



ST. PETER'S, A CATHEDRAL OF THE REFORMATION

In St. Peter's Cathedral, built in the 12th Century, worship is held in French every Sunday at 10 a.m. since Geneva adopted the Reformation at the beginning of the 16th Century. Everyone is welcome. Jean Calvin, the French reformer, preached there until his death in 1564.

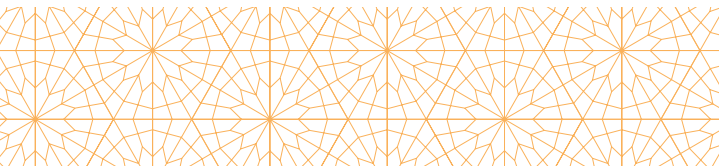
SIX PRINCIPLES OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

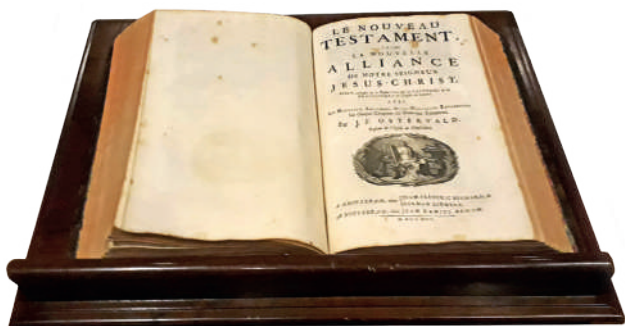
«**Soli Deo Gloria / Glory to God alone.**» This verse of the New Testament (1 Timothy 1: 17) is often used by Protestants. God alone is holy. Not the Church, the institution, the buildings, the clergy, or the saints. In Protestant piety, therefore, there is no worship of the saints, nor of the Virgin Mary. God alone is worshiped.

«**Solus Christus / Christ alone.**» The Reformation wanted to come back to the message of Jesus. «*Only Jesus-Christ is Lord*» (Philippians 2: 11). No man, no matter how high he is in the social or ecclesiastical hierarchy, can replace Him. All human beings, whatever their social condition, ethnicity, gender or age, have free access to Him. «*There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*» (Galatians 3: 28).

«**Sola Scriptura / The Scriptures alone.**» For Protestants, the Bible – the word inspired by God – is the foundation on which their faith, doctrine and piety rest. In the 16th Century, the reformers translated the Bible into the vernacular and then spread it widely thanks to printing, making it accessible to everyone. The meditation of the Scriptures and the sermon hold a central place in protestant worship.

«**Sola Gratia / Grace alone.**» In the 16th century, when St. Peter's Basilica in Rome was being built, the Catholic Church sold «indulgences» that people could buy to obtain grace from God. The Reformers opposed this practice, in the name of God as revealed by Jesus-Christ, who offered his grace unconditionally. There is no need to buy God's indulgence, nor his love, since God offers them to us for free.





«**Sola Fide / Faith alone.**» Confronted with the temptation to buy his salvation with money or by undertaking «works» the Reformers affirm that faith and trust in God is enough. «*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.*» (Ephesians 2: 8).

«**Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda est secundum verbum dei.**»/The Reformed Church must be constantly reformed according to the Word of God. For Protestants, the Church is a human institution constantly obliged to transform itself and to be changed by Jesus-Christ. It is judged on its ability to put into practice the Word of God. «*Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.*» (Matthew 25: 40).



«**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**» (John 3:16).



PROTESTANT ETHICS

Reformed (Presbyterian and Congregational) Protestantism has always given special attention to ethics.

It does not see good works as meritorious. It sees them as a response and gratitude for the grace of God, since He offers everything freely and unconditionally.

God requires obedience to His law, which is to love Him and to love others as yourself.

This requirement already appears in everybody's conscience. Indeed, everyone, believers or not, know *that they should not be doing to others what they would not want to be done to them.* Christians understand simply that the will of God passes through justice. God then requires more: *to do to others what they would like to be done to themselves.*

Calvin illustrates it with an example: not killing is not enough; God commands us to do everything in our power that the other may live with dignity. Thus we move from justice to love.

The Reformation then invites us to think responsibly. All are invited to respond to the call heard in their own life, knowing that *«for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required»* (Luke 12: 48).

These principles have had many consequences political, legal and economic. These principles largely explain the presence of many international institutions in Geneva, from the UN to the International Committee of the Red Cross, who have understood that the first concrete form of love is justice.

SOME CLICHES ABOUT PROTESTANTS

«**Protestants do not worship the Virgin Mary.**» The worship of Mary being absent from the New Testament, Protestants recognise Mary's status as mother of Jesus-Christ and revere her in the same way as all the other key characters in Christ's life.

«**Protestants do not recognise the pope.**» Jesus-Christ is the only mediator between God and man.

Nevertheless, Protestants recognise the authorities who manage the life of the Church in a democratic way. Ministers are trained at university. They are responsible for interpreting and transmitting the Scriptures during the service. They are allowed to get married. The first female minister in Geneva was consecrated in 1943. Currently, there are just as many women as men in the Company of Ministers and Deacons of Geneva.

«**Protestants are austere.**» Protestant piety does not include the practice of fasting or penance.

«**Protestants have contributed to the emergence of capitalism.**» If responsibility and freedom (to act, believe and undertake) are indeed sacred principles for Protestants, social justice and solidarity with those who are less fortunate, remains the basis of ethics for all Christians.

In 2019, there are about 2 billion Christians in the world, including 800 million Protestants who are divided in many denominations (Lutheran, Presbyterian, Evangelical, Anglican, Baptist and Methodist).

St. Peter's Cathedral is one of the cradles of worldwide Protestantism.

THE CATHEDRAL, VOLUNTARILY AUSTERE

As opposed to the valuable ornaments in other churches and cathedrals, Protestants prefer their places of worship to be sober. It is not an economic issue, but more a spiritual one rooted in the Bible: *«You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.»* (Exodus 20: 4-5).



At the time of the Reformation, Genevans destroyed some of the statues in the cathedral and erased the paintings that decorated the walls. The altarpiece painted in 1444 by Konrad Witz was saved and can be admired today at the Geneva Museum of Art and History (MAH).

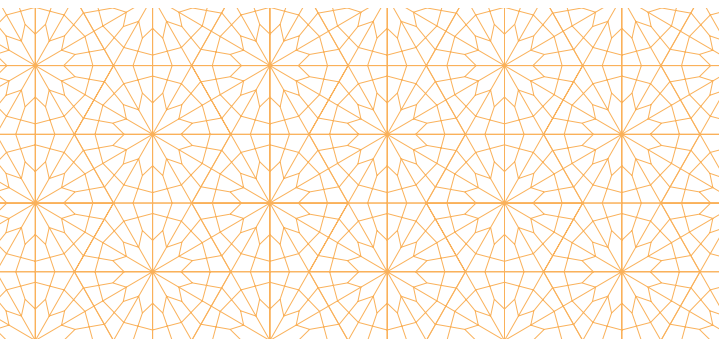
The choir is no longer a space reserved for the clergy. Everyone has access to it.

The pulpit has become the centre of the service.

There is no confessional in a Protestant church. There is no holy water because blessing can only be given to people and there is no confessional because believers address their prayers directly to God without the intermediary of a priest.



The Miraculous Draught of Fishes by Konrad Witz, MAH Geneva.



IMPORTANT DATES

31 October 1517 Luther (1483-1546) protested against the then current practice of the Church of selling « indulgences ». He published the 95 theses against them. *« They preach vanity who says that the soul flies out of Purgatory as soon as the money thrown into the chest rattles. What is sure, is, that as soon as the penny rattles in the chest, gain and avarice are on the way of increase; but the intercession of the church depends only on the will of God Himself. »*

18 April 1521 Summoned by the Pope to withdraw his 95, Luther refused: *« Unless convinced by the testimony of Scripture and by obvious reasons – for I do not believe in the infallibility of the Pope or the councils, since it is established that they have often been mistaken and contradicted – I am bound by the biblical texts which I have quoted. As long as my conscience follows the Word of God, I cannot and will not retract anything, for it is neither safe nor wholesome to act against our conscience. »*

1532-1536 Guillaume Farel (1489-1565) **preached** the Reformation in Geneva. The City Council suspended mass and Farel called on Jean Calvin (1509-1564) to organise the Reformation in Geneva.

21 May 1536 Genevans adopted the Reformation. Emancipated from the bishop who fled and the Duke of Savoy, Geneva became a Republic.

1536-1559 Calvin wrote the Ecclesiastical Ordinances and then the Civil Edicts, which served as a Constitution for the new Republic. Geneva became the « Protestant Rome ».



The « Calvin College ».



*Statue of Jean Calvin
(The Reformation Wall).*

1559 Calvin founded the «Académie de Genève» – the current university. Designed in the 16th Century as a theological and humanist seminary, it is now one of the top 30 universities in the world.

24 August 1572. The St. Bartholomew's Day massacre in Paris. Thousands of Protestants fled France. Geneva, already a place of international commerce, became a land of asylum and refugees.

30 April 1598 Henry IV, King of France, a Protestant who converted to Catholicism, signed the Edict of Nantes, which granted Protestants civil rights and the right to celebrate their worship. This Edict tried to end the wars of religion in France. The Edict of Nantes was revoked by Louis XIV in 1685. After the Edict of Tolerance in 1787, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789) finally recognised freedom of conscience for both Jews and Protestants.

30 June 1907 The people of Geneva voted for the separation of Church and State. Since then, the State guarantees the respect of worship within a secular and pluralistic city.

Today, St. Peter's Cathedral belongs to the Protestant Church of Geneva. The building is looked after by a foundation called St. Peter's Keys. The Protestant Parish of St. Peter is responsible for its spiritual and communal life.

The Cathedral regularly hosts ecumenical and inter-religious celebrations as well as concerts. Every five years, political authorities of the Republic and Canton of Geneva come to St. Peter's Cathedral to take their oath of office.

PRAYER

«Lord God, in the same way as to make the sun shine on the earth to enlighten us, please make that the brightness of your Spirit enlightens my understanding and my heart to lead me on your path. Forget my errors of the past, forgive them by your infinite mercy, as you promised to all those who will pray you sincerely. Increase every day your grace in me until you have brought me to the full awareness of your Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour, who is the true sun of our lives, shining day and night, endlessly and forever; and whatever I do, let me look even further towards the goal you have set for me.»

Jean Calvin



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