

*On Being Presbyterian*  
**Chapter 9 - “The Glorious Reformation: Calvin, Knox, and  
The Beginnings of Presbyterianism”**

“Without the Reformation, Europe would have been a thoroughly secular society by the end of the seventeenth century.” (152)

“If the Reformation had never happened, the rising capitalists of Europe would have led the secularization process with disastrous results for the continent’s political and moral situation.... The Reformation did much to make sixteenth century capitalism more compassionate.” (153) [e.g., care for poor and sick in Calvin’s Geneva]

“If the Reformation had never happened, then the gospel of free grace would have been overshadowed by the unreformed ritual and malformed theology of the Roman Catholic Church.” (154)

“The gospel of the Reformation, which proclaimed that God’s righteousness shall come to those who live by faith alone, fundamentally challenged the basis of medieval religion and piety. If salvation came by faith alone in Christ alone, and if this provided an effectual removal of religious guilt and anxiety, then the forms of penance that had proved so financially profitable for the church (particularly indulgences) were not only unnecessary, but blasphemous.” (155)

“Out of this Reformation period that fundamentally transformed social, political, economic, and religious structures, Presbyterianism came into being.” (p. 155)

Three key historical figures/events that decisively shaped Presbyterian history: John Calvin, John Knox, Westminster Assembly

**Timeline**

1509 – John Calvin born in Noyon, France

1513 – John Knox born in Haddington, Scotland

1516 – Erasmus published first critical edition of Greek New Testament

1517 – Martin Luther nails 95 Theses to church door in Wittenberg

1521 – Luther condemned at Diet of Worms

1525 – Luther writes *The Bondage of the Will* in response to Erasmus

1532 – Calvin publishes commentary to Seneca’s *De Clementia*

1533 – Calvin flees Paris when identified as part of Protestant movement

1536 – Calvin publishes first edition of *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

1536 – In July, a planned one-night stopover in Geneva is extended when William Farel convinces Calvin to join him in organizing the Reformation movement there

1538 – Calvin expelled from Geneva after refusing to follow city council’s religious directives

1538 –1541 – Calvin joins Martin Bucer in Strasbourg, pastoring French congregation there. Publishes enlarged edition of *Institutes*, commentary on Romans, reply to Cardinal Sadoletto (who was trying to bring Geneva back to RC church). Marries Idelette (1540).

- 1541 – Calvin returns to Geneva at invitation of city council, which votes to adopt his *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, a blueprint for reform.
- 1546 – Luther dies
- 1547 – Knox becomes preacher at St. Andrews Castle which is soon captured. Knox becomes a galley slave.
- 1549 – Calvin’s wife, Idelette, dies
- 1553 – Servetus executed in Geneva on charges of blasphemy
- 1553 – After accession of Catholic “Bloody” Mary Tudor to throne in England, Knox flees to continent
- 1556 – Knox becomes pastor of English congregation in Geneva (after brief return to Scotland)
- 1558 – Knox publishes *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, arguing against female sovereigns like Mary Tudor
- 1559 – Calvin publishes final edition of his *Institutes*
- 1560 – Knox publishes *Scot’s Confession*, after returning to Scotland the year before
- 1564 – Calvin dies
- 1572 – Knox dies
- 1638 – National Covenant signed in Scotland (“Covenanters”)
- 1643 – Westminster Assembly of divines convenes July 1<sup>st</sup> at call of parliament to reform church in England
- 1643 – Signing of *Solemn League and Covenant* in September called for joint efforts by English and Scots at Assembly
- 1646 – *Westminster Confession of Faith* completed
- 1647 – *Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms* completed
- 1649 – Cromwell rises to power and king executed
- 1660 – Charles II becomes King and establishes Anglican Church in England