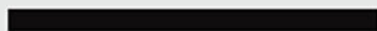


Calvin – Saint or Sinner?

Edited by
HERMAN J. SELDERHUIS

*Spätmittelalter, Humanismus,
Reformation*



Mohr Siebeck

Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation

Studies in the Late Middle Ages,
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herausgegeben von Berndt Hamm (Erlangen)

in Verbindung mit

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Volker Leppin (Jena), Heinz Schilling (Berlin)

51



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Table of Contents

HERMAN J. SELDERHUIS (Apeldoorn): Calvin: Saint or Sinner?	1
---	---

Biography

IRENA BACKUS (Geneva): The Beza/Colladon <i>Lives</i> of Calvin and the Calvinist concept of sainthood	7
--	---

MAX ENGAMMARE (Geneva): John Calvin's Seven Capital Sins	22
---	----

ISABELLE GRAESSLÉ (Geneva): Geneva against Calvin: The myth of the non-saint	40
---	----

OLIVIER MILLET (Paris): Calvin als Leidensmann: Berufung, Arbeit, Krankheiten	50
--	----

FRANS VAN STAM (Amsterdam): Olivétan, not Calvin the author of <i>A tous amateurs</i> , a preface to the oldest French protestant Bible	66
---	----

Bible

JON BALSERAK (Edinburgh): 'There will always be prophets'. Deuteronomy 18:14–22 and Calvin's prophetic awareness	85
--	----

JOHN L. THOMPSON (Pasadena, CA): Reformer of Exegesis? Calvin's Unpaid Debt to Origen	113
--	-----

CHRISTOPH BURGER (Amsterdam): Calvin und Luther deuten das Magnifikat (Lukas 1, 46b–55)	142
--	-----

Theology

ARNOLD HUIJGEN (Apeldoorn): Divine Accommodation and the Reality of Human Knowledge of God: The Example of Calvin's Commentary on the Moses Theophany (Exodus 33–34)	161
VOLKER LEPPIN (Jena): Calvins Institutio vor dem Hintergrund der Theologie des Mittelalters gelesen	173
ANTHONY N.S. LANE (London): Anthropology: Calvin between Luther and Erasmus	185
CHRISTIAN LINK (Bochum): Probleme der Prädestinationslehre Calvins	206
GÜNTER FRANK (Bretten): Die natürliche Theologie als ökumenisches Problem. Zur Relektüre der „theologia naturalis“ bei den Reformatoren Melanchthon und Calvin	215
KEES VAN DER KOOI (Amsterdam): Calvin's Christology from a contemporary systematic perspective. A few remarks	241

Church

EMIDIO CAMPI (Zürich): Calvin und die reformierte Konfession	257
KARIN MAAG (Grand Rapids, MI): Calvin as the Ideal Teacher	273

SCOTT MANETSCH (Chicago, IL):
Holy Terror or Pastoral Care?
Church Discipline in Calvin’s Geneva, 1542–1596283

ELSIE ANNE MCKEE (Princeton, NJ):
John Calvin as Reformer of “Spirituality”307

List of Contributors325

Index of Names and Places327

Calvin: Saint or Sinner?

HERMAN J. SELDERHUIS

As a start of the Calvin year 2009, a large number of experts in Calvin studies and Reformation research in general convened from October 31 – November 2nd at the Vanenburg Castle at Putten (The Netherlands). The conference, organised by the Institute for Reformation Research (Theological University Apeldoorn), dealt with the fact that for a long time Calvin has been seen as a great reformer, theologian, preacher and exegete by some, while others could only see him as a rigid dogmatist, the intolerant leader of the city of Geneva, and the one who burdened the reformed tradition with a joyless lifestyle. With the 500th birthday of John Calvin lying ahead, scholars presented papers on various topics in order to get a better and more objective perspective on John Calvin. These papers have in this volume been organised into four sections: biography, Bible, theology and church.

Biography

The image of Calvin as a saint or a sinner has for centuries been based on a few old biographies rather than on research into available facts. However, as Irena Backus demonstrates, the various editions of Theodore Beza's Life of Calvin get less hagiographical, although his life remains heroic. Far from that is the contribution of Max Engammare, in which he measures Calvin with the norm of the so-called seven capital sins of the Roman Catholic tradition. He concludes that pride was the reformer's major sin in this list, but admits that Calvin himself was aware of this. Isabelle Graesslé then challenges the negative ideas that up until today exist of Calvin and pleads for a long overdue rehabilitation, for which there is ample reason. A case study for this new approach is the article of Frans van Stam, in which he describes the plausible motives for printers, and for Calvin as an author to publish a work under a false name.

Olivier Millet describes Calvin as a man suffering from many physical problems and from an overload of work, relating it to Calvin's conviction that God called him to His service, a service of self-sacrifice. This attitude may have made him a hero, certainly not a saint.

Bible

How Calvin saw himself in the light of being called to be a prophet of God is the theme of Jon Balsarak. The parallels Calvin drew between the situation of the Old Testament church and the church in Geneva did increase the reformers's awareness that he had the position of a prophet and should speak and act accordingly. This however did not mean that he saw himself as an author of Scripture. According to John Thompson, Calvin wanted to listen to the tradition of the Church, but from the conviction that much of earlier exegesis did not do justice to what God had said. Thompson however also states that Calvin was a reformer of exegesis, yet stayed much closer to traditional exegesis than is often thought. Proof of this is Christoph Burger's comparison between Luther's and Calvin's explanation of the Magnificat. Calvin is more concise and more exact in his exegesis of Mary's words, but he also takes up thoughts that can be found in some medieval exegetes.

Theology

There is no doubt that Calvin was a reformer of theology, and the contributions in this volume demonstrate this. Arnold Huygen for example deals with the concept of 'accommodation' as Calvin's instrument to deal with the way in which the transcendent God reveals himself to humans and what this means for our knowledge of God. As a reformer of theology, Calvin too had to deal with existing views and positions. Calvin's attitude towards medieval theology differs from that of Luther and Zwingli, in the sense that he feels less necessity to defend himself against this tradition and therefore also is more open to its reception. Volker Leppin compares the structure of Calvin's theology and his conception of philosophy, and finds basic parallels between Calvin and medieval thinkers. In his anthropology, Calvin makes use of the results of the Luther-Erasmus debate, but also of insights of Augustine and Melancthon, as Tony Lane shows. Christian Link deals with the fascinating and complex issue of predestination and admits that Calvin – just as Augustine and Luther – had to deal with the complicated and seemingly inconsistent 'data' given by biblical authors such as John and Paul. Günter Frank too deals with the reception of existing concepts, especially with that of the natural knowledge of God. Frank states that in reading Calvin it should be noted that he speaks as a theologian, not as a philosopher. More related to present day theology is the paper of Kees van der Kooi. Calvin's christology is in balance between a theology of the cross and a theology of resurrection, which makes his theology even more relevant for today.

Church

The final section of this volume deals with the papers that were related to Calvin's position in the church. Although Calvin can be seen as the *primus inter pares* regarding those who contributed to the contents and function of the reformed confessions, he certainly is not the only one, as Emidio Campi claims. Campi suggests that more research should be devoted to those reformers who so long stood in the shadow of the major figures, but also that the reformed tradition should be seen more as a whole. Karin Maag questions the idea of Calvin as being the ideal teacher. Tracing Calvin's career and the content of his lectures, she concludes that he was not exceptional as a teacher but highly influential. Fitting with the image of Calvin as a sinner is the image of the terror of Genevan discipline. Scott Manetsch analyses this image on the basis of careful studies of the remaining records and claims that it was not a matter of terror but of pastoral care that characterizes the cases in which men and women were disciplined. This approach is in line with Calvin's spirituality, as Elsie McKee describes this. Calvin strove for himself and for others to live a life of 'pietas', not as a condition for grace but as a result of it. McKee calls Calvin's spirituality creative in the way he combined elements from the Bible and traditional elements. In this spirituality, the knowledge of guilt before God and the necessity of a sanctified life are basic. Calvin knew both, being 'simul' saint and sinner.

Conclusion

The great variety of topics as well as the rich contents of the contributions demonstrate that Calvin research is closer to the beginning than to the end. The Calvin year 2009, which started with the conference at the Vanenburg, has given an immense impulse to this research, and this volume gives insights and directions from which many will profit.

This conclusion also gives me the opportunity to thank those who have made this book possible. My assistant Martijn de Groot has done a great job in formatting the manuscript. I would like to thank Frau Ilse König (Mohr Siebeck) for her patience and friendly co-operation. The editors of the series "Spätmittelalter und Reformation" deserve thanks for taking this volume in their respected 'Reihe'. I would also like to give special thanks to Mr. Jan Baan for his generous contribution to the conference, and to the people at the Vanenburg for making us feel at home there.

Biography

The Beza/Colladon *Lives* of Calvin and the Calvinist concept of sainthood¹

IRENA BACKUS

For mediaeval Christians, especially from the thirteenth century onwards, the saints were the dead who had received special recognition and who had entered the kingdom of God. Unlike the reformers who considered all believers dead or alive as saints without paying them any particular homage, except as members of the true church, the medieval church honoured particularly a limited number of the deceased to whom it accorded the title of saint. In order to merit the title the deceased had to satisfy a certain number of conditions, the most important of which was the celebration of the day of the saint's death which was co-terminous with his or her entry into the kingdom of heaven, for example the feast of Saint John, the feast of Saint Catherine etc. Although frequently in the later Middle Ages, recognition of a saint by the church was due to popular pressure, no one, as a rule, could become a saint without official ecclesiastical recognition, or canonisation, which could be granted either by the bishop or by the pope. The latter practice was to become dominant in the West from the thirteenth century onwards, which did not stop a certain number of local cults of the saints. At the same time, the Eastern Church continued to canonise its saints by episcopal authority. This meant a proliferation of lists of saints and of calendars. All the saints, local, national or canonised by Rome continued to be venerated for a hundreds of years after their death, as is the case to this day. The most common form of hagiography was their *Lives*, which commemorated their merits. These *Lives* could be divided into two closely related subgenres: straightforward biographical accounts containing a legendary element and sermons which also included legendary material. The purpose of these writings was to depict the saints as models of how Christians should live and not to give a historical account of their origins, social context or personalities. Thus Gregory of Tours entitled his

¹ Some of the material in this essay is derived from Irena Backus, *Life Writing in Reformation Europe. Lives of reformers by friends, disciples and foes*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008. (Cf. indications in the footnotes). Most of it, however, is new. The introduction and the comparison with Jacques Lect's *Life* of Chandieu are also new and based on original research.

collection of *Lives* of twenty three Gallic saints *De vita patrum* or *Life of the fathers* in the singular, because he wanted to stress the merits and virtues which made up the one ideal of sainthood. Differences of the number and quality of miracles, or the different types of abnegation practised by each were not important. Given this underlying aim and scope it is inevitable that *Lives* of the saints should obey very strict rules of composition and that the saints should be depicted as followers and imitators of Christ *par excellence*. Certain motifs and certain expressions became their hallmarks and were generally applicable regardless of the particular saint's origins, gender or identity.²

However, this model could not fit the 16th century *Lives* of the major reformers. When confronted by the latter therefore, we cannot help but ask ourselves: "what sort of document is it?" Are we dealing with another form of hagiography or are we dealing with the writing of history? Or a bit of both? All sorts of subsidiary questions arise. Are we dealing with a private commemoration of a teacher or a friend destined for a limited public? Or are we faced with a funeral encomium intending to highlight the merits and achievements of the deceased on the model of Greek and Roman *Lives*? It could also be that are we confronted by an attack on or a defence of the dead reformer's character and undertaking. Finally a *Life* could also be another way of writing a History of the Reformation or for that matter a way of presenting a school manual of theology or ethics. Or, it could be a mixture of any or these types of writing. To put it briefly, a 16th century biographies of reformers do not form a clearly defined genre in contrast with medieval *Lives* of the saints. Moreover, they are marked by tensions between history, invective, hagiography and the funeral *laudatio* style. Today I shall talk about the early *Lives* of Calvin by Beza and Colladon concentrating on the way they juggle with the notion of sainthood, not wishing either to scrap it altogether or to imitate medieval *Lives* of the saints. The second question I shall be attempting to answer will concern itself with Jacques Lect's³ *Life* of Antoine de la Roche Chandieu (ca.

² The literature on mediaeval *Lives* of the saints is very abundant but there is no adequate general work in English. By way of a general introduction see René Aigrain, *Hagiographie, ses sources, ses méthodes, son histoire* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 2000). Reprint of the original 1953 edition with new bibliography by Robert Godding. See also Jacques Dubois and Jean-Loup Lemaître, *Sources et méthodes de l'hagiographie médiévale* (Paris: Cerf, 1993).

³ Jacques Lect (1556–1611) studied law at Bourges and Geneva prior to becoming professor of law at the Academy of Geneva in 1583. He was a member of the small Council from 1584 onwards and a syndic in 1597, 1601, 1605, 1609. He followed the political and religious line of Calvin and Beza to whom he was much devoted. He was involved in the negotiations leading up to the Peace of St. Julien of 1603, a treaty which affirmed Geneva's independence from Savoy defeated in the Escalade of december 1602. He wrote a number of political and

1534–1591) in an attempt to discover whether the model of the Beza/Colladon *Lives* of Calvin was functional when it came to the writing of *Lives* of other reformers.

Calvin

Calvin's disciple – biographers faced various issues. The chief of these was the defence of his reputation in the face of rumours about his purportedly dissolute private life, his dictatorial ways and his intolerance. There were also some suspicions of Genevan preachers instituting a Calvin cult. On the reformer's death in 1564 a need for a detailed account of his life made itself felt in order to show that Calvin was a holy individual after all. This need was probably increased by Calvin's well-known reluctance to talk about himself. However, unlike the followers of Luther, the Genevans did not have the option of preaching on Calvin on the model of *Lives* of the saints, nor could they compare him to John the Baptist or similar biblical prophet without committing what was in their view the unpardonable crime of confusing divine and human elements of religious belief and practice. The question that preoccupied mainly Beza but also Antoine de la Faye and Nicolas Colladon after Calvin's death was how to write a *Life* of the reformer that would correct historical errors and rumours, and portray Calvin as the saintly individual *sine macula et ruga*, while at the same time avoiding giving the impression of writing a *Life* of a saint, something did not worry the Lutherans at all. In other words, the problem of Calvin's successors could be summed up as: how to write the *Life* of a protestant saint without making him look like a saint of the Catholic Church?

The problem was not an easy one, which is why Beza with the encouragement of de la Faye and with the help of Colladon had three successive attempts at writing the *Life* of Calvin, which saw the light of day successively in 1564, 1565 and 1575.

As is well-known, Beza wrote the first version of his *Life* of Calvin in French as a preface to Calvin's Commentary on Joshua which the reformer left unpublished on his death in 1564 and which his successor had published by Perrin in Geneva in the same year.⁴ Still in 1564 Beza published

legal treatises and is best known for his *Le citoyen de Genève* (co-authored with Jean Sarasin), 1606, a work of anti-savoyard propaganda. See M. Campagnolo, art. 'Jacques Lect' in *Dictionnaire historique suisse* [<http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/f/F116284.php>] consulted on 25.08.2008. His English connections and his biography of Chandieu have never yet been studied.

⁴ See Frédéric Gardy, *Bibliographie des œuvres de Théodore de Bèze* (Geneva: Droz, 1960), no. 173, p. 105. Hereafter: Gardy.

the *Life* separately under the title *Discours de M. Théodore de Besze, contenant en bref l'histoire de la vie et mort de Maistre Iean Calvin avec le Testament et derniere volonté dudict Calvin. Et le catalogue des liures par luy composez. 1564.*⁵ Gardy lists four separate imprints of the leaflet all dating from 1564. All of these were printed without the printer's name. However, Gardy identifies one as emanating from the presses of Thomas Bouchard in Saint Lô⁶ and another as being the work of Eloi Gibier of Orléans.⁷ Of the other two, one bears the place of printing as being Orléans; the other neither the printer's name nor his address. All four imprints contain the printer's preface to the reader but only the Saint Lô imprint also includes the preface by Antoine de la Faye.⁸

This short document points up the problem very clearly and succinctly. In contrast with the *Life* of Luther, writing the *Life* of Calvin turned out to be an embarrassing business. De la Faye's preface is correspondingly defensive. He argues that remarkable, pious individuals are intended by God as a proof of His grace and that their human merits count for nothing. "Therefore, he notes, the praiseworthy lives of those who were gifted with virtues are left to us as a memorial not so that we obscure the grace that God made shine through them and exalt these men unnecessarily, but so that God's grace is made known to us all and that we praise God for it." In contrast with all the Luther biographers, neither Beza nor de la Faye wishes to present Calvin as a mere instrument of providence. What Beza intends with his first *Life* of Calvin is to show that the human Calvin with *his individual* virtues is a proof of the workings of divine grace. However, as the printer's preface suggests, the first *Life* is merely an attempt at capturing the unique combination of Calvin as holy individual and Calvin as the proof of God's grace. The printer emphasises that Beza's *Life* is too short having been intended only as a preface and the reader must not think that the remembrance of someone as important as the Genevan reformer

⁵ I shall be referring to the 1564 printing without the printer's address. Hereafter: Beza, *Discours*. See Gardy, no. 175, p. 105.

⁶ See Gardy, no. 176, p. 106 (contains preface by Antoine de la Faye as well as the printer's address to the reader). Cf. Geneva: Musée historique de la Réformation copy (shelf-mark: B 24, 1 (64) b. De la Faye's preface figures on fol. A ij r.–Aij v.: *inc.* 'Quand Dieu nous propose quelques excellens personnages...' *des.* '...qui est la parole de Dieu.' De la Faye distinguishes the *Life* of Calvin from the Catholic hagiographical genre and stresses that *Lives* of saintly individuals are intended by God not to obscure His glory but to highlight it. By imitating the example of Calvin and other saintly men we get to obey God's commandments.

⁷ See Gardy, no. 174, p. 105.

⁸ See Gardy, no. 175, p. 105; no. 177, p. 107.

can be encompassed in such a short work.⁹ However, this does not make it worthless, as its object is first and foremost to edify the reader.

The *Life* also has an introductory function in the printer's view 'as it will surely give you hope of expecting a fine and complete account of everything he did, which will profit greatly the progress of God's Church.'¹⁰ Knowing about Calvin the man and what he had to endure is not matter for an autobiography, contrary to what Melanchthon thought about Luther,¹¹ but for an official biography which will profit the church. This may seem surprising when we bear in mind Calvin's own discretion about himself and his open aversion to becoming an *exemplum* or any sort of cult figure after his death and a fear of it happening despite his wishes.¹² The tone set by the printer's preface to Beza's *Discours* suggests that his disciples feared on the contrary that Calvin's discretion, if extended to his biographies, would hamper the evangelisation of France and conversion of new faithful.

The *Discours* proved something of a bestseller. Between 1564 and early 1565 it underwent eight further French imprints.¹³ It was also translated into Latin, English and German.¹⁴ However, it created as many problems as it solved and proved to be rather too close to a mediaeval *Life* of a saint. Thus the French version of the *Discours* was first of all augmented and reorganised by Beza and Nicolas Colladon and published as a preface to Calvin's *Commentaires svr le liure de Iosué* in 1565.¹⁵ This version was

⁹ Beza, *Discours*, p. 2: *Imprimeur au lecteur*: 'Cependant ne trouue estrange si ce discours ne commence par la forme accoustumee aux Hystoriographes, car l'intention de l'autheur qui est M. Theodore de Besze, semblablement bon seruiteur de Dieu, et compagnon de M. Iean Caluin en l'oeuvre du Seigneur, n'a esté de le publier comme une histoire, ains seulement pour vne preface aux commentaires dudict Caluin sur le liure de Josue, mis en lumiere depuis son trespas. Le t'ay bien voulu aduertir de ce, affin que tu ne pensasses que la memore d'un si grand personnage se peut contenter d'un si petit discours (combien qu'il soit diligemment et veritablement fait)...'.

¹⁰ Beza, *Discours*, p. 2: *Imprimeur au lecteur*: '...lequel te servira seulement de te donner esperance d'attendre vne belle et ample histoire de ses faits et gestes, qui profitera grandement à l'aduancement de l'Eglise de Dieu...'

¹¹ See Backus, *Life Writing*, pp. 3–4.

¹² He forbade any identifying mark on his grave and its exact location in Geneva's Plainpalais cemetery remains unknown to this day.

¹³ See Gardy, nos. 175–182, pp. 105–109.

¹⁴ See Gardy, nos. 184–187, pp. 109–112.

¹⁵ *Commentaires de M. Iean Caluin svr le liure de Iosué. Avec une Preface de Theodore de Besze, contenant en brief l'histoire de la vie et mort d'iceluy: augmentee depuis la premiere edition deduite selon l'ordre du temps, quasi d'an en an...* A Geneve, De l'imprimerie de François Perrin. 1565. Cf. Gardy, no. 189, p. 112. References here to the text in *Ioannis Caluini opera quae supersunt omnia*, eds G. Baum, E. Cunitz, E. Reuss (59 vols, Braunschweig: Schwetschke etc., 1863–1900), vol. 21 (1879), cols. 50–115. Hereafter: *Calv. Opp.*, vol. 21.

then reprinted five times between 1565 and 1663 both separately and in preface form. Finally, in 1575, Beza completely rewrote this second *Life* of Calvin appending the new version to his edition of *Ioannis Caluini Epistolae et responsa*, which were subsequently re-edited in 1576 and 1657.¹⁶ This third *Life* of Calvin was also inserted in the 1617 edition of Calvin's *Opera theologica* and in the 1654 Leiden edition of the *Institutes*.¹⁷

The pattern of revision in the three Lives of Calvin

I shall examine the three *Lives* in chronological order in an effort to trace the pattern of change. Beza starts the *Discours* not with a chronology of the reformer but with an account of Calvin's doctrine and his struggles against heresies of his time:

Indeed, as for his doctrine which I shall address first, it is so far from the truth that the very number of its opponents renders it suspect to all people of sound judgement that, on the contrary, it can serve as a good argument of its solidity. This is especially true as no one who ever opposed it was aware that they were criticising not just a man but one who was a true servant of God.¹⁸

There follows a chronological catalogue of all the heresies combated by Calvin. Beza divides it into two parts; main heresies and second order heresies. Among Calvin's main opponents Beza lists the Anabaptists, Caroli, Servetus, Bolsec, and the Antitrinitarians. Second order heretics include Pighius, Sadolet, Joachim Westphal and Tillemann Hesshusen. All these, unlike the first category, issue from established churches. Castellio and Bauduin get a section to themselves. Beza concludes that his account of Calvin's teaching and doctrinal struggles exhausts the major part of Calvin's life which was in his view 'one perpetual doctrine, in what he said, what he wrote and in his morals and way of life.'¹⁹ However, Beza does not stop his biography there. After the idealised account of Calvin's

¹⁶ *Ioannis Caluini Epistolae et responsa. Eiusdem I. Caluini Vita a Theodoro Beza Geneuensis ecclesiae ministro accurate descripta...Omnia nunc primum in lucem edita*, Geneva, Pierre Saint-André, 1575. Cf. Gardy, no. 200, p. 119. For later editions see *ibid.*, nos. 201–203, 206, pp. 119–121, 122.

¹⁷ See Gardy, no. 204–205, p. 121.

¹⁸ Beza, *Discours*, p. 4: 'Or, quant à sa doctrine, de laquelle je veux parler en premier lieu, tant s'en faut que la multitude de ceux qui luy ont contredit la doivent rendre suspecte envers toutes gens de bon jugement qu'au contraire cela seul pourroit servir de certain argument pour l'approuver, d'autant que nul ne s'y est jamais opposé qui n'ait expérimenté qu'il s'adressoit non point contre un homme, mais contre un vray serviteur de Dieu.'

¹⁹ Beza, *Discours*, p. 17: 'Voilà les principaux combats que ce bon personnage a soustenu heureusement pour la vérité du Seigneur. Au reste par ce discours je pense avoir traité la pluspart de sa vie, car qu'a-ce esté autre chose de sa vie qu'une perpetuelle doctrine, tant par paroles que par escrits, et par toutes ses mœurs et façons de vivre?'

origins and education and an idealised account of his expulsion from and return to Geneva, he interweaves Calvin's private and public morality. According to Beza, Calvin had more integrity and worked harder than any man in the service of the church. He had extremely fragile health but, despite this, supported the heavy charge that God placed upon his shoulders. He was of exceptional temperance and most of the time content with one meal taken every twenty four hours. Contrary to the accusations of some, he was not in the least vainglorious or ambitious, never abused his position, and never made any important decisions without consulting his colleagues. His attire and the furnishings of his home were of the utmost modesty. He never dedicated his works to important patrons. Beza stresses that his marriage was of the most chaste despite the accusations of adultery levelled not so much at him as at those close to him (in fact his sister-in-law). But according to Beza, similar things happened in the house of Jacob and David.

Apart from his chastity, Calvin was characterised, according to Beza, by his clemency towards heretics and by his vehemence which no one could confuse with a choleric temperament. It goes without saying that he had a good death.²⁰

Beza's identification of the man with his teaching and the highly idealised, hagiographical, portrait of the reformer would have rendered the Genevans vulnerable to the accusations of trying to start a Calvin cult.

Beza and Colladon therefore collaborated on the second *Life*²¹, which keeps intact most of the contents of the *Discours* but reorders them in a strictly chronological framework adding material such as additional facts, dates and detailed information on Calvin's works, without removing the catalogue, which had figured in Beza's *Discours*. Calvin's *Life* in its second version focuses much more on events and this means that the reformer is shown not so much as a static model as someone interacting with the environment. This should make the *Life* much closer to the modern conception of historical biography. However, this is not the case for variety of reasons. Firstly, the biographers' object is not to situate Calvin in the history of the period but to prove that his life shows him to be called by God and armed by the Almighty 'with holy perseverance until the day of his death to edify his own orally and in writing.'²² What is interesting about the 1565 account of Calvin is that, despite being couched in this providential framework, it contains several perfectly human anecdotes about the

²⁰ W. Lindanus in his *Historia tragica* of 1564 (French version: *Discours en forme de dialogue ou histoire tragique*, Paris: G. Chaudière, 1566) mentions that most of the reformers encountered bad and ignoble ends (cf. *ibid.*, fol. 147r.).

²¹ For evidence of collaboration see Backus, *Life Writing*, pp. 129–130.

²² *Calv. Opp.*, vol. 21, col. 52–3.

reformer and devotes a great deal more attention to the exact chronology of Calvin's works. Colladon introduces anecdotes such as the theft of Calvin's horse on his way to Basel in 1536²³, his risking his life to quell a rebellion of the Council of 200 on 16 December 1547²⁴, or joking with his friends that he did not produce a second edition of the *Traité des reliques* (1546) because they failed to provide him with further examples of fake relics.²⁵ He also shows privileged knowledge of Calvin's intellectual gifts, his memory in particular and cites several examples of its prodigious capacity.²⁶

Another feature of this *Life* of Calvin is its construction on a yearly basis according to the chronicle model, a device which contributes to making the reformer seem more human, by portraying his life as a series of struggles fought by a mortal. This emphasises the break with Beza's first portrayal of the reformer as identical with his teaching. We might further note that the frequency with which the *Life* cites dates²⁷ enables it to show that God intervened directly in the history of Geneva during Calvin's time, beginning with his return in 1541:

Thus he was re-established in Geneva on thirteenth of September 1541 with Master Viret as his colleague. And thus God showed his wonderful mercy towards the people of Geneva. For given that when the ancient nation rejected Moses, God delayed their deliverance by forty years, did not the people of Geneva who had rejected Calvin and his companions, all good and faithful servants of Christ, deserve to be enslaved forever to the tyranny of the devil and the Roman Antichrist? And yet, God allowed them to reconstruct their Church after only three years.²⁸

While no historical biography in modern sense of the term, the *Life* now conveys more of the specificity of Calvin than Beza's first account. Removing Beza's identification of the man with the doctrine and referring the

²³ *Calv. Opp.*, vol. 21, col. 53.

²⁴ *Calv. Opp.*, vol. 21, col. 69.

²⁵ *Calv. Opp.*, vol. 21, col. 68.

²⁶ *Calv. Opp.*, vol. 21, cols. 108–9.

²⁷ See e.g. *Calv. Opp.*, vol. 21, cols. 62–3: 'Davantage il commença à escrire sur saint Paul, dediant son commentaire de l'Epistre aux Romains à M. Simon Grynée, le plus docte des allemans et son grand ami. La date dudit Commentaire est de l'an 1539, le 18 octobre. Aussi il escrivit en François un petit Traité et bien familier, de la Cene du Seigneur pour l'usage de ceux de la langue Françoisse...'

²⁸ *Calv. Opp.*, vol. 21, col. 64: 'Par ainsi il fut restabli derechef à Genève, l'an 1541, le 13 de septembre trouuant là pour son compagnon M. Viret. En cest endroit se monstra merueilleuse la misericorde de Dieu envers le peuple de Genève. Car si le peuple ancien reiettant Moïse, la deliurance fut retardee quarante ans, le peuple de Geneve n'estoit-il pas bien digne d'estre à iamais asservi sous la tyrannie du diable et de l'Antechrist romain, quand il avoit reietté Calvin et ses compagnons, fideles et excellens serviteurs du Seigneur? Et toutesfois Dieu n'a permis que pour cela ait esté différé l'edifice de ceste Eglise que trois ans seulement.'

reader to Calvin's works for the latter, the Beza/Colladon *Life* substitutes a portrait of someone more human but nonetheless sent by God at a particular time. That model too proved unsatisfactory and only served to reinforce the impression that Geneva was promoting a Calvin cult instead of Christianity.²⁹

Beza waited ten years before trying his hand at a new biography of Calvin, aiming this time at a more restricted readership of theologians. This 1575 *Life* was written in Latin and was not to be translated into French until 1681. Beza appended it to his edition of Calvin's letters, thus linking implicitly biography with the letter as its documentary source. Nowhere does Beza suggest that he based his work on the letters, which we know to have been very carefully selected for public use.³⁰ Their function, on the contrary, is to confirm a certain public image of the reformer as founder and leader of the church and not bring the reader closer to the man or to reveal hitherto unknown facts about him. As regards the *Life*, gone are all the anecdotes of 1565, having obviously been judged unsuitable for a biography of a churchman and a public figure. Gone too are all passages likely to make the Genevan Church open to accusations of instituting a Calvin cult.

Instead, Beza added a methodological and ideological justification for Calvinist *Life* writing in the face of doubts and criticisms:

Let them clamour, those who got hold of the idea through ignorance and those who are wicked, that we worship Luther, Zwingli and Calvin as if they were gods while very frequently decrying as idolaters those who worship saints. Let them shout, I say, as loudly and as long as they want. We have an answer ready. It is one thing to commemorate the labours, the words and the actions that holy men performed or uttered in the cause of religion- for good men become better through knowing these things while the wicked are condemned, that being our sole purpose in this sort of writing. It is, however, quite another thing to do as they do, which is either to deface the lives of truly holy men with tales which are as impious as they are inept (this what Abdias, whoever he was, did with the *Lives* of the Apostles), or to fabricate tales from the most disgusting lies (generally called golden legends in barbarian vocabulary, but I call them stinking legends suitable for removal) and finally to bring back into use the images of pagan gods, with only the names changed.³¹

The function of the reformers' *Lives* is portrayed as moral and edifying. They bear no relation to the *Lives* of the saints as they do not mingle fact and fiction. They do not attribute supernatural powers to their subjects, nor

²⁹ See Backus, *Life Writing*, p. 133 and footntes ibid.

³⁰ See Daniel Ménager, 'Théodore de Bèze, biographe de Calvin', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 45 (1983): 231–235, pp. 249–51, esp. p. 250: 'La Correspondance, déjà soigneusement triée pour n'offenser ni la mémoire de Calvin, ni la susceptibilité des destinataires, ne passe pas finalement dans la biographie.'

³¹ *Calv. Opp.*, vol. 21, cols. 119–20.

are they meant to encourage people to worship them. This is how Beza defines the genre:

There is no one in my view [he says] who does not admit that amidst all God's works men are to be recognised and honoured above all, and among these mortals, especially those who have distinguished themselves by their teaching and by their saintliness. It is not for nothing that Daniel [12, 3] compares saintly men to stars whose splendour points the road to blessedness to others. Those who allow their light to be completely extinguished at their death deserve being invaded by darkness much thicker than before.³²

Beza has gone beyond de la Faye's preface of 1564. Whereas de la Faye argued that remarkably pious humans are only saintly in so far as they provide a proof of the workings of God's grace, Beza links their merits to God's creation design and defends his model of Calvin hagiography as biblically founded.

This third biography of Calvin is also the first protestant biography to publish a physical description of its subject à la Suetonius and in the spirit of Varro's *Imagines*, albeit in a summary form. Beza describes him as of medium height, of very pale and dull complexion with eyes which remained bright until he died, sign of penetrating intelligence.³³ In this third version of his biography Calvin is raised to the status of a *Hercules christianus*³⁴ or a remarkable individual who gave his life over to the service of the church.

Beza's *Life* of Calvin in its final version thus marks the beginning not only of a new style of religious biography but also of a new perception of the role of individuals in implementing God's plan. Calvin is neither a saint nor an antique hero, but contrary to what might be expected, given the protestant concept of predestination, he cannot be reduced to the role of divine instrument either. With his last *Life* of Calvin, Beza put forward a specific notion of the emblematic Christian hero which was to propagate itself until well into the twentieth century. Indeed, no further protestant *Lives* of Calvin were produced throughout the early modern period. Calvin's second Calvinist biographer after the combined Beza – Colladon – de la Faye efforts of 1564–75 was none other than Émile Doumergue who took up in 1899 many of the issues present in the 16th century *Lives*, including that of defence of the reformer's reputation.³⁵

³² *Calv. Opp.*, vol. 21, col.120.

³³ *Calv. Opp.*, vol. 21, col. 170: 'Statura fuit mediocri, colore subpallido et nigricante, oculis ad mortem vsque limpidis.'

³⁴ *Calv. Opp.*, vol. 21, col. 170.

³⁵ Émile Doumergue, *Jean Calvin. Les hommes et les choses de son temps*, (7 vols, Lausanne-Neuilley: n.p., 1899–1927).

Antoine de la Roche Chandieu (ca. 1534–1591)

This is all well and good but to what extent was Beza's heroic model of protestant hagiography copied by his Calvinist contemporaries and disciples? While Antoine de la Faye certainly took it over wholesale in his controversial *Life of Beza* which got him into trouble with the Council,³⁶ this was not the case of de la Faye's greatest Genevan enemy,³⁷ Jacques Lect, who wrote a biography of Antoine de la Roche Chandieu as a preface to the latter's complete works published in 1593.³⁸

Unlike Calvin, Chandieu requires the briefest of preliminary introductions.³⁹ He was born in Chabottes in the Maconnais in 1534 and he died in Geneva in 1591 having obtained the city's bourgeoisie just before his death. As the name shows, he came from a noble family. After law studies in Toulouse, he adopted the teaching of Calvin after meeting the reformer in Geneva. He was pastor of the protestant church in Paris in 1556/57. At the beginning of the first war of Religion he sought refuge in Orléans and presided over the third national synod of the French Church. His attack on Morély's ecclesiastical discipline is well-known.⁴⁰ He was a religious refugee in Geneva and Lausanne in 1568 and 1570 and then again in 1573 and 1583. It was during that latter period that he produced most of his properly theological work, which consists, among other things, of polemical tracts against the Lutheran (Ubiquitarian) doctrines on the nature of the resurrected body of Christ and the eucharist and also in controversies against the Jesuits, Francisco Torres in particular. He also proposed a new form of scholasticism intended to repel the Jesuit onslaughts on Calvinist theology.

He took part in the making of the *Harmonia confessionum* of 1581. This was the first attempt at comparative Dogmatics or Symbolics. It grew out

³⁶ See Backus, *Life Writing*, pp. 138–148.

³⁷ For Jacques Lect see footnote 3 above. The quarrel between the two men was to do with de la Faye's ambition to succeed Beza as lifelong moderator of the Company of Pastors at the time when the Council wanted to make the Company into an instrument of the civil authorities. For details see Backus, *Life Writing*, pp. 138–139 and footnotes 46–49 *ibid*.

³⁸ *Chandei nobilissimi viri Opera theologica. Volumine vno cpmphensa et ordine commodissimo digesta: in queis [sic] omnes aduersariorum tractatus aduersus superstitem illum editi refelluntur. Accessit cl. Viri Iacobi Lectii iurisconsulti de vita Ant. Sadeelis et scriptis epistola ad ampl. V. Archiepiscopum Cantuariensem.* Geneva: Jean Le Preux, 1593. Hereafter: Lect, *Vita in Opera*, (1593).

³⁹ The most recent study of Chandieu by Sara K. Barker, *Developing French Protestant Identity: the political and religious writings of Antoine de Chandieu (1534–1591)*, Ph.D., St. Andrews University 2006 [<https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/bitstream/10023/236/1/Chandieu+thesis.pdf>].

⁴⁰ See Philippe Denis and Jean Rott, *Jean Morély (ca. 1524–ca. 1594) et l'utopie d'une démocratie dans l'Église*, (Geneva: Droz, 1993).

of a desire for one common Creed, which was modified into the idea of a selected harmony. In this shape it was proposed by the Protestants of Zurich and Geneva, entrusted to Beza, Daneau, Chandieu and Salvart minister of the French church at Castres, and chiefly executed by the last of the three. It was intended as a defence of protestant, and particularly Reformed, doctrine against the constant attacks of Romanists and ubiquitous Lutherans. It does not give the *Confessions* in full, but extracts from them on the chief articles of faith, which are classified under nineteen sections. Besides the principal Reformed Confessions, three Lutheran Confessions were also used, viz., the Augsburg, the Saxon, and the Württemberg Confessions. The work appeared almost simultaneously with the Lutheran *Formula of Concord*, and may be called a Reformed *Formula of Concord*, though differing from the former in being a mere compilation from previous Symbols. Like the Lutheran *Formula*, it is symptomatic of the growing realisation that the Reformed Church had to affirm itself more strongly in its non-monolithic but nonetheless harmonious identity. In 1587 Chandieu was in the service of the King of Navarre who sent him on a mission to the Swiss reformed cantons the following year. In 1589 he returned to Geneva and took part in the war against Savoy in the same year. His literary production spans a variety of genres, ranging from poetry, and his famous controversy against Ronsard, through *Meditations* on the Psalm 32 and some properly theological treatises. In a word, Chandieu in the context of his era had sufficient influence and stature to be depicted as either a protestant saint on the model of the Beza/Colladon *Lives* of Calvin of 1564 and 1565, or, as a *Hercules christianus* on the model of Beza's *Life* of Calvin of 1575.

Lect's *Life* is short (10 folio pages) and written in the funeral *laudatio* mode. It is dedicated to John Whitgift (ca. 1532–1604), archbishop of Canterbury from 1583 until 1604 who had not been a Marian exile and who was opposed to both Catholic and Presbyterian system of church government while remaining resolutely Calvinist in his theology. On the face of it, the staunch champion of Episcopalianism seems an odd dedicatee to chose for a French Presbyterian pastor. To think that, however, is to forget that, as Nicholas Tyacke once put it: 'manifestly by the 1590s Calvinism was dominant in the highest reaches of the established [English] church.' Tyacke goes on to note aptly that this was most clearly evident in the Church of England's strong approval of Calvinist predestinarian doctrines which coexisted with suppression of Presbyterianism.⁴¹ Lect's prime motive is thus of a diplomatic nature: he aims to demonstrate to the archbishop the basic unity of the Continental and English versions of Cal-

⁴¹ Nicholas Tyacke, 'The Rise of Arminianism reconsidered', *Past and Present* 115 (March, 1987): 202–216.

vinism, which is why he omits the slightest mention of Chandieu's own views on Church government. Not that he says so in so many words. After noting that Chandieu had always been on friendly terms with Whitgift and that the latter often corresponded with the deceased, Lect reminds Whitgift that he received most cordially Chandieu's son Jean on the latter's visit to England in 1592 and that the Queen herself had always been most supportive of Chandieu and his family. He notes also that Chandieu's name was particularly honoured in England and that the news of his death was received with much mourning.⁴² Contrary to these protestations, Chandieu's name was never very well known and loved in England and the only work of his to be translated into English were his *Meditations* on the 23rd Psalm. Lect's work represents, as we noted above, a diplomatic rather than an historical endeavour and is above all not to be taken as a sign of a wish for religious unity or any hope of reconciling the Episcopalian and the Presbyterian systems of Church government. It is of course possible that Lect was mindful of Beza's diplomatic *faux pas* of 1564 when he chided Elizabeth for her system of church government. Be that as it may, Lect avoided the issue altogether.⁴³ What is more he chose not to copy any of Beza's models of protestant hagiography, which he would have been familiar with. What sort of model did he substitute?

Almost as a matter of routine that Lect starts with an explanation of the benefit of biographies of saintly individuals as exemplars:

Even though, as Tertullian said, we do not value faith because of persons but persons on account of their faith,⁴⁴ nonetheless persons can also be usefully invoked in public when we it is plain that the road to virtue is long if only precepts are used, but very short if we use examples. Indeed, to commit to paper both privately and publicly the actions and morals of great men is an ancient custom, which I see is highly praised in your country.⁴⁵

There follows a factual account of Chandieu's lineage, family, origins, studies and career. Among the more interesting features of Lect's account we might note his mention of Chandieu's conversion during his time in Toulouse as law student. The conversion, as Lect describes it, was a gradual and a fully human process:

⁴² Lect, *Vita*, in *Opera*, (1593).

⁴³ See Alain Dufour, 'Bèze et les grands de ce monde', in *Théodore de Bèze (1519–1605). Actes du colloque de Genève de 2005*, ed. Irena Backus with the Institut d'histoire de la Réformation (Geneva: Droz, 2007), p. 24.

⁴⁴ Cf. Tertullian, *De praescr. haer.* 3, 6: 'Ex personis probamus fidem an ex fide personas? Nemo est sapiens nisi fidelis, nemo maior nisi christianus, nemo autem christianus nisi qui ad finem usque perseueraverit.'

⁴⁵ Lect, *Vita*, in *Opera*, (1593).

His first teacher was Mathias Granianus from whom he drew the seeds of holy religion. Then he went to Toulouse and studying mainly law, he obtained little by little the knowledge of the truth. At the same time he began to abstain from papist filth.⁴⁶

Appropriately, Lect devotes proportionately much more space to Chandieu's career in France than to his life and activities in Geneva. He praises Chandieu's learning, eloquence and his skill in politics and in ecclesiastical affairs. He also commends Chandieu's theological and literary production particularly his concern with finding a method of combating 'the recent arrogant sect of Jesuits.' This would naturally have been acceptable to Whitgift, notorious for his opposition to the Roman Church as well as to the advocates of Presbyterianism. This is what Lect says:

When he saw the new, deadly tricks of the recent arrogant sect, called the Jesuits, he learned eagerly the precepts of Aristotle's doctrines and he got a good grasp of it good enough to bring it out of the shadow of the Schools into the practical realm so as to render inoperable all the snares laid by these men.⁴⁷

These writings, claims Lect, are famous and praised by all right thinking men. He also mentions Chandieu's poetry which he does not include in the volume of complete works:

He took enormous pleasure in writing poetry not, as most poets in this day and age, to celebrate carnal pleasures and luxury but to draw the spirit nearer to things divine...⁴⁸

The image of Chandieu that emerges is very much that of an eminent French Protestant leader of service to the Church and princes in the context of the Wars of Religion which, it so happens, benefited from English support. His theology is made to correspond as closely as possible to Whitgift's Anglican version of Calvinism with its support of predestination and refusal of Presbyterianism. At the same time, as we said, Lect does not portray Chandieu either as a new type of protestant saint or an emblematic Christian hero. Although learned, modest, virtuous and devout as well as doing everything in his power to show up the false Jesuit religion, Chandieu is not an instrument of God, his exemplary role is not biblically founded, he has not been chosen by the divine powers to fulfil any historic or eschatological mission. His *Life* is that of any outstanding human, his conversion to Protestantism when still a law student at Toulouse is treated as a part of human process of learning.

Lect abandoned the Bezan model of biography writing. This could have been due to various reasons: did he find the method itself inappropriate

⁴⁶ Lect, *Vita*, in *Opera*, (1593).

⁴⁷ Lect, *Vita*, in *Opera*, (1593).

⁴⁸ Lect, *Vita*, in *Opera*, (1593).

and veering dangerously near to the Roman Catholic hagiographical genre or did he think the genre appropriate for Calvin only? This is not likely as one of his and the Council's objections to de la Faye's *Life* of Beza was not its hagiographical slant, but, on the contrary, its inclusion of what in their view were 'several points which dishonoured the deceased man's memory.'⁴⁹ Did he want to lay a stress on the historical value of biography? The answer is emphatically no, as, despite his detailed account of the chronology of Chandieu's life, he remains resolutely hyperbolic in his praise of the deceased French religious leader and does not so much as advert to any weak points of character. Moreover, as we saw, he invokes Tertullian to stress the ethical value of biography, whilst unhesitatingly omitting to mention such features of Chandieu's theology as are likely to offend Whitgift.

Two likely reasons remain: firstly, delicate diplomatic negotiations and hagiography did not go together and Lect thought that a hagiographic portrayal of Chandieu was likely to offend rather than please. Secondly, and more probably, by the time Lect was writing, the Genevan church had already established that it had two saints, Calvin and Beza, and that, as the power of the Council over the Company of Pastors increased, there were to be no more saintlike individuals at the head of any European Calvinist church.

⁴⁹ See Backus, *Life Writing*, pp. 138–140.

John Calvin's Seven Capital Sins

MAX ENGAMMARE

Simon Devoyon, an unknown reformed protestant from La Rochelle, wrote and published a year after the death of Calvin, his *Discourse upon the catalogue of doctors of God's Church*.¹ In this little read *catena* which runs from Adam to John Calvin, the one hundred forty-seventh and last article summarizes the life of the Geneva reformer in the following words:

Et pour dire en moins de paroles, c'est chose merveilleuse de la grande assistance que le Seigneur a faicte à ce bon et saint personnage pour l'employer en son œuvre, comment il a esté diligent à prescher, exhorter et faire leçon, escrire, et respondre aux uns et aux autres, ayant une grande dexterité pour coucher ses responses à l'encontre de tous loups, et chiens, et amas de sangliers assemblez pour desgater la vigne du Seigneur, et comment il a renversé et destruit par le moyen des saintes/ Escritures, tant les heresies anciennes renouvelées, que nouvellement forgées, bref, pour repurger la doctrine de verité et salut, et pour derechef allumer la lumiere d'icelle.²

Calvin is described as a "good and saintly character." While this corresponds with the spirit of this conference, it does not correspond with Theodore Beza's description, which Devoyon would have read in the preface to his commentary on Joshua. Beza spoke only of a "good character"³, a "loyal servant" and "father".⁴ Of the saints, there was only Luke, John, Paul and the others ("saintes lettres" and "Saint-Esprit" are translated "Holy Scriptures"

¹ First of all, I would like to warmly thank Travis Bruce who helped me in writing this paper in English. See *Discours sur le denombrement des docteurs de l'Eglise de Dieu, assavoir, tant de ceux qui ont esté dès le commencement du monde (connus aux saintes Escritures) que de plusieurs qui ont puis apres succédé par ordre jusques aujourd'huy*. The book was translated into English by John Golburne, (who translated many other protestant texts): *A discourse vpon the catalogue of doctors of Gods Church, : to witt, aswell of those that haue beene from the beginning of the world, mentioned in the Holy Scriptures; as of manie which haue sithens by order succeeded, together with the continuall succession of the true Church of God vntill the yeare 1565*, London, "Richard Bradocke, for John Browne, and are to be solde at his shop in Fleetstreete over against the White Friars, at the signe of the Sugarloafe", 1598.

² *Ibid.*, f K_{ii}r-v.

³ See "Vie de Calvin" in *Calvini opera* 21, 21.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

and “Holy Spirit”). Devoyon had thus added “saintly” to Theodore Beza’s expression “good character”. In Geneva in 1564 or 1565, it was not usual to consider John Calvin as a “holy character”⁵. As you know, unlike at Wittenberg, the Great Reformer’s tombstone did not carry his name, to avoid any temptation of an idolizing cult, and only a few months after his death, out of town visitors were unable to locate Calvin’s sepulchre⁶. On the other hand, only two years after Calvin’s death, in 1566, the *Recueil des opuscules* (A French translation of almost all Calvin’s treatises) and a re-edition of the *Institution of the Christian Religion* displayed for the first time an engraving of Calvin in one of his books: it was Pierre Woeiriot’s engraving of Calvin, the second in an awkward new cutting, but on the title page itself.⁷ Fifteen years later, in the *Icones*, Beza spoke already about Calvin in the terms of a saint against whom Sophistes bark: “en continuant d’abayer après ce saint et docte theologien (*sanctissimo doctissimoque theologo magis ac magis oblatrantes*)”⁸. A century later, a re-edition of the *Vita Calvini* evoked also “the memory of this saintly man whom our Lord received in his glory”⁹. Calvin’s sainthood was thus recognized not so late in Geneva, but was not followed by a beatification hearing. If Calvin was a saint, to answer this conference’s question, it was as a *simul sanctus et peccator*,¹⁰ and I am interested in the

⁵ See Irena Backus, “Calvin. Saint, Hero or the Worst of all Possible Christians”, in *Calvinus sacrarum literarum interpres*. Papers of the International Congress on Calvin Research, Herman J. Selderhuis (ed.), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008, 223–43.

⁶ See our “L’inhumation de Calvin et des pasteurs genevois de 1540 à 1620. Un dépouillement très prophétique et une pompe funèbre protestante qui se met en place”, in *Les Funérailles à la Renaissance*, Jean Balsamo (ed.) (Travaux d’Humanisme et Renaissance 356), Geneva, 2002, 271–93, here 290. Nicolas Colladon told us the story in 1565, “certains escoliers estans venus de nouveau ici estudier se trouverent trompez un jour que ils allerent tout expres au cemetiere pour voir le sepulcre de Calvin, car ils pensoyent y voir quelque tombeau eslevé et magnifique, et il n’y a rien que la terre simplement non plus qu’aux autres.” See *Calvini opera* 21, 106.

⁷ See Jean-François Gilmont and Rodolphe Peter, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*. Les oeuvres de Jean Calvin publiées au XVIe siècle. I. Ecrits théologiques, littéraires et juridiques, vol. 3, 1565–1600 (Travaux d’Humanisme et Renaissance 339), Geneva: Droz, 2000, Nr 66/2 (by François Perrin, with two states of the title page, the second with the portrait on the reverse) and 66/3 (engraving on the reverse page).

⁸ See Théodore de Bèze, *Les vrais portraits des hommes illustres avec 30 portraits supplémentaires de l’édition de 1673*. Introduction d’Alain Dufour, Geneva, Slatkine reprints, 1986, 121; *Icones, id est veræ imagines virorum doctrina simul et pietate illustrium*, Geneva, Jean de Laon, 1580, f Riii r.

⁹ See *Calvini opera* 21, 11f (edition of 1657).

¹⁰ I play with Luther’s *simul iustus et peccator* (or *ex quadam parte iustus, ex quadam parte peccator* of Augustin) who referred to Romans 7, 7–25 ; and Galatians 5, 13–17. See Thor Hall, “An Analysis of *Simul Iustus Et Peccator*”, *Theology Today* 20, 1963, 174–82 ; J. Wicks, “Living and Praying as ‘Simul Iustus et Peccator’. A Chapter in Luther’s Spiritual Teaching”, *Gregorianum* 70, 1989, 521–48; and many others.

sinner, in particular the seven capital sins of Roman Catholic tradition, and how they interacted with Calvin's work and character.

The tradition of the seven capital sins was strong at the end of the Middle Ages and during the French Renaissance, as demonstrated by the numerous editions of the *Compost et kalendrier des bergiers*¹¹, incunables of which were published in Geneva even before Calvin's birth. These calendars illustrate seven terrible punishments in Hell for those who were guilty of capital sins. A century later, in Paris in 1603, the influential engravings were still used. Although in Roman Catholic theology the Seven capital sins do not coincide with the deadly sins¹², medieval tradition blended the two notions which did not exactly link to Proverbs 6, 16–19¹³: "These six things doeth the Lord hate: yea, his soule abhorreth seven" (*Geneva Bible*, 1560).

Thomas Aquinas confirmed the tradition of the seven capital sins: pride (*inanis gloria vel superbia*), envy (*inuidia*), wrath (*ira*), bad temper (*tristitia*) or disgust (*acedia*), greed (*auaritia sive cupiditas*), gluttony (*gula*) and lust (*luxuria*). Thomas cites Gregory the Great to remind readers that pride is the queen of all vices,¹⁴ while Peter Lombard also refers to Gregory in a brief listing of the same seven sins.¹⁵ The absence of *fornication* is surprising, present as it is in Evagrius or John Cassian, but it was no longer a part of the "canonical" list.¹⁶

The Council of Trent condemned Luther's lack of distinction between venial and mortal sins, and Calvin likewise refused this distinction. Indeed, in

¹¹ See *Le Kalendrier des bergiers*, Geneva, Jean Belot, between the 5th February 1498 and 1500 (CIBN, C-30 ; GW 5912 "vor 1497"). The edition is however to put backward to 1497, because the author gave the year 1497 when calculating the golden ratio! Belot republished the work in 1500.

¹² Thomas of Aquino processed with the seven capital sins just before to distinguish deadly from venial sin. See *Summa theologiae* I–IIæ, q. 84, art. 4 ("utrum convenienter dicantur septem vitia capitalia"), and q. 88 ("de peccato veniali et mortali").

¹³ "These six things doeth the Lord hate: yea, his soule abhorreth seven: The hautie eyes, a lying tongue, and the hands that shede innocent blood, An heart that imagineth wicked enterprises, sete that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lyes, and him that raiseth up contentions among brethren."

¹⁴ "Ad quartum dicendum quod superbia dicitur esse initium omnis peccati secundum rationem finis... superbia... regina quædam omnium vitiorum, sicut Gregorius dicit." See *Summa theologiae* I–IIæ, q. 84, art. 4 ("Cura Fratrum eiusdem Ordinis", Madrid, 1962, p. 545–50, in part. 550).

¹⁵ See Petrus Lombardus, *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*, ed. of the College S. Bonaventure ad Claras Aquas (Spicilegium Bonaventurianum), 2 vols., Rome, 1971–1981, lib. II, dist. Xlii, cap. 6 (vol. 1, 570).

¹⁶ See article "Péché mortel et péché véniel", *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* XII/1, Paris, 1933, 225–55 ; Aimé Solignac, article "péchés capitaux", *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* XII/1, Paris, 1984, 853–62.

his 1547 *Actes du concile de Trente avec l'antidote*, Calvin plainly condemned this distinction by confirming that all sins are mortal:

Comme nous confessons que tout peché est mortel, d'autant que tous sont condamnez par la Loy de Dieu (*quoniam Dei lege damnatum est*), aussi d'autre costé le Saint Esprit enseigne que tous procedent d'infidelité, ou pour le moins du défaut de foy. Il est vray que la malediction de Dieu est mort eternelle, laquelle est denoncée aux paillardes, aux larrons, aux perjures, et semblables, mais par tout où la foy regnera, elle destournera l'ire de Dieu, en chassant tous les pechez, comme en ostant le bois on esteint le feu.¹⁷

The declaration is final, and is also developed in his 1539 *Institution de la religion chrestienne*:

Ils prennent icy un refuge d'une frivole distinction: c'est assavoir que des péchez, les uns sont mortels, les autres véniels; qu'aux premiers il gist une grande satisfaction, que les seconds se peuvent purger par remèdes faciles, comme par l'oraison Dominicale, en prenant de l'eau bénite, et par l'absolution de la messe. Voylà comment ils se iouent et se moquent de Dieu. Mais combien qu'ils ayent sans cesse en la bouche les noms de péché mortel et véniel, ils n'ont encore seu toutesfois discerner l'un de l'autre, sinon que de l'impiété et souilleure du cœur humain (qui est le plus horrible péché devant Dieu), ils font un péché véniel. Nous au contraire, comme l'Escriture (qui est reigle du bien et du mal) nous enseigne, prononçons que le loyer de péché est mort, et que l'âme qui aura péché est digne de mort. Au reste, que les péchez des fidèles sont véniels; non pas qu'ils ne méritent la mort, mais d'autant que par la miséricorde de Dieu il n'y a nulle condamnation sur ceux qui sont en Iesus Christ, d'autant que leurs péchez ne leur sont imputez, mais sont effacez par grâce. Je say combien ils calomnient ceste doctrine, disant que c'est le Paradoxe des Stoiques, qui faisoient tous les péchez pareils. Mais ils seront aisément conveincus par leur bouche mesme. Car ie demande si entre les péchez qu'ils confessent estre mortels ils n'en recognoissent pas un plus grand que l'autre. Il ne s'ensuit pas donc que les péchez soyent pareils, pourtant s'ils sont pareillement mortels.¹⁸

¹⁷ See *Acta Synodi Tridentinae cum antidoto, Calvini opera* VII, 365–506, here 482, and *Recueil des opuscules* (1566) 976, for the French translation.

¹⁸ *ICR* III, iv, 28 (1539/1541). "Here they flee to the sanctuarie of the foolish distinction, that some sinnes are veniall, and some deadly; that for deadly sinnes is great satisfaction due, that veniall sinnes are purged with more easy remedies, as with saying of the Lord's prayer, with sprinkling of holy water, with absolution at the masse. So they mocke and trifle with God. But whereas they alway[s] have in their mouth veniall and deadly sinne, yet they could never discern the one from the other, saving that they make ungodlines and uncleannesse of heart, a veniall sinne. But we (as the Scripture the rule of right and wrong teacheth us) do pronounce, that the rewarde of sinne is death [= Romans 6, 23], and that the soule that sinneth is worthy of death. But that the sinnes of the faithful are veniall, not for that they do not deserve death, but bycause by the mercie of God there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Iesus, because they are not imputed: bycause they are taken away by pardon. I know how unjustly they sclaunder this our doctrine. For they say, that is is the Stoikes straunge conclusion, concerning the equalitie of sinnes. But they shall easily be convinced by their owne mouth. For I demande of them, whether among the very same sinnes that they confesse to be deadly, they do not acknowledge one to be greater than an other. It doth not therefore immediatly followe, that sinnes are egall, because they are all together deadly." See *The Insti-*

In this passage from Book III, as in another from Book II, Calvin bases his argument on Romans 6, 23: “For the wages of sinne is death” (*Geneva Bible*, 1560), or, in his own words, “le péché est gage de mort”. The distinction between small and big sins, venial and mortal sins, is thus swept aside. We should add though that this distinction was a part of Calvin’s vocabulary and thinking, since he knows it in the context of Roman Catholic morals and critiques it incessantly, as for example in the first of his reworked *Quatre sermons*, about Daniel chapter 2 and the refusal of Daniel’s three friends to bow down to the statue of Nebuchadnezzar.¹⁹

The association between mortal and venial sins is present again in the spontaneity of homiletic teachings to French new arrivals and restive residents of Geneva. For example, in an unpublished sermon on the end of the book of Isaiah from July 15, 1559, Calvin writes: (“Which remaine among the graves, and lodge in the deserts, which eat swines flesh, and the broth of things polluted *are* in their vessels”. Isaiah 65. 4. *Geneva Bible*, 1560):

Comme aujourduy encores nous en avons les exemples trop patentes en la papauté. Si on a mangé un morceau de chair en caresme ou au vendredy, on criera au feu. Voilà un *peché irremissible*. Comment avoir violé les observations de nostre mere sainte Eglise ? Et que deviendra toute la chrestienté ? Or nous savons que c’est une doctrine diabolique, comme saint Paul l’appelle, de mettre ainsi telle discretion entre les viandes et faire scrupule de manger de la chair et je ne say quoy, neantmoins voilà comme on a estimé comme un meurtre et plus beaucoup. Qu’un homme paillard, on n’en parlera point, ce n’est qu’un *petit péché veniel*, et on ne s’en fera que moquer. On veoid mesmes que les transgressions les plus vilaines s’en iront par un aspergez d’eau beniste en la papauté, moyennant que les plus meschans et debordez aient receu quelque croix de travers sur le doz, les voilà absoutz et il n’est plus question que Dieu leur demande rien.²⁰

When Calvin does make the distinction between venial and mortal sins, he is obviously always being critical. However, there are in fact “intolerable vices” and “lesser vices” for Calvin and the other Genevan pastors, as seen in the first *Ecclesiastical ordinances* (1541), the ethics applying but shifting the theological question. The “vices which are intolerable in a pastor” include

tution of Christian religion written in Latine by M. John Calvine, and translated into English according to the authors last edition, by Thomas Norton... London, Thomas Vautrollier for Humfrey Toy, 1578 (consulted on Early English Books on line). See also *ICR* II, viii, 58f.

¹⁹ Beginning of the “Sermon auquel tous chrestiens sont exhortez de fuir l’idolatrie exterieure, Sur le troisieme verset du Pseaulme XVI” (*Calvini opera* 8, 380): “Or telles gens debatoient du mot, pretendans seulement d’amoinrir en partie la faulte, laquelle ils ne peuvent du tout excuser. Ils confesseront bien que c’est mal fait, mais ils voudroyent qu’on estimast tel acte, quasi un *peché veniel*. Or quand on leur accorderoit du nom ce qu’ils demandent, si ni auroyent-ils gueres gagné.”

²⁰ See 327th sermon on Isaiah (65, 4–7; French Church of London, Ms VIII f 3, 374r). Underline mine.

heresy and schism, of course, but also bawdiness and drunkenness,²¹ while sins “which are tolerable as long as they are warned about” include “the curiosity of searching after vain questions”, “scurrility”, and also “greed and over cheapness”, “disorderly wrath” and the “indecent dissolution of a minister in clothing, gestural and other strange behaviour”.²² The shift for wrath and greed from “capital sin” to “lesser vice” is significant, especially given the fact that for Calvin, as well as Luther, any sin separates us from God and is wages of death. I will allow myself here this distinction between venial and mortal sins – thanks to the title of this conference – to examine how the seven capital sins interacted with Calvin’s life.

The Seven Capital Sins

If we avoid Jerome Bolsec’s life of Calvin, we can eliminate greed (*avaritia sive cupiditas*), envy (*invidia*) and lust (*luxuria*) from Calvin’s character and work, even if – but I need to say it in French – *la luxure a toujours été le plus capiteux des péchés capitaux*. We should remember though that the first sumptuary ordinances in Geneva date from October 11, 1558: “It is forbidden to use all vardingalls [= hooped petticoats], gilding in the hair, golden head-dress, golden and silver chains, embroidered sleeves and all eccentric clothes for men and women.”²³ The women of Geneva enjoyed dressing up though, since sumptuary ordinances from June 1564 banned women from wearing their hair in curls. They should wear their hair “honestly, tied and attached”, just as the apostle required. The injunction, though repeated *ad nauseam* throughout the century, did little to deter the women of Geneva from wishing to please and dress smartly (*titivate*).

²¹ See *Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs de Genève au temps de Calvin* published by R. M. Kingdon and J.-F. Bergier, vol. I, 1546–1553 (THR 55/2), Geneva: Droz, 1964, 4.

²² “dissolution indécente à un ministre tant en habillement comme en gestes et autre façon de faire”, *ibid.*

²³ “Ici est parlé de défendre toutes verdugales [vertugadins = bourrelets qui faisaient gonfler les robes au-dessus des hanches], dorures sur tête, coiffes d’or, chaînes d’or et d’argent, brodeures sur manchons [= broderies sur les manches] et généralement tout excès en habits, tant d’hommes que de femmes.” See Emile Rivoire and Victor van Berchem, *Les sources du droit du canton de Genève* (Les sources du droit suisse, 22e partie), 4 vols., Aarau, 1927–1935, vol. 3, Nr. 974, 86.

Ira

Calvin's principal fault, brought up by both his friends and enemies, a mortal sin for Catholics and a lesser vice for the reformed, was wrath, anger (*ira*). John Calvin was a wrathful man, and whoever risked going against him would be exposed to his scorn, such as Pierre Caroli and many others, even those close to him²⁴. I have thus shown that Augustin Marlorat lacked a saintly aura in Calvin's eyes, who considered him talkative and presumptuous²⁵. This was despite the fact that Marlorat had indexed his *Institution of the Christian Religion* (1562), represented the Reformed at the conference of Poissy, and had always given first place, though not alone, to Calvin in his *Expositiones catholicae* for the New Testament, Genesis, Psalms and Isaiah.²⁶ Even Theodor Beza recognized the vehemence, the "natural wrathful inclination" of his friend and predecessor:

Il y en a d'autres qui l'ont trouvé par trop cholere. Je ne veux point faire d'un homme un ange, ce nonobstant, pource que je sçay combien Dieu s'est merueilleusement servi mesmes de ceste vehemence, je ne doÿ taire ce qui en est et ce que j'en sçay. Outre son naturel enclin de soy-mesmes à colere, l'esprit merueilleusement prompt, l'indiscretion de plusieurs, la multitude et varieté infinie d'affaires pour l'Eglise de Dieu et, sur la fin de sa vie, les maladies grandes et ordinaires l'avoÿent rendu chagrin et difficile.²⁷

Beza not only recognized Calvin's wrathful character, but he also presented it as his "only fault". This fault is even transformed into a quality, qualified as prophetic²⁸, as when a sermon from 1550 is described as "being of grace, vehemence and simplicity, as is his wont",²⁹ when Calvin's wrathful temper is fully accepted. Jean-François Gilmont began his work *John Calvin and the book* by evoking Calvin's fits of anger, some of which were so violent that he was bedridden.³⁰ Calvin openly took responsibility for his irritable and angry character, as in a letter of December 1552 written to Enzinas (Dryander)

²⁴ See William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin. A Sixteenth Century Portrait*, Oxford, 1989.

²⁵ See Calvin's letter to Beza on January 28, 1562, "alter garrulus et nimia confidentia turgidus", in *Correspondance de Théodore de Bèze*, recueillie par Hippolyte Aubert, publiée par Henri Meylan, Alain Dufour et Arnaud Tripet, tome IV (1562–1563) (Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance 74), Genève, 1965, Nr. 233, 28.

²⁶ See "Un pamphlet calviniste de 1561, best-seller, restitué à son auteur (de Théodore de Bèze à Augustin Marlorat)", *BHR* 70, 2008, 377–409, here 386f.

²⁷ See "Vie de Calvin", in *Calvini opera* 21, 39. See also Nicolas Colladon's version, 117f.

²⁸ "... une telle vehemence, vehemence, di-je, vrayement prophetique, a servi et servira à toute la posterité." *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

³⁰ See Jean-François Gilmont, *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé* (Cahiers d'Humanisme et Renaissance 50), Geneva, 1997, 17–21.

where he assumed: "I realize often that I have a wrathful temper", given a new evidence in interrupting his letter at the point where Enzinas praised Gaspar Hedio's moderation,³¹ or in his farewell address to the ministers on April 28, 1564, in which he summarized the difficult path he had taken in Geneva, recognizing that: "I have always disliked my vices".³² It is not the place to develop the idea, but in his commentary of the Psalms (1557) he emphasized in many ways David's *vehemente affection* and recognized many times David's *vehemente douleur*, which certainly allowed him to accept his own *vehemence*³³. Theodor Beza, in writing Calvin's life, likewise took on his mentor's vehemence.

On the other hand, some residents of Geneva were summoned before the Consistoire for having gotten angry, sometimes for reasons much more legitimate than Calvin's.³⁴

Gula

Theodor Beza was again influential in writing:

Quant à son vivre ordinaire, chacun sera tesmoin qu'il a esté tellement temperé que d'exces il n'y en eu jamais, de chicheté aussi peu, mais une mediocrité louable, hors mis qu'il avoit par trop peu d'égard à sa santé, s'estant contenté par plusieurs années d'un seul repas pour le plus de vingt quatre heures, et jamais ne prenant rien entredeux. Tellement que tout ce que les medecins luy ont peu persuader quant à ce poinct a esté qu'environ demi an, durant sa derriere maladie, il prenoit par fois quelque petit de vin et humoit un œuf environ le midi.³⁵

Nicolas Colladon drove the ascetic nail home the next year adding that, during his long sicknes from autumn 1558 to spring 1559, Calvin could go "48 hours without eating or drinking", occasionally sitting up to have some soup in the evening to avoid completely dehydrating.

³¹ "Et mihi probe succurrit qua sim ingenii vehementia." See letter Nr. 1684, *Calvini opera* 14, 432–435, here 433. Calvin replied to a letter from Enzinas of the 30th October 1552, in which he quoted the quiet temper of Hedio: "Laudanda est prudentia viri optimis Hedionis piae memoriae, cuius erat ingenium adeo sedatum et pacis studiosum ut in toto suae gubernationis cursu, multa etiam privata taedia et incommoda devoravit ut Ecclesiae tranquillitatem et consensionem retineret." See Francisco de Enzinas, *Epistolario*. Edición crítica por Ignacio J. García Pinilla. Texto latino, traducción española y notas (THR 290), Geneva, 1995, letter Nr. 69, 634–640, here 638.

³² "mes vices m'ont tousjours despleu". See *Calvini Opera* 9, 891–894, here 893.

³³ We know how he summarizes his personal life in the Preface. See Olivier Millet, "Calvin témoin de lui-même dans la préface de son commentaire sur les psaumes", in *Emergence du Sujet. De l'Amant vert au Misanthrope*, édité par Olivier Pot, Genève (Cahiers d'Humanisme et Renaissance): Droz, 2005, 113–32.

³⁴ See *Calvin Opera* 21, e. g., 447 or 588.

³⁵ See "Vie de Calvin par Théodore de Bèze", *Calvini Opera* 21, 34; "Vie de Calvin par Nicolas Colladon", *ibid.*, 109.

An egg or some soup with a glass of wine is a bit sad and not very Lutheran. Nevertheless, Calvin had himself expressed his own culinary tastes, since in the treatise *Des Scandales* (1550), while criticizing Friday fasting, he maintained that:

Or chacun sçait que de tous temps, les plus grandes delices ont esté aux poissons... Quant à moy, si je vouloye friander à souhait, je choisiroye la moitié de l'année d'autres viandes que de la chair. Ceulx qui me cognoissent privéement sçavent que j'aime le poisson et autres viandes, desquelles je m'abstiens de mon bon gré, pource qu'elles me sont nuisibles.³⁶

While we all know of Calvin's health problems, who would have guessed that he would have joyously feasted every Friday!

We should also note that, concerning gluttony, banquets were not banned in Geneva. Although the first sumptuary law of October 11, 1558 condemned fashion and festive excess, feasting was not banned: "Moreover during banquets it is not allowed to have more than three services [*venues*], and in each service no more than three dishes."³⁷ There was no ban on banquets, only a restriction: no more than twelve courses! From a remark to the Duke of Longueville, we can also conclude that Calvin did not condemn wedding feasts, accepting even that guests could enjoy secular music.³⁸

³⁶ See *Des scandales*, édition critique d'Olivier Fatjo (TLF 323), Geneva: Droz, 1984, 198 and 200.

³⁷ "Davantage que es banquets n'y ait plus haut de trois venues [services], et à chaque venue plus haut de quatre plats." See *Annales Calviniani*, in *Calvini Opera* 21, col. 706. See *Annales Calviniani*, in *Calvini Opera* 21, col. 706. Text erroneously quoted by E. Doumergue, Jean Calvin. Les hommes et les choses de son temps, t. 7, Paris, 1927, p. 118. See better, Emile Rivoire et Victor van Berchem, Les sources du droit du canton de Genève, op. cit., tome 3, n° 974, p. 86. I have already cited that sentence about banquets in "Plaisir des mots, plaisir des mets. Irdische Freude bei Calvin", in *Calvinus Sincerioris Religionis Vindex* [Proceedings of the International Congress for Calvin Research in Edinburgh 1994], ed. by Brian G. Armstrong and Wilhelm H. Neuser (Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies 36), Kirksville, 1997, p. 189–208. During the sixteenth century twelve dishes made up just a small banquet. See the critical remark done 1574 by Jean Bodin against normal diners with three menus, and for each menu "encore il faut d'une viande en avoir cinq ou six façons". Quoted by Barbara Ketcham Wheaton, *L'Office et la bouche. Histoire des moeurs de la table en France 1300–1789*, Paris, 1984, p. 97.

³⁸ Calvin referred to that practice in his 1542 "Epistle to the Reader" of *La Forme des prieres et des chantz ecclesiastiques* (*Calvini Opera* 6, col. 169f): "It is therefore necessary to make a great difference between music played at lunch or at home to delight human beings and psalms sung at church in front of God and his angels." Calvin did not condemn the domestic practice.

Superbia

I am not a Bolsec *redivivus*, and it is unnecessary for a Charles Drelincourt to rise up and fight me,³⁹ but the fault that I would like to bring up last is one which has been little studied: Calvin's pride (*inanis gloria vel superbia*). I must add, that I do not say anything of the seventh capital sin, being bad-tempered (*tristitia*), or disgust (*acedia*), increasingly rendered through misunderstanding or simplification as sloth (*pigritia vel languor*, Cicero used both terms), even though it is not difficult to discern in Calvin a certain melancholy that we can associate with *acedia*.⁴⁰ There are many ways to illustrate Calvin's pride, but I will be careful to avoid the Roman Catholic controversy. I will analyze his signature, while to avoid coming off as a county fair graphologist. While searching through a collection of Calvin's letters for a signature to illustrate the second volume of the critical edition of Olivier Millet's *Institution of the Christian Religion*, I was struck by the characteristic evolution of Calvin's signature, and by the moment from which it could be dated.⁴¹ We do not forget that signature is an identical sign which has found its affirmation in the age of the Reformation: it is a mark of the body and the soul of the person who signs.⁴² In that sense we may connect the signature with the personality of the human being who does sign.

In the first volume of this monumental biography, Emile Doumergue reproduces many samples of Calvin's signature.⁴³ He was not trying to study its evolution, but to spot its uses through Calvin's various pseudonyms: "We will see how Calvin changed his signature, adding his first name or not, shortening his name and his surname in many ways".⁴⁴ Anyone who reads the appendix to the first volume of Doumergue's *Jean Calvin* can immediately notice what the author did not choose to highlight, that the capital "I" in Johannes and Jean changed considerably in the second half of 1541. We can even precisely date this to the beginning of autumn, and his arrival in Geneva.

³⁹ I make reference to Charles Drelincourt's *La Défense de Calvin contre l'outrage fait à sa mémoire de Charles Drelincourt* (Jean Antoine and Samuel de Tournes, Geneva 1667) which Pierre Bayle often quotes in his *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, 2nd édition, Amsterdam, 1702, tome 1, p. 766–76. Drelincourt replied to Cardinal Richelieu's harsh critic. However, Richelieu's text was published in 1651, nine years after the death of the Cardinal!

⁴⁰ Cf. Anne Larue, *L'autre mélancolie. Acedia, ou les chambres de l'esprit*, Paris, Hermann, 2001.

⁴¹ See Béatrice Fraenkel, *La Signature. Genève d'un signe*, Paris, Gallimard, 1992. I thank you Christian Grosse who caught my attention to this book.

⁴² See Béatrice Fraenkel, *La Signature. Genève d'un signe*, Paris, Gallimard, 1992.

⁴³ Cf. Emile Doumergue, *Jean Calvin. Les hommes et les choses de son temps*, tome premier *La Jeunesse de Calvin*, Lausanne, 1899, appendice n° VIII, p. 558–573.

⁴⁴ "On verra comment Calvin a varié sa signature, l'accompagnant ou non de son prénom et abrégant ce prénom et ce nom de toutes les manières possibles." *Ibid.*, 559.

On February 19, 1541, Calvin wrote to the Council of Geneva, his secretary writing out the letter, and Calvin signing it “Vostre humble serviteur et entier amy Jean Calvin” (illustration 1)⁴⁵. On July 25 of that same year, Calvin wrote in Latin to Viret, signing “Joã. Calvinus tuus” (illustration 2), with an identical capital “I”. On the road to Geneva, on September 7, 1541, Calvin warned the Geneva Magistrate of his delay, and the signature is still similar (illustration 3).⁴⁶

During the Fall 1541, Calvin’s signature changed: there was a new capital ‘I’, as we can see in three letters to Farel (illustration 4).

This capital “I” was present in Calvin’s writing, and he simply applied it to his signature. It was, for example, the capital “I” that he used at the beginning of paragraphs. Thus, from Strasbourg on the 13th of August, 1541, Calvin began a letter to Viret with “Iam quintus dies” (illustration 5), signing the letter with a different ‘I’ (illustration 6).

Between 1537 and 1541, when Calvin wrote to Viret or Farel, here on the 4th of August 1538 (illustration 7), the signature was a simple and familiar “Calvinus tuus” or “tuus Calvinus”. When he used a pseudonym, the signature became “Passelius tuus”, as in this letter to Farel, from Ratisbonne, June 9, 1541 (illustration 8).

Beginning in 1542, the signature becomes more solemn, adding almost always the first name with an initial monumental “I”, as if Calvin’s role in Geneva and his position as undisputed leader authorized him to illustrate his greatness even with his old friends Farel and Viret: “Joannes Calvinus tuus”. As an example, as shown at the end of a letter to Viret on January 25 1546, and in two others to Farel from July 10 and August 10 1548, the two friends were receiving letters from a great man (illustration 9). In Latin, Calvin’s signature did not change until his death, neither the elections in February 1555 (for example in the signature to Farel the 15th of May 1555⁴⁷) nor other events brought new developments as we can see at the end of a letter to Heinrich Bullinger the 27th of September 1563 (illustration 10).⁴⁸

In French, John Calvin used often the signature “Charles d’Espeville”, and we can admire a grandiose signature the 15th of March 1557 to the Parisian Pastors (illustration 11). He also used “vostre humble serviteur Jean Calvin” or simply “J. C.”, initials not unknown for a Christian! In the other hand, by prudence, in the 1550s and 1560s many letters were not signed. Someone has to do a vaster and diachronic study of his signatures from the beginning to his death to confirm or to amend this first attempt.

⁴⁵ Geneva, Bibliothèque de Genève, Ms. fr. 106 (as the majority of signatures quoted hereafter).

⁴⁶ Geneva, Archives d’Etat, Pièces historiques 1250/4.

⁴⁷ Geneva, Bibliothèque de Genève, Ms. fr. 107a, 1st part, f 101r.

⁴⁸ Geneva, Bibliothèque de Genève, Ms. fr. 107a, 2nd part, f 218r.

I may be exaggerating calling attention to the evolution of Calvin's signature as proof of his pride, although the title of this conference goaded me, but I did want to share with you a previously disregarded awareness of the signature of Joannes Calvinus, one which gives away a facet of his personality and the change in his status after 1541. I do believe that we can associate the transformations in his signature in the autumn of 1541, with the moment when John Calvin became aware of this prophetic calling.⁴⁹

Conclusion

Calvin's *superbia* was reality, but we cannot forget that he knew himself perfectly, he knew the depth of his soul before God. He knew himself because he was always searching for God (*ICR* I, i, 1), and he knew the inner dignity of his person in front of God: it gave him an exceptional authority which could accept his *superbia*. Someone could also study Calvin's device "prompte et sincere" with the initials "I. C." in connection with Calvin's character.

Finally, since I have not been perhaps overly kind with Calvin, I would like to end on a more realistic note, citing a passage from one of Calvin's last sermons on the Book of Isaiah, which you will be able to read in 2010. In the 337th sermon on Isaiah 66, 7–11, on August 12, 1559, Calvin writes:

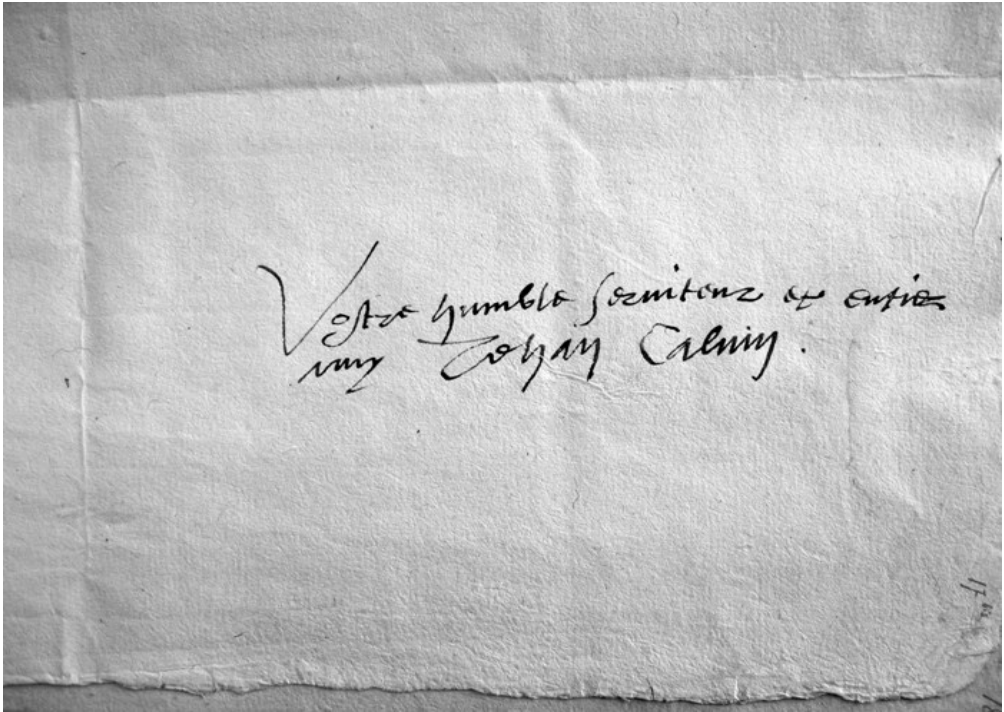
Et de là aussi nous avons a recueillir une exhortation à humilité, que nous pensions bien que il n'est pas de nostre industrie que nous sommes parvenuz à une dignité si haulte d'estre crestiens et enfans de Dieu et compagnons des anges, mais que par la vertu admirable de nostre Dieu, et qu'il nous faut estre raviz en estonnement, toutesfois et quantes que nous pensions que Dieu nous a retirez du gouffre d'enfer et de la mort eternelle où nous estions plongez, qu'il nous a reculliz à soy.⁵⁰

Although I have shown you a demonstration of Calvin's pride through his signature, I have not forgotten his calls for humility, he who reminded me and all of us, from the beginning of *ICR* to his "Discours d'adieu aux ministres", that we must "learn what is humility".⁵¹ Like Calvin, we are all *simul sancti et peccatores*.

⁴⁹ See my "Calvin. A Prophet without a Prophecy", in *Church History* 67, 1998, 643–61.

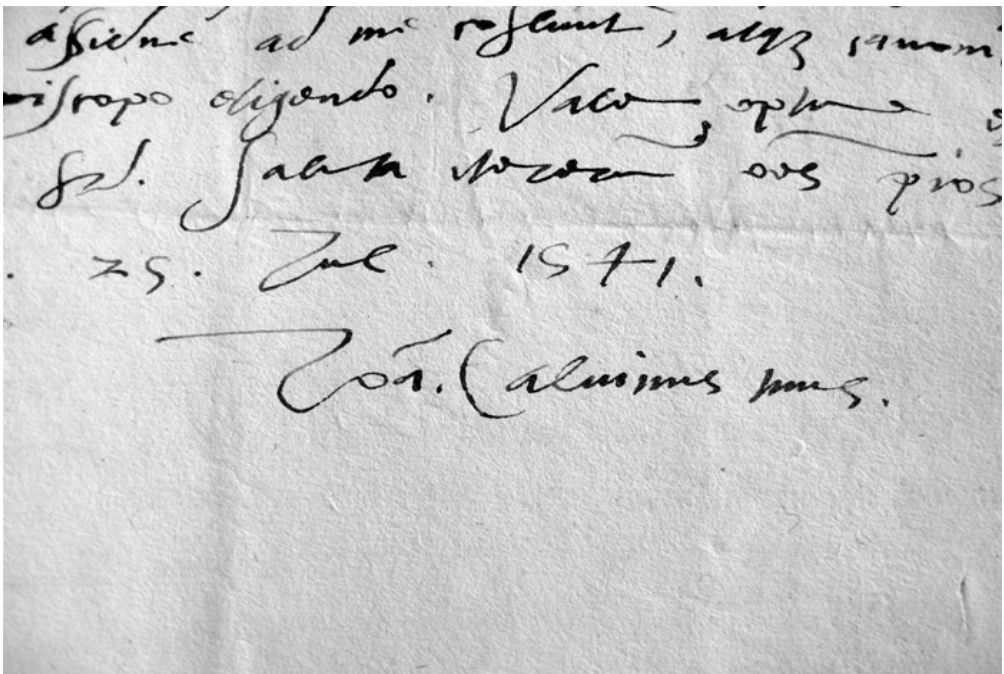
⁵⁰ French Church of London, Ms. F VIII 3, 457r.

⁵¹ See *ICR* I, i, 1: "... lever les yeux en haut... pour estre esveillez de crainte, et par ce moyen apprendre que c'est d'humilité".



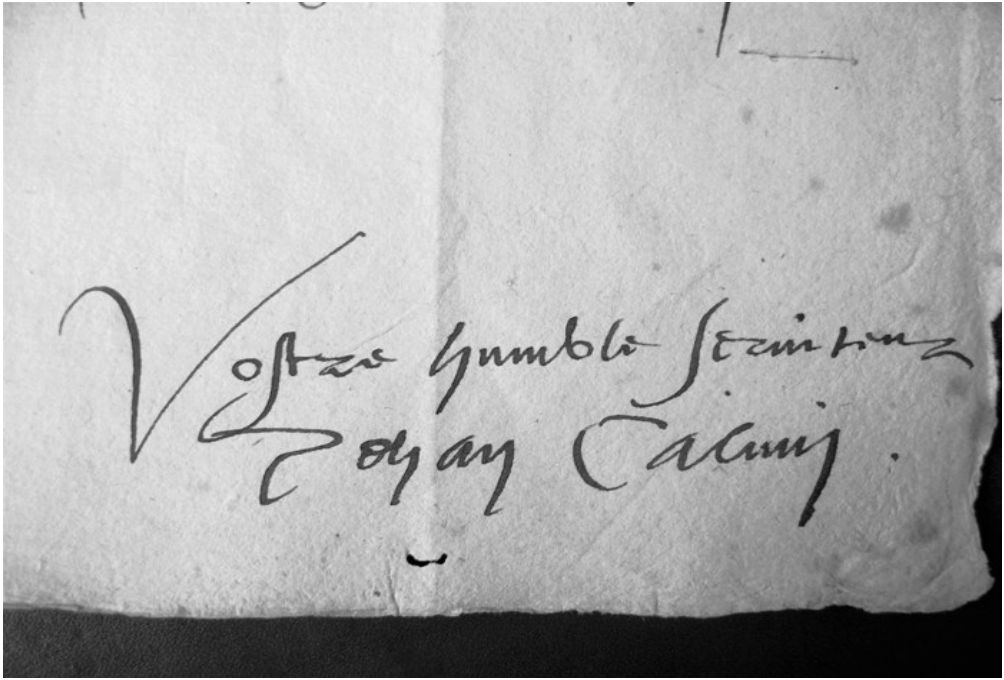
Vostre humble seruitour et entier
vray Jehan Calvin.

Illustration 1



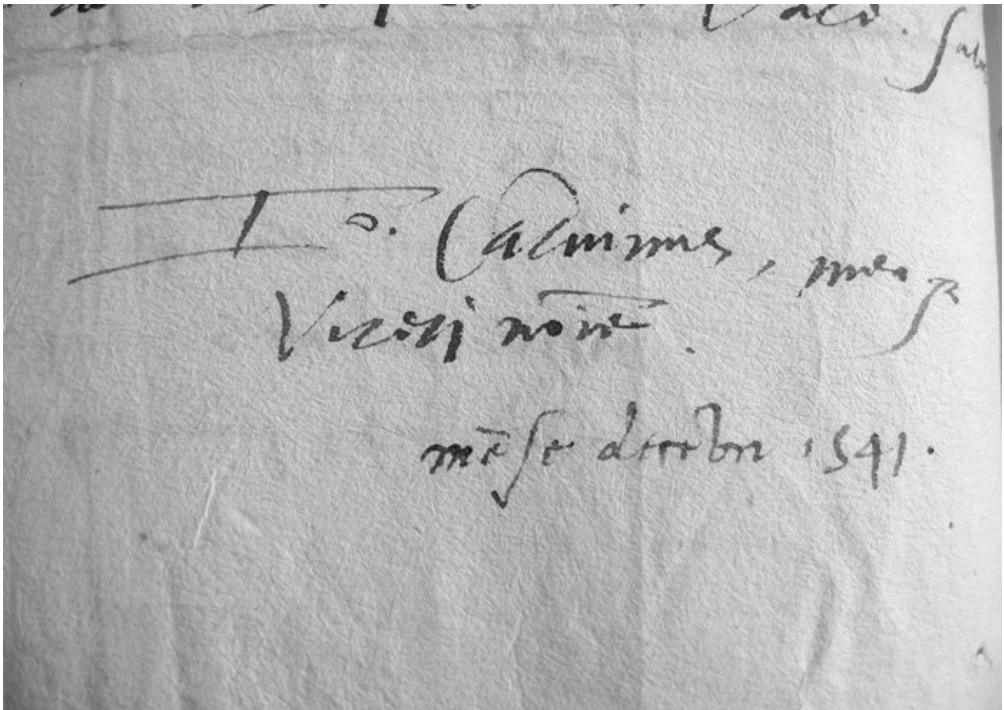
à Dieu ad me referunt, atq; sanon
mistrolo dijendo. Vale, opte
Srl. Jean Calvin des pios
25. Jul. 1541.
Joh. Calvinus pms.

Illustration 2



Vostre humble seruiteur
Jehan Calvin.

Illustration 3



Jehan Calvin, mes
Vostre serviteur.
mese d'octobre 1541.

Illustration 4

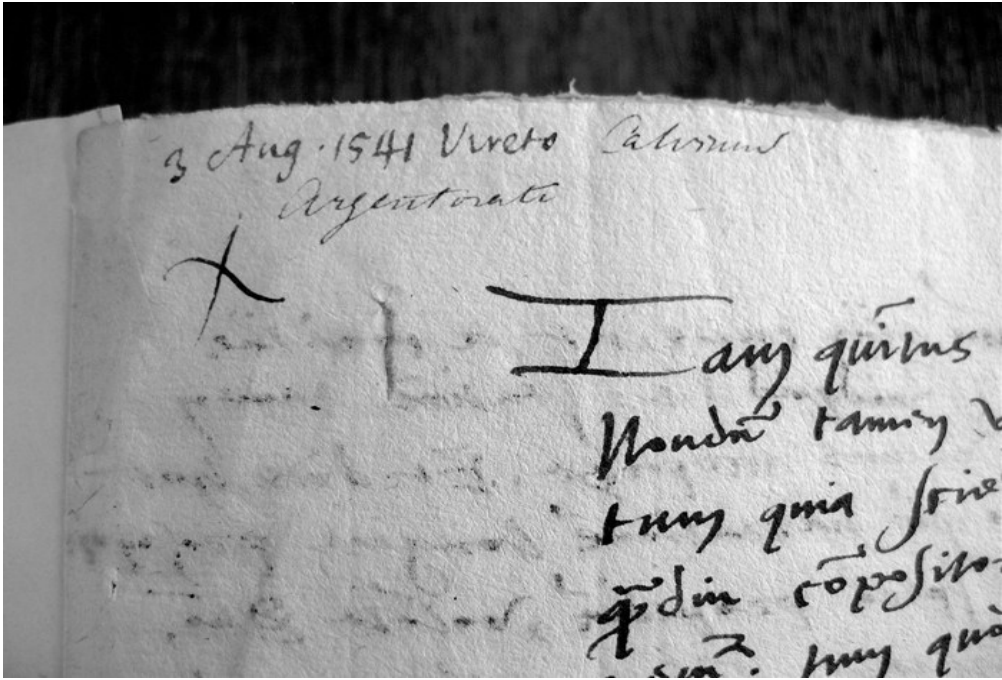


Illustration 5

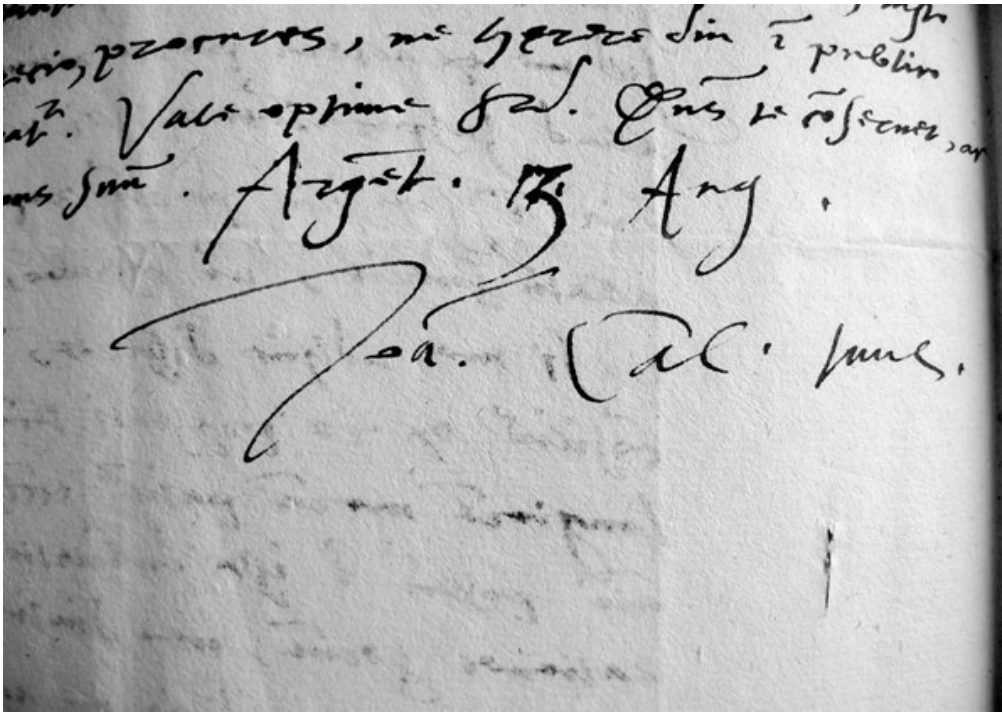


Illustration 6

Capitulum quod ad hoc designatum multo.
 geloz afforabilis, si qd populus sine vob.
 et oot vob, p'cipue quod designari
 habuerit. *Basileae 4. Augusti;*

Talium sumus.

 ad mone, no sine vobis
 et vobis. *Basileae vobis et vobis*

Illustration 7

habent vobis, vobis vobis, ut
 vobis. Ego ipse vobis vobis vobis, nisi p'p'is
 vobis. ~~Basileae~~ *Basileae* vobis ipse vobis vobis, ut me i vobis
 vobis vobis, per quos admirari illos me p'p'is quocumque
 vobis. Vobis vobis vobis. De vobis vobis vobis vobis vobis.
 Vobis vobis vobis vobis, et vobis se adingit vobis vobis.
 vobis vobis. Vobis vobis vobis, vobis vobis vobis, q'
 vobis vobis vobis vobis. Vale sal mi vobis et vobis.
Basileae. 5. Oct. Tuias.

Vassellus sumus.

Illustration 8

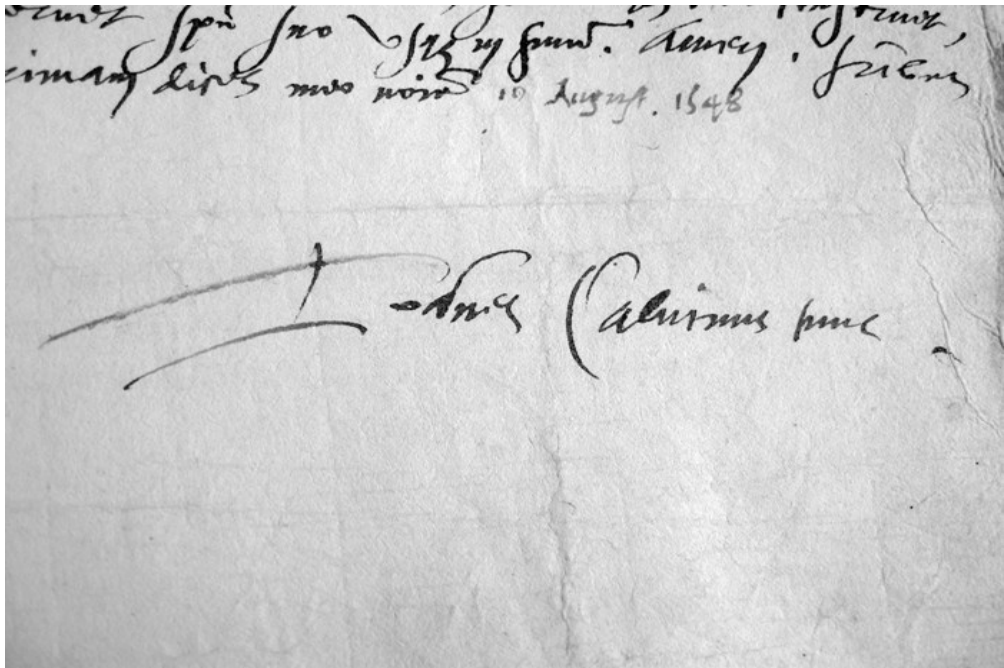


Illustration 9

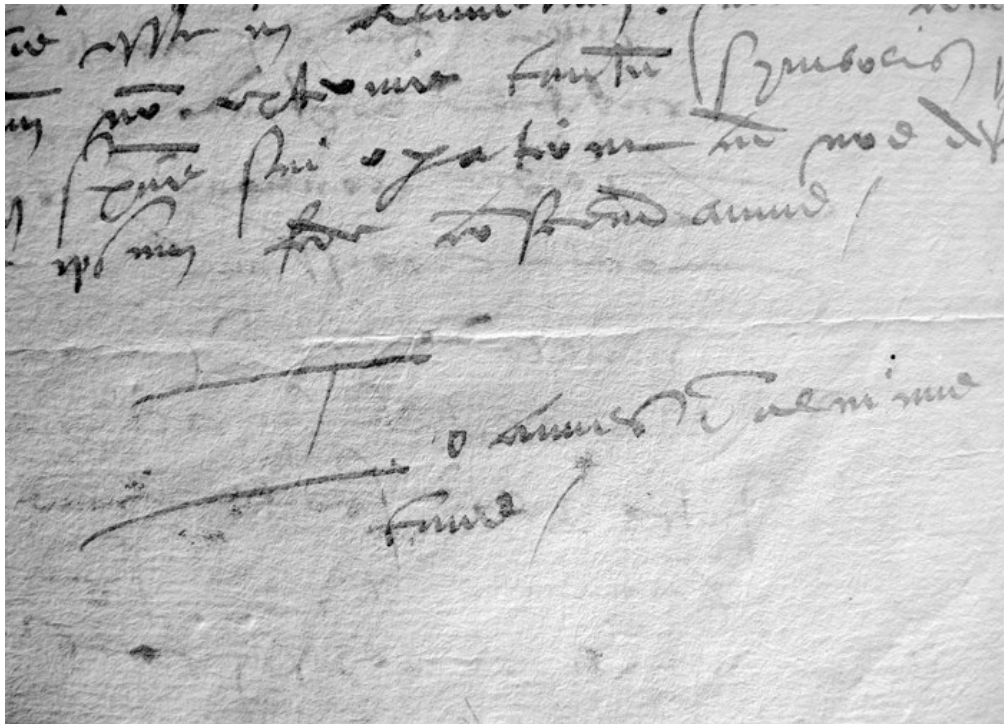


Illustration 10

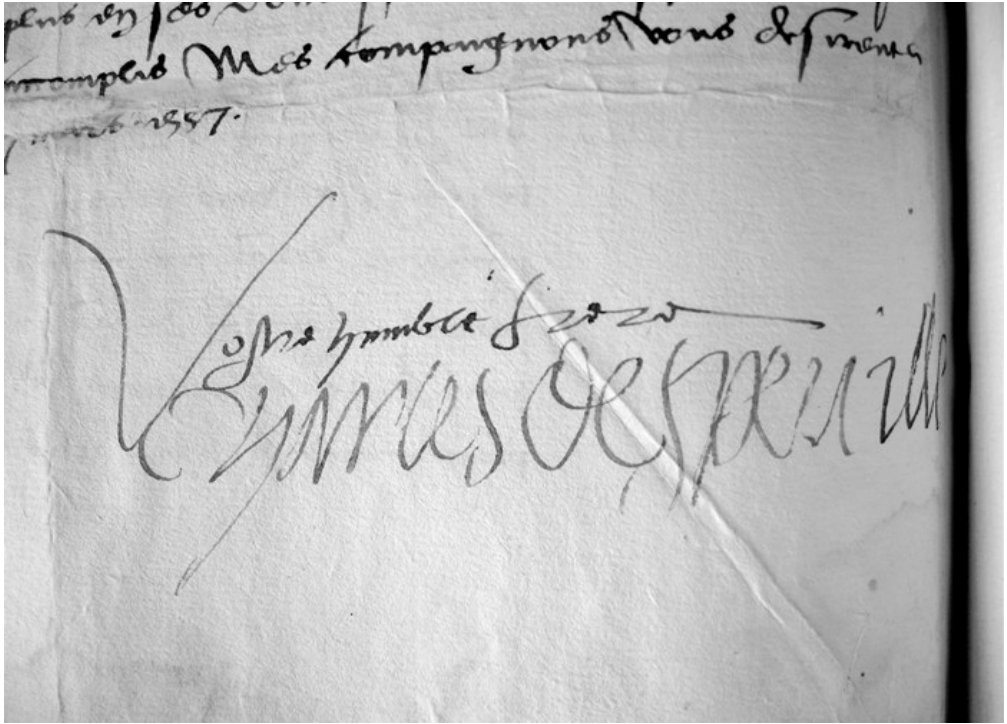


Illustration 11

Geneva against Calvin: The myth of the non-saint

ISABELLE GRAESSLÉ

I. What sources for what question?

When I began researching this article, my initial goal was to ask why people in Geneva still have such mixed feelings about Calvin. Indeed, it seems as if, for the last 500 years, a curse has been cast over the city and the reputation of its reformer, transforming historical reality into a tangle of rumours and misperceptions.

It appeared to me that in order to celebrate the 2009 Jubilee in a scientific and impartial way, it would be worthwhile to question this bad reputation, to draw back the curtain of history as much as possible, and to try to determine whether John Calvin was a sinner or a saint. However, I soon realised that my self-assigned task was an impossible one.

First of all, the title “Geneva against Calvin” requires some clarification: which Geneva are we talking about? The political Geneva? The people of Geneva? The movers and thinkers of Geneva? The Geneva that welcomed so many refugees? What sources should I consult to find answers to my initial question regarding the “legacy of hatred” that has stuck to the image of John Calvin?

Second, why focus on Geneva? Are negative feelings towards Calvin limited to this city alone? No doubt thousands of Protestants all around the world are just as perplexed by this embarrassing precursor.

Finally, is Geneva’s opposition to Calvin still a reality? Probably not. Indeed, a new tendency has begun to emerge, especially among intellectuals of the younger generation, for whom John Calvin appears as an unavoidable, even endearing, ancestor, a kind of local grandfather with old-fashioned ideas – as evidenced by the Reformer’s numerous criticisms of the corrupt youth of his time¹ – but also a founding father thanks to whom

¹ “Et principalement nous avons une jeunesse fort corrompue: ainsi quand on ne leur veut point permettre toute licence, ils font des mauvais chevaux à mordre et à regimber. Naguère ils ont été fort dépités, sous l’ombre d’une petite chose, C’est qu’on ne leur voulait point concéder de porter chausses découpées, ce qui a été défendu en ville il y a douze ans passés” [24 juillet 1547]. In Jules Bonnet, *Lettres de Jean Calvin*, Paris, Meyrueis, 1854, vol. I,

the city opened itself up to freedom and wealth – a wealth of heart and soul, if not material riches.

Of course, the old rumours are still very much alive; for instance, someone recently asked me whether it was true that Calvin put a young girl in prison for playing with a ball during his siesta. This is an odd accusation, given that the only words of Calvin's that I have read in relation to children, such as Viret's daughter or other friends' children, express nothing but caring solicitude. Not to mention that it is hard to imagine Calvin ever taking a siesta, except, perhaps, during one of his all too rare excursions to the countryside with friends. Wishing to treat the question seriously, however, I challenged all the Calvin scholars I knew to locate a reference to this story... which was never found, of course. Nevertheless, rumour remains a force to be reckoned with.

II. A new direction

At this point, I had to recognise difficulties posed by my initial statement of the question. I realised that I had to return to the proposed topic: "John Calvin: Saint or Sinner?" This question actually reminded me of another opposition, which has preoccupied scholars throughout the 20th century, although it in fact gained currency already shortly after his death, perhaps even during his life time: "John Calvin: human or inhuman?"

Indeed, a highly significant repositioning of academic research on Calvin has taken place since the 1950s. Focus has quietly shifted from the history of his ideas to a more socio-economic point of view, and finally to psychology. In other words, we have moved from "what were Calvin's ideas?" to "what was Calvin's time like?" to "who was Calvin?"

Begun with enthusiasm, my readings on the theme of "the humanity of Calvin" led slowly to disappointment: I expected nuanced discussions, yet found only strong opinions for or against Calvin, each of which marshalled an army of arguments for turning the table entirely on one or the other point!

With Doumergue,² Stauffer³ and Perrot,⁴ we stand very much on the human side of Calvin: they describe him as a loving husband, a caring father – albeit for a very brief time – and a faithful friend.

p. 214. I chose to quote Calvin in the original French, slightly adapted to modern French usage. The volume of the Bonnet edition is indicated by roman numeral and the page number by arabic numerals.

² Emile Doumergue, *Le caractère de Calvin*, Paris, Foi et Vie, 1921.

With Zweig,⁵ Galiffe and Pfister,⁶ we stand decisively on the despotic side of Calvin: they portray him as thoroughly inhuman for accusing his opponents, jailing his reluctant fellow-citizens, and burning his enemies.

In the end, an article by Olivier Millet⁷ helped me overcome the obstacles posed by these excessively contrasted portraits. In his article, Olivier Millet strikes a delicate balance: he paints a picture of a “human Calvin”, whose humanity is a validation of the principle of *sola gratia* – Calvin was imperfect, as we all are, but his imperfections were overcome by the will of God, in other words, God’s grace. The humanity of John Calvin overcomes the two previous ethical categories: he was neither a saint (since he was only an imperfect tool of a perfect message), nor a sinner (since he was already forgiven by God’s grace).

Taking into account Olivier Millet’s argumentation, I came to the realisation that the 2009 Jubilee might be the *kairos*, the exact moment, in other words, to draw up a new inventory of the past: this 500th anniversary seems like a good time to rethink the issue of Calvin’s humanity.

First of all, this process will require us to break the vicious circle of the “for or against Calvin” debate. It will also require us to set aside the old arguments and counter-arguments that have been circulating for ages around the Reformer’s “dark legend”. It will allow us, finally, to avoid the pitfall of an overly anecdotal approach to the question.

Olivier Millet gave me a clue as to how to continue: “Ces considérations pourraient s’inscrire dans le cadre d’une étude, qui manque actuellement, de la correspondance du Réformateur, que l’on mènerait sous un angle rhétorique, en étudiant notamment la façon dont Calvin constitue une image de lui-même (ce qu’on appelle en rhétorique l’éthos de l’orateur) pour en jouer auprès de ses correspondants et de son public.”⁸

³ Richard Stauffer, *L’humanité de Calvin*, Neuchâtel, Delachaux et Niestlé, Cahiers théologiques 51, 1964.

⁴ Alain Perrot, *Le visage humain de Jean Calvin*, Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1986.

⁵ Stefan Zweig, *Castellion contre Calvin ou Conscience contre violence*, Paris, Grasset, 1946.

⁶ Oskar Pfister, *Calvins Eingreifen in die Hexer- und Hexenprozesse von Peney, 1545, nach seiner Bedeutung für Geschichte und Gegenwart: ein kritischer Beitrag zur Charakteristik Calvins & [und] zur gegenwärtigen Calvin-Renaissance*, Zürich, Artemis Verlag, 1947.

⁷ Olivier Millet, “L’humanité de Calvin”, *La Revue réformée*, Vol. XLVII, 1996 (5), p. 9–24.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

III. An instructive course of reading

I attempted to apply this suggested rhetorical approach to the two volumes of Calvin's French correspondence (in Jules Bonnet's 1854 edition). Unsurprisingly, the Calvin I discovered was a study in contrasts, appearing in a different light depending on his readers, the year and current political situation, and of course his state of health – illness is a constant and painful theme in his entire work – and, at last, depending to the evolution of his thought.

To be exhaustive, I should mention my predecessors in this attempt at an alternative reading of Calvin's writings, which include in a very stimulating article on Calvin's sermons by Richard Stauffer,⁹ as well as an older but quite convincing essay¹⁰ by Léopold Monod, which offers a balanced approach to Calvin's character.

Actually, the Calvin who wrote the French correspondence from 1538 to 1664 presents an image of himself that is very close to the image that emerges from the homiletic writings studied by Stauffer, at least with regard to the two first aspects discussed below.

1. An ambivalent triple image

My reading of Calvin, like Stauffer's, revealed a *prophetic* image: the image of a man who was called by God, but was never fully understood by those to whom he was sent; the image of a man who felt rejected, weak and abandoned. A man, however, who loved God's people even when they rejected him. This image is eloquently expressed in the following extracts from the letters:

“Je me suis retiré à Bâle, attendant ce que le Seigneur voudra faire de moi.” Strasbourg, 10 July 1538 (I, 9)

To the Church of Geneva: “Mes frères, je m'étais abstenu jusqu'ici de vous écrire, espérant que les lettres de notre frère Farel qui avait pris cette charge pour tous deux, vous pourraient suffire; et aussi je voulais ôter tant qu'il était possible l'occasion de médire à ceux qui la cherchent.” Strasbourg, 1 October 1538 (I, 11)

“Toutefois, quand il est question de comparaître devant Dieu je ne fais pas de doute qu'il ne nous ait humilié de la sorte pour nous faire reconnaître notre ignorance, imprudence et les autres infirmités que de ma part j'ai bien senties en moi et ne fais aucune difficulté de les confesser devant l'Eglise du Seigneur.” *ibid.* (I, 15)

To the same: “Toutefois il y a encore une raison laquelle me contraint plus à regarder les moyens de pouvoir obtempérer à votre vouloir. C'est le singulier amour que je porte à

⁹ Richard Stauffer, “Les discours à la première personne dans les sermons de Calvin”, in *Regards contemporains sur Jean Calvin. Actes du colloque Calvin 1964*, Strasbourg, Presses Universitaires de France, 1965, p. 206–238.

¹⁰ Léopold Monod, *Le caractère de Calvin d'après ses lettres*, Lyon, Royer, 1912.

votre Eglise, ayant toujours en mémoire qu'elle m'a été une fois recommandée de Dieu et commise en charge, et que par cela j'ai été obligé à jamais de procurer son bien et salut." Worms, 12 November 1540 (I, 33)

"Je me [reconnais] fort inutile serviteur de l'Eglise." Geneva, October 1541 (I, 44)

Again as in Stauffer's analysis, my reading also reveals a *polemical* image: that of a man who was often betrayed, even by close friends, wrongly accused, the victim of false allegations that he had usurped power, exerted a bad influence and made terrible mistakes.

To his friend Louis du Tillet: "Si vous reconnaissez pour Eglises de Dieu celles qui nous ont en exécration, je m'en rapporte à vous. Mais nous serions bien mal en point, si ainsi était." Geneva, 31 January 1538 (I, 4)

"Plutôt que je sois ôté du monde par mort amère que d'approuver votre fait que je reconnais être damnable en soi." *ibid.* (I, 6)

To Du Tillet: "Quelles sont mes fautes en particulier, combien que j'en aperçoive beaucoup, j'estime bien toutes fois que je ne vois ni les plus grosses, ni le plus grand nombre. Pourtant, je prie le Seigneur qu'il me les veuille de jour en jour plus évidemment manifester; celles que vous notez ne me sont point de mise." Strasbourg, 20 October 1538 (I, 20)

To the queen of Navarre: "Car ceux qui me connaissent savent bien que je ne suis pas si barbare ou inhumain au point de mépriser ou tâcher de mettre en mépris les principautés, la noblesse terrienne et ce qui appartient à la police humaine." Geneva, 28 April 1545 (I, 112)

To the Church of Poitiers against M. de la Vau: "Il dit qu'il faut que tout le monde me baise ici la pantoufle. Je crois que vous avez assez de témoins quelles pompes je mène et comment je demande qu'on me fasse la cour. Je suis bien assuré que s'il pouvait tenir ma place, il ferait bien d'autres morgues. Car puisqu'il est si enflé, n'étant rien, il faudrait bien qu'un degré acquis le fit crever du tout." Geneva, 20 February 1555 (II, 19)

To the same on the same topic: "Il me reproche que je fais autoriser mes livres à ce que nul ne soit si osé ni hardi d'en médire. A quoi je réponds que c'est bien pour le moins que les seigneurs auxquels Dieu a donné le glaive et autorité ne permettent point qu'on blasphème en leur ville contre la foi en laquelle ils sont enseignés. Mais il va bien que les chiens qui aboient tant après nous ne peuvent nous mordre." *ibid.* (II, 20)

The third image of Calvin which appears from my reading is a *political* one: that of a man playing the very complex game of 16th-century European politics, writing to kings and queens, trying to influence the cause of the Reformation here and there, adapting also to the changing situation with a keen sense of political flexibility.

This accounts for the reformer's public image, his more obvious and predictable side: as expected, we discover nothing new. But another side became obvious too, one that is rarely mentioned, or only anecdotically, as a grace-note in a universe of conflict and fierce opinions, namely, Calvin's deep appreciation for the "pleasure of life". The question has already been studied, for instance, by Max Engammare, in an article on Calvin's enjoy-

ment of “le plaisir des mets et le plaisir des mots” (the pleasure of food and the pleasure of words).¹¹

Actually, my premise is that Calvin’s respect for what he called “le bon plaisir de Dieu”, literally, the “pleasure of God” serves as an antidote to the image of the stern reformer, prophet and polemicist, in the form of a sort of palimpsest added by Calvin himself.

2. *A Reformed pleasure of life*

The expression “le bon plaisir de Dieu”, appears often in classical and literary French with the meaning “if it pleases God, if God agrees”. But the expression has remained in the language as a synonym of “douceur de vivre”, the sweetness of life. To lead one’s life “au plaisir de Dieu” – literally, at God’s pleasure – today means to live a gentle, peaceful life, without conflict or trouble. For John Calvin, at least in his French letters, the pleasure of God takes three forms.

The pleasure of God expressed in a literary style. First, the pleasure of God is expressed through an elegant, sharp, expressive and lively written style. When Calvin writes to Renée of Ferrara: “Jésus Christ vaut bien de vous faire oublier tant France que Ferrare” (II, 340), what we have is not just a well-turned phrase with a pleasantly alliterative series of f’s, but rather a style in the service of an argument: love of Christ should come before love of country, even for kings and queens, even for a respected duchess who chose to follow the Reformation. The alliteration only envelops the argumentation with a sweet scent.

The pleasure of God expressed in an innovative theology. Only rarely in the lengthy volumes of Calvin’s correspondence did I find references to predestination (with regard to its acceptance by Geneva and rejection by the canton of Vaud and the Bernese authorities, as well as Calvin’s enemies) and a punishing God. The cliché of a despotic Calvin preaching a despotic God fades before the accumulation of images of a caring God:

“comme notre bon maître n’est pas venu pour donner empêchemen aux hommes mais plutôt pour être la voie où tous cheminent sans trébucher.” (I, 13)

Calvin’s God appears here as a worker who works through human hearts, no matter whether they are good or bad:

¹¹ Max Engammare, “Plaisir des mets, plaisir des mots: Irdische Freude bei Calvin”, in *Calvinus sincerioris religionis vindex*, Kirksville, Sixteenth Century Journal Publ., 1997, p. 189–208.

“davantage vous avez à penser que ces choses ne vous sont pas advenues sans la dispensation du Seigneur lequel besogne même les iniques, selon le conseil de sa bonne volonté.” (I, 14)

Elsewhere, he is described as extending a helping hand to save us from mortal injury:

“notre bon Dieu est toujours prêt à nous recevoir à merci et quand nous sommes tombés, nous tend la main, afin que nos chutes ne soient point mortelles.” (II, 4)

But he is also the kind of God who, in his fury over people calling themselves Christians despite being guilty of the most hair-raising exactions, allows evil to flare up all over the world:

“la fureur de Dieu est bien embrasée sur le monde quand il lâche la bride à Satan jusqu’à persuader de telles exécutions ceux qui se nomment chrétiens, lesquelles feraient dresser aux païens les cheveux de la tête.” (II, 329)

The pleasure of God expressed in a special friendship. My rhetorical reading of the two volumes of this French correspondence also requires us to draw particular attention to the letters addressed to the Duchess of Ferrara. Not that they are in the least romantic, of course: what is striking is the special tone John Calvin adopted when writing to Renée, a tone full of affection, understanding, compliments, admiration, esteem – the list of all the emotions expressed in these letters is quite long. Maybe a bit too long for the Duke of Ferrara’s taste: on his deathbed, he asked his wife to promise never to write to Calvin again! But after the duke died, Calvin dared deliver Renée from her promise: “Quoi qu’il en soit, ne doutez point que vous ne soyez préférée à tous”,¹² he wrote the year before his own death (II, 516).

Of course, until now historians have read this special correspondence mainly on a political level: Calvin was trying to use his influence with Renée to spread the Reformation further south in Europe. From this point of view, the duke’s prohibition of his soon-to-be widow’s correspondence with the reformer can also be read as an attempt to prevent Protestant inroads in his kingdom after his death.

However, this long exchange allows one to at least hypothesise the existence of feelings of mutual esteem between these two friends, who met only once, when Calvin was 27 and Renée 26, but continued to write to each other until two months before the reformer’s death.

¹² To be exhaustive, one should note that the quote relates to the duchess’s request for Calvin to send her a preacher: she was “preferred” in that she was to be the first to receive a Geneva-trained pastor. In the broader context of the friendship between Calvin and the duchess, it is impossible not to read a symbolic, if not sentimental, dimension in his preference.

“Madame, je vous supplie humblement de vouloir prendre en bonne part la hardiesse que j’ay eu de vous escrire ces présentes, estimant que s’il y a en cela trop grande simplicité, elle ne procède pas tant de témérité ne oultrcuidance que de pure et vraye affection de vous faire service en notre Seigneur.” Geneva, 1541 (I, 43–44)

This esteem extended well beyond their political and religious roles, as Calvin imagines the Duchess without her noble attributes:

“D’avantage j’ai congneu en vous une telle crainte de Dieu et fidelle affection à luy obéyr, que mesme la haltesse ostée qu’il vous a donnée entre les hommes, j’ay en estime les grâces qu’il a mises en vous, jusques-là que je me penseroys mauldit, si je omectoys les occasions de vous servir”. *ibid.* (I, 44)

For Calvin, serving the duchess represented an ongoing duty, which consisted in teaching her about the new doctrines of the Reformation (i.e. the passage from the sacrificial mass to a new understanding of the death of Christ, etc.) in a very wise, biblical and pedagogical manner.

“Si c’est votre plaisir d’estre plus amplement instruite en ceste matière, principalement comment une personne chrestienne se doit gouverner quant aux scandalles, je tascheray selon que le Seigneur m’a donné de vous en satisfaire. Cependant je vous envoye une épistre laquelle y est propre, comme vous verrez, si vous l’estimez tant que de y vouloir employer quelques heures de vostre plaisir.” *ibid.* (I, 56)

Serving the duchess also meant offering ongoing pastoral support, even in critical moments, such as the time in September 1554 when she faced arrest, imprisonment and separation from her children. Calvin forgave her for her apparent renouncement of her Reformed faith, when she accepted to attend the Catholic mass and to go to confession. He brings up the issue in the gentlest way possible, associating himself with her “fall” by using a supportive plural “we”:

“Et de fait le diable en a tellement fait ses triomphes, que nous avons été contraints de gémir et de baisser la teste, sans nous enquérir plus oultre. Au reste, Madame, comme nostre bon Dieu est tousjours prest à nous recevoir à mercy, et, quand nous sommes tombéz, nous tend la main, affin que nos cheutes ne soient point mortelles, je vous prie de reprendre couraige...” 2 February 1555 (I, 5)

Even when the case was more complicated, as with Renée’s daughter, Anne d’Este, who married the arch-Catholic Duke of Guise, Calvin finds the right words to address the mother:

“Je n’ay point nouvelles à vous mander que vous ne sachiez d’ailleurs, surtout lesquelles vous puissent resjouir, et je n’aime point vous fascher, combien que je suis contraint de décharger mon cœur, non pas sans grand regret, d’une tristesse laquelle est commune à tous enfans de Dieu. [...] je voudrois bien qu’elle [Madame de Guise] pust estre induite par vostre autorité à modérer ses passions, auxquelles elle ne peut obéyr, comme elle fait, qu’en faisant guerre à Dieu.” February 1562 (II, 457–458)

Finally, in his last letters, Calvin worries about the right present to send to her – probably a gold coin:

“Adviser si je suis hardy; mais pour ce que je doubtois si vous en aviez de pareille, je m’en suis déporté jusques icy, car il n’y a rien que la nouveauté qui luy donne grâce. En la fin je l’ay baillée au porteur pour vous en faire monstre, et si ce vous est chose nouvelle, qu’il vous plaise la retenir. Ce sont les plus belles estrennes que je vous puisse faire.”, 8 January 1564 (II, 549)

As indicated by the Duchess’s answer, the present was very much appreciated:

“Et quand au présent et estraines que vous m’avez envoyé, je vous assure que je l’ay veu et receu volontiers, et n’en avois jamais eu de pareil.” (in Bonnet, 549)

In his last letter, written on his deathbed, Calvin movingly assures Renée that he still admires her deeply, even though her daughter has married the Catholic nobleman most hated by the French Protestant party:

“Quant à moy, je vous proteste que cela m’a incité d’avoir vos vertus en tant plus grande admiration.” Geneva, 4 April 1564 (II, 559)

He concludes with a last recommendation that Renée help the Duchess of Savoy, her niece, declare herself publicly for the Reformation, before their very special relationship ends forever.

In conclusion: Geneva against Calvin ... or Calvin as permanent opposition?

At this point, the argument can be reversed: it is not Geneva which was or still is against Calvin, but it is the image Calvin presented of himself which has contributed to creating this negative reputation.

In his identity as a prophet and polemicist and in his political responsibilities and talents, he played the role of a permanent opposition. This role is one he is likely to conserve for at least another 500 years.

But his “dark” side – though I consider it in fact to be his more luminous side – was his pleasure in life, underscored by the pleasure of God, which serves as an antidote to the harshness of the first image. In the pleasure of a style that has meaning (*sola scriptura*), a caring God (*sola fide*) and a special friendship (*sola gratia*), John Calvin was indeed neither a sinner nor a saint, but just a human being with all his contradictions: simultaneously inspired and bad-tempered, dying of his many ailments yet still wanting to cultivate his garden, a human being who built one of the most incisive theological systems of his time while also offering unhappy husbands and wives a surprisingly modern form of counselling and busying himself with finding wood to heat old women’s homes, who assumed his special prophetic identity while dealing with unpleasant church conflicts in Geneva and many other new Reformed churches, a human being

who was faithful to his caring God while also nurturing lifelong friendships. He was a human being bound by the limitations of his own contradictions and circumstances, but he also had a humorous side, which may surprise many readers today.

To Monsieur de Falais: “S’il n’y avait qu’à vous écrire, ce me serait une peine bien aisée à porter, si peine se doit appeler où on prend seulement plaisir. La difficulté est des fâcheries et rompements de tête qui interviennent, pour interrompre une lettre, et encore davantage. Quant à la santé, j’étais beaucoup plus faible, vous écrivant naguère, que ne suis à présent. Mais étant bien disposé par tout le reste du corps, je suis tourmenté sans cesse par une douleur qui ne me souffre quasi rien faire. Car outre les sermons et lectures, il y a déjà un mois que je n’ai guère fait, tellement que j’ai presque honte de vivre ainsi inutile.”, Geneva, April 1546 (I, 141).

To the same, about the search for a wife for the widowed Pierre Viret: “Vous savez que notre frère Viret est à marier. J’en suis en aussi grand soin que lui. Nous trouvons assez de femmes ici, à Lausanne, à Orbe. Mais il n’y en a point encore apparu une de laquelle je me contentasse du tout.”, Geneva, 4 October 1546 (I, 157).

To the same, on the same subject: “Depuis, j’ai su que le propos d’une veuve continuait, combien que de cette heure je ne sais comment il en va. Et tant s’en faut que je m’en sois mêlé, sachant en cette ville une veuve d’aussi bonnes conditions que je voudrais souhaiter pour moi, quand Dieu m’aurait affligé jusque là de m’avoir destitué de ma compagnie et qu’il me faudrait remarier”, Geneva, 16 November 1546 (I, 169).

I may be reproached for not mentioning his terrible temper – not exactly a characteristic shared by every “a mere human being”. My response would be to request a thorough study of Calvin’s character, as I have tried to do in relation to Calvin’s image through my reading of his French correspondence. In other words, Calvin’s vehemence should be understood in the context of his other character traits: his willingness to laugh, despite the constant presence of death, epidemics and poverty; his steadfastness in offering encouragement to Protestants facing death in Lyon, Paris or Provence; his indefectible friendship with a French duchess exiled in Italy.

At this point, I believe the title of this article should be changed from “Geneva against Calvin” to “Calvin against Calvin, or the double image of a still astonishing historical figure”.

Calvin als Leidensmann: Berufung, Arbeit, Krankheiten

OLIVIER MILLET

Das Leiden, vor allem das körperliche Leiden, spielt eine wichtige Rolle im Leben des Körpers wie des Geistes Calvins. Bereits sehr früh ist das Leiden ein wichtiges Thema in der reformatorischen Botschaft Calvins gewesen. Am Ende des *Widmungsbriefts an den König*, im Zusammenhang mit der Verfolgung der französischen Evangelischen durch die königliche Justiz, schreibt der Verfasser der *Institutio* 1535:

Si vero (...) importunae illae furiae, te connivente, semper vinculis, flagris, equuleis, sectionibus, incendiis saeviunt, nos quidem, velut oves mactationi destinatae, ad extrema quaeque redigemur; sic tamen, ut in patientia nostra possideamus animas nostras, et manum Domini fortem expectemus; quae indubie tempore aderit, et sese armata exeret tum ad pauperes ex afflictione eruendos, tum etiam ad vindicandos qui tanta securitate nunc exsultant, contemptores.¹

Die hier erwähnten Leiden sind eindeutig körperlich, und es ist die *patientia*, die ihnen entspricht. Calvin identifiziert sich vollkommen mit den Verfolgten, indem er in der ersten Person spricht. Der Gegensatz zwischen dem leidenden Körper und der triumphierenden Seele stützt sich auf das biblische Thema der *festen Hand* Gottes, er ist aber auch ein ironisches Echo auf die Vorrede des königlichen Edikts von Coucy, von Juli 1535, die die Peinigung der verurteilten und angeblich bereuenden Evangelischen im Augenblick der Vollstreckung folgendermaßen beschreibt:

(...) à la fin de leurs jours et heure de leur supplice *délaissés de la main de notre Seigneur* („die sogenannten Evangelischen, vom Hand unseres Herren verlassen...“), ains en soi retournant vers lui et sa bonté infinie lui ont demandé grâce et miséricorde, et ont fait pénitence publique et repentance de leurs dites erreurs, et sont morts comme bons chrétiens et catholiques, à la louange de Dieu et exaltation de son Église.²

Calvin kehrt also die offizielle Perspektive um, setzt an die Stelle der katholischen Buße die evangelische Geduld, an die Stelle der sich selbst

¹ Vorrede an Franz I., *Joannis Calvini opera selecta*, ed. P. Barth und G. Niesel, vol. III, München, Ch. Kaiser, 1967, s. 30.

² Zitat nach D. El Kenz, „Le roi de justice et le martyr réformé“, *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du protestantisme français*, Bd. 141, Januar 1995, s. 44; wir unterstreichen.

überlassenen Schuldigen, die Hilfe, die von Gott kommt. Was er aber ebenfalls verändert, ist der herkömmliche Sinn des christlichen Leidens im Licht der reformatorischen Theologie. Denn es versteht sich von selbst, dass er den Gedanken an einen teilnehmenden geistlichen Nutzen des Leidens von sich weist (und also das Fegefeuer und die Rückfälligkeit der Verdienste). Er zitiert dazu in der *Institutio* den römischen Bischof Leo:

Accepere justi, non dederunt coronas, et de fortitudine fidelium nata sunt exempla patientiae, non dona justitiae; singulares quippe eorum mortes fuere (franz. Übersetzung von Calvin: „chacun a souffert pour soi“ = „jeder hat für sich selbst gelitten“), nec alterius quisquam debitum suo fine persolvit: quum unus extiterit Dominus Christus, in quo omnes crucifixi, omnes mortui, sepulti, suscitati.³

Die Gläubigen nehmen teil an den Leiden Christi vor allem wenn sie durch ihre Leiden Zeugnis ablegen von ihrem Glauben an das Wort Gottes. Calvin selbst jedoch ist dieser höchsten Form der Teilnahme, des Martyriums, entkommen. Sein Teil an dem Leiden geht aus der allgemeinen christlichen Moral hervor: die Schmerzen dienen dazu, uns von dieser Welt loszusagen, sie sollen uns warnen, sie sind eine göttliche Strafe und regen den Wunsch an, insbrünstig zu beten. Calvin als Leidensmann hat also „für sich“ gelitten, und zwar so wie es dem allgemeinen Glauben entspricht, nämlich der christlichen Geduld. Er hat sein Leiden vor Gott (gleich David), aber auch vor den Menschen ausgedrückt, vor allem in seinen Briefen. Ich möchte die Formen der christlichen Vorstellung des Leidens, die Calvin abweist, schnell anzeigen, und dann näher eingehen auf das, was die drei Hauptquellen seines persönlichen Leidens verbindet, seine öffentliche Berufung als Reformator, die erdrückende Arbeitslast, die damit Hand in Hand geht, und die Krankheiten, die durch diese übermenschliche Last hervorgerufen oder verschlimmert wurden. Danach möchte ich die kulturellen und geistlichen humanistischen Modelle betonen, die es Calvin erlauben, von seinen eigenen Leiden so zu sprechen, wie er es getan hat, wie ihm dann seine Anhänger (insbesondere sein Nachfolger Théodore de Bèze) in ihren Berichten über den Reformator gefolgt sind.

Es gibt Modelle, die von vornherein ausgeschlossen sind. Unter diesen verworfenen Parametern der Tradition sind die Darstellungen Christi als Leidensmann, die zwischen 1300 und 1600, wie man weiß⁴, charakteristisch sind für die naturalistische Brutalität ihres Ausdrucks; sie ziehen parallele Phänomene in der Darstellung und im Ausdruck des Leidens der

³ *Institutio christianae religionis* 1559, éd. P. Barth und G. Niesel, in *Opera selecta*, vol. IV, München, Ch. Kaiser, III, 5, § 3, s. 134; wir unterstreichen.

⁴ Siehe Gert von den Osten, *Der Schmerzensmann. Typengeschichte eines deutschen Andachtsbildwerkes von 1300 bis 1600*, Berlin, Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft, 1935, und Christian Mouchel, *Les Femmes de douleur. Maladie et sainteté dans l'Italie de la Contre-Réforme*, Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2007.

Christen nach sich, zum Beispiel der Märtyrer. Dem steht andererseits eine andere Tendenz entgegen, die sich immer mehr bestätigt mit der Reformation und der katholischen Gegen-Reformation, die Bewahrung der *dignitas* eines eher verinnerlichten Leidens. Dessen Ausdruck entspricht ethischen und ästhetischen Normen, die deren Sozialisierung in einer von humanistischen Werten gekennzeichneten Welt erleichtern.

Für Calvin kann natürlich nicht die Rede sein von einer Erlösung, der das Leiden als Kasteiung mit den damit verbundenen Verdiensten zugrunde läge. Die calvinistische Theologie schließt besonders das klösterliche und franziskanische Ideal aus, laut dem die Leidenschaften des Körpers durch die Kraft des Schmerzes mittels freiwilliger Züchtigungen (Fasten, Geißelungen, usw.) zurückgehalten werden müssen, gemäß der Idee, dass die dem Körper auferlegten Züchtigungen es der Seele erlauben, in Richtung auf die naturgemäß geistliche Vervollkommnung fortzuschreiten, so dass das Leiden des Körpers ein Mittel zum Heil der Seele darstellt. Die Reformation hat die Vorstellung ausgeschlossen, dass man den Körper durch das Leiden als Instrument des Heils brauchen sollte, und folglich die Frömmigkeit durch und für das Leiden.

Sind also ausgeschlossen die mystischen Modelle in der Art der franziskanischen Nachfolge Jesu Christi, indem man aktiv und freiwillig dessen Leiden wieder aufnimmt, als ob man körperlich mit dem Christus der Passion übereinstimmen könnte. Calvin klagt dieses Modell als ein lächerliches, abgöttisches Nachahmen an, und zwar aus zwei Hauptgründen:

1. Erstens, die Heiligkeit würde durch die Nachfolge der Passion Christi als Werk des Glaubens definiert, was durch die reformatorische Theologie der Rechtfertigung allein durch den Glauben ausgeschlossen ist;

2. Zweitens, es wird damit nach einer neuen Inkarnation gestrebt, während der nunmehr durch seine Himmelfahrt triumphierende Körper Christi von uns entfernt ist wie der Himmel von der Erde. Die Veräußerlichung des Leidens als Instrument einer Präsenz, die die Gnade der Erlösung in der Welt sichtbar und tätig macht, wird also verworfen.⁵

Schließlich ist die christliche (und stoische) rigoristische Tendenz Calvin fremd. Sie schließt das Gefühl des Mitleids und also des Mitleids mit sich selbst von dem Bereich der zulassbaren Seelenregungen aus; für Calvin im Gegenteil hat man durchaus das Recht zu weinen. Über diese Frage wurde in den Kreisen des französischen Evangelismus heftig diskutiert, und man

⁵ Siehe D. El Kenz, „Le *corpus dolens* dans les stratégies de propagande, au temps des guerres de religion“, *Corpus dolens. Les représentations du corps souffrant du Moyen-Âge au XVII^e siècle*, ed. L. Borot und M.-M. Fragonard, Publications de l'Université de Montpellier, 2002, s. 271. Dennoch wird der Körper der reformierten Märtyrer ein „Theater der göttlichen Gnade“, siehe darüber F. Lestringant, *Lumière des martyrs. Essai sur le martyre au siècle des Réformes*, Paris, Champion, 2004.

kann feststellen, dass der Reformator in dieser Hinsicht den Standpunkt der Marguerite de Navarre⁶ teilt.

Wie stellt sich in diesem theologischen und geistlichen Zusammenhang Calvin als Leidensmann dar?

Das Leiden Calvins ist wesentlich mit Genf verbunden, und also mit seiner Berufung zum Reformator in dieser Stadt. Bis zum Sommer 1536 ist Calvin ein vielversprechender junger Humanist und bereits ein Schriftsteller im Dienst der Reformation. Die Würfel sind schon gefallen; der Autor der *Institutio* weiß jedoch noch nicht, was dieses genau für ihn bedeutet. Calvin hat aber in Genf den Aufruf von Guillaume Farel gehört, und sein nun beginnendes Genfer Abenteuer im Licht eines biographischen, den biblischen Berufungen entnommenen Modells interpretiert. Dieses Szenario ist wesentlich, um zu verstehen, wie er später seine eigene Existenz geführt und seine historische Rolle aufgefasst hat. Das dementsprechend erzählerische Modell ist das der biblischen Propheten, die von Gott dazu berufen sind, Vorboten des göttlichen Wortes für ihr Volk oder sogar für die anderen Nationen zu werden, obwohl sie es nicht erwartet haben. Die erste Berufung dieser Art in der Bibel ist die Abrahams, um den Preis des Exils weit entfernt von seinem Geburtsland. Die folgenden „Berufenen“ versuchen, sich ihrer Berufung zu entziehen, indem sie sich entschuldigen, wie zum Beispiel Moses oder Jeremias; sie haben prinzipiell nicht die Gaben dazu, wie Moses oder David; sie versuchen sogar der göttlichen Berufung zu entkommen, indem sie wie Jonas flüchten. Der bedeutende „autobiographische“ Text von Calvin, die Vorrede zu seinem Kommentar der Psalmen von 1557⁷, wertet diese Art zu denken und sich sein Leben vorzustellen aus, und zwar zu einer Zeit, als die Psychologie nicht existierte und als die Widersprüche der Persönlichkeit und des Gewissens nur durch symbolische Bildermodelle gedacht werden konnten. Calvin erklärt hier in der Tat, wie seine Berufung zum Reformator sich seiner Person gegen seinen Willen aufgedrängt hat. Dann erzählt er genauer, wie er ganz am Anfang seines evangelischen Glaubens entdeckte, dass er bereits ein Meister für die ihm Zuhörenden war. Da er in Basel versteckt lebte, hatte der Autor

⁶ Siehe Jean Lecointe, „Ethos stoïque et morale stoïcienne. Stoïcisme et rhétorique évangélique de la consolation dans le *De contemptu rerum fortuitarum* de Guillaume Budé (1520)“, *Stoïcisme et christianisme à la Renaissance*, Paris, Editions Rue d'Ulm-Presses de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure, 2006, s. 35–58.

⁷ Lateinischer und französischer Text in den *Calvini opera* (weiter mit CO abgekürzt, gefolgt von der Nr. des Bandes und der Seite) im *Corpus Reformatorum*, CO, 31, 13–36. Siehe unsere Interpretation dieser Vorrede „Calvin témoin de lui-même dans la Préface de son Commentaire sur les psaumes“, *L'Emergence du sujet. De L'Amant vert au Misanthrope*, Etudes réunies par O. Pot, Genève: Droz, 2005, s. 113–132. Über den biographischen Inhalt dieses Kommentars, s. Herman J. Selderhuis, *Calvin's Theology of the Psalms*, Grand Rapids (Mi), Baker Academic, 2007, s. 26–36.

der *Institutio* nur den Wunsch, anonym zu bleiben. Von Farel in Genf als Autor dieses Buchs erkannt und in gewisser Hinsicht vor vollendete Tatsachen gestellt, lehnt er zunächst gewisse Verpflichtungen ab. Wenn Calvin ganz allgemein, wie auch die anderen Reformatoren, das Wort Gottes der Legitimität der Hierarchie der römischen Kirche entgegensetzt und auf dieser Weise die Reformation im allgemeinen rechtfertigt, so ist, was ihn persönlich betrifft, die Frage folgendermaßen: bin ich wirklich für die mir aufgebene Mission geschaffen? Calvins Antwort ist klar: Nein! Trotz meiner Fähigkeiten ist mein Temperament das eines studierenden, mit Büchern arbeitenden Mannes, „ein armer, schüchterner Schüler wie ich es bin und immer gewesen bin“, sagt er, kein öffentlicher Wortführer, der dafür begabt ist, die *negotia* einer öffentlichen Verantwortung aufzunehmen, eine konkrete Gemeinschaft zu leiten und also den heftigen Reaktionen des kollektiven Lebens die Stirn zu bieten.⁸ Das Entsetzen Calvins vor dem, was auf ihn zukommt, erklärt seine erste Rückzugsbewegung vor Farel's Einladung und die körperlichen und moralischen Leiden, die der Reformator später und während seiner ganzen Laufbahn erduldet. Gleichzeitig ist aber auch die Versuchung, die seine Vernunft ihm rät, sich zu weigern, für ihn ein Beweis dafür, dass seine Berufung keine willkürliche, persönliche Wahl ist. Der Ruf der anderen (Farel), der einer bestimmten Situation (Genf), sind Zeichen dafür, dass die Wahl ihm nicht mehr gehört, wenn er Gott gehorchen will. Sein eigener Widerwillen bedeutet, dass nicht er Herr der Situation ist, sondern die göttliche Vorsehung, der er sich in einem letzten Akt des Glaubens und der wahrhaften Umkehr ausliefert.

Calvin wird diese grundlegende Inszenierung ein zweites mal erleben, als er glaubt, nachdem er 1538 gescheitert ist und aus Genf vertrieben wird, in Basel als Flüchtling den Frieden seiner von ihm so sehr geschätzten Studien wiederzufinden; er erhält jedoch bald zwei aufeinander folgende Rufe. Martin Bucer braucht ihn als Pastor, um die Gemeinschaft der französisch sprechenden Flüchtlinge in Straßburg zu leiten. Hier, wo er sich weigert, an den „großen Versammlungen“ teilzunehmen (eine Art, kundzutun, dass er dort keine vordergründige sozio-politische und kirchliche Verantwortung hatte), nimmt er jedoch, auf die Bitte der Straßburger Obrigkeiten, teil an den Reichsversammlungen, die sich um die Einigung von Protestanten und Katholiken bemühen. Danach kommt im Jahre 1541 der Ruf aus Genf, das ihn nicht entbehren kann. Er kehrt zurück wie ein

⁸ In seiner Abschiedsrede an die Genfer Pastoren vor seinem Tode wiederholt Calvin diesen Punkt: „Je vous assure que de ma nature je suis timide et craintif. Aussi il remémora, que quand il revint de Strasbourg ici, il suivit cette vocation comme étant contraint“ (Calvins *Vie* von Colladon, CO, 21, 102).

Hirt zu seiner Herde, allerdings „mit Trauer, Tränen, großer Sorge und Pein“⁹.

Calvin hat also die Zeichen seiner Berufung weder auf einem persönlichen Weg zum Heil, noch aus Anlass geistlicher Erfahrungen gefunden. Diese Zeichen sind ihm immer von anderen Menschen oder von den jeweiligen Umständen zugekommen und, dies ist das wesentliche, diese göttliche Berufung verkehrt die eigenste Natur (oder, in der Sprache der damaligen Medizin, „Temperament“) dieses Menschen in ihr Gegenteil. Für ihn ist das der sichere Beweis für die Glaubwürdigkeit des Wegs, den er dann einschlägt. Der Weg, der sich für ihn auftut, ist gerechtfertigt, denn er ist das Ergebnis einer totalen Objektivation der Sorge um sich selbst. Die persönliche Geschichte Calvins ergibt sich nicht aus der Suche nach der eigenen Identität als innerer Zusammenhang oder Behälter des göttlichen Bildes. Im Gegensatz zu Augustin ist das Vorbild nicht das eines Heilswegs als Rückkehr zu sich selbst und zu Gott, sondern das einer Existenz, die einer immerwährenden Prüfung göttlichen Ursprungs unterworfen ist. Diese Vorstellung hängt mit der reformatorischen Auffassung der göttlichen Gnade eng zusammen. Anstatt sich mit der Natur des einzelnen zu befassen, rechtfertigt sie den Menschen, indem sie jegliche Idee einer anthropologischen Konsistenz der menschlichen Natur, einer natürlichen oder verfügbaren Befähigung für das Heil in Frage stellt. Diese Auffassung unterstreicht auch die geistliche Bedeutung des Leidens, die nicht als Werk, sondern als Instrument einer Prüfung angesehen wird.

Dieser von Calvin 1557 vorgelegte autobiographische Bericht wie auch der seiner „Passion“ und seiner im nachhinein entdeckten Nachfolge Davids (und durch ihn folglich die Nachfolge Christi) heben die ganz besondere Idee hervor, dass seine Existenz von der verborgenen Hand Gottes geleitet wurde. Auf diese Weise wird Calvin über die Widersprüche seiner Persönlichkeit Reformator. Von nun an vermischen sich bei ihm die Nutzung seiner bisher gewonnenen Kompetenzen zum Dienst seiner Mission und die Hingabe an den göttlichen Willen, die seiner Persönlichkeit nicht Rechnung trägt. Der wissenschaftlich Gebildete und leidenschaftlich-hochempfindliche Student der humanistischen und biblischen Schriften wird zum *leader*; er wird für diese Spannung zahlen, indem er ein Leidensmann wird, was zur Zerstörung seines Körpers führen wird.

Um die Natur der Last dieser Genfer Aufgabe in Calvins Leben und das Bild des Reformators als Leidensmann erscheinen zu lassen, führen wir drei Briefe des Reformators an, die aneinander klingen. In März 1540, als er in Strassburg Nachrichten von seiner eventuellen Zurückberufung nach Genf hört, schreibt er an Farel: „Lieber tausend andere Tode als dieses Kreuz (*crux*), an dem es tausendmal pro tag zu untergehen heissen wür-

⁹ CO 31, 27.

de¹⁰. Im zweiten, im September 1540 an denselben Farel gerichteten Brief¹¹ entschuldigt sich Calvin, dass er in einer Sache nicht so gehandelt hat, wie es Farel von ihm erbeten hatte: er erklärt nämlich, eine Krankheit habe ihn daran gehindert. Es ist der erste erhaltene Brief mit einer langen chronologischen und klinischen Beschreibung seines verschlechterten Gesundheitszustands.¹² In diesem wahrhaft medizinischen Bericht erklärt Calvin, dass zu seiner Krankheit noch die Weigerung hinzukam, öffentlich zuzugeben, dass er krank war; weiter hebt er die damit verbundenen privaten Sorgen hervor. Dem modernen Leser kann die psychosomatische Dimension seiner Krankheit nicht entgehen. Er hat also nicht handeln können, erklärt er, weil das ein *cum deo pugnare* bedeutet hätte. Der Briefschreiber benützt ein ausdrucksvolles Wort, um seine körperlichen Leiden zu bezeichnen; er hat *excruciat*, also Schmerzen erlitten, die denjenigen der Kreuzigung ähnlich sind. Ein Jahr später ist Calvin endgültig nach Genf zurückgekehrt; er ist also seiner Berufung gefolgt, und hat endgültig auf den „Kampf mit Gott“ (auf das *cum deo pugnare*) verzichtet. Im September 1541 schreibt Calvin noch an Farel¹³, und bittet ihn um Beistand bei seiner ungeheuren Genfer Arbeit. Er fleht seinen Freund an und bringt ein pathetisches Argument vor: „wenn Sie nicht wollen, das ich umsonst gemartert werde (*excruciari*), und dass ich, ohne einen Vorteil für wen auch immer, der elendste aller Menschen werde“. Genf und die lokale, wie auch die damit verbundene internationale Verantwortung werden für Calvin in der Tat eine Marter; diese moralische Tortur beinhaltet die im eigentlichen Sinn des Wortes körperlichen *excruciat*; dies ist das Opfer (sein Kreuz), das der Reformator bringen wird, um mit seiner öffentlichen Berufung das Gemeinwohl zu verwirklichen. Derselbe Ausdruck der Kreuzmarter Schmerzen erscheint ein letztes Mal, in der *Vita Calvini* von Théodore de Bèze¹⁴, aber in einem anderen Kontext. Es geht um das Jahr 1557 und um die gegen die Pariser Evangelischen geübten Verfolgungen; deren Nachricht habe, so schreibt Beza, den französischen in Genf gesessenen Reformator gemartert (*excruciavit*). So werden die verschiedenen von Calvin erlebten Marterschmerzen durch einen roten Faden zusammengebunden: sowohl die körperlichen Krankheiten wie die Last der Genfer Aufgaben und die pathetische Identifikation mit den französischen unter dem Kreuz leidenden Reformierten drücken in der moralischen oder in der physischen Person Calvins Wunden. Deren Bezeichnung ist den Schmerzen der christ-

¹⁰ CO, 11, 30, Br. Nr. 214.

¹¹ CO, 11, 83 sq., Br. Nr. 238.

¹² Der letzte, kurz vor seinem Tode, ist der medizinische Bericht über seinen Zustand, den er an die Ärzte von Montpellier 1564 schickte (CO, 20, 252–254, Br. Nr. 4077).

¹³ CO, 21, 281, Br. Nr. 355.

¹⁴ *Vita Calvini*, CO, 21, 152.

lichen Märtyrer angepasst. Im Laufe seines Lebens hat Calvin das christliche Blutzugnis nicht erlitten, er hat aber die entsprechende Prüfung auf einer stellvertretenden Weise erlebt, wegen der starken Leiden, die sich aus seiner Genfer Berufung ergaben, auf Grund einer symbolischen Übertragung, die Körper und Seele betrifft.

Kulturelle Modelle des calvinischen Leidens

Welche sind die Modelle, die es Calvin erlauben, die Idee eindeutig auszusprechen, dass diese Aufgabe der Ursprung seines Leidens ist? Ich habe schon den Gegensatz erwähnt zwischen einerseits dem Privatleben und der mit dem Studium verbundenen Tätigkeit, und andererseits den *negotia*, den Aufgaben des im Vordergrund stehenden öffentlichen Lebens. Dieser Gegensatz stammt aus der klassischen Tradition, vor allem von Guillaume Budé und von Erasmus vermittelt, bei denen er eine wesentliche Rolle spielt. Mit der Veröffentlichung ihrer Briefe hatten Erasmus und Budé¹⁵ sich selbst als sich ihren Studien widmende und damit ihre Gesundheit gefährdende Autoren dargestellt: obwohl ihr Körper schwach und ihre Gesundheit schwankend waren, opferten sie sich aus Liebe zur Philologie ganz auf; dazu verlangten noch die *negotia* ihre volle Aufmerksamkeit. Bei diesen beiden Autoren wird so der schwache Körper ein Zeichen dafür, dass sie sich ganz der Sache der humanistischen Studien hingeben, während Krankheit und Erschöpfung den dafür notwendigen Kraftaufwand unterstreichen; schliesslich tritt hier klar der Gegensatz zwischen der geistlichen Überlegenheit der wahrhaftigen Kultur des Geistes und der materiellen und sozialen Sphäre hervor. Andererseits legen unsere beiden Humanisten den grössten Wert auf das *otium* und bemühen sich so, dem Druck des öffentlichen Lebens standzuhalten, um über genug Zeit für ihre intellektuellen und literarischen Arbeiten zu verfügen.

Bei Calvin ist diese Anordnung genau das Gegenteil. Die Genfer Berufung bedeutet den endgültigen Verzicht auf das *otium*¹⁶. Die intellektuellen und literarischen Tätigkeiten des Exegeten, des Predigers und des Schrift-

¹⁵ Siehe für Erasmus das zu erscheinende Buch (in Genf, bei Droz) von Christine Bénévnt, *La Correspondance d'Erasmus entre République des Lettres et lettres secrètes*, Abteilung IV, „Le corps souffrant, une sociabilité en retrait“. Für Budé, siehe seine griechische von 1529, in 1548 und in 1557 wiedergedruckte Vorrede an Franz I. seiner *Commentarii linguae graecae*, und deren im 16. Jahrhundert unveröffentlichte, französische Übersetzung bei Luigi-A. Zanchi in *Les Commentaires de la langue grecque de Guillaume Budé*, Genève, Droz, 2006, s. 23–24, und den Kommentar dazu s. 34, Fussnote 88.

¹⁶ CO 31, 21: *otium semper amavi*; 21–23: Calvins Ideal bestand darin: *ignobile otium colere*; cf. den Kommentar autobiographischer Art des Psalms 84, v. 7, CO 31, 782.

stellers werden eins mit der erdrückenden Last der *negotia* des Kirchenmannes¹⁷. 1558–1559 schreibt zum Beispiel der kranke und sich zwangsweise schonende Reformator, das *otium* sei ihm bitter, er kann nicht ertragen, sich seinen üblichen Tätigkeiten zu entziehen¹⁸. Die von Beza verfasste lateinische *Vita* hat ein weiteres Wort Calvins aus den Jahren 1558–1559 überliefert: Calvin verwirft die Perspektive einer Pause und ruft aus: „Ich würde vom Herrn als untätige (*otiosum*) Person angeklagt“.¹⁹ Das Wort *otium* bedeutet nun in seinem Munde Untätigkeit und Unnützlichkeit, genau das Gegenteil der Bedeutung des Wortes unter dem Feder der beiden humanisten Erasmus und Budé.

Wie bei Budé und Erasmus behalten jedoch Krankheit und Erschöpfung ihren Wert als Argument und sind ein Zeichen dafür, dass ihre Sache höher steht als alle Risiken und Leiden. Die Ähnlichkeit zwischen Budé, Erasmus und Calvin drängt sich auf. Zwei Punkte treten hervor: einerseits geht es hier um das ursprünglich aristokratische und gleichsam christliche Ideal einer heldenhaften Illustration der erlittenen und das Leben aufs Spiel setzenden Schmerzen. Calvin hat diese Ausdrucksweise und diese Ideologie zugunsten seines reformatorischen Strebens total christianisiert. Andererseits bezeichnet Budé die diese Leiden Ertragenden als *philoponoï*, „Menschen, denen das Leiden eine Wonne ist“ (ein bei Calvin nicht vorkommender Ausdruck); dagegen, so schreibt Budé, steht Cicero, der diesem griechischen Begriff das direktere und weniger paradoxe lateinische Adjektiv *laboriosi*, „Menschen, die fähig sind, Mühsal zu ertragen“, vorzieht; letzterer ist bei Calvin und in seinem Milieu geläufig. Meines Wissens trifft man nur ein einziges Mal auf die Idee der *philoponia* (Leiden als Wonne) in bezug auf Calvin, und zwar in der zweiten französischen, unter dem Namen Colladon herausgegebenen Biographie²⁰. Eines Tages, obwohl der Reformator an Fieber litt, ging er doch zur Kirche, um sein Predigtamt zu leisten:

Or lui ne pensant point à sa fièvre, ou n’y voulant point penser (tant il prenait grand plaisir de servir l’Eglise („so grosses Vergnügen er am Dienst der Kirche nahm“) un bien peu

¹⁷ So schreibt ein Korrespondent von Calvin, er weiss, dass der Reformator ist *negotiis obrutus verius quam occupationibus* (CO 17, 622). Über den *obrutum* Calvin sofort nach seiner Rückkehr in Genf siehe z.B. CO 15, 337.

¹⁸ (...) *sibi acerbam esse vitam ut ipse aiebat otiosam* (CO 21, 156, *Vita*: der Ausdruck *ut ipse aiebat* unterstreicht das Problem!).

¹⁹ CO 21, 161 (*Vita*).

²⁰ Über diese Fragen der Autorschaft der zweiten (französischen) Fassung, siehe Irena Backus, *Life Writing in Reformation Europe. Biographies of reformers by friends, disciples and foes*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008. Wir teilen ihre Meinung, dass diese zweite Fassung nicht von Beza stammt.

devant qu'il sortît de sa maison pour aller au temple, on aperçut à ses doigts quelque signe de l'accès venant. Mais il dissimula cela, et monta en chaire (...).²¹

Dieser Auszug ist um so bedeutsamer, als es darin um einen Gottesdienst geht, währenddessen zwei neue Pastoren vorgestellt werden sollten. Die *philoponia* bedeutet hier also die christliche Nächstenliebe und nicht den Genuss eines individuellen *otium*. Ausschliesslich diese zweite der drei verschiedenen Fassungen der offiziellen Biographie Calvins betont, dass der Reformator manchmal versucht habe, sich im Freundeskreis trotz aller Schmerzen wohl zu fühlen; nur sie erwähnt auch die Freude, die Calvin bei der Verfassung seiner Bücher empfunden habe²².

Ein anderes Modell, dieses Mal medizinischer Art²³, war ebenfalls durch die Briefe des Erasmus in Calvins Milieu verbreitet. Calvins Krankheiten sind Teil seines Bildnisses als Leidensmann. Die moderne, monumentale Biographie Calvins von E. Doumergue²⁴ wirkt hier eher illusorisch. Doumergue behandelt in der Tat jene Krankheiten im zweiten Buch des dritten Bandes mit dem Titel „Das Haus Calvins“ und in dem Kapitel „Calvin zu Hause“. Dies führt dazu, Calvins Krankheiten auf der modernen Dimension des privaten Lebens zu reduzieren und der modernen Auffassung des eigenen Körpers als zur Sphäre des Vertraulich-Intimen gehörend zuzuordnen, wenn auch Doumergue Calvins Krankheitszustand eng mit seinen ausserordentlich mühevollen Tätigkeiten verbindet. In Wirklichkeit ist Calvins körperliches Leiden ein Teil dessen, was er als Mann der Öffentlichkeit schon zu seinen Lebzeiten war. Calvin hat selbst dazu beigetragen, vor allem durch seine Korrespondenz, oder wenn er in seinem Krankenzimmer aus ganz Europa herbeigeeilte Leute empfing, oder auch indem er gestattete, Vorworte seiner Werke zu veröffentlichen, die seine körperliche Erschöpfung durchblicken liessen. Im 16. Jahrhundert hatte die Krankheit eines Menschen keineswegs etwas mit der Vertraulichkeit zu

²¹ CO, 21, 80.

²² „Finalement, sa goutte commença à luy donner quelque relasche: adonc il se parforçoit quelquesfois de sortir dehors pour se resjouir avec ses amis, mais principalement pour lire, et mesmes prescher, se faisant porter en une chaire iusques au Temple“ (CO 21, 96). Cf. über seine Schreibtätigkeit als Buchverfasser: „estant en continuel et tresheureux travail d'esprit“ (CO 21, 110), wo das Wort *heureux* (= glücklich) kann dennoch auch *fruchtbar* (cf. das lateinische Adjektiv *felix*) bedeuten.

²³ Über die Krankheiten Calvins siehe Charles L. Cooke, „Calvins Illnesses and Their Relation to Christian Vocation“, *John Calvin and the Church. A Prism of Reform*, ed. Timothy George, Louisville (Kentucky), Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990, s. 59–71. Dieser Aufsatz stützt sich auf Doumergue (siehe folgende Fussnote).

²⁴ Diese Biographie begründet in der modernen Historiographie Calvins Leben als Geschichte eines Leidensmannes: *Jean Calvin. Les hommes et les choses de son temps*. t. 3: *La ville, la maison et la rue de Calvin*, Lausanne, G. Bridel, 1905 (insbesondere S. 509: ausserordentlicher Charakter dieser Leiden).

tun. Die von Erasmus herausgegebenen Briefe, in denen er realistisch von den intimen Körperteilen, zum Beispiel dem Unterleib, seines kranken Körpers spricht, legen dafür Zeugnis ab. Nach dem Tod Calvins bestätigt die zweite Ausgabe unter dem Namen von Colladon erschienenen Biographie Calvins diese öffentliche Dimension. Sie geht in besonderer Weise auf die verschiedenen Etappen der calvinischen Krankheiten ein; sie spricht sehr genau und realistisch von ihnen, um den Erzählstil mittels dieses pathetischen Elements zu dramatisieren. Wichtig ist hier, dass Calvins Krankheiten als Folge seiner aufopfernden, ganz den Studien, dann der reformatorischen Arbeit gewidmeten Lebensweise, dargestellt werden.

Die in den Biographien hervorgehobenen Zusammenhänge sind folgende: Calvin, dessen Körperschwäche schon früh zutage getreten war²⁵, neigt bereits auf Grund seines Temperaments in seiner Jugend und lang vor seiner Berufung zum Reformator dazu, tagtäglich hart zu arbeiten. Diese Lebensweise hat dann äusserst schmerzvolle und auf die Dauer fatale Krankheiten verursacht oder verschlimmert; sie hat es aber Calvin gleichzeitig erlaubt, auf Kosten unglaublich grosser Mühen das bis nach seinem Tod weiter bestehende reformatorische Werk zu schaffen. Hier einige genauere Aspekte dieses Szenarios nach der Chronologie der drei Biographien. Der junge studierende Calvin las in Orléans bis Mitternacht, sah seine Lektüre morgens, kaum aufgewacht, noch einmal durch. Dieses schlafraubende Leben hat laut Beza eine *ventriculi imbecillitas* hervorgerufen, die dann zum krankhaften Zustand führte und schliesslich den Tod zur Folge hatte²⁶. Am Ende seiner Biographie, wo er ein körperliches und moralisches Bild des Reformators entwickelt, greift Beza auf zwei Faktoren zurück, die den gesamten Bericht über die Jugend bis zum Tod einrahmen²⁷: jahrelang hat Calvin wegen dieser *ventriculi imbecillitas* nur einmal am Tag gegessen; fast ohne zu schlafen hat er bis spät in die Nacht hinein gearbeitet²⁸, oft im Bett²⁹; mehr als zehn Jahre lang hat er nicht zu Mittag gegessen, um seinen Magen zu schonen³⁰. Der gebildete Leser dieser Zeit weiss nur zu gut, was das bedeutet. Selbst Erasmus hatte geraten, immer stehend zu schreiben und nicht nachts schriftliche Arbeiten zu vollenden; auch sei jegliche intellektuelle Tätigkeit nach dem Abendessen auszuschliessen; nachmittags nach dem Essen solle man sich weniger intensive geistige Arbeiten als

²⁵ „Dieu avoit logé ce grand esprit en un corps imbecille et disposé de soy-mesmes au mal de phthisie“ (*Vie* von Colladon, CO 21, 106).

²⁶ *Vita*, CO 21, 125.

²⁷ Cf. Colladon: „(...) les études de sa jeunesse l’avoient fort atténué (...)“ (CO 21, 106).

²⁸ *Vita*, CO 21, 169. Cf. Colladon: „Estant de si petite vie il dormoit aussi fort peu“ (CO 21, 109); cf. CO 21, 156 (Arbeit tags und nachts); CO 21, 159 (schlaflose Nächte).

²⁹ Über diese Gewohnheit der Arbeit im Liegen, siehe Colladon, CO 21, 109–110.

³⁰ CO 21, 160 und 169 (*Vita*).

morgens vornehmen³¹. Schon früh hatte Calvin, wohl wegen seines besonderen Temperaments, eine diesen Ratschlägen entgegengesetzte Diät für sich gewählt³², selbst wenn er, laut Colladon, „morgens die meisten seiner Bücher diktiert hat“³³. Diese Art, um sich zu sorgen, besser gesagt, um sich nicht zu sorgen, hatte er als junger Mann bei Guillaume Budé feststellen können, der aus Liebe zur Kultur seine Ernährung, den Schlaf und seinen Körper vernachlässigte und so Gefahr lief, schwer krank zu werden, wie es sein Biograph Louis le Roy 1540 schreibt. Dies alles war aber längst bekannt, denn Budé, Calvins Meister, hatte das bereits selbst in seinen Werken erwähnt³⁴.

Die drei nacheinander offiziell veröffentlichten Biographien Calvins gehen jede nach ihrer Art auf diesen Punkt ein: Calvin hat durch seine mühselige Arbeit seinen Gesundheitszustand verschlechtert, indem er sich nie geschont hat. In der zweiten Version zum Beispiel liest man folgendes:

Calvin de sa part ne s'épargnait nullement, travaillant beaucoup plus que son pouvoir et l'égard de sa santé ne portait³⁵,

und weiter in derselben *Vie*:

La cause de si grande indisposition était, qu'en ne donnant nul repos à son esprit, il étoit en perpétuelle indigestion, à laquelle même il ne pensa jamais qu'étant contraint par la douleur.³⁶

Calvin hat sich nicht umsonst so tief in das Studieren vergraben, denn dadurch sind seine ausserordentlichen intellektuellen und literarischen Fähigkeiten zutage getreten; nicht zu vergessen ist aber auch der damit verbundene Jähzorn. So liest man in der *Vita* von Beza:

Fuit omnino naturae ipsius temperamento oxucholos, quod vitium etiam auxerat laboriosissimum illud vitae genus.³⁷

Beza verteidigt eher diesen Charakterzug, – das tut er auch später in dem Vorwort zu seinen Ausgaben der Werke und Briefen Calvins –, denn für ihn geht es darum, den von dem Reformator in seinen zahllosen Kontroversen angeschlagenen Ton und die polemischen Ausdrücke zu rechtferti-

³¹ Siehe darüber Ch. Bénévent, *loc. cit.*

³² „(...) c'est qu'il avoit un corps si debile de nature, tant attenué de veilles et de sobriété par trop grande (...)“ (Colladon, CO 21, 107).

³³ CO 21, 110.

³⁴ Siehe Michel Magnien, „Portrait de Budé en ‚intellectuel‘: la *G. Budaei viri clarissimi Vita* de Loys Le Roy (1540)“, *Renaissance and Reformation*, 2000, 24/4, s. 31–34 und Fussnote 18.

³⁵ Colladon, CO, 21, 66.

³⁶ Colladon, CO, 21, 94.

³⁷ *Vita*, CO 21, 170.

gen. Die viel mehr medizinisch geprägte, Colladon zugeschriebene französische Biographie unterstreicht noch mehr als die lateinische *Vita* die Verbindung von Arbeitswut und Jähzorn. Letzterer – laut der *Vita*, ein *viti-um* –, ist bei Colladon einbegriffen als Quelle des Leidens, sowohl der calvinischen Leiden als auch derjenigen, die im Kreis um den Reformator lebten:

Outre son naturel enclin de soyemesmes à colere, l'esprit merueilleusement prompt, l'indiscretion de plusieurs, la multitude et varieté infinie d'affaires pour l'Eglise de Dieu, et sur la fin de sa vie, les maladies grandes et ordinaires, l'avoyent rendu chagrin et difficile.³⁸

Das von Budé entworfene Selbstbild sah anders aus: die intellektuellen Studien hatten den berühmten Humanisten höchst melancholisch gestimmt³⁹. Calvin aber bezeichnet nicht vordergründig die Melancholie, sondern die Cholerik als eine seiner Berufung entsprechende Eigenschaft, die es ihm erlaubt, aktiv und mit voller Kraft die *negotia* zu meistern und die Hindernisse zu beseitigen. Ein Punkt verbindet aber die beiden Fälle, Budés und Calvins: den beiden ist es dumpf im Kopf, so dass sie als Intellektuelle und Schriftsteller unter Migräne leiden. Was Calvin betrifft, hatte er die Gewohnheit, seinen Kopf immer auf die Hand zu stützen⁴⁰; das ist charakteristisch für den Melancholiker, wie die Renaissance den entsprechenden Typus beschreibt.

Die lateinische *Vita* zählt Calvins Jahre in Genf als aufeinander folgende Prüfungen auf, als da sind Kalamitäten, Mühsal und Kämpfe. Nur die Jahre 1549–1550 und 1555 bringen eine Linderung des Gesundheitszustands. Die zweite französische Biographie wiederum strukturiert den Bericht, indem sie die verschiedenen somatischen Etappen der Krankheiten hervorhebt. Diese französische *Vie* stellt den fatalen Wendepunkt in Calvins Leben aus dem Jahr 1556 dar⁴¹. Es löste sich ein stetiges Wechselfieber aus, das sich 1558 zu einer neuen Form veränderte. Es griff einen durch schon verschiedene Krankheiten geschwächten Körper an, wie es in der *Vita* zu lesen ist: *corpusculum illud macilentum et laboribus ac morbis attritum*.⁴² Tatsächlich macht Jean Budé (Sohn des Guillaume Budé), ein der wichtigsten Mitarbeiter Calvins, im Februar 1557 in seinem Vorwort zur Ausgabe der Lektionen Calvins über den Propheten Hosea öffentlich bekannt, wie erschöpft der Reformator ist: in einem breiten nausologischen

³⁸ CO 21, 117.

³⁹ Über diese melancholische Veränderung von Budé unter dem Druck seiner intellektuellen Opferungen siehe M. Magnien, *op. cit.*, s. 33.

⁴⁰ *Vita*, CO 21, 161. Cf. die berühmte „Melancholia“ von Dürer.

⁴¹ CO 21, 80–81, und 88–89.

⁴² CO 21, 156.

und pathetisch- biographischen Zusammenhang braucht er schon das Wort *corpusculum*:

Ut nemini iam dubium sit, divina non modo benignitate, sed insigni et ad posteros nunquam non praedicando miraculo corpusculum hoc trahere, natura imbecillum, crebris insuper morbis vehementer affectum, immensis deinde laboribus exhaustum: postremo assiduis impiorum aculeis confossum, et omni contumeliarum genere undique afflictum et divexatum.⁴³

Angeborene Schwächezustände, Krankheiten, unvorstellbar zermürbende Anstrengungen und fast könnte man sagen Verfolgungen durch seine Gegner: das Bild Calvins als Leidensmann ist zum erstenmal vollständig, da es sowohl die schon früh sichtbaren Anlagen erwähnt, als auch die Idee des Martyriums nahlegt. Die von Calvin selbst aufgezeichneten Begebenheiten bilden jetzt in diesen Text eine Synthese, und sie kündigen so das Vorwort zu dem Psalmenkommentar Calvins an, der im Juli desselben Jahres erscheinen wird.

In seinen Briefen an Calvin spricht auch A. Blaurer ab 1559 von dessen *corpusculum*⁴⁴. Dieser Ausdruck hat dann in der *Vita* für das Jahr 1563 seinen festen Platz: *in corpusculo tam imbecillo, tot laboribus exhausto, tot denique morbis attrito*, um den höheren Wert des Geistes (*animus*) zu unterstreichen, der *fortis* und *generosus* ist⁴⁵: besser kann man die heldenhafte und fast stoische Dimension der calvinischen *patientia* nicht hervorheben. Als Calvin im Jahr 1564 schon mit dem Tod ringt, erscheint dieses Wort wieder in der *Vita*, um dem *spiritus* wieder den höchsten Wert zuzugestehen⁴⁶. Das Wort *corpusculum* trat auch in den Mitteilungen über Calvins Gesundheitszustand auf, denn im Februar 1564 benutzt es ein französischer Korrespondent Calvins in einem an letzteren gerichteten Brief: er beschreibt darin nach platonischer Art den zum Skelett gewordenen Grabes-Körper des Reformators, wie er durch *labores* erschöpft ist, wie sein *animus* den *curae* der Kirche geweiht ist⁴⁷. Dieses Wort *corpusculum* ist ein Echo auf das Werk des Erasmus, der es oft für sich selbst als Leidensmann in der christlichen Perspektive gebraucht. Die Einleitung zur zweiten Auflage der *Institutio principis christiani* zum Beispiel nennt es, sowie auch zahlreiche andere Texte und Briefe des Humanisten, in denen er zur Geltung bringen möchte, wie sehr er sich dem Gemeinwohl hingeeben hat: seine körperlichen Leiden sind Zeichen seiner geistlichen, aus dem Dienste Christi geschöpften Kräfte. Erasmus hatte auch stets geschrieben,

⁴³ Zitat nach CO 42, Prolegomena.

⁴⁴ CO 17, 430 (Br. vom 4. 2.1559); CO 18, 538 (Br. vom 6.7.1561); cf. CO 20, 546 (Gratianus an Calvin, ohne Datum).

⁴⁵ CO 21, 159.

⁴⁶ CO 21, 168 (... *corpusculo... ut solus illi spiritus superesset*).

⁴⁷ CO 20, 257, Br. n° 4080.

dass die körperliche Schwäche ganz allgemein die notwendige Bedingung für die Schärfe und die intellektuelle Fruchtbarkeit des Geistes ist⁴⁸. Das der Öffentlichkeit ab 1557 bekannte Bild Calvins als *corpusculum* vereinigt also jene beiden Werte, die christliche und die intellektuelle, wie sie Erasmus verkettet hatte. Ab 1564 sind sie dann wiederum in der Ehrung des gestorbenen Reformators in den offiziellen Biographien miteinander verknüpft.

Um die Leiden Calvins zu beschreiben, kehrt neben der medizinischen Ausdrucksweise am häufigsten das Wort *labor* wieder. Die Zeitgenossen des Reformators und später seine Biographen unterstreichen die hohe Bedeutung der *labores* Calvins im Sinne sowohl der Arbeiten als auch der von ihrem Helden erduldeten Mühsal; gemeint sind damit die zahlreichen Aufgaben des Kirchenmannes sowie seine theologischen und literarischen Schriften. Das am Ende der *Vita* von Beza entworfene körperliche und moralische Bild Calvins liefert uns den symbolischen Schlüssel zu diesem Wort. Nachdem Beza in seinem Bericht die von Calvin erduldeten Prüfungen, Krankheiten und Kalamitäten ausführlich beschrieben hat, schliesst er mit der übermenschlichen Kraft, die sein Held aufgewandt hat, um sein Werk zu vollenden. An so vielen Fronten angegriffen, war Calvins höchstes Ziel, die Sache Gottes zu verteidigen:

Sed hoc potius admiratione dignum est, unicum hominem tanquam Herculem quendam christianum tot domandis monstris sufficere potuisse, nempe fortissima illa clava, id est Dei verbo utentem (...).⁴⁹

Das Bild der Herkulesarbeiten mag uns banal erscheinen. Es war es nicht in der humanistischen Kultur. Tatsächlich hatte Erasmus das Bild des Herkules mit dem des schwachen Mannes verbunden, der er selbst körperlich gewesen war, und zwar der Antithese des (schwachen) Körpers und des (starken und heroischen) Geistes folgend, aus der das Bild des übermenschlichen mythologischen Helden Vorteil zugunsten des Ansehens der humanistischen Kultur zieht. Dieses Bild stufte die unermessliche philologische und literarische Arbeit des Erasmus sehr hoch ein, wie auch den Sieg der geistlichen Werte, wofür vor allem seine Ausgabe des Neuen Testaments und der Werke des heiligen Hieronymus Zeugnis ablegen. Auf dem berühmten, von Holbein gemalten Porträt des Erasmus trägt ein zugeschlagenes Buch die doppelte Inschrift: *Herakleioi ponoi* (Herkulesarbeiten) und *Erasmus Roterodamus*⁵⁰. Es ist nun so, dass das *Adagium* (der

⁴⁸ Siehe für die Belege Bénévent, *loc. cit.*, wie auch Godin, „De la plainte à la dette: Erasme humaniste dolent?“, *Corpus dolens, op. cit.*, s. 221–231 (mit Bibliographie über das Thema).

⁴⁹ CO 21, 170.

⁵⁰ Siehe Ch. Bénévent, *op. cit.*, „La grandeur d'un Hercule souffreteux“.

Spruch) Nr. 2001, *Herculei labores*, desselben Erasmi den Herkulesarbeiten gewidmet ist⁵¹. Es lädt den Leser dazu ein, um der humanistischen Kultur willen sich „von den üblichen Vergnügen loszusagen, und weder den Körper, noch den Schlaf noch die Gesundheit zu schonen, frühzeitig zu sterben, das Leben zu verachten, um auf diese Weise den der meisten Leute auf dich gerichteten Hass zu erwecken und vor allem ihren Neid“. Um dieses Programm der *labores* zu vollenden (um des *publicum negotium*, der *communis utilitas* willen), muss man „Herkules im Geist (*animo*) sein“ und die Fähigkeit besitzen, alles zu tun und alles zu ertragen. Erasmus setzt noch deutlich hinzu: geht es darum, die alte und wahre Kultur wiederherzustellen (*in restituendis antiquae veraeque literaturae monumentis*), so muss man dem Herkules ähnlich sein. Hauptthema des Adagium ist der Gegensatz zwischen dem Neid der anderen, als einzige Belohnung, die der Humanist für seine Riesenarbeiten zu erwarten hat, und dessen persönlichem Opfer als Instrument der authentischen Kultur in der modernen Welt.

Der Text von Beza schöpft aus der Quelle der erasmischen Mythologie und überträgt deren Bedeutung und Prestige auf Calvin, auf die calvinische Reformation der Kirche (bei Erasmus handelte es sich um die *restitutio literarum*) und auf die vom reformierten Theologen durchgestandenen (bei Erasmus, vom Neid verursachte) Kämpfe und Kontroversen gegen allerlei Gegner Gottes. Man kann aber auch sagen, dass Calvin schon seit seiner Jugend das von dem holländischen Humanisten vorgegebene und von Guillaume Budé melancholisch inkarnierte Programm der Selbstopferung wortwörtlich genommen hat. Er hat sich dann später danach gerichtet und tatsächlich sein Leben und seinen Körper für eine unerwartete Berufung aufgeopfert, die nicht seine freie Wahl war und seinem Temperament widersprach, ein typisches Merkmal des calvinischen Selbstbildes.

Calvin und Beza sind sich gewiss, dass die Leiden des Reformators auf alle Fälle seine Mission glaubwürdig machen und sein Werk legitimieren. Trotz Calvins Charakterstärke sind aber diese Leiden keine Wunder und ziehen keine Verdienste an. Der objektive Beobachter kann sie einfach in den Bereich der Wahrscheinlichkeit einordnen: sie gründen nicht die Autorität eines Dogmas oder einer Kirche; es sind einfache Zeichen, die es der Verantwortung der Gläubigen überlassen, sie im Licht ihres Glaubens zu entziffern. Die zeitgenössischen Texte, die sie erwähnen, sind in Fachsprachen und nach Konventionen verfasst, wie sie die medizinische und literarische Kultur dieser Epoche vorlegte. Calvin, dieser sich zur Reformation bekennende Humanist, wurde so zu einem Helden des Glaubens; er kann und darf aber nicht als Heiliger geehrt werden.

⁵¹ *Opera omnia*, North Holland Publishing Company, Amsterdam/Oxford, *Adagia*, Bd. II, 5, ed. F. Heinimann, E. Kienzle und S. Seidel-Menchi, 1981, s. 23–41.

Olivétan, not Calvin the author of *A tous amateurs*, a preface to the oldest French protestant Bible

FRANS VAN STAM

There exists an intriguing problem that an essay, most probably not composed by Calvin, reappeared under his very name eight years later. The present contribution¹ proposes to deal with I. the oldest complete French Bible of the 16th century, its prefaces and especially the one under consideration, titled *A tous amateurs*; II. the available evidence which excludes Calvin's authorship for the mentioned preface, and the identification of another author; III. the reappearance under Calvin's name seven years later, and some proposals in which direction an answer may be looked for.

I.

In June 1535 the printer Pierre de Vingle published in Neuchâtel the first complete protestant Bible.² The name of the translator has not been mentioned on the title page, but an acrostic at the end of this Bible reveals it: Olivétan. He is also known as Pierre Robert, and was born in Noyon in France, a few years before his nephew Calvin. They may have met each other at the University of Orléans³, but most probably in that time Olivétan

¹ An earlier version, based on a lecture at McGill University in Montreal in September 2005, has appeared under the title "Qui a composé la preface 'A tous amateurs' de la Bible d'Olivétan de 1535?" in *Littératures* 24/1 (2007), 51–71. Dr. William Kemp kindly provided a lot of help for the lecture and the article.

² *La Bible Qui est toute la Sainte escripture. En laquelle sont contenus, le Vieil Testament et le Nouveau, translatez en Francoys. Le Vieil de Lebrieu, et le Nouveau du Grec.* According to the colophon the printing process was completed on 4 June 1535. About the publisher, Pierre de Vingle, see Gilmont, Jean-François, "La signification historique des publications neuchâteloises de Pierre de Vingle" in *Littératures* 24/1 (2007), 1–23.

³ A common explanation of this name traces it back to his alleged studies deep in the night by candlelight fueled by olive oil (= Olivetanus). A more plausible solution may be, that during his studies in Orléans he was housing in the hamlet Olivet, situated south of Orléans just at the other bank of the Loire.

was already an evangelical. The next year Olivétan stayed in Strasbourg as a guest of Capito and Bucer. In 1531 he worked as a tutor in Neuchâtel, belonging to the inner circle of Guillaume Farel and Pierre Viret.⁴ In September 1532, during a synod of Waldenses at Chanforan in the Alps, it was Farel who passed on to Olivétan the Bible translation project, at which Olivétan worked during three years in severe seclusion high in the Alps in the small settlement Angrogne.⁵ After having the translation project completed he worked some time in Geneva and then departed to Italy, where he died in 1538, perhaps murdered.⁶

This French Bible counts six prefaces. At the reverse of the title page we find a Latin text which announces Calvin as its author. Then follow two prefaces without author's name but both expressively announced as composed by the translator, thus Olivétan. The fourth preface provides only three initials as indication of its author's name, namely V.F.C.: most probably the initials of Wolfgang Frabricius Capito. This preface offers an introduction to the Old Testament. It provides many an allusion to Hebrew and rabbinic texts. This is in favour of Capito's authorship, because in those years he was considered an expert on this field. The fifth preface is without author's name and functions as an introduction to the Apocrypha. The sixth⁷ and last one is an introduction to the New Testament, again without author's name, and this is the preface which will attract our special attention. Its title in full reads *A tous amateurs de Jesus Christ et de son evangile*, mostly referred to with its first three words *A tous amateurs*. So there are only two prefaces with author's name and four without, although two of this last group can easily be identified as composed by Olivétan, the translator.

⁴ Cf. the preface: "Le translateur à ses freres fideles en nostre Seigneur: Hilerme Cusemeth, Cephas Chlorotes et Antoine Almeutes.", pseudonyms for resp. Farel, Viret and Antoine Saunier; *La bible qui est*, iii^r. He further writes there about Farel and Viret (the following quotation reveals also his characteristic style): "... vous ... m'avez tant prié, sollicité, importuné et quasi adjuré, qu'ay esté constrict à entreprendre ceste si grande charge, laquelle certes toy, Cusemeth [= Farel], et Chlorotes [= Viret] eussiez peu faire trop mieulx que moy, si Dieu vous eust voulu permettre et donner le loysir et qu'il ne vous eust appellé à plus grand chose, asçavoir pour semer le pur grain de sa parolle en son champ fructueux et arroser et faire verdoyer son delicieux verger de Eden."

⁵ Cf. *La Bible qui est*, [v]^v: "ayant jà longuement trainé ce joug tout seul, ay esté contreinct entre ces montaignes et solitudes user tant seulement de maistres muetz, c'est à dire livres, veu que ceulx de vive voix par vostre moyen me defailloient." Angrogne, about 40 km as the crow flies south-west of Turin, in the Valle Pellice which is not connected by passes with other valleys. The Waldenses elected this vally in the 13th century because of its remoteness.

⁶ Cf. Calvin in a letter to Farel of Jan. 1539; Herminjard 5, 228 (ep. 767).

⁷ These prefaces can be found in *La Bible qui est*, resp.: title page verso, ii^{r-v}, iii^{r-v}, vi^{r-vii}, AAi^v, aai^{r-aii^f}.

The anonymous introduction to the New Testament, *A tous amateurs*, is an interesting essay. Its tone is compassionate, with for example exclamations as “O chrétiens et chrétiennes, entendez icy et apprenez, car certes l’ignorant avec son ignorance perira”, and at the end a gibe at Roman Catholic dignitaries: “O vous tous, qui vous nommez evesques et pasteurs du povre peuple...”. This introduction depicts in broad outline the Heilsgeschichte also known as the history of salvation. Its opening words are: “Dieu le createur...avoit faict l’homme comme un chef-d’oeuvre”. But man sinned. This caused his perdition. Only Jesus Christ the Saviour restored men’s relation to the Creator.

But who composed this preface? Although the name of the author is lacking, for many a scholar it is without doubt Calvin. The option of Calvin’s authorship has a long history, because already Théodore de Bèze attributed it to him in 1575.⁸ The attraction of Calvin as its author is evident: whereas for many a contemporary Calvin’s *Institutio* of March 1536 appeared as out of the blue, this would give us a detailed theological statement from his pen written months before he composed the preface to his *Institutio*.⁹

However, halfway *A tous amateurs* a strong counter-argument presents itself. There is a distinctive reference to the work of the translation of the NT: “lequel [nous] avons translaté le plus fidelement qu’il nous a esté possible selon la verité et propriété de la langue Grecque”.¹⁰ The last part of this quotation – “la propriété de la langue” – is typical for the heed Olivétan as a translator wanted to pay to the idiom of the languages of the Bible as well as the French. In his first preface he considers it being his task “de tirer et desployer iceluy thresor hors des armoires et coffres ebraicques et grecz, pour, apres l’avoir entassé et empacqueté en bougettes françoyses...en faire ung present à toy, o paovre eglise...”.¹¹ We do not know such kind of comments of Calvin before 1542. And, regarding the last part of the quotation: is it likely, that Calvin could have written “à toy, o paovre eglise”? We know the severe pressure Farel had to exert on him midst July 1536 to get him to work for the church of Geneva. To realize this, Farel saw himself forced to pronounce an imprecation.¹² More

⁸ He provides a Latin translation of it in his edition of Calvin’s *Epistolae et response* (Geneva, 1575), 393–400.

⁹ The preface to Calvin’s *Christianae religionis institutio* of 1536 is dated on 23 August 1535, two monts before the printing process of Olivétan’s Bible was completed.

¹⁰ The plural ‘we’ has to be considered as a form of courtesy, because in two other prefaces regarding his efforts as a translator Olivétan uses the singular, and cf. also below n. 13.

¹¹ *La Bible qui est*, II^r.

¹² CO 31, 25 and 26.

convincing might be that some months after the appearance of the Olivétan Bible, Calvin stated in a letter of 11 September 1535, that he himself was not a translator, but a corrector of this Bible, preparing its second edition.¹³ And how could he have found the time to work on the translation, whereas his life in France was in jeopardy (he had to leave Paris, travelled a lot in France – Paris, Angoulême, Nérac, Orléans) and he had to seek refuge first in Strasbourg and then in Basel, and lived there in seclusion to complete his *Institutio*, which must have taken up almost all his time during those years. And, moreover, how could Olivétan and Calvin have kept in touch with some regularity as the intensive translation project would require, whereas Olivétan lived among Waldenses in the above mentioned remote settlement high in the Italian Alps? Therefore, the possibility of Calvin's participation in Olivétan's French Bible translation before June 1535 can be ruled out.

Two arguments, however, seem to support Calvin's authorship of *A tous amateurs*. Firstly, the Olivétan Bible does provide a preface composed by Calvin. So, if there is one preface by Calvin, why not two? Some scholars even suppose that Calvin composed four of the prefaces: the first one and the last three. But this Latin preface under the title *Ioannes Calvinus cesaribus* appears a little bit out of the ordinary in a French Bible destined for common people. Perhaps details about the design for this translation project had not reached Calvin in optimal form, which might indicate, that Calvin entered the project at a late moment. The fact that this Latin preface has been printed on the backside of the title page may confirm composition at the very last moment, because documents on that specific place used to be added mostly after completion of the printing of the main body of the book. It is indeed conceivable that Olivétan, returning from the Italian Alps with the manuscripts completed to see his French Bible through the press in Neuchâtel, met his nephew Calvin, who then remained in Basel (the distance between Neuchâtel and Basel is no more than a hundred kilometres), and invited him to add a preface at the only still available blank page at the reverse of the title page. In that case Calvin had to do a rush job, which may explain his use of Latin, but also that his contribution to Olivétan's Bible was most probably confined to this single one.

¹³ See Calvin's letter of 11 Sep. [1535], which seems to implicate Calvin's cooperation as a corrector of the second edition; Cor 6/1, 115–118 (ep. 22). As year only 1535 is appropriate, because Calvin refers to a 'senio', which constitutes in the typographical language of the sixteenth century a quire of six sheets of the printed edition. Moreover, Olivétan refers in one of his prefaces to his Bible to three men who had encouraged, supported and guided him in view of his work as a Bible translator: Farel, Viret and Saunier, see above n. 4. When Calvin was among his supporters, one should expect his name too.

The second argument is much more difficult to surmount. Five years after Olivétan's death appeared *A tous amateurs* under Calvin's name: does not this fact provide a strong reason to identify him as its author, does it? Before we enter into the discussion about this reappearance under Calvin's name, we first need to scrutinize further evidence for the author of *A tous amateurs*.

II.

Let us, conform the suggestion in the title of the present contribution, start with an overview of the available writings of Olivétan to solve the question of the authorship. It is not much¹⁴, but maybe enough. First of all, there are two prefaces in the Olivétan Bible which from the very title present themselves as composed by him, namely *L'humble et petit translateur* and *Apologie du translateur*.¹⁵ Further, there is Olivétan's *L'instruction des enfans*¹⁶, a manual of 152 pages in octavo format, to learn the French

¹⁴ There is only one small piece of paper containing Olivétan's handwriting: his letter to the Council of Neuchâtel. Piaget, Arthur (ed.), *Documents inédits sur la Réformation dans le Pays de Neuchâtel* (Neuchâtel, 1909), 521–523 (no. 165) published it and dated it in 1531: at that year Olivétan (subscribing this letter as Louis Olivier) worked there as a schoolmaster. Olivétan declared in this letter, that he lived in poor circumstances: “ne sachant sur qui seront faictz les dits despens, attendu que telz ma pauvreté ne pourroit porter”, and: “... veu aussy que je suis pour le present de toute chose destitué et que l’yver approche”. This communication attracts attention, because after his death he turned out to have possessed a large collection of books, in fact one of the most extensive libraries of the sixteenth century, cf. the inventory, listing only a part of the books, in Herminjard, *Correspondance* 6 13–27 (ep. 816) and Dony, Jean-Claude, “La bibliothèque d'Olivétan” in Casalis, Georges, Roussel, Bernard (ed.), *Olivétan, traducteur de la Bible. Actes du colloque Olivétan, Noyon mai 1987* (Paris, 1987), 93–106 One can be inclined to consider the possibility, that Olivétan bought his books from the huge sum of money, which the Waldenses gathered for the translation in French of the Bible (500 écus d'or!). But the only evidence for the mentioned money connects it with the printer, De Vingle: “Ad typographum dati sunt quingenti aurei nummi ... ut quam poterit brevissime imprimatur”; Herminjard, *Correspondance* 2, 452–453 (ep. 393). Calvin inherited a considerable part of Olivétan's books. Maybe Olivétan's letters are deliberately destroyed, because he corresponded with Calvin, Farel, Fabri, Saunier, Viret e.a., and we know none of these letters. But why?

¹⁵ *La bible qui est*, resp. ii^r-^v (dated 12 Feb. 1535) and iii^r-^v.

¹⁶ There are two editions of it, one of 1533 in Geneva, printed by Pierre de Vingle, and another of 1537, printed by Jean Gérard in Geneva, see Higman, Francis M., *Piety and the people. Religious printing in French, 1511–1551* [St Andrews studies in Reformation history] (Aldershot, 1996), 335, and Berthoud, Gabrielle, “L'édition originale de *L'instruction des enfans* par Olivétan” in *Musée Neuchâtelois* 24 (1937), 70–79. Olivétan used the pseudonym Belisem d'Utopie. During the time he prepared his edition of 1533, he dwelled already among the Waldenses in the Alps. We used the 1537 edition.

language, which was his job as a schoolteacher. Most probably it was Olivétan's intention to make by it Waldenses familiar with the French he used in his Bible, because they spoke a different dialect.

1. Itemizing the arguments in favour of the authorship of *A tous amateurs* by Olivétan, the first is a rather prosaic one. The Olivétan Bible contains six prefaces of which two present themselves as composed by the translator. Two others provide some kind of author's name: the already mentioned Latin one, written according to its title by Calvin, and the other, an introduction to the Old Testament, subscribed with the initials V.F.C. This last preface is nowadays contributed by most of the scholars to Wolfgang Fabricius Capito (= V.F.C.: classical Latin lacked the W and used in stead of it the V¹⁷). This solution is a firm one, because Capito had been in Strasbourg Olivétan's teacher of Hebrew and was considered both an expert on the exegesis of the OT, and on rabbinic traditions.¹⁸ An authorship of Calvin is out of question¹⁹, just because his arrival in Basel at the beginning of 1535 provided him only a few months to learn Hebrew from Sebastian Münster, whereas the preface refers to the *Talmud* and the *Sefer Mitswot Gadol*.²⁰ And not to overlook, nowhere else has Calvin himself indicated with the signature V.F.C. or in full with "votre frère Calvin". He uses pseudonyms, he signs his letters with "tuus Calvinus", but not the plural possessive form "your brother Calvin" (which, by the way, makes little sense before Farel got him prepared to work for the church of Geneva). It therefore seems recommendable to revive the ruling practice that all prefaces and other pieces in a book, unless expressively stated otherwise, are from the hand of the composer, included *A tous amateurs*. Moreover, in Bible translations the translator himself was used to compose the introductions to the Old en New Testaments and the Apocrypha.²¹ Apart from that: the Olivétan Bible contains more pieces, poems for

¹⁷ Cf. the subscription by Capito in a letter of March 1538: "Vol. Fab. Capito"; Hartmann, Alfred (ed.), *Die Amerbachkorrespondenz* 2 (Basel, 1943) 106 (ep. 605).

¹⁸ See Detmers, Achim, *Reformation und Judentum. Israel-Lehren und Einstellungen zum Judentum von Luther bis zum frühen Calvin* [Judentum und Christentum 7] (Stuttgart, 2001), 268–276.

¹⁹ Alleged other solutions for V.F.C. are: "Votre frère Calvin" and "Viret, Farel, Calvin".

²⁰ Almost nothing is known about Calvin being taught Hebrew in Paris by François Vatable. Supposing that Calvin could have used a Latin translation of the Talmud (although extremely rare in 1535) without any proof that he possessed such a book or could have borrowed it, is in danger of being a circular reasoning.

²¹ See for example the two introductions in Jacques Lefèvre's *Le Nouveau Testament* 2 vols. (Paris, Simon de Colines, 1523).

example, signed by the composer²², and again another one without name which most probably stems from Olivétan: a poem in the form of an acrostic which reveals the people who had financed this translation: “Les Vaudois people evangelique ont mis ce thresor en publique”.²³

2. Now Olivétan’s *L’instruction des enfans* deserves attention. As already mentioned above *A tous amateurs* refers to a sequence of biblical events, which are since the nineteenth century usually called Heilsgeschichte. This Salvation historical scheme includes: creation of men to God’s image and likeness, the fall of mankind, rejection of God’s revelation in the nature, rejection of God’s special revelation to Israel, men’s total desperate situation, and men’s salvation by Christ already prophesied in the OT. *A tous amateurs* uses this scheme extensively. But in Calvin’s *Institutio* it is lacking, most probably because conform to Calvin’s way of thinking it would a little bit too massively suggest an existing historical phenomenon unrelated to men’s actual behaviour. For his *Institutio* of 1536 develops along the line of thinking: knowledge of God and men in correlation, exposition of the Decalogue, explanation of the apostolic creed, and that of the Lord’s Prayer, the sacraments and Christian freedom. Although the one does not exclude the other, this difference does not support the thesis of Calvin’s authorship of *A tous amateurs*. More conclusive, however, is the fact, that Olivétan’s *L’instruction des enfans* contains on its final pages a passage which resembles the line of reasoning in *A tous amateurs*. Its length is small compared to the extensive way in which it has been dealt with in *A tous amateurs*; but considering the intended readership of *L’instruction des enfans*, dealing with it in a more general way suits children. The following passage of the *L’instruction des enfans* provides the relevant text (we have some key words underscored):

“Les dessus dictz livres enseignent cecy: Qu’il est un Dieu tout puissant, tout sage et tout bon, lequel par sa puissance, sagesse et bonté a faict toutes choses.

Qu’il a formé Adam à son image et similitude; mais que par l’envie du diable et desobeissance du dict Adam peché est entré au monde et que nous sommes tous en Adam et par Adam pecheurs.

Que Christ a esté promis aux pères, lesquelz ont receu la Loy, affin que par icelle congnoissans leurs pechez et insuffisance, desirassent l’advenement de Christ pour satisfaire de leurs pechez et accomplir la Loy par iceluy.

Que Christ est nay en temps constitué de Dieu, son Père, c’est assavoir, lors que toute iniquité abondoit. Et non point pour les bonnes oeuvres d’aucun (car tous estoient pecheurs), mais affin que comme veritable il nous feist grace et misericorde.

²² *La Bible qui est*, resp. vii v. (Bonaventure des Périers), ooi r. (Des Périers and Hugues Sureau du Rosier), rri r. (Matthieu Gramelin = Thomas Malingre).

²³ The first lines of this poem read (the underscoring is ours): “Lecteur entends, si vertité adresse / viens donc ouyr instamment sa promesse / et vif parler, lequel en excellence ...”.

Que Christ est nostre vie, voye, verité, paix, justice, pasteur, advocat, sacrifice et sacrificateur, lequel est mort pour le salut de tous et resuscité pour nostre justification. Le jugement duquel les infideles doyvent craindre et les bons attendre la vie eternelle”.²⁴

3. The last part of the quotation above about Christ, was on purpose larger than strictly necessary, namely: “Christ est nostre vie, voye, verité, paix, justice, pasteur, advocat, sacrifice et sacrificateur”: Olivétan prefers – a good quality for an translator! – the method of using a variety of words to master all the aspects of an issue. Two examples of that method may confirm this tendency, one from a preface composed by the translator, the other from *A tous amateurs*. From *L’humble et petit translateur* several passages present themselves, for example a series of no lesser than 28 nouns, but the following ironical catalogue of epithets used in dedications to honour dignitaries may suffice. The composers of these dedications are, in the opinion of Olivétan, afraid that without such excellent names their books would not draw any attention at all, namely “si elles ne portoient la livree de quelque tresillustre, tresexcellent, treshault, trespuissant, tresmagnifique, tresredoubté, tresvictorieux, tressacré, beatissimé et sanctissimé nom”. Olivétan provides in his Bible prefaces more proofs that he did not like people impressed by their own importance, for example on the same page he produces “quelque glorieux Thraso”. But now the example from *A tous amateurs*, a wordy one, in praise of Christ:

“il s’est humilié pour nous exalter; il s’est asservy pour nous affranchir; il s’est apaovery pour nous enrichir; il a esté vendu pour nous racheter; captif pour nous delivrer; condamné pour nous absouldre; il a esté faict malediction pour nostre benediction; oblation de peché pour nostre justice; il a esté desfiguré pour nous figurer; il est mort pour nostre vie; tellement que par luy rudesse est adoucie; courroux appaisé; tenebres esclairecies; injustice justifiée; foiblesse vertueuse; desconfort consolé; peché empesché; mespris mesprisé; crainte assuree; debte quictee; labeur allegé; tristesse resjouyé; malheur bienheuré; difficulté facile; desordre ordonné; division unie; ignominie anoblée; rebellion assubjectie; menace menacee; embusches desbuchees; assaulx assaillis; effort efforcé; combat combatu; guerre guerroyee; vengeance vengee; torment tormenté; damnation damnee; abysme abysmé; enfer enferré; mort morte; mortalité immortelle”.

This figure of speech provides again an indication to Olivétan being its author.

²⁴ One should not overlook the variance between the opening sentence of Calvin’s *Institutio* of 1536 (“Nearly the whole of sacred doctrine consists in these two parts: knowledge of God and of ourselves”, translation of Ford Lewis Battles) and the following remark in *A tous amateurs*: “Car ceste est la vie eternelle: congnoistre ung seul, vray Dieu et celuy que il a envoyé, Jesus Christ, auquel il a constitué le commencement, le moyen et la fin de nostre salut”.

4. In the above mentioned quotation an extensive reminiscence to Bible words draws our attention. Wilhelm Neuser, who published an English translation of *A tous amateurs*, noted more than a hundred passages from the Bible.²⁵ A characteristic of *L'instruction des enfans* is, that it too provides a chain of Bible quotations. Olivétan wanted to familiarized his pupils in one go with the French and with the Bible.²⁶ A noteworthy phenomenon is it, that, whereas the size of *L'instruction des enfans* is about eight times that of *A tous amateurs*, it also counts no less than about eight hundred Bible quotations: both publications show the same rationing. Calvin too uses Bible quotations, but firstly not so extensively, and secondly, more as a theologian who almost always discusses Bible texts, being in search for its meaning, for example confronting it with seemingly contradictory places. In comparison to him, Olivétan seems more inclined just to end discussion by quoting a Bible text.

5. It is, further, a peculiarity of Olivétan to introduce a hyphen to clarify the meaning of Hebrew words. In his preface *Apologie du translateur* he declares: “nous avons usé aucunesfoys d’une certaine virgule...entre aucuns motz propres, affin de mieulx discerner l’etymologie et denoter que le nom est composé de deux motz, comme Ben-iamin, c’est à dire: Filz de la dextre”.²⁷ About 1535 the use of accents and other marks was a new phenomenon.²⁸ It is interesting, that the 1533 edition of Olivétan’s *L'instruction des enfans* contains at the end of the volume a letter of the publisher, Pierre de Vingle, wherein he excuses himself not being capable to comply to the wishes of Olivétan “par faute de caracteres qui n’avoit presentement”.²⁹ Nevertheless Olivétan’s manual contains two hyphens in the Hebrew proper names Bar-nabas and Beth-el.³⁰ It suffices to thumb in Olivétan’s Bible to find many an example of this hyphen. Therefore, it is hardly by accident that *A tous amateurs* too uses the novelty of the hyphen, although only once, in the Hebrew name Melchi-zedek.³¹

²⁵ Olivétan, *Instruction des enfans* (Genève, Jean Gérard, 1537), 140–141.

²⁶ Neuser, Wilhelm H., “The first outline of Calvin’s theology: the preface to the New Testament in the Olivétan Bible of 1535” in *Koers. Bulletin for Christian scholarship* 66 (2001), 1–38.

²⁷ *La bible qui est*, iiiif.

²⁸ See Jean-F. Gilmont, ‘La fabrication et la vente de la Bible d’Olivétan’ in *Musée neuchâtelois* 22 (1985), 281–220: “L’orthographe nouvelle”.

²⁹ See Berthoud, “L’édition originale” (above n. 16), 71.

³⁰ [Olivétan], *L'instruction des enfans*, 95 and 99.

³¹ *La bible qui est*, aaiiv.

6. At the end of this gathering of evidence for Olivétan's authorship³² a specific description of Jesus by qualifications from the OT may suffice. De preface *L'humble et petit translateur*, after having referred to Jesus, raises the question:

“Ne le congnois tu point? C'est ton frere comme le pitoyable Joseph: ne se peult plus contenir qu'il ne se donne à congnoistre à toy; c'est ton amy tel que Jehonathan, le plus parfait, constant et entier que tu aye jamais eu”. *A tous amateurs* provides a close parallel, even with a reference to the “pitoyable Joseph”, again about Jesus: “Cestuy est Izahak, le filz bien aymé du pere...; c'est le vigilant pasteur Jakob, ayant si grand soing des brebis qu'il a en garde; c'est le bon et pitoyable Joseph, qui en sa gloire n'a point eu honte de recongnoistre ses freres, quelque humbles et abjectz qu'ilz feussent; c'est le grand sacrificateur et evesque Melchi-zedek...; c'est le souverain legislateur Moseh...; c'est le fidele capitaine et guide Jehosua pour nous conduire en la terre promise; c'est le noble et victorieux roy David assubjectissant à sa main toute puissance rebelle; c'est le magnifique et triumpant roy Salomoh, gouvernant son regne en paix et prosperité; c'est le fort et vertueux Samson, qui par sa mort à acablé tous ses ennemys”.³³

III.

How to consider, however, the appearance in 1543 of Olivétan's *A tous amateurs*, now under the title *Jesus Christ est la fin de la loy*, under Calvin's name? It appeared as the first piece in a book of which the title page announces Calvin's and Viret's names, namely *Deux epistres*. Within two years an identical reissue of the same book appeared³⁴, so there evidently was a market for it. In what follows we provide some facts about this publication of 1543 together with considerations about what possibly has motivated Calvin to publish Olivétan's essay under his own name. Because contemporary documentation about Calvin's motives is lacking we have to provide a series of proposals as an area within these motives and

³² More evidence from the prefaces may established by investigating themes as Olivétan's appeal to the Waldenses, his underscoring of their sufferings (“paovre peuple”), his repeatedly use of “chretiens et chretiennes”, which Calvin did not use in the same manner and scale.

³³ *La bible qui est*, resp. ii^v and aaii^v.

³⁴ *Deux epistres. L'une demonstre comment Jesus Christ est la fin de la loy ... composée par M[onsieur] I. Calvin; l'autre pour consoler les fidels qui souffrent persecution ... composée par M[onsieur] P. Viret* ([Genève, Jean Girard], 1543). In 1545 appeared a new edition, see Peter, Rodolphe and Gilmont, Jean-François, *Bibliotheca calviniana. Les oeuvres de Jean Calvin publiées au XVIe siècle* [Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance, 255], 1 (Genève, 1991), 141–143, 204–205; nos. 43/8, 45/12 (in the following notes abbreviated as BC).

influences, or some of them, may actually have prompted this reappearance under Calvin's name.

In 1538 Olivétan was deceased under, as already mentioned, unsolved circumstances (murder in Italy?). Calvin inherited most of Olivétan's large library.³⁵ One could, therefore, propose the possibility, that Calvin considered himself as Olivétan's intellectual heir too. And why should this writing remained shelved? To publish it after Olivétan's death anonymously would diminish its momentum. Revealing his name neither would be expedient: Olivétan had chosen not to identify himself. About 1535 the method to explain on the title page that, in this case, Calvin had edited a document of his deceased nephew, was still unknown. Regarding its contents *A tous amateurs* functioned as an appeal, but that characteristic required someone who accepted the responsibility for it.³⁶ Another decisive role in reissuing *A tous amateurs* may have been, that Olivétan was dead, but not his Bible translation project. And indeed, in Geneva came into being a huge Bible production, which resulted in many hundred thousands of Bible copies coming from its presses before the end of the century. The Waldenses had invested a huge amount of money in the Bible project, and Calvin may have felt obliged to inform them about the continuation of the process. Since Olivétan's request to him in 1535 to do the job of a corrector of a new edition of the French Bible, Calvin was committed to this project.³⁷

The purpose of Calvin's and Viret's co-production in the *Deux epistres* was to offer support to protestants who suffered persecution. It is clear that Olivétan's *A tous amateurs* was apt to fulfil that role as this other prefaces in his French Bible, supporting as they did suffering Waldenses ("la paovre eglise").³⁸ Exactly these Waldenses would recognise the piece of writing originally composed by Olivétan, because he had dwelled among them in the Italian Alps about three years. It, therefore, is out of question, that Calvin considered that the reissue under his own name would remain undetected. On the contrary, more probably he hoped that the Waldenses would grasp the message that the Bible project would be pursued. The fact

³⁵ See Dony, 'La bibliothèque d'Olivétan' (above in n. 14).

³⁶ People who had to hide their motives or feared recognition used a pseudonym or, as for example Michael Servet did after his books against the Trinity, chose to publish their writings anonymously. City Councils required registration by the printers in advance.

³⁷ Cf. above n. 13.

³⁸ In *A tous amateurs*: "Ne soyons desolez comme si toute esperance estoit perdue, quand nous verrons mourrir et perir devant noz yeulx les vrays serviteurs de Dieu"; in *L'humble et petit translateur*: "Ce paovre peuple qui ... fut deschassé et banny ... plus de troys cens ans ya et espars aux quatre parties de la Gaule, tenu depuis et réputé ... le plus meschant, execrable et ignominieux que jamais fut"; *La bible qui est*, resp. aaii^v and ii^f.

that within two years there was room for a reissue of *Deux epistres* makes it plausible, that the message has been understood.

Another point for attention is the fact that Viret's part of *Deux epistres* was a slightly revised piece, published originally in 1541.³⁹ In *Deux epistres*, however, *A tous amateurs* too was, apart from its title, slightly altered. One of the alterations is revealing, because it erased precisely Olivétan's above mentioned disclosure of himself as the Bible translator. This passage namely was changed in a more general announcement of the Apostles' task to compose the NT.⁴⁰ This too establishes evidence, that Calvin was not one of the translators of Olivétan's French Bible and therefore neither of *A tous amateurs*.

Another line of approach offer Geneva's printers. In short: since Olivétan's French Bible had appeared in 1535, the anonymous *A tous amateurs* reappeared in two New Testaments in Geneva: in 1536 with Jean Girard as its publisher and in 1538 with Jean Michel as its publisher. For these editions Olivétan himself may have been responsible, living as he did in Geneva. Remarkable is it, that when Girard published his NT again in 1539 *A tous amateurs* is lacking, but at that time Olivétan was dead. Calvin stayed at that time in Strasbourg after being banished from Geneva. Girard belonged to the supporters of Calvin and Farel. Why had he left out *A tous amateurs*? Most probably, because no one could bear the responsibility as the author. In an almost identical reissue of Girard's NT in 1543 the preface is lacking again⁴¹, and at that time Calvin had returned to the city as its leading minister. In the same year appears *Deux epistres*, published by Girard⁴², with *A tous amateurs* for the first time under Calvin's name. Which explanation can here be offered?

³⁹ [Pierre Viret], *Epistre consolatoire envoyée aux fideles qui souffrent persecution* ([Genève, Jean Girard], 1541, cf. Gilmont, Jean-François et alii (eds.), 'Bibliotheca Gebennensis. Les livres imprimés à Genève de 1535 à 1549' in *Geneva* 28 (1980), 235 (no. 41/15).

⁴⁰ In stead of "... reconciliée à Dieu. Ainsi qu'il est pleinement contenu et appertement démontré au livre qui s'ensuyt [= NT], lequel avons translaté le plus fidelement qu'il nous a esté possible ... Et se nomme ledict Nouveau Testament", *A tous amateurs* of 1543 reads "... reconciliée à Dieu. Pour laquelle chose declairer le Seigneur Jesus, qui en estoit le fondement et la substance, a ordonné ses apostres, ausquelz il a donné la charge et le mandement de publier sa grace par tout le monde. Or, les apostres ... l'ont reduicte par escrit ... Tout ce recueil se nomme le Nouveau Testament"; Calvin and Viret, *Deux epistres* (Genève, 1543), 14 (own nummering of the pages).

⁴¹ About the Bible and NT editions see Chambers, Bettye Thomas, *Bibliography of French bibles. Fifteenth- and Sixteenth- century French-language editions of the Scriptures* [Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance, 192] (Genève, 1983), passim.

⁴² His name is lacking, but his typographical material has been used, see BC 1, 143 (no. 43/8).

Geneva's printers seem to have played some role in it, because the inclusion or exclusion of *A tous amateurs* evidently was up to the publishers to decide on. In the years 1544–1552 Jean Girard was Calvin's main publisher.⁴³ In 1546 he would publish a Bible with a newly composed preface by Calvin. In 1551, however, he would revert to the unaltered *A tous amateurs*. And the following year another publisher in Geneva, Philibert Hamelin, would edit in his Bible both the newly composed preface by Calvin and the unaltered version.⁴⁴ As soon as an author delivered such a document to the publisher, it was considered more or less as the publisher's property, at least the publisher could take the initiative to insert or publish it. This is confirmed by the rivalry which existed in Geneva between the publishers Girard and Michel.⁴⁵ This rivalry is embedded in the rivalry between Farel and Calvin after their banishment from Geneva⁴⁶ at the one hand, and their successors in Geneva, Antoine Marcourt and Jean Morand⁴⁷, at the other. The publisher Michel, who had taken over Pierre de Vingle's typographical material⁴⁸, had transferred his printing office from Neuchâtel to Geneva⁴⁹, evidently arriving there in company with Marcourt. This installed him in the camp of Farel's and Calvin's opponents. Calvin never granted him the publishing of one of his writings, whereas on the contrary Michel published almost all the books of Marcourt. At the other side of the front in Geneva stood the publisher Jean Girard. From origin he

⁴³ Michel had moved in 1544 his printing office from Geneva to Lyons.

⁴⁴ See Chambers, *Bibliography of French bibles*, 154–156, 178–180, 186–188.

⁴⁵ On Girard see BC 2, 1096; on Michel Berthoud, Gabrielle, 'Les impressions genevoises de Jean Michel (1538–1544)', in: Candaux, Jean-D. and Lascaze, B., *Cinq siècles d'imprimerie genevoise*, vol. 1 (Genève, 1980), 55–88.

⁴⁶ On this banishment cf. Stam, Frans P. van, 'Farels und Calvins Ausweisung aus Genf am 23. April 1538' in *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 110 (1999), 209–228.

⁴⁷ On them see Berthoud, Gabrielle, *Antoine Marcourt. Réformateur et pamphlétaire du Livre des marchans aux Placards de 1534* [Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance, 129] (Genève, 1973), and Farge, James K., *Biographical register of Paris doctors of theology 1500–1536* [Subsidia mediaevalia 10] (Toronto, 1980), 337–339. Calvin and Farel considered Marcourt and Morand as traitors, see CO 10/2, 208 (ep. 121) = Herminjard 5, 28 (ep. 717).

⁴⁸ Michel's acknowledgement of debt for this purchase dates from 19 Oct. 1537, see Berthoud, *Antoine Marcourt*, 283: "à Noble et saige personne Jehan Merveilleux, Bourgeois dudict Neufchastel, absent, et Maistre Anthoine de Marcourt, predicant du st. evangille audict Neufchastel ... Assavoir la somme de vingt escux d'or sol de bon or et de juste poix, troys groz moings ... pour le transpourt et remise qu'il m'a faicte de certains quantité de meubles et utensils de mayson, ensamble des presses et les appertenances d'icelles que luy furent taxées puyz naguerez des biens de feuz Pierre de Vingle, jadix imprimeur, avec certaines quantité de bibles et d'aultres livres".

⁴⁹ He brought to Geneva also the remainder of copies of the Olivétan Bible, which one still could buy in Geneva in 1561 and even in 1670, see Gilmont, Jean-F., 'La fabrication et la vente de la Bible d'Olivétan' in *Musée neuchâtelois* 22 (1985), 213–224.

belonged to the Waldenses, as did his friend in Geneva, Antoine Saunier, the leader of the pro Calvin-Farel party there, who had together with Farel mediated during the synod at Chanforan in 1532 to grant the task of the translation of the Bible into French to Olivétan.⁵⁰ In June 1539 the rivalry between those two publishers came to light. Michel asked Geneva's Council permission to publish the French Bible. Some months later Girard too asked the same permission. The Council charged the two publishers to arrange it together.⁵¹ They evidently failed, because the Council eventually granted the expensive project⁵² to each of the two publishers. In the summer of 1543, the same year wherein Calvin and Viret would publish their *Deux epistres*, Calvin received during a long journey outside de city an alarming letter from his colleagues in Geneva. Calvin dwelled at that time in Strasbourg together with Farel in order to explore possibilities to evangelize the city of Metz.⁵³ His colleagues at home informed him: "As soon as some impostors realized your absence, they immediately declared their intentions to publish something". The most disturbing seems to be the publisher's intention to put Calvin's name on the title page "to promote the sales". Calvin's colleagues reassure him, that they had already lodged a protest before Geneva's Council.⁵⁴ It turns out, that the publisher Michel

⁵⁰ He knew Farel already from the his years in Paris, see Piaget, Arthur (ed.), *Les actes de la dispute de Lausanne 1536* (Neuchâtel, 1928), 204.

⁵¹ Cf. Dufour, Th., 'Notice bibliographique sur le Catéchisme et la Confession de foi de Calvin (1537) et sur les autres livres imprimés à Genève et à Neuchâtel dans les premiers temps de la Réforme (1533–1540) in Rilliet, A. and Dufour, Th., *Le Catéchisme français de Calvin publié en 1537*, réimprimé pour la première fois d'après un exemplaire nouvellement retrouvé et suivi de la plus ancienne Confession de foi de l'église de Genève, avec deux notices (Genève, 1878), CCLXXX–CCLXXXI, and Berthoud, 'Les impressions genevoises de Jean Michel (1538–1544)', 67.

⁵² Bergier, J-F., 'Le contrat d'édition de la *Bible de l'épée*, Genève, 1540', in *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 18 (1956), 110–113, provides the text of the contract for Girard's *Bible de l'épée* of 1540, for which he needed the help of two merchants, Jean Chautemps and Jean de la Maisonneuve: "... pour faire et imprimer la bible. Et ce à myez prouffit et myez perde. Et fere la vente pour ensamble. Et portant par lesdictes parcties toutes charges et dispances pour ensambles et en commun. Et pour einssy lesdictes parcties en ce affaire associent avecq eulx le sire Jehan de la Maisonneufve ... Et ce en condiction que ledit Jehan de la Maisonneufe doyje avoyer lesdictes bibles par le pris qui costeraz ausdictes parties sans poyent de prouffit y devoyer prendre sus ly. Et pour ce moyen lesdis Jehan Chautemps et Jehan Girard et chesqun de eulx pour le tout confessent debvoyer audit Jehan de la Maisonneufve trente escus au soloyl au cuing du roy de France pour l'avancement desdictes parties, lesqueulx y confessent avoyer heu".

⁵³ Cf. Stam, Frans P. van, 'Le livre de Pierre Caroli de 1545 et son conflit avec Calvin' in Millet, Olivier, *Calvin et ses contemporains* [Cahiers d'Humanisme et Renaissance, 53] (Genève, 1998), 21–41.

⁵⁴ See the letter in CO 11, 592–594 (ep. 487) = Herminjard 8, 446–449 (ep. 1256): "... impostores quidam ... senserunt te abesse, mox protulerunt quaedam in lucem, quae

planned a New Testament in French with new chapter titles, and with Calvin's name on the title page. So the known antagonism reappears again. The Council, after having heard Calvin and his colleagues, decided to grant permission to Michel to publish his NT. But with one stipulation: he had to leave out the names of Geneva and of Calvin. Notwithstanding this stipulation, however, there seems to have existed a NT printed by Michel with Calvin's name on the title page. Moreover, Girard too has put Calvin's name on the title page the following years.⁵⁵

Therefore, one can draw the conclusion, firstly that the decisions of Geneva's Council were neglected, and had to give way to commercial interests. Secondly that both publishers were ruled by the motive to promote their sales, and therefore used Calvin's name on the title page. Publishers presented themselves in this regard as little scrupulous: they did not protect our modern notion of the intellectual property of the authors, but their business. The same motive seems to lie behind publishing *A tous amateurs* under Calvin's and Viret's names in *Deux epistres*: it would sell the better.

But at the same time it is not likely that the printers dealt behind Calvin's back. His friendship with Girard was firm, and Calvin was used to

falso jactant argumenta seu judicia suprascripta singulis capitibus Novi Testamenti quod novissime castigasti ... Statuerant enim (ut opinamur) inscribere tuum nomen in fronte, ea causa ut pluris venderent. Sed ubi deprehendimus rem, non cessavimus instanter eos accusare apud Senatam velut calumniatores, falsarios, conspurcatores imperitos, qui talia ediderunt: indignum esse librum qui prodeat ex officina ecclesiae nostrae”.

⁵⁵ On 26 June 1543 the Genevan ministers Abel Poupin and Matthieu did report to the Council “comment M. Calvin havoyt corrigé un Nouveaulx Testament, qui estoit au vray; més aulchongs, desirant calumpnye sus l'escripture sainte, hont fayct ung summayre suspect sous le nom du dit M. Calvin, lequelt Jehan Michiel a imprimé”. On 3 July the Council decided: “on havoyt donné charge aux predicans de visité les Nouveaulx Testamens avecques les summayres imprimés par J. Michel: [ils] ont refferu qu'il trove es dits summayres erreurs”. On 10 July the Council decided: “Ayans aoyes les predicans, aussy le dit imprimeur et ung aultre avecques luy: resoluz que, avant que permectre qu'il soyent imprimés, que l'imprimeur doybge alle[r] trove[r] M. Calvin et M^c G. Farel [à] Estrabourg, et si [Calvin] escripve qu'il n'y a nul erreur, il leur sera permys de imprimé et parachevé l'oeuvre”. On 31 Aug. the Council decided: “Ayans aoyes M. Calvin et les autres ministres qu'il hont visité le nouveault testament que Johan Michiel a imprimer: combien que en icelluy aye plusieurs faultes aux sommayres, ... luy ayans fayct bonnes remonstrances pour ceste foys luy soyt permys de parachevé l'oeuvre, moyennant qu'il ne mette pas Geneve ny le nom de M. Calvin”. Nevertheless, some copies appeared with Calvin's name on it, according to a preface by Calvin in editions of the NT of 1545 and 1546 by Girard: “Pource qu'en l'autre impression du nouveau Testament, on avoit miz au tiltre que je l'avoye revue et corrigé ...”; Herminjard 8, 447–449 nn. 6.10.14.15 (ep. 1257) and Gilmont, Jean-F., *Bibliotheca Gebennensis*, 237 (no. 3a: revue par M. Jean Calvin. Imprimé à Genève: Par I. Girard 1543), 239 (no. 1: J. M[ichel], 1544), 244 (no. 4: revue par J. Calvin. [Genève: J. Girard], 1546).

discuss all kind of topics with his friends. It may be, that Girard took the initiative, and that Calvin and Viret wanted to send a message to the persecuted Waldenses, that their Bible project would be continued. Most probably Calvin adapted in *A tous amateurs* the eye catching anachronism about the translator of the NT. Calvin and Viret felt themselves obliged to the Waldenses to whom they intended their *Deux epistres*, which contained at least one piece that they recognized as one that had already sustained them in the past.

Bible

‘There will always be prophets’¹ Deuteronomy 18:14–22 and Calvin’s prophetic awareness

JON BALSERAK

There is a paucity of literature on Calvin’s prophetic awareness but that which does exist is of a high quality. The work which arguably put the topic on the map (so to speak) is Alexandre Ganoczy’s *Le jeune Calvin* (1966).² There were, it is true, scholars prior to Ganoczy who mentioned the idea. In fact, it is centuries old.³ But Ganoczy’s is the treatment which seems to have left the greatest impression on current sensibilities within Calvin scholarship, and for good reason given the excellence of his study of the reformer. Following Ganoczy, noteworthy discussions of the topic have been produced by a number of authors, including Rodolphe Peter, Olivier Millet and Max Engammare.⁴

¹ CO 27:499 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:9–15).

² Ganoczy, Alexandre. *Le jeune Calvin: Genèse et évolution de sa vocation réformatrice* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1966); ET: *The Young Calvin*, trans. David Foxgrover and Wade Provo (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987). He supplemented his work in *Le jeune Calvin* with the later piece: ‘Calvin avait-il conscience de réformer l’Eglise?’ in *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie Lausanne* 118/2 (1986), 161–177.

³ Elsie McKee mentions that Jean Morely’s identifying of Calvin as a prophet, see, *Elders and the Plural Ministry; The Role of Exegetical History in Illuminating John Calvin’s Theology* (Geneve: Librairie Droz, 1988), 159. The work in which this is done is Moreley’s *La Traicté de la discipline & police Chrestienne* (Lyon: Jean de Tournes, 1562), book 3, chap. 14, p. 257. Similarly Robert Rollock and Iohannes Cocceius identify Calvin as a prophet.

⁴ Rodolphe Peter, *Sermons sur les livres de Jérémie et des Lamentations*, Rodolphe Peter ed, *Supplementa Calviniana* 6 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, 1971), XIV–XVI (I am indebted to Max Engammare for pointing me to this work); Olivier Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole: Etude de rhétorique réformée*, Genève, Editions Slatkine, 1992; 324–329, 447–449, et passim; ‘Eloquence des prophètes bibliques et prédication inspirée: la ‘prophétie’ réformée au XVI^e siècle’ in *Prophètes et prophétie au XVI^e siècle* (Paris: Presses de l’Ecole Normale Supérieure (Cahiers V.-L. Saulnier, 15), 1998), 65–82; Max Engammare, ‘Calvin: A Prophet without a Prophecy’ in *Calvin Studies IX; Papers Presented at the Ninth Colloquium on Calvin Studies, Davidson College, January 30–31, 1998* John Leith and Robert Johnson eds (Davidson, N.C.: Davidson College, 1998), 88–107. Additionally, see Richard Stauffer, ‘Le discours à la première personne dans les sermons de

These scholars take different approaches to the topic. Ganoczy focuses on the young Calvin and specifically on his conversion, which he contends is linked very closely in Calvin with the idea of vocation. From this, he argues that Calvin's conversion was experienced as a calling to reform the church after the manner of the prophets.⁵ Engammare points to evidence such as Calvin's confidence as a biblical interpreter, his role as an admonisher of governments, and his discreet allusions to this prophetic awareness in order to argue his case.⁶ Peter culls evidence from Calvin's sermons on Jeremiah.⁷ Millet addresses the subject from several points of view, including identifying (like Ganoczy) Calvin's sense of calling, his applying of Amos 5:10 ('They hate him who reproves them at the gate, and they abhor him who speaks with integrity') to himself, his attraction to the rhetoric of the prophets, and the Sixteenth Century's understanding of prophecy.⁸

One approach to the subject that has not yet been taken is to query how Calvin grounds his *munus extraordinarium* in the testimony of Scripture. The importance of this question becomes clear the moment one considers Calvin's commitment to obey the scriptures, as God's Word. If they leave him with no possibility of being a prophet (i.e. if they, for example, were to dictate that prophets are no longer raised up by God under the new covenant in the post-apostolic period), then the thought that he considered himself to be one is struck a serious blow. We shall adopt this approach here, looking specifically at the question: what does Calvin think a prophet is (according to Scripture)? This question will be examined from two different vantage points through which means the author hopes to demonstrate how Calvin's prophetic awareness finds its grounding in his reading of the Bible and to expound something of the substance of that awareness.

I. The Office of Prophet in the Sixteenth Century

The Middle Ages⁹ witnessed a rise in the number of prophets and in literature on the discernment of spirits and related issues. Some of the high pro-

Calvin' in *Regards contemporains sur Jean Calvin; Actes Du Colloque Calvin* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965), 206–238.

⁵ Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, esp. 241–312.

⁶ Engammare, 'Calvin: A Prophet without a Prophecy', 88–107.

⁷ Peter, *Sermons sur les livres de Jérémie*, XIV–XVI; I was unable to examine Calvin's sermons on Jeremiah thoroughly when preparing this chapter but can tell from Peter's introduction and from my brief perusing of the sermons that they will repay careful attention.

⁸ Millet, 'Eloquence des prophètes bibliques et prédication inspirée', 65–82; *id.*, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 447–449.

⁹ Note Aquinas' apparent support of post-apostolic prophecy: 'The prophets who foretold the coming of Christ could not continue further than John, who with his finger pointed to

file figures, such as Catherine of Seine and Joachim of Fiore, have received scholarly attention, though the topic and period are still in need of further investigation, as is the relation between medieval prophecy and that encountered in the Early Modern period.¹⁰

Various groups and individuals claimed to speak prophetically during the Early Modern period. Anabaptists and (so called) Radicals were keen to describe themselves as 'prophets' and to point to their close relationship to the Spirit of God. Jan van Leyden can be recalled in this context, though not all examples are as notorious.¹¹

Martin Luther's name also comes to mind in this context. Not only did he have to deal with a group he called the Zwickau prophets but he himself toyed with the term prophet when speaking of himself.

I say not that I am a prophet, but I do say that the more they despise me and esteem themselves, the more reason they have to fear that I may be a prophet. ... If I am not a prophet, yet for my own self I am certain that the Word of God is with me and not with them, for I have the Scriptures on my side, and they have only their own doctrine.¹²

Christ actually present. Nevertheless as Jerome says on this passage, 'This does not mean that there were no more prophets after John. For we read in the Acts of the Apostles that Agabus and the four maidens, daughters of Philip, prophesied.' John, too, wrote a prophetic book about the end of the Church; and at all times there have not been lacking persons having the spirit of prophecy, not indeed for the declaration of any new doctrine of faith, but for the direction of human acts. Thus Augustine says (De Civ. Dei v, 26) that 'the emperor Theodosius sent to John who dwelt in the Egyptian desert, and whom he knew by his ever-increasing fame to be endowed with the prophetic spirit: and from him he received a message assuring him of victory' (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Romae: Ex Typographia Senatus, 1887), 2a2ae q.174 a6 reply to obj 3), this was brought to my attention by Niels Christian Hvidt, *Christian Prophecy: The Post-Biblical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁰ I am indebted to Dr Anke Holdenried of the University of Bristol for stimulating my thinking on these matters in reference to the Middle Ages. A serious comparison of Calvin with the Middle Ages on this topic would be a useful addition to Calvin scholarship. For some background see: Bernard McGinn, *The Calabrian Abbot. Joachim of Fiore in the History of Western Thought* (MacMillan, New York/London, 1985); Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages. A Study in Joachimism* (Notre Dame/London, University of Notre Dame Press, 1993); Niels Christian Hvidt, *Christian Prophecy: The Post-Biblical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹¹ George Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (London: 1962); R. L. Petersen, *Preaching in the Last Days; The Theme of 'Two Witnesses' in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), *passim*; in relation to Calvin specifically, Willem Balke, *Calvijn en de Doperse Radikalen* (Amsterdam, 1973); ET: *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, trans. William Heymen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981).

¹² 'An Argument in Defence of All the Articles of Dr. Martin Luther Wrongly Condemned in the Roman Bull, 1521' in *Works of Martin Luther*, Philadelphia Edition, trans C. M. Jacobs (Muhlenberg: Muhlenberg Press, 1932), 3, 12–14 brought to my attention by James Swan.

In Zurich, the *prophezei* meetings¹³ commenced in the 1520s, being established by Zwingli and based on his reading of passages like 1 Corinthians 14. In point of fact, Zwingli's successor, Heinrich Bullinger wrote extensively on the question of the office of prophet in his *De propheta libri duo*, *De prophetae officio*, and *De scripturae sanctae auctoritate, certitudine, et absoluta perfectione*,¹⁴ and held his senior colleague and mentor, Zwingli, to be a prophet.¹⁵

The relations between these Swiss theologians and Geneva's Calvin deserve consideration, though it will not receive it here. It has already been noted that others considered Calvin a prophet. Indeed Engammare produces a superb quote from Beza to this effect.¹⁶ In point of fact, Calvin himself leaves us some interesting allusions to his own prophetic calling, as can be seen in this example:

We see, then, in what respect these four differ: Isaiah and Micah address their reproofs to the kingdom of Judah; and Hosea and Amos only assail the kingdom of Israel, but seem to spare the Jews. Each of them undertook what God had committed to his charge; thus each confined himself within the limits of his own call and office. For if we, who are called to instruct the Church, close our eyes to the sins which prevail in it, and neglect those whom the Lord has appointed to be taught by us, we confound all order.¹⁷

But how is he able to do this? What does he think a prophet is (according to Scripture)? This question shall be taken up from two different perspectives. The first will be a New Testament perspective in which his thoughts on some of the standard passages on the prophetic office and prophecy, Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12:10, 1 Corinthians 14:29, 30–31, Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Thessalonians 5:20, will be examined. The second will focus on Calvin's thoughts on important Old Testament passages, specifically Deuteronomy 18:14–22 and his exposition of the prophetic books. After considering these two perspectives, this chapter will briefly summarize its findings and reflect on the future of Calvin scholarship on this topic.

¹³ On the *prophezei* meetings, see, G. R. Potter, *Zwingli* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 221–224; Fritz Büsser, *Die Prophezei. Humanismus und Reformation in Zurich* (Bern e.a.: Verlag Peter Lang, 1994).

¹⁴ By the time his *Decades* began to appear Bullinger's interest in prophecy seems to have declined; see, Daniel Bolinger, 'Bullinger on Church Authority: The Transformation of the Prophetic Role in Christian Ministry' in *Architect of Reformation; An Introduction to Heinrich Bullinger, 1504–1575*, Bruce Gordon and Emidio Campi eds (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 159–177.

¹⁵ On Zwingli as a prophet, Petersen, *Preaching in the Last Days*, 120–21, Petersen refers to *De prophetae officio* (Zürich: Froschouer, 1532), sig. Dviii(r)–Eiii(r). BBBibl I/1, no. 33.

¹⁶ Engammare, 'Calvin: A Prophet without a Prophecy', 90.

¹⁷ CO 42:197 (Introduction to Hosea/Minor Prophets).

II. First Perspective

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers ... (Eph 4:11)

Calvin expounded Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians and 1 Thessalonians prior to 1550, though he edited some of these commentaries later on. The exegetical tradition on these texts bequeathed to Calvin a number of questions which he was obliged to address, thus leading him into a rather congested intersection of definitions, distinctions and queries.

The first task to be taken up is that of differentiating between the individual offices. What distinguishes a prophet from an apostle? what is peculiar to the office of evangelist? to the office of pastor? and so forth. In answering, Calvin endeavors to address each office clearly and concisely. The present study cannot linger over Calvin's answers to these questions, and the reader is directed to Elsie McKee's fine study, *Elders and the Plural Ministry*, for a thorough treatment of them.

Taking up prophecy and the office of prophet specifically, Calvin distinguishes, at least on some occasions, between the office (as mentioned in Ephesians 4:11) and prophesying. The latter he treats simply as preaching, as his commentary of 1 Thessalonians 5:20 ('despise not prophecy') indicates.

By the term prophecy, however, I do not understand the gift of foretelling the future, but as in 1 Corinthians 14:3, the science of interpreting Scripture, ... The statement, however, is a remarkable one for commending preaching. It is the dream of fanatics that those who continue to employ themselves in the reading of the Scripture or the hearing of the word are children; as if no one were spiritual unless he is a despiser of doctrine. Thus, they proudly despise the ministry of man, even Scripture itself, that they may attain the Spirit.¹⁸

While he does mention prophets here, his view on the office of New Testament prophet will (as we shall see) take on elements which distinguish it slightly from what he says here and from the simple work of preaching. Incidentally, his mention of those who despise the ministry of men refers, as he indicates later, to the 'libertines', and is noteworthy in that it provides us with a sense of some of the concerns pressing on Calvin's mind while commenting on these questions.

When considering the office of New Testament prophet itself, Calvin distinguishes between the view that the prophet's main task is foretelling the future and the view that it is interpreting Scripture. The former is advocated by Luther and has a discernible position within exegetical history being adopted by the likes of Ambrosiaster (who allows for both views)

¹⁸ CO 52:176.

and Herveus. Calvin sides, however, with the latter position which is held by Erasmus and Zwingli, and before them, by Chrysostom and Bruno.¹⁹ Calvin's position is clear from the above quotation and can also be seen in Calvin's exposition of Ephesians 4:11 where he identifies prophets as 'distinguished interpreters of prophecies, who, by a remarkable gift of revelation, applied them to the subjects which they had occasion to handle.'²⁰ Here Calvin's exegesis includes the fact that New Testament prophets were granted the gift of revelation to interpret Scripture without study, thus differentiating a prophet from a doctor (who had to engage in study in order to understand the Scripture).²¹ The same point is made in *Institutes* 4.3.2 but is not always explicitly noted.²²

Finally, Calvin addresses the question of whether the New Testament office of prophet is permanent or temporary. There was considerable disagreement amongst commentators, ancient and contemporary, on this question, and it was far from being a settled matter when Calvin began to write and preach on the relevant New Testament texts.²³ Accordingly the fact that his own position exhibits uncertainty should not surprise us. In his commentary on Ephesians 4, Calvin states that the offices of apostle, evangelist and prophet are temporary and have now ceased (but there is a caveat).

It deserves attention, also, that of the five offices enumerated here only the last two are intended to be perpetual. Apostles, Evangelists, and Prophets were bestowed on the church for a limited time only, except in those cases where religion has fallen into decay, and evangelists are raised up in an extraordinary manner in order to restore the pure doctrine which had been lost.²⁴

Similar is his statement in *Institutes* 4.3.4.²⁵

Yet the view stated in his commentary on 1 Corinthians 12:10 and 14:29, 30–31²⁶ strikes a different tone as does his sermon on Ephesians 4:11–12. In the last of these, Calvin explains that prophets are rare (but they do exist) in his day in comparison with the patristic era.

For apostles were not chosen in order to continue to the world's end, ... [The apostles] had companions and associates ... St Paul calls them evangelists. ... These two offices, then, served for that time.

¹⁹ Engammare, 'Calvin: A Prophet without a Prophecy', 93–94; McKee, *Elders and the Plural Ministry*, 64–65.

²⁰ CO 51:197.

²¹ See McKee, *Elders and the Plural Ministry*, 65.

²² CO 2:778.

²³ See McKee, *Elders and the Plural Ministry*, 65.

²⁴ CO 51:197–98.

²⁵ CO 2:779–780.

²⁶ CO 49:499–500 (Commentary on 1 Corinthians 12:10) and CO 49:529–530 (on 1 Corinthians 14:29–31).

Now with regard to the office of prophets, we do not have it now to such excellent degree as it was then, as is evident. For God has diminished his gifts because of the ingratitude of the world. ... [we are unworthy of his gifts] ... Whatever the case may be, the prophets served to be, as it were, expounders of God's will; they had a much better understanding of the Scriptures than the common teachers had, whose office it was to instruct.²⁷

Here, then, Calvin argues for two temporary offices but speaks of prophets (simply) as less common.

Finally, Calvin makes this uncertainty explicit in the 1543 edition of his *Institutes* 4.3.4: 'By Prophets, he means not all interpreters of the divine will, but those who excelled by special revelation; none such now exist, or they are less manifest (*quales nunc vel nulli exstant, vel minus sunt conspicui*).'²⁸ Thus, it is simply not clear whether he thinks the office of New Testament prophet exists permanently within the church or not.²⁹ The fact that he inserted the statement found in the *Institutes* in 1543 and yet added a clear statement of the temporary character of the prophetic office in his editing of his Ephesians commentary in 1556 is a curiosity. Why did he not change his assertion in the *Institutes* to match? A thorough answer to this query is beyond the scope of the present study, and anyone wishing to pursue it further – or the general topic of Calvin's treatment of church offices, for that matter – would be well advised to consult Elsie McKee's fine study.³⁰

In everything considered thus far, Calvin gives no hint to his readers that he might believe himself to hold the office of New Testament prophet. Not only does he say nothing explicitly on the question but he provides nothing implicitly either. There is simply nothing to alert the reader to the fact that Calvin thinks of himself as anything other than a pastor. And his stated uncertainty about the permanence of the office of New Testament prophet only compounds the fact.

Having now finished our consideration of the question from the first perspective, let us turn to the second and to Calvin's exegesis of the Old Testament.

²⁷ CO 51:556; *John Calvin's Sermons on Ephesians* (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 372.

²⁸ CO 2:779.

²⁹ Thus, we would take slight issue with McKee: 'It is notable that neither Bucer nor Calvin completely excludes some particularly good interpreters of scripture, prophets, but neither considers this office permanently necessary in all churches.' in McKee, *Elders and the Plural Ministry*, 157.

³⁰ See, McKee, *Elders and the Plural Ministry*, 158.

III. Second Perspective

1. Calvin's Exegesis of Deuteronomy 18:14–22

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. (Deuteronomy 18:15)

Calvin's treatment of this passage (Deuteronomy 18:14–22) is important in the context of our examination not least because it seems to be unique. In his sermons (1555) and his commentary (1563) on this text, as well as his treatment of it elsewhere (such as Acts 3 and Acts 7), Calvin argues that the promise of a 'prophet' is not the promise of Joshua or Jeremiah (the standard Jewish reading) nor is it solely, or even primarily, the promise of Jesus (the Christian reading), rather, it is the promise of many prophets. Moses 'speaks of the continual order which God intended to establish in his church, which shall endure to the world's end.'³¹ Thus, to Calvin 'a prophet' is used by enallage for 'a number of Prophets.'³²

Stepping back to examine Calvin's reading of the text, it becomes clear that it is predicated on the idea of God's care for his church. In the earlier portion of Deuteronomy 18, God forbids his church from practicing sorcery, consulting oracles, using witchcraft and engaging in other occult practices (Deut 18:9–14). Calvin insists that if God had left the Israelites with this bare prohibition, they would have objected that they had been badly treated since they were shut out from all prophecies and revelations. Accordingly, God anticipates this objection (says Calvin) by announcing 'that their access to God would be not less familiar than if he should himself openly come down from heaven.'³³ On these grounds, Calvin argues that the promised prophet could not be Jesus alone, since that would not have answered the objection; the people could still have complained that they were required to wait for two thousand years for him to come and, thus, were still being badly treated.

God's care for his church is also exhibited in another way in this promise. In his exposition, Calvin draws attention to the next verse (Deut 18:16) and the fact that God had already spoken to the people from Horeb, and in doing so, had terrified them so that they pleaded for him to stop speaking lest they should die. Thus, Calvin argues, the promise of prophets (Deut 18:15) expresses God's concern for his church in that it is an attempt on his part still to speak to them but in a way which they could receive. In promising prophets to his church, God condescends to address them through fellow humans who will not terrify them.

³¹ CO 27:499 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:9–15).

³² CO 24:271 (Commentary on Deuteronomy 18:15–18).

³³ CO 24:271.

As mentioned, Calvin's interpretation is unique. Of course, caution must always be exercised when making such a claim. Thus it will suffice to say that no exegete has been found by the present author who interprets the text the way Calvin does. Earlier Christian exegetes and theologians such as Clement,³⁴ Tertullian,³⁵ Novatian,³⁶ Archelaus,³⁷ Athanasius,³⁸ Augustine,³⁹ Rabanus Maurus,⁴⁰ the Ordinary Gloss,⁴¹ Rupert of Deutz,⁴² Hugh of St Cher,⁴³ Nicholas of Lyra,⁴⁴ Paul of Burgos,⁴⁵ and Denis the Carthusian⁴⁶ all set out essentially the same reading of the passage – one which, while it may mention other prophets too, focuses on Jesus. Some of them (like Hugh of St Cher and Lyra), it may be noted, differentiate between the first mention of a prophet being raised up 'from amongst your brothers (*de fratribus tuis*)' (18:15) which referred, they argue, to later prophets like Joshua and Jeremiah⁴⁷ and the second mention of a prophet being raised up 'from amongst their brothers (*de medio fratrum suorum*)' (18:18) which referred to Jesus who was 'of the seed of David (*de semine David*)'⁴⁸ or 'of Abraham (*de Abrah.*)'.⁴⁹ But these exegetes still focus em-

³⁴ 'The Instructor' in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885–1887; reprinted: Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 2, 224. [henceforth *ANF*]

³⁵ 'Five books against Marcion' in *ANF*, 3, 384.

³⁶ 'Treatise concerning the Trinity' in *ANF*, 5, 618.

³⁷ 'Acts of the Disputation with Manes' in *ANF*, 6, 219.

³⁸ 'Four Discourses against the Arians' in *Ante-Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series and second series (Christian Literature Publishing Co. and Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886–1900; reprinted Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), second series, 4, 338 [henceforth *ANPNF*] and 'Festal Letter IV' in *ANPNF*, second series, 4, 543.

³⁹ 'Lectures or Tractates on the Gospel according to St. John' in *ANPNF*, first series, 7, 105.

⁴⁰ PL 108:906–907.

⁴¹ PL 113:471.

⁴² PL 167:919–920.

⁴³ *Pars ... Hvius Operis Continens Textum Bibliae, cum Postilla Domini Hugonis Cardinalis* (Parisiis: Galterus), 2, 83r.

⁴⁴ *Opus Biblie una cum postillis ... Nicolai de Lyra cumque additionibus per Paulum Burgensem editis; ac replicis magistri Mathie Dorinck* (Norimbergae: Anton Koberger, 1485), this was Lyra's exposition of Deuteronomy 18:14–22; I could find no indication of page or folio numbers.

⁴⁵ *Opus Bibli*, Burgos criticises Lyra's exposition of Deuteronomy 18:15 and 18, moving in a more Christocentric direction and taking issue with Lyra's even contemplating the idea that the text might refer to other prophets like Jeremiah; again no page or folio numbers.

⁴⁶ *D. Dionysii Carthusiani Enarrationes piae ac eruditae, in quinque Mosaicae legis libros, hoc est, Genesim, Exodum, leviticum, Numeros, Deuteronomium...* (Coloniae: ex officina Joannis Quentel, 1548), 761.

⁴⁷ Mention of these two prophets presumably points to the influence of Jewish exegesis upon these Christian commentators.

⁴⁸ *Opus Biblie una cum postillis ... Nicolai de Lyra cumque additionibus per Paulum Burgensem editis; ac replicis magistri Mathie Dorinck* (Norimbergae: Anton Koberger, 1485),

phatically upon Jesus and see the passage principally as a promise of him, citing Luke 7:16 ('a great prophet is risen up among us') and John 6:14 ('Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world') as support.⁵⁰ This focus on Jesus is, if anything, intensified in the commentaries of Calvin's contemporaries, Martin Luther,⁵¹ Conrad Pellican,⁵² Sebastian Münster,⁵³ Heinrich Bullinger,⁵⁴ Johannes Brenz,⁵⁵ Martin Borrhaus,⁵⁶ Tomasso de Vio Cardinal Cajetan⁵⁷ and Cyriacus Spangenberg.⁵⁸

In order to substantiate his reading, Calvin must address the fact that Moses says this prophet will be 'like me (*sicut me*).'⁵⁹ Indeed there are two closely-related issues he feels he must treat: first, that the Prophet referred to by Moses must, it is simply assumed, be more excellent than Moses himself; and secondly, that Moses states he will be 'like me' which again indicates that he must have greater dignity than all other prophets, since 'there arose not a Prophet since like unto' Moses (Deut 34:10). For these reasons, it is argued by Christian exegetes that Moses is pointing to Jesus. But to Calvin these convictions are erroneous. Concerning the first, he simply does not hold it to be a valid assumption. *Whoever* is sent by God should be listened to, whether he is equal, or inferior, to Moses. As regards the second, 'this particle translated like (*sicut*) does not always denote

this was Lyra's exposition of Deuteronomy 18:14–22; I could find no indication of page or folio numbers.

⁴⁹ *Pars ... Hvius Operis Continens*, 2, 83r.

⁵⁰ The citing of John 6 and Luke 7 in this way is found at least as early as Rabanus Maurus, PL 108:906–907.

⁵¹ WA 14:524.

⁵² *Commentaria Bibliorum* (C. Froshoverus, 1532–1535), 1, fol. 123r.

⁵³ *Hebraica Biblia Latina planeque nova Sebast. Munsteri translatione, post omnes omnium hactenus ubiuis gentium aeditiones euulgata, & quoad fieri potuit, hebraicae ueritati conformata: adiectis insuper è Rabinorum cómentarijs annotationibus haud poenitendis, pulchre & uoces ambiguas, & obscuriora quaeq; elucidantibus* (Basileae: Ex officina Bebliana, impendiis Michaelis Isingrinii et Henrici Petri, 1534–1535), fol. 183r. Münster mentions specifically the Jewish tendency to see 'the prophet' as either Joshua or Jeremiah.

⁵⁴ *De Scripture sanctae autoritate, certitudine, et absoluta perfectione* from soon-to-be-published proofs kindly sent to me by Prof Emidio Campi. Checking through Bullinger's work (and thoughts on the prophet therein) one finds no reference to Deuteronomy 18:14–22.

⁵⁵ *Operum tomus primus ... [Commentarii in Genes.-Deuteron.]* (Tubingae, 1576), 1057–1058.

⁵⁶ *In Mosem diuinum legislatorem, paedagogum ad Messiam seruatorem mundi, commentarij. In ... Genesim. Exodum. Leuiticum. Numeros. Deuteronomium ...* (Basileae, 1555), col 1019–1020.

⁵⁷ Tommaso de Vio Cajetan, *Opera omnia quotquot in sacrae Scripturae expositionem reperiuntur. Cyra atque industria insignis Collegii S. Thomae Complutensis...* (Lugduni, 1639), 470–471.

⁵⁸ *In Sacros Bibliorum Veteris Testamenti Libros ... Tabularum M. Cyriaci Spangenbergii Opera ... Pars ...* (Basileae: Parcvs, 1563).

equality.⁵⁹ Thus Calvin argues that the prophets were, to be sure, not like Moses in respect to gifts, but they were like him 'because God set over his Church a continual succession of teachers to execute the same office as he did.'⁶⁰ In fact, he declares later in his exposition, the comparison Moses makes between himself and other prophets was intended to have the effect of raising the people's estimation of the teaching of these prophets who were to come.

The other issue with which Calvin must deal is the fact that Peter cites Deuteronomy 18:15 in a sermon recorded in Acts 3 in such a way that he seems to make it a straightforward prophecy of the coming of Christ. Peter's words are:

But God has fulfilled what he had foretold through the mouth of all of his prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. ... For Moses said to the fathers: the Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers; you must listen to him in everything he tells you. ... Indeed all the prophets from Samuel onwards, as many as have preached, have foretold these days (Acts 3:18, 22, 24).⁶¹

Here Calvin contends that Peter was applying (*accommodare*) the passage to Christ and that, while he did so appropriately, even elegantly (*aptissime*), his handling of it did not indicate that Moses had only Christ in mind when he uttered this promise. Calvin argues this point in his commentary and sermons on Deuteronomy 18:15 and his handling of Acts 3:22 (where he also reiterates the interpretation of Deuteronomy 18 which was rehearsed above).⁶²

Thus, in Calvin's judgment Deuteronomy 18:14–22 teaches that 'there will always be prophets.'⁶³ 'God', Calvin declares on this passage, 'promised a prophet not only to the Jews but also to us ...'⁶⁴ 'I have proved already', he says in a later sermon, that Deuteronomy 18:15 'is not meant of Moses alone, and of those who lived under the Old Testament but that it extends even to us also and comprehends in it the whole reign of our Lord Jesus Christ.'⁶⁵ Nor, according to Calvin, is Deuteronomy the only place where the promise of prophets for the New Testament era is made. It is

⁵⁹ CO 24:272 (Commentary on Deuteronomy 18:15–18).

⁶⁰ CO 24:272.

⁶¹ CO 48:69, 73; my translation of the Latin text from Acts 3 as cited in Calvin's commentary.

⁶² CO 27:500 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:9–15); CO 24:272 (Comm on Deuteronomy 18:15–18); CO 48:74–75 (Commentary on Acts 3:18, 22, 24) and SC 8:311–320; especially 315–315 (Sermons on Acts 7:35–37; Calvin preaches on Acts 3:17–19 and then skips to Acts 4:1, thus he covers the material on Peter's citing of Deuteronomy 18:15 in his coverage of Acts 7).

⁶³ CO 27:499 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:9–15).

⁶⁴ CO 27:519 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:16–20).

⁶⁵ CO 27:527 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:16–20).

also set out, he avers, in Isaiah 59:21⁶⁶, as he makes clear in his sermon on Deuteronomy 18:11–15.⁶⁷ Thus his view on the topic is developed enough to find roots in other portions of the biblical record. Calvin, then, is convinced that the scriptures promise prophets to the church throughout her existence on earth.

2. Calvin's Understanding of the Office of Prophet in his exposition of Deuteronomy 18:14–22 and elsewhere

But what kind of prophets? What is the 'continual order'⁶⁸ which God wished to establish in his church as regards prophets? What understanding does Calvin have of this office as mentioned in these Old Testament passages?

Consideration of these questions immediately raises the very interesting point that very little is present in Deuteronomy 18 to guide Calvin in his exegesis of this promised prophet. There is of course the context of the whole of canonical Scripture and particularly the Old Testament; the word 'prophet' is clearly not a hapax legomenon. But within Deuteronomy 18:14–22 itself there is little. There is (of course) the word 'prophet', its general association with Moses (a prophet 'like me'), and the words 'you must listen to him' (Deut 18:15; and other similar pronouncements concerning the prophet's authority), but that is about it. One does not find guidelines or strictures about the character, calling, or occupation of this prophet, nor does one have other offices placed along side it, as was the case with Ephesians 4:11. Given these facts the word 'prophet' in Deuteronomy 18:15, 18, we may muse, seems to act as a receptacle into which Calvin may – indeed, must(!) – place his thoughts (as culled and developed from the whole of Scripture) on the office. But what are those thoughts?

This question can be answered in at least two ways. First, it can be answered by considering Calvin's conception of the general character of these prophets. In taking this up it will be noted that the description Calvin provides in his treatment of Deuteronomy 18:15, 18 (examined above) looks suspiciously like the one found in his *praelectiones* on the Old Testament prophets, that is, in his introductions to his commentaries on Isaiah and the Minor Prophets, where he discusses the office of prophet (he does not preface his treatments of Jeremiah, Daniel or Ezekiel with such introductions). In fact, Deuteronomy 18:15, 18 plays a central role in Calvin's

⁶⁶ Isaiah 59:21 reads: 'Et ego cum ipsis hoc foedus meum (sancio) dicit Iehova. Spiritus meus qui super te est, et verba mea, quae posui in ore tuo, non recedent ex ore tuo, neque ex ore seminis tui, neque ex ore seminis tui, dicit Iehova, ab hoc tempore usque in aeternum.' (from Calvin's commentary on Isaiah in CO 37:336).

⁶⁷ CO 27:519 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:16–20).

⁶⁸ CO 27:499 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:9–15).

preface to Isaiah where he sets out a scenario essentially identical to that described in his expositions of the Deuteronomy passage. Remarking at the commencement of his treatment of the prophet Isaiah that the easiest way to introduce the prophets is to trace them to the law, 'from which they derived their doctrine, like streams from a fountain', Calvin describes the law briefly but then explains:

To make this matter still more clear, we must go a little farther back, to the Law itself, which the Lord prescribed as a perpetual rule for the Church, that it be always in the human hands and be observed by every succeeding age. Perceiving that there was danger lest an ignorant and undisciplined nation should need something more than the doctrine delivered by Moses, and that the nation could hardly be restrained without the use of a tighter rein, God forbids them to consult magicians or soothsayers, augurs or diviners and enjoins them to be satisfied with his doctrine alone, but at the same time he also adds that he will take care that there shall never be lacking a Prophet in Israel. He does this deliberately with a view to meeting an objection which the people might have brought forward, namely, that their condition would be worse than that of the infidels, all of whom had their priests of various orders, their soothsayers, augurs, astrologers, Chaldeans, and such like, whom they had it in their power to visit and consult, but that they would have no one to hold them by his advice in intricate and difficult matters. In order, therefore, to deprive them of every pretence, and to hinder them from polluting themselves by the abominable practices of the Gentiles, God promises that he will raise up Prophets (Deuteronomy 18:15) by whom he will make known his will and who shall faithfully convey the message which he has entrusted to them; so that in future there will be no reason to complain that they are in want of anything. There is an exchange (*heterōsis*) of the plural for the singular, when he uses the word 'prophet.' For although, as it is explicitly interpreted by Peter (Acts 3:22), that passage relates literally and chiefly to Christ (since he is the head of the Prophets and all of them depend on him for their doctrine and with one consent point to him) yet it relates also to the rest of the prophets and includes them under a collective name.⁶⁹

That this is a virtually identical account to the one given in Calvin's sermons and commentary on Deuteronomy 18:14–22 is undeniable. Thus one does not seem to be stretching the data too far to propose that the description of a prophet which Calvin produces in his commentary and sermons on Deuteronomy 18 and the one found in his *praelectiones* on Isaiah and the Minor Prophets are effectively identical. In other words, Calvin's description is of an Old Testament prophet and yet he says the office continues into the New Testament era. For 'God promised a prophet not only to the Jews but also to us', as we saw.⁷⁰ The ramifications of this will be pursued in the remainder of this chapter.

The second way the question can be answered is by examining the relationship between church and prophet (the continual order God established). What model does Calvin perceive here? The following heads summarize Calvin's thinking.

⁶⁹ CO 36:19–20.

⁷⁰ CO 27:519 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:16–20).

- Sacred text.
- The Text is Complete or Sufficient (with respect to redemption).
- The Prophet interprets that text and keeps the church in obedience to it.
- He must add nothing to it.
- The Church needs prophets.
- God puts his word into the prophet's mouth.
- Prophets speak with the authority of God.
- Prophets must be called (raised up) by God and gifted with the Spirit and the ability to interpret.
- Church must test the prophets.

It is, again, characterized by continuity. A brief treatment of each of these heads follows.

The *Sacred Text* is, for prophets appearing in the Old Testament period, the Law. Those appearing in the New Testament era would of course have as their sacred text, the entire Bible (Old and New Testaments).

This Text is *Complete*. Calvin's model is one which asserts the existence of a text which is given to the covenant community and is complete – that is, it is sufficient for the needs of the covenant community. What this means is related by Calvin in his introduction to his commentary on Isaiah: 'Now, the Law consists chiefly of three parts: first, the doctrine of life (*vitalis doctrinam*); secondly, threats and promises; thirdly, the covenant of grace, which, being founded on Christ, contains within itself all the special promises.'⁷¹ He articulates the same in his commentaries on the Minor Prophets.

But the law has two parts, namely, a promise of salvation and eternal life (*salutis et vitae aeternae promissio*), and a rule for a godly and holy living. To these is added a third, namely, that people, if they do not respond to their call (*vocationi suae*), are to be recalled to the fear of God by threatening and reproofs. The prophets inculcate the precepts of the law respecting the true and pure worship of God, respecting love; in short, they instruct the people in a holy and godly life, and then offer to them the grace of the Lord. And as there is no hope of reconciliation with God except through a mediator, they constantly set forth the messiah, whom the Lord had promised long before.⁷²

The emphasis that the law sets forth Christ and the covenant of grace is a characteristically Calvinian one, the upshot of which is that in possessing the law, the Old Testament church possessed a text which was fundamentally sufficient for life and salvation – she did not have to wait for the apostolic writings to have the gospel. Though Calvin rather assumes this in

⁷¹ CO 36:19.

⁷² CO 42:198.

his treatment of Deuteronomy 18:14–22, he explains it elsewhere in his exposition of that book.⁷³ That the New Testament church has, according to Calvin, a sufficient sacred text is too obvious to require exposition.

Calvin did, of course, acknowledge some differences between the Old and New Testaments. He makes clear that 'we have greater perfection of doctrine than the people had in old time'.⁷⁴ But the difference, for him, is one of degree rather than kind.

The Prophet interprets that text and keeps the church in obedience to it. Naturally, the vocation of the prophets in the Old Testament period entailed some foretelling of the future. But this point being acknowledged, it must be said that it plays very little importance in Calvin's work on the Old Testament prophetic books. In point of fact, it is downplayed and almost ignored by Calvin except on occasions when he simply cannot ignore it. The same is true for prophets in general.

Rather than foretelling, it is interpreting that is, in Calvin's judgement, essential to the work of the prophet. In his sermon on Deuteronomy 18:9–15, he explains that although God revealed his will (i.e. the Law) to the people, 'yet [he] will send [them] expounders (*exposer*) of the doctrine and maintainers (*maintenir*) of it'.⁷⁵ The point is made in Calvin's handling of the prophet Isaiah and the Minor Prophets. 'But with regard to the Prophets, this is true of them all, as we have sometimes said, that they are interpreters of the law.'⁷⁶

To this, Calvin adds (as can be seen from the quote from his Deuteronomy sermon) the notion that the prophet is one who maintains (*maintenir*) right doctrine. This is a point he repeats. 'God has not only once uttered his will but he has also sent us teachers regularly to keep his church in obedience.'⁷⁷ Prophets labor so that doctrine 'does not perish, nor become buried, nor corrupted with false interpretations.'⁷⁸ It is this aspect of the prophets work that moves Calvin to speak in the most explicit and eloquent manner about the hardships faced by those prophets whom God raises us from time to time. Accordingly he produces a quite long discussion of God's calling of prophets from Samuel onwards, all of whom were protec-

⁷³ See CO 28:652 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 31:22–30 (specifically v26)); also elsewhere, CO 53:51–66 (Sermon on 1 Timothy 1:8–11: '... the law is not made for the righteous, but for lawbreakers...'), for example.

⁷⁴ CO 27:534 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:21–22).

⁷⁵ CO 27:499 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:9–15).

⁷⁶ CO 42:198 (Introduction to Hosea/Minor Prophets) also CO 36:317 (Commentary on Isaiah 17:10)

⁷⁷ CO 27:499.

⁷⁸ CO 27:499.

tors of doctrine. And in his sermon on Deuteronomy 18:21–22, Calvin declares:

The office of prophet was not only to tell of things to come, but also to give people good instruction, to exhort them to amend their lives, and to edify them in the faith. As for example, we see that the prophets did not only say such a thing will befall you but also confirmed the covenant by which God had adopted the people of Israel and told them of the coming of the redeemer on whom the hope of all God's children was grounded. Moreover, they comforted the sorrowful by preaching the promises of God's favor to them; further they threatened the people when they became disordered; they discovered their faults and transgressions; they cited sinners to God's judgment to make them humble themselves.⁷⁹

From this it is clear that keeping the church in obedience entails not only maintaining right doctrine but also condemning the wicked and comforting the sorrowful; this is also part of the prophet's duty.

He must add nothing to it. On this Calvin is emphatic. The prophet must add nothing to the sacred text he is expounding. In his sermons on Deuteronomy, Calvin makes the point by insisting, 'the bridle is not put on their necks to set forth what [the prophet] thinks is good.'⁸⁰ 'He has provided that those who are commissioned to speak must not bring their own dreams and songs; they must not forge any new doctrines but learn them only from their master and then deliver what they have learned faithfully to others without adding anything at all of their own.'⁸¹

Again, the same is found in his treatment of the prophetic books.

When he promised to give them Prophets, by whom he would make known his will and purpose, the Lord commanded the people to rely on their interpretations and doctrine. And yet it was not intended that they make any addition to the Law but that they interpret it faithfully and sanction its authority.⁸²

So strongly does Calvin feel on this point that he defends it by explaining that even things which some might think are additions to the law are actually not. For example, when the Prophets inculcate moral duties, Calvin argues, 'they bring forward nothing new, but only explain those parts of the Law which had been misunderstood.'⁸³ Nothing is an addition.

The prophets, therefore, enter more largely into the illustration of doctrine and explain more fully what is briefly stated in the Two Tables and lay down what the Lord primarily requires from us. Next, the threats and promises, which Moses had proclaimed in general terms, are applied by them to their own time and minutely described. Lastly, they express

⁷⁹ CO 27:529–530 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:21–22).

⁸⁰ CO 27:502 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:9–15).

⁸¹ CO 27:525 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:16–20).

⁸² CO 36:20 (Introduction to Isaiah).

⁸³ CO 36:20.

more clearly what Moses says more obscurely about Christ and his grace and bring forward more copious and more abundant proofs of the free covenant.⁸⁴

And if one wonders what adding to the sacred text looks like, Calvin points to, and criticises, Rome as the most egregious offenders in this area, underscoring the intensity of his concern in this idea.

The Church needs prophets. An additional part of Calvin's model entails the notion that the church cannot exist with the sacred text alone, but requires prophets to interpret it. In Calvin's judgment (a judgment which reminds one of Occam's razor), the Lord's raising up of the prophets implies this, for he would not have done so unnecessarily.

It is not enough for people to read Holy Scripture. For if God had known it to be sufficient for us, he would have stopped with that ... So we have to gather that the church cannot stand without teaching.⁸⁵

The point is clear and is clearly not altered by the closing of the canon. Hence, Calvin is not only saying that the Old Testament church needed prophets but also that the New Testament church does. This need was already alluded to when speaking to the idea that the prophet is an interpreter who keeps the church in obedience to right doctrine, since this implies, of course, that as long as the church has the potential to corrupt sound doctrine or to fall into moral decay, so long the church will need prophets. But though alluded to elsewhere, Calvin makes it explicitly in several places.

God puts his word into the prophet's mouth. The text of Deuteronomy 18:18 declares this explicitly, and Calvin repeats it, making clear that this was not only the case in the Old Testament period but also in the New: 'Behold the condition under which God has raised up prophets in all ages, namely, that he put his word in their mouths.'⁸⁶ The same sentiment is repeated a little later, with emphasis:

He says expressly that the prophet who is sent by him shall have his word in his mouth. To whom does God speak? He speaks generally of all who were ever sent by him. For I have already proven that this text is not meant of Moses alone or of them who lived under the Old Testament but that it extends even unto us also.⁸⁷

Prophets speak with the authority of God. The point being made here can be found in almost identical form in both the Deuteronomy sermons and the preface to Isaiah. In Calvin's introduction to Isaiah, he declares:

⁸⁴ CO 36:20.

⁸⁵ CO 27:499 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:9–15).

⁸⁶ CO 27:525 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:16–20).

⁸⁷ CO 27:527.

It would be absurd to boast of attending to the word were we to disregard the divine interpretations of it; as many persons at the present day arrogantly boast of attending to the word while they cannot at all endure the godly admonitions and reproofs which proceed from the doctrine of the word.⁸⁸

In his sermon on Deuteronomy 18:16–20, Calvin declares:

For as I declared, it is not enough for us to say, ‘God’s word is worthy to be heard’, but we must also show this by proof. Whenever our Lord speaks – even if it is through the meanest of creatures – let us receive him quietly and obey him.⁸⁹

The assertion effectively carries God’s placing of his word into the prophets’ mouths to its logical conclusion, namely, that they speak with God’s authority and, thus, must be listened to.

Prophets must be called (raised up) by God and gifted with the Spirit and the ability to interpret. His assertions in the sermon on Deuteronomy 18 are brief but quite clear: ‘... as many as will nowadays be taken for teachers in the church must have the charge (*la charge*) to bring God’s word.’⁹⁰ He also adds that he ‘must have his spirit; that is to say, they must have the gift of expounding the holy scripture (*la grace d’exposer l’Ecriture sainte*).’⁹¹ Calvin reiterates these points in a slightly different manner when treating Jeremiah 1:9.⁹²

The Church must test the prophets. To round off this model, we note that Calvin insists the church must test the prophets, lest they simply listen to anyone and everyone who claims to be bringing God’s word to them. This was, of course, true in the Old Testament and part of Deuteronomy 18, as well as chapter 13, are taken up with this notion. But it is also true of those living in the New Testament era. Only by testing the prophets, Calvin insists, will the church know whether they are true or false prophets (again, for false, he has Rome in mind). Much of his sermon on Deuteronomy 18:21–22 is taken up with the practicalities of testing the prophets. His comments on testing, however, commence in the previous sermon, in which Calvin observes that God wills the church to heed the prophets but that he does not wish to remove discretion from believers. ‘No but he will have us examine men’s doctrine;’ hence Calvin goes on to urge the testing of the prophets as to whether they teach correctly or not.⁹³ As was noted

⁸⁸ CO 36:20.

⁸⁹ CO 27:523 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:16–20).

⁹⁰ CO 27:528.

⁹¹ CO 27:528.

⁹² CO 37:479–480.

⁹³ CO 27:526.

earlier, his exposition of Jeremiah 1:9 contains similar thoughts on the idea.

3. Calvin's Understanding of the Church in his Day

What has been discovered thus far raises a number of questions, one of the more intriguing of which is: what is Calvin's understanding of the church? A (very) brief treatment of this seems in order, since it is the only one of the trio (prophet, church, and the relationship between them) that has not been examined. Following this, we will be in a place to turn specifically to Calvin and his prophetic awareness.

Not surprisingly, one finds that continuity between the two testaments is basic to Calvin's thoughts on the church.⁹⁴ Just as he conceives of a perpetual office of prophet and an essentially unchanging prophet-church relationship, so the Frenchman also conceives of the church in his own day as effectively identical to the church in the Old Testament period – but particularly *the church of the prophets' day*.⁹⁵ This is seen particularly clearly in his exposition of the prophetic books in statements such as:

Moreover this reproof applies to many in our day. So to those who sagaciously consider the state of things in our age, the papists appear to be like the Israelites, for their apostacy is notorious; there is nothing sound among them; the whole of their religion is rotten; and everything is depraved. But as the Lord has chosen us peculiarly to himself, we must beware lest they should draw us to themselves and entangle us. For as we have said, we must always fear contagion.⁹⁶

Here Calvin states that the church to whom someone like Isaiah or Hosea preached is like the church in his day; there is a similarity, a continuity, between the church in these two periods.

He also suggests the nature of that continuity in this citation, which is that the true church in both periods is extremely small. The (large) visible church⁹⁷ is corrupt. In Calvin's day, this referred to Rome. They, in his judgement, were wicked to the point of being rotten and irretrievable. In the prophets' era this referred, Calvin avers, to Israel. He also draws the

⁹⁴ General treatments of Calvin on the church: François Wendel, *Calvin: sources et évolution de sa pensée religieuse* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1950). ET: *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (New York: Harper and Row, 1963; reprinted Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1987), 291–311; Benjamin Milner, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Church* (Leiden: Brill, 1970).

⁹⁵ Petersen notes Zwingli's belief that this was so, *Preaching in the Last Days*, 139, n11.

⁹⁶ CO 42:289 (Commentary on Hosea 4:15).

⁹⁷ On developments in thinking during the late medieval period on the visible and invisible church, Heiko Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation; The Shape of Late Medieval Thought Illustrated by Key Documents* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 207–239.

same conclusion, though less aggressively, about Judah. Both were corrupt. Accordingly the prophets addressed their words of condemnation to this corrupt church as Calvin notes, for example, in his exposition of Hosea 2:4 (And I will not have mercy on her children, for they are the children of whoredom):

We must remember that this sentence specifically belonged to the reprobate.⁹⁸

The true church, the remnant, is faithful but small. In Calvin's day these were the evangelicals. In the prophets' era this referred to a small group sometimes identified in Scripture as the remnant (Isaiah 11:11). Calvin sees the prophets as addressing their words of comfort to this remnant as his comments on Malachi 3:4 ('Then shall the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant to the Lord, as in the days of old') demonstrate:

But he meant to confine to the elect what ought not to have been extended to all, for there were among the people, as we have seen and shall again presently see, many who were reprobates, in fact, the greater part had fallen away. This is the reason why the prophet especially addresses the few remaining who had not fallen away.⁹⁹

Examples could easily be amassed, but for the sake of brevity will not be. In this way, then, Calvin found the era of the prophets' to be remarkably like his own.

We see, then, extraordinary continuity in Calvin's thinking on the character of the prophets, the character of the church of the prophets' day and of Calvin's, and the prophet-church relationship – all of which is established on Calvin's exegesis of the prophetic books and of Moses' promise in Deuteronomy 18:14–22, from which he argues that prophets are given to the church in all ages. While this provides Calvin's prophetic awareness with a structure for its expression, it does not directly demonstrate the existence of that awareness. The material presented below will aim to do that. It will be divided into two bodies of material, the first of which is drawn from Calvin's corpus generally, the second, more specifically from his sermons on Deuteronomy 18:14–22.

4. Calvin among the Prophets; discreet allusions

The first section of material consists of Calvin's allusions to his own prophetic calling. The structure produced above enables us to see the significance of these more clearly. One of them (from his introduction to his

⁹⁸ CO 42:228.

⁹⁹ CO 44:465.

commentary on the Minor Prophets) was cited near the beginning of this chapter and is repeated here.

We see, then, in what respect these four differ: Isaiah and Micah address their reproofs to the kingdom of Judah; and Hosea and Amos only assail the kingdom of Israel, but seem to spare the Jews. Each of them undertook what God had committed to his charge; thus each confined himself within the limits of his own call and office. For if we, who are called to instruct the Church, close our eyes to the sins which prevail in it, and neglect those whom the Lord has appointed to be taught by us, we confound all order.¹⁰⁰

Calvin's movement in this quotation from the prophets to himself ('we') could, of course, be one which turns on the idea of similarity; the simple fact that both prophets and pastors are similar because they are both ministers of God. This would be a slightly odd reading of this passage, but not entirely implausible – particularly if Calvin conceived of the prophetic office in a way which did not allow him to be a prophet.

But, as has been seen above, Calvin's conception of the prophetic office *does* allow him to be a prophet. This being the case, the words, '[f]or if we, who are called to instruct the Church, close our eyes to the sins which prevail in it, and neglect those whom the Lord has appointed to be taught by us, we confound all order', would seem most naturally to indicate that Calvin and the prophets are linked together by virtue of their possessing the *same* calling. Thus, Calvin would be saying that he could no more close his eyes to the sins which prevail in the church of his day than could *any of the prophets*. The implication of the sentiment is clear.

Nor is this the only quotation one can find. A brief taste of those which can be discovered unveils some in which Calvin is discussing rather mundane matters, such as clothing.

It appears from this place that prophets wore sordid and hairy garments. But interpreters do not appropriately quote those passages from the prophets where they are bidden to put on sackcloth and ashes. For Isaiah, while announcing many of his prophecies, did not wear sackcloth and ashes, but only when he brought some sad message. The same also may be said of Jeremiah, when he was bidden to go naked. Nonetheless, it was a common thing with the Prophets to be content with a hairy, that is, with a sordid and mean garment. For though there is liberty allowed in external things, yet some moderation ought to be observed; for were I to teach in a military dress, it would be viewed as inconsistent with common sense. There is no need of being taught as to what common decency may require. The true prophets accustomed themselves to hairy garments.¹⁰¹

This is, to be sure, a fascinating citation and carries in its own way weight and importance. But the topic which most often moves him to make these allusions is that of speaking the word of God. We find such in a statement from Calvin's sermon on 1 Timothy 4:1–2.

¹⁰⁰ CO 42:197.

¹⁰¹ CO 44:350 (Commentary on Zechariah 13:4).

... let us note that the true prophets which were sent from God and performed their office faithfully, protested always that they spoke not in their own name, neither set their own fancies and dreams ... but that it was the Spirit of God that spoke by their mouths. And there is good reason that we should make that protestation, if we will be heard. For who are we that men should obey us, ...¹⁰²

Here, as in the earlier example from the Minor Prophets, the implication is clearly that Calvin possesses a prophetic calling.

Additionally – and here I am indebted to Max Engammare for the next two citations, both of which are outstanding examples – when Calvin is preaching on Daniel 5 he declares:

For if one preaches in this city that God's vengeance will be felt, that people do not wish to receive what we announce in the name of God, and that it is in his name that we have spoken, that there is a prophet, they will ridicule all that.¹⁰³

Also a sermon on Ezekiel:

There are some today who say: 'There's Calvin who makes himself a prophet, when he says that one will know that there is a prophet among us. He's talking about himself.' Is he a prophet? Well, since it is the doctrine of God that I am announcing, I have to use this language.¹⁰⁴

Other similar citations can be found in Peter's study; all of them point to the same reality, namely, that Calvin conceived of himself as a prophet.

5. Calvin among the Prophets; sermon application

The second section of material is found in Calvin's application of Deuteronomy 18 to his own day in his sermons on the passage (Deut 18:14–22). There are various ways he applies the text, but two are worth briefly noting. First, Calvin here on Deuteronomy, and throughout his preaching, lecturing, commentating and writing, gives himself vigorously to the task of calling the Roman church before the judgment of God for their wickedness. In this way Calvin is, I would suggest, acting in accordance with his understanding of the church (as outlined above) and following his prophetic calling not to 'close our eyes to the sins which prevail in [the church].' As a prophet, Calvin is profoundly concerned to highlight and condemn the sins of the apostate church in Western Europe repeatedly and with, what he clearly considers, the divine authority to do so. In point of fact, a sizable portion of his three sermons on Deuteronomy 18:14–22 are taken up with such condemnations. Accordingly, he conceives of himself as one who is called to maintain right doctrine and to keep the church in

¹⁰² CO 53:251.

¹⁰³ Engammare, 'Calvin: A Prophet without a Prophecy', 95.

¹⁰⁴ Engammare, 'Calvin: A Prophet without a Prophecy', 95.

obedience to it, and in particular to decry its (i.e. Rome's) departure from right doctrine.

But more impressive is Calvin's application of the passage in regards to the authority of the prophet. Up to now:

A. He has argued that Deuteronomy 18:14–22 promises prophets to the church throughout her earthly existence.

B. He has described these prophets after the model of the Old Testament prophets.

C. He has asserted the necessary conclusion: 'We must obey the prophets.'¹⁰⁵ Indeed this is stated explicitly in Deuteronomy 18:15 ('you must hear him') and 19 ('it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not listen to my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him').

But how does Calvin apply the point? He does so by cutting off three related-but-distinct routes which people take in order to avoid it. First, he had already said (as we saw) 'It is not enough to read your bible'; that is not good enough.¹⁰⁶ Secondly, he says – in fact, repeatedly – one cannot protest that they long to hear God's word but do not listen to his prophet. 'God says not just hear my word but listen to my prophets whom I send.'¹⁰⁷ Thirdly, he warns that Christians must not allow the fact that the prophet whom God raises up is someone known to them to deter them from obeying him. 'God promised a prophet [to us] ... Let us suffer ourselves to be governed by his word. And let us not refuse to hear men who speak to us in his name. But although they be from among us and of our own company, so that we might allege that we owe no such duty ... yet notwithstanding, seeing that they are set in God's place by his will, let it suffice to us.'¹⁰⁸ Thus, Calvin strives in these ways to make the injunction 'you must hear [God's prophets]' inescapable.

But how does he make this less abstract? What does it mean, for Calvin, in practical terms? It means, he argues, that the Genevans should hear *his* sermons.

For when our Lord will have people obey him he does not say only 'he that will not obey my word' but 'he that will not hear the prophets whom I send.' For we see many in our own day who protest that they are ready to submit themselves to God, but yet in the mean time they cannot find it in their hearts to yield obedience to him in regards to his laws, or to the holy scriptures, or the order of the church. You will see a scoffer who wants to be taken to be a good catholic but as for sermons, he avoids them and thinks they are superfluous. And if they chance to come to any it is but in ceremony and for the sake of fashion, as they say. Thus if it were not for public shame, they would never come to church. You will never hear that they desire to be taught. But what kind of Christianity is this? Contrary to this, we hear how it is said here that God will have us to listen to him. How?

¹⁰⁵ CO 27:504 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:9–15).

¹⁰⁶ CO 27:499.

¹⁰⁷ CO 27:521 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:16–20).

¹⁰⁸ CO 27:519 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:16–20).

People can say well enough that they are willing to obey. But he adds ‘whoever does not hear the prophets whom I send.’ I have shown already that seeing that God has set this order in his church, it ought to be held to be inviolable. Therefore whoever he is who has no regard for the sermons, nor comes to them, shows himself to be a rebel against God. Who says so? God himself. We do not need to reason carefully to arrive at this conclusion. For our Lord tells us that all those who will not quietly submit themselves to the order which he has appointed are rebels against him.¹⁰⁹

This is Calvin’s conviction concerning the practical meaning of Deuteronomy 18:14–22 and (if you will) concerning himself too.

6. *Did Calvin Think he was Inspired?*

From what has been considered it appears that Calvin conceived of his relationship with the church and his ministry towards it in terms similar to those seen in the biblical prophets, Isaiah et al. Not only does he see his own day as parallel to that of the prophets, but he sees himself within it as called to be one of those prophets who seek to turn the church away from its idolatry, according to the model set down in Deuteronomy 18.

But this raises the question: is there any difference between Calvin and prophets like Moses, Isaiah or Ezekiel? Is Calvin saying he is the recipient of direct revelation in the same way that Jeremiah was? Is he saying his writings (the *Institutio* for example) should be included in the canon? The brief answer is ‘yes there is a difference.’ Calvin says this in at least one place. On Hebrews 1:1, he writes:

But we must notice the difference between us and the fathers; for God formerly addressed them in a way different from that which he adopts toward us now.¹¹⁰

Thus, there is something which distinguishes Calvin from Isaiah, Ezekiel and the other Old Testament prophets.

But the longer answer is harder to formulate. I would suggest that that something (that difference) is, for example, not authority. All prophets, in Calvin’s scheme as outlined above, seem to have the same authority, and that would include him. Old Testament prophets, just as those who appear during the New Testament era (like Calvin), are to be tested. The test, as we saw, is: does the prophet add anything of his own to the text he is interpreting? But when the prophet has passed the test and is found to be a true prophet, then he is – irrespective of the era – to be listened to as carrying the same authority as any of God’s spokespersons.

This may raise in a more acute manner the question of whether there is, or in what sense there actually is, anything which really differentiates Cal-

¹⁰⁹ CO 27:521; see also CO 27:524 (both from the Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:16–20).

¹¹⁰ CO 55:9 (on Hebrews 1:1). I am indebted to my brother, Paul Balsarak, for bringing this quotation to my attention.

vin and someone like Jeremiah. Do Calvin's words on Hebrews 1:1 amount to a distinction without a difference when considered in the context of his whole theology? The question is a fascinating one, but one that cannot be answered here. What can be done instead is to point to an observation already made by Millet and Engammare which is that there is a subtlety to Calvin's thinking on this entire question of his own prophetic awareness. It is, we would suggest, that subtlety that we have bumped in to here.

7. Prophets Old and New; Comparing the Two Perspectives

Under this second perspective we have sought to demonstrate the existence, and show something of the character, of Calvin's prophetic awareness. The question does, however, arise here: how is it that Calvin seems to treat the prophet in one way when dealing with New Testament texts and another when dealing with the Old Testament?

In addressing this conundrum, it is worth noting that Calvin does refer to some of the relevant New Testament passages in his sermons on Deuteronomy 18:14–22. This was already noted briefly in respect of Ephesians 4:11. But one also finds that when discussing testing the prophets, Calvin briefly alludes to 1 Corinthians 14:29 and the idea that the prophets were to speak in order and the remainder who listened to them were to judge what they said. Calvin declares: 'It is said that those who have the gift of prophecy should speak in order.'¹¹¹ Likewise, in the next sermon, on Deuteronomy 18:21–22, he notes Romans 12:6 but only curtly.

Thus, Calvin does not appear to be wholly unaware when expounding Deuteronomy 18:14–22 that the New Testament addresses the topic of the prophet as well. But this is, it must be said, not enormously helpful. His references are, even in the case of 1 Corinthians 14, exceedingly brief. They do not suggest that Calvin may have conceived of there being a harmony between these texts and Deuteronomy 18. Thus, although they are interesting, they still leave us with the fact that Calvin seems to expound the notion of 'prophet' one way at one time (in the New Testament) and another way at another (in the Old Testament).

Yet all is not lost. One line of thought will be set out here provisionally in answer to this conundrum. Calvin may have had an understanding of the office of prophet which was attuned to the very different circumstances into which the two kinds of prophets (Old Testament prophets and those mentioned in the New Testament in places like Ephesians 4:11) were called and raised up. For, the New Testament prophet was called into a new church. His task, according to Calvin, was to interpret Scripture by

¹¹¹ CO 27:526 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:16–20).

means of a special gift of revelation. Calvin is aware of, and comments on, the fact that these extraordinary New Testament offices (prophet, and also apostle and evangelist) were given to the New Testament church in the early period when it was being established. Thus, the prophet interpreting Scripture in that context would have had a role related to this work of *establishing* – a role which would presumably be completed once the church was established. The Old Testament prophet's task was a very different one. He was raised up, Calvin clearly feels, to speak to a church fully established but *dealing with corruption*, doctrinal, moral or both. Thus, the prophet's work of interpreting had particular aims. Further, he had a role which could not be completed until the church completed its earthly sojourn. Thus Calvin was, it is clear from his writings, aware of the differences which existed between these two forms of the prophetic office.

Whether what has been postulated here helps answer our conundrum – that is, whether this explains the apparent inconsistency raised in this chapter – is hard to judge. Calvin leaves us with only hints that it might be so. But it certainly is true that this distinction outlined in the preceding paragraph reveals the fact that the two manifestations of prophets (in texts like 1 Corinthians 12 and in texts like Deuteronomy 18) were very different. These prophets appeared at different times in the church's existence and served different functions. Nonetheless, if these thoughts are useful in dealing with the matter, they still require further study in order to be established.

8. Calvin's Extraordinary Calling

We should probably not leave the uniqueness of Calvin's interpretation of Deuteronomy 18:14–22 without a final comment on it. It is, after all, a remarkable fact.

That Calvin should produce a novel interpretation of a biblical passage is not remarkable, in and of itself. He does so on occasion. But on this occasion, his novel reading opens the door (so to speak) for him to be a prophet. Thus, the uniqueness of it takes on added significance. This significance is given slightly more weight (at least theoretically) when one considers that Calvin was never ordained. Bernard Cottret reminds us of this in his recent biography of Calvin: 'Calvin found himself called a 'reader' at first, but after some months the words 'preacher' or 'pastor' were used with respect to him. One thing is certain: Calvin never received any pastoral consecration.'¹¹²

¹¹² Bernard Cottret, *Calvin: Biographie* (Paris: Éditions Jean-Claude Lattès, 1995); ET: *Calvin: A Biography*, trans. M. Wallace McDonald (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 120. This point (that Calvin was not ordained) was raised by Professor Emidio Campi in a discussion between Professor Campi, Dr Scott Manetsch and myself while at Putten. I am extremely

Thus, we are faced with these two facts. Of course it would be extremely hasty even to attempt to draw any conclusions at this point. Thus, all that is intended here is to raise some questions for reflection.

It seems appropriate to ask: could Calvin have thought of himself as being appointed to an office (the prophetic vocation) which effectively did not require the ordaining of the church? A calling which involved functioning to restore the church against her will (as it were)? Could it be that the failure (for whatever reason) of the Genevan authorities to ordain him helped slowly to move him towards the realization that he was called to be a prophet? Could it, alternatively, be that Calvin did not wish to be ordained precisely because he (already) saw himself as a prophet? Could the fact that Calvin was never ordained have influenced his reading of texts like Deuteronomy 18:14–22? Could it have moved him to highlight certain aspects of the passage while overlooking others? Or, could the two facts mentioned in this section be unrelated to one another? In attempting to explore these matters, one must also wonder how much his polemical engagements with Roman Catholic theologians influenced his thinking. Could it be that he felt sensitive over the fact that he could be charged by them with an unauthorized break from God's holy church? One must also wonder when this reading of Deuteronomy 18:14–22 was first proposed by Calvin. Was it in the 1550s when he took up Deuteronomy for preaching and the Minor Prophets for lecturing? Did Calvin ever set out an alternative reading of the passage? Additionally, how much did events such as the Regensburg Colloquy and the Peace of Augsburg influence his thinking? Could it be that Calvin's prophetic awareness was influenced by these events and by the failure of the evangelicals to resolve their differences with Rome? These and many other questions are worthy of further consideration – not least because of Calvin's unique reading of this important passage.

Conclusion

This study sought to examine Calvin's prophetic awareness by exploring how he grounded that awareness in his reading of Scripture. What it discovered is that, in Calvin's judgment, God's promise in Deuteronomy 18:14–22 establishes an order of prophetic ministry within the church that is to continue for the entirety of the church's earthly existence; and furthermore that Calvin saw himself as part of that prophetic ministry.

grateful to him for reminding me of it within the context of this discussion of Calvin's understanding of his calling.

To conclude, the present study proposes to the wider field of Calvin research that the question of Calvin and his prophetic awareness be taken into greater consideration when assessing who Calvin is, his character, theology and legacy. As mentioned at the beginning of this piece, the literature on this topic by scholars like Ganoczy, Millet and Engammare is of excellent quality. They have done an outstanding job of bringing this matter to our attention, outlining its shape, and making its importance clear. There are, however, aspects of it which require deeper examination. It is the hope of the present author that these will be taken up by Calvin scholars as matters of real significance in the coming years.

Reformer of Exegesis? Calvin's Unpaid Debt to Origen

JOHN L. THOMPSON

Was John Calvin a reformer of exegesis? At first glance, the question seems ludicrous, for the answer should be obvious: Of course he was, wasn't he? Surely, as a humanist scholar, as a Protestant reformer, and as an advocate of *sola scriptura*, he must have intended also to reform exegesis. Presumably, that would mean not only restoring Scripture itself to its proper place of authority over church and society and all of life, but also restoring the *exegesis* of Scripture – the way Scripture was to be read, interpreted, understood, applied, and proclaimed – to *its* proper place, where what Christians took from Scripture was indeed what God originally and enduringly meant them to receive. Yet this supposedly obvious answer, that Calvin must have been or had to be a reformer of exegesis, begs the question of just what sort of reformer of exegesis he really was. What did Calvin mean to do in his own exegesis that represented, in his own mind at least, some sort of reform of the handling of Scripture? What was needed in his own day? Where had his predecessors and contemporaries missed the mark?

This essay will address these questions in three moves. First, if Calvin aspired to be a reformer of exegesis, it behooves us to ask him just what he saw as the *form* of that re-formation. That is to say, if we understand the Reformation as an attempt to restore Christianity to health, we should look for Calvin's exegetical agenda, asking him to tell us what good exegesis should look like or what it should do. Second, we should ask Calvin what he found wrong with prevailing exegetical practices. If he saw himself as a reformer of exegesis, how had exegesis become, apparently, de-formed? Third, we should end with some assessment, not so much asking if Calvin was a perfect exegete, but did he do what he said he meant to do? Did he live up to his own expectations as an interpreter of Scripture, or did his theory sometimes outrun his practice?

I. Calvin's exegetical agenda: *What good exegesis looks like*

The first question of these questions is easy, partly because Calvin's agenda as an interpreter of the Bible has been addressed so regularly in treatments of his work as a commentator.¹ Calvin left no treatise on exegetical method, but there is a well-worn path leading to a favored set of passages where scholars always go to find Calvin's clearest statements about what he intends to do in his commentaries. It's simply a matter of rounding up the usual suspects, then, when we consult Calvin's preface to his Romans commentary, the preface to his 1539 *Institutes*, and the preface to his proposed French edition of Chrysostom, all of which date from this early period.²

¹ The short study by Hans-Joachim Kraus, "Calvins exegetische Prinzipien," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 79 (1968): 329–41, which appeared in English as "Calvin's Exegetical Principles," *Interpretation* 31 (1977): 8–18, is sometimes regarded as a milestone, but probably only as a convenient chronological limit to the literature, which has grown unchecked since Kraus. These are some key studies, listed by date: Benoit Girardin, *Rhétorique et théologique: Calvin, le commentaire de l'Épître aux Romains* (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1979); Alexandre Ganoczy and Stefan Scheld, *Die Hermeneutik Calvins: Geistesgeschichtliche Voraussetzungen und Grundzüge* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1983); Fritz Büsser, "Bullinger as Calvin's Model in Biblical Exposition: An Examination of Calvin's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans, in *In Honor of John Calvin, 1509–64: Papers from the 1986 International Calvin Symposium*, ed. E.J. Furcha (Montreal: Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University, 1987), 64–95; Thomas F. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1988); Olivier Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole: Étude de rhétorique réformée* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1992); T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* (second edition; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993); Peter Opitz, *Calvins theologische Hermeneutik* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1994); Gary Neal Hansen, "John Calvin and the Non-literal Interpretation of Scripture," (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1998); Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Nicole Kuroпка, "Calvins Römerbriefwidmung und der consensus piorum," in *Calvin im Kontext der Schweizer Reformation: Historische und theologische Beiträge zur Calvinforschung*, ed. Peter Opitz (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2003), 147–68; John L. Thompson, "Calvin as a Biblical Interpreter," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald A. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 58–73; R. Ward Holder, *John Calvin and the Grounding of Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

² The strategic "preface" to Calvin's Romans commentary that is comprised by his letter to Simon Grynaeus (18 Oct 1539) should not be confused with his commentary's longer *argumentum*; both are included in OE 13 and translated in CNTC 8. For the text of the 1539 *Institutes*, I have used OS 3–5. The preface to Chrysostom is found in CO 9:831–38, and in W. Ian P. Hazlett, "Calvin's Latin Preface to His Proposed French Edition of Chrysostom's Homilies: Translation and Commentary," in *Humanism and Reform: the Church in Europe, England, and Scotland*, ed. James Kirk (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 129–50. For a fourth text, less well-known, see n. 4 below.

What do we learn from these well-studied texts? Let me simply summarize what is already well known. Calvin's letter of dedication to Simon Grynaeus, which stands as a preface to his Romans commentary, is the *locus classicus* for this topic. In its opening lines we find a brief but lucid account of the formal virtues of *perspicua brevitatis* – that is, of a concise but readable exposition – along with Calvin's insistence that virtually the only task of a commentator must be to explicate the mind and meaning of the author who wrote the text. Again, Calvin's agenda here is well known, but it is hardly radical: his recipe for good exegesis could be transferred with ease to any writer or any text. For that reason, it is important to follow Calvin one step further, into his commentary's *argumentum*, where he quickly distills for his readers exactly what Paul had in mind. In brief, the main argument and the main question of Romans is that “we are justified by faith,” a Reformation catchphrase that he immediately expands: “Our only righteousness is God's mercy in Christ, which, having been set forth by the gospel, is received by faith.”³ The compactness of Calvin's sentence here should not be allowed to disguise its importance, because if we understand what Paul is doing in Romans (Calvin says), the doors will be opened that lead to all of the Bible's most hidden treasures. The implication, it would seem, is that the main argument and focus of Romans is also the main argument and focus of the entire Bible.⁴

Was any of this new? Yes and no. Calvin's preface and *argumentum* to Romans are liberally sprinkled with technical terms that indicate his familiarity with Agricolan rhetoric and his appreciation for the methodological precedents offered by Erasmus, Melancthon, Bullinger, and Bucer, all of whom (except Erasmus) are credited in the preface itself.⁵ Probably

³ Calvin, *Commentarius in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos*, *argumentum* (OE 13:7.13–23), key phrases italicized: “Epistola tota sic methodica est, ut ipsum quoque exordium ad rationem artis compositum sit. Artificium quum in multis apparet, quae suis locis observabuntur, tum in eo maxime quod inde *argumentum principale* deducitur. Nam apostolatus sui approbationem exorsus, ex ea in Evangelii commendationem incidit: quae quum necessario secum trahat disputationem de fide, ad eam quasi verborum contextu manu ducente delabitur. Atque ita ingreditur *principalem totius epistolae quaestionem, fide nos iustificari*, in qua tractanda versatur usque ad finem quinti capituli. Sit ergo nobis istorum capitulum proposita thesis, *unicam esse hominibus iustitiam, Dei misericordiam in Christo: dum, per evangelium oblata, fide apprehenditur.*”

⁴ The centrality of Romans as a summary of salvation history is also noted in passing by Richard A. Muller in his analysis of Calvin's 1535 *Épître a tout amateurs de Jesus-Christ*; see *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 23–34.

⁵ Erasmus's exegetical contributions included his *Paraphrase* of Romans (1517) and his *Annotations* (1516); the latter work was revised four times through 1535. Melancthon wrote several commentaries on Romans, including 1522, 1529/30, 1532, and 1540, as will be noted below. Bullinger's *In Sanctissimam Pavli ad Romanos Epistolam, ... Commentarius* appeared in 1533; Bucer's *Metaphrasis et enarratio in epist. d. Pauli apostoli ad Romanos*

the most immediate influence here, however, was that of Melanchthon, exerted not only through his many writings on Romans, including his 1532 commentary, but also by his works on rhetoric and the various editions of his *Loci Communes*. Both Calvin and Melanchthon published commentaries on Romans in 1540, and in a comparison of the *argumenta* of the two volumes, Richard Muller has found significant differences – yet they are unmistakably differences expressed with a common vocabulary and with extremely similar aims, insofar as “Melanchthon illustrated what was to become the primary path for most Protestants from text and exegesis to theological formulation.”⁶ As Timothy Wengert has observed, “Romans functioned for Melanchthon ... as a key to the entire Bible, providing the exegete with both the goal (*scopus*) of the Scripture and the proper method (*methodus*) for interpretation.”⁷ Remarkably, and as early as 1522, Melanchthon’s statement of the central teaching of Romans fully anticipated Calvin: Paul “treats grace, law and sin in the most apt order and plainly with a rhetorical method. The *status* of the case is that we are justified by faith.”⁸ Although Calvin does not echo all of these particular

appeared in 1536. For Bullinger I used the 1582 collected Pauline commentaries, and for Bucer I used the 1562 edition, both as digitized by the DLCPT; I consulted the 1541 printing of Erasmus’s *Paraphrases* as digitized by the DLCR. All commentaries will be cited as (e.g.) *Comm. Rom.* Most of these works are compared in fruitful ways by T. H. L. Parker, *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans, 1532–1542* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986).

⁶ Richard A. Muller, “‘Scimus enim quod lex spiritualis est’: Melanchthon and Calvin on the Interpretation of Romans 7:14–23,” in *Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560) and the Commentary*, ed. Timothy J. Wengert and M. Patrick Graham (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 219.

⁷ Timothy J. Wengert, “The Biblical Commentaries of Philip Melanchthon,” in *Melanchthon and the Commentary*, 139.

⁸ Melanchthon, *Annotationes ... in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos* (1522; Strasbourg 1523), 3^v; as quoted by Timothy J. Wengert, “Philip Melanchthon’s 1522 Annotations on Romans and the Lutheran Origins of Rhetorical Criticism,” in *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation*, ed. Richard A. Muller and John L. Thompson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 129. The emphasis on the centrality of justification in Romans only grows sharper in Melanchthon’s successive writings on Romans: in his 1532 commentary, see MSA 5:30.10–14, 32.14–25; in the 1540 commentary, see CR 15:495; both of these commentaries further incorporated a massive “prolegomena” or “summa” on justification as part of the *argumentum*. Bullinger writes in similar ways about his desire to describe the *scopus* of Romans and to do so with brevity; see T. H. L. Parker, *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans, 1532–1542* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 20. The virtue of “lucid brevity” (*lucida brevitare*) was noted by Erasmus in the 1522 “letter to the reader” in the first volume of his *Paraphrases* (sig. α vi), as well as in his *Ecclesiastes* (1535). The exegetical implications of Calvin’s rhetorical method are described in detail by Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 125–35; T. H. L. Parker, introduction to John Calvin, *Commentarius in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos* (Geneva: Droz, 1999), OE 13:li–lxvi; and Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 108–17.

terms – where Melanchthon speaks of the *scopus* of Romans, Calvin seems to substitute *argumentum principale* and *principalem ... quaestionem* – his commentary nonetheless displays equal commitment to rhetorical analysis. Indeed, the same could be said of Bullinger and Bucer, and of Erasmus, who preceded them all.⁹

I'll return to Calvin's relationship to the commentaries of Melanchthon and others, but for the moment we may simply affirm what Muller also observed, namely, that the *Praeceptor Germaniae* may also have been the *Praeceptor Calvini*.¹⁰ Thus, if there is anything new to what Calvin was doing as an exegete, it lay less in the *theories* about exegesis that he shared with most Protestants of his day and more in his specific *implementation* – that is, in his attempt not only to capture the true *scopus* of Scripture but also to do so with the lucid brevity that he explicitly found lacking not only in his predecessors but also in his contemporaries. Once again, we may draw on two excerpts from Calvin's letter to Grynaeus. The first of these praises Melanchthon, Bullinger, and Bucer for (respectively) learning, industry, and skill; ease of expression; and keenness of intellect and wide reading, among “many other varied excellences.”¹¹ A few lines later, however, Calvin admits that he also finds fault with his friends' exegesis. He writes with all the bluntness of a blogger: Melanchthon skips too many important points; Bucer is too verbose, if not too profound to be understood. Thus, passing over Bullinger altogether, Calvin sets himself up nicely as the *via media* between Melanchthon and Bucer, more comprehensive than the former yet briefer and more lucid than the latter.¹²

Calvin's criticisms also lead directly to what some might regard as his reform of exegesis, namely, the editorial strategy whereby he refused to dilute his continuous exposition of Scripture by intruding *loci communes* – those long and potentially distracting theological discussions that could more conveniently be gathered somewhere else. In Calvin's case, that “somewhere else” was, from 1539 on, his *Institutes of the Christian*

⁹ The consensus of Melanchthon, Bullinger, Bucer, and Calvin on the *scopus* of Romans is noted by Kuropka, “Calvins Römerbriefwidmung,” 154–59, esp. n. 35. I find it curious that Calvin is quite capable of using *scopus* as a technical term, including in Romans, yet he avoids it in these prefaces. One clear instance of such usage is at Rom. 12:6, where Calvin speaks of the *scopus* of Paul's exhortations, but the term has more local than global significance here; see Girardin's reconstruction of the *dispositio* of Calvin's commentary, *Rhétorique et théologique*, 369–87, esp. 383. See also Holder, *Grounding of Interpretation*, 139–80 (and sources noted there); and Parker, previous note.

¹⁰ Muller, “Scimus enim quod lex spiritualis est,” 236.

¹¹ Calvin to Grynaeus, in *Comm. Rom.* (OE 13:4.11–26, CO 10:403–4, CNTC 8:2).

¹² Calvin to Grynaeus, in *Comm. Rom.* (OE 13:4.37–5.8, CO 10:404, CNTC 8:3).

Religion.¹³ But does that mean we should rest here, as if the most we can say about Calvin's "reform" of exegesis was merely this, that he developed a user-friendly filing system, whereby he put his exegesis in a drawer marked "commentaries," and his doctrinal exposition in another, marked "Institutes"? Isn't there more to say about Calvin as a reformer of exegesis?

II. Calvin on Chrysostom and Origen: *How exegesis gets deformed*

There *is* more to say. However tactless we may find Calvin's critiques of Melancthon and Bucer, his criticisms (and his alternative methods) really addressed minor issues, which is how I would categorize the whole discussion of lucid brevity. A more pressing concern, however, is raised by our second topic, namely, not what did Calvin dislike about the *editorial* decisions of Melancthon or Bucer (whom he personally liked very much), but what did Calvin dislike, even *despise*, about virtually the whole state of exegesis prior to the Reformation?

1. Calvin's diagnosis and proposed remedy

The two prefaces I have already mentioned will serve us well once more, because together they underscore both Calvin's diagnosis and his proposed cure. But let me begin by calling attention to still another treatise. Late in 1543, Bucer had urged Calvin to write to the Emperor in anticipation of a conference between Protestants and Catholics to be held in the city of Speyer the following year. Calvin responded with his *Supplex Exhortatio* to Charles V, a fairly long treatise that came to be known in the English-speaking world as *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*. As an alternate title, it's a good one: Calvin defends both his treatise and the Reformation by asserting that the Reformers have done nothing except what the dire state of the church has compelled them to do. In brief, says Calvin, "the Church lies in the greatest peril," in the grips of a necessity that is both public and dire.¹⁴

¹³ Calvin's division of tasks has been noted by several scholars, but see Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 140–58, for a particularly exacting analysis.

¹⁴ Calvin's most poignant diagnosis appears late in the treatise; see "On the Necessity of Reforming the Church" (CO 6:526, CTS-Tracts 1:222). The theme of necessity, however, occurs several times in the opening paragraphs, in such phrases as *publica necessitate* and *summa necessitate* (CO 6:457–59; CTS-Tracts 1:123–26).

What Calvin wrote in this apologetic treatise finds a remarkable parallel and anticipation in the preface to Romans but even more so in his preface to Chrysostom, insofar as Calvin's argument for a reform of *exegesis* follows the same lines as his argument for reforming the *church* – namely, by appealing to necessity. In the preface to Romans, where Calvin has to justify why he would even dream of writing on a book already addressed by the competent and approved commentaries of Melanchthon, Bullinger, and Bucer, Calvin writes with understatement: “When we dissent from our predecessors,” he says, “it shouldn't be from desire for novelty, slander, hatred, or ambition – only *necessity* should compel us, for the sake of doing good.”¹⁵ Calvin's goal is repeated throughout this preface: he has written this commentary only in hopes achieving “some good for the church of God” (– the fact that this same church is on its deathbed, he leaves in silence). But in the preface to Chrysostom, the urgency of his case is on center stage, written with all the anguish he would later employ in his *Supplex Exhortatio* and which he also marshaled in the *Institutes'* Prefatory Epistle to Francis I.

For it was obvious that the people of God had been deprived of the supreme repository of their salvation – with Scripture lying hidden in the libraries of a select few, inaccessible to the general public ... [T]hose who were in a position to observe the state of the world ... twenty years ago remember that, among the vast majority of people, *there was almost nothing remaining of Christ except his name*; any recollection of his *power* which did exist was both rare and scanty. This shocking situation, which is the worst possible, had undoubtedly occurred only because people ... had left the reading of Scripture to the priests and monks.¹⁶

Calvin proceeds to use this stark diagnosis, this angry indictment, in a twofold manner. First, he underscores the sad state of the church, in which neither Christ nor his benefits have been known for a very long time. But he also thereby justifies his own proposal to improve the state of the church by nurturing the reading of Scripture, that “supreme repository” of salvation, and so restore the people of God to a knowledge of Christ and the benefits of the gospel.

Calvin's diagnosis of the church's ills discloses one aspect of how he understands the “main argument” or *scopus* of Scripture: appropriating the benefits of Christ depends directly on appropriating the central message of the Bible. Making Chrysostom's homilies available in French, he thinks, will bolster the knowledge of Scripture among the “humble and unedu-

¹⁵ Calvin to Grynaeus, in *Comm. Rom.* (OE 13:6.2–5, CO 10:405, CNTC 8:4): “sola necessitate coacti, nec aliud quaerentes quam prodesse” (italics mine).

¹⁶ Hazlett, “Preface to Chrysostom,” 140 (italics mine), translating CO 9:831.

cated.”¹⁷ *But why Chrysostom?* If Calvin was not reluctant to critique his friends Melanchthon and Bucer in the preface to Romans, he was even more forthcoming in the preface to Chrysostom, where he bluntly critiqued a dozen fathers of the church whose exegesis ranked far below Chrysostom’s. Some of these patristic writers are set aside because their exegetical works do not survive; Calvin lists here Athanasius, Basil, and Gregory of Nazianzus, as well as Tertullian and Cyprian. But the rest are divided between good and bad: Cyril of Alexandria is good, but second to Chrysostom. Theophylact is somewhat commendable, except Calvin suspects him of stealing his best stuff from Chrysostom. Among Latin exegetes, only Ambrose (surely Ambrosiaster is meant) is praised for coming close to “the plain sense of Scripture,” but he is too laconic. Augustine is a good dogmatician, but his exegesis is “too ingenious.” As for Hilary, Calvin says he lacks lucidity and does not grasp “the mind of the prophet,” thus missing exactly the virtues Calvin prizes most! However, it is Origen who leads Calvin’s list of bad exegesis, for Origen seems to be the pioneer among those who “obscure ... the plain meaning of Scripture with constant allegories” – an indictment Calvin later extends also to Jerome.¹⁸

The contrast between Chrysostom and Origen is deceptive: Calvin regarded Chrysostom as the best of the patristic commentators; it would be hard not to think he saw Origen as the worst. Indeed, though Calvin dismissed Origen with a single line in his preface to Chrysostom, Origen arises over and over in Calvin’s commentaries and *Institutes*, often as the epitome of twisting and distorting the Bible. Yet Calvin’s use of Chrysostom and Origen by no means mirrors his distribution of praise and blame in the preface to Chrysostom. For the balance of this essay, I want to devote only one more paragraph to Chrysostom, whose exegetical significance for Calvin has been studied with intriguing results, but I want to look at Origen in much more detail.

2. Calvin’s mixed opinion of Chrysostom

Calvin’s use of Chrysostom as “an exegetical tutor” has been studied by several scholars and summarized by a few others.¹⁹ There are only two

¹⁷ Hazlett, “Preface to Chrysostom,” 142, where CO 9:833 has “rudibus ac illiteratis.”

¹⁸ All these judgments are packed into in two short paragraphs at CO 9:834–35; cf. Hazlett, “Preface to Chrysostom,” 144–45.

¹⁹ Including R. J. Mooi, *Het kerk- en dogmahistorisch element in de werken van Johannes Calvin* (Wageningen: H. Veenman & Zonen, 1965), 273–80; John Robert Walchenbach, “John Calvin as Biblical Commentator: An Investigation into Calvin’s Use of John Chrysostom as an Exegetical Tutor” (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1974); Alexandre

findings I want to highlight here. First, even though Calvin lavished praise on Chrysostom as the best of the patristic commentators, one who “took great pains everywhere not to deviate in the slightest from the genuine plain meaning of Scripture, and not to indulge in any license of twisting the straightforward sense of the words,”²⁰ Walchenbach found that Chrysostom receives far more criticism than praise in Calvin’s own commentaries, where Calvin also often misrepresents Chrysostom’s views.²¹ Van Oort adds that Calvin can find Chrysostom’s exegetical views “forced” and “absurd.”²² A second remarkable finding emerges from Alexandre Ganoczy and Klaus Müller, who examined Calvin’s handwritten notes in a volume of Chrysostom’s works, only to find that to a large degree, the passages in Chrysostom that Calvin annotated did not receive attention in Calvin’s own works, and the passages that Calvin did cite from Chrysostom elsewhere were not marked up in Calvin’s copy.²³ Thus, from Walchenbach we learn that Calvin was more enamored with what he took to be Chrysostom’s exegetical theory than his actual practice, while Ganoczy and Müller suggest that Calvin’s handwritten notes were more interested in Chrysostom’s moral exhortations than in his actual exegesis.²⁴ What emerges from this mixture of Calvin’s enthusiasm and dissatisfaction, then, is a tension in his theory and practice that complicates our picture of Calvin’s reform of exegesis. If Calvin’s agenda included modeling his exegesis after the virtues he claimed to find in Chrysostom, why does his use of Chrysostom seem to run the other way?

Ganoczy and Klaus Müller, *Calvins handschriftliche Annotationen zu Chrysostomus: Ein Beitrag zur Hermeneutik Calvins* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1981); Johannes van Oort, “John Calvin on the Church Fathers,” in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, ed. Irena Backus (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 2:691–93; Anthony N. S. Lane, “Calvin’s Knowledge of the Greek Fathers,” in *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 67–86; and Irena Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378–1615)* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 101–6.

²⁰ Hazlett, “Preface to Chrysostom,” 145–46. CO 9:835 reads, “Chrysostomi autem nostri haec prima laus est quod ubique illi summo studio fuit a germana scripturae sinceritate ne minimum quidem deflectere, ac nullam sibi licentiam sumere in simplici verborum sensu contorquendo.”

²¹ Walchenbach, “Calvin’s Use of Chrysostom,” 23–35, 167, 183–90, 199.

²² Van Oort, “Calvin and the Church Fathers,” 692.

²³ Ganoczy and Müller, *Calvins handschriftliche Annotationen*, 22.

²⁴ As has been regularly noted, Calvin’s praise for Chrysostom is at odds with his undisguised worries over some of Chrysostom’s dogmatic views, especially his unguarded pronouncements about the freedom of the will, but these aspects do not bear on our present topic.

3. Calvin's mixed opinion of Origen

Calvin's ambivalence toward Chrysostom also forecasts Origen's role in Calvin's exegesis. An electronic search of the *Calvini Opera* indicates that Origen is named approximately 98 times in 76 passages; if the search is restricted to Calvin's commentaries and sermons, there are about twenty passages of interest – recognizing, of course, that such statistics are at the mercy not only of OCR technology but also of the *Corpus Reformatorum's* nineteenth-century compositors, who were occasionally capable of spelling Origen as *Origin*. For this study, I have examined the four most important sources for examining Calvin's appropriation and assessment of Origen's exegesis. Three are commentaries: Origen is mentioned by name four times in Romans, six times in Galatians, and four times in Genesis. The fourth is Calvin's *Institutes*, where five of Calvin's seven named references to Origen stem from the 1539 edition – an edition that would obviously be linked to Calvin's 1540 Romans commentary, as the references themselves bear out.²⁵ In examining just these four documents, we will be assessing roughly two-thirds of Origen's appearances in Calvin's exegetical work.

The overall quest here is to learn something about Calvin's exegetical agenda by studying how he used Origen, who often appears as a foil for Calvin's agenda, if not as a figure of straw. But *how* Calvin used Origen runs hand in hand with the question of whether he read Origen directly, or whether his impression of Origen was obtained secondhand, through the writings of others. Origen was much discussed in the Renaissance. He found a significant advocate in Erasmus. Indeed, both Origen and Erasmus were controversial figures in the Renaissance and the edgy reputation of each surely contributed to the furor that surrounded the other. However, despite the spate of recent interest in the reception of Origen and other church fathers in the Renaissance and Reformation, Calvin's relationship to Origen has not received the attention it deserves.²⁶ The new editions of

²⁵ Calvin's references to Origen in the *Institutes* are considered at nn. 46, 55, and 56, below.

²⁶ Origen and Calvin have together received attention from Mooi, *Het kerk- en dogma-historisch element*, 209–12; van Oort, "Calvin on the Church Fathers," 2:687–88; Lane, *Student of the Church Fathers*, passim; Myung-Jun Ahn, "Calvin's Attitude toward the Fathers and Medieval Interpretation from the Perspective of the Principles of *Brevitas et Facilitas*," in *Calvin in Asian Churches*, vol. 1 (Seoul: Korean Calvin Society, 2002), 66–73; and Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity*, passim 101–18. For general overviews of Origen in this period, see Max Schär, *Das Nachleben des Origenes im Zeitalter des Humanismus* (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1979) and, most recently, Thomas P. Scheck, *Origen and the History of Justification: The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 129–204. There are numerous studies of church fathers in the Reformation, including André Godin's

Calvin's commentaries on Romans and Galatians are of limited help: they direct the reader to plausible sources in Origen for Calvin's references, yet they almost wholly ignore whether Calvin used intermediate sources for his knowledge of Origen.²⁷ Erasmus himself produced an edition of Origen in 1536, the very last of his patristic editions, and one could easily suppose that Calvin drew directly on this edition (if not an earlier one), which contained Origen's best-known works as well as his homilies on Genesis and his commentary on Romans. But Calvin's sparing references to Origen demand closer scrutiny, because while his prefaces imply that he possessed a direct acquaintance with the commentaries of Melanchthon, Bullinger, and Bucer, Calvin never claims to have read Origen firsthand. All three of Calvin's colleagues mention Origen more often and interact in more detail than Calvin did in his 1540 work. Melanchthon's own 1540 commentary named Origen a dozen times, but there are some striking references to Origen in many other places in Melanchthon, such as his *Loci Communes*, his 1529/30 *Dispositio* on Romans, his 1532 commentary on Romans, and his 1539 treatise *On the Authority of the Church and the Writings of the Fathers*.²⁸ Some of these, if not all, were certainly read by Calvin. Similarly, while Bullinger mentions Origen only thirteen times, he occasionally adds precise details of where in Origen a remark is to be found – something Calvin never does in *Romans*.²⁹ Bucer is not to be left out, indeed, far from it: his 1536 commentary on Romans mentions Origen somewhere in the neighborhood of 160 times.

4. Calvin's formal complaint against Origen as an allegorist

I want to look at some specific examples of Calvin's interaction with Origen in a moment, but let me first sketch the main features. Of the

voluminous work, *Érasme lecteur d'Origène* (Geneva: Droz, 1982); and several essays in Backus, *Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, among other special studies of Luther, Melanchthon, Bullinger, and Bucer, some of which will be cited below.

²⁷ Thus, Parker's notes in Calvin's *Comm. Rom.* direct readers only to Origen's own *Comm. Rom.* (OE 13:13.24, 66.15, 111.3, 143.23). Helmut Feld's notes in Calvin's *Comm. Gal.* sometimes suggest direct sources for Origen's views, with no obvious consideration of intermediate sources, while other notes point to parallel discussions among Calvin's opponents (OE 16:6.15, 48.22, 49.20, 74.28, 78.3, 106.11). Like many of the works mentioned in the previous note, the editorial notes in these volumes seem to look at Calvin and Origen "from the top down," i.e., they look for immediate doctrinal contrasts or thematic correlates rather than also puzzling over Calvin's actual exegetical sources. Here, Lane's studies are always the exception.

²⁸ My tally of references to Origen in Melanchthon, Bullinger, and Bucer derive from electronic surveys of digitized editions obtained from the DLCPT and from <http://books.google.com>.

²⁹ See n. 52, below.

twenty or so times that Calvin names Origen in the *Institutes* and these three commentaries, most of the time he is voicing one of two complaints. One complaint rings the changes on Calvin's impatience with what he calls "this game of allegorizing Scripture."

Origen, and many others along with him, have seized this occasion of twisting Scripture this way and that, away from the genuine sense. For they inferred that the literal sense is too meager and poor and that beneath the bark of the letter there lie deeper mysteries which cannot be extracted but by hammering out allegories ... This was undoubtedly a trick of Satan to impair the authority of Scripture and remove any true advantage out of the reading of it.³⁰

These lines from Calvin's commentary on Galatians are part of his most extensive rant against Origen, which goes on to brand all "phony expositions" that "lead us away from the literal sense" as not merely "doubtful," but as a "deadly corruptions."³¹ But the long complaint in Galatians is really just an extension of what Calvin said about Origen in his preface to Chrysostom as well as what he lamented more generically in his preface to Romans, namely, that so many have habitually "turned Scripture this way and that, as if playing a game."³² One need not disagree with Calvin, however, to note that his complaint is itself generic: it is the usual Protestant line about Origen and, to a large degree, about the bulk of patristic and medieval exegesis. One also need not have read Origen himself to have arrived at this opinion.

Calvin's commentaries often follow this pattern, wherein Origen merely furnishes an excuse to rail against allegory as a perversion of exegesis and a dangerous abuse of Scripture. Thus, Calvin's long complaint at Galatians 4 takes issue with nothing specific that Origen does with the allegory of Sarah and Hagar, and the same is the case in Genesis 21, where Calvin basically defers to his complaints in Galatians, which were impassioned but exegetically featureless. It could have been otherwise: Calvin could have specifically objected to Origen's seventh homily on Genesis, where Origen argues that an allegorical reading is demanded because what Paul calls Ishmael's "persecution" of Isaac (in Gal. 4:29) is "historically" absent from Genesis 21. Calvin does defend Paul's statement, but there is no hint that he is targeting Origen. Instead, the views that Calvin goes on to dismiss in

³⁰ Calvin, *Comm. Gal.* 4:22 (OE 16:106.11–23, CNTC 11:84).

³¹ OE 16:107.4–6 (cf. CNTC 11:85): "Fictitias expositiones, quae a literali sensu abducunt, non modo negligamus tanquam dubias, sed fortiter repudiemus tanquam exitiales corruptelas."

³² Calvin to Grynaeus, in *Comm. Rom.* (OE 13:5.33–34, CNTC 8:4): "Proinde affinis sacrilegio audacia est, Scripturas temere huc illuc versare, et quasi in re lusoria lascivire ..." Calvin reuses this image of playing games in similar contexts; see Hansen, "Calvin and Non-Literal Interpretation," 193–94 and passages cited there.

his remarks on Galatians are rather those of Jerome, Chrysostom, and some unnamed rabbis.³³

It is extremely difficult to establish any specific sources for Calvin's contempt of Origen as an allegorist. Not only does Origen make dozens of references to Gal. 4:21–31 as proof that allegorical readings are necessary and not optional,³⁴ even where Calvin includes some exegetical detail alongside his criticism of Origen, it is difficult to establish that he read Origen directly. For example, in Genesis, Calvin objects to the way Origen allegorizes both the Garden and Noah's ark, but his remarks on the first text closely echo those of Luther, whom Calvin regularly (if tacitly) consulted on Genesis.³⁵ The second text, on Noah's ark, also raises some suspicions. It stands next to two perfectly specific citations of Augustine, to book 15 of *The City of God* and book 12 of *Against Faustus*, over against which Calvin's mention of Origen can only look vague and imprecise. Was Calvin prompted by Augustine? This is one possibility, made further plausible by Calvin's explicit approval, only a page earlier, of the notion that the "cubits" mentioned in Genesis 6 were actually "geometric" cubits – an interpretation that Calvin credits to Origen *as attested by Augustine*, again, in book 15 of *The City of God*. Calvin's tandem approval of Augustine (directly) and Origen (via Augustine) on the question of geometric cubits leads us to wonder if there is a similar dependency on the next page, when Calvin excoriates Augustine (with bibliographical precision) and Origen (without precision) for their readings of the ark as Christ's body, an allegory that Calvin finds simply too detailed to be

³³ Calvin's series of criticisms is distributed throughout the passage. Origen is criticized at Gal. 4:22; Jerome and Chrysostom, at Gal. 4:25; "some Jews," at Gal. 4:29. See also Origen, *Hom. Gen.* §7.3.

³⁴ According to *Biblia Patristica* 3:420, plausible sources for Origen's reading of Galatians 4 include not only his *Comm. Gen.* and *On First Principles* (e.g., 4.2.6), but also his *Contra Celsum* and his *Comm. Rom.*

³⁵ Both Luther and Calvin explain Origen's exegesis of the Garden by insisting that he and his followers took recourse to allegory because they could find no literal place that corresponded to Eden. Luther writes, "Ineptus igitur est Origenes et Hieronymus cum aliis Allegoristis. Quia enim Paradisum non amplius in terra inveniunt, putant aliam sententiam querendam esse" (*Comm. Gen.* 2:8, WA 42:69.16–18). Compare Calvin: "Allegoriae autem Origenis et similium prorsus repudiandae sunt ... Fieri quidem potest ut quidam necessitate coacti ad sensum allegoricum confugerint: quia nusquam in mundo reperiebant locum qualis describitur a Mose: sed plurimos videmus, stulta argutiarum affectatione, nimium fuisse allegoriis deditos" (*Comm. Gen.* 2:8, CO 23:37). Luther's shadowy presence in Calvin's commentary on Genesis has been well argued by Anthony N. S. Lane, "The Sources of the Citations in Calvin's Genesis Commentary, in *Student of the Church Fathers*, 205–59. In this instance, I think the text from Luther cited above is a closer parallel to Calvin's text than WA 42:69.74 (identified by Lane, p. 246). To be sure, Luther's knowledge of Origen may also have been indirect, via excerpts or summaries in Lyra's *Postilla*.

believed. But Calvin might also have been prompted at this point by Luther, who (unlike Calvin) liked this allegory of the ark and who also credited Augustine's *Against Faustus*, though without specifying the book.³⁶

A final example of Calvin's vague or indirect use of Origen to address the evils of allegory arises at Rom. 7:14, where Paul writes that "We know that the law is spiritual." Calvin's agenda here is much the same as at 2 Cor. 3:6, where Paul says that "the letter kills, but the spirit gives life." Both of these are texts that Origen repeatedly invoked to justify allegorical exegesis, and in both places, Calvin pauses to issue a fairly generic warning against imitating Origen. Here is what Calvin says – *all* of what he says – at Rom. 7:14:

The interpretation of Origen, although it was formerly approved by many, is not worth refuting. He says that the law is called spiritual by Paul, because the Scripture is not to be understood in a literal sense. What has this to do with the present subject?³⁷

Two things are striking about this terse reference to Origen. First, while one might expect that Calvin would simply have read Origen's own commentary on Romans (as Parker suggests in his editorial note), it is curious that Calvin has not quite caught the gist of what Origen actually says in his commentary at this verse.³⁸ Calvin seems to have generalized to his usual case against Origen's contempt for the literal exegesis of Scripture, a point Origen often makes, but not quite here, where Origen's focus is narrower, emphasizing how Christians have a spiritual understanding of the law of Moses. Calvin's emphasis seems strongly seasoned, instead, by what he surely found in Melanchthon in several places, and this is a second point to note. Granting that Calvin could not have read Melanchthon's 1540 commentary on Romans prior to publishing his own Romans commentary in 1540, Melanchthon wrote expansively on Origen's errors at Rom. 7:14 in at least three earlier works known to Calvin. One of these is Melanchthon's 1530 *Dispositio* on Romans, where he reports how Origen "ridiculously" explains "the law is spiritual" as if Paul meant to say the law is *allegorical*.³⁹ Another is the work Calvin must have been

³⁶ Calvin, *Comm. Gen.* 6:14 (CO 23:123); Luther, *Comm. Gen.* 6:16, 9:12–16 (WA 42:310, 371; LW 2:68, 156).

³⁷ Calvin, *Comm. Rom.* 7:14 (OE 13:143.28–32, CNTC 8:147): "Illa autem Origenis expositio, quae tamen ante hoc tempus multis arrisit, indigna est quae refutetur. Legem spiritualem a Paulo vocatam dicit, quia non sit literaliter intelligenda scriptura. Quid istud ad causam praesentem?"

³⁸ Origen, *Comm. Rom.* 6.9.3 (PG 14:1085, FC 104:37). *Biblia Patristica* 3:365–66 finds over seventy allusions to Rom. 7:14 in Origen's surviving works and fragments.

³⁹ Melanchthon, *Dispositio orationis in Epist. Pauli ad Romanos* (CR 15:465). According to Kuropka, the *Dispositio* was published in 1529 and again in 1530, but the first edition

describing in his letter to Grynaeus, Melanchthon's 1532 commentary, which dismisses Origen's allegorical account of Rom. 7:14 as one of his foolish conjectures (*illas ineptias Origenis missas*).⁴⁰ Yet a third source for Calvin may have been Melanchthon's treatise *On the Authority of the Church and the Writings of the Fathers*, which appeared in June of 1539, when Calvin was still polishing off his own commentary on Romans, and which Calvin himself commended to Farel in a letter later that autumn. There, too, Melanchthon faults Origen for allegorizing Rom. 7:14.⁴¹ In brief, it seems far more likely that Calvin's criticism of Origen on this passage represents an echo of Melanchthon than any original or fresh reading of Origen himself.⁴²

5. Calvin's material complaint against Origen's theology

Earlier I stated that most of Calvin's references to Origen cluster around two complaints. We have been looking at the first, where Calvin condemns the *form* of Origen's exegesis, that is, his penchant for allegory. We now turn to Calvin's second complaint, which finds fault with the *substance* of Origen's theology as it emerges from his faulty exegesis. One of the central Protestant convictions about the epistle to the Romans and the Pauline doctrine of justification was that God's grace, received by faith alone, frees us from having to do what no one could do, namely, fulfill the works that the law requires. Protestant exegesis vigorously rejected what its Roman

extended only through Rom. 5:11, and the edition printed in CR 15 reproduces a reprint of 1539; see "Calvins Römerbriefwidmung," 150 nn. 5, 9.

⁴⁰ Melanchthon, *Comm. Rom. 7:14* (MSA 5:223.10–28). Melanchthon also discusses Origen's allegorical misreading of Rom. 7:14 in conjunction with his exposition of Rom. 2:29 (MSA 5:89.18–90.4).

⁴¹ That Melanchthon's *De ecclesia autoritate et de veterum scriptis libellus* (MSA 1:323–86, title corrected per MBW T8:460) was published by 24 June 1539 is attested by the date of his personal letter to Albrecht of Preussen, to whom the treatise was dedicated; see MBW 2227, 2228. Calvin commended the treatise to Farel in a letter dated 20 Nov 1539 (CO 10/2:432, #197; Bonnet 1:167), so it is not possible to know if Calvin used it in the late revisions of his own Romans commentary or only shortly thereafter. Melanchthon inserted a revision of the treatise into in his revised Romans commentary of the following year, and there are further echoes of Melanchthon to be heard in the final edition of Calvin's Romans commentary of 1556. My thanks to Timothy Wengert for calling my attention to these pieces of correspondence.

⁴² There is, of course, one more passage in Calvin's commentaries where he takes aim at Origen and allegorical exegesis, and that is 2 Cor. 3:6, where Paul famously writes that "the letter kills, but the spirit brings life." Although the text is not without interest, Calvin dismisses Origen in passing, with but a single hostile sentence (CO 50:39). His treatment of Origen here is therefore as generic as at Galatians 4, but vastly shorter.

Catholic opponents argued, namely, that justifying faith frees us from the ceremonial law, but not from the *moral* law.

Melanchthon's repeated comments on Romans once again provide a convenient bridge between Calvin and Origen, precisely because Melanchthon does two things at once: he argues against reading "works of the law" as pertaining only to the ceremonial law and he frequently names Origen and Jerome as perpetrating this exegetical error – and he does these two things in ways and places that anticipate where and how Calvin will follow suit. Perhaps the most prominent passage where Calvin would have witnessed the vigor of Melanchthon's argument against Origen's interpretation of the works of the law is in the *argumentum* of Melanchthon's 1532 Romans commentary, almost on the first page:

Mercy is opposed to what is owed to or earned not just by ceremonies but also by works of morality. So when [Paul] disputes about things like these – the remission of sins, justification, certitude of conscience – it is easy to see that this does not come to pass chiefly or exclusively for the sake of freeing us from Jewish rites. Origen, however, was mistaken here.⁴³

Of course, Melanchthon's campaign against Origen had begun long before 1532 and targeted not only the legacy of Origen but also Origen's living advocates, Erasmus above all.⁴⁴ Whether Calvin appreciated the threat represented by Erasmus, however, is hard to judge from his brief remarks in 1540. But Melanchthon's warnings about Origen do find some resonance in Calvin's commentary, at least where Calvin bothers to mention Origen. The alleged exegetical error by which Origen argued that faith frees us merely from the ceremonial "works of the law" is the focus of a critical aside on Origen in Calvin's Romans commentary, as well as in an extended comment in the 1539 *Institutes* (at 3.11.19), and the topic dominates four or five of the six references to Origen in Calvin's 1548 commentary on Galatians.⁴⁵ Indeed, most other mentions of Origen in the

⁴³ Melanchthon, *argumentum* to *Comm. Rom.* (MSA 5:31.5–11): "Opponitur autem misericordia debito ac dignitati non tantum ceremoniarum, sed etiam moralium operum. Cum itaque de rebus tantis, de remissione peccatorum, de iustificatione, de certitudine conscientiae disputet, facile intelligi potest non hoc praecipue aut solum agi, ut liberemur Iudaicis ritibus. Sed hoc fefellit Origenem."

⁴⁴ See Timothy J. Wengert, *Human Freedom, Christian Righteousness: Philip Melanchthon's Exegetical Dispute with Erasmus of Rotterdam* (New York: Oxford, 1998), who amply documents how the question of the ceremonial works of the law is central for Melanchthon, especially throughout the 1520s.

⁴⁵ The indirectness of Calvin's knowledge of Origen in his *Comm. Gal.* is suggested by his early criticism of those who rely on "the commentaries of Origen and Jerome" – a problematic reference, because although Jerome mentions using Origen's five-book commentary, by Calvin's day it had long been lost, as it remains today. Calvin must have

1539 *Institutes* are closely tied to this central theme of justification by faith and the workings of grace with respect to human willing – variations that are nearly always worked out in dialogue with the epistle to the Romans.⁴⁶ This, too, is not surprising, since all these are elements of what Melancthon had called the *scopus* and Calvin the *argumentum* or “main question” of the epistle to the Romans, itself the doorway to all of Scripture.

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that Calvin's reading of Melancthon accounts for every passage where Origen's theology is at play in Romans, for Calvin seems to evince the influences of Erasmus and Bucer on Romans, too. Thus, both Erasmus and Bucer had their say about Origen and the ceremonial works of the law long before Calvin addressed the matter.⁴⁷ Both writers also may lie behind Calvin's terse dismissal of Origen at Romans 5, where Calvin frets over Origen's “dangerous wanderings” regarding original sin, whereby he seems to regard Adam and Christ as mere examples for our imitation.⁴⁸ Calvin could have found

been “reading” Origen as if he were the ghost writer behind Jerome's commentary. Significantly, four of Calvin's six mentions of Origen also immediately mention Jerome, and all of these address the controversy over the place of the ceremonial law. See Calvin's *Comm. Gal. arg.*, 2:15 *bis*, 3:17 (OE 16: 6.15, 48.22, 49.20, 74.28). For Jerome's acknowledgment of his own use of Origen, see the prologue to his *Comm. Gal.* (PL 26:308).

⁴⁶ Calvin added five references to Origen in 1539: at 2.2.4 (on free will), 2.2.27 and 2.5.17 (on whether we can prepare for grace), 3.11.19 (on the works of the law), and 3.22.8 (on whether God gives grace according to foreknown merit). All but the first of these references occur in the context of multiple quotations from Romans 3, 4, 5, 7, and 9, and even the first is on a topic not far removed. The same could be said of the remaining reference to Origen in Calvin's *Comm. Gal.* (i.e., besides the critique of Origen's allegoresis at 4:22, addressed earlier). At Gal. 3:17 (OE 16:78.3), Calvin's rejection of Origen is extremely concise, but the remark follows his review of all the texts from Romans 3, 5, and 7 in which the identity of the law as the *moral* law is made clear – the very same places where he has contested the views of Origen.

⁴⁷ Bucer mentions the controversy over the ceremonial law and the views of Origen and several other fathers in a section entitled “Paul on ‘law’ and ‘works of the law,’” in *Comm. Rom.*, Preface §10, 22–27, esp. p. 26. Erasmus explains “works of the law” in terms of ceremonies (=Origen's view, as well as that of Ambrosiaster and Pelagius [pseudo-Jerome]) in many places, but the correlation with Origen is not always easy to track. John B. Payne identifies some of Erasmus' key dependencies on Origen in “Erasmus: Interpreter of Romans,” *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies* 2 (1971): 1–35, esp. 16–20; but he also shows how Erasmus toned down some of his Origenistic emphases on this topic in “The Significance of the Lutheranizing Changes in Erasmus' Interpretation of Paul's Letters to the Romans and the Galatians in his *Annotationes* (1527) and *Paraphrases* (1532),” in *Histoire de l'exégèse au XVIe siècle*, ed. Olivier Fatio and Pierre Fraenkel (Geneva: Droz, 1978), 312–30, esp. 317. Note, too, that there was controversy between Erasmus and Luther over the ceremonial works of the law as early as 1516, well before Melancthon entered the fray; see Payne, “Erasmus: Interpreter of Romans,” 35.

⁴⁸ Calvin, *Comm. Rom.* 5:14 (OE 13:111.3, citing here the 1540 text): “ne cum Origene pernitiōse hallucineris.”

Origen's views, including some verbatim quotations, in Bucer's 1536 commentary.⁴⁹ Calvin also could have gleaned details about Origen from Erasmus, who annotated this passage at great length.⁵⁰ In any case, Calvin's revisions in 1556 prove that he had certainly read or reread Erasmus by then, for he pronounced Erasmus's defense of Origen even less excusable than Origen's original error.⁵¹

This second set of Calvin's citations of Origen – those that document Calvin's disagreement with the substance of Origen's actual exegesis and doctrinal conclusions – prompts two or three observations:

First, from the standpoint of exegesis and doctrine, Origen was of extended interest to Calvin on one main theological topic: *justification*, together with the closely related topics of faith and works, grace and free will. In other words, based on this sampling of texts, whenever Calvin felt constrained to comment on the doctrinal implications of Origen's exegesis, most of the time his impulse was to warn his readers away from Origen as having failed to grasp the very heart of the gospel, the "principal argument" of Romans as well as of the Bible.

Second, based on these same passages, it is once again hard to believe that Calvin's reading of Origen was new or fresh, much less part of any immediate preparation for lecturing or writing. Most of what Calvin says amounts to generalization, possibly quoting Origen from memory but more plausibly derived from or prompted by the Romans commentaries that Calvin himself credits – Melancthon and Bucer, along with Erasmus. Bullinger, by contrast, contributed little to Calvin's knowledge or use of Origen, despite his inclusion of a few verbatim quotations from Origen's commentary on Romans.⁵²

⁴⁹ Bucer, *Comm. Rom.* (pp. 298–301). While Calvin may have drawn details from Bucer, Calvin's hostility to Origen stands in some contrast to Bucer. As others have noted, Bucer consistently minimizes disagreements among all the church fathers, even Origen; see Irena Backus, "Martin Bucer and the Patristic Tradition," in *Martin Bucer and Sixteenth Century Europe*, ed. Christian Krieger and Marc Lienhard (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1993), 1:55–69.

⁵⁰ For Erasmus on Rom. 5:12, see *Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament: Acts, Romans, I and II Corinthians*, ed. Anne Reeve and M. A. Screech (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 366–73; translated in *CWE* 56:139–61.

⁵¹ Calvin, *Comm. Rom.* 5:14 (OE 13:111.3, 1556 additions are italicized): "Observa autem non vocari Adamum, peccati figuram, Christum iustitiae, (*ac si tantum exemplo suo nobis praeirent*), sed alterum cum altero conferri; ne cum Origene perperam hallucineris, et quidem pernicioso errore. Nam et philosophice profaneque disputat de humani generis corruptelis, et gratiam Christi non modo enervat, sed totam fere delet. Quo minus excusabilis est Erasmus, qui in excusando tam crasso delirio nimium laborat." The reference to Origen's "philosophizing" also recalls the excursus (*De autoritate...*) Melancthon added to his own *Comm. Rom.* in 1540, but see n. 41 above.

⁵² Of the thirteen appearances of Origen's name in eleven discrete passages of Bullinger's commentary, Calvin shares Bullinger's interest in Origen only once, at most. That

There is, however, a third observation to register here, if only to recognize that there are indeed a few texts where Calvin mentions Origen without any special prejudice, and (once!) even with precision. In our present selection, which focuses on Calvin's commentaries and *Institutes*, there are four instances that all function like proof-texts – the briefest of mention for the sake of attesting a historical point of exegesis or theology. These four are as follows:

– As noted earlier, in *Comm. Gen.* 6:14, Calvin invoked Origen's notion of the geometric cubit to explain the dimensions of Noah's ark – a reference that Calvin also locates in Augustine with bibliographical precision.⁵³

– Calvin concisely credits Origen in his *Comm. Rom.* 1:1 for explaining why Paul was also called Saul. Calvin could have drawn this argument from Origen's commentary on Romans, but he probably ran across it first in Bucer's commentary if not in Erasmus.⁵⁴

– In *Institutes* 4.2.2, Origen appears next to Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Augustine as witnesses called by Calvin's opponents to defend the Roman Catholic understanding of episcopal succession. This is the only reference to Origen added after 1539, and the editors of the *Opera Selecta* attribute it not to Origen directly but to John Fisher's 1523 *Confutation of the Lutherans' Assertions*. Whether Fisher is the real source for Calvin's citation of writers is open to doubt, but it remains plausible that such a

passage is Bullinger's longest verbatim excerpt from Origen's commentary – a passage where Bullinger cites Origen favorably, as teaching that “a person may be justified by faith alone without works,” as attested by Jesus's words to the thief on the cross. The quotation, however, is less than true to Origen, owing to some strategic omissions; see Bullinger, *Comm. Rom.* 3:28, pp. 26–27, where he excerpts and credits Origen's *Comm. Rom.* 3.9.3–8 (PG 14:952–54). Everywhere else in Bullinger's commentary, Origen is just another source of exegetical information, mostly of minor significance. Of course, Bullinger may have influenced Calvin's commentary at a more theoretical level; see Büsser, “Bullinger as Calvin's Model,” 72–78.

⁵³ See n. 36, above.

⁵⁴ Although the *Annotations* of Erasmus do not mention Origen here, the *Paraphrase* does, but Calvin's larger paragraph seems indebted to other details from the *Annotations*. Calvin's wording here, “Probabilior Origenis sententia, qui binomium fuisse iudicat,” is redolent of Bucer (“fuerit binominis, Saul, & Paulus vocatus, quod Origeni videtur”) but even more of Erasmus (“Sunt rursus qui putant illum fuisse binominem: id quod mea sententia uero propius est”). See Calvin, *Comm. Rom.* 1:1 (OE 13:13.24); Origen, preface to *Comm. Rom.* (PG 14:837); Bucer, *Comm. Rom.* 1:1 (p. 5); Erasmus, *Ann. Rom.* 1:1 (p. 334, CWE 56:3) and *Tomus secundus paraphraseon*, argument (sig. aa 3^v, CWE 42:6 [LB 7:773–74]).

“collective” reference is the sort of thing Calvin might well have drawn from a polemical sourcebook.⁵⁵

– In *Institutes* 2.8.12, Origen is a witness, along with Augustine, that the early church listed four commands in the First Table of the Decalogue and six in the Second. Once again, Augustine is cited with bibliographical precision while Origen is not, which might suggest that Calvin read Augustine firsthand but was citing Origen from memory or from an intermediate source. Or maybe not: Origen describes his division of the Decalogue in his eighth homily on Exodus. Amazingly, there is a scrap of opinion to be found among Calvin’s *Consilia*, that collection of short and often undated writings from Calvin, in which he cites Origen’s twofold definition of worship and provides not only an exact reference to this same homily, but also a distinctive, if only two-word, quotation from Origen. So it would be hazardous to conclude that Calvin never read Origen directly, even if it usually looks that way.⁵⁶

These last two references from Calvin’s *Institutes* and his *Consilia* – one vague, the other quite precise – set the stage nicely for concluding this survey. After looking closely at the majority of Calvin’s references to Origen,⁵⁷ I do not intend to argue that Calvin never read Origen directly,

⁵⁵ Fisher’s work is suggested at OS 5:32 n.1. The 1523 edition was not available to me, but my electronic search of the 1597 edition (via the DLCR database) turned up no discussion of episcopal succession where all four authors are listed. Indeed, Fisher certainly knows Irenaeus on this topic but does not seem to mention him in his *Assertionis Lutheranae Confutatio* – a work and author we have no reason to think Calvin ever consulted. Nonetheless, there were many such anti-Protestant handbooks, and it remains, as van Oort concludes, that Calvin’s use of the church fathers was itself “primarily, though not exclusively, polemical” (“Calvin and the Church Fathers,” 2:671). See also Lane, *Student of the Church Fathers*, 230.

⁵⁶ Origen explains his division of the Decalogue at *Hom. Exod.* §8.3. In his *Consilia* (CO 10:195), Calvin cites “Origen on Exodus 20, eighth homily” (§8.4, PG 12:154d), then goes on also to identify Origen’s *Comm. Rom.* 1 as another source for Origen’s twofold understanding of worship as both internal and external. The CO editors report that the ms. is inscribed “Pour envoyer à M. de Beze” but dated only February 6; they conjecture the year as 1562.

⁵⁷ While an electronic search of the entire *Calvini Opera Database* (searching for *origen**, fuzziness set at zero) produces 77 hits, that number must be refined in order to eliminate references to Origen that are spurious or not from Calvin’s own writings. By my count, there are 57 relevant instances, corresponding to 46 discrete passages. Of these 46, I found 7 in the *Institutes*, 17 in Calvin’s treatises, 20 in his exegesis, and 1 in the *Annales*. The main item of interest not addressed in the present study is Calvin’s 1543 treatise against Pighius, with five passages of interest. However, Lane concludes that Calvin’s citations of Origen in this treatise were probably derived from the work of Pighius that he was refuting; see “Calvin and the Fathers in His Bondage and Liberation of the Will,” in *Student of the Church Fathers*, 172, 177.

or that he never had Origen's *Opera Omnia* open before him as he wrote. Instead, what I want to stress, for the sake of understanding Calvin's reform of exegesis, is that however deeply Calvin may have read Origen, his actual *use* of Origen (both positively and negatively) in his own exegesis almost never *required* direct knowledge of or direct access to Origen's works.⁵⁸ Most of Calvin's use of Origen – that *bête noir* of Protestant exegesis – consisted of citing and recycling generalities if not stereotypes about the Alexandrian father, often on topics and at places where Calvin was likely prompted, if not tutored, by Melanchthon, Bucer, and Erasmus.

III. Calvin's affinity with Origen:

When Scripture's argumentum transcends its letter

If our interest were solely with Calvin's use of Origen, we might stop now. But to understand Calvin's reform of exegesis, there is one more aspect of his relationship to Origen that must be considered.

Unlike Luther, Calvin was never trained in the classic exegetical *quadriga*, the fourfold rule that found in Scripture not only a historical or literal sense, but also three spiritual senses: moral, allegorical, and anagogical. With good reason, we usually think of Calvin as interested simply in the literal sense, the plain meaning, and so on. Indeed, it is striking to examine Calvin's vocabulary – how he customarily describes the exegetical sense or meaning that he is looking for. It is true that Calvin often identifies the "letter" or "the literal sense" as the location of the real and genuine meaning of the Bible, but he just as often uses terminology that is anything but technical, whether the traditional *allegory* and *anagogy* he repudiated

⁵⁸ It must be noted, of course, that there were times in Calvin's life when he would have been unable to read Origen directly. Jean-François Gilmont calls attention to Calvin's complaint against Pighius, who chided Calvin for not citing Chrysostom or Jerome on the topic of free will, at a time when Calvin claimed to have had access only to a borrowed volume of Augustine. Moreover, while Calvin actually inherited a set of Origen's works from Olivetan, these books, like much of what Calvin originally took to Geneva, were apparently sold; see *John Calvin and the Printed Book* (Kirksville, Mo.: Truman State University Press, 2005) 135–38. Still, Calvin was known for his impressive recall of what he read, as at the Lausanne Disputation in 1536 (details in van Oort, "Calvin and the Church Fathers," 672–73), though it is hard to gauge his specific knowledge of Origen from these accounts. Lane states that "Calvin's use of Origen prior to 1543 was not excessive, but wide enough to suggest that Calvin had read his works" (*Student of the Church Fathers*, 164). Scheck, on the other hand, describes Calvin's knowledge of Origen as "dilettantish" (*Origen and the History of Justification*, 5). The truth probably lies between these two views.

in Origen or the rhetorical terms he favored especially in his commentary on Romans.

If we examine some of the passages where Origen is criticized, we can see Calvin make use of both vocabularies – one somewhat precise and traditional, the other less so. So, at Gen. 2:8, Calvin attacks Origen and those like him who believe that Eden was an allegory rather than a literal garden, and he uses those exact terms: many have been “far too devoted to allegories,” a vain and pointless pursuit that Calvin goes on to describe as “philosophizing beyond the letter.”⁵⁹ But Calvin can also contrast the allegories of Origen to “the natural treatment” of the biblical narrative,⁶⁰ or to Scripture’s “simplicity.”⁶¹ Calvin has no shortage of synonyms here. For him, the true meaning of the Bible lies in its letter, but also in an exegesis that is simple, natural, and genuine, as well as certain, firm, and profitable. Such exegesis stands in contrast not only to purely allegorical readings, but to everything else that misses the “pure understanding” of Scripture, including ambiguous and uncertain interpretations; a foolish preoccupation with cleverness; cold and barren understandings; twisted or tortured explanations, some of which are even delirious; and all the false glosses and other tricks of Satan that render the Bible useless to us.⁶² With this rich non-technical vocabulary, Calvin projects his conviction that reading the Bible is not truly difficult but only a matter of common sense⁶³ – provided, of course, that one seeks the intention of Scripture with a pious mind.

Even as Calvin’s pronouncements about good exegesis usually included a principled rejection of Origen’s exegetical practice, so might one expect that his own exegesis would avoid allegory, whether identified as such or not. On the other hand, while *sola scriptura* is commonly identified as *the*

⁵⁹ Calvin, *Comm. Gen.* 2:8 (CO 23:37): “sed plurimos videmus, stulta argutiarum affectatione, nimium fuisse allegoriis deditos. Quantum ad praesentem locum attinet, frustra et importune extra literam philosophantur.”

⁶⁰ Calvin, *Comm. Gen.* 6:14 (CO 23:123): “Origenes etiam audacius allegoriis ludit: sed nihil utilius est quam in genuina rerum tractatione insistere.”

⁶¹ Calvin, *Comm. Gen.* 21:12 (CO 23:302): “Origenes, dum ubique allegorias venatur, totam scripturam corrumpit: et alii nimis cupide eius exemplum aemulando fumum ex luce dederunt. Nec modo vitiata fuit scripturae simplicitas, sed fides paene labefactata fuit, multisque deliriis aperta ianua.”

⁶² This list derives from four of the passages examined above, including Calvin’s *Comm. Gen.* 2:8, 6:14, 21:12 (CO 23:37, 123, 302) and *Comm. Gal.* 3:22 (OE 16:106–7). Cf. Randall C. Zachman, “Calvin as Commentator on Genesis,” in *Calvin and the Bible*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 21.

⁶³ Calvin often invokes common sense as a criterion, but one that can also require some refining; cf. *Comm. Gen.* 1:6, 16 (CO 23:18, 22), where Calvin affirms common sense in various ways but ends by insisting that Scripture accommodates the ignorant and uneducated.

Protestant principle of exegesis, we have lately come to appreciate the complexity of early Protestant doctrines of Scripture and tradition, as well as what constitutes supposedly literal exegesis. Thus, even though Luther could mock his former skill as an allegorist, the older Luther by no means forsook allegory: one surprise in his lectures on Genesis is a long excursus at the end of the flood narrative, entitled “Concerning Allegories,” in which he warns his students against the “merely moral and philosophical” allegories of Erasmus and Origen and urges them instead to seek allegories that are truly “theological.”⁶⁴ Likewise, Bullinger’s 1528 manuscript, the *Ratio studiorum* (which itself anticipated much of what Calvin would say in his preface to Romans), features a brief chapter on allegories. After warning that allegorical exegesis is not for beginners, Bullinger offers his readers three rules for aspiring allegorists.⁶⁵

What about Calvin? It is true that Calvin generally keeps his distance from allegory, and he never urges his students or readers to practice the art of allegory. But there is more to the story. Calvin was deeply concerned for the practical side of Scripture, for those “benefits of Christ” that he spoke of, and to this end he always looked for applications, analogies, and other bridges from the Bible to us, continuities between the people of God of the past and the people of God of the present. It is precisely Calvin’s passion for application that leads him to make some possibly surprising exegetical moves in the course of expounding the supposed letter of Scripture.

⁶⁴ Luther, *Comm. Gen.* 9 (WA 42:372.24–29, LW 2:158). The excursus ends with what could be taken as an emphasis on the *scopus* of Scripture: “I urge you with all possible earnestness to be careful to pay attention to the historical accounts. But wherever you want to make use of allegories, do this: follow closely the analogy of the faith, that is, adapt them to Christ, the church, faith, and the ministry of the Word. In this way it will come to pass that even though the allegories may not be altogether fitting, they nevertheless do not depart from the faith. Let this foundation stand firm, but let the stubble perish” (LW 2:164).

⁶⁵ Bullinger’s *Ratio studiorum* (Zürich, 1594), 37^v–38^v. The apparent incongruity of allegory in Bullinger’s hermeneutics is briefly discussed by Peter Stotz in his commentary on his critical edition of this work, *Studiorum Ratio – Studienanleitung* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1987), 1/2:227, cf. 1/1:90–93. Many of Calvin’s later judgments about exegetical “best practices” agree with what Bullinger said in this ms., as Parker summarizes in *Commentaries on Romans*, 18–20. Bucer, too, advocates this rhetorical approach to exegesis, though he rejected allegory more strongly than Bullinger; see §6 of his 1531 ms., *Quomodo S. Literae pro Concionibus tractandae sint Instruction*, in Paul Scherding and François Wendel, “Un traité d’exégèse pratique de Bucer,” *Revue d’Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 26 (1946): 54–61. Several parallel themes in Bucer are described by David F. Wright, “Bucer, Martin,” in *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 157–64. Irena Backus’s description of Bucer’s attitudes toward Origen and allegory could largely apply to Calvin; see “Martin Bucer and the Patristic Tradition,” 61.

Some of these surprises emerge from the midst of Calvin's harshest indictment of Origen, in his *Comm. Gal.* 4:22. Right after Calvin's repudiation of Origen's approach to exegesis and his plea that we cling to the "true sense of Scripture," which is "natural and simple," Calvin returns to consider what Paul meant by using the word *allegory* in Galatians 4.

Paul certainly does not mean that Moses wrote already planning to turn the narrative [in Genesis] into an *allegory*. Rather, he is telling how that story fits the present case, namely, if we pay attention to the image of the church that is sketched for us there in a *figure*. Nor is an *anagogy* of this sort foreign to *the genuine sense of the letter*, for there is a *likeness* to be drawn from the family of Abraham to the church. Just as the household of Abraham was the true church at that time, so there can hardly be any doubt that the main and most memorable events that happened in it are all *types* for us. Just as there was an *allegory* in circumcision, in the sacrifices, and in the whole Levitical priesthood, even as there is today in our sacraments, so it was also in Abraham's household. But that does not mean [Paul] has let go of *the literal sense*.⁶⁶

To be sure, the allegory of Galatians 4 was a problem for anyone who advocated the primacy of the literal sense of Scripture, but there is at least a trace of irony in Calvin's quickness to identify all the major continuities between the Old Testament and the New not merely as *allegory*, but even as *anagogy* – two terms Origen often used, including in Book 4 of *On First Principles*, where Origen takes at least a passing notice of Sarah and Hagar.⁶⁷

Calvin's comments at Galatians 4 demonstrate that while he dislikes Origen, he is by no means afraid of these traditional terms – nor of the sort of exegesis, rightly practiced, that these terms can represent. The pattern of Calvin's usage is itself informative. He mentions *anagogy* in 48 passages, almost all in his commentaries and almost always with approval, and it is clear that there is nothing pejorative about anagogy for Calvin.⁶⁸ Sometimes Calvin calls upon anagogy to explain difficult texts, which is how he argues that God's curse on the serpent extended also to the devil.⁶⁹ Most of the time, the term describes how various features of the Old Testament

⁶⁶ Calvin, *Comm. Gal.* 4:22 (OE 16:107.7–18; cf. CNTC 11:85); italics mine.

⁶⁷ Origen, *On First Principles* 4.2.6, 4.3.6 (PG 11:369–70, 387–88). Naturally, Calvin may have been hard pressed to find references to the Greek term *anagogy* if he only took recourse to Origen in a Latin translation.

⁶⁸ T. H. L. Parker justly observes that anagogy, for Calvin, is "not the *anagogē* of the 'four senses'," but rather "an application ... demanded by the letter of the text" (*Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986], 72). However, the same could also be said of Origen, for whom *anagogē* only sometimes designated a special spiritual sense, as opposed to its usual meaning rooted in an ordinary verb meaning "to lead." A comparison between Origen and Calvin is best conducted by comparing actual instances of their respective exegesis.

⁶⁹ Calvin, *Comm. Gen.* 3:15 (CO 23:70).

harbor spiritual or practical (as opposed to historical) lessons about Christ or the church today.⁷⁰ Thus, the Levitical priesthood, anagogically understood, tells us also about the pastorate in our own day.⁷¹ Hezekiah was so just and faithful that Calvin cannot but be reminded of Christ himself: not that there is an *allegory* here (Calvin insists!), but anyone who studies Hezekiah with care will be led, anagogically, to the Christ whose image the good king bears.⁷² The sacraments are implicated, too: circumcision anagogically leads to infant baptism, even as there is an anagogical relationship between Old Testament sacrifices and the death of Christ – though Calvin repudiates “that preposterous anagogy” between those same sacrifices and the papal mass.⁷³ In all these instances, however much Calvin stresses that he is not adding anything at odds with the simple and genuine sense of Scripture, Calvin is obviously aware, much of the time at least, that he is in fact *adding* something.⁷⁴

Calvin's use of the term *allegory* is more complex. Not only does he mention allegory in nearly 250 passages, his disposition towards it is surprisingly varied. We have already seen in Galatians 4 that Calvin can criticize Origen's allegories only to turn around and herald other allegories that he finds embedded in the Bible. *Allegory* well describes the parables of Jesus, which Calvin naturally approves, but Jesus also speaks allegorically when he dares his opponents to “destroy this temple” (namely, his body) and when he says he is “the gate for the sheep.”⁷⁵ Calvin also commends Ambrose's allegory in Genesis 27: just as Jacob was blessed only when covered by the garments and fragrance of Esau, so are we blessed only if clothed by Christ. Calvin likes this allegory, but it would be truer to say he

⁷⁰ See Calvin's general lesson at *Comm. Dan.* 8:25 (CO 41:121–22): “Whatever happened to the church of old also looks forward to us ... It is no wonder if we today encounter some part of [the persecutions that] the fathers experienced long ago: this is a useful anagogy, I think, and does not twist the simple sense of Scripture.”

⁷¹ Calvin, *Harmony of the Pentateuch* on Exod. 28:31, Num. 8:24, 18:1 (CO 24:433, 443, 464).

⁷² Calvin, *Comm. Isa.* 33:17 (CO 36:571).

⁷³ Calvin, *Institutes* 4.16.3, 4.18.11–13 (OS 5:306.23, 427.27, 428.32). Calvin clarifies the anagogy from sacrifices in a slightly different direction in *Comm. I Cor.* 9:13–14 (CO 49:444). For the anagogy that leads from the eucharistic sign to its spiritual reality, see the prefatory letter to Calvin's *Second Admonition to Westphal* (CO 9:49).

⁷⁴ My qualification here is meant to acknowledge that in many instances, but by no means all, Calvin bolsters his case for anagogy by citing precedents or patterns he finds elsewhere in Scripture, usually in the New Testament.

⁷⁵ Calvin, *Harmony of the Gospels* at Matt. 13:10, 13, 35 (45:357, 360, 374); *Comm. John* 2:19, 10:7–8 (CO 47:47, 238–39).

reinvents it, for his account is vastly more Christological than Ambrose's original.⁷⁶

Other allegories are less favored. Calvin dislikes those that are spun out of frivolous details, such as Augustine's notion that the angels who guarded Jesus' body at his head and feet allegorically foreshadow the preaching of the gospel from East to West.⁷⁷ But Calvin finds some allegories positively pernicious. In Acts, for example, Calvin faults the Anabaptists for reading "children" allegorically and thus withholding baptism from literal children.⁷⁸ The "Papists" use allegory to defend free will: in the parable of the Good Samaritan, after all, the man set upon by thieves was only *half-dead*.⁷⁹ At the end of 1 Peter, Calvin resists reading Babylon as a covert reference to Rome, which he regards as an allegorical reading – one that smacks too much of the specious notion of the Roman episcopacy of Peter.⁸⁰ Curiously, while Calvin thinks it "tortured" to read the soldiers who divided Jesus' garments as an allegory of what heretics do to Scripture, he goes on to say that this "forced" *allegory* actually makes a good *comparison* – unless you go as far as the Papists, who argue that while heretics may divide the Scriptures, they cannot tear the true church.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Calvin attributes to Ambrose this *allegoria* of how we are clothed by Christ in his *Comm. Gen. 27:27* (CO 23:378), but the details are sketchy. However, *Institutes* 3.11.23 has a verbatim quotation from Ambrose's *De Iacob et vita beata* 2.2.9 that was inserted into the edition of 1553, about the time Calvin was finishing his commentary on Genesis. Calvin again frames the excerpt as teaching that our justification consists in being clothed in the righteousness of another, though Ambrose's point is rather that the *church* has been clothed in the finery of the Old Testament because the church knows how to use it better. What probably attracted Calvin to the text, instead, was Ambrose's assertion there that we are justified not by works but by faith. Ironically, Ambrose's actual use of Gen. 27:27 is closer to that of Origen than to what Calvin has read into Ambrose, insofar as both Origen and Ambrose commonly see the "pleasing odor" of Jacob as a figure of acquired righteousness or fruitful works pleasing to God.

⁷⁷ Calvin, *Comm. John* 20:12 (CO 47:431).

⁷⁸ Calvin, *Comm. Acts* 2:39, 3:25, 13:33 (CO 48:55, 76, 299).

⁷⁹ Calvin, *Harmony of the Gospels* at Luke 10:30, repeated at *Comm. John* 5:25 (CO 45:614, 47:117).

⁸⁰ Calvin, *Comm. 1 Peter*, argument (CO 55:206).

⁸¹ Calvin, *Comm. John* 19:23 (CO 47:416): "Quod *allegorico* sensu quidam hunc locum ad scripturam torquent, quae laceratur ab haereticis, nimis coactum est. Non displicet quidem *comparatio*, quod sicuti semel a profanis militibus divisae sunt Christi vestes, ita hodie perversi homines totam scripturam, qua Christus ut se nobis conspicuum praebeat vestitur, alienis commentis discernunt. Sed minime ferenda est papistarum improbitas cum horribili Dei blasphemia coniuncta. Scripturam dicunt ab haereticis lacerari: tunicam vero, hoc est ecclesiam, integram manere: ut reiecta scripturae autoritate fidei unitatem in solo ecclesiae titulo consistere evincant, quasi vero ipsa ecclesiae unitas alibi fundata sit quam in scripturae fide" (italics mine).

In the preceding examples, Calvin explicitly acknowledges the presence of allegory, whether approved or rejected. There are other places, however, where Calvin's exegesis takes what is clearly an allegorical turn even where the word is absent. A single example will suffice. In Gen. 15:17, after the Lord explains to Abraham the future of his descendants, "a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between" the severed halves of animals that Abraham had prepared, as part of the covenant ritual. Calvin, however, sees more, and would prefer to interpret this text as "a symbol of the future deliverance" not only of Israel, but also of the church in our own day. Accordingly, Calvin takes the contrast between smoke and light as a lesson to Abraham that "light would eventually emerge out of darkness" – and a lesson to us that we should hope for life, even in the midst of death, and not be overwhelmed by "the darkness of afflictions."⁸² It's a wonderful lesson, but no one will mistake it for literal exegesis or for the simple and genuine sense of Scripture, or even for a proper typology.⁸³

It is nothing new to note that Calvin's passion for application sometimes led him to expound Scripture in ways that look not only like typology but also like both traditional and original allegories; many recent studies make this observation and furnish many more examples.⁸⁴ Clearly, Calvin is a critic of allegorical exegesis. Yet he is also able to admire allegories and analogies, to reuse some from his predecessors, and to frame new ones of his own. Sometimes his allegories are explicit; at other times, unnamed. Sometimes he writes with a touch of defensiveness. As Gary Hansen has stated, "Calvin complained that allegory made interpretation a game but, perhaps despite himself, it was a game he himself played quite well at times."⁸⁵ We might add, however, that Calvin's allegorical exegesis mostly conforms to Luther's prescription: to find more than mere moralisms and, instead, to see the theological import of these extra dimensions of the text. For Calvin, as for virtually all of his Protestant colleagues, that meant tethering even non-literal exegesis to Scripture's "principal argument" – to Christ and his benefits.

⁸² Calvin, *Comm. Gen.* 15:17 (CO 23:221).

⁸³ Parker reaches the same conclusion about this passage; see *Calvin's OT Commentaries*, 74.

⁸⁴ See Hansen, "Calvin and Non-Literal Interpretation," 189–237; Parker, *Calvin's OT Commentaries*, 69–82; David L. Puckett, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 105–24.

⁸⁵ Hansen, "Calvin and Non-Literal Interpretation," 262.

IV. Reformer of Exegesis? Calvin's unpaid debt to Origen

Was Calvin a reformer of exegesis? In assessing Calvin's arguable reform of exegesis, it is crucial to hold two things in tension: on one side, his repudiation of Origen's exegesis in theory; on the other, his proximity to Origen in practice. Certainly, Calvin aspired to be no Origenist, neither in exegesis nor in doctrine, and his constant appeal to the simple and genuine sense of Scripture is meant to remind his readers where his commitments lie. Yet Calvin can hardly be proved to have given Origen a fair hearing, for his treatment of Origen's exegesis seems largely provoked by, if not derived from, the more detailed and direct accounts of his Protestant role models, Melanchthon and Bucer.

That Calvin the busy scholar and pastor had little time to give Origen a fresh or original reading should occasion no surprise: for over a thousand years, Origen's problematic reputation had always seemed to arrive well ahead of his actual writings. Yet from Melanchthon, Bullinger, and Bucer, as well as from Erasmus, Calvin absorbed more than a view of Origen. He was also mentored by their works so as to master a rhetorically-informed approach to exegesis. Indeed, the principles behind what so many admire in Calvin's exegesis were set forth first by his colleagues – which is not to say, of course, that he did not execute his intentions better than they. But this does mean that Calvin cannot claim originality in aspiring to find and present the *scopus* of Scripture, its principal argument, with lucid brevity.

Indeed, Calvin's commitment to the *scopus* of Scripture – to the benefits of the gospel of Christ, applied to the one people of God – often functions as an overriding principle or doctrine to which exegesis submits, not the other way around.⁸⁶ Whenever Calvin moves toward anagogy or allegory, whether he names these terms or not, it is always because the Bible's central saving message, its *argumentum*, has compelled him to describe this additional application of the text – even if such an application was not foremost in the mind of Scripture's human author.

The same dominance of Scripture's central message over its exegetical details explains Calvin's practical ambivalence toward Origen. Wherever the ghost of Origen appears as an advocate for a methodology or an exposition that misses or threatens the Bible's central message, especially if there is an echo of Origen's views in the doctrinal conflicts of the sixteenth century, Calvin instinctively issues an anathema. But when there is no such

⁸⁶ Calvin seems to anticipate the priority of doctrine over exegesis even in his letter to Grynaeus (OE 13:5.41–6.8), where he allows that although “consent among us in understanding passages of Scripture is not to be hoped for in this life,” the Lord still wishes our minds to be harmonious “especially in the doctrines of our religion.”

polarization lurking in the wings, Calvin can make exegetical moves that not only underscore the *scopus* of Scripture but also look strikingly like what Origen might have done. In reforming exegesis, then, Calvin did not really abandon allegory. Instead, he moderated it, he renamed it, and he expanded the letter to absorb much of what was formerly conveyed by “spiritual” exegesis.⁸⁷ Calvin was thereby able to distance himself from Origen rhetorically, yet retain an actual kinship. In a polemical age, of course, when Scripture and the details of its doctrine of justification were so hotly contested, that was a kinship – perhaps even a debt – that Calvin could never have acknowledged, even if he had read Origen deeply enough to see it.

Was Calvin a reformer of exegesis? Yes. But he was not a radical or a revolutionary, nor was he the founder of modern biblical criticism. If Calvin was a reformer, he also filled less dramatic roles: as a renewer, a restrainer, a re-packager of exegesis. Unlike Origen, Calvin knew when to stop and, usually, when not to start. But despite his clear exasperation with the Alexandrian father, Calvin remained much closer to traditional exegesis than is often admitted, and his distance from Origen was often more rhetorical than real.

⁸⁷ On Calvin's “recycling” of traditional exegetical methods, see Richard A. Muller and John L. Thompson, “The Significance of Precritical Exegesis: Retrospect and Prospect,” in *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation*, 335–45. Millet notes that Calvin “has a tendency to invest the ancient functions of allegory in other rhetorical figures” (*Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 294); David F. Wright makes a similar point with respect to Calvin's invocation of divine accommodation in “Calvin's Accommodating God,” in *Calvinus Sincerioris Religionis Vindex*, (Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1997), 3–20.

Calvin und Luther deuten das Magnifikat (Lukas 1, 46b–55)

CHRISTOPH BURGER

I. Einleitung

Das ökumenische Gespräch zwischen der römisch-katholischen Kirche und den Kirchen, die aus der Reformation des 16. Jahrhunderts hervorgegangen sind, hat oft genug die Gestalt eines Streits oder gar einer erbitterten Auseinandersetzung angenommen. Im Laufe der Jahrhunderte schoben sich in diesen Debatten sehr verschiedene Themen in den Vordergrund. Manche Themen, die im 16. Jahrhundert von zentraler Bedeutung gewesen waren, traten in den folgenden Jahrhunderten in den Hintergrund. Heutzutage können sie erneut wichtig werden oder aber lediglich Anlaß zum Kopfschütteln bieten.

Wer die ‚Bibliotheca Calviniana‘, die von Peter und Gilmont erarbeitete Zusammenstellung aller im 16. Jahrhundert erschienenen Werke Calvins, von vorn bis hinten daraufhin durchsieht, welche Themen Calvin in der Polemik gegen die römisch-katholische Kirche seiner Zeit in erster Linie behandelte, dem wird das sehr bewußt. Denn zu Calvins Lebzeiten sind Schriften von seiner Hand von Käufern nachgefragt und deswegen auch von Verlegern wiederholt aufgelegt worden, deren Themen Lesern des 21. Jahrhunderts wenig faszinierend erscheinen. So war beispielsweise Calvins Schrift gegen die Verehrung von Reliquien¹ im Meinungskampf zwischen Anhängern der Reformation und Altgläubigen sehr erfolgreich. Sie wirkte beispielsweise in Köln², wo es ja zeitweise durchaus so aussah, als ob sich die Reformation würde durchsetzen können. Heutzutage aber hat die

¹ Jean Calvin: *Advertissement du proffit qui reviendroit à la Chrestienté s’il se faisoit inventaire des reliques*, Genf, Jean Girard 1543 (Rodolphe Peter (†) /Jean-François Gilmont: *Bibliotheca Calviniana. Les oeuvres de Jean Calvin publiées au XVIIe siècle. I. Ecrits théologiques, littéraires et juridiques 1532–1554*, Genève 1991, Nr. 43/2, S. 119–121).

² Vgl. Christoph Burger: *Der Kölner Karmelit Nikolaus Blanckaert verteidigt die Verehrung der Reliquien gegen Calvin (1551)*, in: Leif Grane, Alfred Schindler und Markus Wriedt (Hgg.): *Auctoritas Patrum II. Neue Beiträge zur Rezeption der Kirchenväter im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*. Mainz 1998 (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz. Abteilung Abendländische Religionsgeschichte. Beiheft 44), S. 27–49.

Frage, ob ein Christ Reliquien verehren dürfe oder nicht, im ökumenischen Gespräch zumindest in Nordwesteuropa keine Priorität.

Wie es Verschiebungen der Relevanz von Themen in der Zeit gibt, so existieren auch innerhalb einer christlichen Kirche in verschiedenen Ländern zur gleichen Zeit sehr unterschiedliche Akzentsetzungen in der Frömmigkeit. Die Mutter Christi, Maria, spielt ganz offenbar in der römisch-katholischen Kirche Polens und mehrerer südamerikanischer Länder auch heute eine sehr viel wichtigere Rolle als in Nordwesteuropa.

Dieser unterschiedlichen Bedeutung Marias für die Reformatoren Luther und Calvin möchte ich am Beispiel ihrer Auslegung des Lobgesangs der Maria, des ‚Magnificat‘, nachgehen. Hatte doch die Verehrung der Gottesmutter als einer ‚Königin des Himmels‘ wie schon seit Jahrhunderten, so auch zu Beginn des 16. Jahrhunderts eine dominante Stellung in der Frömmigkeit der Christenheit im westlichen Teil des ehemaligen römischen Reiches inne.³ Nicht umsonst haben die Reformatoren immer wieder versucht, gegen eine ihrer Überzeugung nach völlig überzogene Verehrung Marias deutlich zu machen, dass Christus allein der Mittler sei.

Ich wähle die Aussagen der beiden Reformatoren Luther und Calvin zu Marias Lobgesang (Lukas 1, 46b–55) als Beispiel für ihre Auseinandersetzung mit der Marienfrömmigkeit ihrer Zeit. Natürlich könnte man auch Zwinglis⁴ oder Bullingers⁵ Marienpredigten oder Kommentare anderer Reformatoren zum Vergleich heranziehen. Ein Vergleich zwischen den Exegesen Luthers und Calvins legt sich jedoch deswegen besonders nahe, weil von ihnen jeweils sowohl ein Kommentar als auch Predigten erhalten geblieben sind. Man hat also die Möglichkeit, ihre Aussagen für die zum Gottesdienst versammelte Gemeinde und für einen spezieller interessierten Leserkreis miteinander zu vergleichen. Freilich hat Luther auch seinen Kommentar in der Volkssprache geschrieben. Durch diese Entscheidung hat er ein weniger gebildetes Leserpublikum ins Auge gefaßt, als Calvin es in den Erläuterungen zu seiner Evangelienharmonie getan hat. Was Luther

³ Vgl. Klaus Schreiner: *Maria. Jungfrau, Mutter, Herrscherin*, München/Wien 1994, und Jaroslav Pelikan: *Mary Through the Centuries, Her Place in the History of Culture*, New Haven/London 1996.

⁴ Zwingli: Eine Predigt über die ewigreine Jungfrau Maria, die Mutter Jesu Christi, unseres Erlösers. In modernem Deutsch greifbar bei Emidio Campi: *Zwingli und Maria, Eine reformationsgeschichtliche Studie*, Zürich 1997, S. 99–146. Kritische Ausgabe: *Corpus Reformatorum*, Band 88, Berlin / Leipzig / Zürich 1905, S. 391–428.

⁵ Bullinger: Über die selige Jungfrau Maria, die Mutter unseres Herren Jesu Christi. In modernem Deutsch, freilich gekürzt, abgedruckt bei Walter Tappolet unter Mitarbeit von Albert Ebnetter: *Das Marienlob der Reformatoren. Martin Luther, Johannes Calvin, Huldrych Zwingli, Heinrich Bullinger*, Tübingen 1962, S. 274–302. Als Quelle nennt Tappolet eine Predigtsammlung Bullingers, die 1558 und erneut 1564 bei Christoffel Froschauer in Zürich gedruckt worden sei (S. 274).

auf deutsch schrieb, hat Calvin wohl nicht zur Kenntnis genommen, denn er sprach nicht Deutsch. Inhaltliche Nähe kann also nicht auf Rezeption beruhen.

Ich skizziere zunächst, wie Luther sich in seinen Predigten und in einem Kommentar zum Lobgesang der Maria, dem Magnifikat, geäußert hat, und gehe dann auf Calvins Aussagen ein.

II. Schwerpunkte der Exegese Luthers

Von Luther sind allein vierzehn Predigten über das Magnifikat erhalten geblieben. Sie stammen aus den Jahren 1516 bis 1544. Mehrere dieser Predigten hielt er an dem Marienfesttag ‚*Visitatio Mariae*‘, an dem der Besuch Marias bei der Mutter Johannes‘ des Täufers, Elisabeth, gefeiert wird.⁶ Bei denjenigen Predigten, die in lateinischer Sprache überliefert sind, handelt es sich wohl entweder um Predigten vor den lateinkundigen Brüdern des eigenen Konvents oder um Skizzen, aufgrund derer Luther dann in der Volkssprache predigte, oder um lateinische Nachschriften von Predigten, die auf deutsch gehalten worden sind.⁷ Kurz vor seiner Abreise zum Reichstag in Worms und danach auf der Wartburg schrieb Luther einen ausführlichen Kommentar zum Magnifikat in der deutschen Volkssprache.

Zu Luthers Übersetzung des biblischen Texts

Luther übersetzte das Magnifikat innerhalb seines Kommentars mehrfach: einmal zu Beginn seines Kommentars den ganzen biblischen Text, und dann ein weiteres Mal jeden einzelnen Vers, bevor er begann, ihn auszulegen. Auch mit dem nun erzielten Resultat war er noch nicht zufrieden. Denn ein Vergleich mit der Übersetzung des gesamten Neuen Testaments, die dann nur wenig später während seiner Schutzhaft auf der Wartburg entsteht, zeigt, dass er erneut änderte.⁸ Ich greife hier nur ein Beispiel

⁶ Das Datum dieses Feiertages ist der 2. Juli.

⁷ Vgl. zu Luthers Predigten über das Magnifikat auch Christoph Burger: Luthers Predigten über das Magnifikat (Lc. 1,46–55). In: *Théorie et pratique de l'exégèse. Actes du troisième colloque international sur l'histoire de l'exégèse biblique au XVIe siècle* (Genève, 31 août – 2 septembre 1988). Textes réunis par Irena Backus et Francis Higman, Genève 1990, S. 273–286, sowie von dems.: *La polémique de Luther contre la vénération de Marie*. In: Matthieu Arnold (éd.): *Annoncer l'Évangile (XVe–XVIIe siècle). Permanences et mutations de la prédication. Actes du colloque international de Strasbourg (20–22 novembre 2003)*, Paris 2006 [Patrimoines. Christianisme], S. 71–85.

⁸ Zu Luthers Übersetzung in sprachwissenschaftlicher Sicht vgl. die Züricher germanistische Dissertation von Stephan Veit Frech: *Magnificat und Benedictus Deutsch*.

heraus, auf das es Luther selbst besonders ankam: die Übersetzung von *epeblepsen epi ten tapeinosin tes doules autou* (Lukas 1, 48). Zunächst übersetzt er mit ‚mich seine geringe magd‘, sodann mit ‚die nichickeyt seyner magt‘, und im Septembertestament mit ‚die nydrickeyt seyner magd‘. In einleitenden Bemerkungen erklärte er, welche Beweggründe er bei seinen Übersetzungen für seine jeweilige Wortwahl hatte.

Einige Monate vor dieser Predigt war das *Novum Instrumentum* des Erasmus erschienen. In den *Annotationes* zur Stelle hatte Erasmus dort darauf hingewiesen, die griechischen Wörter *epeblepsen epi ten tapeinosin* seien nicht etwa so zu verstehen, als ob Gott Marias tugendhaften Sinn wahrgenommen habe. Er habe vielmehr auf ihren geringen sozialen Status gnädig hingesehen.⁹ Luther kann aufgrund seiner exegetischen Arbeit unabhängig von Erasmus auf seine Interpretation dieser Stelle gekommen sein. Machen doch die Psalmen viele Aussagen über Gottes Eingreifen zugunsten der Armen, Geringen und Bedürftigen. In Luthers erster Vorlesung über die Psalmen, die ‚Dictata super Psalterium‘, finden sich denn auch Reflexionen über diese Menschengruppe. Schon in seiner ersten Vorlesung über die Psalmen, in den *Dictata super psalterium*, führte Luther in den Jahren 1513 – 1515 aus, das lateinische ‚humilis‘ habe man als ‚gering‘ zu verstehen und nicht als ‚demütig‘. In seinem Scholion zu Psalm 15, 1 schreibt er beispielsweise, den hebräischen Terminus *technicus* ‚michtham‘ leite Hieronymus von den beiden hebräischen Vokabeln ‚michach‘: arm (pauper), niedrig (humilis), geschwächt (attenuatus) und ‚thamam‘: einfach (simplex), (integer) und vollkommen (perfectus) ab.¹⁰ Zu Psalm 40, 2 merkt Luther kritisch an, dass der hebräische Text an dieser Stelle nur das Äquivalent von ‚arm‘ (pauper) aufweise, nicht aber eine Vokabel, die mit ‚bedürftig‘ (egenus) übersetzt werden müßte. Die *Biblia Vulgata* mindere durch diese Zufügung Würde und Gewicht der knappen hebräischen Formulierung.¹¹ Es ist also denkbar, dass Luther die

Martin Luthers bibelhumanistische Übersetzung in der Rezeption des Erasmus von Rotterdam, Bern etc. 1995 (Zürcher germanistische Studien, Bd. 44).

⁹ Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami in *Novum Testamentum ab eodem denuo recognitum Annotationes*, ingenti nuper accessione per autorem locupletate, Basel 1519, S. 119. In der modernen kritischen Ausgabe Bd. VI/5 (Amsterdam etc. 2000), S. 464, Zeilen 516–520: ‚*Humilitatem ancillae. Tapeinosin* Vt intelligas paruitatem, non animi virtutem quam suo vocabulo Graeci vocant tapeinophrosynen. Nec est *respexit humilitatem*, sed ‚aspexit ad humilitatem‘, *epeblepsen epi ten tapeinosin*, vt sit contrarium ei quod est auersari, sitque sensus: et sim infima ancilla, tamen non est auersatus a me.“

¹⁰ Vgl. Siegfried Raeder: *Das Hebräische bei Luther untersucht bis zum Ende der ersten Psalmenvorlesung*, Tübingen 1961, S. 76–77.

¹¹ Psalm 40, 2 (Vulgata) lautet: ‚Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem.“ Luthers Scholion in der ersten seiner Psalmenvorlesungen lautet (WA 55/II, Weimar 2000, S. 221, Zeilen 21–23): ‚Notandum sane, quod in hebr.[eo] non est *Egenum*, sed tantum *pauperem*. Et

philologische Belehrung durch Erasmus lediglich als willkommene Unterstützung gewertet hat. Doch kann die Bedeutung der *Annotatio* des Erasmus zu dieser Stelle auch entscheidend gewesen sein.

*Gott sieht hin auf Marias Niedrigkeit,
er vergilt nicht etwa ihre tugendhafte Demut*

Die erste überlieferte Predigt über Marias Lobgesang stammt vom 15. August, dem Fest der Aufnahme Mariens in den Himmel. Luther hielt diese Predigt 1516. Schon damals thematisierte er Marias ‚humilitas‘. Diese lateinische Vokabel kann ja entweder als ‚Niedrigkeit‘, als ‚niedriger sozialer Status‘, oder aber als ‚Demut‘ übersetzt und verstanden werden. In dieser ersten Predigt über das erste Kapitel des Evangeliums nach Lukas blieb Luther im Jahre 1516 freilich ganz knapp und sicherte sich noch nicht philologisch ab, wie er das später tat. Er beschränkte sich hier vielmehr auf die Aussage, Maria habe ein Beispiel gegeben. Sie rühme sich nicht etwa eines Verdienstes, das sie erworben hätte, sondern sie bekenne von sich, sie habe von Gott Wohltaten empfangen. Sie sei nicht eine Frau, die Großes gewirkt habe, sondern die Großes empfangen habe.¹² Damit formulierte er schon die für ihn wichtigste Aussage, die er dann in seinen weiteren Predigten und in seinem Kommentar lediglich noch präzisieren und unterbauen sollte. Maria soll gepriesen werden aufgrund dessen, was Gott an ihr getan hat, nicht aufgrund dessen, was sie etwa geleistet hätte. Gott soll gepriesen werden, weil er an ihr Großes getan hat.

Die zweite erhalten gebliebene Predigt über das Magnifikat hielt Luther am Festtag des Besuches Marias bei Elisabeth, *Visitatio Mariae*, im Jahre 1520.¹³ Deutlicher als in der Predigt vier Jahre zuvor erläuterte er die lateinische Vokabel ‚humilitatem‘ als ‚Verachtetsein‘, ‚Niedrigkeit‘ und ‚Armut‘, grenzte dieses Verständnis also noch eindeutiger gegen das Verständnis als ‚Demut‘ ab: „Das ist nun nicht so zu verstehen, wie die Verdienstler plappern, als ob der Herr sie erwählt hätte, weil sie durch ihre Demut Verdienst erworben hätte, sondern weil des Herren Auge die, die höher stehen, übersieht und auf die Niedrigen gerichtet ist.“¹⁴

ea additio non parum adimit dignitatis et ponderis de sententie maiestate.“ Vgl. dazu Raeder (wie Anm. 10), S. 11.

¹² Luther: Predigt am Tage der Aufnahme Mariens in den Himmel; 15. 8. 1516 (WA 1, 77, 31–32): „Nihil sui iactat meriti, nullum opus, tantum se passivam confitetur matrem et receptricem bonorum operum, non operatricem.“

¹³ Von dieser Predigt vom 2. 7. 1520 sind zwei Nachschriften bekannt. Beide liegen ediert vor, die ältere in WA 4, 633–635, die von Timothy Wengert in der Württembergischen Landesbibliothek Stuttgart entdeckte in WA 59, 227–230. Beide weichen nicht unerheblich voneinander ab.

¹⁴ Luther: Predigt am Tage der Heimsuchung Mariens; 2. 7. 1520, nach der schon länger bekannten Nachschrift (WA 4, 633, 23–25): „Non intelligendum, quasi Dominus eam

Kurz vor seiner Reise zum Reichstag nach Worms und dann nach seiner Rückkehr auf der Wartburg verfaßte Luther in der deutschen Volkssprache einen Kommentar zum Magnifikat. Luther warnte darin vor einer Verehrung Marias, die nur ‚trotzig und verzagt‘ mache. Verzagen könne ein Christ, wenn er sich klar mache, wieviel weniger demütig er sei als Maria. Es könne aber eben auch zur gegenteiligen Haltung kommen, weil ein Christ daran verzweifeln könne, jemals auch nur ähnlich vollkommen zu werden wie Maria. Trotz ist also die Kehrseite des Verzagtseins: man kann verzagen, weil man einsieht, wie unvollkommen man selbst ist, aber man kann sich auch trotzig verhärten. Beide Haltungen sind nach Luthers Überzeugung verfehlt. In keinem Falle findet er es für einen normalen Christen hilfreich, wenn Maria allzu sehr erhoben wird. Es gilt Maria vielmehr so zu verehren, dass man darauf schaut, dass Gott sich ihr gnädig zugewendet hat. Wenn man Marias Demut preise, aufgrund derer sie es geradezu verdient habe, Gottes Mutter zu werden, dann stelle man sie sehr gegen ihren eigenen Willen viel zu hoch in Gottes Nähe. Sie weise aber gerade von sich weg auf Gott hin.¹⁵

Da Luther diese Schrift in der Volkssprache für ein breites Lesepublikum schrieb, ging er nicht darauf ein, in welchen Quellen die von ihm getadelte übermäßige Verherrlichung Marias zu finden sei. Doch lassen sich in Schriften, die im späten Mittelalter verbreitet gewesen sind, zahlreiche Belege beispielsweise für die Eva-Maria-Typologie finden, in der Marias Demut dem Hochmut der Stamm-Mutter Eva gegenübergestellt wird. Diese Eva-Maria-Typologie ist der Adam-Christus-Typologie nachgebildet und versetzt Maria in die Rolle einer Miterlöserin.¹⁶

Wer hochmütig ist, der enthält Gott die Ehre vor, die ihm zusteht

Schon in der zweiten erhalten gebliebenen Predigt aus dem Jahr 1520 verwendete Luther zwei Verse aus dem Buch des Propheten Jeremia als

elegisset ob meritum eius humilitatis, ut questuarii garrunt, sed quia oculus Domini super pusillos neglectis maioribus.“

¹⁵ Vgl. dazu ausführlicher: Christoph Burger: Marias Lied in Luthers Deutung. Der Kommentar zum Magnifikat (Lk 1, 46b–55) aus den Jahren 1520/21, Tübingen 2007 (Spätmittelalter und Reformation, Neue Reihe, Band 34), Abschnitte 2.6.4.15–2.6.4.18 (zum Thema: Maria auf die angemessene Weise verehren), S. 86–92.

¹⁶ Vgl. zu einflußreichen Texten zur Marienfrömmigkeit, die mit der Auffassung Luthers nicht zu vereinigen sind, Christoph Burger: Maria muß ermutigen! Luthers Kritik an spätmittelalterlicher Frömmigkeit und sein Gegenentwurf in seiner Auslegung des ‚Magnificat‘ (Lukas 1, 46b–55) aus den Jahren 1520/21. In: *Piété et Spiritualité. L’impact de la Réformation aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles = Frömmigkeit und Spiritualität. Auswirkungen der Reformation im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert.* Hrsg. von / sous la direction de Matthieu Arnold und Rolf Decot. (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz. Abteilung für Abendländische Religionsgeschichte. Beiheft 54), Mainz 2002, S. 15–30, besonders S. 16–21.

Interpretament des Magnifikat, die dann in seiner weiteren Exegese von zentraler Bedeutung sein werden. Es geht um Jeremia 9, 22 und 23.¹⁷ In der Textfassung der revidierten Lutherübersetzung von 1964 lauten diese beiden Verse so: „So spricht der Herr: ‚Ein Weiser rühme sich nicht seiner Weisheit, ein Starker rühme sich nicht seiner Stärke, ein Reicher rühme sich nicht seines Reichtums. Sondern wer sich rühmen will, der rühme sich dessen, dass er klug sei und mich kenne, dass ich der Herr bin, der Barmherzigkeit, Recht und Gerechtigkeit übt auf Erden; denn solches gefällt mir‘, spricht der Herr“. Mit der Entscheidung, diese Verse aus dem Buch des Propheten Jeremia als Schlüssel zur Deutung des Magnifikat heranzuziehen, hat Luther die Weichen für seine Akzentsetzung gestellt. Denn das Verbum ‚sich rühmen‘ oder, wie Luther das lateinische Verb ‚gloriarī‘ mehrfach übersetzt, ‚prangen‘, steht zwar fünf Male in den beiden Jeremia-versen, aber nicht im Text des Magnifikat. Luther hat sich also dadurch, dass er Jeremia 9, 22 und 23 als Interpretament des Magnifikat heranzieht, dazu entschlossen, Gottes Widerstand gegen die ‚Hoffärtigen‘, die Hochmütigen, als besonders wichtig anzusehen.

Als vormoderner Exeget kann Luther mit gutem Gewissen den Sinn des Lobliedes der Maria mit Hilfe zweier Verse aus dem Alten Testament erklären. Geht es doch in den Versen aus dem Buch des Propheten Jeremia um eine Aussage, die mit dem Anspruch auftritt, Gotteswort zu sein. Gibt doch Gott selbst in den Versen aus dem Jeremiabuch Anweisungen dafür, wessen sich ein Mensch rühmen dürfe. Preist doch Maria Gottes Tun.

Da Luther ein verkehrtes ‚sich rühmen‘ als die zentrale Verfehlung herausstellt, der Gott entgegentritt, verliert in seiner Exegese die Aussage von Gottes umwälzendem Handeln an Gewicht: Gott erniedrigt zwar und erhöht, das spielt auch in Luthers Exegese eine Rolle.

Aber Gott erniedrigt eben nach Luthers Ansicht in erster Linie die Hoffärtigen. Diese Hoffärtigen oder Hochmütigen sind die, die sich selbst rühmen, statt Gott die Ehre zu geben! Verglichen mit ihnen findet Luther die in Marias Loblied auch genannten Machthaber und Reichen weniger problematisch. Luther differenziert also innerhalb der Aussagen des biblischen Texts in solche, die er als zentral betrachtet, und solche, die er minder zentral findet. In seiner eigenen Zeit sieht er die Hochmütigen im Papst und in dessen Anhängern. Vergleicht man Luthers Exegese beispielsweise mit der seines Zeitgenossen und Kontrahenten Thomas Müntzer, so wird deutlich, wie anders dieser die Akzente setzt. Bei Müntzer sind Gottes Erniedrigen und Erhöhen von zentraler Bedeutung. Er befindet sich freilich auch in einer recht anderen Lage als Luther. Es

¹⁷ Die Verszählung in der Biblia Vulgata weicht von der Verszählung in der hebräischen Bibel ab. Die Vulgata zählt diese beiden Verse als Jeremia 9, 23 und 24.

verwundert denn auch nicht, dass ihm das Erniedrigen und Erhöhen wichtiger sind.¹⁸

In seinem Kommentar zum Magnifikat zieht Luther diese beiden Verse heran, um zu deuten, was seiner Auffassung nach der zentrale Sinn des Loblieds der Maria ist. Aufgrund dieser beiden Verse gliedert er Gottes Handeln an Maria, an seinem Volk Israel und an der gesamten Menschheit überhaupt übersichtlich.¹⁹ Er zieht eine Linie von den Moabitern, den Feinden des Volkes Israel im Alten Testament, zum Papst und seinen Anhängern in seiner eigenen Zeit. So wenig wie der im Alten Testament wiederholt erwähnte Leviathan jemanden an sich herankommen läßt, so wenig sind der Papst und seine hochmütigen Gefährten nach Luthers Ansicht bereit, sich aufgrund der Heiligen Schrift korrigieren zu lassen.

Für Luthers Exegese kennzeichnend ist auch der Unterschied, den er zwischen einem Wirken Gottes, das jeder Mensch auch ohne Glauben verstehen könne und einem Wirken, in dem er in scheinbarer Schwachheit seine eigentliche Kraft erweise und das deswegen nur mit den Augen des Glaubens recht wahrgenommen werden könne, macht.

Marias Lobgesang lehrt einen Herrscher, recht zu regieren

Luther widmete seinen Kommentar zum Magnifikat dem erst neunzehn Jahre alten Herzog Johann Friedrich von Sachsen.²⁰ Kurfürst Friedrich der Weise, dessen Onkel, hatte keine legitimen Kinder. Deswegen war es absehbar, dass nach ihm sein Bruder Johann, dem später der Beiname ‚der Beständige‘ beigelegt werden sollte, Luthers Landesherr werden würde, und nach diesem gegebenenfalls dessen Sohn Johann Friedrich. In der Vorrede und im Schlußwort wandte Luther sich an den jungen Herzog, der ihm in seiner bedrängten Lage nach der Wiederaufnahme des gegen ihn laufenden Prozesses unter anderem durch Fürsprache bei seinem Onkel beigestanden hatte. Nach Luthers Überzeugung ist Marias Lobgesang ganz besonders dazu geeignet, einem Fürsten vor Augen zu stellen, dass er sich weder auf sich selbst noch auf seine Ratgeber verlassen darf, wenn er gut regieren will, sondern ganz allein auf Gott. Freilich führt Luther in diesem

¹⁸ Vgl. Christoph Burger: Luther and Müntzer see Mary's Magnificat through different spectacles, in: Christopher Ocker, Michael Printy, Peter Starenko, and Peter Wallace (redd.): Politics and Reformations: Histories and Reformations. Essays in Honor of Thomas A. Brady, Jr., Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2007, S. 241–253 (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, volume 127).

¹⁹ Vgl. Burger: Marias Lied in Luthers Deutung (wie Anm. 15), 2.8.: Zum Aufbau von Luthers Auslegung der Verse 50–53 (S. 107–112).

²⁰ Vgl. zu Person und Wirken dieses Herrschers aus der ernestinischen Linie des Hauses Wettin den Aufsatzband: Johann Friedrich I. – der lutherische Kurfürst, hg. von Volker Leppin, Georg Schmidt und Sabine Wefers, Gütersloh 2006 (Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte, Band 204).

Zusammenhang nicht aus, auf welchem Wege Gott denn einem Fürsten seiner Meinung nach seinen Willen kundtun werde. Welche Haltung er für angemessen hält, bündelt er in einem abschließenden Gebet.²¹

Charakteristika der Magnifikat-Exegese Luthers

Luther ist sowohl in seinem Kommentar als auch in seinen Predigten darauf bedacht, herauszustellen, dass es auf Gottes gnädiges An-Sehen Marias ankomme und nicht etwa auf eine tugendhafte Demut, die Maria zeige. Auch und gerade für Herrscher ist Maria nach Luthers Ansicht ein Vorbild. Sollen doch auch sie sich von Gott leiten lassen und nicht von ihrer eigenen Einschätzung oder von ihren Ratgebern.

III. Schwerpunkte der Exegese Calvins

Im Jahre 1554 verfaßte Calvin eine eingehende Exegese des Lobgesangs der Maria. Sie findet sich in lateinischer Sprache in seiner Evangelienharmonie mit Kommentar. Am 1. August 1555 konnte er die Widmungsvorrede zu diesem Werk unterzeichnen.²² Eine Übersetzung des Werkes ins Französische erschien noch im gleichen Jahre.²³ Zahlreiche Nachdrucke der Fassungen in beiden Sprachen belegen das Interesse der Leser an dieser Evangelienharmonie. Es sei immerhin angemerkt, dass die von August Tholuck 1833 in Berlin publizierte Edition den Charakter der Evangelienharmonie deutlich hervortreten läßt, während die Edition im Corpus Reformatorum die Bibeltexte und Calvins Kommentar dazu in einer Form darbietet, die das Spezifische einer Evangelienharmonie nicht betont.²⁴ Acht Jahre später, im Jahr 1562, erschienen dann 65 Predigten im Druck, die Calvin in französischer Sprache von 1559 an bis zum 17.

²¹ Vgl. Christoph Burger: Luthers Gebetsvorschlag für Herzog Johann Friedrich von Sachsen, in: *Oratio. Das Gebet in patristischer und reformatorischer Sicht*. Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Alfred Schindler, hg. von Emidio Campi, Leif Grane und Adolf Martin Ritter, Göttingen 1999 (FKDG 76), S. 185–196.

²² Vgl. Rodolphe Peter (†) /Jean-François Gilmont: *Bibliotheca Calviniana. Les oeuvres de Jean Calvin publiées au XVI^e siècle. II. Ecrits théologiques, littéraires et juridiques 1555–1564*, Genève 1994, Nr. 55/9, S. 587–590. In der Edition in *Corpus Reformatorum* Bd. 73 = *Calvini Opera* Bd. 45: VIII Seiten Einleitung und 830 Spalten Text.

²³ Vgl. ebd. Nr. 55/5, S. 569–571.

²⁴ Zur Gattung der Evangelienharmonie und zu deren Merkmalen vgl. Ulrich Schmid: *Evangelienharmonien des Mittelalters: Forschungsgeschichtliche und systematische Aspekte*, in: Christoph Burger, August den Hollander, Ulrich Schmid (Hgg.): *Evangelienharmonien des Mittelalters* (Studies in Theology and Religion [STAR], Editor Jan Willem van Henten, Bd. 9), Assen 2004, S. 1–17, hier: S. 2–3.

November 1560 über die biblischen Texte gehalten hat, die er in dieser Evangelienharmonie zusammengestellt hatte.²⁵

Zu Calvins Übersetzung des biblischen Texts

Betrachtet man die Übersetzung des Bibeltexts ins Lateinische, so fällt als erstes auf, dass Calvin die griechische Vokabel *soteri* in Lukas 1, 47 mit ‚servatore‘ übersetzt.²⁶ Vergleicht man die französische Übersetzung in der zehnten Predigt Calvins, so bietet sie die Vokabel ‚sauveur‘.²⁷ Das lateinische ‚servator‘ wie das französische ‚sauveur‘ sind im Deutschen wohl am besten mit ‚Retter‘ zu übersetzen.

Die Biblia Vulgata hat ‚salutari‘. Erasmus weicht davon nicht ab. Luther übersetzt mit ‚heyland‘ und betont, es gehe bei dem Heil, das Christus bringe, nicht um das irdische Wohlergehen, auf das manche Christen ihre Wünsche richteten. Er tadelt sie als ‚Nießlinge‘, die nur auf Genuß aus sind, die nur an den Gütern Interesse haben, die Gott schenken kann, aber nicht an Gottes Güte.²⁸

Calvin kommt mit ‚servator‘ beziehungsweise mit ‚sauveur‘ dem Bedeutungsgehalt des griechischen Wortes *soter* näher als Erasmus und Luther. Freilich darf man voraussetzen, dass beide unter ‚Heil‘ dasselbe verstehen wie Calvin unter ‚Rettung‘. In seinem Kommentar erläutert Calvin, dass das von ihm gewählte lateinische Wort ‚servator‘ eigentlich nicht recht die ganze Bedeutungsfülle des Wortes *soter* abdeckt: „Die Bezeichnung als *soter* bedeutet für Griechen mehr als ‚servator‘ für Lateiner, und zwar jemanden, der nicht nur einmal befreit, sondern Urheber dauernden Heils ist.“²⁹ Den folgenden Vers 48 des ersten Kapitels des Lukasevangeliums überträgt Calvin so, dass das Verständnis im Sinne der vorherrschenden Marienverehrung der altgläubigen Kirche ausgeschlossen ist: ‚respexit ad humilitatem ancillae suae‘, in der französisch

²⁵ Vgl. ebd. Nr. 62/22, S. 953–957, hier: S. 954. In der Edition in Corpus Reformatorum Bd. 74 = Calvini Opera Bd. 46: VIII Seiten und 826 Spalten Text.

²⁶ Calvin: Harmonia evangelica. Übersetzung von Lukas 1, 47 (CR 73 = CO 45, Braunschweig 1891, VIII + 830 Spalten, hier: Sp. 36).

²⁷ Calvin: Harmonie évangélique, dixième sermon. Übersetzung von Lukas 1, 47 (CR 74 = CO 46, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 110).

²⁸ Vgl. Luther: Das Magnifikat verdeutscht und ausgelegt (1520/1521), hg. von Martin Seils, in: Martin Luther: Studienausgabe, hg. von Hans-Ulrich Delius, Bd. 1, Berlin 1979, (S. 312–313: Einleitung) S. 314–364, hier: S. 326, Zeilen 2–S. 327, Z. 16.

²⁹ Calvin: Harmonia evangelica. Auslegung von „Magnificat anima mea“ (CR 73 = CO 45, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 37): „Nomen *soteris* plus Graecis significat quam Latinis servator, nempe qui non semel tantum liberat, sed perpetuae salutis autor est.“ Diese Aussage macht Calvin auch in seiner Predigt. Calvin: Harmonie évangélique, dixième sermon. Auslegung von Lukas 1, 47 (CR 74 = CO 46, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 111): „Sauveur ... il aura toujours le soin de nous et de nostre salut iusques à ce qu’il l’ait amené à sa perfection.“

gehaltenen gedruckten Predigt: ‚il a regardé la petitesse de sa servante‘. Beide Fassungen sind zu übersetzen als: ‚er hat hingesehen auf die Niedrigkeit seiner Magd‘. Mit ‚ex hoc tempore‘ beziehungsweise mit ‚dorenavant‘ (von diesem Zeitpunkt an) übersetzt Calvin die griechischen Wörter *apo tou nyn* völlig eindeutig: Durch die Hinzufügung der deutenden Vokabel ‚tempore‘ beziehungsweise durch ‚dorenavant‘ macht er klar, dass hier eine Zeitangabe gemeint ist. Calvin schließt auf diese Weise aus, dass man das ‚ex hoc‘ in der lateinischen Übersetzung der Biblia Vulgata so verstehen dürfe, als ob Maria hier sage, ihre Entscheidung, sich dem Ratschluß Gottes zu fügen, werde dazu führen, dass man sie fortan selig preisen werde.

Erasmus war einmal mehr nicht so deutlich gewesen wie Calvin: er hatte das ‚ex hoc‘ der Vulgata stehen lassen. Luther übersetzte in seinem Kommentar zwei Male ‚davon‘. Was er damit meinte, war eindeutig, denn das ‚davon‘ bezog sich auf ‚er hat angesehen‘. Etwas später übertrug Luther das griechische *apo tou nyn* in seiner Übersetzung des Neuen Testaments mit ‚von nu an‘.

Calvins Übersetzung bleibt näher am griechischen Text als die des Erasmus und die Luthers. Das zeigt sich bereits bei der Übersetzung der Vokabel *soter*. Ebenso wie Luther steuert auch Calvin das Verstehen seiner Leser in die gewünschte Richtung. Er tut das beispielsweise durch die Übersetzung von *tapeinosis*, aber auch durch die Zufügung des ‚tempore‘.

Schwerpunkte der Exegese Calvins in Kommentar und Predigt

Im Unterschied zu Luther, der seine profunderen Aussagen zu diesem Text nicht in der lateinischen Sprache der Gelehrten, sondern in der deutschen Volkssprache gemacht hat, findet sich Calvins präzisere Exegese in seiner lateinischen Evangelienharmonie.³⁰ Vergleicht man damit Calvins volkssprachliche Predigt zum Thema, so fällt auf den ersten Blick auf, dass er hier sehr viel ausführlicher auslegt. Vergleicht man einmal den Raum, den Calvin einem Vers in der Predigt im Durchschnitt einräumt, und vergleicht damit, wieviel Raum er nötig hat, um ihn in der Evangelienharmonie zu erklären, so kommt man auf das Fünffache.³¹

Calvin setzt die Akzente anders als Luther. Ihn fasziniert es nicht im gleichen Maße, dass Gott laut Lukas 1, 51 den ‚Hochmütigen‘ widersteht, in denen Luther ja den Papst und dessen Anhänger sehen möchte. Auch Calvin polemisiert intensiv gegen die ‚Papisten‘, wie er sie nennt, aber er setzt sie nicht so sehr mit den ‚Hochmütigen‘ des Bibeltexts gleich. Er

³⁰ Calvin: *Harmonia evangelica*. Auslegung von Lukas 1, 46–55 (CR 73 = CO 45, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 36 unten bis Sp. 43 oben).

³¹ Calvin: *Harmonie évangélique, dixième sermon*. Auslegung von Lukas 1, 45–48 (CR 74 = CO 46, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 109 unten – 122 unten).

findet auch nicht wie Luther im Magnifikat einen Lobpreis eines sechsfachen Werkes Gottes. Das wirkt sich darin aus, dass Calvin den zweiten Hauptteil von Marias Loblied schon mit den Worten „und heilig ist sein Name“ beginnen läßt. Hier fange Maria an, Gottes Macht und Gerechtigkeit zu loben, schreibt er.³² Doch auch nach Calvins Ansicht kann man den Lobgesang der Maria in drei Hauptteile gliedern: Marias Dank für Gottes Barmherzigkeit, ihr Lobpreis von Gottes Macht und Gerechtigkeit, und die Zuspitzung darauf, dass mit der Geburt des Gottessohnes die Erlösung beginnen soll, die ‚der Kirche‘ seinerzeit verheißen worden sei.³³

Calvin erklärt einleitend, obwohl Maria erst an zweiter Stelle sage, dass ihr Geist sich freue, gehe ihre Freude doch in der Zeitfolge dem voraus, wovon sie zuerst spreche: Meine Seele erhebt den Herren. Sei doch der Geist (,spiritus‘) das Erkenntnisvermögen, die Seele (,anima‘) dagegen der Sitz der Affekte.³⁴ Wirft man einen Seitenblick auf die Lehre von den Seelenkräften bei zwei spätmittelalterlichen Autoren, so wird einem bewußt, dass Calvins Aussage dem recht nahe kommt, was sie gesagt haben. Der Pariser Universitätstheologe und Kanzler Jean Gerson (1363–1429) beispielsweise läßt die intellektuellen Kräfte die affektiven anregen,³⁵ und bei Johannes Mauburnus findet sich eine vergleichbare Aussage.³⁶ Calvin sagt: Der Intellekt regt den Affekt an. Der Geist freut sich, und daraufhin erhebt die Seele den Herrn. Traurigkeit und Angst dagegen hindern einen Menschen daran, Gottes Güte zu loben.³⁷ Ehe nicht Gott als

³² Calvin: *Harmonia evangelica*. Auslegung von „Et sanctum nomen eius“ (CR 73 = CO 45, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 39): „Haec est secunda pars cantici, in qua generalibus sententiis sancta virgo Dei virtutem, iudicia et misericordiam commendat.“

³³ Calvin: *Harmonia evangelica*. Gliederung vor der Einzelexegese von Lukas 1, Vers 46 (CR 73 = CO 45, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 37). In der volkssprachlichen Predigt: *Harmonie évangélique, dixième sermon* (CR 74 = CO 46, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 113).

³⁴ Calvin: *Harmonia evangelica*. Auslegung von „Magnificat anima mea“ (CR 73 = CO 45, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 37): „Ut teneamus sanctae virginis mentem, notandum est, quod secundo loco hic ponitur, ordine prius esse. Nam ut ad laudandum Deum incitetur hominis voluntas, praecedat spiritus exsultatio necesse est ...“ In der Predigt vereinfacht Calvin erheblich: *Harmonie évangélique, dixième sermon*. Auslegung von Lukas 1, 46–47 (CR 74 = CO 46, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 117).

³⁵ Vgl. Christoph Burger: *Aedificatio, Fructus, Utilitas*. Johannes Gerson als Professor der Theologie und Kanzler der Universität Paris. Tübingen 1986. XII und 228 Seiten [Beiträge zur Historischen Theologie. Hg. von Johannes Wallmann, Band 70], S. 127–143.

³⁶ Johannes Mauburnus: *Rosetum*, (Druck: Paris 1510, Johannes Parvi und Johannes Scabalerius), fol. 177r, titulus XV: Die intellektuelle Kraft der Seele regt die affektive an.

³⁷ Calvin: *Harmonia evangelica*. Auslegung von „Magnificat anima mea“ (CR 73 = CO 45, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 37): „Tristitia enim et anxietas tum animum constringunt, tum linguam impediunt a celebranda Dei bonitate.“

Retter erkannt ist, wird ein Mensch nicht wirklich froh, heißt es bei ihm.³⁸ Damit sagt Calvin inhaltlich etwa dasselbe wie Luther, der geschrieben hat, erst wer die Erfahrung mache, durch Gott aus Not gerettet zu sein, könne ihn loben.

Die Deutung des Wortes ‚humilitas‘ als ‚Demut‘ bekämpft Calvin in seiner lateinischen Evangelienharmonie nicht ausgiebig. Er tut sie als eine Auffassung ab, die ungelehrte, barbarische Leute in der Vergangenheit vertreten hätten.³⁹ Das kann er nur deswegen tun, weil er offenbar keine lebhaftere Verehrung der Demut Marias bei den Lesern voraussetzen muß. Anders sieht es in der volkssprachigen Predigt aus. Hier betont Calvin, Maria werde gepriesen, weil sie geglaubt habe. Er zieht Lukas 1, 45 zum Predigttext hinzu, beginnt also seine Predigt nicht erst mit einer Auslegung von Marias eigenen Worten. Elisabeth sagt ja: „Selig ist sie, die geglaubt hat“. Mit ‚glauben‘ ist das Stichwort gegeben, das Calvin für die Hörer und Leser seiner französischen Predigt unterstreichen will. Ohne gegen die abgelehnte Tugend der ‚Demut‘ ausdrücklich zu polemisieren, schreibt er: „Das [glauben] ist also die wichtigste Tugend, die wir in der Jungfrau Maria erkennen müssen. Wir sollen ja nicht urteilen nach unserem Verstand und Hirn ... wir haben ja schon gesehen, dass Elisabeth nicht gesprochen hat, was ihre Phantasie ihr eingab, sondern dass der heilige Geist ihren Mund und ihre Zunge leitete.“⁴⁰ „Wir haben uns zu merken, dass die einzigartige Tugend, die in dieser heiligen Jungfrau war, die war, dass sie im Glauben die Zusage empfangen hat, die ihr gegeben war, und dass sie gar nicht daran gezweifelt hat, dass Gott treu sein werde ...“⁴¹ Die Papisten, sagt Calvin, schmücken Maria mit tönlichen, selbsterdachten Würden und schätzen das, was sie an Gutem von Gott empfangen hat, so gut wie nicht.⁴² Er zählt einige von den Würdetiteln auf, die man Maria

³⁸ Calvin: *Harmonia evangelica*. Auslegung von „Magnificat anima mea“ (CR 73 = CO 45, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 37): „donec enim agnitus fuerit Deus servator, nunquam in verum et liberum gaudium solventur hominum mentes ...“.

³⁹ Calvin: *Harmonia evangelica*. Auslegung von „Quia respexit“ (CR 73 = CO 45, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 37): „ut stulte putarunt indocti et barbari homines ...“.

⁴⁰ Calvin: *Harmonie évangélique*, dixième sermon. Auslegung von Lukas 1, 45: „Bienheureuse est celle qui a creu ...“ (CR 74 = CO 46, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 111): „Voila donc la principale vertu que nous devons recognoistre en la vierge Marie, voire ne jugeant point selon nostre sens et cerveau ... nous avons desia veu qu’ Elisabeth n’a point parlé de sa fantasie: mais que le saint Esprit a gouverné sa bouche et sa langue.“

⁴¹ Calvin: *Harmonie évangélique*, dixième sermon. Auslegung von Lukas 1, 45: „Bienheureuse est celle qui a creu ...“ (CR 74 = CO 46, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 111): „Or donc nous avons à retenir quer la singuliere vertu qui a este en ceste sainte Vierge, c’est que par foy elle a receu la promesse qui luy estoit donnée, et n’a point douté que Dieu ne fust fidele ...“.

⁴² Calvin: *Harmonia evangelica*. Auslegung von „Ex hoc tempore beatam“ (CR 73 = CO 45, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 38): „Unde perspicimus, quantum ab ea distent Papistae, qui

beilegt: „Königin des Himmels, Stern des Heils, Pforte zum Leben, Süße, Hoffnung und Heil.“ Die Papisten treiben es sogar so weit, ihr zuzutrauen, sie könne ihrem Sohn Christus gebieten. Dabei hat doch Maria selbst alle Ehre, die ihr erwiesen wird, auf Gottes Wohltaten gegründet! In diesem Sinne anerkennen eben gerade die Anhänger der Reformation den Titel einer Lehrerin für Maria.⁴³ In der volkssprachlichen Predigt wird Calvin sehr viel heftiger als im Kommentar: Er wirft den ‚Papisten‘ vor, sie erhöhen in Maria eine schwache und fehlbare Kreatur und machten sie zu einem Abgott.⁴⁴ In der volkssprachlichen Predigt geht Calvin intensiver auf die Gefahr ein, man könne die griechische Vokabel *tapeinosin* als tugendhafte Demut mißverstehen, weil sie mit ‚humilité‘ übersetzt worden sei.⁴⁵ Der Satz „und heilig ist sein Name“ gibt Calvin Anlaß dazu, auf den Unterschied zwischen Abrahams echten und unechten Nachkommen einzugehen.⁴⁶ Weiter unten kommt er darauf zurück und spricht über den Bund, an dem Gott festhalte.⁴⁷

Die Verse Lukas 1, 51–55 bespricht Calvin als Einheit. Gott bedarf keiner Helfer, er handelt souverän.⁴⁸ Während Luther den Papst und seine Anhänger als die ‚Hochmütigen‘ derart in den Vordergrund stellt, dass die Machthaber in seinem Kommentar relativ blaß bleiben, sieht Calvin in

inanibus suis figmentis eam temere ornantes quidquid accepit bonorum a Deo fere pro nihilo habent.“

⁴³ Calvin: *Harmonia evangelica*. Auslegung von „Ex hoc tempore beatam“ (CR 73 = CO 45, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 38): „Libenter enim eam amplectimur magistram, eiusque doctrinae et praeceptis obtemperamus.“

⁴⁴ Calvin: *Harmonie évangélique*, dixième sermon. Auslegung von Lukas 1, 45: „il a regardé la petitesse de sa chambrière“ (CR 74 = CO 46, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 119): „ils veulent magnifier une creature fragile et caduque, et en font une idole ...“.

⁴⁵ Calvin: *Harmonie évangélique*, dixième sermon. Auslegung von Lukas 1, 48: „il a regardé la petitesse de sa chambrière.“ (CR 74 = CO 46, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 117). Zu Beginn der zehnten Predigt hatte Calvin anstelle von ‚chambrière‘ die Vokabel ‚servante‘ gebraucht.

⁴⁶ Calvin: *Harmonia evangelica*. Auslegung von „Et sanctum nomen eius“ (CR 73 = CO 45, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 39): „Sed quia non omnes, qui descendunt ex Abraham secundum carnem, genuini sunt Abrahae filii, promissionis effectum restringit Maria ad veros Dei cultores ...“.

⁴⁷ Calvin: *Harmonia evangelica*. Auslegung von „Ut memor esset“ (CR 73 = CO 45, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 42): „Caeterum iisdem verbis ostendit Maria, gratuitum fuisse quod cum patribus foedus olim Deus pepigerat, quia promissam illic salutem ex mera misericordia tanquam ex fonte derivat.“

⁴⁸ Calvin: *Harmonia evangelica*. Auslegung von „Fecit potentiam“ (CR 73 = CO 45, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 40): „Intelligit ergo Maria, Deum sua unius virtute contentum nullos adhibuisse operis socios ...“.

ihnen durchaus Menschen, deren Herrlichkeit die Ehre Gottes gefährden könnte.⁴⁹

Charakteristika der Magnifikat-Exegese Calvins

Calvin stellt sich dadurch auf seine Leserschaft ein, dass er für die Leser seiner Erläuterungen zur Evangelienharmonie in der lateinischen Bildungssprache sehr viel knapper formuliert. Das gilt besonders für die Polemik gegen die ‚Papisten‘. Das Thema des Bundes, den Gott mit Abraham geschlossen hat, spielt eine Rolle von Bedeutung. Die Kirche, die aus denen besteht, die sich an das Evangelium halten, ist nun die wahre Nachkommenschaft Abrahams. Ihr gilt die Verheißung, die sich mit dem Kommen des Gottessohnes erfüllt.

IV. Übereinstimmungen und Differenzen zwischen Luthers und Calvins Exegese des Magnifikat

Weil Calvin die deutsche Sprache nicht beherrschte, ist es unwahrscheinlich, dass er Luthers Übersetzung und Kommentar des Magnifikat gelesen hat. Dennoch sind einige Übereinstimmungen zwischen den Kommentaren der beiden Reformatoren bemerkenswert.

Beide widersprechen vehement der im Spätmittelalter verbreiteten Sichtweise, Maria sei durch ihre Demut der Antitypos zum Hochmut der Eva gewesen. Beide betonen, die Vokabel *tapeinosis* bedeute niedrigen sozialen Stand, den Maria auch bewußt akzeptiert habe. Beide wehren sich dagegen, dass Maria beispielsweise als Königin des Himmels angerufen wurde.

Doch sind auch gewichtige Unterschiede festzustellen. Calvin betont viel stärker als Luther den Bund, den Gott mit Abraham geschlossen hat und aufgrund dessen sich (reformatorische) Christen seiner Auffassung nach als ‚Abrahams Samen‘ betrachten dürfen, als Gottesvolk, das Gott wirklich dient. Luther wiederum geht intensiver auf die Frage ein, wie es denn konkret aussehe, wenn Gott erniedrige und erhöhe, wie man es sich zu erklären habe, dass eine Königin wie Esther und ein reicher Herdenbesitzer wie Abraham durchaus bei Gott Gnade gefunden hätten und eben nicht erniedrigt worden seien. Nur bei Luther findet sich der Gedanke, Marias Loblied sei auch ganz besonders geeignet, einem Fürsten

⁴⁹ Calvin: *Harmonia evangelica*. Auslegung von „Detraxit primates“ (CR 73 = CO 45, Braunschweig 1891, Sp. 41): „Quod si ex utero sceptrum afferrent principes, et continua esset regnorum stabilitas, statim evanesceret omnis Dei et eius providentiae notitia.“

zu zeigen, in welcher Haltung man sich gerade als Herrscher der Leitung Gottes anvertrauen solle.

Die im Spätmittelalter weit verbreitete intensive Marienverehrung schließlich beschäftigte Luther viel stärker als Calvin. Gerade deswegen ist es andererseits auch wieder bemerkenswert, dass Luther in späten Predigten über das Magnifikat wieder viel unbekümmerter über Demut sprechen konnte als in seiner Frühzeit.

Theology

Divine Accommodation and the Reality of Human Knowledge of God: The Example of Calvin's Commentary on the Moses Theophany (Exodus 33–34)

ARNOLD HUIJGEN

In the eyes of many contemporary systematic theologians, Calvin is a “Sinner” rather than a “Saint”, because of his (in)famous notion of divine accommodation. They think this notion is not helpful to describe God's revelation, since it fails to ensure that humans can *really* know God, because Calvin seems to assume a reality behind the reality of revelation. The notion of divine accommodation seems to rest on a theistic presupposition of Who God is, that can no longer be maintained under the conditions of modernity – at least not in the way it has been articulated in earlier centuries.¹ So, the reality of human knowledge of God through divine accommodation is seriously questioned.

An instance of these questions and objections is found in H.M. Kuitert's dissertation.² He altogether rejects the notion of divine accommodation because of its indebtedness to the metaphysical tradition, which originated in Philo of Alexandria, and of which Calvin is a prominent representative.³ Kuitert argues for the problematic character of the accommodation idea by highlighting its theological consequences. First, in the doctrine of revelation, God's incomprehensibility as essential characteristic of His being God precludes any revelation, for any revelation would make God less incomprehensible, and, therefore, would lessen God's being God. The notion of accommodation tries to compensate for this incomprehensibility, but cannot successfully do so, because it is inherently dependent on this incomprehensibility.⁴ Secondly, in Christology, divine accommodation leads

¹ Cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematische Theologie*, Göttingen: V&R 1988, 44–45.

² H.M. Kuitert, *De mensvormigheid Gods. Een dogmatisch-hermeneutische studie over de anthropomorfismen van de Heilige Schrift*, Kampen: Kok, 1962. The German translation is *Gott in Menschengestalt. Eine dogmatisch-hermeneutische Studie über die Anthropomorfismen der Bibel*, München: Kaiser, 1967. No English translation exists.

³ Kuitert, *De mensvormigheid Gods*, 62–66.

⁴ Kuitert, *De mensvormigheid Gods*, 106–107.

to gnosticism and docetism, because the flesh of Christ is no more than the formal cloak of God's presence in this world.⁵ Thirdly, in theological epistemology, divine accommodation precludes real knowledge of God, for only God has actual knowledge of God, since only God can fully know God.⁶ In short, divine accommodation seems to preclude true knowledge of Who God *really* is.

The same point is raised, though from a different perspective, in Calvin research. Many students of accommodation in Calvin distinguish a *real* vision of God from *truly* seeing God, particularly in the Old Testament. Randall Zachman, for instance, observes in his analysis of Calvin's commentary on a vision the prophet Ezekiel received: "the accommodated self-manifestation of God is not delusive, for God is *really* seen in the vision, even if God is not seen as God *truly* is."⁷ That raises the question how we can *know* that God's accommodated self-manifestation is reliable. When God can present Himself differently than He actually is, how can we be sure that we have sound knowledge of Who God really is? That is a serious question, which even relates to the relation between immanent and economic Trinity in Calvin's works.

In this article, I wish to examine how Calvin thinks about the reality, and reliability, of our accommodated knowledge of God, particularly though not exclusively in the Old Testament. Because this question cannot be treated exhaustively here, I narrow the discussion to Calvin's commentary on the Moses theophany in Exodus 33–34. The background for this choice lies in the fact that, while working on the analysis of Calvin's concept of accommodation, I have developed the thesis that two perspectives can together comprehensively account for the various instances of divine accommodation in Calvin; namely, the perspective of transcendence and the perspective of pedagogy.⁸ In my opinion, the Moses theophany plays a central role in both, while the importance of exactly these two perspectives can be demonstrated in Calvin's use of the Moses theophany.

⁵ Kuitert, *De mensvormigheid Gods*, 117–118.

⁶ Kuitert, *De mensvormigheid Gods*, 158.

⁷ Randall C. Zachman, *Image and Word in the Theology of John Calvin*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, 152. My italics. Zachman analyses Calvin, *Comm. Ezek. 1:28* (CO 40:60; CTS 22:106). Cf. Randall C. Zachman, "Calvin As Analogical Theologian." *SJTh* 51 (1998): 162–187, particularly 169.

⁸ This point cannot be extensively demonstrated here. See my *Familiar Knowledge. Divine Accommodation in John Calvin's Theology*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht (forthcoming).

I. The Moses theophany and divine transcendence

From the perspective of divine transcendence, the question is how Calvin can maintain that God Himself, God's essence or majesty, is not at variance with God as He reveals Himself to humans. Characteristically, Calvin does not secure this by way of a definition of this relation. Rather, it is a matter of faith that God is no other than He reveals Himself. So, Calvin does not make a detour around God's revelation and goes to God in Himself, neither with regard to God's love, nor with regard to His wrath.⁹ Such abstraction would, in Calvin's terms, be "vain speculation." But it is impossible for us to step away from our actual situation as fallen humans *coram Deo* and still receive knowledge of God. In short, we are completely dependent on God's revelation.

The question remains, however, how the reliability of God's revelation can be ascertained when God shows Himself differently than He actually is. For instance, when God repents, Calvin observes that "the mode of accommodation is for him to represent himself to us not as he is in himself, but as he is sensed by us (*non qualis in se est, sed qualis a nobis sentitur*)."¹⁰ But how can we distinguish those, or know whether there is a reality behind God's revelation, that may be at variance with what we think God's revelation is?

One of the ways to answer this question is found in Calvin's notion of God's nature, in some specific cases. These are only found in the Old Testament, and especially in the Moses theophany. Before delving into this, though, it should be noted that, as a rule, Calvin uses the notions of "God's essence" and "God's nature," in accordance with a broad theological tradition, as synonyms.¹¹ But there are Old Testament cases in which Calvin describes God's nature as part of God's revelation, or even as a summary

⁹ Cf. Cornelis van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror. John Calvin and Karl Barth on Knowing God. A Diptych*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions 120, Leiden: Brill, 2005, 152: "It is as if the lines of Calvin's theology become blurred when the human eye seeks what is taking place within God."

¹⁰ Calvin, *Institutes* 1.17.12–13 (*OS* 3:217–218; *LCC* 20:226–227, slightly altered).

¹¹ Calvin writes, for instance, that God's nature is simple and spiritual, which he otherwise states of God's essence; *Comm. Isaiah* 44:15–17 (*CO* 37:116). Places where Calvin uses *essentia Dei* or *gloria Dei* and *natura Dei* as synonyms are, for instance, *Institutes*, 1.15.5, 2.8.2 (*OS* 3:181, 345); *Comm. Exodus* 25:8 (*CO* 24:403); *Serm. Genesis* 1:1–2 (*SC* 11.1:1). In other passages, Calvin attributes aspects of God's essence to God's nature: *Comm. Isaiah* 55:10, 66:1 (*CO* 37:291, 436); *Serm. Acts* 5:7–15, 7:42–44 (*SC* 8:132, 356). When dealing with "improper" expressions for God's majesty, Calvin can also describe these as unfitting for God's nature. See *Comm. Zephaniah* 3:16–17 (*CO* 44:72–73): "Videtur ergo respuere has loquendi formas Dei natura [...] Nam si disputamus an haec convenient naturae Dei, uno verbo dicendum erit, nihil magis esse remotum."

of God's revelation, whereas he does not regard God's essence as a summary of God's revelation. Though Calvin does not clearly distinguish God's nature from God's essence in these instances – which would be a deviation of his own use of these notions as synonyms – , he shows to use the notion of God's *natura* in a specific way, that is not found in his use of the notion of God's *essentia*.

On the one hand, Calvin is reluctant to say that God reveals His essence as such, without accommodation.¹² The immensity of God's essence precludes its comprehension by finite humans, which is the reason that God accommodates Himself. "The Father, himself infinite, becomes finite in the Son, for he has accommodated himself to our little measure lest our minds be overwhelmed by the immensity of his glory."¹³ On the other hand, Calvin is obviously less restrained to say that God has shown His *natura* to us, namely in the Moses theophany, Exodus 34:6–7: "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness⁷, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."¹⁴

The Moses theophany stands in the tension between the non-revelation of God's essence and the revelation of God's nature. The occasion for the theophany is Moses' request to see God's glorious majesty, by which "Moses had inconsiderately proceeded farther than he should."¹⁵ But while God keeps His glorious majesty, and essence, away from Moses' eyes, He does reveal His nature, in Exodus 34:6–7. Remarkably, though Calvin devotes a large portion of his Pentateuch Harmony commentary to this passage, he does not explicitly note it as the "nature" of God. But in many other passages, especially in the Psalms commentary, he explicitly refers to Exodus 34:6–7 as "as clear and satisfactory a description of the nature of God [...] as can anywhere be found."¹⁶ When Calvin finds the terms of Exodus 34:6–7 in a passage, he can write: "This sentence, as is well

¹² Calvin, *Institutes* 1.13.1 (*OS* 3:108; translation Battles/McNeill, 121): "God speaks 'sparingly' (*parce*) of His essence, to keep us in sobriety." A. Baars has rightly nuanced my earlier statement that God's essence is no subject of revelation in Calvin, see A. Baars, *Om Gods verhevenheid en Zijn nabijheid. De Drie-eenheid bij Calvijn*, Kampen: Kok, 2004, 654 n. 57.

¹³ Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.6.4 (*OS* 3:325–326; translation Battles, 347). Calvin quotes Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 4.4.2.

¹⁴ Exodus 34:6–7 (NIV).

¹⁵ Calvin, *Comm. Exodus* 33:18 (*CO* 25:108; *CTS Mosaic Harmony* 3:377).

¹⁶ Calvin, *Comm. Psalms* 145:8 (*CO* 32:414; *CTS Psalms*, 5:275).

known, is taken from Exodus 34:6, where we meet with a very remarkable description of the nature of God.”¹⁷

The reason for Calvin’s explicit references to Exodus 34:6–7 as “God’s nature” seems to be his desire to comfort believers in distress and in temptation, when it seems that God is not as He has revealed Himself to be. With pastoral sensitivity, Calvin notes that when we cast our cares upon God, it “often happens, that the nearer He approaches us, the more, to outward appearance, does he aggravate our sorrows. Many, therefore, when they derive no advantage from this course, imagine that they cannot do better than forget him.”¹⁸ In such situations, David derives deep comfort from the fact that “God changes neither his love nor his nature.”¹⁹ Calvin stresses that God’s nature is as “proper” to God as His essence is²⁰, and that, therefore, no believer should ever think that God could act contrary to his merciful character – even if that seems to be the case.²¹ Amid distresses and temptations, God’s nature is the life ring to which the believer clings to. So, David clings to God’s gracious and enduring nature, amidst temptations that suggest that God is in no way gracious or longsuffering.²² Thus, the characteristics of God’s nature, highlighted in the Moses theophany, guarantee that God *in se* is no other than God *quoad nos*, that there is no God behind God.

The consistency of God’s nature shows even if believers would have Him act contrary to that nature. For instance: after God’s gracious reaction to the Ninevites’ repentance, Jonah says that he already knew that God would react as He did, even though God had said that He would destroy Nineveh. Jonah could predict this reaction because he knew that God was

¹⁷ Calvin, *Comm. Psalms* 86:14 (CO 31:797); cf. *Comm. Psalms* 85:6, 86:5, 103:8 (CO 31:787, 793; 32:78); *Comm. Isaiah* 28:18 (CO 36:479); *Prael. Jeremiah* 18:23 (CO 38:316–317); *Prael. Daniel* 9:9 (CO 41:142); *Prael. Joel* 2:12–13 (CO 42:545); *Prael. Jonah* 4:2 (CO 43:265); *Prael. Nahum* 1:2 (CO 43:438).

¹⁸ Calvin, *Comm. Psalms* 77:12 (CO 31:717; CTS *Psalms* 3:217).

¹⁹ Calvin, *Comm. Psalms* 77:12 (CO 31:717; CTS *Psalms* 3:217).

²⁰ Calvin, *Comm. Psalms* 77:10 (CO 31:715): “sic coniunctam esse bonitatem cum Dei essentia, ut impossibile sit eum non esse misericordem. [...] An Deus naturam suam exueret, ut non sit misericors?” This is the only passage I know in which Calvin uses “essentia Dei” in the same way as he otherwise uses “natura Dei.”

It has often been noted that Calvin employs the terminology of *proprie* and *improprie*, proper and improper, to distinguish what belongs to God’s essence (e.g. incomprehensibility) and what does not (e.g. corporeality). The same terminology occurs with regard to God’s nature: some things are properly ascribed to it (e.g. mildness and friendliness), other things are improperly said and do not as such belong to God’s nature (e.g. punishments for His children). Things that are improper to either God’s essence or God’s nature are evoked by human disposition or behavior with which God has to deal.

²¹ Calvin, *Comm. Psalms* 25:6 (CO 31:253).

²² Calvin, *Comm. Psalms* 25:6; 28:3; 31:1 (CO 31:253.282.301).

merciful and longsuffering, in accordance with Exodus 34:6–7.²³ Otherwise, “He would [...] deny his own nature (*abnegaret suam naturam*): God cannot be unlike himself, he cannot put off that disposition (*affectus*) of which he has once testified to Moses.”²⁴

Still, the thought that God’s nature functions as the standard by which God’s dealings can be measured, has to be nuanced. Not only because Calvin does not always clearly define his terms, but also because he employs another standard, which could potentially damage the religious certainty on the Biblical basis just described. With respect to anthropomorphisms, for instance, Calvin repeatedly writes that “we know that God has no passions.”²⁵ Without entering the discussion of the exact meaning of “passions” and “emotions” here, it can be noted that Calvin employs another standard than the standard of Exodus 34:6–7. This knowledge seems as much an inheritance of the metaphysical tradition as it is an articulation of Biblical notions of God’s consistency, though it should be kept in mind that, for Calvin, God’s unchangeableness is a matter of His ‘staying true to Himself’ (*similis sui*), rather than an abstract immutability.²⁶

In sum, when Calvin distinguishes God’s nature from God’s essence in the Old Testament, this “nature” serves as a guarantee of Who God is. Calvin does not secure the unity of God *in se* and God *quoad nos* by way of reasoning, but by way of faith, though this can not directly account for the distinction as such, or for some references to seeming metaphysical standards.

II. The Moses Theophany and Divine Pedagogy

Like the Patristic writers that employ the notion of divine accommodation, Calvin pictures it as a divine pedagogy. This is the second perspective to analyze Calvin’s notion of divine accommodation. God raises His Old Testament people, by leading them through various accommodations to Christ. Within this pedagogy, the Moses theophany again has a crucial place, for

²³ Calvin explicitly quotes this text.

²⁴ Calvin, *Prael. Jonah* 4:2 (CO 43:266; *CTS Minor Prophets* 3:115–116).

²⁵ For instance: Calvin, *Prael. Jeremiah* 26:17–19 (CO 38:532): “Scimus in Deum non cadere mutationem”; *Prael. Hosea* 10:10 (CO 42:423): “Scimus passiones in Deum non cadere”; *Prael. Hosea* 11:8–9 (CO 42:442): “Scimus Deum nullis passionibus obnoxium esse”; *Prael. Zephaniah* 3:16–17 (CO 44:72): “Scimus enim statim implere quidquid visum est.”

²⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.4.3 (OS 3:42). See Wilhelm H. Neuser, “Calvins Verständnis der Heiligen Schrift,” in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor. Die Referate des Internationalen Kongresses für Calvinforschung vom 20. bis 23. August 1990 in Grand Rapids*, edited by Wilhelm H. Neuser. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994, 45.

Moses is pictured as the one who received the most farreaching revelation of all the Old Testament. I will focus on the central place of Moses in divine pedagogy, to examine what this means for the reality of our knowledge of God.

The centrality of Moses within divine pedagogy shows when the various phases of that pedagogy are taken into the account. After God's accommodation to humans in Paradise, for instance by the sign of the Tree of Life, Calvin discerns three main phases in the Old Testament: the patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets. That Moses stands out, shows when we compare Calvin's exegesis of the statements of both Jacob and Moses that they saw God "face to face."²⁷ Let me first note two similarities in Calvin's exegesis of both passages. In both cases, Calvin denies that Jacob or Moses saw God's immense majesty. In Moses' case, the occasion for the theophany was Moses' request to see God's glory, His majesty. This was denied to him.²⁸ A second similarity is Calvin's exegesis of seeing God "face to face" as a matter of comparison: it does not *literally* mean seeing God's face, but it is a comparison to other forms of revelation, to highlight the farreaching character of this revelation. But here, the difference begins to show. For Jacob, this vision is to be compared with other visions he received, "in which the Lord had not so plainly appeared unto him."²⁹ In comparison to the clarity of the Gospel, however, the revelation to Jacob was only a "slender measure of knowledge."³⁰ But in the case of Moses, the clarity of the revelation is not only to be compared with his own life, but in comparison with all revelations under the Old Testament, it is the clearest. Calvin notes this even in the commentary on Jacob's (!) vision of God at Peniel. "Because he [Moses] occupied an intermediate place *between patriarchs and apostles*, he is said, in comparison with them, to have seen, face to face, the God who had been hidden from the fathers."³¹ So, the Moses theophany is placed not only between patriarchs and prophets, but between patriarchs and apostles. This theophany stands out above all of Old Testament revelation. "[N]o man was ever equal to Moses, or arrived at such a pitch of dignity."³² God "carries His manifestation of Himself to its very utmost."³³ That is to say, within the Old Testament. For, in comparison with Moses, "God has approached more nearly unto us" in the New Testament.³⁴

²⁷ See Zachman, *Image and Word*, 133–162, particularly 144–148.

²⁸ Calvin, *Comm. Exodus* 33:18 (CO 25:108).

²⁹ Calvin, *Comm. Genesis* 32:30 (CO 23:446–447; CTS *Genesis* 2:202).

³⁰ Calvin, *Comm. Genesis* 32:30 (CO 23:446–447).

³¹ Calvin, *Comm. Genesis* 32:29 (CO 23:446; CTS *Genesis* 2:201).

³² Calvin, *Comm. Exodus* 33:11 (CO 25:105; CTS *Mosaic Harmony* 3:372).

³³ Calvin, *Comm. Exodus* 33:19 (CO 25:109; CTS *Mosaic Harmony* 3:378).

³⁴ Calvin, *Comm. Genesis* 32:29 (CTS *Genesis* 2:201).

Still, Moses did not see God's majesty. Though God revealed Himself clearer than ever before, this revelation was still accommodated to Moses' human capacity.³⁵ So, that Moses saw God "face to face" should be taken as "equivalent to discoursing openly and familiarly."³⁶ This "familiar intercourse" is crucial for the character of the Moses theophany;³⁷ moreover, it is the objective of all God's accommodating activities. It not only denotes the intimate nearness of God, but it also fits in the larger picture of the family of God, that is shaped through the history of divine pedagogy. Calvin's complete image of the Fatherhood of God, and of the family of God, resounds in his reference to "familiar intercourse."

For our question about the reality of human knowledge of God, the position of the Moses theophany helps to see that, for Calvin, the ultimate reality of human knowledge of God is reached in the eschaton. That is the reason that Calvin repeatedly states that Moses did not see God as He is in Himself. "God cannot be seen by a mortal man; for we shall not see Him as He is, until we shall be like Him."³⁸ Until that day, "the most perfect amongst us, such as Moses was, [...] cannot endure God's glory through the infirmity of the flesh."³⁹ Therefore, faith is directed toward that moment. Our present time is characterized by the "not yet" (*nondum*): "we do not as yet see clearly the mysteries of the heavenly kingdom, and we do not as yet enjoy a distinct view of them."⁴⁰ We still see in a mirror; that is, we still need the means of the preaching of God's Word and the administration of the sacraments. The word is "a naked and open revelation of God, and it has nothing intricate in it, to hold us in suspense, as wicked persons imagine; but how small a proportion does this bear to *that* vision, which we have in our eye!"⁴¹

In sum, Moses received the clearest revelation under the Old Testament, which highlights both the privilege of New Testament believers, and the importance of the eschaton for all knowledge of God. It also further under-

³⁵ Calvin, *Comm. Exodus* 33:20 (CO 25:111): "non tamen ut Deum perfecte videat qualis in se est, sed quatenus fert captus humanae mentis. Nam etsi angeli dicuntur faciem Dei videre excellentiore modo quam homines, non tamen capiunt immensam gloriae perfectionem, qua absorberentur. [...] Neque enim fieri potest quin ille incomprehensibilis fulgor in nihilum nos redigat. Itaque Deus solida sui cognitione nos arcendo, se tamen manifestat quoad expedit: imo lucis mensuram nostro modulo attemperans, faciem induit quam possumus ferre (1. Ioan. 3,2)."

³⁶ Calvin, *Comm. Deuteronomy* 5:4 (CO 24:211; CTS *Mosaic Harmony* 1:341).

³⁷ Calvin, *Comm. Exodus* 33:11 (CO 25:105; CTS *Mosaic Harmony* 3:372): "familiare colloquium"; cf. *Comm. Exodus* 33:19 (CO 25:109).

³⁸ Calvin, *Comm. Exodus* 33:20 (CTS *Mosaic Harmony* 3:381).

³⁹ Calvin, *Comm. Exodus* 33:21 (CTS *Mosaic Harmony* 3:382).

⁴⁰ Calvin, *Comm. 1 Corinthians* 13:12 (CTS *Corinthians* 1:429).

⁴¹ Calvin, *Comm. 1 Corinthians* 13:12 (CTS *Corinthians* 1:431).

lines how crucial the passage Exodus 33–34 is. Not only do we find the clearest description of God’s nature there, but also the highest revelation of all the Old Testament.

III. The Moses theophany and Christ

What has been said so far, relates mostly to the typical Old Testament context, since we focused on the Moses theophany. But how does this relate to God’s revelation in Christ, in the New Testament? Let me briefly indicate the relation between the centrality of the Moses theophany in the Old Testament accommodation, and the centrality of Christ in all accommodations. I contend that both aspects, transcendence and pedagogy, center on Christ.

First, the whereas “God’s nature” is revealed in the Old Testament, Christ ultimately reveals who God Himself is, His essence.⁴² Whereas Calvin is consistently reluctant to say that God actually reveals His essence, he observes that God has “essentially” revealed Himself in His Son.⁴³ So, this is a complete, essential, revelation. “God has often communicated Himself to men, but it has been only in part. In Christ, however, he communicates Himself to us wholly (*totum se nobis communicat*).”⁴⁴ Those who know Christ, “have God truly present (*vere praesentem*), and enjoy Him completely.”⁴⁵ Once again, this serves an antispeculative purpose. We must not investigate God’s hidden essence without Christ, but rather behold Him as He appears in His only-begotten Son.⁴⁶ For looking to Christ “is to come to the light, which is justly said to be otherwise inaccessible.”⁴⁷ God keeps on dwelling in inapproachable light – a reference to 1 Timothy 6:16 –, so all speculation is warded off; but the inaccessible has become

⁴² Calvin, *Comm. John* 14:13 (*COR* 2.11.2:146): “Nam quum nobis per se abscondita sit Dei maiestas, in Christo refulget; quum occulta sit eius manus, eam habemus in Christo visibilem.”

⁴³ Calvin, *Comm. Colossians* 2:9 (*COR* 2.16:425): “In Christo autem essentialiter nobis apparuit.”

⁴⁴ Calvin, *Comm. Colossians*. 2:9 (*COR* 2.16:425; *CTS Colossians*, 183).

⁴⁵ Calvin, *Comm. Colossians*. 2:9 (*COR* 2.16:425; *CTS Colossians*, 183).

⁴⁶ Calvin, *Comm. 2 Corinthians* 4:6 (*COR* 2.15:75–76): “Insignis locus, unde discimus Deum in sua inscrutabili altitudine non esse investigandum (habitat enim lucem inaccessibilem), sed cognoscendum, quatenus se in Christo patefecit. [...] Iterum videmus in voce personae relationem ad nos statui, quia nobis utilius est Deum conspicerem, qualis apparet in Filio unigenito, quam arcanam eius essentiam investigare.”

⁴⁷ Calvin, *Comm. 1 John* 2:22 (*CO* 55:325; *CTS Catholic Epistles*, 196): “ergo necesse est in Christum respicere. Hic accessus est ad lucem, quae alioqui merito inaccessa dicitur.”

accessible in Christ.⁴⁸ So, with the coming of Christ, the situation of divine accommodation has changed fundamentally: Calvin does not use the distinction between God's essence and God's nature in the New Testament situation, because God's essence has been revealed in Christ. He is the life ring to which New Testament believers have to cling in temptation.

Secondly, from the pedagogical perspective, the familiarity motif from the Moses theophany points to Christ. Under the Old Testament, only Moses received this level of familiar knowledge,⁴⁹ but under the New Testament, God has given Christ "familiarily in our midst."⁵⁰ In the first sections of *Institutes* 2.9, in which Calvin compares the knowledge of Christ in the Old and New Testaments, the term *familiaris* plays a central role.⁵¹ Calvin observes that the ancient people did not come to possess the treasures which God had transmitted to us by their hand. "For today the grace of which they bore witness is put familiarily before our eyes."⁵² By His coming, Christ has "opened the door of the heavens for us, that a familiar entrance (*familiaris ingressus*) is fully accessible."⁵³ So, the pedagogical situation has fundamentally changed with Christ's coming, because of the familiar knowledge that is no longer bound to certain recipients, and theophanies, but to the incarnate Christ. Once again, this familiar knowledge points to the eschaton, to the moment in which believers will see God face to face.

Conclusion

How does Calvin think about the reliability of human knowledge of God, which we receive through accommodation? On the basis of our survey of the function of Exodus 33–34 in Calvin's concept of accommodation, three

⁴⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.2.1 (*OS* 4:7; translation Battles, 543): "Since 'God dwells in inaccessible light', Christ must become our intermediary."

⁴⁹ It would be an oversimplification to state that familiar knowledge of God in Christ is restricted to the New Testament. Calvin's views on the unity of the covenant forbid that. Even before Christ took the flesh upon Himself, He descended in an intermediate form so that He might have more familiar access to the faithful; namely, as the Angel of the Eternal God. Calvin, *Inst.* 1.13.10 (*OS* 3:122). Cf. *Comm. Genesis* 18:1 (*CO* 23:267): "Deus non modo e media angelorum turba duos ad eum [Abraham] mitteret, sed familiarius se illi patefaceret in filio suo."

⁵⁰ Calvin, *Institutes* 2.12.1 (*OS* 3:438).

⁵¹ Often unnoted, though. In the texts to be quoted in the next two footnotes, the Battles / McNeill translation twice passes over the words "familiaris" and "familiariter" without translating them.

⁵² Calvin, *Institutes* 2.9.1 (*OS* 3:398).

⁵³ Calvin, *Institutes* 2.9.2 (*OS* 3:400).

conclusions can be drawn. First, for Calvin, this reliability is a matter of confidence, of faith – and not of argument. This rests on the conviction that faith in Christ is the only entrance to true knowledge of God. Calvin refuses to know anything about God *in se* which He chose not to reveal, though he sometimes seems to know things about God *in se* that have not been revealed as such. But Calvin is not so much interested in a consistent argument, knowable for reason, as he is in God's familiarity, knowable only through faith.

Secondly, Calvin's references to God's nature, as expressed in Exodus 34:6–7, show that Calvin reckons with the thought that God may be different than He shows Himself, though not as an intellectual question, but as a temptation, to be overcome by clinging to God's nature. Calvin is not consistent in this respect, because he can also refer to a knowledge that God has no passions, that is not exclusively based on the Biblical patterns found in Exodus 34:6–7. Still, God's nature is the life ring for the believer in distress.

Thirdly, all human knowledge of God is oriented towards the eschaton. Until that coming of Christ, our knowledge of God is knowledge through a mirror. This implies that all knowledge of God is limited, mediated, and accommodated until that day. Therefore, the ultimate reality of human knowledge of God can only be seen through faith in the coming Christ. That God is no other than He reveals Himself, and that there is no God behind God, can only be known through faith – or it is not known at all.

Probably, most modern theologians would object to Calvin's seeming knowledge that God has no passions. The problem is not only the position that God has no passions, but also the lacking justification for the claim, other than a seeming reference to metaphysics. It seems that Calvin acts contrary to his own references to God's nature, here, though he rejects abstract immutability and insists that God stays true to Himself and to His Word. But Calvin's insistence that God has no passion, could perhaps serve as a correction of the almost exclusive personalism of the present day.

On the other hand, there are elements in Calvin's thought on accommodation that I think can be valued positively. That Calvin does not ground the reliability of our knowledge of God on a speculative definition of the relation between God *in se* and God *quoad nos*, is such a point. Reliable human knowledge of God is founded not on reasoning, but on God's promise in Christ. Still, it can be asked whether the anti-speculative tenor, the focus on God's revelation, particularly in Christ, and the eschatological dimension that characterizes the notion of divine accommodation, cannot be articulated without the use of the notion of accommodation. That question cannot be treated in the space of this paper.

In closing, let me make a variation on the quote of Randall Zachman in the introduction: Calvin underlines both that we *really* and *truly* know God through faith in Christ, but that we will only *fully* know Him, and *truly* see Him at that final day.

Calvins Institutio vor dem Hintergrund der Theologie des Mittelalters gelesen

VOLKER LEPPIN

Die Konfrontation Calvins mit mittelalterlicher Theologie ist nicht ganz einfach: Während es ganz unproblematisch erscheint, Luthers Theologie als Reformation, oder besser: Transformation mittelalterlicher Theologie darzustellen, scheint dies bei Calvin bedeutend schwerer. Das liegt vor allem daran, dass sein Weg zur Reformation ja bereits einen gewissen Entwicklungsstand reformatorischer Theologie voraussetzt, also nicht in der Weise wie bei Luther – oder auch Zwingli¹ – als ein Herausschälen aus mittelalterlichen Rahmenbedingungen zu beschreiben ist²; vielmehr liegt ihre Charakteristik gerade darin, dass sie die bereits vorhandene reformatorische Theologie weiterführt und umgestaltet. Das Verhältnis zum Mittelalter ist damit ein um vieles stärker gebrochenes als bei anderen Reformatoren.

Nun ist nicht gänzlich zu bestreiten, dass dennoch eine Rekonstruktion des Weges von der mittelalterlichen zur reformatorischen Theologie denkbar wäre³, freilich müsste die um vieles komplexer ansetzen als in anderen Fällen und würde den Umfang einer Kleinstudie gänzlich sprengen. Umgekehrt erscheint es reizvoll, die Frageperspektive einmal umzukehren und zu fragen, ob und inwieweit nicht unter Umständen beim späten Calvin wieder auf neue Weise mit dem mittelalterlichen Erbe umgegangen wird, ob also nicht unter Umständen, sich gerade im Horizont einer gefestigten Abgrenzung vom Mittelalter an manchen Stellen eine neue Möglichkeit zum entspannten Umgang mit dessen Theologie entwickeln kann. Daher gehen die folgenden Überlegungen von der entwickelten Theologie des späten Calvin in der Institutio von 1559 aus und unterziehen diese einer Lektüre vor dem Hintergrund mediävistischer Erfahrungen und Lesegewohnheiten.

¹ S. hierzu Volker Leppin, Art. Zwingli, in: Theologische Realenzyklopädie 36, Berlin/New York 2004, 793–809, 798–804.

² Dies gilt grundsätzlich auch im Blick auf die Seelenlehre, auf deren spätmittelalterliche Wurzeln George H. Tavard, *The Starting Point of Calvin's Theology*, Grand Rapids 2000, verwiesen hat, die aber zugleich schon zum frühest nachweisbaren Zeitpunkt von der Auseinandersetzung mit den Täufern geprägt ist.

³ Vgl. Karl Reuter, *Vom Scholaren bis zum jungen Reformator. Studien zum Werdegang Johannes Calvins*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1981.

I. Sapientiale Katechetik: der Aufbau der Insitutio letzter Hand

Vergleicht man die Gliederung der Institutio von 1559 mit den früheren Auflagen, so drängt sich der Eindruck, dass die letzte Auflage über die früheren hinweg wieder an mittelalterliche Denk- und Gliederungsgewohnheiten anknüpft, unmittelbar auf. Das hängt zunächst an der auffälligsten und offenkundigsten Änderung, die Calvin in der Gliederung vorgenommen hat: Die bislang durchgängige Gliederung nach Kapiteln – sechs in der ersten Auflage von 1536, siebzehn in der von 1539 und einundzwanzig in den Auflagen von 1543 bis 1554 wird nun aufgegeben⁴. Stattdessen erfolgt eine Gliederung in Bücher, die in sich dann in Kapitel aufgeteilt werden:

Liber 1: De cognitione Dei creatoris

Liber 2: De cognitione Dei redemptoris

Liber 3: De modo percipiendae Christi gratiae

Liber 4: De externis mediis ad salutem⁵

Dass diese Änderung der Gliederung keineswegs nur äußerlich ist, zeigen die Verschiebungen, die Calvin vorgenommen hat, wohl am Auffälligsten im Zusammenhang der Auslegung des Glaubensbekenntnisses: Die Auslegung des ersten Teils des Credo, die sich seit 1543 in Kapitel 6 fand, rückt nun, der Gottesthematik entsprechend, in das erste Buch, die Auslegung des zweiten Teils kommt im zweiten, christologischen Buch zu stehen, und mit dem Übergang zum dritten Teil beginnt nun in der Auflage letzter Hand das dritte Buch⁶, der von Calvin bereits in der ersten Auflage⁷, im Unterschied zu Luther, gezählte vierte Teil, der mit den eigentlich ekklesiologischen Aussagen beginnt, rückt naheliegender Weise in das vierte Buch. Allein schon diese Aufteilung macht deutlich, dass die *ratio* der vier Bücher der späten Institutio-Auflage in einer Nachzeichnung des Glaubensbekenntnisses besteht.

Doch ergibt eine Lektüre aus mediävistischer Perspektive einen darüber hinausgehenden bemerkenswerten Befund: Umschreibend könnte man den Inhalt der vier Bücher zu zusammenfassen:

⁴ Das muss keinen Widerspruch zu der von Paul C. Böttger. *Calvins Institutio als Erbauungsbuch. Versuch einer literarischen Analyse*, Neukirchen-VLuyn 138–140, hervorgehobenen kontinuierlichen applikativen Struktur der Institutio in allen Auflagen sein, stellt aber doch einen markanten Einschnitt dar, der für die Interpretation nicht missachtet werden sollte.

⁵ Vgl. zu diesem Komplex Stefan Scheld, *Media salutis. Zur Heilsvermittlung bei Calvin*, Stuttgart 1989.

⁶ S. den synoptischen Überblick der Kapitel in CO 29, LIII.

⁷ CO 29,72.

- I: Gottes- und Schöpfungslehre
- II: Soteriologisch zugespitzte Christologie
- III: Rechtfertigungslehre
- IV: Heilmittel

Nun ist eine Gliederung in vier Bücher sicher zunächst etwas ganz Äußeres, doch besteht eine große Auffälligkeit darin, dass die viergliedrige Bucheinteilung ja für den Kenner mittelalterlicher Theologie alles andere als ungewöhnlich ist. Es drängt sich zumindest auf, nach einem Zusammenhang mit dem Sentenzenwerk des Lombarden zu fragen, das bekanntlich ebenfalls in vier Bücher eingeteilt war. Und ein solcher genauere Blick ergibt, dass sich die Ähnlichkeit nicht nur auf diese äußerliche Vierteilung beschränkt, sondern auch auf deren inhaltliche Füllung: Beim Lombarden, dessen Werk Calvin selbstverständlich bekannt war⁸, folgen aufeinander⁹:

- I: De mysterio trinitatis
- II: De rerum creatione et formatione corporalium et spiritualium et aliis pluribus eis pertinentibus
- III: De Incarnatione Verbi
- IV: De Doctrina signorum

Vergleicht man dies mit dem Aufbau bei Calvin, so könnte man das Verhältnis so bestimmen, dass die Anliegen, die der Lombarde und mit ihm die mittelalterliche scholastische Tradition in den ersten beiden Büchern behandelt hatten, bei Calvin auf das erste Buch konzentriert sind, während die Soteriologie nun, die bislang im dritten Buch unter der Frage der Inkarnation behandelt worden war, zwei Bücher einnimmt, verteilt auf die christologische Seite einerseits im zweiten Buch, die Gnadenzueignung im Menschen andererseits im dritten Buch. Das jeweilige vierte Buch entspricht sich wiederum in auffälliger Weise.

Der Befund ist einerseits bemerkenswert, andererseits durchaus interpretationsoffen. Bemerkenswert ist er, weil man jedenfalls diese Art von Aufbau nicht als selbstverständlich gesetzt sehen kann – man braucht nur an den klassischen Aufbau eines lutherischen Katechismus zu denken, um sich deutlich zu machen, dass es noch allerhand andere Aufbaumöglichkeiten gibt. Erst recht gilt dies, wenn man auf eine weitere innermittelalterliche Lösung blickt, die Summa des (von Calvin ebenfalls studierten¹⁰) Thomas, in der bekanntlich die Christologie erst in der *tertia pars* eingeführt

⁸ S. z.B. die Zitate in Inst. II,17,6 (CO 30,390); IV, 14,16 (CO 30,953); vgl. auch die Hinweise von Francois Wendel, Calvin. Ursprung und Entwicklung seiner Theologie, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1968, 95.

⁹ S. die Edition: Sententiae in IV libris distinctae. 2 Bde., Grottaferrata (Rom) 1971. 1981 (Spicilegium Bonaventurianum 4).

¹⁰ Wendel, Calvin 106.

wird, nach ausführlichen Darlegungen zur Anthropologie und zur Tugendlehre in der *prima secundae* und *secunda secundae*¹¹. Trotz dieser bemerkenswerten Entsprechung aber bleibt die Aussagekraft begrenzt. Angesichts des allmählichen Wachstums der *Institutio* lässt sich schwer entscheiden, wie bewusst Calvin das mittelalterliche Schema aufgegriffen und transformiert hat – in jedem Falle aber ist die vollzogene Änderung erheblich: Die Ausweitung der Soteriologie ist mit Händen zu greifen.

Freilich ist auch diese Änderung nicht ausschließlich in Kategorien der Abgrenzung zu beschreiben, weswegen für sie der Begriff der Transformation angemessen bleibt: Neben der Bedeutung, die selbstverständlich im reformatorischen Kontext die Rechtfertigungslehre erlangt hatte, ist der soteriologische Grundduktus für die *Institutio* leitend, wie er sich auch etwa in Melanchthons *Loci* niedergeschlagen hat: Wie dieser erklärt hatte, Christus zu erkennen, heiße seine Wohltaten (*beneficia*) zu erkennen¹², will Calvin von Gott als der Quelle aller Güter (*fons omnium bonorum*) sprechen¹³. Nur eine äußerst naive Sicht auf das Mittelalter, wie sie freilich den Reformatoren und erkennbar auch Calvin selbst nicht fremd war, kann dies als einen Gegensatz zur mittelalterlichen Theologie im Sinne einer spekulativen Verengung verstehen. Tatsächlich ist die Frage nach dem praktischen Charakter der Theologie in der theologischen Wissenschaftstheorie des Mittelalters seit ihren Anfängen¹⁴ wiederholt verhandelt und in der Regel nicht schlankweg abgewiesen worden, Duns Scotus hat den praktischen Charakter der Theologie im Sinne ihrer Ausrichtung auf das, was für das Heil des Menschen relevant ist, geradezu zum Ausgangspunkt seiner Bestimmung von Theologie gemacht¹⁵. Noch relevanter für Calvin dürfte die Entwicklung der Frömmigkeitstheologie sein, auf deren Wichtigkeit für ein Verständnis der Reformation Berndt Hamm verschiedentlich aufmerksam gemacht hat¹⁶, deren Bedeutung für Calvin bislang aber noch nicht zureichend erschlossen ist: Blickt man auf diese Theologieformen, so erschließt sich die Ausrichtung des Theologietreibens auf das Frömmigkeitsleben der

¹¹ S. zum Aufbau Volker Leppin, *Theologie im Mittelalter*, Leipzig 2007 (Kirchengeschichte in Einzeldarstellungen I/11), 111.

¹² Philipp Melanchthon, *Loci communes*. 1521. Lateinisch-deutsch, übers. U. komm. V. Horst Georg Pöhlmann, Gütersloh 21997, 22.

¹³ CO 30,34.

¹⁴ S. Ulrich Köpf, *Die Anfänge der theologischen Wissenschaftstheorie im 13. Jahrhundert*, Tübingen 1974 (BHTh 49), 198–210.

¹⁵ S. etwa Duns Scotus, *Opera Omnia*. Bd. 1, hg. v. P. C. Balić u.a., Vatikan 1950, 207–218.

¹⁶ Berndt Hamm, *Frömmigkeitstheologie am Anfang des 16. Jahrhunderts*. Studien zu Johannes von Paltz und seinem Umkreis, Tübingen 1982 (BHTh 65); ders., *Was ist Frömmigkeitstheologie? Überlegungen zum 14. bis 16. Jahrhundert*, in: Hans-Jörg Nieden u. Marcel Nieden (Hg.), *Praxis pietatis*. FS Wolfgang Sommer, Stuttgart 1999, 9–45.

Glaubenden unmittelbar als Erfüllung eines im späten Mittelalter breit vorhandenen Anliegens, das in Calvins *Institutio* durch die im Ursprung katechetische Form einen adäquaten Ausdruck gewonnen hat, der freilich, um eine Kategorie Otto Hermann Peschs¹⁷ für diesen Zusammenhang aufzugreifen, mit der Ausweitung von Thematik und Inhalt, vor allem aber dem zunehmenden Vorschalten eines erkenntnistheoretischen Vorbaus¹⁸, eine sapientiale Gestalt angenommen hat, die an mittelalterliche Systeme erinnert, deren Aufbau freilich zugleich durch die stark soteriologische Konzentration bricht – in diesem Sinne benennt Calvin selbst seit 1539 den Inhalt der *Institutio* als *sapientia*, freilich mit der Betonung: *nostra sapientia*¹⁹; mit diesem Begriff ersetzt er die 1536 noch gewählte Bezeichnung *sacra doctrina*²⁰.

II. Die Bedeutung der Philosophie

1. Abgrenzung und Konflikt

Es ist offenkundig, dass eines der Abgrenzungsmerkmale zwischen reformatorischer und mittelalterlicher Theologie das unterschiedliche Vertrauen in den Nutzen der Philosophie für das theologische Gespräch ist. Auch Calvin teilt die im reformatorischen Lager immer wieder zu beobachtende Abneigung gegenüber zu regem Gebrauch der Philosophie, vor allem gegenüber einem blinden, ungeprüften Vertrauen in eine Übernahme philosophischer Erkenntnisse in den theologischen Verstehenszusammenhang. Ein markanter Punkt für solche Abgrenzungsstrategien ist die Anthropologie, speziell die Lehre vom freien Willen. Sie ist auch deswegen für die Untersuchung des Verhältnisses Calvins zum Mittelalter von Bedeutung, weil die

¹⁷ Otto Hermann Pesch, *Theologie der Rechtfertigung bei Martin Luther und Thomas von Aquin. Versuch eines systematisch-theologischen Dialogs*, Mainz 1967 (Walberberger Studien der Albertus-Magnus-Akademie 4).

¹⁸ Diese Funktion der allgemeinen erkenntnistheoretischen Überlegungen unterschätzt Wendel, Calvin 138, wenn er ihnen nur die „negative Wirkung“ zumisst, dem Menschen die Entschuldigung vor einer Verdammung zu nehmen. Charakteristischerweise hat Wendel diese Abschnitte Calvins erst *nach* den Ausführungen zur Schriftlehre dargestellt und damit die von Calvin vorgenommene Reihenfolge umgekehrt; ähnlich blickt nur auf die defizienten Momente der Aspekte natürlicher Theologie bei Calvin Thomas F. Torrance, *Calvins Lehre vom Menschen*, Zollikon-Zürich 1951, 178–188. Aus dem Horizont der Psalmenauslegung Calvins würdigt Herman J. Selderhuis, *Gott in der Mitte. Calvins Theologie der Psalmen*, Leipzig 2004, 69–71, stärker den propädeutischen Charakter natürlicher Gotteserkenntnis bei Calvin.

¹⁹ CO 29, 279; 30, 31; vgl. Reuter, *Vom Scholaren zum Reformator* 167.

²⁰ CO 29,27.

mit ihr verbundene Fragestellung, bekanntlich zunächst einmal durch die Auseinandersetzung mit humanistischem Denken, speziell im Konflikt zwischen Luther und Erasmus – auch wenn die damit verbundene grundsätzliche Bedeutung für eine Trennung von humanistischem und reformatorischem Lager an der Frage der Willensfreiheit in der Regel überbetont wird.

Bemerkenswerterweise ist nun für Calvin der Diskurspartner gerade nicht Erasmus. Das eigentliche Sachargument wird nicht mit erkennbarem Zusammenhang mit ihm aufgeführt. Vielmehr heißt es hier lapidar, dass „die“ Philosophen²¹ eine Seeleneinteilung vornähmen, nach der der Willen, die *voluntas*, zwischen Vernunft (*ratio*) und Sinnlichkeit (*sensus*) verortet werde (Inst. II,2,2)²², und es ist unverkennbar, dass Calvin dabei die scholastische Anthropologie in ihrer Aufnahme des Aristoteles im Blick hat. Die Pointe dieser philosophischen Position bzw. ihrer Zusammenfassung durch Calvin ist, dass auf diese Weise dem Willen in eine Wahlfreiheit zwischen Vernunft und Sinnlichkeit gegeben werde. Dem setzt Calvin eine doppelte Argumentation entgegen, deren Stoßrichtung wiederum eine gemeinsame, nämlich die Bestreitung des freien Willens ist: Einerseits begründet er hamartiologisch die Unfähigkeit des menschlichen Willens, ohne Hilfe des Heiligen Geistes eine freie Entscheidung zu treffen (Inst. II,2,12.27)²³, andererseits verweist er darauf, dass die angemessene Sprache zur Beschreibung anthropologischer Sachverhalte die biblische sei, man mithin den Menschen als ganzen als Fleisch zu identifizieren habe²⁴. Damit ist nicht nur in der einzelnen materialen Argumentation, sondern auch im Ansatz der Erkenntnisquellen ein deutlich von den Mitteln scholastischer Theologie unterschiedener Ansatz gewählt, wobei freilich der Unterschied stärker ausfällt, wenn man ignoriert, dass die vermeintlich „scholastische“ Zuordnung der Theologie zu begrifflichen Vorgaben der Philosophie schon seit dem 14. Jahrhundert nicht mehr ohne Weiteres galt, sondern bereits lange in der *Via moderna* an Plausibilität verloren hatte²⁵. Calvins Unterschied zu diesem mittelalterlichen Denkstrang besteht vor allem in seiner mit anderen Reformatoren geteilten Grundsätzlichkeit, in der jedenfalls in diesem Zusammenhang der philosophischen Sprache die Legitimität in *theologicis* abgesprochen wird.

²¹ Zu Calvins Auseinandersetzung mit Platos Anthropologie vgl. Wilhelm Schwendemann, Leib und Seele bei Calvin. Die erkenntnistheoretische und anthropologische Funktion des platonischen Leib-Seele-Dualismus in Calvins Theologie, Stuttgart 1996 (Arbeiten zur Theologie 83).

²² CO 30,187.

²³ CO 30,195f. 207–209.

²⁴ CO 30,209.

²⁵ S. hierzu etwa Volker Leppin, Geglaupte Wahrheit. Das Theologieverständnis Wilhelms von Ockham, Göttingen 1995 FKDG 63), 171–186.

2. Adaptive Weiterführung

Diese Distanz gegenüber philosophisch-aristotelischer Sprache findet sich bei Calvin freilich nicht durchweg, vielmehr gibt es einzelne Stellen, in denen er mit erstaunlicher Selbstverständlichkeit auf aristotelische Sprach- und Denkmuster rekurriert, freilich in nicht immer ganz schulmäßige Form. So bezeichnet er etwa Christus als Materie beziehungsweise Substanz aller Sakramente²⁶, geht also davon aus, dass diese Begriffe ein selbstverständlich geeignetes Instrumentarium zur Analyse der Heilmittel sein können. Und es ist gerade die Beiläufigkeit, in der er die Begriffe hier einführt, die anzeigt, wie wenig problematisch das Verhältnis zum mittelalterlichen Aristotelismus für ihn gegebenenfalls sein konnte.

Das gilt genauso etwa für den Gebrauch des aristotelischen Vier-Ursache-Schemas, das er anwendet, um Darzulegen, dass keine der vier Ursachen geeignet ist, um eine konstitutive Bedeutung der Werke für das Heil zu begründen (Inst. III,14,17)²⁷: *Causa efficiens* sei Gottes Liebe, *causa materialis* Christi Gehorsam, *causa formalis* von Calvin wiederum in einer zweifelhaften Wendung mit der *causa instrumentalis* gleichgesetzt – den Glauben, und schließlich als *causa finalis* den Erweis von Gottes Gerechtigkeit und das Lob seiner Güte. Gerade an dieser Stelle wird nun allerdings auch erkennbar, dass die Anknüpfung an philosophische Sprache ihre spezifische Funktionalität hat, will Calvin doch mit der Werkgerechtigkeit gerade eine solche Lehre ad absurdum führen, von der die Reformatoren überzeugt sind, dass sie Folge einer Vermengung von Philosophie und Theologie im scholastischen Horizont sei. Die Auswertung dieser Argumentation kann also zwar einerseits wiederum auf die Selbstverständlichkeit des Umgangs mit aristotelischer Schulphilosophie verweisen, muss andererseits aber auch berücksichtigen, dass diese hier wie an anderen Stellen nicht konstitutiv für Calvins Denken wird, insofern hier durchaus kein Gegengewicht zu der erwähnten Tendenz der Entgegenstellung von Theologie und Philosophie geschaffen wird.

Das ist aber mindestens an einem und durchaus relevanten Punkt anders: Was Calvins *Institutio* in ihrer Auflage von 1559 in hohem Maße an die mittelalterliche Argumentationsweise erinnern lässt, ist der in der ersten Auflage noch fehlende, seit 1539 aber stets mitgeführte allgemeinerkenntnistheoretische Vorbau: Calvin setzt nicht bei der Offenbarung ein, sondern steuert auf sie zu. Das heißt: Es ist das klare Ziel seiner Argumentation, zu begründen, warum und inwiefern die christliche Theologie auf die Offenbarung in der Schrift angewiesen ist – aber er bedarf hierzu eben der Argumentation mit den allgemeinen Möglichkeiten der Erkenntnis, und

²⁶ CO 30,952f.

²⁷ CO 30,575f.

es ist diese wissenschaftstheoretische Grundlagenreflexion, die er an den Beginn der *Institutio* stellt. Die ersten fünf Kapitel reflektieren auf die allgemeine Gotteserkenntnis – mit orthodoxer Terminologie gesprochen, handelt Calvin hier von der *theologia naturalis*, aber in einer spezifischen systematischen Zuordnung: nicht als Unterstützung der aus der Offenbarung gegebenen Erkenntnis, sondern als Vorbau, eine Grundlagenreflexion, wie sie die mittelalterlichen Sentenzenkommentare, insbesondere seit dem 14. Jahrhundert mit großer Selbstverständlichkeit prägte.

Freilich besteht ein markanter Unterschied zu den mittelalterlichen Reflexionen darin, dass Calvin seine Wissenschaftstheorie von vorneherein mit materialer Theologie verbindet, ja, aus dieser herleitet: Das erste Buch handelt von der Erkenntnis Gottes als Schöpfer, und Calvin steigt nun mit der Analyse der Erkenntnis Gottes *aus* der Schöpfung ein. Freilich geht es dabei nicht nur um die Herleitung der Gotteserkenntnis aus der äußeren Schöpfung, sondern Calvin entwickelt auch den Gedanken einer dem Menschen eingepflanzten Kenntnis von Gott, also jener *notitia indita*²⁸. Allen Menschen, so Calvin, ist die Kenntnis von Gott als Schöpfer gegeben, und selbst wer dies leugnet, ist doch in Wirklichkeit nicht ohne diese innewohnende Erkenntnis und wird durch sein Gewissen daran erinnert²⁹. Gotteserkenntnis und –erkenntnis ist mithin eine anthropologische Grundbestimmung. Dieser Argumentationsgang zeigt sogar in stärkerem Maße als die meisten mittelalterlichen Theologien eine Auseinandersetzung mit dem Phänomen eines möglichen Unglaubens, der freilich dem Mittelalter, wie insbesondere Anselm zeigt, keineswegs völlig unbekannt war. Diese dem Menschen eingepflanzte Gotteserkenntnis ist allerdings noch gänzlich unbestimmt, und so kommt Calvin in einem zweiten Gedankengang zur Herleitung und näheren Bestimmung der Gotteserkenntnis aus der Schöpfung: Alle Schöpfungswirklichkeit wird zum Zeugnis Gottes, und hier werden dann auch die *artes liberales*, unter denen Calvin besonders Astronomie, Medizin und *physica scientia* nennt in den Dienst genommen, die in ihrer Analyse der Schöpfungswirklichkeit letztlich Gott selbst als den Schöpfer preisen (Inst. I,5,2)³⁰. All diese Erkenntnis aber ist nach Calvin unzureichend, und unter Berufung auf Hebr 11,3 kann Calvin dann sagen, dass die volle Erkenntnis der Welt als Werk Gottes erst durch den Glauben möglich ist (Inst. I,5,14)³¹ – Grund hierfür ist aber nicht die allgemeine Defizienz menschlichen Verstehens, sondern hamartiologisch begründet die Schuld des Menschen (Inst. I,5,15)³² – so braucht der Mensch zur wahren Gottes-

²⁸ CO 30,35.

²⁹ CO 30,37f.

³⁰ CO 30,42.

³¹ CO 30,51f.

³² CO 30,52.

erkenntnis die Heilige Schrift (I,6)³³, und Calvin kann mit dem sechsten Kapitel in den Modus der Erfahrungstheologie wechseln.

Nähe und Entsprechung zu bestimmten mittelalterlichen Denkmustern, insbesondere zu Thomas von Aquin sind hierbei mit Händen zu greifen: Auch Thomas begründet die Angewiesenheit des Menschen auf die Offenbarung in der Schrift damit, dass der Mensch nicht in der Lage ist, die theologischen Wahrheiten aus sich heraus zu erkennen. Allerdings ist seine Begründungsfigur zum Aufweis dieser Begrenzung nicht hamartiologischer Art, sondern begründet in aristotelischer Reflexion darauf, dass der Mensch das Ganze seiner Bestimmung begrifflich nicht erfassen kann. Dies macht ebenso wie die erwähnte Verschränkung von epistemologischer und materialer Reflexion bei Calvin einen Unterschied aus, der sich in der Weise beschreiben lässt, dass Calvin das Anliegen mittelalterlicher Theologie, die Theologie in einem Vorbau allgemein-epistemologischer Art zu situieren, teilt, aber nicht einfach fortschreibt. Für eine genauere Bestimmung seines Verhältnisses zu den mittelalterlichen Entwürfen wird man auch noch die zwischenzeitliche Transformation etwa durch Zwingli einbeziehen, der bekanntlich auch seinen *Commentarius de vera et falsa religione* so eingekleidet hat, dass der spezifisch christlichen Gotteslehre eine allgemein-philosophische vorgeschaltet war.

III. Verhältnis zur theologisch-kirchlichen Lehre des Mittelalters

1. Abgrenzung

Die bisherigen Ausführungen galten Calvin Verhältnisbestimmung von Philosophie und Theologie und damit einem markanten Charakteristikum, durch das in der Regel mittelalterliche und reformatorische Theologie voneinander unterschieden werden. Selbstverständlich sind auch einzelne materiale Fragen heranzuziehen, um das Verhältnis Calvins zur mittelalterlichen Theologie näher heranzuziehen. Es ist offenkundig, dass hier die Lehre von der Kirche eine entscheidende Rolle spielt – zwar ist es Unsinn, wenn man gelegentlich hört, im späten Mittelalter habe es einen *Locus de ecclesia* nicht gegeben – die Schriften Wyclifs wie auch Hus' „*De ecclesia*“ zeugen von dem weit fortgeschrittenen Stand spätmittelalterlicher Ekklesiologie. Tatsächlich war diese aber bei diesen wie bei anderen Autoren wie etwa Wilhelm von Ockham in eigene Traktate eingegangen und spielte innerhalb der Sentenzenkommentare als der klassischen Gestalt akademischer Theologie keine wesentliche Rolle: Die Kirche kam hier allein als Trägerin der

³³ CO 30,53–56.

Heilsmittel, also der Sakramente in den Blick. Dies hat sich bei Calvin nun offenkundig geändert: Die Kirche kommt bei ihm passenderweise im IV. Buch, also ebenfalls im Zusammenhang der Sakramentenlehre, zur Sprache, aber die Ausführungen, die er hier bietet, dienen weitgehend der Abweisung der alten mittelalterlichen beziehungsweise gegenwärtigen römisch-katholischen Kirche, bis hin zu vier Kapiteln (Inst. IV,4–8)³⁴, die ausführlich die Geschichte des Papstes darstellen³⁵ und seine Illegitimität nachweisen, und ein eigenes Kapitel dient der Widerlegung der Lehre von den sieben Sakramenten (IV,19)³⁶. Sowohl in dieser Abgrenzung als auch in den ausführlichen Darlegungen zu einer positiven Ekklesiologie Genfer Gepräges also lässt sich eine gewaltige materiale Erweiterung der mittelalterlichen Fragestellungen und letztlich damit ein vollständiger Umbau bzw. eine vollständige Akzentverschiebung im vierten Buch der *Institutio* gegenüber dem vierten Buch der *Sentenzen* nachzeichnen. Das gilt selbstverständlich auch für viele andere Bereiche, in denen die materiale Theologie nicht nur implizit, sondern sehr deutlich explizit als Abgrenzung von der mittelalterlichen Scholastik formuliert wird, etwa in der Entfaltung der Lehre von der Buße als einer Umkehr im Sinne von Luthers Ablassthesen, der sich folgerichtig nicht im Rahmen der Sakramentenlehre findet, sondern im dritten Buch, also im Horizont der Erlösungslehre, in deren Rahmen Calvin sich von einer sakramentalen Deutung von Buße schroff absetzt (Inst. III, 3–5).

2. Modifizierte Weiterführung

Trotz dieser Akzentsetzungen, die als Folge der Grundentscheidungen reformatorischer Theologie der *Institutio* ein neues Gepräge geben, kann man aber Calvins Theologie keineswegs durchweg nur in Entgegensetzung zum Mittelalter verstehen. Wie oben für die Philosophie dargelegt, gibt es auch in der Theologie einzelne Anknüpfungen an tradierte Denkmuster, bezeichnenderweise zumal dort, wo sich augustinisches Denken im Mittelalter erhalten hat, was ja sehr viel häufiger der Fall ist, als es eingefahrene evangelische Denkmuster normalerweise zugestehen.

Dies kann man gerade auch im Bereich der Sakramentenlehre deutlich machen, in der Calvin ausdrücklich erklärt, sein eigenes Verständnis von

³⁴ CO 30,788–858.

³⁵ Zu einem wichtigen Aspekt der antipäpstlichen Argumentation Calvins vgl. Anette Zillenbiller, *Die Einheit der katholischen Kirche. Calvins Caprianrezeption in seinen ekklesiologischen Schriften*, Mainz 1993 (VIEG 151), 114–117; vgl. auch, konzentriert vor allem auf die Frage der biblischen Begründung, Heribert Schützeichel, *Calvins Kritik der biblischen Begründung des Papstamtes*, in: ders., *Katholische Beiträge zur Calvinforschung*, Trier 1988, 50–70.

³⁶ CO 30,1066–1092.

Sakrament sei zwar ausführlicher als die Definition Augustins, nach der ein Sakrament *res* und *signum* sei, der Sache nach aber davon nicht unterschieden³⁷. Seine eigene Definition ist die, dass das Sakrament ein mit äußerem Zeichen bekräftigtes Zeugnis der Gnade im und sei, das mit einer Bezeugung der menschlichen *pietas* gegenüber Gott verbunden sei³⁸. Dass er diese ausführlichere – und sogar nach eine weitere, noch ausführlichere – Definition an die Stelle der augustinischen setze, liege daran, dass diese in ihrer Kürze zu möglichen Missverständnissen Anlass gebe – damit ist natürlich die mittelalterliche Theologie gemeint. In einem und demselben Akt also drückt Calvin seine Gemeinsamkeit mit dieser wie auch die unverkennbare Differenz aus, wobei ein genauere Blick in die mittelalterliche Theologie natürlich auch sehr verschiedene Umgangsweisen mit der Definition Augustins zutage legen kann, so dass man zwar im Sinne reformatorischer Rhetorik diese ganz vom Mittelalter abgrenzen kann, historisch zutreffende aber wohl sagen müsste, dass sie an einzelnen Stellen an einem Diskurs partizipiert, den das Mittelalter formiert und formuliert hat.

IV. Schlussüberlegungen

Schon eingangs hatte ich angesprochen: Calvin ist nicht einfach als Reformator mittelalterlicher Theologie zu beschreiben, wie dies für Zwingli oder Luther noch ohne Weiteres der Fall war. Darin äußert sich wie in vielen anderen Konstellationen auch, die Tatsache, dass er als Reformator der zweiten Generation bereits einen weitgehend entwickelten Bruch zwischen alter und neuer Kirche voraussetzt und seine eigene Theologie auf der Basis eines bereits einigermaßen klaren Gegenübers entwickelt.

Dennoch sind im Detail wie im Gesamtaufriß durchaus Parallelen zur mittelalterlichen Theologie zu beobachten gewesen, die sich teilweise auch als Wirkungen verstehen bzw. einen Transformationsvorgang erkennen lassen. Man könnte Calvin wohl im Sinne des zuletzt anhand der Sakramentenlehre Ausgeführten noch stärker in den mittelalterlichen Diskurs einrücken, wenn man die frömmigkeitstheologische Entwicklung stark macht: Mit seinem katechetischen, praktisch ausgerichteten Verständnis von Theologie partizipiert er an deren Anliegen und bringt sie voran, ja, in diesem Falle: transformiert sie.

Der besondere Charakter dieser Transformation hat möglicherweise mit der angesprochenen Aufwertung der Ekklesiologie im vierten Buch zu tun, die ja sogar am Ende in einer Obrigkeitslehre gipfelt. Es ist offenkundig,

³⁷ CO 30,942.

³⁸ CO 30,942.

dass hier der städtische Reformator wirkt und auf das von ihm theologisch angeführte Gemeinwesen hin schreibt. Und eben dies ist ein neuer Akzent einer solchen Literatur. Die Frömmigkeitstheologie des späten Mittelalters schreibt nicht auf das Kollektiv der Gemeinde hin, sondern auf den Einzelnen. Selbst dort wo sie sich in den Dienst einer bestimmten sozialen Gemeinschaft stellte, wie bei der Wiener Schule, die um 1400 die Theologie der Melker Reformbewegung formte, war der Fokus ganz das Individuum. Das ist in der *Institutio* nicht aufgehoben, aber ergänzt: Es geht um das Individuum im Horizont der reformierten Kirche.

Selbst hier also noch überwiegt innerhalb der Transformation, die ja immer Elemente der Kontinuität mit denen des Neuansatzes verbindet, der Neuansatz. Calvins Theologie ist, legt man die hier versuchte Lektüre vor dem Hintergrund mittelalterlicher Theologie zurück, eine solche, die ihr Gepräge durch den Horizont schon vollzogener Reformation gewinnt. In ihr spiegelt sich, durch viele Momente von Entsprechung und auch Kontinuität hindurch, überdeutlich, dass die reformatorische Theologie sich von neuen Grundlagen her versteht.

Anthropology: Calvin between Luther and Erasmus¹

ANTHONY N. S. LANE

‘Calvin between Luther and Erasmus.’ Certainly the most famous Reformation clash on this topic was that between Luther and Erasmus. Calvin did not engage directly with Erasmus, but had his own clash, with the Dutch Roman Catholic theologian Albert Pighius² or Pigge³, who died on 29 December 1542.⁴ The debate with Pighius especially involved the interpretation of Augustine, whose support Calvin claimed. One other figure should be mentioned, Philipp Melancthon, whose views on this issue changed with time.

¹ Some material has been drawn from: A. N. S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999); COR 4/3:11–62; articles on Calvin and Pighius forthcoming in *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*.

² For a general account of Pighius, cf. H. Jedin, *Studien über die Schriftstellertätigkeit Albert Piggés* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1931); P. Pidoux, *Albert Pighius de Kampen, Adversaire de Calvin, 1490–1542* (Lausanne: Lausanne University BTh thesis, 1932); É. Amann, ‘Pighi (Albert)’ in *DTC* 12:2094–2104; M. E. Kronenberg, ‘Albertus Pighius, Proost van S. Jan te Utrecht, zijn Geschriften en zijn Bibliotheek,’ *Het Boek* 28 (1944–46) 107–58, 226; C. N. Fehrmann, ‘Albert Pigge: een vermaard Kampenaar,’ *Kamper Almanak* 1955–56, 169–213 (169–97 are an account of his life, heavily dependent upon Jedin; 198–213 describe his relations with Kampen); R. Bäumer, ‘Albert Pigge’ in E. Iserloh (ed.), *Katholische Theologen der Reformationszeit* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1984) 98–106. Kronenberg, ‘Albertus Pighius,’ 125–58, lists the books left by Pighius on his death.

For two brief but extremely succinct accounts of his life, cf. H. de Vocht, *Literae Virorum Eruditorum ad Franciscum Craneveldium 1522–1528* (Louvain: Librairie Universitaire, 1928) 256–60; idem, *History of the Foundation and Rise of the Collegium Trilingue Lovaniense 1517–1550*, Part 4 (Louvain: Bibliothèque de l’Université, 1955) 197–200.

³ In recent years it has become fashionable to refer to him by the Dutch form of his name, Pigge. Since, however, all of his own works and most of those about him use the Latin form, that has been retained here.

⁴ In the literature the date of Pighius’s death is given as 26, 28 and 29 December. For the evidence that he died on the 29th, cf. A. N. S. Lane, ‘When did Albert Pighius Die?’, *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 80 (2000) 327–42.

I. Calvin's Debate with Pighius

Calvin's teaching on this topic developed as a result of his debate with Pighius. Its progress can be seen through a series of works.

In the second, 1539, edition of Calvin's *Institutio* chapter two was on *the knowledge of humanity and free choice* and chapter eight on *the predestination and providence of God*.⁵ When this appeared, Bernardus Cincius, the Roman Catholic bishop of Aquila, showed it to Cardinal Marcello Cervini. They agreed that this work was more dangerous than the other 'Lutheran' writings and showed it to Pighius.⁶ He wrote a response to these two chapters, which was published in August 1542, his ten books *De libero hominis arbitrio et divina gratia* (hereafter, *De libero arbitrio*).⁷ The first six books respond to Calvin's second chapter, on free choice, the remaining four to chapter eight, on providence and predestination.

Calvin, when he saw Pighius's work, felt a pressing need to respond, lest the Evangelical cause be lost by default and wrote his *Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrinae de servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii, adversus calumnias Alberti Pighii Campensis* (hereafter, *Defensio*).⁸ This is his fullest treatment of the issue of the relation between grace and free will and contains important material not found elsewhere in his writings. It also contains far more discussion of the Early Church Fathers than any other of Calvin's works, apart from the *Institutio*, and is important for appreciating his use of the Fathers.

⁵ The text (with concordance) of this edition has been produced by R. F. Wevers (Grand Rapids: Meeter Center, 1988).

⁶ C. Schultingius, *Bibliothecae catholicae et orthodoxae, contra summam totius theologiae calvinianae in Institutionibus Ioannis Calvinii, et Locis Communibus Petri Martyris* (Cologne, 1602) 1:39–40; Jedin, *Studien*, 163 (Pighius's own account of this).

⁷ Cologne: Melchior Novesianus, 1542. A facsimile copy of Books 1–6 is found in COR 4/3:331–450. For a summary of the work, cf. Melles, *Albertus Pighius en zijn Strijd met Calvijn*, 17–53.

⁸ For the text: CO 6:229–404; COR 4/3. English quotations are taken from John Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A Defense of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice against Pighius*, ed. A. N. S. Lane, tr. G. I. Davies (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House & Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996 and reprints) (= BLW). On this work, see CO 6:XXIII–XXV; R. Peter, J.-F. Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana. Les oeuvres de Jean Calvin publiées au XVI siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 1991–2000) 1:124–25; COR 4/3:11–66; L. F. Schulze, *Calvin's Reply to Pighius* (Potchefstroom: Pro Rege, 1971); G. Melles, *Albertus Pighius en zijn Strijd met Calvijn over het Liberum Arbitrium* (Kampen: Kok, 1973); A. Pinard, 'La Notion de Grâce Irrésistible dans la *Response aux Calomnies d'Albert Pighius* de Jean Calvin' (Quebec: Laval University PhD thesis, 2006) – L. F. Schulze, 'Calvin's Reply to Pighius – a micro and macro view' in W. H. Neuser (ed.), *Calvinus Ecclesiae Genevensis Custos* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1984) 171–85, is primarily about Calvin's later *De aeterna dei praedestinatione* (= *De praed.*).

Calvin was concerned to make the 1543 Frankfurt Book Fair, which meant that he had time to answer only Pighius's first six books, on free choice.⁹ He intended to write an answer to the remaining four books, on providence and predestination, in time for the 1544 Book Fair,¹⁰ but in the meantime he heard that Pighius had died and decided to drop the project, so as 'not to insult a dead dog'.¹¹ But the controversy over predestination did not cease and in 1551 it burst into life at Geneva itself, as Calvin's doctrine was attacked by Jerome Bolsec.¹² Calvin responded to Bolsec, while also settling the old score with Pighius, in his *De aeterna dei praedestinatione*, which appeared in 1552.¹³ Calvin responded to Pighius in one other manner, in the ongoing revisions of his *Institutio*.¹⁴ Pighius is only once named there, Calvin citing his *Controversies*,¹⁵ but there are other places where it is possible that he is one of the opponents that Calvin has in mind.¹⁶ There are also places where the influence of the present debate can be discerned in the argument. The 1543 edition of the *Institutio* was already largely complete by early 1542 and was probably with the printer by the time Calvin was replying to Pighius,¹⁷ so no influence on that edition is to be sought (or found). What little new material entered at the 1550 revision was not on the present topic. It is in the definitive 1559 edition that influence of the debate with Pighius is to be found and concerns especially the issue of the destruction of the will.¹⁸

⁹ COR 4/3:70, 74, 77–78.

¹⁰ COR 4/3:329.

¹¹ *De praed.* (COR 3/1:12:10–11).

¹² For a full account of the Bolsec controversy, cf. P Holtrop, *The Bolsec Controversy on Predestination from 1551 to 1555* (Lewiston (NY), Queenston (Ontario) & Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1993).

¹³ CO 8:253–366; COR 3/1; *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, ed. J. K. S. Reid (London: James Clarke, 1961).

¹⁴ For a full investigation of Pighius's influence upon Calvin's later writings, cf. Lane, *John Calvin: Student*, 179–89.

¹⁵ *Inst.* 3:2:30 (1550). On Pighius's *Controversiarum, quibus nunc exagitur Christi fides et religio*,] *diligens et luculenta explicatio* (1541), on which cf. A. N. S. Lane, 'Albert Pighius's Controversial Work on Original Sin,' *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 4 (2000) 34–42 + 'Erratum' in *ibid.* 3:1/2 (2001) 215.

¹⁶ The OS footnotes three times identify Pighius's *De libero arbitrio* as a potential source as Calvin's unnamed opponent: 3:284, n. 2 (2:3:9); 4:374, n. 1 (3:21:5); 4:427, n. 1 (3:24:15). Such identifications should always be treated with extreme caution since the same ideas may also be found in many other works. All of the passages are from 1559, though the substance of the last is from 1539 at which date Calvin could not have had Pighius's *De libero arbitrio* in mind.

¹⁷ Peter & Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, 1:130; OS 3:XIX–XX.

¹⁸ Cf. Lane, *John Calvin: Student*, 187–89; COR 4/3:20–21.

II. Luther and Erasmus

Calvin and Pighius were not the first to debate this issue in Reformation times. That distinction goes to Luther and Erasmus.¹⁹ On 15 June 1520 a papal bull was proclaimed, condemning as heretical forty-one errors drawn from Luther's writings.²⁰ The thirty-sixth of these was that 'liberum arbitrium post peccatum res est de solo titulo, et dum facit quod in se est, peccat mortaliter.' This was the thirteenth of the theological theses defended by Luther at the Heidelberg Disputation in May 1518.²¹ Luther responded to the papal bull with various works, including his *Assertio omnium articulorum M. Lutheri per bullam Leonis X. novissimam damnatorum* (1520).²² Article 36 receives a lengthy and vigorous treatment.²³

In the early years of the Reformation Erasmus lent tacit support to Luther. But eventually he was persuaded to oppose him and in 1524 he published his *De libero arbitrio diatribe sive collatio*, in which he attacked Luther's treatment of the thirty-sixth article.²⁴ Luther responded the following year with his *De servo arbitrio*.²⁵ Erasmus had the last word, replying at great length, in his *Hyperaspistes*, which appeared in two parts in 1526 and 1527.²⁶

How do the two debates, between Luther and Erasmus and between Calvin and Pighius, compare? In many ways it is remarkable how little they have in common. Erasmus's *Diatribe* is brief and eloquent while Pighius's work is longer and more thorough, not to say pedestrian. In particular, Pighius devotes considerable attention to the writings of the early Fathers, while Erasmus mentions them only briefly and in passing.²⁷ What they do have in common is that both of them were later seen to have strayed beyond the bounds of Roman Catholic orthodoxy in their exaltation of free choice. This was in main part due to the fact that the condemnation of Semi-Pelagianism at the second council of Orange (529) was overlooked from the tenth century to 1538.²⁸

¹⁹ On Luther and Erasmus, cf. especially, H. J. McSorley, *Luther: Right or Wrong?* (New York, etc.: Newman and Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969).

²⁰ J. Atkinson, *The Trial of Luther* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1971) 83–89; L. Grane, *Martinus Noster* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1994) 231–37; McSorley, *Luther: Right or Wrong?*, 251–53.

²¹ WA 1:354:5–6 (*Disputatio Heidelbergae habita*).

²² WA 7:94–151. Cf. Atkinson, *Trial of Luther* 102–112.

²³ WA 7:142–149. Cf. McSorley, *Luther: Right or Wrong?*, 253–73.

²⁴ LB 9:1215–48.

²⁵ WA 18:600–787.

²⁶ LB 10:1254–1536.

²⁷ LB 9:1218–19.

²⁸ The medievals relied on compilations for their knowledge of the councils and these, including the most influential, the ninth-century Pseudo-Isidorian *Decretals*, did not include Orange. Thus the canons of this council were unknown and unquoted from the tenth century

To what extent do Pighius and Calvin draw upon the earlier debate? The answer appears to be none at all. Pighius attacks Luther's *Assertio omnium articulorum*, but makes no mention of either Erasmus's *Diatribes* or Luther's *De servo arbitrio*. Pighius's library at his death included neither work – but nor did it include Calvin's *Institutio* or Luther's *Assertio*.²⁹ Calvin makes no allusion to the earlier debate. In the notes to the critical edition of his *Defensio* a number of parallels have been noted, but none of these amounts to clear proof that either Pighius or Calvin had the earlier works in mind.³⁰ What is remarkable is not the occasional parallel, nor the inevitable fact that certain commonplace arguments are reiterated, but the amazing lack of parallels between the two debates.

In a recent PhD dissertation, Matthew C. Heckel seeks to prove that Calvin made use of Luther's *De servo arbitrio* in writing his *Defensio*, but the evidence is decidedly sparse. His prime evidence consists in parallels that he discerns between the two debates, but these are comparatively few and not very impressive.³¹ It needs more than a few parallels to establish dependence.³² For Heckel it is an 'uncanny similarity' that Luther and Calvin both wrote of the role of Satan and the wicked in God's providence ('Satana et impio' versus 'Satanam et impios') but the juxtaposition of these two words in this context is hardly solid evidence for affirming Calvin's dependence upon the *De servo arbitrio*.³³ It is one thing to show parallels in the arguments used in the two debates, as Heckel does, but quite another thing to show that they are peculiar

until in 1538 Peter Crabbe published his two-volume *Concilia Omnia* (Cologne, P. Quentel) (H. Bouillard, *Conversion et Grace chez S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Aubier, 1944) 98–102, 114–21).

²⁹ Kronenberg, 'Albertus Pighius,' 132–158.

³⁰ COR 4/3:80, n. 39; 87, n.68; 109, n. 38; 117, n. 80; 159, n. 21; 177, n. 144; 247, n. 275; 267, n. 138 for Luther. COR 4/3:80, n. 39; 105, n. 14; 319, n. 286 for Erasmus.

³¹ M. C. Heckel, "'His Spear through my Side into Luther.'" Calvin's Relationship to Luther's Doctrine of the Will' (Concordia Seminary, St Louis PhD thesis, 2005) 22–23, 94–162. He also (incorrectly) takes the parallels that I cited in the notes to the English translation of the *Defensio* as indicating that I imply Calvin's familiarity with Luther's *De servo arbitrio* (Heckel, 'His Spear', 19, citing xxviii, n. 90; 40, n. 25; 49, n. 73). Similarly Heckel, 'His Spear', 21, 33. These parallels are all listed, together with some more, in the notes of COR 4/3, as cited in the previous footnote.

³² Heckel, 'His Spear', 24 cites my approach as set out in Lane, *John Calvin: Student*, 8, but sets against my 'Hermeneutic of Suspicion' his own 'Hermeneutic of Historical Comparison' (43–52). The key issue is how impressive are the comparisons. He shows the parallels between Calvin and Luther over the distinction between coercion and necessity (184–93) but correctly recognises that despite these parallels the source may rather be Bucer (213–16). This illustrates the point that parallels alone do not suffice to prove dependence.

³³ Heckel, 'His Spear', 139. His earlier judgement is more judicious: 'We cannot prove that as Calvin composed *BLW* he had access to or had opened Luther's *BW* if [sic] front of him' (26).

to these two debates in particular. When two people debate this theme certain issues and arguments will inevitably come to the fore.

We need to distinguish two different questions. Was Calvin familiar with Luther's *De servo arbitrio* and perhaps also with Erasmus's *Diatribes*? It is not unlikely that he was, though one cannot simply assume it. Secondly, did the debate between Luther and Erasmus significantly influence that between Calvin and Pighius? No. What is striking is the remarkable *lack* of overlap between the two debates. There is no ground for affirming Calvin's ignorance of the *De servo arbitrio*, but the parallels between the two debates are so sparse that it is unlikely that the earlier debate had any influence on Calvin's *Defensio*.

III. Calvin and Pighius: the Issues³⁴

The structure of the *Defensio* is not primarily related to the theological issues. Calvin mainly follows Pighius's order,³⁵ which was itself related to the structure of Calvin's 1539 *Institutio*. Also, considerable time is spent on debating the views of the Fathers and here the text often moves from author to author, and from book to book, with the theological issues emerging wherever they happen to be discussed.

The central issue is, of course, the freedom/bondage of the human will and human choice. Almost all of the other topics are introduced inasmuch as they bear on this issue. Considerable space is devoted to discussing the views of the early Fathers in general³⁶ and of Augustine in particular.³⁷ Unfortunately, the issue was obscured by the fact that Calvin, unlike Augustine, chose to reject the term *liberum arbitrium*. Pighius seizes on this, assuming that because Augustine and the Fathers affirmed free choice while Calvin rejects it, Calvin is opposed to the Fathers. Calvin responds by saying that he accepts free choice as Augustine defined it, but thought that the term was best dropped because of possible misunderstanding. He was, however, willing to affirm that the will is free in the sense that it is not coerced but at all times spontaneous (*spontaneus*), willing of itself (*ultro*), of its own accord (*sponte*) and wilfully (*volun-*

³⁴ Cf. A. N. S. Lane, 'Bondage and Liberation in Calvin's Treatise against Pighius,' in J. H. Leith & R. A. Johnson (eds.), *Calvin Studies IX* (Davidson (NC): Davidson College and Davidson College Presbyterian Church, 1998) 16–45; Melles, *Albertus Pighius en zijn Strijd met Calvin*, 92–206. For an account of the teaching of this work, from a philosophical perspective, cf. P. Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas* (Oxford: O.U.P., 2004) 157–83.

³⁵ COR 4/3:78.

³⁶ Especially COR 4/3:136–56.

³⁷ Especially Book 3.

tate). The choices of the will are voluntary or wilful (*voluntarius*).³⁸ In fact a ‘coerced will’ is a contradiction in terms. But Calvin’s fear is that most people, including Pighius, mean something different by the term *liberum arbitrium*, thinking that a free will has the power to choose between good and evil by its own strength.

In an important passage Pighius defines the will or the choice (*arbitrium* or *electio*) as the faculty of the soul by which we will. It is free, not bound (*serva*) because it is *sui iuris*, and ‘suiipsius potestatem habet’. This means that whatever it does, it does not do it necessarily but could do otherwise. This is by contrast with a bound will, which does not have power over itself but is subject to alien rule and is constrained by necessity.³⁹ Pighius claims Augustine’s support for these points and these are the issues that are contested in passage after passage of the church father.

Calvin, by contrast, acknowledges free will only in a sense that is compatible with the bondage of the will to sin. In an important passage, responding to Pighius’s definition just given, Calvin clearly defines his terms.⁴⁰ A *coerced* will is one which ‘does not incline this way or that of its own accord or by an internal movement of decision, but is forcibly driven by an external impulse.’ By contrast, a will is *self-determined* (*spontaneus*) when ‘of itself it directs itself in the direction in which it is led, when it is not taken by force or dragged unwillingly.’ Finally, the will is *bound* which ‘because of its corruptness is held captive under the authority of evil desires, so that it can choose nothing but evil, even if it does so of its own accord and gladly, without being driven by any external impulse.’ According to these definitions, all people have choice and this is self-determined. We commit evil of our own voluntary choosing, not as a result of coercion or force. But the choice is not free because it is driven to evil of necessity, by innate human wickedness, and cannot seek anything but evil. It is because of the corruption of the will that it is ‘held captive under the yoke of sin and therefore of necessity wills in an evil way.’ Thus bondage brings necessity, but is nonetheless a voluntary rather than coerced bondage.⁴¹ Much of the work is devoted to explaining and defending these statements.

Underlying the bondage of the will is the doctrine of original sin. This surfaces a number of times in the debate and Calvin repeatedly criticises Pighius’s

³⁸ COR 4/3:137–39, 158–60, 173–75, 185–89, 192–200, 214–15, 232–34, 260–61. Calvin’s vocabulary to make this point is richer in the *Defensio* than elsewhere.

³⁹ *De libero arbitrio* 22a:29–38. For Pighius’s recognition of the extent to which sin may have affected the freedom of the will, cf. *De libero arbitrio* 49a–b.

⁴⁰ COR 4/3:137–39 = BLW 68–70.

⁴¹ The distinction between necessity and coercion is fundamental for Calvin and he devotes a section to defending it (COR 4/3:221–25).

understanding of the effects of Adam's fall, accusing him of Pelagianism.⁴² In the first controversy of his *Controversies* Pighius expounded a novel theory of original sin,⁴³ according to which the only effects of the Fall of Adam were the introduction of death and the imputing to all humanity of the guilt of Adam's sin. There was no talk of the corruption of human nature as a result of the Fall. The lust that human beings experience derives from nature as created and was experienced by Adam before the Fall. This issue resurfaced in his debate with Calvin over free choice and Calvin pointed out that Pighius was heretical by the criteria of Roman Catholic orthodoxy, a conclusion also reached by the delegates at the Council of Trent.⁴⁴ Calvin, by contrast, held that the fall affected every aspect of human nature.⁴⁵ Fallen human beings are in bondage to sin. Before the operation of God's grace there is no good at all in the human will.⁴⁶

Because of this teaching Calvin was accused of Manichaeism, of teaching that God's creation is evil. He responded with one of the most important distinctions of the whole work, that between human nature as created and as fallen.⁴⁷ Human nature is good as originally created, but has become corrupted as a result of Adam's fall. This distinction Calvin also uses as a tool to interpret the Fathers⁴⁸ and the early writings of Augustine.⁴⁹ He also develops it in detail, distinguishing between natural human feelings as given by God's creation and the way in which sin has turned these into lusts.⁵⁰ He turns the tables on Pighius at this point, accusing him of Manichaeism. By teaching that our mortality and corruption arise not from the effects of the Fall but from God's original creation he makes God the author of evil, precisely the charge that he brought against the Reformers.⁵¹

Because of the bondage of the will, there is no way in which people can prepare themselves to receive God's grace. Grace is prevenient and precedes any human good will.⁵² This point surfaces repeatedly in the debate.⁵³ Pighius

⁴² COR 4/3:174–77, 184, 220, 262–65.

⁴³ For Pighius's doctrine of original sin, see especially J. Feiner, *Die Erbsündenlehre Albert Pighes. Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der kath. Kontroverstheologie in der Reformationzeit* (Dissertatio ad Lauream in Facultate Theologica Pontificae Universitatis Gregorianae, Rome) [Zürich, 1940].

⁴⁴ H. Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent*, vol.2 (London, etc.: Thomas Nelson, 1961), pp. 145, 153, 162, 173.

⁴⁵ COR 4/3:178–79, 249–54, 294.

⁴⁶ COR 4/3:176, 185–86, 190–91, 201–203, 208–209.

⁴⁷ COR 4/3:108–109, 114–16, 182, 223, 249–51, 290, 294–95.

⁴⁸ COR 4/3:139–47, 154–55, 231–32.

⁴⁹ COR 4/3:161–70.

⁵⁰ COR 4/3:266.

⁵¹ COR 4/3:263–65.

⁵² COR 4/3:151–52, 175–86, 191, 194–95, 202, 272, 296–307.

repeatedly throughout *De libero arbitrio* affirms that sinful humans can prepare themselves to receive God's grace.⁵⁴ But then he confuses the issue by speaking of a threefold action of grace, the first of which is prevenient.⁵⁵ Calvin is perplexed by this apparent contradiction.⁵⁶ Jedin states that Calvin's repeated accusation of Pelagianism is understandable given many of Pighius's statements.⁵⁷

Calvin was not content just to affirm our need of prevenient grace. He also held that this grace does not merely make it *possible* for people to respond. Grace is also efficacious and effects conversion.⁵⁸ This is true not just of the beginning of the Christian life. Grace is needed at every stage and, in particular, for final perseverance. This is a gift of God, not something that is merited by previous obedience.⁵⁹ While Pighius was equivocal in his stance on prevenient grace, he was absolutely clear in his rejection of efficacious grace, in his affirmation that God's grace is effective only in as much as we allow.

Other doctrines enter the debate as they relate to free choice and grace. A recurring issue is whether it is possible to obey the law. Pighius repeatedly deduces human ability from God's commands.⁶⁰ Calvin rejects the assumption that 'ought' implies 'can'.⁶¹ This might be true for human nature as created, but Calvin argues that fallen humanity cannot even begin to observe the law.⁶² The function of the law is not to show human ability but to point to grace. Grace gives what the law commands.⁶³

Related to the law is the question of 'good works'. Calvin argues that even the best of human works are tainted by sin. Thus it is by his grace and generosity that God rewards them.⁶⁴ Furthermore, all good works are the gifts of God's grace and thus, as Augustine put it, when God rewards our merits he crowns his own gifts.⁶⁵

Human responsibility is a recurring theme. Pighius objects that it is incompatible with God's sovereign providence⁶⁶ and with human necessity to sin.⁶⁷

⁵³ COR 4/3:93, 181–82, 187, 195, 208–209, 215, 252, 254–55, 267–73, 277–78, 297–98, 302–307, 311–13.

⁵⁴ E.g. *De libero arbitrio* 6a, 80a.

⁵⁵ *De libero arbitrio* 80b.

⁵⁶ COR 4/3:274–75.

⁵⁷ Jedin, *Studien*, 106–107, esp. n. 51.

⁵⁸ COR 4/3:184–86, 190–96, 202–209, 252–56, 275–77, 284–86, 292–93.

⁵⁹ COR 4/3:186, 205–207, 253, 256–57, 318, 324.

⁶⁰ E.g. *De libero arbitrio* 65b–69b, 93b–94a.

⁶¹ COR 4/3:93, 109–10, 119–20, 189, 212–16, 231–43, 303.

⁶² COR 4/3:119–20, 242.

⁶³ COR 4/3:109–10, 189–90, 216, 287–88.

⁶⁴ COR 4/3:94–95, 213, 227–28.

⁶⁵ COR 4/3:187, 195, 197, 215, 228–29, 302.

⁶⁶ *De libero arbitrio* 15b–16b, to which Calvin responds in COR 4/3:104–108.

He also asks why one should bother to preach the gospel if conversion is the work of grace alone.⁶⁸ Calvin answers these objections, stressing that God's sovereignty is exercised through human means. Pighius also complained that the character of God was impugned by the doctrines of the bondage of the will⁶⁹ and election.⁷⁰

Pighius also accused Calvin of teaching that the will is destroyed by grace. If conversion is a new creation, does it involve the destruction of the will? In the 1539 *Institutio* Calvin at times appeared to teach this. The beginning of regeneration is to expunge ('aboleatur') what is ours. If Calvin was understood to teach that grace destroys the will he must himself bear at least part of the blame, but in fact he qualified this teaching. After this statement he adds that Augustine rightly taught that grace does not destroy the will but rather repairs it. This will is said to be made new (*nova creari*) inasmuch as its corrupt nature is entirely changed.⁷¹

Despite such qualifications, Pighius accused him of teaching that grace destroys the will.⁷² Calvin had stated that in conversion 'whatever belongs to our will is abolished and what takes its place is entirely from God' and that 'conversion is the work of God alone.'⁷³ Pighius had interpreted this to mean that God destroys the substance or faculty of the will itself.⁷⁴ Calvin was angered by this interpretation and the *Defensio* clarified his meaning at length.⁷⁵ It is true that 'everything which is ours should be obliterated' but this means 'what we have in ourselves apart from God's creation' – i.e. 'the corruption which abides not in some part of us but throughout our nature.' Sin has affected the whole of human nature so that fallen humanity cannot think, choose, will, attempt or do anything but evil. It is in this sense that all that is ours is destroyed and renovated.⁷⁶ Again, in conversion 'it is certain that it is we who will when we will, but it is he who causes us to will the good. It is certain that it is we who act when we act, but it is he who, by giving the will fully effective pow-

⁶⁷ *De libero arbitrio* 59b, 60b–64b, to which Calvin responds in COR 4/3:213–14, 217–29.

⁶⁸ *De libero arbitrio* 15a, 69a–b, 90b–91a, to which Calvin responds in COR 4/3:99–102, 238–41, 295–96.

⁶⁹ *De libero arbitrio* 16b, 17a, 90b, to which Calvin responds in COR 4/3:109, 116, 295.

⁷⁰ *De libero arbitrio* 64a, 92b, to which Calvin responds in COR 4/3:230, 300.

⁷¹ *Inst.* 2:5:15 (1539). Cf. Lane, *John Calvin: Student*, 187 for other examples.

⁷² Pighius did not allow sufficiently for the element of humanist exaggeration in Calvin's rhetoric. Cf. R. W. Richgels, 'Scholasticism Meets Humanism in the Counter-Reformation. The Clash of Cultures in Robert Bellarmine's Use of Calvin in the *Controversies*,' *Sixteenth Century Journal* 6:1 (1975) 61–66.

⁷³ *Inst.* 2:3:6 (1539), attacked in DLA 87a, 88a.

⁷⁴ DLA 88b–89b.

⁷⁵ See especially COR 4/3:288–94, 310, 315–16.

⁷⁶ COR 4/3:293–94 = BLW 212–13, discussing *Inst.* 2:3:6 (1539).

ers, causes us to act.⁷⁷ It is significant that this last quotation is taken from Augustine, without whom Calvin would probably have been even more reluctant to admit any human role.

In responding to Pighius on this point Calvin introduces the concept of habit. Pighius cited, against Calvin, Ambrose's statement that the substance of the heart is not removed.⁷⁸ Calvin mocks this, insisting that he had never taught the destruction or removal of the substance of the heart or will. What is changed in conversion is not the faculty or substance of willing, nor is it merely the actions of the will. It is rather something in-between, the quality or 'habit' (*habitus*) of the will. He accuses Pighius of not recognising the existence of this in-between category.⁷⁹ Calvin is making no cheap debating point here. Pighius saw sin purely in terms of sinful acts, which is why he could not acknowledge a corruption of human nature. He saw righteousness purely in terms of righteous acts and left no room for 'habitual' grace.⁸⁰

IV. Augustine

The debate between Calvin and Pighius focusses especially on the teaching of the early Fathers in general and of Augustine in particular. A considerable proportion of Pighius's *De libero arbitrio* is devoted to refuting Calvin's claim, in his 1539 *Institutio*, that apart from Augustine the early Fathers are so confused, vacillating and contradictory on the subject of free choice that almost nothing can with certainty be ascertained from their writings.⁸¹ Pighius seeks to refute the claim both that the early Fathers were inconsistent and that Augustine supported Calvin. He also claims Augustine for himself, but is not intimidated by the latter's authority. If Augustine anywhere taught contrary to Pighius's exposition of him, Pighius would number him with the Protestants and say that he had degenerated from human nature into a brute beast – although he hastens to add that such an unworthy insult should not apply to such a holy and learned man as Augustine.⁸² He admits that Augustine teaches that God's efficacious grace is not offered to all and that we cannot obtain it by our

⁷⁷ COR 4/3:216 = BLW 142, quoting Augustine. Similarly in COR 4/3:227–28.

⁷⁸ DLA 87a, 88b–89b.

⁷⁹ COR 4/3:289–90, especially. Cf. COR 4/3:288–91, 310.

⁸⁰ Feiner, *Die Erbsündenlehre Albert Pigges*, 25–26, 29–32, 43–45, 81, 85.

⁸¹ *Inst.* 2:2:9 (1539), referring back to an earlier statement in *Inst.* 2:2:4 (1539). Pighius repeatedly returns to one or other of these statements (e.g., *De libero arbitrio* 10b, 24b, 28a, 32b, 35b, 36b).

⁸² *De libero arbitrio* 45b.

own efforts but God bestows it on those whom he pleases – yet confesses that he finds this teaching difficult and perplexing.⁸³

Pighius divides Augustine's writings on this theme into three groups: those written before the Pelagian controversy, those written in the heat of the controversy and those written during the controversy in a more positive tone.⁸⁴ Unwisely, Pighius chose to base his argument especially on the third group, which included *De praedestinatione sanctorum* and *De gratia et libero arbitrio*. The latter appealed to him because of its strong affirmation of free choice (*liberum arbitrium*), but the great weakness of Pighius's case is his assumption that he and Augustine meant the same thing by that term. Pighius was also careless in making use of three pseudo-Augustinian writings. For *Hypognosticon* and *De dogmatibus ecclesiasticis* he need only have read the comments in Erasmus' edition – but it appears that Pighius owned and worked from the earlier edition of Amerbach.⁸⁵ The third apocryphal work, *Sermon 236*, was an unfortunate choice as it was in fact the *Confession of Faith to Pope Innocent* submitted by none other than *Pelagius!*

Pighius had claimed the support of the Fathers for his own doctrine of free choice (which was not completely orthodox by Roman Catholic standards). Calvin sought, so far as possible, to neutralise Pighius's appeal to the other Fathers and to claim Augustine for his own view. Pighius had accused Calvin of quoting Augustine out of context and without understanding him,⁸⁶ and of quoting mutilated passages contrary to Augustine's meaning.⁸⁷ Calvin was stung by this charge and devoted the third of his six books to Augustine, taking care that it would not be open to such accusations.

About a third of the text of Book 3 consists of quotations from Augustine and Calvin quotes lengthy passages with reference to their context. He concludes this book with extended quotations from some of Augustine's last works and ends by stressing that these are not mutilated, maimed statements.⁸⁸ He also accuses Pighius in turn of twisting Augustine and, in one place, of inserting his own phrase into a quotation.⁸⁹ Calvin quotes at length from Augustine's anti-Pelagian works especially. Pighius made extensive use of some of Augustine's earlier writings, such as *De libero arbitrio*, where

⁸³ *De libero arbitrio* 102b, with reference to *corrept.* 8.17 especially.

⁸⁴ *De libero arbitrio* 37b–38a.

⁸⁵ Kronenberg, 'Albertus Pighius,' 132, 135.

⁸⁶ *De libero arbitrio* 37a–b, especially with reference to the passages quoted in *Inst.* 2.2.8 (1539).

⁸⁷ *De libero arbitrio* 64a–b with reference to the quotation of *gr. et lib. arb.* 6.15 in *Inst.* 2.5.2 (1539).

⁸⁸ COR 4/3:200–208.

⁸⁹ COR 4/3:192–93, referring to *Io. ev. tr.* 53.8.

Augustine's approach to free choice was closer to his own, and Calvin made extensive use of the *Retractationes* to undermine Pighius's appeal to them.⁹⁰

Both Pighius and Calvin pile up endless quotations from Augustine, but occasionally the dispute becomes more interesting. Calvin had argued that the gift of being not able to sin (*non posse peccare*) described in *De correptione et gratia* 12.33 applies to believers here and now,⁹¹ to which Pighius responded that it applies only after the resurrection.⁹² In his *Defensio*, at the end of Book 6 there is an extended discussion of this passage, where Calvin argues that it applies both to the future and to the present,⁹³ a concession that he fails to make in any previous or subsequent edition of the *Institutio*. Clearly there is a future reference in Augustine's words but recent scholarship supports the idea that there is also some reference to the present.⁹⁴

Why did they bother with the teaching of the Fathers? As a Protestant who held to the final authority of Scripture, why did Calvin need to bicker over the interpretation of Basil or Augustine? At one level, he did not need to. Calvin is perfectly frank in stating that if the Fathers' teaching is contrary to Scripture it is invalid. Even the consensus of the Fathers does not count if it is contrary to Scripture.⁹⁵ But this battle was being fought at different levels. For Calvin all must be tested by Scripture. For Pighius the pronouncements of the pope are the final norm. As they are arguing from different premises there is little chance of a meeting of minds. But there is a secondary battle under way. What is historic Christianity? Pighius claims that his view is in accord with the universal consensus of the Catholic Church over the centuries. While Calvin theoretically could have conceded this claim, to have done so would have gravely undermined the plausibility of his case.⁹⁶

This is not to say that Calvin's appeal to the Fathers was not sincere. He genuinely believed that Augustine supported him on this issue. Repeatedly he claimed that Augustine was on his side.⁹⁷ With what justice? It must be admitted that his quotations of Augustine (and other writers) are often very loose. He omits words, adds words, changes words, changes tenses, changes word order, etc. He also on occasions paraphrases, using similar words, or just summarises the meaning of passages in his own words. Such a method of working was not unusual in the sixteenth century, where scholarly standards

⁹⁰ COR 4/3:161–70.

⁹¹ *Inst.* 2.3.13 (1539).

⁹² *De libero arbitrio* 100a–106a.

⁹³ COR 4/3:324–29.

⁹⁴ D. F. Wright, 'Non posse peccare in this life? St. Augustine, *De correptione et gratia* 12:33,' *Studia Patristica* 38 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001) 348–53.

⁹⁵ E.g. COR 4/3:150.

⁹⁶ For more on this, cf. Lane, *John Calvin: Student*, 33–40.

⁹⁷ COR 4/3:171, 188, 196, 200, 209, 262. He claims Augustine as 'prorsus nostrum' (COR 4/3:171, 200) and 'prorsus nobiscum' (COR 4/3:188).

were different from today's. The reasons for Calvin's looseness in citation are simple – lack of resources and pressure of time.⁹⁸ For some works he was relying upon his memory of earlier reading, either because he did not have the volume to hand or because he did not have time to consult it. With the major works of Augustine that he is expounding, it is likely that having seen what Pighius had to say, he read through the work and then wrote his response from memory of that (recent) reading. At times he would have had the work open and have taken longer quotations from it, but again without bothering about total accuracy.

Pighius, by contrast, quotes longer passages than Calvin and generally much more accurately, though not with total accuracy. Why was this? As Calvin notes in his preface, his Roman Catholic adversaries had considerably more time, leisure and peace to prepare their attacks.⁹⁹ In addition, while Calvin laments his lack of books while writing the 1539 *Institutio*,¹⁰⁰ Pighius had an extensive personal library, an inventory of which was made after his death.¹⁰¹ How accurate was Calvin's *interpretation* of Augustine? Unfortunately, the issue was obscured by the fact that Calvin, unlike Augustine, chose to reject the term *liberum arbitrium*. Pighius seizes on this, assuming that because Augustine and the Fathers affirmed free choice while Calvin rejects it, Calvin is opposed to the Fathers. Calvin responds by saying that he accepts free choice as Augustine defined it, but thought that the term was best dropped because of possible misunderstanding. For centuries there has been controversy between Roman Catholics and Protestants over this issue. But as a greater sense of historical development has grown it has become easier for both sides to acknowledge that change has taken place and to interpret the Fathers more objectively.¹⁰² The influential essay by the Benedictine Odilo Rottmanner in the nineteenth century marked a new willingness by Roman Catholics to acknowledge those aspects of Augustine's teaching on grace and predestination that were appealed to by the Reformers.¹⁰³ There are places where Calvin's inter-

⁹⁸ Calvin wrote the whole work in a couple of months.

⁹⁹ COR 4/3:70. Pighius wrote the prefatory material for the 1542 Cologne edition of his *Controversies* in that city on 5 January 1542 and the prefatory material for his *De libero arbitrio* on 13 August in the same city. The intervening seven months were probably mainly devoted to writing the latter work.

¹⁰⁰ COR 4/3:226.

¹⁰¹ Kronenberg, 'Albertus Pighius,' 125–58.

¹⁰² Cf. O Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman. The Idea of Doctrinal Development* (Cambridge, CUP, 2nd edition:1987).

¹⁰³ O Rottmanner, *Der Augustinismus* (Munich: J J Lentner, 1892). A more recent example is J. P. Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1980).

pretation is open to question,¹⁰⁴ but the main thrust of his case would be very widely conceded today.¹⁰⁵

V. Calvin and Luther

Calvin was concerned in his *Defensio* to maintain a common Protestant front. He glossed over the differences between Luther and Melancthon concerning human free choice in external and secular matters.¹⁰⁶ He also defended Luther against Pighius's attacks. But that does not mean that there were no differences at all between them. In particular, at two points Calvin adopts a more moderate position than does Luther.

Luther, in his defence of the thirty-sixth article, quoted above, ironically retracts what he had said earlier. He should not just have said that 'free choice before grace is reality in name only' ('liberum arbitrium ante gratiam sit res de solo titulo'). He should have said frankly that 'free choice is a fiction, a name without substance' ('liberum arbitrium est figmentum in rebus seu titulus sine re').¹⁰⁷ Calvin's position was rather more nuanced than this. He believed as strongly as Luther in the bondage of the will, but he also recognised that there was a valid use of the term *liberum arbitrium*. Both in the *Institutio*¹⁰⁸ and in his *Defensio*¹⁰⁹ he states that he accepts the term in the sense that Augustine used it, though he deemed it wiser to avoid the term because of how it is understood. The difference between the two reformers at this point concerns terminology rather than substance, but this is not insignificant.

Luther, in his defence of the thirty-sixth article, went on to state that 'all things happen by absolute necessity' ('omnia ... de necessitate absoluta eveni-

¹⁰⁴ As indicated in the notes to COR 4/3, e.g. 172, n. 116; 183, n. 188.

¹⁰⁵ For a Roman Catholic writer who argues that the Reformers (especially Luther) were basically justified in their claim to represent the Augustinian tradition of the church on this issue, cf. McSorley, *Luther: Right or Wrong?*, 353–55, 367–69. As early as the 1920s a Dominican writer concluded that while Thomas accepted and Calvin rejected free will, there is no contradiction because they meant different things by the term (C. Friethoff, *De predestinatione-leer van Thomas en Calvijn* (Zwolle: Fa. J. M. W. Waanders, 1925), which was translated into German: *Die Prädestinationslehre bei Thomas von Aquin und Calvin* (Freiburg: St. Paulus, 1926). Also 'Die Prädestinationslehre bei Thomas von Aquin und Calvin,' *Divus Thomas* 4 (1926) 71–91, 195–206, 280–302, 445–66). This conclusion is found on p. 461 in the last of these versions. Friethoff does not deny that there are other points where Calvin does contradict Thomas.

¹⁰⁶ COR 4/3:96–97.

¹⁰⁷ WA 7:142, 146, cited by Pighius (*De libero arbitrio* 6a, 8a) and Calvin (COR 4/3:93).

¹⁰⁸ *Inst.* 2:1:7–8 (mostly 1539).

¹⁰⁹ E.g. COR 4/3:173–74.

unt').¹¹⁰ Pighius, citing this, repeatedly brought against the Reformers the charge of teaching that everything happens by absolute necessity,¹¹¹ a charge that irritated Calvin. He criticized Pighius for dragging in at this stage what belongs to the issue of providence and predestination and should be deferred to that later treatment.¹¹² But he could not avoid it altogether and in his exposition agrees that 'God causes everything and of necessity, that is, in accordance with his providence' and that 'everything that happens happens of necessity, as [God] has ordained'.¹¹³

Why was Calvin irritated by Pighius's repeated reference to 'the absolute necessity of [all] events'? No doubt he was, as he states, annoyed by Pighius's failure to discuss the issues in an orderly fashion. But there is another reason, which explains Calvin's touchiness on this issue. Pighius accused the Reformers of duplicity concerning this doctrine, later conceding free choice to humanity 'in external matters and in public affairs'. Calvin, clearly embarrassed by the charge of Protestant disunity, affirms his deep respect for Luther and claims that the Reformers have remained consistent in their teaching, while developing the manner in which they express that teaching. Between Luther and Melancthon, Calvin will admit no more than that the latter concentrated on the important issue (the role of the will in salvation) and that regarding 'public affairs and outward behaviour' he softened Luther's 'form of expression so as to remove anything displeasing'.¹¹⁴

It was not only the divergence between Luther and Melancthon that embarrassed Calvin. Calvin also diverges from Luther, as became apparent in his later *De aeterna praedestinatione*. In addition to affirming 'absolute necessity', Luther also denied the scholastic distinction between absolute or consequent necessity (*necessitas consequentis*) and necessity of consequence (*necessitas consequentiae*).¹¹⁵ Pighius assumed that Calvin agreed with Luther's teaching that 'nothing happens to us contingently, but everything by sheer necessity'.¹¹⁶ Calvin's embarrassment was that he did not agree – but could not say so openly without displaying Protestant disunity.¹¹⁷ When he did come to

¹¹⁰ WA 7:146.

¹¹¹ *De libero arbitrio* 6a, 8a, 15b.

¹¹² COR 4/3:93, 95, 103–104, 250.

¹¹³ COR 4/3:100, 107 = BLW 253, 258.

¹¹⁴ For this paragraph, cf. COR 4/3:95–97 = BLW 28–29.

¹¹⁵ Luther rejects it in *De servo arbitrio* (WA 18:616–17, 722) – also in his *Lectures on Romans* and *Disputatio contra scholasticam theologiam*, cited by McSorley, *Luther*, 232–36, 242, 315–21. For the meaning of the distinction, see *ibid.* 234–35, 319–20.

¹¹⁶ Pighius, *De libero arbitrio* 6a; COR 4/3:249 = BLW 171.

¹¹⁷ Calvin never admits in this work to any difference of substance from Luther. He refers to 'Luther and the rest of our party' (COR 4/3:74 = BLW 8) and the uninitiated reader would remain blissfully unaware that there was any division between Lutheran and Reformed Protestantism. Calvin implicitly calls himself a Lutheran (COR 4/3:98) and calls

discuss the issue, in his *De aeterna praedestinatione*, he took a position significantly different from Luther's – or at the very least he expresses himself differently from Luther. He agreed that God's will is 'the chief and principal cause of all things' and 'the necessity of things.'¹¹⁸ But he also conceded the validity of the scholastic distinctions between relative and absolute necessity (*necessitas secundum quid et absoluta*) and between necessity of consequence and consequent necessity.¹¹⁹ 'Though it is proper for us to regard the order of nature as divinely determined, I do not at all reject contingency in regard to human understanding.'¹²⁰

This is further spelt out in the 1559 *Institutio*. While all things are controlled by God, 'for us they are fortuitous'. Not that they are truly random, but they 'are in a sense fortuitous'. This is because they 'bear on the face of them no other appearance, whether they are considered in their own nature or weighed according to our knowledge and judgment.' From our perspective the future is contingent, even though the outcome is determined. 'What God has determined must necessarily so take place, even though it is neither unconditionally, nor of its own peculiar nature, necessary.' Christ's bones were like ours and therefore clearly breakable, and yet it was impossible for them to be broken (John 19:33,36). There is, therefore, good ground for the scholastic distinction between different types of necessity.¹²¹

The purpose of this atypical foray into 'scholastic subtlety' is to enable Calvin to dissociate himself from the early Luther's language of absolute necessity.¹²² Why did Calvin here embrace this distinction when he more often rejected such scholastic distinctions as sophistic subtlety?¹²³ Furthermore, why should Calvin use the distinction when his expressed concern was 'lest any subtlety should prevent even the most simple of my readers from understanding what I say'?¹²⁴ In 1543 Calvin had promised an answer to the charge that he agreed with Luther in asserting absolute necessity. In 1550 he answers the

Luther a 'distinguished apostle of Christ' (COR 4/3:96). For other references to Luther, cf. COR 4/3:73–74, 79, 81, 84, 89, 91–98, 104–106, 108, 110, 116–18, 167. Calvin also refers to the Augsburg Confession as 'our confession' (COR 4/3:90 = BLW 23).

¹¹⁸ COR 3/1:254 = *Eternal Predestination*, 177–78.

¹¹⁹ Calvin approves it, together with the distinction between *necessitas secundum quid* and *absoluta*, in *De praed.* (COR 3/1:238 = *Eternal Predestination*, 170). The E.T. is faulty here, conflating the two distinctions into one.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Inst.* 1:16:9 (1559).

¹²² For a fuller discussion of this, cf. A. N. S. Lane, 'Did Calvin Believe in Freewill?', *Vox Evangelica* 12, 1981, 74–75; Lane, 'Bondage and Liberation in Calvin's Treatise,' 23–25.

¹²³ A. A. Lavalley, *Calvin's Criticism of Scholastic Theology* (Harvard University Ph.D. thesis, 1967) 67.

¹²⁴ *Eternal Predestination*, 170 = COR 3/1:238.

charge – rejecting the idea of absolute necessity, by means of the scholastic distinction. The simple were indeed in danger of being confused – by Luther’s statements.¹²⁵ It was in order to rescue the simple from Luther’s unsubtle but extreme formulation that Calvin resorted to the uncharacteristic use of scholastic distinctions. Calvin is careful not to name Luther when tackling the issue in 1550, which would have been harder had he followed Pighius’s agenda and tackled it in 1543.

Heckel devotes much space to refuting my interpretation of this point, using three lines of argument.¹²⁶ First, he appeals to Calvin’s claims to solidarity with Luther.¹²⁷ The problem with this argument is that Calvin also claims solidarity with Melancthon and no one denies that there were serious differences between them. Calvin also claims that the differences between Luther and Melancthon reflected only the latter’s softer way of speaking. Secondly, Heckel claims that Calvin did not affirm the distinction in the same sense that Luther rejected it.¹²⁸ This may well be true. What embarrassed Calvin was Luther’s language of absolute necessity and he himself took care to explain his own position more carefully – hence the use of the distinction. As Heckel puts it, ‘if Calvin was distancing himself from Luther, it does not amount to repudiating the content of what Luther taught, but only of rescuing a distinction too quickly discarded.’¹²⁹ Thirdly, Heckel cites their differences over the Lord’s Supper to prove that Calvin was willing to acknowledge difference where it existed.¹³⁰ Here there is no comparison. On the Lord’s Supper the two clearly occupied substantially different positions. On the present topic no one questions that Calvin and Luther were in very substantial agreement.¹³¹ All that I am claiming is that there were differences in nuance between them, that the agreement was nearer 99% than 100%. Against this Heckel maintains that Calvin (on this topic) ‘was in *complete* agreement with *everything* that Luther had written’¹³² – an extraordinary claim in that I doubt whether even Luther was ‘in complete agreement with everything’ that he had written.

¹²⁵ McSorley, *Luther*, 233–34, 242, 259, 315, 319–21, charitably argues that Luther had not properly grasped the meaning of the scholastic distinction and that he did in fact accept its basic thrust.

¹²⁶ Heckel, ‘*His Spear*’, 27.

¹²⁷ Heckel, ‘*His Spear*’, 9,

¹²⁸ Heckel, ‘*His Spear*’, 9–19, 86–93, 107–125.

¹²⁹ Heckel, ‘*His Spear*’, 19. Cf. *ibid.*, 11. In the light of Heckel’s arguments I have moderated my claims about the extent of distance between Luther and Calvin, compared to the articles cited in n. 122, above.

¹³⁰ Heckel, ‘*His Spear*’, 20–21, 38, 270–73.

¹³¹ So Heckel is right to say that ‘Calvin and Luther on the Lord’s Supper were not like Calvin and Luther on the will’ (272) – but I am not aware that anyone would claim otherwise.

¹³² Heckel, ‘*His Spear*’, 22 (my emphasis).

VI. Calvin and Melanchthon

Calvin's relation to Melanchthon is the subject of a number of older studies¹³³ and more recently there have been studies on their 'friendship'¹³⁴, of Melanchthon's influence upon the 1539 *Institutio*,¹³⁵ and of Calvin's influence upon Melanchthon.¹³⁶

In the dedication to his *Defensio* Calvin states that Melanchthon will be pleased with the work:

To begin with, I am dedicating to you a book which I know for certain will be doubly pleasing to you, both because of your love for me the author and because it contains a defence of the godly and sound teaching of which you are not only a most zealous supporter, but a distinguished and very brave champion.¹³⁷

This should not be taken too literally as Calvin was aware of differences between them and had already criticised Melanchthon's view of election (without naming him) in the 1539 *Institutio*.¹³⁸ In his letter to Calvin of 11 May 1543

¹³³ The main works were P. Schaff, 'The Friendship of Calvin and Melanchthon,' *American Society of Church History* 4 (1892) 143–63 – also in his *History of the Christian Church* vol.8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950) 385–98 (§90: 'Calvin and Melanchthon'); A. Lang, 'Melanchthon und Calvin' in his *Reformation und Gegenwart* (Detmold: Mehersche Hofbuchhandlung, 1918) 88–135; W. Nijenhuis, *Calvinus Oecumenicus*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhof, 1959) via index; J. T. Hickman, 'The Friendship of Melanchthon and Calvin', *Westminster Theological Journal* 38 (1975–76) 152–65.

¹³⁴ R. C. Zachman, 'Restoring Access to the Fountain' in D. Foxgrover (ed.), *Calvin Studies Society Papers 1995, 1997* (Grand Rapids: Calvin Studies Society, 1998) 205–28 (especially 211–19); T. Wengert, "'We Will Feast Together in Heaven Forever': The Epistolary Friendship of John Calvin and Philip Melanchthon' in K. Maag (ed.), *Melanchthon in Europe* (Grand Rapids: Baker and Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999) 19–44 (especially 26–33); M. A. van den Berg, 'Calvijn en Melanchthon, een beproefde vriendschap,' *Theologia Reformata* 41 (1998) 78–102 (especially 88); R. Faber, 'The Humanism of Melanchthon and of Calvin' in G. Frank and H. J. Selderhuis (eds.), *Melanchthon und der Calvinismus* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2005) 11–28 (especially 22–23).

¹³⁵ R. Muller, *Ordo Docendi: Melanchthon and the Organization of Calvin's Institutes, 1536–1543*' in Maag (ed.), *Melanchthon in Europe*, 123–40; idem, *The Unaccommodated Calvin* (New York and Oxford: OUP, 2000) 118–30; O. Millet, 'Les "Loci communes" de 1535 et l'"Institution de la Religion chrétienne" de 1539–1541, ou Calvin en dialogue avec Melanchthon' in G. Frank (ed.), *Melanchthon und Europa* (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2002) 85–96.

¹³⁶ B. Pitkin, 'The Protestant Zeno: Calvin and the Development of Melanchthon's Anthropology,' *Journal of Religion* 84 (2004) 345–78.

¹³⁷ COR 4/3:69 = BLW 3.

¹³⁸ *Inst.* 3:24:17 (1539). Cf. Zachman, 'Restoring Access to the Fountain,' 215–16. Zachman argues that Calvin was at this stage still interpreting Melanchthon through the Augsburg Confession and was not yet fully aware of the extent of the difference between them. Calvin may at this stage have underestimated the divergence between them, but

thanking him for the dedication, Melanchthon expresses (in coded language) his concern that both the bondage of the will and reprobation are in danger of making God the author of sin.¹³⁹ In his next letter, of 12 July, he again expresses similar reservations.¹⁴⁰ Melanchthon had initially supported Luther's doctrine of the bondage of the will, but by this stage had come to allow more scope to human free will than did either Luther or Calvin.¹⁴¹ Despite his awareness of these differences, Calvin arranged for a French translation of the 1543 edition of Melanchthon's *Loci Communes* and himself wrote the preface to it.¹⁴² Here he alludes to their differences on free will and predestination, again (as in the *Defensio*) minimising them.¹⁴³ Calvin's opponents were not so reserved in expressing the difference between the two Reformers and cited Melanchthon for support in their opposition to his doctrine of predestination.¹⁴⁴

Conclusion

Calvin forged his anthropology in dialogue with others. He was in considerable agreement with Luther, though not happy with some of Luther's more extreme formulations. He was in less agreement with Melanchthon, though minimised their differences in the interests of Evangelical unity. He did not engage to any significant extent with Erasmus on this issue but was forced to engage at considerable length with Pighius, with whom he sharply disagreed. Finally, his

Zachman's study does not take sufficiently into account the coded nature of Renaissance letters, on which cf. Wengert, "We Will Feast Together in Heaven Forever," 22–23, 27–30. The other factor is Calvin's concern to present a united Evangelical front in response to Pighius's accusations of disunity.

¹³⁹ Herminjard 8:341–44; CO 11:540–42; cf. MBW 3:394 (#3245). Cf. Zachman, 'Restoring Access to the Fountain,' 217–18; Wengert, "We Will Feast Together in Heaven Forever," 28–29.

¹⁴⁰ Herminjard 8:451–52; CO 11:594–95; cf. MBW 3:407 (#3273). Cf. Wengert, "We Will Feast Together in Heaven Forever," 29.

¹⁴¹ Cf., e.g., B. Hägglund, *History of Theology* (Saint Louis & London: Concordia, 3rd edition: 1968) 249–51; C. A. Fong, 'Luther, Melanchthon and Calvin: The Dynamic Balance between the Freedom of God's Grace and the Freedom of Human Responsibility in Salvation' (Westminster Theological Seminary PhD thesis, 1997) 175–270; Zachman, 'Restoring Access to the Fountain,' 214–15.

¹⁴² CO 9:847–50. It was published in 1546.

¹⁴³ CO 9:848–49. Cf. Zachman, 'Restoring Access to the Fountain,' 218–19; Wengert, "We Will Feast Together in Heaven Forever," 29–30.

¹⁴⁴ Castellio (CO 58:202, cited by Muller, *Unaccommodated Calvin*, 125, n. 44) and Trollet (CO 14:374–77, cited by Wengert, "We Will Feast Together in Heaven Forever", 30, n. 48).

theology was as always forged with one eye on Augustine, who reminded him that the sovereignty of grace does not exclude the reality of human choice.

Probleme der Prädestinationslehre Calvins

CHRISTIAN LINK

Calvin hat sich mit dem Thema und Problem der Prädestination, durch seine Gegner herausgefordert, *mehrfach*, in mehreren Anläufen befasst: zunächst in der *Institutio* von 1536: hier erscheint die Prädestination als „Tiefendimension der calvinischen Lehre von der Kirche“ (B.Klappert), ein Kontext, der in späteren Schriften spürbar zurücktritt, sodann in der Römerbriefauslegung von 1539, ferner in einer Reihe von Predigten und schließlich in dem großen lehrhaften *Summarium* der *Institutio* von 1559 (III,21–24). Jede dieser Schriften eröffnet eine neue Perspektive auf das Thema. Es fällt jedoch nicht leicht, diese Perspektiven in ein einheitliches Konzept zu integrieren. Deshalb spreche ich von offen gebliebenen Problemen, füge allerdings hinzu, dass sich nahezu alle Schwierigkeiten, vor die uns die Endgestalt dieser Lehre stellt, in ähnlicher Form bereits bei Augustin und Luther finden und zuletzt auf Paulus zurückgehen, an dessen Römerbrief Calvin die eigenen Thesen immer wieder überprüft hat. Mit der Darstellung dieses ihm wichtigsten Gesprächspartners sei daher begonnen.

I. Das Gespräch mit Paulus

Die wichtigsten dogmatischen Entscheidungen Calvins sind in und über seiner exegetischen Arbeit gefallen. Die Leitbegriffe, mit denen er das Prädestinationsproblem bearbeitet – *Erwählung*, *Berufung* und allen voran der göttliche *Vorsatz* – stammen von Paulus. Wie seine reformatorischen Mitstreiter interpretiert Calvin den Römerbrief mit einer erstaunlichen Konsequenz unter dem Aspekt der für ihn entscheidenden Frage nach der Rechtfertigung, gerade auch dort, wo es in den Kapiteln 9–11 um das für die Prädestination so wichtige Drama Israels geht: Wie ist es möglich, dass sich ausgerechnet die „ursprünglichen Hüter und Erben des Bundes“ gegen Christus stellen? Die paulinische Antwort, dass „nicht alle Israeliten sind, die aus Israel stammen“ (Röm 9,6), verbunden mit dem vielleicht schwie-

rigsten Satz: „Jakob habe ich geliebt, Esau aber habe ich gehasst“ (V.13), führt ihn auf das Thema der „verborgenen Erwählung“.

Warum verfährt Gott so? Hier setzt Calvin die Akzente fast noch schärfer als der Römerbrief selbst. Paulus will jede Berücksichtigung der Werke ausschließen: „nichts können Verdienste hier bewirken“ (485,11.14)¹. Es kann auch keine Rede davon sein, als habe Gott sie vorhergesehen. Niemand also soll glauben, „die Erwählten würden deshalb erwählt, weil ... sie sich auf irgend eine Weise die Gunst Gottes erworben hätten“ (493,14). Das alles sind Spitzenaussagen der Rechtfertigungslehre, und so fasst Calvin den Argumentationsgang denn auch in der Feststellung zusammen: „Israel hat den wahren Grund der Rechtfertigung verfehlt“ (521.14). Denn dieser Grund, Gottes reine Gnade, ist es, der in der Erwählung sichtbar und anschaulich wird. Systematisch wird die Rechtfertigung damit zurückverlagert an den „Ort“ der Erwählung und findet hier ihre sozusagen tiefste Begründung.

Worin also hat die Erwählung ihren Grund? Calvin präzisiert die Argumentation, indem er mit Paulus (Röm 9,11) den Begriff des *Vorsatzes* (*propositum*) einführt, der mit sehr viel formaleren Bestimmungen einhergeht, und erst in diesem Zusammenhang erhält der Begriff der Prädestination seine genaue Bedeutung – und seine Schärfe. Denn dieser Vorsatz „hängt [allein] von Gottes Wohlgefallen ab, weil Gott *außer sich selbst* über die, die er zu Kindern annimmt, nichts im Voraus weiß“ (439.11). „Weil Gottes Erbarmen frei ist, ... kann es sich wenden, wohin es will“, und im Blick auf diese Freiheit heißt es nun: „Das Wort ‚vorherbestimmen‘ (*praedestinare*) bezieht sich auf Umstand [und Ausführung] dieses Vorsatzes“ (439,14), und noch genauer: es „bezeichnet nicht die Erwählung (*electio*), sondern jenen Vorsatz bzw. Ratschluss (*decretum*) Gottes“ (441.7). Calvin unterscheidet also zwischen Prädestination und Erwählung, wobei der im „Römerbrief“ eher seltene, in der *Institutio* eher dominante Begriff der Prädestination das Problem ganz auf die Entscheidung Gottes zuspitzt, den juristischen Gedanken in seine ganze Konsequenz verfolgt und deshalb – anders als Paulus – Aussagen auch über endgültig Verworfenene riskiert. Prädestination, von dem so verstandenen göttlichen Vorsatz her begriffen, der nicht unentschieden sein kann, ist daher *ex definitione doppelte* Prädestination (*ad vitam et ad mortem*)².

Mag Calvin in seiner Interpretation über das, was Paulus explizit gesagt hat, einen folgenreichen Schritt hinausgegangen sein, das erläuternd he-

¹ Die in Klammern stehenden Ziffern beziehen sich auf Seiten- und Zeilenzahl der Calvin-Studienausgabe (CStA 5.1 und 2), Neukirchen 2005/2007.

² Inst III,21,5 (OS IV, 374.10–15). Den Gedanken einer bloße Zulassung (*permissio*) im Blick auf die Nicht-Erwählten hat Calvin immer abgewehrt. Gleichwohl kann er mit Augustin auch einmal von einem „Übergehen“ (*praeterire*) dieser anderen reden.

rangezogene Töpfergleichnis (Röm 9,20) scheint ihm Recht zu geben. Er zitiert es jedoch nicht in der Fassung von Jer 18, wo von „misstratenen“ Gefäßen die Rede ist, aus denen ein neues und besseres Geschirr gemacht werden soll, sondern in der härteren Version von Jes 45,9, das auf die Freiheit des Töpfers zielt, über den Zweck seines Werkstücks selber zu entscheiden, und erklärt: „Wie der Töpfer dem Ton nichts wegnimmt, welch' beliebige Form er ihm gegeben haben mag, so nimmt auch Gott dem Menschen nichts weg, mit welcher Bestimmung auch immer er ihn geschaffen hat“ (505.16). Die Frage, *warum* es überhaupt „Gefäße zur Unehre“ gibt, hat Paulus nicht gestellt und erst recht nicht beantwortet. Calvin folgt ihm darin: den Grund der Erwählung müssen wir unangetastet lassen. So sind die Menschen „Werkzeuge“ in Gottes Hand, „durch die er seinen Namen verherrlichen will“ (509.9). Dass er mit dieser luziden Argumentation die Logik von Röm 9,11f. gleichsam auf den Punkt gebracht hat, lässt sich wohl kaum bestreiten.

Und doch muss man fragen, ob ihm – wie übrigens der ganzen Reformation – der eigentliche Gehalt von Röm 9–11 zuletzt nicht doch verschlossen geblieben ist. Er verkennt, dass die „Verwerfungsaussagen umspielt sind vom Zeugnis der Treue Gottes zum geschichtlichen Israel“³. Israel ist hier lediglich ein Beispiel für die Kirche, als Demonstration für Gottes Gericht oder als Beispiel seiner Geduld. Erwählung und Verwerfung werden hier jenseits des tatsächlichen geschichtlichen Dramas logisch als zwei symmetrische, aber geschichtslose Akte Gottes vorgeführt. Genau hier schürzt sich der Knoten des Problems.

II. Das Problem: Erwählung und Geschichte

Im Alten Testament bricht das Thema der Erwählung über der Klärung des eigenen geschichtlichen Ortes und dessen theologischer Deutung auf (Dtn 7,7ff.). Es begründet ihre unverbrüchliche Geltung mit Erfahrungen Israels und seiner Repräsentanten. So bekommt Abraham nicht etwa zu wissen, er sei „erwählt“. Er sieht sich vor den Auftrag gestellt: „Zieh hinweg aus deinem Vaterland und aus deiner Verwandtschaft ...“ (Gen 12,1). Dieser Auftrag macht ihn zum Wanderer, zum Fremdling, bereichert und belastet ihn mit einer Fülle von Erfahrungen, die er ohne die Eröffnung eines solchen Weges nie gemacht hätte. Hier erst trifft die theologische Reflexion auf die Spur Gottes, die mitten durch die Lebensgeschichte von Menschen hindurchführt. Es ist die erfahrbare Beziehung zwischen ihnen und diesem Gott, die das Nachdenken auf den Begriff der Erwählung geführt hat. Noch

³ Vgl. hierzu: H. Scholl, Calvinus Catholicus, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1974, 148f.

bei Calvin hat die Erwählung ihren primären *lebensgeschichtlichen* Ort in der verfolgten kämpfenden Gemeinde der Hugenotten die wissen soll, dass sie Gottes Eigentum ist. Das aber bleibt ohne Konsequenzen für die theologische Reflexion.

Die Frage, die das theologische Nachdenken im Zeichen der Erwählung in Atem hält, lautet denn auch: Wie verhält sich die Freiheit der Zuwendung Gottes zu den Entscheidungen, der irdisch-menschlichen Geschichte? Denn es gibt einen Schatten der Erwählung, den wiederum erst das intensive Nachdenken über die eigene Geschichte sichtbar gemacht und der seinen Niederschlag in den Begriffen der Verstockung und Verwerfung gefunden hat. Saul wird als der providentielle Retter seines Volkes zunächst „erwählt“, später jedoch „verworfen“. Wer verworfen wird, kann nicht mehr erwählt sein, was umgekehrt nun allerdings auch bedeutet, dass *niemand* verworfen werden kann, der nicht *zuvor* erwählt wurde. Nur insofern besteht zwischen Erwählung und Verwerfung eine Art Bipolarität.

Mit der Christusverkündigung der paulinischen Mission entsteht eine neue Situation. Israel sieht sich in die Defensive gedrängt, da die neue Botschaft ihm seinen heilsgeschichtlichen Ort streitig zu machen droht. „Hat Gott sein Volk etwa verlassen?“ (Röm 11,1) Paulus stellt klar, dass der Gott, der sich in Christus offenbart hat, kein anderer ist als der, welcher Israel erwählt hat. In paulinischer Interpretation heißt das: Die Gerechtigkeit Gottes, die im Evangelium „aus Glauben zu Glauben“ offenbar wird, ist *dieselbe*, in der Gott Abraham erwählt und die Lebensordnungen des Bundes in Kraft gesetzt hat. Die Erwählung – ein folgenreicher hermeneutischer Schritt – wird demzufolge von der Rechtfertigung her verstanden. Damit gerät sie ins Fahrwasser einer ihr von Hause aus fremden Alternative: Glaube *oder* Werke. Sie soll die Unverfügbarkeit der Rechtfertigung sichern und wird so „zum unergründlichen Grund, in dem die Rechtfertigungsgewissheit des einzelnen gründet“.⁴ Das Argument, dass Gottes Gerechtigkeit sich niemals von menschlichem Tun oder Lassen abhängig macht, ist der neu entdeckte Schlüssel, der das Geheimnis der Erwählung „verstehbar“ macht. Da jedoch kein Mensch über diesen Schlüssel verfügt, wird die Erwählung zu einem Akt *grundloser* göttlicher Entscheidung, deren Unabhängigkeit sich in ihrer nun *temporal* verstandener Vorzeitlichkeit – „vor Grundlegung der Welt“ (Eph 1,4) – manifestiert.

Wer zum Glauben kommt und wer nicht, entscheidet Gott nun ganz unabhängig von den geschichtlichen Umständen. Die Klammer zwischen Erwählung und Geschichte zerbricht. Damit sind die Weichen für die dogmatische Lehrentwicklung gestellt. Aus der Erwählung wird nun im Wortsinn die Prä-destination. Sie konnte sich (nicht erst bei Calvin) folge-

⁴ B. Klappert, Erwählung und Rechtfertigung, in: Miterben der Verheißung, Neukirchen 2000 (105–147), 133.

richtig mit dem Thema der Vorsehung verbinden. Ihr Problem ist von diesem Ansatz her so gestellt, dass es, wenn überhaupt, dann nur auf einer Ebene oberhalb und jenseits der menschlichen Geschichte verhandelt werden kann. Es ist Gottes eigenes Problem und deshalb für den Menschen ein undurchdringliches Rätsel. Man begreift auf diesem Hintergrund, dass sich die Prädestinationslehre nun als Ausgangspunkt theologischer (autonomer) *Erklärungen* anbot. Sie soll begründen, wie es kommt, „dass der Bund des Lebens nicht bei allen Menschen gleichermaßen verkündigt wird“ (Inst III,21,1).

III. Zwei verschiedene Lehrformen

Calvin hat die theologischen Schwierigkeiten, die die These einer doppelten Prädestination mit sich führt, sehr wohl gesehen: „Hier erheben sich große und schwere Fragen, die nicht anders zu lösen sind, als wenn die Frommen klar erfasst haben, was sie von Erwählung und Vorbestimmung wissen müssen“ (III,21,1). Dieses notwendige Wissen entfaltet er unter zwei verschiedenen Perspektiven und dementsprechend in zwei verschiedenen Gattungen: einmal im Genus der Lehre (so im theozentrischen Entwurf der *Institutio*), ein anderes Mal im Genus der Predigt (hier dominiert der christologische Aspekt). Wilhelm Neuser hat geradezu von zwei verschiedenen *Konzeptionen* gesprochen.⁵

Erwählung als Prädestination

Längst bevor Calvin zu schreiben begann, sind die Probleme des ersten Weges in Luthers Schrift *De servo arbitrio* sichtbar geworden. Luther unterscheidet dort zwischen dem *gepredigten* und dem nicht-gepredigten und darum *verborgenen* Gott⁶ und schreibt die Frage der Erwählung dem letzteren zu. Das hat zur Folge, dass das Denken mit seinem Bedürfnis zu *verstehen*, vor einer verschlossenen Tür steht. Denn wo es Auskunft bekommen möchte, da „hat Gott sich selbst gar nicht definiert“.⁷ Da trifft man nur auf die einsame Majestät eines „vor“ und „über“ der Welt thronenden Gottes. Ob Calvin diese Schrift Luthers gekannt hat, wissen wir nicht. Dass er sich in der *Institutio* mit der ganzern Leidenschaft seines Denkens ähnlichen Problemen zugewandt hat und zu ähnlichen Lösungen gekommen ist, lässt sich nicht bestreiten.

⁵ W. Neuser, Calvin als Prediger, in: M. Beintker (Hg), Gottes freie Gnade. Studien zur Lehre von der Erwählung, Wuppertal 2004 (69–91), 87.

⁶ M. Luther, *De servo arbitrio*, WA 18, 685.

⁷ Ebd. 712.

Obwohl die Erwählungslehre schon durch den Ort, an dem sie hier (Buch III) steht, als ein Kapitel der Gnadenlehre entworfen ist, lässt sie sich ihr dominantes Thema durch Eph 1,4 stellen: „Gott hat uns in Christus erwählt vor Grundlegung der Welt“. Aus diesem Satz zieht Calvin drei Schlussfolgerungen, die für das Profil seiner *Lehre* maßgebend sind: (1) Hat Gott uns in Christus erwählt, so wird jeder einzelne „außerhalb seiner selbst“, d.h. ohne Rücksicht auf irgendwelche Verdienste erwählt. So verstanden heißt Erwählung *Auswahl* und somit Scheidung. (2) Lässt sich diese Auswahl nicht durch Gottes Vorherwissen menschlichen Verhaltens begründen, dann sind unsere etwaigen Tugenden selbst Folge und *Wirkung* der Erwählung. (3) Scheidet das augustinische Vorherwissen (*praescientia*) aus, dann zählt nur der göttliche *Vorsatz*, und das bedeutet, dass Gottes Entscheidung ohne Rücksicht auf innerzeitliche Bedingungen und Umstände und darum auch jenseits der Christologie fällt. Wir sehen, heißt es in der Prädestinationsschrift (1552), „dass *Gott* bei sich *selbst* anfängt, wenn er uns seiner Erwählung würdigt, *wir* aber sollen nach seinem Willen bei Christus anfangen, um zu wissen dass wir zu seinem heiligen Eigentum zählen“ (CO 8,319). Die *Institutio* sekundiert: „Von den Erwählten heißt es, dass sie dem Vater schon gehörten, *bevor* er sie seinem eingeborenen Sohn gab.“ (III,22,7). Calvin also greift in seiner dogmatischen Interpretation wie Luther *hinter* die Geschichte Jesu Christi zurück. Hier liegt das zentrale Problem seines Entwurfs: Lässt sich die Prädestination überhaupt mit der Christologie verbinden, kann das Heilsgeschehen für sie eine begründende (und nicht nur instrumentale) Bedeutung haben, wenn über Gottes Ja und Gottes Nein (als gegensätzliche Äquivalente) bereits zuvor entschieden ist?⁸

Erwählung als Gnade

Calvin hat sich als Schüler Augustins verstanden und legte Wert darauf, sich in seiner Fassung der Erwählungslehre „keinen Fingerbreit“ von dessen Entwurf zu unterscheiden. Dort jedenfalls ist zum ersten Mal die Perspektive entwickelt worden, die den Ton der Predigten bestimmt: Der Mensch Jesus Christus ist das „strahlendste Licht der Erwählung und Gnade“, er ist der „Spiegel der Erwählung“.⁹ Dementsprechend liest man in unverkennbarer Spannung zum eben skizzierten Ansatz:

„Ich weise die Menschen durchaus nicht an Gottes geheime Erwählung (*arcana electio*), damit sie von dorthier ihr Heil erwarten sollen; vielmehr heiße ich sie geradewegs zu Christus zu gehen, in dem uns das Heil vor Augen gestellt ist ... Auf diesen Spiegel soll

⁸ Vgl. O. Weber, Grundlagen der Dogmatik II, Neukirchen 1962, 474f. K. Barth, KD II/2, 68–72.145, hat mit diesem Argument Calvins Ausführungen scharf kritisiert.

⁹ Augustin, De correptione et gratia 11,33; Migne PL 44,934f., zit. in Inst III,22,1.

sich der Blick des Glaubens heften und nicht dorthin vorzudringen versuchen, wohin ihm kein Zugang offen steht ... Denn wer den Zugang nicht auf dem gebahnten Weg des Glaubens findet, dem wird Gottes Erwählung ein tödliches Labyrinth sein.“¹⁰

In Calvins Predigten – ich konzentriere mich auf die große Ansprache zum Abschluss der Bolsec Kontroverse (1551) – gruppieren sich die Probleme der Prädestination um dieses von Augustin freigelegte Zentrum der Christologie. Der Weg Gottes zum Menschen, seine Kondeszendenz, ist der maßgebliche *Erkenntnisgrund* unserer Erwählung:

„Wir dürfen nicht hoch hinaufsteigen, um Dinge zu erforschen, die uns jetzt noch verborgen bleiben müssen, sondern Gott selbst neigt sich zu uns herab. Er zeigt uns das Heil in seinem Sohn, als ob er uns sagen wollte: Hier bin ich, schaut mich an und erkennt, wie ich euch zu meinen Kindern angenommen habe!“ (143,2ff.)¹¹

Man erkennt das veränderte Gefälle, wenn man auf die Akzente der Textauslegung achtet. So fällt auf die Vorzeitigkeit der Erwählung kein eigenes Gewicht, aus ihr wird kein *decretum aeternum* abgeleitet, und wo der „ewige Ratschluss“ einmal ausdrücklich erwähnt wird, da wird er auf das Erbe des bleibenden Abrahambundes bezogen, also gewissermaßen auf die Zukunft hin ausgelegt (111.24ff.). An die Stelle der Ursache der Erwählung – das ist eine der markantesten Differenzen gegenüber der Institutio – tritt das eschatologische Argument, das den Blick auf die Zukunft Gottes lenkt: Wenn „das Buch des Lebens“ aufgetan wird, werden wir wissen, was uns heute noch verborgen ist (121,10ff.). Wichtig ist jetzt nicht die logische Erwägung, dass der Gnade die Erwählung zeitlich und sachlich vorausgeht, sondern die soteriologische Gewissheit, dass sie selbst Inbegriff der Erwählung ist.

Diese Ausrichtung hat Konsequenzen für das sperrige Problem der Verwerfung. Anders als in der Institutio wird hier eine doppelte Prädestination zum Leben *und* zum Tod nicht gelehrt. Der Terminus der *praeordinatio*, auch sein Äquivalent der *praedeterminatio* (*destination*) begegnet hier nicht ein einziges Mal. Das dunkle Rätsel, warum am Ende nicht alle errettet werden, beantwortet Calvin auf den Spuren Augustins mit dem Hinweis auf unsere geschöpfliche Situation. Der Blick auf die Nicht-Erwählten soll uns zu dem Eingeständnis führen, dass wir von Rechts wegen alle auf die Seite der von Gott Geschiedenen gehören (137.3ff.). Ein symmetrisches Gleichgewicht zwischen Erwählung und Verwerfung gibt es hier nicht. Umgekehrt wird gerade so der Nachdruck verständlich, mit dem Calvin unsere *Heiligung* als die eigentliche Absicht der Erwählung herausstellt.

¹⁰ De aeterna Dei praedestinatione, CO 306f.

¹¹ Die in Klammern stehenden Ziffern beziehen sich auf den Text der „Congrégation“ in CStA 4, 93–149.

Offen bleibt bei all dem freilich, ob die so eindrucksvoll betonte Kondeszendenz auch als *Realgrund* unserer Erwählung gelten darf.

IV. Das Ziel der Erwählung

Calvin blickt nicht nur *zurück* auf den Grund der ewigen Erwählung, er blickt mit gleicher Intensität *voraus* auf das Ziel der „himmlischen Herrlichkeit“, das den von Gott „Vorherbestimmten“ nach Röm 8,30 gesteckt ist. Deshalb verbindet sich mit der Prädestination die *Perseveranz*, die Gabe der Beharrlichkeit, des Standhaltens.¹² Wie die Geschichte *Jesu* eine prädestinarianische Voraussetzung hat und zugleich die Erfüllung der Verheißungsgeschichte Israels ist, so hat der Glaube der *Christen* sein Fundament in der Erwählung Gottes und richtet sich auf die Vollendung im zukünftigen Leben. Hier liegt die „kerygmatische Spitze“ (Moltmann) der Prädestinationslehre, die die eschatologische Ausrichtung der Erwählung offenkundig macht. Neu ist bei Calvin der Nachdruck, mit dem er die praktische, dem Leben der Erwählten zugewandte Seite dieser Gewissheit betont. Sie werden in Anfechtungen und Leiden bestehen.¹³ Das ist die Form und Gestalt, die die ewige Erwählung in der Zeit annimmt. Neu ist darum auch der Nachdruck, mit dem Calvin auf der Unzerstörbarkeit des einmal erweckten Glaubens besteht, der sich nicht, wie die Scholastik lehrte auf ein *punctum temporis* einschränken lässt. Perseveranz ist Bewahrung in der Zeit. Sie hat ihren Grund in der unverbrüchlichen Treue, mit der Gott zu seinen Verheißungen steht: sie hängt an der Festigkeit (*firmitudo*) Christi, der nicht zulässt, dass die Glaubenden seiner Hand entgleiten.

Es fällt auf, dass Calvin in der Erläuterung dieser Spitzenaussage nicht mehr mit dem ewigen Dekret argumentiert, sondern – wie in der Predigt – fast ausschließlich mit dem Verweis auf Christus, auf das Wort Gottes und seine Verheißungen. Der christologische Erkenntnisgrund ist hier tatsächlich als Realgrund zur Geltung gebracht. Im Blick auf den innergeschichtlichen Weg, der vor den Glaubenden liegt, gibt es keine Kluft zwischen einer vorzeitlichen göttlichen Entscheidung und dem hier und jetzt gebotenen Leben und Tun. Wer die Prädestination von dem *geschichtlichen* Gang und Vollzug der Erwählung antrennen wollte, hätte sie um ihre Pointe gebracht. „Man kann also Calvin ... nicht genug danken, dass er den Satz von der *perseverantia* in [dieser] ... Form auf den Plan gestellt hat“, liest man sogar bei dem schärfsten Kritiker seiner Lehre, bei Karl Barth: „Das

¹² Dazu: J. Moltmann, Prädestination und Perseveranz. Geschichte und Bedeutung der reformierten Lehre „De perseverantia sanctorum“, Neukirchen 1961, 31–51.

¹³ Zu Röm 8,30 (CStA 5.2, 441.18), ähnlich auch Inst III,24,1 (OS IV, 410.12).

ganze Evangelium leuchtet erst dann, wenn diese Lehre leuchtet.“¹⁴ Indessen fällt der Schatten der *doppelten* Prädestination zuletzt auch auf diese Verheißung. Sie wird „nicht allen zuteil“.¹⁵ Doch hat Calvin damit nicht das Johannesevangelium auf seiner Seite, das Christus die Worte in den Mund legt: „Ich bitte nicht für die Welt, sondern für die, die du mir gegeben hast“?¹⁶

Eberhard Busch hat unlängst auf die spätesten Äußerungen Calvins zur Sache hingewiesen, die sich diesem Problem in großer Nachdenklichkeit stellen: Wie kann Gott – so lautet die Frage in der „Auslegung des Propheten Ezechiel“ – *beides* wollen, die Seligkeit aller (Ez 18,23 und 32) *und* die Scheidung der Erwählten von den Verworfenen?¹⁷ Und wie soll man gleichwohl daran festhalten, dass von einer Zwiespältigkeit Gottes keine Rede sein kann? „Gottes Wille ist einfach und einheitlich, auch wenn er sich für unser Empfinden verschieden äußert.“ In diese, für unsern Verstand unauflösbaren Fragen hat sich ihm das Problem der Prädestination zusammengezogen, und man spürt es diesen letzten, vor seinem Tod gehaltenen Vorlesungen ab, dass er – und wohl niemand – mit diesem ‚Widerspruch‘ fertig werden kann. Das Ziel der prophetischen Verkündigung (*coelestis doctrina*) ist eindeutig: „Alle sollen gerettet werden, ... alle sollen ohne Unterschied zum Heil berufen werden.“¹⁸ Gott hat keine Freude am Tod dessen, der stirbt, – *aber*: „Wollen wir in seinen verborgenen Ratschluss eindringen, so liegt die Sache (*ratio*) anders.“ Darum müssen wir uns damit begnügen, „die Dinge jetzt nur wie in einem Spiegel und Rätselwort (1 Kor 13,12) zu sehen.“¹⁹ Es spricht für Calvin, dass er der Versuchung widerstanden hat, hier eine Lösung, einen rational einsichtigen Ausgleich zu suchen. Er betrachtet den Spiegel dort, wo er durch das Licht des „himmlischen Dekrets“ in der Person des Mittlers Jesus Christus, der uns zum „Immanuel“ werden sollte, hell geworden ist, d.h. zum „Spiegel, in dem wir unsere Erwählung betrachten sollen“ und in dem allein wir es auch können.²⁰ So wird er uns zum Manifest der Treue Gottes. Und ist das nicht Basis, auf der diejenigen, die ihre Erwählungsgewissheit erkannt haben, diese Treue als Verheißung auch denen nahe bringen können, die sie noch nicht erkannt haben?

¹⁴ K. Barth, a.a.O. (Anm.8), 365.367.

¹⁵ Inst III,24,6 (OS IV, 417.23).

¹⁶ Joh 17,9, zit. in Inst III,22,7 (OS IV, 387.22).

¹⁷ CO 40,456. Dazu: E. Busch, Gotteserkenntnis und Menschlichkeit. Einsichten in die Theologie Calvins, Zürich 2005, 75.

¹⁸ Ebd. 459.

¹⁹ Ebd. 446.

²⁰ Inst III,24,5 (OS IV, 416.3), vgl. auch Inst I,12,1.

Die natürliche Theologie als ökumenisches Problem. Zur Relektüre der „theologia naturalis“ bei den Reformatoren Melanchthon und Calvin

GÜNTER FRANK

I.

Nahezu alle Studien des vergangenen Jahrhunderts, die in irgendeiner Weise die natürliche Theologie bei Calvin zum Gegenstand hatten, standen unter dem Paradigma der vernichtenden Kritik Karls Barths und der dialektischen Theologie an der „theologia naturalis“. Der Kern dieser Kritik bestand in der spezifischen Art, in der die Neuscholastik diese Lehre vor dem Hintergrund der „Analogia entis“ konzipiert hatte.¹ Barths Position war in Auseinandersetzung mit der Analogie-Metaphysik Erich Przywaras² eindeutig: „Ich halte die analogia entis für die Erfindung des Antichrist und denke, dass man ihretwegen nicht katholisch werden kann.“³ Die neuscholastische Analogie-Lehre hielt Barth bekanntlich für ungeeignet, sowohl die tatsächliche, allein von Gott gestiftete Gemeinschaft zwischen ihm und der Kreatur als auch die bleibende Verschiedenheit zwischen beiden auszudrücken. In dieser Folge wurde die Analogie-Lehre und die darauf gegründete „theologia naturalis“ zu einem konfessionellen Problem.

Blickt man näher auf die Analogie-Metaphysik, wie sie Barth bei seinem Gesprächspartner Przywara im Blick hatte, erheben sich Zweifel, ob damit überhaupt das Anliegen der Reformatoren und der reformatorischen Bewegung, sofern sie sich um die natürliche Theologie bemüht hatten (Luther kann sicher nicht dazu gezählt werden), getroffen ist. Zwar gibt es durchaus Versuche unter lutherischen Gelehrten (etwa bei Jacob Schegk und Nikolaus Taurellus⁴), eine als Ontologie verstandene Metaphysik zu rehabilitie-

¹ *Przywara, Erich*: Gotteserfahrung und Gottesbeweis, in: *ders.*: Ringen der Gegenwart. Gesammelte Aufsätze 1922–1927, Bd. I, Augsburg 1929, 398: „In der analogia entis ist Ursprung, Wahrheitsgrund, Inhalt und Umfang unserer natürlichen Gotteserkenntnis.“

² *Analogia Entis. Metaphysik, I. Prinzip*, München 1932.

³ *Barth, Karl*: Kirchliche Dogmatik, Bd. I/1, Zürich 1932, VIII. (Fortan: KD).

⁴ Ausführlich hierzu die Studie des Vf.: Die Vernunft des Gottesgedankens. Religionsphilosophische Studien zur frühen Neuzeit, Stuttgart – Bad Cannstatt 2003 (Quaestiones 13), bes. 89–168.

ren. Den Reformatoren Luther, Melanchthon und Calvin gemeinsam war jedoch ihre grundlegende Verwerfung dieser als Ontologie konzipierten Metaphysik.⁵ In meinem Beitrag versuche ich deshalb den umgekehrten Weg einer Relektüre des Anliegens der Reformatoren. Zunächst soll die Frage diskutiert werden, wie die „*theologia naturalis*“ überhaupt in die Theologie der Reformation gelangt ist. In einem zweiten Abschnitt werde ich ihren systematischen Stellenwert innerhalb der Topik als Methode der Dogmatik – denn genau hier ist ihr Ort – näher explizieren. In einem dritten Teil soll schließlich die Struktur der natürlichen Theologie der Reformatoren wenigstens skizzenhaft und ihr – wie ich meine – bleibendes Anliegen in einem abschließenden Teil dargestellt werden.

II.

Das Lehrstück der „*theologia naturalis*“ erscheint im Zusammenhang der Etablierung der Theologie als einer wissenschaftlichen Disziplin im Protestantismus. Für das Entstehen einer solchen Theologie maßgebend wurde zweifellos die „*Loci*“-Theologie Melanchthons, wie sie seit den „*Loci communes*“ von 1521 und ihren Überarbeitungen als „*Loci theologici*“ von 1535 und 1543 die protestantischen Dogmatiken präludierten. Mit der Reformation kann man geradezu von einem Boom an „*Loci*“-Theologien sprechen, die konfessionsübergreifend eine bestimmte Methodologie bedeutete, Theologie als wissenschaftliche Disziplin zu verstehen.⁶

Unter den Wittenberger Theologen sind hier im Anschluss an Melanchthon etwa die einflussreichen Traktate von Martin Chemnitz (1522–1586) „*Loci theologici*“⁷, die posthum von Polycarp Leyser 1591 in Frankfurt herausgegeben worden waren, oder die neunbändigen „*Locorum Theologorum*“⁸ von Johann Gerhard (1582–1637), in Jena zwischen 1610 bis 1622 publiziert, sowie das einflussreiche, bereits in anti-melanchthonischer Absicht verfasste „*Compendium Locorum Theologorum*“ von Leonhard Hutter (1563–1616)⁹ zu nennen, das bereits im Jahr 1613 in einer deutschen

⁵ Ebd. bes. 25–174.

⁶ Ausführlich hierzu der Beitrag des Vf.: *Wie kam die Topik in die Dogmatik? Topik als Methode der Dogmatik bei Philipp Melanchthon und Melchior Cano*, in: *Hermeneutik, Interpretation, Exegese. Zur Theorie der Interpretation in der frühen Neuzeit* (hg. v. Günter Frank, Stephan Meier-Oeser), Stuttgart – Bad Cannstatt 2010 (MSB 11).

⁷ *Loci theologici reverendi et clarissimi viri D. Martini Chemnitii [...] qibus et loci communes Philippi Melanchthonis perspicue explicantur.*

⁸ *Locorum Theologorum Cum Pro Adstruenda Veritate, Tum Pro destruenda quorumvis contradicentium falsitate per Theses nervose, solide & copiose explicatorum tomus.*

⁹ Vgl. auch die Neuausgabe: *Compendium locorum theologicorum ex scripturis sacris et libro concordiae: lateinisch – deutsch – englisch. Kritisch herausgegeben, kommentiert und mit einem Nachwort sowie einer Bibliographie sämtlicher Drucke des Compendium versehen*

Übersetzung erschienen war und bis in das 19. Jahrhundert hinein als theologisches Lehrbuch an den Universitäten Verwendung fand¹⁰. Unter den reformierten Gelehrten ragen heraus die „Loci communes“ des Norditalieners und später in Oxford lehrenden Theologieprofessors Pietro Martire Vermigli (1499–1562), die posthum 1576 in London publiziert und bereits 1583 hier ins Englische übersetzt wurden und die bis 1656 neben diesen beiden noch 12 weitere Auflagen erreichen sollten.¹¹ Zu nennen sind unter reformierten Theologen auch Johannes Piscators „Aphorismi doctrinae Christianae“¹².

Auch auf römischer Seite hatten „Loci-communes“-Traktate seit dem 16. Jhd. dogmatische Konjunktur. So hatte diese Tradition schon der Ingolstädter Theologe Johannes Eck (1486–1543) mit seinem „Enchiridion locorum communium“ aus dem Jahr 1525¹³ eröffnet, das seit der Bemerkung Huldrych Zwinglis in einem Brief an Vadian vom 22. April 1526, Eck habe mit seinen Loci Melanchthon nachgeahmt¹⁴, gemeinhin als Erwiderung auf Melanchthons frühe „Loci communes“ gilt¹⁵, dessen nachhaltigen Einfluss immerhin die stattliche Anzahl von 121 Auflagen belegt¹⁶. Als kritische Auseinandersetzung mit der „Loci-communes“-Theologie wurden

von Johann Anselm Steiger, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 2006 (Doctrina et pietas: Abt. 2, Varia; Bd. 3). Noch der Jenenser Theologieprofessor Karl August (von) Hase (1800–1890) hatte sein Hauptwerk der lutherischen Dogmatik „Hutterus redivivus“ (1829; 1887) genannt.

¹⁰ Vgl. hierzu insgesamt *Ratschow, Carl Heinz*: Lutherische Dogmatik zwischen Reformation und Aufklärung, 2 Bde., Gütersloh 1964–1966.

¹¹ Vgl. die bibliographische Übersicht bei *Donnelly, John Patrick*: A bibliography of the works of Peter Martyr Vermigli, compiled by John Patrick Donnelly. In collaboration with Robert M. Kingdon. With a register of Vermigli's correspondence, Kirksville, Mo 1990 (Sixteenth century essays & studies 13), 98–126; *Strohm, Christoph*: Petrus Martyr Vermigli's Loci Communes und Calvins Institutio Christianae Religionis, in: Peter Martyr Vermigli: Humanism, Republicanism, Reformation (hg. v. Emidio Campi), Geneva 2002, 77–104.

¹² Aphorismi doctrinae Christianae, maximam partem ex Institutione Calvini excerpti, sive loci communes theologici, brevibus sententiis expositi, Herborn 1589.

¹³ Enchiridion locorum communium adversus Lutherum et alios hostes ecclesiae, Landshut 1525. Vgl. hierzu die Neuausgabe von Pierre Fraenkel, Münster 1979 (Corpus Catholicorum. Werke katholischer Schriftsteller im Zeitalter der Glaubensspaltung, Bd. 34).

¹⁴ „Eccius quosdam locos explicuit communes, ut arbitror Melanchthonem imitatus [...]“ (CR 95, 574).

¹⁵ In der gegenwärtigen Forschung wird diese These jedoch modifiziert, Ecks „Enchiridion“ durchaus als ein eigenständiger Entwurf gewürdigt, der kontroverstheologischen Zwecken der katholischen Theologie diene. Vgl. hierzu die Hinweise bei Fraenkel (wie Anm. 13) 7*–16*; *Minnich, Nelson H.*: On the Origins of Eck's „Enchiridion“, in: Johannes Eck (1486–1543) im Streit der Jahrhunderte. Internationales Symposium der Gesellschaft zur Herausgabe des Corpus Catholicorum aus Anlaß des 500. Geburtstages des Johannes Eck vom 13. bis 16. November 1986 in Ingolstadt und Eichstätt (hg. von Erwin Iserloh), Münster 1988 (RST 127), 37–73.

¹⁶ Erwin Iserloh (Hrsg.): Katholische Theologen der Reformationszeit, Bd. 3, Münster 1986, 17.

von Melanchthon¹⁷ höchstpersönlich die „*Topicorum Theologicorum libri duo*“ des Pariser Benediktiners Joachim Perionius (Périon, 1499–1559) angesehen, die 1549 in Paris erschienen waren und die insofern einen terminologischen Höhepunkt dieser Traktattradition darstellen, als sie schon im Titel programmatisch eine „Theologische Topik“ versprechen¹⁸. Wenig bekannt und untersucht sind darüber hinaus die „*Locorum communium religionis Christianae partitiones*“ des Kölner Humanisten und Kontrovers-theologen Arnold von Wesel (gest. 30.10.1534)¹⁹, die allerdings erst posthum im Jahr 1564 im Druck vorlagen²⁰. Ihren Höhepunkt erreichte die „*Loci-communes*“-Tradition unter römischen Theologen zweifellos in Melchior Canos berühmten Traktat „*De locis theologicis*“, der 1563 posthum in Salamanca veröffentlicht wurde und von hier aus die Methodenlehre der katholischen Dogmatik über 400 Jahre geprägt.

Die Topik ist jedoch nicht erst in der Zeit der Reformation zur Methode der Dogmatik avanciert. Sie spielte schon eine wichtige Rolle bei den Reflexionen der lateinischen Theologen des Mittelalters auf die der Theologie eigentümlichen Quellen sowie ihres Verhältnisses zur Philosophie.²¹ In diesen mittelalterlichen Debatten unter den lateinischen Theologen ging es wesentlich – um dies hier kurz zu resümieren – um das Problem der Begründung der Prinzipien der Theologie, das sich aus der Konzeption der Theologie als einer deduktiven Wissenschaft ergeben hatte, wie sie sich seit

¹⁷ So Melanchthon in seinem Widmungsschreiben an Anna, die Ehefrau seines Freundes Joachim Camerarius, in seiner deutschen Ausgabe der „*Loci Theologici*“, die 1553 als „Heuptartikel Christlicher Lere“ publiziert worden war. Vgl. hierzu die Neuedition: Philipp Melanchthon. Heubartikel Christlicher Lere. Melanchthons deutsche Fassung seiner *LOCI THEOLOGICI*, nach dem Autograph und dem Originaldruck von 1553 herausgegeben von Ralf Jenett und Johannes Schilling, Leipzig 2002, hier: 78.

¹⁸ *Ioachimi Perionii Benedictini Cormoeriaceni Theologi Parisiensis Topicorum Theologicorum libri duo, Quorum in posteriore de iis omnibus agitur, quae hodie ab haereticis defenduntur, Parisiis 1549. Zu Joachim Perionius (Périon) vgl. Zedler, Johann Heinrich, Großes vollständiges Universal-Lexikon, Bd. 27, Leipzig 1741, 437 f; Jöcher, Christian Gottlieb: Allgemeines Gelehrtenlexikon, Bd. 3, Leipzig 1751 (ND: Hildesheim 1961), 1391 f. Perionius' Kritik bezieht sich vor allem auf die Fragen einer Heiligenverehrung, bzw. -anrufung. (vgl. *Topica Theologica* 169a – 176a).*

¹⁹ Arnold von Wesel wird in der Literatur unterschiedlich benannt. Sein richtiger Name ist wohl Arnold Haldrein. Es finden sich auch die Namensnennungen von Halderen (nach dem Geburtsort des Vaters) oder auch Haldrenius. Nach seinem Geburtsort Wesel am Rhein finden sich dann auch die Versionen von Wesel oder – in Humanistentradition latinisiert – Vesaliensis. Vgl. Henze, Barbara: Art. Haldrein v. Wesel, in: *LThK* 4 (³1995) 1154 f.

²⁰ *LOCORVM COMMVNIVM RELIGIONIS CHRISTIANE Partitiones. Primum a doctissimo viro Arnolda VVesaliensi, Deinde ab aliis quibusdam studiosis, paucissimis quibusdam immutatis, collectae, Lovanii 1564.*

²¹ Charles H. Lohr: Modelle für die Überlieferung theologischer Doktrin: Von Thomas von Aquin bis Melchior Cano, in: *Dogmengeschichte und katholische Theologie* (hg. v. Werner Löser, Karl Lehmann, Matthias Lutz-Bachmann), Würzburg 1985, 148–167, hier: 148 f.

dem Vordringen der aristotelischen Philosophie im frühen 13. Jhd. durchsetzte.²² Hier war es die Forderung aus den „Zweiten Analytiken“ des Aristoteles, dass jede Wissenschaft Prinzipien voraussetzt, die selbst nicht mehr beweisbar sind, sondern unmittelbar einsichtig sein müssen (Anal. Post. A II 71b 19–23). Dieses methodische Postulat drängte die Theologen dazu, die Frage nach dem Status von Prinzipien in der Theologie zu klären. Thomas von Aquin zählte im Anschluss an die boethianische Überlieferung der ciceronischen Topik vier „Orte“ (loci) auf, an denen Prinzipien der Theologie aufgefunden werden können²³: die Schrift, die Väter, die menschliche Vernunft und die Philosophen, wobei Thomas die Schrift als die der Theologie eigentümliche Quelle ansah, die Kirchenväter immerhin wahrscheinliches Wissen bieten, während die Autorität der menschlichen Vernunft und der Philosophen – genau genommen – der Theologie fremd sind.

Was aber sind solche der Theologie als Wissenschaft eigentümlichen Topoi (Loci)? Die Antwort auf diese Frage ist, auch im Blick auf Melancthon, komplex. Dies hängt damit zusammen, dass der Topos-Begriff selbst schon traditionell innerhalb eines mehrschichtigen Bedeutungsfeldes changiert. Obwohl die Topoi in der aristotelischen Topik und Rhetorik vielfach Verwendung fanden²⁴, hat Aristoteles nirgends definiert, was ein Topos (locus) nun genau ist²⁵. Cicero meinte ihn so zu verstehen, als habe er als

²² Neben dem Beitrag von Charles Lohr (Anm. 21) sind hier zu nennen: *Köpf, Ulrich*: Die Anfänge der theologischen Wissenschaftstheorie im 13. Jahrhundert, Tübingen 1994 (BHTh 49); *ders.*: Art. Theologie, I. 4: Wissenschaftstheoretische Bestimmung von „Theologie“ im 13. Jahrhundert, in: RGG 8 (⁴2005) 259–261.

²³ S.Th. I qu 1 a 8 ad 2. In den „Editiones Paulinae“, Milano 1988, wird im Zusammenhang der Verwendung des Locus-Begriffs bei Thomas in dem entsprechenden Beleg sowohl auf Boethius’ „De differentiis topicis“, als auch auf seine andere Hauptschrift „In Ciceronis Topica“ verwiesen. Obwohl im Mittelalter bekannt, gab es jedoch – anders als Boethius’ „De differentiis topicis“ – keine Kommentare zu Ciceros „Topica“. (vgl. *Green-Pedersen, Niels Jörgen*: The Tradition of the Topics in the Middle Age. The Commentaries on Aristotle’s and Boethius’ „Topics“, München / Wien 1984 [Analytica], bes. 39; 123). Wie Tobias Reinhard belegen konnte, finden wir im Mittelalter zwar mindestens 140 Manuskripte der ciceronischen „Topica“; dennoch herrscht weitgehend Unklarheit darüber, ob diese Schrift systematischen Einfluss auf die philosophischen Diskussionen ausgeübt hat. Vgl. Hierzu: *Reinhard, Tobias*: Marcus Tullius Cicero, Topica, edited with translation, introduction, and commentary, Oxford 2003, 73–77.

²⁴ *Primavesi, Oliver*: Art. Topik, in: HWPB 10 (1988) 1263–1269.

²⁵ Ars rhetorica A 2, 1358a 10–17. Vgl. hierzu *Otte, Gerhard*: Theologische und juristische Topik im 16. Jahrhundert, in: Entwicklung der Methodenlehre in Rechtswissenschaft und Philosophie vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert (hg. v. Jan Schröder), Stuttgart 1998 (Contubernium 46), 17–26; 186 f; *Flashar, Hellmut*: Aristoteles, in: Die Philosophie der Antike, Bd. 3: Ältere Akademie. Aristoteles – Peripatos, Basel/Stuttgart 1983 (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie, Bd. 3), 326–329; hier: 327.

Topoi „sedes argumenti“ verstanden.²⁶ In diesem Sinn ist ein Topos also ein Ort, an dem man Argumente finden kann. Und in diesem Sinn hatte Cicero bekanntlich seine Topik als eine Kunst der Findung (von Argumenten) bezeichnet. Hier steht also nicht ein syllogistisches Beweisverfahren im Vordergrund, sondern die Topik will einem Rhetor für eine jede beliebige Rede, vornehmlich die Gerichtsrede, die treffenden Argumente bereitstellen. Neben dieser ciceronischen Deutung der Topik stellte Boethius, in dessen Bearbeitung die ciceronischen Topiken dem Mittelalter und der Frühen Neuzeit überliefert wurden, eine andere Deutung vor. Nach ihm sind Topoi Urteile von höchster Allgemeinheit, „maximae propositiones“.²⁷ Handelt es sich bei den Loci als „sedes argumentorum“ also um Stichworte, Begriffe, Prämissen o.ä., so sind die „Loci“ in der boethianischen Tradition allgemeine Urteile oder Sätze, die bereits eine logische Form topischer Argumentation implizieren.

Changiert der Begriff der Topoi schon in seiner Überlieferungsgeschichte, so nicht weniger in den Deutungen, die Melanchthon seinen „Loci“ verlieh. Genau genommen, finden sich bei ihm drei verschiedene Deutungen von Topoi oder „loci“.²⁸ Einerseits finden wir die Bedeutung der „loci“ als „sedes argumentorum“, d.h. als Fundorte für Argumente. So definiert Melanchthon ganz im Sinne Ciceros in seiner dialektischen Hauptschrift „*Erotemata dialectices*“ aus dem Jahr 1547: „Ein dialektischer Topos ist der Sitz eines Arguments, oder ein Index, der zeigt, aus welcher Quelle ein Argument zu beziehen ist, durch welches“ – wie er bezeichnenderweise ergänzt – „eine Proposition“, also ein allgemeines Urteil im Sinne des Boethius, „bekräftigt werden muss“.²⁹ Wie Melanchthon in seiner kleinen Programmschrift über die „loci communes“ aus dem Jahr 1531 (De

²⁶ Cicero, *Topica* II, 7: „[...] sic enim appellatae ab Aristotele sunt eae quasi sedes, e quibus argumenta promuntur.“

²⁷ Boethius: In *Topica Ciceronis* I 1051 CD: „[...] Supremas igitur ac maximas propositiones vocamus, quae et universales sunt, et ita notae atque manifestae, ut probatione non egeant, eaque potius quae in dubitatione sunt probent.“ Vgl. auch: *De differentiis topicis* II 1186 A.

²⁸ Aus der älteren Literatur bieten noch immer wertvolle Hinweise: *Joachimsen, Paul*: *Loci communes*. Eine Untersuchung zur Geistesgeschichte des Humanismus und der Reformation, in: *LJb* 8 (1926) 27–97; *Maurer, Wilhelm*: *Melanchthons Loci communes von 1521 als wissenschaftliche Programmschrift*. Ein Beitrag zur Hermeneutik der Reformationszeit, in: *LJb* 27 (1960) 1–50; für ein Verständnis der verschiedenen Loci-Begriffe Melanchthons unerlässlich sind jedoch die Studien von *Mertner, Edgar*: *Topos und Commonplace*, in: *Strena Anglica* (FS Otto Ritter), Halle/S. 1956, 178–224, sowie *Wiedenhofser, Siegfried*: *Formalstrukturen humanistischer und reformatorischer Theologie bei Philipp Melanchthon*, Bd. 1, Frankfurt / München 1975 (*Regensburger Studien zur Theologie* 2), 373–376.

²⁹ CR 16, 659: „Locus dialecticus est sedes argumenti, seu index, monstrans ex quo fonte sumendum sit argumentum, quo confirmanda est propositio, de qua dubitas, ut, si huius propositionis confirmationem quaeras: ...“

locis communibus ratio) deutlich macht, gilt dabei das Postulat, dass „loci“ nicht willkürlich gefunden, sondern aus dem der Natur nächstliegenden Fundorten gebildet würden.³⁰ Was ein solcher „Fundort eines Arguments“ ist, hat Melanchthon genauer in seinen Scholien zur Topik Ciceros erläutert. „Alle Argumente gehen“ – wie er hier betont – „entweder aus einer Definition oder aus Ursachen hervor, die übrigen Loci sind mit diesen verbunden“, um als Beispiel hinzuzufügen, „aus einer Definition, wie wenn ich frage, ob die Philosophie notwendig ist, ich gleichzeitig frage, was Philosophie (überhaupt) ist.“³¹ Aufgrund solcher – und das ist die zweite Bedeutung von Topoi – in der topischen Invention gefundener Allgemeinbegriffe oder Urteile (propositiones), die also aus einem Abstraktionsprozess aus den jeweiligen Definitionen und Ursachen eines jeglichen Gegenstandes gewonnen werden, sind für Melanchthon „loci“ auch generelle Überschriften für allgemeine Erwägungen, d.h. Prinzipien der verschiedenen Wissenschaften. „Loci“ – so Melanchthon in seiner „Compendiaria dialectices ratio“ aus dem Jahr 1520, einem Vorläufer der dialektischen Hauptschrift – stellen dem Redner Zeichen (signa) zur Verfügung, aus denen sich dann die allgemeinen Erwägungen oder Überschriften (capita) gewinnen lassen. Schließlich sind nach Melanchthon die „loci“ auch – und das ist das Besondere – sachbezogene Grundbegriffe aller Wissenschaften. Auch auf dieser Bedeutungsebene wird erneut deutlich, dass – wie Melanchthon in seiner Rhetorik von 1531 betont³² – „loci“ nicht beliebige Lehrbegriffe oder Zitate sind, sondern allgemeine Sätze oder Urteile (propositiones), bzw. – wie Joachim Knappe modern formuliert hat – semantische Substrate darstellen, die auf dem Weg der Abstraktion aus einem Text (etwa aus der Historie oder der Bibel) gewonnen werden.³³ In seiner Rhetorik führt Melanchthon als Beispiel zum Verständnis des Literalsinnes aus: in der Frage nach dem Priestertum Christi dürfe man keine allegorischen

³⁰ CR 20, 698: „Neque vero putes eos temere confingi, ex intimis naturae sedibus eruti formae sunt seu regulae omnium rerum.“

³¹ Scholia in Ciceronis Topica (CR 16, 810): „Principio dicit duas esse partes dialecticae, inveniendi et iudicandi. Inventio, quando res oblata casu, ut locos tanquam indices inveniam, qui submonent, quid cogitare debeam. Artes non docent causam, sed casus offert materiam, causam et propositionem, ut: Si pecunia egeam, scribo ad amicos, ut mittant. [...] Cicero recensuit multos locos, et pleraque ad verbum ex Aristotele descripsit. Omnia argumenta aut ex definitione, aut ex causis nascuntur, nam reliqui loci sunt cum his cognati. Ex definitione, ut cum quaero, num philosophia sit necessaria, statim quaero, quid sit philosophia. Ex causis, Christiana iustitia non est secundum philosophiam, probo ex causis: Iustitia Christi facit nos consummatos coram Deo, id non facit iustitia philosophica, ergo etc.“

³² CR 13, 451–454.

³³ Knappe, Joachim: Melanchthon als Begründer der neueren Hermeneutik und theologischen Topik, in: Werk und Rezeption Philipp Melanchthons in Universität und Schule bis ins 18. Jahrhundert. Tagung anlässlich seines 500. Geburtstages an der Universität Leipzig (hg. v. Günther Wartenberg), Leipzig 1999, 123–131.

„loci“ herbeiziehen, sondern „loci communes“ und über diese in einem geordneten dialektischen Verfahren lehren, so etwa, was Priestertum ist, was das Priestertum Christi bewirke, was unsere Gerechtigkeit sei, usw.³⁴

Melanchthon erachtete dieses topische Verfahren bereits in seiner Vorrede zu den „Loci communes“ von 1521 an Tilemann Plettener vom März 1521 als seine (theologische) Methode.³⁵ Das topische Verfahren der „Loci communes“ führt zu einer Dogmatik, deren bestimmendes und alleiniges Prinzip das „sola scriptura“ zu seien scheint. In dem hermeneutischen Verfahren der Topik werden die Grundbegriffe des Glaubens aus den biblischen Schriften gewonnen, die auf diese Weise zu allgemeinen Sätzen, Propositionen oder Grundbegriffen der Dogmatik werden. Der topischen Methode in der Dogmatik, wie sie Melanchthon vor dem Hintergrund des Schriftprinzips entwickelt hatte, kennzeichnete eine überaus große Flexibilität, die im Kern – zumindest prinzipiell – enzyklopädisch angelegt war. Denn vor dem Hintergrund der analytisch gewonnenen Leitbegriffe der Dogmatik konnte durch immer weitergehende Definitionen und Distinktionen das gesamte Feld der Theologie erschlossen werden. Ein Beispiel für eine solch enzyklopädisch angelegte Dogmatik bieten schon die „Tabulae Locorum communium Theologicorum“ des Badischen Superintendenten Johannes Nisaeus (ca. 1527–1599).³⁶ (Abb. 1) Melanchthon hatte diesen Tafel theologischer „Loci“ ein eigenes Vorwort vorangestellt, in dem er ein doppeltes methodisches Verfahren in den Wissenschaften unterschied: Aufgrund der Sinneserfahrung würden – wie die Erfahrung zeige – die einzelnen Begriffe erkannt, die Leben, Tod, Furcht, Glaube, Schmerz und Freude bezeichneten. Die Spekulation jedoch bezeichne die dialektische Ordnung der Glieder, Definitionen, Einteilungen, die Einsicht in die Folge-

³⁴ CR 13, 468: „Constituendum est igitur, quod hic Psalmus de uno ac solo Christo loquatur, et literalis sensus seu historicus in hoc versu erit de Christi sacerdotio. Nunc qui volent explicare, non accersat allegorias, sed hanc causam seu literalem sensum de sacerdotio Christi, referat ad locos communes, et de his ordine dicat, iuxta dialecticae praecepta: Quid sit sacerdotium, Quid effecerit Christi sacerdotium, Quod nostra iusticia [...] Hoc modo literalis sensu illustratus, per definitionem sacerdotii, magnopere iuvat bonas mentes, ac in locis communibus delectus adhibendus est, ubi ad Evangelium referenda res sit, [...]“

³⁵ MBW.T 132, 3–5: „Anno superiore Paulinam Epistolam quae Romanis inscripta est enarraturi, communissimos rerum theologicarum locos adeoque illius epistolae farraginem ceu methodica ratione digessimus.“ Vgl. zum Folgenden auch: Köpf, Ulrich: Melanchthon als systematischer Theologe neben Luther, in: Der Theologe Melanchthon (hg. von Günter Frank), Stuttgart 2000 (MSB 5), 103–127, bes. 119–127.

³⁶ TABULAE LOCORUM COMMUNIIUM THEOLOGICORUM COMMUNIIUM Theologicorum Philippi Melanchthonis, confectae Per IOANNEM NYSAEUM Augustanum, Basileae 1560. Über Nysaeus vgl. Neu, Heinrich: Pfarrerbuch der evangelischen Kirche Badens von der Reformationszeit bis zur Gegenwart, Teil II, Lahr 1939 (Veröffentlichungen des Vereins für Kirchengeschichte in der evangelischen Landeskirche Badens XIII), 439.

rungen oder die Zusammenhänge in den Argumenten.³⁷ Folgerichtig besteht die Dogmatik des Nisaeus als lauter Tafeln, welche die jeweiligen Grundbegriffe der Theologie durch immer weitergehende Definitionen und Distinktionen in den unterschiedlichsten theologischen Begriffsfeldern expliziert – und gerade dadurch den Charakter einer Enzyklopädie gewinnt (Abb. 2).

Hier erscheint dann – zunächst der Sache nach, noch nicht begrifflich – innerhalb der dreifachen „Loci De Deo“ eine doppelte Beschreibung des Gottesbegriffs: dem aus den Schriften gewonnenen kirchlichen Gottesbegriff und einem – wenn auch unvollständigen (*imperfecta*) – philosophisch-platonischen (Abb. 3). Methodisch nicht anders, wenn auch schon mit in einem modifizierten Ordnungsmuster erscheint die natürliche Theologie bei reformierten Gelehrten wie Guillaume de Laune (William Delaune, ca. 1530–1611).³⁸ Hier ist die Gotteserkenntnis schon eingeteilt in eine auf natürliche Weise eingestiftete (*naturaliter insita*) und eine durch Vergleich gewonnene, hier aus der Weltmaschine sowie den biblischen Schriften.³⁹ (Abb. 4) Bei Johann Piscator handelt der ganze erste „Locus“ von der Gotteserkenntnis, die eingeteilt ist in eine Erkenntnis, die natürlich (*naturalis*) sowie erworben (*aquisitus*) ist, und eine Erkenntnis Gottes als Erlöser.⁴⁰ (Abb. 5) Bei dem reformierten Polyhistor Johan Heinrich Alsted schließlich, bei dem der Begriff der „*theologia naturalis*“ wohl erstmals in der frühen Neuzeit bereits im Titel erscheint, ist die natürliche Theologie bereits aus der Theologie insgesamt ausgegliedert.⁴¹ (Abb. 6) Aber auch diese natürliche Theologie ist ganz nach dem methodischen Verfahren der Topik entwickelt. Die „*theologia naturalis*“ wird eingeteilt in eine allgemeine (*communis*) und eine eigentümliche (*propria*) und durch immer weitergehende Distinktionen und Definitionen wird das gesamte Feld einer möglichen philosophischen Erkenntnis durchschritten.

³⁷ Ebd. Philippus Melancthon *Piis Lectoribus Praefatio*: „Sensu agnoscuntur singula vocabula, ut experientia ostendit, quid significant Vita, Mors, Timor, Fides, dolor, laetitia. [...] Speculationem vero nominat dialecticum ordinem membrorum, definitiones, distinctiones, iudicium de consequentiis, seu connexionibus in argumentis.“

³⁸ *Institutiones Christianae Religionis a Joanne Calvino Conscripta, Epitome*, London 1538. Vgl. hierzu die Hinweise bei *Platt, John*: *Reformed Thought and Scholasticism. The Arguments for the Existence of God in Dutch Theology, 1575–1650*, Leiden 1982 (*Studies in the History of Christian Thought*, Vol. XXIX), bes. 34 f.

³⁹ Vgl. die Tafel bei Platt (wie Anm. 38) 44.

⁴⁰ Vgl. die Tafel ebd. 46.

⁴¹ *Theologia naturalis exhibens Augustissimam naturae scholam, In qua Creaturae Die communi sermone ad omnes patiter docendos utuntur: Adversu Atheos, Epicureos, et sophistas huius temporis, Duobus libris pertractata*, (Frankfurt ?) 1615.

III.

Welche systematischen Konturen weisen diese im Kontext der Reformation entstandenen Entwürfe der natürlichen Theologie auf? Zunächst wird man festhalten müssen, dass die „*theologia naturalis*“ auch außerhalb der reformatorischen Bewegung eine beachtliche Tradition aufweist. Begrifflich geht sie schon auf den Stoiker M. Terentius Varro zurück⁴²; für die frühe Neuzeit bestimmend wurde jedoch der Traktat „*Liber naturae sive creaturarum*“ (geschrieben zwischen 1434–1436) des spanischen Mediziners und Philosophen Ramón de Sabunde (gest. 1432), der allerdings erst im Laufe seiner Druckgeschichte den Titel „*Theologia naturalis*“ erhielt.⁴³ Sabundes Traktat war insgesamt gegen die Vorstellung geschrieben, Vernunft und Glauben, Philosophie und Theologie würden in einem unversöhnlichen Gegensatz zueinander stehen. Hingegen – so Sabunde – lehre diese Wissenschaft mühelos alle notwendigen Wahrheiten über Gott und über den Menschen; sie lehre alles, was für das Heil des Menschen notwendig sei, so dass er durch sie (die natürliche Theologie) zum ewigen Leben gelangen könne.⁴⁴

In der mittelalterlichen Tradition besaß die natürliche Theologie insgesamt eine beachtliche Tradition. Sie war hier jedoch mit einem Problem verbunden, das sich aus der Bestimmung des Gegenstandes der Metaphysik des Aristoteles ergeben hatte.⁴⁵ Auf der einen Seite hatte Aristoteles als Gegenstand der Metaphysik als allgemeinste Disziplin die Ursachen des Seienden als Seienden bestimmt, die letztlich identisch sind mit dem Gött-

⁴² Vgl. *Augustinus*: De civ. Dei 6, 5 (CCSL 47).

⁴³ Incipit *theologia naturalis siue liber creaturarum*. Specialiter de homine et de natura eius [...] compositus a venerabili viro magistro Raymundo de Sabunde, Daventrie um 1485. Zu Rabundes' natürlicher Theologie vgl.: *Matzke, David*: Die natürliche Theologie des Raymundus von Sabunde. Ein Beitrag zur Dogmengeschichte des 15. Jahrhunderts, Breslau 1846; *Compayré, Gabriel*: De R. Sabundo ac de theologiae naturalis libro, 1872; *Cicchiti-Suriani, F.*: Sopra R. Sabonda, teologo, filosofo e medico del secolo XV, 1889; *Schenderlein, Johannes*: Die philosophischen Anschauungen R. von Sabunde, Leipzig 1898; *Feiereis, Konrad*: Die Umprägung der natürlichen Theologie in Religionsphilosophie. Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte des 18. Jahrhunderts, Leipzig 1965 (EthSt 18), 6–10; *De Puig Oliver, Jaume*: Escriptura i actitud humanistica en el „Liber Creaturarum“ de Ramón Sabunde, in: *Revista Catalana de Teologia* 3 (1978) 127–151; *ders.*: Les sources de la pensée philosophique de Raimond Sebond (Ramon Sibiuda), Paris 1994 (Études montaignistes 17); *ders.*: La filosofía de Ramon Sibiuda, Barcelona 1997.

⁴⁴ Vgl. die Belege bei Feiereis (wie Anm. 43) 7, Anm. 9–13.

⁴⁵ Vgl. zum Folgenden: *Zimmermann, Albert*: Ontologie oder Metaphysik? Die Diskussion über den Gegenstand der Metaphysik im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert, Leiden/Köln 1965; *Honnefelder, Ludger*: Der zweite Anfang der Metaphysik. Voraussetzungen, Ansätze und Folgen der Wiederbegründung der Metaphysik im 13./14. Jahrhundert, in: *Philosophie im Mittelalter* (hg. v. Jan P. Beckmann, u.a.), Hamburg ²1996, 165–186.

lichen.⁴⁶ In dieser Hinsicht war für ihn Gegenstand der Metaphysik auch die Theologie. Auf der anderen Seite hatte er jedoch die Metaphysik auch bestimmt als Wissenschaft von den Gründen und Prinzipien des Seins im Sinne einer universalen Ontologie.⁴⁷ Für das aristotelische Konzept der Metaphysik war charakteristisch, dass ihr höchster Gegenstand immer zugleich Theologie wie auch Ontologie ist. Im Zuge der Rezeption der aristotelischen Metaphysik, in der es auch um Präzisierungen in der Bestimmung des Gegenstands der Metaphysik ging, hatte sich für die lateinischen Theologen ein mehrschichtiges Dilemma ergeben: Wenn die Metaphysik zur Erkenntnis Gottes vordringt, wozu bedarf es dann noch einer Offenbarung? Wie ist der in diesem metaphysischen Kontext formulierte Gottesbegriff zu beziehen auf die allgemeine Gotteslehre der Theologie, vor allem auch der Trinitätsdoktrin, und schließlich: In welcher Hinsicht ist eine Offenbarung notwendig und wie ist diese als eine mögliche auch argumentativ auszuweisen? Die unterschiedlichen Antworten der Theologen wie Thomas von Aquin, Duns Scotus und Wilhelm Ockham stellten dann unterschiedliche Versuche dar, der Bedrohung der Theologie in Folge der Wiederaneignung der aristotelischen Metaphysik im 13. Jahrhundert durch Erkenntniskritik zu begegnen. Genau in diesem Zusammenhang der Gegenstandsbestimmung der Metaphysik erscheint die natürliche Theologie (*theologia philosophica*) auch bei Thomas von Aquin. Im dritten Teil seines Traktats „*Super Boetium De Trinitate*“ hatte Thomas im Artikel 4 die Frage behandelt, welcher als Gegenstand der Theologie (*scientia divina*) erachtet werden müsse und diesen selbst in zweifacher Hinsicht bestimmt: Einmal, indem die göttlichen Dinge gleichsam nicht als Subjekt dieser Wissenschaft betrachtet würden, sondern gewissermaßen als Prinzip dieses Gegenstandes, in der christlichen Theologie hingegen wird das Göttliche in sich selbst als das Subjekt gesehen, deren Quellen jedoch die biblischen Schriften sind.⁴⁸ Gegenstand der philosophischen Theologie ist dann nicht das Göttliche einfachhin, sondern sofern es Prinzip des Gegenstandes der Metaphysik ist.⁴⁹ Diese Hinweise sind wichtig, um deutlich zu machen, dass auch in der mittelalterlichen Philosophie Gott nicht einfachhin Gegenstand philosophischer Erkenntnis ist, sondern – zumindest bei Thomas – das „*ens commune*“ als das den Geschöpfen gemeinsame Sein, das als das Erste der ge-

⁴⁶ Metaphysik E 1, 1025b 1–1026a 23.

⁴⁷ Metaphysik Γ 1, 1003a.

⁴⁸ *Super De Trinitate*, pars 3 q. 5 a. 4 co. 4: „Sic ergo theologia sive scientia divina est duplex. Una, in qua considerantur res divinae non tamquam subiectum scientiae, sed tamquam principia subiecti, et talis est theologia, quam philosophi prosequuntur, quae alio nomine metaphysica dicitur. Alia vero, quae ipsas res divinas considerat propter se ipsas ut subiectum scientiae et haec est theologia, quae in sacra Scriptura traditur.“

⁴⁹ Ebd.: „Theologia ergo philosophica determinat de separatis secundo modo sicut de subiectis, de separatis autem primo modo sicut de principiis subiecti.“

schaffenen Dinge betrachtet und gleichzeitig nach dem subsistierenden Sein als dessen Ursache oder Prinzip-Sein gesucht werden muss (Gott als principium subiecti).⁵⁰ Aber der Kontext dieser philosophischen Theologie ist unverkennbar die Ontologie als universale Seinswissenschaft.

Dies zeigt sich auch bei einem wirkmächtigen Autoren des Jahrhunderts der Reformation: dem später auch von lutherischen und reformierten Theologen rezipierten Jesuiten Francisco Suárez. In seinen berühmten „Disputationes Metaphysicae“ aus dem Jahr 1597 knüpfte Suárez an die doppelte Gegenstandsbestimmung der Metaphysik des Aristoteles an und bestimmte hier allerdings als Gegenstand der „theologia naturalis“ Gott und die göttlichen Dinge, sofern sie aus dem natürlichen Licht (der Vernunft) ausgesagt werden können.⁵¹

IV.

Auch wenn sich der Begriff einer natürlichen (philosophischen) Theologie oder der „theologia naturalis“ bei den Reformatoren Melanchthon und Calvin nicht findet, ist damit über das systematische Problem, das damit gegeben ist, noch nichts ausgesagt. Die Hinweise auf die Tradition der natürlichen Theologie im Kontext der Metaphysik führen jedoch zu zwei grundlegenden Einsichten, die schon hier als Thesen vorweggenommen werden können. Grundbegriff der natürlichen Theologie der Reformatoren Melanchthon und Calvin ist nicht das Sein und seine allgemeinsten Bestimmungen. Ihr Kontext ist in diesem Sinn auch nicht die „analogia entis“. Grundbegriff dieser natürlichen Theologie ist vielmehr der Geist, so dass man treffender von einer „analogia mentis“ sprechen kann.

Nach Melanchthon ist das philosophische Wesen des menschlichen Geistes durch die Theorie des Exemplarismus bestimmt⁵², die letztlich auf

⁵⁰ An diesem Konzept des Thomas knüpfte dann auch der Tübinger Lutheraner Jacob Schegk an. Vgl. Frank (wie Anm. 4) 101–119.

⁵¹ Suárez, *Francisco*: *Disputationes Metaphysicae*: Disputatio 1: De natura primae philosophiae seu metaphysicae: „Hinc rursus *naturalis theologia* vocatur ex lib. VI Metaph., c. 1, et lib. XI, c. 6, quoniam de Deo ac divinis rebus sermonem habet quantum ex naturali lumine haberi potest; [...]“ Vgl. hierzu auch die neuere Untersuchung von: Marschler, *Thomas*: Die spekulative Trinitätslehre des Francisco Suárez S.J. in ihrem philosophisch-theologischen Kontext, Münster 2007 (BGPhMA, NF 71).

⁵² Ausführlich zu Melanchthons philosophischen Bestimmungen des menschlichen Geistes: Frank, *Günter*: Philipp Melanchthons Gottesbegriff und sein humanistische Kontext, in: Pirkheimer Jahrbuch 8 (1993) 181–202; ders.: Die theologische Philosophie Philipp Melanchthons (1497–1560), Leipzig 1995 (EthSt 67) (mit weiteren Belegen zu dieser für Melanchthon zentralen Theorie einer Wesensverwandtschaft zwischen göttlichem und menschlichem Geist in den unterschiedlichen Schriften S. 88 f, bes. Anm. 154–159); ders. (wie Anm. 4) 58–68.

die platonische⁵³ und seit Augustin⁵⁴ christliche getaufte Metexistheorie zurückgeht. Melanchthon interpretiert das Urbild-Abbild-Verhältnis zwischen göttlichem und menschlichem Geist als ein Teilhabeverhältnis, in dem der menschliche Geist durch die diesem eingestifteten „notitiae naturales“ (κοινὰ ἔννοια; πρόληψις) nicht nur ein Licht der göttlichen Weisheit darstellen⁵⁵, durch die dieser jedoch sogar an der göttlichen Weltregierung teil hat⁵⁶.

Was ist nach Melanchthon mit solchen geistphilosophischen Erkenntnisprinzipien der „notitiae naturalis“ gemeint? Begrifflich haben sie ihren Ursprung bei Epikur und in der Stoa. Der Begriff der „Prolepse“ (πρόληψις) geht wohl auf Epikur (342/1 – 271/0) zurück.⁵⁷ Nach Epikur gelten diese sog. „Prolepsen“ als zweites Wahrheitskriterium der Erkenntnis, und zwar nach der Sinneserfahrung. Sie sind eine „in uns gespeicherte Allgemeinvorstellung, d.h. Erinnerung an das häufig in äußerer Wahrnehmung Erschienene“, also ein Allgemeinbegriff, der ohne unser Zutun in unserer Seele entsteht, indem sich durch wiederholte Wahrnehmung des Gleichen die Vorstellung des Gemeinsamen festhält. „Niemand könne eine Frage stellen oder ein Problem erörtern oder gar eine Meinung fassen [...] ohne Prolepsis.“⁵⁸ Eine „Prolepsis ist demnach eine mit der Wortbedeutung wesentlich verbundene Vorstellung, die aus wiederholter Erfahrung gewonnen wird. [...]“⁵⁹

⁵³ Parmenides 132–136; Phaidon 100 b–d.

⁵⁴ De ordine II 18, 47.

⁵⁵ CR 13, 5: „Exemplumque Dei quisque est in imago parva“; CR 11, 941: „[...] hominem esse parvum mundum, quia mens imago Dei est [...]“.

⁵⁶ CR 11, 942: „Nec tantum convincit nos hic ordo, ut esse Deum fateri cogamur, sed etiam qualis sit, monet, et imaginem gubernationis divinae in nobis circumferimus. Tota antiquitas hoc modo distribuit homines vires [...]“.

⁵⁷ Vgl. zur Einführung *Hossenfelder, Malte*, Geschichte der Philosophie, Bd. 3: Die Philosophie der Antike 3. Stoa, Epikureismus und Skepsis. München 1985, bes. 129 f.

⁵⁸ Ebd. 129, Anm. 14. Zitiert wird nach *Usener, Hermann*: Epicurea. Leipzig 1887, 187, Z. 33 f (ND: Stuttgart 1966), einer lateinischen Übersetzung des 10. Buches Epikur aus Diogenes Laertius (wie Anm. 59).

⁵⁹ *Erler, Michael*: Epikur, in: Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie der Antike, Bd. 4/1. Die hellenistische Philosophie (hg. v. Michael Erler, Hellmut Flashar, Günter Gawlick, Woldemar Görler, Peter Steinmetz), Basel 1994, 29–202, hier: 134 f. Eine solche Deutung der „Prolepsen“ Epikurs überlieferte übrigens auch Diogenes Laertius: „Was aber ihre sogenannte Prolepsis (Vorherbestimmung = Begriff) betrifft, so ist sie gleichsam ein Ergreifen des Wirklichen oder wahre Meinung oder Gedanke oder allgemeine in uns liegende Vorstellung, d.h. Erinnerung an das oft vor der Anschauung Erschienene, so wie wenn wir sagen: ‚Dieser hier ist ein Mensch‘, denn so bald das Wort Mensch laut geworden ist, tritt sofort dem Begriff gemäß auch die Gestalt desselben vor unseren Geist nach der Führung der Sinne.“ Zitiert nach: *Laertius, Diogenes*: Leben und Meinungen berühmter Philosophen, (hg. v. Hans Günter Zekl). Hamburg ⁴1998, 237 f (Buch X, Epikuros, 33).

Als eine in wiederholter Wahrnehmung gewonnene Allgemeinvorstellung jeglicher Erkenntnis erscheint eine solche Position Epikurs in einer unverkennbaren Spannung zur Stoa, wo die Rede von den „Prolepsen“ im Zusammenhang mit ersten Allgemeinbegriffen (κοινὰ ἔννοιαι) begegnet.⁶⁰ Denn kennzeichnend für die Stoa war eine sensualistische Erkenntnistheorie, die ihren Ausdruck in der klassischen Formel gefunden hatte: „Alles Denken geht von der sinnlichen Wahrnehmung aus oder vollzieht sich jedenfalls nicht ohne diese [...]. Und allgemein ist in einem Begriff nichts zu finden, dessen Kenntnis man nicht aus sinnlicher Gegebenheit besitzt.“⁶¹ Die erkennende Seele gleicht danach bei der Geburt einer „tabula rasa“. Erst aufgrund einer sinnlichen Wahrnehmung können Vorstellungen entstehen, die als Erinnerungen zurückbleiben. Aus vielen gleichartigen Erinnerungen bildet sich dann der Begriff (ἔννοια) als eine Allgemeinvorstellung, die das Gemeinsame der Erinnerung festhält. Die Stoiker nannten die so entstandenen Begriffe „Vorwegnahmen“ (Prolepsen).⁶² Vor allem, wenn es sich um allen Menschen gemeinsame Begriffe handelte (κοινὰ ἔννοιαι), hatten sie als Wahrheitskriterien eine besondere Dignität.⁶³

So unterschiedlich die erkenntnistheoretischen Positionen Epikurs und der Stoa auch sein mögen, in zwei Perspektiven kommen sie jedoch zusammen: Einerseits werden die Erkenntnisvoraussetzungen, bzw. – prinzipien – hier die „Prolepsen“, dort die „κοινὰ ἔννοιαι“ – letztlich auf die Sinneserfahrung zurückgeführt; andererseits resultiert aus dieser Grundan-

⁶⁰Auf den stoischen Ausdruck der κοινὴ ἔννοια geht dann der lateinische Begriff der „notio communis“ zurück, wobei strittig ist, ob er als synonym zu πρόληψις zu gelten habe. Nach Chrysipp gelten diese als stärkstes natürliches Wahrheitskriterium, die jedoch auf der Erfahrung basieren (*Ioannes ab Arnim: Stoicorum veterum Fragmenta*, 4 Bde. Stuttgart 1903–1924 [ND: Stuttgart 1964]; fortan: SVF; hier: II, 154, 23 – 155, 24). Vgl. hierzu die Hinweise bei *Schneider, Johannes: Art. Notiones communes*, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* 6 (1984) 938–940, hier: 938; vor allem aber: *Sandbach, Francis H.: Ennoiai and Prolepsis in the Stoic Theory of Knowledge*, in: *Classical Quarterly* 24 (1930) 44–51; *Todd, Robert B.: The Stoic common notions: A reexamination and reinterpretation*, in: *Symbolae Osloenses* 48 (1973) 47–75.

⁶¹SVF II, 88.

⁶²SVF IV, 123 (bei Zenon [I, 41, 2; II, 28, 22; II, 228, 23; II, 228, 32; III, 17, 14] und Chrysipp [II, 12, 26]).

⁶³Gerade gegen eine solche Position der Stoa richtete sich die Kritik des Platonikers Plutarch. Sein Essay *περὶ τῶν κοινῶν ἐννοιῶν πρὸς τοὺς στοικοῦς* stellt eine Kritik dieser stoisch-ciceronischen Theorie von Gemeinbegriffen oder gemeinsamen Vorstellungen dar (*Plutarch: Moralia*, 72). Vor allem kritisierte Plutarch die Stoiker in ihrer Annahme von Gemeinbegriffen (κοινὰ ἔννοιαι), wenn sie gerade nicht übereinstimmen mit allgemeinen Vorstellungen aller Völker. (*Plutarch: De communibus notitiis*, 1068 A–D). Vgl. hierzu auch die Einleitung zur englischen Übersetzung von *Babbitt, Frank Cole: Plutarch's Moralia I*. New York 1927 (ND: Cambridge/Mass./London 1962), V–XXXV, sowie die Hinweise bei *Schneider* (wie Anm. 60) 938–940, hier: 939.

nahme die Vorstellung, daß alle „Prolepsen“, bzw. Prinzipien der menschlichen Erkenntnis – erkenntnispsychologisch gesehen – niemals angeboren sind, sondern allererst Ergebnis einer wie auch immer zu beschreibenden Verstandestätigkeit sind, die aus Anlass der Sinneserfahrung hervorgeht.⁶⁴

Es waren dann vor allem Cicero und Boethius, die diese erkenntnistheoretischen Positionen des Epikur und der Stoa vermittelt und ihnen eine aprioristisch-neuplatonische Wendung gegeben hatten.⁶⁵ Cicero deutete Epikurs „Prolepsen“ als der Seele des Menschen angeboren (innatus), bzw. „eingepfropft“ (insitus)⁶⁶ und explizierte sie so als eine aprioristische Antizipation oder einen Vorbegriff (praenotio) jeglicher Erkenntnis. Die Vernunft kann danach nur erkennen, wovon sie bereits Begriffe in der Seele vorfindet, und insofern antizipieren die Begriffe jegliche mögliche Erkenntnis. Cicero übersetzte darüber hinaus in seiner „Topica ad C. Trebatium“ im Zusammenhang der Unterscheidung von Gattung (genus) und Art (forma) das griechische ἔννοια und πρόληψις, die er gleichermaßen in einem allgemeinen Sinn als Allgemeinbegriff (notio communis) deutet.⁶⁷ Darunter verstand er „entweder allen Menschen gemeinsame (vor aller Wahrnehmung getroffene) Unterscheidungen (Begriffe, Vorstellungen), die mittels Definition geklärt werden, [...] oder Einsichten, formuliert in Sät-

⁶⁴ „Even the common notions, or *ennoia*, which all men share, are arrived at by each individual through his own processing of sense data; they are not innate.“ (Colish, *Marcia L.: The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early middle ages*, Bd. 1. Stoicism in Classical Latin Literature. Leiden / New York / København / Köln 1990, 52 f).

⁶⁵ Nach der Untersuchung von *Horsley, Richard A.: The Law of nature in Philo and Cicero*, in: *Harvard Theological Review* 71 (1978) 35–59, geht diese neuplatonische Wendung der stoischen Erkenntnisprinzipien (dort des Naturrechts) schon auf Antiochus von Askalon zurück. Auch Tobias Reinhardt verweist in seiner Neuedition der ciceronischen Topik auf den Mittelplatonismus, in dem eine solche Überlagerung der stoischen Erkenntnisprinzipien durch die platonischen Ideen zu finden sei. Vgl. *Reinhardt, Tobias: Marcus Tullius Cicero, Topica* (edited with translation introduction, and commentary). Oxford 2003, 259 f; vgl. hierzu auch die Besprechung von Dionysios Chalkomatas, in: *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2004, 12.32.

⁶⁶ Vgl. hierzu Ciceros Erläuterungen in „De natura deorum“, I 44: „Quod igitur fundamentum huius quaestionis est, id praeclare iactum videtis. Cum enim non instituto aliquo aut more aut lege sit opinio constituta maneatque ad unum omnium firma consensio, intellegi necesse est esse deos, *quoniam insitas eorum vel potius innatas cognitiones habemus*; de quo autem omnium natura consentit, id verum esse necesse est; esse igitur deos confitendum est. Quod quoniam fere constat inter omnis non philosophos solum, sed etiam indoctos, fatemur constare illud etiam, hanc nos habere sive *anticipationem*, ut ante dixi, sive *praenotionem deorum* (sunt enim rebus novis nova ponenda nomina, ut *Epicurus ipse πρόληψις* appellavit, quam antea nemo eo verbo nominarat).“

⁶⁷ *Cicero: Topica ad C. Trebatium* VII, 31: „Genus et formam definiunt hoc modo: Genus est notio ad plures differentias pertinens; forma est notio cuius differentia ad caput generis et quasi fontem referri potest. *Notionem appello quod Graeci tum ἔννοιαν tum πρόληψις. Ea est insita et ante percepta cuiusque cognitio enodationis indigens.*“ (kursiv G. F.). Zitiert nach *Marcus Tullius Cicero: Topica* (ed. by Tobias Reinhardt) Oxford 2003, 130.

zen, über deren Geltung weitgehende Übereinstimmung herrscht.⁶⁸ Der Gebrauchsspielraum umfasst neben dieser Verwendung⁶⁹ und dem Kompositum „notiones communes“ noch „notio“ im Sinne einer angeborenen Idee⁷⁰. Die platonische Wendung der epikuräisch-stoischen Theorie von Allgemeinbegriffen besteht nun jedoch nicht in der Annahme, diese seien Abbilder einer transzendenten Ideenwelt, sondern in der platonischen Metexislehre. So diskutierte Cicero die platonische Ideenlehre hinsichtlich der Frage, wo die Ideen näherhin präsent sind. Seine Antwort lautete: im Denken und im Geist (cogitatione et mente), oder: in der Vernunft und im Verstand (ratione et intellegentia).⁷¹ Dass der menschliche Geist nur darum diese zu erkennen vermag, weil er an einem göttlichen $\nu\omicron\delta\varsigma$ teilhat – und gerade dies ist der Kern der platonischen Metexislehre –, wird hier von Cicero allerdings nicht erwähnt.⁷²

Boethius teilte in seinem Commentar zu Ciceros „Topica“ sowie in „De differentiis topicis“ die ciceronische Definition der „notiones communes“ (ennoia, prolepsis) als platonische, angeborne Ideen.⁷³ Diese von Boethius

⁶⁸ Schneider (wie Anm. 60) 939.

⁶⁹ Vgl. hierzu auch Ciceros Hinweise in: De finibus III, 6, 21 ; Tusc. Disp. IV, 24, 53 ; V, 10, 29 ; V, 39, 114.

⁷⁰ In Tusc. Disp. I, 57 spricht Cicero von den „notiones“ als der Seele der Menschen eingestiftet (insitas) und miteingeprägt (consignatas), die auch $\epsilon\nu\nu\omicron\iota\alpha$ genannt würden.

⁷¹ M. Tulli Ciceronis Orator ad M. Brutum, Kap. 2, Z. 8: „Sed ego sic statuo, nihil esse in ullo genere tam pulchrum, quo non pulchrius id sit, unde illud ut ex ore aliquo quasi imago, exprimatur; quod neque oculis neque auribus neque ullo sensu percipi potest, cogitatione tantum et mente complectimur. [...]“ Ebd. Z. 10: „Has rerum formas appellat $\iota\delta\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ ille non intellegendi solum, sed etiam dicendi gravissimus auctor et magister Plato, easque gigni negat et ait semper esse ac ratione et intellegentia contineri; cetera nasci occidere fluere labi nec diutius esse uno et eodem statu.“ Zitiert nach: Auswahl aus Ciceros Rhetorischen Schriften (hg. V. Richard Thiele), Wien / Leipzig 1920, 194.

⁷² Auf diese platonischen Implikationen der ciceronischen Positionen hatte auch der anerkannte Platonkenner Heinrich Dörrie hingewiesen. Vgl. Dörrie, Heinrich: Der Platonismus in der Antike, Bd. 1: Die geschichtlichen Wurzeln des Platonismus, Stuttgart – Bad Cannstatt 1987, bes. 522.

⁷³ Auch für Boethius ist eine Idee ein Verstandesbegriff (concept) oder eine einfache geistige Vorstellung (simple mental comprehension), Cicero nenne – so Boethius – eine Idee dasjenige, was die Griechen ennoiai oder prolepsis genannt hatten und definiert mit ihm eine Idee als (der Seele) eingestiftete (ingrafted) und vorausgehend enthaltene Kenntnis irgendeiner Form; und wie bei Cicero ist der Ort dieser Diskussion die Unterscheidung von Gattung und Art (genus und species). „Since a kind cannot exist without a genus (for nothing can exist without its source), Cicero added definitions of both genus and species and said that a genus is an idea relating to many differentiae. An idea, however, is a concept and a simple mental comprehension that is related to many things differing from one another. [...] Cicero calls an idea what the Greeks refer to as *ennoia* or *prolepsis*. The definition of an idea is this: an idea is ingrafted and previously obtained cognizance of some form, [...]“ Zitiert nach: Boethius's In Ciceronis Topica, III, 6.3 (translated and introduced by Eleonore Stump), Ithaca / London 1988, 102 f. Vgl. hierzu auch die Hinweise bei Colish, Marcia L.: The Stoic Tradition from

überlieferte und kommentierte Tradition der „Topica ad Trebatium“ war auch der Ort, an dem Melanchthon diese Diskussion erneut aufgegriffen hatte.⁷⁴ In seinen eigenen, sehr erfolgreichen Scholien zu Ciceros „Topik“ mit dem Kommentar des Boethius, die erstmals 1524 in Wittenberg erschienen⁷⁵, heißt es zu dieser Stelle⁷⁶: „Ein Verstandesbegriff (conformatio), d.h., ein gewisses Abbild in der Seele, welches die Griechen ἔννοια und πρόληψις nennen.“⁷⁷ Schließlich: auch in der Diskussion, in der Cicero den griechischen ἔιδη-Begriff diskutiert hatte, heißt es bei Melanchthon in der platonisierenden Diktion des Boethius: „[...] Idee nennt Platon, was Aristoteles mit ‚species‘ beschrieb.“⁷⁸

Für den Grundgedanken einer natürlichen Theologie (oder theologischen Philosophie) unter den Voraussetzungen ihrer Grundlegung in der Schöpfungstheologie und ihrer Defizienz durch den Sündenfall⁷⁹ spielen diese geistphilosophischen Erkenntnisprinzipien bei Melanchthon eine herausra-

Antiquity to the Early middle ages. Bd. 2. Stoicism in Christian Latin Thought through the Sixth Century, Leiden / New York / København / Köln 1990, 279.

⁷⁴ Es ist bezeichnend, dass – anders als Boethius’ „De differentiis topicis“ – seine andere Hauptschrift „In Ciceronis Topica“ im Mittelalter zwar wohl bekannt war, aber es kaum Kommentare gab. Vgl. *Green-Pedersen, Niels Jørgen: The Tradition of the Topics in the Middle Age. The Commentaries on Aristotle’s and Boethius’ ‚Topics‘*, München / Wien 1984 (Analytica), 39: „[...] there are no medieval commentaries on Cicero’s Topica. [...]“; ebd. 123: „It is difficult to say how much – if any – direct acquaintance the authors from the later periods have with the ‚In Ciceronis Topica‘. They know that it exists, but hardly much more.“ Dieses Gesamturteil muss jedoch insofern korrigiert werden, als Tobias Reinhardt (wie Anm. 65) 73–77 immerhin 140 Manuskripte dieser boethianischen Fassung der ciceronischen Topica verzeichnet, die vor dem 14. Jhd. verfaßt wurden, zumeist mit dem Text von Boethius versetzt. D.h., es gab wohl Manuskripte, die im Mittelalter zirkulierten und abgeschrieben wurden, aber – soweit wir jedenfalls bis heute wissen – keine eigenständigen Kommentare oder Bearbeitungen. Weitgehende Unklarheit herrscht darüber hinaus über die systematischen Einflüsse, die aus den o.g. Manuskripten für die zeitgenössischen philosophischen Diskussionen zu erkennen sein könnten. Erste Gesamtausgaben der ciceronischen Schriften, darunter auch der „Topica“, sind dann seit dem ausgehenden 15. Jhd. in Drucken bekannt, so etwa die Ausgabe von Hieronymus Squarzafricanus, Venedig 1485 (Cicero, M. Tullius: [Opera]), die Ausgabe von Alexander Minutianus, Mailand 1498 (Cicero, Marcus Tullius: *Opera*) sowie eine Nürnberger Ausgabe der „Topicorum Liber ad Caium Trebatium“ aus dem Jahr 1497.

⁷⁵ CR 11, 805–832. Vgl. zur Druck- und Editions-geschichte CR 11, 805–808.

⁷⁶ Bei Cicero heißt es in der „Topica ad C. Trebatium“ 5, [27], der Verstandesbegriff ist der Intellegentia insigniirt und eingepägt und wird „notio“ genannt. („[...] conformatio insignita et impressa intellegentia, quam notionem voco“).

⁷⁷ Ciceronis ad C. Trebatium Topica Melanthon anno 1524. Cum Boetii commentario edidit sua praefatione praemissa (CR 16, 820) V, 27: „...Conformatio] Id est, imago quaedam in animo, quam Graeci ἔννοιαν καὶ πρόληψιν vocant.“

⁷⁸ VII, 30 (Ebd. 821): „Idea] Idem vult Plato, cum ideas vocat, quod Aristoteles speciem.“

⁷⁹ Zur schöpfungstheologischen Grundlegung und zur für diese Fragestellung wichtigen Verhältnisbestimmung von „imago-similitudo“ vgl. ausführlich Frank 1995 (wie Anm. 52) bes. 102–105.

gende Rolle. Der Sündenfall habe zwar zum Verlust der „imago“ und jenes Zustandes der Urstandsgerechtigkeit geführt; trotzdem „sind auch jetzt nach dem Sündenfall der Geist und die wahren ‚notitiae‘ im Geist Zeugnisse, dass Gott existiert und dass er ein intelligentes Wesen ist, wahrhaft, gut, gerecht, wohlwollend, rein, Bestrafer der Frevler etc.“⁸⁰ „Gotteskenntnisse“ (notitiae de Deo) sind Kennzeichen einer strukturellen Gottebenbildlichkeit, die der Mensch durch den Sündenfall nicht verloren hat und die deshalb auch die Grundlage für die Möglichkeit der Gotteserkenntnis bilden, deren philosophisches Ziel der platonische Gottesbegriff ist (Gott ist ein ewiger Geist, Ursache des Guten in der Natur⁸¹). Melanchthon hatte auf dieser Grundlage von geistphilosophischen Erkenntnisprinzipien eine Reihe von Gottesbeweisen gelehrt. Denn „wie Gott beschaffen ist, zeigen die ‚notitiae‘, die ewig und unveränderlich im Geist der Menschen leuchten: die Zahlen, die Erkenntnis des ‚ordo‘, die Unterscheidung der Dinge, des Guten und Bösen, der Figuren, Ursachen und Wirkungen, die Schlussfolgerungsfähigkeit, die ‚notitiae‘, die zwischen Gut und Böse unterscheiden, der Schmerz, die Strafe für die Verbrechen in den Herzen der Menschen. Diese ganze Weisheit hat Gott gleichsam als Strahlen seines Lichtes in den Geist der Menschen eingestreut, und er hat sie deshalb eingestreut, damit wir erkennen, dass Gott existiert und dass er ein Geist ist, weise, wahrhaft, wohlwollend, gerecht, rein, der zwischen Gut und Böse unterscheidet, der das Menschengeschlecht sieht und erhält und die Verbrecher bestraft.“⁸² Auch im Zusammenhang der Römerbriefexegese 1, 18 f, in der Melanchthon ausführlich die Gottesbeweise explizierte, betont er, dass wohl aus vielen Spuren auf Gott geschlussfolgert werden könne, dies jedoch nur, weil dem Geist der Menschen die ‚notitia‘ oder Prolepse von Gott eingestiftet sei.⁸³ Es ist jedoch bedeutsam, dass er diese eine Gesetzeserkenntnis nannte, d.h., dass sie offenbarungstheologisch und soteriologisch insuffi-

⁸⁰ CR 12, 591f: „[...] nunc post lapsum tamen mens et verae notitiae in mente testimonia sunt, quod sit Deus et quod sit essentia intelligens, vera, bona, iusta, benefica, casta, vindex scelerum etc.“

⁸¹ Zu den vielfältigen Belegen für Melanchthons platonischen Gottesbegriff vgl. Vf. (wie Anm. 4) 64 f, bes. Anm. 154–159.

⁸² CR 7, 950: „Deinde quale sit, ostendunt notitiae lucentes in humanis mentibus aeternae et immotae, numeri, intellectus ordinis, distinctio rerum, boni et mali, figurarum, causarum, effectuum, ratiocinatio, notitiae discernentes honesta et turpia, dolor, vindex scelerum in cordibus hominum. Hanc totam sapientiam, tanquam radios suae lucis sparsit Deus in hominum mentes, et sparsit ideo, ut agnoscamus et esse Deum, et esse eum mentem sapientem, veracem, beneficam, iustam, castam, discernentem honesta et turpia, intuentem et servantem genus humanum et vindicem scelerum.“ Ähnl. Auch in: CR 6, 736; CR 7, 407; CR 8, 61; CR 11, 811 f; 942; 947; CR 24, 213; 698 f.

⁸³ CR 15, 564: „Nam ex multis vestigiis ratiocinatur ista de Deo. Neque tamen hae ratiocinaretur, nisi etiam insita esse menti quaedam notitia seu πρόληψις de Deo.“

zient sind.⁸⁴ Die Prinzipien der Gotteserkenntnis sind trotz dieses Offenbarungstheologischen Vorbehalts apriorische Prinzipien; sie gehören als Ausdruck eines (neuplatonischen) Exemplarismus und einer unzerstörbaren strukturellen Gottebenbildlichkeit zur Grundausstattung des menschlichen Geistes, eine Position, die man in der Forschung mit dem unschönen Begriff des Innatismus bezeichnet.

Bei Calvin lassen sich zwar viele einzelnen Elemente dieser geistphilosophischen Struktur einer natürlichen Theologie nicht finden. So finden sich keine Anleihen an die epikuräisch-stoischen Begriffe in ihrer neuplatonischen Wendung (*κοινὰ ἔννοιαι πρόληψις*), und auch ein ausführlicher Katalog von Gottesbeweisen findet sich bei ihm wohl nicht.⁸⁵ Aber das Muster des neuplatonischen Innatismus findet sich auch in seinen Überlegungen zu Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer Gotteserkenntnis. Dies zeigt sich schon in den fünf einleitenden Kapiteln des 1. Buches seiner „*Institutiones christianae religionis*“ aus dem Jahr 1559, in denen Calvin bekanntlich die Grundlegung einer Gotteserkenntnis diskutierte.⁸⁶ Hier entwickelte er diesen neuplatonischen Innatismus (*Dei notitia mentibus nostris insita*), indem zunächst die Gotteserkenntnis in Verbindung mit den menschlichen Dingen dargestellt (I.), Inhalt und Ziel der Gotteserkenntnis beschrieben werden (II.), die eine dem Geist der Menschen eingestiftete Gotteserkenntnis ist (III.), die zwar teils unbekannt, teils verdorben sein kann (IV.), die jedoch grundsätzlich im Werk der Welt (*fabrica mundi*) und in der fortwährenden Welterhaltung leuchtet (V.). Zwar ist auch für Calvin klar, dass der Sündenfall die Kräfte des Menschen geschwächt hat; genau genommen hat er zu einer Fülle von Übeln im Menschen geführt⁸⁷, die aber gerade deshalb umso mehr den Menschen drängen, durch dessen Hand geführt, Gott zu suchen.⁸⁸ Als Inhalt dieser Gotteserkenntnis beschreibt Calvin nicht nur die Existenz Gottes, sondern auch Bereiche der Gottesverehrung. Und wie er ausdrücklich betont, geht es ihm in diesen einleitenden und grundlegenden Kapiteln gerade nicht um die Glaubenserkenntnis, um die Erkenntnis Chris-

⁸⁴ Vgl. hierzu bündig: CR 24, 865: „*Intelligitne natura esse Deum. Respondeo: Ratio naturaliter intelligit esse Deum, et agnoscit aliquo modo, qualis sit. Nam mens habet aliquam notitiam legis: sicut Plato dicit: Deus est mens aeterna, causa boni in natura.*“

⁸⁵ Vgl. hierzu auch die vergleichenden Studien über die Römerbriefexegese Melancthons, Bucers, Bugenhagens und Calvins von *Steinmetz, David C.*: Calvin and the Natural Knowledge of God, in: *Via Augustini. Augustine in the Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation* (ed. by Heiko A. Obermann, F.A. James), Leiden 1991, 142–156; Wiederabdruck in *ders.*: Calvin in Context, New York/Oxford 1995, 23–39.

⁸⁶ Vgl. zum Folgenden ausführlich Frank (wie Anm. 4) 69–72.

⁸⁷ ICR I, 1: „*Praesertim miserabilis haec ruina, in quam nos deiecit primi hominis defectio, sursum oculos cogit attollere, non modo ut inde ieiuni et famelici petamus quod nobis deest, sed metu expergefacti, humilitatem discamus.*“

⁸⁸ Ebd.: „*Proinde unusquisque sui agnitione non tantum instigatur ad quaerendum Deum, sed etiam ad reperiendum quasi manu ducitur.*“

ti als Erlöser, sondern um die in der Ordnung erste, d.h. dem Geist der Menschen eingestiftete Gotteserkenntnis aus der Schöpfung, die Calvin eine ursprüngliche und einfache Erkenntnis nennt, zu welcher schon die Naturordnung führen würde, wenn Adam unversehr geblieben wäre.⁸⁹ Es ist klar, dass Calvin hier als Theologe argumentiert. Theologischer Skopus seiner Aussage ist, dass niemand – und nur darin sieht er die Folge des Sündenfalls – Gott als Vater, weder als Urheber des Heils, noch in irgendeiner Weise als versöhnenden Gott erkennen könnte. Gleichwohl bleibt die Gotteserkenntnis aus der Schöpfungsordnung und der Vorsehung anerkannt, die Calvin – wie erwähnt – ausdrücklich von der Glaubenserkenntnis abhebt. Im Hintergrund steht die Vorstellung von einer doppelten Offenbarung: die Offenbarung aus der Schöpfungsordnung und der Vorsehung (Gott als Schöpfer und Erhalter der Welt) und die Offenbarung aus der Heilsordnung (Christus als Erlöser). Und wie Melanchthon⁹⁰ verweist Calvin im Blick auf die allgemeine Überzeugung von der Existenz Gottes im Geist der Menschen auf die wirkungsgeschichtlich bedeutsamen Ausführungen in Ciceros „De natura deorum“⁹¹.

In der Calvinforschung ist häufig behauptet worden, dass es sich bei dieser allgemeinen Gotteserkenntnis nur um eine formale Möglichkeit des Menschen handle, die zudem allein auf den Zustand des menschlichen Geistes vor dem Sündenfall appliziert werden könne. Dagegen spricht, dass die Heiden – wie Calvin in Anspielung auf Röm 1, 18 voraussetzen scheint, wo Paulus von der Ungerechtigkeit der Heiden spricht, sofern sie diese allgemeine Erkenntnis niederhalten⁹² – gar nicht für ungerecht gehalten werden könnten, wenn sie nicht eine solche allgemeine Gotteserkenntnis auch tatsächlich besitzen würden.

⁸⁹ Ebd. II, 1: „[...] aliud tamen est sentire Deum fictorem nostrum sua nos potentia fulcire, providentia regere, bonitate fovere, omnique benedictionum genere prosequi: aliud vero, gratiam reconciliationis in Christo nobis propositam amplecti, Quia ergo Dominus primum simpliciter creator tam in mundi opificio, quam in generali Scripturae doctrina, deinde in Christi facie redemptor apparet: hinc duplex emergit eius cognitio: quarum nunc prior tractanda est, altera deinde suo ordine sequetur.“

⁹⁰ Bei Melanchthon wurden diese wirkungsgeschichtlich bedeutsamen Stellen aus Cicero erstmals in seinen „Loci communes“ von 1521 im Kapitel „De lege“ systembestimmend (MSA 2/1, 40–42). Melanchthon erklärte hier im Anschluss an Röm 1, 20 und 2, 15, dass in der Schöpfung nicht nur Naturgesetze dem Geist der Menschen eingestiftet wurden (in späteren Schriften sind die „leges naturae“ dann die praktischen Prinzipien der Moralphilosophie), sondern auch spekulative Prinzipien der theoretischen Wissenschaften, die er „communia principia“, κοινὰ ἔννοια oder einfach πρόληψις nannte.

⁹¹ De natura deorum I 16, 43; 17, 45. ICR I, 3: „Atqui nulla est etiam, ut Ethnicus ille ait, tam barbara natio, nulla gens tam efferata, cui non insideat, haec persuasio, Deum esse (Cic. De Nat. Deorum).“

⁹² ICR I, 2: „[...] quod antea in nobis falso iustitiae praetextu arridebat, pro summa iniquitate mox sordescet.“

Für die zweite Frage, inwiefern eine solche philosophische Gotteserkenntnis allein auf den Ursprungszustand des Menschen vor dem Sündenfall zu beziehen ist, ist Calvins Auslegung der Doktrin der Gottebenbildlichkeit des Menschen von Bedeutung. Für die patristische und mittelalterliche Tradition der Gottebenbildlichkeitslehre war kennzeichnend, dass diese bestimmt war von einer inneren Differenzierung als „imago“ und „similitudo“, wie sie Irenaeus von Lyon (*Adv. haer.* V 6, 1; 16, 2) in einer kategorialen Differenz zwischen einer bleibenden „imago“ auch nach dem Sündenfall gelehrt hatte, die im Vernunft- und Willensbesitz bestand, und der durch den Sündenfall verloren gegangenen „similitudo“, die in einem heilsgeschichtlichen Prozess wiederzugewinnen ist. Die Reformatoren Luther, Melanchthon und Calvin hatten eine solche Unterscheidung von „imago“ und „similitudo“ abgelehnt und diese sowohl auf die aktuelle Gottesgemeinschaft des Menschen wie auch auf die Urstandsgerechtigkeit bezogen.⁹³ Allerdings unterschied sich schon die Position Melanchthons im Gegenüber zu Luther in einer wichtigen Perspektive: Obwohl er wie dieser eine Synonymität von „imago“ und „similitudo“ gelehrt hatte⁹⁴, führte diese Synonymität doch nicht zum Verlust einer strukturellen Gottebenbildlichkeit des menschlichen Geistes. Diese besteht nach Melanchthon darin, dass auch nach dem Sündenfall die Erkenntnisprinzipien des menschlichen Geistes – darunter auch die Prinzipien der Gotteserkenntnis – zur strukturellen Ausstattung des menschlichen Geistes gehören, durch die dieser nicht nur Gott erkennen kann, sondern in denen er am göttlichen Geist selbst partizipiert, wie dies ein Kerngedanke des neuplatonischen Innatismus darstellt.⁹⁵

In der Calvin-Forschung des vergangenen Jahrhunderts war die Frage nach den „*facultates*“ der menschlichen Vernunft und einer philosophischen Gotteserkenntnis im Zusammenhang mit der Doktrin von der Gottebenbildlichkeit des Menschen nicht nur als wichtigstes Problem in Calvins Theologie bezeichnet⁹⁶, sondern insgesamt sehr kontrovers diskutiert wor-

⁹³ Scheffczyk, *Leo*: Art. Gottebenbildlichkeit, in: *LThK* 4 (³1995) 871–876; *Markschies, Christoph*: Art. Gottebenbildlichkeit, in: *RGG* 3 (⁴2000) 1159–1163.

⁹⁴ So hatte Melanchthon sowohl in der *CA* 2, in der *Apologie* (*CR* 27, 421–429), in der „*Confutatio*“ (*CR* 27, 87–90) wie auch in seinen „*Loci theologici*“ von 1543 (*CR* 21, 668–678) die „imago“ und „similitudo“ auf die aktuelle Gottesbeziehung des Menschen wie auch auf die Urstandsgerechtigkeit bezogen. Vgl. zum Folgenden ausführlich: Frank 1995 (wie Anm. 52) bes. 102–111.

⁹⁵ Diese strukturelle Gottebenbildlichkeit hatte Melanchthon nicht nur in seinem Lehrbuch „*De anima*“, sondern auch in seinen Römerbrief-Kommentaren zu den bezeichnenden Versen Röm 1, 18–20 entwickelt. Vgl. *MSA* 3, 362 f; *MSA* 5, 70–74; *CR* 15, 563–565.

⁹⁶ *Stauffer, Richard*: *Dieu, la création et la providence dans la prédication de Calvin*, Bern 1978, 201.

den⁹⁷, auch hier übrigens immer im Kontext der Barth-Brunner-Kontroverse. David van Houten hatte in seiner 1993 in Chicago publizierte Dissertation diese Problematik umfassend aufgegriffen, und diese auf die Frage zugespitzt, welche Rolle jene natürliche Vernunft im Menschen spiele, die in dem Geist der Menschen eingestiftet ist (reason naturally implanted in us), und diese gleichzeitig verbunden mit dem bekannten Diktum Calvins vom „sensus divinitatis“ sowie dem Gewissen als Aspekte der „imago Dei“.⁹⁸ Unbestritten ist die besondere Rolle der menschlichen Vernunft insgesamt und des Willens im Stande der Urstandsgerechtigkeit als eine von Gott vermittelte natürliche Fähigkeit.⁹⁹ Zu Anfang seines dritten Kapitels des 1. Buches der „Institutio“ untersucht Calvin genauer die Struktur der von Natur aus eingestifteten Gotteserkenntnis. Dass dem menschlichen Geist ein natürlicher Instinkt (instinctus naturalis) und ein Samen der Religion (semen religionis) innewohnt, steht danach – wie Calvin betont – außer jedem Zweifel. Dies beinhaltet das Wissen, dass Gott existiert und er der Schöpfer der Welt ist.¹⁰⁰ Und dieses Wissen ist nach Calvin auch durch den Sündenfall nicht zerstört worden. Es ist, als von Gott dem Geist des Menschen eingestiftet, unzerstörbar.¹⁰¹ Gerade auch der Widerspruch der Gottlosen ist – wie Calvin fortführt – ein Beweis dafür, dass diese Überzeugung auf natürliche Weise allen eingestiftet ist.¹⁰²

Auch hier ist natürlich zu berücksichtigen, dass Calvin weniger an einer philosophischen Argumentation interessiert ist. Auch ist klar, dass die Gotteserkenntnis nach dem Sündenfall immer nur ein verworrenes und kein vollständiges Wissen von Gott in Form der Idolatrie ist.¹⁰³ Van Houten hatte seine Untersuchung insgesamt darin zusammengefasst, dass die intellek-

⁹⁷ Vgl. hierzu ausführlich *Jon van Houten, David: Earthly Wisdom and Heavenly Wisdom: The Concept of Reason in the Theologie of John Calvin*, 2 Vol., Diss. man., Chicago 1993, 106–165.

⁹⁸ Ebd. 109. Calvin selbst hatte diese Problematik im 15. Kapitel seines 1. Buches „Qualis homo sit creatus: ubi de animae facultatibus, de imagine Dei, libero arbitrio, et prima naturae integritate disseritur“ erörtert.

⁹⁹ IRC I, 15: „Proinde hac voce (imago) notatur integritas qua praeditus fuit Adam quum recta intelligentia polleret, affectus haberet compositos ad rationem, sensu omnes recto ordine temperatos, vereque eximiis dotibus opificis sui excellentiam referret.“

¹⁰⁰ Ebd. I, 3, 1: „Quendam inesse humanae menti, et quidem naturali instinctu, divinitatis sensum, extra controversiam ponimus: siquidem, nequis ad ignorantiae praetextum confugeret, quandam sui numinis intelligentiam universis Deus ipse indidit, cuius memoriam assidue renovans, novas subinde guttas instillat: ut quum ad unum omnes intelligant Deum esse, et suum esse opificem, [...]“

¹⁰¹ Ebd. I, 3, 3: „Hoc quidem recte iudicantibus semper constabit, insculptum mentibus humanis esse divinitatis sensum, qui deleri nunquam potest.“

¹⁰² Ebd.: „Imo et naturaliter ingenitam esse omnibus hanc persuasionem, esse aliquem Deum, et penitus infixam esse quasi in ipsis medullis, locuples testis est impiorum contumacia, qui furiose luctando, se tamen extricare e die metu nequeunt.“

¹⁰³ IRC I, 4, 1–4.

tuelle oder konzeptuelle Erkenntnis der Existenz Gottes auch nach dem Sündenfall im menschlichen Geist bleibe. Diese Gotteserkenntnis ist Kern einer bleibenden und unverlierbaren strukturellen Gottebenbildlichkeit des menschlichen Geistes. Was ihm in dieser Erkenntnis mangle, ist die Erkenntnis von Gottes wahrer Natur und die dieser korrespondierenden Antwort des Glaubens und der Frömmigkeit.¹⁰⁴

„Locus classicus“ für die Frage einer natürlichen Theologie ist dann vor allem die Exegese des Römerbriefs (1, 18–20). David C. Steinmetz hatte in seiner Studie von 1991 „Calvin and the natural Knowledge of God“ Calvins Position im Vergleich zu den exegetischen Schriften Melanchthons, Bucers und Bulligers, auf die sich Calvin selbst in seiner Vorrede seines Römerbriefkommentars bezog¹⁰⁵, expliziert¹⁰⁶. Melanchthon hatte in seinem Kommentar von 1532 in der Auslegung von Röm 1, 18 festgehalten¹⁰⁷, dass jene Wahrheit (veritas) oder Gotteskenntnis (notitia Dei), von der Paulus behauptet, sie werde von den Heiden in Ungerechtigkeit niedergehalten, darin besteht, dass alle Menschen wissen, dass Gott existiert, dass er dem Sünder zürnt und der Mensch ihm gehorchen muss¹⁰⁸. Auch wenn diese Kenntnis eine Erkenntnis des Gesetzes und nicht des Evangeliums sei – wie Melanchthon die Gesetz-Evangelium-Dialektik auch in diesem Zusammenhang betont –, besitzen diese jedoch alle Menschen auf natürliche Weise (naturaliter)¹⁰⁹, d.h. Gott hat diese Kenntnis dem menschlichen Geist – Kern des neuplatonischen Innatismus – eingestiftet¹¹⁰. Aufgrund dieser dem

¹⁰⁴ Van Houten (wie Anm. 97) 135: „Returning to the important aspect of the divine image in humanity in the form of the response of thankfulness to God, we can now say, on the basis of reason’s Failure to achieve more than the knowledge that God exists, that this part of the imago has been lost in the Fall and is only restored in Christ.“

¹⁰⁵ In Epistolam Pavli ad Romanos, Ioannis Calvini Commentaria, in: Ioannis Calvini in omnes D. Pauli epistolas, atque etiam in epistolam ad Hebraeos commentaria luculentissima. Ex postrema authoris recognitione, Genevae 1551, Praefatio Aa 3 f. (fortan: Ep. Rom.) Da Calvins Römerbrief-Kommentar erstmals 1540 erschienen war, lagen ihm auf jeden Fall Melanchthons Kommentar aus dem Jahr 1532 (MSA 5), möglicherweise aber auch derjenige aus dem Jahr 1540 vor (CR 15, 495–796).

¹⁰⁶ Steinmetz 1991 (Anm. 85) 142–156.

¹⁰⁷ Vgl. zum Folgenden ausführlich Frank 1995 (wie Anm. 52) bes. 95–98.

¹⁰⁸ MSA 5, 69 f: „Veritatem in iniustitia detinent“. ‚Veritatem‘ vocat notitiam Dei. Hanc dicit ‚detineri in iniustitia‘, quia corda hominum non assentiuntur illi notitiae nec obtemperant ei. Homines sciunt Deum esse, Deum irasci peccantibus, Deo oboediendum esse, et tamen huic notitiae neque assentiuntur neque obtemperant [...] simpliciter hoc loco significat habere aliquam notitiam de Deo, et tamen non credere illi notitiae neque oboedire, sed contemnere Deum, non timere Deum, non credere, non invocare.“

¹⁰⁹ Ebd. 70: „Nam hanc notitiam de Deo naturaliter habent homines, quae quidem est notitia quaedam legis, non evangelii.“

¹¹⁰ Ebd. 71 f: „Prudentissime autem addit particulam ‚Deus manifestavit eis‘; significat enim has notitias ‚Deus est‘, ‚Deus est bonus‘, ‚Deus est iustus‘, ‚Deus punit iniustos‘ divinitus insitas esse mentibus humanis. [...] Quamquam enim [...] mens ratiocinatur aliquid de

menschlichen Geist eingestifteten Erkenntnisprinzipien partizipiert er am göttlichen Geist – und dies ist die Voraussetzung für die Gotteserkenntnis. Dennoch hätten die Menschen jenen „Kenntnissen“, unter ihnen auch die Gotteserkenntnis (*notitia de Deo*), Zustimmung und Glauben verweigert. Nach Melanchthon war die Verweigerung einer Gotteserkenntnis also kein Defizit der Erkenntnisfähigkeit des menschlichen Geistes als Folge des Sündenfalls¹¹¹, sondern ein Problem der Zustimmung und des Glaubens.

Calvin hat ganz unverkennbar dieses Grundanliegen von Röm 1, 18–20 aufgenommen, ihm aber eine eigene theologische Deutung hinzugefügt. Er folgt zunächst der Grundüberzeugung, dass Gott die Erkenntnis seiner Existenz in den Geist der Menschen eingeschrieben hat.¹¹² So beweise der natürliche „ordo“ die Existenz Gottes, nicht dessen Wesen, so dass in allen Werken und Kreaturen von allen Menschen seine Majestät von allen Menschen erkannt werden kann¹¹³. Hier führt Calvin nun jedoch – worauf auch David Steinmetz hingewiesen hatte – das Argument der Dunkelheit (*tenebra*¹¹⁴) ein, die den menschlichen Geist in Dumpfheit verhülle.¹¹⁵ Diese Blindheit besteht nach Calvin darin, dass die Heiden, obwohl die Gotteserkenntnis eine allen Völkern gemeinsame ist, die Majestät Gottes gefangen halten wollten und sie sich einen Gott schufen, wie er mit ihrer Sinneserfahrung erfaßt werden kann.¹¹⁶ Aber auch hier gilt, dass die Heiden dann in ihrer Dunkelheit gerade nicht unentschuldig wären, wenn sie nicht tatsächlich eine allgemeine Gotteserkenntnis besitzen würden, so wie es auch die paulinische Diktion nahe legt.

V.

Auch wenn Melanchthon und Calvin unterschiedliche theologische Aspekte aufweisen in der Begrenzung der Möglichkeit einer philosophischen Got-

Deo ex consideratione mirabilium eius operum in universa natura rerum, tamen hunc syllogismum ratio non haberet, nisi etiam Deus quandam notitiam καὶ πρόληψιν indidisset mentibus nostris. Et illa mirabilia spectacula rerum in natura sunt signa, quae commonefaciunt mentes, ut de Deo cogitent ac illam πρόληψιν excitent.“

¹¹¹ Über die Bedeutung des Sündenfalls und die Folgen für die Gotteserkenntnis vgl. Frank 1995 (wie Anm. 52) 102–111.

¹¹² Ep. Rom. 8: „Hic aperte testatur, Deum omnium mentibus sui cognitionem insinuas: hoc est sic se demonstrasse per opera, ut illi necessario conspicerent [...].“

¹¹³ Ebd. 8: „Deus per se invisibilis est: sed quia elucet eius maiestas in operibus & creaturis universis, debuerunt illinc homines agnoscere: nam artificem suum perspicue declarant.“

¹¹⁴ In der ersten Ausgabe von 1540 verwendete Calvin den Begriff der „Blindheit“ (*caecitas*), vgl. Steinmetz 1991 (wie Anm. 85) 153 f, Anm. 47 f.

¹¹⁵ Ebd. 8: „Atque ita tenebris obvoluta stolidi eorum mens, nihil rectum percipere potuit.“

¹¹⁶ Ebd. 8: „Neque enim id proprie in philosophos competit, quod in Dei cognitione putarint se esse sapientes: sed aequae commune est gentium ordinumque omnium. Nemo enim fuit, qui non voluerit Dei maiestatem sub captum suum includere: ac talem Deum facere, qualem percipere posset suo apte sensu.“

teserkenntnis (bei Melanchthon die Unterscheidung von Gesetz und Evangelium, bei Calvin die Betonung der Blindheit oder Dunkelheit des menschlichen Geistes) und auch wenn sicherlich Melanchthon in der Begründung dieser Möglichkeit stärkere Anleihen aus der antiken und patristischen Tradition genommen hat (die epikuräisch-stoischen Erkenntnisprinzipien in ihrer neuplatonischen Deutung bei Cicero und Boethius) so weist die Struktur der Gotteserkenntnis doch grundsätzliche Übereinstimmungen auf. Bei beiden ist die Möglichkeit einer Gotteserkenntnis auch außerhalb der Offenbarung begründet in der von Gott dem menschlichen Geist eingestifteten Erkenntnisfähigkeit. Sie sind Ausdruck des Exemplarismus zwischen göttlichem und menschlichen Geist (Innatismus) und gleichzeitig – trotz des Verlustes der „imago“ wie der „similitudo“ durch den Sündenfall – einer bleibenden strukturellen Gottebenbildlichkeit des Menschen. In dieser Weise haben die beiden Reformatoren die Aufnahme der natürlichen Theologie in ihren eigenen Lehrtraditionen grundgelegt. Sie findet sich schon in Zacharius Ursinus' Kommentar zum 1563 publizierten Heidelberger Katechismus. Ursinus lehrte hier, dass die wahre Philosophie nicht der Theologie widerspreche und nicht einfach Lüge sei, sondern sie ist Wahrheit „und gleichsam ein Strahl der göttlichen Weisheit, die den Seelen der Menschen in der Schöpfung eingepägt wurde, denn sie ist eine Lehre von Gott und von den Kreaturen und anderen dem Menschengeschlecht nützlichen Dingen, von weisen Männern aus dem natürlichen Licht und aus den von Natur bekannten Prinzipien errichtet“¹¹⁷. Auch unter niederländischen reformierten Gelehrten findet sich diese in Melanchthon und Calvin begründete Tradition der natürlichen Theologie. Hugo Grotius' 1641 in Amsterdam publizierten „Annotationes in Epistolam ad Romanos“ sowie Gisbert Voetius' Anmerkungen zum Römerbrief sind zugleich ein Beleg für das Nachwirken der melanchthonischen Kernbegriffe der natürlichen Erkenntnisprinzipien und der „Prolepsen“ in ihrer Bedeutung für die dem Geist der Menschen eingestiftete Gotteserkenntnis.¹¹⁸ Genau in dieser Linie wurde eine doppelte Gotteserkenntnis – eine geoffenbarte und eine natürliche – dann auch im zweiten Artikel der „Confessio Belgica“ festgehalten.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Zit. nach Bizer, *Ernst*: Frühorthodoxie und Rationalismus, Zürich 1963, 16. Vgl. zum Folgenden auch Frank (wie Anm. 4) bes. 224–232.

¹¹⁸ Ausführlich hierzu auch: Verbeek, *Theo*: From „Learned Ignorance“ to Scepticism: Descartes and Calvinist Orthodoxy, in: *Scepticism and Irreligion in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (ed. by Richard H. Popkin, Arie J. Vanderjagt), Leiden / New York / Köln 1993, bes. 30–32; Becht, *Andreas*: Zur Rezeption Melanchthons bei Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676), namentlich in seiner Gotteslehre, in: *Melanchthon und der Calvinismus* (hg. v. Günter Frank, Herman J. Selderhuis), Stuttgart 2005 (MSB 9), 317–342.

¹¹⁹ „Duobus autem modis eum (Deum) cognoscimus: primo, per creationem, conservationem, atque totius mundi gubernationem: quandoquidem is coram oculis nostris est, instar

Im Blick auf die eingangs erwähnte Kritik an der natürlichen Theologie durch Karl Barth und die dialektische Theologie muss in einer allgemeinen Hinsicht betont werden, dass die natürliche Theologie der Reformatoren nicht im Kontext der aristotelischen Onto-Theologie konzipiert war; sie ist mithin auch nicht scholastisch. Ihr Kontext ist dann auch nicht – wie Barth im Blick auf Przywaras Analogie-Metaphysik zu meinen glaubte – die „*analogia entis*“, sondern eine „*analogia mentis*“. Ihr Anlass ergibt sich aus dem universalistischen Anspruch der Gotteserkenntnis, wie sie in den biblischen Schriften zum Ausdruck kommen. Ihr Parameter besteht letztlich im Verhältnis von Glauben und Vernunft (*fides et ratio*), um die sich auch die reformatorische Bewegung selbst bei ganz anderen theologischen Voraussetzungen bemüht hatte. Die historische Besinnung auf die je eigenen Traditionen innerhalb dieses Parameters eröffnet dann aber erst das eigentliche Potential für die eigenen, zeitgenössischen Debatten, die nicht mehr unter den Voraussetzungen der Reformationszeit geführt werden können, die aber heute im Verhältnis von Glauben und Vernunft so aktuell sind wie in den vergangenen 2000 Jahren.

libri pulcherrimi, in quo creaturae omnes, magnae minoresque, loco characterum sunt, qui nobis Dei invisibilia contemplanda exhibent: aeternam nempe eius potentiam et divinitatem, ut Paulus Apostolus loquitur, Rom. 1.20. Quae omnia ad convincendos, et inexcusabiles reddendos homines, sufficiunt. Secundo, ipse sese nobis longe manifestius et plenius in sacro et divino suo Verbo cognoscendum praebet, quantum quidem id, ad gloriam ipsius, nostramque, in hac vita salutem, necessarium est.“ (Bekennnisschriften und Kirchenordnungen der nach Gottes Wort reformierten Kirche, hg. v. Wilhelm Niesel, Zollikon / Zürich ³1983, 120).

Calvin's Christology from a contemporary systematic perspective. A few remarks

KEES VAN DER KOOI

It is not without hesitation that I present my topic to you. Is it possible to give an evaluation of Calvin's christology and to appropriate some elements of his thought in contemporary systematic theology? Or should this task be regarded in advance as a hopeless undertaking? It can easily be dismissed from both sides of the ditch between historical and systematic studies and in fact it is dismissed. From the side of historical theology systematic theologians are reminded that Calvin, first of all, must be interpreted in his own context and they are warned that this context is always more complicated than initially thought. From the side of modern hermeneutics they are reminded that all our interpretations are – in the first place – appropriations that should be approached with suspicion and should be deconstructed; we are driven by interests that direct us to see what we want to see and to leave out what is not of use. The times when a systematic theologian could boldly give an account of Calvin's eschatology, christology or predestination as if Calvin were a systematic theologian in the way the idealistic philosophy of the 19th century spoke of a system have passed. It can not be my goal to give an historical account of the developments of Calvin's christology or to pretend that I will present an update of what Calvin should have said if he had lived today. Contemporary theology should not treat Calvin as if he were the standard of a theology that is faithful to the bible. What systematic theology can do is to act on its own responsibility and say what is usable and what is not. In the first place, systematic theology or dogmatics has, in my view, the task of explaining the content of christian faith, and in the second place in some cases it has to function as a tool for correction. In the third place sometimes it explores new fields, and more regularly it should give orientation to interpret reality.¹ Given these four tasks, what can be said of Calvin's christology? Which elements or features of his christology are particularly valuable and significant? I will restrict myself to a few elements.

¹ For an elaboration of these tasks see C. van der Kooi, *Goed gereedschap maakt het verschil. Over de plaats en taken van christelijke dogmatiek*, Amsterdam 2008.

I. The existential situation

First of all I want to draw attention to the fact that Calvin, in what he has to say on christological issues, shows a deep consciousness of the existential and spiritual situation of theological reflection. Theological reflection is therefore different from what is used in religious studies. It can neither take the position of a spectator or outsider nor pretend that the explanation of the content of christian faith is done from a helicopter view that provides us with overall insight. The condition of the human being is a constant reminder that the content of christian faith is not a neutral object of our intellectual interest, but something from which our spiritual and moral wellbeing are dependant on. Theological reflection on the knowledge of God does not take place in a neutral intellectual context but is conditioned by the spiritual and moral situation of the human being. It occurs in a situation in which the human being is already addressed by God in all his works. Every part of the knowledge of God has – according to Calvin’s famous statement at the beginning of the *Institutes* – a bearing for the human being.

This lack of moral and spiritual neutrality becomes clear in what Calvin has to say about conscience. A fine example of such a crucial role for the conscience with regard to christological knowledge can be found in *De Scandalis* (1550),² published in a period in which the political prospects of the Reformation were frankly poor, as a result of the ‘Interim’. One of the ‘stumbling blocks’ that Calvin takes up in this work is the doctrine of the incarnation. It is striking that he makes no attempt whatsoever to clarify or explain this doctrine. In the passage in question we encounter another strong example of how Calvin deals with what can be termed as the categorical difference between God and man. It appears as if he wants to say that any attempt at explanation rests at its outset on a false estimate of human capacity to comprehend what he terms ‘doctrina caelestis’. The incarnation is a mystery which far exceeds human understanding. Among the causes of the difficulty that people have with this doctrine is that the human mind is incapable of taking it in. However, from God’s side there is no paradox whatsoever. According to Calvin the real problem lies not at the intellectual level; rather, one must dig deeper. The problem is spiritual in nature. It becomes visible when people allow their conscience to speak. Calvin suggests that the offence with which the incarnation confronts us lies in human arrogance and the refusal to accept God’s nearness in the incarnation. God comes too close for man’s taste. ‘Because God descends

² See the introduction and edition by O. Fatio, *Des Scandales*, Geneve 1984, 8. For the Latin text see: OS II, 162–240.

from his immeasurable heights to you, would you therefore continue further removed from Him? What if He had called you up to the inaccessible sanctuaries of the heavens? How would you have gone to him from such a distance, you who are offended by his drawing near?' According to Calvin, the scoffers conclude 'that there is no one more foolish than we, who hope that we shall be given life out of a dead man, who ask acquittal from a condemned man, draw the grace of God from a curse, and flee to the galleys as the only anchor of eternal salvation.' By laughing at so much gullibility on the part of others, they present themselves as being extremely intelligent. There is however something which cannot be found in them, 'which is the most important in true wisdom. That is a sense of conscience. What remains of wisdom, of reason, of the capacities for judgement, when the conscience is blunted?'³ The stumbling block however disappears when someone descends into themselves and sees their own deplorable condition. True knowledge of God begins with the realisation of who it is that men are really dealing with – God himself. A man must first become a fool in his own eyes. In the confrontation with God men learn humility. Then, when someone sees their own wretchedness, the realisation of the necessity of a Saviour will grow, someone through whose mediation one can escape eternal death. Only 'then shall the way for them to come to Christ be opened, at the same time with the possibility for Christ to come to them.'

What is striking about Calvin's refutation is the emphasis on the necessity of getting a feeling for the real relationship between God and man. When the realisation of the holiness of God is absent in a man, if he has no fear of God, no *timor Dei*, he will remain stuck at the level of questions born of curiosity, which because of sin really do not accomplish anything. Calvin's thought has no room for outsiders – spectators in the sidelines. 'We know that they take offence, because they, devoid of fear of God, have no taste whatever for spiritual teachings. Therefore let us, so that their senselessness should not be a stumbling block for us, be led from the human nature of Christ to divine glory, which transforms all curious questions into reverence. Let us turn from the death on the cross to the glorious resurrection, which negates the whole ignominy of the cross. Let us exchange the weakness of the flesh for the might of the Spirit, in which all foolish thoughts are absorbed.'⁴

³ OS II, 173.

⁴ OS II, 174: 'Hos sciamus ideo offendi, quia timore Dei vacui, nullum spiritualis doctrinae gustum habent. Quare ne sit nobis offendiculo ipsorum stupor, sed potius ab humana Christi natura ad divinam gloriam feramur, quae omnes curiosas questiones in admirationem convertat: a morte crucis ad gloriosam resurrectionem dirigamur: quae totum crucis opprobrium debeat: a carnis infirmitate ad potentiam spiritus transeamus, quae stultas omnes cogitationes absorbeat.'

From this passage some conclusions can be drawn about his view on what we call systematic theology today: Calvin shows deep contempt for theories, which attempt to encompass or encapsulate the mystery of incarnation. That God and man are together in the one man Jesus Christ may be paradoxical from a human point of view, but from the perspective of God it is not. In fact, Calvin says, in such reflections the misery of the human condition is not taken into account. In the coming of Jesus Christ the salvation of the human being is at stake. Those who mock the incarnation do not show any understanding of the real condition the human being is in. We are not able gods who can scrutinize the mystery of the incarnation; what is put before our eyes is the grace of God which comes near to us.

It brings me to a remark on soteriology as the context for our own christological reflections. The christological dogma and the conceptuality of two natures has become a stumbling block for the modern mind. The liberal theology of the late 19th century could only regard the confession of the divinity of Jesus Christ as a late and basically distorted interpretation of the human person Jesus. When in contemporary biblical studies the soteriological implications of the earliest devotion of Jesus is emphasized⁵, this links up with the way in which Calvin, and before him, Melanchthon, framed their christological reflections. From the very start Christological reflections should be guided and driven by the discovery of soteriological dimension in the biblical testimony on Jesus Christ. Christian knowledge of God is never neutral or distant knowledge. In talking about God, the identity of Christ and the identity of the Father, a stage is opened on which human beings immediately are called to a response.

II. The need of a Mediator

A second issue that makes Calvin's christology interesting from a contemporary perspective is the keyrole of Christ as mediator. Mediation links up with the modern concept of representation. Christ represents God on earth and represents the sinner before Gods throne. But let me begin with Calvin.

Fundamental for Calvin's theology is the conviction that in the whole of his dealings with man, God must accommodate himself to man's measure. The necessity for accommodation arises directly from the infinite elevation of God above creation.⁶ There is a fundamental ontological distance which

⁵ Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ. Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity*, Grand Rapids 2003.

⁶ See for instance his commentary on Jeremiah 31:2, CO 38, 660.

must be bridged. It is not in sin that the necessity of accommodation itself is found. Some form of mediation is always necessary. Calvin does not speak at length of this, but the matter is clear. It is one of the things taken for granted in his theology: 'Had man remained free from all taint, he was of too humble a condition to penetrate to God without a Mediator.' This remark comes in the course of the discussion with Osiander about the necessity of the incarnation.⁷ Reflecting on Luther's notion of the justification of the godless, Osiander had argued that justification is the result of the indwelling of the divine nature in man. If man is called the image of God, then that must imply his participation in divine nature in some manner. The next step that Osiander makes is that he derives the necessity of the incarnation as such from the ontological difference between God and man, and not from the fallen state of man. Calvin opposes that second step, but nevertheless makes the remark that the distance between God and creature demands that a mediator or agent comes in this context. How can that be? Is the incarnation of the eternal Son still to be derived from the distance between God and man? The apparent inconsistency disappears however when we take into account that Calvin emphatically distinguishes between Jesus Christ as the incarnate Word and the eternal Word as agent of creation. In his thinking the concept of the mediator has a wider meaning and reaches further than the incarnation. When dealing with the incarnation of the eternal Son, the assumption of human nature by the second person of the Trinity, Calvin wants to stop at the strict relation that is made in the Bible with deliverance: he refuses a speculative diversion. Anyone who seeks further grounds for the incarnation than this soteriological ground, oversteps the bounds set by God.⁸ To summarise, as a theological concept the notion of 'mediator' has a wider function, and by Calvin is chiefly, but not exclusively connected with the incarnation, the *assumptio carnis*. But Christ, as the eternal Son of God, also plays a decisive role in God's dealings with the world outside of the incarnation, *extra carnem*. As the Son, as the eternal Word, He is involved with the world as mediator in creation and as sustainer.⁹ Nor does the incarnation prevent Him as the eternal Son from being active *extra carnem* in certain ways.

⁷ Inst. 2.12.1: 'Quavis ab omni labe integer stetisset homo, humilior tamen erat eius conditio quam ut sine Mediatore ad Deum penetraret.'

⁸ Inst. 2.12.4: 'Ubi ad opem miseris peccatoribus ferendam Christum divinitus proprie addici audimus, quisquis has metas transilit, stultae curiositati nimis indulget.' Inst. 2.12.5: 'Siquis excipiat, horum nihil obstare quominus idem Christus, qui damnatos redemit, testari etiam potuerit suum erga salvos et incolumes amorem, eorum carnem induendo: brevis responsio est, quum pronuntiet Spiritus, aeterno Dei decreto coniuncta simul haec duo fuisse, ut fieret nobis redemptor Christus, et eiusdem naturae particeps, fas non esse longius inquirere.'

⁹ Calvin agrees with the exegesis in the ancient church in which the appearances of the angel of the Lord (Judges 6, 7, 13; Gen. 32:29–30) were appearances of the Word as the sec-

1. *Logos asarkos or logos incarnandus?*

Here we encounter a substantive element of Calvin's concept of the knowledge of God that, as is well known, was taken up in the debate between Lutheran and Reformed theologians under a title prone to lead to misunderstanding, the 'extra-calvinisticum', as if this were a notion wholly limited to Calvin. I will restrict myself here to two observations. First, in light of history or dogma, Calvin is absolutely not original on this point. As Willis has demonstrated from an abundance of materials, he simply continues a line of thought that has been generally accepted since the apologists.¹⁰ Next, it must be stated that the distinction has its roots in Trinitar-

ond person of the Trinity. See, for instance, Inst. 1.13.10: 'Etsi enim nondum erat carne vestitus, descendit tamen quasi intermedius, ut familiaris ad fideles accederet.' E.D. Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology. The Function of the so-called Extra Calvinisticum in Calvin's Theology*, Leiden 1966, 69–71, points to the clarification that Calvin introduced in his vision of the mediatorship of Christ in answer to the views of F. Stancaró. According to Stancaró Christ was only mediator by virtue of the human nature that he assumed in the incarnation. In his *Responsum ad Fratres Polonos* (1560), CO 9, 338, Calvin makes it clear that Christ's mediatorship also involves the creation and sustaining of the world. By virtue of this mediatorship in creation the Son is the Head of the Church from the very beginning, standing above the angels, and is properly named the firstborn of the whole creation.

¹⁰ See Calvin's famous formulation in Inst. 2.13.4: 'etsi in unum personam coaluit immensa Verbi essentia cum natura hominis, nullam tamen inclusionem fingimus. Mirabiliter enim e caelo descendit Filius Dei, ut caelum tamen non relinqueret: mirabiliter in utero Virginis gestari, in terris versari, et in cruce pendere voluit, ut semper mundum impleret, sicut ab initio.' The study by E.D. Willis cited in note 71 shows that in light of the history of dogma there is no reason this should be termed the extra-calvinisticum. The notion that the Logos was active apart from the incarnation is a component of the established store of traditional doctrine. From the abundance of material, see for instance Athanasius, *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*, 17, John Damascene, *De Fide Orthodoxa*, III.7, and Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III,q.5, a.2. The term can therefore only be understood as a polemic label that was introduced against the Reformed position by the Lutheran side in the conflict over the nature of Christ's presence in the Supper. The Reformed position is expressed in Question and Answer 48 of the Heidelberg Catechism: 'Q. But are not the two natures in Christ separated from each other in this way, if the humanity is not wherever the divinity is? A. Not at all; for since divinity is incomprehensible and everywhere present, it must follow that the divinity is indeed beyond the bounds of the humanity which it has assumed, and is nonetheless ever in that humanity as well, and remains personally united to it.' (trans. A.O. Miller and M.E. Oosterhaven) Since its introduction the term has become meaningful in the theological debate to the extent that it does refer to the Lutheran accusation that Calvin does not take the incarnation seriously enough theologically. For its significance in the structure of Calvin's theology see H.A. Oberman, 'Die "Extra"-Dimension in der Theologie Calvins' in: idem, *Die Reformation. Von Wittenberg nach Genf*, Göttingen 1986, 253–282. According to Jüngel, Karl Barth's doctrine of the eternal election of the man Jesus Christ can be seen as a systematic counter-proposal to this accusation: one can no longer think of the man apart from the *Logos incarnatus*. See E. Jüngel, *Gottes Sein ist im Werden. Verantwortliche Rede vom Sein Gottes bei Karl Barth. Eine Paraphrase*, Tübingen 1976³, 96.

ian theology, and has major consequences for the whole structure of theology. In Calvin God's acts are differentiated in a Trinitarian manner from the very beginning; that is to say, what God does is to be resolved into the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in which these three can not be identified with one another without qualification. With all emphasis on the unity of God, the work of the Spirit, for instance, has a peculiarity with respect to the work of the Son, and the work of the Son has characteristic properties with respect to that of the Father. The eternal Son does not coincide perfectly with the incarnate Word, and knowledge of God does not therefore coincide perfectly with knowledge of Jesus Christ as the incarnate Word. However much knowledge of God substantively derives the criterion for its content from Jesus Christ as the incarnate Word, as the mirror of divine mercy, for Calvin the work of the Spirit forms the wider horizon in which the work of the Son is situated and the Father leads his people to renewal and perfection through the Spirit.

It is at this point that Barth has made a counter-proposal for the 20th century. He fears that a 'logos asarkos' apart from the 'logos ensarkos' will finally end up in a second source of theological knowledge that will compete with or dominate the knowledge drawn from Jesus Christ. Barth derives all knowledge of God from the one revelation of God in Jesus Christ, the 'logos ensarkos', and sees it as consisting of the 'disclosure' of that which is given in Christ.

Here I can only briefly touch upon the ongoing debate on this topic. The systematic question is: What is the status of the 'logos', which according to the gospel of John became flesh? Can anything be said about a 'logos asarkos', apart from the incarnation, and apart from the concrete life and acts of Jesus Christ? Calvin's own christology shows how easily a speculation on the eternal being of the Logos apart from the incarnation can endanger the reality and humanity of Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that Bruce McCormack has proposed to speak of the 'logos incarnandus'.¹¹ And I would add the remark that every statement about the work of the Logos 'extra carnem' should be bound to the 'Logos incarnatus'. The first chapters of the letter to the Collosians and Ephesians are clear that every discussion about the cosmic Christ is derived from the encounter and manifestation of Jesus Christ of our history. It might be true that we are not able to say much on the preexistence, the preexistence of the Logos as the 'Logos incarnandus' is somehow supposed.

I must add a second remark that directly relates to the importance of the Logos as mediator in creation and the providence. The same Son, who

¹¹ Bruce McCormack, "Grace and being: the role of God's gracious election in Karl Barth's theological ontology", in: John Webster (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, Cambridge 2000, 92–110. 103.

came to us in Jesus Christ, is already active in creation and in sustaining the world.¹² This world might also be the stage for God's enemies, basically this world and all the goods that flow to us from the created world, are his. It is this stress on God the Father as the source of all good and the Son as the Mediator, that in later times in neo-calvinistic theology was taken up and further elaborated. True catholicity has an impact for all spheres of life. By this a theology was constructed that helped to give orientation to a changing and modern world.¹³ Was this elaboration a mistake or was it right? The debate on this issue continues within calvinism. To be clear, I take the second option. The first option leaves our world and culture to the devil.

2. God comes down

Let us return to Calvin's christology. All of God's self-revelation in creation, in the Scriptures, in Jesus Christ and in the sacraments must be understood as a form of accommodation. The characteristic of revelation is its downward motion. Or in other terms, God stoops down to such an extent that he deliberately places himself at the level where he can be seen and heard by his creatures. That is also an element which is often forgotten. Not rarely, the figure of accommodation is understood only as a concession, something which really does not fit with the highness of God. It has been part of the established theological and historical repertoire to contrast Luther and Calvin with reference to this. Luther's theology is then accounted as a theology of the Cross. God is present here *sub cruce*. However, it is best not to force the issue and act as if only the transcendence of God counts for Calvin. God is not only elevated; he comes down, with the crucified Christ as the nadir, down to within the reach of the senses, and thus into our lives and hearts. He wishes to reach out to his people in his effacement. The fact is, that mankind must be delivered. God does that in a way that leads down, and from the depths upward.

This movement is in fact the mediation that is executed in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is able to mediate, because in his person two natures are united. Calvin clarifies that the mediation is not only effected by the human nature of Christ. In his debate with Stancaró (1560–1561) he has elaborated his position on the role of the divinity of the Son in the mediation.¹⁴ God comes by way of humanity near to the human being. Humanity is called a channel, through which the fountain of life flows to hu-

¹² Calvin, Comm. John 1:2.

¹³ See for example H. Bavinck, *De Katholiciteit van christendom en kerk* (1888).

¹⁴ Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology*, 14–39.

man beings. But due to the divine nature Jesus Christ is able to draw the elected ones to the Father.¹⁵

As we already mentioned, Calvin emphasizes that Jesus Christ as the eternal Son is already acting as the Mediator who mediates between human beings and the Father. The eternal Son already 'extra carnem' protects, gives life, guides his children and unites them to the Father. In his commentary to the prologue of the gospel of John he states that before all ages Christ as the eternal Word is already the fountain of life. In the incarnation he shows that this life is placed in the flesh.

From a contemporary perspective the critical question can be asked: Is the flesh only a channel? Here it is significant that the human flesh according to Calvin is not only a vehicle that can be cast away as soon as it has done its duty. Through and in his humanity all the gifts of the Spirit are bestowed upon us. Christ is filled with the Spirit in his humanity and Christ is in heaven at the right hand of the Father in his glorified humanity. "Christ differs from us in this respect, that the Father has poured out upon him an unlimited abundance of his Spirit. And certainly, it is proper that the Spirit should dwell without measure in him, that we may all draw out of his fullness ..." ¹⁶ So, Christ is the Spirit bearer, and the gifts are exhibited to us in order that we may receive them.

It can also be asked to what degree one can find here possibilities for a connection with the contemporary attention for the work of the Spirit in Calvin's own thought. When Christ is the Spirit bearer and the one who gives and sends the Spirit, then there are fundamental similarities that could be elaborated.

3. *The Three offices as identity markers*

Calvin's doctrine of the three offices can be regarded as his most important tool for his interpretation of the christological dogma. Here we see what Oberman called a shift of emphasis "von einer Naturen-Christologie zu einer Ämter-Christologie"¹⁷. God rules his people through the offices of priest, king and prophet. These offices are characterised by the anointment and gift of the Holy Spirit. This attention for the role of the Spirit points to the dynamic view of the work of God. Calvin shows that, by viewing the life and work of Jesus Christ through the prism of these offices, that the life of Jesus is not a historical incident. His coming fits completely within the drama of the history of the covenant, which God has initiated and

¹⁵ *Ministorum ecclesiae Gnevensis responsio ad nobiles Polonos et Franciscum Saantcarum Mantuanum de controversia mediatori*, CO 9, (345–358) 351.

¹⁶ Comm John 3, 34 (CO 47,75).

¹⁷ H.A. Oberman, 'Die extra Dimenison', 276.

which will complete with the consummation of the world. The figures of priest, king and prophet are the 'dramatis personae' in this history of God and his people. They represent God with the people, but the other way is also possible. By exploring the meaning of Jesus Christ in terms of these roles, it becomes possible to address the complexity and multi-facetedness of the human existence in relation with God. Each of these roles implies also a role from the side of the people who are addressed. The interesting characteristic of this doctrine of the three offices is, that it takes its point of departure in act. Just as Karl Barth described the being of God. God's being is Being in the act. Act and acting are not of secondary importance. It is in the acting, in the movement of the several roles, that God's identity becomes visible to us.

4. Priesthood

I restrict myself here to a few observations on the offices of priesthood and kingship. It is clear that the office of priesthood according to Calvin also implies a retributive moment. Jesus Christ died in our place. But this retributive moment is part of a wider framework of images and concepts that overlap and enforce each other. From the contemporary perspective, this means that the application of the well-known distinction between a subjective and objective doctrine of atonement will not work for Calvin. This scheme, an invention of the 19th century, tears apart what in Calvin's theology is still intertwined and one inclusive reality of communion with Christ.

As is known, Calvin's doctrine of atonement cannot simply be identified with the thought of Anselm. With both theologians atonement implies a moment of retribution, but with Anselm this retribution is understood in terms of civil law, as a form of merit (*meritum*), whereas with Calvin the passion and obedience of Christ is understood as a kind of penal justice (*poena*). What Calvin draws from Anselm however and includes in his own thought is the necessity of a mediator, who is God and human at the same time. But this necessity stands with Calvin within the context of God's free decision to save the human being in this way. God's love is the deepest ground for this mission. Nobody forces God to do so. In this way of a free choice, Christ as mediator bears the punishment for the sins of the people. The death of Christ is a substitutive punishment, a kind of retribution that meets the measure of God's justice. Christ carries the full weight of the wrath of God against sin and has for that reason to descend into the deepest abandonment by God. Contemporary systematic theology has become critical here towards Calvin and his split between justice and love. In contemporary biblical studies it is stressed that Calvin's split between love and justice as competing attributes of God should be criticised. In Pauls

understanding of the righteousness of God the concept of righteousness is not contrary to love, but is a form of God's love. From a theological point of view it is, however, decisive that in Calvin's theology the triune God, that means also the eternal Son, is the source and initiator of the drama of the reconciliation. The moving and overarching reason for the death on the cross is God's love and his decision to yield life to the chosen sinner. God searches for a way to take away the curse, which rests on the human being and drains his life. For that reason, an exchange takes place between God and man. Christ acts as priest and victim at the same time and in this way reopens the avenue to the fountain of life. Christ is the place where the life-giving and renewing power of God becomes available.

Within this last image of Christ as fountain or even better, the place where the fountain of divine life is opened for human beings, we have met an important metaphor, which shows the importance of the early church in the thought of Calvin. The image of the fountain provides possibilities to perceive and obtain the inclusiveness of what has happened in Christ in favor of human beings. In the history of Christ we meet God's movement towards human beings, a saving action, by which God the Father not only has mercy on Jesus Christ, but in his person the Father embraces the whole church. Using a corporeal image: by the Spirit we are incorporated in Christ and from Him flows life towards the human being.

Hendrikus Berkhof has criticised Calvin's theology for thinking in substances and materiality and he advocated a reinterpretation of the reformed heritage in terms of personalistic language of encounter and relation.¹⁸ I would, however, take a slightly other direction. It should be appreciated that Calvin does not use exclusively personalistic language to articulate what is done to us in the priestly work of Christ. It is not only the language of personal relations, human encounter or judicial imagery that dominates Calvin's view on what happens in our salvation. Frequently he uses impersonal and substantial language that is used to articulate God's influence. It is due to the work of the Spirit that we are incorporated in the body of Christ. The work of the Spirit is not so much something that one can understand, but it is first of all an experience. The Spirit constitutes a context in which a new reality, life, becomes effective and transformative. God's work and salvation does not reach the human being only on the way of cerebral understanding and personal appropriation. The Spirit of Christ provides us with a new context, new conditions, a new atmosphere and social field, in which renewal enters our life as an overwhelming and transformative power. I regard Calvin's theology in this respect to be a theology

¹⁸ H. Berkhof, *Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Study of Faith*. Grand Rapids, 1979, 347.

with some hidden and still unused outlets that can be used for a pneumatological reorientation of reformed or presbyterian theology.

5. *Christ as king*

I come to the second office, that according to Calvin is constitutive for Christ mediatorship: his kingship. When people are reconciled with God, space is opened to acknowledge Christ as king. Frequently Calvin points to king David as type of the kingship of Jesus Christ. A king should be engaged in care for his people, maintain order and justice, and as a good housefather rule over his subjects. He has to provide a public context, that will foster the common good. This kingship, which is a fountain of goods and prosperity, has been realised in Jesus Christ.

In this context the ascension must be mentioned as a topic that has an extremely important value for contemporary theology. Ascension means in Calvin, that Christ has received his kingship and that the living Christ, now already, *hic et nunc*, from the hiddenness of the heavens, is near to his children and is near to them. The ascension and the 'sessio ad dexteram' is with Calvin the inauguration of the rule of the exalted Lord. It is a salvation act of the first order. His rule and the judgement that is transmitted to the Son is not threat, but a source of hope and relief for the children of God, who in this earthly life are plagued by numerous dangers and anxieties. The presence of the exalted Lord at the right hand of the Father gives warrant to the reality of the promises for the human being, who on earth is still on his pilgrimage. Jesus Christ is flesh of our flesh and in exalted state he is our king. As to this topic Calvin's theology is often criticised as naturalistic or too massive. However, one could also appreciate the fact that the human createdness and reality of salvation is deeply anchored in Calvin's christology. It is a bulwark over against all kinds of spiritualism and esoteric escapism that denies the human createdness. I regard it as one of the explorative and for contemporary theological reflection promising elements of Calvin's theology. Salvation does not only regard the human soul or hidden identity. We do not live without or outside of our corporeality. To be more specific, Calvin's emphasis of the corporeality of the 'sessio ad dexteram' can easily be linked with an aspect that is discovered and emphasized in pentecostal and charismatic renewal. The message of salvation also has a possible effect on our corporeal and psychic existence.

Christ is king over the church. He exercises mastery over the church in protecting the church, and in sustaining her. I follow Stephen Edmondson here in his observation that Calvin balances within the commentaries on the gospels the glorious image of Christ with the second, more humble

image of Christ as our brother.¹⁹ It is once again in the combination of these two elements, Christ in his glorious kingship and his brotherhood, that he executes the office of the mediator. The Holy Spirit unites us with Christ in order that all that is his becomes ours. The doctrine of the offices makes it possible to elaborate on the close relation between Christ and the believers.²⁰ Here it is also fruitful to point to the close connection between christology and the social metaphor of the family in his exposition of the sacraments. The prominent place that the metaphor of the family has in Calvin's theology of the sacraments, for example in the *Petit Traicté*, is telling. Calvin firmly believes that the image of the family is the medium through which God lets us see how he wishes to relate to mankind. That is true both for baptism and the Supper. According to Calvin, God takes man into his family through baptism, not as a boarder, but as an adopted child, with full rights. The walls of the church are in fact the walls of God's house.²¹ The image of the family appears not only in the discussion of baptism, but also is the background for the Supper. God is visualised as the father who has adopted us as his children and feeds us at his table as his children. The food consists of the life that is found in Jesus Christ. It is given to us in Word and Sacrament. When unpacked, this gift appears to consist of multiple gifts – benefactions, as Calvin says. Men receive forgiveness, the promise of eternal life, a share in sanctification, and in perseverance.

Once again I would like to come back to the existential situation of human beings. What sort of people are these who are given a place at the table in this house? The necessity for receiving a share in these benevolences becomes painfully clear when one sees the state, according to Calvin, of the people to whom the invitation comes. Here we should be reminded of what was said previously about the function of conscience in knowledge of God. Calvin proceeds from the idea that the people who come together for the Supper are people in need, and that they themselves recognise this need. It is not something they have been persuaded of; they recognise it as their own world. Anyone who looks into his or her own heart knows very well that this is a wasted life and that there is no scrap of righteousness to be found there.²² Nothing from outside needs be called upon to arrive at that judgement; our own conscience is sufficient to remind us that we have fallen into death and iniquity. In short, if we take our own inner world under consideration, we see a structure that cannot stand, one that is rotting away. It is at that juncture that the Supper holds a

¹⁹ S. Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology*, Cambridge 2004, 125.

²⁰ Inst 2.15.1–6.

²¹ OS I, 504.

²² OS I, 506.

mirror up before us, in which there appears another image, namely that of the crucified Christ.²³

6. Concluding remark

This brings me to a final and concluding remark. In Calvin's christology we see a balance between emphasis on cross and incarnation, on the one hand, and resurrection and glory, on the other. From a contemporary perspective this multi-facetedness of Christ's work and life is important. Calvin knows about the movement of salvation history. God is in Christ coming near to us, delivering us, and giving life. The earthly life, death, resurrection, the ascension of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit by Christ are moments in this drama of our salvation. It is important for the development of a contemporary reformed theology to stick to these various and different moments in Gods dealing with his world. In the last three decades some theological proposals have been focussing on either cross, resurrection, or the bestowal of the gifts of the Spirit. In Calvin we see the outline of a theological tradition that seriously considers that theology cannot be reduced to either theology of the cross, theology of resurrection, or theology of the Spirit. Only by sticking to this multi-facetedness of God's acting contemporary systematic theology can there be a tool for orientation and interpretation of life and experience.

²³ OS I, 504.

Church

Calvin und die reformierte Konfession

EMIDIO CAMPI

Vorüberlegungen zum Thema

Es empfiehlt sich, einen ersten Gedankengang dem Thema des Aufsatzes zu widmen. Dies umso mehr, als die Formulierung des Themas nicht auf mich zurückgeht, sondern mir freundlicherweise vorgegeben wurde. Solche eine Vorgabe entlastet einerseits den Referenten von der Suche nach einer pointierten Themenformulierung, nötigt ihn aber andererseits zu einer Reflexion der Themenstellung, damit er den Stoff auch im Sinne seines Auftraggebers behandelt.

Bekanntlich ist das Wort „Konfession“ in seiner ekklesiologischen Bedeutung und als historiographischer Begriff erst im 19. Jahrhundert entstanden, um „kirchliche Absonderungen innerhalb des Christentums zu bezeichnen, die sich als eigenständige kirchliche Körperschaften organisierten“.¹ Zuvor sprach man seit der Reformationszeit von „Religionsparteien“ oder von Religion. Konfessionelle Differenzierungen tauchten freilich schon in der Urchristenheit (Scheidung des Heidenchristentums vom Judentum) und in der alten Kirche auf (das arianische Schisma); aus verschiedenen Gründen aber haben sie nicht zu ausgeprägten Konfessionskirchen im modernen Sinn des Wortes geführt. Eine Ausnahme in dieser Hinsicht bildet die im Jahr 1054 vollzogene Spaltung der christlichen Kirche in eine Ost- und eine Westkirche, wobei durch die geographische Entfernung jedoch das konfessionelle Problem überdeckt wurde. Dieses stellte sich dann in seinem ganzen Umfang und mit großer Dringlichkeit in der Reformationszeit. Zwar wollten die Reformatoren keine neue Kirche gründen, sondern die eine christliche Kirche, in der sie lebten, zu ihrem Ursprung, zu ihrer echten Gestalt, nämlich der *ecclesia catholica apostolica* zurückführen. Da dieses Anliegen von der Gesamtkirche nicht aufge-

¹ Vgl. hierzu und zum Folgenden Carl Heinz Ratschow, Art. Konfession/Konfessionalität, in TRE 19 (1990), 419–426, hier 419. Marc Lienhard, Die Vielheit der Konfessionen und die Einheit der Kirche, in: Materialdienst des Konfessionskundlichen Instituts Bensheim 57 (2006), Heft Nr. 5, 83–89; Michael Beintker, Die Zukunft evangelischer Konfessionen, in: Die reformierten upd@te 05.2, Das reformierte Quartalsmagazin, 6. Jahrgang 2005, Nr. 2, 25–36.

nommen wurde, kam es zur Trennung. Es entwickelten sich spezifische Gesamtausprägungen des christlichen Glaubens und Lebens. Dank obrigkeitlicher Unterstützung und Anerkennung wurde Raum geschaffen für eigene konfessionelle Kirchentümer.

Keine andere Theoriebildung hat die reformationsgeschichtliche Forschung der letzten 25 Jahre so befruchtet wie die Hypothese, dass es bei der Konfessionalisierung des Christentums im Zuge der Glaubensspaltung um einen Fundamentalvorgang handelt, der die Modernisierungsprozesse der Frühen Neuzeit entscheidend geprägt und beschleunigt hat (H. Schilling, W. Reinhard, H. Klüeting).² Neuerdings wird am Konfessionalisierungs-Paradigma Kritik geübt³; es wird vor allem als etatistisch verengt kritisiert.⁴ Außerdem läuft dieses sonst äußerst fruchtbare historische Interpretationsmodell Gefahr, unhinterfragt von bereits im 16. Jahrhundert festgefügt Konfessionen auszugehen. Doch eigentlich wissen wir, dass es noch jahrzehntelang unmöglich war, trotz formulierter Hauptbekenntnisse klare Grenzen zwischen den drei Hauptkonfessionen, „römisch-katholisch“, „lutherisch“, „reformiert“, zu ziehen.⁵ Dies gilt vor allem für den lutherischen und reformierten Protestantismus. Man denke an die theologisch-kirchenpolitischen Auseinandersetzungen innerhalb der evangelisch-lutherischen Bewegung zwischen den Gnesiolutheranern, den genuinen Lutherschülern, und den Philippisten, den Anhängern Philipp Melancthons, die sich um die rechte Interpretation von Luthers Erbe stritten. Obwohl der Augsburger Religionsfrieden von 1555 zur Anerkennung der lutherischen Konfession im Reich führte, konnten erst 1580 die wichtigsten im Luthertum gültigen Bekenntnisse und Lehrschriften zum Konkordienbuch zusammengestellt werden. Wie fließend die Übergänge vom Luthertum zum Reformiertentum waren, zeigt die tiefe Verbundenheit Calvins mit dem in manchem doch wahrlich anders ausgerichteten lutherischen Reformator Philip Melancthon eindrucklich. Was das Reformiertentum anbelangt, war es auch in seiner Entstehungsgeschichte weniger einheitlich als das Luthertum. Bereits die deutlichen Lehrunterschiede zwi-

² Harm Klüeting, Art. Konfessionalisierung, in: RGG⁴ 4 (2001), 1547–1548.

³ Siehe u.a. Peter Hersch, „Klassizistischer“ Katholizismus, in: *Historische Zeitschrift*, 262 (1996), 357–389; Thomas Kaufmann, Konfessionalisierung von Kirche und Gesellschaft, in: *Theologische Literatur Zeitung* 121 (1996), 1008–1025, 1112–1121. Siehe auch Kaspar von Greyerz et al. (Hg.), *Interkonfessionalität – Transkonfessionalität – binnenkonfessionelle Pluralität. Neue Forschungen zur Konfessionalisierungsthese*, Gütersloh 2003 (SVRG 201).

⁴ Heinrich Richard Schmidt, *Sozialdisziplinierung?*, in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 265 (1997), 639–682.

⁵ Es ist offensichtlich, dass in diesem Bereich nach wie vor eine Begriffsverwirrung herrscht und dass die Operationalisierbarkeit des von Th. Kaufmann vorgeschlagenen Begriffs ‚Konfessionskultur‘ gewisse Schwierigkeiten bereitet.

schen dem reformierten Protestantismus Zürcher Prägung und dem Genfer Calvinismus weisen darauf hin. Das beste Zeichen für jene eigentümliche Vielfalt der Positionen ist von Anfang an der bewusste Verzicht der verschiedenen Kirchen der reformierten Familie auf ein gemeinsames Bekenntnis sowie auf einen Stifternamen in der Konfessionsbezeichnung Sie begriffen und begreifen sich als eine „nach Gotteswort reformierte Kirche“.

Ich betone das, weil in der einschlägigen Literatur der reformierte Zweig des Protestantismus häufig einfach mit dem Namen des Genfer Reformators umschrieben wird.⁶ In der Forschung ist zwar unbestritten, dass die nach Gottes Wort reformierten Kirchen auf die schweizerischen und oberdeutschen Reformationsbewegungen des frühen 16. Jahrhunderts zurückgehen. Allerdings wird auch von Fachleuten oft übersehen, dass Zürich zu Zeiten Zwinglis zum entscheidenden Ort für den reformatorischen Durchbruch wurde und auch mit Bullinger neben Genf das anerkannte Zentrum des reformierten Protestantismus blieb. Erst seit wenigen Jahren kehrt langsam wieder ins volle Bewußtsein zurück, dass Bullingers reformatorisch-kirchenpolitische Tätigkeit – ebenso wie jene Calvins – eine gesamteuropäische Dimension besaß, die sich vom alten Kontinent aus sehr bald auch bis zur Neuen Welt erstreckte.⁷ Wie viel dessen, was unter dem Stichwort „Calvinismus“ kolportiert wird, in der Tat auf Bucers, Zwinglis, Oekolampads, Musculus, Bullingers oder Vermigli's Gedanken gut zurückzuführen sei, ist eine offene Frage, die nicht ganz so einfach beantwortet werden kann. Es klaffen noch immer enorme Lücken in unserer Kenntnis der reformierten Konfessionsbildung. Hier liegt also ein kompliziertes historisches Problem vor, das zwar im Kontext der Konfessionalisierungsthesen und unter Berücksichtigung der neuesten Forschungsergebnisse diskutiert werden muss, dessen Lösung aber aus keiner Formel, durch keine logische Deduktion oder Induktion, sondern nur auf dem Weg des Tastens, Suchens und Näherkommens, letztlich durch die Erarbeitung des heterogenen Quellenmaterials gefunden werden kann.

Auch wenn in diesem Rahmen weder auf die schwierigen historiographischen Detailprobleme der reformierten Konfessionsbildung noch auf ihre theologischen Spezifika eingegangen werden kann, so möchte ich wenigstens zu einer kleinen Spurensuche einladen. Der doppelten Anforderung von Tagungs- und Vortragsthema („The Reformation of John Calvin. Saint or Sinner?“, und: „Calvin und die reformierte Konfession“) entsprechend

⁶ Vgl. die sehr lesenswerten Ausführungen von Christoph Strohm, *Methodology in Discussion of „Calvin and Calvinism“*, in: Herman J. Selderhuis (Hg.), *Calvinus Praeceptor Ecclesiae*, hg. von, Genf 2004, 65–105.

⁷ Den Zugang zum neuesten Stand der Forschung vermittelt Emidio Campi, Peter Opitz (Hg.), *Heinrich Bullinger: Life – Thought – Influence*, 2 Bd., Zürich 2007.

sei auf drei Problemkreise hingewiesen, die aus meiner Sicht von besonderem Interesse sind, weil sie Calvins Größe und Schwäche aufzeigen, und für die Entstehung und Entwicklung der reformierten Konfession von grundsätzlicher Bedeutung waren bzw. sind. Es handelt sich um folgende Fragenkomplexe: 1. Das Schriftverständnis, 2. Die Prädestinationslehre, 3. Die Verhältnisbestimmung von Kirche und Staat. Dabei werden einige zentrale Gedanken des Genfer Reformators zu den genannten Themen diskutiert, mit den Positionen seiner Zeitgenossen konfrontiert und dann in ihrer Weiterentwicklung skizziert.

1. Das Schriftverständnis⁸

Für Calvin, wie für alle Reformatoren, ist die Heilige Schrift das Zeugnis, durch das Gott zu uns spricht, durch das wir von Gott wissen, und das aufzeigt, worauf es im Glaubensleben ankommt. Sie ist ein Abbild oder ein Ausdruck der Weisheit Gottes, vom Geist Gottes selbst inspiriert. Ihre Verfasser waren so begnadet, dass Calvin sie „Organe des Heiligen Geistes“⁹ nennt. Die Worte der Bibel sind für ihn Worte, die vom Heiligen Geist diktiert worden sind, also Ausdruck des göttlichen Willens; sie bedürfen keines Beweises, da sie als „lebendige Stimme Gottes“ (*viva vox Dei*) „vom Himmel geflossen“ (*e caelo fluxisse*) sind.¹⁰ Die Schrift ist ganz klar und hat ihre eigene spezifische Evidenz.

In diesen Ausführungen Calvins, die mit jenen der Mitreformatoren Zwingli, Oekolampad, Bucer, Farel, Musculus, Bullinger und Vermigli nahezu identisch sind, zeigt sich eine biblizistische Neigung, die wir von der Reformationszeit über die reformierte Orthodoxie des 17. Jahrhunderts bis zu den amerikanischen fundamentalistischen Fernsehpredigern der Gegenwart verfolgen können. Darin liegt auch der Grund, dass die moderne Bibelforschung die reformierte Glaubensfamilie härter treffen konnte als den Rest der christlichen Kirchen.¹¹ Die Kirchen des christlichen Ostens

⁸ Siehe Heiko A. Oberman, *Zwei Reformationen: Luther und Calvin – Alte und Neue Welt*, Berlin 2003, 229–233; Wulfert de Greef, *Calvins Bibelverständnis und seine Bibelauslegung*, in: Martin Hirzel, Martin Sallmann (Hg.), *1509 – Johannes Calvin – 2009. Sein Wirken in Kirche und Gesellschaft. Essays zum 500. Geburtstag*, Zürich 2008, 95–118; Peter Opitz, *Schrift*, in: Herman J. Selderhuis (Hg.), *Calvin Handbuch*, Tübingen 2008, 231–240.

⁹ *Comm. 2 Tim. 3,16*, CO 52,383.

¹⁰ *Inst. 1,71*, OS III, 65.

¹¹ Vgl. Louis Cappel (1585–1658), *Arcanum punctuationis revelatum*, Leyden: Thomas Erpenius, 1624; *Der., Critica sacra*, Paris 1650 und die scharfe Widerlegungen von Johann Buxtorf d.J. (1599–1664), *Tractatus de punctorum vocalium et accentuum, in libris veteris testamenti hebraicis, origine, antiquitate & autoritate: oppositus arcano punctuationis revela-*

konnten sich auf die Konzile der alten Kirche und der Katholizismus auf das kirchliche Lehramt beziehen. Das Luthertum konnte zwar die Schriftinspiration vertreten; es verfügte aber über ein gewichtiges Prinzip für die Bewertung der unterschiedlichen Schichten der Offenbarung in der Heiligen Schrift. Denn nach Luthers berühmtem Satz „was Christum treibt“ war es nämlich schon lange vor dem Aufkommen der modernen Bibelforschung möglich, an der Schrift von ihrer Mitte her Kritik zu üben.

Die reformierten Kirchenväter dagegen haben das Wort Gottes mit der Heiligen Schrift gleichgesetzt. In der *Summa christenlicher Religion* (1556) schreibt Bullinger: „Alle und yede Christen söllend der heiligen Biblischen gschrift, alts und nüws Testaments one alles widersprächen (als dem waaren wort Gottes, das von Gott ygeistet ...) glauben.“¹² Bekannt ist vielleicht der einleitende Satz der *Confessio Helvetica posterior*: „Wir glauben und bekennen, dass die kanonischen Schriften der heiligen Propheten und Apostel beider Testamente das wahre Wort Gottes sind“.¹³ Auch für Calvin ist das *verbum Dei* identisch mit den *canonici libri* – die Apokryphen hat er von vornherein beiseite gelassen, obwohl er sie sehr geschätzt und benutzt hat. Dabei ist ihm klar, dass die Schrift wohl vom Hl. Geist inspiriert, aber von Menschen geschrieben ist; – eine Tatsache, die er durch all seine exegetischen Arbeiten genügend erhärtet hat. Dennoch ist der Text der Bibel für ihn unmittelbar als eine verpflichtende Offenbarung aufzufassen, die vom Leser gläubigen Gehorsam fordert. Insbesondere für den Rechtsgelehrten Calvin hat die Schrift den Rang eines göttlichen Testaments und das Testament besitzt dieselbe Autorität wie der Testator.

Im späteren Reformiertentum, wurde das Anliegen der Reformatoren völlig missverstanden. Denn die Meinung war es freilich nicht, dass das Wort Gottes in der Schrift jederzeit greifbar ist, sondern dass jederzeit hörbar werden kann. So wurde die Heilige Schrift zum göttlichen Gesetz-

tio Ludovici Cappelli, Basel 1648; Ders., *Anticritica: seu Vindiciae Veritatis Hebraicae Adversus Ludovici Cappelli Criticam quam vocat Sacram, eius[ue] Defensionem: Quibus Sacrosanctae Editionis Bibliorum Hebraicae Autoritas, integritas, & sinceritas, a variis eius strophis, & sophismatis ... illustrantur*, Basel 1653. Vgl. auch die *Formula Consensus Ecclesiarum Helveticarum* (1675) mit der gottgewirkten Inspiration des Texts des Alten Testaments inkl. der Konsonanten, Vokale und Punkte. Dazu Stephen G. Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish studies: Johannes Buxtorf (1564–1629) and Hebrew learning in the seventeenth century*, Leiden 1996.

¹² Heinrich Bullinger, *Summa christenlicher Religion*, Zürich: Christofel Froschower, 1556, 1r. Siehe auch Ders., *De scripturae negotio* (1523), HBThS 2, Zürich 1991, 19–31; *De scripturae sanctae autoritate deque episcoporum institutione et functione* (1538), HBThS 4, Zürich 2009, 22–25; *Sermonum Decades quinque* (1552), HBThS 3.1, Zürich 2008, 29–49.

¹³ BSRK, 170 (deut.: *Das Zweite Helvetische Bekenntnis*, hg. von Walter Hildebrandt und Rudolf Zimmermann, Zürich 1966, 17).

buch, das wörtlich diktiert worden war.¹⁴ Der Grundsatz der orthodoxen Skriptologie lautete: „*Scriptura sancta est verbum Dei*“. Die Schrift stammte nicht nur von Gott; darüber hinaus musste ihr auch die gleiche Ehre wie ihm zuteil werden. Wegen dieses ungeschichtlichen Schriftverständnisses wurde freilich übersehen, dass das Neu Testament nicht von einer *Buch*werdung, sondern von einer *Fleisch*werdung des Wortes Gottes spricht! Im deutlichen Gegensatz zu Calvin entging außerdem der späteren reformierten Orthodoxie, auf die sich die heutigen Fundamentalisten gerne berufen, dass der Reformator die Autorität der Schrift nicht auf die Verbalinspiration, sondern auf das gegenwärtige Zeugnis des gleichen Geistes gründete, der zu den Propheten und Aposteln redete. Anders formuliert: die Schrift ist für Calvin Gottes Wort, aber dieser Satz ist nicht umkehrbar: Gottes Wort ist die Schrift. Die Schrift ist insofern Gottes Wort, als sie vom Zeugnis des Geistes besiegelt wird. Wort und Geist bilden ein Korrelat, dessen Glieder nicht voneinander getrennt werden können. Nur das innere Zeugnis des Geistes (*testimunium spiritus sancti internum*,)¹⁵ ermöglicht es uns, die Autorität der Schrift zu erfassen und schafft in unseren Herzen die Gewissheit, dass die Schrift von Gott kommt. Von dieser Einsicht Calvins ist freilich bei den modernen Fundamentalisten nicht viel erhalten geblieben – abgesehen davon, dass sie sich der Heiligen Schrift rühmen.

Der zweite Punkt in Calvins Schriftverständnis betrifft das Verhältnis vom Alten Testament zum Neuen Testament. Bei diesem Punkt werden Gemeinsamkeiten und Differenzen zum Luthertum deutlich. Zwar können Luther und Melanchthon die Kontinuität zwischen dem Alten und dem Neuen Testament auf Grund der Identität Gottes und aufgrund deren Eingebettet-Sein in das Geschehen von Verheißungswort und Glaube betonen. Doch diese beiden Reformatoren und noch mehr die lutherische Orthodoxie neigen dazu, die beiden Testamente mit dem Begriffspaar „Verheißung und Erfüllung“ oder „Gesetz und Evangelium“ zu umschreiben. Calvin und noch mehr Bullinger¹⁶ sowie die ganze spätere reformierte Tradition behalten den Kontinuitätsgedanken bei und verstärken ihn. Die beiden Testamente werden auf einem heilsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund miteinander verbunden: die biblischen Schriften sind in ihrer in sich differenzierten Gesamtheit nichts anderes als das Christuszeugnis; sie unterscheiden sich lediglich in ihrer äußeren Form auf Grund der göttlichen Akkommodation

¹⁴ Siehe Ulrich H. J. Körtner, Gotteswort oder Menschenwort. Zum Verhältnis von Bibelfrömmigkeit und kritischer Schriftauslegung, in: Materialdienst des Konfessionskundlichen Instituts Bensheim 60 (2009) 24–32.

¹⁵ Inst. I, 7,5; bes. I, 9,3.

¹⁶ Vgl. Peter Opitz, Heinrich Bullinger als Theologe. Eine Studie zu den „Dekaden“, Zürich 2004, 126–131.

auf die menschliche Schwachheit. Der Unterschied zwischen Altem Testament und Neuem Testament besteht darin, dass Christi Ankunft „weit mehr Licht“ (*longe plus lucis*) bedeutet. Gott gibt sich in Christus „in vollem Glanz“ (*plenus fulgor*) zu erkennen, die Gnade ist reichlicher (*uberior*) zu geniessen.¹⁷ Christus ist im Alten Testament nicht nur der Kommende, er ist schon vorhanden. Wenige Gedanken sind Calvin zeitlebens so sehr am Herzen gelegen wie jener der Einheit der beiden Testamente. Es wäre wohl eine kleine Übertreibung, vom Judaismus Calvins zu reden. Doch ist das Bewusstsein um die heilsgeschichtliche Verbundenheit der Christen mit den Juden im Reformiertentum ausgeprägter als in anderen Konfessionen und dies geht sicher auf Calvin, aber ebenso auf Bullinger zurück.

Welche Folgen hat nun diese Hervorhebung der Kontinuität der beiden Testamente konkret? Dies wirkt sich in dem Sinne aus, dass Calvin (wie alle reformierten Mitreformatoren) nicht nur die traditionellen Verwendungsarten des biblischen Gesetzes bejaht, nämlich den theologischen Gebrauch (*usus theologicus*) und den erzieherischen, wegweisenden Gebrauch (*usus elencticus oder didacticus*), sondern einen dritten Gebrauch des Gesetzes für das menschliche Gemeinwesen hinzufügt, den politischen (*usus politicus oder usus civilis*). Er betrachtet das Gesetz Gottes als Grundlage für die Gemeinschaftsordnung. Dies hat für das Gebiet der politischen Ethik weitreichende Folgen gehabt. So entwarf Calvin (und bereits vor ihm Zwingli und Bullinger), kontrastierend zu Luthers Zwei-Regimente-Modell, ein Einheitsmodell, in dem das göttliche Gesetz auf das menschliche Gesetz normierend wirkt. Das darf allerdings nicht zu pedantisch verstanden werden. Die biblischen Gebote müssen nicht eins zu eins auf das heutige Leben übertragen werden. Es geht eher um eine Gesamtrendenz und Zielrichtung. Deshalb begegnen wir bei Calvin dem Versuch, das Christusgeschehen auf die reale Existenz des Einzelnen, der Gemeinde sowie der Gesellschaft zu beziehen.

Diese Vision Calvins ist eindrücklich. In ihrer anfänglichen Phase verlieh sie dem Calvinismus die notwendige Stosskraft, sich einen Platz in Frankreich, in den Niederlanden, in Schotland und in großen Teilen der Vereinigten Staaten zu verschaffen. In allen diesen Regionen hat der Calvinismus im Unterschied zum Luthertum ein starkes politisches Bewusstsein gefördert. Es gilt jedoch auch die Schattenseite dieser Vision und damit auch die Grenzen von Calvins Erbe mit Klarheit zu erkennen. Wo kirchliche Ethik und öffentliche Moral in einem einzigen Gesetzbuch verbindlich gemacht werden, wo die Forderungen des Glaubens und der bürgerlichen Pflichten nicht mehr voneinander unterschieden werden, dort verwandelt sich das „biblische Gesetz“ in eine Tyrannei.

¹⁷ Inst. II, 9,1, OS III, 398, 18–29.

2. Die Prädestinationslehre

Wir müssen uns nun mit dem zweitem Thema befassen, das für die Rezeption Calvins schwerwiegende Konsequenzen nach sich gezogen hat. Gemeint ist die Prädestinationslehre, oder genauer gesagt: die Erwählungslehre.¹⁸ Freilich war sie keine *creatio ex nihilo*, sondern geht auf Augustin zurück. Thomas von Aquin und Duns Scotus entwickelten sie weiter. Zwingli, Bucer, Bullinger und Vermigli akzeptierten sie und lehrten sie. Dennoch war es Calvin, der der Kirche die stützende Kraft dieser Lehre aufzeigte.

Für Calvin ist die Lehre von Gottes Gnadenwahl die konsequente Zuspitzung der befreienden Rechtfertigungsbotschaft des sündigen Menschen und seiner Heiligung allein aus Gnade. Dass der Mensch gerechtesprochen wird, lässt sich in keiner Weise auf den Menschen selbst und sein Handeln zurückführen, sondern ist Ausdruck der freien Gnade Gottes. Der Gedanke der Erwählung lenkt den Menschen ab von der Fixierung auf sich selbst und bewegt ihn dazu, sein Heil allein bei Gott zu suchen. Calvin hebt gleich zu Beginn seiner Darstellung (Inst. III, 21, 1) die dreifache *utilitas* dieser Lehre hervor. Sie lehre uns: a) unser Vertrauen ganz auf die freie Barmherzigkeit Gottes zu setzen; b) sie zeige uns die Herrlichkeit Gottes (*gloria Dei*); c) sie leite uns zur wahren Demut (*humilitas*).

Diese Sätze bringen das eigentliche Anliegen Calvins bei der Prädestination zur Sprache: Die bedrängten Kirchenmitglieder dürfen sich – gegen das Zeugnis ihrer Sinne – allein an diesem Wort festklammern: Der Herr kennt die seinen, er wird das Werk seiner Hände nicht vergessen.¹⁹ Im Rahmen seiner Theologie entwickelte Calvin nun aber auch die Lehre von Gottes ewiger Wahl nach zwei Seiten hin und sprach von Erwählung und

¹⁸ Eva-Maria Faber, Immer schon überholt? Zur Frage der Prädestination in der Theologie Johannes Calvins, in: *Theologische Zeitschrift* 56, 2000, 50–68; Christian Link, Calvins Erwählungslehre zwischen Providenz und Christologie, in: Peter Opitz (Hg.), *Calvin im Kontext der Schweizer Reformation*, Zürich, 2003, 169–193; Randall C. Zachman, *Crying to God on the Brink of Despair: The Assurance of Faith Revisited*, in: Herman J. Selderhuis (Hg.), *Calvinus Praeceptor Ecclesiae*, Genf 2004, 351–58; Christian Link, Erwählung und Prädestination, in: Martin Hirzel, Martin Sallmann (Hg.), *1509 – Johannes Calvin – 2009. Sein Wirken in Kirche und Gesellschaft. Essays zum 500. Geburtstag*, Zürich 2008, 139–157.

¹⁹ Oberman, *Zwei Reformationen*, formuliert zugespitzt: „Calvins Prädestinationslehre bildet das Bollwerk christlicher Glaubenden gegen die Furcht, sie könnten dem Druck der Verfolgung nicht standhalten. Außerhalb dieses Zusammenhangs ist Calvins Erwählungslehre nicht nur abstoßend, sondern auch widergöttlich. Innerhalb dieses Erfahrungshorizonts jedoch ist sie ein kostbarer Schatz, den wir, so lange wir unter dem schützenden Dach der Demokratie leben, lebendig halten und weitergeben müssen, um uns und unsere Kinder für Kommen des vorzubereiten. Denn das Kreuz und die Verfolgung gehören zur wahren Kirche, wie dies Calvin zu Recht anmahnte“.

Verwerfung.²⁰ Es ist deutlich, dass für Calvin die Verwerfung nur eine Grenzvorstellung innerhalb einer Gedankenführung ist, die auf die Universalität der Gnade hinzielt. Der Schwerpunkt liegt auf der *praedestinatio ad bonum*. Calvin verweist auf Christus, „in welchem der himmlische Vater seine Auserwählten unter sich vereint und durch ein unauflösliches Band an sich selber gebunden hat.“ (Ist. III, 21,7). Christus ist der „Spiegel in dem wir unsere Erwählung anschauen können“ (Inst. III, 24,5). Mit diesen Aussagen wird die Bestimmung des Begriffes Erwählung erst vollständig.

Diese Lehre ließ verschiedene Probleme ungelöst. Sie erklärte das Schicksal der Verworfenen, der Mehrheit der Menschen, die der Strafe der ewigen Verdammnis anheimfallen, nicht im Einzelnen. Sie war so hart, dass sie für viele, sogar für seinen älteren Mitstreiter Heinrich Bullinger, kaum zu akzeptieren war, wie die Korrespondenz zwischen Genf und Zürich in der Bolsec-Affäre zeigt, die zunächst die Genfer Kirche, dann alle reformierten Schweizer Kirchen beschäftigte. Im Zuge der Verurteilung des ehemaligen Karmelitermönchs Hieronymus Bolsec, der Calvins Prädestinationslehre als nicht schriftgemäss bestritt, fragten die Genfer Magistraten Bern, Zürich und Basel um Rat. Vor allem die Zürcher Pfarrerschaft mahnte in ihrem Gutachten zur Mässigung und zum Ausgleich.²¹ Ausserdem zeigte ein Privatbrief Bullingers an Calvin, dass er Bolsec näher stand als dem Genfer Reformator. Bullinger verhehlte seinen Dissens mit Calvin nicht und gab ihm eine für ihn bezeichnende Antwort: „Glaube mir, dass manche durch Deine Sätze über die Erwählung in der *Institutio* geärgert sind und aus ihnen denselben Schluss ziehen wie Hieronymus aus Zwinglis Buch *De providentia*, nämlich dass Gott Urheber der Sünde sei.“²² Die Erbitterung nahm zu. So schrieb Calvin an Farel über die Zürcher Pfarrer: „Über die Basler habe ich mich neulich beklagt, mein Farel, aber neben den Zürchern verdienen sie das höchste Lob, ich kann kaum sagen, wie ihre Grausamkeit mich schmerzt. Herrscht denn unter uns weniger Menschlichkeit als unter den wilden Tieren?“²³ Auch nachdem der Streit durch die Verbannung Bolsec aus der Stadt zu Calvins Gunsten entschieden war, kam der Reformator nicht zu Ruhe. Er schrieb an Bullinger:

²⁰ Die berühmte Definition lautet, Inst. III, 21,5: „Unter Vorbestimmung verstehen wir Gottes ewige Anordnung, vermöge deren er bei sich beschloß, was nach seinem Willen aus jedem einzelnen Menschen werden sollte! Denn die Menschen werden nicht alle mit der gleichen Bestimmung erschaffen, sondern den einen wird das ewige Leben, den anderen die ewige Verdammnis vorher zugeordnet. Wie also nun der einzelne zu dem einen oder anderen Zweck geschaffen ist, so – sagen wir – ist er zum Leben oder zum Tode, vorbestimmt“.

²¹ Gutachten der Zürcher Prediger vom 27. November 1551, CO 8,229–231; Gutachten der Zürcher Pfarrer an den Rat von Genf, 1. Dezember 1551, CO 8, 232–233. Vgl auch „Procès de Jérôme Bolsec“ in RCP, Bd. 1: 1546–1553, Genf 1964, 80–131.

²² Bullinger an Calvin, 7. Dezember 1551, CO 14, 214–215, hier 215.

²³ Calvin an Farel, Januar 1551, CO 14, 218.

„Dass ihr meine Erwartung getäuscht habt, will ich gerne unserer Freundschaft zugute halten. Vor den andern schweige ich, als wäre ich zufrieden mit euch.“²⁴ Die Unstimmigkeiten zwischen Calvin und Bullinger legten sich wohl wieder,²⁵ sie blieben allerdings beide in Bezug auf die Prädestination bei ihren unterschiedlichen Auffassungen.²⁶

Diese Unterschiede lassen sich in drei Punkten zusammenfassen:²⁷

1. Der Zürcher Antistes lehnte jeglichen spekulativen Zug und Determinismus deutlich ab und stellte stattdessen die Frage der Christuszugehörigkeit in Gestalt des Glaubens ins Zentrum. Entscheidend für die ewige Erwählung oder Verwerfung ist die Gemeinschaft mit Christus, die sich im Glauben verwirklicht. Bei Calvin hingegen folgen Erwählung wie Verwerfung notwendigerweise aus dem ewigen Ratschluss Gottes. Es kommt zur – wie Karl Barth²⁸ formuliert hat – fatalen Parallelität der beiden Begriffe.

2. Im Unterschied zu Calvin vertritt Bullinger zwar eine *praescientia ad damnationem*, nicht jedoch eine *praedestinatio ad damnationem*. Gott sieht die Verwerfung voraus, hat sie aber nicht angeordnet bzw. vorherbestimmt.

3. Noch deutlicher als bei Calvin zeigt sich dann bei Bullinger, dass die Universalität von Gottes Gnadenangebot in Christus im Mittelpunkt steht. Der Skopus der Prädestination ist die Erwählung in Christus. Bullinger spricht von Erwählung, nicht jedoch von Verwerfung (*reprobatio*), sondern lediglich von „Verworfenen“ (*reprobi*), nämlich denjenigen, die sich vor Christus verschließen. Nicht zu Christus gehören, bedeutet Verderben. Calvin hingegen setzt sich eingehend mit den Einwänden gegen die Prädestinationslehre auseinander und zieht die ihm logisch und notwendig erscheinenden Konsequenzen bis zur doppelten Prädestination.

Die Remonstranten haben diesen Dissens zwischen den beiden befreundeten Reformatoren richtig gesehen, auch wenn sie sich in vieler Hinsicht zu Unrecht gegen Calvin auf Bullinger beriefen. Denn Bullinger hat ohne

²⁴ Calvin an Bullinger, Ende Januar 1552, CO 14, 251–254, hier 253.

²⁵ Calvin an Bullinger, 13. März 1552, CO 14, 302–305.

²⁶ Vgl. Peter Walser, *Die Prädestination bei Heinrich Bullinger im Zusammenhang mit seiner Gotteslehre*, Zürich 1957; Gottfried W. Locher, *Bullinger und Calvin. Probleme des Vergleiches ihrer Theologien*, in: *Heinrich Bullinger 1504–1575. Gesammelte Aufsätze zum 400. Todestag*, Bd. 2: *Beziehungen und Wirkungen*, hg. von Ulrich Gäbler und Erland Herkenrath, Zürich 1975, 1–33, hier 23–28; Richard A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree. Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins*, Durham 1986, 39–47; Cornelis P. Venema, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Doctrine of Predestination. Author of the Other Reformed Tradition?*, Grand Rapids, MI 2002.

²⁷ Vgl. Christoph Strohm, *Bullingers Dekaden und Calvins Institutio. Gemeinsamkeiten und Eigenarten*, in: Peter Opitz (Hg.), *Calvin im Kontext der Schweizer Reformation. Historische und theologische Beiträge zur Calvinforschung*, Zürich 2003, 215–269, hier 239–242.

²⁸ Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, Bd. II,2, Zollikon 1959, 13–16.

Einschränkung die göttliche Erwählung zum Heil vertreten und die absolute Unverdienbarkeit der Gnade zum Ausdruck gebracht. Jedenfalls setzte die Dordrechter Synode in ihren Beschlüssen, in den sogenannten Fünf Artikeln die calvinische Prädestinationslehre in ihrer Strenge durch: 1. Bedingungslose Erwählung – Gott ist vollkommen frei, einen jeden Menschen zum Heil vorherzubestimmen, ungeachtet dessen, ob er glaubt oder nicht. 2. Eingeschränktes Sühneopfer Christi – Christus starb nur für diejenigen, die zum Heil vorherbestimmt sind. 3. Totale Verworfenheit – der Mensch ist durch den Sündenfall einer solchen Verderbnis anheimgefallen, dass er gar nichts tun kann, um das Heil zu erlangen. 4. Unwiderstehliche Gnade – das Angebot göttlicher Gnade ist so mächtig, dass der Mensch sich ihr nicht widersetzen kann. 5. Die Beharrlichkeit der Heiligen – diejenigen, die zum Heil vorherbestimmt sind, können nicht abtrünnig oder ihres ewigen Lohns verlustig werden.²⁹

Merkwürdig, wie sich Calvins ursprüngliches Anliegen verschoben hatte. Aus dem Vertrauen auf Gottes Barmherzigkeit wurde die Heilsgewissheit der Erwählten. Aus der Herrlichkeit Gottes wurde der Inbegriff der Allwirksamkeit Gottes. Aus der Demut vor Gott wurde jene Karikatur der protestantischen Ethik, wie sie von Max Weber als mit dem kapitalistischen Geist kongenial beschrieben worden ist. Somit hatten die in Dordrecht versammelten theologischen Führer des internationalen Calvinismus das gesamte Reformiertentum genau zum Zeitpunkt des Ausbruchs des Dreißigjährigen Krieges im Heiligen Römischen Reich auf eine ungewöhnlich rigide und kompromißlose Version der Prädestination verpflichtet.³⁰ Darüber hinaus unternahmen die politischen Führer, die hinter ihnen standen, alles in ihrer Macht Stehende, um ihr zum Erfolg zu verhelfen.³¹ Die reformierte Konfession hätte sich vielleicht manche Irrwege sparen können, hätte sie in Dordrecht Bullingers Auffassung von der Prädestination angenommen.

²⁹ BSRK, 843–861. Im Englischen durch den berühmten Akronymus TULIP zusammengefasst: Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, Perseverance of the saints.

³⁰ Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism*. New Haven 2002, Kap. 10, 297–317; Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin: studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition*, New York 2003.

³¹ Heinz Schilling, *Religion und Gesellschaft in der calvinistischen Republik der Niederlande*, in: Franz. Petri (Hg), *Kirche und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in deutschen und niederländischen Städten der werdenden Neuzeit*, Köln 1980, 197–250.

3. Kirche und christliche Obrigkeit

In der *Institutio*, Buch IV, Kap. 20, legt Calvin ganz klar seine Ansichten über die Beziehung zwischen Kirche und Obrigkeit dar. Diese standen in einem deutlichen Gegensatz zu einer Reihe anderer zeitgenössischer Positionen. Er lehnte mit aller Entschiedenheit die päpstliche Hierokratie ab, ebenso die von Thomas Erastus gelehrte Unterordnung der Kirche unter den Staat, sei sie nach lutherischer oder zwinglischer Art. Obwohl er, wie die Täufer, jegliche Vermengung zwischen der geistlichen und der weltlichen Ordnung ablehnte, glaubte er im Gegensatz zu ihnen nicht, dass ein Christ sich von allen Ämtern fernhalten müsse. Geistliches und weltliches Regiment sind nicht voneinander getrennt, sondern wirken zusammen und unterstützen sich gegenseitig, obwohl jedes in seinem eigenem Bereich selbständig ist. Allerdings beanstandet ein Grossteil der Forschungsgemeinschaft, dass die Grenzlinie zwischen beiden nicht immer klar gezogen sei. In verschiedenen provozierenden und sehr lebendig geschriebenen Abhandlungen zu diesem Thema bezeichnet William C. Naphy die Beziehung zwischen den beiden Regimenten im Genf Calvins als „unglaublich eng miteinander verzahnt“, „äußerst komplex, aber in großem Masse auf Konsens angelegt.“³²

Lassen Sie mich in diesem Punkt ganz klar sein, sei es auch nur, um frühere Ungenauigkeiten und die Romantisierung des Genfer Reformators als Vorboten der freidenkerischen Devise „freie Kirche im freien Staat“ zu vermeiden. Wie alle seine Mitreformatoren und fast jeder im sechzehnten Jahrhundert, mit Ausnahme der Täufer, trat Calvin mit allem Nachdruck für eine Staatskirche ein, der alle angehören müssten. Aus Calvins, aber ebenso aus Bullingers Sicht, konnten Kirche und bürgerliches Gemeinwesen nicht zwei völlig voneinander getrennte Körperschaften sein, die auf fundamental verschiedenen Prinzipien aufbauten, sondern vielmehr zwei Teile desselben Organismus. Die Obrigkeit darf nicht die geistliche Funktion der Kirche an sich reißen. Die Kirche darf sich ihrerseits nicht die Vorherrschaft über die weltliche Macht anmaßen. Obwohl sie unterschiedliche Aufgaben haben, gründen beide doch auf gemeinsamen Grundsätzen und müssen sich der Autorität der Schrift unterstellen.³³

Ausgehend von diesen Prämissen wurde dem Magistrat z.B. sowohl in den Genfer *Ordonnances ecclésiastiques* ebenso wie in der Zürcher *Prediger- und Synodalordnung* eine grosse Rolle im kirchlichen Leben zuge-

³² William G. Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation*, Manchester-New York 1994; Ders., *Church and State in Calvin's Geneva*, in: David Foxgrover (Hg.), *Calvin and the Church*, Grand Rapids, 2002, S. 13–28, hier 20 und 27.

³³ Vgl. Emidio Campi, *Bullingers Rechts- und Staatsdenken*, in: *Evangelische Theologie* 64 (2004), 116–126.

dacht. In Genf wurden die Ältesten, die zusammen mit den Pastoren das für die Kirchenzucht zuständige *Consistoire* bildeten, aus den Rängen der drei Genfer Räte gewählt – dem *Petit Conseil*, dem *Conseil des Soixante* und dem *Conseil des Deux Cents*; den Vorsitz hatte der *Syndic* inne.³⁴ In Zürich nahmen alle Pastoren und sieben Mitglieder des Stadtrates an der Synode teil, deren Vorsitz der leitende Pastor und der amtierende Bürgermeister gemeinsam innehatten.³⁵ Die Genfer wie auch die Zürcher Obrigkeit übten ständig Druck aus, um die staatliche Gerichtsbarkeit über die Kirche aufrechtzuerhalten. Bei den Verpflichtungen der Pastoren gegenüber dem Staat, der Aufsicht des Staates über die Pastoren und der Rolle der Geistlichen bzw. der weltlichen Regierung herrschte sowohl in Genf als auch in Zürich in grossen Bereichen Einigkeit. Für Genf spezifisch war, dass Vertreter der Obrigkeit als Älteste im *Consistoire* an der Ausübung der Kirchenzucht und der Exkommunikation von Kirchengliedern beteiligt waren. Den Zürchern widerstrebt es, im Gegensatz zu den Genfern, eine eigene Kirchenzucht einzuführen, und sie überliessen dies ganz – oder zumindest zu einem grossen Teil – dem Stadtrat. Das Zürcher Modell, das nach Pamela Biel durch „reciprocal relationship“³⁶ gekennzeichnet war, bestand im Wesentlichen in einem *modus vivendi*, der die Anliegen beider Seiten berücksichtigte. Während die höchste Autorität über die Kirche in den Händen weltlicher Herrscher lag, blieb die prophetische Funktion der Kirche, ihr Wächteramt gegenüber der ganzen Gesellschaft, einschliesslich der Obrigkeit, Aufgabe der Geistlichen. Zudem hatten die Pastoren über die Person des Antistes einen direkten Zugang zum Stadtrat und konnten ihre Stimme erheben, wann immer sie es als wichtig erachteten, der Regierung ihre Ansichten mitzuteilen.³⁷

Aus der Lektüre des gewichtigen Kap. 20 des Buches IV der *Institutio* gewinnt man den Eindruck, dass Calvin, genau wie Bullinger, bestrebt war, der weltlichen Obrigkeit die schwer wiegende Verantwortung für die *cura religionis* zu übertragen. Vor allem aber lag Calvin dran, die Autonomie der Kirche vor einer Vermischung mit der Gerichtsbarkeit der „christlichen Obrigkeit“ zu bewahren. Sein Modell ist gekennzeichnet

³⁴ Die Genfer „Zauberformel“ war: 12 Laien (= 2+4+6) und 9 Pfarrer.

³⁵ Bruce Gordon, *Clerical Discipline and Rural Reformation. The Synod in Zürich, 1532–1580*, Bern 1992.

³⁶ Pamela Biel, *Doorkeepers at the House of Righteousness. Heinrich Bullinger and the Zurich Clergy 1535–1575*, Bern 1991, S. 20.

³⁷ Ich beziehe mich an dieser Stelle auf den besonderen Brauch der Fürträge, der formellen Eingaben an den Stadtrat, die von Bullinger eingeführt und bis weit ins 17. Jahrhundert in Zürich beibehalten wurden. Siehe dazu Hans Ulrich Bächtold, *Heinrich Bullinger vor dem Rat. Zur Gestaltung und Verwaltung des Züricher Staatswesens in den Jahren 1531 bis 1575*, Bern 1982. Die meisten dieser Fürträge liegen heute in einer modernen deutschen Übersetzung in Heinrich Bullinger, *Schriften*, Bd. 6, hg. von Emidio Campi et al., Zürich 2006, vor.

durch eine relative Autonomie und Unabhängigkeit der Kirche von der weltlichen Obrigkeit innerhalb der Staatskirche, insbesondere, was die gesellschaftlichen und politischen Implikationen der Ausübung der Kirchengleichheit betrifft. Anachronistisch ausgedrückt betonte Calvin die wichtige Rolle von „checks and balances“ in einem System, in dem Kirche und Staat als „ein sozialer Organismus auf nationaler Ebene (funktionierten), in dem die handelnden Personen und der soziale Raum zum großen Teil dieselben waren“.³⁸

In fast allen Kirchen, in denen sich Calvinisten etablierten, wurde ein ganz spezielles Organisationsmodell mit einem eigenen Organ, dem Konsistorium, zur Ausübung der Kirchengleichheit geschaffen, das sich an der Autonomie der Gemeinde orientierte. Das genaue Ausmaß der Befugnisse der Konsistorien hing natürlich davon ab, wie viel Unterstützung die Calvinisten in der jeweiligen Gemeinde für ihre Grundsätze erlangten. Eine vollständige Verhaltenskontrolle war nur möglich in Gebieten wie Genf oder Schottland oder den Waldensertälern, wo die Calvinisten auch die lokale Regierung beaufsichtigten. In Ländern wie Frankreich, wo die Calvinisten normalerweise geschützte Minderheiten waren, oder den Niederlanden, wo neben den Calvinisten ansehnliche Gemeinden von Mennoniten und Katholiken ihren Glauben ausüben durften, wurden die Konsistorien zwangsläufig eher zu rein kirchlichen Institutionen mit eingeschränkter Reichweite.³⁹ Am ehesten sind sie vielleicht für die Überwachung des Sexualverhaltens zur Bewahrung der Integrität der christlichen Familie bekannt. Dabei übernahmen sie einige der Funktionen der bischöflichen Gerichte in katholischen Ländern, denen häufig vorrangig, wenn nicht ausschließlich, die Rechtsprechung in Ehefragen oblag.⁴⁰ Überdies handelten sie als Sittengerichte, indem sie unentwegt Kampagnen zur Eindämmung oder Abschaffung von Unzucht und öffentlicher Trunkenheit führten oder beispielsweise Wucherei (übermäßige Darlehenszinsen) und andere skrupellose Praktiken zu verhindern suchten. Häufig griffen sie ein, um religiöses Verhalten zu regeln, Gemeindeglieder vor dem Rückfall zum Katholizismus zu bewahren und sie von radikalen religiösen Gruppen fernzuhalten.

Obwohl der Erfolg dieser Kirchengleichheit für die Sozialdisziplinierung der Bevölkerung durch eine Reihe von Zahlen belegt wird, ließe sich Manches, auch sehr Kritisches, über diesen Eingriff des kirchlich-staatlichen Consistoire ins Privat- und Familienleben sagen. Ich möchte jedoch an erster Stelle betonen, dass Calvins Position in dieser Frage eine wichtige Errungenschaft darstellt. Seine mit grossem Nachdruck vertretenen Ansichten

³⁸ Naphy, *Church and State in Calvin's Geneva*, in: *Calvin and the Church*, S. 22.

³⁹ Robert M. Kingdon, *Kirche und Obrigkeit*, in: Herman J. Selderhuis (Hg.), *Calvin Handbuch*, Tübingen 2008, 349–355.

⁴⁰ John Witte Jr., *Ehe und Familie*, in: ebd., 449–459.

erwecken unsere Bewunderung, denn sie sind eine kreative Quelle von theologischen, rechts- und staatspolitischen Impulsen geworden. Sein kirchliches Organisationsmodell war mit Sicherheit stärker biblisch orientiert und barg ein geringeres Gefahrenpotential als z.B. als Bullingers Modell der Beziehungen zwischen Kirche und Gemeinwesen und erwies sich langfristig gesehen sowohl im geistlichen als auch im politischen Bereich als einflussreicher.

Zudem strebt Calvins System der „checks and balances“ sehr viel mehr als die bloße Verteidigung kirchlicher Interessen an. Calvin glaubte und praktizierte, was wir immer und immer wieder neu lernen müssen: Die Kirche kann und sollte auf die Gesellschaft einwirken, allerdings nicht um der Herrschaft willen, sondern um sich als Sauerteig einzumischen und zur gesellschaftlichen Erneuerung beizutragen. Gerade damit tun sich auch die kleinen wie die grossen reformierten Kirchen nicht selten schwer. Gerne geben sie der theokratischen Versuchung nach, den Staat auf ihre weltanschaulichen partikularen Positionen festlegen zu wollen. So bleibt die religiös-weltanschauliche Neutralität des Staates permanent umkämpft. Man muss sie auch theologisch, um der Entlastung des Glaubens willen, verteidigen. Vielleicht liegt darin Calvins grösster Beitrag zur politischen Ethik, ein Beitrag, der freilich konfessionelle Grenzen bei weitem übersteigt und für die ganze christliche Kirche von Bedeutung ist.

Schlussbemerkung

Ich komme zum Fazit: Statt von einem Gründer der reformierten Konfession ist es wohl besser, von Gründern mit der dazu gehörenden Umgebung zu sprechen, in welche Calvins Denken und Handeln eingebunden war. Die lineare Metapher des „Stifters“ greift historisch zu kurz, nicht nur im Blick auf Luther und das Luthertum, sondern auch im Blick auf Calvin und das Reformiertentum. Dennoch ist Calvins hervorragende Bedeutung innerhalb der reformierten Konfession auffällig. Für die durch verschiedene Färbungen des Humanismus geprägten, von Luthers Frühschriften aufgerüttelten oberdeutschen Reformatoren besitzen seine theologischen Gedanken offenbar eine große Attraktivität. Die Vorgänge in Genf gelten zudem als Vorbild. Stärker als wohl auch den Zeitgenossen selber bewusst war, gehörte er als *primus inter pares* zu den Grundvätern der reformierten Konfession. Seine Rolle vor und nach dem *Consensus Tigurinus* und bis zu seinem Lebensende zeigt es.⁴¹ Andererseits ist es gerade seit der Einigung

⁴¹ Dazu Emidio Campi, Ruedi Reich (Hg.), *Consensus Tigurinus. Die Einigung zwischen Heinrich Bullinger und Johannes Calvin über das Abendmahl*, Zürich 2009.

zwischen Genf und Zürich über die Abendmahlsfrage offensichtlich, dass er sich zunehmend und vorzugsweise vom „dilectus symmista“, „frater et amicus charissimus“, „ornatissimus vir et colendus frater“ Heinrich Bullinger angezogen fühlte.⁴² Dies galt in Bezug auf die Bereiche Kirchenordnung, Bekenntnis, Liturgie und Theologie wie auch auf seine politischen und sozialen Ideen.

Daraus ergeben sich schließlich drei Forschungsdesiderate: Erstens: Die Reformationsgeschichtsschreibung darf sich nicht von der didaktisch sinnvollen, aber historiographisch problematischen Schleiermacherschen *Maxime der „grossen Gestalten“*⁴³ blenden lassen, sondern sollte ein ausgewogenes Verhältnis zwischen dem Individuum und den Gestaltungsprozessen, in welche es eingebunden war, anstreben.

Zweitens: Für die „Schweizerisch-oberdeutsche“ Reformationsforschung und die Calvin-Forschung hängt damit indirekt die Forderung zusammen, die verschiedenen Aktivitäten nicht mehr, wie dies bis heute oft der Fall ist, voneinander getrennt zu betrachten und sich von der ausschließlichen Fokussierung auf das Denken und Wirken einzelner Reformatoren abzuwenden. Denn dadurch drohen bereits methodisch wichtige historische Zusammenhänge ausgeblendet zu werden. Es dürfte wenigstens als Leitsatz sinnvoll sein, Forschungsgegenstände miteinander zu verknüpfen, die bisher getrennt betrachtet wurden, und die Grenzen des eigenen Bereiches zu überschreiten.

Drittens: Die Texteditionen. Beispielsweise die *Calvini Opera Selecta*, immer noch Grundlage für doktorierende künftige Calvinologen. So verdienstvoll das Werk in seiner Zeit – 1936 – auch war, trägt sein Anmerkungsapparat den hier skizzierten Zusammenhängen bei weitem nicht Rechnung. Die *Ioannis Calvini opera omnia denuo recognita et adnotatione critica instructa notisque illustrata*, die Neuedition von Calvins Werke, geben diesbezüglich Anlass zu verhaltenem Optimismus. Zu tun gibt es aber noch genug. Denn, nach wie vor gilt: *De Calvino numquam satis*.

⁴² Ebd. 101, 111, 124. Über das Verhältnis der beiden Reformatoren siehe André Bouvier, Henri Bullinger le successeur de Zwingli d'après sa correspondance avec les réformés et les humanistes de langue française, Neuchâtel-Paris 1940, 43–48.

⁴³ Friedrich Schleiermacher, Kurze Darstellung des theologischen Studiums, [Nachdruck Leipzig 1910], Darmstadt 1993, 96 (§ 251), 96: „Wiewohl im ganzen in der christlichen Kirche die hervorragende Wirksamkeit einzelner auf die Masse abnimmt, ist es doch für die historische Theologie mehr, als für andere geschichtliche Gebiete, angemessen, die Bilder solcher Zeiten, die, als wenn auch nur in untergeordnetem Sinne, epochemachend, als Einheit aufzufassen sind, an das Leben vorzüglich wirksamer Einzelner anzuknüpfen.“

Calvin as the Ideal Teacher

KARIN MAAG

In his commentary on 1 Corinthians 3, first published in 1546, John Calvin described what he saw as the ideal teaching method:

...it is the part of a wise teacher to accommodate himself to the capacity of those whom he has undertaken to instruct, so that in dealing with the weak and ignorant, he begins with first principles, and does not go higher than they are able to follow, and so that, in short, he drops in his instructions little by little, lest it should run over, if poured in more abundantly.¹

Yet Calvin also felt that instructors should challenge their students: later on in the same section, he commented, "...if the hearer does not occasion delay by his slowness, it is the part of a good teacher to be always going up higher, till perfection has been attained."² Thus Calvin's pedagogical approach, in theory at least, involved having the teacher match the learner's pace and proceed in a logical, step-by-step manner, until the learner was ready to be challenged by the instructor to move to a higher level. This educational model depicted the student as an empty vessel, as someone to be filled with the knowledge imparted by the teacher. At the same time, Calvin's understanding of the aims of education had a strongly moral character: education was not an end in itself but a means to the goal of forming people of faith in service to God. This emphasis on the central moral component of education was shared both by pre-Reformation humanists, including Erasmus, and by fellow Reformers such as Martin Luther.³

The subject of this presentation is "Calvin as the ideal teacher". To start off with, I would like to change the title into a question, as in "Calvin as

¹ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* John Pringle, ed. and transl., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), Vol. 1, p. 122.

² John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* Vol. 1, p. 123.

³ Riemer Faber, "Humanitas as Discriminating Factor in the Educational Writings of Erasmus and Luther" in Wim Janse and Barbara Pitkin, eds, *The Formation of Clerical and Confessional Identities in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 25–37, though Faber stresses the difference between the two men's approach to education based on their differing views of the nature of humanity. See also Stephan Ehrenpreis, "Kulturwirkungen konfessioneller Erziehungsmodelle im 16. Und 17. Jahrhundert," *ARG* 95, 2004, 240–51, esp. 246.

the ideal teacher?" It seems to me that we will make more progress in assessing Calvin's impact as a teacher if we question our assumptions rather than starting off by trying to verify a claim. Before deciding whether and in what way Calvin was the ideal teacher, we need to define some parameters. First, in order to avoid the dangers of anachronism, we will focus our attention on Calvin's pedagogy in his own time period, comparing him to his contemporaries. To keep the topic manageable, and to avoid making grandiose claims, we will not try to investigate whether Calvin was the ideal teacher for all time. Second, we will consider not only what Calvin said about teaching and learning, but also what he did during his lifetime. In other words, this presentation will focus on Calvin as a teacher both in theory and in practice. Third, it is important to remember that though it may be tempting to focus solely on Calvin, it is neither right nor accurate to ascribe all educational developments in Geneva in particular only to Calvin: he worked with many colleagues, and the achievements of the Genevan educational system by the time of his death in 1564 should not be credited to Calvin alone.

These caveats aside, to answer the question whether and in what way Calvin was a model of the ideal teacher in early modern Europe, we need to begin by assessing Calvin's own experience with education, both as a student and as a teacher. Second, we need to consider Calvin's role as a teacher in a broad perspective: not only the teaching he did in public lectures in Geneva and Strasbourg, but also the teaching he imparted in his sermons, catechisms, and other works of instruction. Finally, we need to examine his role in the Genevan Academy and his legacy in that center of higher learning he helped establish in 1559. Throughout, I will argue that while Calvin's educational approach was in no way unique in his time period, the value of his contribution as a teacher lay in his highly effective use of a range of instructional venues and genres to get a consistent message across to diverse audiences, and on his emphasis on the community's responsibility for the education of its members.

Calvin's experiences as a student in Paris, Orléans, and Bourges, while not preparing him specifically for his later career as a Reformer and church leader (since he studied liberal arts in Paris, and civil law in Orléans and Bourges, and never formally studied theology) did provide him with educational models that shaped the training later provided under his leadership in Geneva. Some of these models were specific individuals, such as Mathurin Cordier, one of Calvin's earliest instructors at the Collège de la Marche in Paris. Cordier spent time in Geneva from 1537 to 1538 and again from 1559 until his death in 1564. During both of these periods, he took on some teaching responsibilities, first in the Collège de Rive and then in the *schola privata*, the lower level of the Genevan Academy. Cordier's pedagogical method of teaching the youngest children gradually in

the use of Latin, even in daily conversations, was a feature of the curriculum in Geneva as in Neuchatel and Lausanne, where he also taught.⁴ Other instructors also exercised an intellectual influence over Calvin, as did Melchior Wolmar, a German scholar who taught Calvin Greek while Calvin was a law student in Orléans. Calvin later dedicated his commentary on Second Corinthians to Wolmar, and his commentary on First Thessalonians to Cordier. In each instance, Calvin highlighted the impact these men's teaching had on his knowledge and abilities in Greek and Latin respectively. In his dedication to Cordier, Calvin wrote, "...I had, for a short time, the privilege of having you as my instructor, that I might be taught by you the true method of learning, in such a way that I might be prepared afterwards to make somewhat better proficiency."⁵ While one should bear in mind that dedicatory epistles are intended to extol the recipients rather than provide an even-handed assessment of their contribution, Calvin clearly felt he benefitted from the instruction he had received from these two men during his youth.

Calvin's own experience as a teacher began in Geneva in 1536, shortly after his arrival in that city, when he took on the post of "reader of the Holy Scriptures", giving lectures on the Bible that were open to the public. Not much is known about these lectures, since they have not survived in any form, but there is evidence from the 1538 pamphlet advertising schooling opportunities in Geneva (*L'ordre et manière d'enseigner en la Ville de Genève au Collège*) that Calvin's lectures focused on the New Testament. The anonymous work, in all likelihood written by Antoine Saulnier, then principal of the Collège de Rive, Geneva's only official Latin school, noted that outside of the classes taught in the Collège de Rive, there were two public lectures given daily, one on the Old Testament by Guillaume Farel and an unnamed Hebrew language instructor, and "as for the other lecture on the Greek of the New Testament, John Calvin presents it at two in the afternoon."⁶ Following his exile from Geneva in 1538, Calvin went to Strasbourg, where he also gave public lectures on the New Testament, including on the Gospel of John and Paul's letters to the Corinthians.⁷ At the same time, he was able to observe at first hand the structure and functioning of the educational system newly-established in Strasbourg under

⁴ See Charles Delormeau, *Un Maître de Calvin: Mathurin Cordier: l'un des créateurs de l'enseignement secondaire moderne* (Neuchatel: Messeiller, 1976), pp. 44–70 and 103–114.

⁵ Calvin, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Thessalonians* in Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians* John Pringle, ed. and transl., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), p. 234.

⁶ *L'Ordre et manière d'enseigner en la Ville de Genève au collège* in E. A. Bétant, *Notice sur le Collège de Rive* (Geneva: Fick, 1866), pp. [34–35].

⁷ François Wendel, *Calvin: Sources et évolution de sa pensée religieuse* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1985), p. 38.

the oversight of Jean Sturm. Though scholars have debated the matter extensively, it seems clear that one of the chief models for the Genevan Academy in 1559 was the Strasbourg school, with its sequential classes through which pupils could only pass when they could prove they had assimilated the knowledge imparted in the previous level. As was the case later in Geneva, Strasbourg also offered upper-level public lectures that attracted a wide range of students.⁸ On his return to Geneva in 1541, Calvin resumed his public lectures in the city, and these became one half of the theology lectures once the Genevan Academy was established in 1559. According to the statutes of the academy, Calvin and his colleague Theodore Beza lectured on alternate weeks, as part of their pastoral responsibilities. Indeed, Calvin never really clearly explained his understanding of the role of the teaching office as distinct from that of the office of pastor. While in some texts, such as the 1541 and 1561 ecclesiastical ordinances of Geneva, Calvin made distinctions between the two roles, in other works, such as the 1543 *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin ended up describing the responsibilities of pastors and teachers as different aspects of the pastoral ministry, rather than as separate callings.⁹ Hence Calvin's understanding of what it meant to be a teacher was an integral part of his understanding of what it meant to be a pastor. In other words, our investigation as to whether Calvin was the "ideal teacher" must constantly bear in mind that for Calvin teaching took place primarily within the framework of the pastorate, either as instruction of the faithful or as preparation for ministry.

Evidence for the close link between Calvin's teaching and the training of future pastors is not hard to find. For instance, the audience for his exegetical lectures, whether before or after the foundation of the Genevan Academy, was comprised of young men who had completed lower-level studies in the Latin school, or more advanced students and pastors who wished to benefit from Calvin's exegesis of specific books of the Bible. Beginning in 1557, these lectures were taken down by scribes and published. Based on the number of words per lecture and the amount of time allocated for each lecture, it appears that he spoke slowly enough for students to be able to take his words down at a dictation pace.¹⁰ His teaching method was consistent during all his years of instruction: he selected a given book of the Bible and went through it in order, verse by verse and

⁸ Anton Schindling, "Jean Sturm, pedagogue," in Matthieu Arnold and Julien Collonges, eds, *Jean Sturm: Quand l'humanisme fait école* (Strasbourg: Bibliothèque Nationale de Strasbourg, 2007), pp. 33–38.

⁹ See the careful analysis by Willem Dankbaar, "L'office des docteurs chez Calvin", *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 44 (1964), 364–88.

¹⁰ Jean-François Gilmont, *John Calvin and the Printed Book* translated by Karin Maag (Kirkville: Truman State University Press, 2005), pp. 28–29 and 54–58.

line by line, explaining the meaning and significance of the text, discussing clashing interpretations held by various commentators, and presenting what he saw as the clear interpretation of the passage in question. Thus his students could gain skills not only in understanding the meaning of Scripture but also in modeling their exegetical approach on that of Calvin. As was the case for professors and instructors at this level across early modern Europe, Calvin lectured in Latin. Hence the impact of his teaching in this format might on the one hand be viewed as restricted, since it could only benefit those who knew Latin well enough to follow along. On the other hand, given that Latin was the international language of educated elites at the time, Calvin's exegetical lectures may in fact have been more accessible to these elites than his sermons, which were preached in the vernacular, and it is to these sermons that we shall now turn.

In terms of his oral instruction, Calvin was perhaps even better-known for his sermons than for his lectures. While he taught in Geneva on a weekly or bi-weekly basis to a relatively restricted audience, he preached every week at least once on Sundays, and every second week several times during the week and on Sundays as well. Thus in terms of sheer frequency, he preached more sermons than he gave exegetical lectures. For instance, Denis Raguénier, who took down and transcribed Calvin's sermons between 1549 and 1560/61, reported that he recorded 2,042 of Calvin's sermons in just over a decade.¹¹ Given that Calvin began preaching shortly after he arrived in Geneva in 1536, and that he preached three times a week (plus Sundays) during his exile in Strasbourg, the total number of sermons Calvin preached could certainly have reached 4,000 or more. Because the sermons were intended for a more general audience, not only did Calvin speak in the vernacular but he also strove to provide practical applications of biblical teachings for the congregation. Thus, while the exegetical lectures, intended for a more advanced and educated audience, often focused on the meanings of particular words or phrases, or translation issues, the sermons tried to show ordinary Genevans how God wanted them to live as faithful Christians and what God wanted them to learn. For instance, Calvin's sermons on Deuteronomy stressed God's role as the teacher of the faithful: "So then, no doubt but that here Moses continueth the matter which he had begun already, namely that the people should sit down at the feet of God to hear his word. He declareth after what manner we should sit down at God's feet to be his scholars, that he may be our master and we be taught at his mouth."¹² The task of teaching the principles of the faith then spread, according to Calvin, from God to members of

¹¹ W. de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide* transl. by Lyle Bierma (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), p. 111.

¹² John Calvin, *Sermons on Deuteronomy* Facsimile of the 1587 London edition (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), p. 1192.

the community, whose responsibility it was to teach one another: “so that every man help forward his neighbor, and draw him with him, and the fathers and masters in the meanwhile be careful to teach their children and servants.”¹³

Indeed, Calvin understood preaching to be a form of teaching, and stated that teaching was woven through the entire process: Scripture was to teach the preacher, and the preacher was to teach the congregation, being careful to include himself among those to be taught. Thus Calvin was careful to use “we” rather than “you” in his sermons.¹⁴ In order to avoid the dangers of glorification of the pastor and of inaccurate doctrine, Calvin was quick to state that the correct attitude towards the Bible on the part of the preacher was one of humble learning: a pastor who was too confident of his own interpretation risked placing his own human reason at the center of the process, rather than the true teachings of Scripture.¹⁵

Thus sermons in general were intended as teaching venues, where lay-people of all backgrounds could learn about what God’s Word said and about what God expected of them. During the early years of the Reformation in Geneva, it is easy to understand that Calvin and his colleagues felt one of their priorities was to help congregations understand what it meant to live as Reformed Christians, since the majority of Genevans had grown up Catholic. Indeed, one particular kind of sermon was specifically intended to teach the basics of the Reformed faith to those who had little background, namely catechetical sermons. Following Calvin’s return from Strasbourg in 1541, pastors in turn preached a sermon on Sunday afternoons on a specific section of Calvin’s 1542 catechism. By 1549, the catechism had been divided into fifty-five parts. Thus the whole cycle of sermons lasted slightly more than a year. The evidence of the Genevan Consistory records for 1542–44 shows that people of all ages who failed to demonstrate to the Consistory’s satisfaction that they knew the basics of their faith (the Lord’s Prayer, Ten Commandments, and Apostles’ Creed, all in the vernacular) were sent to the catechism service for further instruction.¹⁶ In later years, basic religious instruction of adults tended to take place privately, while the catechism service became primarily intended for children, youths, and household servants, but its teaching focus remained prevalent. Calvin’s own perspective on catechetical instruction can be seen

¹³ Calvin, *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, p. 276.

¹⁴ T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin’s Preaching* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), pp. 39–40.

¹⁵ T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin’s Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), pp. 35–40.

¹⁶ Robert Kingdon et al., *Registers of the Consistory of Geneva in the Time of Calvin* Vol. 1: 1542–44 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 44–45, 49, 50, 51–52, 54, 60, 70, 77–78, 85, 90, 92, 93, 95–96, etc.

in a surviving published text from 1563, in which he expounded the meaning of the forty-third section of the catechism, dealing with the final request in the Lord's Prayer. As was the case for his exegetical lectures and his sermons, Calvin approached the section of the catechism by dividing it into subsets, in this case, subsets of questions and answers, rather than subsets of biblical verses. Each time, Calvin gave an expanded response to the issues raised in the section he was commenting on.¹⁷ According to Rodolphe Peter, Calvin's expanded commentary may have been intended for other pastors, rather than being an example of a catechetical sermon for beginners in the faith, and the complex themes Calvin addressed in the text (including whether or not God was the author of human sin) seem to bear out Peter's claim.¹⁸ Although the fact that Calvin had to provide a commentary on his catechism suggests that his text was not as directly accessible to its audience as one might have hoped, it did make an impact even beyond Geneva. Indeed, while the field of early modern catechism writing was crowded, and while Calvin's catechism lost out to other works in the long term (especially to the Heidelberg Catechism) in most Reformed areas apart from Geneva and France, his text did reach audiences far and wide thanks to a significant number of translations.¹⁹ By the time of Calvin's death in 1564, his catechism was available in the original French and Latin, and in Italian, Spanish, English, and German, as well as a few bilingual Greek/Latin editions.²⁰ Through the publication and translation of his catechism and his commentaries, editions of the *Institutes* and other works, Calvin's teachings reached audiences beyond Geneva. At the same time, international audiences also came deliberately to Geneva, to benefit from the instruction available in the city, particularly following the establishment of the Genevan Academy in 1559.

When considering Calvin as the "ideal teacher", his role in the foundation of the Genevan Academy rapidly comes to mind. Yet we must bear in mind that he only taught in the Academy itself for less than four years, prior to his death in 1564. Indeed, his role as an active teacher in the Academy was not really very different to what he had been doing in his public exegetical lectures prior to the Academy's foundation. Thus it may be more fruitful to consider Calvin's impact on the Academy in terms of

¹⁷ John Calvin, *Deux congrégations et exposition du catechisme*, edited by Rodolphe Peter (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964), pp. 32–44.

¹⁸ Calvin, *Deux congrégations*, pp. xxvi–xxvii.

¹⁹ For an assessment of Calvin's catechism as a teaching tool, see Robert Kingdon, "Catechesis in Calvin's Geneva" in John Van Engen, ed., *People of Faith: Exploring the History of Jewish and Christian Communities* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 294–313.

²⁰ See John Calvin, *Opera Selecta* edited by Peter Barth and Wilhelm Niesel, vol. 2 (Munich: Kaiser, 1952), pp. 62–71.

its pedagogical outlook and aims, rather than specifically on the teaching he provided to students in his exegetical lectures.

The statutes of the Genevan Academy were presented to the Genevan Small Council for approval on 29 May 1559, and the official inauguration of the Academy took place on 5 June 1559 in a public ceremony in which the new rector, Theodore Beza, gave the welcoming address. It is difficult to ascertain exactly what role Calvin played in crafting the statutes and in helping to draft Beza's speech. In fact, scholars have debated at length whether the Genevan Academy's statutes owed more to Calvin's recollections of the Strasbourg educational system or to the statutes of the Lausanne Academy, from which Beza and a number of the other first generation of professors in Geneva had just recently come. Yet certain themes that appear in the statutes echo Calvin's statements in his 1546 commentary on 1 Corinthians, on the importance of teaching students in progressive steps, moving from one topic to another in a measured and systematic way. For instance, the statutes of the lower level of the Genevan Academy, the *schola privata*, only allowed the pupils to move from one class level to the next when they had demonstrated their proficiency in yearly school-wide examinations. The statutes also laid out clearly what subjects and even what authors should be studied at which level.²¹ Thus the curriculum of the *schola privata* conveyed Calvin's emphasis on step-by-step training in a practical form. The curriculum of the *schola publica*, the upper-level of the Academy, was much more open in its structure: there were no examinations for these students, and indeed, it seems that students were fairly free simply to attend the lectures that interested them the most. One key feature of both the lower and upper-level of the Academy was its humanist-inspired focus on ancient classical sources as teaching texts and models. While some might imagine that a Reformer such as Calvin would only use the Bible and Christian authors (perhaps the early church fathers) for instruction, such a view is clearly inaccurate. In fact, Calvin was very open about the benefits of classical learning, and rejected any form of obscurantism based on what was to him the faulty notion that there is nothing to learn from pre-Christian or otherwise worldly sources. In his *Institutes*, for instance, Calvin made a strong case for these sources not to be disdained or ignored. He noted,

If we regard the Spirit of God as the sole fountain of truth, we shall neither reject the truth itself, nor despise it wherever it shall appear, unless we wish to dishonor the Spirit of God. For by holding the gifts of the Spirit in slight esteem, we condemn and reproach the Spirit himself. What then? Shall we deny that the truth shone upon the ancient jurists who established civic order and discipline with such great equity? Shall we say that the philosophers were blind in their fine observation and artful description of nature? Shall

²¹ Sven and Suzanne Stelling-Michaud, *Le Livre du Recteur de l'académie de Genève* (Geneva: Droz, 1959), vol. 1, pp. 69–72.

we say that those men were devoid of understanding who conceived the art of disputation and taught us to speak reasonably? Shall we say that they are insane who developed medicine, devoting their labor to our benefit? What shall we say of all the mathematical sciences? Shall we consider them the raving of madmen? No, we cannot read the writings of the ancients on these subjects without great admiration.²²

Calvin's willingness to learn from the ancients is reflected in the curriculum of the Genevan Academy, that reflected the humanist model of returning to the Greek and Roman sources of human wisdom, while at the same time placing a special emphasis on moral and spiritual training within a Reformed context.

Indeed, the feature that comes through most clearly, both in the Academy's foundational documents and in Theodore Beza's inaugural speech, was the strong emphasis on the moral and spiritual component of education in Geneva. In his speech, Beza insisted on the importance of following Christ's example, and contrasted the moral focus of Genevan education to the vain and worldly approach of the ancient Greeks, who lacked the Genevan Academy students' sense of moral purpose.

You have not come here as most of the Greeks of old went to their gymnasia to watch vain wrestling matches. Instead, prepared by the knowledge of the true religion and all sciences, you can contribute to the glory of God and become the honor of your homeland and the support of your family. Remember always that you will have to account for your service in this holy militia before the supreme commander.²³

Although the words were Beza's, the mindset was clearly one he and the other pastors and professors shared with Calvin. The Genevan Academy offered high-quality education with a strong purpose: not learning for its own sake but learning in the service of God and of His church. Another document that sheds light on the Academy's function as a center for religious as well as intellectual preparation is the lengthy and comprehensive statement of faith that all students in the *schola publica* had to sign up to. This text has consistently been ascribed to Calvin.²⁴ Students who wanted to matriculate in the Genevan Academy had to promise to reject all Catholic, Anabaptist, and even Lutheran theological positions before being allowed to enroll. Thus even before they began their studies in Geneva, students had to understand clearly that this education was being provided within a specific confessional framework, to which they had to conform.

Yet Calvin's impact on higher education in Geneva did not limit itself to curricular and moral or spiritual approaches only. Calvin and his colleagues in the Company of Pastors saw their role as teachers and mentors

²² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* II. ii. 15.

²³ *Discours du Recteur Th. De Bèze prononce à l'inauguration de l'académie dans le temple de Saint Pierre à Genève le 5 juin 1559* (Geneva: 1959), p. 19. Translation mine.

²⁴ See Calvin, *Opera* IX, cols. 721–730 and prolegomena.

as more than simply classroom instructors. Instead, we see Calvin taking on an active role in all the aspects of Genevan education, from the search for new professors to ensuring that suitable accommodation was available for the teaching staff. Thus if one's model of the ideal teacher encompasses concern for all aspects of the educational process, from the mundane to the complex, Calvin did indeed fulfill such a role in the Genevan Academy.²⁵ He also served as a reference point and attracted students to Geneva by virtue of his reputation, so much so that even opponents such as the Catholic controversialist Florimond de Raemond highlighted this aspect of Calvin in his *Histoire de la naissance, progresz et decadence de l'heresie de ce siècle*, published posthumously in 1605.²⁶ The fact that even Calvin's detractors acknowledged his drawing power as a teacher is significant.

When one considers Calvin's work as a teacher as a whole, however, it is difficult to sustain the claim that Calvin was particularly innovative. Instead, he followed and implemented the "best practices" he had witnessed or learned of elsewhere, as in Strasbourg, for instance. Yet innovation is not necessarily the hallmark of an ideal teacher. Perhaps an ideal teacher is best described as one who harnesses the beset practices and approaches used elsewhere and molds them into an effective system. In Calvin's case, instruction in Geneva was provided in a wide variety of settings, from sermons and expositions of the Catechism to exegetical lectures in the Genevan Academy. Everyone in Geneva was expected to learn and understand at least some basic concepts of the faith, and no one was exempt from these requirements. The patient persistence of the Consistory when dealing with those elderly or uneducated Genevans who returned month after month, unable to work their way through reciting the Lord's Prayer or the Apostles' Creed, is a case in point. At the other end of the spectrum, the Genevan Academy, especially the *schola publica*, offered high-caliber university-level training, helping to prepare the urgently-needed pastors for growing Calvinist communities across Europe. It would be inaccurate and anachronistic to label Calvin the ideal teacher for all time and all places. Yet in Geneva, from the late 1530s through the 1560s, he and his colleagues helped to provide a range of instructional opportunities that had a strong and lasting impact, not only in Geneva but also beyond its walls.

²⁵ See my "Calvin and Students" in Herman Selderhuis, ed., *Calvin Handbuch* (Mohr-Siebeck, 2008).

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Holy Terror or Pastoral Care? Church Discipline in Calvin's Geneva, 1542–1596

SCOTT M. MANETSCH

Four hundred years after Geneva's Reformation, and two years before Kristallnacht, the Austrian-born novelist and playwright Stefan Zweig published the book *Castellio gegen Calvin* (1936) in which he recounted Sebastian Castellio's courageous, but unsuccessful struggle against the spiritual tyranny of John Calvin and his program of moral discipline.¹ From Zweig's perspective, John Calvin – this “lean and harsh man”, this “iron ideologist” – was one of history's most malevolent dictators, a forerunner of Robespierre and Adolf Hitler. Through the institutional form of the Consistory, Calvin created an organized system of religious discipline and moral control that destroyed freedom of conscience and imposed a reign of terror on Geneva that lasted for more than a century. Zweig writes:

Calvin's secret was not a new one; his art was that which all dictators before and since have used. Terror. Calvin's was a Holy Terror. ... Calvin regarded harshness towards “sinners” as the keystone of his system; and to carry this system unremittingly into effect was for him ... a duty imposed on him by God. ... Terrible was the price which the city had to pay for the establishment of such “order” and “discipline”...²

Zweig's attack is perhaps the most spectacular modern example of a tradition of criticism directed against Calvin's program of moral supervision and discipline. In the last four and a half centuries a long list of churchmen, savants, and skeptics have lined up to throw stones at Calvin's Consistory and Geneva-style discipline: one thinks of Jerome Bolsec, Palma Cayet, Richard Bancroft, Voltaire, Oskar Pfister, and Will Durant, to name but a few.³ Their condemnations of Calvin and his program of church dis-

¹ Stefan Zweig, *Castellio gegen Calvin oder Ein Gewissen Gegen Die Gewalt* (Vienna: Herbert Reichner Verlag, 1936). My quotations are from the English translation, *The Right to Heresy, Castellio against Calvin*, translated by Eden and Cedar Paul (New York: Viking Press, 1936).

² Zweig, *The Right to Heresy*, 60–63.

³ See, for example, A. G. Dickens and John Tonkin, *The Reformation in Historical Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985) and Graeme Murdock, *Beyond*

cipline have usually followed a number of well-worn paths: Calvin's preoccupation with discipline, they argue, was driven by a harsh asceticism as well as his lust for religious power. Likewise, Calvinist discipline in practice was heavy-handed, intolerant, intrusive, and vindictive – hardly better than the Spanish Inquisition.⁴ Of course, Geneva-style moral discipline has also had its admirers, both in Calvin's day as well as in our own. (One thinks of John Knox's famous description of Geneva as "the most perfect school of Christ that ever was on earth since the days of the Apostles."⁵) But, the overwhelming judgment has been negative: Calvinist discipline in Geneva and reformed Europe was misguided at best, diabolical at worst.

Over the last four decades, historians of early modern Europe have taken a new look at Calvinist moral discipline and the tribunals that reformed churches established to enforce it. These moral tribunals – known variously as consistories, kirk sessions, presbyteries, or Kirchenrat – have been of particular interest to social historians, who have found in disciplinary records a rich deposit for understanding popular belief and daily life in the age of Reformations. Dozens of specialized studies now exist that explore the form and function of reformed discipline in various regions of Europe, from Transylvania to Scotland, from Emden to Nîmes.⁶ While recognizing the important role that consistories played as agents of social control, recent scholarship has highlighted the fashion in which reformed dis-

Calvin, The Intellectual, Political and Cultural World of Europe's Reformed Churches (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 76–101.

⁴ Ironically, it was the Catholic controversialist Palma Cayet who likened reformed consistories in France to "une vraie INQUISITION D'ESPAGNE." Pierre Victor Cayet, *Remonstrance Chrestienne et tres utile. A Messieurs de la Noblesse Françoise qui ne sont de l'Eglise Catholique Romaine* (Paris: Philippe du Pre, 1596), 42–43. In a similar fashion, the English churchman and future Archbishop of Canterbury Richard Bancroft in 1593 attacked the "pretended holy discipline" of Calvinist Geneva and likened the Geneva church to a "new Papacie" for "consistorians." Cited in Murdock, *Beyond Calvin*, 84.

⁵ See Alain Dufour, "Le mythe de Genève au temps de Calvin," in *Revue Suisse d'Histoire* 9.4 (1959): 503. A similar panegyric appears in a letter of the Lutheran minister Valentin Andreae after visiting Geneva in 1610: "When I was in Geneva I observed something great that I shall remember and desire as long as I live. There is in that city ... a moral discipline which makes weekly investigations into the conduct, and even the smallest transgressions of the citizens ... All cursing and swearing, gambling, luxury, strife, hatred, fraud, etc. are forbidden, while greater sins are hardly heard of. What a glorious ornament of the Christian religion is such a purity of morals." Cited in Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. VIII, *The Swiss Reformation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 519.

⁶ Excellent summaries of the general contours of this research are found in Murdock, *Beyond Calvin*, 76–101 and Didier Poton, "Les institutions consistoriales: I. Les exemples des xvi^e et xvii^e siècles," *Bulletin de la société de l'histoire du protestantisme français* 148 (2002): 953–64. For bibliographical sources, see Murdock and Poton (*ibid.*), as well as my article "Pastoral Care East of Eden: The Consistory of Geneva, 1568–1582," *Church History* 75.2 (June 2006): 274–313.

disciplinary institutions helped to establish the structure of Calvinist marriage, preserved the sacral unity of the Eucharistic community, and protected prevailing moral norms in reformed communities. Scholars have also recently demonstrated the manner in which Calvinist social discipline contributed to the process of confessionalization and state-formation in early modern Europe.⁷ At the same time, specialists have gained a new awareness of the penitential and pastoral dimensions of reformed discipline. Even as they attempted to regulate public morality, consistories concerned themselves with educating the ignorant, defending the weak, and mediating interpersonal conflicts. As Robert Kingdon has rightly observed regarding John Calvin's Consistory in Geneva, "Discipline to these early Genevans meant more than social control. It also meant social help."⁸

This presentation will examine the manner in which church discipline functioned as an expression of pastoral care in Calvinist Geneva during the sixteenth century. My research builds upon and extends the analysis of scholars like Robert Kingdon and Christian Grosse in two ways: (1) This paper offers quantitative analysis of the work of the Consistory not only during Calvin's lifetime but through the rest of the sixteenth century. My data are drawn from a detailed study of thirty-seven years of consistorial activity: from 1542–1551, and all of the extant records from 1560 to the end of the century.⁹ This permits us to identify some of the general patterns and subtle changes that occurred in Calvinist discipline during the first half-century of its existence in Geneva. (2) This paper will argue that explanations that focus on social control – or even social help – do not adequately account for the decidedly *pastoral* dimensions of church discipline in Calvinist Geneva. For the ministers and elders who served on the Consistory between 1542 and 1596, the intense labor of investigating misbehavior, intervening in interpersonal disputes, rebuking sinners, applying

⁷ Philip S. Gorski, *The Disciplinary Revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

⁸ Kingdon, "The Geneva Consistory in the Time of Calvin," in *Calvinism in Europe, 1540–1620*, ed. Andrew Pettegree, Alastair Duke, and Gillian Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 21–34. Heinz Schilling and Christian Grosse have also studied the social ministries of reformed disciplinary institutions during this period. See Schilling, "'History of Crime' or 'History of Sin'? Some Reflections on the Social History of Early Modern Church Discipline," in *Politics and Society in Reformation Europe*, ed. E. I. Kouri and Tom Scott (London: Macmillan, 1987), 289–310; and Grosse, "Les Rituels de la Cène: Une Anthropologie Historique du Culte Eucharistique Réformé à Genève (XVIe–XVIIe siècles)" (PhD diss., University of Geneva, 2001).

⁹ The years for which consistory registers are extant during the sixteenth century are: 1542–1543, 1544 (partial), 1545 (partial), 1546–1548, 1550–1572, 1573 (partial), 1575–1582, 1589, 1592–1596. I have not yet had the opportunity to consult the registers for the period 1552–1559. My data for the year 1564 are not yet complete, covering the months from January through May.

corrective discipline, and restoring repentant sinners to church fellowship was part of their vocation as spiritual overseers of the Christian community. The minutes of the Consistory indicate that Calvin and his colleagues understood their role to be not primarily that of moral police or agents of social betterment, but Christian pastors and elders appointed by God to provide spiritual care for the people of God.¹⁰

I. Church Discipline in Calvin's Geneva

One of the first actions taken by John Calvin when he returned to Geneva from Strasbourg in 1541 was to draft a new constitution for Geneva's church, entitled the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* (1541). This document mandated that the city's pastors and twelve lay elders meet weekly in Consistory to supervise public morality and apply the "medicine" of church discipline so as to achieve repentance and restoration.¹¹ Calvin and his colleagues derived their doctrine of church discipline in large part from the biblical concept of the "power of the keys" (Matt 16:19 and 18:19), believing that Christ had granted to his Church the authority to proclaim God's sentence of condemnation and forgiveness to sinners.¹² The spiritual authority to "bind and loose" was exercised in a general way, Calvin believed, when ministers preached the gospel in their sermons, announcing God's righteous judgment upon the wicked and the promise of salvation to those who turned to Christ in repentance and faith. The power of the keys was employed more particularly when pastors and lay elders conducted annual household visitations to examine the character and doctrine of church members, or when they admonished sinners in private conferences. Finally, Calvin believed that ministers and elders employed the power of the keys through the ministry of the Consistory as they confronted people guilty of moral failure. The purpose of church discipline was thus three-

¹⁰ This paper thus restates the central argument of my article "Pastoral Care East of Eden: The Consistory of Geneva, 1568–1582," but broadens the scope of its analysis from the inception of the Consistory in 1542 to the end of the sixteenth century.

¹¹ *Ordonnances Ecclésiastiques* (1541), in *Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs de Genève*, vol. 1, ed. Robert Kingdon and J. F. Bergier (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1964), 11. Hereafter cited as *RCP*.

¹² See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill and trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, Penn.: The Westminster Press, 1960), 638–39 (III.iv.14). For Beza's application of the power of the keys to church discipline, see Tadataka Maruyama, *The Ecclesiology of Theodore Beza, the Reform of the True Church* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1978), and Manetsch, "'The Most Despised Vocation Today': Theodore Beza's Theology of Pastoral Ministry," in *Théodore de Bèze (1510–1605)*, Actes du Colloque de Genève (September 2005), ed. Irena Backus (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2007), 249–50.

fold: it helped preserve the purity of Christ's church; it protected Christians from the bad influence of notorious sinners; and it shamed the wicked, thereby hastening their repentance and restoration to the Christian community.¹³ Calvin and his successor Theodore Beza insisted that church discipline in its various forms should be practiced with moderation and in a spirit of gentleness.¹⁴ The primary goal was to rescue – not humiliate – the sinner. Beza made this point in one of his sermons. The pastor is like a physician of the soul who must

not only discern the illness, but also the situation and disposition of the patient, looking for the best medicine to prescribe, preaching the Law to the hardened, and the gospel of grace to those despairing. In brief, let us always condemn the sin, but try to save the sinner.¹⁵

Between 1542 and 1596, the Consistory played a central role in confronting misbehavior and enforcing Calvinist standards of morality in Geneva. Every Thursday at noon, dozens of people were summoned to the Consistory's chambers for interrogation or to provide testimony. Most defendants came voluntarily; those that did not were brought forcibly by the lieutenant (*sautier*) of the Consistory. In the presence of the Consistory, a defendant faced a barrage of pointed questions, intended to rattle even the most obstinate sinner and elicit an admission of wrongdoing. Not surprisingly these sessions sometimes became tense and combative. When the ministers confronted Guillaume Torteau for excessive drinking at tavern, he became so enraged that he threw his hat on the ground in front of Consistory and demanded a hearing before the magistrates.¹⁶ In a similar fashion, Guillaume Barbelet shouted "arrogantly and uncivilly" when the Consistory confronted him for his laziness and wanton neglect of his seven children.¹⁷

¹³ *Institutes*, vol. 2, 1232–34 (IV.xii.5). Theodore Beza, *Confession de la foi Chrestienne* (Geneva: Conrad Badius, 1559), 175. Elsewhere, Beza suggests a fourth purpose for church discipline, namely to protect the Lord's Table from spiritual defilement. See Maruyama, *The Ecclesiology of Theodore Beza*, 31.

¹⁴ *Institutes*, vol. 2, 1236–37 (IV.xii.8). The *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* also stipulated moderation in the treatment of sinners: "Et neantmoins que tout cela soit tellement moderé qui n'y ait nulle rigueur dont personne soit grevé et mesmes que les corrections ne soient sinon medicines pour reduire les pecheurs à nostre Seigneur." Cited in *RCP I*, 13.

¹⁵ Theodore Beza, *Sermons sur l'histoire de la resurrection de nostre seigneur Iésus Christ* (Geneva: Iean le Preux, 1593), 129–30.

¹⁶ *Registres du Consistoire*, Archiv d'Etat de Genève, vol. 32 (1581), 170v. Henceforth abbreviated as R. Consist. In cases where I cite from the four *published* volumes of the consistory registers (covering the years 1542–1548), I will place the title in italics (*R. Consist.*) and the volume number in roman numerals. For the years 1549–1552 and 1560–1564, I have relied upon the transcriptions made by Robert Kingdon and his students (available in electronic form through the Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA).

¹⁷ R. Consist. 31 (1578), 249v–250.

People of more sensitive temperament sometimes burst into tears when confronted by the intense questioning and stern rebukes of the ministers. Pernette Aberjoux, for example, “wept and cried” before the Consistory after she was forced to admit abandoning a child that she had borne out of wedlock.¹⁸

Once guilt was determined the ministers and elders applied one of several types of church discipline to the offender, depending on the gravity of the sin and the degree of contrition expressed. In ascending order of severity, these spiritual penalties included: (1) private reprimand or admonition, (2) public confession and reparation before the entire church, (3) minor excommunication (also known as suspension), and (4) major excommunication. The penalty of minor excommunication or suspension was imposed on thousands of moral offenders in sixteenth-century Geneva. This form of discipline usually involved a brief suspension from the Lord’s Table – perhaps three to six months – after which it was expected that sinners would return to Consistory, confess their sins, and be restored to the church.¹⁹ The roll call of miscreants who received this form of censure makes for colorful reading. It includes adulterers and Anabaptists, blasphemers and wife-beaters, drunkards and gluttons, business cheats and petty thieves. People were suspended for neglecting their children, visiting fortune-tellers, praying the rosary, missing sermons, fighting with their neighbors, and singing profane songs. Some of the disciplinary cases are particularly memorable or shocking: Antoine Bonard was suspended for kneeling down and worshipping the sun in the city marketplace.²⁰ A peasant boy named Jean Saddo was banned from the Table for the “cruel and barbaric act” of extracting the eyeball of an unruly cow and presenting the bloodied organ to his minister.²¹ A group of four servant girls received the penalty of minor excommunication for bathing in Lake Geneva and lifting their skirts far above their knees – in full view of a company of foreign soldiers.²²

The penalty of major excommunication was a far more severe judgment, but was employed much less frequently. Normally, only about 2–3 percent

¹⁸ R. Consist. 31 (1578), 170v. See also the case of Jaqueme Favre, *R. Consist.* II (1546), 135–36.

¹⁹ The *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* (1561) required that people under the penalty of suspension be reconciled to the church within six months or face more serious civil punishment. See *Ioannis Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, ed. G. Baum, E. Cunitz, E. Reuss, vol. 10 (Brunsvigae: A. Schwetschke and Son, 1871), col. 118. Hereafter cited at *CO*. For evidence that people regularly remained in a state of suspension for more than six months, see my article “Pastoral Care East of Eden,” 298–300.

²⁰ R. Consist. 25 (1568), 119, 182. The case also appears in Geneva’s *Proces Criminel* 1483.

²¹ R. Consist. 30 (1576), 28.

²² R. Consist. 24 (1567), 36v.

of all excommunications were of this more extreme variety.²³ The Consistory reserved this type of discipline for hardened sinners who stubbornly refused to repent, or who were guilty of egregious public sins such as habitual usury, flagrant sexual misconduct, or religious apostasy. A person who received major excommunication was not only barred from the Lord's Supper, but was judged to be "unworthy of the company of Christians."²⁴ The *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* mandated that ministers announce in their Sunday sermons the expulsion of the sinner from the spiritual community, which included (at least in principle) social ostracism until repentance occurred.²⁵ Hence, when Antoine Pellinque refused to affirm the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity (claiming that the divine spirit had instructed him otherwise), the Consistory finally decided to "proclaim and publish his excommunication in the Church," and then urged the magistrates to "chase him outside of their city."²⁶

The decision to impose the penalty of suspension or excommunication on a sinner brought with it significant religious consequences and social sanctions. Most importantly, the offender was temporarily barred from the Lord's Supper – no small penalty for reformed Christians who believed that the sacrament of the Table was a means of grace offered by Christ for the spiritual nourishment of believers. The decision to suspend a man or woman from the sacrament served as a serious rebuke of the sinner's life and warned of divine condemnation if repentance was not forthcoming.²⁷

²³ For example, between 1560 and 1567, less than 3 percent of total excommunications were major excommunications.

²⁴ R. Consist. 20 (1563), 13.

²⁵ Christian Grosse has shown that, according to an edict of 1560 (which was added to the revision of the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* the following year), the names of excommunicated persons were to be announced in the church "affin que chescun s'abstienne de leur compagnie." Furthermore, the edict stipulated that "ceux qui auront esté excommuniez par le Consistoire, s'ils ne se rengent après avoir esté deurement admonestez, mais qu'ils persistent en leur rebellion, soyent declarez par les temples estre rejettez du troupeau jusques à ce qu'ils viennent reconnoistre leur faute et se reconcilier à toute l'Eglise." Quoted in Grosse, "Les Rituels de la Cène," 460. Scholars disagree as to whether social ostracism was actually practiced against excommunicated persons in Geneva and other reformed communities (*ibid.*, 490). The fact that Geneva's city magistrates often enforced major excommunication by banishing the sinner from the city indicates a very tangible act of social separation or ostracism was often practiced.

²⁶ R. Consist. 17 (1560), 7.

²⁷ Calvin comments in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*: "For when Christ promises that what his people 'bind on earth shall be bound in heaven' [Matt. 18:18], he limits the force of binding to ecclesiastical censure. By this those who are excommunicated are not cast into everlasting ruin and damnation, but in hearing that their life and morals are condemned, they are assured of their everlasting condemnation unless they repent. ... And although excommunication also punishes the man, it does so in such a way that, by forewarning him of his future condemnation, it may call him back to salvation" (*Institutes*, vol. 2, 1238

Suspension also entailed social penalties. In a state of suspension, men and women could not normally contract a marriage, baptize a child, or serve as a sponsor at baptism. At the same time, the stigma of suspension damaged reputations and strained relationships; it caused heads to turn and neighbors to talk. Thus, for example, when a jealous husband named Benoit Constantine was suspended from the Lord's Supper for quarreling with his wife, one of his neighbors mocked him as a "wicked excommunicate." Constantine gained revenge by attacking his neighbor, a provocation that resulted in a second suspension.²⁸ As an ecclesiastical court, the Consistory had no authority to impose corporal punishment. However, in cases where moral infractions violated both God's law and city ordinances, the Consistory functioned as a de facto advisory board to civil justice by gathering evidence about the crime and recommending appropriate punishments, whether fines, imprisonment, beatings, or banishment. These three dimensions of church discipline – spiritual sanction, social shame, and the likelihood of civil punishment – made suspension and excommunication particularly effective pastoral tools for regulating public behavior and restoring sinners to the Christian community.

II. Patterns of Discipline in Calvinist Geneva

The program of moral discipline that Calvin institutionalized through the Consistory did not remain static over the course of the sixteenth century. In this section, we will tabulate and classify all documented suspensions in the Geneva church from 1542–1551 and 1560–1597, looking for patterns that shed light on the changing priorities and strategies that the Consistory employed to enforce godly behavior and right belief in the city.²⁹ Efforts to count and categorize disciplinary cases are admittedly fraught with difficulties, and scholars have rightly advised caution when attempting to quantify materials like these.³⁰ But even if our tabulations necessarily present

[IV.xii.10]). Beza repeats this perspective in his *Confession de la foi Chretienne*, 172. For more on Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper, see Christian Grosse, "'Le Mystère de Communiquer à Jésus-Christ.' Sermons de Communion à Genève au XVIe Siècle," in *Annoncer l'Évangile (XV^e–XVII^e siècle)*, ed. Matthieu Arnold (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2004), 161–82.

²⁸ R. Consist. 25 (1568), 145.

²⁹ For the remainder of this essay, I will not differentiate between minor and major excommunications, and will use the terms "suspension," "excommunication," and "censure" to refer to both forms of excommunication.

³⁰ For a description of some of these difficulties, see Thomas Lambert, "Preaching, Praying and Policing Reform in Sixteenth-Century Geneva" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1998); Judith Pollmann, "Off the Record: Problems in the Quantification of Calvinist Church

“soft” numbers, reflecting a degree of interpretive judgment, they nonetheless allow us to draw some general conclusions about the overall landscape of church discipline in Geneva over a half-century.

How frequently did Calvin’s Consistory employ the penalty of suspension? Graph 1 depicts the annual number of suspensions in the Geneva church between 1542 and 1596 based upon my findings and supplemented with data drawn from the research of Christian Grosse. The bell-shaped curve of Graph 1 is unmistakable: beginning with only several dozen annual excommunications during the first years of the Consistory’s existence, the frequency of suspensions increased rapidly after 1555, reaching an apex in 1568 when more than 680 people were barred from the Lord’s Supper. Following this peak, the number of annual excommunications fell sharply before leveling off during the last quarter of the century, when suspensions ranged between 120 and 250 per annum. Despite fluctuations year to year, the overall number of suspensions in sixteenth-century Geneva is breath-taking – far exceeding the rate of excommunications prac-

Discipline,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 33 (2002): 423–38; and Philip Benedict, *Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002). In my study of the Geneva documents, two interpretive difficulties have been particularly evident. First, from time to time the registers are unclear as to whether an offender is actually suspended. This confusion may result from opaque language used by the scribe, uncertainty about the offender’s age (youthful offenders who had not yet been granted admission to the Table could not be suspended from it), or cases in which the Consistory reaffirms a prior suspension of a recidivist. Fortunately, the secretaries of the Consistory normally denoted a suspension with a marginal note, such as “suspendu du Cene.” Second, the specific reasons for a suspension are not always self-evident, particularly when a defendant is guilty of multiple infractions. In these cases, I have consulted (when available) the statement of reconciliation, which usually sheds light on the nature of the original suspension.

ticed in reformed churches in other parts of Europe during the period.³¹ I have documented over 7,000 excommunications in Geneva during my thirty-seven year sample – and this total does not include data from the decade of the 1550s that I have yet to examine.

Comparing suspensions year to year is precarious given that the consistory registers contain occasional gaps where weekly sessions are not reported. Hence, a more accurate way to compare suspension rates is by determining the average number of censures per session (see Graph 2).

In the first years of the Consistory's activity, less than one person on average was suspended from Lord's Supper each week. By 1568 and 1569, the ministers and elders were suspending more than eleven people per session. During the final decades of the century, the number of excommunications averaged between two and four each week.

³¹ To offer one comparison: Mentzer notes that the reformed church of Montauban (with around 8,000–10,000 adherents) suspended only 80 people between 1595–1598, while the Consistory of Nîmes (with approximately the same number of adherents) censured a total of 104 people between 1561–1563 and 1578–1583. Comparisons like these are suggestive, but must be made cautiously given the substantial differences between the “autonomous” churches of southern France and a “state” church in Geneva. See Mentzer, “Excommunications in the French Reformed Churches,” in Mentzer, ed., *Sin and the Calvinists*, 100, 124. For a summary of numbers of annual excommunications in other regions of reformed Europe, see Murdock, *Beyond Calvinism*, 97–98.

For what types of sins and misbehavior were people suspended from the Lord's Supper in Calvinist Geneva? Table 1 provides a quantitative summary of the chief reasons for suspensions broken down by gender:

Table 1: Suspension Offenses, 1542–1551, 1560–1596

Offense	# Male/Female	Total	Percentage
Quarrels / <i>Mauvais Ménage</i>	1292 / 630	1922	26.7
Fornication / Adultery	434 / 348	782	10.9
Scandals	366 / 193	559	7.8
Dancing / Songs	131 / 228	359	5.0
Blasphemy / Swearing	257 / 92	349	4.9
Lying / Calumny	195 / 148	343	4.8
Confessional Infidelity ^a	171 / 167	338	4.7
Rebellion / Contumacy	235 / 92	327	4.5
Drunkenness	233 / 79	312	4.3
Petty Theft	147 / 157	304	4.2
Catholic Belief or Behavior	200 / 104	304	4.2
Ignorance	127 / 99	226	3.1
Gambling / Gaming	214 / 2	216	3.0
Lord's Supper Violation	114 / 65	179	2.5
Folk Religion / Superstition	48 / 80	128	1.8
Sermons, Neglect or Misbehavior	88 / 29	117	1.6
Business Fraud	90 / 18	108	1.5
Clandestine Marriage	54 / 41	95	1.3
Begging / Idleness / Gourmandize	66 / 23	89	1.2
Usury	50 / 7	57	0.8
Endangerment ^b	29 / 22	51	0.7
Heresy / Anabaptism	15 / 0	15	0.2
Unknown	6 / 4	10	0.1
	4562 / 2628	7190	100 Percent

^a "Confessional Infidelity" refers to the sin of compromising the Protestant faith under duress.

^b "Endangerment" is the term that I have chosen to identify the act of exposing oneself or another person to physical danger (usually to the plague) through negligence or ill-will.

Time allows only three brief observations at this point. First, the Consistory censured defendants far more frequently for faulty behavior (such as quarrels, blasphemy, or drunkenness) than for wrong belief (such as heresy, ignorance, or Catholic conviction). At least in practice, Geneva's Consistory functioned more as a morals court than as a theological tribunal. Second, during the years of my study, men were nearly twice as likely

to be suspended from the Lord's Supper as women.³² Some offenses tended to be gender specific: Women were more likely than men to be disciplined for illicit dancing and singing, petty theft, and the practice of folk religion. On the other hand, men account for nearly all of the suspensions for such offenses as gaming and gambling, usury, and heresy. Finally, Table 1 makes clear that a substantial part of the Consistory's workload was devoted to public quarrels and domestic conflict (*mauvais ménage*; literally, bad household). One quarter of all suspensions in my sample were the result of interpersonal conflict. In the course of a year, the ministers and elders addressed hundreds of people struggling in broken, abusive relationships: battered wives, violent husbands, neglected children, obnoxious neighbors, exploitative masters, and meddling mothers-in-law. As we shall see later in this paper, attempting to reconcile estranged spouses and embattled neighbors was one important way in which the Consistory exercised pastoral care in Geneva.

Patterns of discipline in Calvinist Geneva come into clearer focus when we examine different stages in the development of the Consistory during the sixteenth century. My research provides a window into three distinct stages of consistorial activity: a period of consolidation from 1542–1551; a period of expansion from 1560–1569; and a period of contraction from 1570–1596.

Period of Consolidation (1542–1551): During the first decade of the Consistory's existence, Calvin and his colleagues were still putting in place the institutional structure of church discipline in Geneva. Household visitations in the city and pastoral oversight in the countryside parishes remained undeveloped for much of the period. Moreover, Calvin and his colleagues faced strong resistance from Geneva's magistrates over the ministers' prerogative to excommunicate sinners.³³ These factors go far in explaining the relatively modest nature of the Consistory's activity between 1542 and 1551. During this decade, around fourteen people on average were summoned to the Consistory's chambers each week, whether as defendants or witnesses. Of the 241 people who are known suspended during

³² This ratio is consistent with that found in other communities in reformed Europe. See, for example, Raymond Mentzer's article "Excommunication in the French Reformed Churches," in *Sin and the Calvinists, Morals Control and the Consistory in the Reformed Tradition*, ed. Mentzer (Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Journal, 1994), 124. At least one Geneva resident complained about the relative leniency shown to female defendants. In 1581, Claude Miville noted "que a esté rapporté que le concistoire ne veult pas qu'on chastise les femmes..." R. Consist. 32 (1581), 242v.

³³ See Grosse, "Les Rituels de la Cène," 419–49, 492–522. For discipline in the rural parishes, see my article, "Pastoral Care East of Eden," 294–98.

this period, only one of seven came from the countryside parishes surrounding Geneva.

The most common reason for suspension during this decade was for illicit sexual behavior, including fornication, adultery, prostitution, rape, and solicitation (see Table 2).

Table 2: Primary Reasons for Suspension by Period

Consolidation 1542–1551	Expansion 1560–1569	Contraction 1570–1596
Fornication / Adultery (18%)	Quarrels/ <i>Mauvais Ménage</i> (24%)	Quarrels/ <i>Mauvais Ménage</i> (31%)
Ignorance (15%)	Fornication / Adultery (9%)	Fornication / Adultery (12%)
Quarrels/ <i>Mauvais Ménage</i> (15%)	Confessional Infidelity (8%)	Scandals (9%)
Catholic Belief & Behavior (10%)	Scandals (6%)	Dances & Songs (7%)
Rebellion (10%)	Lying (6%)	Drunkenness (5%)
Scandals (10%)	Blasphemy (5%)	Gaming & Gambling (5%)
Blasphemy (7%)	Rebellion (5%)	Blasphemy (4%)
Heresy (3%)	Theft (5%)	Lying (4%)
Lying (2%)	Ignorance (5%)	Theft (4%)
Drunkenness (2%)	Catholic Belief & Behavior (4%)	Catholic Belief & Behavior (4%)
Recorded Suspensions: 241	Recorded Suspensions: 3762	Recorded Suspensions: 3187

A good number of these cases involved young couples that cohabitated or shared sexual intimacy before they had formalized their marriages in the church. Geneva's Marriage Ordinance (1546) outlawed this traditional practice, and the ministers and elders worked strenuously – though without great success – to eradicate it.³⁴ The relatively high number of people disciplined for fornication led some people mistakenly to assume that the Consistory's primary role was to punish sexual deviance. Thus, when the Consistory investigated a suspected Anabaptist named Jeanne Pignier in 1543, she expressed surprise that the ministers had summoned her, for “she had heard that the Consistory was for men and women guilty of fornication, and she had not committed fornication.”³⁵

³⁴ For Geneva's legal statutes against fornication, including premarital sex, see John Witte Jr. and Robert M. Kingdon, *Sex, Marriage, and Family in John Calvin's Geneva*, vol. 1, Courtship, Engagement, and Marriage (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 414–18.

³⁵ *R. Consist.* I (1543), 294.

During this period of consolidation from 1542–1551, the ministers and elders also employed church discipline regularly to promote Christian understanding and root out Catholic behavior and belief. Fifteen percent of defendants were suspended from the Lord's Supper for the sin of ignorance, that is, they lacked a basic understanding of the Christian message or did not know how to pray. In addition, a sizeable number of people (10 percent of sample) were disciplined by the Consistory for espousing Catholic doctrine, or participating in Catholic activities such as attending the Mass, praying to the Virgin Mary, wedding a Catholic spouse, or having a child baptized by a priest. This was the case with Jeanne Pertenez, who in 1542 was examined and rebuked for attending Mass and asserting that the Virgin Mary was her advocate in heaven. The Consistory decided that Jeanne should be barred from the Eucharist until "the Lord touched her heart," and then "declared her to be outside of the Church."³⁶

Period of Expansion (1560–1569): Following their decisive victory over the Perrinist faction in 1555, Calvin and the ministers of Geneva gained a free hand to investigate and impose ecclesiastical discipline on the city's residents with little interference from the civil authorities.³⁷ Consequently, the Consistory's caseload expanded dramatically over the next decade, and along with it the number of annual suspensions. During the years 1560 to 1569, nearly 35 people on average were summoned to the Consistory each week.³⁸ Over the same period, more than 3,700 people were suspended from the Lord's Supper, or around seven excommunications per week on average. Evidence indicates that the system of moral surveillance in the countryside had become more effective: one of every five suspensions came from Geneva's rural parishes outside the city walls.

As Table 2 indicates, the number of people disciplined for public quarrels and domestic conflicts now makes up the largest part of overall suspensions (nearly one-quarter of the total). Other common reasons for excommunications between 1560 and 1569 are fornication, confessional infidelity, and scandals. The high number of suspensions for confessional infidelity during this period of expansion requires some explanation. Following the re-Catholicization of Lyon in 1567, hundreds of Protestant refugees sought safe haven in Geneva, many of whom had temporarily abjured the reformed religion or participated in Catholic rites to avoid persecution. In 1568 alone, the Geneva Consistory suspended no less than 149 French

³⁶ *R. Consist.* I (1542), 26–27.

³⁷ See William Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 167–207; Grosse, "Les Rituels de la Cène," 448–76.

³⁸ This figure does not include data from the year 1568.

refugees for this sin; the following year another 98 were censured. The registers of the Consistory are filled with poignant, even horrifying stories: Catholic soldiers forced Marie Bachelet at knife point to attend the Mass and take “the idol of paste”; Élie Denis wore a crucifix around her neck to avoid being killed as she fled to Geneva; Hannibal Merle was forced to abjure the “evangelical religion” under threat of imprisonment or death.³⁹ Suspensions for confessional infidelity all but disappeared after 1569, partly because the flood of refugees temporarily abated, and partly because the Consistory devised different methods for handling cases of religious accommodation that did not involve formal suspension.

Modern scholars have sometimes judged this explosion of disciplinary activity after 1564 to be a kind of “moral paroxysm” reflecting the ministers’ obsessive concern to regulate behavior and stamp out public sin. Thus, for example, Alister McGrath has asserted that “[a]fter Calvin’s death, the Consistory appears to have lost its sense of direction, and degenerated into little more than a crude instrument of social control, verging on the hysterical.”⁴⁰ Conclusions like these, however, do not penetrate to the foundational pastoral concerns and commitments underlying church discipline in Geneva. Moreover, such judgments ignore the fact that, after 1569, consistorial activity and the number of annual suspensions returned to levels witnessed before Calvin’s death in 1564.

Period of Contraction (1570–1596): The upward trajectory of disciplinary activity in Geneva’s church was arrested and reversed during the years following 1569. This abrupt change was caused by a variety of factors, including adjustments in pastoral strategy, a weakening of the network of surveillance in the countryside, and intervention by the city magistrates who demanded greater leniency for those guilty of minor sins.⁴¹ As a re-

³⁹ R. Consist. 25 (1568), 27, 98v; *ibid.*, 26 (1569), 58v, 80v.

⁴⁰ Alister McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 113–14. McGrath’s assessment is based upon the findings of E. William Monter, “The Consistory of Geneva, 1559–1569,” *Bibliothèque d’humanisme et renaissance* 38 (1976): 467–84.

⁴¹On this point, see my article, “Pastoral Care East of Eden,” 302–305. Magisterial pressure was one important factor. In January of 1576, for example, the Small Council voiced its disapproval to the ministers that the Consistory “defendist la Cene si ordinairement à des personnes qui auparavant n’avoient pas esté reprinses et qui n’auroyent pas commis chose si grande, de laquelle mesme ilz montrent se repentir, et que cela pourroit mettre des consciences en trouble, offencer beaucoup de gens qui sur telles defences peuvent tomber maladies, faire hayr le Consistoire, et que cest pratique ne respond à l’ordonnance qui en est aux edictz, à laquelle ilz pretendent et enjoignent qu’on se tienne.” The magistrates ordered the ministers to follow more closely the guidelines of the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*. The ministers and elders accepted the magistrates’ rebuke, acknowledging “qu’il y avoit heu trop grande rigueur par cy-devant.” *RCP* IV, 39, citing the minutes of the Small Council (RC, vol. 71, fols. 14–17). I am indebted to Grosse for calling my attention to this passage. See his dis-

sult, during the last three decades of the sixteenth century, fewer than 200 people were excommunicated per year, and suspension rates averaged around three to four persons per week. By the final decade of my sample, only 118 people were excommunicated in an average year. During this period of contraction the number of people appearing before the Consistory also fell off sharply, to an average of around 18 people per session.⁴² In part, the decline in consistorial activity was due to a breakdown in pastoral oversight in Geneva's rural parishes during the city's protracted military struggle with the Duke of Savoy in the 1580s and 1590s. In those decades, only around one in eight suspensions came from Geneva's countryside churches. The overall picture, then, can be summarized as follows: during the last quarter of the sixteenth century, the Consistory's workload declined to levels witnessed in the early 1550s, and annual numbers of suspensions returned to levels more or less commensurate with the final years of Calvin's lifetime. From this perspective, the Consistory's frenetic activity during the decade of the 1560s appears to be an anomaly, a consequence perhaps of the insecurity felt by Geneva's ministers following Calvin's death and their over-scrupulous concern to implement Calvin's moral vision.

But that is only part of the story. When we tabulate the primary reasons for suspensions during these final decades, patterns of development and change are evident. As Table 2 indicates, public quarrels and domestic conflict continued to claim an ever-larger part of the Consistory's workload. Numbers of suspensions for fornication and sexual deviance also remained high. On the other hand, sins of the intellect – such as ignorance, heresy or Catholic belief – had become relatively uncommon. One of the more striking developments between 1570 and 1596 is the relatively large percentage of people who were excommunicated for seemingly minor misbehavior such as gambling, dancing and singing profane songs. During Calvin's lifetime, defendants guilty of these minor infractions were regularly scolded, but rarely suspended from the Lord's Table.⁴³ In 1560, for example, the secretary noted in the consistory register that "it is not our custom to prohibit people from the Lord's Supper for dances..."⁴⁴ Such restraint was no longer observed during the final decades of the century,

cussion in "Il y avoit eu trop grande rigueur par cy-devant: la discipline ecclésiastique à Genève à l'époque de Théodore de Bèze," in *Théodore de Bèze*, ed. Irena Backus, 55–68.

⁴² This figure is based on an eleven-year sample, namely 1571, 1573, 1575, 1579, 1581, 1589, and 1592–1596.

⁴³ For the years 1542–1551 and 1560–1564, I have identified only two suspensions for gaming and gambling, and eleven suspensions for dancing and singing.

⁴⁴ Addressing a defendant named Jehanne Duvillard, the Consistory noted that "l'on n'a pas accoustumé de défendre la cene pour les dances comme aussi elle ne luy fut point deffendue pour ce regard..." See R. Consist. 17 (1560), 195.

however. In these years the Consistory occasionally staged “sting operations” to discipline groups of men found gambling with dice or cards, or young people caught singing profane songs and dancing. In the spring of 1579, the Consistory suspended more than fifty young men and women for cavorting in the countryside, singing, dancing to music, and drinking. From the ministers’ perspective, dancing was a vain amusement that fueled fleshly passions, often leading to drunkenness and sexual promiscuity. And as the ministers reminded more than one defendant, Christian people ought to devote themselves to singing “psalms and praises to God” rather than chanting dissolute ditties.⁴⁵

III. Church Discipline and Pastoral Care

At first glance, the chambers of Geneva’s Consistory would seem a most unlikely place to discover expressions of Christian concern and pastoral care. In their weekly meetings, the ministers and elders functioned more as judges than therapists as they confronted sinners in the hopes of achieving repentance and spiritual restoration. Sometimes the Consistory’s discipline appears heavy-handed, harsh, or punitive (at least to modern western sensibilities). We may well chuckle at the story of Claude Griffat, who was suspended from the Lord’s Supper for naming his dog “Calvin.”⁴⁶ But it is hard not to be appalled in other cases, as when the ministers suspended a young husband named Job Verat for lying about his sexual impotence; or when a young woman named Claudine Fichet was excommunicated for having attempted suicide by throwing herself into the Rhone River following her mother’s death.⁴⁷ Church discipline in Calvinist Geneva could be very strong spiritual medicine indeed. Moreover, the large number of suspensions that we have documented in the Geneva church during the six-

⁴⁵ R. Consist. 31 (1577), 49. The relatively large number of suspensions for dancing after 1570 may mirror patterns of behavior and discipline elsewhere in reformed Europe. In 1560, the Second National Synod of the French Reformed Church (held at Poitiers) noted that “tous Consistoires seront avertis par les Ministres, de defendre soigneusement toutes Danses...” See Jean Aymon, *Tous les Synodes Nationaux des Églises réformées de France*, vol. 1 (The Hague, 1710), 16. This provision also found its way into the Discipline of the French church during this period; see François Méjan, ed., *Discipline de l’Église Réformée de France* (Paris: Éditions ‘Je Sers,’ 1947), 296.

⁴⁶ R. Consist. 27 (1570), 123. Monter assesses the work of the Consistory in the late 1560s this way: “it is hard to escape the impression that many people were excommunicated for trivial reasons.” “The Consistory of Geneva,” 383.

⁴⁷ R. Consist. 22 (1565), 94v, 97; *ibid.*, 19 (1562), 83v. In the case of Job Verat, his parents complained about the Consistory’s procedure and argued “que si mons. Calvin eust este en vie, on n’eust pas fait ainsi...” (R. Consist. 22 [1565], 97).

teenth century – more than 7,000 in my thirty-seven year sample – raises questions about the pastoral wisdom and spiritual benefits of this model of church discipline. From this vantage point at least, Stefan Zweig’s indictment that Calvin initiated a moral reign of terror in Geneva seems almost justified.

But numbers and random anecdotes do not tell the whole story. The consistory minutes also portray Geneva’s ministers as conscientious pastors, concerned to protect their spiritual flock in a variety of important ways. This commitment to pastoral care runs as a common thread through the Consistory’s work during Calvin’s lifetime and in the generation that followed. In this section, we will highlight five aspects of the Consistory’s pastoral role as expressed through church discipline.

(1) *Concern for People and Their Problems.* One is impressed by the enormous effort expended by the ministers and elders of Geneva to elicit confession and bring about repentance and spiritual restoration. Hour after hour, week by week, Consistory members inquired into the most intimate, the most painful, the most destructive dimensions of their congregants’ lives. The ministers and elders met with people face-to-face; they addressed them by name; they listened at length to their grievances. It was not uncommon for the Consistory to meet with a defendant two, three, or four times before applying the “medicine” of church discipline that fit the individual circumstance. We as moderns may well shudder at the severity with which they handled some of the offenders who appeared before them, but Geneva’s pastors and elders cannot be accused of being apathetic to the spiritual needs of their flock, nor of being naively disengaged from the pervasive injustice, misery, and sin that surrounded them.

(2) *Concern for Heart Transformation.* The Consistory in Calvinist Geneva was not only committed to enforcing right behavior, it was also concerned with applying discipline that would help change the inward attitude of the heart. The Consistory regularly urged defendants to “reflect on their consciences,” to seek a “clean heart,” or “to feel and understand [their] fault.”⁴⁸ For those who had been suspended, admission of guilt and heartfelt repentance were required before they could be restored to the Lord’s Table. Thus, the ministers denied Jaqueme Leschière’s request for reconciliation because she laughed when she confessed her sin of fornication.⁴⁹ Similarly, Rolette Copponex was sent away still under the bann because she continued to harbor hatred for a neighbor who had wronged her; she

⁴⁸ R. Consist. 17 (1560), 21v, 47, 138v; *ibid.* 26 (1569), 143v; *ibid.*, 33 (1589), 129.

⁴⁹ R. Consist. 33 (1582), 85.

was exhorted to return once she had “a better disposition of the heart.”⁵⁰ When the Consistory rebuked a man and woman guilty of fornication in 1548, one of the ministers explained the soul’s journey from sin to spiritual health in these terms: sinners must “repent, recognize their faults and henceforth walk in newness of life, demonstrating signs of repentance, with the heart touched by the Holy Spirit so as to weep and receive the grace of God.”⁵¹

Certainly repentance and spiritual renewal were the work of God; only the Lord could change the attitude of the heart.⁵² Nevertheless, the ministers believed that church discipline was an important instrument that God used to turn sinners back to Christian righteousness. From this perspective, then, to ignore wicked behavior or wrong belief was not a form of humane indulgence, but rather a gross act of ministerial malpractice and betrayal of the divine call to “shepherd the flock of God that is under your care” (1 Peter 5:2). Excommunication warned a sinner of his spiritual peril, and also prevented him from profaning the holy sacrament, thereby “eating and drinking judgment upon himself” (1 Corinthians 11:29).⁵³ Less rigorous forms of church discipline – including counsel, remonstrance, and rebuke – were also seen as a form of pastoral care. Accordingly, the ministers in the Consistory were generous in offering words of advice and admonition. They counseled parents on how to raise obedient children; they advised husbands on how to live with alcoholic wives; they taught Christians how to endure suffering and misfortune.⁵⁴ When a carder of wool named Bastien Bouchet was called before Consistory for sleeping in the same bed with his daughter and grandson, the ministers felt duty-bound both to reprove this scandalous behavior and at the same time deliver a moral lesson: even if Bouchet was poor and cold, “decency must always take precedence over necessity.”⁵⁵

⁵⁰ R. Consist. 33 (1589), 147v.

⁵¹ R. Consist. IV (1548), 44.

⁵² Thus, in 1542, the Consistory excommunicated Jeanne Pertennaz for Catholic behavior and banned her from the Christian community “jusque le Seigneur luy touché le cueur...” R. Consist. I (1542), 27.

⁵³ There was real spiritual danger, the ministers believed, in partaking of the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner. Hence, when the Consistory examined Pierre Fredon for promising marriage to three different women, the register noted “qu’il s’est mis en azard d’avoir communiqué à la cene et prophane la cene du Seigneur...” R. Consist. 32 (1580), 78v. That laypeople in Geneva’s church also understood this, see R. Consist. III (1547), 69. Furthermore, this danger is recognized in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* (1541). See RCP 1:287.

⁵⁴ R. Consist. 20 (1563), 149; *ibid.*, 18 (1562), 203; *ibid.*, 19 (1563), 220.

⁵⁵ R. Consist. 20 (1563), 11.

(3) *Concern for the Poor and Vulnerable*. The ministers and elders repeatedly intervened on behalf of the most vulnerable members in Geneva society. They rebuked mothers who refused to nourish weak newborns and fathers who mercilessly beat their children.⁵⁶ They chastised Genevans who refused to care for elderly parents and grandparents.⁵⁷ They intervened on behalf of abandoned children, despised refugees, poor laborers, mistreated prisoners, and social misfits.⁵⁸ In 1589, for example, the Consistory learned that a widow named Jeanne de Claren was guilty of horrific treatment of her ten year old niece; she regularly burned her head with live coals, kicked her in the stomach, beat her to the point of blood, and forced her to beg through town. The ministers suspended the woman, advised the magistrates of the situation, and then placed the girl in the city hospital, at the expense of her aunt.⁵⁹ The Consistory also worked to root out social and economic injustice. They confronted landlords for cheating or threatening poor tenants.⁶⁰ They warned citizens about incompetent surgeons, and scolded physicians who demanded excessive fees from the sick and diseased.⁶¹ They disciplined merchants who created monopolies or violated city ordinances by inflating the price of basic commodities such as wood, coal, meat, and bread.⁶² They chastised masters for withholding servants' wages or for cruel treatment of their apprentices.⁶³

The Consistory's campaign to protect the weak and vulnerable was especially important during visitations of the plague, when death, fear, and suspicions threatened to unravel family loyalties and undermine social harmony. During the plague years of 1568–1572, the ministers and elders intervened in nearly a dozen cases in which plague victims were assaulted or abandoned by terrified family members and neighbors. The account of the Bourgeois family in the village of Malval serves as a shocking exam-

⁵⁶ For cases of the Consistory intervening on behalf of abused and neglected children, see for example *R. Consist.* I (1542), 92; *ibid.*, II (1546), 299; *ibid.*, IV (1548), 5; *R. Consist.* 17 (1560), 110v; *ibid.*, 18 (1561), 77v; *ibid.*, 25 (1568), 157v; *ibid.*, 27 (1570), 49, 131; *ibid.*, 28 (1572), 208v; *ibid.*, 30 (1576), 60v; *ibid.*, 31 (1580), 81; and *ibid.*, 33 (1582), 28v–29.

⁵⁷ *R. Consist.* I (1543), 179; *ibid.*, II (1546), 177; *ibid.*, IV (1548), 5.

⁵⁸ For intervention on behalf of abandoned children: *R. Consist.* 5 (1550), 40, 49v; *ibid.*, 24 (1567), 57v. Despised refugees: *R. Consist.* III (1547), 35; *R. Consist.* 5 (1550), 38v; *ibid.*, 23 (1566), 144. Poor laborers: *R. Consist.* 24 (1567), 101; *ibid.*, 25 (1568), 142; *ibid.*, 33 (1589), 133. Mistreated prisoners: *R. Consist.* 34 (1594), 237. Social misfits: *R. Consist.* III (1547), 128; *R. Consist.* 5 (1550), 89v.

⁵⁹ *R. Consist.* 33 (1589), 145v. For a similarly shocking case, see *ibid.*, 5 (1550), 18v.

⁶⁰ See for example *R. Consist.* 25 (1568), 164v; *ibid.*, 32 (1580), 27.

⁶¹ See for example *R. Consist.* 17 (1560), 146v; *ibid.*, 26 (1569), 73v.

⁶² See for example *R. Consist.* 26 (1569), 1, 2v, 50v.

⁶³ Abused servants: *R. Consist.* 16 (1560), 259v; *ibid.*, 18 (1561), 154v; *ibid.*, 23 (1566), 62v; *ibid.*, 26 (1569), 20, 212; *ibid.*, 28 (1572), 185v; *ibid.*, 30 (1577), 112; *ibid.*, 34 (1596), 469v.

ple. In September 1571, a daughter of the family contracted the plague while in the last days of pregnancy. Fearing infection, the young woman's mother, brother, and sister abandoned her. Even when the pains of labor overcame the sick woman, neither family members nor neighbors responded to her desperate cries for help. The exhausted woman finally summoned strength to fetch water, but the effort brought on the final birth pangs. She delivered her baby alone, all the while screaming for water and assistance. The infant died three hours later. The woman's family, listening to the entire ordeal outside, had already dug a grave for the dead child. The Consistory's response to this tragedy was more than perfunctory: in addition to suspending family members for their inhumanity, the ministers sent a delegation to the city magistrates, demanding that "sick villagers should be cared for, either by people from the city or from their own villages" so that "no one would suffer a similar thing ever again."⁶⁴

(4) *Concern for Christian Understanding.* Education was another important dimension of the Consistory's pastoral oversight.⁶⁵ As a prerequisite for participation in the Lord's Supper, the people of Geneva were required to "give a reason for their faith" to the ministers and elders, showing that they had a basic understanding of the Christian faith – or, at the very least, were able to recite the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed in the vernacular tongue. Weekly catechism services were not only for children, but also for adults in need of remedial instruction. Over the course of the sixteenth century, hundreds of men and women were summoned to the Consistory's chambers to explain the substance of their Christian faith, and not a few were found to be woefully ignorant. For example, when Claude Pascard was asked to explain his Christian faith in 1560, he betrayed utter confusion. He thought that there were only three commandments in the Decalogue: "'Our Father who is in heaven,' for one; 'I believe in God,' for another; and 'I believe in the Holy Spirit,' for the third." When asked if fornication and theft violated God's commandments, he said "no." The Consistory suspended Pascard from the Lord's Table, and ordered him to attend catechism classes every week for a year, sitting with the children so as to be better instructed, and to report his progress to his pastor on a regular basis.⁶⁶ On other occasions, the ministers took personal responsibility for the instruction of the ignorant. The minister Nicolas Colladon agreed to meet the widow of Antoine Tissot every Sunday afternoon to help her

⁶⁴ R. Consist. 28 (1571), 83v.

⁶⁵ This aspect of the Consistory's work has been noted by Robert Kingdon, and is treated in detail in Christian Grosse's dissertation. See Kingdon, "The Geneva Consistory in the Time of Calvin," 24–26. Grosse, "Les Rituels de la Cène," 595–610.

⁶⁶ R. Consist. 17 (1560), 163.

learn the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed. Pastor Charles Pinaud was commissioned "to meet daily" with Pierre Genod "until he was properly instructed."⁶⁷ The case of the Flemish Anabaptist Abraham Delamer is even more striking. In August of 1577 Abraham appeared before the Consistory to request instruction in the reformed religion and Christian baptism. The ministers encouraged him to attend sermons, and assigned several of their colleagues to instruct him in private. Four months later, Abraham reappeared before the Consistory to give reason for his faith, requesting Christian baptism and admission to the church. A marginal note in the consistory register reports that he was baptized in the temple of St. Pierre on a Sunday afternoon in late December 1577.⁶⁸

(5) *Concern for Conflict Resolution*: The Geneva Consistory in the sixteenth century also provided a mechanism to reconcile estranged spouses and pacify arguments between family members and neighbors. In this way, as Robert Kingdon has observed, the Consistory functioned as a kind of compulsory counseling service.⁶⁹ The ministers and elders mediated hundreds of disputes each year, some that endangered life or marriage, others that disrupted the peace of household and community. In the Consistory's chambers feuding parties aired their grievances, argued with one another, and sometimes reconciled. In cases where financial resources were in dispute, the ministers might recommend the appointment of arbiters to resolve the disagreement.⁷⁰ On other occasions, they solicited the intervention of family members, godparents, and civil authorities to hasten reconciliation.⁷¹ The Consistory employed moral persuasion, bald threats, and suspension in an effort to stem destructive behavior, end violence, and foster reconciliation. Jacques Pape was ordered to stop tormenting his wife, and to "love her and support her as a good Christian ought to do."⁷² A poor pin-maker named Guillaume Badollet was told to stop drinking, work at his craft, and provide food and clothing for his eight children.⁷³ The Consistory threatened to suspend Barthélemie Varin and Jeanne Esply from the

⁶⁷ R. Consist. 18 (1561), 32; *ibid.*, 32 (1580), 139v.

⁶⁸ R. Consist. 31 (1577), 81, 130.

⁶⁹ Kingdon, "The Geneva Consistory in the Time of Calvin," 26–33. Christian Grosse discusses this dimension of the Consistory's ministry in detail, "Les Rituels de la Cène," 646–744.

⁷⁰ For example, R. Consist. I (1544), 356; *ibid.*, III (1547), 18; R. Consist. 28 (1571), 87; *ibid.*, 29 (1575), 1; *ibid.*, 30 (1577), 61.

⁷¹ For example, R. Consist. 31 (1579), 351, 363.

⁷² R. Consist. III (1548), 81.

⁷³ R. Consist. 31 (1577), 22.

Lord's Supper if they did not cease arguing and calling each other names.⁷⁴ Many times moral persuasion and threats were not enough, however. In 1561, a wife beater named Jehan Pradaire was summoned to Consistory for vicious batteries against his wife. A half-dozen witnesses described a gruesome pattern of abuse. In previous attacks, Pradaire had showered insults upon the poor woman, pinched her thighs with hot tongs, hit her in the stomach and face, and tried to strangle her. Now he had struck her in the head with a board and knocked her unconscious. His poor wife – who was judged “an honorable virtuous woman” – was still in bed recovering from a cracked skull and other injuries. Hearing this report, the ministers and elders excommunicated Pradaire and commanded him “never to touch or mistreat his wife” again. He was then sent to the city magistrates with recommendations that he receive additional corporal punishments.⁷⁵

Because the registers of the Consistory are by their nature more attentive to misbehavior than to personal moral reformation, it is difficult to determine the long-term outcome of the ministers' efforts to heal troubled relationships. We do not know whether Jehan Pradaire stopped beating his wife, or Guillaume Badollet became a responsible provider for his family. To be sure, Consistory members recognized that some of their efforts to achieve reconciliation were not likely to succeed. In 1546, for example, after describing the formal act of reconciliation between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law, the secretary of the Consistory noted in his register: “I do not know if it will last.”⁷⁶ But in other cases, the outcome of the Consistory's intervention seems more promising. For example, in June 1578, Gabriel Pottu and Jaques Bottilier were called before the Consistory and suspended from the Supper for fighting in public. In response to the ministers' admonition to “live together as good brothers and fellow-citizens,” the two men agreed to be reconciled and shook hands as a sign of friendship. When the two men were readmitted to the sacrament two months later, the register noted that they were now “good friends and reconciled together.”⁷⁷

⁷⁴ R. Consist. 32 (1580), 151v. The threat of suspension appears to have had its effect: Jeanne acknowledged Barthélemie to be a “good woman” and asked her forgiveness. As a sign of reconciliation and friendship, both women shook hands and promised to treat one another better in the future.

⁷⁵ R. Consist. 18 (1561), 172–172v.

⁷⁶ R. Consist. II (1546), 209. The text reads: “Je ne sçay s'il durera.”

⁷⁷ R. Consist. 31 (1578), 191v, 211.

Conclusion

The Consistory occupied a prominent place in Geneva's religious life during the sixteenth century. The large number of people suspended from the sacrament during this period – more than 7,000 in my thirty-seven year sample – attests to the Consistory's pervasive role in shaping public behavior in the city. But to characterize this program of church discipline as a "moral reign of terror," or to describe the Consistory as a "crude instrument of social control," is to ignore the fundamental pastoral concerns that animated Calvin and his successors in Geneva's church. As we have seen, the ministers and elders were church leaders intimately involved in the lives of their parishioners, attentive to the complexities and difficulties of broken relationships, bad decisions, wrong belief, and sinful behavior. For Calvin and the other ministers of Geneva, church discipline in its various forms served as "spiritual medicine" prescribed by God to bring healing to the human heart, making possible repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth. Moreover, church discipline was employed by the Consistory to protect the weakest members of Geneva's society, enforcing basic norms of justice and humanity. Consistory members served as helpers for the poor, tutors for the unlearned, advocates for the weak, mediators for the estranged, and defenders of the exploited and abused. Both during Calvin's lifetime and in the generation that followed, moral discipline was a crucial dimension of pastoral care in reformed Geneva.

John Calvin as Reformer of “Spirituality”

ELSIE ANNE MCKEE

“Spirituality” is certainly not the first word one might associate with John Calvin or his legacy, but when considered under his preferred name of “*pietas*” or piety it can be easily recognized as a vital aspect of his reforming work. Before examining Calvin’s title to be a “reformer of spirituality” or “piety” it is helpful to explain how the key word is being used. “Spirituality” may be loosely defined as the ethos of a religious people and the characteristic ideas and patterns of practice which express their way of relating to the divine.¹ For Calvin himself, *pietas* has particular reference to the worship of God but it can also be applied more generally to the shape of Christian life in service to God.²

To know whether Calvin was a reformer of spirituality it is necessary to identify what he inherited and whether he made distinctive changes or, to put it another way, whether there are patterns of relating to the divine which are characteristic of Calvinists and traceable to Calvin. This essay first sketches the historical context and then examines in more detail some distinctive features of Calvin’s piety.

¹ One of the leading authorities in the history of spirituality, Bernard McGinn, defines Christian spirituality as “the lived experience of Christian belief, ... the reaction that faith arouses in religious consciousness and practice.” *Bernard McGinn*: Introduction, in: B. McGinn, J. Meyendorff, with J. Leclercq (eds.): *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, New York 1992, xvf.

² For specific development of Calvin’s use of *pietas*, see *Elsie Anne McKee*: *John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving*, Genève 1984, chap. 10. For a brief introduction to Calvin and spirituality, with a selection of some of his writings which give characteristic expression to his piety, see *Elsie Anne McKee* (Hrsg.): Introduction, in: *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety*, Mahweh [New Jersey] 2001, 2ff. For two full examinations of the practice of spirituality in Geneva in the 16th century, see *Thomas A. Lambert*: *Preaching, Praying and Policing the Reform in Sixteenth-Century Geneva*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Madison [Wisconsin] 1998. *Christian Grosse*: *Les rituels de la cène. Le culte eucharistique réformé à Genève (XVIe–XVIIe siècles)*, Genève 2008.

I. Historical Context

The field of spirituality is quite extensive and ever growing, and any sketch of what Calvin inherited can only be very general. There are two major factors to be considered: medieval spirituality and the significant changes which first-generation Protestants made.

Most simply put, in Latin Christendom a basic sense of the sacred and the profane shaped the whole society in its goal of achieving salvation.³ Specific earthly mediators or channels of holiness were understood to be the means provided by God through the church to come to salvation. Everyone must actively seek the way to God through these holy means, especially the sacraments, following the theological injunction “to do what lies in him or herself” [*facere quod in se est*]. Whether this spirituality was satisfying or more likely to produce anxiety is a matter still being debated.⁴ However, those who became Protestants usually shared the terrible plight of uncertainty about their salvation which Calvin describes to Sadoletto as the lot of those who have not come to understand the gospel by faith.

I believed, as I had been taught, that I was redeemed by the death of thy Son from liability to eternal death, but the redemption I thought of was one whose power could never reach me. I anticipated a future resurrection, but hated to think of it, since I thought of it as a most dreadful event. And this feeling not only had dominion over me in private. It was derived from the doctrine which was then uniformly delivered to the people by their Christian teachers. Indeed they preached about thy clemency towards people, but they confined it to those who should show that they deserved it. Moreover, they placed this deservingness in the righteousness of works, so that the only one who was received into thy favor was one who reconciled himself to Thee by works ... When, however, I had performed all these things, though I had some intervals of quiet, I was still far-off from true peace of conscience; for, whenever I descended into myself, or raised my mind to thee, extreme terror seized me – terror which no expiations nor satisfactions could cure.⁵

Here Calvin the convert to the gospel has taken the persona of a Christian standing before God, explaining why he has rejected Rome. As he sees it – perhaps as he experienced it – terror in the face of God’s judgment was the lot of the thoughtful Christian, and the cause of this problem for Christian consciences was the teaching which underlay the practice of spirituality. Thus the changes in spirituality which those who left Rome were seeking required a change in theology as well as the lived piety.

³ A helpful source of a general description of late medieval piety and one perspective on the effects of the 16th reforms may be found in the writings of *John Bossy*, for example: *Christianity in the West, 1400–1700*, Oxford, New York 1982.

⁴ Some voices among many include Steven Ozment, John Bossy, Eamon Duffy, Anne Thayer.

⁵ *John Calvin*: Letter to Sadoletto, in: OS 1, 484, 485; translation in: *John C. Olin* (Hrsg.): *A Reformation Debate*, Grand Rapids 1966, 88, 89 [some words altered].

One fundamental way that Protestants changed medieval spirituality was a revision of ideas about the holy. The holiness of God is so great that no human being can approach God, and no created things can aid in winning God's favor or salvation – so earthly mediators are deceiving and worthless. On the other hand, God in Christ has done all that is necessary to overcome the alienation and destruction brought about by human sin. For those who receive the gift of faith by grace alone, through the power of the Holy Spirit, there is access to the holy God and to salvation by the one Mediator Christ. This new conception of how people are related to the Holy was derived from the conviction that the only true knowledge about the one divine Mediator, and about God's will, must be found in the written word through which the Holy Spirit speaks.⁶ This *sola scriptura* led to rejecting specific non-Biblical teachings such as the adoration of the host or prayers for the dead or to the saints, and church laws requiring fasting or auricular confession or setting apart clergy with some indelible sacred character as a more holy people, among other teachings which had been important aspects of medieval spirituality.⁷ The combination of rejecting earthly mediators and emphasizing personal faith based on the teaching of scripture alone also gave rise to a new emphasis on literacy and religious self-confidence among lay Bible readers, who now had access to the one source of knowledge necessary for salvation.

Other characteristic practices of Protestant spirituality developed from these fundamental changes in understanding the holy and religious authority. One of the most obvious to a lay person was that all spiritual practices must be intelligible to the faithful and communal in character. Catholic reformers as well as Protestants placed an increasing emphasis on intellectual understanding of the faith, including both more instruction and a revised approach to participating in the liturgy; as Virginia Reinburg indicates: "[R]eformers were increasingly inclined to apply a clerical standard to lay religious experience. Certainly both Protestant and Catholic Reformations opened new roles for lay people in both ecclesiastical and spiritual realms. But ... in insisting that lay congregants aspire to a reasonable level of informed participation, both Reformations together created a definitive rupture with the late medieval drama of the mass..."⁸ The degree of change

⁶ For Calvin's earliest formulation of this common Protestant stance, see the 1536 *Institutio*, OS 1, 40, 68f. Later form, *Inst.* 3.2.6–7, 14; 3.11.1–2, 4; 1.6.1–2; 1.7.4–5.

⁷ For Calvin's position, see 1536 *Institutio*, OS 1, 99f, 143, 178, 216f, 226f. Later form, *Inst.* 3.20.17, 19, 21; 4.17.35; 3.19.7; 3.4.7, 15; 4.19.30–31.

⁸ Reinburg explains the ideal medieval pattern of lay participation in the Latin liturgy as complementary to that of the clergy, and concludes that the changes introduced by Catholic as well as Protestant reformers aimed at making the service a single pattern; *Virginia Reinburg: Liturgy and the Laity in Late Medieval and Reformation France*, in: *Sixteenth Century Journal* 1992, 526ff, quotation 546.

and its effect on corporate worship was much greater among Protestants, where use of the vernacular and a more apparent continuity between formal worship and daily piety became the normative practice. Published texts for corporate liturgy, prayer and song not only gave ministers and people one common public service but also provided the new devotional basis of daily life, now the same for everyone.⁹

For Protestants, spirituality gradually moved from a more emotional to a more cognitive pattern, a trajectory leading away from an essential reliance on church teaching to a greater individual obligation to learn and test what the preacher says. Reformed piety has often been accused of being overly-intellectual but it should be noted that Calvin emphasized heart as much as head in his definition of faith, and the personal appropriation of the gospel was vital for him. Like others among the early reformers, he also gave greater attention to the public, corporate teaching of the faith than to inculcating personal Bible reading,¹⁰ although in time the latter came to be a mark of Protestants and especially the Reformed tradition. Particularly the practice of Bible reading by women drew criticism from traditional opponents.¹¹ A second and more distinctive visible change

⁹ For Calvin's formulation of vernacular liturgy, see Inst. 3.20.33, and preface to Psalter (cited below at n. 21). The importance of texts available to the congregation, especially hymns and/or psalms, will be treated below; *Grosse: Les rituels de la cène*, 174, points out that the French Psalter which was regularly published with the liturgy, catechism and various additions, formed a distinctive whole "exceptionnel en milieux protestant," which provided all the essentials for worship and passing on the faith. Among the additions, he indicates that the lists of Psalms to be sung at particular corporate/public services could also link private and public use of the Psalter (166).

¹⁰ Inst. 3.2.7: "Nunc iusta fidei definitio nobis constabit si dicamus esse dovomae erga nos benevolentiae firmam certamque cognitionem, quae gratuita in Christo promissionis veritate fundata, per Spiritum sanctum et revelatur mentibus nostris et cordibus obsignatur," OS 4, 16. (This passage enters the Institutes in 1539.) See also 3.2.14. Although various texts indicate that Genevans were encouraged to have Bibles and read them, far greater weight was placed on their attending public worship and hearing the exposition of scripture by trained ministers. See *Thomas A Lambert & Isabella Watts* under *Robert M. Kingdon* (Hrsg.): *Registres du Consistoire de Genève au temps de Calvin*, tome 1, Genève 1996, 10, 16, 18, 28, 32, 40. *Grosse: Les rituels de la cène*, 176, indicates that the use of the psalter and the texts bound with it served along with preaching as the main source of the knowledge of the Bible. "Le psautier encadre encore la manière dont le fidèle se nourrit des Ecritures. Médiateur privilégié – avec la prédication – de l'accès à la parole divine, il propose une sélection de textes bibliques à portée normative, du point de vue de la foi (Symbole des apôtres, Confession de foi, catéchisme), de la conduite (décalogue) et de la piété (psaumes, Notre père). L'usage des Ecritures auquel il incite passe par la pratique culturelle plutôt que par la lecture, que les Réformés protestantes ne favorisent guère avant la fin du XVIIe siècle". (The focus here is French-language Calvinists; English puritans turned to private Bible reading more quickly.)

¹¹ For an example of a lay woman who was led by reading the Bible to accept the new faith, see the story of Claudine Levet recounted by *Antoine Froment: Les actes et gestes*

among Protestants was the way the sacraments were limited. Most obvious was the reduction from seven to two. Equally clear was the enormous emphasis placed on preaching as a necessary if not primary part of corporate worship, so that the sacraments were no longer the central focus of all liturgical spirituality. While all Protestants retained infant baptism, various ones weighed the purpose and character of the two sacraments, as well as the frequency and organization of practice of the Lord's Supper, differently.¹²

Among the implications of these principles and changes were also effects less visible to later generations, particularly how spirituality was reshaped by omissions as well as additions. For example, the impact of *sola scriptura* on praying led to a much more prominent place for the Lord's Prayer – not because it was new but because many other traditional prayers were eliminated and the Lord's Prayer stood out in a fresh way and was taught primarily in the vernacular. The weight of church power was felt in a different way when the regulation of marriage no longer had to take into account spiritual affinities created by godparentage or holy seasons when weddings could not be performed. The daily experience of faith and the rhythm of devotional life were significantly altered when rituals like Friday fasting and prohibitions of work on saints' days were dropped. The experienced spirituality of first-generation Protestants was as much unlearning as learning.¹³

However, are there distinctive ways in which John Calvin reformed spirituality? Was he just one more Protestant emphasizing vernacular Biblical preaching and prayer, the priesthood of believers, two sacraments, honest work as a religious vocation, and no superstition? In fact, Reformed spirituality and Calvin's particular influence on it constitute a significant contribution to the history of spirituality.

merveilleux de la cité de Geneve nouvellement convertie à l'Evangille (1549), 15–17, cited by *Grosse*: Les rituels de la cène, 43. It is clear that Bible reading, including by women, became a significant marker of "heresy"/Protestantism; see *Natalie Zemon Davis*: *City Women and Religious Change*, in: *N.Z.Davis*: *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, Stanford 1975, 93. For criticism of women reading the Bible, see *Florimond de Raemond*: *L'histoire de la naissance, progresz et decadence de l'heresie de ce siècle*. Divisee en huit livres, Rouen 1623, book 8, chap. 10, p. 1010.

¹² In the 1536 *Institutio*, Calvin separates the two accepted sacraments of baptism and Lord's Supper (chap. 4) from the "five false sacraments" (chap. 5). The importance of the sacraments has been measured in a number of ways; frequency of use for the Supper has been one of the most common but not necessarily the most helpful. The distinctive fashion in which the "rituals" of the Lord's Supper in particular were reshaped in Calvin's Geneva will be treated below.

¹³ For one example of the changes in Geneva, see *Grosse*: *Les rituels de la cène*, chap. 1.

II. John Calvin's Distinctive Piety

Some of the ways Calvin reformed spirituality were typical of the Reformed tradition generally, as distinguished from other Protestants like Lutherans, or from Catholics or Anabaptists, but even in these matters Calvin put his own mark on piety. It is useful to begin with some comments on the corporate as well as personal character of Calvin's legacy: the presence of the church in a world which was no longer considered profane but was instead understood as the place where Christians live their vocation – and then point out some specific practices which marked Calvinist piety, such as the use of the Old Testament, the relationship of sacraments and community, the question of predestination and the consciousness of divine providence. (It may be noted that some of these traits are ones which have drawn sharp criticism, a back-handed way of marking their distinctiveness.)

The Corporate and Personal Nature of Piety

The Church in the World: Calvin's understanding of the nature of church leadership and the work of the church in the world became particular characteristics of spirituality in the communities which followed his teaching. For all Protestants the priesthood of believers meant that daily work in the world could be a religious vocation for citizens and especially for princes or magistrates, but the character of the church's being in the world was given a distinctive shape by Calvin. According to Reformed theology, the Bible serves not only as the sole authority for right teaching (e.g., justification by faith and grace alone) but also in second rank as the right authority for the best church order, for the constitution of the church which is the corporate context of spirituality. The Zwinglian tradition drew on the Old Testament for church order, but Calvin insisted that the New Testament is the source for rightly ordering the church.¹⁴

One manifestation of this is the distinctive Calvinist Reformed pattern of four offices of ministry, two being "lay ecclesiastical offices" – the elders and deacons – who were in principle not civil rulers but elected members of the church. As is well known, Calvin had to struggle for many years to achieve recognition of the autonomy of the church's elected officers, but one effect of these ministries was what became a typical Calvinist emphasis on active lay leadership in the church wherever it might be. A

¹⁴ This is particularly clear in the Biblical texts understood as constituting the Christian ministry of discipline; the Zwinglian appeal to 2 Chron. 19:6–7 is implicitly rejected by Calvin. See *Elsie Anne McKee: Elders and the Plural Ministry. The Role of Exegetical History in Illuminating John Calvin's Theology*, Genève 1988, 49ff.

second and related expression of this New Testament based-doctrine of church order is the equally distinctive pattern of ecclesiastical-civil relationships in Calvin's teaching which meant that churches following his interpretation could function within Christendom or outside it.¹⁵ In many ways the spirituality of Calvin's church is an activist, lay piety, where the church as church is engaged vigorously in education, poor relief, social reform, as well as preaching, in its calling to be the church in the world. It is also a spirituality able to flourish in a variety of political contexts and express itself in an active engagement in the political sphere (even though such a development would go considerably beyond Calvin's own position).¹⁶

Christian Life and the Law: Alongside this corporate church structure is Calvin's characteristic emphasis on the Christian life, and particularly the third use of the law as the pattern for regenerate Christians [2.7.12–13].¹⁷ The law is also the reminder of how far human beings have fallen from their original creation, and Calvin's spirituality is marked by a strong sense of God's glory and human sinfulness [2.7.6]. However, the accusing function of the law is accidental to its purpose. When God's good will to the sinner, which was manifested through the truth of the promises in Christ, is made effective in the heart and mind of the believer by the Holy Spirit (see Calvin's definition of faith [3.2.7]), the alienation of sin is overcome.¹⁸ Then the (third and) principal use of the law is restored, and it serves as the guide for the believer's spiritual life, the way the regenerate person lives every minute before God (*negotium cum Deo*) [3.7.2]. Two notable traits of Calvin's piety are the way he expects every Christian to be consciously, carefully reflecting on each act or thought to determine the responsible application of God's will to her or his life, and the consequences of this for the intelligence and confidence with which each person fulfills his or her vocation as service to God and neighbor.

The law as the over-arching guide to God's will for the faithful encompasses two parts. The first is right faith in God, with the love and reverence and obedience which go with that total self-dedication [2.8.51]. Specific parts of the law shape the visible practice of spirituality in corporate worship. Perhaps the most notable contrast with medieval piety was the Re-

¹⁵ See Inst. 4.3.4, 8–9. "Ordonnances ecclesiastiques," OS 2, 328, 338, 339, 340. For changes after Calvin's success, see "Ordonnances ecclesiastiques 1561," OS 2, 361–64. For further discussion, see *Elsie Anne McKee*: John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving, Genève 1984; idem.: Elders and the Plural Ministry, Genève 1988.

¹⁶ For some discussion/application, see *Ralph C. Hancock*: Calvin and the Foundations of Modern Politics, Ithaca, New York 1989.

¹⁷ See *I. John Hesselink*: John Calvin's Concept of the Law, Allison Park [PA] 1992.

¹⁸ See Inst. 2.7.6; 3.2.7 (quoted above, n. 10). Also the older but still helpful discussion in *Edward A. Dowey*: The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology, New York 1952, chap. 1.

formed rejection of paintings, statues, and all other visual art for religious devotion [1.11.1–4]; this led to a spirituality expressed more through the ear than the eye (although Calvin describes the Biblically based marks of preaching and sacraments as “living images” of God [4.1.5, 13]). Reverent response to God’s great generosity is gratitude and the responsible stewardship of every created thing, whether time, talents, possessions, position and influence, or life itself. Since we can give nothing to God, the right use of God’s many gifts is normally directed to serving our neighbors [3.10.1–2, 5; 3.19.7–9], and that corresponds to the second part of the law, love for neighbors, which means all people who dwell on earth [2.8.54–55; 3.20.38]. The pattern of an intrinsic relationship between the two tables of the law, in which the love of the neighbor is inextricably related to the worship of God and can (at times) serve as the best expression of faith, is a constant throughout Calvin’s theology and a significant marker of Calvinist piety.¹⁹ One expression of this wholistic view of the law in the life of the regenerate person is that Calvin also clearly teaches that Christians should pray for all people, including those who do not appear to have faith, because we do not know what God wills for them but it is devout and humane to wish for their good [3.20.38].²⁰

Some Distinctive Themes

Use of the Old Testament: Calvinist piety is deeply influenced by the Old Testament. The understanding of this part of the Bible is essentially similar to the third use of the law as a guide for Christians; thus the “law and the prophets” form part of God’s manifestation of the one covenant in Jesus Christ [2.9]. One of the most tangible evidences of this Old Testament dimension of Calvin’s spirituality is the appropriation of the Psalms as the prayers of the people.

Calvin’s personal attachment to the Psalms is evident in his preface to the commentary and his own use of the Psalms in a variety of ways. In this preface the usually reticent reformer not only identifies with David and so makes his only significant public autobiographical statement, but he also reveals a sense of the intense affective life which he ascribes to all the faithful.

[The Psalms] are “an anatomy of all the parts of the soul”; for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which human minds are wont to be

¹⁹ See McKee, John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving, chap. 10.

²⁰ See *Elsie Anne McKee: Calvin and Praying for “All People Who Dwell on Earth”*, in: *Interpretation* (2009), forthcoming.

agitated. ... Here the prophets themselves, seeing they are exhibited to us as speaking to God, and laying open all their inmost thoughts and affections, call, or rather draw, each of us to the examination of himself in particular ... whatever may serve to encourage us when we are about to pray to God is taught in this book.²¹

Calvin's choice of the vivid prayers of God's Old Testament people as the language of devotion for his church was consciously made with public as well as personal worship in mind. His first liturgical publication was a Psalter which included six of his own translations. Among these is Ps. 138, which the 1542 Strasbourg *La maniere de faire prieres* designates to be sung during communion.²² This is the only instance in which a particular Psalm is named, which suggests that Calvin chose to translate this one because he needed it for a specific purpose in worship. His sensitivity to the special use of the Psalms is seen also in the way that particular Psalms were assigned for singing in Geneva. Beginning in 1546, posted lists indicated to all worshipers which Psalm was to be sung at each point in the Sunday morning and afternoon and day of prayer services; those expressing petitions were to be sung on the day of prayer, while Psalms of thanksgiving were used on Sundays.²³ Symbolizing the unity of the church, everyone in Geneva sang the same Psalm at the same time, no matter where he or she might be worshiping or which minister was preaching.

Besides unifying the community in public worship, Calvin intended the Psalms to be the constant prayers of the people, as he explains in the foreword to the Psalter.

As for the public prayers, there are two kinds: the first are made with the word only, the others with song. ... And how much more widely the practice of singing may extend! It is even in the homes and in the fields an incentive for us, and, as it were, an organ for prais-

²¹ See the Commentary on the Psalms, OC 31:13–36.

²² See [*Calvin*]: *La maniere de faire prieres aux eglises Francoyses*, p. 153; OS 2, p. 49 indicates that this also appears in the 1545 Strasbourg text. *Grosse*: *Les rituels de la cène*, p. 184, apparently misses this or else is referring only to Geneva when he says that apart from a reference by Charles Perrot to the use of Ps. 23 at the beginning of the service "Aucun autre document ne laisse cependant supposer que certains pseumes plutôt que d'autres sont choisis pour les jours de cène."

²³ See *Pierre Pidoux*: *Le Psautier Huguenot du XVIe siècle*. Vol. 2 Documents et bibliographie, Bale 1962, 32 (1546), 43–44 (1549), 61–62 (1553 – here have instructions about reason for choice of some for Day of Prayer), 135 (1562). See p. 61: "Considerans que le jour du Mecredy est ordonne pour le prieres solennelles, nous avons choisi entre les Pseumes, ceux qui contiennent prieres et requestes a Dieu plus expresses pour chanter en ce jour: reservant ceux qui contiennent action de graces et louanges du Seigneur nostre Dieu et de ses oeuvres, au jour du Dimanche..." For a fuller history see *Robert Weeda*: *Le psautier de Calvin: L'histoire d'un livre populaire au XVIe siècle, 1551–1598*, Turnhout 2002.

ing God and lifting up our hearts to Him, to console us by meditating on His virtue, goodness, wisdom, and justice.²⁴

Christian Grosse points out that the same lists which ordered public worship also contributed to the use of the Psalms in personal devotion,²⁵ as individuals sought appropriate words for specific needs. One of the best known characteristics of Calvinist churches is the singing of the entire metrical Psalter in the vernacular as the common prayer of the faithful both in gathered worship and at home, in devotional practice and in daily life. It should be remembered that the Latin Psalms were the staple of the monastic daily office, and many late medieval lay people envied these “holy people” their life of unceasing prayer. When the metrical psalter became the staple of Calvinist worship, both in corporate and individual life, it functioned as another evidence of the way that Calvinists transformed the concept of the holy by giving all the faithful a common language for prayer.

For Calvin and his followers, the Psalms were not only prayers and the language of the heart but also teaching. It is notable that this is the only Old Testament book on which Calvin is known to have preached on Sundays. In fact, he expounded each Psalm when it was introduced into the Psalter, so that the people would understand what they were singing.²⁶ (This was perhaps necessary in view of the fact that the metrical form was not an exact translation, but it was also an expression of the conviction that the people must sing with understanding.) The importance of the Psalms as teaching is also seen in two other aspects of Calvin’s preaching. One is the fact that when a particular occasion of trial or thanksgiving led him to interrupt the *lectio continua* order of his weekday sermons, it was often to the Psalms that Calvin turned. On two successive weeks in Nov. 1545 the day of prayer gave special attention to the German Protestants struggling in war with the Catholic powers, first intercession for their plight and then thanksgiving for good news about the outcome of the battle. On Nov. 4th Calvin preached on Ps. 115, on Nov. 11th on Ps. 124²⁷ – apparently because these texts lent themselves to the expression of petition and trust in God, and thanksgiving to God.

²⁴ Foreword to the Psalter, OS 2,12–18; quotation 15–16; English from McKee (Hrsg.): John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety, 94, 95.

²⁵ Grosse, *Les rituels de la cène*, 166, 176.

²⁶ See list by Denis Raguénier in *Bernard Gagnebin: L’histoire des manuscrits des sermons de Calvin*, in: *Supplementa Calviniana*, vol. 2, Sermons sur le Livre d’Esaïe, chap. 13–29, Neukirchen Kreis Moers 1961, xv. See comments in Nicholas Colladon’s biography, OC 21:71 for 1549: “Au sermon du soir les Dimanches il preschoit les Pseaumes, prenant seulement ceux qui n’estoyent pas encore traduits en rythme (car desia auparavant il avoit presché les autres), et en estoit au 40.”

²⁷ See *Rodolphe Peter & Jean-Francois Gilmont* (Hrsg.): *Bibliotheca Calviniana. Les oeuvres de Jean Calvin publiées au XVIe siècle*, Genève 1991, vol. 1 #46/3 (Deux sermons).

Another evidence for the devotion to the Psalms as teaching by Calvin and his followers is seen in the fact that expositions of the Psalms were the first of the reformer's sermons to be published, and numbered among these were the only sermons which Calvin himself ever prepared for the public. The very first sermons recorded and published were the two Psalms preached in Nov. 1545, which the preacher reluctantly allowed to appear at the request of the colleague-scribe who had recorded them because Genevans were asking for copies. These were followed by Calvin's *Quatre sermons fort utiles pour nostre temps avec exposition du Pseaume 87* (against Nicodemism), which included a sermon on Ps. 16, two on Ps. 27, and an exposition of Ps. 87 (as well as one sermon on Heb. 13). Having first polished them, the reformer published these texts in French in 1552 and sponsored a Latin translation the following year, when all or part of the booklet was also quickly translated into English and Italian.²⁸ The next set of sermons brought out by his colleagues, in 1554, was the series of twenty-two sermons on Ps. 119 which Calvin had preached on Sunday afternoons the previous year. The editors explain: "This Psalm, which is called the octains, contains matter on which all Christians should meditate day and night."²⁹ Although Ps. 119 might not seem like popular reading matter to a modern audience, it is significant evidence for the way that sixteenth-century Calvinists thought the teaching of the Psalms could contribute to the understanding of the Christian life.

In addition to the Psalms, appreciation for the Old Testament as a whole became a familiar identifying mark of the Reformed tradition. Expository preaching was a common Protestant change. However, the Reformed carried this explanation of the Bible further, insisting that scripture should also be read in order; that is, the canon of the Bible should determine the order of teaching, so that each text would be read in its natural context and none of scripture would be skipped. In general, this practice of *lectio continua* stood out among the churches of other traditions (Lutheran and Church of England as well as Roman Catholic) which followed a selected lectionary of primarily New Testament texts. The fundamental Reformed

²⁸ See *Peter & Gilmont* (Hrsg.): *Bibliotheca Calviniana*. vol. 1 #52/9 ("Quatre sermons fort utiles pour nostre temps avec exposition du Pseaume 87"); #53/1, #53/3, #53/4, #55/10, #61/12.

²⁹ *Peter & Gilmont*: *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, #54/13, p. 540. "Pource que le pseaume, qu'on appelle les octonaires, contient un argument auquel tous chrestiens se doivent exercer nuicts et jours, et qu'il avoit este familierement expose par Maister Jean Calvin en autant de sermons qu'il y a de huitains: je l'ay prie, estant requis aussi de plusieurs bons fideles, qu'il souffrist que ses sermons comme ils ont este recueillis de sa bouche fussent publiez."

commitment to giving voice to the whole of the Bible was thus particularly evident in regular preaching on the Old Testament.³⁰

The high value accorded the Old Testament had another significant influence on Reformed spirituality and culture, the choice of Biblical names for their children.³¹ Calvinist teaching sharply rejected baptismal names which were considered inappropriate, such as saints' names, and gradually became known for the frequency of Old Testament given names in their communities. It is easy to underestimate the popular effect of the shift from names like Claude, Melchior, or Shroud to Abraham, Deborah, and Jeremiah, but as with the pervasive character of the language of the Psalms in Calvinist communities, the shift from names of traditional Catholic saints to Biblical and especially Old Testament saints had a profound effect on Calvinist piety. Instead of claiming the favor of namesakes found in the stories of the *Golden Legend*, Calvinists identified with the Biblical stories of their namesakes, such as Abraham or Isaac, Rachel or Hannah, Jeremiah or Amos.

Sacraments: One key characteristic of Calvin's spirituality which has often been neglected is the importance of the sacraments and their distinctive practice. Like other Protestants, the Reformed rejected private Masses and insisted on corporate celebration of the Lord's Supper with the lay members present and communing. However, the Calvinist conception of the sacraments was different from that of Lutherans or Zwinglians in particular ways. The theological differences are the best known. In contrast with the Lutheran doctrine of the necessity of baptism and the ubiquity of

³⁰ A glance at the various published sermons or lectionaries of the 16th-century suffices to show the differences; compare, for example, Luther's various postilla of expository sermons on the selected texts of the traditional lectionary with Calvin's sermons preached straight through particular Biblical books. The traditional one-year lectionary was essentially composed of New Testament selections, which might be supplemented with sermons on the Old Testament (Luther proposes this in the *Deutsche Messe*, Concerning the service, WA vol. 19, 79). However the Reformed practice of *lectio continua* meant that Old Testament books were regularly chosen for preaching.

³¹ For the issue of baptismal names in Geneva, see "Projet d'ordonnance sur les noms de baptême," OC 10:49–50; "Ordonnances ecclésiastiques 1561," OS 2, 343f. Naphy has examined the controversy over the naming practices; *William Naphy*: Calvin and the Consolidation of the Reformation in Geneva, Manchester 1994, 144–153 *et passim*. Spierling indicates that Naphy's work "risks undervaluing the religious and traditional aspects of the controversy in favor of the more 'purely' economic and political considerations" since naming ordinances were widespread; *Karen E. Spierling*: *Infant Baptism in Reformation Geneva. The Shaping of a Community, 1536–1564*, Aldershot [UK] 2005, 142–3. Spierling refers also to the tension between those who wanted to insist on Biblical names and those members of Reformed communities who wanted to retain the older family naming practices. However, the significant increase of Old Testament names in Calvinist communities is evident in baptismal and other records.

Christ's body and blood in the Supper, and the Zwinglian insistence on sacraments as pledges of faith, Calvin emphasized spiritual communication with Christ and believed that the sacraments are first means of grace, seals of the promises, and secondly confessions of faith. [4.14.5–6, 13–17]. Theology is very important to spirituality but it does not encompass it; more visible aspects Calvinist sacramental piety have to do with distinctive practices of baptism and especially the Lord's Supper.

Calvin has often been criticized for various aspects of the practice of communion, particularly the exercise of discipline in Geneva and the infrequency of celebration, but discussions of his sacramental practices have often overlooked the depth of personal spiritual involvement and role of corporate piety in the celebration of the Lord's Supper among Calvinists. This sacramental spirituality is especially clear in the rituals of preparation for communion.

Given space considerations, it is not possible to do more than list some of the rituals which Christian Grosse has very fully examined.³² Perhaps most important is the recognition that Calvin's Geneva did not so much eliminate ritualized patterns of piety associated with the Lord's Supper as change these in accordance with an altered theological understanding of the sacrament. The four annual celebrations of the Supper became the high points of the liturgical calendar, but they were not simply four days; they were the foci for weeks of heightened attention to the teaching and preaching and forming of the Christian community which was the fundamental course of religious life. The week before the celebration particular exhortations were addressed to the congregations during worship, and those among the children and other catechism students who were considered ready were examined for admission to communion. During the same time the Consistory's primary business focused on seeing that the community was ready for sharing in the Supper, with two and sometimes three sessions instead of the usual one, so that all who had been suspended might have occasion for restoration. Once a year, beginning in 1550, visitations from house to house were conducted by pastors, elders, and others (usually *dizeniers*) to see that all were fittingly prepared in understanding and life for communion. These visits usually happened in the month(s) before Easter; the timing linked this intensified examination with medieval Lenten traditions but the corporate form and particular content underwent significant alterations. The influence of the high point of the Supper extended after the celebration as well, and quarrels or other attitudes contrary

³² See *Grosse: Les rituels de la cène*. For similar expression of ritual developments in Scotland see *Margo Todd: The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland*, New Haven & London 2002, and various writings of Bernard Roussel and Raymond Mentzer for France.

to reverent faith were considered particularly heinous in proximity to the spiritual experience of the sacrament.³³

When communal discipline and the frequency of celebration of the Lord's Supper are considered from a theological viewpoint, however, the theoretical grounds of these Calvinist sacramental rituals becomes evident. This is particularly true by contrast with the practices of other Protestants.³⁴ Among Lutherans not all communicant members who were present at the service were expected to commune every time the Supper was offered; this meant that the sacrament could be celebrated more frequently with those who felt ready.³⁵ Among Zwinglians, all properly catechized people who were present were expected to participate on the four occasions per year when the Supper was celebrated; however, the sacrament served as a pledge of faith and did not require examination of life so it was not connected with social discipline. In the early Reformation in Geneva, this Zwinglian-oriented understanding was established; all Genevans were required to attend worship and the Supper, but the link with discipline had not been effectively established.³⁶ Calvin, however, who agrees with Luther that the sacrament is a means of grace, and with Zwingli that it should include all the people, draws these points together rather differently in the way he understands the role of preparation for the Supper.

In his *Short Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, when Calvin explains the way that the sacrament is to be practiced, he shows how the issues of frequency, participation, and preparation should fit together.

The time for using [the Supper] cannot be certainly fixed for all, for sometimes there are individual hindrances which excuse a person for abstaining. Moreover, we do not have an explicit commandment to constrain all Christians to commune on every day that the sacrament is offered to them. Still, if we consider well the goal to which the Lord is leading us, we will know that the usage should be more frequent than many practice it. For since weakness presses upon us we need to exercise ourselves so much the more in that which can and ought to serve to confirm us in faith and advance us in purity of life. Therefore it should be the custom in all well ordered churches to celebrate the Supper as often as the capacity of the people allows. Each person individually should prepare himself to receive

³³ *Grosse*: Les rituels de la cène, 303ff, 310ff, 331ff, 400ff, 540ff, 562ff.

³⁴ This subject will be examined more fully elsewhere but a summary is given here.

³⁵ See *Martin Luther*: Formula Missae, communion of the people, WA vol. 12, 216. For Lutheran practice, see *Susan Karant-Nunn*: Reformation of Ritual. An Interpretation of Early Modern Germany, London & New York 1997, 120.

³⁶ *Ulrich Zwingli*: Aktion oder Brauch des Nachtmahls, CR 91/ ZW 4, 15f, instructions for Easter communion 1525; for the way this developed among Zwinglians, see *Roland Diethelm*: Bullinger and Worship: "Thereby Does One Plant and Sow the True Faith," in: *Bruce Gordon and Emidio Campi* (Hrsg.): Architect of Reformation. An Introduction to Heinrich Bullinger, 1504–1575, Grand Rapids 2004, 146. For Genevan regulations, *Grosse*: Les rituels de la cène, 523 (March 30, 31, 1537, April 6, 1537).

it every time it is administered in the assembly unless there is some great impediment which compels him to abstain.³⁷

For Calvin, the Supper is Christ's gift to the church, His Body as a whole, which should demonstrate its faith by participation [4.1.8], and so all who are present should commune. It is a means of grace as well as a confession of faith, and thus everyone who shares in it – essentially the whole communicant membership – must be prepared to receive together. This preparation includes self-examination to know that she or he trusts in Christ alone and acknowledges his or her own sinfulness [4.17.42], and the corporate preparation which Grosse describes, which includes the challenge of bringing back to communion those who for one reason or another withdraw from sharing the sacraments.³⁸ The rituals of "fencing the table" and the catechetical and moral-social rituals express important dimensions of Calvin's sacramental piety, with its combination of faith and practice, of personal and communal life and responsibility.

The same strong emphasis on the corporate character and mutual responsibility of Christians is visible in Calvin's practice of baptism. Baptisms should be held only in the gathered community of the church where all the faithful can be witnesses; there are no emergencies which require private baptism, because the act per se is not salvific. The sacramental rite is the confirmation of the promise already given to the child of believers, and the parents' affirmation of the faith which they are promising to teach the child [4.15.19–20].³⁹ Like other Reformed theologians, Calvin eliminated the abundance of ceremonies which had expanded the medieval baptismal liturgy so greatly. On the other hand, Lutheran churches continued to practice private baptisms and retained a number of the liturgical traditions (such as a single exorcism), so the austere and public character of Calvinist (Reformed) baptismal piety stood out clearly.⁴⁰

While all Protestants transferred the major responsibility in baptism from godparents to parents, and emphasized that the parents' task was to rear their children in the faith, the congregational context of Reformed baptism meant that fathers (who had usually been absent from medieval church baptisms) were now necessary at the service.⁴¹ Calvin's different requirements for location, minister, and witnesses of baptism were signifi-

³⁷ *Calvin*: Petit traité de la Sainte Cène, OS 1, 515–516.

³⁸ *Grosse*: Les rituels de la cène, 523ff.

³⁹ See also *Calvin*: La forme des prières, OS 2, 31ff; Ordonnances ecclésiastiques, OS 2, 343.

⁴⁰ For a full examination see *Hughes Oliphant Old*: The Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite in the Sixteenth Century, Grand Rapids 1992.

⁴¹ See *Spierling*: Infant Baptism in Reformation Geneva, 91f for protests against the idea that fathers must be present at baptisms.

cantly new, but there was somewhat more continuity with earlier baptismal traditions in the continuation of godparent(s). However, here too the practice was noticeably changed. Calvin and many who followed him (e.g., in France) made one male godparent the norm. In the cultural context of the day, a male guardian was necessary; if for some reason the father was no longer able to fulfill his promise to rear the child in the faith, the godfather was obligated to do this. The extent to which Calvin was prepared to defend this obligation is seen in his own relationship to the infant son of William Stafford, when that English refugee died and his widow wanted to move the family to France. Because he had promised to see that the baby was reared in the faith, Calvin was not willing for the Staffords to leave Geneva until the child's mother agreed to choose a Protestant home and the family finally moved to Basel.⁴² Again, the sacramental piety combines personal and corporate action and responsibility.

Predestination and Providence: Anyone addressing Calvin's spirituality has to explain the omission of a section on predestination. Much has been written about the anxious spirituality supposedly produced by the Calvinist teaching on double predestination, but very little note has been taken of the fact that Calvin's own quasi-autobiographical description of anxiety about salvation (quoted at the beginning of this essay) refers to the time before his conversion, not after. It has also been overlooked that he did not preach on predestination very often – his text was the Bible and sermons on predestination came essentially when the Biblical text led that way. On the other hand, he devoted regular attention to the knotty pastoral challenge of providence – something which apparently was much more troublesome to Genevans and perhaps to him than predestination, and he did this in the context of corporate worship.

One of the most creative aspects of Calvin's spirituality is the very Biblical way he re-shaped the practice of liturgical time to respond to the fact that – until God calls the redeemed home – this earth and this historical time are their place of service. Generally Calvin is castigated for destroying the traditional liturgical year, a charge which should properly be addressed to – or shared with – Zwingli, Bucer, and others of the first generation Reformed tradition. As Grosse has shown, Calvin in fact reshaped the calendar to make a rhythm of four annual high points focused on the Lord's Supper. However, the reformulation of sacramental time was not the only pattern which came to distinguish Calvinist piety. Calvin's regular Day of Prayer,⁴³ which gives concrete spiritual form to his Biblically-grounded way of seeing events in the present time and place as the evi-

⁴² See OC 21:640–41, 645–46; *Spierling*: Infant Baptism in Reformation Geneva, 105ff.

⁴³ See *Elsie Anne McKee*: Calvin's Day of Prayer. Origin, Nature and Significance, in: proceedings of Calvin und Calvinismus – Europäische Perspektiven (forthcoming).

dence for God's providence, was even more consciously designed than the larger ritual cycle which developed around the Supper. The first Genevan practice of the Day of Prayer came in response to the plague, one of the natural disasters of the early modern world, but there were many other dangers in that world: the seduction of an easy but false trust in human power or virtue to please God, the lure of earthly pleasures or wealth, the discouragement of persecutions and sufferings of all kinds. Herman Selderhuis suggests that Calvin should be seen as "man between God and the world."⁴⁴ In the weekly Day of Prayer, Calvin established a constantly-recurring corporate liturgy for admonishing and comforting the faithful to see their lives and everything around them as held always before God's eyes and in God's hands. Whatever might happen in the time and space, or the human history unfolding before their eyes, or natural disasters or mercies, believers know that God is working for their good, chastising them to call them back to faithfulness, answering prayers. The conviction that God is not only present with them but also continually watching over them, for their good, is the source of the energy of Calvin's spirituality.

Calvin clearly tells his hearers that God has not promised them material good but what God has promised is never to abandon them, here or hereafter [3.2.28]. And this may stand as a fitting conclusion for an overview of Calvin as a reformer of spirituality: both the church and its members always live minute by minute, day by day, before God, who is always attending to God's people and their world, minute by minute, day by day, for their eternal good. Firmly grounded in the corporate life of the church, Calvin's spirituality is also intensely personal. God, the Holy One, is the good God in whom all redeemed sinners find their purpose and joy, while they live on earth and when they step through death into the next, perfect life.

⁴⁴ *Herman Selderhuis: God in het midden. Calvijns theologie van de Psalmen*, Kampen 2000, 273.

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Index of Names and *Places*

- Abdias 15
Aberjoux, Pernette 288
Alsted, Johan Heinrich 223
Ambrose 120, 137–138, 195
Ambrosiaster 89, 120, 129
Amerbach 196
Angoulême 69
Angrogne 67
Anne d'Este 47
Anselm 180, 250
Aquinas, Thomas 24, 86–87, 177, 181,
219, 225, 246, 264
Archelaus 93
Aristoteles 178, 219, 224, 226, 231
Athanasius 93, 120, 246
Augsburg 18, 111, 203, 258
Augustine 2, 87, 93, 120, 125–126, 131–
133, 138, 185, 190–199, 205, 233
- Bachelet, Marie 297
Badollet, Guillaume 304–305
Bancroft, Richard 283, 285
Barbelet, Guillaume 287
Barth, Karl 213, 215, 236, 240, 246–247,
250, 266
Basel 14, 53–54, 69, 71, 265, 322
Basil 120, 197
Battles, Ford Lewis 73
Bauduin 12
Bayle, Pierre 31
Berkhof, Hendrikus 251
Berlin 150
Bern 45, 265
Beza, Theodore 1, 8–23, 28–29, 56, 58,
60–61, 64–65, 88, 276, 280–281, 286–
187, 290
Blaurer, A. 63
Biel, Pamela 269
Boethius 219–220, 229–231, 239
- Bolsec, Jerome 12, 27, 31, 187, 212, 265, 283
Bonard, Antoine 288
Bonnet, Jules 40–41, 43
Borrhaus, Martin 94
Bottilier, Jacques 305
Bouchard, Thomas 10
Bouchet, Bastien 301
Bourges 274
Brenz, Johannes 94
Brunner 236
Bruno 90
Bucer, Martin 54, 67, 91, 115, 117–120, 123,
129–131, 133, 135, 140, 189, 233, 237,
259–260, 264, 322
Budé, Guillaume 53, 57, 59–60, 63–64, 67
Bullinger, Heinrich 32, 88, 94, 115, 117, 119,
123, 130–131, 135, 140, 143, 249–269,
271–272
- Cajetan, Cardinal 94
Canos, Melchior 218
Canterbury 18, 284
Capito, Wolfgang Fabricius 67, 71
Caroli, Pierre 12, 28, 79
Cassian, John 24
Castellio, Sebastian 12, 42, 204, 283
Castres 18
Catherine, Saint 7, 87
Cayet, Palma 283
Cervini, Marcello 186
Chabottes 17
Chanforan 67, 79
Charles V 118
Chemnitz, Martin 216
Chrysostom 90, 114, 118–122, 124–125, 133
Cicero 31, 58, 219–221, 229–231, 234, 239
Cincius, Bernardus 186
Claren, Jeanne de 302
Clement 93

- Colladon, Nicolas 8–9, 11, 13–16, 18, 23, 28–29, 58, 60–62, 303, 316
 Conrad Pellican 94
 Constantine 290
 Copponex, Rolette 300
 Cordier, Mathurin 274–275
Coucy 50
 Cyprian 120
 Cyril of Alexandria 120
- Daneau 18
 Delamer, Abraham 304
 Denis the Carthusian 93
 Denis, Élie 297
 Devoyon, Simon 22–23
Dordrecht 267
 Doumergue, Emile 16, 31, 41, 59
 Drelincourt, Charles 31
 Duns Scotus 176, 225, 264
 Durant, Will 283
 Duvillard, Jehanne 298
- Eck, Johannes 217
 Edmondson, Stephen 252
 Elizabeth 19, 154
Emden 284
 Enzinas 28–29
 Erasmus 2, 57–60, 64–65, 90, 115–117, 122–123, 128–131, 133, 135, 140, 145–146, 151–152, 178, 185, 188–190, 196, 204, 273
 Erastus, Thomas 268
 d'Espeville, Charles 32
 Esply, Jeanne 304
 Evagrius 24
- Falais, Monsieur de 49
 Farel, Guillaume 32, 43, 53, 55–56, 67–71, 77–80, 127, 260, 265, 275
 Faye, Antoine de la 9–11, 16–17, 21
 Feld, Helmut 123
Ferrara 45–46
 Fichet, Claudine 299
 Fisher, John 131–132
Frankfurt 187, 216
- Galiffé 42
 Ganoczy, Alexandre 85–86, 112, 114, 121
 Gerson, Jean 153
- Gibier, Eloi 10
 Gilmont, Jean–François 28, 142
 Girard, Jean 77–81, 117
 Gramelin, Matthieu 72
 Granianus, Mathias 20, 63
 Gregory of Tours 7
 Gregory the Great 24
 Gregory of Nazianzus 120
 Griffat, Claude 299
 Grotius, Hugo 239
 Grynaeus, Simon 114–115, 117, 119, 124, 127, 140
 Guise, Madame de 47
- Hamelin, Philibert 78
 Heckel, Matthew C. 189, 202
 Hedio, Gaspar 29
 Herveus 90
 Hesshusen, Tillemann 12
 Hieronymus 64, 126, 145, 231, 265
 Hitler, Adolf 283
 Hugh of St. Cher 93
 Hugues Sureau du Rosier 72
 Hutter, Leonhard 216
- Innatismus 233, 235, 237, 239
 Irenaeus von Lyon 131–132, 164, 235
- Joachim of Fiore 87
 Johann Friedrich von Sachsen 149–150
 Justiz 50
- Kingdon, Robert 285, 303–304
 Klueting, H. 258
 Knape, Joachim 221
 Knox, John 284
Köln 142, 198
 Kuitert, H.M. 161
- La Rochelle* 22
 Laune, Guillaume de 223
Lausanne 17, 49, 133, 275, 280
 Lect, Jacques 7–9, 17–21
 Leo, Bischof 51
 Leschière, Jaqueme 300
 Leyser, Polycarp 216
 Lombard, Peter 24
Lyon 49, 78, 235, 296
- Malingre, Thomas 72

- Malval* 302
 Marcourt, Antoine 78
 Marguerite de Navarre 53
 Marlorat, Augustin 28
 Mauburnus, Johannes 153
 McCormack, Bruce 247
 McGrath, Alister 297
 Melanchthon 2, 11, 115–120, 123, 126–130, 133, 140, 176, 185, 199–200, 202–204, 215–223, 226–227, 231–235, 237–239, 244, 258, 262
 Merle, Hannibal 297
 Merveilleux, Jehon 78
Metz 79
 Michel, Jean 77–80
 Monod, Léopold 43
 Morély, Jean 17, 85
 Müller, Klaus 121
 Muller, Richard 116
 Münster, Sebastian 71, 94
 Musculus 259–260

 Naphy, William C. 268, 318
 Nechâtel 42, 66–67, 69–70, 78–79, 275
 Nérac 69
 Neuser, Wilhelm 74, 210
 Nicholas of Lyra 93
Nîmes 284, 292
 Nisaeus, Johannes 222–223
 Novatian 93
Noyon 66, 70

 Ockham, Wilhelm 181, 225
 Olivetan 66–79, 133
 Origen 113, 118, 120, 122–138, 140–141
Orléans 10, 17, 60, 66, 69, 274–275
 Osiander 245

 Pape, Jacques 304
Paris 17, 24, 49, 69, 71, 79, 218, 274
 Pascard, Claude 303
 Paul of Burgos 93
 Pellinque, Antoine 289
 Périers, Bonaventure des 72
 Perionius, Joachim 218
 Perrin, François 9, 11, 23
 Perrot, Alain 41
 Perrot, Charles 315
 Pertenez, Jeanne 296
 Pesch, Otto Hermann 177

 Peter, Rodolphe 23, 85, 142, 279
 Pfister 42, 283
 Philo of Alexandria 161
 Pighius, Albert 12, 132–133, 185–200, 202, 204
 Pignier, Jeanne 295
 Piscator, Johannes 217, 223
 Plato 178, 230–231, 233
 Plettener, Tilemann 222
Poissy 28
 Pottu, Gabriel 305
 Poupin, Abel 80
 Pradaire, Jehan 305
Provence 49
 Przywaras, Erich 215, 240

 Rabanus Maurus 93–94
 Raguenier, Denis 277, 316
Ratisbonne 32
Regensburg 111
 Reinburg, Virginia 309
 Reinhard, W. 258
 Renée of Ferrara 45–48
 Richelieu, Cardinal 31
 Robert, Pierre 66
 Robespierre 283
 Roche Chandieu, Antoine de la 8, 17, 22
Rome 8, 101–103, 107, 111, 138, 308
 Ronsard 18
 Rottmanner, Odilo 198
 Rupert of Deutz 93

 Saddo, Jean 288
 Sadoletto 12, 308
 Salvart 18
 Saulnier, Antoine 275
 Saunier, Antoine 67, 69–70, 79
Savoy 8, 18, 48, 298
 Schegk, Jacob 215, 226
 Schilling, Heinz 258, 267, 285
 Sebastian Münster 94
 Servet, Michael 12, 76
 Spangenberg, Cyriacus 94
Speyer 118
 Stafford, William 322
 Stancaró 246, 248
 Stauffer, Richard 41, 43–44
 Steinmetz, David C. 237–238
Strasbourg 32, 43, 54, 67, 69, 71, 77, 79, 274–278, 280, 282, 286, 315

- Sturm, Jean 276
 Suárez, Francisco 226
 Suetonius 16

 Taurellus, Nikolaus 215
 Tertullian 19, 21, 93, 120, 131
 Tholuck, August 150
 Thomas Müntzer 148–149
 Tillet, Louis du 44
 Tissot, Antoine 303
 Tomasso de Vio 94
 Torres, Francisco 17
 Torteau, Guillaume 287
Toulouse 17, 19–20
Trent 24–25, 192
Turin 67
 Tyacke, Nicholas 18

 Usinus, Zacharias 239

 Vau, M. de la 44
 Varin, Barthélemie 304
 Varro 16, 224
 Verat Job, 299

 Vermigli, Peter Martyr 217, 259–260,
 264
 Vingle, Pierre de 66, 70, 74, 78
 Viret, Pierre 14, 32, 41, 49, 70–71, 75–81
 Voltaire 283

 Walchenbach, John Robert 120–121
Warburg 144, 147
 Wengert, Timothy 116, 127, 146
 Wesel, Arnold von 218
 Westphal, Joachim 12, 137
 Whitgift, John 18–21
 Wilhelm von Ockham 181, 225
 Woeiriot, Pierre 23
 Wolmar 275
Worms 44, 144, 147
Wurtemberg 18, 146

 Zachman, Randall 172, 203–204
Zurich 18, 88, 143, 259, 265, 269, 272
 Zweig, Stefan 42, 259, 283, 300
 Zwingli 2, 15, 88, 90, 103, 143, 173, 181,
 183, 217, 259–260, 263–265, 268, 272,
 312, 318–320, 322