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Sommario/riassunto

This sweeping and eminently readable book is the first synthetic history of Calvinism in almost fifty years. It tells the story of the Reformed tradition from its birth in the cities of Switzerland to the unraveling of orthodoxy amid the new intellectual currents of the seventeenth century. As befits a pan-European movement, Benedict's canvas stretches from the British Isles to Eastern Europe. The course and causes of Calvinism's remarkable expansion, the inner workings of the diverse national churches, and the theological debates that shaped Reformed doctrine all receive ample attention. The English Reformation is situated within the history of continental Protestantism in a way that reveals the international significance of English developments. A fresh examination of Calvinist worship, piety, and discipline permits an up-to-date assessment of the classic theories linking Calvinism to capitalism and democracy. Benedict not only paints a vivid picture of the greatest early spokesmen of the cause, Huldrych Zwingli and John Calvin, but also restores many lesser-known figures to their rightful place. Ambitious in conception, attentive to detail, this book offers a model of how to think about the history and significance of religious change across the long Reformation era.