

Calvin was converted in 1532 and died in 1564. In his thirty-two years as a Christian, he changed the world as it was known. By the time of his death, the Protestant church in Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, England, Scotland, Eastern Europe and in parts of Germany were Reformed. Ever since then, the vast majority of Protestant Churches have been influenced by Calvin and his writings. Even those who churches that do not hold to the doctrines of grace show a deep debt to him in parts of their theology, in their worship style and in other ways. Beyond this, Calvinism has had a wide influence on all of modern life. In the early 20th century, Max Weber argued that capitalism grew out of Calvinism. The same can be argued for modern science, the theory of human rights, and other parts of modern culture. If I were asked who was the most influence person of the modern era, I can't think of anyone who can compare to Calvin.

In the late 1970's, a friend of mine was a Ph.D. student in the Philosophy of Religion at Notre Dame University. In one of his classes, the professor was joking about Calvinism. He was under the impression that Calvinism was dead. Suddenly, he asked, "There aren't any Calvinists here are there?" My friend boldly confessed that he was a Calvinist. The professor and students were astonished. However, a few years later the University hired Alvin Plantinga to be the head of its Philosophy of Religion department; and the department became a center for the study of Reformed Epistemology. To be "Reformed" became not only respectable, but a mark to be worn with pride.

This is a parable of a sort. Over the last five hundred years, secular scholars have repeatedly announced the death of Calvinism. But to their astonishment, it keeps raising up from the dead! And today, it is alive and well!

The new Evangelical movement began in the US, England and elsewhere in the 1950's. Many of the original leaders were Reformed Evangelicals, such as Martyn Lloyd-Jones, J.I. Packer, and Francis Schaffer. And as the movement has grown, it has produced a large number of Reformed pastors, authors and scholars. Influential Reformed Evangelical authors include R.C. Sproul, John Piper, John MacArthur and many others. As a movement, neo-Evangelicalism has been surprisingly successful. In a 2007 survey, 28% of Americans consider themselves to be "Evangelical". However, theologically the movement has lost its way. As the fog over Evangelicalism clears, it appears that those Evangelicals leaders who have remained faithful to the Bible are mostly Calvinists. As a result, just as in the days of Calvin, conservative Christians of all sorts are turning to the Reformed faith.

Christianity Today, a popular English Christian magazine, recently did a story on Calvinism in the US (*Young, Restless and Reformed*, Sept 2006). The authors were surprised to discover that in the United States many of today's younger, active Christians are Reformed. The article reports that the largest Baptist Seminary in the United States is now a center for Reformed Theology. Trinity Evangelical Seminary and Gordon-Conwell have also seen a remarkable rise in the number of Reformed students. More importantly, there are more than a dozen Reformed Seminaries in the US alone, and the number of students at these schools is amazing.¹ From the number of Reformed seminaries, Reformed authors, Reformed books, Reformed pastors, and Reformed websites, it appears that Reformed Christianity is once again leading the faithful Church of Christ.

To celebrate the 500th year of his birth, we are happy to present this collection of short works on Calvin and Calvinism. It presents the man and the movement from four different angles. We hope that it will give you a desire read more Reformed books. The works of Calvin himself are enough to fill many volumes. The books of those under his influence are enough to fill many libraries. Furthermore, they are filled with spiritual treasures.

¹ Reformed Theological Seminary has six campuses with over 1000 students and about 40 full-time faculty members. Westminster in Philadelphia has about 800 students. There is also Westminster West and Westminster in Dallas. Other major Reformed seminaries include Covenant Seminary (800 students), Calvin Seminary (300 students), Knox Seminary (150 students), Mid-America Reformed Seminary, and Erskine Seminary. The Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries is a North American association of smaller Reformed seminaries. It includes Birmingham Seminary, Farel Seminary in Quebec, Geneva Reformed Seminary, Greenville Presbyterian Seminary, New Geneva Seminary, Puritan Reformed Seminary, Sangre de Christo Seminary, and Western Reformed Seminary.