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John Calvin
Time Line

- 1509 John Calvin is born in Noyon, France on 10 July, son of notary Gerard Cauvin and his wife Jeanne LeFranc. John is baptized in the parish church of Sainte-Godeberte.
- 1515 John Calvin attends a boys' school in Noyon, College des Capettes, and receives instruction from private tutors of the wealthy de Hangst family.
- Circa 1520 John Calvin begins grammar school studies at the College de la Marche in Paris.
- 1521 At age 12, John receives a share of the chaplaincy of La Gesine, is tonsured, and is furnished scholarship money for his schooling in Paris.
- Circa 1522 John Calvin begins studies at Montaigu College at the University of Paris, preparing for the priesthood.
- 1528 Calvin receives a Master of Arts degree.
- Circa 1528 Calvin's father decides John should study law instead of theology and sends him to the University of Orleans, where he begins graduate study in law.
- 1529 By the end of 1529, Calvin and some of his friends transfer to the University of Bourges to study under the distinguished legal scholar Andrea Alciati. Calvin also studies Greek with the Reformation scholar, Melchior Wolmar.
- 1529 Calvin embraces the moderate Reform movement and begins occasional preaching in churches around Bourges.
- 1530 Calvin receives his Doctorate in Law at Orleans.

1531 Calvin's father dies and John divides his time between family business in Noyon and his academic career in Paris.

1532 On 4 April, Calvin publishes his first book at his own expense, a commentary on Seneca's *de clementia*.

1533 Calvin returns to Orleans, probably to teach.

In October Calvin is back in Paris when his friend, Nicholas Cop, Rector of the University of Paris, is vilified for an address which supports reform. Calvin may have helped write the address.

In November proceedings for heresy are instituted by the University of Paris against Cop and Calvin. Both flee to avoid arrest.

1534 On 27 January William Farel and Pierre Viret represent the reformers in a disputation in Geneva which lays the groundwork for the city's eventual decision to embrace the Reformation.

Calvin takes refuge at the estate of his friend, Louis du Tillet, in Angoulême. From there he travels to Nerac in April for an interview with French scholar/reformer, Lefevre d' Etaples.

On 4 May Calvin is in Noyon resigning his chaplaincy in the Cathedral. He gives up the path of moderate reform and embraces the Reformation.

In October the Affair of the Placards, in which Protestant tracts against the Mass are widely distributed in Paris, leads to ever greater repressive measures against reformers.

Calvin leaves Noyon and travels from place to place (Paris, Poitiers, Angouleme, and Orleans) as he consults with fellow reformers and avoids speaking in public.

1535 In January, Calvin travels with du Tillet to Metz, Strasbourg, and Basel where he is out of the reach of French authorities. He lives under an assumed name and is busy writing *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

On 15 February, Calvin's friend Etienne de la Forge is burned at the stake in Paris.

1536 In March, Calvin publishes the first edition of *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* in Basel, published by Thomas Platter.

In April, Calvin travels to Ferrara, Italy and spends two months at the court of the Duchess, French Princess Renee, who had reformist sympathies.

On 21 May, Geneva adopts the Reformation with the leadership of William Farel and Pierre Viret.

In June, taking advantage of a temporary amnesty given by the French King to religious exiles, Calvin visits Paris to settle some estate and property issues with his brother and sister.

In July, enroute to Strasbourg, Calvin makes a detour through Geneva where William Farel persuades him to help organize the Genevan church.

In October, Calvin joins Farel and Viret at a disputation in Lausanne which results in this city adopting the Reformation.

1538 On 21 April, Calvin and Farel are expelled from Geneva.

Calvin and Farel travel to Zurich to appeal for the help of the Reformed Synod meeting there and then go to Basel.

In September, Calvin accepts an invitation to go to Strasbourg where he is mentored by Martin Bucer.

On 8 September, Calvin preaches his first sermon to a French refugee congregation meeting at the church of St. Nicholas in Strasbourg.

1539 Calvin publishes his *Commentary on Romans* in Strasbourg.

In March, Calvin has a long meeting with Melancthon in Frankfurt.

In August, the second edition of *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* is published in Strasbourg.

1540 In August Calvin is married by Farel to Idelette de Bure, the widow of an artisan from Liege.

In October a pro-Farel faction gains control of the city council in Geneva and invites Calvin to return.

1541 Calvin is invited back to Geneva and is given power to shape a truly reformed church for the city-state. He is welcomed to the city with public acclaim on 13 September.

At the direction of city authorities Calvin drafts the Ecclesiastical Ordinances that will provide structure for the Genevan Church.

Louis Bourgeois arrives in Geneva and is asked by Calvin to provide tunes for metrical Psalms (including “Old Hundredth” and the “Doxology”).

1542 Musician Clement Marot is charged with heresy in Paris and flees to Geneva where Calvin enlists him to produce metrical psalms and worship aids.

A son born to John and Idelette Calvin dies in infancy.

On July 1 the Parisian parliament orders that all copies of Calvin’s *Institutes* be surrendered within three days and the books are burned in front of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris.

1546 Fourteen leaders of the Protestant Church in Meaux are tortured and burned at the stake near the Cathedral.

Martin Luther dies in Wittenberg.

1547 Edward VI becomes King of England and begins thoroughgoing Reform of the Church.

Henry II becomes King of France.

1548 In May Emperor Charles V follows up his Schmalkeldic War victory by imposing the Augsburg Interim which resulted in Strasbourg becoming Lutheran and Bucer leaving for Cambridge the next year.

1549 In March, Calvin's wife Idelette dies after several years as an invalid.

In May, Calvin travels to Zurich to meet with Bullinger and successfully negotiates the Zurich Consensus which brings confessional unity to the Swiss churches.

1551 Cathedral Canons in Calvin's birthplace, Noyon, celebrate in solemn procession the death of the Reformer, unaware that the reports of Calvin's death were false.

1553 Marty Tudor becomes Queen of England and persecutes Protestants.

John Knox is among approximately 800 English Protestants who emigrate to France, Germany, and Switzerland to escape persecution.

English exiles flee the persecution of Mary I and take up residence in Geneva.

Michael Servetus is executed for heresy after being used by the Libertines to discredit Calvin.

1555 With the help of increasing numbers of Protestant refugees flowing into Geneva, Calvin's authority in the city grows.

In April, the Venerable Company of Pastors in Geneva begins a systematic process of smuggling Reformed ministers into France.

A Calvinist church is organized in Paris with a consistory of elders and deacons.

1556 John Calvin visits Frankfort to mediate a controversy within a French refugee congregation.

John Knox becomes pastor to the English exiles in Geneva.

1557 In October, Calvin visits Strasbourg where he is applauded at the Strasbourg Gymnasium (a college founded by Bucer) but not permitted to preach in the churches which are now controlled by Lutherans.

- 1558 English exiles begin returning to England.
- Elizabeth I becomes Queen of England and the Marian exiles return to England as Protestantism is reinstated.
- Mary Queen of Scots marries Francis, crown prince of France.
- 1559 In May, the First national French Reformed Synod is held in Paris, meeting in secret.
- Anne du Bourg, counselor to King Henry II, speaks out in the parliament of Paris to criticize the persecution of Protestants and is executed.
- John Knox returns to Scotland to lead the Reformation there.
- Calvin founds the Geneva Academy which later becomes the University of Geneva.
- Francis II, husband of Mary, Queen of Scots, becomes King of France.
- 1560 The Geneva Bible translation, produced by English exiles in Geneva, is published.
- The Scottish Parliament establishes Protestantism in Scotland.
- Knox and five colleagues write the *Book of Discipline* and the *Book of Worship* of the Church of Scotland.
- Francis II, King of France, dies making Mary Queen of Scots a widow at age 18. Francis' brother, Charles IX, becomes King.
- 1561 The Venerable Company of Pastors in Geneva sends 151 ministers to serve Reformed churches in France, falling far short of meeting the demand.
- The Colloquy of Poissy fails to reconcile French Protestants and Catholics.

1562 The year begins with 1,785 Reformed church consistories operating in France.

The massacre of Protestants at Wassy by the Duke of Guise (uncle of Mary Queen of Scots) sets off the first Civil War pitting Catholics against Protestants.

1563 The Council of Trent concludes, setting the direction of the Counter Reformation.

The Heidelberg Catechism is issued.

1564 On April 28, a gravely ill Calvin bids farewell to the ministers of Geneva.

On May 27, Calvin dies and at his own request is buried in a common grave with no identification stone at the Plague Hospital on the outskirts of Geneva.

With Calvin's death, Theodore de Beze assumes leadership of the Genevan church.