



Reformation in Geneva

Transformation in Only One Generation

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1 Geneva-Crossroads of Influence



Geneva is one of the most significant places in the world. Its reputation for neutrality and its location at an economic crossroads make Geneva well known around the globe. There are over 20 major international organizations located in Geneva, including the World Trade Organization, World Health Organization, International Labour Office, World Council of Churches, Red Cross or the Geneva Office of the United Nations. More humanitarian and diplomatic work is done in Geneva than in any other place in the world.

500 years ago, Geneva was a very poor, dirty city and the hygienic situation was dreadful. The lake was dirty and had a foul smell. Then, in the 16th century, reformers preached that change is possible. Through the investment of the reformers, Geneva was transformed in only one generation. Geneva became a beautiful and prosperous place, where people could live in freedom and peace. One of the best-known reformers was John Calvin. He is also called the “father of modernity”. With him on the top the situation of Geneva turned rapidly and the foundation for a new culture was born, the western civilisation.

“Post Tenebras Lux” is still the motto of Geneva. It means “after the darkness, light,” and is visualized in several places of the city, including in Geneva’s emblem and in the gallery of the UN. It reminds people of the history of the Reformation and the amazing change of the entire society within just one generation.

In western civilisations, people celebrate Easter, Christmas, Pentecost and Ascension. On Sunday, most of the shops are closed. The Christian roots are evident in many customs. Through the Reformation, Christianity laid the foundation of the today known western society. However, the reformation of Geneva shaped our western Civilisation in more ways than most are aware of. When we visit the old city of Geneva, we still see several monuments that express its long history of Christianity, particularly about Reformation.

Let us travel 500 years back and have a closer look at how this enormous change in society was possible in such a short amount of time. I hope that this booklet helps to get a better understanding of how this happened.

2 The Background of the Reformation¹

500 years ago, before the Reformation started, the Catholic Church ruled over people by oppression. The Church was no longer there to help the people, but the people must help the Church. People had to pay for their salvation. The Pope and his clerics lived in prosperity, but most of the population was very poor. Most of the land was owned by kings and the Church. The people had to work for the Pope and the kings, but neither the Pope nor the kings cared for them. Injustice was outrageous, and people longed for change.

Martin Luther started the Reformation in 1517 by posting his Ninety-Five Theses at the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. He claimed that the Pope and the Church were wrong in many of their practices and that they had to stop these evil doings. In a short time, this message spread to all of Europe, and a movement developed momentum. People stood up against the oppression of the Church, and the time of Reformation started. Christianity split into two wings, the “Reformed” and the “Catholics”. About 20 years after it started, the Reformation movement reached Geneva, where the reformers started to reform not only the Church, but also the spheres of society. Geneva developed a completely new understanding of society.

Calvin, the main figure of the Reformation in Geneva, understood the relationship between Church and state better than anyone else, including Luther and Zwingli.

The Reformation brought the idea that everyone stands before God, and that the Church does not stand between God and man. Everyone has access to the truth. Everyone has the opportunity to find out what is

good or bad, based on the Bible. Man can live in freedom without chaos, because the Bible holds society together. Neither the Church nor the state needed absolute control.

Power could be separated because the Bible as an absolute ethical measure stood over both, Church and State. People could not do whatever they wanted to do; they were accountable to the Bible, the Word of God. Everyone could stand, with the Bible in their hand, and claim right or wrong. Life in freedom was possible because everyone had an absolute measure or ethical standard which they were accountable to. This was a revolutionary idea in its time, and it fostered enormous development in every sphere of society. Social freedom without chaos was now possible. This was the beginning of modern society.

Back 500 years ago, not every king wanted to embrace the Reformation. Especially in the west and south of Europe (France, Spain and Italy), royalty fiercely opposed this new way. The kings and clerics didn't want to lose their position and power. This led to enormous conflict in Europe.

Switzerland didn't have a king like other nations. Therefore, the Reformation was not controlled by a king; it was decided by the people. The citizens and the bishops came together in the Churches for a debate to decide if the Reformation was helpful and good for their people. Par example in Bern, there were four main issues linked to the acceptance of the Reformation. First, the Churches must give the land back to the farmers; second, the abolishment of peonage (like slavery in the 19th century); third, the reduction of the taxes; and fourth, the right of citizens to have a voice in political decisions. Reformation was not only a Church issue; it affected all areas of life.

The Reformation in Switzerland did not lead to the 30 Years War like in the other European nations. It seems that it is better when people had the opportunity to decide for themselves. After some initial conflicts, the Swiss made an agreement that every Swiss could choose his own faith. The people were not forced to believe what the authorities believed; they were free. It was the beginning of the neutrality of Switzerland, which is still renowned all over the world.

3 History of Geneva

3.1 *The Symbol of Geneva, the Jet d'Eau (water jet)*

This is the one of the best-known symbols of Geneva. It shoots water 140 meters high at 200 km/h and 500 litres/second. Its force is 1000 hp. In the earlier times, the jewellers of Geneva stopped their work on Saturday at 4pm. Now, there was too much pressure in the pipelines, and the steam was blown into the lake. Around 1885, this became a symbol of Geneva and was eventually constructed into a huge fountain to remind all visitors of the economic success of the industries of Geneva.



3.2 The City

Because of its geographical position in the centre of Europe, Geneva used to be very important for trades and politics. Cesar wanted to control the territory of Geneva and defeated the Celts (Helveticas) in 4 BC, as he asserted in his journal. The Celts became Romans, but they did not live in the Roman way. The Romans were not able to fully transform the animistic thinking of the Celts, and the civilisation took only slow steps. In the 4th century AD, however, Europe turned to Christianity. In 381 AD, Geneva already had its own bishop. The faith in a personal God who gave man responsibility to change the world into a better place was vastly superior to the animistic view of the Celts. Life is not arbitrarily determined by gods who do whatever they feel like; the world is created with natural laws and order. People could understand the world; they could be sure that the sun would rise every day. That faith changed the whole society. Geneva became prosperous and successful.



Crossroads of Europe

In the Middle Ages Geneva also acquired riches because of its neutrality. When the French or the Italians wanted to do free business without the control of the king, they went to Geneva. The “Place du Bourg de Four” was called the Crossroads of Europe because a main north-south commercial route crossed an equally prominent east-west trading route on this spot.

The Rhone River flows from Geneva to the Mediterranean Sea. A bit further north of Geneva a small river called the Orbe flows to the Aare, then into the Rhein, which ends in the North Sea. A lot of trade was done by shipping which made Geneva a crucial point for business and the exchange of goods. So, Geneva became an important crossroads for diplomacy and economy in Europe.

In 1463, King Louis XI of France became jealous of the amazing growth of Geneva. He decreed the death penalty for any of his subjects who would do business in Geneva. France strongly influenced the whole of Europe, and so Geneva lost its position and the traders avoided the place. Thieves and prostitutes remained. Geneva turned destitute because their trade had left, and thus, tax money was gone.

The Reformation brought prosperity again back to the city of Geneva. This shifting in the society became a model of the western civilisation and spread later over the entire world.

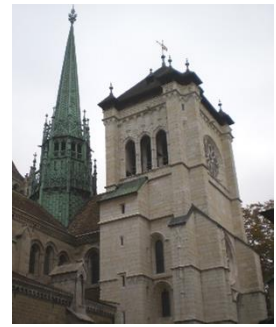
The flag shows the relationship between the bishop (the key of Saint Peter) and the free imperial city (the eagle of the Holy Roman Empire). It originates in the Middle Age and symbolises that though Geneva had been a part of the Holy Roman Empire since the 11th century, it was independent and ruled by the its people, which were represented by the Bishop of Geneva. It was not under the kings or the emperor. Its citizens had much more freedom then most others in Europe. Geneva’s a long history as an independent republic became a model for many modern nations.



Geneva joined the Swiss Confederation in 1815 as the 22nd canton.

3.3 The Cathedral

The Celts had an altar for their gods at the place where the Cathedral of St. Pierre stands today. Underneath the cathedral is a Celtic excavation area what would tell the visitors about the Celts temple and their gods. The back of the cathedral was built in 1160 in the Roman style. The main building is Gothic. The iron tower is newly built because the original burned down. The entrée is build in a neoclassical way 250 years ago.



3.4 The Reformation wall



The history of the Reformation of Geneva is visualized on the great Reformation Monument (1909 – 1917), constructed for the 400 Year celebration of John Calvin. It reminds us of the huge transformation that took place 500 years ago. The giant wall dominates the large Parc des Bastions in Geneva. The focal points are the 15-foot-tall statues of four Geneva luminaries: William Farel, the first who preached the Reformation in Geneva, John Calvin, leader of the reform movement and spiritual father of Geneva, Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor, and John Knox, Scottish reformer and founder of Presbyterianism in Scotland.

3.5 William Farel (1489-1565)²

Open air evangelist and reformer William Farel, a young and passionate man from France, started to preach on Geneva's market place. He taught that change begins with transformed lives and attitudes and called people to repent and change their bad behaviour. Once he pulled the priest from the pulpit and started to preach himself. Another time he pushed a priest into the lake. He got kicked out of the city, but in 1536 he was able to bring the people to accept the Reformation. He also spread reformed thinking to a lot of places in the western part of Switzerland, for example to Lausanne and Neuchâtel.



3.6 John Calvin (1509-1564)³



Calvin was born in Noyon, France on the 10th of July, 1509. He was born Roman Catholic, but became Protestant when he was a young man. In 1535, at the age of 25, Calvin had to flee from Paris and wanted to go to Strasbourg, but for security reasons, he had to travel through Geneva. For this young man who wanted to change the world, Geneva was not the right place to stay. It was a horrible city no serious person would stay in, and certainly no-one who wanted to achieve something relevant for the world.

Both Farel and Calvin fled from France under enormous persecution, and travelled through Europe under cover. If they had been discovered, they would had been killed by being burnt at the stake. Geneva was neutral and so a number of French refugees went there. Almost all of the reformers in Geneva were refugees, mostly from France.

Farel and the reformers already expelled the bishop and the clerics from the city. However, this left the people in a vacuum, which led to chaos. Everyone would do whatever they thought would be the right thing to do. When Farel discovered Calvin, he immediately recognized that this would be the right man to bring order into the city. Farel had already been acquainted with Calvin before. Calvin had studied law and theology and had an understanding of the political and Church orders. Calvin claimed that he learned more about God in his study about law than in his theological study. Theology was about rituals, about Church

and going to heaven, but the study of law had to do with what was right and wrong. For him, law was more relevant than all of the abstract theological discussions about rituals and indulgences.

Farel met him in a restaurant. He argued that he should stay in Geneva. But Calvin didn't intend at all to stay in that awful city. Reportedly, Farel pointed his finger in the air and said "Your studies shall be cursed by God if you are not willing to help the people here". To Calvin, this strong speech of Farel was like the voice of God, and so, he finally felt compelled by a higher authority to stay.

Calvin and Farel preached about repentance and the need to change oneself and one's attitudes. They were banned from the city, because this message did not go down well with the people. Farel went to Neuchâtel and Calvin to Strasbourg, where he learned a lot from Martin Bucer. After three years, the citizens of Geneva recognized that the situation in the city had not improved, but had rather become worse than before the reformation. A delegation travelled to Strasbourg to ask Calvin to return and help them out of the disaster. They reckoned that Calvin would be able to bring the situation back to order. He eventually agreed, and from that time on (1539), Calvin stayed in Geneva until his death in 1564.

Calvin had always suffered from bad health, from asthma, dyspepsia and repeated colds. He married Idelette van Bure who gave birth to a son. His son didn't survive childhood and Idelette died soon after the birth of her son. The Pope and Calvin's objectors saw this as a curse of the devil. Calvin replied to the Pope: "Haven't I got tens of thousands of children in the Christian world? And how many does the Pope have?" Pope Pius IV said about Calvin: "The power of this heretic is, that money means nothing to him". He died in humility in Geneva on the 27th of May 1564. They are not sure where he was buried because he didn't want his grave to have a name on it. He wanted the people to honour God, not him.

Calvin's main goal was to write a book, called "Institutio"⁴, about the Christian religion. Through his writing he wanted to convince the King of France of the Reformation, but it never happened.

Quote from John Calvin:⁵

I had many weaknesses which you had to carry, and all that I accomplished is basically of no value. Bad people take it for my downfall, but I say again that all of my works are not of value and I am a distressed wretch. You are my witnesses that my endeavour was always to look for the good. Therefore, I ask you that you forgive my wrong doings. If there was something good then please take it and follow it.

4 The Influence of the Reformation⁶

4.1 Reformation of Education

Calvin saw that people who were not able to read and write depended on others. Be empower and take responsibility could only function if people had the knowledge of how to handle it. Therefore, Calvin taught that people needed to be educated before they can take responsibility.

Calvin and Farel taught children to read and write by using the Bible. Many of those children later became authorities of the city. Calvin founded the first public school and for the first time in history, even girls were able to go to school. Families were taught to set money aside for their children's education. After seven years of schooling, pupils could continue to attend the lectures and exercises in the Academy.

Young refugee pastors were educated and sent back to bring Reformation to their home countries, mostly France. Often, they lost their lives under enormous persecution because the kings and the Pope opposed them.

The school Calvin founded in 1559 is today called the College de Calvin. The two original buildings are still part of the campus. In 1872 the Academy was transformed into a university and relocated to the Parc des Bastions where it still located today. Many famous universities in the world can be traced back to the refugees who were trained at the Geneva Academy, with examples such as Yale and Harvard (USA), Heidelberg (Germany), Leiden, Antwerp, and Amsterdam (Netherlands).



The printing industry in this time made it possible for Calvin's sermons and other writings to be rapidly dispersed throughout France and elsewhere within a few weeks. Geneva's printing industry was very famous and later served other reformers such as Rousseau, Voltaire or Lenin.

4.2 The Church Order

The Reformer in Geneva thought that man has to change his own attitude first and have to be renewed in his heart through Jesus Christ and the teaching of the Bible.

In the church, power was divided among the pastors, doctors, deacons and elders, who needed to give account to the state council. Elders were elected by each district. Pastors and deacons were elected by the council. All of these were committed to following the moral standard of the Bible, and Calvin demanded high integrity and honesty. Everyone had to sign the Geneva Catechism, otherwise they were not allowed to take the Lord's supper. Priest, farmer or rulers, everyone had to give account for his acts and was punished if they had done evil things.

Calvin thought that the Bible not only talks about sin, but also about the creation of order and freedom in society. The Bible has more to say than just regarding salvation. Calvin taught that the bible has three main functions: firstly, it leads men to know that they are sinners; secondly, it gives man the principles for the state and civil laws; lastly, it shows man the way to salvation.

Calvin claimed that Jesus took only the ceremonial laws from the Old Testament away but not the civil laws. For Calvin the Old Testament was the foundation of living together and building civil order. Without the Old Testament, man cannot understand how people can live together. Neither can they understand the teaching of the New Testament and salvation. For this reason, Calvin was called the advocate of the Old Testament.



The Church and the government worked closely together. They were separated in their powers, but both stood under the authority of the Bible. It was often discussed who would have what authority, but Calvin was able to bring it into balance. There is a famous painting showing the debate about the balance of city and Church leadership in the Museum of the Reformation in Geneva. Calvin lived very strictly. He never held a position in the government but he influenced it significantly.

According to Calvin, no church should become a State Church. Otherwise the other churches would be less valued. Calvin was interested in a synod of the churches in Europe. He put a lot of effort into this, and tried to settle the conflicts between other reformers, intending to bring them together. For example, he tried to soothe the emotions of Luther and the Swiss reformer Zwingli regarding the Lord's Supper.

Calvin wrote more than 2000 letters to teach people to understand God's Word and bring the people together again.

4.3 Reformation of the Social System

4.3.1 Deacons

Before the Reformation, the monks and the monasteries looked after the sick and the poor. Helping the poor had been the responsibility of the Church. People delegated welfare to the Church. It ended in a disaster and resulted in enormous cost for the Church, which it was no longer able to bare.

Yet under Calvin, people were responsible for themselves. Everyone who was in need had first go to his family or his neighbour to ask for help. The blessed ones had to care for their family members and neighbours who were in need. The poor were accountable to their families or neighbours who supported them. It was a system of accountability and relationship. When people were able to work, but didn't want to, they didn't receive any help. Man had both duties and rights. When this system wouldn't work out the church took care of them. When the church not could help, then the state was responsible for the social care. This reduced the costs of the social system enormously and helped many people to get out of poverty.

4.3.2 The Refugees



The French named the refugees who accepted the Reformation "Huguenots". Many fled to Geneva because it was a neutral place to live. The reformers saw the potential that these people brought to Geneva. Switzerland reaped a great blessing by reaching out to bless 16th century refugees. The city gate of Geneva bears the sign "City of Refuge".

Progression and prosperity returned to Geneva partly as a result of welcoming refugees, as many of them were skilled craftsmen and scientists. They became strong pillars in the economy of the city and later in the whole world. In Calvin's days, Geneva was a walled city with limited space. The influx of the Huguenots and other refugees created a housing crisis. Encouraged by Calvin, the city governors and the property owners suspended the building code that limited the height of buildings to four stories, allowing a fifth story to be built. The space that was provided was used to house refugee families. As a lasting testimony to this collaborative social action, the added floors reflect today. The distinctive difference of the top story can still be seen all over the city.

4.4 Reformation of the Economy

Calvin understood the situation of the social aspect as well as how the financial markets functioned. Unlike the Catholic Church, Calvin didn't deem money and private property evil. He believed that man could enjoy the wealth and the beauty of the world. The problem was not money in itself, but that it had to be used in a just way. Wealth is a gift from God and not of one's own efforts. Calvin taught that people's work and business were part of their worship. Man is not allowed to use it as he wants to. Man is responsible to share his wealth and with it bless others who are not so blessed. Calvin said; "God tests the hearts of the rich and the poor. The rich must open their hearts to the poor and the poor shouldn't steal and become rebellious."

Before the Reformation, farmers had worked for the king and the king had been responsible for them. A year had many feasts, and the king had to provide for them, but he was no longer able or willing to do so. The farmers wanted to profit but they didn't work as hard as they should; therefore, the kings oppressed them. There was injustice on both sides. The feudal system was at its end. The people needed a new order.

Now the Reformation enabled businesses to grow. People no longer worked for the king or for the Pope but for themselves. The land was given back to the farmers and the free market brought enormous growth.

The sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) said that the spirit of capitalism came from Calvin. But Calvin's idea was capitalistic thinking rather than capitalism. Calvin taught that capital thinking and social responsibility had to work together. He taught that free business is possible, but only when linked with social responsibility. The Bible was the common standard to live on. It teaches how people can do business and what social responsibility they have to bear. It taught both sides, the one who did business, but also the needy. The law of the bible applied to all the people. It was initiated from God and let the people live in freedom and in order.

4.4.1 Capitalism versus Socialism⁷

Two hundred years later, the Enlightenment brought the idea that freedom of business and making profit is the most important value. It led the world into a time of increased injustice and misuse of people. Many were oppressed, worked for insanely long hours, and lived in horrible social conditions. The Reformation in contrast brought the view of development, but always with a social responsibility to help people less gifted. However, as the people forgot the teaching of the Bible, the view of society became biased.

The backlash reaction was socialism. Socialism sees private property as being the source of evil. Therefore, to claim that God gave man something that belongs to him and not to others (as by the commandment "though shalt not steal"), implies that God himself is the source of evil. The great philosophers in the 19th century, such as Feuerbach, Engels and Marx, claimed that man had to abolish religion and turn from its old unjust system to socialism based on atheism.

The people of the Reformation were focused on reaching and building new resources. They believed in an open system where God the Creator can give more resources that there is enough for everyone. The beliefs of the Enlightenment led into a view that man is living in a closed system, where he has to evenly distribute what he has. Socialism focused on the distribution of resources and neglected the creation of new resources. This eventually led to an enormous famine and a disaster, which was reality when the socialists (communist) came into power. Still today the world lives in the tension of these two basic views: capitalism versus socialism.

4.4.2 Interest and Credit

Before the Reformation, the Catholic Church had forbidden charging financial interest. Calvin however allowed charging interest. Now the rich people were willing to lend money to people who wanted to start a business, because they received something back. It became possible to get capital, which was impossible before the Reformation. Before the Reformation it had only been possible to build up something if people already had capital; to start something new was only possible for the wealthy people. Over time, the ones who had a lot received more, and the ones who had less lost even the little what they have. The rift between rich and poor grew bigger and bigger. The rich were in power and held back the growth process. Through the new understanding, it became possible that new businesses started all over the place.

Calvin only allowed charging interest from people who were starting a business with the intention of earning money with it. It was not allowed to take interest from poor people who needed money to survive. The highest advised interest rate was 4%, a ratio which remained in effect for 400 years.

People were empowered to use God's given creativity to bless the nations. This in turn led to a superiority over the places that didn't accept the Reformation, a rift that is still visible today in many parts of the world. For example in the economic superiority of North America vs. South America. Both of them have resources, although South America has even more, but the reformed north became more prosperous than the south. Why? The reformed places lived in a freedom to do business, take credit, and develop all spheres of soci-

ety. The reformed places empowered people, they were freer to bring their creative ideas and were not under the control of the Church or kings. This brought a stronger development and resulted in economic superiority over many non-reformed places in the world.

4.5 Reformation of the Defence

Before the Reformation, only the king owned weapons. This became very dangerous. History teaches that a man with too much power is dangerous. When there was a conflict, the rulers looked out first for himself and oppressed those who had no weapons to defend themselves.

Calvin taught that everybody in the city is responsible for its defence. "In one hand a weapon, in the other hand a shovel." Even women were co-responsible for defence. A new understanding of the military came across. Everybody is responsible to defend themselves.



Remembering; Canons in Geneva

1602, there was a conflict between the Savoy, the French and the "Eidgenossen" (Confederation) about Geneva. Because of the civil army that had come out of the ideas of the Reformers, Geneva could defend itself and retained its independence. Geneva won the war because a woman poured her soup over the spies who were under the city wall and therefore had time to warn the citizens. A woman made the victory possible. Still today, every year the Genevans celebrate their independence on the Escalade de Geneva.

The Bible allowed weapons but also taught man how to use them. They were to be used only to defend. This reformation was only possible on the basis of a common ethical standard that all people agree to. It was possible through turning back to the bible.

The Reformation of Geneva was strongly influenced by the "Swiss Confederation". They had had the idea of a civil army since their founding in 1291. Switzerland has this system to this day. Every Swiss man who can go to the military is a member of the national army. They all have a gun at home, have to attend regular army trainings after their time in the army and do a certain number of shooting trainings every year.

4.6 The influence of the Reformation into Politics

The idea that everyone is directly under God and accountable to His word made freedom in order possible. Everybody has to give account to a constitution, the bible. Nobody should have too much power. Many had similar idea before. But it probably never worked out. But with the bible it became possible. It brought an absolute standard whereby everyone can test what is right or wrong. This constitution was not written by man and no one could change it. Neither minorities or majorities. Not the rich, nor the powerful. It was a common law for everybody. This made living in freedom and order possible, as long as the people lived under the fear of God.

The reformer found out that God advised the Israelites 3500 years a political system of representatives, in which the people could decide by themselves who should rule them. They found out that a political system should be federalist and subsidiary in nature, i.e. people should solve problems on the lowest political level possible. Therefore, the church of Geneva became the first adequate democracy based on the separation of powers and a constitution, the Geneva convention. These Ideas quickly found their way into politics.

Theologian Théodore de Bèze (1519-1604) successor of John Calvin, wrote¹ about the importance of an independent court. An official should not be in the Kings service, but in service of people. This developed

¹ De iure magistratum 1573

over time into the human rights and the bill of right in America. A Huguenot named Francois Hotman (1524-1590), who fled from the Bartolommeo night to Geneva, wrote that the King is just the chairman of the parliament². This thinking laid the foundation for the parliament in England and the congress in America. The parliament should always have the opportunity to dismiss the King. The idea of America's president came from *Vindicae Contra Tyrannos*, written by Huguenots in Basel (1579). The ruler has to obey first God and his world. The refugees developed out of the reformation of Geneva a new political system.

Reformer of Scotland, John Knox, a refugee, brought these ideas from Geneva to Scotland. 1573 Scotland got reformed and became the first democratic nation in the world. Holland, influenced by the refugees from Geneva, became independent from Spain in 1576, got reformed and became a democracy as well.

Influenced by the refugees from Geneva, King William of Orange voluntarily gave 1689 his power to the parliament of England, unlike later in the French Revolution, when it was taken from the king by force. The reformers understood that when people acts in rebellion against injustice, they are no better than the people who did wrong in the first place. This reform became the bloodless revolution, a reformation instead of revolution. Still today Great Britain is a monarchy where the power is with the parliament and not with the king. Calvin understood that too much power brings the danger that people become corrupt. Therefore, God advised in the Old Testament that power should be segregated and that people have to give accountability to one another.

Geneva was never a theocracy. The state and Church were always separated, but both were standing under the same law. Before the Reformation, the church had stood over the whole of society, and it had led to the crusades and injustice. The separation of powers between state and Church made the western world strong. For the reformers, it was clear that Church and state should remain side by side, but both under same order, the order of God.

Are we not in the situation to repeat the same mistake? These present days, it is no longer the Church, but the state that increasingly controls everything.

4.6.1 Courts

The reformer taught that the court has to be separated from the ruler authorities. Today it is a principle in almost every modern nation that the court (judicial) has to be separated from the government. Calvin organised small courts in every district in Geneva that would take appeals. This was bottom-up ruling similar to the understanding of the Bible. Moses looked for men to judge the people, setting them over groups of 1000, of 100, and of 10. They were to solve the problems where they happened, with the people who were involved, and on a level where the people knew one another and were involved in the issues.

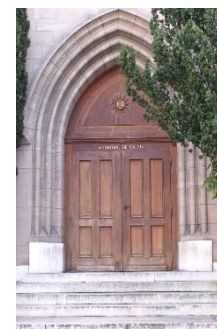
The court stood directly under God and under the Bible, just as the state and the Churches did. Paul Roberts painted a picture in the old Supreme Court of Lausanne in 1905 called "the justice of the nation". The lady of justice points with her sword to the Bible. Every judge who goes into the court has to pass this painting and is reminded of Biblical justice. They are reminded that God is standing over people. People always have to give account to God, even when other people don't see or know it. The fear of God brought justice to the world. This painting expressed what the Swiss believed hundred years ago.



² Fraco Gallia 1572

4.7 The Reformation spread out into the English-speaking world

The Auditoire of Calvin next to the cathedral was the first English-speaking Church in Geneva. John Knox (1514-1572) was the pastor. Still today, the Scottish Presbyterian congregation meets in this building. With the Geneva Bible in hand the message of the Reformation spread to England, Scotland, Holland, North America and their colonies. The whole English-speaking world was strongly influenced by the reformers from Geneva. Geneva became the foundation of the Presbyterian, the Puritan, and the Anglican Churches. The Anglicans retained the form of the Catholic mass, but reformed their theology.



4.8 Today the Bible is still the Foundation of Western Civilisation

4.8.1 Institution of America 1787

Thomas Jefferson was the father of the institution of America. He was strongly influenced by the Puritans who had brought the ideas of the reformers of Geneva. With the Geneva bible in hand and the writing of the refugees, the Puritans built up a new nation based on the bible. As America gained economic and politic superiority, it became a role model for the whole world.

4.8.2 The Red Cross located in Geneva (Henri Dunant)



A young banker named Henri Dunant was part of a strong Calvinist family in the middle of 19th century Geneva. Seeking a business meeting with Emperor Napoleon, Dunant arrived in Solferino, Italy. The day after he arrived there was a major and bloody battle. He was so moved by the lack of attention to the wounded, that on his return to his Church in Geneva he gave a report. Touched by the teaching of the Bible, a movement, led by Dunant, started in Geneva. It led to the Geneva Convention and the Red Cross. One man with conviction and compassion set up a network of influ-

ence by the bible that has helped millions! His labours exceeded his initial vision and he became the first recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

4.8.3 The Human Rights Declaration

René Cassin (1887-1976) was the author of the Declaration of Human Rights. He also received the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1948 the General Assembly of the UN in New York signed his Declaration. He wrote an article with the title "From the 10 Commandments to Human Rights". Just like the reformers, he thought that human rights must have a deeper foundation than just man. He wrote that through thousands of years the moral authority of the Bible has not changed and is still relevant in our days.

Centuries have passed. Judaism has, throughout unparalleled trials, preserved its passion for justice and its desire to contribute to the defence of the rights of men of all races and origins, along the lines of the very principle with which it was entrusted two thousand years ago. The Ten Commandments, the first Code of the essential duties of man, have suffered many an outrage in history and continue to suffer. Their moral authority remains intact⁸.

4.8.4 Neutrality

Through the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), highly civilized Europe was destroyed and thrown back for hundreds of years. Thanks to the reformers, Switzerland could handle the conflict between Catholic and Reformed Churches much better, and Switzerland did not take part in this war.

The first time when Catholics and Reformed went to war In Switzerland, they eventually decided to share and eat a soup together rather than fighting. This event is still remembered and called the Kappeler milk soup. After several conflicts, Switzerland became neutral, deciding to take position neither for Catholics nor for the reformed. Switzerland maintained its Neutrality until today. It was not involved in the First nor Second World War. Switzerland has had hardly any revolution, unlike most other European Nations.

After the revolution years, Europe turned back to the old political order, but Switzerland evolved with the first constitution in Europe. Today, though sometimes disputed, Switzerland still has a great reputation for its neutrality and a lot of international organisations are located in Geneva for this very reason.

5 Reformer without a Biblical understanding

Western society is built on the Reformation, but over time, its foundation was lost. The foundation of the Reformation was the Bible, which gave a common, absolute standard of morality and behaviour for everyone. Although all harvested the fruit of the Reformation, the seed was stifled. This absolute standard outside and beyond man was lost, and by and by, man became the absolute.

In 1707, Pierre Fatio (1662-1707) wanted to reform Geneva on the same secular thinking, but the Genevans burned him at the stake. But slowly influenced by the French philosopher's humanism has gained more and more ground. Charles de Secondat Montesquieu (1689-1755) demanded in his writing³ the separation of power and the sovereignty of the people built on humanism, which resulted in the French Revolution.

Philosophers such as Voltaire (1694-1778) and Rousseau (1712-1778) lead the people by and by away from Christianity. Later, however, Geneva, along with the rest of the western world, became influenced by the new philosophy, and turned away from reformed thinking. They wanted to have the system that the Reformation brought but no longer wanted God, who was the foundation and the Giver of the system.

5.1 Voltaire (1694-1778)

Voltaire too lived in Geneva and printed his philosophical writings in this town. During his stay in England, he saw the Glorious Revolution and wanted the same for France. However, he didn't have the same understanding as the reformer had, and it ended in the French Revolution. "Liberté, égalité, fraternité" (liberty, equality, brotherhood) was the voice of the French Revolution, but it turned into a reign of terror. The Revolution devoured its children. They killed the king and threw out their authorities, but the people were left in a vacuum, where everyone did what he thought was right. It was not possible to separate powers on a human foundation. Because the people looked for their own interest, Napoleon came into power and centralised everything for his own sake. Liberty, equality and brotherhood were over and a dictatorship evolved, where everyone was controlled. After Napoleon's horrible disaster, he was banished to an island and whole of Europe had to be rebuilt, starting with in the Congress of Vienna in 1815.

5.2 Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

200 years after Calvin, Rousseau grew up in Geneva, just one street away from Calvin's house. His father was a Huguenot who fled from France in the 17th century. He too wanted to change society, but from a different view. For him, the Church oppressed and controlled people with their idea of sin. He thought that man is good by nature and environment and bad authorities made him bad. The solution would therefore be, to abolish authority, and institution. Rousseau's solution for society was total liberty from all authorities. He was against any institution in society and wanted to destroy every structure or organization, especially family structure. Both Calvin and Rousseau wanted to solve the problems of society, but in an opposite

³ De l'esprit des lois, 1748

way. Rousseau hated the idea of sin. He said that the new man has to be totally free, living in nature and could do whatever he wanted to.

Rousseau's ideas for a "perfect society" never became reality. His thoughts came from Plato and eventually led to Napoleon and further into communism. The French Revolution, especially Napoleon, wanted to bring Rousseau's ideas into reality. Up to this day he is still mentioned in a lot of books, and people believe in his ideas, but it is only a philosophy or a dream that never really worked out. Where people tried to build a society with his worldview, it always turned into a disaster. It did not work because it was built on the idea that man is good. The Bible says that man is a sinner and this seems much more realistic.

5.3 Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924)⁹

In the 19th century Vladimir Lenin appeared as well in Geneva. He was a man who turned the world upside down. His thinking came from Karl Marx who had proclaimed the complete emancipation of man. The dusty thinking of the Middle Ages must be removed and replaced by a new view. Marx said that until now, the philosophers spoke about a better world, but now we have to make it happen. A new man is born out of himself.

Lenin took this word from Marx seriously and brought it in Russia into reality. Lenin printed his revolutionary ideas in Geneva and sent them to Russia. Communism promised freedom and human rights, but the promise never became real. In the beginning, they promised a just system where each person had the same rights, but the reality turned out quite different. It patronized man and destroyed self-responsibility and innovation. Instead of his promise, terror and oppression ruled. The Russian Revolution ended in an enormous disaster, just as the French Revolution, and ended in the next brutal dictatorship. 66 million people were killed during the dictatorship of Lenin and Stalin because they didn't want to believe in communism and didn't want to give up their property or responsibility, or simply because of the dictators fear to lose their power.

5.4 The Enlightenment in Geneva

In almost every village in Switzerland there is a Church. It is usually the highest building, and its tower points to God. The bells ring almost every hour to remind the people that there is a God. When we go into a cathedral, normally our eyes go up. Look: the architecture of the Church points to God. It always reminds the people of the sovereignty of God.

The front of the cathedral in Geneva, the entrance, is in neoclassical style. It was built 250 years ago to portray the new worldview of Geneva. The church, especially the Gothic style, always points upwards to heaven and to God. The Greek style of the front, however accentuates the horizontal.

The Greeks in ancient times freed themselves from their gods. Man became free. The architectural style of the Greeks became a symbol of the independence from gods. The Enlightenment brought this worldview to the west. Deliverance was no longer from the gods of the Greeks; it was now from the Christian God. Now, the Geneva built a monumental neoclassical entrée before the gothic cathedral to express their changed worldview.



6 Summary

The Reformation was not only about the Church; it affected the whole of society. It was not perfect, but it brought a major change in Europe. It set people free from hierarchical bondage to the Pope and kings and laid a Scripture-based foundation for democracy and freedom.

The reformation made it possible that people could live together in freedom and peace, because a common constitution holds society together. A constitution that everybody can read and understand, and nobody, neither rich or powerful, neither minorities nor majorities can change. It was the bible, which was not from man and not controlled by man. The Reformers were able to build a better system out of their worldview, one that seems to fit best with reality. Christians are not better than other people, but they have a better system that helps man to live in peace and freedom.

Geneva turned poverty into prosperity in just one generation, with an impact that is still felt in some aspects today. However, over time the western world by and by lost its foundation in Christianity and the teaching of the Bible. However, a lot of influence are still visible still today.

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