Jean Calvin, Protestant theologian and church leader, died May 27, 1564 in Geneva, Switzerland (born July 10, 1509). He was the leading French Protestant reformer and the most important figure in the second generation of Protestant reformers. Although Martin Luther launched the Reformation, Calvin significantly shaped the Protestant Church and systematized its theology, sometimes differing from Luther in his positions. Calvin’s theology, which incorporated the concepts of predestination and the sovereignty of God, became foundational for Presbyterian and Reformed churches around the world.

Calvin was raised a Roman Catholic and exposed to Reformation ideas while studying for the priesthood and later for a law degree. He fled to Switzerland from France in 1534 to escape prosecution for his association with Nicolas Cop. He served pastorates in Geneva and Strasbourg between 1536 and 1564.

One of Calvin’s major accomplishments was authoring the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, one of the most important Christian theological works. Originally published in 1536 as a catechism in six chapters, the final 1559 edition contained 80 chapters. Eden’s Rare Book collection includes several of Calvin’s original published works, including the 1539, 1543, 1553, and 1561 Latin editions of the *Institutes*, and catechisms in Latin, French, Greek, and Hebrew.

Calvin was a native of the Picardy region of northern France, where his original language was Picard, a patois of French. Through the popularity of his theological writings and his vernacular translation of the Bible, Calvin influenced the development of the modern French language, much as Martin Luther did German and the Geneva/King James translations did English.