

# International organisations based in Geneva

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A reformator and a bishop in Geneva, not contemporaries, but almost:

## Jean Calvin, 1509 – 1564

Originally trained as a lawyer, Jean Calvin broke from the Roman Catholic Church around 1530. He was invited to help reform the church in Geneva. The city council resisted the implementation of Calvin's ideas, and he was expelled but was eventually invited back to lead the church. He introduced new forms of church government and liturgy, despite the opposition of several powerful families in the city who tried to curb his authority. Following an influx of supportive refugees and new elections to the city council, Calvin's opponents were forced out. Calvin spent his final years promoting the Reformation both in Geneva and throughout Europe.

Calvin's writing and preachings provided the seeds for the branch of theology that bears his name. The Presbyterian and other Reformed churches, which look to Calvin as a chief expositor of their beliefs, have spread throughout the world.

During his ministry in Geneva, Calvin preached over two thousand sermons. Initially he preached twice on Sunday and three times during the week. This proved to be too heavy a burden and late in 1542 the council allowed him to preach only once on Sunday. His sermons lasted more than an hour and he did not use notes. An occasional secretary tried to record his sermons, but very little of his preaching was preserved before 1549. In that year, a professional scribe, who had learned or developed a system of shorthand, was assigned to record all of Calvin's sermons.

Very little is known about Calvin's personal life in Geneva.

Calvin did not live to see the

foundation of his work grow into an international movement; but his death allowed his ideas to break out of their city of origin, to succeed far beyond Geneva and to establish their own distinct character.

## Francis de Sales, 1567 – 1622

Francis de Sales was the son of a Savoy nobleman and enjoyed a privileged education with the Jesuits. At the age of 20, after a deep crisis, Francis came to the conclusion that whatever God had in store for him was good, because "God is love", as Scripture attests. This faithful devotion to the God of love not only expelled his doubts, but also influenced the rest of his life and his teachings. His way of teaching Catholic spirituality is often referred to as the Way of Divine Love, or the Devout Life, taken from a book he wrote of a similar name: Introduction to the Devout Life.

Francis engaged in enthusiastic campaigns of evangelism among the Protestants of Savoy, and many returned to the Old Faith.

In 1602, Bishop Granier died, and Francis was consecrated Bishop of Geneva. During his years as bishop, he acquired a reputation as a spellbinding preacher. He was known as a friend of the poor, a man of almost supernatural affability and understanding.

St. Francis developed a sign language in order to teach a deaf man about God. Because of this, he is the patron saint of the deaf.

Saint Francis de Sales was beatified in 1661 and canonized three years later. The Roman Catholic Church today celebrates St Francis de Sales's feast on January 24.

Many schools and hospitals are named after St Francis de Sales, also in New Zealand.

## International organisations based in Geneva

Geneva is the seat of the European headquarters of the United Nations. It is located in the Palace of Nations building (French: Palais des Nations) which was also the headquarters of the former League of Nations. Several agencies are headquartered at Geneva, among which the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) or the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

Apart from the United Nations agencies, Geneva hosts many inter-governmental organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Economic Forum (WEF), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

## Geneva Motor Show

The International Geneva Motor Show is an annual auto show held in March in Geneva.

First held in 1905, the Salon has hosted almost all major internal combustion engined models in the history of the automobile, along with benzene- and steam-powered cars from the beginning of the century. Exotic supercars often steal the spotlight during their debuts at the show. Prototypes, new equipment, technical breakthroughs, international partnerships, as well as political and social debates, have been announced at the exhibition.