



IRTC

INTERNATIONAL REFORMED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

Calvinism and Missions

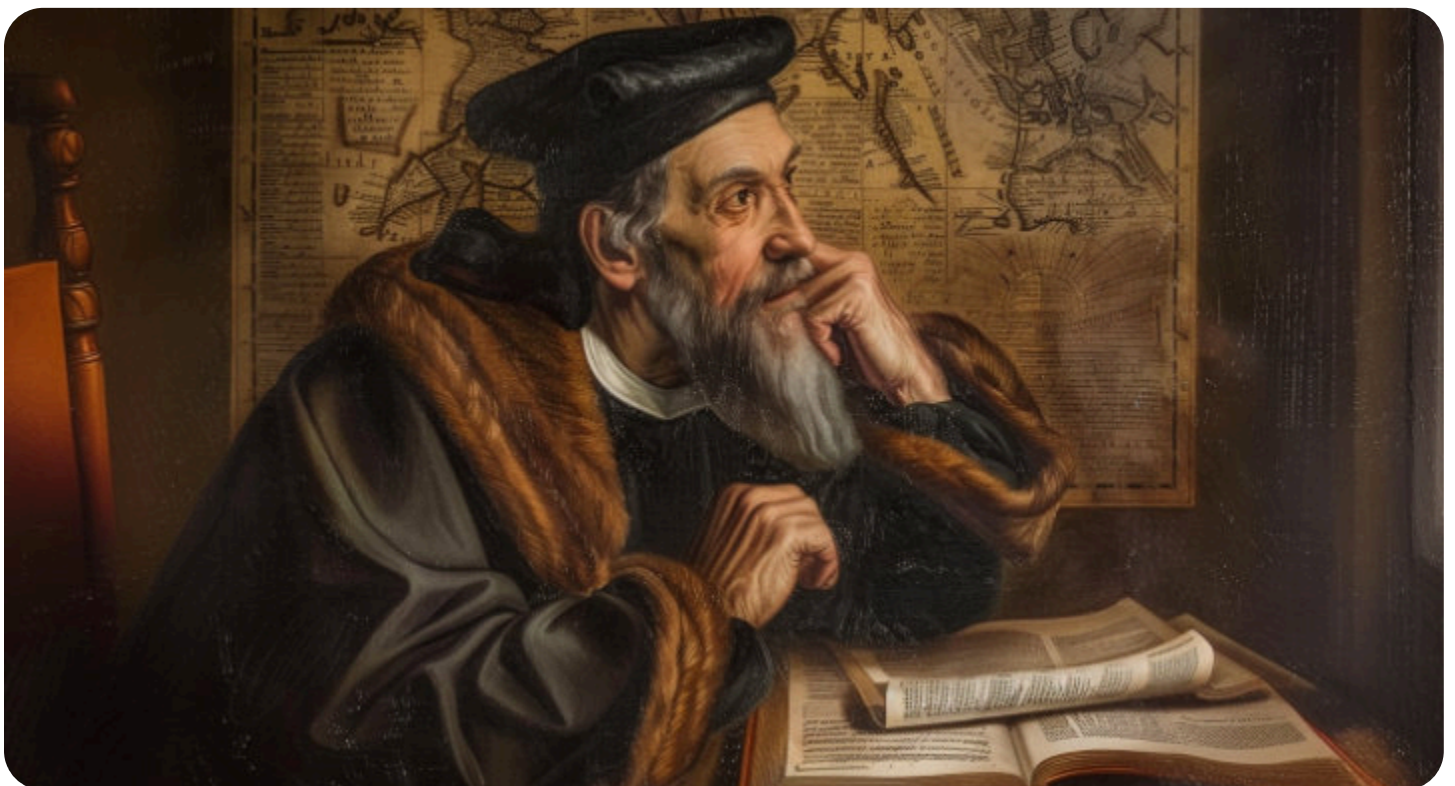
Often, when we think of the Protestant Reformation and Calvinism, we immediately recall Calvin's academic prowess and his significant literary contributions. Yet, for many, there is an accusation that persists to this day: the Reformed pastor values the proper indoctrination of his flock but pays little attention to the church's missionary duty. Is this stereotype justified by Calvin's pastoral experience? Certainly not. Geneva became a major center for missions, whether through the many refugees sheltered from religious persecution or through Calvin's intentionality in sending missionaries to various parts of Europe and even to Brazil.

Countries such as the Netherlands, Poland, Hungary, England, and Scotland embraced the Reformation through refugees who, after being welcomed and trained in Geneva, returned to their native lands. Many of them were brutally martyred. France deserves special mention: in just seven years (1555 to 1562), Calvin sent over 140 missionaries—a conservative estimate, considering these

records were kept secret for the missionaries' safety. By 1562, France had 2,150 Reformed churches with approximately 3 million members, representing fifteen percent of the country's population.

Calvin also had a significant impact on the Portuguese-speaking world, especially in Brazil. In 1555, Nicolas Durand de Villegaignon led a group of Huguenots to establish France Antarctique in Rio de Janeiro. With the arrival of Calvinist pastors such as Jean de Léry, the colony saw the first Protestant worship services in the New World. Despite persecution by Catholic authorities and the eventual dissolution of the colony, the Huguenot presence contributed to a broader understanding of Protestant resilience. Their witness is still remembered and celebrated by Reformed churches in Brazil.

What is the reasoning behind such a focus on missions? The logic is simple: if we possess the best, most biblical theology, it should not be confined to academic circles



but, according to Christ's precept, be placed "on a stand, so that it gives light to everyone..." (Matthew 5:13). That is why Jesus instituted the Great Commission. As Calvin wrote, "the Lord commands the ministers of the gospel to go to a distance, in order to spread the doctrine of salvation in every part of the world" [commentary on Matthew 24:19].

Calvin had a missionary heart because he himself was a missionary. Being French, he arrived in Geneva at just 27 years old to pastor a church that was trying to find its way after abandoning Catholicism. The church in Geneva, a city of only 20,000 inhabitants, left its mark on the history of world missions as a great example and paradigm for our times. As Klooster wrote, "the missionary activity that emanated from Geneva under the inspiration

of Calvin was monumental in scale. Perhaps it is the greatest local missions project the world has seen since the time of the apostles."

Besides encouraging and discipling many missionaries through letters, Calvin utilized the most modern technology of his time: the printing press, invented less than 100 years earlier and popularized just a few decades before. Using this new technology, Calvin spread Reformed theology throughout Europe. If he lived in our time, I dare say he would not hesitate to use online courses to bring the gospel to the most distant corners of the planet. In this same spirit, the IRTC reaffirms its mission: technology in the service of sound theology. After all, even though it may not seem so to some, Calvinism and missions go hand in hand!

New Certificate Programs at the IRTC

In 2024, the IRTC introduced five new postgraduate certificate programs designed to be completed in one year. These courses are aimed at specializing graduate students in specific areas of ministry.

Certificate in Leadership

Develops leadership and administration skills, covering church planting, covenant theology, chaplaincy, and practical issues such as marriage and family. The training also includes topics on John Calvin, biblical spirituality, and Christian worldview. This preparation will help students to face challenges in leadership and to strengthen their churches.

Certificate in Church History

Provides a comprehensive view of the Christian church's trajectory, exploring early and modern church history, including the history of the Portuguese-speaking church and Presbyterianism in Brazil. Participants will learn to contextualize historical events and ecclesiastical figures, applying historical lessons in their ministerial practice.

Certificate in Reformed Theology

Focused on the principles of Reformed theology, the course covers Christian worldview and cultural anthropology, covenant theology, the work of the Holy Spirit in the church and contemporary theology. It also discusses the various applications of these principles in marriage, family, and

church leadership. This knowledge will be foundational for leaders looking to strengthen their theological bases and their ability to teach and defend the Reformed faith.

Certificate in Christian Education

Prepares Christian educators with studies in didactics and redemptive pedagogy, along with delving into topics such as covenant theology, chaplaincy and biblical counseling. The program provides pedagogical tools grounded in Reformed theology, allowing the creation of enriching educational programs for families, schools, communities and churches.

Certificate in Biblical Studies

Offers a comprehensive exploration of biblical theology in the Old and New Testaments, analyzing topics like covenant theology, biblical geography and archaeology, apocalyptic literature, and biblical counseling. Students will be equipped with a deep and applied understanding of the Scriptures, which can be applied in their ministries and teaching in the church and home.

Each of these programs is offered entirely online, allowing students to study according to their own schedules. The classes are taught in Portuguese and include a combination of written materials, videos, discussion forums, and live sessions.

\$203,879
2024 Budget

53%

\$109,000
Raised (Apr 30)



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