

BAREND JOHANNES VAN DER WALT, born in 1939 at Potchefstroom, studied theology and philosophy at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education and continued his studies in philosophy at the Free University of Amsterdam. Since July 1970 he has been Senior Lecturer in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Fort Hare and from July 1974 Director of the Institute for the Advancement of Calvinism and (since 1975) also of the Clearing House of the International Conference of Institutions for Christian Higher Education at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education.

His D. Phil. dissertation is entitled: *Die Natuurlike Teologie met besondere aandag aan die visie daarop by Thomas van Aquino, Johannes Calwyn en die "Synopsis Purioris Theologiae"* — 'n Wysgerige ondersoek (1974).

He has written articles in *Philosophia Reformata* and several South African journals.

PRESENT ADDRESS:

42 Parys Avenue
Baillie Park
Potchefstroom
2520
Republic of South Africa

FROM NOYON TO GENEVA



BJ VAN DER WALT

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WETENSKAPLIKE BYDRAES OF THE PU FOR CHE
Series F: Institute for the Advancement of Calvinism

FROM NOYON TO GENEVA

A pilgrimage in the steps of
John Calvin
(1509-1564)

Dr. B.J. van der Walt

Potchefstroom University for CHE
Potchefstroom
1979



MY HEART I OFFER, LORD, TO
THEE EAGERLY AND EARNESTLY.

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(Back flap — inside).

PREFACE

During May and June 1977 I had the privilege to visit some institutes in Europe doing research on the Reformation. I used this opportunity to travel on the footsteps of Calvin and ascertain what visible signs are still left recalling the history of this great man.

My travel impressions were published (in 1977 and 1978) in Afrikaans in *Die Kerkblad*. Appreciation from people also outside South Africa (who could follow Afrikaans because of their Dutch background) gave the stimulus to republish the series of articles separately — this time in English with a more complete photograph album. (The numbers in the text refer to the same numbers in the photo album.)

I hope this booklet will serve as an incentive to many to undertake a similar trip and to be encouraged to acquaint themselves with the spiritual heritage left behind by the man who was born in Noyon 460 years ago.

Bennie van der Walt

1 ADVENTURE IN THE UNKNOWN

The setting sun was hovering over the Golden City like a great red ball, as we found ourselves ensconced inside the large air-craft, the pain of separation from loved ones still heavy on our heart. However, the giant soon came into motion, nosed skywards... and we were off. With a novel feeling of excitement and expectation the prospects of our travels soon became our chief occupation.

In talking to people one discovers how many reasons there are for travelling in Europe: business, study, research, visiting relatives, and of course just taking a holiday. The lure of the unknown is inescapable. To roam around Europe for a full month, visiting a new place every day has its own fascination. It is different. Everything is so much older. Everything is steeped in ancient history. Who knows, perhaps an invisible navel string still binds us to the continent from which our forbears came more than three centuries ago.

The reason for my travels was not for any of the above-mentioned reasons. The Muslims journey to Mecca, the Jews go on pilgrimages to Israel, Roman Catholics go to Rome to receive the Papal blessing in the Vatican City. Why should a Calvinist not go on a pilgrimage in the steps of Calvin?

Not being a writer I do not aspire to write a true travel story, but rather to disseminate some information regarding highlights from the life of the reformer after whom the philosophy of life of many people in our own country is named. Many South Africans today have the opportunity to travel in Europe. Perhaps this information will persuade some to set aside part of their tour for this specific purpose, namely to see places where this great man lived and worked.

I learnt by experience during my travels just how difficult it is to find out where some of these places are.

This article is by no means intended solely for those who will be privileged to explore our heritage in the Reformation for themselves, but also for those who stay at home. I agree, a tour on paper through the camera and eyes of another is second best — but a good deal cheaper! With those in mind who will not have the privilege to follow in Calvin's footsteps in Europe, I have included in this booklet quite a number of photographs.

2 NOYON IN PICARDIA

The small town of Noyon (\pm 15 000 inhabitants) is situated off the main road between Paris and Lille, about 95 km. north of Paris; a place with a rich heritage. As far back as the sixth and seventh centuries famous bishops like St. Merdad and St. Eloi (600-639) lived there. Charl the Great was crowned there in 768.

Rich in history

In the course of the centuries many storms have raged over this cathedral city. In the fifteenth century, for example, there was the struggle for the bones of St. Eloi. (The Roman Catholic Church attaches great importance to the mortal remains of their saints. In many places in Europe one can even today see the relics of some saint or other in the form of a skull or bones.) In the case of Saint Eloi the struggle was about who possessed the true Eloi-relics: the chapel of the cathedral, or the Abbey of St. Eloi. (One set possibly belonged to the younger and the other to the older Eloi!) As we shall see later, there were more such holy relics in circulation in that area.

This storm, however, was not the worst. In the sixteenth century this mediaeval city was ravaged during the religious wars between Protestants and the Roman Catholics. (Especially in 1552 when it was overrun by Spanish troops.) Neither was this small city spared the violence of the French Revolution. The nine churches and four monasteries in the city were demolished! The large old Cathedral was desecrated though not destroyed. More devastation followed during the First World War. The Germans left the place in ruins. Only the walls of the great Cathedral were left standing. Fortunately French architects restored it more beautifully than ever.

The heart of the town

The great cathedral (photo no. 1) is most certainly the centre of Noyon, as it dominates the scene over the mosaic roof-tops and streets below, having kept vigil over the surrounding country-side for 800 years. (It took 200 years to build from 1135-1333). The building is so large, and so closely surrounded by houses, that one needs to go to a nearby cemetery on a hill in order to take a photograph of the whole. Adjoining the cathedral there is the ruin of an older building (a church?) and on the other side the Bibliothèque du Chapitre, a gracious wooden structure on pillars, from the sixteenth century.

In the shadow of this Cathedral a little boy possibly wiled away many hours. His name was Jean Cauvin (later changed by him to Calvinus or Calvin). At the beginning of the sixteenth century (on July 10th 1509) he was born here.

Calvin was the fourth child in the family. (There were two more after him.) His father Gerard Cauvin was of humble birth. He came from a seafaring family from the little town Pont l'Evêque on the Oise River. Through hard work, however, he became one of the most influential citizens of Noyon. Calvin's mother, Jeanne Lefranc, was the daughter of an hotelier from Kameryk, who settled in Noyon. She was an attractive woman, a pious faithful Roman Catholic. Unfortunately Calvin lost his mother early. (His father later re-married but very little is known of his second wife.)

Until 1523 Calvin was a pupil at the Collège des Capettes in Noyon.

The cradle of Calvinism

When one enters the Maison Calvin in Noyon (it is situated on Rue Calvin and easily accessible. Ask for Musée Calvin. Open from 10h00 to 12h30 and 14h30 to 17h30) it soon becomes evident that here one encounters the beginnings of Calvinism. Here the man who gave birth to the Calvinistic view of life, was born.

Madame V. Matthieu is the curatrix of the museum. Unfortunately I do not speak French, which is apparently the only language she knows! Consequently communication was difficult.

The residence is made up of two sections (photo no. 2). The right-hand portion (viewed from the front) with three storeys contain (in the two lower storeys) various interesting paintings, prints and furniture which are not directly linked with Calvin (photos no. 3 and 4). The building on the left attached to the above-mentioned houses the actual Calvin museum (photo no. 5). In a way it is somewhat disappointing, as there is not much to be seen, apart from paintings and writings of Calvin. The uncomfortable chair (photo no. 6) is a replica of the chair Calvin used in his pulpit in Geneva. Language difficulties precluded me from learning the history of the chest (photo no. 7) with beautiful wood carving.

In spite of the scantiness of museum pieces, it is an experience to linger in the house of Calvin in Noyon, trying to capture something of the atmosphere in which Calvin, a sensitive youngster, grew up 470 years ago. The climate was wholly Roman Catholic. What an indelible impression the sanctity of services in the cathedral and the awe in which the relics were held, must

have made on him. The impressions of one's childhood are not easily erased. This is why it seems almost incredible that one of the greatest reformers should come from the cathedral city of Noyon. Only God's miraculous dealings with the young man from Noyon could account for it.

3 A TRIP TO OURSCAMP ON THE OISE

The museum of Noyon to which I paid a quick visit is housed in the papal palace.

On the next stage of my pilgrimage I went by taxi 6 km. away to the Abbey of Ourscamp. I was several rand poorer over this short distance, having stopped on the way to take some quick photographs of the Oise river.

A valuable skull

A young boy, holding his mother's hand, crossed the same river about 460 years ago on the way to Ourscamp. Calvin never forgot it. When he wrote his sharp, ironical tract against the relics in 1543, he still recalls clearly how he had gone with his mother and how they had kissed the skull of the saintly Anna in Ourscamp.

In the fifteenth century, the skull of Anna (the mother of Mary) made Ourscamp famous and many believers must have undertaken the same pilgrimage. The valuable (!) possession was brought to Ourscamp from Hungary by the Knight Matthieu du Plessie de Roye after the defeat of Nicopolis in Bulgaria on the Danube (1396). It was already promised to the Abbey of Ourscamp in 1440, but the official entry of the relic could only take place in 1490, after endless argument. (It is said that the relic is still to be seen today in the church of Chiry-Ourscamp, where it was taken in 1807.)

We argued a little about apartheid (fortunately the taxi-driver's limited English prevented him from saying too much), when the car stopped in front of the wrought-iron gate next to the moat surrounding the Abbey. The building complex of the Abbey stands isolated in the midst of beautiful green wheat-fields.

A bear helps to build a church

It is only from the legend of the afore-mentioned St. Eloi that we learn of the earliest origin of Ourscamp. He was first goldsmith, adviser and minister of king Dagobert. After the king's death he became bishop of Noyon, and withdrew himself from Noyon, together with a few pious friends, to a spot on the banks of the Oise. Apart from a small church he also built an abbey. While a servant was busy carting bricks to the site a bear appeared out of the forest and ate up all the oxen — so the legend goes. Eloi punished

the bear by making him pull the wagon in place of the oxen, and helping with the building of the Abbey until it was completed. (This is possibly where the name Ourscamp originated: *ours*=bear.)

This monastery of Eloï does not exist any longer. In 1128 it was replaced by a larger abbey. The well-known theologian-philosopher of the Middle Ages, Bernard of Clairvaux, together with twelve monks came to this Abbey, and within a short space of time, the total population of the Abbey rose to a 1 000 monks. Later the buildings were added to, but the bitter conflict with the Germans during the First World War destroyed most of it (Photo no. 8).

A quiet afternoon amongst silent ruins

From the ruins of the Abbey Chapel (photos no. 9, 10) of the thirteenth century one can vaguely picture the former glory of the place. Half hidden in the grass nearby there is a simple statue of a kneeling monk. One wondered whether the place was completely deserted (except for a farmer cutting grass in the distance) or whether you were having hallucinations when a monk in his black habit came walking down the path. But he was real, and on his way to the little church on the other side still in use. For more than thirteen centuries (641-1977) monks like this one have spent their lives here in isolation.

If these ruins could only tell their own story!

The fascination of the quiet afternoon among the grey silent ruins — there was only one other visitor beside myself — is still with me. Did the same gay little spring flowers growing in the grass, grow there way back in Calvin's youth?

With a shock I realized that the train to Paris stops at Noyon for only two minutes. It was time to go.

By evening I was back in the city to which Calvin also went in 1523 to continue his studies, wondering what reminders of the intelligent young Picardian this city still held.

4 STUDENT IN THE CAPITAL

Paris today is a cosmopolitan metropolis where a stranger has to keep his wits about him, finding his way in the labyrinth above and below the ground. Fortunately a helpful fellow-traveller from Amsterdam took pity on me and helped me find my way on the métro.

Student in the Collège de la Marche

How would Calvin have fared when he came to Paris for the first time as a fourteen-year-old boy? Possibly somewhat better — he at least knew French!

In this large city the memory of Calvin is preserved in an unsightly little street which bears his name. (One also finds a Rue Calvin in Noyon, Strasbourg and Geneva.)

There are still a few landmarks from his student days. Near the well-known Pantheon (photo no. 11) in the Rue Valette 4, one now finds the Collège Sainte Barbe (photo no. 12) which, it is said, was the original Collège de la Marche, where Calvin was a student when he first went to Paris.

(In a large room, among the portraits of other famous men who had studied there, is also a portrait of Calvin.) It was here that Calvin acquired his good Latin under the capable Mathurin Cordier.

A difficult time

Unfortunately Calvin's stay here was brief. He was transferred to another College of the Paris University (presumably at the request of the authorities in Noyon who had to pay his fees). Here, in the Collège Montaigu (photo no. 13) Calvin had a hard time. Not only was it very dirty (in the bedrooms they were plagued by all kinds of "insects"), the food was very poor, and the lecturers still used the cane without restraint. The morals of the students also left much to be desired of.

Spiritually the position was no better. The Collège Montaigu was a stronghold of the most conservative scholasticism. Here young Calvin got to know something of the heresy-hunting and endless quibbling of the Roman Catholic Church of the time. It was to his advantage, however, that apart from mediaeval thinking it was here he also learnt to know the Church-Fathers. In his later life he could quote the writings of the Church-Fathers freely from memory! It is not improbable that Calvin might have heard of

reformers like John Huss, John Wycliffe and Martin Luther, from the fierce opponents of the Reformation even at that time.

Absorbed in student life

After hunting for some time in the Rue Valette due to new street numbers, I entered a small gateway which at last brought me to the right place. A small room on supporting beams high up in the air (photo no. 14) is said to have been Calvin's abode during student days.

Calvin is often described as a sombre person with an uncommunicative nature — even during his student years. It is true that he was a hard-working student, but judging by the number of friends he made here (some of them life-long friends, even following him to Geneva) this stricture seems misleading. He lived the normal life of a student of his time.

Departure from Paris

Modern Paris does not offer much more than that as far as the life and times of Calvin are concerned. In 1528 Calvin had to leave Paris on instructions from his father. Gérard Cauvin had quite a lot of trouble with the Church authorities and decided that his gifted son was no longer to become a priest. A legal profession would offer him a better future. For legal studies he had to go to Orléans.

Quite conceivably the change was no great disappointment to Calvin. Apart from the desperate circumstances at the Collège Montaigu, he was also not happy about the spiritual side of his education. He and others were very critical of the Roman Catholic teaching and way of life. Calvin had already heard of the new movement for reform in Germany under the leadership of Luther. Also in his own country there was a great interest in the humanistic studies (among others the brilliant scholar Guillaume Budé) and renewed interest in the study of the Bible. He also made the acquaintance of his cousin Pierre Robert d'Olivet (or Olivetanus) who a few years later translated the Bible into French.

The hard preparatory years were, however, not in the least fruitless, and his departure from Paris was not final either... there were at least five more occasions when the Picardian found himself in Paris.

5 HUGUENOT LANDMARKS IN PARIS

Once in Paris one naturally follows other avenues apart from those leading to Calvin. In the next three chapters I would like to mention something of the Huguenot's history in France.

Monument to a Huguenot admiral

Close to the famous Louvre (Palais du Louvre) between the Rue de Rivoli and the Rue Saint-Honoré, there is the Oratoire du Louvre. The church itself (Protestant since 1844) is not as important as the splendid monument of Admiral Caspard de Coligny (photo no. 15), on the facade facing the Rue de Rivoli. (A small town in Western Transvaal, viz. Coligny is named after this famous Huguenot.)

The impressive Admiral De Coligny, leader of the Huguenots, stands between two sitting female figures. The left-hand figure symbolizes the nation: she wears a crown with the inscription Saint-Quenton 1557 — the place where De Coligny defended the city when it was seized by the Spaniards. The righthand figure symbolizes the (Protestant) religion: she holds a palm in her hand dated August 24th 1572 — the date of one of the most dreadful nights in the history of Protestantism. During this night (known as St. Bartholomew's Eve) scores of Protestants were surprised and murdered. Among them was De Coligny who was stabbed to death a short distance from here at the Rue de Rivoli 144. The signal for the start of this blood-bath was the ringing of the bells at St. Germain l'Auxerrois along the Seine not far from the Oratoire.

One does not easily forget this impressive monument and the history it recalls. (Its unveiling took place on July 24th 1889). What a pity the fence round it prevents one from taking a proper photograph!

Notre Dame

One cannot but stop to look at this magnificent building (photo no. 16) when one is in Paris. It is not without meaning in our pilgrimage in search of Calvin. On the plain in front of this imposing structure not only the works of Luther were burnt by the Roman Catholic Church in 1523, but also an edition of Calvin's *Institutes* in 1543.

On the same island in the river Seine there is the Palais de Justice (Palace of Justice). In the clock-tower of this building many Huguenots were kept captive.

A further walk through Paris revealed more of the troubled Huguenot history.

Close to no. 67 Rue de la Grange aux Belles stood the scaffold of Mont-faucon where the body of De Coligny was dragged.

The Place de l'Hotel de Ville marks the place where the death penalty was executed — also for many Huguenots.

Many Huguenots were also executed at the Place Maubert.

In the St. Germain des Près there is an abbey which could be called the birthplace of the French Reformation. It was there, as early as 1512 that Le Fèvre d'Étaples drew up his Commentary on the epistles of St. Paul in which justification by faith alone was attested — one of the central ideas of the reformation. In the garden of the church (adjoining the broad Boulevard St. Germain) there is the statue of the Huguenot Bernard Palissy who spent many years in prison for his faith, and who also died in the Bastille.

The Library of French Protestantism (Bibliothèque de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français), Rue de Saint-Pères 54, contains a fine selection of writings (± 120,000) some of which are very old. (Open from Tuesday to Saturday from 14h00 to 17h00). Here one also finds one of the very small Bibles which the Huguenot women used to hide in their hair-do.

The gathering place of the Protestants was in the Rue Visconti (formerly Rue des Marais) and here their first minister was ordained — the official inauguration of the Reformed Church in Paris. Here also the first general synod met in 1559 when the new confession of faith (Confession de la foi et la discipline) was accepted.

Between the Rue de l'Université and the Quai Voltaire there lies an area called Grand Pré aux Cleres, the terrain where the students of those days liked to gather. It was here they sang in 1558 the Psalms according to the French translation of Clément Marot (photo no. 17) to the music of Claude Goudine.

Then dating back to the time of Calvin there is the small Eglise (church) of St. Julien le Pauvre and the St. Séverin Church.

One grows silent when one becomes aware of the extent to which our forebears endured suffering for the sake of their faith. (Most of us probably have some link with the Huguenots.) Here too the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church, as many Huguenots fled to England, the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries, Germany, Switzerland, North America and South Africa.

In Paris the places of Huguenot interest are easily accessible. For those who may find an opportunity to visit other parts of France, I would like to tell more. (Unfortunately I have not visited these places myself. It still remains an ambition. I therefore hope the facts which I have gathered are correct.)

Journey through the West of France

We start at Orléans south-west of Paris — the place where we left Calvin in Chapter 4 — and journey down southwards skirting the old castles along the Loire River. In this area some stirring events took place during the sixteenth century. Between 1562 and 1598 France saw no fewer than eight religious wars!

In Talcy, on the right bank of the Loire, Catherina de Medici called together the chief Protestant leaders in 1562 to grant them a measure of religious freedom by edict.

Untold cruelty

In Amboise one can see the castle with the balcony from which the corpses of Protestants were exhibited as a deterrent in 1560. Only three years later Catherina de Medici with the Prince of Condé signed the treaty of Amboise in the same castle, by which Protestants were granted religious liberty in specified cities. This treaty, however, was not worth the paper on which it was written.

Origin of the name Huguenot

Not far from here we find a small place called Tours. Here the French Protestants came together round about 1550 at the tower of Hugon. This — according to some historians — has given rise to the name "Huguenot".

Moving further south-west from here to Chinon one sees old castles from the thirteenth and fifteenth century everywhere — in Langeais fifteenth century castles and in Villandry fourteenth and sixteenth century castles. From Chinon one can go to Saumur, which was a Reformation stronghold in the sixteenth century. Here also is the impressive castle where Duplessis-Mornay lived. This is where he started a Protestant theological

school in 1599.

Edict of Nantes

Nantes not far from here is also worth a visit. On April 13th 1598 the famous Edict of Nantes was signed in the Castle. After indescribable suffering this treaty ultimately gave religious freedom to Protestants. They enjoyed it for approximately a hundred years — it was recalled again in 1685. Accompanied by his friend Louis du Tillet, Calvin addressed kindred spirits at secret meetings in the vicinity of Poitiers. Among other places the cave at Saint Benoît is said to have been a place where the gospel was preached by him in secret.

A Synod and ... a beleaguered city

Proceeding westwards from Poitiers through beautiful scenery one reaches the coast and the coastal city of La Rochelle. In 1571 the General Synod met here under the chairmanship of Calvin's successor, Theodore de Bèze, hoping to give definite character to the Reformed confession of faith. This city had to pay a heavy penalty for its faith. In 1573, just after St. Bartholomew's Eve, it was besieged. Only half a century later a more terrible siege followed. Cardinal de Richelieu, who wanted to render the Huguenots a deathblow surrounded the city, and cut it off from the harbour with a dyke. After the besieged city had lost 12000 lives and had only seventy-four able-bodied men left they had to surrender. The Protestant museum in La Rochelle is rich in reminiscences of this time.

The open sea as a place of prayer

Further south along the coast past Rochefort the traveller reaches the islands of Arvert. Here the open sea offered the only safety as a place of worship. They gathered in small boats to hold divine services!

To travel through this country-side is like paging through the books of Reformation history. There are very many reminders of the annals of those times to see for oneself.

7 HUGUENOT FOOTPRINTS IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

We were last in the neighbourhood of Rochefort on the West Coast. Our search now takes us through Bordeaux — also not an unimportant place in the history of the Reformation — then eastwards and inland. Here in the beautiful south of France those of Protestant persuasion enjoyed more freedom — at least for a time. There was a period when the majority of the princes were tolerant towards the new faith. During the period of Louis XIII and Louis XIV however, they also had to pay the supreme price for their faith. In places like Sainte Foy la Grande, Bergerac and La Force there are still large Protestant communities.

Under the protection of a queen

Journeying on past Cahors one comes to Montauban which stood at the centre of the religious conflict. In this vicinity near the river Tarn the Institut Jean Calvin came into being. Not far from here in Nérac (westwards) we find further footprints of Calvin. It was here during his wanderings after he had fled from Paris, that he — like many of his fellow believers — enjoyed the protection of Margaretha of Angoulême, queen of Navarre. The old castle where the king had his court can still be seen there. Here Calvin also met the old Le Fevre d'Étapes and his friend Roussel of Paris times. However, he did not stay here long. (April/May 1534). Also his successor Theodore de Bèze found refuge here in the house which today is known as "The chair of Calvin".

In Lescar, in the south-western corner of France, there is the twelfth-century cathedral where the afore-mentioned Margaretha of Navarre (or Angoulême) is buried. Pau, a little distance away, was the capital of the kings of Navarre. The castle of Henry IV can also be seen there.

Cave becomes home for Huguenots

Our journey takes us further east now through Tarbas and Saint Gaudens past the famous cave of Mas d'Avril where the Huguenots were besieged in 1625.

The tragedy of Toulouse

North from the historical caves lies the city of Toulouse. In 1562 (St.

Bartholomew's Eve of Toulouse) 5000 Protestants were murdered here. Two hundred years later in 1761 another tragedy was enacted here which is described in a moving historical novel by Jan Overduin: *Tragedie van Toulouse*. (It was translated into Afrikaans from the Dutch under the title: *Hugenate op die pynbank*.) To those who can read French we recommend the historical novel *La Superbe* by André Chamson. This unique and stirring book enables one to understand the way of life and the way of thinking of Roman Catholic France two centuries ago.

From the cave Mas d'Avril we proceed westwards to Carcassonne with its mediaeval fort where many heroes and heroines of the Reformed faith were innocently made to languish.

Religious wars in the Cévennes

From here northwards ascending to the mountainous area of the Cévennes, one enters another terrain where bloody wars were fought between Christians.

From 1702 to 1710 the war of the Camisards took place here between the Protestants and the troops of Louis XIV. The Huguenots retreated into this mountainous area and often lived in caves. Grotte des Demoiselles at Ganges is only one of these caves. North of Anduz one finds the Protestant Museum (Musée du Désert).

Southwards to Nimes with more reminders of Huguenot times, and then, Montpellier, nearby which was occupied by the Protestants in 1567.

Prisons filled to capacity... with believers

In Aigues-Mortes there stands the Tour de Constance (Tower of Steadfastness). There is the story of Marie du Rand who, during the persecutions lost her father and mother and brother (a Protestant minister). On July 14th 1730 she herself was taken to the stone fortress of Aigues-Mortes by the dragoons, and in this dark tower at the sea-side she remained captive for 38 years.

In 1768 — old and sick — she was released by a governor who discovered the shocking state of affairs in the prison. In all these years she was the spiritual councillor of all the other women prisoners. In reply to all the attempts of the Roman Catholic priests to persuade her to renounce her faith, she carved out the word "Résister" (to Resist) on the stone floor of the tower. (Those who know French can find further details in *La Tour de Con-*

stance by André Chamson.)

Many Huguenots languished and died in prison. There was also a Huguenot prison on the Mediterranean Island, Saint Honoret. There were six Protestant ministers among the prisoners. In 1950 a monument to their memory was unveiled — a statue in the form of a kneeling minister.

A moving procession of images from a troubled period of history passing by in one's mind...

Northwards

When one takes a course northwards, through eastern France towards Paris, there are more reminders of the Huguenots. In the vicinity of Paris there is much to be seen. At Vincennes there is still a prison with inscriptions by Huguenots. At Fontainebleau, in the salon of Madame de Maintenon, the repeal of the Edict of Nantes was signed in 1685. North-west of Paris lies Poissy with the abbey where in 1561 the fruitless talks between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestants took place.

Persecution, suffering, murder...

In Rouen (Normandy) the Reformation gained ground very early. For this reason the city was attacked and the minister hanged in front of the cathedral.

In search of a new homeland

Other places worth seeing are: Alençon, Saint Lo sur la Vire, Caën and Dieppe. In the castle at Dieppe, on the north-west coast of France, many Huguenots were kept imprisoned. Near this castle one sees the statue of a Protestant mariner, Jean Rigault, who was sent to America by Admiral Caspar de Coligny to establish a colony for persecuted. Near the Belgian Coast at Avesnes another monument reminds one of Jessé de Forest. He laid the foundations of New York which was formerly known as New Avesnes.

At the beginning of the religious wars

At Vassy one can see the La Grange du Massacre where, in 1562, three hundred Huguenots were surprised of whom sixty were killed and two hundred wounded — the first of the eight religious wars.

The suffering of our Protestant ancestors for their faith was great indeed!
We enjoy a rich heritage to-day which in those days was procured with
blood and tears.

Would that we prize it highly!

8 CALVIN IN STRASBOURG

It would be impossible to follow Calvin on foot after he left Paris as a student in 1528.

We only mention the main dates, places and events in order to spend more time on his stay in Strasbourg.

After studying in Orléans from 1528 to 1531, he gained a licentiate in law. On May 26th 1532 his father died and Calvin went back to Noyon. After that he returned to his studies both in Paris and Orléans with some interruptions until 1533, and also wrote his "thesis" (on Seneca's *De Clementia*) in 1532.

Unrest in Paris

And so ended his peaceful student days (photo no. 18). From November 1st 1533 Calvin became a fugitive. It was an oration by Nicolas Cop, at that time a professor at Paris University, which sparked off the trouble. Cop was chosen as rector in 1533, and in the customary rectorial address expressed himself in favour of the reformation. That put the cat among the pigeons! Cop had a narrow escape.

Calvin was his friend. (It is also surmised that Calvin might have helped him in the preparation of his avenged address.) Therefore he had to flee. It is said that when his Roman Catholic pursuers knocked at the front door of the Collège Fortet, he was let down through a window at the back on sheets knotted together. He had to leave all his books and belongings...

Refugee

He fled to the South of France. Calvin was a "converted" Protestant by now. In May 1534 he renounced his ecclesiastical privileges as he did not feel free to accept any further money from the Church of Rome of which he was no longer a member. In 1534 he roamed in Angoulême, Orléans, Poitiers and Strasbourg. In 1535 he wrote the first edition of his famous *Institutes* which appeared in print in Basle during the following year.

In the same year (1536 under the pseudonym Charles d'Espeville) he stayed for a while in the north-east corner of Italy in Ferrara not far from the large Garda Lake. Here he enjoyed the protection of the sympathetic Duchess Renée de France. Among others Clément Marot, the well-known French poet (who later translated the psalms into French) also stayed here.

However, things soon became too hot for Calvin in the land of the Pope, and he had to flee, through Aosta (in the far north-west corner of Italy), back to the north. He is believed to have preached to the evangelically minded people in that area. It is told that he narrowly escaped from the inquisition. His flight through Aosta is commemorated by a monument dated May 14th 1951, which is erroneous, as he was in Strasbourg at that time. The correct date for his stay in the north of Italy would be May (April) 1536.

Calvin went from here to Basle and Paris, and then he wanted to go back to Strasbourg where there were many Protestant fugitives by this time. However, he had to go a round-about way via Geneva. This round-about way proved to be the providence of God and of great importance in his later life...

Early stay in Geneva

The inhabitants of Geneva had just recently (May 21st 1536) accepted the Reformation and there was a great need for leadership. Guillaume Farel heard of Calvin's presence in the city and prevailed on him to remain in Geneva (July 1536). Calvin's connection with Geneva was to last practically for the rest of his life.

At first it was not so easy. The opposition succeeded in ousting both Farel and Calvin, so that in April 1538 they had to leave the city. (The course of history, however, is often strange: in 1541 Calvin would be called back to Geneva!)

When Calvin had to leave Geneva (after brief visits to Bern, Zurich and Basle), he went to the place en route to which he was interrupted by Farel in Geneva: Strasbourg.

A minister in Strasbourg

In the beautiful city of Strasbourg, Calvin was called as minister to the French refugees. He also became a lecturer at the Academy. Here he had more rest so that a second enlarged edition of his *Institutes* could be issued (1539). He also wrote his first commentary on the Bible, that on Romans. Further he took part in religious discussions with the Roman Catholics.

In 1540 Calvin married Idelette de Bure (photo no. 19) in Strasbourg. Only nine years later in 1549 she died. They had only one child, a son born on July 28th 1542, but he died soon after. Thus Calvin also knew the sor-

row of losing those who are close to one through death.

Strasbourg to-day

You must be eager to know whether Strasbourg to-day still holds reminders of the times of Calvin. Yes, it does. Visible, (e.g. a street named Rue Calvin – photo no. 20), and also spiritual matters to keep alive his memory.

Strasbourg is an interesting city. The entire old part of the city is surrounded by a canal. The waters of the river Ill (the old city is situated on its banks) are canalised and divided, so that the river flows around the city in two half circles. The streets alongside the canal are called quai.

Churches where Calvin preached

Alongside the Quai St. Nicolas (on the outside of the canal) the Eglise St. Nicolas (St. Nicolas Church) still stands to-day. It is said that Calvin preached here two or three times at the beginning of his stay in Strasbourg. I went there on the Sunday morning with great expectation – only to be disappointed. It is the same old building, but the message was no longer in the spirit of Calvin. It is now one of the many Pentecostal churches.

Hurrying up the same canal I came to the church where Calvin usually preached during his stay in Strasbourg – also on the outside of the canal – Eglise St. Madaleine (photo no. 21). This building is no longer the original, as it was almost entirely rebuilt during the previous century, to my mind, not with great success, as it makes a very sombre, morbid impression from the outside. At the entrance I decided to turn back: it is a Roman Catholic Church to-day.

Neither of these two churches had anything to remind a visitor that the voice of Calvin was heard there about 440 years ago.

9 MORE ABOUT STRASBOURG

Fortunately there are still some Reformed churches in Strasbourg. One of them is in the Rue du Bouclier. When I was spying out the city the previous Saturday-evening I came upon it, because at the entrance there was the following inscription "Eglise Réformée fondée par Jean Calvin en 1538" (The Reformed Church founded by John Calvin in 1538). If it had not been for this notice at the entrance I would not have recognised it as a church. From outside it looked just like any other public building (photo no. 22). The tower is not a proper church tower either. I discovered later that it was purposely built this way because it was built during the time of persecution and had to be camouflaged.

Reformed service far from home

I was in time for the German worship service at 09h30 (There are two services on a Sunday, the second at 10h30 in French). The friendly minister, Pfarrer Pfeiffer, was able to show me the vestry with a painting of Calvin (photo no. 23) and also a memorial tablet which was unveiled on October 9th 1938 (400 years after Calvin had come to Strasbourg). The bronze plate (photo no. 24) was inscribed in grateful memory of the first two ministers of the refugee community in Strasbourg: J. Calvin (1538-1541) and P. Brully (1541-1544).

Here I felt at home. Unfortunately I was unable to attend a church service inside the church itself, as they were busy redecorating it and the church was full of scaffolding. However, the service in the little hall next door did not detract from the good Reformed sermon on the Tower of Babel! Calvin himself never knew this church, neither did he preach there, but the spirit is truly Calvinistic.

After the inspiring service — what a pity there were so few young people — I had to hurry to get to the Eglise St. Paul (photo no. 25) — altogether on the other side of the town where the river Ill forks. What a fine piece of architecture! Unfortunately the service was just over. I was disappointed but two beggars on each side of the entrance, were glad — perhaps some of the church-goers had not put all their money into the collection plates, and they might get a bit! There was a friendly welcome to a stranger in an invitation to tea after the service: "Come and join us".

Hospitality in the Protestant Seminary

Can I ever forget the hospitality and helpfulness of Prof. Rudolphe Peter? Even before I reached Strasbourg he let me know that I was not to stay at a hotel. He had arranged for me to stay at the Thomas Stiftung (The Seminary of the Protestant Church). There I was able to share the student fare at minimal cost. What a cosmopolitan student community: they come from Hungary, U.S.A., all the West-European countries, the East... and also from Africa, to follow all kinds of courses.

The evening meal was frugal. A bowl of rice with tomato sauce, a few lettuce leaves and an apple — that is, if your neighbour had not been there before you! Pure water to still the unsatisfied hunger. (Or perhaps that was the dessert?)

Through Europe on five rand a day

By this time one had already learnt to eat frugally. A meal in a restaurant is a luxury which is out of the question. One resorts, instead, to buying a litre of milk, a few bread rolls, some butter or cheese and fruit. With a plunger (which fits any plug) one can boil water for a refreshing cup of coffee or soup — much cheaper than paying up to 75 cents for a cup of coffee.

Prof. Peter's hospitality is responsible for one unforgettable meal in Strasbourg. An invitation to the Restaurant République Saturday evening held a great surprise for me. The whole meal consisted of a hard "pancake". (I have unfortunately forgotten the name of the dish) served on a wooden platter. The host cuts it into four portions, and when you have finished your portion together with delicious French wine, you are served with more identical servings of the same until you have had enough. (Photo no. 26).

Calvin's spiritual heritage

Scholars like Peter, Rott and Roussel impressed one with their knowledge of Calvin and the Reformation. It was much more enriching talking to them (even in German!) than seeing all the old churches and cathedrals.

A less well-known Reformer

Most of us know only the names of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and perhaps

Knox*. There are however many more reformers of importance. In Strasbourg there was Martin Bucer (photo no. 27). Calvin learnt much from him. Scholars note the difference in magnitude between the first edition of his *Institutes* (1536) and the second which appeared in 1539 (during Calvin's stay in Strasbourg). The addition to the second edition, can to a great extent be attributed to the influence of Bucer on Calvin's thinking.

Martin Bucer's official residence (photo no. 28) can still be found at the Place St. Thomas — opposite the Eglise St. Thomas. (photo no. 29). Bucer served in this church. The church was closed to visitors owing to restoration to the building, but Prof. Peter (who is an elder) had access to a key. What an impressive interior! In the entrance there is a fine marble relief in memory of Bucer's ministry. Also a fine antique piece of relief work depicting the "unbelieving" apostle Thomas, after whom the church is named. Many other old and beautiful articles — there are too many to mention them all.

After quite a search that Sunday afternoon I found the other church where Bucer preached the Gospel. It is the Eglise Sainte Aurélie more or less on the corner of Rue de la Pte Course and Faubourg National. Only the tower of the building still dates from the time of Bucer. The visit was somewhat fruitless as the building is surrounded by iron railings and high trees, so that I could not take a photograph, neither was I able to see the interior.

A little Afrikaans far from home

A sense of disappointment soon made way for surprise as I passed a couple on my way back, and overheard the wife say to her husband in Afrikaans: "That's a South African!" My immediate response was a spontaneous "Yes, I am!" During the pleasant chat that followed — the first in Afrikaans on my tour — I completely forgot to ask how on earth she had recognised me as a South African. Probably intuition — that wonder peculiar to women!

Too much to take in

Strasbourg is a beautiful old city. To the photographer and the artist it could be a paradise (photo no. 30). For a little less than a rand — provided

*. See photo-album for some other important reformers of the sixteenth century.

you are fit enough — you can accept the challenge of the Cathedral's 142 metre high tower (photo no. 31) with its 370 steps, and enjoy the breathtaking view of the whole city (photo no. 32). Even then you are not at the highest point in the building as you are only standing in the place where a second tower was to have been built but it never materialised. It is not surprising that it took from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries to build this cathedral.

In Strasbourg there are also the oldest pharmacy (1268) in France, interesting museums and very much more. But we have to leave Strasbourg. Calvin was called back to Geneva in 1541, and in this city there is still much to see.

Calvin was called back to Geneva on September 13th 1541, from where he had been expelled in 1538. The twenty-seven year old Frenchman was already famous for his *Institutes* and other writings. Here he found a church which had recently embraced the Reformed faith but had great need of a minister who could instruct them further and who could undertake the church administration. The Reformation in Geneva was sudden and revolutionary and it needed to be brought to order.

Including his first stay here, Calvin was to give almost thirty years of his life to this city.

A city rich in landmarks of the Reformation

There is however so much to be seen in Geneva that, departing from our method in previous chapters, we are going to leave the history of Calvin (from 1541 to his death in 1564) in the background to concentrate on visible landmarks of his times. The reader who would like to know more of Calvin's experiences here can easily refer to one of the many biographies of Calvin*.

Calvin's spiritual heritage

Naturally we are not forgetting that this part of his life was the most fruitful as far as his literary output is concerned. Much more important than any buildings of brick and clay are the writings he left us (photo no. 33). Apart from smaller tracts, essays, a creed and a catechism, he also wrote about seventeen commentaries at this time, covering the majority of the books of the Bible. Further he wrote hundreds of letters to fellow believers across the whole of Europe. He also took part in many religious discussions and disputes. Added to this there were his regular sermons, not only on Sundays but also on week-days.

In the life of this man who literally burnt himself out in the service of his King, there was not much time for rest or sleep. He was true to his life-motto: that he dedicated his heart as an offering to the Lord. His emblem was a hand holding a heart with the motto: *cor meum tibi offero domine — prompte et sincere* — my heart I offer to you, Lord, promptly and sincerely. (Elsewhere he used the expression *Terar dum prosim*, I may be consumed (used up) as long as I can be useful.)

* For instance: T.H.L. Parker: *John Calvin. A biography*. London, J.M. Dent & Sons, 1975.

House in the Rue de Calvin

Most places worth seeing are close to each other in the oldest part of the city, situated comparatively high up on the hill-side. I started off in a little street which to-day is known as Rue de Calvin. Unfortunately the original home of Calvin does not exist any more. A fine marble stone with a relief of Calvin, however, marks the place where he originally lived (photo no. 34). The present building, according to the inscription, was erected in 1706. At the end of the street (towards St. Pierre) there is a fountain with delicious cool water (photo no. 35) spouting out for the thirsty tourist who cannot afford the expensive Coca Cola. From here one also has a view of the picturesque little streets which wind their way down the hill to the bottom.

The Church of St. Pierre

From the Rue de Calvin, St. Pierre (photo no. 36) is just a little distance away. Initially one is slightly confused, as there does not seem to be any correspondence between what one sees and pictures of the church which one remembers. The facade is in the Greek-Roman style. If one walks through it, however, one enters a mediaeval cathedral in Gothic style. I was to learn later that the facade of the eighteenth century was designed by architects who no longer had any respect for the Gothic style!

Imposing

Although I have no great knowledge of architecture, I was nevertheless struck by the impression of strength (the towers gave the impression of fortresses) and yet elegance and spaciousness (achieved by carefully considered proportions). A mighty edifice towering heavenwards, a parable of prayer.

This magnificent building was erected between 1160 and 1220 — a successor to the Christian basilicas of the fourth and sixth centuries — which in their turn arose where formerly heathen temples had stood.

The life of the whole city formerly centred in this cathedral. In times of war it was a fortress for civilians. So it happened that during the course of history it was burnt down more than once and rebuilt. Much later, after the repeal of the Edict of Nantes (1685), private accommodation could no longer be found for all the Huguenot fugitives, and galleries were built in St. Pierre's Cathedral to accommodate them.

The same building was also an educational centre. On June 5th 1559 the statute was read here at the official inauguration of the Academy of Geneva. Some of the lectures were also held here.

Victory for the Reformation

How did this Roman Catholic cathedral become a Protestant church? It happened on August 8th 1535, when the reformists, after a service nearby, stormed St. Pierre and drove out the priests, after which Guillaume Farel ascended the pulpit and preached the first Reformed sermon. About nine months later (on May 21st 1536) during a public meeting the majority of residents of Geneva accepted the Reformation. From then on the worship services in the Cathedral were conducted according to Protestant practice.

Things worth seeing

There is too much to be seen and admired in this building: the magnificent stained-glass windows; frescoes; the chapel of the Macabees which perpetuates the memory of the Czech Reformer John Huss (condemned to be burnt at the stake by the Council of Constance); the incomparable view from the tower of the city all round, the lake far below; the two old bells in the tower and the magnificent organ.

I almost forgot the simple, by no means comfortable, chair in the pulpit of St. Pierre on which Calvin always sat – the only “personal” belonging of Calvin which the church still possesses.

As we shall see, one searches in vain among the gravestones of famous people, buried in St. Pierre’s for that of Calvin.

A spiritual uplift

Having seen it all, the crowning experience of an unforgettable Sunday in Geneva was to be able to attend divine service under this lofty dome. If it had been in one’s mother-tongue the service (a Pentecostal sermon on the Holy Spirit) and the baptismal rite would probably have had even deeper meaning. However, the very fact of being able to stand there, close to one of those gigantic pillars (photo no. 37) in quiet worship – as countless believers have done for seven hundred years – was indeed something sublime. It was as if the very stones, after so many centuries were whispering, the whole building becoming a living sermon...

Unexpected hospitality

After this service I had time to meet the minister, who was busy completing a baptismal certificate. Dr. Henry Babel received me kindly: he presented me with a book he had recently written about Calvin, and invited me to have tea with members of the congregation in an adjoining building. The South-African was introduced to those present and friendly members offered to show the stranger the Servet Monument and Calvin’s burial place. More about that later.

Everything is within easy reach over here. When one steps outside the main entrance of St. Pierre the Auditoire de Calvin (photo no. 38) is just round the corner. The principles of the Calvinistic philosophy emanating from Geneva which made such an impact on the rest of Europe, seem to have taken on visible form within the walls of this auditorium.

Auditoire de Calvin

Let us start from the beginning. Underneath the present building one still finds massive foundation stones from Roman times. The Geneva of B.C. was an important fortress which protected the trade route to France. (Julius Caesar also knew the place where Geneva now stands!) In the third century a Christian church appeared and in the fifth century another above that. During the eleventh century the building was destroyed by fire and another larger building put up to replace it. In the thirteenth century it was called Notre Dame le Neuve. In the fifteenth century it was again destroyed by fire but rebuilt once more. When the Reformation became established in Geneva in 1536, the mediaeval chapel fell into disuse.

A place of worship

The location of Geneva as the southern stronghold of the Reformation and the name of Calvin himself soon drew about 6000 refugees to the city – the indigenous population only numbered 12000! As many of the refugees could not speak French, provision had to be made for them to hear the gospel in their own language. Since 1556 therefore the former Roman chapel was used as a place of worship for the English- and Italian-speaking Protestants. Also those who spoke other languages (Dutch, Spanish and German) used this building, as a place of worship. The Scottish reformer, John Knox (photo no. 39), served the English community there for three years (1556-1559).

No wonder Geneva became known later as the “Protestant Rome”!

Visitors to Calvin’s auditorium to-day will learn from a note at the door (photo no. 40) that services are still being held there in among other languages, English and Dutch. It is also the gathering place for the Italian Waldensian and Spanish Evangelical churches – thus it is still an international, ecumenical church – as it was in Calvin’s time 400 years ago.

Divine services on week-days

Calvin realised that the instruction of the people in the Scriptures should not be neglected. Therefore he held regular gatherings in the auditorium on week-days for the study of the Scriptures (photo no. 41). It started at 7 a.m. so that the citizens of Geneva and the countless refugees would be able to attend before starting their regular work. The gatherings were apparently informal and any one in the audience was entitled to ask questions or take part in the discussion. In this manner the Reformed faith was able to work through at all levels of society.

The first Reformed university in the world

The auditorium also has a close connection with the history of academic education. In 1559, after more than sixteen years of preparation, Calvin was able to open the Academy of Geneva officially. As the very first Reformed College in the world, it served as an example to many such schools for higher education throughout the world. In this academy people were trained to serve church, state and society. It was also the start of the modern university of Geneva. Calvin and his successor, Theodore Beza (photo no. 42), started theological classes in the auditorium in 1562. So the building became the centre of reformed theology: for more than two hundred years the theological colleges of the University were still held in the same place!

Restoration

It was most fitting that this building, historically so important as the focal point of the development and extension of the Reformation, should have been restored in 1954. This commendable initiative (which was very costly) came from the World Alliance of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches. The “new” auditorium could be taken into use on June 18th 1959 – 400 years after the establishment of the academy in Geneva (photo no. 43). At the opening, one of the speakers put it tersely: “The auditorium is now ready. This is how it should be: loyal to the past, effective for the present and ready for tomorrow!”

One would like to say much more about all the objects of interest in this very special church, which is actually much more than just a church. The most important facts, however, told me by the friendly Pasteur Jornod in the short time available, I have already passed on to you. I should leave

some surprises for any who plan a visit themselves.

It was a surprise of a different nature which came to me as I stood talking to Rev. Jormod (in English) in the auditorium and I overheard a man a little distance away say to two ladies in Afrikaans: "I am sure he comes from the Western Transvaal". I never knew that my English was so perfect that it could betray so accurately where I came from!

The Town House

From the dim light of the auditoire I went round the corner of Rue Henri Fazy and the Rue de l'Hotel de Ville to the Town House (photo no. 44). This structure was actually being built (with interruptions) for more than three centuries (from the beginning of the fifteenth century). In 1966 it was restored completely into something of which Geneva can be proud.

Until 1829 it was still the custom to execute justice in public. One can still see the stone bench, used for this purpose at the entrance. The rooms are filled with objects of interest from the history of Geneva.

Calvin himself frequently attended meetings of the Council of Geneva in this building.

Opposite the Town House is the old armoury also beautifully restored. About three of the 200 cannons which used to stand watch on the bastions of the old fortifications, have been re-discovered and are seen there to-day — also a colossal old 22 pounder cast in Geneva in 1683.

12 UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

The Reformers were not perfect people who had faultless insight. They also were children of their time, and committed errors. On some points they did not have the correct understanding of Scripture. We should not hold this against them. Our own insights are also coloured by our milieu and are limited.

It is good however, for posterity to recognise the faults of their forebears and not to explain them away.

Witch-hunting

In the time of Calvin witch-hunting and heretic-hunting was an everyday occurrence. The part which Calvin and other ministers in Geneva played in the persecution of witches in the little town of Peney close by, is well-known. In 1545 the city was struck by a terrible plague. Superstition regarding magicians and witches was still rife, and so these people were immediately blamed. These poisoners were said to come in the dead of night to apply their magic potions to the doors of the residences and so to spread the plague. The Council of Geneva and the ministers rose in the style of a real inquisition and dealt with the people of Peney. Added to this many other suspected people, men and women were beaten, tortured and burnt, some of them maimed most gruesomely.

Calvin's rôle

Calvin not only approved of it, but could actually defend it scripturally (according to the Old Testament). We can never defend such actions, but can only say that in this aspect he was as much a product of his time and his insight was as limited as that of all his contemporaries (e.g. Luther).

In all countries at this time, many unfortunate people lived under the threat of the scaffold and the stake. As far as the women were concerned, the leaner figures were more readily suspected — with our modern craze for slimming, the opposite would probably apply — even to the extent of testing their weight on a witches' scale to determine their fate!

The persecution of the witches of Peney is however not the only blot on the history of Calvin and Geneva.

Michael Servet burnt

At this time magic and heresy were treated alike as evils of equal nature. We all know how the Church of Rome persecuted Protestants, imprisoned, tortured and burnt them.

It is however not so well-known that the Protestants (on a much smaller scale) treated their own heretics in the same cruel manner. The notorious example of this is the case of Servet. According to the Reformers he was guilty of heresy on many points, viz. the Trinity, original sin, infant baptism, redemption by faith, denial of the divinity of Christ and eternal life. The Roman Catholics were also looking for him.

After a long history (in which the Protestants worked together with the Roman Catholics) this Spanish lawyer, theologian, medic and astronomer (a very gifted man) was burnt alive on the hill of Champel, outside the city on October 27th 1553.

The burning at the stake of Servet was historically quite accountable, but morally completely indefensible. May it be a warning to us to-day, in our zeal for the truth not to allow faulty human insights to become God's truth to us!

Acknowledgement

The generations after Calvin had to face the facts of this incident. It came 350 years later, on October 27th 1903, when a small monument was erected on the place where Servet was burnt.

If it had not been for Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Odier who drove me to the place and Miss Gesèle Grosclaude (a nurse) who acted as guide, I might not have found this monument on the slope of the hill between two streets hidden by grass and trees near the hospital. The Hospital Cantonal is situated at the end of the Rue Micheli du Crest. Due east of this hospital is the Rue A. Lombard which runs into Rue Michael Servet. (Due to lack of time I omitted to make more accurate notes of the situation of the monument.)

A moving inscription

This historic reconciliatory monument consists of a large piece of stone, smoothed on the sides to provide for inscriptions on both sides. On the one side the inscription merely states that Servet was burnt at the stake on the hill of Champel on October 27th 1553 (photo no. 45). On the other side (pho-

to no. 46) the acknowledgement translated from French reads: "We, the respectful and grateful posterity of Calvin our great Reformer, condemn this error, which was the error of his time. Strongly devoted to the freedom of conscience as held by the true principles of the Reformation and the Gospel, we have erected this monument of reconciliation on October 27th 1903".

One reads this acknowledgement of posterity with trepidation and great emotion — especially when one realizes that no monument can repair or rectify the mistakes and shortcomings of the past. How careful one has to be in one's zeal for the Gospel. It is so easy to destroy human lives, while intending to save them.

Although Calvin started the Academy in 1559, it was his successor Theodore Beza (or Théodore de Bèze) who was responsible for its leadership after Calvin's death. I've already mentioned this, but have not yet written about my visit to this institution.

Collège de Calvin

It was June 4th 1977, and Saturday afternoon when the libraries are closed. With a vague notion where the place was, I set off. After losing my way several times, asking the way and losing it again — I'm not much good at reading maps — to my surprise I found a bronze plate inscribed "Collège de Calvin" (photo no. 47) in the Rue Théodore de Bèze (no. 2-4). As I walked through the gates, I recognised the buildings I had already seen in pictures (photos no. 48, 49, 50).

I had a stroke of luck as I approached a group of men in the grounds. They were students of twenty years before, who had come to have a look at their alma mater (photo no. 51). Their guide for the afternoon was the present head of the College, Gérald Haury. Mr. Haury is a pleasant man and promised to show me more as soon as he had finished conducting the student tour. As an ex-student of Calvin (I mean his writings) I joined the guided tour, and accompanied them in admiring the new computer centre, where modern students are trained in accounting — technically a step ahead of the time when Calvin was last on the scene, I would say!

Looking around

I secured a few fine photographs of the place from Mr. Haury and then chatted a little with a group of students who were erecting a stage and seats for the audience in preparation for a play. I call them "students", but actually the Collège de Calvin is neither a high school nor a university, but something in between.

On the Monday, just before leaving Geneva, I paid another quick visit there, and with the English teacher as my guide I crawled around in the old loft. The museum from the previous century is now dilapidated and covered in dust and spider webs. There are plans afoot for restoring it again. Then the fine bust of the spiritual father of this place, which I discovered under many years' dust in a corner, will most likely be restored to a place of honour.

Reformation Wall

Between the Rue de Condolle and the Rue de la Croix Rouge there are the library and other important buildings of the Université de Genève in a beautiful garden. In this garden there is the Promenade des Bastions (only for pedestrians). Next to this we find the well-known Reformation Wall (photo no. 52).

It is tremendously long. (I regret not pacing it off). The central figures (usually seen in photographs) are G. Farel, J. Calvin, T. Beza and J. Knox (photo no. 53). Next to these figures there are also statues of well-known reformers from various countries (photos no. 54, 55, 56). Besides these relief panels and inscriptions (one needs time to translate them all) decorate the wall.

On the extreme left of the wall there is a date: 1536. That was the year when the residents of Geneva officially accepted the Reformation — as I have already mentioned. On the extreme right of the wall there is the date December 11th 1602, the night when the troops of the Duke of Savoye made an attempt to overrun the city. (In history it is known as the "Escalade" — when the enemy tried to scale the city walls with the help of ladders.)

It is an impressive wall, depicting not only the history of the Reformation in this city, but also the world-wide influence of the Biblical ideas emanating from Geneva.

At the last resting-place of a great man

I have come to the end of my journey (photo no. 57) because I am standing at the side of the grave of the man whose foot-steps I have been following the last few weeks.

It is a clear quiet Sunday afternoon in Geneva. The grass is green and the large trees in the grave-yard still show something of the bright-green of spring. Little sparkling white flowers are bursting forth everywhere amongst the grass.

I am standing next to a very simple grave under a large old tree. A wrought-iron rail surrounds it, within which it is almost entirely overgrown with a low shrub. There is no impressive grave stone. Showing among the leaves of the shrub there is a small square stone (about 25 x 25 x 25 cm) without any inscription to identify the person whose last resting-place it is — only the letters "J.C." engraved on it...

To God all the glory

We know that it was Calvin's own wish to be buried as an ordinary citizen in the Plainpaleis burial ground (The Cimetière Plainpalais lies between Boulevard de Saint Georges and the Rue du Stand on the one side and the Rue des Rois and the Rue des Jardins on the other.) Neither did he want a grave-stone or any memorial which could later become an object of hero-worship. *Soli Deo Gloria* (to God alone be the glory), his motto during his life-time would also be valid in death.

Is this the place?

This is the reason why to-day one has no certainty whether the grave one is looking at is that of the Man of Geneva. The reason why it could possibly be his grave lies of course in the initials "J.C." on the stone. If grave no. 707 is really his, I find it a suitable resting-place for this man, who discovered the secret of true greatness: to be of no account, humble before God. His life carried the marks of simplicity and sobriety, therefore pomp and glory would not have suited him in death.

This was June 5th 1977. It must have been more or less the same time of year (May) that Calvin was laid to rest here. I have never seen a graveyard so green, nor heard so many birds as in these mightly old trees. Was the spring of 1564 just as beautiful? Then it must have been a suitable omen of the eternal spring which on May 27th 1564 started for this giant of the Christian faith.

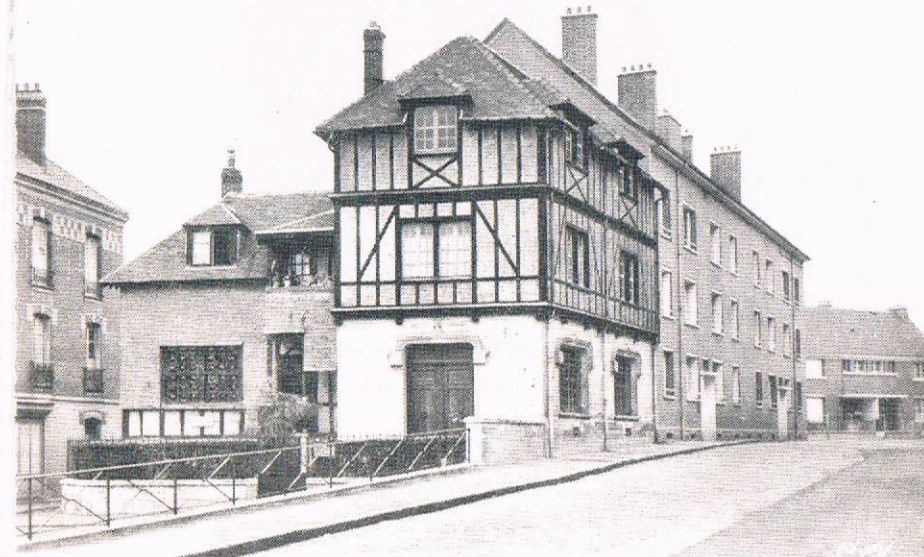
PHOTOGRAPH ALBUM

The numbers of the photographs refer to the same numbers in the text



1 The impressive old Cathedral in Noyon in which Calvin as a boy (still Roman Catholic) attended services.

2. Calvin's house of birth (10 July, 1509) in Noyon. The higher three storey section on the right houses the museum and the residence of the curatrix. The left (two storeys) wing of the building is, according to tradition, the real birthplace of Calvin — more or less totally rebuilt however.

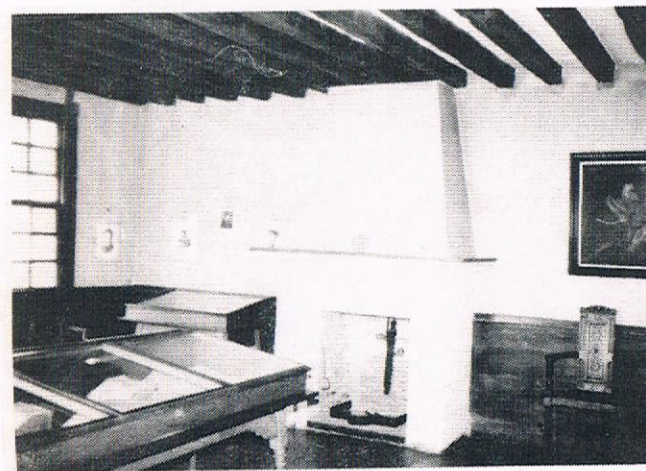




3 A caricature (in the Maison Calvin). The two figures in the middle (back) are M Luther and J Calvin. Portrayed directly in front of them are the four (Roman?) enemies of the Light: they are trying to blow out the flame of the candlestick standing on the Bible.



4 Another caricature in the Calvin House (Noyon) depicting the struggle between Protestants and Catholics: on the right hand side the people of the Reformation with the Bible on their scale. In spite of the fact that the Roman Catholic priest tries his best to add weight to the pope on the scale at the left - even with the devil assisting - it is clear that they will not win out against the Word of God.



5. Interior of the Calvin House (Noyon). At the right a beautiful painting of Calvin as well as a replica of his chair (see photo no. 6). At the far left a drawing of Idelette de Bure, his wife. This room also houses quite a number of old editions of Calvin's books.

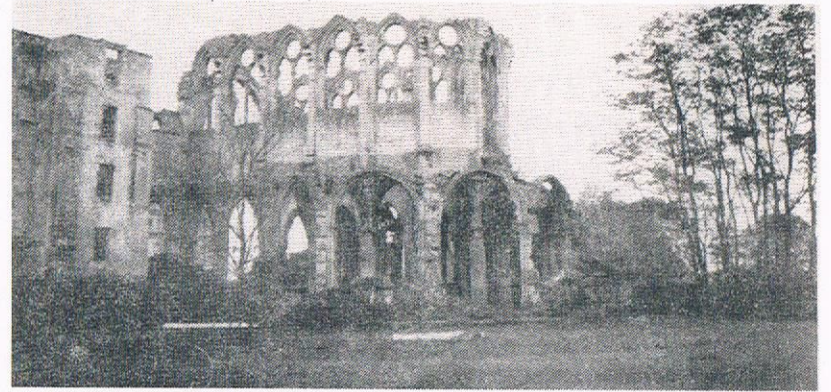
6. The very uncomfortable chair (or a replica?) used by Calvin on the pulpit of the St. Pierre Cathedral in Geneva.





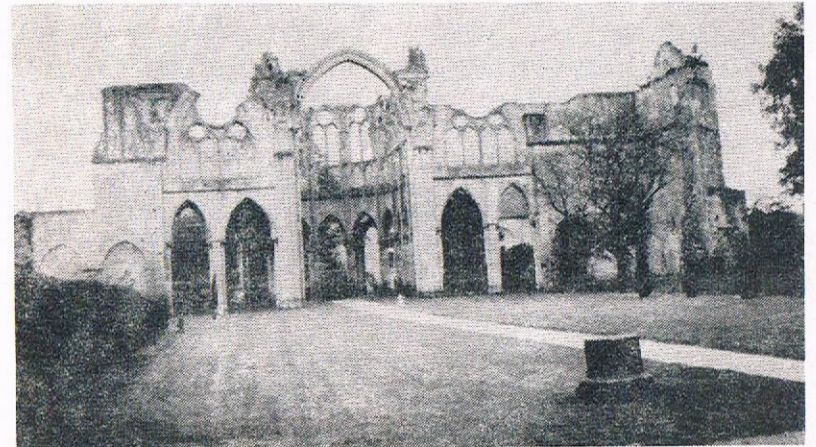
7. A chest with beautiful wood carving in the Calvin House (Noyon).

8. Part of the ruins of the Abbey of Ourscamp, about six kilometers from Noyon.



9. The ruins of the Chapel at Ourscamp viewed from the side.

10. The chapel at Ourscamp (from the front). Calvin often accompanied his mother to this church to kiss the bones of the holy Anna (mother of Mary).





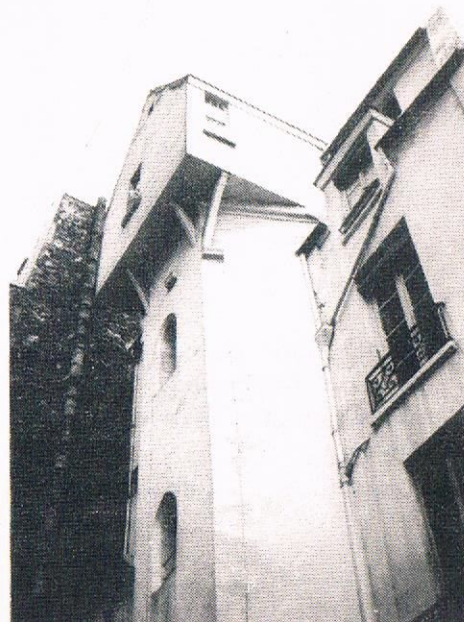
11. The Pantheon in Paris. In this area of the city Calvin studied as student.

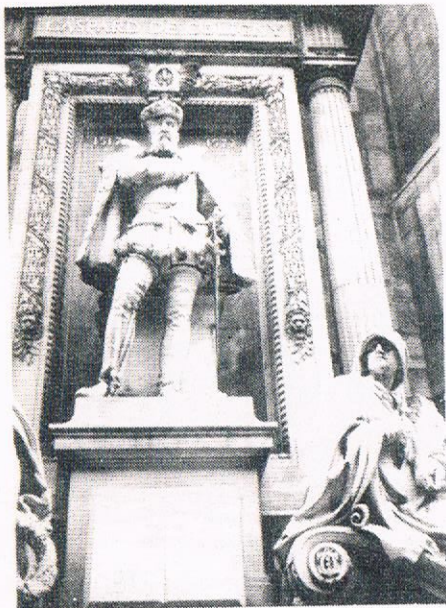
12. The Collège Sainte Barbe (in the Rue Valette) which, it is said, was the original Collège de la Marche, where Calvin was a student when he first went to Paris.



13. The Collège Montaigne (left) where Calvin studied in Paris. Beneath the windows on the wall the names of many famous people – also that of Calvin – are engraved.

14. This small room (on the supporting beams) is said to have been Calvin's abode during his student days.





15. Statue of Admiral Caspard de Coligny, leader of the Huguenots in France, who was murdered together with many other Protestants on St. Bartholomew's Eve in 1572.



16. The Notre Dame (Paris) where works of Luther and Calvin were burned by the Roman Catholic Church.

17. Clement Marot, the French poet, whose rhymed version of the Psalms was also sung by the Protestant students in Paris.

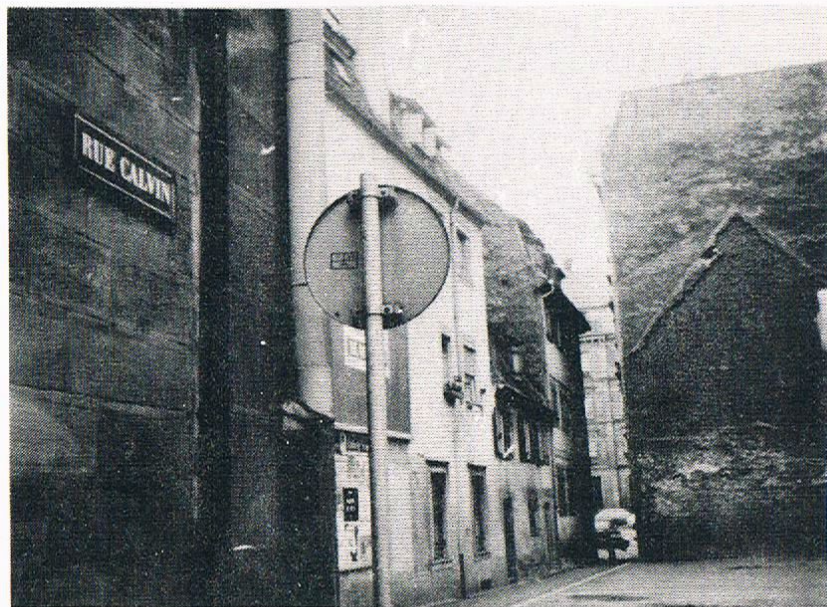


18. Painting of the young Calvin.



19. Idelette de Bure, Calvin's wife (married 1540).

20. Calvin Street in Strasbourg.



21. Eglise St. Madeleine, the church where Calvin preached most often during his stay in Strasbourg.

22. The Eglise Réformée Bouclier (Strasbourg) — where the author attended a service — with Prof. Rudolphe Peter in front.





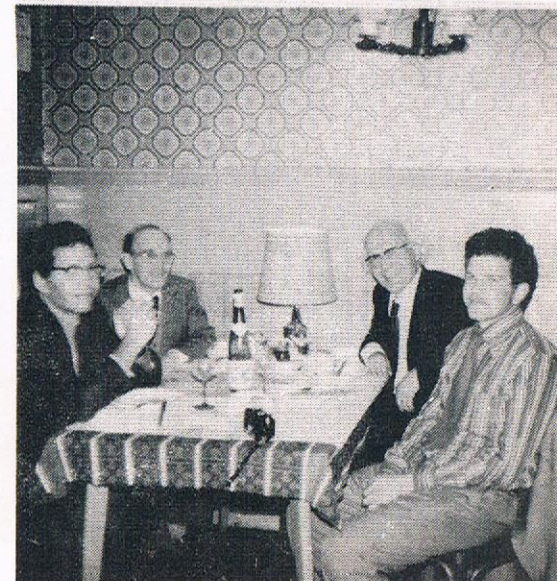
23. The Rev. Pfeiffer in the vestry of the Eglise Réformée. Painting of Calvin — the spiritual father of this church — on the wall.

24. Bronze plate at the entrance of the Eglise Réformée Bouclier in memory of the first two ministers of the Protestant refugee community in Strasbourg: Calvin and Brully.



25. The beautiful Eglise St. Paul in Strasbourg.

26. Dinner in the Restaurant République (Strasbourg) with (from left to right) Dr. B. Roussell, Dr. J. Rott and Prof. R. Peter.





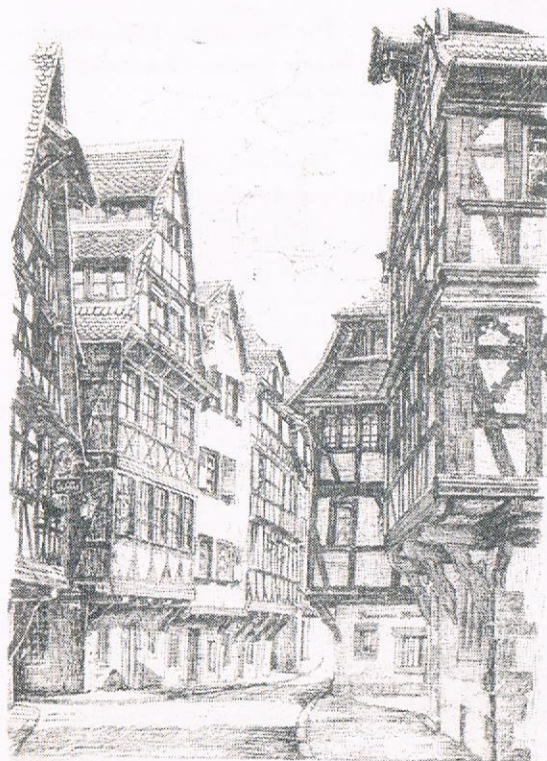
27. The reformer Martin Bucer (marble relief in the entrance to the Eglise St. Thomas, Strasbourg).

28. Official residence of Martin Bucer in Strasbourg.



29. Eglise St. Thomas (Strasbourg) one of the churches where Bucer preached the Gospel.

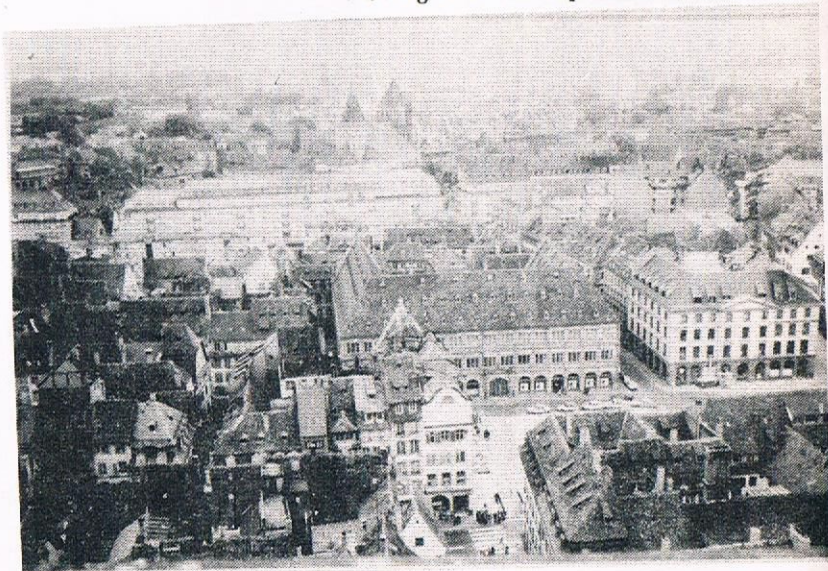
30. "La Petite France", one of the most picturesque places in the older parts of Strasbourg.





31. The Cathedral of Strasbourg with only one tower — the second was not completed.

32. Panorama of the city of Strasbourg from the top of the Cathedral.



En face Monsieur, après avoir humblement
 recommandé à vos bons yeux, et veu de
 M. de Fallais, et vous avoir présenté à vous deux
 ces humbles recommandations de ma femme, et
 supplicé, et en Dieu de vous mander, et la
 provision, vous rendant confiance et joye, et
 de vos amours et que je ne sois
 jaloux — De Genève le 15. Janvier

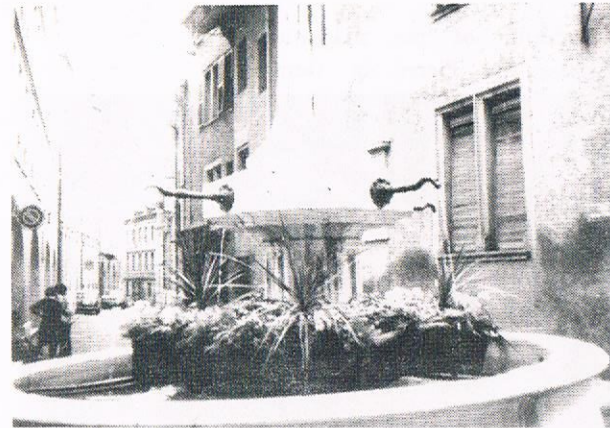
Votre serviteur, humble et fidèle,
 Jean Calvin



33. Specimen of Calvin's handwriting (A letter to M. de Fallais, 1545).

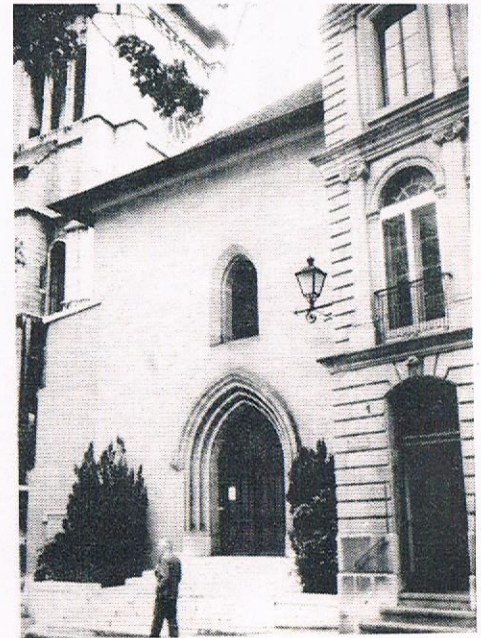
34. Marble stone with relief of Calvin marking the site where he lived in Geneva.

36. St. Pierre Cathedral (Geneva)
where Calvin preached the Gospel for
many years.

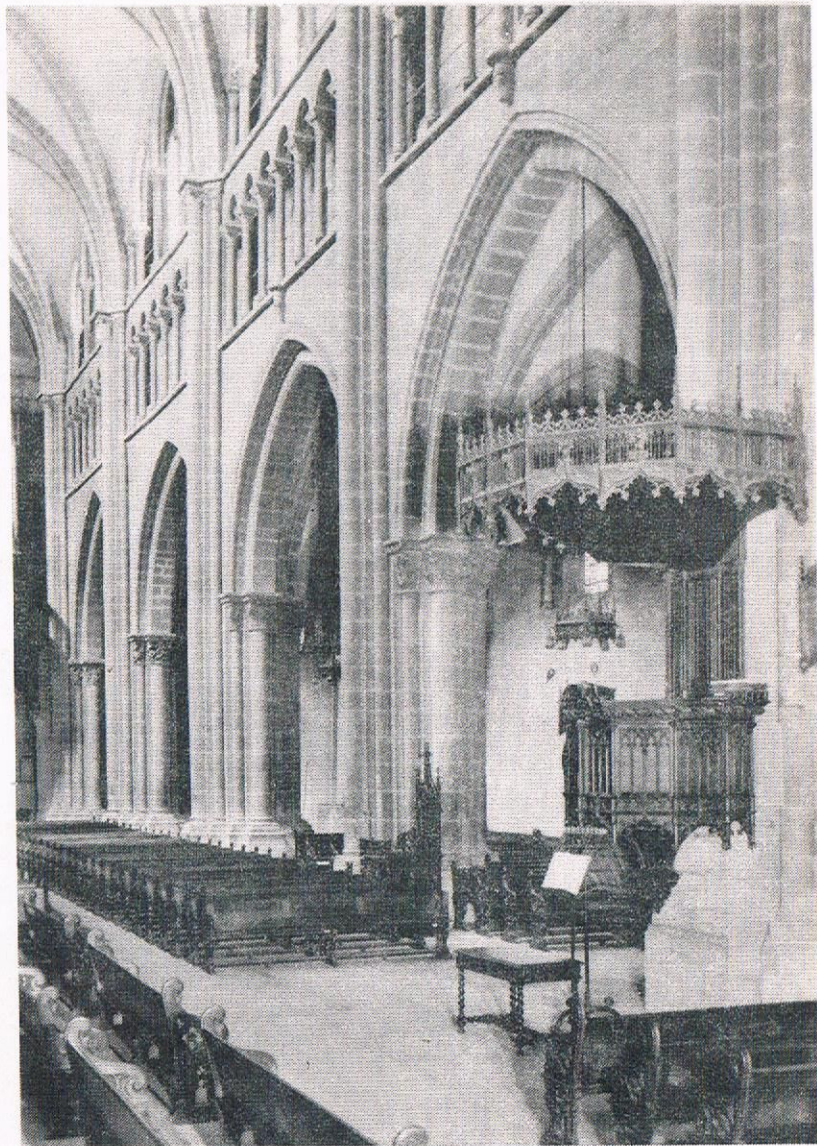


35. Fountain at the end of the Rue
de Calvin (Geneva).

38. Auditoire de Calvin (entrance at
the left) in Geneva.



37. Interior of the magnificent Cathedral St. Pierre in Geneva.



39. John Knox, the Scottish reformer, who preached to the English community of Geneva in the Auditorium.



40. Plate at the entrance of the Auditorium (John Knox Chapel) announcing services in English, Dutch and Italian.



41. Painting of Calvin as a preacher of the Gospel.

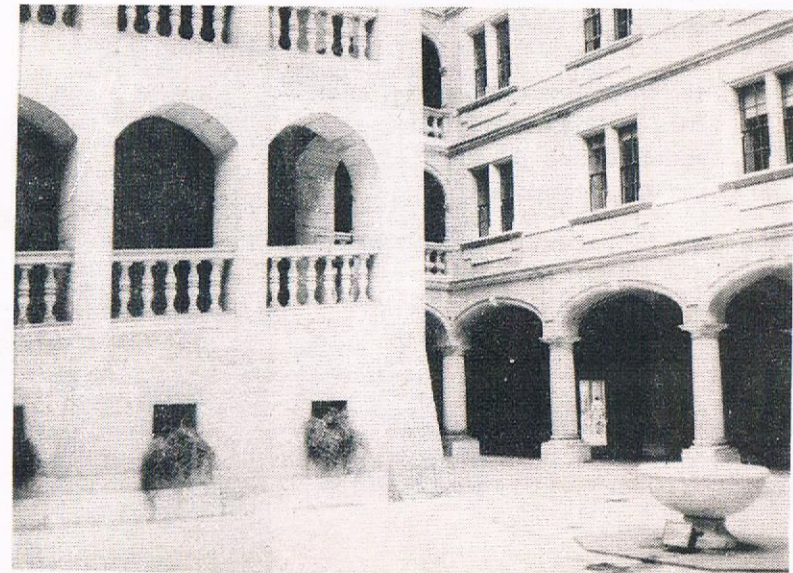


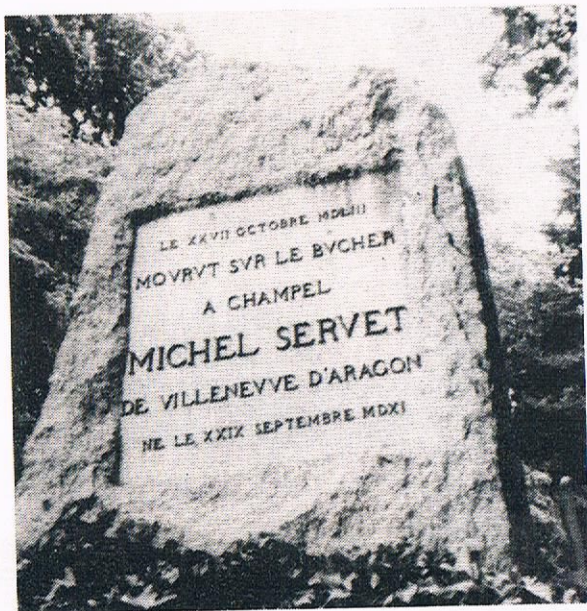
42. Calvin's successor at the Academy of Geneva, Theodore Beza.



43. Interior of the restored Chapel of Auditoire de Calvin (Geneva).

44. Courtyard of the Town House of Geneva after restoration.





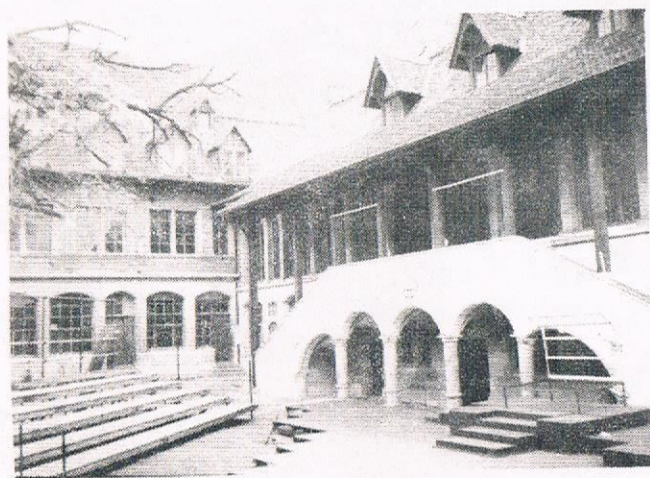
45. Stone monument on the hill of Champel (Geneva) indicating the place where Michel Servet was burned alive on October 27, 1553.

46. Other side of the Servet Monument in Geneva with the inscription acknowledging the error of Calvin and his contemporaries.



47. Collège de Calvin viewed from the Rue Théodore de Bèze.

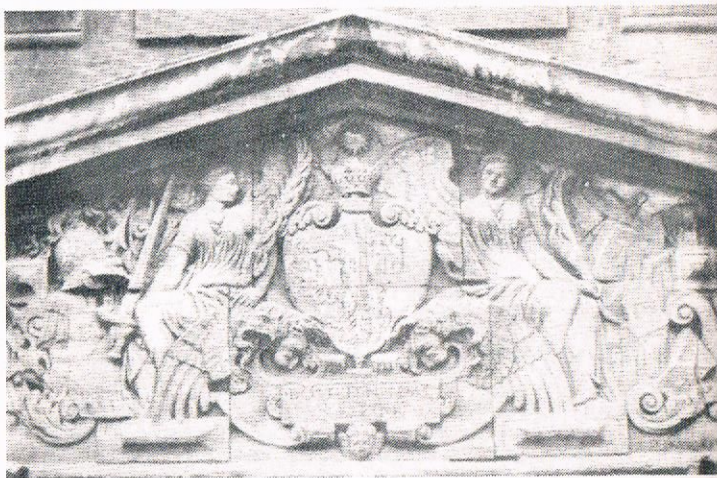
48. Academy of Geneva. The right wing was completed in 1559, the left wing added two years later. To-day the place is called "Collège Calvin".





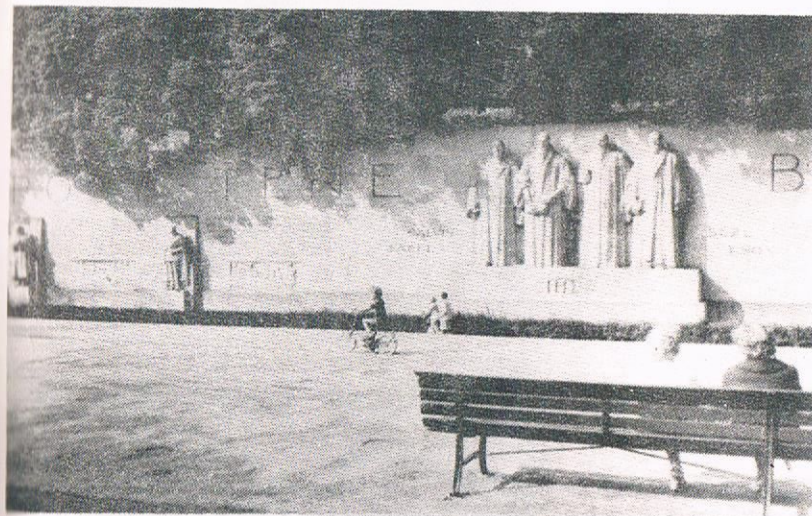
49. Entrance to the left wing of the old Academy of Geneva.

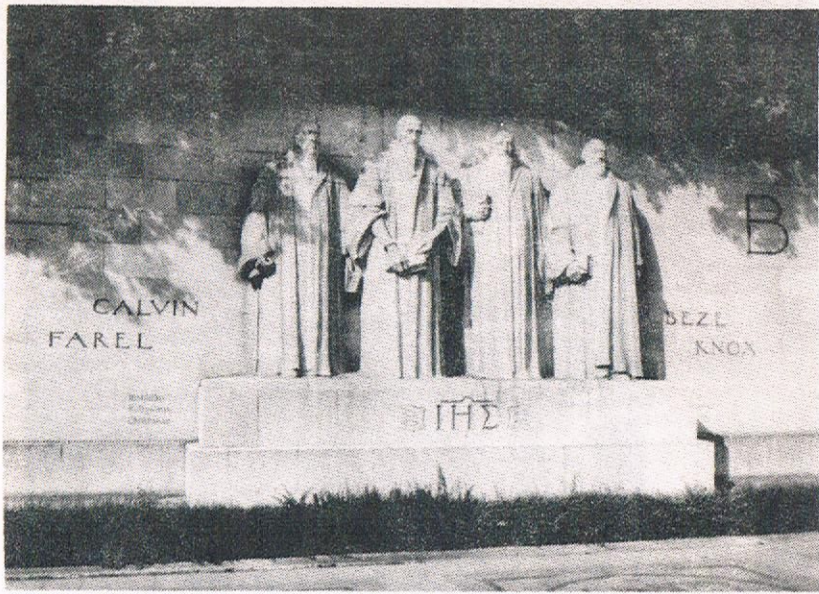
50. Relief work above the entrance to the left wing of the Academy of Geneva.



51. Courtyard of the Academy of Geneva (today "Collège Calvin"). In front, a bronze owl (symbol of wisdom) erected in 1959 commemorating the fourth centennial of the Academy.

52. Reformation Wall in Geneva.



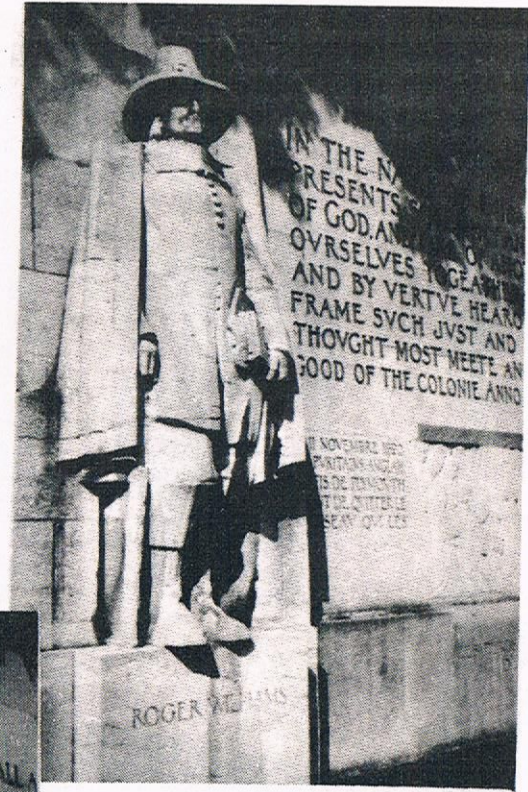


53. Central figures on the Reformation Wall: Farel, Calvin, Beza, Knox.



54. Admiral Caspard de Coligny's statue on the Reformation Wall, Geneva.

55. The statue of Roger Williams on the Reformation Wall.



56. Cromwell's statue on the Reformation Wall in Geneva.

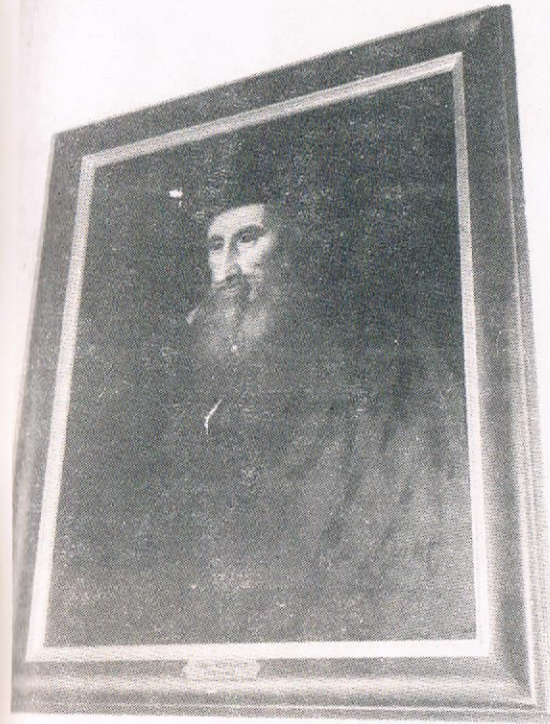




57. Calvin in his old age.



58. Painting of John Huss, one of the earliest reformers.



59. John Wycliffe, one of the first English reformers.



61. Painting by Hans Asper of the Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli (in 1549).

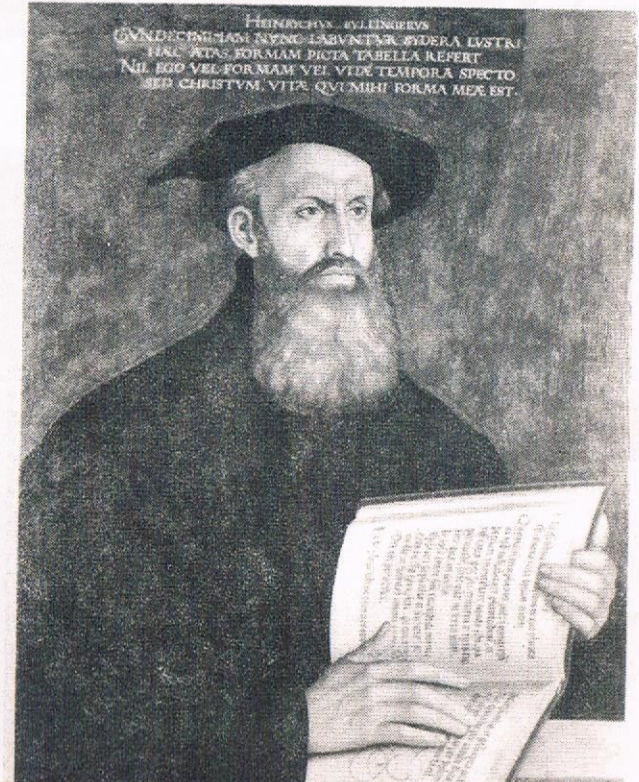


60. Martin Luther, well-known German reformer and his wife Katherine von Bora. (From paintings by Lucas Granach).



62. The Ulrich Zwingli Statue in Zürich.

63. Painting by Hans Asper (in 1550) of Heinrich Bullinger, Zwingli's successor in Zürich.

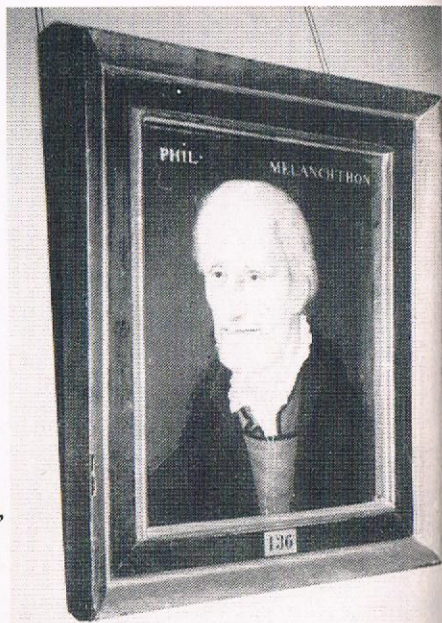


64. Painting of Théodore de Bèze (successor of Calvin at the Academy in Geneva) in the prime of life.



65. Beza as an old man.

66. Painting of Philip Melanchton, German reformer and scholar.



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