

The Birth of Calvinism

In 1536, the Frenchman Jean Cauvin moved to Basel, where he began his activity as a religious reformer by publishing the work *Institutio Christianae Religionis*, a summary of his teachings. John Calvin (from the Latinized version of his name, Calvinus) based his religious meditations on his reading of the Holy Scriptures, St Augustine, Plato and Aristotle, and above all Luther. From these, he derived his doctrine of the total perversion of the sinner and of divine grace as the only possibility for regeneration. In 1559, he founded his Academy in the city of Geneva, which became the center for the diffusion of Calvinism.

Calvinism represented the second generation of Protestantism, appearing on the European scene in the 1530s, that is at a time when Lutheranism had already reached the maximum of its expansion. Various types of Calvinism emerged during the sixteenth century, such as those practiced by the Huguenots in France or the Presbyterians in Scotland. In the English-speaking world, the Calvinists were known as Puritans because of their strong insistence on observance of the law and on ethics.