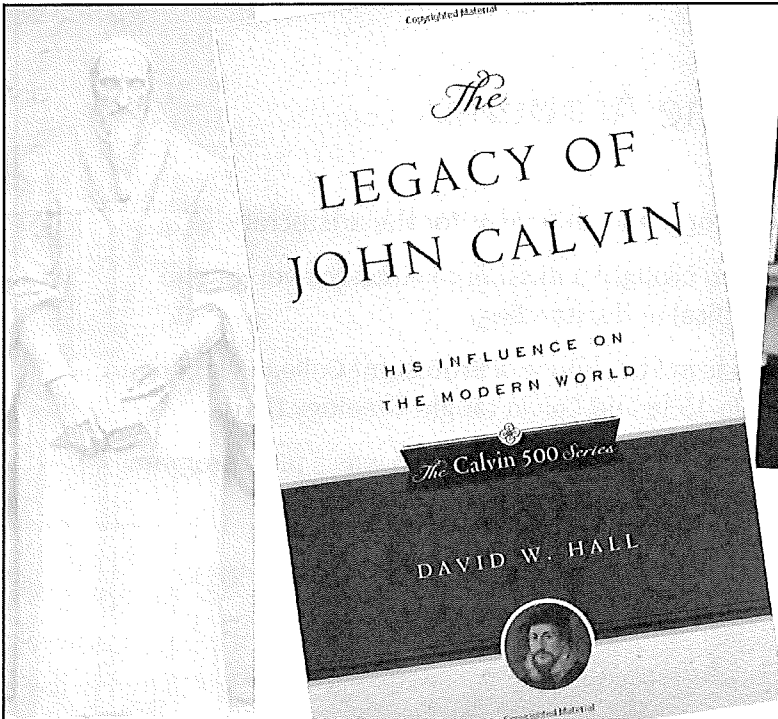
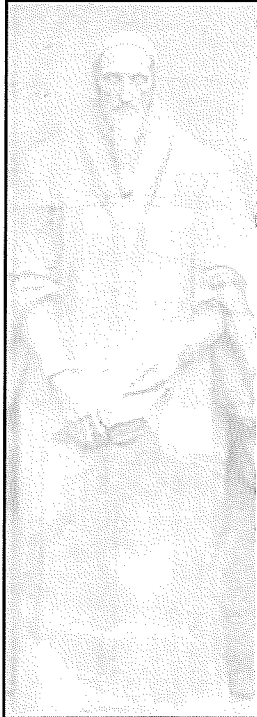


Calvin: the Influence

*How John Calvin is responsible
for Western History and Culture*

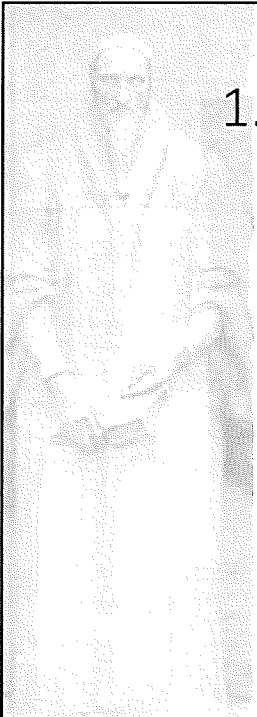
Dr. David G. Barker
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“There is virtually no area of life in which the influence of John Calvin’s thought has not permeated modern history and western civilization – not only in the church but in politics and economics and the wider culture such as education – the single greatest influence upon modern history over the last thousand years, even the last two thousand years, to days of the biblical writers. Calvin towered above history and left a dominant influence. It is impossible to overstate the importance and legacy of John Calvin.”

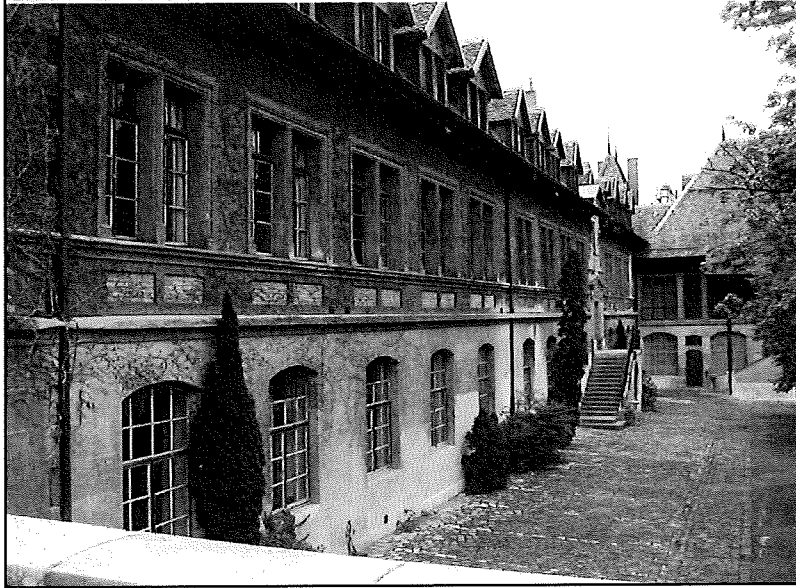
Stephen Lawson



1. Education: The Academy

- Medieval pedagogy: education was for the aristocratic elite
- The Reformation brought a mission to educate everyone to literacy and biblical understanding.
- While Calvin was in Strasbourg, a Protestant College was begun by Reformers in 1538 and Calvin taught theology there.
- Calvin started an Academy in 1559 which was a pilot program for broad-based education throughout the city.

1. Education: The Academy



Two levels of educational focus:

- a) Youth –
7 grades, 280 students
- b) Seminary for future ministers
up to 162 students in 3 yrs.

At the time of Calvin's death:

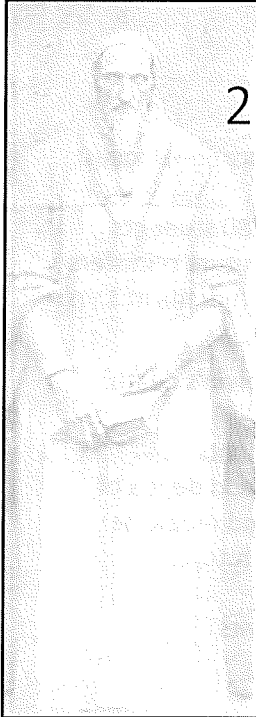
- a) College –
1,200 students
aiming to add dept.s of
law and medicine
- b) Seminary for future
ministers
300 students

1. Education: The Academy

"Calvin's Academy became the standard bearer for education in all major fields." (Hall, p. 15)

"None of the other major Protestant Reformers are credited with founding a university that would last for centuries, ... Historically, education, as much as any other single factor, has fostered cultural and political advancement. (Hall, p. 15)

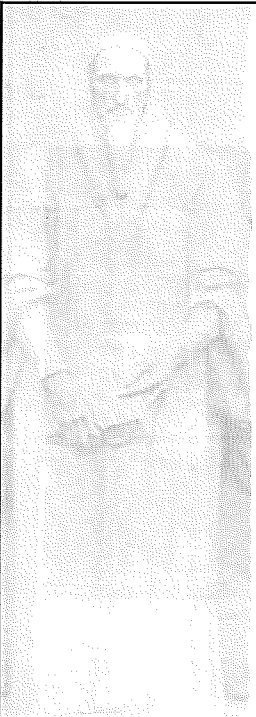




2. Care for the Poor: The Bourse

- Calvin organized the Diaconate, primarily for the ministry of the church to the needy by way of a welfare fund
- First need met: the immigrants fleeing France and coming to Geneva (from 1550-1560, for ex., 60,000 refugees past through the city) they provided job-training, interim subsidies, even necessary tools/supplies
- They housed widows & orphans, the elderly, and those who were abandoned, incapacitated
- They cared for the sick and terminally ill, dealt with those involved in immoralities
- The Bourse was a precursor to other, later western voluntary societies in the 19th & 20th c.
- Calvin was so committed to these efforts that he willed part of his inheritance to the School for the Boys and to the immigrants.

Rf. Calvin and Social Welfare: Deacons and the Bourse Francaise, J. Olson, 1989



*"Without [the diaconate]
there can be no true communion of saints."*



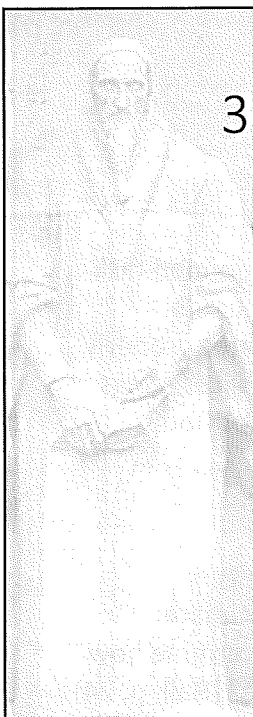
Martin Bucer



3. Ethics & Interpretation of the Moral Law: The Decalogue

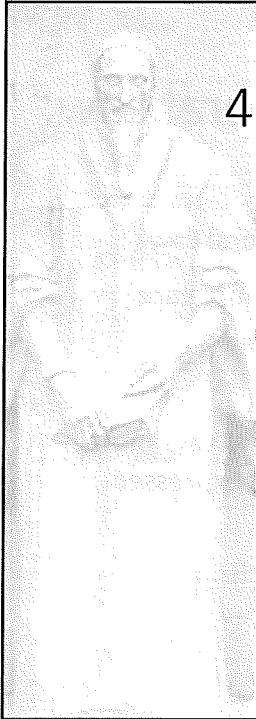
Calvin brought a fundamentally positive view of God's Moral Law.

- An awareness/distrust in human ability/motivation. People are dependent on God's revelation if they are to do well.
- The Moral Law is a perfect rule of righteousness.
- Not limited in scope but full of ramifications: "There is always more in the requirements and prohibitions of the law than is expressed [literally] in words."



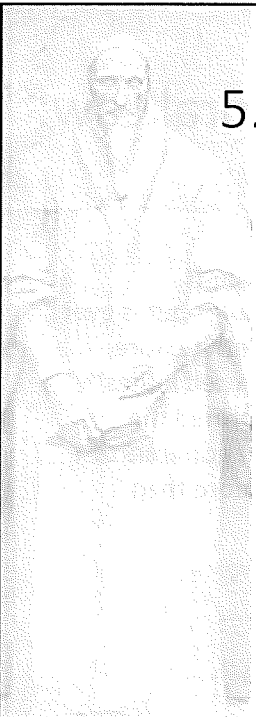
3. Ethics & Interpretation of the Moral Law: The Decalogue

- Each commandment also requires its opposite.
"Calvin's commentary on sexuality (when discussing the seventh commandment) spans less than a thousand words in the Institutes but is ever so profound. His discussion of 'thou shalt not steal' was rich with texture, calling for a person not only to avoid theft but also to 'exert himself honestly to preserve his own' estate. These and other commentaries formed the Protestant work ethic. ... Calvinists, then, were not legalists but admirers of the perfections and wisdom of God's law, which they trusted more than themselves." (D. Hall, p. 19-20)



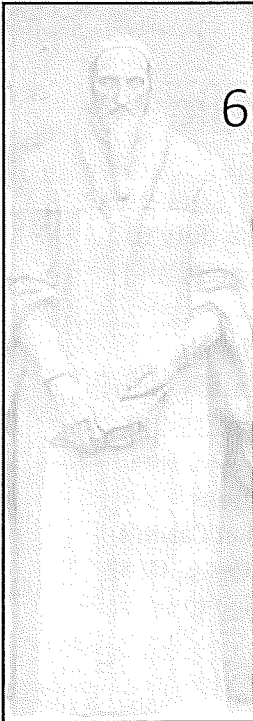
4. Freedom of the Church: The Company of Pastors

- Calvin's first contest was over the issue of the control of the church.
- Pastors, not the City Council, had the Scriptural authority to discipline the sinning believer by barring him from the Lord's Supper.
- Upon Calvin's return, he established a collegial governing body of pastors and church elders from the localized district. "[R]ather than opting for an institution that strengthened his own hand, this visionary Reformer lobbied for decentralized authority, lodging it with many elected officers instead of with a self-perpetuating elite." (D. Hall, p. 21)
- Calvin published his *Ecclesiastical Ordinances (1541)*, a first Book of Church Order, insisting the church be free from political influence.



5. Collegial Governing: The Senate

- Calvin argued diligently regarding
 - the dangers of monarchy,
 - the need for proper limitation of government (with a defined task and scope), and the place of divine sovereignty over human governments. (rf. 1 Sam. 8) "God established magistrates properly 'for the use of the people and the benefit of the republic.'" Kings had authority only insofar as they met the conditions of God's covenant. (rf. Ex. 18)
- From the Samuel narrative [1 Sam. 8], Calvin
 - "distinguished a tyrant from a legitimate prince
 - "a tyrant rules only his own will and lust, whereas legitimate magistrates rule by counsel and by reason so as to determine how to bring about the greatest public welfare and benefit." (Hall, p. 24)



6. Decentralized Politics: The Republic

- Calvin argued, in his *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, that
 - the various branches of government (councils) must not be allowed to act unilaterally;
 - at least two councils were needed before ratifying measures or laws. (This preceded Montesquieu's separation of powers doctrine by two centuries.) Even the best leaders could think myopically and need a format for mutual accountability.

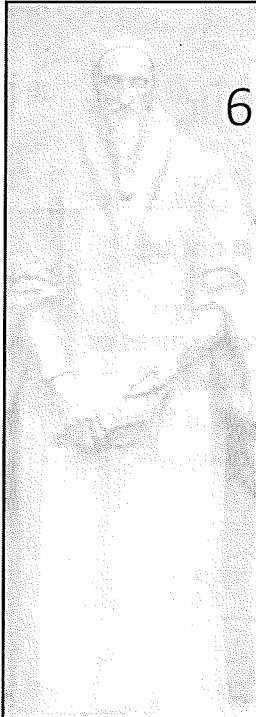


6. Decentralized Politics: The Republic

- Fundamental to this principle is the biblical view of human nature and the role of the state under God.

"This Calvin-shaped polity, which appeared to be either liberal or daringly democratic for its day, provided

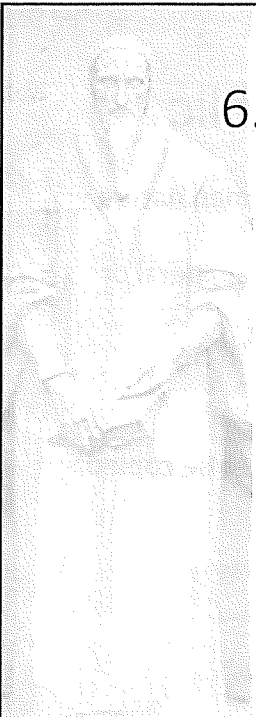
 - checks and balances,
 - separation of powers,
 - election by the residents,
 - other elements of federal structure that would later be copied as one of Geneva's finest exports. ...



6. Decentralized Politics: The Republic

- In keeping with the teachings of Calvin,
 - elected governors perceived themselves as having a duty to God, one that compelled them to serve the public good and avoid pursuing personal benefit. ...
 - Customs now taken for granted, like freedom of speech, assembly, and dissent, were extended as Calvin's Dutch, British, and Scottish disciples refined these ideas. (D. Hall, p. 25-26)

"The Calvinistic view of liberty, wherever it spread, gave citizens confidence and protections. ... So close were law and liberty that Calvin's disciples customarily associated law codes with tables of liberties. ... Of all theologies, Calvinism has made the most significant contribution to democracy." (D. Hall, p. 37)



6. Decentralized Politics: The Republic

The "Five Points of Political Calvinism"

1. Depravity as a perennial human variable to be accommodated.
2. Accountability for leaders provided via a collegium.
3. Republicanism as the preferred form of government.
4. Constitutionalism needed to restrain both the rulers and the ruled.
5. Limited government beginning with the family as foundational.

(D. Hall, p. 37-8)



Why remember John Calvin?

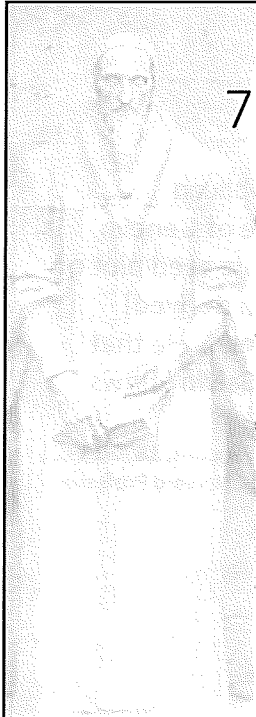
John Calvin was among “the foremost of modern republican legislators”, who was responsible for elevating the culture of Geneva into “the impregnable fortress of popular liberty, the fertile seed plot of democracy.” The “free institutions of America [have been derived] “chiefly from Calvinism through the medium of Puritanism. ... He that will not honor the memory and respect the influence of Calvin knows but little of the origin of American liberty.”

George Bancroft, 1800-1891
American historian, Harvard Professor



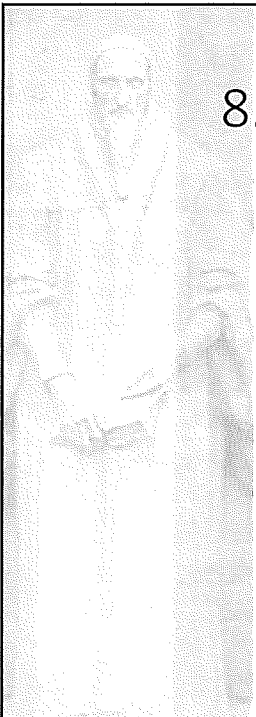
Foundations for Freedom

The 19th Century German historian, Leopold Von Ranke described John Calvin as the “*virtual founder of America.*” Reformer John Calvin laid the foundations for the English and American Bills of Rights, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, the privilege against self-incrimination, the independence of judiciary, the right of *habeas corpus*, the right not to be imprisoned without cause, and other key principles of separation of powers, checks and balances, constitutional and representative government, etc.



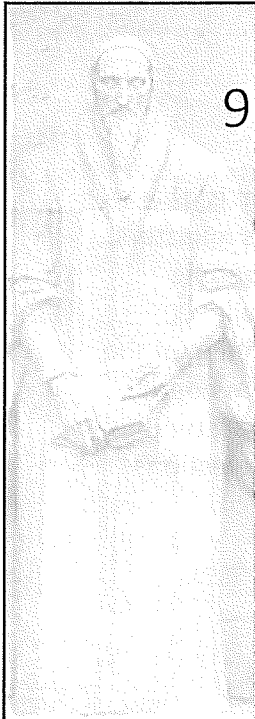
7. Parity among All Professions: The Doctrine of Vocation

- Calvinism ennobles all good work as being in the service of God.
 - Calvin taught the sacredness of ordinary vocation (formally thought only for clergy) (rf. Calvin's commentary on the 4th commandment).
 - "Calvin's doctrine of work and rest was widely popularized."
(D. Hall, p. 28)
- Work, in all its disciplines and vocations, carries with it an inherent dignity.
- This helped retire the sacred/secular distinction.



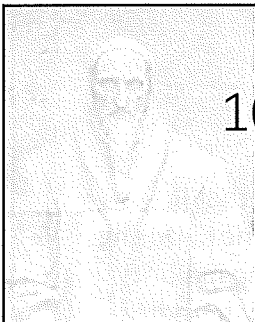
8. Economics and Profit: The Invisible Hand

- "Wherever Calvinism spread, so did a love for free markets and capitalism." (rf. Calvin's sermons on the 8th commandment)
- He asserted that luxury could incite great problems and produce "great carelessness a to virtue", warning that any endeavor that ceased to have charity as its aim was diseased at its very root.
- He advocated a conscious, visible reliance on God – not wealth.



9. Music in the Vernacular: the Psalter

- “Realizing that what people sing in a holy context has enduring impact on how they act, Calvin wanted worship – in all its aspects – to be intelligible. ... His democratizing of holy song and other elements of worship made parishioners participants in the divine liturgy,” (D. Hall, p. 31)
- The Genevan Psalter “became the international songbook of expansionistic Calvinism,” (D. Hall, p. 32)



10. The Power of Publishing Ideas: The Genevan Presses

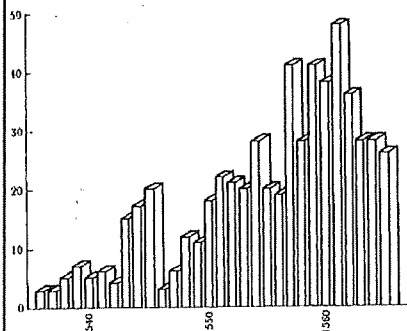
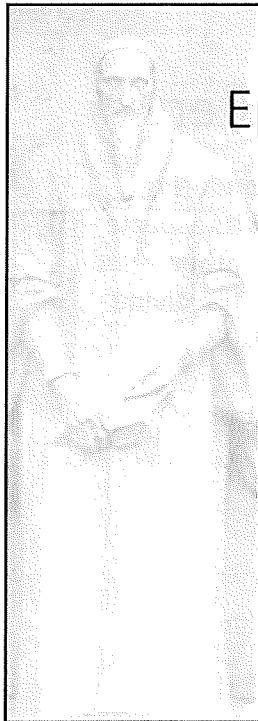


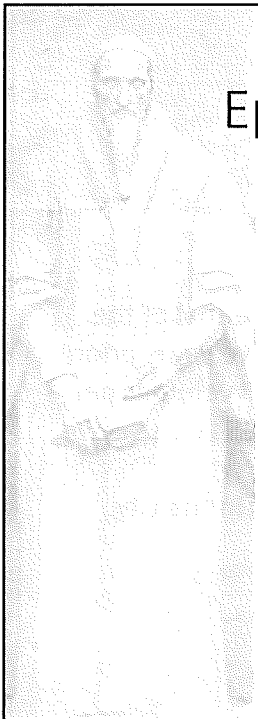
FIGURE 9.1 Books published at Geneva, 1536-63, demonstrated by the number of new titles issued per year

- Calvin and his followers “elevated the potential of the printing press into an art form.” “In the five years prior to Calvin’s death, a stunning average of 38 volumes per year were printed (a ten-fold increase in 25 years).”
- ... By 1563, there were at least 34 presses in the city, many manned by immigrants.



Epilogue

"[The most significant contribution to this millennium is] the principle that laws should be made not by a ruler, or his ministers, or his appointed judges, but by representatives of the people. This principle of democratic self-government was virtually unheard of in the feudal world that existed at the beginning of the millennium. ... So thoroughly has this principle swept the board that even many countries that in fact do not observe it pretend to do so, going through the motions of sham, unopposed elections."



Epilogue

"We Americans have become so used to democracy that it seems to us the natural order of things. Of course it is not. During almost all of recorded human history, the overwhelming majority of mankind has been governed by rulers determined by heredity, or selected by a powerful aristocracy, or imposed through sheer force of arms. Kings and emperors have been always with us; presidents (or their equivalent) have been vary rare."

(A. Scalia, "The Millennium That Was:
How Democracy Swept the World"
WSJ, 9/7/99, A24)