

This Week in Eden History May 27 | Jean Calvin

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,



This 1553 edition of La Forme des prieres Ecclesiastiques avec la maniere d'administrer les Sacrements... [The form of ecclesiastical prayer, including the manner of administering the sacraments...] is one of several original published works by Jean Calvin found in the Eden Rare Book Collection.

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.