

Lecture 1

Life of John Calvin.

I am teaching this class, not because of my expertise in church history, I have an avid interest in that, and know a good deal about it I suppose, but the reason I'm teaching this class is more because of my expertise in Calvinist theology, but before we get to Calvin's theology, especially as it's expressed in the particular work *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, it just stands to reason that we should know something about the life of Calvin and the context out of which he wrote that work, because, in some ways, that will effect our interpretation as well as our evaluation of what he had to write. I'm going to begin at the beginning of his life, the early life of Calvin, if you're taking notes and want to outline this, and then I'm going to later talk about his life as a reformer, and then reflect on some of his accomplishments. And so as we begin the first main point will be his early life.

Calvin was born in Noyon (that's spelled Noyon) which was a small town in northern France, somewhat close to Paris, actually 65 miles to the northeast of it. He was born in Noyon on July 10th, 1509. Now, where does this put us in terms of the progress of the Protestant Reformation in Europe, at this time? 1509 was the same year that Luther was taking his baccalaureate degree in Bible and had already begun giving lectures. So you can see that, as one writer puts it, Calvin was in the second generation of reformers, and yet he was second to none among the reformers.

The Lutheran Reformation in Germany was actually in its zenith by the time Calvin was in his teenage years. In fact, one has to wonder just how much the fact that Calvin was a teenager at the time that the Lutheran Reformation was at its zenith didn't effect what later took place in his life? You know, this is the time that many people, if you study psychology, tend to get interested in issues like that. And, I mean, they didn't have the six o'clock news as we do, but if there was anything akin to it, that's the sort of thing that would be on people's minds. The six o'clock news would be covering what's happening in Germany; what about this rascal Luther? How's he being treated? How goes the war, as it were? And Calvin certainly would have been aware of these things as a teenager.

The father of Calvin was a man of some means, at least early in Calvin's life, and was the secretary to the bishop of the town of Noyon, and Noyon boasted, by the way, the second oldest gothic cathedral in Europe. And so to be the secretary to the bishop was a fairly high position. We might think of high position here in terms of ecclesiastical station; by high position I mean sociologically and financially, a very high position. You must remember that at this time in Europe one of the great degenerate parts of the Roman Catholic Church was that church office and position was sold to the highest bidder. Actually people sent in bids so that they might have the position of bishop or what have you. And so, being the secretary to the bishop puts you in a position to collect a good deal of money. Yes.

Student question: Is that in spite of the lack of theological background?

The church had become so crass and secular as to actually sell salvation through indulgences, etc., and I think it's hard for evangelicals in our day to really get a perception of how wicked the church was in the day of Calvin, and for that reason, they often adversely evaluation the polemics of Calvin and the reformers who could say some *very* strong things about the Church. But that's how bad it was. Now it wasn't in spite of their theology. Their theology.. .most of the men who were in positions of authority in the church didn't know any theology. Many were illiterate, but they had the money to pay for the position, and being in that position they then could require certain things of that the peasants and others who wanted to be right with God.

Well, with that background, you can understand (well not understand, but at least it will not come as such a surprise) that Calvin was appointed to a chaplaincy when he was eleven years old, which he later turned in, by the way, almost like a commercial good, he later exchanged it for two higher paying positions in

the church. He was a chaplain... it was kind of like baseball cards, you know, I'll trade you two of these for one of that. And that's exactly what he did, and at eleven he was appointed a chaplain. It doesn't indicate anything about his spiritual state, though.

Calvin's mother died when he was young, and some would say that accounts for a perceived in his demeanor. Others would say he wasn't a cold man at all, but that his theology and his form of argumentation sometimes made him appear so.

At the age of fourteen (this is the year 1523), Calvin went to Paris to continue his education at the arts and theological colleges of the University of Paris. So in 1523, he's fourteen years old, and he begins his college education. Calvin's obviously a brilliant fellow, but that also shows you the tenor of the times-people tended to go to school earlier than they do in our day and age. This is the year 1523, the University of Paris.

Now let's back up a bit. We're at the year 1512. In 1512, which is five years before Luther first became known for the ninety-five Theses, remember the year 1517, that's the benchmark for all of your church history at this time-1517, the ninety-five Theses. In 1512, five years before Luther becomes well-known, professor Jacques LeFevre of the Sorbonne *** sp? *** in Paris published a commentary on the epistles of Paul. Prior to Luther, a French reformer, then, maintains that God saves sinners by grace alone-by grace alone. One of the students of Jacques LeFevre, at this time, is Ferrel *** sp? ***. Remember the name Ferrel, because he's going to play perhaps the most dramatic role in Calvin's life later. Ferrel is a student of LeFevre learning even before Luther about salvation by grace alone, and many were brought to this faith including Margaret, who is the sister of the king of France. Okay, so the Reformation gets a foothold right in the family of the aristocracy in France.

In 1525-now, to go back to our life of Calvin-in 1525, which was the second year Calvin was in Paris as a student, the papacy condemned the works of Luther and LeFevre both. Okay? So we think of the German Reformation, and Luther's at the forefront, but Lefevre's right along there, you see, and the papacy condemned them both in Calvin's second year in college.

Well, in 1528, Calvin finally received the Master of Arts degree, having excelled, according to his contemporaries, especially in Latin-he was quite a Latin scholar. And at this point Calvin's crass financially motivated father directs him away from the study of philosophy and theology and demands that his son now enter the study of law, because he's recognizing, you know who's getting the money in society? It's the lawyers, those who are going into the legal profession have status in society. So he tells Calvin, you've got to study something else now. And Calvin dutifully, then, studies law both at Orleans *** sp? *** and Bourges *** sp? *** until he felt free of that obligation at the death of his father, which took place in 1531. So for three years, then, Calvin was a student of law. Again, keep that in the
4 back of your mind. How does that effect Calvin's later theology, or at least his method of theologizing? And this is one time maybe we can thank God for lawyers, because the training in law certainly gave Calvin a sense of syllogism, a sense of order, a sense of legal justification, if you want to get into the concepts that are prominent in his theology.

Well, at the death of his father, Calvin returns to Paris now with plans to become a classical scholar, i.e., a scholar that knows the classics, the classic writings, and he publishes his first book in the year 1532. What is the first book he writes? What do you think it is on? Does anybody know? That's right, it's a commentary on Seneca, who was a Roman Stoic philosopher who had been the tutor and advisor to Nero, the emperor. And so Calvin is studying classical languages, he's studying logic, the church fathers, a bit more of law, publishes a commentary on Seneca the Stoic philosopher. And then somewhere between 1532 and 1534, Calvin is finally led away from his general humanist interests to what he later would call "a sudden conversion." And he does not describe the circumstances-a sudden conversion.

Now I am going to be reading four or five long passages from Calvin tonight. One of the first ones, well,

I am not sure if it is the first or second. But, it is a description of his conversion and then his life up to the time that he returns to Geneva. So, we will come back to that sudden conversion. That takes place somewhere between 1532 and 1534. And Calvin scholars argue over exactly when it did take place. Although in a minute I will mention, we do know what the *terminus adwhem* ***sp? ***, must be for it. That is, the outside limit of it, because at a certain point Calvin gives up his benefices with the church. He finally says, "I will have nothing to do with the Roman Catholic Church anymore." Well, before that though. The influence of Reformed thinking came upon Calvin from many sides. His brother had taken an interest in it His cousin had taken an interest in it. His Greek instructor, ***sp? *** who was well-known in Europe, had taken an interest in the Reformation. And even his landlord apparently, had put this bug in his ear. Calvin however, seems to have been particularly struck by the fires of the martyrs who had died for the Reformation. This will come out later when I read from his writings. Calvin was really taken by the fact that these men would die such ignoble deaths for the sake of this cause. And at some point, and I am not sure, scholars cannot pin it down, he apparently enjoyed a meeting with the French condemned reformed, LeFevre. So, one way or another, Reformed interests come into Calvin's life. Calvin had made friends with Nicholas Coppe ***sp? in Paris. Coppe, in time, would become the rector of the University of Paris. In the year 1533, Cop made the annual All Saints Day address. And in that address he called for a more spiritual church and advocated ideas which sounded very much like Luther's. And then the rumor went about that this speech had been written upon the advice of one, Jean Calvin. Both men had to flee the city to save their lives, eventually. Calvin actually escaped through a back window while some of his friends detained bailiffs at the front door. It is really something that he just barely got out of Paris with his life. Well then in the spring of 1534, Calvin surrendered finally, his / clerical benefices, which had financed his studies up to that point. That is, remember I said that he had been appointed a chaplain at eleven. He traded for two higher positions and that sort of thing. Well, all these things brought money. It is really crass. It is amazing. But if you had church position, that brings an income. So, he did nothing. He didn't pray for anybody. He didn't tell anybody how they could better, how they could be right with God. He didn't preach, he didn't write, he didn't do anything. He just got money because he was in the position, like the toll taker, to receive this. And Calvin renounced that, even though it had paid for his education up to that point. And most scholars take that as the sure \ sign that finally been converted to the Protestant cause.

Question from the audience, *** Greg, was there any other system of authority at that time?

Answer: There was certainly civil authority. But civil authority was so clearly, it was so, ahh... subservient? Well, it was not so subservient, it was just inextricably mixed with church authority, that you have to remember pope and emperor are constantly, you know, vying for power. The pope s doesn't do well without the emperors backing and his armies. But, on the other hand, the armies don't \$yfight if the pope doesn't give his blessing to the cause itself. So, the church and the state clearly. In fact, one of the things that I will commend Calvin for later this evening, is really being the father of church/state separation, in the proper sense I think.

Anyway, by the spring of '34 then, Calvin had seen the necessity of reform and he was unmovable in his conviction from that point on, that the church had to be reformed. And that necessity for reform is described in his own words in his 1539 work, *A Reply to Cardinal Sadolet*; which I want to take a few moments to read a section from for you. I will tell you more about this reply to Sadolet and its significance in a few moments. He is replying to Roman Catholic who is encouraging the people of Geneva to re-enter the Roman Catholic communion. And Calvin writes a reply to him that goes on at some length. But at one point Calvin addresses these words to the Lord in explanation of how necessary reform is.

He says,

Oh Lord, I have indeed experienced how difficult and grievous it was to bear the invidious accusations with which I was harassed on the earth. And with the same confidence with which I then

appeal to Thy tribunal, I now appear before Thee because I know that in Thy judgment truth always reigns. That truth by whose assurance supported I first ventured to attempt with Whose assistance provided, I was able to accomplish whatever I have achieved in Thy church. They charge me with two of the worst of crimes, heresy and schism. And the heresy was that I dared to protest against dogmas which they received. But, what could I have done? I heard from Thy mouth that there was no other light of truth which could direct our souls into the way of life than that which was kindled by Thy Word. I heard that whatever human minds of themselves conceive concerning Thy majesty, the worship of Thy deity and the mysteries of Thy religion was vanity. I heard that their introducing into the church, instead of Thy Word, doctrines sprung from the human brain, was sacrilegious presumption. But, when I turned my eyes towards men, I saw very different principles prevailing. Those who were regarded as the leaders of faith, neither understood Thy Word nor greatly cared for it. They only drove unhappy people to and fro with strange doctrines and deluded them with I know not what follies. Among the people themselves, the highest veneration paid to Thy Word was to revere it at a distance as a thing inaccessible and abstained from all investigation of it. Owing to the sublime state of the pastors and the stupidity of the people every place was filled with pernicious errors, falsehoods and superstition. They indeed called Thee the only God, but it was while transferring to others the glory which Thou hast claimed for Thy majesty. They figured and had for themselves, as many gods as they had saints whom they chose to worship. Thy Christ was indeed worshipped as God and retained the name of Savior. But, where He ought to have been honored He was left almost without honor. For spoiled of His own virtue, He passed unnoticed among the crowd of saints like one of the meanest of them. There was none who duly considered that one sacrifice which he offered on the Cross and by which He reconciled to Thyself, none who ever dreamed of thinking of His eternal priesthood and the intercession depending upon it. None who trusted in his righteousness only, that confident hope of salvation which is both enjoyed by Thy Word and founded upon it, had almost vanished. Nay, it was received as a kind of oracle that it was foolish arrogance and as they termed it, presumption, for anyone trusting Thy goodness and the righteousness of Thy Son to entertain a sure and unfaltering hope of salvation. Not a few profane opinions plucked up by the roots, the first principles of that doctrine, which Thou hast delivered to us in Thy Word. The true meaning of baptism and the Lord's Supper also were corrupted by numerous falsehoods and then when all with no small insult to Thy mercy, put confidence in good works, when by good works they strove to merit Thy favor to procure justification, to expiate their sins, and make satisfaction to Thee. Each of these things obliterating and making void the virtue of Christ's cross. They were yet altogether ignorant wherein good works consisted. For just as if they were not at all instructed in righteousness by Thy law, they had fabricated for themselves many useless frivolities as a means of procuring Thy favor. And on these they so plumed themselves, that in comparison of them they almost condemned the standard of true righteousness which Thy law recommended. To such a degree had human desires, after usurping the ascendancy, derogated, if not from the belief at least from the authority of Thy precepts therein contained. That I might perceive these things, Thou Oh Lord did shine upon me the brightness of Thy Spirit that I might comprehend how impious and obnoxious they were. They didst bear before me the torch of Thy Word that I might abominate them as they deserve. Thou didst stimulate my soul. But in rendering an account of my doctrine Thou seest what my own conscience declares that it was not my intention to stray beyond those limits which I saw had been fixed by all Thy servants. Whatever I felt assured that I had learned from Thy mouth, I desired to dispense faithfully to the church. Assuredly the thing at which chiefly aimed and for which I most diligently labored, was that the glory of Thy goodness and justice, after dispersing the mist by which it was formally obscured, might shine forth conspicuous that the virtue and blessings of Thy Christ all glosses being wiped away, might be fully displayed. For I thought it impious to leave in obscurity, things which we were born to ponder and meditate. Nor did I think that truths whose magnitude no language can express, were to be maliciously or falsely declared. I hesitated not to dwell at great length on topics on which the salvation of my hearers depended. For the oracle could never deceive which declares, "This is eternal life, to know Thee the only true God in Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." As to the charge of forsaking the church which they were wont to bring against me, there is nothing of which my conscience accuses me unless, indeed, he is to be

considered a deserter, who seeing the soldiers routed and scattered and abandoning the ranks, raises the leader's standard and recalls them to their post, for thus, oh, Lord were all thy servants dispersed so that they could not by any possibility hear the command but had almost forgotten their leader and their service in their military oath. In order to bring them together when thus scattered, I raise not a foreign standard but that noble banner of Thine whom we must follow if we would be classed among Thy people.

Then I was assailed by those, who when they ought to have kept others in their ranks, have led them astray and when I determined not to desist, opposed me with violence. On this, grievous tumults arose and the contest blazed and issued in disruption. With whom the blame rested is for Thee, oh Lord, to decide. Always, both by word and deed, have I protested how eager I was for unity. Mine, however, was a unity of the church which should begin with Thee and end with Thee. For as oft as Thou dost recommend to us peace and concord, Thou at the same time did show that Thou wert the only bond for preserving it; that if I desired to be at peace with those who boasted of being the heads of the church and pillars of faith, I behooved to purchase it with the denial of Thy truth. I thought that anything was to be endured sooner than to stoop to such a nefarious paction. For Thy anointed Himself hath declare that though heaven and earth should be confounded, yet that Thy Word must endure forever. Nor did I think that I dissented from Thy church because I was at war with those leaders. For Thou hast forewarned me both by Thy Son and by the apostles that that place would be occupied by persons to whom I ought by no means to consent. Christ had predicted not of strangers but of men who should themselves out for pastors, that there would be ravenous wolves and false prophets and had at that same time cautioned to beware of them. Where Christ ordered me to beware, was I to lend my aid? And the Apostles declared that there would be no enemies of Thy Church more pestilential than those from within who would conceal themselves under the title of pastors. Why should I have hesitated myself from persons whom they forewarned me to hold as enemies. I had before my eyes the examples of prophets who I saw had a similar contest with the priests and prophets of their day though these were undoubtedly the rulers of the church among the Israelitish people. But Thy prophets are not regarded as schismatics because when they wished to revive religion which had fallen into decay, they desisted not although opposed with the utmost violence. They remained in the unity of the church though they were doomed to perdition by wicked priests and deemed unworthy of place among men, not to say, saints. Confirmed by their example, I too persisted. Though denounced as a deserter of the church and threatened, I was in no respect deterred or induced to proceed less firmly and boldly. In opposing those who in the character of pastors wasted Thy church with a more than impious tyranny. My conscience told me how strong the zeal was with which I burned for the unity of Thy church provided Thy truth were made the bond of concord. As the commotions which followed were not excited by me, so there is no ground for imputing them to me. Thou Oh Lord knowest, and the fact itself has testified to men that the only thing that I asked was that all controversy should be decided by Thy Word. That thus both parties might unite with one mind to establish Thy kingdom. And I declined not to restore peace to the church as the expense of my head if I were found to have been unnecessarily the cause of torment. But what did our opponents? Did they not instantly and like madmen, fly to fire, swords and gibbets? Did they not decide that their only security was in arms and cruelty? did they not instigate all ranks to the same fury? Did they not spurn at all methods of pacification? To this it is owing that a matter which at one time have been settled amicably, has blazed into such a contest. But although amidst a great confusion, the judgments of men were various, I am freed from all fear now that we stand at Thy tribunal where equity combined with truth cannot but decide in favor of innocence.

I decided to read at length because that is such a stirring passage where Calvin, before the readers in Geneva, is setting forth this defense, actually speaking to God as he writes to Sadolet? He says that "this is the reason why reform is necessary and this is why we are willing to lay down our lives. And if they want peace we will have peace but only on the premise that it come through the Word of God. All disputes must be settled by the Word of God." And Calvin says that he is willing to lay down his life now for that. Now such was the sudden conversion that finally brings Calvin to a steeled point that he will not

back away from.

Audience question: Did he also feel that he had made some move to pass over this amicably instead of any excommunicating so that a lot of this hostility could be avoided?

Yes, in fact in this Calvin seems to be maintaining, "We were for discussions and having resolution around the Word of God. But instead our opponents were quick for the sword, the fire and the gibbet." That is to say, there were quick to persecute and to try to compel the conscience of men to submit to their own opinions without settling it by the Word of God. Calvin claims, "It is only because of the warfare of the enemy that peace can't come in the church." I think that he would have been willing but remember, he is run out of Paris. Later you will see that things don't well in his life. Calvin seems to understand that throughout the Protestants are the ones who should be for peace because they have Bible behind them. And those who don't have the Bible behind them, have to resort to a different kind of authority and force.

Audience question: Was the church alive and well at any place in the world at that time?

It was just barely flickering to life right now. It's a deplorable, deplorable time in Europe and of course, anywhere in Christendom then. Very few people and Luther himself. Where would Luther find somebody to give him just the slightest comfort to his soul to know that Christ in His righteousness alone was sufficient for salvation? Luther had to finally read it and it was only because he became a reader of Holy Scripture and knew the Greek that he could read it for Himself. He began to ask these questions. Jacques LeFevre, the same way. Calvin, apparently, too. He begins to read the Scripture and he says, What on earth are these men teaching us? Nothing but superstition.

By the way, it's a fine argument in this piece too. He says, It's amazing, not only do they corrupt the doctrine of justification, not only do they abominate the grace of God and salvation, but after putting all this emphasis on good works, lo and behold, they don't even know what good works are, he says. In place of the law of God which is the standard of good works, they have all these frivolities, all these silly superstitions and things which they called good works, like praying to saints and their indulgences and that sort of think. And so Calvin has finally come full circle. He wants nothing to do with Roman Catholicism, because he says the unity of the church must now be founded upon the Word of God, and it alone.

Audience question: What's the name of that book? John Calvin by *** inaudible...

I'm reading... the selections I'm reading are coming from this book edited by John Dillenberger, and the book is just entitled *John Calvin*, selections from his writings. If you want to do some outside reading, an excellent source of things on the life and theology of Calvin.

Audience comment: There's an excellent *** inaudible *** of Fox series has *** inaudible *** ...

Yes. Well you.... *The Tracts and Treatises of Calvin* is available and it has the *** inaudible *** In fact, that has been separately published by Bob's Merrill *** sp? *** (side one ends in mid-sentence)

(begin tape second side)

also in their church history series. So that's a crucial piece, and that's what I was reading from right now.

Okay, well that finishes the first portion of tonight's lecture, the life of Calvin as a young man, and I'm going to turn now to the second section, if you're trying to keep up with my outline, the life of Calvin as a reformer.

Calvin has to flee from Paris...

Audience question: Has he actually been in *** inaudible *** this whole time?

Uh huh-the time from the birth of Calvin up to his conversion and his decision to follow the Reformation. And so now I'm going to... this seems to be a good way to break down his life, and now his life as a reformer from this point.

Calvin wandered from city to city under assumed names for a year. He knew that the enemies of the Reformation were out to kill him, and so he was actually going incognito from city to city, not staying very long anywhere. And finally in the year 1535 he found rest for awhile in Basil, Switzerland.

While he was in Basil he set about to make an orderly formulation of the truths of the Bible. He was twenty-seven years old, and at that age, young and tender, Calvin published his exposition of evangelical truth, the title of the book, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, destined to become the most famous system theology of the Protestant Reformation, published at the age of twenty-seven. Remember this is not more than three years after his conversion. It not only served as an explanation of the fundamental doctrines of the Protestant movement, it also served to show that the people being persecuted in France were *not* radicals or revolutionaries or revolutionaries, but simply firm believers in all that the Bible says. And it was for that reason that Calvin dedicated the small book to the king of France, Francis I.

The book was composed in classic Latin, and then translated shortly thereafter into elegant French prose, and it quickly became the leading statement of the evangelical outlook for the Protestant Reformation. Now, I would love to go on and on about it, but as you know, two weeks from tonight we come back, and I'm going to give a whole lecture on the *Institutes*, their formation, their transformation, their publication, and influence. So, twenty-seven years old, in the year 1536, he publishes from Basil, the *Institutes*.

Now in August of 1536 Calvin is on his way to Strasbourg, where he thinks he's going to take up the quiet life of a scholar. Later I'm going to read something to you, as Calvin describes his life, it's almost the humorous when you think of what actually happened to Calvin and how he was constantly thrust before the public's eye, how his one burning desire in life seems to have been to away to some corner where nobody knew him and just read and study. He just wanted to hole-up with his books and just to write away. And that is really what he wanted. I mean, how many people do I know that feel the same way. I don't care about all these debates. I don't care about these fights. I don't need the limelight. I - just want to go away and enjoy reading and learning and writing things down. He always wanted to do that, and so, in August of '36 he heads for Strasbourg where he's determined now with his family's wealth he's just going to set out to be a quiet scholar out in the corner.

When he leaves Basil, nobody even knows that he's the author of the *Institutes*. I mean, you've seen the commercials on TV with the guy with the American Express card says, "Do you know who I am?" Well, of course, people don't recognize all these faces, so the American Express card's supposed to the answer to that. When Calvin left Basil, people had heard of the *Institutes*, but they didn't know that young kid over there was the one who was the author. So he's going to Strasbourg, but he has to, now, take a detour around the western tip of the Lake Geneva, because of warfare that was taking place between Francis I and Charles V. And because of that, Calvin, detours, now, around and has to spend one evening on his way to Strasbourg for his quiet retreat, finally, one evening in Geneva. And there the life of Calvin changed forever.

Ferrel, you see, had come to Geneva in the year 1532 to bring the Reformation to that city. And after a good deal of opposition from the Catholic majority in Geneva, Ferrel's fiery preaching turned the tide. In the summer of 1535, there were riots in the city of Geneva against the mass, the icons, and monks of the

Roman Catholic Church.

In May of 1536, the general assembly of citizens of Geneva voted to make Protestantism the official religion of Geneva. Now that put the city in revolt against its bishop and its lord, the duke of Savoy. And so, Calvin comes to Geneva and it's... (how can I put it?)... it's as though *in name* the city has become Protestant, but there are great political and social pressures in the city that are about ready to tear it apart. Ferrel heard that Calvin was staying the night in Geneva, and of course, he recognized the name of Calvin as this young man who had written the *Institutes*. And Ferrel said that he immediately saw the blessing of God's providence at work. And you have to chuckle. Isn't that true? Calvin had *no* interest in Geneva. Geneva was even on his Trip-tik, after all. He was not intending to go to Geneva. He had to. It was a detour. He wanted to be there one night, and get up early and be on the road. Calvin was surprised when Ferrel came to where he was staying that anybody would even know his name, for Calvin didn't realize that the reputation of *the Institutes* had preceded him already to the city. And so after > pleading with Calvin and hearing his reasonable excuses for not staying in Geneva, Ferrel and rose and, according to the testimony of Calvin, thundered, "May God *curse* your studies, if now in her time of /f] need, you refuse to lend your aid to his church." And Calvin was visibly shaken that Ferrel would curse his Christian studies if he would dare to leave the city of Geneva and give up the cause of reformation in the Church of Christ there. And so fearing God's disfavor for his reluctance, Calvin finally consented to stay and to be Ferrel's assistant.

*|S Calvin was ordained to the office of Professor of the Word of God, and a few months later became one of N the pastors of the city of Geneva. Ferrel and Calvin worked together from August, 1536 to April, 1538. Not a very long time. What happened? Well, Calvin insisted...

Audience question: What was it? From August...

^J^ August '36 to April '38. Not even two full years. But what happened was that Calvin insisted that the *Is* city council had no right to impose an order of worship on the church. And when he argued that / excommunication and church discipline in general were in the hands of the church session alone, he was ^* banished with Ferrel from the city. The city council said, We'll decide who comes to the Lord's table. We'll decide matters of church discipline. And so, you see, how lacking there was of any sense of separation of church and state. The state *was* the disciplinary force and authority in the church. Calvin said, No, you're wrong. Christ has ordained ministers in his church separate from the state. And for insisting on that... this, I mean, this is a young man, he's only been here two years, and he's taking this intelligent, biblical, principled stand, and he and Ferrel, for their efforts, are cast out of the city. And so Calvin finally gets to go to Strasbourg.

And [if] you read the writings of Calvin at the time, and although he's saddened for the city of Geneva and for the church, that it has such an undiscerning city council, he's very happy for his own life, that / finally he gets to leave Geneva as he originally wanted to and to come to Strasbourg and study at the ■ M invitation of Martin Bucer.

Martin Bucer, who had been won over to the Reformation by Luther at the Leipzig debate. Bucer, \1 Calvin will later claim, is the greatest biblical expositor of the day. Bucer will come and lead the Reformation in England with Lattimer and the others. But Bucer, now, is in Strasbourg and welcomes Calvin there.

While he was in Strasbourg, Calvin married a divorced woman who's name was Idlette Van Buren

What's that?

Audience question: *** inaudible ***

I'm sorry. You're right. That's right. She was widowed-Idlette Van Buren.

He also became pastor of the church of the France refugees who were fleeing persecution, and he did a little bit of lecturing in theology. While he was there in Strasbourg, he prepared a greatly enlarged edition of the *Institutes* as well as writing a commentary on the book of Romans. And while in Strasbourg... (this is an interesting point) while in Strasbourg he wrote his reply to Cardinal Sadolet, the Romanist cardinal who had written to the city of Geneva in order to fish it out of the troubled waters of the Reformation back into the bowl of the mother church. What's interesting to me is, though Calvin was glad to be out of Geneva, that the Christians in Geneva sent the letter of Sadolet to him to answer. They still knew that Calvin was their spiritual and intellectual leader, and Calvin loved the church enough that he was willing to do that.

Audience question: *** inaudible, something about keeping a plague from spreading *** was that while he was there?

Urn, I'm not sure of the answer to that question. That may very well be. He continued to have cordial relations with people in Geneva even though he was technically and legally a banished pastor.

Audience question: What was it he wrote there that you just said it.. .he wrote two things?

κ/ He enlarged the *Institutes*, wrote a commentary on Romans, and addressed the famous reply to Cardinal Sadolet.

I might have mentioned earlier that after Calvin published the *Institutes* and then was on his way, not to Geneva, but through Geneva, to Strasbourg, that before that, he had traveled to Italy in order to confer with the Duchess of Ferrara because she had been won over to the Reformation and sympathized with its cause, but Calvin, I. was not impressed with Italy, which of course, was heresy at the time-I mean, every young intellectual was supposed to be impressed with Italy. He was not impressed. He was glad to get out of Italy. And, unfortunately, his appeal to the duchess didn't prove very helpful because she was not at all effective in getting Italians to follow the Reformation, nor was she apparently persuasive with her friends and relatives back in France. And so, from Italy he goes to Noyon finally, to his home to settle his father's estate, and then finally heads out for Strasbourg, as I said, to take up the quiet life of a scholar.

Audience question: *** inaudible ***

What's that?

Audience comment: His father had died...

Yes. Well, his father died, you see, at the time Calvin gave up legal studies to become a classical scholar. Yeah, and that's the only reason he felt that he...

Audience comment: And this is now about three years later, isn't it?

Yeah...yeah. But you see, he was not welcome in France. He had to leave Paris to save his life. Um...

Audience: The Reformation was actually then a popular uprising.

Yes it was. The Reformation was not... not some kind of a peaceful movement of people like join the SDS (well the SDS wasn't very peaceful)... but going to college and just signing your name on some piece of paper that you wanted to be part of some organization. To hold to the Reformation that you were breaking with the establishment-church and state establishment. And so, when Calvin followed the Reformation, especially was good friends with Nicholas Coppe *** sp? ***, he was finally run out of the city of Paris, and that's why he was staying away from that area, but he eventually went back and settled

his father's estate. And then he was going to take the money from this-he was independently wealthy-and he was going to be this quiet scholar in Strasbourg. It didn't work.

Audience: *** inaudible ***

I'm sorry?

Audience: *** inaudible ***

No, Strasbourg is in Switzerland.

Audience: *** inaudible ***

German. That's right.

Audience: *** inaudible, something about Switzerland divided into French and German parts ***

That's right.

Audience: And it was in Strasbourg... was right there between Germany and Switzerland... *** inaudible ***

Well, so Calvin is heading for Strasbourg; it's the detour to Geneva. Ferrel stops him there. He puts in a couple of years of work with Ferrel, but he's banished and finally gets to go to Strasbourg, where he is well acquainted with Martin Bucer. He there married the widow Idlette Van Buren, became pastor of the church of French refugees who were fleeing the persecution, did a great deal of writing. And then I had mentioned that this famous piece he wrote, the reply to Cardinal Sadolet, this is really a classic Reformation polemic. In it, Calvin maintains that the kingdom of Christ has been trampled by the Roman pontiff. I'm going to read a few remarks of his here. He says, "All we have attempted has been to renew that ancient form of the church, which at first sullied and distorted by illiterate men of indifferent character, was afterwards prodigiously mangled and almost destroyed by the Roman pontiff and his faction." Calvin doesn't like the Pope, as you can tell. "But what arrogance you will say to boast that the church is with you alone and deny it to all the world besides," he says to Sadolet. "We indeed, Sadolet, deny not that those over which you preside are churches of Christ, but we maintain that the *l*/Roman pontiff, with his whole herd of pseudo-bishops who have seized upon the pastor's office, are ravening wolves whose only study has hereto been to scatter and trample upon the kingdom of Christ, filling it with ruin and devastation."

Audience question: What is.. .what would be a more literal translation of the word *bishop*? Because he said *pseudo-bishop*?

Yeah, what he...well, bishop... it's an overseer in the church. That's what the Greek word means. And he says *psevdo-bishop*...

Audience questions: lousy overseer, is that right?

What he means.. .you have a position of authority, but falsely so. You're *a, pseudo-overseer*. And then he says.

For in vain more freely against the Roman pontiff who was revered as the vice-gerent of Christ, the successor of Peter, and the head of the Church, they excuse themselves thus. Such titles as those are empty bugbearers by which the eyes of the pious ought not to be so blinded as not to venture to look at them and sift the reality. It was when the world was plunged in ignorance and sloth, as in a

deep sleep, that the Pope had risen to such an eminence. Certainly, neither appointed head of the Church by the Word of God, nor ordained by a legitimate act of the Church, but of his own accord, self-elected. Moreover, the tyranny which he let loose against the people of God was not to be endured if we wish to have the kingdom of Christ amongst us in safety. And they wanted not most powerful arguments to confirm all their positions. First, they clearly disposed of everything that was then commonly adduced to establish the primacy of the Pope. When they had taken away all these props, they also, by the Word of God tumbled him from his lofty height. On the whole, they made it clear and palpable to learned and unlearned that the true order of the Church had then perished, that the keys under which the discipline of the Church is comprehended had been altered very much for the worse, that Christian liberty had fallen. In short, that the kingdom of Christ was prostrated when this primacy of the Pope was reared up.

Okay, so.. .that's why this is a classic Reformation polemic. And to all of you who can get your hands on it I think you should read it.

He says, "The kingdom of Christ has been trampled by the Roman pontiff." He says that Scripture alone must be our standard." Listen to these selections.

Audience question: Is there a particular year that we can say was... that was when we took off from Catholicism?

Urn, well you see, it doesn't.. .it doesn't really happen like a light switch-off and then on. It begins gradually with Martin Luther's 1517 declaration that he wants to debate ninety-five theses that are commonly held in the Roman Catholic Church. Remember, when Luther posted the theses, he was not saying, I'm going to break from the Church. He was simply saying, The standard method of dealing with controversy is to post theses and to challenge somebody to a debate, and so that's what I'm doing. But you see, the Pope condemned him for it, and then what happens is that puts him on a collision course where finally Luther is put out...

Audience question: Luther dates who...what?

Luther said, I'm willing to debate anybody on these ninety-five theses. And instead of debating him, the Roman Catholic Church decides they're going to discipline him. He does get a debate at Leipzig and Worms, etc., but it turns out that the Church is only interested in using it as a pretext to condemn him.

Calvin breaks with the Church, and what you see happening is that there are little clusters of people who hold to the Reformation understanding, and eventually this becomes a movement that even the Roman Catholic Church has to recognize, because they have (as I'm going to say here later) the Council of Trent called, which is the counter-Reformation movement. They finally recognized that this is not just a bunch of individuals here and there, but it's actually Europe is being won over in place after place to a different understanding of the Christian faith. But there's no...in answer to your question, there's no one particular date that we can say, Okay, there, that marks the beginning of Protestantism. Protestantism begins implicitly in 1517, but you have to ask, Protestantism in Strasbourg? Protestantism in...

Audience question: *** inaudible*** ...that was being preached in 1512.

What's that?

Audience question: *** inaudible *** ..being preached in 1512. I suppose by that time you have *** inaudible ***

What was being preached in 1512?

Audience comments: *** inaudible *** ...were fed-up with it for a long time, but they had never found...

Oh, sure! Sure, well you had forerunners, as they're called, of the Reformation: Wycliffe and Huss, and Savinrolen *** sp? ***, these sorts of men, who had preached against excesses in the Roman Catholic Church, and many had been martyred for teaching that salvation is not as the Roman Catholic Church had taught. But you don't get an organized movement until you have the galvanizing influence of Luther, who draws men after him and raises it, gives it such visibility that men around Europe are beginning to ask questions and from this arise different Protestant churches in a movement that has to be reckoned with.

Audience question: How long was the church in such a state of despair?

Well, like the reformation, it comes gradually, although the reformation came much faster than the degeneration of the church. If you read the church fathers, you'll be surprised even in the 300's and the 400's of how bad the theology can be, the misperceptions of biblical teaching. Augustine is such a great church father mainly because his theology is by far head and shoulders above all the others in terms of his perception of the grace of God and that sort of thing. But I would certainly say from the time of Augustine on ~ let's say from 400 or to make it easy 500 on — the church begins a steady degeneration. There are people, of course, who understand the faith. You have your *** anselms (not sure of word) *** and others, but by the time of Thomas Aquinas «the high Middle Ages, the 1200's, 1300's of the church ~ if the light of gospel is there, it is a very weak flickering, you know, way over in a corner somewhere and it is into this world that Martin Luther is born in the 1400's.

Well, I wanted to give you a few other quotes from the *Reply to Sadoleto*. Calvin has said that the kingdom of Christ has been trampled by the Roman pontiff. He says, secondly, Scripture alone must be our standard. He says, "Let your pontiff, then, boast of the succession of Peter. Even should he make good his title to it, he will establish nothing more than that obedience is due to him from the Christian people so long as he himself maintains his fidelity to Christ and deviates not from the purity of the Gospel." Calvin says, "I don't believe that the pope is the successor of Peter, but if you can prove that he is, fine. We still only submit to the pope insofar as he doesn't deviate from the purity of God's Word."

Audience comments: But the reason he puts God's word over the whole church, over every man.

That's right. It is hard for us to perceive today how startling and dramatic that was for someone to say Sola Scriptura. Let everything be judged by this unmovable standard of God's word. He says this alone, "For although we hold that the word of God alone lies beyond the spirit of our judgment and that fathers and councils are of authority only insofar as they accord with the rule of the Word. We still give to councils and fathers such rank and honor as it is mete for them to hold under Christ." In that he says, even the fathers must be judged by the Scriptures.

Audience comments: Our fathers *** inaudible *** if someone were to really *** inaudible *** is, the Supreme Court *** inaudible *** that every one has a right to *** inaudible *** the United States, the way you choose that the Supreme Court couldn't do.

That's a helpful analogy. That's right. If we said everybody should start living today not by what the Supreme Court says but by what they think the Constitution means, and they should read it for themselves, you can imagine what kind of social implications that would have. It was even more, church and state, all of society, all of life, was radically understood in a different way when Calvin and the others said Scripture will be the final authority.

Audience question: What is the mindset of that time? Today we have relativism as the leading philosophy, I think, but it wasn't nearly so at that time was it? It wasn't so much, "Excuse me," but it's

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just a...

No, there were some relativists. In fact, Calvin had some of his biggest run-in's in Geneva with the Libertine Party among whom some were found advocating free love and that there were no moral standards and that sort of thing. But they were really out of place in the 16th century. I mean, everybody took it for granted that there was truth and the church was the one that dispensed it. Now, what Calvin said is that, yes, there is absolute truth but it is not tied to the church, it is tied to the Scriptures.

Audience comment: It didn't become popular until people associated with Einstein's relativity or confused it with Einstein's relativity.

Well, I'm not sure that.. yeah, it is a confusion. Einstein, I don't think, really taught a relativistic view of reality; he simply...

Audience comment: No, he actually spoke against it when people were trying to use it.. use his relativity to... Paul Johnson writes in *Modern Times* that very well...

In our day and age, however, in one sense, the Protestants and the Catholics of the sixteenth century would still be on this side of the gulf. On the other side you have existentialism and relativism and those sorts of things. At least the Romanists of that day believed in absolute truth; their problem is that they tied it to man and to the authority of the Pope rather than to the Word of God.

Audience question: Where do you go...*** inaudible*** Socrates and the Renaissance and Erasmus and that classical humanism. And that had a lot of strong influences toward relativism in the church.

Yeah, see the Renaissance is a rebirth, allegedly, of classical culture-classical culture meaning ancient Greek and somewhat Roman culture. Well, Greek philosophy, of course, had one of its most dominant strains, the Sophists, who taught that man is the measure of all things, that there is no truth, if there is any truth that it can't be taught, if it can't be taught, if it can't be taught, nobody can prove it, and those sorts of things. So there was relativism that could come from the ancient Greek world through the humanists of the Renaissance into the sixteenth century. You're right about that.

But again, the prevailing Zeitgeist, the spirit of the day, was that there were absolutes, and that people could know these absolutes if they would just listen to the Pope. Calvin said, No, the Pope is... well, I see we'll say later I'll quote, "an ape in purple."

Audience comment: *** inaudible *** ... was never formally announced until 1870. I guess it was *** inaudible *** assumed before that time.

Yes, it was formally pronounced primarily as a way of answering those who doubted it. There's no question that the Pope was taken as infallible. He was treated that way by many people long before 1870.

Now, there's one other interesting thing in this reply to Sadolet that I want to get back to, not only Calvin says, The Pope has destroyed the kingdom of Christ, that Scripture alone must be our authority, Calvin indicates something here, (he's not in Geneva at the time) but it's something that's very true about Geneva later and about the live of Calvin. Calvin says the Reformation really has two enemies-two enemies: Roman Catholicism on the one hand...

(tape ends mid-sentence)