

Other Atrocities for which John Calvin was Responsible

(excerpted from IS CALVINISM BIBLICAL? A BIBLICAL EXAMINATION OF CALVINISM AND ITS TEACHINGS BY Cooper P. Abrams, III)

In February 1545, a man named "Freckles" Dunant was accused of applying plague venom to the removed foot of a man who was hanged. He was tortured to death in an attempt to make him confess. He died under the torture but would not admit to the crime of spreading the plague. His body was then dragged to the middle of town and burned. This demonstrates the utter lack of compassion or any legal recourse to those who were accused under John Calvin's law. Clearly, Calvin approved and condoned such horrible acts.

On March 7, 1545, Two women were executed by burning at the stake of the crime of spreading the plague. Cottret wrote that ". . . Calvin humanely interceded the same day to keep the poisoners from being forced to languish in prison. The Council followed this happy directive and urged the executioner henceforth to "be more diligent in cutting off the hands of malefactors."¹⁹

Calvin's actions are a testimony to his lack of character and warped sense of compassion. The executions continued unabated and those who refused to confess were tortured skillfully in a way that would avoid killing them using a strappado. The strappado is a form of torture in which the victim is hung in the air by the wrists with their arms tied behind their back. During this time, two people who were accused sorcerers were decapitated. It was said they composed a plaster of grease and other villainous things that caused people to die.

A number of the victims committed suicide to end their torture. One woman who was handcuffed to keep her from taking her life threw herself out of a window to escape the torture. John Calvin not only condoned, but approved of this hideous superstitious torment.

Clearly Calvin was ruled by an irrational superstition that has its roots in paganism.

The last execution associated with the plague was on May 16, 1545, in which a total of seven men and twenty-four women were executed. A letter from Calvin attests to 15 of these women being burned at the stake. Calvin's only concern was that the plague had not come to his house.

During this period, a total of thirty-seven people were condemned for spreading the plague. The majority had made confessions, which is not surprising considering the terrible tortures they were made to endure. Calvin also had thirty-four women burned at the stake after accusing them of being witches who caused a plague that had swept through Geneva in 1545.²⁰

In 1568, the plague returned and Calvin wrote that fifteen women had already been burned and men were punished more rigorously. Calvin's only concern in all his was that his house had been spared from the plague.²¹

On June 23, 1547 several women were accused of dancing which John Calvin forbid. Francoise Favre was the wife of his close friend Ami Perrin who had brought him to Geneva. However, she fell in disfavor with the court because the year earlier she had refused to testify against several of her friends before the Consistory. She again refused to testify and stood up against Calvin. She was thus imprisoned for her actions of defying the Consistory and Calvin.

Under Calvin, the Anabaptists were cruelly persecuted. He saw them as his adversaries, mainly because they rejected infant baptism and his unbiblical beliefs and practices. Cottret records “Several Anabaptists from the Netherlands were in fact found in Geneva at this time. Among these were Herman de Gerbihan and Benoit d'Anglen, banished during the winter of 1537 with some of their disciples.”²²

A man named Jacques Gruet, who was a confessed atheist was accused of writing a poster against Calvin accusing him of hypocrisy and hanging it on his pulpit. He was arrested and tortured until he admitted to the crime. He was then executed by beheading on July 26, 1547 because he spoke out against the tyrant of Geneva, John Calvin.

This and many other atrocities were conducted under the direction of John Calvin and clearly show that man was a religious fanatic, a criminal, and a murderer. What makes his actions so vile is that he committed these heinous atrocities in the name of Almighty God and under the banner of upholding the truth! These people were not condemned for viable crimes, but because of superstitions, speaking their opinions, or holding beliefs that John Calvin disagreed with. Judging him by his deeds and his warped sense of Christianity, reveals that Calvin was completely devoid of human kindness, and mercy. He certainly had no hint of having the love of Christ in his heart showing no love for his fellow man.

19. Bernard Cottret, Calvin A Biography, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2000, p. 180.

20. Selderhuis, Herman J., John Calvin A Pilgrim's Life, Downer's Grove, IL, InterVarity Press. 2009, p. 139-140.

21. Cottret, Kindle Locations 2315-2316

22. Ibid.