

John Calvin (1509-1564), Reformation theologian, pastor, and social reformer, was concerned about both the spiritual and secular lives of the people within his city. Some scholars have described Calvin's work as a New Deal, Geneva-style.

With the theological foundation of the dignity of man and a belief in both social responsibility and individual responsibility to live a good, productive, and moral life before God, Calvin worked toward an effective civil government. He led initiatives for free education, poor relief, hospital construction, prison reform, improved sanitation systems, consumer protection laws, and provision for refugees. For example, Calvin's Geneva Academy attracted students from all over Europe and when he died, had 1,200 on the roll. And, between 1542 and 1560, Calvin made provision for an estimated 5,000 refugees fleeing to Geneva to escape religious oppression.

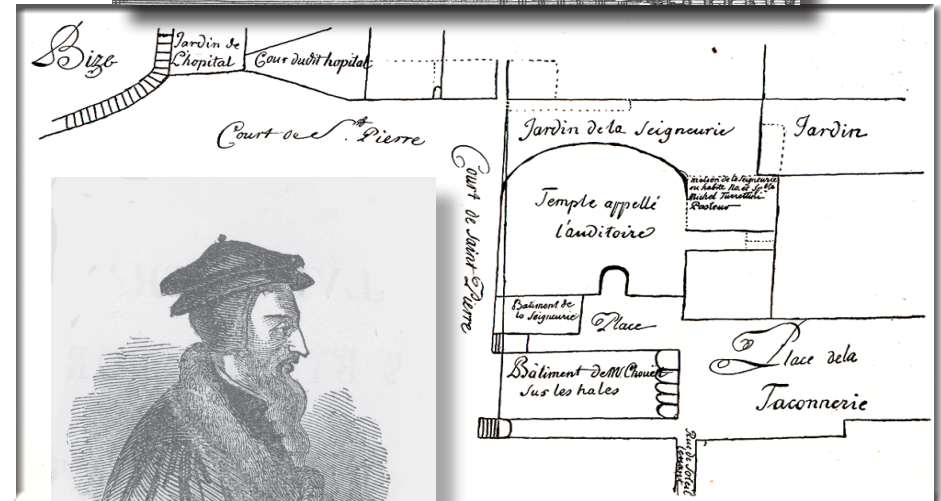
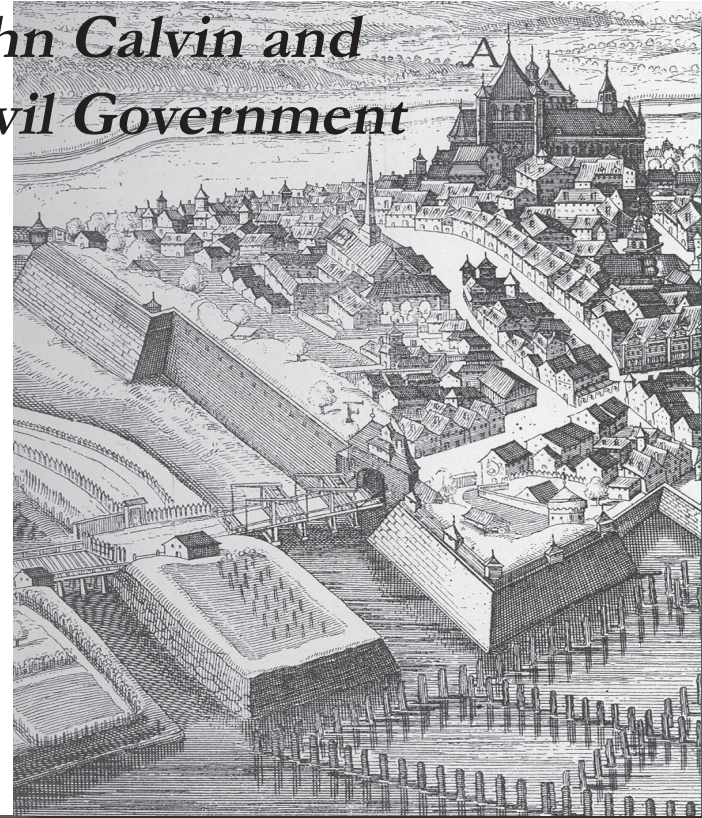
Calvin included a chapter on civil government in his 1536 *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, and it remained almost unchanged through his final 1559 edition: "Having already stated that man is the subject of two kinds of government, and having sufficiently discussed that which is situated in the soul, or the inner man, and relates to eternal life, we are, in this chapter, to say something of the other kind, which relates to civil justice, and the regulation of the external conduct.... Its object is not merely... to enable men to breathe, eat, drink, and be warmed (though it certainly included all these, while it enables them to live together); ...but it is,... in short, that a public form of religion may exist among Christians, and humanity among men."

Illustrations: "View of the city of Geneva, Switzerland, P. Chouet, 1655," and "Archives, anciens plans [Geneva]." Emile Doumergue. *Jean Calvin, Les Hommes et les Choses des Son Temps, vol. 3, La Ville, La Maison, et la Rue de Calvin*, Lausanne: Georges Bridel, 1905.

[John Calvin portrait.] *Tracts relating to The Reformation by John Calvin*. Henry Beveridge, trans., Volume First. Edinburgh: Printed for the Calvin Translation Society, 1844.

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John Calvin and Civil Government



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