughout the world (see “God our only comfort,” pp. 39).

THE CHURCH OF THE STRANGERS

In the case of Eastern Europe, it was not a ruler but a battle that paved the way; the Battle of Mohacs (1526),

where the Ottoman Empire defeated the Hungarian monarchy and Hungarian Catholics, allowed the Reformed faith to take hold in Hungary and Transylvania in the late 1550s.

Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575), Zwingli’s successor in Zurich, was particularly instrumental in guiding the Hungarian church, which eagerly embraced Calvin’s catechism, along with Bullinger’s *Second Helvetic Confession* (1566) and the *Heidelberg Catechism*. Reformed churches in Slavic and Hungarian regions often owed their existence to local reformations supported by the nobility.

One such nobleman and reformer was John a Lasco (1499–1560), Polish born but a far-ranging traveler. He helped preserve and form the Reformed identity of East Friesland in the Holy Roman Empire and served as the foreign superintendent of French and Dutch refugee churches located in London—united under the name “Church of the Strangers” as the first church ever organized in England outside of normal parish structures.

Called back to Poland in 1556, Lasco encouraged the growth of Calvinism there among the middling nobility. He died in January 1560, supposedly whispering the words “My Lord and my God” and slipping away as the evening sun sank over the city of Kaliz. ☞

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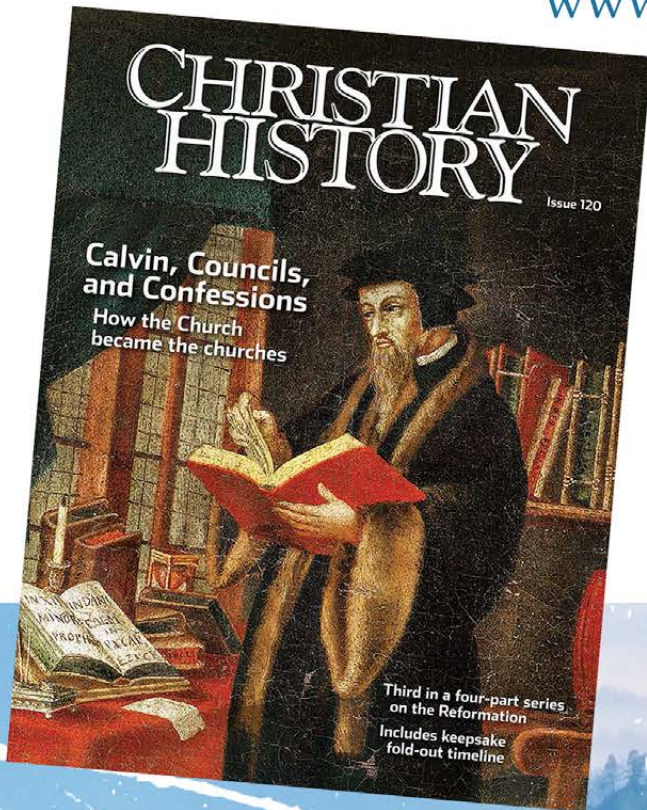
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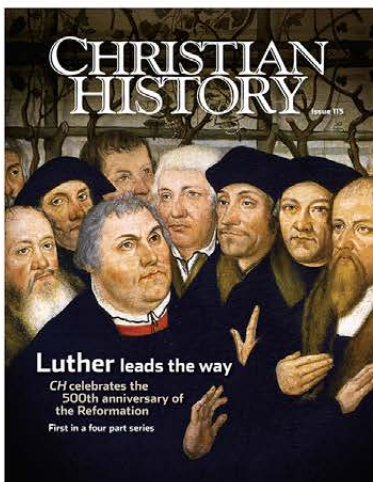
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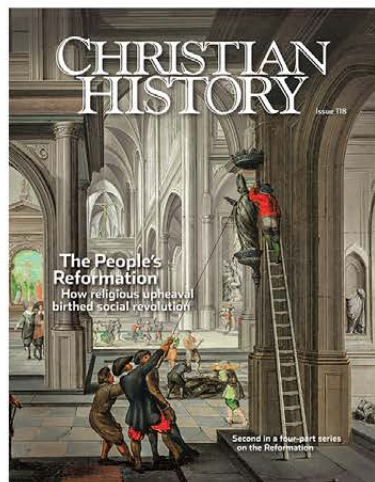
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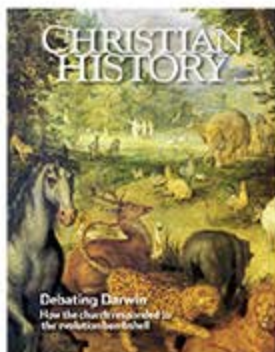
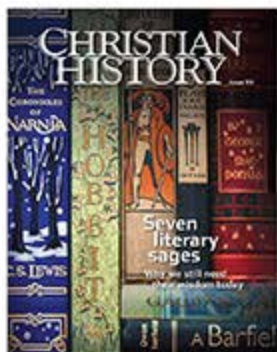
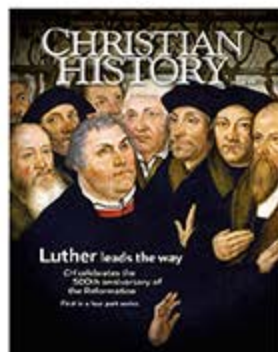
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THE DELIVERY OF THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION, 26TH JUNE 1530, 1617 (OIL ON PANEL), GERMAN SCHOOL, (17TH CENTURY) / GEORGENKIRCHE, EISENACH, GERMANY / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

From Luther to the Lutherans

HOW A DYNAMIC REFORM MOVEMENT BECAME A TERRITORIAL CHURCH

David M. Whitford

IN 1717 a Wittenberg homeowner had a carved stone in the wall of his house restored for the 200th anniversary of the Reformation. It read, "God's Word and Luther's writings are poison to the pope and Calvin." It is ironic that two centuries after the Reformation began, Luther's followers would be lumping Calvinism with Catholicism as his two greatest enemies. For in 1546, as Luther lay on his deathbed, both he and his allies were primarily concerned with Roman Catholic opposition.

After Luther's death the movement he began came increasingly under attack from external threats and internal division that nearly spelled the end of it completely. It would take almost 30 years for it to recapture its vitality and cohesion. Meanwhile the followers of Calvin grew into an international Protestant movement, overshadowing Luther's. Why?

WHO'S NEXT?

When Luther was laid to rest in the Castle Church of Wittenberg in the winter of 1546, there was no clear

SPECIAL DELIVERY German Protestant princes present the Augsburg Confession to Charles V in 1530. But that was far from the end of the "Luther Affair."

successor to step into his place. He was, as the men who eulogized him noted, a colossus, a modern-day Elijah, the successor to Old Testament prophets, and the fulfillment of a fateful prophecy given by Jan Hus at his martyrdom that someone would rise up a century later to vanquish papal idolatry. Not an easy act to follow.

Philip Melancthon was Luther's most gifted theological ally and a skilled teacher whose students were often devoted to him, but not the kind of man to lead movements. Almost 20 years before Luther's death, when called upon to quickly write what has come to be called the Augsburg Confession, he had been equal to the task. Then, too, Luther's movement had been in peril, and he had answered the call with grace and brilliance. But time would prove him an unlikely successor.

When Emperor Charles V attacked pro-Lutheran principalities in the Holy Roman Empire in the late 1540s, Melanchthon attempted to steer Luther's movement through the violent storm. As the emperor pledged to wipe Luther and his followers from the map and from history, Melanchthon defended the Lutheran cause again. After all, he thought, the emperor was limited in power and scope.

But all soon changed in the months following Luther's death. First Charles V placed an imperial ban on Lutheran prince John Frederick, using a squabble between him and another imperial noble as a pretext. He also placed a ban on the other great Protestant prince, Philipp of Hesse, but this ban called for the death penalty; Philipp had been caught red-handed in a bigamous marriage (which he had entered into with the consent of both Luther and Melanchthon), and the penalty for bigamy was death. Thus the two greatest Protestant princes were in grave danger, and their Lutheran subjects shared their fate.

Then Charles V managed to bribe one of the other Protestant princes—Maurice of Saxony—to flip sides. Maurice came to the emperor's side not for religious reasons but for dynastic ones. His cousin, John Frederick, held an influential, monetarily significant, and very prestigious imperial office that Maurice's side of the family had coveted for more than a century. Charles promised it to him if he helped attack his cousin's lands.

And so, in April 1547, Charles and Maurice attacked. John Frederick and Philipp of Hesse were caught off-guard by Maurice's turn of allegiance, and their lines quickly collapsed. It was a rout, and John Frederick and Philipp were soon in the emperor's hands.

NO, REALLY, WE STILL BELIEVE ALL OF IT

Within months Charles V called an imperial diet to finally put an end to what he had long called the "Luther Affair." Luther was dead and all his political allies were either defeated, in prison, or in hiding. Those who could attend the diet (or parliament) in 1548 found themselves in a city surrounded by the emperor's army. It was nicknamed the "Armed Diet." The emperor demanded almost the complete abandonment of all of Luther's reforms.

Melanchthon and some of those still in Wittenberg tried to find a way to appease the emperor and still maintain the essential kernels of Luther's theology. Melanchthon argued that what the emperor demanded amounted to nothing more than outward changes—like the return to priestly vestments instead of the black academic gown, which Protestants had adopted for



AYE, AYE, SIR Melanchthon (right) came to Wittenberg just months after Luther first posted the 95 Theses and served Luther's cause for over 40 years.

presiding at worship and is often called today a "pulpit robe."

This compromise made sense on some of the disputed issues, but others seemed to gut Luther's theology at its core. The emperor's demands required that churches reaffirm transubstantiation and rejected the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

Melanchthon continued to seek ways to appease the emperor and still save Luther's cause, but others were less willing to compromise. Some refused outright and were imprisoned. Others fled, like Martin Bucer, who left Strasbourg and went to Cambridge to teach.

Some of Melanchthon's students realized he was working to maintain Luther's theological commitments and to defend his legacy. Others saw him as a sellout. Luther's allies soon divided into two main camps—Philippists (supporters of Melanchthon) and so-called Gnesio-Lutherans, or True-Lutherans. A pamphlet war between the two sides erupted denouncing each other for betraying Luther.

The Gnesio-Lutherans also pointed their pens at the emperor, denouncing him for good measure and arguing that he ought to be resisted by force. Opposition began to center over time on a single city that steadfastly resisted the emperor's demands and Maurice's armies: Magdeburg.

The city of Magdeburg, downstream from Wittenberg, was one of the largest cities in northern Germany. It had large fortified walls and was protected by muddy fens and heath on the approach, with its back walls facing the river. The land around the city made it hard to bring siege works or the new weapon of the age—cannons—close enough to the city for a successful siege.



IF THIS IS TUESDAY, I MUST BE PROTESTANT Maurice of Saxony switched allegiance twice during the 16th-c.'s religious and dynastic struggles.

counted on Philipp being condemned to death. (He was not executed; in fact, he was released in 1552.)

Before the emperor's defeat of Philipp of Hesse and John Frederick, they had arguably been the two greatest lords in the empire, a check to the emperor's power and ambition. With them out of the picture, the unfettered emperor was now free to do more than bother Lutherans.

Maurice was also being treated as a traitor both in his own lands and in new lands he had gained by defeating John Frederick. And so, in January 1552, he flipped his allegiance *again* and signed a treaty with the French king to attack Charles V and his brother King Ferdinand.

Charles and Ferdinand were shocked by this sudden double-cross; Charles actually had to flee through an alpine pass to escape. But the imperial armies regrouped and killed Maurice in a counterattack. Despite this loss the Protestant side was still able to bring Charles V to the negotiating table, and in August 1552 the decrees implemented at the Armed Diet were suspended until the terms of a more permanent peace could be worked out.

"WHOSE REIGN—HIS RELIGION"

That final peace between the Holy Roman Emperor and his Protestant princes was approved in 1555, at another diet held in Augsburg. The so-called Peace of Augsburg established that whoever ruled a particular imperial jurisdiction (or state) would determine its religious disposition. If you lived in Saxony and your lord was Lutheran, you were a Lutheran and Lutheranism was the official religion of the entire duchy. If you lived in a Roman Catholic region like Bavaria, you were Roman Catholic. The official designation of this was *cuius regio, eius religio*—"whose reign, his religion."

This settled, at least until the early part of the seventeenth century, the battles between Roman Catholics and Lutherans in Germany. It also meant that the religious borders between Lutheran lands and Catholic lands hardened. Protestant evangelism in Catholic lands largely came to an end.

The unforeseen consequence of this was that Lutheranism did not really grow after the Peace of Augsburg. An occasional duke or count converted (one, Gebhard Truchsess von Waldburg of Cologne, even converted to Calvinism—which created another set of issues), but for the most part, the religious frontiers in the empire were settled.

While nobles and princes had fought two wars and negotiated a political peace, the theological rift

The river *also* supplied the city with necessary provisions and a way to distribute printed pamphlets across the empire. The most important pamphlet to be snuck out on a small boat was the Magdeburg Confession (1550), a reiteration of Luther's core beliefs and a theological defense of the right of cities and princes to resist the emperor.

The city became a rallying point for opposition to both the emperor and Melanchthon. What happened there was watched with intense interest as far away as Geneva and London. After a fruitless siege, Duke Maurice—now awarded his cousin's former title and much of his land—entered into an agreement with the city. Magdeburg could maintain the essentials of Luther's theology in exchange for surrendering to Maurice on behalf of the emperor.

FAMILY FEUD

Maurice had gained all that he had hoped for in betraying his cousin—who was also, incidentally, his father-in-law. Maurice's wife, Agnes, whom he married without either set of parents' permission and with whom he remained deeply in love, was Philipp of Hesse's first-born child by Philipp's discarded first wife. Angered by her father's bigamy, Agnes agreed to Maurice's plans to attack him and John Frederick. But neither Maurice nor Agnes had counted on the very harsh conditions under which the emperor held both princes. Nor had they



between those who had sided with Philip Melanchthon and those who had opposed him remained. In some respects, the establishment of a political peace made the theological divisions more apparent. What did it mean to be Lutheran? That was the question.

NO DEALS WITH THE DEVIL

No theologian or pastor sets out to be a heretic or proclaim false doctrine. Arians and orthodox believers who fought at the Council of Nicaea were both trying to be as faithful to scriptural testimony about Jesus as they could. Heresy is the child of sincerity, passion, and stubbornness. The same might be said for the fights over the legacy of Martin Luther.

The opening clash was the contest to preserve the very legacy of Luther's work and the protection of any future the movement might have. Melanchthon, as we have noted, believed that preserving Luther's legacy meant accommodating the dictates of the Armed Diet and the victorious emperor.

He feared that if he did not find some compromise, all Luther's work would simply be swept into the dustbin of church history, a footnote in a long line of heretics. He might have asked "When was the last time you saw an Albigensian church on a corner?" There are none, because they were defeated and hunted, and their doctrines were wiped away. He feared the same might happen to Luther.

NOT PEACE, BUT A SWORD? This famous tapestry shows Luther pointing at Christ from the pulpit in the presence of John Frederick and other German nobles.

Those who opposed Melanchthon believed that his compromises had already destroyed all that Luther had worked for. When did Luther compromise when the Gospel was at stake? Was not Melanchthon, they argued, calling for compromise with the same emperor whom Luther had stood before and uttered, "Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God"? One does not make deals with the devil.

This clash, however, was a mere prelude. Within just a few years, an old debate that dated back to the early years of the Reformation reignited. What role do good works play in salvation? Luther tried to steer clear of antinomianism, the doctrine that performing works after salvation does not matter. Melanchthon had even written at one point that such works are essential. Luther made him back away from such language, but after the Armed Diet, Melanchthon revived it.

Others responded by claiming that good works are completely useless. Condemnations and recriminations flew back and forth. One prominent theologian was forced to publicly recant his position. While attempting to defend Luther or his theology, other pastors and theologians found themselves saying



things they probably regretted later; but most were too stubborn or angry to retract.

In a debate over good works and salvation, for example, one defender uttered in anger that original sin became, in the Fall, humanity's essential nature: the Fall did not just corrupt human nature or foul it, but completely changed its very core. That was a position outside of Christian orthodoxy.

Another author claimed that humanity plays no part in salvation. On one level, that was entirely consistent with Luther's understanding of forensic justification: something that is declared by God, not earned by a person. Luther argued that we do good works not to earn salvation, but because we are saved.

However, in a debate, a former colleague of Luther's ended up saying that only the divine nature of Christ plays a role in salvation: despite what centuries of orthodox theology stated, Christ's becoming human has nothing to do with it. People in the room gasped. In a letter later, Melanchthon chided the author: what of the suffering of Christ on the cross?

DELIVERED FROM THEOLOGY AT LAST


Melanchthon died in April 1560. Always a bit melodramatic, he had expected his death a number of times before, but this time seemed different. In the days prior, still conscious that fear of death might be used to undermine his and Luther's legacy, he wrote a short testament to his faith. At the end he thanked God that death would at last deliver him from the "madness of theologians."

By the late 1560s, many of the other partisans of these debates were either dead, mellowed, or marginalized. A new generation of Lutheran princes had also risen to leadership, less dedicated to the fights of the past than their fathers and more interested in unifying their lands and their churches. The *Formula of Concord* began

SUNRISE AND SUNSET In this city of Wittenberg, Luther launched a movement and Melanchthon died in its service.

to take shape in the 1570s. It was an attempt to state unequivocally the essentials of Lutheran orthodoxy. The product of slow, meticulous work, it made declarations about all of the theological topics that had been so vigorously debated, but now with an air of compromise, an attempt to see a larger picture rather than fight about the tiny spaces at the margins of doctrines.

After the *Formula* was agreed to, it was collected with a set of creeds and statements of faith into the *Book of Concord*. The *Book of Concord* opens with three ecumenical creeds—the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed—and also contains the *Augsburg Confession*, Luther's *Short and Long Catechisms*, and a number of other foundational Lutheran treatises. It was printed in German in 1580, the fiftieth anniversary of the *Augsburg Confession*. A Latin edition was printed four years later. Both pastors and synods, and princes and lords approved and adopted it. This gave it tremendous authority. It remains in effect for most Lutheran churches to this day.

Even so Lutheranism did not grow. At least not much beyond Germany and Scandinavia, until Lutherans began to immigrate to the American colonies and South America. Henry Melchior Muhlenberg is often considered the first official Lutheran pastor in North America, arriving in 1742. There Lutheranism would put down new roots and find new life. But that is another story. 

David M. Whitford is professor of Reformation studies at Baylor University and author of A Reformation Life: The European Reformation through the Eyes of Philipp of Hesse.

God our only comfort: German confessions

The Book of Concord (1580) collected a number of Lutheran confessions into one authoritative spot. Here is the editors' explanation of its content.

We believe, teach, and confess that the sole rule and standard according to which all dogmas together with [all] teachers should be estimated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament alone, as it is written Ps. 119:105: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." And St. Paul: "Though an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, let him be accursed," Gal. 1:8. Other writings, however, of ancient or modern teachers, whatever name they bear, must not be regarded as equal to the Holy Scriptures, but all of them together be subjected to them, and should not be received otherwise or further than as witnesses. . . .

And because directly after the times of the apostles, and even while they were still living, false teachers and heretics arose . . . brief, succinct confessions, were composed against them in the early Church, which were regarded as the unanimous, universal Christian faith and confession of the orthodox and true Church, namely, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. We pledge ourselves to them, and hereby reject all heresies and dogmas which, contrary to them, have been introduced into the Church of God.

As to the schisms in matters of faith, however, which have occurred in our time, we regard as the unanimous consensus and declaration of our Christian faith and confession (especially against the Papacy and its false worship, idolatry, superstition, and against other sects) as the symbol [creed] of our time, the First, Unaltered Augsburg Confession, delivered to the



Emperor Charles V at Augsburg in the year 1530, in the great Diet, together with its Apology, and the Articles composed at Smalcald in the year 1537, and subscribed at that time by the chief theologians.

And because such matters concern also the laity and the salvation of their souls, we also confess the Small and Large Catechisms of Dr. Luther, as they are included in Luther's works, as the Bible of the laity, wherein everything is comprised which is treated at greater length in Holy Scripture, and is necessary for a Christian man to know for his salvation. . . .

The Holy Scriptures alone remain the only judge, rule, and standard, according to which, as the only test-stone, all dogmas shall and must be discerned and judged, as to whether they are good or evil, right or wrong. —Translated by W. H. T. Dau and G. F. Bente

German Calvinists had their own confession, the Heidelberg Catechism (1563). It famously begins:

Q. What is thy only comfort in life and in death?

A. That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ, who with His precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins, and redeemed me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me, that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must work together for my salvation. Wherefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me heartily willing and ready henceforth to live unto Him. —Translator unknown, printed as "The Received American Version, 1771" in Phillip Schaff's *The Creeds of Christendom* (1899)

SETTING IT STRAIGHT Above right: The *Book of Concord's* title page claims that it explains points "which after Dr. Martin Luther's blessed death were the subject of controversy."

HERE'S THE SYLLABUS Above center: The *Heidelberg Catechism* was commissioned for religious instruction by Frederick III, a German prince who supported Calvinism.



From turmoil to peace

HOW MENNO SIMONS AND PILGRAM MARPECK GUIDED ANABAPTISTS THROUGH TROUBLED TIMES

Mary S. Sprunger

IN 1536, when Menno Simons (c. 1496–1561) became an Anabaptist, he joined a movement in peril. Almost all of its initial leaders were dead, either by disease (Conrad Grebel) or execution (Felix Manz, Michael Sattler, Hans Hut, Hans Denck, Balthasar Hubmaier, Georg Blaurock, Jakob Hutter). Melchior Hoffman (1495–1533), the leader responsible for introducing Anabaptism to the Low Countries (modern Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg), was in prison, discredited for prophecies that had not come true.

NO NEW JERUSALEM FOR NOW

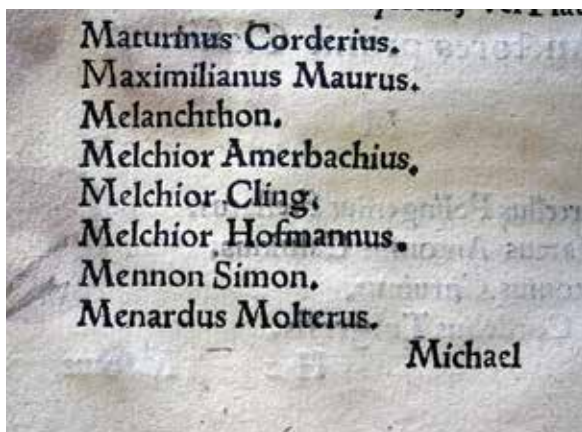
A 1534 coup in Münster had inspired some followers and established Anabaptist political and religious control, but it also terrified most observers, who now saw all Anabaptists as threats to law and order. Münster's collapse in 1535 put the movement under further stress. Even groups who avoided all violence and political power were considered guilty by association. Persecution intensified everywhere.

In southern Germany, Switzerland, and Austria, places—like Strasbourg—that had provided some

PREACHING PEACE Menno's message would live on in people like this 17th-c. Dutch Mennonite preacher and his wife, Cornelius and Geertgen Anso.

haven to religious dissenters now implemented harsher measures against Anabaptists. In addition Anabaptists were divided among themselves on theological and ecclesiastical issues. In the Low Countries, those who survived Münster suffered extreme disappointment; their promised New Jerusalem had come to naught. David Joris (1501–1556), a Dutch Anabaptist leader claiming to be a prophet and a third David, advised dissenters to stay under the radar with public conformity and compromise.

At this critical juncture, two reformers provided leadership: Menno in the Netherlands, and further south in Strasbourg and Augsburg, Pilgram Marpeck (c. 1495–1556). Both emphasized nonviolence, the role of community, and adherence to Scripture as guiding principles. Both were also passionately Christ-centered, but their different understandings of Christology led to two distinct visions for the church.



CHANGED CATHOLIC *Right:* Many Anabaptists came to their beliefs via other reform strains. But Menno (whose name appears on a Catholic list of prohibited books with Melanchthon and Melchior Hoffman, *above*) experienced gradual change while a Catholic parish priest in his hometown, Witmarsum, Friesland.

Menno was already 40 years old when he broke with the establishment and became an Anabaptist fugitive. But his convictions about true faith had been growing for years as a Catholic priest. By his own account, Menno was a mediocre priest. He was skeptical about transubstantiation, but chalked that up to his lackluster faith and did not concern himself with the religious reform sweeping through Europe. Rather, he wrote in a later memoir, he and clergy colleagues spent time “emptily in playing [cards] together, drinking and in diversions as, alas, is the fashion . . . of such useless people.”

Eventually Menno began to study the New Testament for the first time in his life, alongside the writings of Martin Luther, and he became convinced that transubstantiation is unscriptural. As he continued to learn directly from the Bible, Menno became an increasingly popular preacher.

Meanwhile in 1530 Melchior Hoffman had baptized 300 converts in Emden, and Anabaptism was spreading in the Low Countries. When in 1531 an Anabaptist tailor, Sicke Freerks, was beheaded in Leeuwarden, not far from Menno’s home in Witmarsum, Menno was intrigued: “It sounded very strange to me to hear of a second baptism. I examined the Scriptures diligently and pondered them earnestly, but could find no report of infant baptism.”

He searched the writings of the church fathers and contemporary reformers, becoming certain that infant baptism is contrary to the Word and intention of God. Nevertheless he failed to put his new conviction into practice: “Although I had now acquired considerable knowledge of the Scriptures, yet I wasted that knowledge through the lusts of my youth in an impure,



sensual, unprofitable life and sought nothing but gain, ease, favor of men, splendor, name and fame . . .”

“BLOOD ON MY HEART”

A shocking event closer to home pushed him to act. In 1535 several hundred Anabaptists, led by an envoy from Münster, attacked and occupied a Cistercian monastery seven miles from Menno’s parish. The Frisian magistrate’s army defeated and killed most of them a week later. Guilt gripped Menno. Why had he been too cowardly to try to channel the zeal of these Christians toward peace before it was too late? He wrote,

After this had transpired, the blood of these people, although misled, fell so hot on my heart that I could not stand it, nor find rest in my soul. . . . These zealous children, although in error, willingly gave their lives and their estates for their doctrine and faith. . . . But I myself was continuing in my comfortable life and acknowledged abominations simply in order that I might enjoy physical comfort and escape the cross of Christ.

Silent no more, Menno began preaching what he truly believed; by 1536 he had left his parish and position, and soon underwent adult baptism and ordination as an Anabaptist elder. Bringing leadership



TUMULTUOUS TRIO An 18th-c. artist imagined Menno between Luther (left) and Calvin (right).

to a fragmented, despised, and demoralized movement became his second calling, which he attacked more passionately than his first career. Though an outlaw Menno traveled widely in northern Europe—from Amsterdam to Cologne to Gdansk—preaching, baptizing, debating, and writing. One sixteenth-century martyrology describes him as one who “drew, turned, and won to God a great number of men, from dark and erring popery; yea, from the dumb idols, to the living God.”

This success put a substantial price on Menno’s head—100 guilders, to be exact: “Envious men thirsted with such exceeding tyranny and great bitterness for his blood and sought and persecuted him unto death, yet the Almighty God preserved him, and most miraculously protected him from the designs of all his enemies.” At Wüstenfeld in northern Germany, Menno finally found refuge in his old age and set up his own printing press on the estate of a sympathetic noble.

THE DEATH OF THE CHILDREN OF PEACE

Some of his associates were not as fortunate. One man suffered execution on the wheel in 1539 for sheltering Menno in his home. In 1546 authorities confiscated a house whose owner had secretly rented a room to Menno’s “poor sick wife [Gertrude] and her little ones.” And in 1549 Elisabeth Dirks, arrested on suspicion of being Menno’s wife (she wasn’t), endured imprisonment, inquisition, torture, and finally death. Menno felt these losses deeply: coupled with firm pacifist convictions, they led him to a passionate theology of suffering.

Following Christ’s example, he wrote, believers must be prepared to suffer arrest, torture, and even death rather than use violence in self-defense. But that did not

Holland and Friesland (now a Dutch province). Menno was planning to distribute some of these himself.

What did authorities fear inside the covers of these books? Menno described his followers as different from violent Münsterites: “The regenerated do not go to war, nor engage in strife. They are children of peace who have beaten their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning forks.”

He denounced forced community of goods, which had been practiced at Münster and seemed to threaten the social order, but he advocated responsibility and love in economic as well as spiritual matters. He sought religious authority in Scripture alone, emphasizing the teachings and example of Jesus and rejecting prophecies made by Münsterite leaders and by his rival David Joris, who claimed new insights and inspiration from the Holy Spirit.

A major theme of Menno’s writings is the new birth, or regeneration. To commit to Christ is to become a new person required to imitate Christ as much as humanly possible. He became famous among later Mennonites for a statement that reads in part, “True evangelical faith . . . cannot lie dormant. . . . It clothes the naked, it feeds the hungry, it comforts the sorrowful, it shelters the destitute, it serves those that harm it . . . it binds up that which is wounded . . . it has become all things to all people.”

In his later writings, Menno became increasingly concerned with a pure church “without spot and wrinkle” and insisted on strict discipline—banning wayward members from participation in the Lord’s Supper and even excommunicating and shunning them (avoiding all contact, including business, family, and marital relations; some Amish groups still practice this today). Controversy over shunning came to a head



during Menno's lifetime, and Dutch Anabaptists split into two factions, the first of many schisms to come.

TWO VISIONS OF ONE CHURCH

Why such a harsh stance? Influenced like all Dutch Anabaptists by Melchior Hoffman, Menno embraced Hoffman's view, rejected by most Christians today, that Mary contributed nothing to Christ's humanity and acted only as a vessel for the pregnancy (based on an understanding of human reproduction derived from Aristotle in which the woman's "seed" is completely passive). Menno wrote, "The entire Christ Jesus, both God and man, man and God, has his origin in heaven and not on earth." This emphasizes the purity of believers, who are wed to Christ: the church as the Body of Christ participates in Christ's divine perfection. There is no room for sinners.

In contrast stood Pilgram Marpeck, an Anabaptist leader who by profession was an engineer and civil servant in Strasbourg, Augsburg, and elsewhere—moving from place to place as necessitated by banishments or danger. He led Anabaptist groups wherever he was, participating in the conversation among Anabaptists and other reformers. Like Menno (and unlike most first-generation Anabaptists), he died a natural death.

Marpeck, like Menno, was a strong advocate for peace and rejected the spiritualism of contemporaries like Caspar Schwenckfeld (1489–1561), who minimized the need for external ordinances like baptism or the Lord's Supper. Marpeck countered that believers need to be part of a community bound by love. The invisible and visible church are inseparably linked, just as are Christ's two natures, divine and human. To be a true disciple of Christ requires a complete inner change, a



LOST LEADER Above: The title page of a rare manuscript discovered in the 1950s which collects writings of Marpeck and his followers.

CALLED TO COMMUNITY Left: Anabaptists worship together.

fundamental conversion; it happens only through the grace of God, but the vehicles for grace are tangible practices like baptism and Communion.

But Marpeck had a deeper appreciation for human limitation than Menno. He walked a middle road between harsh legalism and an anything-goes spiritualism: the community of the faithful keeps one another accountable to standards of behavior and belief, but errs on the side of love. Rather than a church without spot and wrinkle, the church should be a place where committed Christians grow closer to God and more Christ-like in their practice of love.

Though Menno lends his name to mainstream North American Mennonites in the twenty-first century, their theology most closely resembles Marpeck's. Yet his writings and leadership failed to leave a visible tradition. In fact his importance as a theologian and leader has only recently been brought out of obscurity. Menno became the namesake for many Anabaptists, who survived into the seventeenth century and beyond, yet his vision of a pure church is today practiced mostly by the Amish and other conservative groups. Nevertheless his message of peace and discipleship continues to speak across time and space. ☐

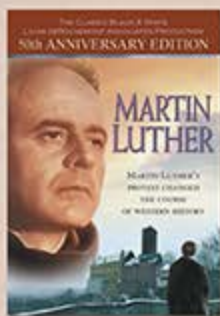
Mary S. Sprunger is professor of history at Eastern Mennonite University, author of numerous articles on Mennonite history, and coauthor with Piet Visser of Menno Simons: Places, Portraits and Progeny.

REFORMERS who CHANGED the World

Martin Luther

Here is the dramatic black-and-white classic film of Martin Luther's life made in the 1950s. This film was originally released in theaters worldwide and nominated for an Academy Award. It is a magnificent depiction of Luther and the forces at work in the surrounding society that resulted in his historic reforming efforts. The film traces Martin Luther's life from a guilt-burdened monk to his eventual break with the Roman Church. In spite of its age, this film continues to be a popular resource to introduce Martin Luther's life. This special fiftieth anniversary edition includes "The making of," biographies of the actors, and a full-color tour of Luther sites. Drama, 105 minutes.

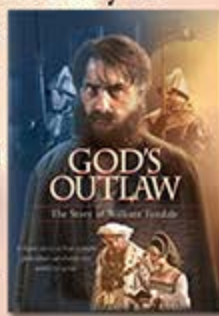
DVD - #4623D, \$14.99 SALE! \$8.99



God's Outlaw: The Story of William Tyndale

A true story, *God's Outlaw* is about international politics, church intrigue, cold-blooded betrayal, and false justice ending in a criminal's death. But it's also about victorious faith and spiritual triumph over some of the greatest political and religious forces known in the sixteenth century. A simple, God-seeking man, William Tyndale somehow became one of the most wanted men in England and all of Europe. Pursued by King Henry VIII and Sir Thomas More, Tyndale darted across Europe to avoid capture, always pushing to complete the task that obsessed him—to translate the Bible into English and publish it for his fellow countrymen. Starring Roger Rees. Drama, 93 minutes.

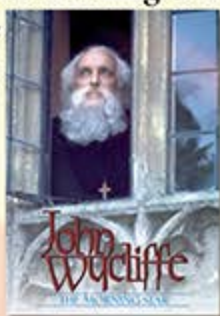
DVD - #4737D, \$14.99 SALE! \$11.99



John Wycliffe: The Morning Star

John Wycliffe is a dramatic biography of the life of the fourteenth-century scholar and cleric who translated the Bible into English for the first time. Wycliffe found himself in the middle of religious, political, and social conflicts. An Oxford scholar, one of Europe's most renowned philosophers, he was a defender of English nationalism against the power of the pope and a champion of the poor against the injustices of the rich. John Wycliffe taught that God's forgiveness cannot be bought with indulgences. He preached that the only true authority is the Word of God, and the Word could only be understood by all if the people could read it in their native tongue. *John Wycliffe* captures the trials and heroic struggles of this significant man of faith—the "Morning Star" of the Reformation. Drama, 75 minutes.

DVD - #4808D, \$14.99 SALE! \$11.99



Wesley: A Heart Transformed Can Change the World

Step into eighteenth-century England and experience the transformation of one man, whose heart-wrenching search for peace haunts him even as he pours himself into a life of service and evangelism. This feature film, based on the personal diaries of John Wesley, tells a story that reads like a Hollywood screenplay—house fire, near shipwreck on the high seas, adventure in a new world, and ill-fated romance! Uncover Wesley's spiritual struggle and renewal as never before. Directed by the Reverend John Jackman, this feature-length film stars Burgess Jenkins, June Lockhart, Kevin McCarthy, R. Keith Harris, and Carrie Anne Hunt. Drama, 117 minutes.

DVD - #501370D, \$19.99 SALE! \$14.99



John Hus

Here is an important chapter in the steps leading up to the Reformation. The history books make little mention of this Bohemian priest and scholar who lived 100 years before Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation. Yet John Hus was convinced and taught openly that the Bible should be presented in the language of the people, that salvation comes by faith in Jesus Christ, and that the Word of God is the final authority. Intrigue and false promises weave a powerful story of this man's commitment to faith in Jesus Christ. He was summoned to the Council of Constance and promised safety, but he was betrayed. In the end, Hus was accused, imprisoned, and charged with heresy. Ultimately, he was condemned and burned at the stake as a heretic. Drama, 55 minutes.

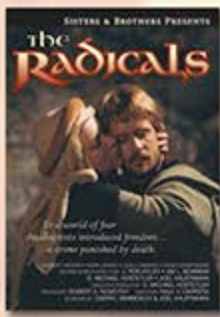
DVD - #4783D, \$14.99 SALE! \$7.99



The Radicals

The year is 1525. Michael and Margaretha Sattler have fled their religious orders. Their quest: to restore the church to the purity of its early days when communities of believers practiced peace, compassion, and sacrificial love. The Sattlers join a group called the Anabaptists and together challenge the thousand-year control of the church by the state. They call for baptism to once again become, not a mark of citizenship, but an adult and voluntary decision to follow Christ. As their movement grows, so does the determination of their enemies to stop them...by any means necessary. In 1527 Michael is burned at the stake and Margaretha is drowned. But their movement survives and today is carried on by Mennonites, Mennonite Brethren, Brethren in Christ, Hutterites, and Amish. Viewer discretion advised. Drama, 99 minutes.

DVD - #4804D, \$19.99 SALE! \$12.99



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The rest of the story

THE REFORMATION IN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND TOOK TWO VERY DIFFERENT PATHS

Calvin Lane

AFTER LUTHER and others burst onto the scene in the late 1510s, the next decades witnessed division upon division. But the second half of the century demanded clarity. If we asked a sixteenth-century believer what it meant to be a Calvinist, the answer would easily come back: to accept the 1561 *Belgic Confession* (see “A faith that could not be contained,” pp. 19–23). To be a Lutheran? To accept the 1580 *Book of Concord* (1580; see “God our only comfort,” p. 39). “Confessionalization” is how scholars refer to the process by which major reformers composed summary statements of Christian belief, and individuals and communities rallied around them: the denominations we know today resulted from this process.

But what about England? Can the question be answered so easily there? There has long been a pervasive sense that England’s reformation was the exception; that the sixteenth-century Church of England was more accommodating and less doctrinally concerned than other Protestant bodies. The narrative usually runs that after heady experiments with Reformed Protestantism

NO COMPROMISE John Knox’s fiery preaching (here at St. Andrews in 1559) made him the principal player in the Scottish reformation of the 1560s.

in the short reign of the boy king Edward VI (1537–1553) followed by the Catholic reaction of Queen Mary (1516–1558), Elizabeth Tudor (1533–1603) settled her kingdom and church along a balanced *via media*, a tolerant middle way incorporating the best of both Reformed and Catholic worlds. But there is much more to the story.

WE’RE REFORMED TOO

Elizabethan England had, broadly speaking, a Reformed church. Most official Church of England doctrinal statements (the 39 *Articles of Religion*, two *Books of Homilies*, and the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer*) generally harmonized with Reformed Protestantism. Unlike the Continent the English had bishops, but that didn’t necessarily disqualify them from being Reformed; Calvin, though he had no bishops himself, had said that bishops for



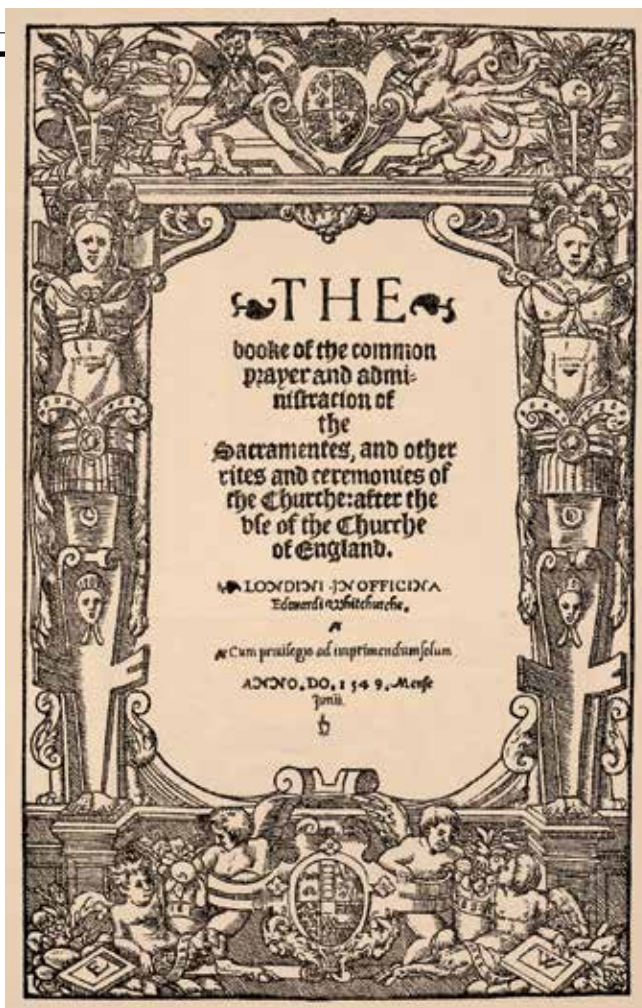
large territories might be expedient. During the reign of Elizabeth, Archbishop John Whitgift (c. 1530–1604) had his clergy read the solidly Reformed theology of Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575), Zwingli's successor. When the pace-setting Reformed Synod of Dort convened in 1618, representatives from the Church of England unsurprisingly took their rightful place at the table.

Yet, less than a hundred years after the Synod of Dort, the average member of the Church of England would perceive the English tradition to be distinct from continental Reformed churches, speaking of the English church as something exceptional. How did that happen? The root is worship.

BEGINNING TO PRAY LIKE PROTESTANTS

Issued in 1549 during the reign of Edward VI, the first edition of the *Book of Common Prayer* represented a seismic shift from the multiple medieval forms of the Mass. However it was still one step in a gradual approach; Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, a committed yet careful reformer, believed that change would be better accepted if achieved incrementally. While shrines were destroyed and religious imagery whitewashed, vestments and altars continued to exist.

But by 1552 a new edition of the prayer book made progress toward Reformed Protestantism clear for all to see. Ties between Cranmer and continental reformers like Martin Bucer and Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562) had deepened, and this second prayer book resembled the Swiss and South German Reformed tradition.



REFORMED, BUT NOT VERY MUCH Above: The 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* preserved distinct affinities with the Mass, including a “canon.” (The cover at left is from a later printing of Elizabeth’s 1559 edition.)

Instead of the “canon” (a lengthy, central prayer of consecration in the Eucharist), the minister simply told the narrative of the Last Supper, and then the people immediately received bread and wine in remembrance of the self-sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.

How people worshiped looked different too. The 1552 prayer book required clergy to wear only a surplice (a white gown). Other vestments were banished. A moveable wooden table replaced the stone altar; communicants knelt around the table to receive loaves of bread, not wafers, and to drink wine, not from a chalice, but from a deep cup.

However this program was derailed when the young king died, likely of tuberculosis, in 1553, and his older half-sister, Mary, became queen. She set to work reconciling England with the papacy and burning many Protestants who had not fled upon her succession, notably Cranmer in 1556. Death also cut short Mary’s reign, and thus Henry’s middle child, Elizabeth, became queen in 1558. Many who had fled Mary’s England returned home.

THIS CHURCH IS GIVING ME A HEADACHE Queen Elizabeth is pictured here shortly before her death.

During the reign of Edward, Cranmer had slowly dismantled Catholic England bit by bit. When Cranmer's exiled colleagues came home, they assumed this would continue: wearing a surplice, using a ring in marriage, and making the sign of the cross in baptism would soon be discontinued.

These returned exiles, however, were disappointed to learn that Elizabeth effectively froze the Edwardian project in amber. Her 1559 prayer book represents not a stepping stone, but a stopping point. In the generation afterward, those returned exiles continually, and unsuccessfully, lobbied for change—and the Puritan party emerged searching for a more “purified” church.

But even *this* isn't the end of the story.

KNOX: #1 FAN OF THE SWISS

Scots reformer John Knox (1513–1572) had proven a nuisance for Cranmer in the reign of Edward. Knox considered kneeling during Communion to be idolatrous, and he had sparked a debate about it. In response the English church issued a rubric explaining that kneeling meant “humble and grateful acknowledging of the benefits of Christ, given unto the worthy receiver” and intended no “Catholic” adoration of the bread and wine. Knox then found his way to Geneva where in 1558 he published a text aimed at Queen Mary, *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*. By the end of the year, however, his misogyny backfired: Elizabeth found the work deeply offensive, and Knox would never again be welcome in England.

Instead he wound up back home in Scotland. While England was developing a church actively led by bishops, with worship that left Reformed Protestants elsewhere unimpressed and whose center was the anointed monarch, further north in Scotland in 1559 Reformed Protestant energy exploded.

Within a year after Knox returned, the Scots parliament engineered an aggressively Reformed church called the “Scots Kirk” and outmaneuvered the politically inept Mary Stuart, queen of Scotland and a Catholic deeply wedded to foreign French politics. In 1567 she fled to England (only to be imprisoned by her cousin Elizabeth), and Scots Calvinists ruled in the name of her son, James VI.

Men like Knox and Andrew Melville (1545–1622), deeply enamored with continental Reformed churches, in some ways outpaced them. In 1561 the Scots Kirk abolished the “nonbiblical” feast of Christmas—a holiday still observed by mainland Protestants, even in



Zurich. And while Calvin himself never formally elevated discipline as one of the marks of a true church, the Scots Kirk surely did.

The Lord's Supper was celebrated sitting at a table, like the Last Supper, and psalm-singing became the only accepted form of sacred music. The nation itself was organized on Presbyterian lines, and from 1562 used the *Book of Common Order* (also known as *Knox's Liturgy*). Scotland became a thorough-going Reformed territory. The Church of England in the same period was a tricky animal: it was in constant conversation with other Reformed churches of Europe, but England's Reformed cousins continued to be disappointed that it would not catch up.

John Jewel, new bishop of Salisbury in the early 1560s, engaged in a flurry of tracts with English Roman Catholic Stephen Harding. In one, *Apology for the Church of England* (1562), Jewel grounded himself in Scripture and the early church fathers to defend not simply *sola fide* (i.e.: “faith alone”) Protestantism, but the authenticity and legitimacy of the English church.

As 1600 approached, three events strengthened this official English church. The destruction of the Spanish Armada in 1588 (preventing an attack on England) was



widely construed as divine approval of the Elizabethan church. Archbishop John Whitgift finally humiliated and jailed his long-time Puritan antagonist, Thomas Cartwright, suppressing opposition. And a young cleric named Richard Hooker wrote his famous eight-volume *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, agreeing with the earlier Jewel that the established English church is legitimate, and one ought to accept her ways of life and prayer.

ALL GLORY, LAUD, AND HONOR

Even while the Scots continued on their Presbyterian course, James VI of Scotland (1566–1625) became James I of England in 1603. Toward the end of his reign in the 1620s, a group of clergy began to preach and write about the holiness of church buildings and the authority of clergy; in some places they even reconstructed altars. They achieved positions of great influence in the reign of James's son, Charles I (1625–1649), and came to be known as Laudians, after Charles's archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud.

The Laudians worked in earnest to distance the Church of England from its Reformed connections by emphasizing the very rites and ceremonies that had long annoyed Puritans, and even began innovating new-but-old rituals: celebrating church consecrations (no rite existed for this in the prayer book), building rails around the Communion table, and adopting long-discarded vestments.


In returning ceremony and clerical rank to the church, the Laudians *created* the narrative that Elizabeth had fashioned a middle-way church that was not Reformed and that could claim certain continuities with the pre-Reformation church, albeit without the pope. As a result of their efforts, the average member of the Church of England began at last to perceive it as distinct from Reformed Protestantism. The English church's validity was sealed with a new name: Anglicanism.



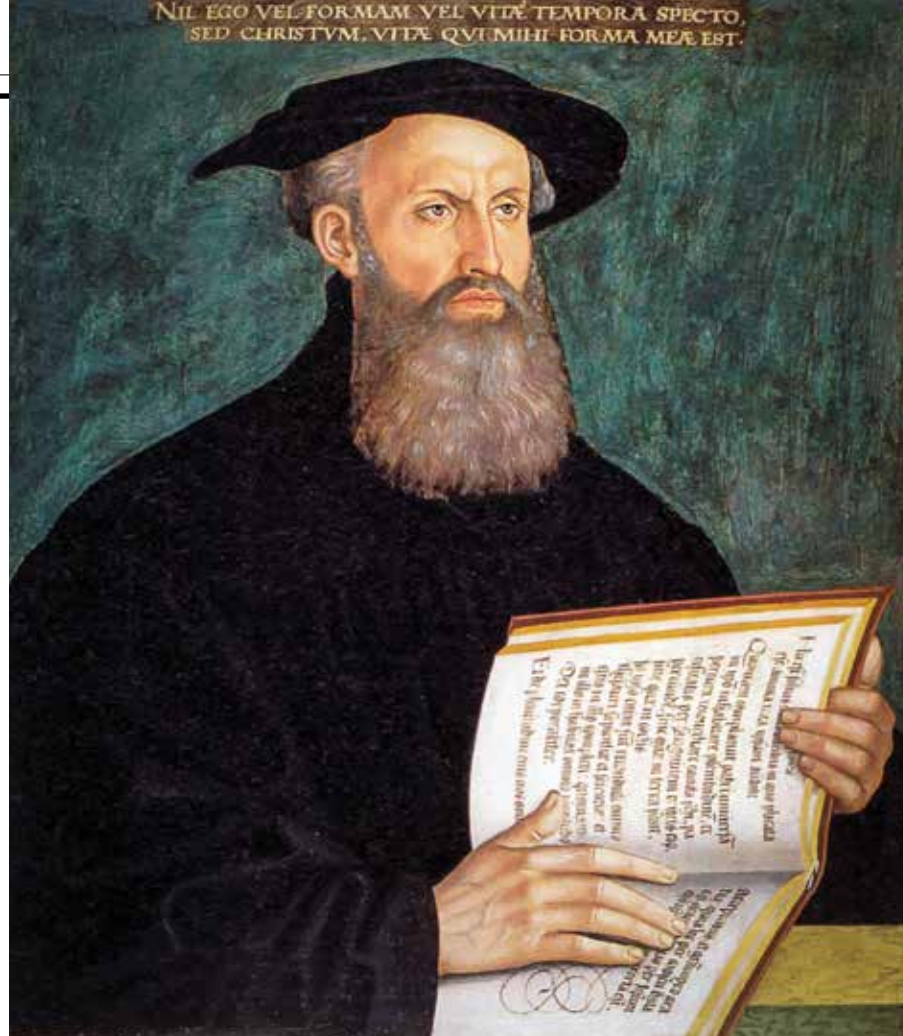
NOT ANGELS BUT ANGLICANS Above: Did William Laud (1573–1645) and his colleagues invent “Anglicanism”?

FOR EVERY ACTION, A REACTION Left: Catholic Englishman Richard Rowlands published *Theater of Cruelty* (1583), an attempt to answer Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* with stories of Elizabeth and others martyring Catholics.

Charles I was executed in January 1649 by Parliament as part of the disastrous English Civil War; after the government of Oliver Cromwell in the 1650s, Charles's son (1630–1685) was invited back to take the throne as King Charles II in 1660. The “Cavaliers” who had supported Charles's father were uncompromising, and their Laudian vision—better put, their Anglican vision—for the established church was crystal clear.

So was the Church of England “confessional”? The answer is a cautious yes and a cautious no. The *39 Articles*, the *Homilies*, and the *Book of Common Prayer* confessed a Reformed faith. But English worship life left the door open just a crack to allow an exit from the international communion of Reformed churches. The Laudians of the seventeenth century widened that crack, forming Anglicanism, a tradition that still stresses an aesthetic, sacramental piety and that has an ambiguous relationship with both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. This is hardly a tidy *via media*, a Catholic church independent of Rome. But neither is it simply Reformed Protestantism with bishops. 

Calvin Lane is affiliate professor at Nashotah House Theological Seminary and associate rector of St. George's Episcopal Church, Dayton, Ohio. He is the author of The Laudians and the Elizabethan Church and the forthcoming Spirituality and Reform, c. 1000–c. 1800.



The king, the emperor, and the theologians

THE MEN WHO PROMOTED AND DISPUTED REFORM IN FRANCE, GERMANY, SWITZERLAND, AND SPAIN

David C. Steinmetz, Paul Thigpen, and the editors

HEINRICH BULLINGER (1504–1575)

The tragic death of Zwingli at the Battle of Kappel (1531) left Zurich and the Protestant cantons of Switzerland dazed and thoroughly demoralized. None of the ministers in Zurich had the gifts to rally the people in the face of what seemed an unredeemable disaster. Zurich turned to a 27-year-old refugee.

Priests were not allowed to marry in the Middle Ages, but they commonly entered into “arrangements” providing the benefits and stability of marriage. Zurich’s new young pastor, Heinrich Bullinger, was the son of such a priest (in 1529, after his father became Protestant, Bullinger’s parents married legally). In 1519, the year of Zwingli’s

SUCCESSFUL SUCCESSOR Could anyone follow Zwingli, people wondered? Bullinger did the job quite well.

conversion to the Protestant cause, Bullinger went to the University of Cologne to study the humanities; his limited reading in medieval theology sharpened his appetite for the church fathers. He broke with Catholicism in 1522 through reading Luther and Melancthon; and, no longer able to become a monk, he asked to teach the Bible and classics at the Cistercian monastery at Kappel as a layman. The abbot knew a gifted teacher when he found one and agreed to Bullinger’s terms. The cloister got more than it bargained for; the young humanist



scholar persuaded the monks to embrace the evangelical faith. In 1527 the monastery was dissolved and transformed into a Protestant parish; Bullinger stayed on for two more years as the pastor.

Bullinger first met Zwingli in 1523; despite the difference in their ages, the two men became good friends. In 1528 he married a former nun, Anna Adlischweiler (against the wishes of her mother) and in 1529 left Kappel and succeeded his father as the Protestant pastor at Bremgarten.

Catholic troops defeated Protestants at Kappel, killing Zwingli and forcing Bullinger to flee at night from Bremgarten to Zurich. On December 9, 1531, he stepped for the first time into the pulpit Zwingli had occupied with such distinction. Before he finished his first sermon, people realized that they had called a worthy successor. He preached six to eight times a week until 1542, when his load was reduced. Fifty of his sermons were printed and widely circulated as a presentation of all the central doctrines of the Christian faith.

Bullinger was so successful that Swiss Catholics never reaped all the fruits to which their victory over Zwingli at Kappel had entitled them. In his 44 years as pastor, the Zurich church experienced a rapid growth unparalleled in its earlier history. In 1549 Bullinger and Calvin were able to unite Zwinglian and Calvinist factions of the Reformed movement on the question of the Lord's Supper. In 1566 Bullinger issued the *Second Helvetic Confession*, which found acceptance far beyond the boundaries of Switzerland.

Bullinger was the friend and adviser of many of the important figures in church and state throughout Europe; his death crowned a long career marked not so much by brilliant innovation as by prudent consolidation. Without Zwingli there would have been no Reformation in Zurich; without Bullinger it would not have lasted.



EDUCATED EMPEROR Above: Heir to the crowns of Spain, the Netherlands, and the Holy Roman Empire, devout Catholic Charles V battled Turkish troops, the pope, the French king—and Luther.

FAITHFUL FRIEND Left: Farel (shown here in a 19th-c. engraving) assisted fellow French refugee Calvin in the process of reformation.

CHARLES V (1500–1558)

When Charles was elected emperor of the Holy Roman Empire at the age of 19, he became the most powerful man in Europe and saw himself as the political leader of Christendom. His domains included Burgundy, the Netherlands, Naples, and Spain and Spanish America, and he laid claim to northern Italy as well. His task of defending Europe against the Turks was made more difficult not only by constant fighting with the French but also by the emergence of what he saw as dangerous heretics within his dominions: Lutherans.

After Luther's excommunication by the pope, he appealed to Charles as head of the government: "For three years I have sought peace in vain. I have now but one recourse. I appeal to Caesar." Charles called Luther to appear before the Diet of Worms in 1521, an already scheduled council of the German rulers. After days of examining Luther, Charles called in the electors and other princes to read them his decision: "A single friar

who goes counter to all Christianity for a thousand years must be wrong. I have decided to mobilize everything against Luther: my kingdoms and dominions, my friends, my body, my blood, and my soul." The Edict of Worms, signed by Charles weeks later, banned Luther from the empire.

For many years other political difficulties preoccupied the emperor, allowing him to pursue only an irregular policy toward the Lutherans that wavered between concession and repression. At the Diet of Augsburg in 1555, Protestant rulers finally forced him to accept the principle that the princes of the empire were to determine the religion of their lands. By the following year, the burdens of government had grown too great, and Charles abdicated his throne to retire to a monastery, depressed and failing in health. When he died two years later, his last word was "Jesus."

GUILLAUME FAREL (1489–1565)

It was Farel who persuaded a young, timid, and unwilling John Calvin to serve the cause of the Reformation in Geneva. Farel detained Calvin, who later wrote, "not so much by counsel and exhortation, as by a dreadful curse, which I felt to be as if God had from heaven laid his mighty hand upon me to arrest me."

The fiery redhead Farel was involved in the reform movement in France led by Lefèvre D'Étaples (see "Another accidental revolutionary," pp. 8–15). When persecution forced him to flee in 1523, he became a leader of a band of evangelists, preaching mainly in French-speaking Switzerland. He was also at the center of efforts that brought the cities of Bern and Geneva into the Protestant fold.

Farel was probably Calvin's closest and dearest friend through the years, and they endured much together. They were both expelled from Geneva in 1538, and the persuasions of Farel prompted Calvin to return in 1541. Farel had gone to Neuchâtel in the meantime, where he continued to work in close harmony with Calvin in Geneva.

A rift occurred between the two friends in 1558, when 69-year-old Farel married 30-year-old widow and refugee Marie Turol (after first installing the destitute Marie and her son in his parsonage while they looked for a house of their own). Calvin refused to attend the wedding and even tried to get the Neuchâtel Consistory to find grounds for an annulment. But their relationship survived. It was to Farel that Calvin wrote one of his last letters and, in a touching gesture, asked Farel to "remember our friendship." Though aged and infirm, Farel felt it his duty to attend his dear friend on his deathbed in 1564. The following year, Farel followed Calvin in death.

FRANCIS I (1515–1547)

Francis I, the king of France during Calvin's early career as a reformer, was a champion of the Renaissance in



RENAISSANCE RULER Francis I encouraged the flowering of art and culture in his dominions.

France and a great patron of arts and poetry. Among other things, he hired Leonardo da Vinci to work on his royal château at Chambord and, for good measure, purchased da Vinci's masterpiece, the *Mona Lisa*, which remains in France to this day. During most of his reign, he was entangled in several wars with major rival Charles V. In fact because Francis and Charles were fighting, Calvin was unable to take the direct route to Strasbourg he intended in 1536 and was forced to take his momentous detour to Geneva.

Initially Francis was reasonably tolerant of the French reformers, due primarily to the influence of his sister Marguerite d'Angoulême. He even maintained cordial relations with pioneer of French reform Lefèvre D'Étaples. But all that changed in October 1534 when the king became incensed by the protest of French Protestants known as the "Affair of the Placards."

In the early morning hours of October 18, 1534, Protestants distributed leaflets throughout Paris denouncing the Roman Mass. One was even placed on the king's bedroom door. Francis dramatized his anger by accompanying a solemn religious procession to the Cathedral of Notre Dame to symbolically purify Paris from the abomination. His anger did not stop with mere ceremonies; hundreds of Protestants were imprisoned,



and 35 were burned at the stake, including several close friends of Calvin. Calvin wrote the *Institutes*, first published in 1536, with these French martyrs in mind. As he wrote to Francis in the prefatory letter, he desired to “vindicate . . . my brethren whose death was precious in the sight of the Lord.”

ANDREAS OSIANDER (1498–1552)

Andreas Osiander was a gifted but difficult man who had a rare talent for making enemies out of potential friends. He first caught the public eye in the 1520s by becoming embroiled in controversy in Nuremberg over Communion in both kinds. Together with the prior of the Augustinian cloister and several other clergymen who supported the Protestant Reformation, he began to encourage the people of Nuremberg to agitate for the right to receive the cup as well as the bread in Communion (against previous Catholic practice).

When the bishop rejected their request, the people persisted in their demand. Finally in 1523, with Osiander’s vehement denunciation of the Roman Antichrist still ringing in their ears, more than 3,000 people received the cup. Osiander himself offered Communion in both kinds to Queen Isabella of Denmark, the sister of Emperor Charles V.

In 1525, following the example of other reformers, Osiander married. It was a public declaration of his rejection of Catholic teaching concerning clerical celibacy. His new family obligations, however, did not slow down the pace of his reform. Together with Lazarus Spengler, he introduced liturgical and doctrinal reforms that strengthened the position of the Lutheran Church.

PRICKLY PREACHER Osiander made his home in Nuremberg (its skyline shown here with figures in different kinds of local dress) until the Leipzig Interim turned him, too, into a refugee.

Though Osiander was not greatly beloved, he was effective. He attended the Marburg Colloquy (1529) as a Lutheran, opposing the understanding of the Eucharist defended by Zwingli and Oecolampadius. But the following year, he criticized Melanchthon’s conciliatory posture at the Diet of Augsburg. If Osiander had been in charge of negotiations instead of Melanchthon, he said, he would have rallied the Protestant princes to declare war on the emperor.

At Schmalkalden in 1537, he again went on record as a Lutheran dissenter, preaching a sermon critical of Luther. Because of his undeniable intelligence, he was sent as a Lutheran delegate to the 1540 colloquy at Worms, where he proceeded to make trouble with his allies. Calvin was offended by his conversation at the dinner table; his fellow Lutherans by his open criticism of Melanchthon. Though he had planned to take part in the Regensburg Colloquy, colleagues who had plainly had enough replaced him as a delegate and sent him indecorously back to Nuremberg.

With the publication of the Leipzig Interim in 1548, Osiander joined the ranks of reformers who felt bound by conscience to leave their homes rather than abide by the terms of the Interim. He went first to Breslau and then to Königsberg, where in 1549 Duke Albert of Prussia, his longtime admirer, made him a pastor and professor on the local university’s theological faculty.

There, in the last years of his life, he sparked a controversy over the nature of justification, generating nearly universal hostility toward him.

Osiander came down hard on Melanchthon's understanding of justification as a forensic act. He maintained—rightly, as it happens—that Luther included the renewal of the human being in justification and understood it as a personal union with Christ. He was wrong, however, to conclude that Melanchthon's view was unfaithful to Luther's intention. Luther, even the mature Luther, understood justification as both union with Christ and pardon for the sake of Christ.

Melanchthon and the Gnesio-Lutherans (see "From Luther to the Lutherans," pp. 34–38), who up to this point had been locked in mortal combat with each other, regrouped and launched a combined attack against their common foe. Calvin passionately refuted Osiander in the *Institutes*. Even the *Formula of Concord*, the new official confession of the Lutheran Church (see p. 39), rejected his ideas.

The sound of battle stirred the old veteran to buckle on his armor and sharpen his sword. He loved nothing so much as a good fight, and he launched a counterattack with all the pugnacity and fervor he could muster. Unfortunately he did not live to see the resolution of the battle, dying suddenly on October 17, 1552, while the controversy was still at its height.

MICHAEL SERVETUS (1511–1553)

Servetus was born in Villanueva de Sigena in Aragon, Spain, perhaps in 1511. He was the secretary to Franciscan Juan de Quintana, who became Charles V's confessor in 1530, but only a year later was traveling to Basel and Strasbourg where he met Oecolampadius, Capito, and Bucer. He published his first anti-Trinitarian work in 1531, but then began to study medicine and established a medical practice. He continued publishing works on both medicine and theology.

He and Calvin corresponded, and Calvin jeopardized his life in the 1530s by returning to a hostile Paris to persuade him to accept the Trinity. Years later Calvin wrote, "I was even willing to risk my life to win him to our Lord, if possible." But after arranging this meeting with Calvin, Servetus did not appear.


Calvin wrote to Servetus during their later theological exchange, "I neither hate you nor despise you; nor do I wish to persecute you; but I would be as hard as iron when I behold you insulting sound doctrine with so great audacity." But by 1546 he was writing to Farel, "Servetus has just sent me a long volume of his ravings. If I consent he will come here, but I will not give my word; for if he comes here, if my authority is worth anything, I will never permit him to depart alive."

In 1553 Servetus was condemned to death *in absentia* throughout Catholic and Protestant Europe



HUNTED HERETIC Servetus's arguments against the Trinity provoked controversy and, eventually, execution.

for his vehement denial of the Trinity. After escaping from a Roman Catholic prison in 1553, he decided to go to Geneva and boldly took a seat in the Cathedral of St. Pierre while Calvin was preaching. He was recognized immediately and, at Calvin's request, arrested. Calvin served as an expert theological witness against Servetus at his trial, though he also visited Servetus in jail and sought to persuade him of his errors.

When the sentence of burning at the stake was passed upon Servetus, Calvin requested that the Genevan city government grant Servetus a more humane death by beheading. The judges remained adamant, and Calvin's request was denied. Servetus was burned at the stake in Geneva on October 27, 1553. 

David C. Steinmetz (1936–2015) was Amos Regan Kearns Distinguished Professor Emeritus of the History of Christianity at Duke Divinity School. His entries on Bullinger and Osiander are adapted from his book Reformers in the Wings (Oxford, 2001), 64–69, 93–99, and used by permission. Paul Thigpen is editor of TAN Books. His entry on Charles V is adapted from CH 34. The entries on Farel, Francis I, and Servetus are adapted from CH 12.

Recommended resources

WHERE CAN YOU GO TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CALVIN, THE REFORMED FAITH, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REFORMATION? HERE ARE SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CH EDITORIAL STAFF AND THIS ISSUE'S AUTHORS.

BOOKS

Read about **John Calvin's** life, theology, and influence in Alexandre Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin* (1987); François Wendel, *Calvin* (1995); Bernard Cottret, *Calvin: A Biography* (2000); Richard Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin* (2001), *Christ and the Decree* (2008), and *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition* (2012); Christopher Elwood, *Calvin for Armchair Theologians* (2002); David Hall and Peter Lillback, eds., *A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes* (2008); Michiel A. van den Berg, *Friends of Calvin* (2009); Herman Selderhuis, *John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life* (2009); F. Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (2011); David C. Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (2012); Jon Balserak, *John Calvin as Sixteenth-Century Prophet* (2014); Michael Horton, *Calvin on the Christian Life* (2014); and Bruce Gordon, *John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion* (2016).

Life in **Geneva** is considered in E. William Monter, *Calvin's Geneva* (1967); Karin Maag, *Seminary or University? The Genevan Academy and Reformed Higher Education 1560–1620* (1995); Ronald Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva, and the Reformation* (1998); John Witte Jr., *Sex, Marriage, and Family Life in John Calvin's Geneva* (2005); and Jennifer Powell McNutt, *Calvin*

Meets Voltaire (2014).

Learn more about the general spread of the **Reformed** faith in Mark Greengrass, *The French Reformation* (1991); Karin Maag, ed., *The Reformation in Eastern and Central Europe* (1997); William Monter, *Judging the French Reformation* (1999); Christopher Elwood, *The Body Broken* (1989); Mack Holt, ed., *Renaissance and Reformation France* (2003); and Alastair Duke, *The Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries* (2003).

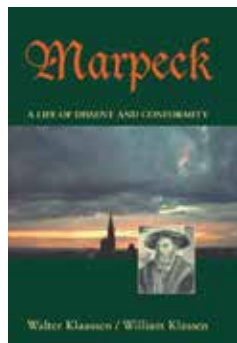
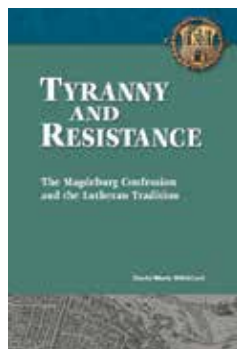
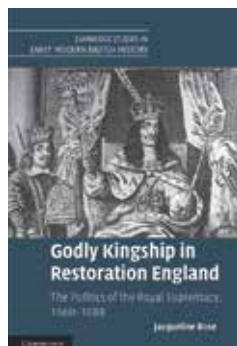
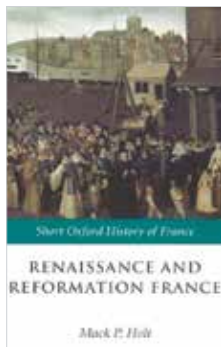
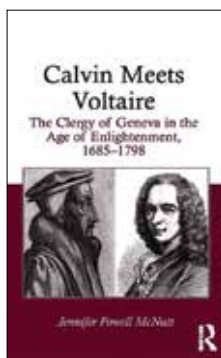
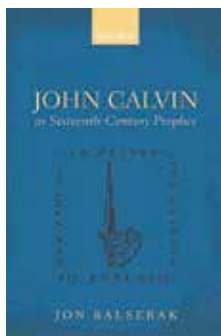
The story of the **English Reformation** continues in Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (1967) and *The*

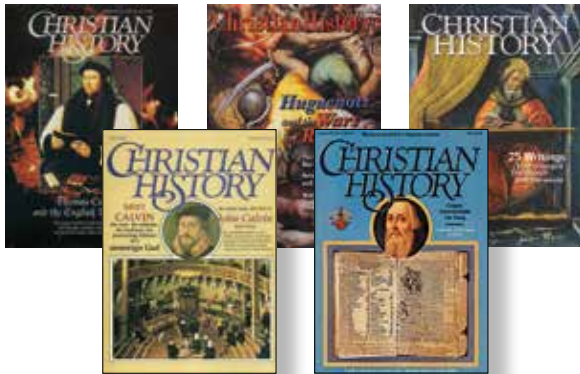
Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559–1625 (1982); A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (1991); J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (1991); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (1992); Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England 1547–1603* (2000); Francis Bremer, *Puritanism: A Very Short Introduction* (2009); and Jacqueline Rose, *Godly Kingship in Restoration England* (2011).

Lutherans are found in Eric Gritsch and Robert Jensen, *Lutheranism* (1976); David Whitford, *Tyranny and Resistance* (2001); C. Scott Dixon, *The Reformation in Germany* (2002); Eric Gritsch, *A History of Lutheranism* (2002); John Witte Jr., *Law and Protestantism* (2002); and Charles Arand, Robert Kolb, and James A. Nestingen, *The Lutheran Confessions* (2012).

Mennonites appear in Piet Visser and Mary Sprunger, *Menno Simons* (1996); C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology* (1997); Walter Klaassen and William Klassen, *Marpeck: A Life of Dissent and Conformity* (2008); Peter Klassen, *Mennonites in Early Modern Poland and Prussia* (2009); and Abraham Friese, *Menno Simons* (2015).

Finally, Roland Bainton's series on **women** in the Reformation concludes with *Women of the Reformation in France and England* (1973) and *Women of the Reformation from Spain to Scandinavia* (1977).





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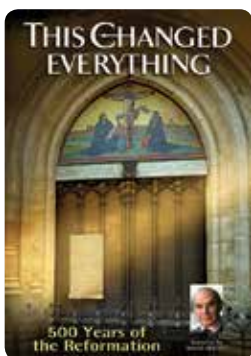
- 5: *Radical Reformation*
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VIDEOS FROM VISION VIDEO

Videos on people and movements featured in this issue include *Knox*, *Reformation Overview*, *Zwingli and Calvin*, and the new original documentary *This Changed Everything: 500 Years of the Reformation*.

Reformation videos your kids might enjoy are *Torchlighters: The Martin Luther Story* and *The William Tyndale Story*.



WEBSITES

Many of the Christian writings mentioned in this issue can be found at the [Christian Classics Ethereal Library](#), at [Project Gutenberg](#), and at the [Modern History Sourcebook](#) at Fordham University in the sections called "Early Modern World" and "Reformation Europe." Despite its title, the [Post-Reformation Digital Library](#) has many texts from this period available.



Read more about Calvin and the Reformed tradition at the [H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies](#), the [Calvin Studies Society](#), and [The History Guide](#).



Anglican history is covered at [The Anglican Domain](#) and [Project Canterbury](#), and Anabaptists at the [Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online](#), [Global Anabaptist Wiki](#), and [Anabaptists.org](#).



Lutherans show up at [The Book of Concord](#) and [Project Wittenberg](#). 

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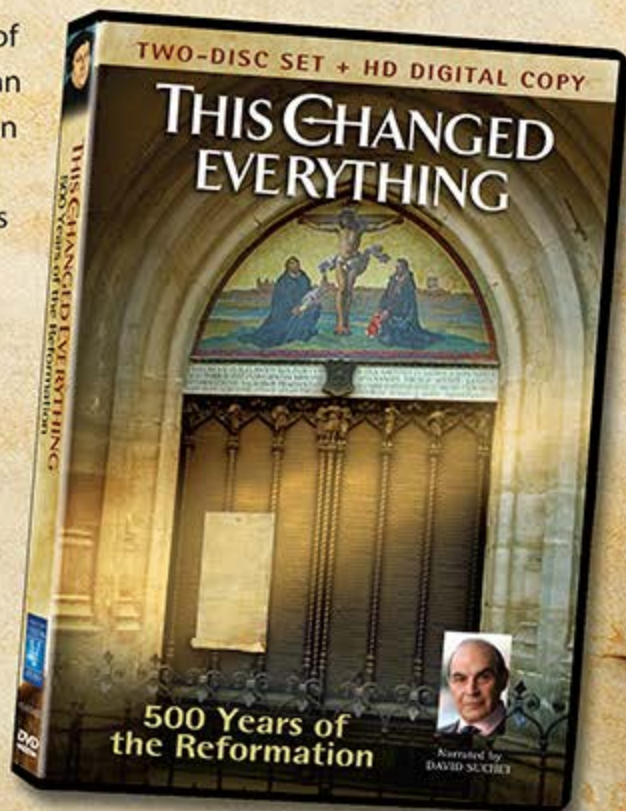


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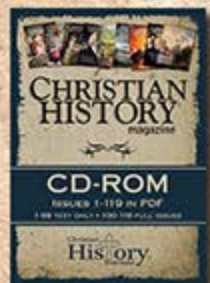
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