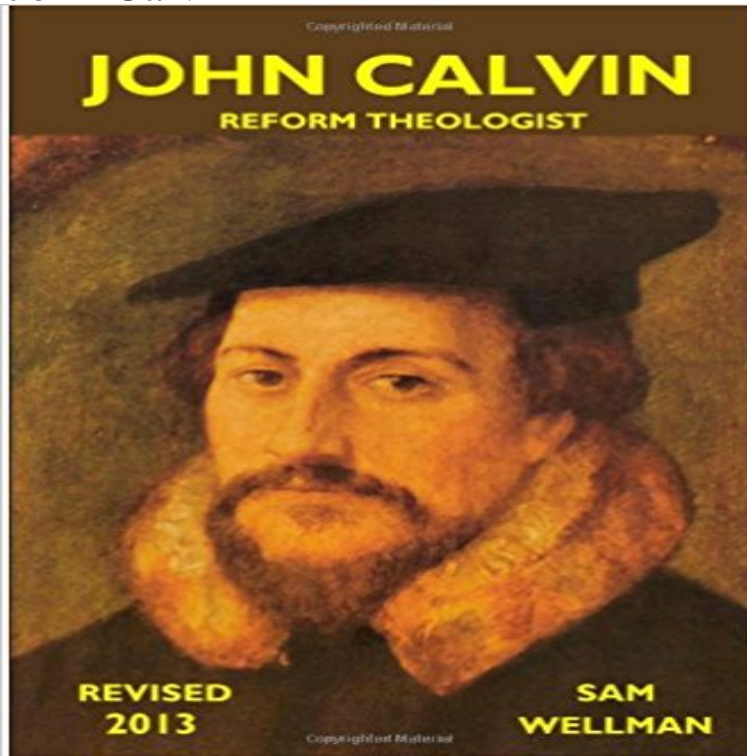


John Calvin



PAMPERED CATHOLIC CHURCH CLERIC TO RADICAL PROTESTANT REFORMER John Calvin was an 8-year-old boy in France when Martin Luther launched the Reformation in Germany in 1517. Precocious John was promoted by the wealthy Montmor family into a Roman Catholic clerical career as well as on to college in Paris. At 25, just one year after earning his law degree, he broke with the Catholic church. Two years later, he had to flee France to Switzerland. In Basel he became protege of William Farel and active in the reform movement. In 1536, Calvin published the first edition of his Institutes of the Christian Religion. Even the Luther circle had not published such an overview of the new Protestant theology. By 1541 he was in Geneva for good and from that time preached thousands of sermons at St. Pierre Cathedral, the main church in Geneva. A lowpoint came in 1553 when he was a prime mover in executing Michael Servetus, a so-called heretic. Nor was Calvin (or other reformers) sympathetic to contemporary Jews. Though he denied predestination was central to his theology he is remembered mainly for his chilling belief: All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation... Nevertheless his theology formed the early basis of the Reformed, Congregational, and Presbyterian churches. His beliefs are still debated in the 21st century. A summary is presented as to the present status.

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