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## Geneva



## Places

### Reformation Monument

The monument commemorates the most important 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century events and persons promoting the spread of the Calvinist Reformation in Geneva and the world. It was erected in a highly symbolic location: integrated into the old town wall, below the city hall and across from the University. Construction began in 1909 in memory of Calvin's 400<sup>th</sup> birthday and was completed in 1917.

As an inscription, it bears the motto of the Geneva Reformation: "POST TENEBRAS LUX" (After darkness, light) as well as the Greek letters IHS for Jesus. The four statues represent the protagonists of the Geneva Reformation (left to right): William Farel, John Calvin, Theodore Beza and John Knox, the Reformer of Scotland. Six medium-sized statues and eight flat reliefs depict other important persons and events of the Reformation. The names of two other major figures of the Reformation, Ulrich Zwingli and Martin Luther, are also mentioned.

### City Hall

The city hall has been Geneva's political center for 500 years. It was constructed in stages and took almost 300 years to complete. In 1526, the "Council of the 200," the predecessor of today's City

Council, was established. It was this council that suspended Mass in 1535, thus introducing the Reformation.

The Geneva coat of arms above the portal of the house at No. 2 displays the crowned eagle as the insignia of the Holy Roman Empire, which Geneva had been a part of since the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and the golden key of the Bishop, who granted the city its rights and privileges in 1387. The courtyard features a masterpiece of 16<sup>th</sup> century architecture: a ramp that allowed visitors to reach the three floors of the building without having to dismount their horse or step out of their palanquin.

## **Church of St. Germain**

St. Germain is one of the five oldest churches in Geneva. This was the site of a house of God from as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Today's church was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Since the Reformation, it has served various purposes: As an additional place of worship for an influx of refugees, an artillery depot, a room for political gatherings, and even a meat storage. During the French rule of 1798-1813, Catholics celebrated Mass here; since 1873, it has been the place of worship of the Christian Catholic parish.

## **Grand-Rue and Palace of the French Envoy**

The Grand-Rue is the central axis of the old town. Many houses were built or expanded when thousands of refugees flocked to Geneva, as the city was only able to grow vertically because its walls did not allow any horizontal spread.

In 1743, the house at No. 11 was built as a residence for the French envoy at the site of his previous older domicile. In 1679, the French king Louis XIV. had decided to establish a permanent diplomatic mission in order to represent his interests in the free city republic of Geneva. In accordance with diplomatic conventions, the envoy celebrated Mass at his house. This unsettled the Genevans, who had abolished Mass 150 years earlier. They suspected the French king of planning to reintroduce the Catholic faith by force.

## ***Fusterie***

Previously called "*Temple Neuf*," the *Temple de la Fusterie* was constructed from 1713 to 1715 as the first new church built after the Reformation. Before that, worship services had taken place in the medieval churches of St. Pierre, St. Gervais and Madeleine, whose interiors had been restructured to meet the requirements of the new worship services. However, the influx of refugees after the repeal of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 filled the churches to bursting, and there was not enough space to fit all congregants.

Thus, this fourth church was built, modelled on the Protestant church of Charenton near Paris, which had been torn down in 1686 by order of Louis XIV. Several baroque elements set the *Temple de la Fusterie* apart from the other Genevan churches.

## ***Les Rues Basses (Lower Streets)***

The "lower streets" include the Rue de Marché, the Rue de la Croix-d'Or and the Rue de Rive. Here, close to the harbor, the storehouses and the markets, the first fairs were established in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, boosting Geneva's importance. The streets were divided into three sections: The carts ran in the middle, and to both sides of this traffic lane were stalls and booths selling goods, so that business could be conducted out of the rain. Between the stalls and the houses, the pedestrians went about their business.

Place du Molard was the political and economic center of Geneva for a period spanning several centuries. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it saw violent clashes between the followers of Savoy and those of the Confederacy, which divided the city, and later, between adherents of the new and the old faith. And it was here that Antoine Froment held the first public Reformed sermon on January 1, 1533.

## **La Madeleine Church**

The present 14<sup>th</sup> century church is the successor of several previous Christian buildings, with the oldest dating back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century. After two fires in 1334 and 1430, the Gothic church was thoroughly renovated.

With the advent of the Reformation, it was restructured several times and repurposed as a Reformed place of worship: the pulpit in the center, surrounded by pews, with galleries running all along the walls. Today, its spire is home to Geneva's oldest bell, called "*Grillet*"; it was cast in 1420.

## **Calvin College**

The Reformation turned Geneva into an educated city, as education was once of its major goals. Indeed, the rate of alphabetization in Geneva was higher than that of the surrounding Catholic regions. With the adoption of the Reformation in 1536, the Genevans also decided to establish a school that was to be mandatory for all children. However, the project was only realized in 1559 with the establishment of the *Collège* and the *Académie*. For ten hours every day, boys seven years and older studied Greek, Latin, Logic, Rhetoric and the Catechism.

The first building of 1558-1562, which still exists today, is called *Collège Calvin*. Its architecture is modelled to the French style of that time. The academy, predecessor of today's university, became a hotbed of Calvinism in Europe. From far away, young men came to study in Geneva and carried Calvin's thoughts into the world. The first principal was Calvin's ally Theodore Beza. The building also housed Geneva's first library until 1872.

## **Lutheran Church**

This building was constructed from 1762 to 1766 for the parish of German-speaking Lutherans. Even though they were Protestants, too, their doctrines and liturgy differed from those of the Calvinists in some points. Permission for construction was only granted on the condition that the building would not resemble a church – which is why it looks like a three-story residential building. Inside, the worship room extends over the two lower stories. Today, worship services are held here not only in German, but also in English, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian and Finnish.

## **Auditoire Calvin**

The *Auditoire* Church, formerly *Notre-Dame-la-Neuve*, rises over the foundations of a 10<sup>th</sup> century chapel. It was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century next to the cathedral in a sober Gothic style. After the Reformation, the worship services of non-francophone Reformed Christians (from England, Scotland, the Netherlands and Italy) were conducted here. John Knox also preached here during his time as a refugee in Geneva. It was also here that he and some of his countrymen decided to translate the Bible into English. Subsequently, the "Geneva Bible" was translated from 1556 to 1559.

The church is called "*Auditoire*" because John Calvin, Theodore Beza and their successors held lectures here. This was the birthplace of the spiritual and moral ideas that made Geneva famous in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the centuries to follow. At the same time, the church was a gathering place for the Genevan pastors in Calvin's time. To this day, the church is used for worship services by the

Reformed Scottish, Dutch and Italian communities.

## **St. Pierre's Cathedral**

Evidence of the first Christian buildings on this site dates back to late antiquity. In the last quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the church became a Bishop's See. The present Gothic cathedral was built between 1150 and 1250. Since then, much renovation and restructuring work has been conducted; around 1750, for example, the crumbling main façade from the Middle Ages was replaced by the current classicistic one. During the Reformation, all decorations in the interior and all ornaments were removed; the murals were painted over. Only the stained glass windows survived.

Here, Calvin preached daily every other week, even twice a day on Sundays, to hundreds of believers. The Maccabee Chapel adjacent to the southern façade was built around 1400. During the Reformation, it was repurposed as a salt storage; around 1670, classrooms for the academy were established on three floors.

## **Maison Mallet and Reformation Museum**

This grand mansion was constructed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century on the site of the former Monastery of St. Pierre. The cloth merchant and banker Gédéon Mallet wished to build a home for his family of nine children. In this endeavor, he was obliged to comply with the City Council's wish of beautifying the square as well as the limited spatial conditions. When the classicist building had been erected in 1723 according to plans by the Parisian architect Jean-François Blondel, it caused a sensation due to its splendor.

Today, the *Maison Mallet* is home to the *Musée International de la Réforme* (MIR) and the seat of the Protestant Church of Geneva. The MIR was opened in 2008 and traces the history of Geneva and the Reformation to the present. Its aim is to provide a tangible experience of the history of the Reformation spearheaded by Luther, Calvin and others. Artifacts, books, manuscripts, paintings and copper engravings bring to life the history of a movement that Geneva played a vital part in and that is shaping the world to this day. In April 2007, the MIR received the Council of Europe Museum Prize.

## **History**

In his "Gallic War," Caesar mentions a Celtic-Roman city named Genava. From the last quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century to the Reformation, Geneva was a Bishop's See. The city belonged to the Kingdom of Burgundy and then to the Holy Roman Empire; from 1124, it was a part of the Bishop's domain. In 1162, the Bishop was made a Prince of the Empire. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Geneva became an important trade city and as such grew wealthy and significant. In the same century, the Bishop granted the city's inhabitants more rights of autonomy.

In the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, the formerly flourishing Geneva plunged into economic crisis. New trade fairs in Lyon ushered in a rapid decline; the city's population plummeted. In 1517, the Reformation started in Germany, but its effect reached Geneva only in 1525. It was ten more years before the sermon of William Farel fell on fertile ground. But the movement only experienced a true upswing with the arrival of John Calvin in July of 1536. He turned Geneva into the "Reformed Rome" and gave the city on the Rhone a significance that far surpassed its political sphere of influence.

From 1540 on, Geneva became a refuge for Reformed Christians who were persecuted in their native countries and wished to practice their religious beliefs freely here. An apogee in the influx of religious refugees was reached after the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's in 1572, when the French king tried to root out the Reformed faith by force. In addition to the French refugees, there were also Italians,

Englishmen and even Spaniards seeking asylum in Geneva. Among them were not only urgently needed pastors, but also professors, lawyers, medical doctors, printers, watchmakers, goldsmiths, weavers and bankers, all of whom gave a significant boost to Geneva's economy.

Geneva became a sanctuary for French Protestants (Huguenots) for a second time after the Tolerance Edict of Nantes was repealed in 1685. This time, too, the refugees boosted economic sectors such as watchmaking, banking and Indienne textile manufacture, making Geneva famous in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The science and art world of the city on the Rhone also benefited. All in all, Geneva gained significant intellectual and spiritual influence due to the Reformation.

## **John Calvin**

Like many Reformers, John Calvin was originally from France, where he was persecuted due to his religious beliefs. He came from a wealthy family in Noyon in the northern French region of Picardy, where he was born in 1509. He attended the Latin School in Noyon. Thanks to his benefices (his father was employed at the cathedral chapter), he was able to fund his studies in Paris from 1523 on. After that, he studied law in Orléans and Bourges.

Back in Paris, Calvin first was exposed to Reformation ideas. He befriended the new rector of the University, Nicolas Cop. When the latter openly argued for the Reformed doctrine in his inaugural address, Cop and Calvin had to leave Paris. On October 18, 1534, everywhere in Paris, including the king's own bedroom door, pamphlets were hung denouncing the "despicable, vast and intolerable abuse of the papal Mass." When the livid king ordered the persecution of all Protestants, Calvin fled to Basel, where he met Bullinger and Farel.

In Basel, he mainly worked on the first edition of his "Institutio Christianae Religionis." In 1536, he returned to Noyon once again. On his way back to Basel, his way was blocked by a war; thus, he went to Geneva instead, where he met Farel once again. The latter told him that if Calvin should withdraw into his scholar's chambers instead of helping the ailing Reformation in Geneva, he, Farel, would personally wish God's damnation down on him. Thus Calvin stayed and created a set of parish rules that regulated life down to every detail. People were to attend worship service regularly and to renounce any and all pleasures.

The parish rules were met with intense resistance, and when Calvin denied the whole parish the Eucharist in 1538, he was expelled from the city. He went to Strasbourg, became a professor, led a Huguenot refugee parish and developed a somewhat more easygoing outlook on life. In 1540 he married Idelette de Bure, a Huguenot widow. Meanwhile, the Reformation in Geneva went off the rails, and a new City Council asked Calvin to return and restore order. From 1541 on, Calvin spent the rest of his life in Geneva. He died there in 1564.

In 1553, the Spaniard Miguel Servet was burnt at the stake. Calvin had supported the death sentence, but argued against death by fire. In 1555, his followers gained the majority in the City Council, which for Calvin's opponents frequently meant banishment or even death. In 1559, he founded the academy that had a significant impact on the Reformed world. In addition, he kept writing new editions of the "Institutio," expanding it from six chapters in the first edition to 80 chapters in the last. It was and partly still is the central work of Reformed theology.

Calvinism became the predominant movement within the Reformed faith, especially in the Anglo-Saxon churches. Today, the Northern American churches – Methodists, Baptists, Pentecostals and many others – are still very much influenced by Calvin, and society along with them. His thoughts had a big impact on the development of human rights and democracy, and thus on the American Declaration of Independence. It also influenced the European constitutions of the modern age, and

thus, Calvin's ideas returned to Europe in a roundabout way.

## **Theodore Beza**

Born in 1519, Theodor Beza grew up in an aristocratic family in Vézelay in Burgundy. He studied law in Orléans before moving to Geneva in 1548 and to Lausanne soon after. There, he taught Greek at the academy for ten years.

From 1558 on, Beza worked in Geneva as a pastor and professor of theology. As a confidant of John Calvin, he was sent to Germany to meet with Protestant rulers several times, asking for support for the persecuted Protestants in Italy and France. His diplomatic and rhetorical skills repeatedly led him to attend religious colloquies and synods in France.

After Calvin's death in 1564, Beza was considered the leading theologian of the Reformed faith. He succeeded Calvin as president of the Consistory (the church's governing body); in 1580, he resigned from this office. He took leave of teaching in 1598 and from the ministry in 1600. He died in 1605 in Geneva, where one of the large statues of the Reformation Memorial is dedicated to him.

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