

JOHN CALVIN: THE INTERNATIONAL ASPECT OF
THE REFORMATION

II.6

Calvin's Reform

Our heading is based on the fact that it was to Calvin's center at Geneva that scholars came from many parts of the known world to further educational pursuits and an understanding of the evangelical cause. Lutheran reform became the watchword of Germany while Calvinistic reform expressed a theology that prevailed in many varied places. Consequently the reformed ideals of Calvin were found in widely different areas, often somewhat modified, but of a truly international setting.

As with Luther there is almost no end to the literature about Calvin. Due to his personality and emphasis he generated a lot of writing, very little of it without passion. Accounts of his work at Geneva as seen by Preserved Smith, for example, are sufficiently different from those described by G.P. Fisher as to give you the impression that the respective authors are discussing two different men and two different places. Most of this is due to the way in which Calvin is viewed as friend or foe. 1964 was the "Calvin Year" and there came forth a lot of material on his life, influence, and work. But one needs to follow the earlier reading advice in the course, especially when thinking of Calvin. Smith may be right when he asserts that the fundamental difference in the two men was in the fact that Luther thought everything was permissible that was not specifically denied while Calvin assumed everything not specifically permitted was categorically denied. At any rate, the thoughtful student will familiarize oneself with the total work of both these men before forming any world shaking decisions.

II.6.a

Calvin's
BackgroundJohn Calvin (1509-1564)Background

Calvin (family name Cauvin) was born of French parents of peasant but progressive background. His father had succeeded in bettering himself and had become what today would be called a notary in the service of the Bishop of Noyen. In such a position the older Calvin was able to obtain ecclesiastical benefices for his son that he might obtain a better education. Accordingly Calvin studied in Paris until his father had a falling out with the bishop (the elder Calvin seems to have been overly honest in an