

Chapter 20

Calvin Makes Protestantism an International Movement

Reformers React to Luther

As we noted with Luther, Calvin's reform movement would not take place in a vacuum. The larger matrix of the rise of the nation states, the moral and political weakness of the papacy and the much needed reforms of the medieval Church still provided a rich soil for reform movements.

In fact, there were a number of these reform movements, which were simultaneous with, but not initiated by Luther. Their causes were many, but their emphasis on Scripture alone as a source of authority proved unable to provide the doctrinal agreement needed to unite these various reform movements as they sprung up.

Before Luther's death in 1546, the reform movement had begun to divide into two groups; a right-wing and a left-wing. The right wing group adhered to Luther and his more conservative views (especially on the Eucharist), which held to a continuity of faith, rite and ethics that was similar to the Roman Church. Furthermore this Lutheran movement was in many ways still controlled by "authorities".

With the bishops deposed and the papacy ignored, princes and magistrates now decided on matters that had been left to Rome and local bishops. Luther's reform did not include a reform of the political system (contrary to Calvin as we shall see) as was evident in his opposition to the Peasants' Revolt. Thus, the medieval concept of Christendom was to be replaced by the national or state church, which in its own way was as authoritative as Rome had ever been - those opposing the state church were often burned at the stake.

The left-wing groups were radical, anticlerical nonconformists (enthusiasts) who turned against the power of the state where they were persecuted, as exemplified in the Peasants' Revolt. In the end this tradition led to the development of the Free Churches, which assembled in their own places of worship, had voluntary membership and their own church order.

As we shall see, in less than twenty years after the first protest of Luther, three very different types of Protestant Christianity had begun to take definite shape - Lutheranism, Free Churches and Reformed Christianity.

Reform Spreads to Switzerland

While the reformation in Switzerland and the whole of Reformed Christianity owes most to John Calvin, it got its start with Huldreich Zwingli (1483-1531). Zwingli was a contemporary of Luther. He grew up in the same social and ecclesiastical milieu as Luther, however he seems to owe very little to Luther and disagreed with Luther on several important theological points.

Zwingli came from German Switzerland. He received a traditional education, became a priest in 1506 and was a parish pastor in Glarus and Einsiedeln until 1516. He was influenced by the humanism of Erasmus. He secured a copy of Erasmus's Greek New Testament and began a study of St. Paul - he memorized all Paul's epistles.

Like Luther, his study of Paul turned him into a "reformed" direction. Because of his powerful preaching, he was appointed People's Preacher at the Great Minster in Zurich. in 1519. By 1522 he emerged as an evangelical Reformer. He preached Christ crucified as the sole source of grace and the Scripture as the sole norm of truth. He preached against the abuses of the Catholic Church and attacked the teachings on purgatory, the saints, monasticism, the Mass, the authority of the pope, fasting and clerical celibacy - in 1524 he married.

His preaching stirred the people of Zurich to call for reform. With the support of the City Council of Zurich, in 1525 canon law was annulled, images and organs were removed from churches, monasteries were dissolved and the Latin Mass was replaced by a Lord's Supper in German.

Zwingli argued with Catholic and Lutheran theologians who held that the sacraments conferred grace. He also denied the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, claiming the Lord's Supper was "simply" a memorial. He also held that the sacraments could not confer grace. He was called by Philip of Hesse to the Colloquy of Marburg in 1529, but could not reach agreement with Luther on the real presence and other issues, (Luther had rejected the concept of "transubstantiation", but had held to a concept of the real presence). Zwingli also attended the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, but could not reconcile his theology with Luther or the Catholic Church.

With the eastern cantons of Switzerland split badly over religion, civil strife erupted and Zwingli was killed in the Second Battle of Kappel in 1531. A truce, known as the Peace of Kappel, provided that each canton should be free to accept the faith of its own choosing. This truce closed the first part of the Protestant revolt in German Switzerland. The fate of French Switzerland and the greater Reform Movement would be in the hands of John Calvin.

John Calvin (1509-1564) - Early History and Education

John Calvin was born on July 10, 1509 at Noyon, France, a small town sixty miles from Paris. His parents were Gerard and Jeanne Cauvin (*Calvinus* in Latin, Calvin in a new French form). The local parish priest noted his unusual intelligence and obtained funding to send him to study theology at the College of La Marche in Paris which he entered in 1523, at the age of fourteen. Here Calvin came in touch with humanism and mastered a brilliant writing style and skill in logical argument. After transferring to the College of Montaigu, he received a Masters of Arts degree in 1528.

After a few years Calvin began to have doubts about his vocation to the priesthood and in 1528 when his father insisted that he turn to the study of law, he immediately complied

and took up law and classical languages at Orleans and Bourges, under some of the best professors of the day. Here he encountered Protestantism for the first time. He also began his study of Greek and was befriended by Melchior Wolmar who was influenced by Luther. When his father died in 1531, Calvin decided to finish his doctorate in law, but not to enter the law profession. He thus returned to Paris to study the classics and to pursue the career of a scholar.

In Paris, Calvin again came in touch with reforming ideas. Shortly thereafter, Calvin had, what he later called, an “unexpected conversion”. He did not explain his conversion experience, but Bokenkotter suggests that his account of a hypothetical conversion in his *Reply to Cardinal Sadoletto* (1539) may have been drawn from his own experience. In this account the reasons for conversion include the failure to find peace of conscience through the Roman Church’s systems of satisfaction and of his soul’s terror in this condition; the comfort received by the doctrine of the sufficiency of Christ’s work of satisfaction; the conviction that church reform was not schismatic in intention; and his belief that the papacy was not grounded in Scripture, but a human tyranny.

In the fall of 1533, Calvin’s close friend and rector of the University of Paris, Nicholas Cop, delivered a strongly Protestant address. It threw the University into an uproar. Some suspected that Calvin had written Cop’s speech and both Calvin and Cop were charged with heresy. This event, plus the severe crackdown on Protestants initiated by the Catholic king, Francis I, after the “Affair of the Placards”, when Protestants set up posters throughout Paris denouncing the Mass, caused Calvin to flee Paris just ahead of the police, rather than face possible martyrdom.

In any event, in 1534 he declared his break from the Roman Church, abandoned his career as a classical scholar and identified with the Protestant cause in France. In 1535 he arrived in Basel, Switzerland.

Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

It was in Basel, in 1536, that Calvin published the first edition of his famous work, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. This work, one of the most important in Christian literature, firmly established Calvin as one of the giants of the reformation and earned him the title of the “Father of Reformed Christianity”.

Originally published in Latin, the *Institutes* were revised and expanded several times and finally translated into French. They are a systematic treatment of Christianity that outlines the main principles of Calvinism. These include:

- 1) The Old and New Testament provide the sufficient source for understanding Christianity.
- 2) The absolute sovereignty of God, whose will determines both the means and the ends of human salvation.
- 3) Due to the Fall, humans are totally depraved, lack free will, and all human actions in themselves are always sinful.
- 4) Justification and sanctification depend on faith alone.

- 5) God predestines the elect to heaven and the reprobate to hell.
- 6) Grace is irresistible and thus the elect necessarily do the will of God.
- 7) The Church is supreme over the State.
- 8) There are two sacraments, Baptism and Eucharist. Sacraments are external signs of an inner reality, but they do not effect this reality.

With the publication of the *Institutes* we can see an outline of the unique features of Reformed Christianity. In Calvin's judgment, God had a definite game-plan, which he called God's sovereign will. Luther's central doctrine was "justification by faith", Calvin's central doctrine was the "sovereignty of God". For Luther the miracle of salvation was found in one's faith in God's mercy toward sinners, for Calvin salvation was a matter absolute predestination in lieu of God's free election. In politics, Calvin saw the church as supreme, while for Luther the State was supreme.

On four important points Luther and Calvin agreed. Both held for the priesthood of all believers, that salvation was a free gift, totally unmerited by any human action, Scripture was supreme and, because of sin, humans did not have a free will.

Calvin in Geneva - 1536-38

In 1536, he decided to travel to Strassburg to take up a life of quiet scholarship and continue writing in support of the Protestant cause. On a chance detour he came to Geneva. There he encountered another reformer, Guillaume Farel, who was in the process of attempting to transform Geneva (pop. 13,000) into a Protestant community. Farel had already succeeded in ousting the local bishop, suspending the celebration of the Mass and imposing a set of regulations that imposed reform on the citizens. There was much opposition and Farel pleaded for Calvin's help. Calvin accepted and was appointed "Professor of Sacred Scripture".

Since Calvin held the church to be supreme over the state, he prepared a confession of faith to be accepted by all citizens, planned an educational system for all citizens and insisted on the power of excommunication from the Lord's Supper for all whose lives did not comply to his strict spiritual standards. This was all a bit much for the local magistrates and after a year of struggle, Calvin and Farel were ordered to leave Geneva in 1538.

Calvin spent the next three years in Strassburg. He was happy there as pastor to French refugees who accepted his discipline. Under the guidance of the Martin Bucer, a Lutheran theologian, he designed his plain and simple church service. He taught theology and produced a new edition of the *Institutes*. He also wrote a series of Biblical Commentaries. He was respected by the city and made their representative to several important religious conferences in Germany. He married a widow, Idelette de Bure, with two children who remained his faithful companion until her death in 1549. She also bore Calvin a son, who died in infancy.

Calvin's Return to Geneva - 1541-64

During Calvin's three year absence from Geneva, the city remained in turmoil over the issues raised by Calvin and Farel. Finally, Calvin's supporters won the day and in the Fall of 1541, they invited Calvin back to make Geneva a "Holy Commonwealth". And indeed he did.

While Calvin expressed some serious misgivings about returning to Geneva, when he arrived he quickly went to work. His goal was to design an ideal Christian community and church that would reproduce the kind of ancient church community that Calvin felt was outlined in the New Testament. To that end he produced his *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* which were adopted by the General Council of Geneva in 1541.

Calvin's reforms outlined in the *Ordinances*, while religious in origins and content, were civil in form. This was true to Calvin's position that the church was superior to the State. The two major categories of reform were: structure and public morality.

The structure consisted of four groups which Calvin claimed were instituted by Christ:

- 1) ministers (pastors) who would meet weekly would be in charge of discipline and local church order.
- 2) teachers (doctors) who were to teach pure doctrine
- 3) elders - a group of twelve who, with the pastors, formed a Consistory to supervise the moral conduct of the citizens.
- 4) deacons who were to manage funds and look after the sick, the poor and other charitable cases.

Public morality consisted of very strict rules of "Christian" behavior. Those who broke the rules could be subject to excommunication, banishment and even death. The rules of law were very severe and were strictly enforced. Infractions included such items as: laughing during a sermon, dancing, seeking out fortunetellers, singing songs (especially ones defamatory of Calvin), drinking, adultery, most gambling, playing cards, skipping church services. One could even be executed for saying that the pope was a good man!

The *Ordinances* also made brief mention of Baptism to be held during preaching services near the pulpit. The Lord's Supper was to be celebrated on Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and the first Sunday in September. Marriage could be held on any day, except communion Sunday, and marriage disputes were handled by the ministers.

While Calvin never held a political office he is often pictured as ruling Geneva as a dictator. Indeed, his strict rule was not accepted by all, however those who opposed him could face severe punishment. One such case was that of Jacques Gruet. Gruet was a member of a sect known as Libertines. This sect, which was widespread in the Netherlands and France, emphasized the "Spirit" and rejected the law. Suspected of blasphemy, Gruet was tortured and beheaded with Calvin's consent.

Another important case was that of the Spaniard, Michael Servetus. Servetus was trained

in law, theology and medicine. He came to Geneva fleeing Catholic persecution for denying the Trinity. Earlier, he and Calvin had heated doctrinal disputes and Calvin viewed him as a heretic. While attending church in Geneva he was recognized by Calvin who accused him of heresy. Servetus was arrested, imprisoned and burned at the stake. Later Calvin was quoted as saying; "I never moved to have him punished with death". Others reported that Calvin had preferred beheading to burning at the stake.

Calvin endured many trials and tribulation in Geneva until his death in 1564. However, the implementation of his concept of church order influenced Reformed Christianity down to the present. The Geneva Academy which he founded in 1559 trained many ministers who spread Calvinism throughout much of Europe, England and the United States.

Summary

We noted earlier that Calvin agreed with Luther on some fundamental "Protestant" points. However, unlike Luther, at the center of Calvin's theology was the concept of the absolute sovereignty of God and predestination. God's grace could not be controlled by sacramental rites or papal indulgences. Predestination held that from all time some people were predestined to salvation or damnation. Nothing that a human being did in his or her lifetime mattered.

Naturally the question arose: Who is saved and who is damned? In either event, what is to keep us from adopting a hedonistic life style - "eat, drink and be merry"?

Calvin admitted that we do not know who is saved and who is damned, however, he spoke of the "signs of election". These signs - public profession of faith, a godly life church attendance, especially participation in Baptism and Eucharist - just *might* be an indication that one was elected by God. Since no one wanted to appear *not* to be among the elect, people endeavored to exhibit these behaviors. The elect are called to dedicate themselves to God's purposes - those who believe do God's will.

Later commentators would claim that Calvin saw economic prosperity as a sign of election, however, Calvin actually saw individual economic prosperity as a danger to the spiritual life. He said: "Whenever prosperity flows uninterruptedly, its delights gradually corrupt even the best of us" (*On Deuteronomy* 8:12) and "It is (spiritually) much more dangerous to be rich than to be poor" (*On Job* 1:2-5) and "Prosperity (to the godly) is like mildew or rust...for our hearts are enfeebled by prosperity so that we cannot make the effort to pray" (*On Zechariah* 13:9)

Over the years professors have devised a quick way to summarize Calvin's main teachings. These are illustrated in the word **TULIP**.

T -- Total depravity: Mankind is utterly sinful and incapable of taking steps to merit one's own redemption.

- U** -- Unconditional election: Those whom God elects to salvation are elected unconditionally, that is, their election is not conditional on their mode of life, or their works.
- L** -- Limited atonement: Christ died for the elect, not for all humankind.
- I** -- Irresistible grace: God's grace is irresistible for the elect, who have, therefore, no claim to merit grace as a reward for their conduct.
- P** -- Persistence in grace: Grace cannot be lost or rejected by the elect.

The Spread of Calvinism

In the final analysis, Calvinism would be the main driving force of the Reformation. Only Northern Germany and Scandinavia generally adopted Lutheranism. Southern Germany, except the Palatinate west of the Rhine in southwest Germany, remained Catholic, due in part to Luther's opposition to the Peasant's Revolt.

Switzerland - With Calvin's success in Geneva, Switzerland accepted Calvinism. While German Switzerland had also been influenced by Zwingli's efforts in Zurich, in 1549 Zwingli's successor, Heinrich Bullinger, joined Calvin in signing a common formula of faith. A document known as the *Second Helvetic Confession* expressed Calvin's fundamental beliefs and was signed and accepted by all the Swiss cantons except Basel and Neuchâtel.

Holland - The spread of Calvinism into Holland was linked with the revolt of the Low Countries from Spanish rule under Philip II, a staunch Catholic. Philip tried to enforce Catholicism through harsh policies, which included the use of the Inquisition to stamp out the heresies of Protestantism. The local nobles saw an acceptance of Calvinism as a method to protest Philip's harsh measures.

William of Orange became the leader of the opposition to Spain and accepted Calvinism in 1574, which became the official religion of the revolutionaries. The revolt separated Holland into northern and southern parts. The section now known as Belgium stayed loyal to Spain and Catholicism, while the section, later called Holland, carried on the revolt alone. Holland (the Dutch Republic) gained its independence from Spain in 1608. The success of Calvinism was directly linked to politics and a hatred of an oppressive Catholic monarchy. These Dutch revolutionaries are still remembered today in the national anthem of the Netherlands, "The Song of the Prince".

France - At the beginning of the 16th century France was the most powerful and united nation in Europe. Henry II (1547-59), as his father before him, did not tolerate Protestants. His theory of monarchy was: "One law, one faith, one king". Unity of faith was to be maintained by force and terror, if necessary. There were some attempts at a reconciliation with the followers of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin, but these all failed. For Henry, "extermination" was still the policy. He provided the Parliament of Paris with a new inquisitorial court, commonly called "the burning chamber". Tongues of victims

were cut out to silence them at the stake, but the silent testimony of martyrs continued to gain converts. By Henry's death in 1559, there were some 400,000 Protestants in France.

Henry was succeeded by three weak sons who ruled for thirty years. The power behind the throne was their mother, Catherine de Medici, who tried to keep a balance of power between Catholic and Protestant nobles - now called Huguenots (conspirators). Her failed attempts were reflected the eight bloody Religious Wars during that thirty year period. The violence of the period was epitomized by the infamous St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572. At the urging of Catherine, some three thousand Huguenots, in Paris for a state wedding, were caught by surprise and butchered

The Religious Wars came to a somewhat surprising end when the Huguenot leader, Henry Bourbon, became king in 1589. Three years later he returned his allegiance to the Catholic Church. In 1598 he issued the (unpopular) Edict of Nantes which allowed Huguenots freedom of religion in their territories, government money for their schools and colleges and complete political and military control over some 200 towns. He thus created a "state within a state". (The Edict of Nantes was to be revoked in 1685)

Scotland

Calvinism in Scotland created a unique phenomenon in 16th century: a country of one religion - Calvinism - ruled by a monarch of another religion - Catholicism. The success of Calvinism in Scotland is largely attributed to John Knox (1513-72). However, as in Holland, it was also greatly influenced by foreign relations and national politics.

Knox was a former Catholic priest who abandoned Catholicism early in his career. He became involved in civil turmoil in Scotland, was captured by the French and served in a French galley for nineteen months. Eventually he visited Europe and finally met Calvin in Geneva. There he developed a theory that Protestants had the right to resist, by force if necessary, any Catholic ruler who would not allow them religious freedom.

Civil war broke out in Scotland in 1559 after the death of Mary Tutor. Civil strife ended with the Treaty of Edinburgh in 1560 and Calvinists were left in control. In 1560, Knox was instrumental in efforts to have the Parliament pass the *First Scottish Confession*, which reflected the basic doctrines of Calvin.

The next monarch in Scotland was Mary Stuart, a Catholic. She became Queen in 1561 at the age of nineteen. Over the next few years Mary Stuart and Knox struggled against each other. However, Mary represented a monarchy and Knox's Calvinism represented a more democratic approach to government and government/church relationships. Knox and Calvinism eventually won the battle and Scotland became a devout, Calvinist country.

England

Calvinism did not play an important role in the English Reformation and never came to

dominate the English Church as it did in Scotland or Holland. The English Reformation was not based on theological issues, rather it was basically a political affair initiated by King Henry VIII. In fact, early in the career of Luther, Henry had opposed Reformation ideas and theologies. He had described Luther as a “poisonous serpent” and a “wolf of hell”. With the aid of Thomas More, Henry had written a treatise against Luther - *The Defense of the Seven Sacraments* - which won Henry the title of “Defender of the Faith”, bestowed on him by Pope Leo X, in 1521.

However, Henry VIII and England had serious political problem. Here is how it developed. Catherine of Aragon, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, had come to England in 1501 at age sixteen. She married Arthur, the son of Henry VII and heir to the throne, who was then fifteen. Arthur died in 1502. All assumed that the marriage had been consummated, even though Catherine later denied it.

In order to retain Catherine’s dowry (5 million dollars?) and to maintain a marriage alliance with the powerful Ferdinand, Henry VII proposed that Catherine (now eighteen) should marry Prince Henry (twelve), now the heir. Some clergy condemned such a suggestion based on a text in Leviticus: “If a man shall take his brother’s wife it is an unclean thing...they shall be childless (20:21). Other clergy defended the suggestion noting the “levirate law” in Deut. 25:5 that instructed a brother to marry a deceased brother’s wife if he had died childless: “If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child (son)...her husband’s brother...shall take her to him to wife”.

The English bishops finally agreed, with some reservations, that if the pope, Julius II granted a dispensation the marriage could be valid. A dispensation from the impediment of affinity was granted by Julius II in 1503. The betrothal - in fact a legal marriage - took place in the same year. Cohabitation was postponed, because Henry was only twelve. In 1505, Prince Henry asked to have the marriage annulled on grounds that he had been forced by his father, but given the political interests of England he was convinced to confirm the marriage. In 1509, six weeks after being crowned King Henry VIII, the marriage was publicly celebrated.

Catherine was to give birth to five children, but the only one who survived was a girl, Mary. Mary was at the heart of the political problem, because at the age of two Mary had been betrothed to the future King of France. If no son came to Henry, Mary would inherit the English throne and her husband, becoming King of France, would in effect be King of England too, making Britain a province of France. This was an unthinkable situation for Henry and the nobility of England. Henry was desperate and even took a vow to lead a crusade against the Turks, if Catherine could bear him a son. Unfortunately, by 1525, Catherine was forty and there was still no male heir. According to Henry, the question then arose in his mind: “Am I under some curse of God?” Henry had examined his marriage against the background of Leviticus 20:21(cited above) which carried the curse of childlessness. Henry concluded that he may well be under a divine curse. Thus, in 1527, Henry asked the new pope, Clement VII, to revoke the special dispensation and declare the marriage invalid -- he had asked for an annulment, not a divorce.

This was a problem for the pope, because Catherine was the aunt of the powerful Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, who was holding the pope as a “prisoner”. Not wanting to offend Charles, the pope stalled. A great deal more intrigue took place (even a suggestion by the Pope that Henry could have two wives!!), but it is too lengthy to recount in this short chapter. Let it simply be said that politics - royal and papal - were shaping the conflict.

Finally, at the suggestion of his top advisor, Thomas Cranmer, Henry presented his case to the scholars of the European universities for their opinion. The response was mixed, but it was enough for Henry. In January of 1533, Henry secretly married Anne Boleyn with whom he had been romantically involved for some six years. In May an English church court declared Henry’s marriage to Catherine null and void. In June, Anne was crowned Queen of England and in September Anne gave birth to a child -- contrary to the predictions of astrologers, it was another girl, Elizabeth.

Finally the pope reacted and excommunicated Henry. Henry now concluded that the only option left open to him was to find a way to transform the Church *in* England, to the Church *of* England. Could he do this? Henry knew that in many ways the Church in England had been moving toward independence from Rome. Henry thus felt that if he could avoid any doctrinal changes and would simply renounce the papal authority of Rome, he would meet little resistance from the nobility and could solve his problems.

After much hard work Henry achieved his goal. In 1534, the Act of Supremacy declared: “The king’s majesty justly and rightly is and ought to be and shall be reputed the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England called *Anglicana Ecclesia*”. The break with Rome was complete. Only two prominent men opposed Henry, Bishop Fisher and ex-chancellor Thomas More, both were beheaded in 1535.

With Henry as the head of the national Church, orthodoxy remained in tact. The Statute of Six Articles in 1539 upheld such Catholic practices as clerical celibacy, the private mass and confessions to a priest, plus the doctrine of transubstantiation. There were two major changes: the suppression of the monasteries and the publication of an English Bible to be used in the churches.

The frail, ten year old Edward VI took the crown after Henry’s death in 1547. His mother was Jane Seymour, whom Henry had married after executing Anne Boleyn for adultery. Under this weak ruler, the Protestant party took charge and the influence of Calvinism became evident. Thomas Cranmer outlined the English liturgy in his masterpiece, the *Book of Common Prayer*, which was later revised to reflect Calvinist ideas and Calvinist doctrines of the Eucharist.

The turn to Protestantism was interrupted by the reign of Mary Tutor, daughter of Catherine, who came to the throne in 1553 and unsuccessfully attempted to restore Catholicism in England. Her brutal measures in persecuting Protestants earned her the title “Bloody Mary”. These measures plus her marriage to Philip of Spain marked her as

a traitor to her country.

In 1558, Elizabeth, Anne Boylen's daughter, took the crown and the Anglican Church now assumed its distinctive character - neither Roman, nor Reformed. English Calvinists, now called "Puritans" sought to purify the Church by ridding it of all superstition, idolatry and popish elements. Puritans attacked the *Book of Common Prayer* for its retention of vestments, the sign of the cross, kneeling at communion and formal prayer. They also sought to replace the office of bishop with a presbyterian form of church order.

Elizabeth resisted these efforts and succeeded in forming an Anglican Church that blended Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist elements in an attempt to unify the people of England into one church. In 1563 Elizabeth published the *Thirty-Nine Articles* which reflected some Protestant ideas such as accepting the Bible as the final authority and recognizing only Baptism and the Holy Eucharist as Christ-instituted sacraments, while retaining many Catholic elements. This successful compromise in blending Protestantism and Catholicism was called the *Via Media*, the Middle Way. The Puritans, however, were never fully satisfied and remained a wing of the English Church hostile to the Episcopalians.

Summary

John Calvin led a revolt not only against the corruption of the late medieval church, but also against its understanding of basic Christian doctrine. Calvin's basic theological doctrines (TULIP) would influence major sectors of Western Christianity. Calvin had seen his Geneva as an example to and a training ground for Christian ministers who accepted the teaching contained in his *Institutes of Christian Religion*. Indeed, they did flock to Geneva to witness Calvin's vision of a Christian society become a reality. John Knox called Calvin's Geneva "the most perfect school of Christ that ever was on earth since the days of the Apostles".

Calvin's followers would not stay united and they would modify some of his teachings, but his influence over Western Christianity has been significant down to the current era. At the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the Christians then living in the New World were some ninety percent Puritan. For good or for ill their influence is still with us today.