

**Church History, Lesson 9:
The Reformation Church, Part 2 (1517 – 1648):
Reformed Reformation and Radical Reformation**

27. Reformed Reformation

a. Ulrich Zwingli (1484 – 1531) (Zurich)

i. The birth of Reformed faith

1. Zwingli is credited with the birth of the Reformed faith.
2. Zwingli arrived at Reformation ideas different and independent from Luther.
3. In 1522, Zwingli preached against laws of fasting and abstinence in Zurich (controlled by Rome). Some of Zwingli's colleagues met at a home, and ate sausages on Ash Wednesday. Eventually the Council of Zurich called for a debate. The Council, since Rome refused to respond and did not answer, deemed Zwingli the winner.
4. The Mass was officially abolished in 1525. The significance is that Zurich is no longer Roman Catholic.
5. With Catholic and Protestant cantons (i.e., independent states) in Switzerland, civil war broke out in 1529 and 1531 (Kappel Wars). Zwingli, a patriot and soldier, died fighting in a battle against the Catholics unrelated to the civil war.

ii. Theological comparison: Luther vs. Zwingli

1. Lord's Supper (Marburg Colloquy, 1529)
 - a. Luther: Christ is physically present in the Lord's Supper. This view is called consubstantiation: The bread and wine *contain* Christ's body and blood.
 - b. Zwingli: Christ is not present in the Lord's Supper. This view is called nonsubstantiation (or memorialism). The bread and wine only *represent* Christ's body and blood.
2. Public worship

- a. Luther: allows into public worship what the Bible does not prohibit. (This is called the Normative Principle of worship.)
- b. Zwingli: rejects into public worship what the Bible does not prescribe. (This is called the Regulative Principle of worship.)

b. John Calvin (1509 – 1565) (Geneva)

i. Life

1. Preparation

- a. Born in Noyon, a small town sixty miles northeast of Paris.
- b. Entered university at age 14. Received M.A. in 1528. Received doctorate in law in 1532.
- c. Was converted sometime between 1527 and 1534. From then on he gave himself to the Protestant cause.

2. Career

- a. In 1533 fled to Basel where in 1536 published first edition of *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.
- b. In 1536 on his way to Stasbourg, Calvin had to make a detour through Geneva. This would change the course of his life.
- c. Geneva had recently accepted the Protestant Reformation. William Farel (1489 – 1565) used a bit of spiritual intimidation to convince Calvin to stay in Geneva and help with reform.
- d. Calvin did not want to stay in Geneva. Calvin was reserved and introspective, and he wanted to pursue a quiet life of scholarship. He stayed for two years (1536 – 1538).
- e. Calvin was eventually removed from Geneva because of conflict over church government. He eventually landed in Strasbourg.

- f. While in Strasbourg for three years (1538 – 1541), he was a pastor of a church to French refugees; teacher; writer, in which he revised and expanded the *Institutes*; married Idelette de Bure, a widow of Anabaptist persuasion converted to the Reformed faith by Calvin himself.
- g. In Geneva, things went from bad to worse, so they asked Calvin to return. Calvin was reluctant: “I would prefer a hundred other deaths to that cross, on which I should have to die a thousand times a day.”⁵⁰ But after some time he returned in 1541.
- h. Calvin transformed Geneva, remaining there the rest of his life (1541 – 1565). The Scots Reformer, John Knox, declared Geneva to be “the most perfect school of Christ that ever was in earth since the days of the apostles.”⁵¹

ii. Contributions

1. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

- a. First edition was completed at age 26.
- b. Went from a “little booklet” of six chapters to four books and 80 chapters in both French and Latin.
- c. The standard English edition today based on the Latin edition of 1559.
- d. The *Institutes* were written for instruction (“institutes”) and as a guide for students of the Bible.
- e. The *Institutes* are not only biblical and theological but devotional and practical.

⁵⁰ Cited in F. Wendel, *Calvin* (London: Collins, 1963), 67; cited in: Anthony N. S. Lane, *A Reader’s Guide to Calvin’s Institutes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 13.

⁵¹ John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1954), 178; cited in: Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1988), 167.

f. The *Institutes* “holds a place in the short list of books that have notably affected the course of history, molding the beliefs and behavior of generations of mankind.”⁵²

2. Sovereignty of God. While Luther was the theologian of justification by faith alone; Calvin was the theologian of the sovereignty of God.
3. The spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper. Thus, he presented a “middle way” between Luther’s consubstantiation and Zwingli’s memorialism.
4. Presbyterianism (*Ecclesiastical Ordinances*). The system of government that Calvin adopted in Geneva, a representative form of government, became the basis of Presbyterianism. This is significant because up until this time, the Church had only known the system of government called episcopacy with the Pope as its head.
5. Preaching through books of the Bible. While in Geneva Calvin had the pattern of preaching through both Old and New Testament books. Interestingly, when he returned to Geneva in 1541 after his 3 year hiatus in Strasbourg, he picked up in the Bible right where he left of three years prior.
6. Commentaries. Calvin wrote commentaries on all of the New Testament books except 2, 3 John and Revelation and on many books of the Old Testament, which are still useful today.
7. Missions. Contrary to some public opinion, Calvin was one of the greatest missionaries of the 16th century. He trained hundreds of missionaries in Geneva who spread throughout Europe and other parts of the world.

iii. Lessons from Calvin

1. God uses all kinds of personalities to do his work.
2. God’s plans are often not our plans.

⁵² John T. McNeill, “Introduction,” in John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, The Library of Christian Classics, edited by John T. McNeill, translated and indexed by Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), xxix.

- c. There are other Swiss Reformers, but we don't have time to mention them. See Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of Church History*, 57.
- d. Reformed Christianity spread beyond the Swiss Confederacy to France, Germany, Hungary, Scotland, Ireland, Belgium, and Holland.

28. Radical Reformation

a. Terminology

i. Anabaptist

1. The name Anabaptist was given to this movement by their enemies. It means "re-baptizer."
2. The Anabaptist rejected re-baptism. To them, being sprinkled as an infant was not a valid baptism. Thus, they considered themselves "Baptists."
3. Historical note: The Anabaptists were not the necessarily the first modern day Baptists.

ii. Radical Reformation

1. Most revolutionary movements produce a "radical" wing. The Anabaptist movement is also given the name "Radical Reformers."
2. The reason they were called "Radical Reformers" is because of their "radical" beliefs for the day and age in which they lived.

b. Beliefs

- i. Believers' baptism only.
- ii. Pacifists. Did not bear arms; did not hold political office; did not take oaths (cf. Matt 5:33-39).
- iii. Separation of church and state (i.e., "free church").
- iv. Discipleship of believers.
- v. Caring for others and redistribution of wealth.
- vi. Scriptures are the final basis of authority for faith and practice.

- vii. Congregational form of church government (i.e., rule by the majority).
 - viii. Schleitheim Confession (1527): statement of seven beliefs that the early Anabaptists came to embrace.
- c. Historical development and leaders
- i. Conrad Grebel (1498 – 1526) (Swiss)
 1. Converted in 1522.
 2. Initially followed the Reformation ideas of Zwingli in Zurich.
 3. Grebel came to embrace believers' baptism. Zwingli disagreed.
 4. On January 17, 1525, the City Council of Zurich called a meeting to debate the question of baptism. The Council agreed with Zwingli. Parents must have their children baptized or face banishment from Zurich.
 5. On January 21, 1525 Grebel and others were baptized.
 6. Eventually, the Zurich Council on March 7, 1526 decided that anyone found "re-baptizing" would be put to death by drowning.
 7. This declaration forced the Anabaptist out of Zurich, and by 1535, there were little traces of them left in Zurich.
 8. Note: the Amish, under the leadership of Jacob Amman (ca. 1644 – ca. 1711) broke with the Swiss Brethren.
 - ii. Menno Simons (1496 – 1561) (Netherlands, north Germany)
 1. Ordained a priest in 1524.
 2. Two years after ordination, read the New Testament and became a believer in Jesus Christ.
 3. Emerged as the leader of the Anabaptist groups in Netherlands and north Germany.
 4. He was staunchly pacifist in his approach to life.

5. Followers are known as the Mennonites (“Menno’s people”).
 6. Again, the Radical Reformation was diverse set of movements. There are other groups that make up the Radical Reformation. See Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of Church History*, chart 58.
- iii. Anabaptists were persecuted by both Roman Catholics and Protestants during the 16th and early 17th centuries. Because of this, they were a minority group during the Reformation Church era, below 10% of the population.