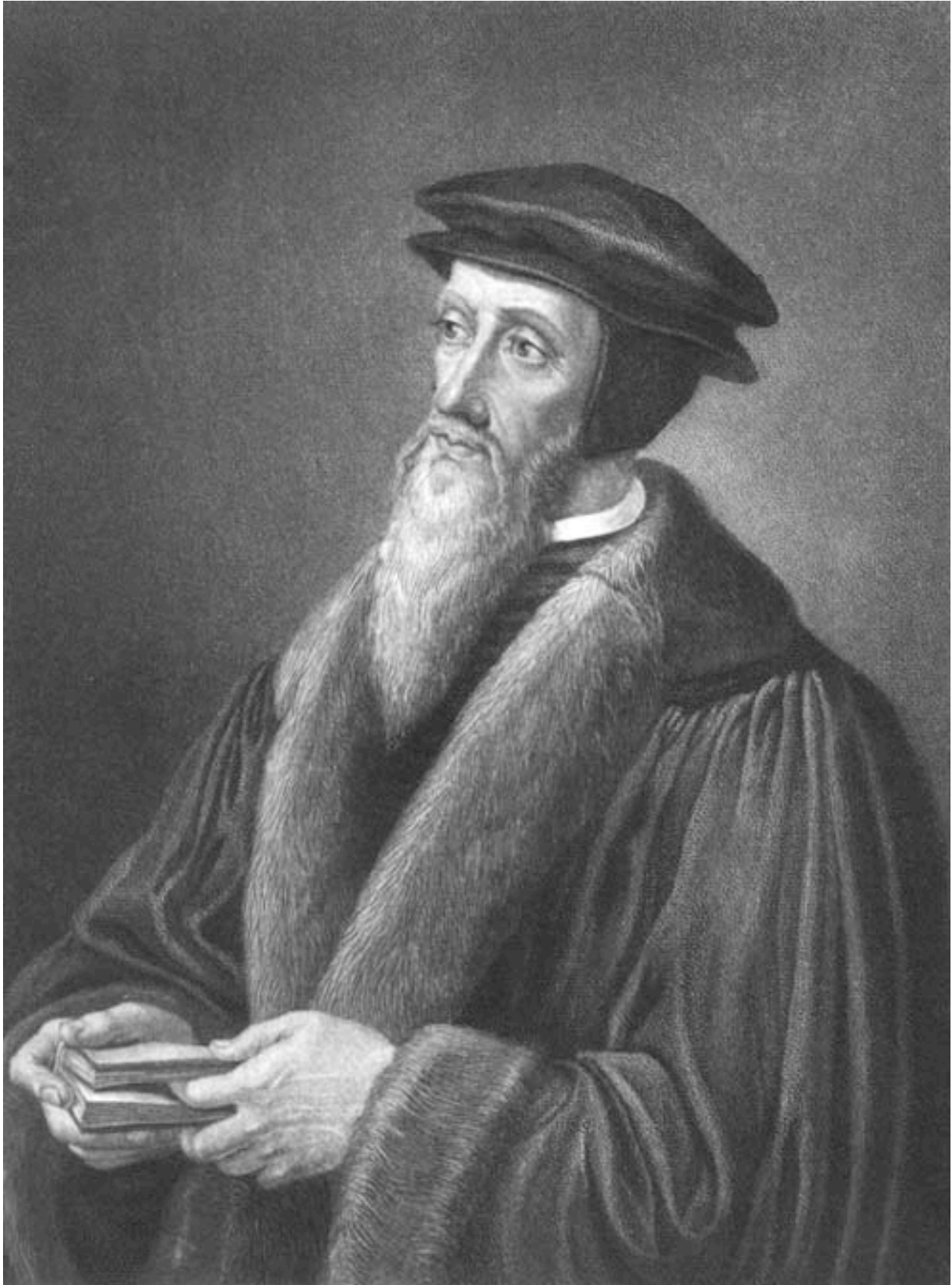


John Calvin, Theologian and Church Reformer (1509-1564)

Observed 29 May



John Calvin is one of the best-known figures of the Reformation of the Western Church. His work in his native France, Germany, and especially Switzerland affected the course of Christian history throughout the world. He has given his name to “Calvinism” as a strain of Protestant thought, rooted in his writings and most often associated with predestination and strict moral codes. The Presbyterian Churches are among the best known as adhering to Calvin’s teachings and emphases. Many remember Calvin for his excesses (such as drowning those whose ‘Anabaptist’ faith led them to rebaptize adults who had been baptized in infancy), but there is much inspiration to be gained from reading his writings. His love of God in Christ and his extensive scholarship are amply evident. One part of his teaching that tends to surprise people today is his emphatic statement that the Eucharist should be received weekly. Like many of the reformers he took issue with the medieval practice of laypeople receiving communion rarely, often only once a year. Only priests received regularly. Calvin’s understanding of scripture and the practice of the early Church told him that this was meant to be a meal shared regularly by every Christian.

“What we have so far said of the Sacrament abundantly shows that...it was ordained to be frequently used among all Christians in order that they might frequently return in memory to Christ’s Passion, by such remembrance to sustain and strengthen their faith, and urge themselves to sing thanksgiving to God and to proclaim his goodness.... [T]he Lord’s Table should have been spread at least once a week for the assembly of Christians, and the promises declared in it should feed us spiritually.... All, like hungry men, should flock to such a bounteous repast.” *Institutes of the Christian Religion* IV.xvii.44, 46

Lessons Joel 2:1-2,12-14; Psalm 119:1-8; Romans 9:18-26; John 15:1-11

Collect Sovereign and holy God, you brought John Calvin from a study of legal systems to understand the godliness of your divine laws as revealed in Scripture: Fill us with a like zeal to teach and preach your Word, that the whole world may come to know your Son Jesus Christ, the true Word and Wisdom; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, ever one God, in glory everlasting. Amen