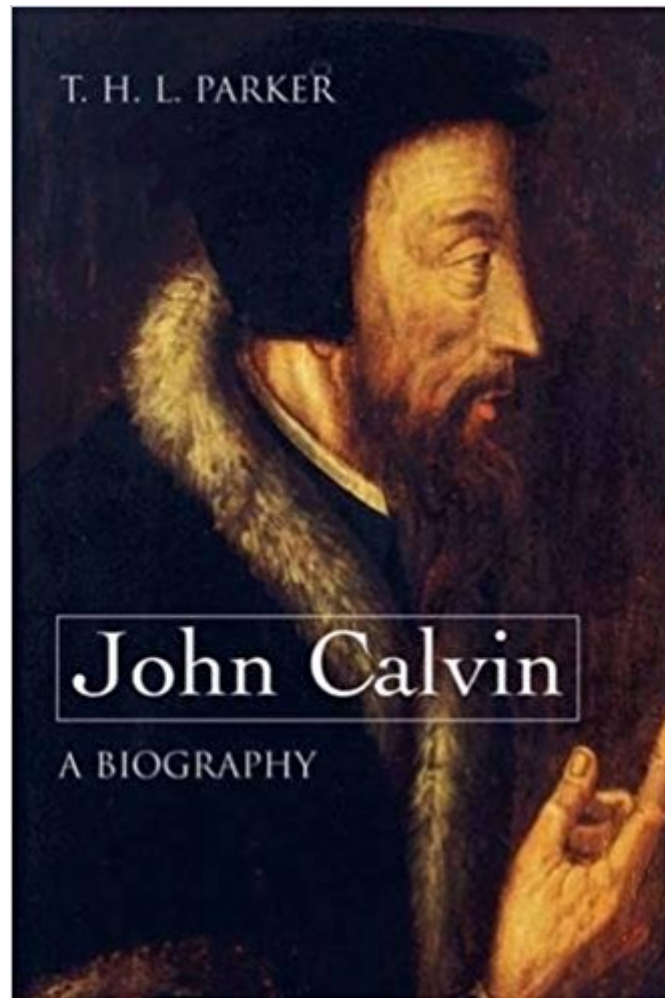




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# John Calvin--A Biography



## Synopsis

John Calvin was one of the most important leaders of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation. In this revision of his major biography, T. H. L. Parker explores Calvin's achievement against the backdrop of the turbulent times in which he lived. With clear and concise explanations of Calvin's theology, analyses of his major works, and insights into his preaching, this definitive biography brings this crucially important reformer and his world to life for readers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

T. H. L. Parker was a widely respected authority on Calvin's life and thought. He was Reader in Theology at the University of Durham in England.

I am familiar with Parker's scholarship through his work on Calvin's commentaries, and particularly in his slender volume, *Calvin: An Introduction to his Thought*, which summarizes and interprets the Institutes. His formidable Calvin research shows in this biography that is, warmly sympathetic to its subject, and is painstaking in its historical detail. That said; do not fear this as a book heavy and dry. It reads smoothly as a novel, with plots and subplots ever revealing aspects of the man at the centre of the story. Running through the text includes a "story" within the story of how the Institutes were conceived and edited at various stages, and ultimately settled upon in a final form. Calvin's literary output is chronicled against the struggles he faced as a churchman and a reformer. Both his friends and foes are given a place in the book to enrich the drama, so to speak. The emergence of Calvin as

a man is what struck me most. Not Calvin the pastor, nor even Calvin the theologian, but Calvin the man. Certainly the Genevan reformer was a man head and shoulders above many of his contemporaries as an academic. Also vigorous in his indefatigable energy and discipline as a servant of the church was Calvin. However, it is the man of God plain and simple that shines through. His humanity is genuine in Parker's portrayal: A man with a passion, no less. The writer explodes the myths surrounding the so-called tyrant of Geneva. Parker also rightly and correctly instructs his readers about the mechanics of sixteenth century civil rule and the magistrate's role in punishing heresy. Though many volumes on the life of Calvin abound, one would do well to be acquainted with this text. Particularly illuminating are the two appendices in which Parker examines a case for redating Calvin's life, and in interpreting Calvin's "conversion" as chronicled by the reformer in his preface to his commentary to the Psalms. There is a mini commentary on the conversion narrative that is both challenging and illuminating. My concerns about Parker are limited to one matter. He appears to read Calvin through Barthian lenses in expositing some of the Frenchman's theological convictions. I saw this clearly in Parker's treatment of Calvin's doctrine of Scripture. Yet even here, the writer evidences careful insight into various nuances of Calvin's views. This is a highly recommended text.

For the sake of brevity, I will keep this short, sweet, and to the point. This is hands down the best biography I have read in a very long time. The life, theology, and movement created by John Calvin was clearly laid out. Not only was this abundantly clear, but it was such an enjoyable read! I don't know what a previous review was referring to when it said that this book is too complicated for the lay person. I found the majority of the book to be about what Calvin was doing with his life, rather than what he was teaching, although it does explain his theology, I thought, quite clearly. I'm confident that anyone with at least an interest with the life of this great reformer will find this to be interesting as well as inspiring!! highly recommend this to anyone and everyone interested in the life of Calvin.

THL Parker has continued to place us all in his debt with his solid, serious, inspirational work on the various aspects of John Calvin's theology. This is one of the better biography's in print on Calvin's life and I would recommend it enthusiastically. Though now roughly thirty years old, it was the first biography written on Calvin's life in quite some time when it was published. Though not as current as Bernard Cottret's recent biography, it seems more in touch with the subject matter than Cottret does. Cottret, it seems to me, seeks too much "objectivity" in rehearsing the details of Calvin's

life--Parker clearly has a fondness for Calvin and the sources with which he is familiar and it shows in this biography. Parker has an enthusiasm for the material that I find missing in Cottret's otherwise outstanding work. I would recommend everything that Parker has authored as worthy of being read, reflected upon, and used. Particularly this biography of Calvin.

Detailed, complete and accurate presentation of John Calvin's life.

i LOVE IT

This is a fairly brief, but detailed, life of the great Genevan Reformer, John Calvin, a man whose thought has had a tremendous impact on the church worldwide.

It's very painful to read the first few pages as they document Calvin's early childhood, where he lives, and education. It gets better and easier to read as you go on. My only problem is that you have to know a lot about theological events and people because the author mentions them without explanation, assuming that you will know what he is talking about. Therefore, you either have to look them up yourself or just keep reading.

Dr. T. H. L. Parker is well known as an "expert" on John Calvin. And while he shows that he is intimately acquainted with Calvin's works, the brevity of this biography left me feeling that it's incomplete. Fascinating insights, the ability to quote Calvin on a dime on any subject, a great grasp of history and an immensely readable style, and yet the actual text of this book falls short of 200 pages! Now unless this is simply meant to be an excellent introduction to John Calvin (at which it succeeds), this book is for me a disappointment. So much potential, and no doubt the author had the knowledge and ability to perhaps write something like a comprehensive and maybe even definitive biography, but we're left with this delicious appetizer but not the sirloin the menu seemed to offer. Too bad. Still, this is a must have book on John Calvin.

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