

In the history of the Reformation,

Switzerland seems to have been a radical center of activity.

Switzerland was a Catholic Country,

but it suffered from all the abuses I mentioned last week.

Many of the clergy as well as the Church as a whole

enjoyed a luxury lifestyle in stark contrast

to the conditions the large majority of the population lived in;  
this luxury was financed by high church taxes

and abundant sale of indulgences.

Many priests were poorly educated,

and spiritual Church doctrines were often disregarded.

Many priests did not live in celibacy but took concubines.

Into this scene a new priest was called to Zürich.

Ulrich Zwingli was educated in the renaissance humanist tradition.

By all accounts he was a gifted preacher.

By 1516 he was preaching against injustices

and hierarchies in the Church.

After a bit, he expanded his criticism also onto political topics

and in particular condemned the mercenary business

which was a major money maker for the Cantons.

By 1523 the city council decided to implement his reform plans

and converted to Protestantism.

Zwingli and Martin Luther met in 1519.

Over time an attempt was made to come to an agreement

and merge the two reform efforts.

They agreed on 14 points

but failed to agree on the Eucharist:

Luther maintained that through sacramental union

the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper

became truly the flesh and blood of Christ,

whereas Zwingli considered bread and wine only symbols.

Among the early followers of Zwingli in Zurich,

there were men who felt as time went on Zwingli was betraying

his earlier views by his willingness to submit

to the civil authorities in matters of religion

and to accept the idea of a state church.

Its earliest leader was Conrad Grebel, called "the first Anabaptist."

As Grebel and others became increasingly disillusioned with what they considered Zwingli's abandonment of evangelical principles,

they found themselves being denounced from the pulpit by Zwingli and the other Zurich ministers.

Baptism was the leading issue between the radicals, who came to be called the Swiss Brethren.

Grebel and his followers reminded Zwingli

he had once rejected infant baptism,

and they claimed they derived their own views on baptism from him.

Meetings of the Brethren were forbidden,

and parents were ordered to have their infants baptized within eight days if they had not already done so, on pain of expulsion from the city.

The response came when Grebel, a layman, baptized Blaurock, an ordained priest.

The Brethren had openly opposed infant baptism; now they went farther and,

by this fateful step, introduced the practice of adult baptism, the so called believer's baptism.

Thus January 21, 1525, marked the beginning of a movement that added a new dimension to the religious ferment of the period and a new element in the history of Christianity.

Some of the Anabaptists following the example of the Apostles and the early church, practiced complete community of goods, administered by elected officials.

In 1529, Jacob Hutter arrived and became their leader.

His influence among them was so profound that they took his name

and have since been known as the Hutterites.

To escape persecution he organized a migration of his followers to the greater safety of Moravia then to Hungary

then to the Ukraine and finally to North and South America.  
Another branch of the Anabaptist movement  
was led by Menno Simons in the Netherlands.  
By 1536 Simons had embraced Anabaptist views  
and had given up his priesthood in the Roman church.  
He assumed leadership of the "brethren," the name adopted  
in order to get rid of the stigma attached to "Anabaptist."  
After his death, the "brethren" were known as Mennonites.  
Persecution drove them to Prussia,  
then to Russia at the invitation of Catherine the Great.  
Many later migrated to North and South America.  
Yet another branch of the Swiss Brethren was a confederation  
of conservative Mennonites was led 1710 by Jakob Amman.  
They subsequently migrated to Pennsylvania.  
They are known as the Amish.

One of the most heartrending aspects of the Reformation  
is the brutal persecution that was the lot of the religious radicals.  
The churches were stronger then than they are now,  
Anyone who challenged the Church doctrines of the time  
might seem to cast doubt on the eternal destiny  
of those who disagreed with them.

The greatest of the Reformers was Martin Bucer in Strasbourg.  
In 1518 at Heidelberg, he heard Luther  
and as a result adopted his views.  
Though the bishop of Strasbourg tried to have him expelled,  
Bucer was called by one of the churches to be its priest.

Bucer had an ideal of a godly Christian society  
jointly supervised by ministers and magistrates.  
Within the church he envisaged four kinds of officers:  
preachers, teachers, elders, and deacons.  
These officers would govern and discipline the lives of the people,  
with power to excommunicate in extreme cases.  
While frustrated in Strasbourg, because the government  
would not permit the establishment of his plan,  
his ideas bore fruit in Geneva because from 1538 to 1541,

the young John Calvin lived and worked in Strasbourg  
in close association with Bucer.

Bucer's last years were spent in England,  
where he had been invited by Archbishop Cranmer,  
with whom he was on very friendly terms,  
and through whose help he was appointed  
Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge University.  
He was treated with great consideration and honor;  
the young king, Edward VI, was friendly and helpful.  
Bucer was often consulted on the affairs of the English church.  
The 1552 version of the Book of Common Prayer  
reflects some of his suggestions.

Bucer has been called one of the fathers of the Church of England,  
and his influence has been traced in the English Puritan tradition.  
He has also been referred to as the father of Calvinism.

We'll hear more of Bucer in a couple of weeks.

John Calvin was born in the French Picardy in 1509;  
By 1534 Calvin had embraced Protestantism,  
and as a result had to leave France.

In 1536, he went to Geneva,  
where he expected to stay for only a short time.

The most active of the reformers of religion in Geneva was  
the fiery French preacher Guillaume Farel.  
Hearing of the arrival of Calvin, whom he knew by reputation,  
Farel came to him and urged him to remain  
and help in the reorganization and reform of religion.  
Calvin had no interest, and attempted to decline,  
but Farel called down the wrath of God upon him if he refused.  
Calvin was so frightened that he felt compelled to stay.

Calvin began his work in Geneva as one of the ministers,  
and his genius for organization soon manifested itself.  
He drew up a catechism and a confession of faith,  
which were accepted by the city government.

But in 1537 many persons refused to accept his confession of faith.  
And he ran into more trouble, his aim was to make the church

autonomous in disciplinary matters.

This involved, first of all, the right of the church to decide who was worthy to be admitted to partake of the Lord's Supper and who should be excluded.

The councils had no intention of letting this important power pass into the hands of the ministers; they asserted that the councils alone had the right to settle such questions.

A mixture of political and religious factors led to the dismissal and banishment of Farel and Calvin.

Calvin left Geneva hoping never to see it again.

He was invited to Strasbourg by Martin Bucer.

Calvin preached and directed the French church, besides teaching theology.

He revised the order of public worship, introducing congregational singing and extemporaneous prayer and laying great stress on the sermon.

Back in Geneva, factional struggles continued at a high pitch.

Within the city, mob violence took place.

The town council invited Calvin to return to bring some order.

Calvin abhorred the thought of going back to Geneva, which he referred to as a "cross" and a "torture chamber."

However, he yielded to what he became convinced was the will of God.

In 1541 on his return to Geneva,

Calvin was given an opportunity to put his ideas into effect in the ordering of the religious life of the city.

In the church there were to be four classes of officeholders: pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons.

Candidates for the position of pastor must pass an examination with respect to both doctrine and moral character.

They must be chosen by the ministers, presented for approval to the Council, and finally submitted to "the common consent of the company of the faithful."

By the end of his career, he had achieved  
a complete dominance of Geneva.

All inhabitants had to renounce the Roman faith  
on penalty of expulsion from the city.

Nobody could possess images, crucifixes  
or other articles associated with the Roman worship.

Fasting was prohibited, together with vows, pilgrimages,  
prayers for the dead, and prayers in Latin.

Nobody could say anything good about the pope.

It was forbidden to give non-Biblical names to children.

Attendance at sermons was compulsory.

In addition, one had to arrive on time, remain,  
and pay attention.

The homes of the citizens were visited in order  
to ascertain the state of the family's morals.

Spies were maintained to check on behavior

Dramatic performances were suppressed,  
except for plays given by schoolboys.

Sexual immorality was frequently practiced  
and frequently chastised.

One of the offenses considered particularly serious  
was criticism of the ministers and especially Calvin.

From 1546, cards and dice were forbidden.

There were to be no taverns;

instead, places were provided for eating and drinking,  
in which pious behavior would be encouraged,  
a Bible in French was to be displayed,  
religious conversation encouraged,  
and excessive drinking, indecent songs, cursing, cards,  
dice, and dancing forbidden.

But in writing his opus, *the Institutes of the Christian Religion*,  
Calvin produced a systematic, comprehensive,  
statement of Christian theology.

He began by emphasizing the greatness and goodness of God  
and the depravity of man.

Men should submit to God and trust God's paternal care.

The most important proof that God is the author of Scripture  
is the testimony of the Spirit in our hearts.

Original sin Calvin defined as a hereditary corruption of man's nature,  
which renders us worthy of God's wrath.

Our nature is not only destitute of all good, but evil.

As a result of the Fall, man's will is no longer free  
but in bondage to sin.

Only divine grace can change the will from bad to good  
and perform good works in us.

Grace is given only to the elect, and it is purely gratuitously,  
not because of man's merits or works.

Calvin took up the crucial doctrine of predestination,  
by which every man is chosen

for either eternal life or eternal death.

Election is being chosen for salvation.

Since we do not know who is predestined,

we must desire and work for the salvation of all,  
leaving the rest to God.

In the church the Gospel is preached and the sacraments administered.

Outside the church there is no salvation.

The pope's church is not a true church

but the kingdom of Antichrist.

Calvin accepted baptism and the Eucharist.

He defended infant baptism though he denied  
that baptism is necessary for salvation.

In discussing the Lord's Supper, he rejected the Real Presence  
in both the Catholic and Lutheran forms,

but maintains that, by faith,

we actually partake of the real body of Christ.

But obedience to earthly authority must never be allowed  
to divert us from our supreme allegiance to God.

For Calvin, man lived directly under the command

of Almighty God for the purpose of doing His will.

One fault that Calvin himself admitted and deplored

was his violent temper.

Toward those who disagreed with him he could express himself with a diatribe that was characteristic of controversy in his day.

He was extremely sensitive to any personal criticism or any sign of disrespect.

Citizens were punished or reprimanded for criticizing his preaching

or even for greeting him without calling him "Master."

Calvin displayed a vindictiveness toward his enemies, which did not rest until they were crushed and humiliated.

The Reformed movement created many branches which we call denominations.

Most were outside the more moderate theological positions.

The largest cluster of denominations resulting from the Reformed movement in Switzerland is called Presbyterian.

In America, the Presbyterians have split and fractured constantly, and that fracturing continues today.

Preached by The Rev Perry W. Polk  
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#### Sources:

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