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UNIO CUM CHRISTO[®]

UNION WITH CHRIST



Calvin and the Later Reformation



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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF REFORMED THEOLOGY AND LIFE

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Articles, interviews, and book reviews will consistently be in line with biblically based Reformed confessional orthodoxy and orthopraxis. Submitted or solicited contributions for its biannual issues will focus on specific themes of importance to the Reformed tradition and present debate.

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Preamble

The celebration of Luther's Reformation this year brings up once again the question of *sola Scriptura*, and in particular the problem of the role of tradition.

We tend to think that tradition is the hunting estate of the Roman Catholic Church. However, Benjamin B. Warfield reminded us that outside the Reformed faith, with its coherent doctrine of revelation and inspiration, we fall into the snares of either mysticism or rationalism. We still face both today. The tradition of the Roman Church tends towards mysticism, saints, and the numinously miraculous, while the tradition of Enlightenment humanism is all around us in rationalism in its postmodern forms, self-evident scientific truths, and politically correct liberalism with its dogmas of tolerance and social constructionism.

But as Warfield remarked, not without a touch of humor,

The Mystic blows hot, the Rationalist blows cold. Warm up a Rationalist and you inevitably get a Mystic; chill down a Mystic and you find yourselves with a Rationalist on your hands. The history of thought illustrates repeatedly the easy passage from one to the other.¹

One remarkable example of this passage in the twentieth century is found in the works of the journalist Malcolm Muggeridge, who described his pilgrimage from socialism to faith (and later to Catholicism) in his three-volume autobiography, *Chronicles of Wasted Time*. I'll never forget his description of the bust of Marx—or was it Lenin? anyway, one of the heroes of dialectical materialism—with a mystical aura of light falling on it in a “chapel” in the house of Fabian socialists Sydney and Beatrice Webb in Surrey, the moneyed garden of bourgeois England.

¹ Benjamin B. Warfield, *Critical Reviews* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 366–67.

So human tradition, human reasoning, the wisdom of the world, call it what you like, is both mystical and rationalist, and it swings like a pendulum from one extreme to the other. Mysticism and rationalism feed off each other. The human psyche needs them both.

The best way we could honor brother Martin today would be to criticize our inherent tendencies to both mysticism and rationalism and hold on to the biblical gospel: grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, Scripture alone, and to the glory of God alone. The gospel punctures both rationalism and mysticism with the double-edged sword of the inspired truth of Scripture and the immediate witness of the Spirit, God's reason, and God's mystery.

Peter Lillback had the masterly idea of writing *A New Ninety-Five Theses on Scripture*. Canons to the right of him, canons to the left of him, he maintains *sola Scriptura* against both mysticism and rationalism, and human traditions whether "spiritual" or "critical."

As Reformed believers, we must constantly turn to Scripture as our foundation and hope. This is the way forward: in faithfulness to revealed truth, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The heart of our confession is not, as in Roman Catholicism, Scripture *plus* tradition, or as in theological liberalism, Scripture *plus present rationality*, but Scripture and *the witness of the Spirit*. That makes the Reformed faith what it is, biblical truth come into its own, as B. B. W. would have said!

PAUL WELLS

Editor in Chief, *Unio cum Christo*

A New Ninety-Five Theses on Scripture

PETER A. LILLBACK

October 31, 2017

1. The church is always in need of reforming according to the Word of God if it is to remain the Christian church.
2. A program for reforming the church requires a reaffirmation of *sola Scriptura*.
3. The church's way of reading and understanding Scripture must be formed by Scripture itself, with Scripture interpreting Scripture.
4. Postmodern rejections of Scripture's story line propose substitute narratives based on an a priori rejection of the divine inspiration of Scripture.
5. Postmodern methods of biblical interpretation reject *sola Scriptura* and replace it with a biblically alien system of hermeneutics.
6. The Scriptures offer assurance and confident hope, whereas postmodern interpretations are self-focused, resulting in relativism, uncertainty, and narcissism.
7. The interpretation of Scripture is not ultimately governed by the beliefs of a community, but rather by Scripture interpreting Scripture. Without this standard, the message of Scripture is relativized, resulting in ambiguity, and theological and spiritual chaos.
8. The rule of faith of Scripture compared with Scripture and Scripture interpreting Scripture is an objective standard for truth claims, meaningful discourse, and theological accountability.
9. Confessional orthodoxy is relevant and must be taken into account in biblical and theological interpretation.
10. No church confession is infallible, as this is true of Scripture alone.

11. Confessions should be read and subscribed to with a heart commitment, while understanding that they are standards subordinate to the Scriptures.
12. Confessional subscription is to be “as far as confessions are Scriptural” and not “because they are Scriptural,” since no human document can claim to equal the unique inerrant and authoritative character of the inspired Word of God.
13. The church must reaffirm the foundational properties of Scripture as revealed, inspired, inerrant, infallible, necessary, perspicuous, authoritative, unified, self-authenticating, immutable, and canonical.
14. Scripture is known because God revealed himself and intended his self-revelation to be preserved in writing.
15. These writings were given in the original languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek), which are to be used as the basis for authoritative translation and interpretation.
16. While the Scriptures have been and must be translated into the vernaculars used by Christians worldwide, the study of Scripture in the original languages must be maintained, encouraged, and not considered superfluous for the life of the church.
17. The Scriptures are not merely human documents that become the word of God when preached or when the Holy Spirit inspires the hearts of believers with the living voice of the gospel.
18. The Scriptures are human documents that are inspired by God the Holy Spirit and preserved by his providence. They are the living voice of God (*viva vox Dei*), and fallible human preaching, enabled by the regenerating and illuminating of the Spirit’s unction, is the living voice of the gospel (*viva vox evangelii*).
19. The Scriptures in their original form (the autographs) no longer exist, although they were given through the inspiration of the authors by the Holy Spirit, so that the written words are infallible and without error.
20. Copies of the originals are so numerous and well preserved that the essential form of the originals can be known, studied, and used authoritatively for the well-being of the church.
21. Through the gospel and biblical teaching, the Scriptures created the church, which by providence and the Spirit’s guidance has been enabled to recognize the canonical Scriptures that have blessed it for nearly two millennia.
22. The canon is not a construct the church has foisted on human documents, but it was inherent in the giving of the inspired divine Word from Old Testament times, continuing into the New Testament era.

23. The so-called gnostic gospels and pseudepigraphic writings were never part of the church's canon. They appeared as a challenge to the church through an amalgam of Greek mystery religions and philosophy.
24. The canon reflects the mind of God focused on the person and work of Christ, promised in the old covenant and fulfilled in the new. It was delivered either by divinely chosen, inspired, and providentially enabled prophets and apostles or by those under their oversight, and so the inspired canonical documents were inscripturated.
25. The Scriptures cannot fail or cease to exist, as they are infallible, and as the inspired Word of God, they cannot deceive. As they reflect the eternal mind of God in revealed form, they possess a property of eternity.
26. The Scriptures cannot err in what they intend to teach in their original inspired form. The nature of God's truthfulness, omniscience, eternity, immutability, and saving goodness are inherent in the Scriptures in the human words superintended by God the Holy Spirit.
27. Because God's incommunicable attributes include eternity, infinity, and immutable perfection, the deposit of Scriptural truth carries with it the nature of a predestined text that is eternal and cannot pass away. It thus teaches, in this world and the next, the truths of God's nature and the work in Christ for his chosen people, united to Christ.
28. Disagreements in biblical interpretation exist, as we do not have all the historical, theological, and scientific data needed to fully understand what Scripture affirms. Nevertheless, the church's commitment to inerrancy is an expression of faith in what the Scriptures, as the revealed word of God, declare about God and themselves.
29. The Scriptures are inspired as a revelation of God's saving will and are necessary for the church's life and gospel ministry and also its ethic of love for God and neighbor.
30. The Scriptures are vast in scope, meaning, and mystery, and cannot be fathomed by mortal minds. However, as the essential truth of God's nature, mankind's sin, redemption, and faith and life in Christ, they are perspicuous in what they intend to teach.
31. Because the Scriptures are true, inspired, necessary, and essentially clear, all people should have them in their own languages and be taught to read, study, and apply them for their salvation and practical benefit.
32. The establishment of an elite body of interpreters takes away the right of believers to read and study the Scriptures and constitutes a restriction and denial of the perspicuity of Scripture.
33. Because the Scriptures are revealed by God and given through inspiration, they are the sole authority for believers' salvation, life, and practice of faith.

34. Attempts to diminish the authority of Scripture through philosophy, science, worldviews, higher or lower criticisms, human ideologies, papal encyclicals, councils and synods of churches, human erudition, or mystical intuitions are to be rejected as a denial of the foundational principle of *sola Scriptura*.
35. While the church's interpretation of the history of redemption has been characterized by various types of hermeneutics, no system of interpretation that rejects the unified character of God's plan of salvation in the person and work of Christ can be accepted as biblical or Christian.
36. The unity of the Bible's saving message in Christ prioritizes Scripture's references to covenant and to the saving declaration of God, "I will be your God and you will be my people," which runs through the canon of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.
37. As a written document, the Scriptures can be studied and compared with other documents for discussion and learning. However, understanding the Scriptures is ultimately possible because of their self-authenticating character, since the Holy Spirit, who inspired the text and its authors, illumines the minds of readers and hearers.
38. The Scriptures as written are intended not only to be read personally, but also to be read corporately and aloud because of the differing ways the Spirit blesses his people through visual and oral learning.
39. Heaven and earth will pass away, but the Scriptures as God's Word are eternal, and the people of God will learn their truths throughout eternity as they increase in their understanding of the grace of God in Christ.
40. God's written Word developed over time with the history of redemption and as its canonical stature grew. However, having reached canonical fullness in the New Testament, the earthly expression of the Scriptures is complete.
41. The reading and understanding of the true sense of the Scriptures is beyond the unregenerate reader, since God's truths are spiritually discerned and illumined only by the inner regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.
42. Collective reading and interpreting of the Scriptures is a profitable task, as no prophecy is given for private interpretation, and the wisdom of the Spirit is not imparted to only one generation of the church.
43. Commentaries written through the ages are useful for interpreting Scripture and for students of the written Word, in subordination to the Scriptures themselves.
44. There is no infallible hierarchy in church or academy for the development of the Scriptures' meaning or biblical doctrine.

45. The Scriptures were not given as a systematic theology, but are a dramatic expression of salvation history that can best be unified in a Christ-centered reading, in light of the unfolding of God's covenant of grace.
46. The interpretation of Scripture should be conducted with careful consideration of historical setting and authorial intent, with attention to the author's words, grammar, syntax, and immediate and broader contexts, and in light of the fullness of the canon, with an eye for how all these point to the Messiah and his redemptive work.
47. Multiple translations of the Scriptures are helpful and should be read in comparison with each other.
48. No historical setting of the written Scriptures (such as Second Temple Judaism, ancient Near Eastern religion, or primitive Catholicism) can have authority in interpreting the Scriptures over against the teaching of the Scriptures themselves.
49. Interpreters, councils, creeds, and magisterial announcements and pronouncements can be considered binding only in light of the written Word of God.
50. Difficult passages of Scripture must be interpreted in light of the clearer passages, with due humility, recognizing that some problems of interpretation will not be resolved in this earthly stage of the church's ministry.
51. Alleged contradictions or inconsistencies of Scripture are recognized as allegations, and efforts should be made to resolve tensions. If these are not resolvable, the church and interpreters are to assume an attitude of trusting faith, awaiting further evidence and greater light provided by the Holy Spirit's ministry to the church in the present or to the people of God in the coming age.
52. Scripture should be mastered, memorized, meditated upon, applied, and consulted as the circumstances of each believer enable.
53. The meaning of Scripture is generally singular, although it may have both an immediate sense and a long-term christological sense, as well as a variety of applications for the people of God throughout the ages of the church.
54. The history of revelation was given in prescientific and non notarial form, so it is not intended to be read as a text of science, a juridical record, or a scholarly statement of human history. There is, nevertheless, in Scripture's teaching scientific truth, accurate reporting, and true history.
55. A facet of the genius of divine revelation is that as the Word of God written, Scripture reflects a timeless message for all people in all civilizations and times, and it will ever be true, wise, useful, and saving, regardless of progress in finite human knowledge.

56. The creation accounts present the truth of God's role in all things, focusing on the who and why of creation, rather than the how or the when.
57. Mystery is present in all of Scripture so that many questions asked of Scripture will remain unanswered, awaiting God's fuller revelation in the coming ages.
58. Reason is a ministerial tool in interpreting the Scriptures. God is a God of order and truth who calls on his people to reason with him, as the Scriptures employ logical constructions of all sorts. Nevertheless, reason alone is an inadequate tool to address the full message of the Scriptures, which is spiritually discerned.
59. The Spirit's movement in the thought, word choices, and personalities of the authors of Scripture was not by mere dictation; the inspired written word of God retains the distinctive style and personality of the authors.
60. The distinctive theological foci of the biblical authors are not an expression of pluralism, but rather complementary emphases inspired by one and the same Spirit.
61. The spoken words of Jesus recorded in the Gospels are not attempts of the early church to create a Jesus of faith as a substitute for the Jesus of history. They are the verbally inspired and providentially preserved oral accounts of the gospel ministry of Jesus, sovereignly recorded by divine superintendence for the spiritual health of the church.
62. The distinctive themes of the Synoptic Gospels and the Fourth Gospel are complementary, not contradictory, reflecting the unique purposes of the authors and their perspectives, looking forward to or looking back from Pentecost.
63. The juridical themes of Paul concerning justification by faith are not contradictory to but covenantally consistent with Paul's experiential doctrine of union with Christ.
64. While Second Temple Judaism may be summarized as covenantal nomism, the Old Testament doctrine of the law in the covenant can never be separated from God's gracious work in divine election and mercy in forgiving grace.
65. Messianic revelation in the Old Testament is mysterious and progressive but not contradictory to or inconsistent with its culmination in New Testament revelation.
66. The interpretation of the history of salvation in the Scriptures is best expressed as organic Christ-centered revelation moving toward Christ as its goal, and outward from Christ as salvation is accomplished in him.
67. A christocentric hermeneutic reflects the direct teachings of Jesus and is supported by the New Testament use of the Old Testament.

68. The Old Testament messianic revelation is christomorphic, not explicitly messianic, reflecting the shape of redemption in Christ as part of God's plan of salvation.
69. Efforts to demythologize the Scriptures are an overt rejection of biblical revelation and a patent declaration that they are not the written Word of God.
70. The Scriptures may be interpreted by contrasting law and gospel when the saving call of the gospel is in view. However, when the Christian life is under consideration, law and gospel are best understood as the double grace of justification and sanctification (the *duplex gratiae*) in the new covenant, sometimes described as law in grace.
71. When the law is written on the heart of the believer in the new covenant, the inner law is a reflection of the revealed law of God in the Scriptures, summarized in the moral law of the Ten Commandments and Jesus's two Great Commandments.
72. The doctrine of *sola Scriptura* re-establishes the great summary mottoes of the Protestant Reformation.
73. *Sola Scriptura* as a doctrine and method of hermeneutics leads to *sola gratia*, *solus Christus*, *sola fide*, *solī Deo gloria*, and the priesthood of believers.
74. The Scriptures celebrate and inculcate salvation by God's grace alone, denying any human merit and rejecting the semi-Pelagian covenantal nomism suggested by some versions of the New Perspective on Paul.
75. The Scriptures hold forth the unique saving work of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, by the types of the Old Testament, by the explicit work of redemption accomplished by Christ, and by the apostolic affirmations of Christ as the exclusive redemptive way to God, of the sole saving name of Christ, and of the Lord's final and unique mediatorial role.
76. While the Scriptures call for obedience to God and highlight the necessity of keeping the law of God, the sinner's hope of salvation is found in the instrument of faith alone for justification.
77. The message of salvation in the Scriptures shows that justification is by faith alone, but that the faith that justifies is never alone and is always accompanied by God's saving graces contained in the covenant and experienced by union with Christ.
78. The continuing sale of indulgences by the Roman Catholic Church confirms its continued commitment to merit, even though there has been a declaration of a common commitment with Lutherans in *sola gratia*.

79. While ecumenical dialogue has its place and offers some practical social benefits, all efforts at the ecumenical integration of Christian churches must be rejected if they do not first proceed from a clear commitment to *sola Scriptura*.
80. The Scriptures insist on the theocentric doxological purpose of the church and prohibit all efforts to elevate any mere human into a place of worship, whether it be Mary, saints, apostles, popes, or martyrs.
81. The Scriptures do not give the church the ability to set the day, the time, the hour or the season of the second advent of Christ, and efforts to overcome this godly eschatological agnosticism are theological hubris and spiritual and ministerial folly.
82. The interpretation of biblical eschatology must not overlook its realized expression in the person and work of Christ, especially in his death, resurrection, ascension, and sending of the Holy Spirit.
83. The eschatology of Scripture must not be interpreted as exhaustively fulfilled in Christ's first advent. It is well described by the "already but not yet" character of the coming of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.
84. The Scriptures teach that the Second Adam was from heaven and became a life-giving Spirit, whereas the First Adam from the earth was a man of dust with the spirit of life divinely imparted to him.
85. The Scriptures maintain that the First Adam failed and through covenant breaking brought the curse of sin and death upon humanity; the Last Adam has brought the blessings of forgiveness and life for God's people through keeping the covenant of grace. There shall never be any other after him, neither any false messiah, nor Muhammad, nor any other teacher proposed by human religions.
86. The Scriptures teach that the Last Adam is also the Second Adam, meaning that he fulfills the duties that Adam failed to do and that there is no other between the First and the Last Adam who was able to do what Christ alone did, neither Moses, nor David, nor the prophets.
87. The Scriptures provide a structure for interpreting the history of salvation presented in the Bible through the contrast between the First and the Last or Second Adam.
88. Contemporary efforts of the emergent church movement to focus on feelings, social justice, and teachings acceptable to culture, at the expense of the authority, necessity, and clarity of Scripture, offer a false gospel and make idols of cultural immediacy, denying the eternal validity of the faith once delivered to the saints in the Scriptures.
89. The public and corporate nature of the church is taught by Scripture, but to interpret the New Testament as seeking only to create a new

corporate community of Jews and Gentiles denies the personal necessity of faith and repentance taught by the Scriptures.

90. The quest to integrate various fields of human knowledge with the Scriptures is a legitimate task, but the insights of Scripture and Scripture's authoritative role in the development of disciplines such as law, history, psychology, science, philosophy, and sociology must not be overlooked, diminished, or denied.
91. The Christian's world and life view is to be developed from Scripture and demonstrated to be compatible with biblical teaching.
92. The Bible's affirmations of the supernatural and the miraculous power of God are an integral part of an authentic Christian perspective on reality. Denial of miracle destroys the fabric of revealed truth.
93. The unique role of the charismatic gifts and the miraculous events of Scripture are best interpreted in what has been called the periodicity of miracles.
94. Some current expressions of what some claim to be charismatic gifts are inconsistent with the Scriptures' description and diminish the significance of the completion of the canon of Scripture that made revelatory gifts no longer essential for the church.
95. The abuse of such gifts implies that the authority of gifts has been placed over the authority of the Scriptures and creates an autonomous source of alleged revelation that either overlooks or denies biblical authority.

IN MEMORIAM

Won Sang Lee (1937–2016)

We are saddened by the passing of Won Sang Lee, December 5, 2016, after his battle with cancer for about a year and half. We wish to honor his life and legacy as a pastor-scholar and visionary churchman. Lee was born in Manchuria, China, in 1937. After studying philosophy, he obtained a masters of theology in Old Testament from Dallas Theological Seminary in 1972, a masters in Near Eastern studies from the University of Pennsylvania in 1981, and a Ph.D. in pastoral theology from Wales Evangelical School of Theology in 2010. He received honorary doctorates from Keimyung University (2002) and Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia (2015).

In 1977, Won Sang Lee was called to become the pastor of Korean Central Presbyterian Church in Centreville, Virginia, where he became Senior Pastor. By the time of his retirement in 2003, the church had blossomed to three thousand attendees at Sunday services. The church joined the Presbyterian Church in America in 1982 as a member church of the Korean Capital Presbytery and continues to flourish under the leadership of Rev. David Eung Yul Ryoo.

Won Sang Lee was the president of the Association of the Korean Churches in the Greater Washington, D.C. area. In 2002 he offered the opening prayer as a guest chaplain for the 107th Congress House of Representatives. His passion for community service was recognized and was honored in 2001 with the Virginia's Governor's Award for Community Service.

Won Sang Lee's love and devotion for world missions was evident as he worked with Milal Mission of America, a mission organization for handicapped people, and the Korean World Mission Council for Christ. He founded and was president of both SEED International and PRASSION (Prayer is Mission) International. He authored *Feed My Sheep* (Seoul:

Tyrannus, 2002) in Korean, a collection of his poems, and *Pastoral Leadership: A Case Study, Including Reference to John Chrysostom* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015).

Besides his beloved wife, Young Ja Lee, he is survived by his son and daughter-in-law, Joseph and Esther Lee; his daughter and son-in-law, Eunice and Dr. David Chu; and eight grandchildren.

Learning from Calvin's Methodology of Biblical Interpretation

DAVID EUNG YUL RYOO

Abstract

Most research on John Calvin focuses on theology and history. Yet Calvin viewed himself primarily as a minister and preacher: the Bible is the revelation of God and exposition the preacher's ultimate mission. This article examines Calvin's methodology of biblical interpretation in his sermons, his perspective on the word, and his conception of preaching. Calvin's sermons reveal four characteristics: the goal of preaching is unfolding biblical texts, biblical interpretation communicates the intent of the original author, the absolute lordship and grace of God is centered upon Jesus Christ, and the text must be applied as well as explained.

Introduction

While history refers to John Calvin as one of the greatest theologians of all time, Calvin personally preferred to be thought of as a preacher.¹ He considered preaching to be God's chosen method of revealing and fulfilling his will upon earth² as well as his central tool in

¹ James Montgomery Boice, "Foreword to John Calvin," *Sermons on Psalm 119 by John Calvin* (Audubon, NJ: Old Paths Publications, 1580, 1996), viii.

² John H. Leith, "Calvin's Doctrine of Proclamation of the Word and Its Significance for

reforming human society and church unity. Calvin's passion in preaching served as the basis of his ministry and theology, and he believed that the primary audience of the Bible was people of limited education; he stated that "the Word meets its intended audience, not through Christian commentaries and references, but only through preaching."³

Contemporary research on Calvin has mostly been on his systematic theology and his influence in church history, mainly derived from his magnum opus, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. However, considering Calvin's lifelong career as a preacher, it is startling that so little research has focused on Calvin's actual preaching. That the religious Reformation was initiated by the rededication of the church to clear exposition of the Bible and its application points to the incongruity of identifying Calvin primarily as a theologian and expert in doctrine.⁴ Finally, Calvin's self-identification as a preacher and minister requires that due focus be given to his preaching and commentaries. Fortunately, recent scholarship and literature indicate a renewed interest in Calvin's expository methodology.⁵ Calvin's commentaries are inseparable from his sermons; however, his sermons retain distinct features and dynamics that cannot be conveyed by commentaries alone. Immense treasures and insight await those who would devote themselves to the study of Calvin's sermons.⁶

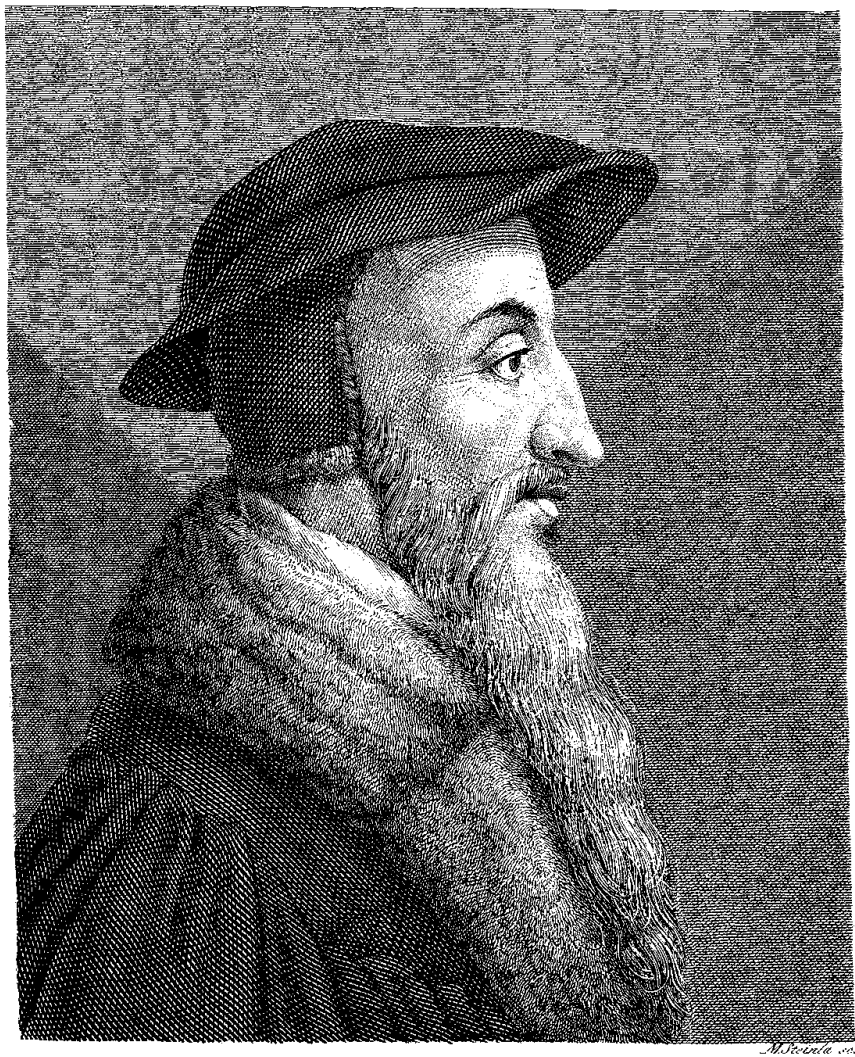
Today," in *John Calvin and the Church: A Prism of Reform*, ed. Timothy George (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 206.

³ Randall C. Zachman, *John Calvin As Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian: The Shaping of His Writings and Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 206.

⁴ "The Reformation was a great preaching revival, probably the greatest in the history of the Christian church." Charles Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 43.

⁵ Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian*, 147. For further research on Calvin's commentaries, see Elsie A. McKee, "Exegesis, Theology, and Development in Calvin's *Institutio*: A Methodological Suggestion," in *Probing the Reformed Tradition: Historical Studies in Honor of Edward A. Dowey Jr.*, ed. Brian Armstrong and Elsie A. McKee (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989), 154–72; Richard Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Barbara Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See: Calvin's Doctrine of Faith in Its Exegetical Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); David C. Steinmetz, "John Calvin as an Interpreter of the Bible," in *Calvin and the Bible*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 282–91; Hans-Joachim Kraus, "Calvin's Exegetical Principles," trans. Keith Crim, in *Interpretation* 31 (1977): 8–18; John L. Thompson, "Calvin as a Biblical Interpreter," in *Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 58–73.

⁶ Thomas H. L. Parker is renowned for his studies on Calvin's sermons. See, e.g., *The Oracles of God: An Introduction to the Preaching of John Calvin* (1947; repr., Cambridge: James Clarke, 2002); *Calvin's Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992); *John Calvin: A Biography* (1975; repr., Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006). See also "God Calls Us to His Service": *The Relation between God and His Audience in Calvin's Sermons on Acts* (Geneva: Droz,



JOHN CALVIN
1509-1564

Calvin began his preaching ministry when he moved to Geneva in 1536 at the request of Guillaume Farel.⁷ But in the face of consistent adversity, Calvin moved to Strasbourg to preach and minister to refugees in 1538. He returned to Geneva three and a half years later, on October 13, 1541, and served as a preacher at Saint Peter's Church until he was called by the Lord; all of his existing sermons originate from this period. While Calvin was fluent in the original biblical languages and Latin, he preached in French—the most accessible language in the area. The manuscript copies of Calvin's sermons between 1549 and 1564 are attributed to Denis Reguequier, who faithfully recorded Calvin's every word. His dedicated effort left a legacy of 2023 copies of Calvin's sermons, which exist to this day, even though Calvin had never preached from a written manuscript. According to Theodore Beza, Calvin preached 268 times and lectured on 186 different occasions per year.⁸

Calvin's life as a preacher was poured out for the purpose of correctly interpreting biblical texts and applying them to edify the lives of the individual listeners unto holiness. This essay focuses chiefly on Calvin's approach to biblical interpretation as manifested in his sermons. I will first provide a basic context for the understanding of Calvin's sermons by introducing his view of the holy Scripture, as well as his hermeneutic theology. Then I will provide a second context that explores the differences between Calvin's sermons and his commentaries, which, as mentioned above, are inseparable.

Calvin's approach to biblical methodology was straightforward. He preached with the goal of simply unfolding biblical texts as they were and faithfully communicating the author's intent in the text. Calvin also emphasized the absolute lordship and grace of God in each and every one of his sermons. This thematic focus naturally developed what we now call Christ-

2001) by Wilhemmus H. Th. Moehn, who discusses the relationship between God and the preacher's audience revealed in Calvin's sermons on the book of Acts, and *Calvin's Preaching on the Prophet Micah* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 2006) by Michael Parsons, which takes a close look at Calvin's sermons on the book of Micah. For a comprehensive overview of Calvin's sermons, see Steven J. Lawson, *The Expository Genius of John Calvin* (Orlando: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2007).

⁷ See Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), which introduces the life, philosophy, and theology of Calvin. To understand Calvin's view and philosophy in the context of the sixteenth century, see William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: Sixteenth Century Portrait* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). For a recent overview of Calvin's theology in the *Institutes*, see ParTEE, *The Theology of John Calvin*.

⁸ Clyde E. Fant Jr. and William M. Pinson Jr., *A Treasury of Great Preaching: Luther to Massillon, 1483–1742* (Dallas: Word, 1995), 2:141. Calvin preached twice on Sundays, and once every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. When the Geneva city council arranged to have Calvin preach on a daily basis, he would often preach every day every other week.

centered preaching. Finally, Calvin's aim was not merely to explain the biblical text, but to make sure it applied to those who listened. Calvin was a revolutionary in his time in that he desired the total transformation of the people, including their daily lives.

I. Understanding Calvin's Hermeneutic Theology

1. The Ultimate Authority of the Bible

Calvin's every moment in the pulpit was a manifestation of his ultimate passion to represent the Bible accurately and faithfully. He held the conviction that the Bible was the ultimate authority, which reinforced his confidence in preaching. Therefore, in order to understand Calvin's sermons, it is crucial to understand his view of holy Scripture.

First, Calvin understood the Bible as God's way of revealing his truth to people. He believed that the private meditation of the word, followed by its public interpretation, through the Holy Spirit, would lead sinful men to the knowledge of God.⁹ Calvin was able to preach faithfully the Bible without regard for his own life because of his theological conviction that what he was preaching was the absolute word of God. To Calvin, the Bible was the infallible, inerrant word of God; therefore, its correct interpretation would accurately reveal God's character and will to us. In an age in which the doctrines of the Catholic Church assumed priority over the authority of Scripture, Calvin's heart-cry of *sola Scriptura*, that the only doctrine the church must follow was the Bible, was a revolutionary teaching indeed. Steven Lawson states that "with this deep conviction about biblical authority, Calvin repeatedly entered the pulpit to minister exclusively from 'the pure foundation of the Word.'"¹⁰ Similarly, Hughes Oliphant Old notes that people are instinctively drawn towards Calvin's sermons because of his pure and ultimate trust in the authority of the Bible. "One of the most amazing things about Calvin's handling of Scripture is that his high regard for the authority of the Scriptures goes hand in hand with his willingness to regard it as a completely historical document."¹¹

⁹ J. I. Packer, "Calvin the Theologian," in *John Calvin* (Appleford: The Sutton Courtenay Press, 1966), 167.

¹⁰ Lawson, *The Expository Genius of John Calvin*, 25.

¹¹ Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Age of Reformation*, vol. 4 of *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 131–32. Old points out that Calvin's sermons are influential because of their focus on content and not because of their presentation. They were sermons that were unheard of before, radical in nature because the content was based upon the purely biblical picture of God's relentless grace and his agenda of faith and salvation (130).

Second, Calvin believed in the unity of Scripture.¹² Though the Bible is comprised of books written by numerous authors over a long period of time, Calvin believed that the Bible has a unified, singular message. He believed that the one and only author of the Bible is the Holy Spirit and that this author has unified the sixty-six books of the Bible into God's one and inseparable message for all times and all peoples.¹³ Calvin's belief in the unity between the Old and New Testaments is especially evident in his sermons. When he preached on Old Testament texts, he consistently supplemented the sermon with New Testament examples, and *vice versa*. The concept of biblical unity forms the foundation of the reformational principle, "Scripture interprets Scripture."

All preachers who aspire to practice biblical preaching must hold to the same high view of Scripture. Theological issues stem from biblical viewpoint, and issues in preaching ultimately stem from biblical theology. Where the Bible is not perceived as the authoritative word of God, there cannot be the accurate revelation of God's nature. Calvin's preaching was effective in drawing people to the accurate knowledge of God because of his conviction that the Bible has the highest authority in life and for salvation.

2. Calvin's Viewpoint on Preaching as the Word of God

Simply put, Calvin believed that true sermons conveyed the word of God. In support of this principle, Calvin argued that because biblical preaching involved the exposition of the word of God, the sermon itself is therefore the word of God.¹⁴ Naturally, because the Bible holds authority as God's word, the sermon must also hold the same authority if it communicates the word of God. This premise not only emphasizes the importance of the sermon as God's sacred word, but also places an enormous responsibility upon the preacher to convey the message accurately and completely. Therefore, the biblical preacher must communicate only the word of God, uncolored by human thoughts or propaganda. This is why "the relationship between preaching and the Scriptures is not merely close, but even indissoluble."¹⁵

¹² Charles Partee notes that in the *Institutes* Calvin displayed more interest in the relationship between the Old and New Testaments than in doctrine. Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 53.

¹³ Parker, *Calvin's Preaching*, 93.

¹⁴ Parker, *The Oracles of God*, 50.

¹⁵ The Bible stands as the source, standard, and criticism of preaching. The preacher, says Calvin in a hundred passages in the sermons, must declare only what he finds in the Bible. He does not enter the pulpit to advocate his own ideas, but the ideas of God, who in the church's act of proclamation, as in all her actions, "always reserves to himself the lordship and sovereign superiority" (Parker, *The Oracles of God*, 50).

Second, the sermon can become God's word because the preacher stands upon the pulpit, clothed with the authority of God, as his ambassador upon earth.¹⁶ The biblical preacher will be anointed by God through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit; therefore, his words are granted him by God alone. He is the agent of God's message and thus is vested with special authority. Calvin cautions us,

We must not think strangely of this. When the servants of God speak, they do not vest upon themselves any authority. They are only granted the power to speak the words that have been delegated to them. Therefore, preachers must never become separated from God. When a person is called as an ambassador for a King, he is delegated all power to act in the name of the King. ... The same holds for the servants of the Lord. God has called them as His tools and has assigned them a task; therefore what they do is not of their own power, but is done through the guidance of the Lord.¹⁷

The third reason why the sermon is equated with the word of God is that sermons derive from God's personal revelation.¹⁸ Calvin emphasized that God was a being who refused to be discovered by natural or unnatural human knowledge, but rather chose to disclose himself to mankind through personal revelation. Mankind may possess the seed of religious affections, but a man's rational thought, logic, and research alone cannot lead him to know the one true God. In other words, God can only be known through the revelation of Christ Jesus.¹⁹ Calvin changes the slogan from "only God can reveal God" to "only the Word of God can reveal God," which implies that Calvin limits revelation to the confines of preaching.²⁰ In conclusion, one must understand that holy Scripture is God's chosen method of special revelation in order to understand Calvin's sermons. And because the Bible is God's description of himself, preachers must not exposit biblical text according to their own ideas and philosophy. The intent of the author must be the cornerstone of all interpretation.

3. Commentaries for Pastors, Sermons for the Congregation

One effective method for understanding Calvin's sermons is to compare them to his commentaries.²¹ First, both Calvin's sermons and his commentaries

¹⁶ Parker, *The Oracles of God*, 51.

¹⁷ *Calvini opera* (hereafter, CO) 26:66.

¹⁸ Parker, *The Oracles of God*, 53.

¹⁹ Calvin's belief that man cannot obtain the knowledge of God without God's personal revelation in Jesus Christ is well portrayed in the *Institutes*.

²⁰ Parker, *Calvin's Preaching*, 53.

²¹ For commentaries and a description of Calvin's sermons, see Zachman, *John Calvin As Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian*, 147–72, where Zachman researches Calvin's work on Ephesians.

give utmost priority to identifying the intent of the author. Since both the commentary and the sermon deal with Scripture, we can see Calvin refusing to display his own thoughts and opinions; rather, he actively submits to the originally intended message of the author of Scripture.

Second, while there are similarities between Calvin's sermons and his commentaries, there are also distinct differences. Calvin intended his commentaries to be accessed by preachers and ministers, while his sermons were aimed at the lay believers of the congregation. Therefore, Calvin applied Hebrew and Latin when interpreting biblical text in his commentaries, often quoting Augustine, Chrysostom, Jerome, Zwingli, Luther, and even Plato, while providing in-depth analysis of Greek and Latin terminology. On the other hand, he preached in common French and refrained from using biblical terminology in his sermons so they would be accessible by even the most uneducated people.

Third, Calvin's commentaries only provided brief insights into the intent of the author, while his sermons were saturated with biblical exposition, also providing the listeners with Scripture's practical implications. For example, Calvin's commentaries on Ephesians were completed in 1548, with each commentary averaging 2000 letters. Calvin preached his sermons on Ephesians ten years later, around 1558 and 1559, averaging 7000 letters per sermon. The difference in length is due to Calvin's emphasis in his sermons to the application of the biblical text.

Fourth, commentaries and sermons show a divergence in choice and presentation of biblical text. For example, Calvin wrote thirty-five commentaries on Ephesians, while his sermons divided the same book into forty-eight parts. And while his commentaries were much more scholarly and academic in nature, his sermons used common phrases such as "as it is often quoted" and "as can be seen from what we found yesterday" in order to establish rapport with the audience. From these differences between his sermons and his commentaries, we can see the principles that he held in priority when interpreting and communicating biblical texts. He believed that sermons, not commentaries, were central to expositing the truth of the holy Scriptures for the benefit of the listener and for reformation within and throughout the church and society.

Thus far, I have provided a basic context for understanding and approaching Calvin's sermons. In summary, Calvin viewed the Bible as the word of God, and the preacher as the delegate. In accordance to his preaching philosophy, Calvin gave his utmost to protect the sovereignty and authority of Scripture in his life. His dedication to the word was blessed by God's providence and grace, ultimately resulting in the reformation of

the church. In the next section, I will address Calvin's methodology of biblical interpretation.

II. Calvin's Approach to Biblical Interpretation

1. Biblical Exposition as the Purpose of Preaching

To Calvin, the purpose of preaching was to unfold the text of the Bible so that the listener could understand it as easily as possible. Therefore, he sought to preach strictly upon the literal text of the Bible, to interpret it accurately and simply, and to apply it to the lives of the listeners. His methodology in doing so can be summarized into three main principles.

First, Calvin viewed conciseness and simplicity as his main concern in exposition.²² As mentioned above, even though Calvin was fluent in Hebrew and Latin, his sermons were highly accessible to the common people, as they were written in French. It is noteworthy that his emphasis on the goals of simple and concise communication did not affect his presentation of the biblical text. Calvin never strove to polish his words with literary decoration, but instead used simple language, and only occasionally encouraged listeners to use their imaginations, preferring to present by his words a clear picture of the meaning of the text.²³ This is a feature that is clearly absent from Calvin's lectures and commentaries,²⁴ as the goals of preaching and lecturing differ. As mentioned above, Calvin offered in-depth research and used the original biblical texts when educating fellow preachers, but used concise and easy terminology when preaching.

Second, Calvin preferred verse-by-verse exegesis. In other words, he read a verse, explained its meaning, and after applying it proceeded to the next verse. When an important contextual factor appeared within a text, Calvin would provide any necessary background that would help the listener understand the full meaning of the text.²⁵ While Calvin preached on biblical texts ranging from a single verse to a full chapter, he often chose two to four verses upon which to base his sermon. For example, Calvin's nineteenth sermon on Deuteronomy consisted of a text of twenty verses, while his fifth sermon on Daniel consisted of fourteen verses. With certain texts that he considered to be of great importance, Calvin would preach multiple times

²² Kraus, "Calvin's Exegetical Principles," 13. Hans Kraus introduces eight principles of Calvin's preaching.

²³ Parker, *The Oracles of God*, 71.

²⁴ Leith, "Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word," 217.

²⁵ Zachman, *John Calvin As Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian*, 103–30.

to help the listeners understand their meaning. For example, he preached on 1 Timothy 2:1–6 five times, and 1 Timothy 3:1–5 four times.²⁶

While Calvin's approach to textual exposition forms the foundation for exegetical preaching, his verse-by-verse preaching method is not one that is recommended for preachers today. The text for a classic sermon should be based upon an expository unit that is lengthy enough to contain a central theme, a comprehensive interpretation, and a point of application for the audience. Therefore, Calvin's verse-by-verse approach to preaching faces the typical limitation of such preaching—an inability to provide a comprehensive and broad message to the listener.²⁷ Another limitation of this approach is in its tendency to provide two or three themes in one message, causing the sermon to lack focus, unity, and depth.²⁸ Exegetical preaching requires the strategic selection of a text that carries or conveys a central message and involves the precise and accurate explanation and application of that message to the life of the listener.

Third, Calvin resorted to the principle of *Lectio continua* and chose the text of his sermons not by theme but by sequential order. As noted by one biographer,

the Sunday after his arrival [back in Geneva after his time in Strasbourg], he mounted the steps of the familiar pulpit, opened the Bible at the same page at which he had left off on Easter Day three and a half years before, took up the next passage as his text, and expounded it as though nothing had intervened.²⁹

Calvin refused to arbitrarily select the text of his sermons.³⁰ From November 12, 1550, to January 10, 1551, Calvin preached 28 times on Micah, and from February 26, 1554, to March of 1555, he preached 159 times on Job. Afterwards, he preached two hundred times on Deuteronomy from March 20, 1555, to July 15, 1556. Because Calvin was completely dedicated to the detailed exegesis of Scripture, it is likely that verse-by-verse preaching suited his needs, as it allowed him to sequentially address the entire Bible without missing a single verse. In light of Calvin's busy schedule, the selection of the biblical text according to its sequential order also served to relieve Calvin of the heavy burden of having to select a text every week.

²⁶ Parker, *The Oracles of God*, 71.

²⁷ O. C. Edwards Jr., *A History of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 316.

²⁸ Parker, *The Oracles of God*, 71. Parker indicates that Calvin's sermons on Job especially lack unity, often causing confusion among young preachers as they try to understand Calvin's preaching theology.

²⁹ John Calvin, *Letters of John Calvin: Selected from the Bonnet Edition with an Introductory Biographical Sketch* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), 26.

³⁰ Leith, "Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word," 213.

2. *Biblical Interpretation Must Communicate the Intent of the Author*

Calvin also adhered to the literary principle that one must refer to historical context and grammatical structure when discovering and interpreting the intent of the author in exegetical preaching. This principle is crucial, especially because in order to communicate the intent of the author, the preacher must first accurately understand the text himself before preaching. Church historian Philip Schaff writes of Calvin's biblical interpretation methodology, "Calvin held that the fundamental purpose of the Biblical interpreter ... is to find the true intended meaning of the author in the text."³¹ Calvin revealed that while preaching on the entirety of the Old Testament, it is almost the only task of an interpreter "to unfold the mind of the writer he has undertaken to expound."³² Similarly, Calvin's approach to interpreting the books of the New Testament was to fully understand the intent of the author. In his sermon on Ephesians 6:12, Calvin endeavored to fix any misunderstandings of the text by offering propositions such as, "If we were to focus on what Paul wanted to say ..." and "Through this text, Paul wants us to understand" By doing so, Calvin shone the spotlight on the critical issue of Paul's intended meaning throughout the biblical text.³³ Randall Zachman writes of Calvin's approach to biblical interpretation in his sermons on Ephesians,

Calvin does not explicate the meaning of the letter in his sermons by means of the original historical and linguistic context of the epistle, but rather in light of the meaning contained in the words Paul uses, always referenced in French translation.³⁴

He continues to offer a reason for why Calvin places such emphasis upon terminology: "The goal for exposing the meaning of the words is to arrive at the intention of Paul expressed in the passage, for Calvin is convinced that the words Paul uses are all meant to show his intention."³⁵

Calvin's emphasis on the intent of the author presents various implications. First, Calvin refused to rely on philosophical or meditative interpretation methods, instead pursuing the most natural and purposive interpretation of the text in further pursuit of the educational goals of his

³¹ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 8:524.

³² David L. Puckett, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 33. While preaching on Psalm 8, Calvin stated that he wanted to fulfill the role of a faithful interpreter in unfolding the prophet's heart.

³³ John Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians* (1562; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1998), 663.

³⁴ Zachman, *John Calvin As Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian*, 164.

³⁵ Ibid.

ministry.³⁶ Calvin was convinced that both the interpreter and the preacher must unfold the text of Scripture in accordance with the author's thoughts if they are to fulfill the intention of the writer of the biblical text. After studying Calvin's commentary on John 18:38, William Bouwsma comments on Calvin's interpretive inclinations,

In light of the Biblical text, it seems that Calvin shifted from an emphasis on philosophical knowledge to Biblical and exegetic concepts of knowledge and communication. When considering the intended audience to which the Scriptures were addressed, the Biblical text is far from philosophical, and Calvin's tendency to drift away from the philosophy is in accord with this view.³⁷

While many attempt to define Calvin as the theologian who founded systematic theology, or as an apologete who defended and argued for Christian truths, Calvin actually enjoyed being identified as a minister, an educator, and a preacher. All of his sermons and commentaries are aimed at helping preachers to heighten their understanding and appreciation of the Bible and to provide guidelines for aspiring preachers. Today's preachers show a serious misunderstanding of Calvin's legacy when they continually philosophize God's words; only through a return to the basic and natural exegesis of the Scriptures can the modern church find its biblical foundation for preaching.

Second, Calvin's focus on the intent of the author diverged from the tendencies of medieval churches. The interpretive culture of the period was to engage in biblical interpretation based on various literary, philosophical, humanistic, and civic approaches. Calvin refused to yield to his contemporary culture and focused purely on the meaning of the text based on the intent of the author. Calvin especially pointed out the difference between his approach and allegorical interpretation, concluding that the emphasis in biblical interpretation must be on the true and appropriate meaning of the text.

I am not unaware of the seemingly beneficial aspects of allegorical interpretation. But if we were to take the teaching of the Holy Spirit seriously, these ideas which have enticed us so convincingly at first glance will vanish from our view in an instant. I will not succumb to such temptations. ... for true meaning, when thoughtfully confronted, will flow naturally from the text of the Scriptures.³⁸

³⁶ Ford Lewis Battles, "God Was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity," *Interpretation* 31 (1977): 20.

³⁷ William James Bouwsma, "Calvin and the Renaissance Crisis of Knowing," *Calvin Theological Journal* 36 (1982): 207.

³⁸ *CO* 41:199 (on Dan 10:5-6).

This emphasis upon the voice of the author of the Bible was Calvin's biggest contribution to the struggle against the limitations of medieval interpretative methodology.

There are two reasons for Calvin's unyielding reliance on textual meaning. First, Calvin believed that the natural interpretation of the author's intent was the method endorsed by the Bible itself. Second, because the Scriptures were recorded for the purpose of people having easy access to it, this precluded the necessity of any sophisticated interpretative mechanisms or theories. Meaning not based on the text of Scripture, no matter how graceful or powerful, will not represent the full meaning that God intended to communicate. By clarifying that the Bible was purposely written to be accessible and easily understood, Calvin has provided the church with an accurate and biblical interpretative foundation that applies even to preachers today. Scripture was written not to be criticized and analyzed, but to be heard, accepted, and understood.

Third, Calvin viewed the intent of the various authors of the Bible and the intention of the Holy Spirit, as the ultimate author of the Bible, to be one and the same.³⁹ Is it the same? Can it ever differ? These questions pose immense and fierce interpretational questions, even among the most orthodox scholars and preachers. It is not clear even yet if an emphasis on the author refers to the human author or the Holy Spirit. In the face of such controversy, Calvin fearlessly equates these two different authors as one and interprets their intention as one. He does not permit disparity between human and divine purpose in Scripture and believes that there are no multiple meanings (*sensus plenior*) that differ from the intent of the prophet who originated the message. While interpreting Psalm 87, Calvin explains, "The intent of the prophet and the intent of the Holy Spirit are so closely interrelated that they are, for all purposes, interchangeable."⁴⁰

This unified identification of the human and spiritual author of the Bible is incredibly important in terms of biblical interpretation, as it provides clear and specific answers to questions such as, Does the author suggest a meaning beyond what is represented in the literary text? and, Did the author fully understand all that the Holy Spirit has explained and record it correctly? and Can the author be inspired to the degree that he is unconscious or unaware of what he has been inspired to write? Calvin boldly answers that the human author of Scripture fully understood the intent of God when he wrote the text. Calvin's interpretative stance leaves us with a legacy which

³⁹ See Puckett, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament*, 32–36.

⁴⁰ Calvin's commentary on Psalm 87:3 (CO 31:801).

fully answers the modern question, Whose understanding do I rely upon when interpreting the Bible: the reader's or the author's?

Modern interpretative trends have drifted from an emphasis upon the intent of the author and toward the subjective understanding of the reader or listener. The reality is that many such modern preachers and listeners are uncomfortable with the fact that there can actually be a living intention behind the text. But those who believe that the word of God comes from the mouth of God are encouraged to actively pursue and discover the intent of the author when interpreting biblical texts. Only when preachers are unshakably convinced that they are communicating the intent of the author can they boldly proclaim after each sermon, "This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God."

3. The Sovereignty and Grace of God in Christ Jesus

In contrast to Luther, whose main focus was upon Christ-centered sermons, Calvin's sermons focused upon God's sovereignty and grace. Calvin's sermons based upon this theme exhibit the following characteristics.

First, a central theme discovered in Calvin's sermons is the sovereignty and grace of God, found in Christ Jesus. Calvin goes further to make it evident in his sermons that God's sovereignty and grace are inseparable from the personhood of Jesus. This is an essential foundation that underlies all of Calvin's sermons and commentaries. After comparing Calvin's and Luther's sermons, Sidney Greidanus observes the following characteristics in Calvin's sermons on the Old Testament:

Luther was concerned mainly about the issue of salvation and focused on justification by faith in Christ. Consequently, finding Christ in the Old Testament became Luther's priority. Calvin, though affirming justification by faith in Christ, has a broader viewpoint; namely, the sovereignty and glory of God. The broader perspective enables Calvin to be satisfied with biblical messages about God, God's redemptive history, and God's covenant without necessarily focusing these messages on Jesus Christ.⁴¹

As mentioned by Greidanus, Christ is not always depicted in Calvin's sermons in the Old Testament. However, we can find that Calvin repeatedly refers to Jesus Christ, either directly or indirectly, in all of his sermons on Genesis, often portraying Jesus as the manifested fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.⁴² Calvin never interpreted the Old Testament by

⁴¹ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 127.

⁴² John Calvin, *Sermons on Genesis: Chapters 1:1–11:4*, trans. Rob Roy McGregor (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009).

itself, but gazed upon it in light of the New Testament. Calvin's purpose in preaching was to reveal the mercy and grace of God, which appears to human beings regardless of their limitations and sinfulness. And the embodiment of such mercy and grace was perfectly represented in the personhood of Jesus Christ. Because of this, we must conclude that in the center of Calvin's biblical interpretation methodology there is Christ Jesus.

Second, in Calvin's sermons, the love and grace of God are revealed through Christ and the cross. We cannot become preoccupied with Calvin's emphasis on God's sovereignty and grace to the point that we become blind to his elaborate portrayal of the fulfillment of God's sovereignty and grace in the cross and resurrection of Jesus. Thomas Parker concluded that we must not moralize Calvin's gospel as a simple teaching, but recognize that his sermons proclaim the grace of God in Jesus Christ.⁴³ To Calvin, who emphasized man's fall from grace and his enmity and open rebellion toward God, Christ was the ultimate channel through which redemption could be granted. For example, in his sermon on Ephesians chapter 1, Calvin starts by praising the grace and glory of God given through Jesus Christ. "The good he has done us in Jesus Christ is beyond all comparison more excellent and noble. For we shall see hereafter that such as know the love that God shows us in our Lord Jesus Christ have all that they can wish, high and low, far and wide."⁴⁴

Calvin's God-centered focus on Jesus Christ is exemplary for all Christian preachers today. In fact, the Master Preacher, Jesus, interpreted the Old Testament through this same principle. "And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me" (John 5:39). The "Scriptures" referred to by Jesus is, of course, the Old Testament. Because the Old Testament records the Messiah who was to save mankind from its sins, it can be said that there is no book that is un-messianic in the Old Testament.⁴⁵

⁴³ Parker, *The Oracles of God*, 81–82.

⁴⁴ Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians*, 16.

⁴⁵ David Larsen, *The Anatomy of Preaching: Identifying the Issues in Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1989), 167–68. For arguments that all sermons must be revelatory of Christ Jesus, see Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). And for an interpretational basis for Christ-centered preaching, see Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007).

4. *Biblical Interpretation for the Purpose of Specific Application*

Calvin considered biblical exegesis as the first priority of preachers, but his ministry did not stop at exegesis. His sermons were aimed specifically to help lay Christian listeners, who lived in varying circumstances and times, to apply the word of God to their lives and be transformed unto holiness. In his sermon on 2 Timothy 4:1–2, Calvin criticizes the uselessness of doctrine without application: “If the application and practice of discipleship were left to listener, they would not be able to move a single step to follow in Christ’s footsteps. Doctrine in itself cannot benefit anyone.”⁴⁶ Doctrine without application is a boat without a rudder. There must be direction and purpose in an exegetical sermon. While exegesis can form the foundation for preaching, it cannot become the goal of preaching. Calvin reflects the importance of application in the time and space that he allots to the practice of the word in his sermons, resulting in sermons that are substantially lengthier than their commentary counterparts. While commentaries are limited to explaining the meaning of the text, the sermon is preached to reflect on the text, to reflect on our lives, and to apply Scripture where it is most needed.

Calvin’s application of the word in his sermons shows the following characteristics. First, Calvin bases the practice of the word upon its accurate exposition. Zachman comments that “Calvin’s method in his sermons is to bring Paul’s meaning and intention to light, so that the congregation might always have that meaning in mind, in order to transform the way they think and the way they live.”⁴⁷

According to Parker’s summary of Calvin’s sermons, Calvin interpreted each verse of the biblical text and based the application of the text on his interpretation;⁴⁸ his application of the text was guided by the wording and the text itself.⁴⁹ One thing to note is that Calvin believed that the temporal or spatial discord between the time at which the text was written and the time at which it was being preached did not hinder the application of the text in any way. In fact, we can see Calvin applying the words of Paul to the Genevans identically to how he applied them to the Ephesians, concluding that in his sermon he had delivered “holy Scripture truly expounded and

⁴⁶ John Calvin, *Sermons on the Epistles to Timothy and Titus* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), 945–57.

⁴⁷ Zachman, *John Calvin As Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian*, 169. For a comprehensive introduction to the relationship between Calvin’s commentaries and sermons on Ephesians, see pages 163–72.

⁴⁸ Parker, *The Oracles of God*, 70–71.

⁴⁹ Parker, *Calvin’s Preaching*, 117.

applied rightly to our use.”⁵⁰ While the Scriptures are addressed directly to the audience of that time, Calvin believed that the text was applicable at face value to the circumstances and the people of his own day.

A sermon is comprised of exegesis and application. Application without exegesis is empty action, and exegesis without application is empty teaching. Biblical application of the text requires that the application be based upon the accurate and appropriate exposition of the word. Haddon Robinson states,

In the expository sermon the idea is derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context. This deals first with how the preacher comes to his message, and second, with how he communicates it.⁵¹

According to this definition, expository preaching requires research followed by research-based application. Exegesis and application are inseparable. Calvin was a preacher who well understood the synthetic and complementary relationship between the two.

Second, Calvin emphasized that application must start from the self. He believed “it would be better for [the preacher] to break his neck going up into the pulpit if he does not take pains to be the first to follow God.”⁵² It is noteworthy that Calvin addressed the audience as “we” instead of “you,” emphasizing the fact that the preacher must, in all humility, be the first to apply the word of God in his life. He observes,

Seeing that the assembled flock ought to hear the word of God by the mouth of a man, he that speaks must certainly testify that it is all in good faith, and that he has such a reverence for the teaching he proclaims that he means to be the first to be obedient to it, and that he wishes to declare that he is not only imposing a law on others but that the subjection is in common and that it is for him to make a start.⁵³

Calvin’s revolution was possible only because his sermons and his commentaries were exemplified in his godly life. He preached with words in the pulpit and preached with his life outside. Preachers today must understand that they are obliged not only to interpret and communicate biblical text, but also to be transformed first and foremost in the presence of the word of God. Calvin’s view of preaching tells us today that the word of God does not discriminate in its choice of audience, but that all who stand before it

⁵⁰ Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians*, 363.

⁵¹ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (1980; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 21.

⁵² CO 26:304.

⁵³ CO 53:257.

are accountable to practicing it in a God-fearing manner. Phillip Brooks's principle of "Truth through Personality" conveys this truth,⁵⁴ as does Robinson's preaching philosophy.⁵⁵ Calvin not only influences readers and listeners throughout all ages because of his excellent commentaries and sermons, but he does so moreover by the life of holiness that complemented his preaching. He was a true man of God who as a preacher humbly submitted to the authority of the word he preached to his audience.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have discussed Calvin's hermeneutic philosophy and his interpretative methodology in his sermons. Calvin believed that the Bible was the authoritative word of God and thus was able to proclaim the word in all confidence. His unwavering trust in the Bible enabled him to adopt an interpretative philosophy that understood and unfolded the word at face value. He also viewed the sermon as a communication not between man and man, but between God and man, where the personhood and will of God was revealed through the sermon.

Calvin's hermeneutic philosophy encourages us to renew our attitude toward preaching and the word. Both the preacher and audience must recognize the voice of God in the Bible. We have also discovered that Calvin's sermons, when analyzed against the backdrop of his commentaries, reveal Calvin's preaching theology and his belief that preaching accurately unfolds the Bible as it is. Calvin proclaims even today that preachers must bear the heart of God and interpret his word through the Holy Spirit, and it would be wise for preachers today to listen with an open heart.

⁵⁴ Phillips Brooks, *The Joy of Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1989), 27.

⁵⁵ Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 21.

Calvin: Interpreter of the Prophets

BYRON G. CURTIS

Abstract

This article explores the hermeneutical principles behind John Calvin's commentaries and lectures on Isaiah (1550/1559), Hosea (1557), the Minor Prophets (1559), Daniel (1561), Jeremiah (1563), and Ezekiel 1–20 (posthumous, 1565). Calvin is not the founder of historical-grammatical exegesis, the precursor of the historical-critical method, or a literalist. He crystallizes earlier medieval practices with his expanded *sensus literalis*. His use of history, grammar, allegory, anagogy, and analogy receive attention, as do the sources of Calvin's historical and chronological errors. Calvin takes ancient Israel's return from exile, Christ's death and resurrection, and the church's present condition as embraced within the *literal* sense of the prophetic word. This inclusiveness allures us as Calvin's pastoral passion comes out and the prophetic word addresses us.

If God has endued me with any aptness for the interpretation of Scripture ... I have faithfully and carefully endeavored ... to preserve genuine simplicity, adapted solidly to edify the children of God, who, being not content with the shell, wish to penetrate to the kernel.¹

¹ John Calvin, dedicatory epistle to King Gustavus of Sweden, January 26, 1559. Preface to *Hosea*, volume 1 of *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, Latin original, trans. John Owen, Calvin Translation Society (Edinburgh, 1846). <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/cal-com26.iii.html>. All commentary citations are from this Edinburgh edition (1844–56), also available in reprint from Eerdmans (1948–63), and Baker Book House (2004); henceforth cited as *Comm Hosea* 1:1; *Comm Dan* 5:1, etc.; with its ccel webpage.

Introduction

John Calvin, an Old Testament scholar? That seems a strange attribution. Yet Calvin devoted himself with remarkable tenacity to the interpretation of the Old Testament, and especially to the books of Israel's prophets. "I desire to spend the remainder of my life in this kind of labor."²

He did so using the new Renaissance methods of the humanities: a contextual hermeneutic that we too easily label "historical-grammatical." In Calvin's able hands, the tools of exegesis penetrate deeply into the kernel of the text. His method refines ancient Antiochene literalism by practices developed in late medieval biblical scholarship and the literary and legal scholarship of the Renaissance in which he had been so well nurtured. His readers find powerful exposition of the prophets' ancient meaning and clear application to the life of faith.

Blithely labeling his method "historical-grammatical" diminishes our understanding of his achievement. With Calvin, both history and grammar are crucial. Yet that description fails to plumb the depths of his rhetorical sense and misses his profound use of what the medievals would have called *anagogy* and *analogy*, ancient paths to the prophetic vision of Jesus Christ, Savior and Son of God, who spoke from the burning bush.³

Calvin makes no clean break with medieval exegesis. It is misleading to claim, with Philip Schaff, that he is "the founder of modern historical grammatical exegesis."⁴ Neither can we assert, with Hans-Joachim Kraus, that "the foundations of modern biblical study are laid in Calvin's adoption of the works of Medieval Jewish scholars."⁵ Nor can we agree with Emil G. Kraeling's notorious dictum: "Calvin was purely a Biblicist. ... Supremely logical ... he interprets Scripture literally with a lawyer's precision" in arid literalism.⁶ The truth is subtler and more substantial than any of these claims.

Calvin certainly believed, with all the church, that the work of faithful Christian exegesis enjoys God's favor only in the light of Christ and under

² John Calvin, dedicatory epistle to King Gustavus, *Comm Hosea*.

³ Calvin, *Comm Exod* 3:2. Here he rejects allegories while insisting that the Old Testament saints never had any communication with God "except through the promised Mediator," https://www.ccel.org/study/Exodus_3:1-15.

⁴ Philip Schaff, "Calvin as a Commentator," *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 3.11 (1892): 466.

⁵ Hans-Joachim Kraus, "Israel in the Theology of Calvin—Towards a New Approach to the Old Testament and Judaism," *Christian Jewish Relations* 22.3–4 (1989): 75.

⁶ Emil G. Kraeling, *The Old Testament since the Reformation* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969): 23–25.

the rule of prayer. But next come *grammar* and *history*. He takes the text in its original language and in its distinctive time, place, and circumstance. He then enriches history and grammar by broadening the definition of “literal,” extending the method of certain late medieval exegetes and astutely applying what medievals would have called *anagogy* (a term he *sometimes* resists) and *analogy* (a term he much approves). The result? Rich expositions that instruct the patient reader.

I. *Historical Exegesis*

Calvin was devoted to historical exegesis. As a young Renaissance scholar, he had mastered first the Latin and then the Greek classics. These sources, plus a remarkably thorough knowledge of the Bible, afforded him the acquaintance with antiquity that supported his interpretive endeavors. He leaned upon ancient Greek historians such as Herodotus and Xenophon for his facts about the Near Eastern world of the Old Testament, augmented by Josephus, whose chronology graced the pages of some Renaissance-era Bibles, and by various patristic, medieval and Renaissance chronographic sources. Among these, we must name Jerome’s *Chronicon*, at that time the most authoritative Christian registry of the dated sequence of ancient events.⁷ More important for Calvin’s work on the Old Testament Prophets, we must name the 1534–35 *Hebraica Biblia* of Sebastian Münster (1488–1552), the best Hebrew study Bible of the Renaissance, which printed the standard medieval rabbinic chronology unrevised.

Calvin is usually reluctant to name such sources. However, in the Daniel commentary, where Calvin’s penchant as historical *raconteur* is most evident, he cites the ancient historians Herodotus, Megasthenes, Polybius, Plutarch, and Xenophon, and he spices his prose with citations of such poets, playwrights, and pundits as Cicero, Homer, Juvenal, Ovid, Terence, and Virgil.⁸

Calvin’s sources for the ancient Near East are thus rather meager. Today we revel in abundance: Sumerian king lists, Akkadian royal annals, Babylonian chronicle texts, Aramaic letters, and the like. Calvin lacked all these. Akkadian, the principal language of these sources, was not deciphered until

⁷ http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/jerome_chronicle_00_eintro.htm. For Calvin’s use of the *Chronicon*, see Irena Backus, “Calvin’s Judgment of Eusebius of Caesarea: An Analysis,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 22 (1991): 419–37. I am also indebted to Professor Backus (private communication) for the point that Calvin’s chronology probably used Josephus’s.

⁸ These are listed in the index of “Authors, Sacred and Profane” at the end of *Comm Dan*, vol. 2:509, omitting only the geographer Megasthenes, who is cited in *Comm Dan* 5:1 (= 1:305–06) under the spelling *Metasthenes*. <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom24.xi.i.html>.

1850, three hundred years after Calvin.⁹ Archaeology did not exist. Of the triad upon which Old Testament historical study steadily rests today—Bible, Akkadian, and Near Eastern archaeology—Calvin possessed but one: the Bible. He must have struggled mightily to understand how Herodotus’s *Histories* or Münster’s rabbinic chronology intersect the biblical narrative.

Despite his extraordinary success in interpretation, Calvin was often mistaken about questions of chronology and the identity of ancient persons. For example, his comment on Daniel 5:1 attempts to correlate the seventy years of Judah’s exile with the lengths of the reigns of the neo-Babylonian kings Nebuchadnezzar and Amel-Marduk, the “Evil-Merodach” of the King James Version.¹⁰ But Nebuchadnezzar reigned not forty-five years, as Calvin’s source says, but forty-three. And Amel-Marduk reigned neither twenty-three years nor thirty, as Calvin’s disputing sources report, but two. *Seder Olam Zutta* and Münster report it as twenty-three.

Or again, Calvin misidentifies the elusive Darius the Mede of Daniel 6 as Cyaxares II, the alleged father-in-law of Cyrus the Great. This error stems from his misreading of Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*, a work about the ideal education of the Persian Empire’s remarkable founder. Like Rousseau’s *Emile*, the *Cyropaedia* is intentional fiction, to teach about education. The character Cyaxares II was evidently invented by Xenophon: an extra king or two adorns any checkerboard.

Ironically, on the very page on which he makes the mistake about Xenophon’s Cyaxares II, Calvin correctly judges the *Cyropaedia* as fiction: in it, the author “fabled most boldly.”¹¹ For this mistake and others like it we should not judge Calvin harshly.

In matters of Old Testament chronology Calvin relied on Münster’s *Hebraica Biblia*, a heavily annotated work in Hebrew and Latin on facing pages.¹² Münster’s Hebrew Bibles in their various editions enjoyed widespread

⁹ See Peter T. Daniels, “The Decipherment of Ancient Near Eastern Scripts,” in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jack M. Sasson (New York: Scribner’s, 1995), 81–93.

¹⁰ *Comm Dan* 5:1. <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom24.xi.i.html>.

¹¹ *Comm Haggai* 1:1 (= 5:318). <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom29.v.ii.i.html>.

¹² I am grateful to my former teaching assistant in Hebrew at Geneva College, the Reverend Brian Wright of Sterling, Kansas, for the delightful news early in 2015 that a fine copy of Münster’s 1534–35 *Hebraica Biblia* resided less than fifty miles from my front door, in Pittsburgh, at the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary’s library. www.rpts.org. Later, Geneva College Reference Librarian Kathryn Floyd heroically located an obscurely listed online version. Münster’s second volume (1535), containing both the *Seder Olam Zutta* and the Prophets in Hebrew and Latin is available here: <https://opacplus.bsb-muenchen.de/metaopac/search?oclcno=164560214&db=100>.

popularity with Christian exegetes.¹³ Calvin owned a copy of the 1534–35 first edition. Münster gained fame as a polymath scholar known for his beautifully published works in Hebraica and geography, including the lavishly illustrated *Cosmographia Universalis* (1544), a Renaissance best-seller. He befriended the young Calvin when the latter arrived in Basel in 1534 or 1535, the very time this Bible was produced.¹⁴ These two Protestant scholars kept up a long and friendly correspondence. Johann Eck, Martin Luther's most able Roman Catholic opponent, ridiculed "Rabbi Münster" because of his constant citations of Jewish sources.¹⁵

Münster's rabbinic sourcing especially influenced Calvin's chronology of Old Testament Israel. Münster's chronology is, in fact, the standard rabbinic chronology developed in a Hebrew text traceable in its major features back to 160 A.D.: the *Seder Olam Rabbah*, "The Great Order of the Ages." This lengthy work was in turn abridged: the *Seder Olam Zutta*, "The Brief Order of the Ages," a work whose basic text is traceable to 804 A.D. That text is printed in full in volume 2 of Münster's Bible (pp. 7–9) adjacent to Isaiah chapter 1, both in Hebrew and in Münster's Latin translation.

Whether *Seder Olam*'s chronology entered Christian exegesis through Münster, I cannot say. However, Münster seems the main source for Calvin's Old Testament chronology.¹⁶ Determining the exact source—or independence—of many a chronological claim in the commentaries remains a vexed question.

Classic moral theology makes a worthy distinction between sins of *vincible ignorance*, a lack of knowledge that could have been overcome by honest effort, and sins of *invincible ignorance*, a lack of knowledge that could not have been overcome by even the most strenuous effort. In regard to historical puzzles, Calvin mainly suffers from an invincible ignorance, though in a few cases, I deem, Calvin suffers from vincible ignorance. Nonetheless, with what meager historical materials he had, and with what

¹³ Raymond A. Blacketer, "Calvin as Commentator on the Mosaic Harmony and Joshua," in Donald K. McKim, ed., *Calvin and the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 33 and n. 18. Cf. Wulfert de Greef, "Calvin as Commentator on the Psalms," trans. Raymond A. Blacketer, in McKim, ed., *Calvin and the Bible*, 87 and n. 6. See also Anthony N. S. Lane's judicious study of the sources used in Calvin's Genesis commentary, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 232–34. Among Lane's conclusions is this: "Calvin is rightly regarded as one of the great commentators of all time. This is all the more remarkable when we consider how little time he had and how little he read" (ibid., 234).

¹⁴ Was Calvin's copy a gift from its famous editor?

¹⁵ So Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 51.

¹⁶ I am indebted to Professor Irena Backus (private communication) for the suggestion that Calvin used Münster's *Biblia Hebraica* for chronology.

limited leisure he had to study amid an astonishingly busy, controverted, and internationally significant pastorate, he did very well. With his ever-present ingenuity, he made maximal use of minimal sources.¹⁷

II. *Grammatical Exegesis*

Along with historical exegesis, Calvin was also committed to grammatical exegesis. This interest he held in common with contemporary Renaissance humanist scholars. Foundations for this grammatical interest lie in part in the legal studies of his youth. In 1528 the nineteen-year-old Calvin enrolled as a law student at Orléans, drawn by what biographer Bruce Gordon calls the “magnetic force” of Frenchman Pierre de L’Estoile, whose mastery of the vast corpus of legal literature was renowned. Calvin was impressed. De L’Estoile’s method divided legal texts into topical genus and species categories, yet without much regard for the historical origins of the individual texts. For him, mastery of the topics in their detail was the key to understanding law.

After study with de L’Estoile, Calvin traveled to Bourges to seek out the university lectures of de L’Estoile’s archrival, the Italian jurist Andrea Alciati, famed for his rhetorical and historically situated analyses of classic legal texts.¹⁸ It seems that Calvin’s biblical scholarship combined the best of both methods: mastery of the vast contents of holy Scripture abetted by detailed attention to social, historical, grammatical, and rhetorical analysis.

Those who heard Calvin lecture on the Old Testament report that he carried nothing with him to the pulpit except a Hebrew Bible. He would open to the text for that day, extemporaneously translate the text into something close to word-for-word Latin, and proceed to lecture, again extemporaneously, in clear unadorned Latin without any notes.¹⁹ One might think such lectures assuredly dull, yet in the late 1550s and early 1560s

¹⁷ Nicholas de Gallars, one of Calvin’s apt young secretaries, tells us with breathless amazement that Calvin “was harassed by so much business that he scarcely had leisure to read.” See his “Prefatory Advertisement to the Readers,” in *Comm Isaiah*, 2:ix. <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom14.iii.html>. For Gallars’s life and friendship with Calvin, see Machiel A. van den Berg, who calls him “a trusted friend”: *Friends of Calvin*, trans. Reinder Bruinsma (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 174–84. For Calvin’s “maximal use of minimal sources,” see Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers*, 6 and 234.

¹⁸ Gordon, *Calvin*, 19–21. Wulfert de Greef calls Alciati the “founder of the historical approach to the study of law”; Wulfert de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 5.

¹⁹ So reports another of Calvin’s apt young secretaries, John Budé, in his preface to the Hosea commentary: *Comm Hosea*, 1:xxvii = <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom26.v.html>. The report in the printer’s preface to the Daniel commentary is similar (*Comm Dan*, 1:lxii).

crowds of perhaps a thousand people crowded around to hear them.²⁰

In his lectures, Calvin's Latin renderings of the Bible conform neither to the Vulgate nor to any known version. His Latin sometimes reappears in variant form later in the lecture, especially in phrases where the original Hebrew is difficult. These two observations underscore that Calvin was proficient in Hebrew. Moreover, they support Calvin's own self-assessment: he clearly deemed himself competent enough to make independent lexical, grammatical, and syntactical judgments about the Hebrew text, and competent enough to criticize the judgments made by other scholars. This is a far cry from the charge leveled by the Hebraist and Roman Catholic polemicist Richard Simon (1638–1712) that Calvin was familiar with little more than the Hebrew letters.²¹

When, where, and from whom Calvin learned Hebrew remain a mystery.²² Kraus, a well-known Old Testament scholar, believed that Calvin became fluent enough in Hebrew to read the great medieval Jewish commentators, not in the Latin compendia made by the Christian scholar Nicholas of Lyra (ca. 1270–1349) used by many including Luther, but in their Hebrew originals. This claim is surely overstated.²³

Like Luther, Calvin too remarked that it is useful to consult the rabbis concerning Hebrew grammar but not about biblical interpretation.²⁴ In his

²⁰ Peter Wilcox, "The Lectures of John Calvin and the Nature of His Audience, 1555–1564," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 87 (1996): 136–48. During Calvin's ministry in Geneva, the population of the city more than doubled from roughly 10,000 in the mid 1530s to between 12,400–13,893 by 1550, to a much-crowded 21,400 by 1560. The sharp increase sprang from the disruptive influx of refugees fleeing religious persecution. Most of these were French. See William G. Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 227. The population figures cited above are found on p. 21 and p. 140, n. 4. Naphy also reports that from October 1538 to October 1539, the only year for which we possess such accurate records, some 10,657 "poor strangers" received material assistance as they passed through the city (*ibid.*, 122). Geneva's resources must have been strained to the breaking point.

²¹ See the discussion of Simon's charge in Darryl Phillips, "An Inquiry into the Extent of the Abilities of John Calvin as a Hebraist" (PhD diss., Oxford University, 1998), 3–7 (hereafter, Phillips, "Inquiry").

²² Phillips, "Inquiry," 14–17.

²³ Kraus, "Israel in the Theology of Calvin," 75. For Lane's doubts about this claim, see *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers*, 228–29. He nonetheless calls for further investigation of Calvin's use of rabbinic sources. See also the discussion about Kraus's claim in Phillips, "Inquiry," 7, 361–66. Phillips says that when Calvin cites a rabbinical opinion, a parallel French or Latin source can nearly always be readily found (*ibid.*, 363). This observation does not disprove but sheds doubt upon Kraus's claim.

²⁴ On Luther's comment, see Basil Hall, "Biblical Scholarship: Editions and Commentaries," in *The West from the Reformation to the Present Day*, vol. 3 of *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, ed. S. L. Greenslade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 71.

Daniel, Calvin shows familiarity with the recently published Daniel commentary, titled *Wells of Salvation* (Ferrara, 1551), written by Rabbi Isaac Abrabanel (1437–1508), referred to by Calvin as “that proud Barbinel.”²⁵ But he confesses that his access to that great rabbi’s exegesis is through consultation with the Geneva Academy’s Professor of Hebrew, “Dominus Antony,” that is, Antoine Rodolph Chevallier (1523–1572), at one time French tutor to the future Queen Elizabeth I and later Regius Professor of Hebrew at Cambridge University.²⁶ It seems Calvin had not actually read Abrabanel but relied on the accuracy of his young colleague’s report. Raymond Blacketer suggests that Calvin’s knowledge of rabbinical opinion is mainly through Nicholas of Lyra’s compendia, the work of other Christian commentators, and (“even more certain”) Münster.²⁷

There is an excellent unpublished dissertation devoted to the assessment of Calvin’s skills as a Hebraist by Darryl Phillips, who, perhaps more than any other, has examined Calvin’s use in comparison to the work of contemporary Hebraists.²⁸ In Calvin’s published lectures and commentaries, he says, “there is a great deal of linguistic observation.” Calvin “translates competently ... [and his] translations are by and large on a par with those of his contemporaries.” Sometimes, with warrant, he claims that his solution to a textual puzzle is “unique.” All in all, though, “Calvin regularly and intelligently used a Hebrew Bible in his studies.”

Calvin makes numerous grammatical and textual observations in his Latin exegetical works. Many of these are not paralleled in the other sources consulted. Such observations suggest an intelligent and often independent handling of the Hebrew text.

While “he sometimes makes errors in translation and textual observations of dubious merit,” “this does not, however, detract from the fact that over all his work is sound.”²⁹

These commitments to the original language of the Old Testament and to its detailed grammatical analysis characterize not only Calvin’s exegetical work but also the exegetical work of the Protestant and Reformed movement he helped build.

²⁵ For an example of Calvin’s distinction between (good) Jewish grammar and (bad) Jewish exegesis, see *Comm Dan* 4:13–16 (= 1:258). <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom24.x.ix.html>.

²⁶ For Calvin’s interaction with Abrabanel’s exegesis, see also *Comm Dan* 2:44–45 (= 1:183–87). <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom24.viii.xlii.html>. For comments on Abrabanel’s messianically focused Daniel commentary, *Wells of Salvation*, see B. Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel: Statesman and Philosopher* (1953; 5th ed., Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998). “Dominus Antony” is also mentioned for his opinion in *Comm Dan* 2:1 (= 1:116).

²⁷ Blacketer, “Calvin as Commentator of the Mosaic Harmony and Joshua,” 33.

²⁸ Phillips, “Inquiry.”

²⁹ So Phillips, “Inquiry,” 23, 374, 376, 377, 378, 384, and 388.

III. *Anagogical Exegesis and an Expanded Literal Sense*

Thus, Calvin adroitly follows a historical-grammatical approach. However, his exegesis is not reducible to literalism. It is enriched by what David Steinmetz calls “a greatly expanded literal sense” that can accommodate much of the content of what patristic and medieval interpreters considered “spiritual” or “allegorical” exegesis.³⁰ This expanded *sensus literalis* is not new with Calvin. It can be traced back two centuries earlier to Nicholas of Lyra, who wrote voluminously both to champion and to nuance the literal sense. Nicholas spoke of an authorially intended but double literal sense—a literal-historical sense and a literal-allegorical sense. The first was earthly, the second heavenly. The first was intended by Scripture’s human author; the latter by its divine author.³¹ Lyra’s expanded literalism gained serious attention in the two centuries that followed.³² Likewise, Calvin often speaks in his expositions of two levels of authorial intention, human and divine.³³ In the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit speaks through human lips, yet in such a way that neither divine authority nor human personhood is diminished.

Calvin clearly benefited from the ancient controversy too-simply described as the rivalry between Antiochian literalists and Alexandrian allegorists. This controversy contributed mightily to the definition of orthodoxy in the ancient church. In the controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries, neither side could exclude the other: both contributed to what became ancient Catholic Christianity. Antiochene “literalists” such as John Chrysostom (d. 407, praised by Calvin above all other patristic commentators), Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428), and Theodoret of Cyrus (d. 458) excelled at understanding the Old Testament in its ancient historical setting, while Alexandrian “allegorists” such as Origen (d. 254), Didymus the Blind (d. 398), and Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) excelled at rendering the Old Testament doctrinally and practically relevant to Christians.³⁴

³⁰ David Steinmetz, *Taking the Long View: Christian Theology in Historical Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 164.

³¹ Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 81; and Jitse M. van der Meer and Richard J. Oosterhoff, “God, Scripture, and the Rise of Modern Science (1200–1700): Notes in the Margin of Harrison’s Hypothesis,” in *Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions: Up to 1700*, ed. Jitse M. van der Meer and Scott Mandelbrote (Leiden: Brill, 2008) 2:371–72; cf. 2:394–96.

³² See Steinmetz’s brief but telling review of the *sensus literalis* from Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) through Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples or Faber Stapulensis (1455–1536), in David C. Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 32–37.

³³ On Scripture’s dual authorial intention according to Calvin, see especially David Puckett, *John Calvin’s Exegesis of the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 26–37.

³⁴ For articles on each of these, see Donald K. McKim, *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007). Theodore of Mopsuestia’s youthful Psalms commentary,

Calvin *seems* to side with the Antiochenes. But he wants to refine the historical-grammatical methods of the former in order to achieve the spiritual and theological goals of the latter, the edification of the church in the faith. This melding of the multiple medieval spiritual senses of the text into the literal sense, or better, the expansion of the literal sense, was well underway in Lyra and the best exegetes of the fourteenth century.³⁵ Thus Calvin is less an innovator and more a crystallizer of earlier exegetical trends. He contributed mightily to making this method dominant in Reformed Protestantism.

Unlike the medievals, but much like St. Paul, Calvin's sense of the Old Testament witness to Christ comes only rarely by way of allegory.³⁶ Rather it is by way of a disciplined christological exegesis: the Old Testament, God's true and valid word to ancient Israel, necessarily leads to Jesus Christ through the divinely directed history of redemption. One of Calvin's approved words for his approach is *anagogy*: the Old leads to the New, promise to fulfillment, protology to eschatology, the earthly to the heavenly.

This approved word, *anagoge* or *anagogy*, from Greek, "to lead upward," had a history in biblical interpretation long before Calvin. It was an essential part of the *quadriga*, the medieval fourfold sense of Scripture. Earlier teachers of Bible, such as the prodigious Nicholas of Lyra with whom it is closely associated, often recited a favorite Latin couplet to their students:

which counts only four psalms as messianic (Pss 2, 8, 45, and 110), is usually considered the prime example of Antiochene extremism.

³⁵ C. L. Patton, "Nicolas of Lyra," in *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 116–22; and in general, David C. Steinmetz, "Calvin and Isaiah," in *Calvin in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 95–109; idem, "The Superiority of Precritical Exegesis," *Theology Today* 37 (1980): 27–38.

³⁶ "How anyone can say that Paul didn't mean 'allegory' when he used the word *allegoroumena* (Galatians 4:24) to explain the Sarah/Hagar comparison is beyond me." – Rev. Nick Batzig, Facebook 4.27.17. My whimsical reply is titled "Allegedly"—

This allegation of allegory in all its gore appalls!
 All who glory to so allege?—"allegators" they'll be called!
 An allegator's but a crock! May his clock bear a crooked dial!
 And a crocodile bears a tale as false as a simile's smile.
 The sober love their allergy to all that's allegoric
 and saintly stiffs will weep and sniff, preferring paregoric.
 For Holy Writ should bear no wit; no figure to figure out.
 And all alleging otherwise ain't wise—or so I pout.
 But if Hagar is Mount Sinai, and Sarah the celestial city—
 If Jews are Ishmael writ large, then all the Moor's the pity.
 If heathens who believe in Christ enroll as Zion's denizens—
 If even now they're kosher saints and Heaven's future citizens—
 If indeed it's true in such a view that Sarah's then our mother,
 I guess Paul's GOT an allegory—though he never wrote another.

*Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria,
Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia.*

The letter teaches events,
allegory what you should believe,
Morality teaches what you should do,
anagogy what mark you should be aiming for.³⁷

Littera, “the letter,” encompassed the historical-grammatical sense of the biblical text. No spiritual sense could be propounded that violated the literal sense of any scriptural text.³⁸ However, according to the greatest Christian biblical scholar of the third century, Origen (185?–254 A.D.), for some texts the literal sense is absurd. What could be more absurd, he suggests, than the insistence upon a literal reading of the first three evenings and mornings of creation in Genesis 1, when there was not any sun until the story’s fourth day? Hence, other more appropriate meanings must be found for these texts, via spiritual exegesis.³⁹ For good reason, Origen is known as the father of Christian allegory.

The spiritual sense is based on the literal but is figurative and threefold: the allegorical, the moral or tropological, and the anagogical. *Allegoria*, the allegorical sense, is not so free as to be permitted to violate the literal sense; its figurations teach theological truths found elsewhere in Scripture’s literal sense and lead us to meditate on its mysteries. *Moralis*, the tropological or moral sense, used figurative interpretation to instruct the faithful in obedience and (for monastics especially) asceticism. *Anagogia*, the fourth and final sense of the interpreter’s *quadriga*, the anagogical, was defined a thousand years before Calvin by the revered monastic John Cassian (ca. 365–ca. 435 A.D.), who writes,

Anagoge climbs up from spiritual mysteries to the higher and more august secrets of heaven, such as what the apostle adds, “The Jerusalem above is free, and is our mother” By means of [anagoge] words are moved to the plane of the invisible and the future.⁴⁰

³⁷ Quoted from Henri de Lubac, *The Four Senses of Scripture*, vol. 1 of *Medieval Exegesis*, trans. Mark DeBanc (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 1. The Latin couplet is given on 271, n. 1. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Rome: Urbi et Orbi Communications, 1994), endorses the *quadriga*, quoting Lyra’s lyrics: §118 and n. 87.

³⁸ “That signification whereby things signified by words have themselves also a signification is called the spiritual sense, which is based on the literal, and presupposes it.” Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 1, q. 1, a. 10.

³⁹ Origen, *On First Principles* 4.3.1 and 4.3.4., trans. G.W. Butterworth (Notre Dame: Christian Classics, 2013), 383, 391.

⁴⁰ John Cassian, *Conferences*, trans. Colm Luibheid, *The Classics of Western Spirituality* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1985), §14.8 (= 160–61). Cf. Origen, *On First Principles* 4.3.9 (pp. 400–402).

In a famous paragraph Cassian brings all four senses together to exegete Saint Paul's "Jerusalem" in Galatians 4:

The one Jerusalem can be understood in four different ways, in the historical sense as the city of the Jews, in allegory as the church of Christ, in anagoge as the heavenly city of God, "which is mother to us all" (Gal 4:26), in the tropological sense as the human soul which, under this name, is frequently criticized or blamed by the Lord.⁴¹

According to Cassian, predictive prophecy must be interpreted anagogically, that is, with a view to *the future unfolding of the heavenly kingdom*. Anagogy is both onward and upward, future and heavenly. Calvin will all but jettison allegory; in its place, he will embrace anagogy.

In some ways, Calvin's exegesis is more like medieval exegesis than much "modern" historical-grammatical work. Calvin and the medievals alike are deeply concerned to produce *a resolutely Christian theological understanding and practice* of the sacred text—alas, not a prime concern in a number of the Bible commentators of the last 150 years.

Nonetheless, there is a morsel of truth in Schaff's 1892 assessment of Calvin as the "founder" of modern exegesis. In his commentary on Galatians 4:22–26, the famous Pauline "allegory" of Sarah and Hagar and the source for Cassian's famous illustration of the *quadriga*, Calvin himself says that he aims for the "simple" or the "natural" meaning of the text. Excoriating Origen for "twisting Scripture this way and that," Calvin praises "the genuine sense," "the literal sense," which is not "meager and poor."⁴²

In place of the "ingenious speculations," a "deadly poison" that silences the Word, Calvin writes that in the Sarah–Hagar story of Galatians 4 "we see ... the image of the Church figuratively delineated." "An *anagoge* of this sort is not foreign to the genuine and literal meaning, when a comparison was drawn between the Church and the family of Abraham *This is not a departure from the literal sense.*"⁴³ And so Calvin goes on to narrate circumcision, the sacrifices, the Levitical priesthood, and indeed Abraham's two wives as legitimate "allegory," that is, *figurative* meanings resident *within* the historical-grammatical sense of the text. The family of Abraham, the church of the old covenant, anagogically points toward the church of the

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Calvin, *The Epistle to the Galatians* in John Calvin, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, vol. 11 of *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, trans. T. H. L. Parker, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 84–85. The anti-Origen sentence is from *Comm Jeremiah* 31:33 (= 4:131). <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom20.iii.xli.html>.

⁴³ Ibid., 85 (my emphasis).

new covenant and is of one essence with it. Thus, Paul's allegory is all but swallowed whole by Calvin's anagogy.

In the *Institutes*, Calvin develops the anagogic relationship between Old Testament circumcision and New Testament baptism, "for circumcision was for the Jews their first entry into the church."⁴⁴ Yet he rails against a "perverse anagogical interpretation," namely, the teaching on the part of some patristic writers that renders the Eucharist a "renewed sacrifice," a teaching that leads to the idolatry of the Roman Mass. Its true anagogy is twofold: (1) "the sacrifice of expiation ... accomplished in reality by Christ alone"; and (2) the "sacrifice of praise and reverence," which the redeemed owe to God with "their whole selves and all their acts."⁴⁵

Sometimes Calvin surprises us with reticence about anagogy. For example, in his exposition of Jeremiah 33:17–18, which promises God's people a future Davidic king and Levitical priesthood, he writes,

The time of [Israel's] return [from exile] ought to be connected with the coming of Christ, for it is not necessary nor expedient to introduce an anagogical sense, as interpreters are wont to do, by representing the return of the people as symbolical of what was higher ... for it ought to be considered as one and the same favor of God He brought back his people from exile, that they might at length enjoy quiet and solid happiness when the kingdom of David should again be established.⁴⁶

These two remarkable events, Israel's astonishing return and Christ's redemptive work, make a unity, one event. Since they are one, there is no anagogy. Here Calvin also speaks of a future Davidic kingdom at the second advent of the Christ, whose victory is not yet consummated. That future event stands in unity with Christ's first advent. Medievals would have called that "anagogy," but Calvin resists.

This feature of the Jeremiah commentary confirms what Peter Wilcox first found in his study of the Isaiah commentary: Calvin teaches a threefold sense of the progress of Christ's kingdom in the new covenant. As he explains Isaiah 40:1's "Comfort, comfort, my people," he states that this text "relate[s] not only to the captivity in Babylon, but to the whole period of deliverance, which includes the reign of Christ."

⁴⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battle (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 4.16.4.

⁴⁵ Calvin, *Institutes* 4.18.11 and 4.18.13.

⁴⁶ *Comm Jeremiah* 33:17–18 (= 4:260). <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom20.v.xvi.html>.

Nor did it begin at the time when Christ appeared in the world, but long before, since the time of God's favor was clearly revealed Afterwards [Daniel], Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Nehemiah, Ezra, and others, down to the coming of Christ exhorted believers to cherish better and better hopes.⁴⁷

Interpreters who miss this ancient beginning, Calvin writes, "make themselves ridiculous to the Jews," for "we must date its commencement from the period of the building of the temple after the people's return from their seventy years captivity ... until he shall appear at the last day."⁴⁸ Likewise, interpretations that miss the present church's inclusion within the literal sense are "frigid." This threefold fulfillment demands that Calvin include the church of his own stormy time (and ours) within the *expanded* literal sense. Christ's kingdom in the Prophets embraces the entire history of the church.

Hence, alongside Nicolas of Lyra's literal-historical and literal-allegorical meanings, John L. Thompson persuasively suggests that Calvin lays out a third kind of literalism, the literal-eschatological, an aspect of meaning that looks from the Old Testament to the New and to "our participation in the kingdom of Christ."⁴⁹ This looks like anagogical interpretation, whether the Genevan Reformer wants to call it that or not, but it is anagogy wedded to literalism. In Calvin's dexterous hands it comprises other, now better known, exegetical practices: (1) typology, the prefiguring of redemptive persons, events, and institutions from Old to New; and (2) redemptive history (*Heilsgeschichte*), the category that shall be developed much later and in different ways by figures as diverse as Princeton's Geerhardus Vos (1862–1949) and Heidelberg's Gerhard Von Rad (1901–1971).⁵⁰

IV. *Analogy*

Reading the church within these prophetic texts brings out another characteristic: Calvin identifies the fledgling faith communities of the Reformation era as the latter-day equivalents of Isaiah's "remnant" of Israel, or of exilic or

⁴⁷ Calvin, *Comm Isaiah* 40:1 (= 3:199). <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom15.ix.i.html>. The French version, perhaps made by Calvin, says, "which includes the reign of Christ to the end of the world."

⁴⁸ *Comm Ezek* 17:22 (= 2:207–8). <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom23.vi.xvii.html>. Cf. Peter Wilcox, "Calvin as Commentator on the Prophets," in McKim, ed., *Calvin and the Bible*, 121; and idem, "The Restoration of the Church in Calvin's Commentaries on Isaiah the Prophet," *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte* 85 (1994): 68–95.

⁴⁹ John L. Thompson, "Calvin as Biblical Interpreter," in *The Cambridge Companion to Calvin*, ed. Donald A. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 69.

⁵⁰ Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948); Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols., trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, 1962–1965).

restoration Judah. Here not only anagogy but also *analogy* seem to be a guiding principle. Both Kraus and Richard A. Muller have written about the important role “kerygmatic analogy” plays in this exegesis.⁵¹ Muller quotes Calvin’s dedicatory epistle to the Daniel commentary, wherein the Genevan Reformer declares that “the similarity of the times [*temporum similitudo*] adapts these [predictions] to us and fits them to our use.”⁵² Indeed, the entire epistle, addressed “to all the pious worshippers of God who desire the kingdom of Christ to be rightly constituted in France,” expounds the times and tumults of the persecuted French Protestants against the background of the book of Daniel. The whole Daniel of the *praelectiones* is a grand kerygmatic analogy for Huguenot France, spoken just at the time (1559–60) when Geneva was making its most strenuous missionary efforts to win that beautiful, tortured land. His applications of the messages of the prophets to his own troubled times in Geneva and the broader European world illumine how we might apply the prophetic text today, in our own troubled times.

Consider how remarkably Calvin expounds Zechariah 1:18–21, the vision of the four “horns” that had exiled Israel, now beaten down by four “blacksmiths”:

There is here set before us by the Lord as in a mirror, *the real condition of the Church at this day*. Let us not then wonder if the world rage on every side against the Church. ... Though we may be struck by our enemies, [God] will find smiths to break them in pieces, *and this indeed is what we have found by experience*. ... For what do all monarchies desire more, or with greater avidity, than to extinguish the memory of the gospel? ... But God does not permit them; on the contrary he excites them to mutual wars to destroy one another. ... It is certainly a wonderful instance of God’s providence, that *amidst so violent and turbulent commotions the Church should take breath, though under the cross*.... We now then see that this prophecy ... ought not to be confined to the ancient people, but *extended to the whole body of the Church*.⁵³

This is kerygma! It is just this element in his Prophets commentaries that many readers find alluring: Calvin’s angst-laden hope, identifying the

⁵¹ Hans-Joachim Kraus, “Calvin’s Exegetical Principles,” *Interpretation* 31.1 (1977): 12. Richard A. Muller, “The Hermeneutic of Promise and Fulfillment in Calvin’s Exegesis of the Old Testament Prophecies of the Kingdom,” in *The Bible in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. David C. Steinmetz, Duke Monographs in Medieval and Renaissance Studies 11 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 72–73. *Kerygma* means “proclamation” in the Greek of the New Testament and is the term chosen by biblical scholars to designate the announcement of the gospel.

⁵² Muller, *ibid.*, 74. Quoted from *Comm Dan* 1:lxix. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom24.iv.html>. Muller relates the similitude to the technique in classical rhetoric called *complexus*, indicating “a connection in discourse as important to the meaning of a text as the grammatical *sensus*” (*ibid.*, 73). The *complexus* allows Calvin multiple spiritual applications without recourse to allegory. Muller expresses it as “one *sensus* [with] multiple referents” (*ibid.*, 81).

⁵³ *Comm Zech* 1:18–21 (= Minor Prophets 5:55). <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom30.iii.ii.xviii.html>. Emphases mine.

prophets' Israelite remnant, or exilic and restoration Judah, with the fledgling state of the Reformation church of Europe—exiled from its true home, constantly endangered, and—humanly speaking—of uncertain future.

This conflict, expressed so vividly both in Zechariah's vision and in Calvin's commentary reminds us of the road-blocking campaign of Francis I of France and Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor in 1536 that sidetracked the young Calvin in a fateful visit to spend what he thought would be a single night ... in Geneva. Calvin's lectures on Zechariah, which must have been given from about January to July 1558, took place while the Hapsburg-Valois War of 1551–59 set Henry II (ruled 1547–59) and the French against Charles V, and, at Charles's abdication in 1556, against Phillip II of Spain. The great Spanish victory at Saint-Quentin in August 1557 humiliated Henry and prevented French domination of Europe. In Calvin's thought, Henry would have been a much more successful persecutor of Protestants had he not been distracted by war.⁵⁴

In Calvin's kerygmatic analogy with the restored Judeans, "like men who dreamed" (Ps 126:1), the Reformed church is near miraculous, the restoration of the gospel in clarity and power, requiring now the most urgent efforts from all its members to establish more surely its witness to the true God, "*under the cross.*"

Armed with these theological convictions and exegetical methods, Calvin applied himself to the biblical texts of the prophets of Israel. He was often successful at getting to the kernel—what the prophets meant—and often insightful in applying the prophetic message to his hearers and readers. For we must not forget, Calvin was a pastor and exegeted the Bible for a pastoral purpose: the good of God's people—including us. Hence, his prayer at the conclusion of his Daniel lectures:

Grant, Almighty God, since you propose to us no other end than that of constant warfare during our whole life, and subject us to many cares until we arrive at the goal of this temporary race-course: Grant, I pray you, that we may never grow fatigued. May we ever be armed and equipped for battle, and whatever the trials by which you test us, may we never be found deficient. May we always aspire towards heaven with upright souls, and strive with all our endeavors to attain that blessed rest which is laid up for us in heaven, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ For the life-and-death struggles of Protestantism in France, and the city of Geneva's precarious military position amid the great European powers of the age, see the chapter "Churches and Blood: France," in Gordon's *Calvin*, 304–28. See also the once-ground-breaking piece by Robert M. Kingdon, *Geneva and the Coming Wars of Religion in France, 1555–1563*, Travaux d'Humanisme at Renaissance 22 (Geneva: Droz, 1956).

⁵⁵ *Comm Dan* 1561. Prayer, Lecture 66. <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom25.vii.xv.html>.

From Exegesis to Preaching: Calvin's Understanding and Use of Ephesians 2:8–10

JOHN V. FESKO

Abstract

This essay discusses the history and development of John Calvin's use of Ephesians 2:8–10. It traces Calvin's use of this text through the various editions of the *Institutes*, his 1548 commentary on Ephesians, and his sermon on this text, and it explores how Calvin used the text and how he employed the passage in the different theological and pastoral contexts throughout his life. It showcases the nexus between exegesis, theology, and pastoral ministry during his life.

Introduction

As famous as John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* are, he never was a one-book man. In the past, historians and theologians have focused almost exclusively upon Calvin's *Institutes* and paid little attention to his commentaries.¹ Yet in the preface to his *Institutes*, Calvin departed from some of

¹ For criticisms of this trend, see Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4–8. Despite Muller's trenchant critique of the flawed one-book methodology, some scholars still persist in

the common practices of his day. Unlike Martin Bucer (1491–1551) and Philip Melancthon (1497–1560), who included doctrinal excurses in their commentaries, Calvin placed his doctrinal arguments in the *Institutes* and left his exegesis in his commentaries.² To get a fuller picture of his views, one needs to read the *Institutes* and Calvin’s commentaries in tandem. But Calvin was more than an exegete and theologian; he was also a pastor and preacher.³ Any exploration of Calvin’s theology, therefore, should take the *Institutes*, his commentaries, and his preaching into account. A broader examination of these three different contexts paints a clearer picture of Calvin’s exegesis and theology in action.

Hence, this essay traces Calvin’s exegesis, theology, and preaching on Ephesians 2:8–10, “For by grace you have been saved by faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”⁴ How does Calvin understand this text? What doctrinal teaching does he draw from it? How does he employ and explain it in his preaching? In one sense, we can obtain answers to these questions by tracing the homiletical process: exegesis leads to doctrine, which informs preaching. The historical reality, however, is that Calvin did not proceed in this manner. Rather, Calvin’s first comments on Ephesians 2:8–10 appear in the second edition of the *Institutes*. Hence, rather than impose an artificial process upon Calvin’s understanding and work, we will trace his use and explanation of this text through time. Along the way we will seek to place his exegesis in its historical context, which provides indicators as to why and how he explains the text. The essay explores Calvin’s use of Ephesians 2:8–10 through the 1539 and 1541 revisions of the *Institutes*, his 1548 commentary on Ephesians, his 1558 sermons on Ephesians, and the final 1559 revision of the *Institutes*. I then offer some analysis regarding Calvin’s use of this Pauline text.

employing this method (so Charles Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008], 4).

² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. John Allen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), preface (pp. 18–19).

³ For overviews of Calvin’s labors as a pastor and preacher, see, e.g., Herman J. Selderhuis, *John Calvin: A Pilgrim’s Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 110–45; T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (1975; repr., Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 116–23; idem, *Calvin’s Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992); W. Robert Godfrey, *John Calvin: Pilgrim and Pastor* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 57–192; Bernard Cottret, *Calvin: A Biography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 288–308.

⁴ English Standard Version—all other Scripture quotations are drawn from Calvin’s works.

I. *The 1539 Institutes*

The *Institutes* were born as an apologetic for the burgeoning Protestant Reformation, but the first edition is a shadow of the definitive 1559 edition. Shortly after its initial publication, Calvin began revising the *Institutes*. According to the editorial spadework of Peter Barth and Wilhelm Niesel, editors of the *Opera Selecta* edition of the *Institutes*, the first time Calvin makes reference to Ephesians 2:8–10 is in the 1539 edition, not in the initial 1536 edition.⁵ There are four references to the text in his 1539 revision.⁶ The first reference appears in Calvin's explanation of the priority of grace to human works in book II, when he interacts with patristic teaching, primarily Augustine (354–430) and his refutation of Pelagius (354–420). Calvin draws readers into redemptive history and the shift between the ages by arguing that in redemption, our "common nature is abolished" because we enter the new creation. He argues that there is an implied contrast between Adam and Christ when Paul teaches that "we are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."⁷ Calvin quotes Ephesians 2:10 to prove the utterly free nature of redemption:

Now, if we possessed any ability, though ever so small, we should also have some portion of merit. But to annihilate all our pretensions, he argues that we have merited nothing, because "we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained"; in which expressions he again signifies that all the parts of good works, even from the first inclination of the mind, are entirely from God.⁸

In this context Calvin's appeal is to a broad concept, namely, the priority of grace to human effort in salvation.

The second reference appears in book III and a new section devoted to the explanation of the doctrine of justification by faith. Here Calvin's comments become more specific—he narrows the field of discussion to "the whole controversy concerning righteousness."⁹ In other words, over against the Roman Catholic Church, Protestant Reformers argued that

⁵ Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: 1536 Edition*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 384.

⁶ I refer to Barth and Niesel's textual markers as they appear in John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill, LCC (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960).

⁷ Calvin, *Institutes* 2.3.6. I take all subsequent quotations from earlier editions of the *Institutes* from the Allen translation of the 1559 edition.

⁸ Calvin, *Institutes* 2.3.6.

⁹ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.13.2.

justification was by faith alone and that human works played no role in the acquisition of righteousness.¹⁰ At this stage of the Reformation, the pope had not yet convened the Council of Trent, so disputes over the doctrine of justification were restricted to the works of individual theologians. Nevertheless, Calvin addresses the controversy and collates Ephesians 2:8–9 with Romans 3:26:

According to the apostle's testimony, he has bestowed his grace on us in order "to declare his righteousness; that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" [Rom. 3:26]. Wherefore, in another place, after having declared that the Lord has conferred salvation on us in order to display "the praise of the glory of his grace" [Eph. 1:6], repeating, as it were, the same sentiment, he adds, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast" [Eph. 2:8–9].¹¹

The overall intent of Calvin's citation here is that Ephesians 2:8–9 corroborates the claim that in justification people do not contribute "the least particle of righteousness," because it would detract and diminish "from the glory of the righteousness of God."¹² Note: though the text mentions nothing specific about the doctrine of justification and righteousness, Calvin believes the text addresses the subject under the broader rubric of the gratuity and priority of God's grace.

In a third reference Calvin appeals to the text to demonstrate the similar point that "we attain to the hope of salvation, not by works, but solely by the grace of God."¹³ Calvin's point is to prove the inability of fallen human beings to somehow merit salvation. He utterly rejects the idea that fallen humanity's works factor in justification: "For, according to the constitution of our nature, oil might be extracted from a stone sooner than we could perform a good work."¹⁴

Calvin employs the fourth and final reference to the text in his refutation of the specific Roman teaching that people are justified by faith working through love. Calvin refers to the classic medieval distinction between *fides informata* (unformed faith—faith without works) and *fides formata* (formed faith—faith with works).¹⁵ According to his understanding of the Roman

¹⁰ For an overview of Reformation views on justification, see Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 208–307.

¹¹ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.13.2.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 3.14.5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Cf. e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (repr., Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1948), I IIae q. 113 art. 4, and q. 114 arts. 3, 4, 8.

position, “faith renders good works effectual to justification.”¹⁶ Calvin identifies this view with the theologians of the Sorbonne and aligns it with the earlier teaching of Peter Lombard (ca. 1096–1164). Despite the fact that the theologians of the Sorbonne frequently cited and appealed to Augustine, Calvin believes they did not understand his teaching. In line with Lombard and Aquinas, the theologians at the Sorbonne believed that people could perform good works if grounded in God’s grace.¹⁷ Once again Calvin parries the claim with reference to the text: “Nothing good, then, can proceed from us but as we are regenerated, and our regeneration is, without exception, entirely of God, we have no right to arrogate to ourselves the smallest particle of good works.”¹⁸

In all four quotations Calvin uses the text to reject any and all claims that good works contribute to a person’s salvation, and he specifically cites the text three times in his locus on justification to this end. To cite Ephesians 2:8–10 in support of the doctrine of justification was a common trend among sixteenth-century Reformed theologians. Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575), for example, cited the text to argue that believers are justified solely by the grace of God through faith and that Paul merely summarized arguments ultimately drawn from his letters to the Galatians and Romans.¹⁹ Other theologians such as Lancelot Ridley (d. 1576) and Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562) offer similar arguments and link Ephesians 2:8–10 with justification.²⁰ Others, such as Wolfgang Musculus (1497–1563), make broader observations about the priority of divine grace to human activity but do not invoke the doctrine of justification.²¹ These slightly different interpretations are not contradictory but complimentary. Those who enlist the text to support the doctrine of justification merely get into the specific doctrines that Paul sets forth in the general terms of grace and salvation by faith.

¹⁶ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.15.7.

¹⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I IIae 113 art. 3; Peter Lombard, *Sentences: Book II*, trans. Giulio Silano (Toronto: PIMS, 2008), II.xxvi–xviii.

¹⁸ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.15.7.

¹⁹ Heinrich Bullinger, *In omnes apostolicas epistolas, divi videlicet Pauli XIII. et VII. canonicas, commentarii* (Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1539), 416.

²⁰ Lancelot Ridley, *A Commentary in Englyshe upon Sayncte paules Epystle to the Ephesyans for the Instruccyon of Them That Be Unlearned in Tonges* (London: Robert Redeman, 1540), comm. Eph 2:8–10 (no pagination in this edition); Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification*, The Peter Martyr Library 8, trans. and ed. Frank A. James III (Kirksville, MO: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 2003), 109.

²¹ Wolfgang Musculus, *In epistolas Apostoli Pauli, ad Galatas & Ephesios, commentarii* (Basel: ex Officina Hergaviana, 1561), 48–53.

II. The 1543 Institutes

In his 1543 revision of the *Institutes*, Calvin added another reference to the text in his locus on justification. Perhaps because of negative feedback about his criticisms of the theologians of the Sorbonne, Calvin sought to clarify his remarks. He identifies the key point of controversy: there is never any action performed by the godly that could pass muster at the divine bar. “This,” writes Calvin, “is the principal hinge on which our controversy ... turns.”²²

Calvin explains that there is no dispute on the “beginning of justification,” at least with the “sounder schoolmen.” Calvin does not identify who he has in mind with this statement.²³ He agrees that when God delivers a sinner from condemnation he receives righteousness, namely, the forgiveness of sins. But Calvin then states and rejects the common Roman formulation by which they subsume sanctification under justification, “and so they describe the righteousness of a regenerate man as consisting in this—that a man, after having been once reconciled to God through faith in Christ, is accounted righteous with God on account of his good works, the merit of which is the cause of his acceptance.”²⁴ To counter this claim, Calvin lines up several passages of Scripture, including Romans 4:9, “faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness,” Habakkuk 2:4, “the just shall live by his faith,” and Romans 4:7, “blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven.” The last text he quotes is Ephesians 2:8–9. The overall point is that “Paul does not tell the Ephesians that they are indebted to grace merely for the beginning of their salvation,” but throughout the entirety of it.²⁵ In other words, at no point in justification do the believer’s good works factor in. Calvin places Ephesians 2 in the same orbit of texts as those that deal with justification.

III. The 1548 Ephesians Commentary

Calvin’s full-scale reflection upon Ephesians, and specifically 2:8–10, appears in his 1548 commentary on Ephesians, which was part of a larger work devoted to four of Paul’s epistles, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians.²⁶ At this point there is no indication that Calvin had preached

²² Calvin, *Institutes* 3.14.11.

²³ Ibid. A likely candidate might be Aquinas. See Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), §§ 92–100 (pp. 224–26).

²⁴ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.14.11.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Wulfert de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin: Expanded Edition*, trans. Lyle D. Bierma (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 78.

on Ephesians, as his sermon series on the book would not begin until 1558. This means that Calvin was engaged in writing his commentary as a project in its own right, rather than as preparation for immediate preaching on the epistle. In his opening comments on the text, Calvin notes how in the preceding statements (Eph 2:1-7) Paul touches upon the subjects of election, free calling, and salvation by faith alone.²⁷ In line with the references to the text in his 1539 *Institutes*, Calvin highlights the gratuity of salvation and priority of God's grace: "Here is nothing of our own."²⁸ True to his stated intentions in the *Institutes*, Calvin only obliquely mentions some of the related doctrinal issues: "Ought we not then to be silent about free-will, and good intentions, and invented preparations, and merits, and satisfactions?" Once again, Calvin emphatically accents the priority and exclusive place of divine grace in salvation: "Faith, then, brings a man empty to God, that he may be filled with the blessings of Christ."²⁹

Unlike his comments in the *Institutes*, Calvin makes exegetical remarks about the nature of Paul's statements. Calvin contends that with the three phrases "not of yourselves," "not of works," and "it is the gift of God," Paul "embraces the substance of his long argument in the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, that righteousness comes to us from the mercy of God alone, is offered to us in Christ and by the Gospel, and is received by faith alone, without the merit of works."³⁰ But even though Calvin was committed to leaving doctrinal exposition to his *Institutes*, this did not mean he ignored polemics. Calvin rejects the Roman Catholic interpretation of this passage, which claims that when Paul precludes works, he only intends to eliminate ceremonial works; in other words, Paul precludes ceremonial works of the law from our salvation, not good works in general. Aware of this, Calvin insists that Paul does not deal with one type of works but eliminates all moral effort.³¹

Calvin also refutes the Roman Catholic attempt to distinguish between initial and final justification, though he does not specifically invoke these terms. Roman Catholic interpreters, according to Calvin, readily admit that Paul bathes all of redemption in divine grace but hold that the specific exclusion of works applies only to the "first grace." Moreover, though they try to apply Paul's words merely to faith, that is, contending that man's faith

²⁷ John Calvin, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, & Colossians*, Calvin's New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 144 (on Eph 2:8). Hereafter cited as *Ephesians*.

²⁸ Calvin, *Ephesians*, 144 (on Eph 2:8).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 144-45 (on Eph 2:9).

owes its origins entirely to God's grace, Calvin counters that faith and salvation find their origin and completion in divine grace.³² These subjects were likely in the forefront of Calvin's thought, given that the Council of Trent had recently published its decree on justification, and Calvin had issued a response in the previous year (1547).³³

Calvin goes on to comment on Ephesians 2:10. He believes that works do play a role in salvation, but not in justification. Hence, he believes that Paul excludes human works from salvation—they are not causes of salvation, but rather effects:

By setting aside the contrary, he proves what he says, that we are saved by grace, that no works are of use to us in meriting salvation, for all the good works which we possess are the fruit of regeneration. Hence it follows that works themselves are a part of grace.³⁴

As with his earlier comments in the 1539 *Institutes*, Calvin argues that Paul's ultimate reference here is to Christ and the new creation. Because people have been regenerated and renewed in Christ, which stands in contrast to their creation in Adam, they produce the fruit of good works.³⁵ On these grounds Calvin rejects any and all claims that good works are a material cause of salvation.

To close the door on any attempt to wrest Paul's famous text from the apostle's meaning and intention, Calvin describes its erroneous exegesis:

We are justified by faith, because faith, by which we receive the grace of God, is the commencement of righteousness; be we become righteous by regeneration, because, being renewed by the Spirit of Christ, we walk in good works. Thus they make faith the door by which we enter into righteousness, but imagine that we attain it by works; or, at least, they define righteousness as uprightness, when a man is reformed to a good life. I do not care how old this error may be; but they err who support it by this text.³⁶

Calvin does engage in theological exposition, but it turns closely upon questions of erroneous exegesis and suspect theological conclusions. He sees such an interpretation as having a twin foundation, one partially in

³² Ibid., 145 (on Eph 2:9).

³³ Cf. *Dogmatic Decrees of the Council of Trent*, "Decree on Justification," sess. 6, January 13, 1547, in Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss, eds., *Creeeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 2:826–39; John Calvin, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, with the Antidote (1547)*, in *John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, 7 vols., ed. Henry Beveridge (1851; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 3:17–188.

³⁴ Calvin, *Ephesians*, 145 (on Eph 2:10).

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 146 (on Eph 2:10).

God's grace and the other in human effort. According to "Paul's design," the apostle uses these statements to box out completely any and all human contributions. The "cause of righteousness" lies completely with God and not at all with man.³⁷

Calvin places an exclamation point on his argument by drawing attention to Paul's final words, "which God afore prepared." Believers can lay no claim upon God, because salvation is entirely of him: "God owes us nothing." Hence, we have no place whatsoever for boasting. Even believers' good works "were drawn out of His treasures, in which they had long before been laid up; for whom He called, them He justifies and regenerates."³⁸ He closes his comments with what appears to be an allusion to Romans 8:30 and Paul's famous golden chain of salvation. This fits within his broader observation that Ephesians 2:8-10 encompasses Paul's arguments from Romans and Galatians. In this case, even though Paul does not mention effectual calling, justification, or sanctification, Calvin believes they are nevertheless in view. He recourses to these doctrines in his exegesis because Ephesians 2:8-10 is the tip of Paul's doctrinal iceberg—the other doctrines lie just beneath the surface.

IV. *The 1558 Sermons on Ephesians*

As one might expect, Calvin's sermon on Ephesians 2:8-10 takes on a slightly different flavor than his commentary or the dispersed references throughout the editions of his *Institutes*. In his *Institutes* he appeals to portions of the text to make specific points, and in his commentary he offers observations on all of the ideas contained in the verses. His sermon looks more like his commentary because he offers a *lectio continua* exposition of the text. The sermon does not have a formal structure per se, but is rather a series of observations and comments that loosely follow verses 8-10. If there is a structure to his sermon, we might identify three main sections loosely based around (1) the gift of God; (2) the new creation; and (3) good works.

1. *The Gift of God*

In the first section Calvin explores what Paul means when he designates salvation as a gift from God. He repeatedly informs his congregation that they contribute nothing to their salvation and that everything comes from God. Given the divine source of salvation, a regular theme is the believer's

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 147 (on Eph 2:10).

need for humility and gratitude. In fact, unlike what he does in his commentary and *Institutes*, Calvin raises the dangers of pride and the need for humility at least eleven times throughout this sermon.³⁹ Given that the context is congregational, rather than academic (*Institutes*) or exegetical (commentary), he naturally focuses his energy upon the needs of his congregation—their struggle with pride. He wants his congregation to recognize that God is the source of all their goodness and hence their salvation: “So then, if a man intends to find any good in himself, he must not seek it in his own nature, nor in his former birth, for there is nothing but corruption, but God must reform us before we can have a single drop of goodness in us.”⁴⁰

But though Calvin addresses issues of moral conduct, this does not mean he ignores doctrinal disputes. He tells his church that fallen man cannot offer virtue, wisdom, ability, or righteousness in the cause of his salvation. At this point he specifically mentions his target:

For the papists are driven to confess that without God’s help they can do nothing, and that they are too weak to withstand Satan, if they are not strengthened by the Holy Spirit. They will readily acknowledge that they cannot deserve anything at all, but that God must supply their deficiencies; also that they have need of the forgiveness of sins.⁴¹

This statement echoes his earlier sentiments in the 1539 revisions to his *Institutes* that he had no quarrel with the “sounder schoolmen” who acknowledged the necessity of grace for the initiation of salvation.⁴² But he continues,

But yet, for all that, they cannot bear to give up their freewill, but truly imagine that they can assist themselves in part. Upon this they are always building up some merit, and although they grant that God’s grace goes before them at first, yet they always mix with it some effort and good will of their own, and when they flee to God for release from their sins, they bring him such and such satisfactions.⁴³

He does not mention condign or congruent merit, or initial and final justification, or penance, but he nevertheless engages the substance of Roman claims and sets them before his congregation.

³⁹ John Calvin, *John Calvin’s Sermons on Ephesians* (1562; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 155, 157–58, 160, 163, 167–68.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁴² Calvin, *Institutes* 3.14.11.

⁴³ Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians*, 158–59.

Calvin invokes one of the slogans of the Reformation in response: "We must bring nothing with us but faith alone."⁴⁴ He also sets two biblical illustrations before his church to buttress his point. The first is Mary's song (Luke 1:53), "in which it is said that such as are so filled with pride shall remain hungry, and God will laugh their vain presumption to scorn." The second is the words of the psalmist (Ps 81:10): "We cannot, then, be fed with God's grace unless we long for it, and feel our own need, according to the saying of the psalm, Open thy mouth and I will fill it."⁴⁵ The implication is that papists, the arrogant, and hypocrites attempt to contribute their own works towards their salvation, whereas the humble and contrite rely completely on God's grace and do so by faith alone.

2. *The New Creation*

In the sermon's second section Calvin comments upon Paul's statement that believers are God's workmanship, and he expounds on the concept of the new creation, a theme he included in his 1539 revision of the *Institutes*.⁴⁶ Calvin wanted the congregation to know that when Paul wrote about God's workmanship, he did not refer to the initial creation. In fact, given their fallen condition, people are "unfit for the heavenly life ... because they are but as dead creatures and as carcasses in which is nothing but rottenness."⁴⁷ Calvin likely employs the imagery of a rotten carcass, which does not appear in his *Institutes* or commentary, because he was preaching to common people—those familiar with animal husbandry and agricultural life. In other words, they would likely have encountered an animal carcass at some point, hence the blunt but nevertheless relevant illustration.

Calvin contrasts sinners' fallen existence "in Adam" with being "created in Jesus Christ," whom Calvin identifies as the "second Adam."⁴⁸ He contrasts the "general creation by which we live in this world" with God's grace by which he "creates us new again when he vouchsafes to give us newness of life by his gospel."⁴⁹ Calvin fills in this two-Adam structure by elaborating humanity's fallen condition. Infants fall under God's just condemnation. No one can claim that during the years of discretion (seven to twenty or thirty years old) they had some measure of goodness; on the contrary, everyone's thoughts and desires are utterly rebellious against God. From

⁴⁴ Ibid., 159.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 158.

⁴⁶ Calvin, *Institutes* 2.3.6.

⁴⁷ Calvin, *Sermon on Ephesians*, 160.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 160–62.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 161.

birth people only fight against God because they are all under Adam's curse.⁵⁰ The only remedy for Adam's curse is re-creation in Jesus, the second Adam:

For here he shows that the creating of us in Adam is but a bringing of us to destruction, and therefore we must be fashioned and created anew again, namely, even in Jesus Christ who is the second Adam, as he himself calls him in the fifth chapter to the Romans and in the fifteenth chapter of the first Letter to the Corinthians.⁵¹

Calvin establishes the redemptive-historical structure of the old and new creation, which has the first and second Adams as their respective founts. But in accordance with the first portion of his sermon, he reiterates that only God's grace bridges the two realms. Calvin once again criticizes the papists, who claim they possess heavenly life "partly by God's grace (they say) and partly by our own freewill."⁵² Calvin informs his congregation of the dangers of the papist alchemy, the attempt to mix God's grace with human works to create the gold of salvation. Such efforts only reveal pride and their villainous blasphemy. "What can a dead man do? And surely we are dead," writes Calvin, "until God quickens us again by means of faith and by the working of his Holy Spirit."⁵³

To prove the incompatibility of Adamic and new creation life, Calvin raises two concepts: creation *ex nihilo* and union with Christ. Calvin argues that fallen sinners cannot somehow contribute to their salvation because it is ultimately a divine act of creation, "We are created is as much as to say that we were nothing at all before." Just as God called forth Abraham, who was "altogether decrepit and barren," and Sarah, who was past childbearing years, God brought forth life through the gift of faith. Only when people acknowledge their utter inability can they lay hold of salvation through the gift of God's grace through faith.⁵⁴ Union with Christ is ultimately the source of all of the new creation blessings: righteousness, wisdom, virtue, and goodness: "God does not pour them out haphazardly here and there, but has put the fullness of all things belonging to our salvation into Jesus Christ, so that when we are once members of his body, we are also made partakers of all his benefits."⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Ibid., 161–62.

⁵¹ Ibid., 162.

⁵² Ibid., 163.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 164.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 165.

3. *Good works*

In the third and final section of his sermon, Calvin reflects upon Paul's statement that God has prepared good works for those who are in Christ. Once again Calvin raises concerns about the papists. Both the Roman and Reformed churches expressed interest and concern for good works, but they differed on where, precisely, they should appear in the doctrine of salvation. Calvin employs several illustrations to make his point:

Have you coined them [good works] in your own shop, or have you some garden planted by yourself from which to gather them, or do they spring, I do not know how, from your own labors and skill, so that you may advance yourselves by them?⁵⁶

Calvin sweeps away papist claims with these two illustrations (the coin and garden) and further emphasizes his point with a third example. How can people complain against God when he has taken sinners into his home, given them money, and then sinners use this same money to repay the host? How can sinners boast that they have somehow paid the host?⁵⁷

Through his sovereign work of the Spirit, God reforms the lives of sinners, which enables them to harmonize their lives with his law.⁵⁸ The only way, then, that believers can produce good works is if they flee to God for refuge, and when they have done good, to shun pride and cling steadfastly to God, who is the source of all righteousness. "Whenever God gives us good works," writes Calvin, "although they are the fruits of his goodness alone, yet they cannot purchase anything for us at his hand, for we must always establish and settle ourselves upon the forgiveness of our sins. There lies all our righteousness."⁵⁹ Good works, therefore, are the fruit of salvation and are neither the means by which we purchase God's favor nor something in which we place our trust.⁶⁰

V. *The 1559 Institutes*

Calvin's last two references to Ephesians 2:8-10 appear in the definitive edition of the *Institutes*. What makes these comments interesting is the historical context in which they were added. Calvin likely added these comments while in the midst of preaching through Ephesians or shortly thereafter. His sermon series, his earlier commentary, and twenty years of ministry lie

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 165-66.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 166.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 167.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

behind his 1559 revisions. The first addition is found in book III and Calvin's treatment of repentance. Calvin may have included this revision in the wake of the tumultuous conflicts with the Libertines in Geneva. In 1555 the Libertines instigated a riot in an effort to disrupt the city; they failed, and many either fled Geneva or were arrested.⁶¹ In fact, Calvin and the company of pastors had sought to win the right for the church to handle discipline rather than the local magistrates. In the wake of the Libertine-instigated riot, the church won this right and made immediate use of it. In 1556 there were 80 cases of discipline, and in 1557 there were 160 cases. During 1558 there were on average 240 discipline cases per year, and in 1559 there were 300 excommunications.⁶² Calvin, therefore, likely inserted a reference to Ephesians to explain the nature of repentance given the increased pastoral engagement with church discipline.

In the broader context of his arguments, Calvin explains in what manner repentance is the prior condition of the forgiveness of sins.⁶³ He explains that repentance immediately follows faith and is the fruit of it, arguing against the claim that repentance precedes faith.⁶⁴ He brings many arguments against this claim and then invokes Ephesians 2:10 to prove that even repentance is the gift of God: "In the whole course of regeneration we are justly styled God's 'workmanship, created unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.'"⁶⁵ Once again he enlists this text to protect the prerogative of divine grace over human activity.

In the second reference Calvin cites Ephesians 2:10 against claims that the doctrine of election encourages antinomianism. At this point in his ministry he had engaged in a large-scale debate on the doctrine of election with Jerome Bolsec (d. ca. 1584) from 1551 through 1555.⁶⁶ A common objection raised against Calvin's doctrine of election was that he rendered good works superfluous. Calvin believed that such accusations were malicious and impudent. He notes that the same accusations were leveled against Augustine. Undaunted by criticism, Calvin points to Paul, who wrote about predestination "openly and loudly" and also exhorted the recipients of

⁶¹ Selderhuis, *John Calvin*, 208–9.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 215–16.

⁶³ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.3.1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.3.21.

⁶⁶ Cf. John Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans. J. K. S. Reid (Cambridge: James Clark, 1961), 89, 107; Philip C. Holtrop, *The Bolsec Controversy on Predestination, from 1551–1555: The Statements of Jerome Bolsec, and the Responses of John Calvin, Theodore Beza, and Other Reformed Theologians* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1993); Richard A. Muller, review of *The Bolsec Controversy* by Philip C. Holtrop, *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994): 581–89.

his letters to live godly lives. To this end he quotes Paul: "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them."⁶⁷ Echoing sentiments expressed in his sermon on Ephesians 2:8–10, Calvin writes, "When we exhort and preach, persons endued with ears readily obey; and those who are destitute of them exhibit an accomplishment of the Scripture, that hearing they hear not."⁶⁸ In other words, those whom God has chosen will heed the exhortation to good works, which means that predestination does not incite lawlessness in the church.

VI. Analysis

The development of Calvin's use of Ephesians 2:8–10 begins with silence in the 1536 edition of the *Institutes*. He sees no need to reference the passage even though he references Ephesians 2:1–6, 11, 12, 18, 20, and 21 among his numerous scriptural citations.⁶⁹ In the revision of his *Institutes* in 1539, where the locus on justification is introduced, he makes four references to the passage to prove the gratuity of salvation, the exclusion of human works, and the divine origins of righteousness, and to reject the Roman Catholic view of faith working through love. He also employs the text a fifth time in his 1543 revision of the *Institutes* to buttress his doctrine of justification. In his 1548 commentary on Ephesians, Calvin focuses upon exegetical issues that were likely fostered by the Council of Trent's recent declaration on justification and his own response. In his commentary Calvin once again employs the passage in his explanation of elements of the doctrine of justification.

By 1558 and 1559 Calvin was preaching through Ephesians and making final revisions to his *Institutes*. His sermon reflects his earlier comments and use of the text, particularly on the gratuity of salvation, the theme of new creation, and the place of good works in salvation. Calvin is not averse to naming his papist foes, but he arguably expends greater effort in addressing his congregation's pride. He does draw his church's gaze upon justification and union with Christ in his sermon, but he focuses upon the broader issue of God's grace and the need for humility. Given the recent tumult in Geneva with the 1555 Libertine riot and the recent transfer of discipline from the magistrate to the church, these events explain the shift in Calvin's attention.

⁶⁷ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.23.13.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Calvin, *Institutes* (1536), 384.

The unfolding history of Calvin's use of Ephesians 2:8–10 suggests that early in his career he sought to articulate and defend the doctrine of justification. But later in his ministry he believed he needed to address matters related to sanctification. He never surrendered justification but nevertheless emphasized humility and gratitude in his preaching and inserted two extra comments about repentance and the necessity of good works. With the Libertines pressing against him on one side and the predestinarian controversy with Bolsec on the other, Calvin wanted to assure his congregation and the readers of the *Institutes* that repentance and good works were necessary and important parts, but not causes, of justification or salvation.

This brief history raises the question of what comes first, the chicken or the egg? Do the circumstances of life make or reveal character? In this case, does Calvin's ministry shape or reveal his understanding of Ephesians 2:8–10? The answer is yes. In this case it appears that Calvin affirmed both halves of Paul's famous passage: the utter gratuity of salvation and the necessity of God-ordained works. He never wavered on either of these issues but saw the need to press them into service in different ways at different points in his ministry.

Conclusion

Despite the prominence and long shadow of Calvin's *Institutes*, the famous Genevan Reformer is far from a one-book man. Calvin is a dense, dark forest, and the path through his works has many twists and turns. Challenges face historians because of his voluminous and multifaceted labors—his *Institutes* are but one facet of his theological *oeuvre*. To obtain a full picture, one must explore his commentaries and sermons and must do so with an eye to the events in Calvin's life. When and why did he write? Moreover, far from the straight line from exegesis through doctrine to preaching, Calvin's development is more complex. He undoubtedly exegeted Scripture when he wrote and revised his *Institutes*, but sometimes his more concentrated exegesis came after his theological formulations. Moreover, he used Ephesians 2:8–10 in different ways depending on the context. He always makes the same general point regarding the gratuity of salvation, but in his *Institutes* he stresses the doctrine of justification, in his commentary he refutes Roman Catholic exegetical claims about the nature of Paul's exclusion of works, and in his sermon he hammers on the theme of humility and gratitude.

This brief survey only scratches the surface of the relationship between exegesis, theology, and preaching. How does Ephesians 2:8–10 feature in Calvin's letters and other doctrinal treatises? Does he make reference to

Ephesians 2:8–10 in other sermons during his ministry? Answering such questions would undoubtedly create a thicker account of his use of Paul's famous text, but they will have to wait for another day. For the time being, this essay demonstrates the need for a holistic investigation of Calvin's theology. One-book examinations of his theology should be set aside, as they create a thin account, one at odds with his own stated purposes. His *Institutes* was intended as an introductory textbook for theology students. Certainly his other works and ministerial labors help us to have a better understanding of his theology. If anything, a full-orbed investigation of Calvin must involve his *Institutes*, his commentaries, and his sermons so we can better grasp him as exegete, theologian, and pastor.



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Calvin, Beza, and Perkins on Predestination

JOEL R. BEEKE

Abstract

Given the importance of predestination to Reformed theology and the place that Calvin, Beza, and Perkins have in its development and in modern historiography, this article asks what these theologians actually said about predestination. It offers a brief exposition of their teachings on this important topic and seeks to demonstrate their basic complementarity of belief, their shared intention, and their desire to promote godliness by this aspect of *sola gratia*. It is no surprise that succeeding generations of Reformed orthodoxy such as the divines of the Westminster Assembly and the Dutch further Reformation looked to their writings as stellar examples of a predestinarian theology that is biblical, christological, and practical.

The Reformed faith is often judged, positively or negatively, for its doctrine of predestination.¹ Reformed Christianity is as broad in scope as the faith of the Apostles' Creed, the loving obedience prescribed in the Ten Commandments, and the hopeful devotion modeled in the Lord's Prayer, as the Reformed

¹ Portions of this article have been condensed from Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 117–31; Joel R. Beeke, *Debated Issues in Sovereign Predestination: Early Lutheran Predestination, Calvinian Reprobation, and Variations in Genevan Lapsarianism* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 93–110, 140–46, 175–95.

catechisms teach us. However, it is inevitable that people would single out predestination as a distinguishing feature of Reformed theology, for Reformed divines have fought many battles on this particular doctrinal field.

Those who view predestination as the stuff of nightmares often try to pin the blame on a particular bogeyman of history. For many, it is John Calvin. Of course, Calvin did not invent predestination. The makings of the doctrine may be found everywhere in the Old Testament: “The counsel of the LORD standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations” (Ps 33:11). The verb “predestine” or “predestinate” (*proorizo*) appears several times in the New Testament,² and the same is true of the related words “choose” (*eklegomai*), “elect” (*eklektos*), and “election” (*ekloge*).³ Augustine (354–430) wrote extensively on predestination in the Pelagian controversies more than a thousand years before Calvin was born.

In the twentieth century, a number of historical scholars have tried to exonerate Calvin and indict his successor at Geneva, Theodore Beza (1519–1605). It was Beza, we have been told, who distorted Calvin’s biblical faith into the monstrous logical system of “Calvinism.”⁴ Beza’s error in turn is said to have infected English Puritanism, due in large measure to the widely read books of William Perkins (1558–1602). This theory has been largely discredited today.⁵

Given the importance of predestination for Reformed theology and the place that Calvin, Beza, and Perkins have in its development and in modern historiography, it behooves us to ask in the first place what these theologians actually said about predestination. This article will offer a brief exposition of their teachings on this important topic, seeking to demonstrate their basic continuity of belief and shared intention to promote godliness by this aspect of *sola gratia*.

² Acts 4:28; Rom 8:29–30; 1 Cor 2:7; Eph 1:5, 11.

³ See the theological uses of this word group in Matt 20:16; 22:14; 24:22, 31; Mark 13:20, 22, 27; Luke 18:7; John 15:16, 19; Acts 9:15; Rom 8:33; 9:11; 11:5, 7, 28; 16:13; 1 Cor 1:27–28; Eph 1:4; Col 3:12; 1 Thess 1:4; 2 Tim 2:10; Titus 1:1; Jas 2:5; 1 Pet 1:2; 2:4, 6, 9; 2 Pet 1:10; 2 John 1, 13; Rev 17:14.

⁴ R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Paternoster, 1997), 38. See Basil Hall, “The Calvin Legend,” and “Calvin against the Calvinists,” in *John Calvin*, ed. G. E. Duffield (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 1–37.

⁵ For a review of the historiography and Richard Muller’s role in its reversal, see Raymond A. Blacketer, “The Man in the Black Hat: Theodore Beza and the Reorientation of Early Reformed Historiography,” in *Church and School in Early Modern Protestantism: Studies in Honor of Richard A. Muller on the Maturation of a Theological Tradition*, ed. Jordan J. Ballor, David S. Sytsma, and Jason Zuidema (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 227–41.

I. Calvin's Sources for His Doctrine

Calvin's primary and supremely authoritative source for the doctrine of predestination was the Bible.⁶ S. Leigh Hunt has said, "The doctrine of predestination occupies a prominent place in his system, primarily because he found it so clearly revealed in Holy Scripture."⁷ Calvin warned against the two errors of speculating beyond what God has revealed and blasphemously judging as useless what God has spoken in his Word for our use.⁸ Calvin's doctrine was also shaped by Augustine,⁹ possibly Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (1455–1536) and his pupil Gérard Roussel (1500–1550),¹⁰ Martin Luther (1483–1546),¹¹ and Martin Bucer (1491–1551).¹² Ultimately, however, Calvin must be regarded as a man of God's Word rather than the disciple of any mere human teacher. Nor did he build his doctrine on experience,¹³ or

⁶ John Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans. J. K. S. Reid (London: James Clarke, 1961), 61–62. Hereafter cited as Calvin, *Eternal Predestination* (1961).

⁷ S. Leigh Hunt, "Predestination in the 'Institutes of the Christian Religion,' 1536–1559," *Evangelical Quarterly* 9.1 (January 1937): 38. See A. Mitchell Hunter, *The Teaching of Calvin* (London: James Clark, 1950), 100–101.

⁸ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, LCC 20–21 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 3.21.2–4; cf. 3.22.10; 3.23.1.

⁹ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.23.13–14. See John Weeks, "A Comparison of Calvin and Edwards on the Doctrine of Election" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1963), 71–73; Anthony N. S. Lane, "Augustine and Calvin," in *The T&T Clark Companion to Augustine and Modern Theology*, ed. C. C. Pecknold and Tarmo Toom (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 185.

¹⁰ Hunter, *The Teaching of Calvin*, 99.

¹¹ 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, trans. G. I. Davies, Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 26, 28, 49; Willem Nijenhuis, "Calvin and the Augsburg Confession," in *Ecclesia Reformata: Studies on the Reformation* (Leiden: Brill, 1972, 1994), 1:101–14; 2:63; Alexandre Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, trans. David Foxgrover and Wade Provo (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 137–45; Chun-ming Abel Fong, "Luther, Melancthon and Calvin: The Dynamic Balance between the Freedom of God's Grace and the Freedom of Human Responsibility in Salvation" (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1997), 273–75.

¹² David Wiley, "Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination: His Principal Soteriological and Polemical Doctrine" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1971), 314–24; François Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 138–39; Weeks, "Calvin and Edwards on the Doctrine of Election," 77–80; Hunter, *The Teaching of Calvin*, 99; Williston Walker, *John Calvin: The Organizer of Reformed Protestantism* (1906; repr., New York: Putnam's Sons, 1969), 148; John Patrick Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli's Doctrine of Man and Grace* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 129; J. I. Packer, "Calvin the Theologian," in *John Calvin*, ed. G. E. Duffield (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 175; Klaas Dijk, *Om't Eeuwig Welbehagen: de leer der praedestinatie* (Amsterdam: De Standaard, 1925), 125.

¹³ Harro Hopfl, *The Christian Polity of John Calvin* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 237, *contra* Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. T. H. L. Parker et al. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), II/2:39; Heinz Otten, *Calvins theologische*

on philosophical speculation,¹⁴ but on the exegesis and interpretation of the holy Scriptures.

Calvin's doctrine of predestination was fiercely tested in polemics. He was opposed by Albertus Pighius (ca. 1490–1542), Jerome Bolsec (ca. 1510–1584), Jean Trollet (fl. 1550), and Sebastian Castellio (1515–1563). When in 1542 Pighius replied to Calvin's 1539 *Institutes* with a book entitled *De libero hominis arbitrio et divina gratia* (*On the Free Will of Man and Divine Grace*), Calvin responded with his *Defensio doctrinae de servitute arbitrii contra Pighium* (*A Defense of the Doctrine of the Bondage of the Will against Pighius*) in 1543,¹⁵ and his *De aeterna Dei praedestinatione* (*Of God's Eternal Predestination*) in 1552.¹⁶

For Calvin, predestination was a crucial element in the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. The apostle Paul had written that "the election of grace" establishes that salvation is "by grace," not "of works" (Rom 11:5–6). Calvin therefore said that "we must be called back to the course of election" in order "to make it clear that our salvation comes about solely from God's mere generosity."¹⁷ Calvin defined predestination as "God's eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man.... Eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others."¹⁸ Calvin's summary of the doctrine of eternal predestination includes two branches: first, election to salvation through effectual calling, justification, and sanctification, and second, reprobation to damnation.¹⁹

Calvin taught that God took the initiative and chose from eternity unconditionally, that is, for no merit or desert in those who are chosen. He summarized election by saying that "God once established by his eternal and unchangeable plan those whom he long before determined once for all to

Anschauung von der Prædestination (Munich: Kaiser, 1938), 29.

¹⁴ Calvin, *Commentary*, on Rom 9:14; 11:33; Eph 1:5, 8; *Institutes* 1.17.2; 3.14.21; 3.21.1–3; 3.23.1–13; 3.24.14, 17; *Eternal Predestination* (1961), 65, 122. See Packer, "Calvin the Theologian," 171; Charles Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy*, *Studies in the History of Christian Thought* 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1977).

¹⁵ *Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. G. Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss, vols. 29–87 in *Corpus Reformatorum* (Brunsvigae: Schwetschke, 1863–1900). Hereafter, CR 34:225–404, first translated into English as *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A Defense of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice against Pighius*, ed. A. N. S. Lane, trans. G. I. Davies (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996).

¹⁶ CR 36:249–366; English translations include, John Calvin, "The Eternal Predestination of God," in *Calvin's Calvinism*, trans. Henry Cole (London: Sovereign Grace Union, 1927), and Reid's translation in *Eternal Predestination* (1961).

¹⁷ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.21.1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.21.5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.21.7.

receive into salvation.”²⁰ According to Calvin, the ultimate reason why some are elected and some reprobated was God’s sovereign will and good pleasure. He said, “If, then, we cannot determine a reason why he vouchsafes mercy to his own, except that it so pleases him, neither shall we have any reason for rejecting others, other than his will.”²¹

The absolute unconditionality of election corresponds to the total corruption of all mankind. Due to man’s “depravity of nature,” Calvin said, “except out of the Lord’s mercy there is no salvation for man, for in himself he is lost and forsaken.”²² In himself, man is totally given over to sin, full of pollution, and lacks even “a single taste or grain of purity”; in fact, “just as a fish is nourished in water so men are confined in sin and iniquity.”²³ Man cannot blame God’s decree for his sinfulness, for God made man righteous, and Adam sinned of his own free will, apart from any corrupting influence from God, who cannot be the author or approver of sin.²⁴ Calvin said, “If all whom the Lord predestines to death are naturally liable to the sentence of death, of what injustice, pray, do they complain?”²⁵ Simply said, we all deserve to be condemned, for all have sinned. For Calvin, the wonder is that any are redeemed and that not all are reprobated.

Yet election is a gracious reality in Christ. The apostle Paul taught that God “hath chosen us in him [that is, in Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him” (Eph 1:4). For Calvin, “in Christ” implies that we cannot know our own election apart from knowing Jesus Christ as our Savior: “If we have been chosen in Christ, we shall not find assurance of our election in ourselves; and not even in God the Father, if we conceive of him as severed from his Son. Christ, then, is the mirror wherein we must, and without self-deception may, contemplate our own election.”²⁶

Neither can we separate divine election from practical holiness. Though God did not choose us on the basis of anything that we would do, God’s intention in election is to produce a holy people. Election, far from making us indifferent to good works, rather makes us “devote ourselves to the pursuit of good as the appointed goal of election.”²⁷ God’s choosing the elect to be holy refutes the accusation that election dampens or extinguishes incentives

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 3.22.11.

²² Calvin, *Eternal Predestination* (1961), 121.

²³ Cited in Wiley, “Calvin’s Doctrine of Predestination,” 145–46.

²⁴ Cole, *Calvin’s Calvinism*, 125.

²⁵ Calvin, *Institutes* 2.5.3.

²⁶ Ibid., 3.24.4.

²⁷ Ibid., 3.23.12.

to godly living.²⁸ On the contrary, God's design in electing his people is "that we should be to the praise of his glory" (Isa 43:20–21; Eph 1:4–6). Calvin said, "The end of our election is that we may show forth the glory of God in every possible way."²⁹

Calvin did not shrink from affirming election's dreadful twin: the decree of reprobation, damning some men forever. However, he guarded his teaching from any suggestion that God is responsible for our sin. He distinguished between God as the *remote* (or ultimate) cause of man's deeds and man as the *proximate* (or secondary) cause of his own actions.³⁰ As the remote cause, God's will governs all his creatures and all their actions. However, man is the proximate cause of his sins, and all guilt resides with the sinner, who is rightly damned for his sins. Fred Klooster has summarized Calvin's view well: "While God sovereignly passes some by in His decretive will, the ground of His final condemnation of them is their sin and guilt. This sin is our sin; it constitutes the proximate cause of reprobation as far as the unbeliever's condemnation is concerned."³¹ As Calvin said, "none undeservedly perish,"³² for condemnation, while sovereignly executed, is always hinged upon human sin and guilt.³³ Both election and reprobation are sovereign and free acts of God. But God executes election in time monergistically (that is, it is his work alone), whereas he works out reprobation synergistically, as his righteous judgment in response to man's willful and culpable sin.³⁴ For Calvin, election is always sovereign and gracious; reprobation is always sovereign and just.

Taking his stand on the Bible and in continuity with the Augustinian tradition represented in Luther and Bucer, Calvin unreservedly taught the doctrine of a double predestination as the purpose and outworking of God's will for mankind. Calvin's distinction between remote and proximate causes assigns full sovereignty to God and leaves full culpability with man. Because all have sinned, God could rightly damn the entire race. Therefore, the election of anyone to salvation is a signal act of undeserved mercy, and no injustice can be found in the reprobation of sinners. In this manner, Calvin sought to assert and protect the biblical doctrines of salvation by grace alone,

²⁸ Ibid., 3.23.13.

²⁹ Calvin, *Commentary*, on Isa 43:21.

³⁰ Cole, *Calvin's Calvinism*, 91, 100; cf. *Commentary*, on Rom 9:11; 11:7; and CR 36:346.

³¹ Fred Klooster, *Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), 76–77.

³² Calvin, *Eternal Predestination* (1961), 125.

³³ John Murray, *Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 55–71.

³⁴ J. V. Fesko, *Diversity Within the Reformed Tradition: Supra- and Infralapsarianism in Calvin, Dort, and Westminster* (Greenville, SC: Reformed Academic Press, 2001), 97.

sovereign divine election to salvation, and sovereign divine reprobation to damnation, while exalting God's perfect justice and impeccability or freedom from all sin and affirming human responsibility for human actions.

II. *Beza on Predestination*

Regarding the doctrine of predestination, Theodore Beza is best known for his *Tabula Praedestinationis* ("A Chart of Predestination"; 1555).³⁵ This treatise contains Beza's influential chart or diagram of the outworking of predestination, which divides mankind into the two pathways blazed by election and reprobation, tracing the execution of these two decrees through the life of an individual and on to his eternal destiny.

From this *Tabula* twentieth-century scholarship has gathered most of its ammunition against Beza, labeling him as rigidly theocentric, coldly deterministic, and rationalistically scholastic.³⁶ However, these critics have neglected to take into account that the text of the *Tabula* consists of relatively few brief theological aphorisms, each supported by a substantial list of citations from the holy Scriptures. Rather than a deductive system of logic, it provided an answer to Bolsec's accusation that Calvin's theology was not proven by clear testimonies from the Bible.³⁷ Richard Muller has noted,

Beza's *Tabula* is nothing more than a presentation of the doctrine of predestination in its relation to the *ordo salutis*, based on the standard scholastic distinction between the decree and its execution in time. It is hardly a prospectus for a [logical] system.³⁸

The *Tabula* does not make predestination the central dogma of Reformed theology. Instead, "the intention of the *Tabula* is to show that the doctrine of the decree and its execution, as presented through the collation of biblical texts, is a source of consolation and strength."³⁹

³⁵ For a modern translation, see Theodore Beza, *The Potter and the Clay: The Main Predestination Writings of Theodore Beza*, trans. Philip Holtrop (Grand Rapids: Calvin College, 1982), 19–94. I will cite the Holtrop edition, enumerated by chapter and aphorism.

³⁶ David Steinmetz once held this view (David C. Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981], 168–69), but changed as more research was done in this area by Muller. See the 2001 rev. ed. of *Reformers in the Wings* and Blacketer, "The Man in the Black Hat," in *Church and School*, 227.

³⁷ Richard A. Muller, "The Use and Abuse of a Document: Beza's *Tabula Praedestinationis*, The Bolsec Controversy, and the Origins of Reformed Orthodoxy," in *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, ed. Carl R. Trueman and R. S. Clark (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Paternoster, 1999), 46.

³⁸ Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 1:128.

³⁹ Muller, "The Use and Abuse of a Document," 35.

As did Calvin, Beza asserted the priority of God's will while maintaining the culpability of sinners. While asserting with regard to "the destruction of the reprobate" that the "total blame remains within themselves," Beza still affirmed that God's will is "that high mystery that precedes in order all causes of their damnation."⁴⁰ He noted that when the apostle Paul answered objections against predestination in Romans 9, he did not say "that God so willed because he foresaw that they would be corrupt," but that to find the ultimate cause, we must "ascend to God's supreme will, which is the only rule of justice."⁴¹ The cause of God's decree of reprobation is his own will, while the reprobate are damned for their own sins and unbelief.⁴²

Beza structured his treatment of predestination according to the distinction between the eternal decree in God and the execution of that decree in time through secondary causes, until God's ultimate purpose is achieved.⁴³ Donald Sinnema has concluded that this is a basic framework in Beza's doctrine of predestination, serving to safeguard, as it does in Calvin's thought, the doctrines of God's sovereignty, God's righteousness, the reality of secondary causes, and the responsibility of angels and men for their own sins.⁴⁴ When God executes his decree of reprobation in time, he acts in righteous wrath against impenitent sinners who choose to be hardened and deserve to be damned: "Why doth he harden? Because they are corrupt. Why doth he condemn? Because they are sinners. Where is then unrighteousness? Nay, if he should destroy all after this same sort, to whom should he do injury?"⁴⁵ John Bray felt that this distinction became Beza's "most significant original contribution to the question of predestination."⁴⁶

Another distinctive aspect of Beza's doctrine is his supralapsarianism, which gives to God's decree of election and reprobation logical priority over his decrees of creation, the fall of mankind, and redemption in Christ.

⁴⁰ Beza, *Tabula*, II, 5, in *Potter and the Clay*, 35.

⁴¹ Beza, *Tabula*, II, 5, proof 2, in *Potter and the Clay*, 36.

⁴² Beza, *Tabula*, II, 5, in *Potter and the Clay*, 35–36. See Donald W. Sinnema, "The Issue of Reprobation at the Synod of Dort (1618–19) in Light of the History of the Doctrine" (PhD diss., University of St. Michael's College, 1985), 69–70.

⁴³ Donald Sinnema, "God's Eternal Decree and Its Temporal Execution: The Role of this Distinction in Theodore Beza's Theology," in *Adaptations of Calvinism in Reformation Europe: Essays in Honour of Brian G. Armstrong*, ed. Mack P. Holt (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007), 56–58. See Beza, *Tabula*, III and following.

⁴⁴ Sinnema, "God's Eternal Decree," 55–78.

⁴⁵ Theodore Beza, *The New Testament of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Translated out of Greek by Theod. Beza*, trans. L. Tomson (London: Deputies of Christopher Barker, 1599), on Rom 9:18. On Beza's insistence on dividing reprobation (God's eternal will) from damnation (immediately arising from man's sin), see *Tabula*, V, 1–2, in *Potter and the Clay*, 61.

⁴⁶ John S. Bray, *Theodore Beza's Doctrine of Predestination* (Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1975), 91.

In a 1555 letter to Calvin, Beza described both the *infra* and the *supra* approach and opted for the latter, writing that creation, fall, original sin, and Christ's mission are all "subordinated ... to that first purpose of God to elect and to reprobate." He so wrote because of the medieval axiom, "the end is first in intention" (and last in execution), and because he understood the image of the potter and the clay (Rom 9:20–21) to communicate God's purpose to glorify himself in salvation and damnation "even before he decided to create" mankind.⁴⁷

Even in the context of his supralapsarianism, Beza's view of salvation remained centered upon Christ, saying, "Christ, the second Adam from heaven, is the foundation and entire substance of the salvation of the elect."⁴⁸ Consequently, our assurance of election cannot be separated from faith in Christ. Beza wrote,

The gift of faith proceedeth from the free election of the Father in Christ, after which followeth necessarily everlasting life. Therefore, faith in Christ Jesus is a sure witness of our election, and therefore of our glorification, which is to come.⁴⁹

The Christocentric character of Beza's theology is crystal clear, notwithstanding the refusal of Barthian-influenced scholarship to acknowledge it.⁵⁰

If Beza did subsume all of theology under a rationalistic, decretal structure, then one would certainly expect to find this bent in his systematic presentation of the Christian faith. However, his *Confessio Christianae Fidei* (French 1559; Latin 1560) demonstrates quite the opposite.⁵¹ The *Confessio* represents Beza's most comprehensive and systematic theological work, but he structured it around not predestination, but the Trinitarian pattern of the Apostles' Creed.⁵² Predestination serves as one concept among many, not as the overarching principle of all theology. Beza's "*Confessio* is not a predestinarian system," as Muller notes.⁵³ Beza did not regard predestination

⁴⁷ Beza, Letter to Calvin, July 19, 1555, *Correspondance*, 1:170, in *The Potter and the Clay*, 16–17.

⁴⁸ Beza, *Tabula*, V, 1, in *Potter and the Clay*, 61.

⁴⁹ Beza, *The New Testament of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, on John 6:37.

⁵⁰ Herman Hanko, "Predestination in Calvin, Beza, and Later Reformed Theology," *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* 10 (April 1977): 21.

⁵¹ Theodore Beza, *Confessio Chistianae fidei, et eiusdem collation cum Papisticis haeresibus* (Genevae: Eustathium Vignon, 1587); translated into English as "Theodore Beza's Confession (1560)," in *Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries in English Translation, Volume 2, 1552–1566*, ed. James T. Dennison Jr. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008), 234–369.

⁵² Sinnema, "God's Eternal Decree," in *Adaptations*, 62–66.

⁵³ Richard A. Muller, "Predestination and Christology in Sixteenth-Century Reformed Theology" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1976), 227.

as the heart of the gospel (for that is Christ), although he did regard it as an important support for the Christian's hope, grounding our confidence in God's sovereignty.⁵⁴ This observation is confirmed in Beza's shorter confession, *Altera Brevis Fidei Confessio* (1559) and his brief *Catechismus Compendarius* (1575), both of which are evangelical, Christ-centered affirmations of salvation by grace alone with incidental references to predestination.⁵⁵ Andrew Woolsey says that in these works, "predestination was not at all prominent ... and could in no sense be considered an organizing principle of theology."⁵⁶

Finally, the accusation that Beza is rigid and cold in his doctrine of predestination runs contrary to even a cursory reading of the *Confessio*. Beza refuses to divorce predestination from the Christian's redemption, comfort, and sanctification in Christ, writing in the *Confessio*,

Good works are certain testimonies of our faith and also assure us of our eternal election, for faith is necessarily joined to election Our sanctification (from whence good works proceed) is a certain effect of faith (Rom. 8:5–9); or rather of Jesus Christ dwelling in us by faith. And whoever is united to Jesus Christ is necessarily called and elected of God to salvation in such a way that he will never be rejected or forsaken (John 6:37).⁵⁷

Like Calvin, Beza believed that the doctrines of election and reprobation mortify pride and cultivate awe and humility in believers as they contemplate the fact that apart from God's gracious will they would be as fatally blind and horribly corrupt as others.⁵⁸ We might say of Beza what some scholars have said of the English Puritans: he was a practical predestinarian.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Shawn D. Wright, *Our Sovereign Refuge: The Pastoral Theology of Theodore Beza*, Studies in Christian History and Thought (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Paternoster, 2004), 167–73.

⁵⁵ Theodore Beza, *Altera Brevis Fidei Confessio*, in *Tractationum Theologicarum* (Anchora [Geneva], Joannis Crispini, 1570), 1:80–84. It was originally appended to Beza's fuller *Confession*, and translated with it as *Another Brief Confession of Faith*, in *Briefe and Pithie Sum* (1565), 184–96. See Lyle D. Bierma, *The Theology of the Heidelberg Catechism: A Reformation Synthesis*, Columbia Series in Reformed Theology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2013), 24; Wright, *Our Sovereign Refuge*, 122–26. Theodore Beza, *Catechismus Compendarius*, in *Tractationum Theologicarum*, 2nd ed. (Geneva: Apud Enstathium Vignon, 1576), 1:689–94; English translation: *A Little Catechisme* (London: Hugh Singleton, 1578).

⁵⁶ Andrew Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought: A Study in the Reformed Tradition to the Westminster Assembly*, Reformed Historical-Theological Studies (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 355.

⁵⁷ Beza, "Confession (1560)," 4.19, in *Reformed Confessions*, 2:268–69; cf. "Theodore Beza's Confession at Poissy (1561)," in *Reformed Confessions*, 2:415–16.

⁵⁸ Kirk M. Summers, *Morality after Calvin: Theodore Beza's Christian Censor and Reformed Ethics*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 87–88.

⁵⁹ Shawn Wright has written copiously on Beza's warm, practical, pastoral heart and life. See his "The Pastoral Use of the Doctrine of God's Sovereignty in the Theology of Theodore Beza" (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2001); *Our Sovereign Refuge*;

Beza's teachings on predestination did not arise from logical speculation, but from the exegesis of God's Word and from the use of tools provided by both medieval scholasticism and Renaissance humanism, as Jeffrey Mallinson notes. Human reason cannot comprehend God, "for how will finite things be capable of infinity?"⁶⁰ Man's need for special revelation is compounded by the corruption and darkness left in man by his fall away from God.⁶¹ For Beza, human reason cannot supplement Scripture as a source of doctrine; rather, it should serve Scripture, so that interpreters can draw out its truths with valid arguments and avoid logical contradictions, as God intended us to use our minds.⁶² Beza's predestinarian doctrine did not arise out of a metaphysical agenda, but out of his sincere and thoughtful interpretation and application of the written Word of God.

III. Perkins on Predestination

William Perkins has been called the father of Reformed pietism and Puritanism. He grounded the practice of godliness upon the biblical doctrine of divine predestination, writing that God's "decree determines what shall be done.... For there is nothing higher than his will."⁶³ Perkins balanced his doctrine so as not to fall into either the abyss of fatalism or the snare of man-centered religion. He was faithful to the theology of Calvin and Beza in their healthy combination of Reformed theology and piety.⁶⁴ However, Perkins expressed his theology in a form shaped by the methodology of Petrus Ramus (1515–1572), with its nested sets of topical divisions.⁶⁵ This methodology was new for its time, but the content was not. Muller says, "Perkins's thought is not a distortion of earlier Reformed Theology, but a positive outgrowth of the systematic beginnings of Protestant thought."⁶⁶

Theodore Beza: The Man and the Myth (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2015).

⁶⁰ Theodore Beza, *Cours sur les Épîtres aux Romains et aux Hébreux, 1565–66*, ed. Pierre Fraenkel and Luc Perrotet (Geneva: Droz, 1988), 40, quoted in Jeffrey Mallinson, *Faith, Reason, and Revelation in Theodore Beza (1519–1605)*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 110.

⁶¹ Beza, *Tractationem Theologicarum* (1570–1582), 1:678–79, quoted in Mallinson, *Faith, Reason, and Revelation*, 115, 117.

⁶² Mallinson, *Faith, Reason, and Revelation*, 74–79.

⁶³ William Perkins, *The Workes of That Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge, Mr. William Perkins*, 3 vols. (London: John Legatt, 1612–13), 1:723 [hereafter, *Works*].

⁶⁴ Ian Breward, intro. and ed., *The Work of William Perkins*, The Courtenay Library of Reformation Classics 3 (Abingdon, England: Sutton Courtenay, 1970), xi.

⁶⁵ W. B. Patterson, *William Perkins and the Making of a Protestant England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 121–22.

⁶⁶ Richard A. Muller, "Perkins' *A Golden Chaine*: Predestinarian System or Schematized Ordo Salutis?," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 9.1 (1978): 69–71, 79–81.

In the introduction to his *Armilla Aurea* (1590), translated as *A Golden Chaine* (1591),⁶⁷ Perkins identified four viewpoints on the matter of predestination:

- The old and new Pelagians, who place the cause of predestination in man, in that God ordained men to life or death according to his foreknowledge of their free-will rejection or receiving of offered grace
- The Lutherans, who teach that God chose some to salvation by his mere mercy but rejected the rest because he foresaw they would reject his grace
- The semi-Pelagian Roman Catholics, who ascribe God's predestination partly to mercy and partly to foreseen human preparations and meritorious works
- Finally, Perkins's view, those who teach that God saves some merely of his mercy and damns others entirely because of man's sin, but that the divine predestination concerning both has no other cause than his will.⁶⁸

God's decrees flow from the inner life of the triune God. Perkins defined God's glory as "the infinite excellency of his most simple and most holy divine nature."⁶⁹ Proceeding from this internal glory, God's decree, as well as its execution, aims at "the manifestation of the glory of God."⁷⁰ Perkins wrote, "The decree of God, is that by which God in himself, hath necessarily, and yet freely, from all eternity determined all things (Eph. 1:11; Matt. 10:29; Rom. 9:21)."⁷¹

Predestination, which is God's decree insofar as it concerns man, is that "by which he hath ordained all men to a certain and everlasting estate: that is, either to salvation or condemnation, for his own glory."⁷² Election is God's decree "whereby on his own free will, he hath ordained certain men to salvation, to the praise of the glory of his grace."⁷³ Reprobation is "that part of predestination, whereby God, according to the most free and just

⁶⁷ An *armilla* is an arm band or bracelet; to call it a "chaine" calls attention to the fact that its parts are woven together into a thing of usefulness and beauty, made of material most precious.

⁶⁸ Breward, ed., *Work of Perkins*, 175–76. Cf. Michael T. Malone, "The Doctrine of Predestination in the Thought of William Perkins and Richard Hooker," *Anglican Theological Review* 52 (1970): 103–17.

⁶⁹ Perkins, *Works*, 1:13.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:15.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1:16.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 1:24.

purpose of his will, hath determined to reject certain men unto eternal destruction, and misery, and that to the praise of his justice.”⁷⁴

Like Beza, Perkins held a supralapsarian position: God’s highest and first purpose is to manifest his glory in saving and damning, prior to any consideration of the means, such as the fall of man and Christ’s mission to save sinners.⁷⁵ Though Reformed theologians continued to debate supralapsarianism *versus* infralapsarianism, it is the case, as Richard Sibbes (1577–1635) wrote, that all Reformed divines agree that God had eternally distinguished between men as “an act of sovereignty over his creature, and altogether independent of anything in the creature as a cause of it” and that “damnation is an act of divine justice ... and therefore the execution of God’s decree is founded on sin.”⁷⁶

Perkins knew that the Reformed doctrine of predestination prompted the objections that it implicates God in the guilt of sin and diminishes the role of Christ as Savior. In addressing the first objection, Perkins rejected the idea that God is the author of sin. God decreed the fall of man, for God ordains all that comes to pass, but he did not approve of sin.⁷⁷ God “planted nothing in Adam, whereby he should fall into sin, but left him to his own liberty, not hindering his fall when it might.”⁷⁸ If it be objected that man had no choice but to sin if God decreed the fall, Perkins distinguished the necessity of infallibility and the necessity of compulsion. As a consequence of God’s sovereignty, what he decrees will infallibly come to pass. But the voluntary acts of the creature are in no way coerced or compelled by God’s decree.⁷⁹ The proper cause of the fall, according to Perkins, was the choice of Adam’s own will.⁸⁰ God gave Adam a righteous will, a revelation of God’s commandment, and the inward ability to will what is good. But God did not give Adam the grace to persevere in willing the good under temptation. Nor can he be blamed for withholding this grace because God owes no man any grace, which by its very nature is something unmerited or unearned; and God had good purposes for withholding it.⁸¹

⁷⁴ Ibid., 1:106.

⁷⁵ William Perkins, *An Exposition of the Symbole or Creed of the Apostles* (London: John Legatt, 1595), 431.

⁷⁶ Richard Sibbes, preface to Paul Bayne[s], *An Entire Commentary upon the Whole Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians* (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1866), 2.

⁷⁷ Perkins, *Works*, 1:15; Breward, ed., *Work of Perkins*, 197–98.

⁷⁸ Perkins, *Works*, 2:619.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 2:619; cf. 621.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 2:607.

⁸¹ Ibid., 1:160; cf. 1:16; 2:611.

As for the second charge, that predestination subordinates Christ to the decree, Perkins firmly maintained that *election in Christ* draws the line of separation between the elect and reprobate. Christ is “the foundation” of “the execution of this decree” of election; Christ is “not subordinate” to the “decree itself of election, but to the execution thereof only.”⁸² Elsewhere Perkins wrote,

The actual or real foundation of God’s election ... is Christ: and therefore we are said to be chosen ‘in Christ.’ He must be considered two ways: as he is God, we are predestinated *of him*, even as we are predestinated of the Father and the Holy Ghost. As he is our Mediator, we are predestinated *in him*.⁸³

Perkins was more Christ-centered in his predestinarian theology than most scholars realize; he carefully placed the mediator in a central relation to both the decree and its execution, and the *ordo salutis* originates from and is effected in Christ.⁸⁴

In *A Golden Chaine*, Perkins adapted the chart from Beza’s *Tabula* to represent the origin and progressive execution of God’s decrees from the glory of the eternal past to the glory of the eternal future. Perkins’s chart is similar to Beza’s in showing the contrasts between God’s love for his elect and his hatred for the reprobate, effectual calling and ineffectual calling, the softening of the heart and the hardening of the heart, saving faith and culpable ignorance, justification and sanctification over against unrighteousness and pollution, and the glorification of the elect over against the damnation of the reprobate.

The greatest difference between Beza’s and Perkins’s tables is the center of the diagram. The central column of Beza’s table is empty between the fall and the final judgment. By contrast, the center of Perkins’s table is filled with the work of Christ as mediator. Christ is central to predestination and all its outworking in the calling, justification, sanctification, and glorification of the elect.⁸⁵

The execution of election falls under covenantal headings: the covenant of works with Adam and the covenant of grace in Christ.⁸⁶ Under the banner of God’s absolute sovereignty, the covenant brings God’s decree into the realm of human relationships and makes both God’s glory and

⁸² Breward, ed., *Work of Perkins*, 197–98; cf. *Works*, 1:283.

⁸³ Perkins, *Works*, 1:282; cf. 2:607–608.

⁸⁴ Muller, “Perkins’s *A Golden Chaine*,” 71, 76.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 76–77.

⁸⁶ Perkins, *Works*, 1:32; Mark R. Shaw, “The Marrow of Practical Divinity: A Study in the Theology of William Perkins” (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1981), 124.

personal conversion central to the application of salvation—reflecting the practical emphasis of Reformed piety.⁸⁷

According to Perkins, God carries out election in Jesus Christ by means of the covenant of grace through steps by which he puts into action his eternal love: beginning with effectual calling and continuing in justification, sanctification, and finally glorification.⁸⁸ Election manifests itself in the whole process of the Christian's conversion, engagement in spiritual warfare, and ongoing pilgrimage to the kingdom of glory. The whole Christian life is by faith in Christ, not because of faith's perfection, but because of faith's perfect object, Jesus Christ, to whom the Holy Spirit has bound the believer in union and communion.⁸⁹

Perkins's chart reveals that he had developed reprobation as carefully as he did election. Indeed, the dark chain of reprobation from man's perspective is really a golden chain from God's perspective, for it too issues in the glory of God at the last. Reprobation involves two acts. The first act is God's decision to leave certain men to themselves. This act is absolute, based on nothing in man, but only on the will of God. The second act is God's decision to damn these men to hell. This second act is not absolute, but based on their sins. It is the act of God's righteous hatred against sinners. Therefore, Perkins did not teach that God damns men arbitrarily; no one will go to hell except those who deserve it for their sins.⁹⁰

Perkins saw reprobation as a logical concomitant of election.⁹¹ A major difference exists between reprobation and election, however. God's will to elect sinners consisted of his delight in showing grace and his intent to work grace in them. But God's will to reprobate sinners did not include any delight in their sin, nor any intention to work sin in them. Rather, he willed to not prevent their sinning because he delights in the manifestation of his glorious justice.⁹²

According to Perkins, there are two types of reprobates: those who are not called, and those who are called, but not effectually. Those who are not called go on in sin unhindered, proceeding from "ignorance and vanity of mind" to "heart hardening," to "a reprobate sense," to "greediness in sin,"

⁸⁷ F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 55.

⁸⁸ Perkins, *Works*, 1:77–94, 370.

⁸⁹ Charles R. Munson, "William Perkins: Theologian of Transition" (PhD diss., Case Western Reserve, 1971), 100; Victor L. Priebe, "The Covenant Theology of William Perkins" (PhD diss., Drew University, 1967), 141.

⁹⁰ Perkins, *Works*, 1:105; 2:612.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 1:287.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 2:611–18.

to “fullness of sin.”⁹³ Those who are called, but not effectually, may experience “a general illumination, penitence, temporary faith, a taste [of eternal things], [and] zeal”—before they “relapse” into sin by means of “the deceit of sin, the hardening of the heart, an evil heart, an unbelieving heart, [and] apostasy.” Their last state is worse than their first. Ultimately, those so called are led to “fullness of sin,” so that the two streams of reprobates become one prior to death. For the reprobate, all gospel calls remain ineffectual because they do not bring them to Christ. Taken captive by their own sins, of which the greatest sin is “an unbelieving heart,” the reprobate make themselves ripe for divine judgment and damnation.⁹⁴

However, no one should conclude in this life that his present sins and unbelief prove him to be reprobate or rejected by God. Rather, he should seek God’s grace and place himself under the ministry of the Word. Perkins taught that preaching is “the mighty arm” by which God “draws his elect into his kingdom and fashions them to all holy obedience.”⁹⁵ The Word promises “that now for all such as repent and believe in Christ Jesus, there is prepared a full remission for all their sins, together with salvation and life everlasting.”⁹⁶ Therefore, Perkins said, “The gospel preached is ... that ordinary means to beget faith.”⁹⁷ How else shall unbelievers come to faith if not by the hearing of the Word? So we see that for Perkins the gospel is to be preached to all men without distinction and calls all men to repentance and faith in Christ.

Perkins’s predestinarian theology did not make him cold and heartless when dealing with either sinners in need of a Savior or saints burdened with difficulties. Rather, his warm, biblical theology set the tone for the literature of Puritan “practical divinity” that would pour forth from the presses in the seventeenth century. It has inspired generations of preachers to call men to turn from sin to a loving Savior and to follow him through life, trials, and death to glory.

Conclusion

Calvin, Beza, and Perkins were men of distinct temperaments and gifts who served in different, albeit overlapping, historical settings. We find nuances particular to each of these theologians. Calvin did not structure his

⁹³ Ibid., 1:107.

⁹⁴ See chart on Perkins, *Works*, 1:11.

⁹⁵ Quoted in Munson, “William Perkins: Theologian of Transition,” 197.

⁹⁶ Perkins, *Works*, 1:70.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 1:71.

treatment of predestination according to distinction between the eternal decree and its execution in history as did Beza and Perkins. This distinction led to a further development of the doctrine of the *ordo salutis*. Calvin also did not enunciate a distinctly supralapsarian view of predestination like that of Beza and Perkins, though it would be anachronistic to call Calvin an infralapsarian. The supralapsarian position would have other adherents after Beza and Perkins, but it proved over time to be a minority view among Reformed theologians. Calvin and Beza did not formulate their treatises according to the Ramist division of topics, as Perkins did.

However, Calvin, Beza, and Perkins demonstrated remarkable continuity in their teaching on predestination. They all taught the following ten points:

1. The triune God has revealed in his Word that he determined and decreed before time began whom he would save and whom he would damn.
2. Both election and reprobation hinge upon God's will, not man's worthiness, will, or works.
3. God's decree infallibly secures God's intended results, but it does not coerce men to sin or negate the responsibility of angels and men for their sins.
4. The salvation purposed in election centers upon Christ's mediatorial work and is applied to people through a Spirit-worked faith.
5. Election is unto holiness of life and is both the ultimate cause of true piety and a great encouragement to the practice of godliness.
6. Persevering faith in Christ and in godly living serve as crucial indicators of divine election for the assurance of God's people.
7. Though reprobation destines some people to damnation, it does not do so arbitrarily; the reprobate will surely be damned, but only for their sins, unbelief, and culpability before God.
8. Neither the fall of all mankind nor the sins of any individual may be blamed on God, who is never the author or approver of sin, but the righteous creator, lawgiver, and judge.
9. The gospel addresses men indiscriminately, calling all who hear it to repent of sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and promising eternal life to all who do so.
10. God has ordered all things, from the creation and fall of man to the salvation of the elect by grace alone and the damnation of impenitent, unbelieving sinners, for his own glory.

Calvin, Beza, and Perkins bore united witness to Reformed experiential Christianity, a faith that is expressly rooted in the Bible, wrought out in

experience, and doxologically oriented to the praise of God. Theirs was a God-centered worldview that saw God's purposes pulsating in all of life. It is no surprise that succeeding generations of Reformed orthodoxy such as the divines of the Westminster Assembly and the Dutch Further Reformation looked to the writings of Calvin, Beza, and Perkins as stellar examples of predestinarian theology that is biblical, christological, and practical. As John Owen (1616–1683) said, Calvin, Beza, Perkins, and others like them were theologians “whose fame upon this very account, of the eminent and effectual breathing of a spirit of holiness in their writings, is gone out into all the nations about us, and their remembrance is blessed at home and abroad.”⁹⁸

⁹⁸ John Owen, *The Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance*, in *The Works of John Owen* (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1965), 11:487.

Vermigli, Calvin, and Aristotle's Ethics¹

PAUL HELM

Abstract

Peter Martyr Vermigli and John Calvin differed in significant ways in their attitudes toward Greek philosophy, notably toward Aristotle, who was chiefly of interest for his remarks on the structure of human nature and ethics. Peter Martyr was more reverential, perhaps more positive, in his use of Aristotle, and studied him for theological purposes. Calvin distinguished between Aristotle's excellence at metaphysics and his ethics, which was handicapped by his lack of conception of the fall and its effects on human nature. In Vermigli this distinction was present but not pronounced or controlling. The effect of Vermigli's scholastic training is evident.

Peter Martyr Vermigli, exiled from Italy with the Inquisition breathing down his neck, lectured in Strasbourg 1542–1548, then went to England with Bucer and others. As it turned out, John Calvin had been in Strasbourg 1538–1541, also as an exile. But as far as I can see, they did not meet there, narrowly missing each other. Vermigli lectured on Aristotle on his return to Strasbourg from England following the death of Edward VI, 1553–1555/6, alternating in teaching with fellow Italian and Aristotelian Jerome Zanchius, who lectured on Aristotle's *Physics*. He then moved to Zurich as Conrad Pellican's

¹ This article is a revised and somewhat enlarged version of "Vermigli, Calvin et l'éthique d'Aristote," *Contre vents et marées*, ed. Jean-Philippe Bru (Aix-en-Provence: Kerygma, 2014).

successor and died in 1562. Calvin had a very high opinion of him: "... most excellent man, and my truly honoured brother; may the Lord always stand by you, govern you, and bless your labours."²

I. Vermigli's Lectures on Aristotle's Ethics

Vermigli's extensive lectures run to over four hundred pages in translation. Apparently, he delivered them while at the same period commenting on the book of Judges. Though he provides a summary of all ten books of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, the commentary itself runs only as far as book 3, chapter 2, presumably first interrupted and then suspended permanently by his move in 1556 to Zurich, where Conrad Gesner was already teaching philosophy. After Vermigli's death in 1562, the lectures edited by Santerenziano were published by his Zurich colleagues. They have now been translated into English for the first time and edited by Emidio Campi and Joseph C. McLelland.³

This paper has arisen from an attempt to familiarize myself with what for me was a surprising fact and to try to understand why it should be less surprising. We tend—or I tended—to think of the Reformation during the second half of the sixteenth century as chiefly if not exclusively concerned with the recovery of the authority of Scripture, with the repristination of Christian theology, and with meeting the need for polemical and expository works arising therefrom, including of course, and alas, a good deal of internecine debate.

So it is of some interest (to me at least) to find a Reformer of the generation of Calvin (Vermigli was ten years older than Calvin and died shortly before him) lecturing in the 1550s so extensively on Aristotle's corpus. It is not surprising that a Reformed theologian who was Aristotelian by training, as Vermigli and Zanchius were, should retain a fondness for the Stagirite—what could be more natural?—just as Calvin retained a fondness for the Stoics, say. But that he should devote precious time to expounding his writings at such length initially seemed odd. I learned from the introduction to this translation, however, that five sets of similar lectures on Aristotle's ethics had already been published before Vermigli lectured, those by Melancthon (twice), Werdmuller, Scheegkius, and Hyperius, though Vermigli does not refer to any of them. So perhaps I should not have been surprised.

² John Calvin, Letter to Vermigli, August 27, 1554, in *Tracts and Letters*, ed. Jules Bonnet, trans. Marcus Robert Gilchrist (1858; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2009), 6:60.

³ Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Emidio Campi and Joseph C. McClelland, The Peter Martyr Library 9, Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies 73 (Kirkville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2006).

Richard Muller has pointed out how, by the turn of the sixteenth century, the Reformed churches were becoming institutionalized and education was having to be provided to a rising generation of Reformed professional men—including, of course, ministers.⁴ It is natural, as part of this, to find a curriculum being developed within seminaries, with attention being given to the teaching of philosophy. But it was somewhat surprising, or was to me, to find such extensive attention being paid to Aristotle fifty years earlier. Maybe the attention was nothing nearly as extensive as that which subsequently followed, or perhaps the process of institutionalization began earlier than I imagined; certainly, it was earlier in Strasbourg and Zurich than in Geneva.

II. Geneva

Nevertheless, despite Calvin's qualification regarding Aristotle, it should be borne in mind that in 1559 the statutes of the newly-established Academy of Geneva included the following:

The Professor of Greek shall follow the Professor of Hebrew in the morning, and shall expound some book of moral philosophy, by Aristotle or Plutarch or some Christian philosopher.⁵

Whatever the truth, the sharp contrast between Vermigli's rather careful, if not exactly reverential, attitude toward Aristotle's ethics, as compared with Calvin's more complex attitude toward Aristotle as a philosopher, is striking. While Calvin had a basically Platonic attitude toward the immortality of the soul, he may be said to have bolted onto the soul the apparatus of faculty psychology developed by Aristotle in which the soul was distinguished into a number of faculties or powers—intellect, will, emotions and so on. At the same time he had a dismissive attitude to the moral philosophy of the ancient Greeks in general, Aristotle included. So as regards Aristotle he could, in book 1 of the final edition of the *Institutes*, make favorable remarks regarding his distinction between theoretical and practical reason,⁶ and make use of his faculty psychology, in the following terms,

We dwell not on the subtlety of Aristotle, that the mind has no motion of itself; but that the moving power is choice, which he also terms the appetive intellect. Not to

⁴ Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), part 1.

⁵ "Extract from the Statutes of the Geneva Academy, 1559," in *Calvinism in Europe, 1540–1610: A Collection of Documents*, ed. Alastair Duke, Gillian Lewis, and Andrew Pettegree (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 218.

⁶ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1559, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 1.15.7.

lose ourselves in superfluous questions, let it be enough to know that the intellect is to us, as it were, the guide and ruler of the soul; that the will always follows its beck, and waits for its decision, in matters of desire. For which reason Aristotle truly taught, that in the appetite there is a pursuit and rejection corresponding in some degree to affirmation and negation in the intellect (Aristot. *Ethic. lib. vi. c. 2*). Moreover, it will be seen in another place (Book II. c. ii. sec. 12–26), how surely the intellect governs the will. Here we only wish to observe, that the soul does not possess any faculty which may not be duly referred to one or other of these members.⁷

Here we see Calvin's admiration for Aristotle coupled with a tendency to cut him short when he suspects that some Aristotelian distinction is not profitable and may lead to speculation.⁸ We shall find Calvin later being similarly approving of Aristotle in his *Bondage and Liberation of the Will*.

Calvin's most basic criticism of pagan philosophers, including Aristotle—and of those Christians unduly influenced by them, such as later medi-evals—is that in their analysis of free will and virtue and vice, “they were seeking in a ruin for a building.”

Hence the great darkness of philosophers who have looked for a complete building in a ruin, and fit arrangements in disorder. The principle they set out with was, that man could not be a rational animal unless he had a free choice of good and evil. They also imagined that the distinction between virtue and vice was destroyed, if man did not of his own counsel arrange his life. So far well, had there been no change in man. This being unknown to them, it is not surprising that they throw everything into confusion.⁹

One consequence of this is that the pagan moral philosophers have deficient views of human fallenness; not surprisingly, for they have no concept of a fall. In *Institutes* 2.2.2 Calvin repeatedly inveighs against “the philosophers” (they are referred to five or six times in two short sections) and their view of the “bondage of the senses.”¹⁰ The attitude of Vermigli to pagan moral philosophers, or at least to one moral philosopher, is much less sharp, as we shall see. This is not to say that the outlooks of the two Reformers were antithetical, but it may be that they had different views of philosophical ethics, Calvin seeing in such work a direct challenge to the gospel, Vermigli seeing it more as an adjunct.

⁷ Calvin, *Institutes* 1.15.7. For a fuller discussion of the influence of scholastic faculty psychology on Reformed orthodoxy, see Paul Helm, *Human Nature from Calvin to Edwards* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, forthcoming).

⁸ So Aristotle is “a man of genius and learning” (John Calvin's Commentary on Ps 107:43, in *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson [Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1847], 4:266); and while “Plato, in some passages, talks nobly of the faculties of the soul,” yet “Aristotle, in discoursing of it, has surpassed all in acuteness” (“Psychopannychia [1542],” in Calvin, *Tracts and Treatises*, 3:420).

⁹ Calvin, *Institutes* 1.15.8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.2.2.

The structure of this article is to spend some time attempting to understand Vermigli's general attitude to the relation between Aristotle and Scripture, then to look at two topics, first virtue and habit and then voluntary action, at which point we shall rejoin Calvin. I choose these topics partly because Calvin also makes general philosophical remarks on them, though of course much briefer than Vermigli's, but it might be worthwhile standing the two Reformers side by side where we can.

III. *Vermigli's Attitude to Aristotle and Scripture*

Vermigli's practice in the *Commentary* is to give his chief attention to an intensive discussion of Aristotle's text, occasionally with some help from the Byzantine philosopher and theologian Eustratius of Nicaea (ca. 1050–ca. 1120), noting textual variants and expounding Aristotle in a manner that, in the main, upholds and commends what he is doing. Toward the end of most lectures, Vermigli provides a scriptural support or comment on what has just been discussed, using words such as, "It remains to look at how the above statements agree with holy scripture" (47).¹¹ What follows may turn out to be an endorsement of Aristotle's doctrine by Scripture, as in Vermigli's provision from Scripture of examples of different types of voluntary action and their value, as we shall see later, more or less fully agreeing with Aristotle's views. Or it could be a reminder to the reader that since Aristotle knew nothing of the grace of justification, nor of the life to come, his definition or characterization of happiness is deficient in its attitude to death, or in the importance that he gives to material possessions as a necessary condition of happiness (216). A similar attitude is found in remarks about the contemplative life, which Aristotle sees as the ultimate form of or ideal for human life. On this Vermigli comments—with a sidelong glance, no doubt, at forms of monastic community and solitariness—that contemplation can form only a part of the Christian life (178). On one occasion within the body of the lecture, there is a quite extensive discussion of Aristotle's famous account of universals in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, including comments from Augustine and the bearing of the topic on the doctrine of God (135–36).

When Vermigli discusses Aristotle's views on providence and fortune he is particularly scathing.

¹¹ Numbers in parentheses in the text that follows are page references to the English translation of Vermigli's *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*.

Now was the time [for Aristotle] to affirm categorically that [happiness] should be expected from God no less than other gifts. In speaking this way, he attempts to avoid the shame of being impious, but does not merit the praise of having given an open and candid confession. If his views were good and right he should not have used these evasions. (220)

Vermigli adds, “Aristotle speaks ambiguously about whether God is the author of happiness, but we affirm that point most constantly” (230). Sometimes the “Christian” application seems so different from what Aristotle is taken to be saying as to make the much longer and more elaborate discussion of Aristotle seem beside the point. So, at the opening of his discussion of book 1, chapter 4, where Aristotle discusses his procedure in his determination of what happiness is, Vermigli is bold enough to say regarding the constituent parts of what happiness is that holy Scripture is “more preferable in this context than philosophy” (78), for it proposes a twofold end for us, one in this life and one in the life to come. But he goes on to endorse Aristotle’s own procedure in establishing the nature of true happiness—proceeding from effects to their causes, from just, brave, well-balanced, prudent actions to their corresponding virtues, which, together with the premise that virtues depend upon happiness as their goal, enables Aristotle to arrive at an understanding of what happiness is—rather than to adopt the procedure of first defining happiness (81, 83). This gives rise to a detailed epistemological discussion (91–92). The supreme end in this life is that we be justified in Christ, which differs from the end of eternal life only in degree. Nevertheless, even this supports Aristotle’s view that there are great differences among people as to what happiness is. Yet in Scripture God seeks to establish faith in himself, his greatness, by what he does. Vermigli appeals to Romans 8:32: God, who gave up his only Son, will freely give us all things besides: “As Aristotle wishes to use demonstrations based on results and consequences, so from the effects just mentioned, we may conclude that we have acquired eternal happiness” (92). Yet while Aristotle restricts his ethical teaching to a certain kind of student, to those without corrupt minds, God invites anyone to study his teaching.

One might draw various conclusions from this style of comparing and contrasting. Vermigli might take the view that lectures on Aristotle are not the time or the place to discuss Christian theology at length. If so, then, this is likely to emanate from a warm endorsement of Aristotle’s general outlook on the place of reason in ethics and on the nature of virtue and its relation to happiness, holding that this is so satisfactory that it only needs a little tweaking from the Christian theologian. For the most part, it looks as if he thinks that a Christian outlook can be bolted onto the body of Aristotle’s thought.

Another possibility, which Vermigli seems occasionally to favor, is that Aristotle is dealing with family and especially civic virtue, and so we must bear in mind that the *Nicomachean Ethics* is simply the first part of a two-volume work on political ethics, in which case this would be the wrong place to look for an account of ethics that places a premium on motive and intention in the manner of, say, Augustine, or of the New Testament. So, for example, Vermigli comments,

Nor should we fail to point out that Aristotle spoke improperly when he said that "action will of necessity be acting and acting well" since in truth it is not the action that acts, but that by which men act. But he could speak like this because the distinction is not important for the question under discussion. (204)

Aristotle is telling us how we ought to behave in the *polis*, what the good *civic* life consists in and so has things of direct value to the Christian in that role; otherwise, we should be blaming Aristotle for doing something that he was not trying to do in the first place.

Writing of the governing of the passions, Vermigli comments,

One thing now remains to be seen: how these passions may be governed and corrected. The first is the "civil" way, through moral virtues. These bring the passions back to the mean and are sufficient, if we consider only the present life; before God, however, they are not so, nor does civil justice suffice before his judgment seat. There is need, then, for another standard, namely that of holy scripture, which is useless unless it is grasped by faith. (319)

As I say, there is some evidence for such a view: At one place (197) Vermigli asks, Does the scriptural statement that those whose sins have been forgiven and whose iniquities are covered are blessed (Ps 32:1–2) not refute the Aristotelian motif that the end of man is happiness revealed in action? He then responds,

We are not speaking of that kind of happiness, but only of the happiness that follows primary happiness and lies in acting properly in this life and in contemplating and enjoying the sight of the supreme God in the world to come. (197)

See also his reference to the virtues being political (253) having to do with the nature of civic morality (319). So there is some ambivalence here. Sometimes Vermigli says that moral action has the same structure in Aristotle and in the gospel (41). At other times he gently makes the point that Aristotle was a stranger to God's revelation in Jesus. At still other times he forcefully criticizes Aristotle for his paganism. He may at times be suggesting that the ethics of Aristotle has to do chiefly, if not exclusively, with the first kingdom, the earthly kingdom, and not with the kingdom of God,

though I am not aware that Vermigli used this terminology. Certainly, at one place he endorses the thought given prominence by Calvin that whatever the source of some truth God the Holy Spirit is its ultimate author. As Vermigli puts the point, “We do not deny the sentiment that is hallowed by the centuries, which says that any truth set forth by any author proceeds from the Holy Spirit.”¹²

One other thing occurred to me: the pattern of detailed exegesis and commentary of Aristotle, followed usually by a much briefer scriptural comment, is consistent with Vermigli having first prepared and given the lectures at some stage in his earlier years in Italy—either before he adopted Evangelical views or afterward. If afterward, if the lectures were prepared and delivered during the period 1537–1542, then the Evangelical views and the comments on Scripture may already have been present in them; if earlier, then they may have been added during this later period as Vermigli climbed up the rungs of the ladder of the Augustinian order, finally becoming Abbot of Saint Pietro and Aram in Naples (1537–40) and Prior of Saint Frediano in Lucca (1541–42), during which time he established a Reformed theological college.

There is some additional evidence for this latter view, perhaps: those theological discussions that occur within a lecture, as opposed to being at its end, are not specifically Protestant. We have already noted a discussion of Augustine and Platonic ideas, and there is one on Pelagianism (216), which one might expect from an Augustinian friar. There are exceptions to this general procedure, however. In the middle of one lecture, he criticizes “what the Papists do in reducing the pure religion of Christ, which is already complete in itself, to a histrionic Mass” (205). So the form of the lectures is *generally* consistent with them being in existence before Vermigli fled Italy and then being “Protestantized” by having a tail added to most of them, giving scriptural comments of a Protestant kind. Why prepare more lectures when one already has a perfectly good set? The pre-existence of the lectures may even have determined that in Strasbourg he lectured on the *Nicomachean Ethics* and not on some other part of the Aristotelian corpus.

For the rest of this piece, I shall spend time looking in a little more detail at two philosophical topics that Vermigli deals with in Aristotle that are of particular interest to me and noting some points of divergence from and convergence with Calvin. These are the relationship between habit and virtue, and the place of voluntariness and ignorance in the evaluation of

¹² Cited by McLelland in his introduction (xxv), but the reference he gives to the main text (66) appears to be inaccurate.

personal responsibility. I should stress that all the material that follows is sketchy and based entirely on one reading and a partial rereading of the text, with (so far) little or no attention paid to secondary literature, of which I am largely ignorant.

IV. *Habit and Virtue*

Debating about the hardness of the human heart and the need for grace, Calvin states, "Pighius declares that the hardness [of the heart] was incurred through bad habit. Just as if one of the philosophers' crew should say that by evil living a person had become hardened or callous towards evil." Calvin's (and Augustine's) view is at odds with the Aristotelian idea—the idea of the "philosophers' crew"—that we become just by doing just acts, prudent by doing prudent acts, brave by doing brave acts, and so on. For if, for example, being just is not simply a matter of habitually or spontaneously doing what is objectively just but also a matter of having the right motives and dispositions in doing so—if, in other words, we take a motivational view of ethical goodness, as Calvin and Augustine do—then the first question is how we come to do the just thing in the first place, how we come to be remotivated to love justice. Calvin's answer is that we can only do a just act in the first place by having the *habitus* of our minds redirected, a redirecting that, at least in its first stages, must be done for and to us rather than our doing it.

However, there is reason to think that Calvin is not being quite fair to Aristotle here, if indeed he had Aristotle clearly in view. For Aristotle not only says this:

This then, is the case with the virtues also; by doing the acts that we do in our transactions with other men we become just or unjust, and by doing the acts that we do in the presence of danger, and by being habituated to feel fear or confidence, we become brave or cowardly.

He also says this:

Again, the case of the arts and that of the virtues are not similar; for the products of the arts have their goodness in themselves, so that it is enough that they should have a certain character, but if the acts that are in accordance with the virtues have themselves a certain character it does not follow that they are done justly or temperately. The agent also must be in a certain condition when he does them; in the first place he must have knowledge, secondly he must choose the acts, and choose them for their own sakes, and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character.¹³

¹³ Cited in Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004), 178.

There is plenty of scope here for Calvin to adapt Aristotle to his own view by claiming that a firm and unchangeable desire to be virtuous can only be brought about by the efficacious grace of God, though he does not appear to want to adapt it.

In dealing with the same passage in which Aristotle argues that moral virtue is acquired through habit (287–88),¹⁴ Vermigli makes the same point as Calvin, though he also provides Aristotle with a get-out-of-jail card. Moral virtues (like intellectual virtues, though distinct from them), though not conatural or innate, are not contrary to nature. Virtues derive from the exercise of the will—“or rather, the will, God, and action; we should also add reason, with which right actions should agree” (296). As is his custom, Vermigli compares what Aristotle says to holy Scripture.

Though expressed in a very mild and undemonstrative way, Vermigli makes serious criticisms of Aristotle. Men have sometimes been made wise in an instant; not developing the virtue over a period. More generally, God is the primary and most powerful cause of all the virtues (citing 1 Cor 4:7).

With respect to vitiated and corrupt nature, however, these statements [by Aristotle] are true in the normal course of things and according to ordinary reason. Aristotle, however, was unable to see this corruption of nature, since he was left without faith and the light of holy scripture. It is also true that our nature, in its present state, is suited to and capable of receiving the virtues, if we are speaking of the civil and moral kind, although not all people are disposed to them in the same way. (296–97)

The “civil and moral” kind of virtue is presumably being contrasted with the theological virtues, though as far as I am aware Vermigli does not use this phrase in this work, he goes on to refer to the “true virtues, such as faith, hope and charity and the like” (297; see also, 331–37).

V. *Voluntariness and Ignorance*

In his work *On the Bondage and Liberation of the Will* Calvin tirelessly insists on the fact, against Pighius but with Augustine, that our present lack of free will is not part of our nature, but is a corruption of it.

He includes a short excursus, “Coercion versus Necessity,” that establishes the difference. The importance of the distinction for Calvin is that while acting out of necessity is consistent with being held responsible for the action, and being praised or blamed for it, being coerced is inconsistent with such praise or blame. In his criterion of praise and blame, he explicitly follows Aristotle:

¹⁴ Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 2.1.

When Aristotle distinguished what is voluntary from its opposite, he defines the latter as, *to bia e di agnoian gignomenon*, that is, what happens by force or through ignorance. There he defines as forced what has its beginning elsewhere, something to which he who acts or is acted upon makes no contribution (*Eth. nic.* 3.1).¹⁵

So normal human activity is not forced or coerced; insofar as it proceeds from fallen human nature it is not free, because a person with a fallen nature does not have the power to choose what is good. Nonetheless, where a person is not forced, but makes a contribution to his action and is not acting out of ignorance, he is acting voluntarily and is responsible for what he does.

Vermigli similarly follows Aristotle in his comments on the passage (book 3.1), but much more closely and in greater detail. The distinction between the voluntary and the involuntary is, for Aristotle, the basis of praise and blame (373–74). (“Ought implies can” applies to “secular laws” [Vermigli concedes] but “not those of God.”) “For the latter require things that are impossible, especially in view of the corrupt and spoiled condition of nature” (374). In civil actions, involuntary actions and actions done through ignorance are pardoned, as they also are in Scripture (Deut 19:5).

The voluntary is understood in terms of the absence of force—an impossible-to-resist or difficult-to-resist impulse, an external force which receives no help from the recipient (Aristotle) but which may nevertheless be cooperated with (for example, the highwayman who shouts, “Your money or your life!”)—and of the presence of knowledge (375). Vermigli follows Aristotle in showing considerable analytic interest; for example, in distinguishing the spontaneous from the voluntary, and the range of possible instances of the voluntary, leading to a discussion of “cases” (377), and also a discussion of the blameworthiness of actions in this range of the “voluntary.”

For example, if one endures evil for an unworthy end, this is blameworthy, but if for a noble end—one’s country, one’s parents, one’s wife and children—then praiseworthy (379). Those who act from base motives may not be acting involuntarily, as they may claim (384).

Vermigli goes into all this with great expository skill—clearly, orderly, and in detail—making judicious points, and then toward the end of the chapter, he presents a longer-than-usual discussion of how all these Aristotelian claims accord with holy Scripture. He cites a number of biblical examples that accord with Aristotelianism. Of particular interest is the way in which

¹⁵ John Calvin, *Defensio Sanae et Orthodoxae Doctrinae de Servitute et Liberatione Humanae Arbitrii*, Joannis Calvini, Scripta Didactica et Polemica 3, ed. Anthony N. S. Lane and Graham I. Davies (Geneva: Droz, 2008), 224. English translation, John Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, ed. A. N. S. Lane, trans. G. I. Davies (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1996), 190.

Vermigli thinks that scriptural examples of moral action, together with praise and blame, follow the same contours as Aristotle's thinking.

Aristotle famously distinguished between those actions that are fully voluntarily and those in which the will is involved, but that are not fully voluntarily.

Something of this sort occurs in jettisoning goods during a storm. There is no one who, strictly speaking, willingly and voluntarily throws away his own property, but people do it to save themselves and others, if they have any sense. (Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 3.1; quoted on p. 376)

So, as regards responsibility, there is a threefold classification: the fully voluntary, the partly voluntary (as in the jettisoning case), and actions done out of ignorance. Vermigli thinks that this is exactly what we find in Scripture.

First, voluntariness (396): The faithful are praised for being a willing people (Ps 11:9), and the woodcutter is excused if his action is accidental because it was not voluntary (Num 35:18). The devil tells the truth but does so only under compulsion and so is not praised; neither is Balaam, who is forced at the metaphorical point of a sword to bless the people of God (Num 22:1–35). Mixed actions—that is, those where we are constrained, though we still act of our own accord—are commended in Scripture, for example, self-denial for a greater good, to suffer rather than to sin, or to endure persecution (397). We are praised for such mixed actions, for those who endure persecution are blessed (Matt 5:10). What should be endured for what? We should endure anything rather than depart from Christ. Base actions may be as voluntary as honorable actions, as Aristotle taught.

But there are issues over which Aristotle and Scripture deviate. For what if the evil we do is due to the presence of original sin? Vermigli asks, “Suppose someone said that knowledge or awareness is lacking when this sin is contracted and that the sin is caused by the first evil motions of our soul, in which there is no deliberation or choice?” Answer:

Aristotle's teaching should be understood of ethical and actual behavior, but that he had no knowledge of original sin. It is enough for us that they cannot be called compulsory because they have an internal principle.

Original sin is such an internal principle (400). So Aristotle is confirmed after all! (396–97).

Finally (in this rather rapid survey), what of ignorance? Aristotle distinguished between those actions done from ignorance about which we feel remorse when our ignorance is uncovered and those over which we do not feel remorse. That we do not feel remorse when sin is uncovered does not

mean that we committed no sin if we ought to have known (398): "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." They had sinned and needed forgiveness: "I know that you acted in ignorance." But if they could not have known what they were ignorant of, this ensures nonculpability. (He cites the drunkenness of Noah.) Culpability depends partly on the importance and centrality of ignorance in the question in view (398). Actions done when drunk are voluntary, both for Aristotle and Scripture (399). So the approach here is that what Aristotle says is true because and insofar as it accords with Scripture, and we might say that Vermigli sees Aristotle as an astute observer of and commentator on human life, as a recipient of "natural light," "common grace," and so forth.

Several things are interesting about this treatment. There is no discussion of the metaphysics of human action, nothing on what is nowadays called determinism or compatibilism, or of agent causation. His reference to original sin presented him with an invitation to discuss these issues, but he does not accept it. There is no attempt to discuss Aristotle's account of the voluntary and the blameworthy in light of Aristotle's own indeterminism and fear of fatalism to be found in his famous chapter "The Sea Battle Tomorrow" in book 5 of the *De Interpretatione*. It is true that Aristotle's account of blameworthiness in terms of voluntariness and knowledge (or awareness) can be bolted onto either a compatibilist or an incompatibilist account of action, depending on what one takes the sources of voluntariness to be. But it seems that Vermigli, in common with Calvin, is sympathetic to some form of compatibilism.¹⁶ In ignoring the questions of the overall consistency or otherwise of Aristotle's moral psychology and his ethics, Vermigli is simply content to help himself to this aspect of Aristotle's thought without bothering about its significance for Aristotle's overall views themselves. (This may be partly at least because he takes Aristotle to be discussing ethics from a civil or public angle rather than from the angle of metaphysics, and he may be correct in this.) There is considerable merit in the care with which he discusses voluntariness, and Calvin's short statements on the matter could certainly have benefited from discussions of the matter with his friend.

¹⁶ Luca Baschera, "Peter Martyr Vermigli on Free Will: The Aristotelian Heritage of Reformed Theology," *Calvin Theological Journal* 12.2 (2007): 325–40. But alongside this account must be played the much more ambiguous account of free will in the following passage: "Judgment belongs to the function of understanding, but desire belongs to the will. Reason or understanding has the place of an advisor, but the will desires, accepts or rejects. Accordingly, we may define free will that follows the directive of the understanding to refuse or desire something by itself." (From a lecture given on January 25, 1560, and incorporated into his *Loci Communes*. English translation Joseph C. McClelland, in *Philosophical Works*, Peter Martyr Library 4, Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies 39 (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 1996), 272.



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Discipline and Ignorance in Calvin's Geneva¹

SCOTT M. MANETSCH

Abstract

Founded by John Calvin in 1542, the Genevan consistory was a disciplinary court made up of pastors and lay elders that oversaw public morality and enforced right belief in the city church. Although scholars of early modern Europe have explored in detail the various functions of this religious institution, inadequate attention has been paid to its important pedagogical role. This essay explores the various strategies that Calvin's consistory employed to correct religious ignorance and inculcate Protestant belief among the city inhabitants. Based on quantitative analysis of extant Genevan disciplinary records from 1542 to 1609, it will be argued that Calvin's consistory was largely successful in reshaping Geneva's religious culture and imparting a deeper understanding of reformed Christianity to many children and adults.

In August of 1577, a young man named Abraham de La Mare appeared before the Genevan consistory with an unusual request. De La Mare had been raised in an Anabaptist home in Flanders and now wished to receive instruction in the Reformed faith in preparation for baptism. The ministers and elders agreed to instruct and catechize the young

¹ This essay adapts and expands upon arguments made in my book *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536–1609* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). A shorter version of this paper was presented at a symposium entitled “Discipline and Control in Calvin's Geneva,” sponsored by the Classics Department of the University of Alabama, September 2016.

man, requiring that he also attend sermons several days each week. Four months later, the consistory assigned a city minister to meet privately with de La Mare to gauge his progress and determine whether or not he possessed the requisite knowledge of the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer. The interview must have gone well, for de La Mare received Christian baptism on December 22, 1577, in front of the congregation at the temple of Saint Pierre.² The account of de La Mare's instruction and baptism demonstrates the important pedagogical function of Geneva's consistory during the sixteenth century.

Scholars of early modern Europe have long recognized the prominence and historical significance of moral discipline in Reformed churches during the age of the Reformation. Beginning with Calvin's consistory in Geneva, disciplinary courts sprang up in other regions of Reformed Europe—in southern France, Scotland, Emden, the Netherlands, and the Palatinate—in an effort to supervise public behavior, battle ignorance, and enforce right belief.³ The detailed registers that survive from these Reformed tribunals continue to offer historians a fascinating glimpse into daily life, misbehavior, and misbelief in the sixteenth century. Whereas scholars once portrayed Reformed consistories as repressive institutions of social control, created to impose a Puritan-like moral austerity on a resistant laity, more recent scholarship has highlighted the ways that Calvinist discipline helped define confessional boundaries, protected the sacral unity of the Eucharistic community, provided relational support and pastoral care for troubled souls, and contributed to the process of state formation in the early modern period.⁴ In his magisterial work, *Les Rituels de la cène*, Christian Grosse has

² Registres du Consistoire, Archives d'État de Genève, vol. 31 (1577), fols. 81r–v, 130. Hereafter cited as R. Consist. For published volumes of the consistory, the abbreviated form will be italicized, i.e., *R. Consist.*

³ These disciplinary courts were variously called "consistories," "kirk session," "presbyteries," or "Kirchenrat."

⁴ Some important representative works include: Robert M. Kingdon, "The Control of Morals in Calvin's Geneva," in *The Social History of the Reformation*, ed. Lawrence P. Buck and Jonathan Zophy (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1972), 3–16; Janine Estèbe and Bernard Vogler, "Le genèse d'une société protestante: Étude comparée de quelques registres consistoriaux languedociens et palatins vers 1600," *Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisation* 31.2 (1976): 362–88; Raymond Mentzer, "Disciplina nervus ecclesiae: The Calvinist Reform of Morals at Nîmes," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 18.1 (1987): 89–115; Heinz Schilling, *Civic Calvinism in Northwestern Germany and the Netherlands* (Kirkville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal, 1991); Janine Garrisson, *Protestants du Midi, 1559–1598* (Toulouse: Privat, 1991); Jeffrey Watt, "Women and the Consistory in Calvin's Geneva," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 24.2 (1993): 429–39; Raymond Mentzer, ed., *Sin and the Calvinists: Morals Control and the Consistory in the Reformed Tradition* (Kirkville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal, 1994); Robert Kingdon, *Adultery and Divorce in Calvin's Geneva* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995);

also highlighted the multifaceted pedagogical role that Calvin's consistory played in Reformation Geneva. As Grosse has observed, in the early years of the Reformation "the struggle against ignorance constituted the principal objective pursued by the Consistory."⁵ Taking Grosse's statement as a point of departure, I seek in this essay to shed further light on the various strategies that Calvin's consistory employed to correct religious ignorance and inculcate Protestant belief among the city's inhabitants.⁶ My quantitative analysis of Genevan disciplinary records over a sixty-eight year period, from 1542 to 1609, will also allow me to assess the overall effectiveness of the consistory in instructing Geneva's residents in the evangelical doctrine of the Reformation.

I. *Geneva's Consistory in Theory and Practice*

Of all the institutions that Calvin created in Geneva, his consistory was the most distinctive and the most controversial.⁷ The consistory had its genesis in Geneva's religious constitution, the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, drafted by a commission led by Calvin in 1541. The *Ordinances* required both the city and countryside pastors, along with twelve lay elders, to meet weekly on Thursday afternoons to supervise public morality and apply the spiritual "medicine" of church discipline as needed.⁸ Calvin and his colleagues believed that the practice of church discipline found biblical warrant throughout the New Testament, but especially in the Gospel of Matthew (16:19 and 18:19), where Jesus entrusted to his disciples the "power of the

Michael Graham, *The Uses of Reform: "Godly Discipline" and Popular Belief in Scotland and Beyond, 1560–1610* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Thomas Lambert, "Preaching, Praying and Policing the Reform in Sixteenth-Century Geneva" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1998); Judith Pollmann, "Off the Record: Problems in the Quantification of Calvinist Church Discipline," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 33.2 (2002): 423–38; Graeme Murdock, *Beyond Calvinism: The Intellectual, Political and Cultural World of Europe's Reformed Churches* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Christian Grosse, *Les Rituels de la cène: Le culte eucharistique réformé à Genève, XVIe–XVIIe siècles* (Geneva: Droz, 2008); Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*.

⁵ Grosse, *Les Rituels de la cène*, 467.

⁶ For a more general treatment of the Swiss Reformers' educational campaign against religious ignorance, see Karin Maag, "The Spectre of Ignorance: The Provision of Education in the Swiss Cities," in William Naphy and Penny Roberts, eds., *Fear in Early Modern Society* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 137–49.

⁷ For an excellent introduction to the Genevan consistory, see Robert 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.

⁸ *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* (1541), in *Registres de la Compagnie des pasteurs de Genève au temps de Calvin*, ed. Robert Kingdon and J. F. Bergier, vol. 1 (Geneva: Droz, 1964), 13. Henceforth cited as RCP.

keys,” that is, the authority to proclaim God’s sentence of condemnation and forgiveness to sinners.⁹ Calvin believed that the spiritual authority to “bind and loose” was exercised in a general way when ministers preached the gospel in their sermons, announcing God’s 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 in a more targeted fashion when pastors and elders admonished sinners in private conferences, at the annual household visitation, or during the weekly meetings of the consistory. Geneva’s religious constitution made clear that the consistory exercised no civil jurisdiction and possessed no authority to impose corporal punishment on sinners. Instead, the ministers and elders were to wield the “spiritual sword of the Word of God” as they admonished, counseled, censured, and, if necessary, suspended offenders from the Lord’s Supper in hopes of affecting heart change and repentance. In the most flagrant cases, where misbehavior also constituted criminality, the consistory was expected to refer defendants to Geneva’s magistrates for fines, imprisonment, banishment, or even execution.

Calvin and his colleagues insisted that church discipline benefited not only the individual sinner but also the entire Christian community. Discipline helped maintain the purity of Christ’s church; it protected Christians from the bad example of unrepentant sinners; it shamed the wicked in hopes of securing their repentance and restoring them to the fellowship of Christian believers. The ultimate goal of church discipline was spiritual healing, not punishment or public humiliation. Calvin’s colleague Theodore Beza compared moral discipline to a form of spiritual medicine in that pastors 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 who are despairing. In brief, let us always condemn the sin, but try to save the sinner.¹⁰

Hence, Calvin and his colleagues believed that church discipline was essential for a healthy Christian church. Church discipline was like a “father’s rod” that preserved the unity and purity of the church and guided God’s people to obedience and spiritual health. Consequently, as Calvin stated in

⁹ For Calvin’s most developed treatment of church discipline, see his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1229–40 (4.12.1–13).

¹⁰ Theodore Beza, *Sermons sur l’histoire de la resurrection de nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ* (Geneva: Jean Le Preux, 1593), 129–30.

Table 1: Geneva Suspension Offenses, 1542-1609

Offense	# Male / Female	Total	% of Total
Quarrels / <i>Mauvais Ménage</i>	1,572 / 777	2,349	25.4
Fornication / Adultery	636 / 538	1,174	12.7
Scandals	447 / 233	680	7.3
Blasphemy	393 / 125	518	5.6
Lying / Slander	265 / 194	459	5.0
Catholic Behavior	298 / 152	450	4.9
Illicit Dances / Songs	171 / 274	445	4.8
Rebellion	308 / 123	431	4.7
Drunkenness	277 / 97	374	4.0
Ignorance	209 / 159	368	4.0
Confessional Infidelity	186 / 169	355	3.8
Petty Theft	159 / 161	320	3.5
Gaming / Gambling	253 / 2	255	2.8
Violation of Lord's Supper	163 / 82	245	2.6
Business Fraud / Usury	164 / 29	193	2.1
Folk Religion	63 / 99	162	1.8
Sermon Violations	108 / 34	142	1.5
Clandestine Marriage	61 / 50	111	1.2
Begging / Idleness	80 / 24	104	1.1
Endangerment	33 / 28	61	0.7
Anabaptism / Heresy	25 / 1	26	0.3
Unknown	18 / 16	34	0.4
Totals	5,889 / 3,367	9,256	100%

his *Institutes*, “all who desire to remove discipline or hinder its restoration—whether they do this deliberately or out of ignorance—are surely contributing to the ultimate dissolution of the church.”¹¹

During Calvin’s lifetime—and in the half-century following—hundreds of men and women were summoned to the consistory’s chambers each year and examined for a variety of moral infractions. The pastors and elders confronted wife beaters and Sabbath breakers, drunkards and diviners, fornicators, and petty thieves. In my study of Genevan consistorial records from 1542 to 1609, I have identified more than 9,200 cases where

¹¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1230 (4.12.1).

defendants were temporarily suspended from the Lord's Supper.¹² The most common reasons for suspensions in Calvinist Geneva are listed in Table 1: quarrels and household disputes (25.4%), fornication and adultery (12.7%), scandals (7.3%), blasphemy (5.6%), lying and slander (5.0%), Catholic behavior (4.9%), illicit dancing and singing (4.8%), rebellion (4.7%), drunkenness (4.0%), and ignorance (4.0%). My tabulations offer several surprising results. First, the consistory censured defendants far more frequently for faulty behavior (such as quarrels, blasphemy, or drunkenness) than for wrong doctrine (such as heresy, ignorance, or Catholic belief). At least in practice, Geneva's consistory functioned more as a morals court than as a theological tribunal. Second, during the six-and-a-half decades of my study, men were nearly twice as likely to be suspended from the Lord's Supper as women (64%–36%). Third, my data indicate that roughly 26% of men and women suspended from the Lord's Supper came from Geneva's twelve countryside parishes—a percentage that is slightly disproportionate given that only one in five of Geneva's inhabitants lived in the territory outside the city walls. Finally, 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. Men, by contrast, account for nearly all of the suspensions for gambling, business fraud, and heresy.

II. *The Problem of Ignorance*

At first blush, it would seem that the problem of ignorance does not fit the disciplinary profile of Calvin's consistory. After all, most cases of ignorance would presumably not constitute "moral failure" or "hardened unbelief" in need of repentance and restoration. Ignorance might be deplorable, but not culpable. Many defendants who appeared before the consistory for ignorance indicated that the problem was not one of inadequate desire, but of limited mental capacity. Defendants sometimes complained of having a "bad head," a "thick head," a "poor head"—or simply of being "stupid."¹³ Mamad Buctin admitted to the pastors and elders that, even though he attended sermons, "he has such a thick head that he can retain nothing of the preaching." Jacques Mossier, who had lived in Geneva for three years when he was

¹² These archival findings are discussed at length in Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*, 182–220. For a discussion of the difficulties of counting and categorizing disciplinary cases, see *ibid.*, 366, note 88.

¹³ See, for example, *R. Consist.* 1 (1542), 138; *ibid.* 1 (1544), 193r–v; *R. Consist.* 17 (1560), fol. 163; *ibid.* 18 (1561), fol. 32; *ibid.* 20 (1563), fol. 50v; *ibid.* 22 (1565), fol. 160.

called to consistory, insisted that he had “good will to learn but he is thick-headed.” When the ministers exhorted Aimé Navette to memorize the Ten Commandments, he replied curtly, “I knew nothing of it last year; I know nothing of it now; and as for the year to come, the Devil with it!”¹⁴

For Geneva’s ministers, ignorance warranted church discipline for reasons that lay at the heart of the city’s confessional identity.¹⁵ When Geneva officially adopted the Reformation on May 25, 1536, the citizens voted unanimously to “live henceforth according to the Law of the Gospel and the Word of God, and to abolish all Papal abuses.”¹⁶ Geneva was henceforth identified as a city where people “lived according to the true Reformation of the gospel,” a city where the evangelical faith was “purely preached and proclaimed.”¹⁷ In the years that followed, Geneva’s magistrates and ministers confirmed and consolidated this civic and religious identity by passing laws to ensure that all residents of the city and countryside understood the Reformed faith and lived according to it. All Genevan adults and children were mandated by law to attend (at a minimum) two sermons on Sunday as well as the “Day of Prayer” on Wednesday mornings. During the weekly liturgy, the congregation confessed aloud the Apostles’ Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. Moreover, fathers and mothers were obligated to instruct their households in the evangelical faith. Children were expected to go to school and attend weekly catechism classes. Beginning in 1561, the ministers were required by law to visit all the households in the city before Easter each year to make sure that family members were properly catechized and living in Christian harmony.¹⁸ Additionally, the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* required that all native Genevans and foreign visitors should be examined by the ministers and make public profession of faith before being admitted to the Lord’s Supper.¹⁹ This decision to fence off the holy sacrament from those who were ignorant of Geneva’s public faith satisfied a number of Calvin’s concerns. It addressed Paul’s warning in 1 Corinthians 11:27 against people profaning the Lord’s Supper by communing in an unworthy manner. It served as an antidote to ignorance by motivating both children

¹⁴ R. Consist. 1 (1542), 104; R. Consist. 20 (1564), fol. 50v; *ibid.* 19 (1562), fol. 35v.

¹⁵ See Grosse’s detailed discussion in *Les Rituels de la cène*, 425–36.

¹⁶ Cited in E. William Monter, *Calvin’s Geneva* (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1967), 55–56.

¹⁷ Geneva was “une cité pour y vivre selon la vraye Reformation de l’Evangile, en icelle purement presché et annoncé ...” See R. Consist. 17 (1560), fol. 121. Elsewhere, the consistory minutes describe Geneva’s brand of Christianity as “the evangelical faith,” “the evangelical Reformation,” “the holy gospel,” “the teaching of the Christian religion,” “the true religion,” and “the holy Reformation of the gospel.”

¹⁸ For more on the annual visitation, see Grosse, *Les Rituels de la cène*, 400–407.

¹⁹ RCP 1:8–9.

and adults to master the basics of the Protestant faith. So too, it provided a clear public reminder of Geneva's confessional boundaries and the evangelical identity that united the city's residents.

The Genevan consistory identified ignorance and determined theological illiteracy by measuring it against the general outline or summary of Calvin's *Catechism* (1542).²⁰ Defendants were expected to be able to recite in the French vernacular the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer, providing a brief explanation of what they believed, how they should behave, and how they should pray. Though rote memorization was important, the pastors and elders also desired that defendants understand and personalize the basic truths of the Christian gospel. People needed to comprehend what they were praying; they needed to fear God and obey his laws; they needed to understand the substance of their salvation; they needed to have the Word of God engraved on their hearts. Thus, in 1542, after scolding François Mermiez for beating his wife, the consistory demanded that he "give an explanation of his faith in intelligible language" and show that "he knows how to pray to God."²¹ Fifteen years later, the consistory called to its chambers Pierre de La Place and his wife Guicharde who were asked "to declare what is the substance of their salvation and make a confession of faith as all good Christians should be able to do."²² Geneva's ministers and elders were especially concerned that men and women recognize that salvation is purely God's gift in Christ, apart from human works. This is illustrated in the case of Jehan Revilliod, a laborer from southern France, who was summoned to consistory in 1580 because he was "full of ignorance, without knowing how to give a reason for his faith." Not only was Revilliod unable to recite the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, or the Apostles' Creed, but he failed miserably when asked to explain the basis for his Christian hope.

Inquired if he will be saved, has responded that he hopes so, yes. And by what means, he has responded by the works that we do. In this he has responded very badly because we must have our confidence and faith of being saved by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Following this botched examination, the consistory ordered that Revilliod seek out Christian instruction before presenting himself at the Lord's Supper.²³

²⁰ For catechetical instruction in Geneva, see Grosse, *Les Rituels de la cène*, 470–72, 481–92; and Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*, 265–74.

²¹ *R. Consist.* (1542), 36.

²² *R. Consist.* 12 (1557), fol. 16v.

²³ *R. Consist.* 32 (1580), fols. 47v–48.

III. *Kinds of Ignorance*

The Genevan consistory suspended men and women for ignorance with some frequency during the first generations of the Reformation. In my study of the consistory registers from 1542 to 1609, I have identified 368 cases of ignorance that resulted in suspension, or 4% of total suspensions during the period. Of this number, 57% of the defendants were men, 43% were women. Surprisingly, ignorance cases were far more prevalent among city dwellers than country folk: 88% of defendants suspended for religious ignorance came from within the city walls—a figure that may indicate more intense supervision, or perhaps, higher expectations placed upon city dwellers.²⁴

Consistory records indicate that there were various kinds or degrees of ignorance cases, which we will classify into three categories: extreme ignorance, confessional ignorance, and hostile ignorance. A number of men and women were suspended from the Lord's Supper for religious ignorance so extreme that even the jaded ministers and elders were taken aback. When a butcher named Pierre Durand was asked to repeat the Lord's Prayer, he could barely recite two words of it. A sailor named Guillaume Genod did even worse, failing to remember a single word of the Creed. So poorly instructed in the Christian faith was Jehan Cuys that the consistory likened him to a "lost sheep."²⁵ Defendants before consistory sometimes found the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith to be elusive, if not altogether incomprehensible. When asked about the doctrine of the Trinity, a wagon driver named Mermet Foudral announced that there were three gods in heaven who were all one, that the divine Father named "Pilate" had died for sinners, and that he did not think God would damn anyone. The wife of Pierre Armand did only slightly better, stating that the father of believers was Jesus Christ, and that the son of Jesus Christ was God. As for the identity of Jesus Christ, Isabela Delafie opined that he was "God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit ... he is the Father if you please." Other Genevans who appeared before the consistory displayed extreme ignorance regarding the Ten Commandments and the sacraments. Marguerite Danelle, the wife of a pin maker, believed that there were three commandments, the Lord's Supper, Baptism ... and she couldn't remember the third. When asked about the holy sacraments, a servant named Gaspard Musner stated that "it was the grace of God and that the bread was one sacrament

²⁴ In addition, one wonders if ministers who served rural parishes sometimes informally censured ignorant country folk and withheld the Lord's Supper from them without sending them to the city for formal suspension.

²⁵ *R. Consist.* 1 (1542), 119; *ibid.* 2 (1546), 103; *ibid.* 8 (1553), 121–22.

and the wine the other.” Perhaps the most spectacular case of ignorance belongs to a widow named Guillermette Tissot, whom the consistory examined in 1561. She was judged to be “very stupid and ignorant of the way of her salvation” for declaring that the Virgin Mary was the *father* of Jesus Christ. Further questioning revealed that she was not altogether clear as to whether the Virgin was a man or a woman. Guillermette was ordered to meet with her minister every Sunday after catechism class to become better instructed.²⁶

Confessional ignorance was a second and more common kind of religious ignorance found in Geneva’s consistory records. The term “confessional ignorance” has been chosen to identify Genevan residents who presumably embraced the city’s Protestant faith, but remained habituated to a variety of Catholic teachings or ceremonies.²⁷ Clearly, many men and women raised in the Catholic religion and nurtured on the Latin Mass found it difficult to adjust to Geneva’s new confessional requirements. In the early years of Geneva’s Reformation, the consistory encountered a sizeable number of elderly citizens who continued to say the Ave Maria, continued to pray to the saints, continued to believe in purgatory—and found it next to impossible to learn the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Ten Commandments in the French vernacular. When Françoise Loup was called before the consistory for ignorance in 1542, she complained that “she has a poor head” and “does not know how to pray to God except in the manner that her father and mother taught her ... and she says she is a good Christian and that it is too late to teach her the Our Father.” Sermé Bylo, the elderly wife of a string maker, had a similar problem fourteen years later: she did not know the Apostles’ Creed and still prayed in the “old fashion,” that is, in Latin. Geneva’s ministers and elders were especially on the lookout for defendants who were unable to articulate “the reason for their faith” or express confidence in the evangelical message of grace. In 1572, for example, the consistory’s interview of a foreign visitor named Antoine Buffet took place as follows: Asked if he was confident that he would be saved, Antoine initially said no, but when confronted with the possibility of despairing in hell, changed his answer to yes. Antoine was asked by what means he would be saved. “By works,” he replied. The consistory next inquired whether he prayed to the Virgin Mary. Antoine assured them that he did, and proceeded to recite the

²⁶ R. Consist. 30 (1576), fol. 102v; *ibid.* 18 (1561), fol. 40; *ibid.* 22 (1565), n.p.; *ibid.* 17 (1561), fol. 217v; *ibid.* 19 (1562), fol. 78; *ibid.*, 18 (1561), fol. 32.

²⁷ Of course, there were also native Genevans or foreign visitors who remained secretly committed to the Catholic religion and hostile to Geneva’s Reformed faith. In my tabulation of suspensions, I have listed these individuals under the category of “Catholic practice.”

Ave Maria. As a result of this hearing, Antoine and his wife were ordered to attend sermons and present themselves to their minister for instruction and repentance before the next Lord's Supper.²⁸

A third type of religious ignorance might be described as hostile ignorance, where religious confusion was accompanied by resistance toward Geneva's religious authorities or even toward classical creedal Christianity. When the hostess of the tavern named The Three Sheep was questioned by the consistory in 1548, she averred that no one is damned, not even the devil or Judas Iscariot, and that Catholicism was as good as the gospel. Alarmed by her "poverty of soul," the consistory commanded her to attend catechism services and sent her to the parish minister for instruction in the Christian faith. Two decades later, a widow named Catherine Leguaine—who had already been suspended once from the Lord's Table—was summoned before consistory for refusing to give a reason for her faith. Her curt response was that if she wasn't wise enough to take the Lord's Supper, then neither was she wise enough to give a reason for her faith—and, she would henceforth partake of the sacrament elsewhere. Accusing her of rebellion, pertinacity, and foolishness, the ministers and elders suspended her from the Lord's Supper (a second time) and sent her to the magistrates for further punishment. Thyven Bastard of Bourdigny was equally hostile to consistorial correction. When Bastard appeared before the consistory in May 1561, he was unable to answer the question "Who suffered and died for us?" He was given two months to improve his knowledge of the Christian faith by attending sermons and seeking out his minister for weekly instruction. A month later, Bastard was called back to the consistory for infelicitous comments made to his minister Jean Trembley. At their recent meeting, Trembley had confronted Bastard with the fact that Bastard's wife was well instructed and would go to paradise. When asked if *he* too hoped for paradise, Bastard replied: "If I knew that [my wife] was in paradise and I wasn't, I would go there and make a great spectacle by beating her." Given this outrageous statement, the consistory suspended Bastard for his "ignorance and stupidity, as well as his mockery."²⁹

IV. *The Battle Against Ignorance*

Calvin's consistory employed a variety of strategies to assure that Geneva's residents in the city and countryside understood the basics of the Protestant

²⁸ *R. Consist.* 1 (1542), 138; *R. Consist.* 11 (1556), fol. 14; *ibid.* 28 (1572), fol. 193.

²⁹ *R. Consist.* 4 (1548), 6–7, 9; *R. Consist.* 25 (1568), fol. 68v–69; *ibid.* 18 (1561), fols. 52, 68v.

faith. As we have already seen, the consistory regularly summoned, examined, and sometimes suspended from the sacrament men and women suspected of ignorance. The decision to impose church discipline on the ignorant was almost always accompanied by specific advice or requirements intended to foster theological literacy and hasten restoration to the Christian community. The most common strategy was to command defendants to obey city statutes that required regular attendance at sermons and weekly catechism classes. The Sunday catechism was not only for children, but also for adults in need of remedial Christian instruction. Hence, when Claude Pascard in 1560 betrayed utter confusion about the Christian faith (he stated that theft and adultery do not violate the Ten Commandments), the consistory suspended him from the Lord's Supper 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 minister on a regular basis. Though many men and women refused to attend the catechism out of the perception that "the catechism hour is for children," the ministers never backed down from their expectation that the catechism sermon should serve both children and ignorant adults.³⁰

The consistory possessed still other "weapons" in its arsenal as it battled ignorance. The ministers and elders sometimes directed a defendant to purchase and read the Bible, or to hire a private tutor for personalized Christian instruction. The consistory also held parents responsible for the religious education of their children and household servants. Thus, in 1542, the consistory ordered a merchant named Jaques Carre to "learn the Lord's Prayer and his faith and creed so he can teach his children." The following year, the ministers commanded the apothecary Pierre Pauloz Du Pain, whose mother remained an ardent Catholic, to

instruct his wife and his mother, that he admonish and give a good example to his household ... and remove the books from his house so that his mother will not read them. ... and to teach his mother to pray to God and learn her creed, and all those of his house.³¹

Finally, Geneva's consistory frequently played a more direct, personal role in helping ignorant men and women grow in Christian understanding. During the annual household visitation, held shortly before Easter each year, the ministers examined the religious knowledge of individual family members and attempted to help them understand the central tenets of the

³⁰ R. Consist. 17 (1560), fol. 163; *ibid.*, 12 (1557), fol. 81.

³¹ R. Consist. 1 (1542), 44; *ibid.* (1543), 218.

Table 2: Geneva Consistory Suspensions for “Ignorance” by Decade

Decade	# Suspensions for Ignorance	Total Suspensions	% of Total
1540s	26	112	23.2
1550s	127	1,407	9
1560s	195	3,987	4.9
1570s	9	1,989	0.5
1580s	5	558	0.9
1590s	4	640	0.6
1600s	2	563	0.4
Totals	368	9,256	4%

Christian faith.³² In addition, defendants who appeared before consistory were regularly advised to consult their parish ministers for personal tutoring and assistance. Thus, for example, the consistory commanded Jean de La Pallud of the parish of Saint Gervais to seek out his minister Raymond Chauvet for instruction twice per week and then report back on his progress in three weeks. Similarly, the pastor Jean Pinault was commissioned “to meet daily” with a citizen named Pierre Genod “until he should be properly instructed.”³³ In all these ways then—through sermons and catechism, through household visitations, and through personal coaching and formal discipline—Geneva’s consistory endeavored to assure that all Genevans understood the Christian gospel and were committed to it.

Conclusion

The question that remains is how effective the consistory’s battle against ignorance in early modern Geneva was. Grosse and other scholars have recently argued that Calvin’s extensive program of religious instruction and moral supervision succeeded within several decades of imparting to most Genevan adults and children a basic understanding of Protestant faith and

³² The central pedagogical purpose of the annual visitation is stated in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* (1576): “We have decreed that each household should be visited yearly, to examine each person very simply on their faith, so that at least no one will come to communion without knowing the grounds of their salvation.” In Henri Heyer, *L’Église de Genève: Esquisse historique de son organisation, 1535–1909* (repr., Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1974), 289. On this, see Maag, “The Spectre of Ignorance,” 145.

³³ R. Consist. 15 (1559), fol. 78; *ibid.* 32 (1580), fol. 139v.

practice.³⁴ My empirical study of Genevan suspensions between 1542 and 1609 lends support to this conclusion. During Calvin's lifetime, from 1542 to 1564, extant consistorial records indicate that 308 people were suspended for ignorance, or 11% of all total suspensions. After Calvin's lifetime, from 1565 to 1609, extant consistorial records indicate that around 60 people were suspended for ignorance, or less than 1% of all total suspensions. This sharp decline in the relative number of ignorance suspensions is seen even more clearly when they are broken down by decade (see Table 2). During the decade of the 1540s, 25% of all consistory suspensions were for ignorance; during the decades of the 1550s and 1560s, that number declined to 9% and 5% respectively. During the last three decades of the sixteenth century, suspension rates for ignorance never exceeded 1% of all consistorial suspensions—and most of those cases involved foreign visitors to Geneva rather than Genevan natives.

Despite this indication of success, however, Geneva's ministers recognized the challenges and limitations of their educational enterprise. Memorizing a brief summary of Calvin's *Catechism* or reciting the Creed and the Lord's Prayer in French did not guarantee that a person had extensive knowledge of Reformed doctrine. The city's ministers admitted this fact in 1576, when they expressed alarm that many people whom they examined were not well instructed and that "our catechisms ... do not seem to be accomplishing what they should."³⁵ But if Calvin's pedagogical program produced mixed results, the fact remains that it significantly reshaped Geneva's religious culture and imparted to a large number of adults and children a deeper understanding of Protestant Christianity, which many of them welcomed with gratitude. Such was the case with Master Thomas Sylvester, a physician from the royal court of Hungary, who arrived in Geneva in July of 1559 desiring "to hear the preaching of the gospel" and "become instructed and live according to the true reformation of the gospel." An initial interview before the consistory determined that Sylvester was "very ignorant and did not know the principles of Christianity"; consequently, the ministers charged Sylvester to study the catechism in Latin and Italian and to report back in six weeks for a fuller examination of his Christian faith. When Sylvester returned to consistory at the end of August without having mastered the catechism, the ministers gave him another three months to be instructed and urged him to consult the city ministers

³⁴ See Grosse, *Les Rituels de la cène*, 498–501. Similarly, Lambert concludes that most Genevans had learned to pray in the Reformed fashion by the 1570s. See his "Preaching, Praying and Policing the Reform," 417–19.

³⁵ RCP 4:47.

to “discuss with them matters of doctrine.” Finally, after five months of formal and informal catechetical instruction, Master Thomas Sylvester successfully declared “the reason for his faith and the manner of his salvation” before the consistory and was welcomed to the Lord’s Supper before the Genevan congregation in December 1559.³⁶ By all appearances, the consistory’s pedagogical program had succeeded.

³⁶ R. Consist. 15 (1559), fols. 124r–v, 167v, 244.

Bullinger on Islam: Theory and Practice

DANIËL TIMMERMAN

Abstract

The present inquiry engages with the perception of Islam and of Christian-Muslim relations in the works of the sixteenth-century Zurich Reformer Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575). On the basis of previous research, it attempts to deepen our understanding of the Reformer's theory of Islam by comparing it with the notions of true and false prophecy. This theological perspective is broadened by a discussion of Bullinger's more practical advice on the Christian presence in Turkish territories and on evangelization of Muslims. These themes are explored through the Reformer's correspondence, his 1551 catechetical letter to Hungarian Protestants, and his 1567 systematic and polemical exposition of Islam (*Der Türgg*).

Introduction

In our age, the world is facing growing tensions between worldwide communities of Muslims and the largely secularized Western societies. On either side of the spectrum, Christians are called to live as a “holy priesthood” (1 Pet 2:5), witnessing in word and deed to the gospel of reconciliation through Jesus Christ. However, on the path to fulfilling this vocation, we are confronted with stumbling blocks from the past. This applies in particular to the history of Christian-Muslim relationships. Although the records show remarkable examples of respectful dialogue and

cohabitation, the prevailing image is that of mutual prejudice, caricature, and violence. For many Muslims, the history of aggression from the medieval crusades to the twentieth-century massacres in Bosnia fuels a deep suspicion against the powers of the “Christian” West. On the other hand, the present-day violence of certain radical Islamists reinforces the deeply ingrained and historically developed distrust of many in Western societies against Muslims. Hopefully, awareness of the stumbling blocks from the past may be a step in the process of removing them.

For the present purpose, we will take a look at the Christian perception of Muslims in a specific time and context: the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the European continent witnessed a steady advance of the forces of the Ottoman Empire. By 1529 the Turkish armies had marched into the heartlands of the Hungarian kingdom and even laid siege to the city of Vienna. In the following decades, the main powers of central Europe always had to counter military pressure from the Ottoman Empire. As a result, the confrontation with the Turks curtailed the military strength of the leading Catholic states, thereby immediately facilitating the development of the Protestant Reformation. Theologically, the advance of the Turks was interpreted on both sides of the confessional rift as an indication of God’s wrath against Christianity.

Rather than focusing on the views of Martin Luther and the German Reformers,¹ the present article will zero in on the perception of Islam and Muslim believers in the city-state of Zurich. Although this breeding ground of the Reformed tradition was not directly affected by the military engagement with the Ottoman Empire, the issue of the “Turkish threat” was felt there as much as in other parts of the continent. Through networks of correspondents, its leading theologians were well informed about the situation of Protestant Christians under Islamic rule.² Since Zurich was one of the leading cities in the movement of what would later become the Reformed tradition, they were challenged with the task of giving interpretation and guidance in view of the rise of the Turkish armies at the doorstep of a continent that understood itself as a *corpus Christianum*.

¹ A vast research literature exists on this subject. For orientation on the current state of the debate, see Damaris Grimmismann, *Krieg mit dem Wort: Türkenpredigten des 16. Jahrhunderts im Alten Reich*, AKG 131 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016). For English introductions to Luther’s position, see Adam S. Francisco, *Martin Luther and Islam: A Study in Sixteenth-Century Polemics and Apologetics*, CMR 8 (Leiden: Brill, 2007); and Hans Schwarz, “Luther and the Turks,” *Unio cum Christo* 3.2 (April 2017): 139–52.

² Erich Bryner, “Bullinger und Ostmitteleuropa: Bullingers Einfluss auf die Reformation in Ungarn und Polen: Ein Vergleich,” in *Heinrich Bullinger: Life—Thought—Influence*, ed. Emidio Campi and Peter Opitz, ZBRG 24 (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zurich, 2007), 2:799–820.

Fortunately, the views of the sixteenth-century Zurich theologians on Islam are very well documented.³ Scholarship has paid special attention to the writings of the city's leading minister, Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575),⁴ and of the professor of Old Testament at the Zurich Academy, Theodor Bibliander (1505–1564).⁵ On the one hand, the present inquiry seeks to deepen our understanding of Bullinger's theory of Islam by relating it to the notion of prophecy. On the other hand, it attempts to broaden the image of the Reformer's approach to Islam by turning to more practical questions, like how Bullinger counseled Christian believers in Turkish territories and what his opinion was on the evangelization of Muslims. Both perspectives, theory and practice, are brought together in the concluding section.

I. *Islam as False Prophecy*

The opinion of Bullinger on Islam is articulated in his 1567 polemical treatise *Der Türgg* (The Turk).⁶ On the title page of this work, Muhammad is introduced to the readers as a “false prophet.”⁷ This polemical rejection of the prophetic status of the founder of Islam is a standard element in medieval and early modern writings on Islam.⁸ However, within the corpus of

³ Paul Widmer, “Bullinger und die Türken: Zeugnis des geistigen Widerstandes gegen eine Renaissance der Kreuzzüge,” in *Heinrich Bullinger*, ed. Campi and Opitz, 2:593–624; W. Peter Stephens, “Understanding Islam—In the Light of Bullinger and Wesley,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 81 (2009): 23–27; Emidio Campi, “Early Reformed Attitudes towards Islam,” *Near East School of Theology Theological Review* 31 (2010): 131–51; Damaris Grimmsmann, “Heinrich Bullingers Deutung der Türkengefahr und des Islam,” *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte* 103 (2012): 64–91.

⁴ Biography: Rodney L. Petersen, “Bullinger, Heinrich (1504–1575),” in *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters*, ed. Donald K. McKim, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 254–61. Works: *Heinrich Bullinger Werke* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zurich, 1972–2017) [= HBW]. Bibliography: Joachim Staedtke, ed., *Heinrich Bullinger Bibliographie 1: Beschreibendes Verzeichnis der gedruckten Werke von Heinrich Bullinger*, HBW 1.1 [= HBBib].

⁵ Biography: J. Wayne Baker, “Bibliander, Theodor,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1:171–72 (hereafter, *EncR*); Emil Egli, *Analecta Reformatoria, II. Biographien: Bibliander, Ceporin, Johannes Bullinger* (Zurich: Zürcher & Furrer, 1901), 1–144. Bibliography: Christian Moser, *Theodor Bibliander (1505–1564): Annotierte Bibliographie der gedruckten Werke*, ZBRG 27 (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zurich, 2009).

⁶ Heinrich Bullinger, *Der Türgg: Von Anfang und Ursprung des Türggischen Gloubens ...* ([Zurich], 1567), doi:10.3931/e-rara-5161; see HBBib 249; Bruce Gordon, “Heinrich Bullinger,” in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, vol. 6: *Western Europe, 1500–1600*, ed. David Thomas and John Chesworth, CMR 22 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 746–51.

⁷ Bullinger, *Der Türgg*, fol. a1r.

⁸ For an overview, see David Nirenberg, “Christendom and Islam,” in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 4, *Christianity in Western Europe, c. 1100–c. 1500*, ed. Miri Rubin and Walter Simons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 149–69. For the designation of Muhammad as false prophet, see, e.g., Robert of Ketton's famous 1143 translation of the Qur'an, the *Lex Mahumet pseudoprophete*; see Campi, “Attitudes,” 133.

Bullinger's writings, this application of the term "false prophet" deserves further attention. Within the incipient Reformed tradition, the Zurich Reformer was an influential voice on the subject of prophecy. His 1532 treatise on the duties of the prophet, *De prophetarum officio*, was the first comprehensive exposition of this high-profile topic in the Protestant tradition. Accordingly, the notion of true and false prophecy provides a specific viewpoint from which to explore Bullinger's evaluation of the Islamic faith.

Before turning to the contents of *Der Türgg*, it will be useful to survey Bullinger's positive exposition of the prophetic office in his earlier works.⁹ For the Reformer, a true prophet combines two basic characteristics. Firstly, he should be a learned interpreter of the biblical text in its original tongues and a rhetorically skilled preacher with the ability to edify, encourage, and challenge the church on the basis of Scripture (cf. 1 Cor 14:5). Following an idiosyncratic exegesis of 1 Corinthians 14, Bullinger understands the gift of "tongues" as the ability to speak and translate the original languages of the Bible. A prophet who faithfully exercises this gift thereby gains the authority to proclaim the word of God.¹⁰ Secondly, Bullinger's prophet is a watchman over the people of God. In line with his emphasis on the unity of God's covenant, from Israel to the church, he sees a clear resemblance between the Old Testament prophets and the preachers of the church. Whereas the former were sentinels on the walls of Zion (cf. Ezek 3:16–21; Hos 9:8), the ministers of the word should guard over Christian society by means of sound teaching and an exemplary way of life. In doing so, the preachers must warn both magistrates and civilians within Christian society about imminent danger and teach them the ways of the Lord.

A comparison of Bullinger's assessment of Islam in *Der Türgg* with his idea of the prophetic preacher reveals six points of interest. First, when true prophecy is identified as the reliable and orthodox teaching of Scripture, false prophecy amounts to a conscious deviation from this teaching. In other words, it is heresy. In the Reformer's earliest writings, this argument is employed in polemics against Roman Catholicism. He emphasizes that in Scripture false prophecy emerges primarily from within the people of God. In the Old Testament, false prophets appeared in the temple (e.g., Jer 28). Likewise, the New Testament warns that false prophets will cause confusion and deception within the church (e.g., Matt 24:24). Within this interpretative framework, Bullinger judges the doctrines and practices of

⁹ See Daniël Timmerman, *Heinrich Bullinger on Prophecy and the Prophetic Office, 1523–1538*, Reformed Historical Theology 33 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015).

¹⁰ An echo of this approach may be heard in chapter 1 of the Second Helvetic Confession: "the preaching of the word of God is the word of God."

the papal church of his days. For instance, in his first published work, the 1526 *Verglichung der uralten und unser Zytten Kaetzeryen* (Comparison of ancient and contemporary heresies), he argues that the doctors and priests of Rome are in fact heretics, because they ground their teaching not in Scripture but in their own ideas and philosophies.¹¹

In *Der Türgg* a similar line of reasoning appears, but now in relation to Islam. For the identification of Muhammad as a false prophet, Bullinger was greatly indebted to traditional Christian polemics against Islam. More specifically, his writing relies heavily on the works of John of Damascus (676–749), who first designated Muhammad a false prophet. Accordingly, Bullinger argues that Muhammad “has scraped this ‘Alcoran’ together with the special help and support of an apostate, unfaithful, and heretical monk by the name of Sergius, and also by the advice of certain distorted Jews and false Christians.” These advisors of Muhammad, Bullinger argues, were stained by heresies similar to those that had arisen in the early church, like those of Arius, Nestorius, and Eutychus. Characteristic of Bullinger’s treatment of this theme is his interest in the historical framework, emphasizing the relative newness and lack of authenticity of Muhammad’s teaching over against the antiquity and trustworthiness of the books of Moses and the Gospels.¹² Thus, Muslims are not in view as people who have not yet been reached by the gospel, but rather as apostates who have consciously rejected the Christian message.

Secondly, this view of Islam as a heretical deviation from Christian orthodoxy results in a critical assessment of the prophetic role of Jesus in the Qur’an. Again, a parallel is present in Bullinger’s earlier writings against the Church of Rome. In a discussion with papist theologians, he underlines the qualitative difference between God’s revelation and the teachings and traditions of the church. Therefore, he argues that prophets as the human interpreters of God’s revelation are always subordinate to God’s revelation in Jesus Christ and to the Scriptures that testify on his behalf (cf. John 5:39). Because of this qualitative difference, Bullinger is reluctant to call Jesus a prophet. In line with the christological outlook of his theology as a whole, he rather emphasizes that the Lord is “more than a prophet” (Matt 11:9).¹³

An echo of this discussion is heard in *Der Türgg*. Bullinger knows that Muhammad considered Jesus to be a great prophet, born of a virgin and raised by God into heaven. Moreover, second only to Muhammad himself,

¹¹ See HBBibl 3.

¹² Bullinger, *Der Türgg*, fol. a4v. For a similar approach, see his *De Testamento seu foedere Dei unico et aeterno* (Zurich, 1534), fol. 48r.

¹³ Likewise, Bullinger did not develop the concept of a “threefold office of Christ.”

Jesus is regarded as the holiest of all saints. This appreciation of Jesus's prophetic role, however, adds no credibility to Islam for Bullinger. On the contrary, he maintains that Muhammad does not teach the right doctrine concerning Jesus Christ, who is truly God and man, crucified for our sins and raised for our justification.¹⁴ In sum, the prophetic status of Jesus in the Qur'an does not provide a point of contact between Christianity and Islam.

On the contrary, a third element is found in the Reformer's association of Islam with the great eschatological adversary of the church: the antichrist. This view was presented to him by a broad strand in the Christian tradition. In the Middle Ages, many reached the conclusion that the victories of Muslim heretics at the eastern and southern borders of Europe were an unmistakable sign of the end times. In a similar vein, the religious and moral decay of the Roman papacy suggested that the devil had gained a foothold at the very heart of Christianity. There emerged the theory of a double antichrist, Islam in the east and the papacy in the west. In early works, like his 1536 commentary on Second Thessalonians, Bullinger clearly adhered to this theory. Later, he seemed to have exchanged the theory of a twofold antichrist for an exclusively antipapal understanding of the eschatological adversary.¹⁵ Nevertheless, echoes of his previous position are still heard in *Der Türgg*. In this work, Bullinger understands Islam in light of Paul's prophecy of the latter days in 2 Thessalonians 2:11–12. Therefore, this religion is a manifestation of the "powerful delusion" which God sends into the world and by which all those who do not love the truth are led to "believe lies so that all who do not believe the truth but delight in unrighteousness will be judged."¹⁶ From the context of these verses, it becomes clear that an echo of Bullinger's previous association of Islam with the antichrist is still present in 1567.

Fourthly, at the heart of Bullinger's use of the concept of prophecy lies the question of religious authority. When the prophetic preacher is legitimately called by the church and gives a correct and faithful interpretation of Scripture, he is able to proclaim the word with divine authority. In his polemics with Roman Catholicism, the Reformer frequently rebuked the doctors and prelates of the church as false prophets because they did not know the Bible and missed its correct understanding. Similarly, Bullinger criticized the Anabaptists because their preachers traveled around the

¹⁴ Bullinger, *Der Türgg*, fol. a5v.

¹⁵ Heinrich Bullinger, Commentary on 2 Thess 2:3–5, *HBW* 3.8:61–68. See Christian Moser, "Papam esse Antichristum": Grundzüge von Heinrich Bullingers Antichristkonzeption," *Zwingliana* 30 (2003): 73–75.

¹⁶ Bullinger, *Der Türgg*, fols. a4v–5r.

countryside without a commission by the church and preached and baptized on their own initiative. Therefore, he deprecatingly called them “self-commissioned” messengers of dreams. The Reformer applied the scriptural warnings against false prophets from Deuteronomy 18:20–22 and Jeremiah 23:25–28 to Roman Catholic theologians and Anabaptist preachers alike.¹⁷

The same theme of religious authority plays a central role in *Der Türgg*. Bullinger asserts that Muhammad lacked the authority of a prophet because “he devised many revelations and visions and maintained that God himself and God’s archangel Gabriel talked to him and commanded him to reveal these to the people.” In doing so, “he deviated from the salutary and true word of God, which is revealed by the holy prophets and apostles in both the Old and New Testament, and devised for himself and by his own capriciousness a doctrine and law.” In other words, his message was not in line with God’s revelation in Scripture. Moreover, he did not receive a legitimate call. Bullinger portrays Muhammad as “a completely cunning, deceitful, and hypocritical Arab” who had been employed as a merchant. Only afterward, he “set himself up as a prophet, and became known and very famous under the Arabs in the year 613.” In a similar vein, Bullinger argues that he “commissioned himself, and his new teaching in particular, into the world.”¹⁸ This refutation of Muhammad’s claim of prophetic authority particularly echoes the earlier polemics with the Anabaptists.

The fifth element of Bullinger’s discussion of false prophecy concerns the immoral behavior and carnal interests of false prophets. In his earlier works, he did not fail to expound the moral flaws of the Roman Catholic clergy and the Anabaptist preachers. He underlines that all false prophets, past and present, are prone to pride, avarice, and carnal desires. This association between false prophecy and immorality is also a core element in medieval and early-modern Christian polemics against Muhammad and his followers. Many authors of this era dwell on the atrocities and sexual excesses of Muslim peoples—often turning a blind eye to the abuses by Christian crusaders against Jews, Muslims, and fellow Christians. Also in this respect, Bullinger’s *Der Türgg* is greatly indebted to the tradition. Both in quantity and scope, the moral failures of Muhammad and his successors receive full emphasis. The Reformer considers Muslim women subject to the whims of their husbands, and he rebukes Muslim males for their carnal and

¹⁷ See Timmerman, *Prophecy*, 135–47, 301–2.

¹⁸ Bullinger, *Der Türgg*, fol. a4r.

unspiritual understanding of paradise as a place of food, drink, and sex.¹⁹ He goes on to compare Muhammad and his followers to the radical Anabaptists of Münster because both groups tried to propagate their religion with the sword and tried to establish an earthly kingdom.²⁰ In other words, the Reformer identifies the false prophets of Islam by their fruits (cf. Matt 7:15–20).

Closely related to the immorality of false prophets is the sixth and final characteristic: the inclination to proclaim a message which is pleasant and acceptable to the ears of their auditors. Such was the case with the four hundred false prophets in the days of Micaiah son of Imlah (1 Kgs 22). In his earlier works, Bullinger applies this criticism to the teachers of the Roman Catholic Church.²¹ Likewise, in *Der Türgg* the prophet Muhammad is rebuked for his attempt to amalgamate the religions of the world into a single and acceptable faith.

In those days, there were Christians, Jews, and heathen in the world, who all strove against each other with conflicting doctrines and separate beliefs. Muhammad attempted to unify all these beliefs as much as possible and to devise a pleasant faith for the world.

To this end, he purposefully deluded his “poor and foolish” followers with “fantasies and new fables.” Moreover, the prophet formulated a “better-composed doctrine” by leaving out disagreeable or disputed elements from the orthodox message, such as the doctrine of the Trinity and of the two natures of Christ.²² Muhammad adapted other parts of the true message by adding Jewish teaching concerning circumcision and food regulations. “Indeed, by means of adding, altering, and deconstructing he has corrupted and brought to shame the true salutary foundation of our veracious Christian faith, with remarkable and terrible blasphemy.”²³

In sum, in *Der Türgg* Bullinger understands Islam in much the same way as he previously characterized the position of his Roman Catholic and Anabaptist opponents. In his opinion, they all reveal the essential qualities of false prophecy. With respect to the appearance of the “false prophet,” Bullinger considers Muhammad as the one sent by God to rebuke the sins and unbelief of the Christian world. Again, the Reformer shares in the

¹⁹ Ibid., fols. a6v–7r.

²⁰ Ibid., fols. a4v, a6r–v.

²¹ See Timmerman, *Prophecy*, 260.

²² Bullinger, *Der Türgg*, fols. a4r–5r. On these pages the Reformer uses the term *verglychen*, meaning to compare or equate.

²³ Ibid., fols. 5r–7r.

traditional Christian approach to Islam, according to which Muslims are seen as the rod by which God chastises his church. Therefore, the advance of the Ottoman Empire is understood as a clear indication of God's indignation over the sins of the church and of his righteous wrath. Accordingly, in the concluding prayer formula to *Der Türgg*, Bullinger reveals that God has sent the Turks to instruct and discipline the church and that Christians are called to confess their sins.²⁴ This call for prayer forms a bridge to the Reformer's pastoral advice for Christian life under Muslim rule.

II. *Christian Life under Muslim Rule*

In *Der Türgg* Bullinger presented a theological and historical account of the Islamic faith to his Swiss compatriots, who were unlikely ever to meet Muslims in person. At the same time, the Zurich Reformer was well informed about the situation of other Protestant believers and their churches who lived in territories under Ottoman rule. The position of these Christians provides a specific starting point for an elaboration of Bullinger's practical advice concerning Christian-Muslim relations.

The main source for the present exploration is a 1551 epistolary treatise, addressed to the "oppressed and ravaged churches in Hungary, and to their pastors and ministers."²⁵ After subsequent defeats by the Ottoman sultan Suleiman I in 1526 and 1541, the magnificent kingdom of Hungary became divided into three spheres of influence. The northwest was dominated by the house of Habsburg under the Austrian archduke Ferdinand I, a brother to Emperor Charles V; the heartlands of the kingdom came under immediate Turkish rule, and an Ottoman vassal state emerged to the southeast under the rule of János Zsigmond Zápolya. Over time, Zsigmond's realm of Transylvania gained a substantial degree of political autonomy. The political confusion promoted religious diversity in Hungary. Whereas Archduke Ferdinand I was a loyal Catholic who strongly opposed Protestantism, the sultan tolerated religious diversity among his Christian subjects. As a result, vigorous forms of Protestantism, of both the Lutheran and Reformed confessions, emerged in central Hungary and Transylvania.²⁶

²⁴ Ibid., fol. d7v.

²⁵ Heinrich Bullinger, *Epistola ad ecclesias Hungaricas earumque pastores scripta, MDLI*, ed. and trans. Barnabás Nagy (Budapest: Synodalkanzlei der reformierten Kirche von Ungarn, 1968); see HBBibl 181–82. The work was not printed before 1559. Quotation from p. III.

²⁶ David P. Daniel, "Hungary," *EncR* 2:272–76; Peter Schimert, "Transylvania," *EncR* 4:170–72.

For the Reformed churches of Hungary, the theologians of Zurich were an important point of reference and a source of advice.²⁷ This is illustrated by a letter sent to Bullinger in 1551 by Johannes Fejérthóy, the secretary of the Hungarian chancellery at the court in Vienna.²⁸ After having expressed his gratitude for Bullinger's learned writings, this official argues that it has been through these works that the Hungarian people have been led back to the "pure guide of the Christian religion." Moreover, he knows that the message of the gospel has even reached the capital of the Turkish Empire. In his letter, Fejérthóy asks Bullinger's attention for the difficult situation of those fellow Hungarians who remain faithful to the word of God. On the one hand, they are confronted with oppression by the Roman Catholic Church, and on the other with the "tyranny of the Turks." Their pastors must face great trials and tribulations. In the face of these hardships, Fejérthóy asks Bullinger to write a book of consolation and advice for the believers in Hungary.²⁹ In June of the same year, the Reformer met Fejérthóy's request by sending him an extensive letter of instruction.

Bullinger's *Epistola* is, in fact, a catechism-style introduction to the central elements of biblical teaching from a Reformed perspective. Its main polemical thrust is directed against the "new" and false teaching of the Roman papacy.³⁰ In his preface, Bullinger expresses his gratitude for the fact that God has called his Hungarian brothers and sisters out of the "darkness of the antichrist" into the "wonderful light of his beloved Son." He considers that the day of Jesus Christ is drawing near because, as he argues, "the pure proclamation of the gospel has been reintroduced in nearly the entire world, after so much violence and misleading by the antichrist."³¹ Despite its anti-papist outlook, the *Epistola* also addresses the issue of Christian-Muslim relations in a section devoted to the question "whether it is appropriate to live among the unfaithful." From the letters sent to him by Hungarians he

²⁷ Bryner, "Einfluss," 804–7.

²⁸ Johannes Fejérthóy to Heinrich Bullinger, March 26, 1551, in Johann Jacob Ulrich, ed., *Miscellanea Tigurina ...* (Zurich, 1723), 2.1:192–94. See Barnabás Nagy, preface to *Epistola*, by Bullinger, 9–10.

²⁹ Among other themes, Fejérthóy seeks Bullinger's advice on the particularly vexing issue of second marriages of those whose spouses had been deported by the Ottomans. What should be done when the spouse returns unexpectedly after a long time in captivity and finds the partner married to another person? Bullinger's reply does not contain an answer to this question.

³⁰ Bullinger, *Epistola*, IV. It shows a strong thematic resemblance to another work by Bullinger from 1551, his *Gaegensatz Umd kurtzer begriff*, which contains a systematic comparison of evangelical and papist doctrines, written particularly in view of the second session of the Council of Trent. See HBBib1 114.

³¹ Bullinger, *Epistola*, IV, XLIX–L.

has learned that the gospel is being proclaimed “to you, who are dispersed everywhere under the government of the mighty Turk, and even in Thracia and the royal city of Constantinople.” Therefore, Bullinger engages himself in particular with the position of Christians in the Ottoman vassal state in central Hungary, and of those held captive in the homeland of the Turkish Empire.³²

Four points of interest to the present exploration of Bullinger’s practical counsel for Christians living under Muslim rule appear in the 1551 *Epistola*. First, the Reformer highlights that believers should accept their situation. He compares their position to that of the first Christians who lived under the rule of the idolatrous and perverted Roman emperors. Likewise, their situation is similar to that of the people of Israel during the exile in the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires. Here, the covenantal dimension of early Reformed theology, with its emphasis on the unity of the Old and New Testaments, results in identification with the trials and tribulations of ancient Israel by later Christians. Therefore, when the Hungarian believers accept that “God has handed [them] over to the power of Turks,” they should accept that political reality. Moreover, they must be prepared for even greater misfortunes, for “since God has conferred the kingdom to the Turks, he will add even greater strength to them.” But, as Bullinger explains, “this is not because their religion, which had been taught by Mohammed, would be true and sound, but because our sins are worthy of the rod.” In sum, the Ottomans fulfill the same chastising role towards Christians as the Assyrians, Babylonians, and other nations once fulfilled against the people of God in the Old Testament.³³

Second, while accepting their position under hostile rulers, Bullinger maintains that Christians should in no way contaminate themselves with the beliefs and practices of Islam, or, for that matter, of Catholicism. He clearly states that all teachings and rituals that do not lead the church to Christ should be shunned and condemned. Believers must take heed not to “participate in their beliefs or religion, in their rituals and devotions.” In support, he quotes a number of scriptural passages, including 2 Corinthians 6:17: “Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them.” Significantly, in relation to the position of Christians under Muslim rule, he also refers to Calvin’s 1537 *Epistolae duae*—a work addressing the attitude of Protestants under Catholic dominion.³⁴ Positively, believers are called to

³² Nagy, preface, 9.

³³ Bullinger, *Epistola*, LI.

³⁴ See Wulfert de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 135–36.

give a clear testimony to Jesus Christ and to the gospel. In support, Bullinger adds a Pauline encouragement to perseverance and patience: Jesus warned his followers that persecution, defamation, robbery, and even death may be their share in this world. At the same time, the Lord made promises of great reward for those who suffer for the sake of his name and for the gospel. “It is the greatest blessing to be in fellowship with Christ and the holy martyrs, through the cross.” With many quotations from Scripture, the Reformer encourages the believers in Hungary to remain steadfast until the end.³⁵

That they might persevere, the Hungarian believers are urged to express their difficulties and concerns in prayer to God. Since the second half of the fifteenth century, the call to prayer had been a standard element in the spiritual warfare of Christians against the Turks.³⁶ The same motive appears as the third characteristic of Bullinger’s pastoral advice in the *Epistola*. Because he acknowledges that “our sins are worthy of the rod,” their prayer should first and foremost be a prayer of confession and supplication. This element is fully developed in the concluding prayer formula at the end of *Der Türgg*, “which Christians may pray to God, during the present Turkish threats and warfare.”³⁷ Bullinger leads his flock in ardent prayer, acknowledging that the sins of Christianity are great and heinous and that God’s judgments are righteous and deserved. He specifically mentions a list of vices, ranging from false doctrine and religious dissensions to blasphemy, perjury, and other moral abuses. He knows that God has sent the Turks to teach and chastise Christians, just as the people of Israel were disciplined by the Assyrian and Babylonian kings. When believers acknowledge and confess this, an opening appears for them to return to God and to plead for his forgiveness and mercy, and for liberation from the oppression by the Ottomans.³⁸ In other words, the acknowledgment of the Turkish oppression as a rod in the hand of God should lead to a response of humble prayer. Notably, the element of confession receives full emphasis in *Der Türgg*, a work written for readers who could observe the Turkish threat from a safe distance. When writing to Christians who lived under the yoke of Ottoman rule, Pastor Bullinger merely touches on this aspect.

Fourth and finally, this prayer of supplication also leads to intercession for the Turkish overlords. The *Epistola* Bullinger adduces the example of the people of Israel in Babylon as a model for the present. Jeremiah’s appeal to “seek the welfare of the city” and to “pray to the Lord on its behalf” (Jer

³⁵ Bullinger, *Epistola*, LII–LIV.

³⁶ See Grimmsmann, *Türkenpredigten*, 28–66.

³⁷ Bullinger, *Der Türgg*, fol. a1r.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, fols. d7r–v.

29:7) is brought home to the Hungarians who “should pray for the papists, and even for the Turks.” By doing what is good and honorable, without cunning or deceit, they should aspire to a quiet life.³⁹ A similar motive appears in the concluding prayer in *Der Türgg*. Bullinger suggests that his readers pray that God “would convert the Turks from Muhammad, that great seducer and evil man, to Jesus Christ, the light and savior of the entire world.” He is confident that God can magnify himself “even today amidst the Turks,” just as he did once during Israel’s captivity in Babylon. That this missionary perspective is encapsulated within the geopolitical framework of his age, is shown from Bullinger’s assumption that Turks will acknowledge their false beliefs if “they would become our subjects.”⁴⁰ This dimension of the Reformer’s pastoral advice to Christians living under Islamic rule introduces a final question: How did Bullinger consider the possibility of active Christian witness to Muslims?

III. *Christian Witness to Muslims?*

Today, a time after the great missionary movements of the nineteenth century, a discussion of Christian-Muslim relations is likely to evoke the question of the necessity and possibility of evangelization of Muslim believers. However, for several reasons, this question was not foremost in the minds of many sixteenth-century believers. The political and military antagonism between Christian and Islamic nations made active missionary outreach to Muslims practically impossible. Contemporaries were well aware that a Christian could safely travel to Egypt for trade, but would certainly risk his life if he were to say anything contradictory to Islam.⁴¹ Also, as the discussion of Bullinger’s work *Der Türgg* has elucidated, Muslims were not generally seen as unreached peoples, but rather as dangerous apostates who had consciously rejected orthodox Christian doctrines. Therefore, they were considered more as associates of the eschatological adversary of Christ than as objects of evangelization. Moreover, most medieval and early-modern theologians thought that the “great commission” of Matthew 28:19–20 had been fulfilled in the days of the apostles.⁴²

In spite of this, the notion of the evangelization of Muslims was not completely foreign to Bullinger’s era. For instance, his Hungarian correspondents

³⁹ Bullinger, *Epistola*, LI.

⁴⁰ Bullinger, *Der Türgg*, fol. d8r.

⁴¹ Georg Frölich to Heinrich Bullinger, April 1, 1546, *HBW* 2.16:300.

⁴² Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2005), 626–28.

informed him about the unimpeded proclamation of the gospel in the areas under Ottoman control. Fejérthóy reveals that many Turks were present in the worship services of the Christians. Their overlords even sympathized with the Protestant cause rather than with Roman Catholics. Therefore, Fejérthóy expects that “if they are not by chance destroyed, the Turks will soon accept the Christian faith.”⁴³ In light of these signs, it is understandable that certain contemporaries considered active missionary outreach to Muslim believers possible. The most famous example is provided by the controversial scholar and priest Guillaume Postel. This French Roman Catholic combined a profound knowledge of the Arabic language and Ottoman culture with an apocalyptic zeal for missionary activity. In the Protestant camp, Postel found a kindred spirit in the Zurich scholar Bibliander.⁴⁴

A great exegete and polyglot, Bibliander was not only an expert in the field of Hebrew and Greek but also a pioneer of comparative linguistics. For this purpose, he learned the Arabic language and devoted himself to the study of the sources of Islam. This resulted in the 1543 publication of an encyclopedic work on Islam in which he collected all available knowledge of “the lives and teachings of Muhammad, leader of the Saracens, and his successors, and the Qur’an itself.” It is a compilation of a Latin translation of the Qur’an and a great number of treatises on the doctrines and history of Islam. Although Bibliander wrote with the apologetic purpose of instructing Christians in the erroneous nature of Islam, he also wished to stimulate missions to Muslim nations.⁴⁵ In a later phase, he devoted his scholarly attention to the common elements in the languages known to him, including Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic. Starting from this linguistic perspective, Bibliander also considered the common elements in the religious texts of Jews, Christians, and Muslims. While maintaining the essential difference between orthodox Christianity and other beliefs, he identified no less than ten common elements in all world religions. Also, Bibliander developed an increasing and sometimes speculative interest in the end times. Not unlike Postel, the expectation of the immediate return of Christ and the defeat of the antichrist fostered his zeal for missions to the Islamic world.⁴⁶

⁴³ Johannes Fejérthóy to Heinrich Bullinger, October 10, 1551, in Ulrich, *Miscellanea Tigurina*, 2.1:198. See also Bryner, “Einfluss,” 806–7, n. 23.

⁴⁴ William J. Bouwsma, “Postel, Guillaume,” *EncR* 3:321; Egli, *Analecta*, 83, 132–33.

⁴⁵ *Machumetis Saracenorum principis eiusque successorum vitae* ... ([Basle], 1543), doi:10.3931/e-rara-246. See Bruce Gordon, “Theodor Buchmann,” in *Christian-Muslim Relations*, ed. Thomas and Chesworth, 680–85.

⁴⁶ Campi, “Attitudes,” 140–43; Egli, *Analecta*, 70–95; Gordon, “Buchmann,” 675–85; Moser, *Bibliander*, 8–14; Grimmsmann, “Bullingers Deutung,” 89.

A remarkable episode in Bibliander's life was his temporary resolve to abandon his chair in Zurich in order to travel to Egypt as a missionary.⁴⁷ In early 1546, he wrote to Georg Frölich, the secretary to the Council of Augsburg. It seems that Bibliander asked this official to gather information from Augsburg tradesmen about the possibilities of a journey to Egypt. Also, he requested funds from this wealthy town to support his plans for the evangelization of Muslims. Rather than providing him with the requested information and funds, Frölich wrote to the Zurich church leader, Bullinger, suggesting that he dissuade Bibliander from undertaking such a dangerous voyage.⁴⁸ Bibliander's request and the Augsburg reaction cannot be isolated from the theological problems that had previously arisen in Zurich. It was generally known that the exegete and philologist Bibliander was very critical of all theological speculation on the subject of predestination. Around 1545 this seems to have resulted in a vehement conflict between the Old Testament professor and some of the Zurich clergy. Apparently, it was Bullinger, the prudent pastor and church leader, who reconciled the conflicting parties and dissuaded Bibliander from leaving the city.⁴⁹

Despite the fact that Bibliander was unable to put his missionary convictions into practice, it is still remarkable that this Zurich scholar considered for some time evangelizing the Muslim people of Egypt. Bullinger's appeal to abandon this plan was probably prompted by a degree of political realism and a concern for his friend's well-being. Nevertheless, this episode raises the question as to how Bullinger would have evaluated Bibliander's missionary motives. Although the sources do not allow a definitive answer, it seems clear that Bullinger did not share his colleague's evangelistic agenda. Reading backward from the preceding discussion of the 1551 *Epistola* and the 1567 *Der Türgg*, it appears that Bullinger's writings on Islam were written from an exclusively internal Christian perspective. Muslims are viewed as both the rod by which God punishes Christianity and a political reality that Christians should accept without accommodating to their beliefs. Although he does encourage believers to pray for the conversion of Muslims, in contrast to Bibliander, he does not mention the possibility of missions to Islamic territories. Moreover, Bullinger clearly does not share the comparative approach to religion advocated by Postel and Bibliander. This is indicated

⁴⁷ Egli, *Analecta*, 88–95; idem, "Biblianders Missionsgedanken," *Zwingliana* 3.2 (1913): 46–50.

⁴⁸ Georg Frölich to Heinrich Bullinger, March 2, 1546, *HBW* 2.16:192; idem, April 1, 1546, *HBW* 2.16:300.

⁴⁹ Georg Frölich to Heinrich Bullinger, June 3, 1546, in *HBW* 2.17, 68.

by a comparison of Bibliander's writings with Bullinger's *Der Türgg*.⁵⁰ After Bibliander's death in 1564, Bullinger reworked much of his scholarship into his own writing, leaving out his exposition of the common elements of religions, and his missionary program. Moreover, Bullinger's emphasis on Muhammad as a false prophet may motivate the former's dissociation from the comparative approach of contemporaries like Postel and Bibliander.

Conclusion

This article has explored in reverse chronological order three episodes from Bullinger's engagement with Islam. Around 1546, he dissuaded his Zurich associate Bibliander from embarking on a mission to the Muslims of Egypt. In 1551, he wrote a catechetical letter to Hungarian Protestants living under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. And in 1567, he published a systematic and polemical exposition of the history and beliefs of Muhammad and his followers (*Der Türgg*). A consistent element in these otherwise very different episodes is Bullinger's polemical and defensive attitude against Islam. His main objective was to demarcate the message of the gospel from alternating religious views, either within the Christian tradition (Roman Catholicism, Anabaptism), or outside (Islam). Moreover, the Zurich Reformer interpreted the religious and political conflicts of his days in terms of the eschatological collision of the kingdom of Christ with the forces of the antichrist. This perspective clearly shaped his interpretation of Islam as the religion of the "false prophet" Muhammad. Unlike his contemporary Bibliander, however, Bullinger did not translate this eschatological perspective into a program for the evangelization of Muslims.

In view of the challenges of the church today, we should not confine ourselves to repeating the ideas of Bullinger and his contemporaries. Although the highly polemical portrait of Islam of the Reformer is understandable in view of the political situation and theological tradition, it comes short in terms of a fair and truthful description of the beliefs and practices of Muslims. Moreover, in light of present-day Christian-Muslim relations, more needs to be said about the necessity of respectful dialogue and humble witness to Jesus Christ in Islamic cultures.

Nevertheless, valuable lessons can be drawn from the sixteenth-century discussions. For one, over against the somewhat naive quest of some of Bullinger's contemporaries for a universal harmony between the world's religions, the Reformer reminds the church of the need of steadfast

⁵⁰ Gordon, "Buchmann," 750.

confession of the truth of the gospel. Further, his writings encourage the church today to persevere in prayer for our Muslim neighbors. Such prayer should include confession of sins because the words and deeds of Christians have done great damage to the cause of the gospel and to Islamic believers. Also, following the calling of Israel in Babylon to “seek the welfare of the city,” we should also pray to God for the well-being of Muslims. Such prayer may include the request that God would grant us the grace to give testimony, with gentleness and reverence, to the hope that is in us (1 Pet 3:15–16).

Bullinger's *The Old Faith* (1537) as a Theological Tract

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Abstract

The Swiss Reformer Heinrich Bullinger wrote *The Old Faith* (1537) to be read alongside his treatise on the covenant, *De testamento* (1534). His aim was to convince a wide audience that the Reformed faith was in conformity with a correct reading and interpretation of the biblical message and the church fathers. The work displays insight into key biblical and theological themes and, as with Irenaeus's *The Demonstration*, has apologetical, catechetical, and polemical purposes. We can learn with Bullinger to read and exegete the text of the biblical canon and learn from faithful exegetes of the past.

This article presents the biblical and theological themes that Swiss Reformer Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575) wove into the fabric of *The Old Faith*, in which he demonstrates that the Reformed faith is “old” because it has its roots in Adam, that it is reflected in the writings of church fathers Irenaeus and Augustine, and that it is “catholic” as the faith of believers over the centuries. In many ways the book reveals that Bullinger follows Irenaeus’s defense of the faith against the Gnostics.

Bullinger became Huldrych Zwingli’s successor as *Antistes* or chief minister at Zurich upon Zwingli’s untimely death in 1531, and he continued at

that post until his own death in 1575. A contemporary of John Calvin, he was a prolific writer, and more than twelve thousand of his letters are extant. He is known in the English-speaking world as the author of *The Second Helvetic Confession* (1566) and *The Decades* (1549–1551). The latter, which consists of fifty sermons in Latin, is probably his best-known work; known as the “house book,” it was widely used in England, Germany, and Holland.¹ Because of his pastoral concern for the churches in Europe and England, he has been referred to as “the common shepherd of all Christian churches.”² Bruce Gordon observes that Bullinger was “one of the most widely consulted figures of the age.”³

His work on the covenant, *De testamento* or *A Brief Exposition of the One and Eternal Covenant of God* (1534),⁴ was often bound together with his commentaries on the Epistles (*In omnes apostolicas epistolas*, 1537) as well as his treatise *An Orthodox Assertion of the Two Natures of Christ* (1534). This compendium was an important tool for pastors. *The Old Faith* was directed at the laity, as it was written in German,⁵ though a Latin translation was made by Cellarius in 1544.⁶ It is evident from *The Decades* that Bullinger regarded *The Old Faith* as a work that he expected his readers to be familiar with.⁷

Edward A. Dowey made somewhat critical comments about *The Old Faith*, which he views as essentially the opposite of *The Decades*. He considers *The Decades*

¹ Thomas Harding, ed., *The Decades of Henry Bullinger* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2004).

² Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 207.

³ Bruce Gordon and Emidio Campi, eds., *Architect of Reformation: An Introduction to Heinrich Bullinger, 1504–1575* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 17.

⁴ Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 99–138; Heinrich Bullinger, “Of the One & Eternal Testament or Covenant of God: A Brief Exposition,” in Peter A. Lillback and Richard B. Gaffin Jr., eds., *Thy Word Is Still Truth: Essential Writings on the Doctrine of Scripture from the Reformation to Today* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 245–70.

⁵ Heinrich Bullinger, *Der alt gloub* (Zurich, 1539); cf. Joachim Staedtke et al, eds., *Heinrich Bullinger Werke: Bibliographie* (Zurich: TVZ, 1972–2004), no. 100 (HBBib1). The author’s own translations are used in this article. An English translation may be found in *Writings and Translations of Myles Coverdale*, The Parker Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1844; repr., New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1968), 1–83 (hereafter, Coverdale). Coverdale gave the work the title *The old faith, an evident probacion out of the holy scripture, that the christen fayth (which is the right, true, old and undoubted faith) have endured sens the beginnyng of the worlde. Herein hast thou also a short summe of the whole Byble, and a probacion, that al virtuous men hath pleased God, and were saved through the christen fayth.*

⁶ Heinrich Bullinger, *Antiquissima fides et vera religio* (Zurich, 1544); cf. HBBib1 103.

⁷ Peter Opitz, *Heinrich Bullinger Theologische Schriften*, Band 3, *Sermonum Decades quinque de potissimus Christianae religionis capitibus* (Zurich: TVZ, 2008), 418.

a major Reformation classic ... unchallengeable as his most full-bodied and comprehensive theological work, containing the richness of his scholarship, gathering together themes of all his major writings up to that time.⁸

Dowey's evaluation of *The Old Faith*, however, is that "it is often intricate in details and sometimes confusingly nuanced."⁹ He further concludes that *The Old Faith* "may be considered a good example from Bullinger's work of his idiosyncratic treatment of one of the main themes of Christian theological reflection, the relation of the Old and New Testaments."¹⁰ He also refers to the "crass particularity of [Bullinger's] interpretation of 'seed,' 'woman,' 'heel' and 'head.'"¹¹ Dowey's assessment is in stark contrast to the warm and positive appreciation of *The Old Faith* shown by Cornelis Venema, who sought to draw lessons from it for contemporary Reformed theology.¹² In his comparison of *The Old Faith* with *The Decades* and *The Evangelical Churches Are neither Heretical nor Schismatic but Completely Orthodox and Catholic*,¹³ Peter Stephens notes that Bullinger defended the Reformed faith as "old" over against the papal doctrine, which was "new" because it had departed from the teaching of both Scripture and the church fathers.¹⁴

As well as addressing Dowey's negative assessment, we will examine the biblical and theological themes that Bullinger referred to in *The Old Faith* to see what lessons apply to us today.

I. Overview of The Old Faith

The significance of *The Old Faith* may be overlooked, as the style is deceptively simple. Not only is it an apology for the Reformed faith against the attacks of Rome, it is also a polemic against the Anabaptists, with an unmistakable focus on the Old Testament as a foundation, not the background,

⁸ Edward A. Dowey, "Heinrich Bullinger as Theologian, Thematic, Comprehensive, and Schematic," in Gordon and Campi, *Architect*, 49–50.

⁹ Edward A. Dowey, "Comments on One of Heinrich Bullinger's Most Distinctive Treatises," in Willem van't Spijker, ed., *Calvin: Erbe und Auftrag: Festschrift für Wilhelm Neuser zu seinem 65. Geburtstag* (Kampen: Kok, 1991), 271.

¹⁰ Dowey, "Comments," 277.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Cornelis P. Venema, "Heinrich Bullinger's *Der alt gloub* ("The Old Faith"): An Apology for the Reformation," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 15 (2004): 11–32. See also Aurelio A. Garcia Archilla, *The Theology of History and Apologetic Historiography in Heinrich Bullinger: Truth in History* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 7–36.

¹³ Heinrich Bullinger, *Ecclesias evangelicas neque haereticas neque schismaticas sed plane orthodoxas et catholicas* (Zurich, 1552); cf. HBBib1 258.

¹⁴ W. Peter Stephens, "Bullinger's Defence of the Old Faith," *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 6 (2004): 36–55.

for Christian faith. The work has ten sections, which follow the historical outline of the canon, between an introduction and a conclusion.

There is little doubt about the historiographical significance of this work. As in *Epitome temporum et rerum ab orbe conditio* (1565), Bullinger presents how biblical history unfolds according to God's plan for the salvation of the elect.¹⁵ *The Old Faith* seeks to bolster the antiquity, orthodoxy, and catholicity of the Protestant faith in the face of the attacks of Rome. Bullinger points out that "our Christian faith has endured since the beginning of the world and is and remains the one and only true, original, indubitable, and certain faith."¹⁶ Indeed, later in *The Decades* he echoes this assertion by emphasizing that the Reformed faith is "true, old, indubitable, authentic, orthodox, and catholic."¹⁷ His presentation of the faith as being "from the beginning of the world" indicates that his argument is *a primordio* or *ab antiquitate* in quasi-rabbinic style.

The Old Faith was written towards the end of the first of three periods of Bullinger's ministry and after major commentaries on the Pauline epistles and just prior to two major treatises, *De scripturae sanctae autoritate* (1538) and *De origine erroris libri duo* (1539).¹⁸ Although it does not have the form of a theological treatise, *The Old Faith* is not the work of a theological dilettante. Bullinger fully grasps the significance of the incarnation: the transcendent God, the "horn of plenty" (*cornucopia*), has personally acted in history for the salvation of mankind. God's words (specifically, his promises) and his acts declare his eternal purposes for the elect. *The Old Faith* is Bullinger's effort to convey this to a wider audience.

The theme of the covenant is prominent in *The Old Faith*, and so it complements his treatise on the covenant, *De testamento* (1534), which is directly quoted.¹⁹ The various themes referred to in *The Old Faith* have been examined by several studies, and Roland Diethelm has identified the following: the goodness of God and the wickedness of mankind, righteousness and God's mercy, sin, grace, punishment, God's promises, faith, the gospel of Jesus Christ, justification, and the struggle of the believer.²⁰

¹⁵ Christian Moser, *Die Dignität des Ereignisses: Studien zu Heinrich Bullingers Reformations-geschichtsschreibung* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 20–25.

¹⁶ *Der alt gloub*, Giiir; Coverdale, 69.

¹⁷ Oplitz, *Decades*, 34.

¹⁸ Fritz Büsser, "Bullinger, Heinrich," in Gerhard Krause et al., eds., *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (New York: de Gruyter, 1981), 7:383–84.

¹⁹ *Der alt gloub*, Cviir (this is omitted in Coverdale's translation).

²⁰ Roland Diethelm in Emidio Campi, Detlef Roth, and Peter Stotz, eds., *Heinrich Bullinger Schriften I* (Zurich: TVZ, 2004), 175.

II. *The Word of God Inscribed on the Heart*

God's accommodation to mankind is a recurring theme in *De testamento*, where Bullinger points out that when God initiated the covenant he was pleased to use human expression (*humana appellatione*) and human custom (*humanum morem*) on account of the weakness (*imbecillitatem*) of human nature.²¹ Although the term "accommodation" is not actually used, it is presumed throughout *The Old Faith* because of repeated references to God speaking to the saints of the Old Testament whether directly or by the prophets. It is also clear that Bullinger firmly believed that God can and does illuminate men and women inwardly. In this, Bullinger followed Zwingli.²² For example, despite a full description of the folly of the sin of Adam and Eve, Bullinger points out that God spoke directly to them and promised to reverse the consequences of the fall. He further explains that Adam and Eve were receptive and obedient: "As for Adam and Eve, they lacked none of these things, though they had not the matter in writing for God spoke it all to them himself, and wrote it on their hearts."²³ Moreover, he emphasizes that Adam and Eve proclaimed God's Word to the next and subsequent generations. This represents a type of oral tradition. Section 8 has the heading "All holy prophets exhibited Christ and proclaimed that salvation is to be found only in him." Not only was the word of God proclaimed to all people, but it was written on the hearts of the elect so that they could respond appropriately. Several times Bullinger emphasizes that the inscripturation of the Torah at the time of Moses was not an added extra, as God had already written it on the hearts of the patriarchs, and that because the Israelites had hearts of stone, the Torah was inscribed on tablets of stone. In many ways, therefore, an understanding that "the preaching of the word of God is the word of God" (*Praedicatio verbi Dei est verbum Dei*)²⁴ was present, in embryo, in *The Old Faith*.

²¹ Heinrich Bullinger, *De testamento seu foedere Dei unico et aeterno* (Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1534), 4v; cf. HBBib1 54; Aurelio A. Garcia Archilla, "Bullinger's *De testamento*: The Ample Biblical Basis of Reformed Origins," in Emidio Campi and Peter Opitz, eds., *Heinrich Bullinger: Life—Thought—Influence* (Zurich: TVZ, 2007), 674; Joe Mock, "Biblical and Theological Themes in Heinrich Bullinger's »De Testamento«," *Zwingliana* 40 (2013): 5–8.

²² Gottfried W. Locher, *Zwingli's Thought: New Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 282–85.

²³ *Der alt gloub*, Bvii; Coverdale, 27.

²⁴ *The Second Helvetic Confession* 1.4. See Locher, *Zwingli's Thought*, 277–85.

III. *The Word of God, tota Scriptura*

The heading of section 6, “The origin of Scripture and faith,”²⁵ indicates that the purpose of Scripture is to point men and women to faith, specifically faith in Christ. Bullinger explains that God “harnessed” Moses to write the Pentateuch.²⁶ The deliberate choice of this verb serves to show that God himself is the author of Scripture, which he further explains by stating that as Moses wrote, “he was inspired by the Holy Spirit.” Bullinger observes, “In these five books given us of God by Moses is the whole ground of our holy faith.”²⁷ Because of his conviction that Scripture is the word of God, he was concerned about the message of the Bible as a whole, *tota Scriptura*. All of Scripture was written to lead men and women to a life of faith in Christ. Bullinger emphasized that the treatise is a summary of the message of the Bible as a whole, as he states on the title page of *The Old Faith*: a “short history and depiction of the age of holy faith, its most important events and those who confess faith and of its spread and decline.”²⁸

As Dowey correctly indicates, *The Old Faith* reiterates throughout the organic relationship and unity between the Scriptures of the Old Testament and those of the New Testament. In fact, Bullinger calls those who jettison the Old Testament “ignorant and unlearned fools,”²⁹ clearly a polemic against the Anabaptists, who are singled out together with the Manichaeans.³⁰ He affirms that “there is nothing read concerning the Lord in the New Testament which the prophets have not prophesied before.”³¹

That is why the Scriptures of the New Testament refer to and take up wholly the Scriptures of the Old Testament so that neither can rightly be understood without the other. So, conversely, the interpretation cannot be understood without the underlying, foundational text. The Law and the Scriptures of the prophets constitute the text; the exposition is the Scriptures of the evangelists and the apostles.³²

Bullinger essentially rephrases what he wrote as early as November 1523 in his *De scripturae negotio*.³³ It was his familiar hyperbolic way of stating

²⁵ *Der alt gloub*, Eiir; Coverdale, 48.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ *Der alt gloub*, Eiiv; Coverdale, 49.

²⁸ *Der alt gloub*, Aiv. The title page is not translated by Coverdale.

²⁹ *Der alt gloub*, Giiiv–Gvr; Coverdale, 70–71.

³⁰ *Der alt gloub*, Eiiiv; Coverdale, 51.

³¹ *Der alt gloub*, Fvv; Coverdale, 62.

³² *Der alt gloub*, Gvr; Coverdale, 71.

³³ Hans-Georg vom Berg, Bernhard Schneider, and Endre Zsindely, eds., *Heinrich Bullinger Theologische Schriften*, Band 2, *Unveröffentlichte Werke der Kappeler Zeit* (Zurich: TVZ, 1991), 25.

the importance of the Old Testament in the context of the unity between the Testaments.

It is not surprising, therefore, that *The Old Faith* particularly highlights the prophecy of Daniel. As in his other writings, Bullinger sees in Daniel 9 a prophecy of the death of Christ,³⁴ concerning the ministry of Christ in the context of the covenant.³⁵ He also refers to the Writings, showing from Psalms 33 and 110 that David had knowledge of and faith in Christ.³⁶ From these two particular psalms, Bullinger deduces the twelve articles of the Apostles' Creed, maintaining that many of its articles are referred to in other psalms of David. He also sees in Psalm 110 references to Christ as prophet, priest, and king, and in verse 6 an allusion to the treading down of the head of the serpent in the *protoevangelium*.³⁷ Moreover, following Irenaeus and Justin Martyr, Bullinger sees in verse 7 a reference to the passion of Christ through the drinking of the "cup," followed by his exaltation as declared by Paul in Philippians 2.³⁸ In doing so, he perceives a deliberate word play on "head" (*rosh*) in these two verses.³⁹ It is not without significance that *rosh* underlies his comment concerning the victories over the enemies of Israel that Joshua, as a figure of the Messiah, won as "a chief head and as an instrument and vessel of God."⁴⁰ Bullinger's hermeneutic approach thus indicates that he viewed the Old Testament to be both christocentric and christotelic.⁴¹

Bullinger was convinced of the unity between the Old Testament and the New because of the one divine author. Therefore, he frequently uses typology, as is attested by the number of times the term "figure" appears in the text. But because there are occasions where Bullinger's typology is not specifically mentioned in the New Testament, Dowey comments negatively on what he considers "the crass particularity of his interpretation of 'seed', 'woman', 'heel' and 'head'."⁴² However, Bullinger was convinced by the humanist approach to reading the Bible as a whole that the different parts of Scripture were interrelated and that there was one overall message for the canon.

³⁴ *Der alt gloub*, Fviiiir, Giir, Giiiv; Coverdale, 65, 68–69.

³⁵ Garcia Archilla, *History*, 128–29.

³⁶ *Der alt gloub*, Evv–Fiir; Coverdale, 53–58.

³⁷ *Der alt gloub*, Eviiiv; Coverdale, 56.

³⁸ J. Armitage Robinson, *St. Irenaeus: The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* (London: SPCK, 1920), 113 (section 48 of *Epideixis*); Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 33:20–21.

³⁹ Genesis 3:15 is cited a few lines later on.

⁴⁰ *Der alt gloub*, Eiiir; Coverdale, 51.

⁴¹ Following Jeff Fisher, "christoscopic" would also be an appropriate term; Jeff Fisher, *A Christoscopic Reading of Scripture: Johannes Oecolampadius on Hebrews* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016).

⁴² Dowey, "Comments," 277.

IV. Bullinger and Irenaeus's Message of the Canon

None of Irenaeus's works appear to have been in Bullinger's personal library.⁴³ Throughout Bullinger's works there are only occasional references to the church father, such as his mention of Irenaeus's view about the Johannine authorship of Revelation.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, the way he deals with the Anabaptists reflects Irenaeus's strategy confronting the Gnostics in *Adversus Haereses*, outlining as fully as possible the views of the plethora of Anabaptist groups that had arisen to systematically expose their errors and refute them theologically. In the opening paragraph of *Der Widertoeufferen* (1561) against the Anabaptists, Bullinger directly cites the strategy of Irenaeus to combat the Gnostics.⁴⁵ Joachim Staedtke is convinced that he was influenced by Irenaeus (although he acknowledges that Bullinger hardly mentions Irenaeus in his work) and concludes that the allusions and quotes from *Adversus Haereses* show implicit knowledge of Irenaeus's work. Staedtke concludes that the main themes in Irenaeus are reflected in Bullinger, namely, the close connection between soteriology and Christology, with an emphasis on the significance of the incarnation, as well as the concept of recapitulation and its importance for understanding salvation history and covenant theology. Staedtke's observations are thought provoking, but he provides no documentary evidence for them.⁴⁶ However, it does seem likely that Bullinger was aware of Irenaeus's understanding of the unity of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Bullinger appears to have used a hermeneutical approach similar to that of the church father. Restating an observation by Robert Grant,⁴⁷ John O'Keefe and Russell R. Reno identify three terms from classical rhetoric applied by Irenaeus to biblical interpretation: *hypothesis*, *economy*, and *recapitulation*.⁴⁸ The same pattern is reflected in Bullinger, as his commentaries focus on the "big picture" or the message of a section or a book as a whole; he thus seeks to elicit the *hypothesis* of a work. He also focuses on the fact

⁴³ Urs Leu, "Heinrich Bullingers Privatbibliothek," *Zwingliana* 30 (2003): 5–29. Of the 21 volumes of the church fathers in Bullinger's personal library, none is by Irenaeus.

⁴⁴ W. Peter Stephens, "Bullinger's Sermons on the Apocalypse," in Alfred Schindler and Hans Stickelberger, eds., *Die Zürcher Reformation: Ausstrahlungen und Rückwirkungen* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2001), 266.

⁴⁵ Heinrich Bullinger, *Der Widertoeufferen Ursprung* (Zurich, 1561; repr., Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1975), 1r.

⁴⁶ Joachim Staedtke, *Die Theologie des jungen Bullinger* (Zurich: TVZ, 1962), 43.

⁴⁷ Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (London: Routledge, 1997), 46–53.

⁴⁸ John O'Keefe and Russell R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 34.

that God is a God of order, highlighting parallels between the old and new covenants. Because of his strong conviction of the unity of Scripture he seeks the *economy* of the way God works in and through salvation history. Furthermore, he uses language similar to that of Irenaeus's *recapitulation*.

The 1904 discovery of an Armenian translation of Irenaeus's *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* (*Epideixis*) reveals some similarities with *The Old Faith*. Susan Graham's rhetorical analysis of *The Demonstration*⁴⁹ concludes that it has the form of a bipartite Hellenistic introductory treatise (*eisagōge*) similar to Origen's *Peri archōn*, with apologetic, catechetical, and polemical purposes. This triple purpose is evident in *The Old Faith*. In her analysis, the first part of *The Demonstration* summarizes the topic while the second part treats it from a different perspective. Graham further establishes that *The Demonstration* refers to the biblical covenants more systematically than *Adversus haereses*, presenting them in a "historically organized framework."⁵⁰ She concludes that "Irenaeus builds his history between Creation and the Incarnation around covenant narratives concerning Noah, Abraham and Moses (*Epid.* 8–29), truncating or eliminating most other events in that history altogether." *The Old Faith* and Irenaeus's *Demonstration* are salvation historical accounts that highlight the continuity between the Old and New Testaments and the old and new covenants. Moreover, both expound the Old Testament and its fulfillment and goal in Christ.

The significance of the *protoevangelium* of Genesis 3:15 is pivotal in Irenaeus's *Adversus haereses*. Notwithstanding the Vulgate's translation of the pronoun at the beginning of the second sentence of this verse as *ipsa* (*she*),⁵¹ Irenaeus followed Justin Martyr in interpreting the verse in a Mariological sense with Christ as the promised seed who would crush the head of the serpent.⁵² That Bullinger's emphasis on the significance of Genesis 3:15 for salvation history is similar to what Irenaeus wrote in *Adversus Haereses* can be seen, for example, in 3.23.7, which refers to the seed prophesied to be born of Mary who shall "trample down the lion and the dragon."⁵³ But the section in *Adversus haereses* that shows the most striking parallels to *The Old Faith* is to be found in 5.21.1:

⁴⁹ Susan Louise Graham, "Structure and Purpose of Irenaeus' *Epideixis*," *Studia Patristica* 36 (2001): 210–21.

⁵⁰ Susan Louise Graham, "Irenaeus and the Covenants: 'Immortal Diamond,'" *Studia Patristica* 40 (2006): 393–98.

⁵¹ This is followed by Luther in his *Babylonian Captivity of the Church: Ipsa conteret caput tuum*.

⁵² *Apology*, 100; *Dialogue with Trypho*, 102.

⁵³ Note Irenaeus's references to Ps 91:13 and Rev 20:2.

He has therefore, in His work of recapitulation, summed up all things, both waging against our enemy, and crushing him who has at the beginning led us away captives in Adam, and trampled upon his head, as thou canst perceive in Genesis that God said to the serpent, “and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; He shall be on the watch for thy head, and thou on the watch for His heel.”⁵⁴

If Bullinger did indeed adapt Irenaeus’s approach in *The Demonstration*, then the rather truncated attention given to the New Testament (sections 9 and 10) would represent the second part of an *eisagōge*. This understanding of the dynamic of Bullinger would address the concern of Dowey, who speaks of *The Old Faith* in terms of “the extreme and unprecedented step of regarding the Old Testament as ‘text’ and the New as ‘commentary,’ and the New as ‘nothing other than the interpretation of the Old.’”⁵⁵

V. Justification by Faith Alone

Justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone is the central theme in Bullinger’s works. The customary citation of Matthew 17:5 on the title page of *The Old Faith*, where Bullinger has “reconciled” (*placatus*) rather than “pleased” (*placitus*), is a reminder that one is reconciled to God if one is in Christ. In section 4 of *The Old Faith* Bullinger quotes the words at the baptism of Christ in Matthew 3:17: “This is my beloved Son in whom I am reconciled.”⁵⁶ Significantly, *The Old Faith* commences with the declaration that through the Christian faith alone “all God-fearing people please God and are saved.”⁵⁷

Romans 16:20 for the Zurich Reformer refers to the imminent treading down of the devil: Christ, as the fulfillment of the *protoevangelium* of Genesis 3:15, is the promised “Blessed Seed” in whom alone is salvation given. The number of times the word “seed” occurs in *The Old Faith*, especially as “Blessed Seed,” reflects the importance of the *protoevangelium* in Bullinger’s grasp of salvation history.⁵⁸ Salvation is often depicted in Anselmic terms. At the start of section 2 he explains that through Christ coming in the fullness of time “a way was found to satisfy the righteousness and truth of God. ... Christ Jesus, who is given us by the manifest grace of God, was offered for our sins, satisfied, and recompensed the righteousness of God

⁵⁴ *St. Irenaeus of Lyons: Against Heresies* (n.p.: Ex Fontibus, 2010), 608.

⁵⁵ Dowey, “Comments,” 277.

⁵⁶ *Der alt gloub*, Ciiiiiv; Coverdale, 33. This is repeated on Gviir; Coverdale, 73.

⁵⁷ *Der alt gloub*, Aiiir; Coverdale, 13.

⁵⁸ “Seed” is mentioned 67 times.

and so delivered us from the bonds of the devil.”⁵⁹ God acts in human history for the salvation of mankind on the ground of his truth and righteousness,⁶⁰ which are satisfied through Christ.⁶¹ There are echoes of both *Cur Deus Homo* and *Christus Victor* in that God’s truth and righteousness are fulfilled in his Son taking on true manhood;⁶² and redemption is achieved through deliverance from the power of the devil.⁶³

Bullinger further explains substitutionary atonement in tandem with *Christus Victor*:

One obtains forgiveness of sins, true righteousness, and eternal life only through him, his passion, and his death and not through any other means. That is to say, he is the only mediator, priest, intercessor, comforter, the one and only righteousness, satisfaction, redemption and sanctification and the one and only eternal sacrifice, pledge of grace and salvation.⁶⁴

The above reference to grace indicates an underpinning theme in *The Old Faith*: salvation is “of the pure grace of God.”⁶⁵ Thus, alluding to Galatians, Bullinger states that because salvation is based on God’s promise and grace it is based on neither “our own strength nor works of the law.”⁶⁶ Indeed, “Salvation is ascribed only to the grace of God,”⁶⁷ and “only through Jesus Christ through faith.”⁶⁸ Several times Bullinger insists that ceremonies have no part in the salvation of Old Testament saints and were done away with when Christ came as the promised Blessed Seed.⁶⁹

For Bullinger, justification by faith is found in the Old Testament, as the Old Testament saints were saved proleptically through faith in Christ. From Adam onwards they looked forward to Christ. This is clear from the title given to the 1547 printing of Myles Coverdale’s English translation of *The Old Faith*: “Looke from Adam and behold the Protestants faith ... that all holy men who have pleased God, have beene saved through this Christian faith alone.”⁷⁰

⁵⁹ *Der alt gloub*, Aviiir; Coverdale, 18.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Der alt gloub*, Bir, Biv; Coverdale, 20.

⁶² *Der alt gloub*, Biv; Coverdale, 20.

⁶³ *Der alt gloub*, Div; Coverdale, 39.

⁶⁴ *Der alt gloub*, Gviiir; Coverdale, 74.

⁶⁵ *Der alt gloub*, Diiiv; Coverdale, 41.

⁶⁶ *Der alt gloub*, Diiiiv; Coverdale, 42.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Der alt gloub*, Eiiiv; Coverdale, 42.

⁶⁹ *Der alt gloub*, Bviiiv–Bviiir; Coverdale, 27.

⁷⁰ London: Printed by Iohn Haviland, for Thomas Pavier, 1624. See the discussion in J. Wayne Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant: The Other Reformed Tradition* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1980), 55–79.

Bullinger points out that the prophets announced the gospel of the *proto-evangelium*, which Adam and Eve had taught their children. Thus, they taught the people not to trust the works of the law or their own efforts, but rather Christ. This is evident in the title Bullinger gives to section 8, “All the holy prophets exhibit Christ and preach that salvation is in him alone.”⁷¹ There was nothing new with the inscripturation of the law at the time of Moses, for it was already written by God on the hearts of the patriarchs.⁷² Concerning the testimony of the prophets, Bullinger refers to Jeremiah 23, which prophesies that the righteous blossom would come and execute judgment and righteousness.⁷³ Moreover, he concludes that there is nothing in the New Testament about Christ not already spoken by the prophets.⁷⁴ The prophets do indeed teach “true righteousness and serving of God.”⁷⁵ Following Jerome, Bullinger calls Isaiah an evangelist.⁷⁶ Salvation is by faith in Christ, without works or ceremonies, as the believer responds:

For those who say: Is it enough and does it satisfy everything, if I acknowledge that I am a sinner and am saved only through the Blessed Seed? It is so answered here and clearly given to understand, that all those who place their trust upon the Blessed Seed, take upon themselves the ways of the Seed and hate the ways of the Serpent, that is sin, will also struggle for ever and ever in their lives against the world and the devil, and truly strive in themselves after what God wills.⁷⁷

The understanding of righteousness is not just forensic. For example, speaking of Abraham, Bullinger explains that Abraham was God’s friend and that he was “justified or made righteous” (*gerechtfertiget oder fromm gemacht ist*).⁷⁸ The key to understanding at this point is to appreciate his terminology. Quoting Veronika Günther,⁷⁹ Mark Burrows points out that in the early sixteenth century *fromgheit* and *grechtigkeit* were essentially interchangeable, so that for Bullinger, the righteousness and holiness of

⁷¹ *Der alt gloub*, Fiiir; Coverdale, 59.

⁷² Cf. the similar conclusion of Irenaeus in *Haer.* 4.13.1; 4.15.1. It is significant also that both Bullinger and Irenaeus speak of the time between Sinai and Christ as somewhat of a “detour” in salvation history. Compare Bullinger, *De testamento*, 29r–31r with Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.25.1.

⁷³ *Der alt gloub*, Fvii; Coverdale, 63.

⁷⁴ *Der alt gloub*, Fv; Coverdale, 62.

⁷⁵ *Der alt gloub*, Fiiir; Coverdale, 61.

⁷⁶ *Der alt gloub*, Fviii; Coverdale, 66.

⁷⁷ Garcia Archilla, *History*, 22; *Der alt gloub*, Biiiv; Coverdale, 23.

⁷⁸ *Der alt gloub*, Cviv; Coverdale, .35

⁷⁹ Veronika Günther, ‘Fromm’ in *der Zürcher Reformation: Eine wortgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Aarau: Sauerländer, 1955), 208–14. Günther also cites examples where Zwingli and Bullinger view these two words as interchangeable.

Christ is imparted to the believer.⁸⁰ So when Bullinger contrasts the seed of Christ with the seed of the devil, the contrast is between “the righteous” (*die frommen*) and “the unrighteous” (*die unfrommen*).⁸¹ Moreover, referring to Paul’s sermon in Acts 13:39, Bullinger points out that no one was justified through the law of Moses, but those who believe in Christ are justified.⁸² Significantly, on the title page of *The Old Faith* Bullinger states that the treatise expounds how the “pious” or the “righteous” please God and are saved through Christian faith. The patriarchs are “made righteous through the Blessed Seed”; they “are pious and righteous” (*fromm und gerecht sind*).⁸³ Bullinger also describes believers as “having been made righteous” (*unser gerechtmachung*).⁸⁴ He also uses “made righteous” (*gerechtmachung*) to say that Psalm 110:4 predicted what is made plain in Hebrews 5–10: that Christ is the mediator for the faithful for whom he is the only salvation, redemption, and righteousness, resulting in their sins being forgiven and their being made righteous (*gerechtmachung*).⁸⁵ Abel, was righteous through faith and made righteous in Christ,⁸⁶ as “only by the grace of God through Jesus Christ are the elect cleansed and made righteous.”⁸⁷ In the Latin translation of *The Old Faith* Abel is said to be *iustus*, and in the same breath Abel was both “truly righteous” (*vere iustus sit*) as well as “justified” (*iustificatus sit*).⁸⁸

The Latin text also indicates that salvation is “through Christ, and by his grace all are justified and purified [*per Christum et eius gratiam omnia iustificari et purificari*].”⁸⁹ Thus, justification and sanctification appear to be complementary. That Bullinger’s understanding of justification is not merely declarative or forensic can be seen in the fact that Noah knew “that he had all good things from God.”⁹⁰ This is a direct reference to the prelapsarian status of Adam and Eve, who had “been furnished with the unspeakable riches of God’s goodness.”⁹¹ Bullinger describes salvation on the first page of *The Old Faith* in terms of “all the glorious treasures of

⁸⁰ Mark S. Burrows, “‘Christos intra nos vivens’: The Peculiar Genius of Bullinger’s Doctrine of Sanctification,” *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 98 (1987): 48–69.

⁸¹ *Der alt gloub*, Evv; Coverdale, 52.

⁸² *Der alt gloub*, Hiiiir; Coverdale, 79.

⁸³ *Der alt gloub*, Bviii; Coverdale, 28.

⁸⁴ *Der alt gloub*, Diiiv; Coverdale, 41 This is translated as *iustificatione nostri* in *Antiquissima Fides*, 28r, and as *unsere Rechtfertigung* in *Heinrich Bullinger Schriften*, 1:211.

⁸⁵ *Der alt gloub*, Eviii; Coverdale, 76.

⁸⁶ *Der alt gloub*, Bviiv; Coverdale, 28.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* Cf. *Heinrich Bullinger Schriften*, 1:196.

⁸⁸ *Antiquissima Fides*, 14v.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Der alt gloub*, Ciiiir; Coverdale, 33.

⁹¹ *Der alt gloub*, Aiiiir; Coverdale, 14.

Christ so richly proclaimed and communicated to all people as they were never before.”⁹² Receiving “all good things” (*omnia bona*) and receiving Christ himself through union with him through faith appears to parallel the reference to God as the “horn of plenty” (*cornucopia*) in *De testamento*, to Christ as “all the fullness” (*omnis plenitudo*) in his commentaries on the Pauline epistles, and to his frequent references to “all Christ’s blessings” in the sermons on the sacraments in *The Decades*. In section 1 of *The Old Faith* Bullinger speaks of God as “sufficient to all perfection.”⁹³ It is through the gospel that “all the glorious treasures of Christ are so richly declared and poured out among all people.”⁹⁴ Although section 1 does paint a very beautiful picture of the world created for Adam and Eve before the fall, Bullinger’s major thrust is that through faith in Christ, God himself, and all his goodness, is given to the elect, rather than simply God’s good gifts.⁹⁵

As in all his works, Bullinger emphasizes the right response to the grace of God in granting salvation to the elect. Believers are urged to live uprightly (*integer*) before God, to love and obey him.⁹⁶ They are to die daily to evil.⁹⁷ He seeks not only to teach his readers about God’s plan of salvation for the elect, with its initial phase of realization in the postlapsarian *protoevangelium* of Genesis 3:15. All his works encourage his readers to live in covenant faithfulness with the Creator.

VI. The Covenant

The major section on the covenant in *The Old Faith* is to be found in section 4, where it is referred to by the word *pundt*.⁹⁸ For Bullinger, there is only one covenant in the canon.⁹⁹ The same covenant was renewed throughout

⁹² *Der alt gloub*, Aiiiir; Coverdale, 13.

⁹³ *Der alt gloub*, Aiiiir; Coverdale, 14.

⁹⁴ *Der alt gloub*, Aiiiir; Coverdale, 13.

⁹⁵ Peter Opitz, *Heinrich Bullinger als Theologe: Eine Studie zu den «Dekaden»* (Zurich: TVZ, 2004), 160–70.

⁹⁶ *Der alt gloub*, Avir; Coverdale, 17.

⁹⁷ *Der alt gloub*, Bvii; Coverdale, 27.

⁹⁸ *Der alt gloub*, Ciiiv; Coverdale, 32.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* For Bullinger and the covenant, see Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant*; Baker, “Heinrich Bullinger, the Covenant, and the Reformed Tradition in Retrospect,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 29 (1998): 35–48; Emidio Campi, “Theological Profile,” in Amy Nelson Burnett and Emidio Campi, eds., *A Companion to the Swiss Reformation* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 480–86; Garcia Archilla, “De testamento,” 671–91; Peter A. Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin’s Role in the Development of Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 110–25; Lillback, “The Early Reformed Paradigm: Vermigli in the Context of Bullinger, Luther and Calvin,” in Frank A. James III, ed., *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformation: Semper Reformanda* (Leiden: Brill 2004), 70–96; Andrew A. Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity in Covenant-*

God's salvation-historical plan unfolded in Scripture. God entered into covenant with Adam in the *protoevangelium* of Genesis 3:15 even though the term "covenant" does not appear in the text. Bullinger was aware that the first time the word appears in the canon is in the account of Noah. This is reflected in his assertion that God declares that the covenant he establishes is "my covenant" and that the promises of the covenant with Adam are also those "of my covenant." Moreover, the use of the Hiphil form of the verb *qum* in the canonical text, expressing causation, thus underlines that *the* covenant with Adam was renewed with Noah.

[God declared to Noah,] "However, with you I will cause my covenant to stand." He did not say, "I will make a covenant with you," but, rather, "I will cause my covenant to stand." That means, "Whatever pertains to my covenant and whatever I have agreed with Adam I will constantly keep."¹⁰⁰

Not only does Cellarius's Latin translation of *The Old Faith* translate *pundt* in this section by *foedus*, but there is additional material in the text. For example, the reference to 1 Peter 3:20–21 is added to reinforce the typology between salvation through the ark and salvation through Christ. Bullinger indicates that the covenant was given to Adam immediately after the fall and that throughout the history of Israel it was renewed and confirmed by God.¹⁰¹

For Bullinger, at the center of the covenant is the fact that God binds himself to his elect.¹⁰² One of the characteristics of this understanding is that God gave *himself* rather than just covenant blessings to his people. Bullinger reflects this when he describes the giving of the Mosaic law to renew the covenant already established with Adam. God personally spoke the law with his own mouth and wrote it with his own fingers.¹⁰³

Whereas the Jews boasted of circumcision as their major ceremony, for Bullinger, Abraham's circumcision was not so much a sign of the covenant but proleptically, the confirmation of holy, Christian faith. It was neither a sign of the law nor a Jewish ceremony, but a *testament* to which nothing can be added or subtracted.¹⁰⁴ The covenant is a testament fulfilled in the death

al Thought (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 228–49.

¹⁰⁰ *Der alt gloub*, Ciiiv; Coverdale, 32–33.

¹⁰¹ A consideration of the usage by Bullinger of the Latin terms for "covenant" (*foedus*, *testamentum*, and *pactum*) may be found in a previous study of *De testamento*. Mock, "Biblical and Theological Themes," 28–31.

¹⁰² *Der alt gloub*, Div; Coverdale, 39.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Der alt gloub*, Diiiir; Coverdale, 42. Joe Mock, "Bullinger and the *Circumcisio Christi*," *Reformed Theological Review* 73.2 (2014): 107–8.

of Christ, the testator, and it points forward to Christ, who is not only its goal but also its *raison d'être*.

The *protoevangelium* of Genesis 3:15 encapsulates the postlapsarian covenant between God and mankind, the promise of Christ, and the origin of the two “cities” or two “nations” arising from the two “seeds.” Here are unmistakable echoes of Augustine, the church father most cited in Bullinger’s works. He states it starkly: “For the righteous are the seed of Christ, the unrighteous and unfaithful are the seed of the devil.”¹⁰⁵ He indicates repeatedly that because “the heel of the virgin’s seed is well trodden upon,”¹⁰⁶ the seed of Christ will strive with the seed of the devil throughout salvation history.

Aurelio Garcia Archilla concludes that “Bullinger’s exegesis of Genesis 3:15 has found in it the whole New Testament Gospel: virgin birth, two-natures Christology, justification by faith alone.”¹⁰⁷ It is clear for Bullinger that here lies the origin of “true and false religion”:

There will be two different peoples, one will cling to Christ the Blessed Seed, the other will cling to the Devil. And these two generations will not get on with each other but will be at odds with respect to faith and the worship of God.¹⁰⁸

The *protoevangelium* is “the first promise and the first thorough gospel.”¹⁰⁹ “Promise” is synonymous with “covenant,” and its frequency in *The Old Faith* indicates that covenant is an underpinning theme.¹¹⁰

VII. Divine Election

The sovereignty of God underlies Bullinger’s thought in *The Old Faith*. He explains that God’s “wise” plan for the salvation of mankind was “without doubt determined from everlasting” and revealed only after the fall.¹¹¹ Several phrases indicate that he refers to the elect, namely, “all that believe,”¹¹² “his (Christ’s) faithful,”¹¹³ “the faithful in Christ,”¹¹⁴ “faithful Christian,”¹¹⁵ “one

¹⁰⁵ *Der alt gloub*, Evv; Coverdale, 52.

¹⁰⁶ *Der alt gloub*, Gviii; Coverdale, 75.

¹⁰⁷ Garcia Archilla, *History*, 23.

¹⁰⁸ *Der alt gloub*, Bviii; Coverdale, 28.

¹⁰⁹ *Der alt gloub*, Biv; Coverdale, 21.

¹¹⁰ “Promise” in both nominal and verbal forms occurs 21 times in *Der alt gloub*.

¹¹¹ *Der alt gloub*, Avii; Coverdale, 18.

¹¹² *Der alt gloub*, Biii; Coverdale, 23.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Der alt gloub*, Biii; Coverdale, 25.

who faithfully believes,”¹¹⁶ and “true believer.”¹¹⁷ On several occasions, following Augustine’s “two cities” theme, Bullinger refers to true citizenship in the city of God, and mankind is classed as either “children of God” or “children of man, the issue of the serpent.” He also speaks of the “faithful remnant.”¹¹⁸ Adam and Eve are “the first faithful Christians.”¹¹⁹

An important message in the context of the widespread sale of indulgences was that those who are saved are ordained and preserved for salvation.¹²⁰ Bullinger refers to both election on the one hand and God’s enabling on the other, so that the elect persevere to the end. Moreover, quoting Paul’s sermon (Acts 13:39), he affirms that those who believe in Jesus are justified, stressing that those called to salvation are kept in the faith through the faithful preaching of the word of God.¹²¹

Conclusion

The manner in which Bullinger develops biblical and theological themes in *The Old Faith* reveals that he deals with the attacks of Rome just as Irenaeus countered the Gnostics in his *eisagōge*, *The Demonstration*. As an adapted *eisagōge* for sixteenth-century Europe, he wrote for apologetic, catechetical, and polemical purposes.

A two-sided apologetic is an important facet of the treatise. The first aspect is that the Protestant faith, founded on the correct reading of the biblical texts, is the faith of the saints of Scripture and of the early church fathers. The second aspect is an apology for the Protestant faith against Roman dogma, leading to the conclusion that the Reformed church is the true “catholic church,” the “faithful remnant” of the people of God over the ages.

The catechetical purpose is reflected in the many repetitions throughout the treatise. The evil of the seed of the serpent (the focus on Cain against Abel) is a warning for true believers to remain faithful to the “true original religion which has been maintained since the beginning of the world and by which all holy men have ever loved, worshiped and served God.”¹²² Bullinger persistently warns his readers not to follow the folly of Israel by tragically falling into idolatry. *The Old Faith* was in German to reach a wider audience and also for this catechetical purpose.

¹¹⁶ *Der alt gloub*, Bvii; Coverdale, 27.

¹¹⁷ *Der alt gloub*, Bviii; Coverdale, 29.

¹¹⁸ *Der alt gloub*, Cviii; Coverdale, 38.

¹¹⁹ *Der alt gloub*, Biii; Coverdale, 24.

¹²⁰ *Der alt gloub*, Giii; Coverdale, 70.

¹²¹ *Der alt gloub*, Hiii; Coverdale, 79.

¹²² *Der alt gloub*, Hvii; Coverdale, 83.

The polemical focus of *The Old Faith* is far more incisive than that of *De testamento*. There is pointed reference to “citizens of the devil’s city”¹²³ and “great poison in the church,”¹²⁴ to the “abomination of the pope’s power”¹²⁵ and “his wanton spirituality.”¹²⁶ An extensive list of “abominations”¹²⁷ exposes “the kingdom of Antichrist.”¹²⁸ Nonetheless, God has “his own holy flock,”¹²⁹ whose members are called to be faithful and to persevere in the truth in view of the imminent second coming of Christ. In the meantime, true believers are challenged to be faithful under persecution.

The Old Faith is, in no small measure, a theological tract that demonstrates perceptive theological insight. Those of the Reformed faith can learn from Bullinger to read and understand the message of the biblical canon and humbly learn from such faithful exegetes of the past.

¹²³ *Der alt gloub*, Hvir; Coverdale, 81.

¹²⁴ *Der alt gloub*, Hviv; Coverdale, 82.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ *Der alt gloub*, Hviiv; Coverdale, 83.

¹²⁷ *Der alt gloub*, Hviv; Coverdale, 82.

¹²⁸ *Der alt gloub*, Hviiv; Coverdale, 83.

¹²⁹ *Der alt gloub*, Hviir; Coverdale, 82. There is a clear reference to the “faithful remnant” at the time of the Reformation.

Reformation and Music

BILLY KRISTANTO

Abstract

This article explores the impact of the Reformation and the post-Reformation era on the Christian understanding of music, as well as the historical development of music. The article begins with Martin Luther's unique contribution to the theology of music. The second section deals with John Calvin's complementary theology of music. The third section shows that some Lutheran post-Reformation theologians have developed their thoughts not only from the central tenets of Luther's theology of music but also from those of Calvin. The final section shows the relevance of reformational and post-reformational theologies of music to contemporary issues in worship. In conclusion, an eclectic and principled ecumenical understanding of those various theologies of music can help to challenge in a sensitive way the current shortage of high-quality music in our contemporary context.

The sixteenth-century Reformation was a reformation not only of the church but also of music and the arts. Both Martin Luther and John Calvin knew the special power of music. Even Ulrich Zwingli, who banned music from the church, based his decision on his knowledge on the power of music (which he believed could distract worshipers from the Word of God). The Reformers agreed on the issue of justification but disagreed on music. Paul Westermeyer titles a chapter of his book *Te Deum* "Sound, Silence, and Strictures" to summarize the different views of music held by Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, ascribing

the influence on some later Lutheran Pietist communities to Zwingli.¹ The post-Reformation internal debates within Lutheran communities concerning church music were due to the increasing polemical confessionalization in both Lutheranism and Reformed communions. The unintended effect of this confessionalization was Zwingli's and Calvin's influence on some post-Reformation Pietists.

The Reformers' views of music were characterized by a break away from the medieval theology of music based on the Pythagorean theory of music to a modern humanistic ontology that interprets music as a means of rhetoric.² Music, which had belonged previously to the Quadrivium (along with geometry, arithmetic, and astronomy), thus slipped into the Trivium (rhetoric, grammar, and dialectic) in the Renaissance. This shift had implications for the Reformers' theology of music. The Reformers had to make a theological evaluation of music in relation to the Word of God. Both Luther and Calvin explain the relationship between music and the Word. The Reformers' theology of music can also be examined from the aesthetic perspective. Miikka Anttila freshly examines Luther's theology of music from the viewpoint of pleasure, showing simplicity, freedom, pleasantness, and joy as the aesthetic criteria in Luther's theology of music.³ He has shown that Luther not only develops a theology of music but also thinks musically and aesthetically in his theology.

I. *Luther and Music*

Luther's high esteem for music is attested in his famous claim that "next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise."⁴ In what sense does Luther place music next to God's Word? Anttila relates Luther's high praise of music as the greatest gift of God (*optimum Dei donum*) to his notion of *gift* as an essential concept in his theology: music is the greatest gift of God because, first, it is given to us by God, and secondly, with that gift we praise God in return.⁵

¹ Paul Westermeyer, *Tē Deum: The Church and Music* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 141–60.

² Cf. Oskar Söhnngen, "Die Musikanschauungen der Reformatoren und die Überwindung der mittelalterlichen Musiktheologie," in Musikwissenschaftliches Institut (Humboldt-Universität, Berlin), ed., *Musa, mens, musici: Im Gedanken an Walther Vetter* (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1969), 52.

³ Cf. Miikka E. Anttila, *Luther's Theology of Music: Spiritual Beauty and Pleasure* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 173–94.

⁴ Martin Luther, "Liturgy and Hymns," in *Luther's Works* (Saint Louis: Concordia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1958–1986 [henceforth *LW*]), 53:323.

⁵ Cf. Anttila, *Luther's Theology*, 76–81, 84. Anttila takes up the idea of reciprocity in Luther's notion of *gift*, such as discovered by Risto Saarinen, Wolfgang Simon, and Bo Kristian Holm.

In order to understand what Luther means, we need to read Luther's following description on music: "She is a mistress and governess of those human emotions," the most effective means that one can find "to comfort the sad, to terrify the happy, to encourage the despairing, to humble the proud, to calm the passionate, or to appease those full of hate."⁶ Luther understands the emotions, inclinations, and affections as the masters of the human heart, for they drive human beings into either evil or good. Music is next to the Word of God because, like the Word of God, it can be used by the Holy Spirit as a means to govern human affections. In this context, Luther views human affections as something untamed and carnal that need to be controlled and moderated: the sad should be comforted; the happy should be terrified. Luther sees the danger of sinful human affections when they overwhelm and move the human heart in the wrong direction.

In his *Preface to the Psalter*, Luther compares the human heart to a ship driven by storms into various affections like fear, worry, grief, and sadness, but also hope, happiness, security, and joy. Different situations produce different affections:

He who is stuck in fear and need speaks of misfortune quite differently from him who floats on joy; and he who floats on joy speaks and sings of joy quite differently from him who is stuck in fear.⁷

Such earnest speaking is the greatest thing in the Psalter, for it contains different affections that are expressed in different songs. Congregants should adjust their affections in accord with the affection of the psalm. For Luther, the Psalter is "a kind of school and exercise for the disposition of the heart" (*Psalterium affectuum quaedam palaestra et exercitium*).⁸ In this context, Luther wants to emphasize the importance of singing with the spirit as taught by Paul (cf. 1 Cor 14:15) and so has introduced the "transition from the intellectual to the affective dealing with the Psalter."⁹

Music has a special function in the proclamation of the Word of God, for through music the Word of God is sounded. Luther is convinced that God's Word should not stay in its written form but instead be preached. He goes even so far as to give a theological justification, though rather unconvincingly, for his preference for the oral proclamation of the word.¹⁰ Luther includes

⁶ Luther, "Liturgy and Hymns," 323.

⁷ Martin Luther, "Word and Sacrament I," *LW* 35:255.

⁸ Martin Luther, "Selected Psalms III," *LW* 14:310.

⁹ Günter Bader, *Psalterium affectuum palaestra: Prolegomena zu einer Theologie des Psalters*, HUT 33 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 44.

¹⁰ "It does not suffice in the church that books are written and read, but it is necessary, that these are spoken and heard. Therefore, Christ has written nothing but spoken everything; the

the sonority (*Stimmlichkeit*) of any word in his understanding of the essential nature of that word.¹¹ As an implication of this concept, liturgical music is viewed as highly as the sermon, for both are proclamation of God's Word. Therefore, both preachers and teachers should be musically literate. Luther comments,

I have always loved music; whoso has skill in this art, is of a good temperament, fitted for all things. We must teach music in schools; a schoolmaster ought to have skill in music or I should reject him; neither should we ordain young men as preachers unless they have been well exercised in music.¹²

Music is an essential element in good education, for it can function as a prevention of many sinful activities. Along with gymnastics, music belongs to noble exercises that can help humans not to fall into debauchery, drunkenness, lust, and gambling.¹³ Good musical education will help to sanctify our aesthetic taste and appetite.

Not only does Luther comment on the importance of music, he himself was a composer. Judged by modern criteria, Luther cannot be regarded as a first-rate composer, for he reuses too many existing melodies by adapting them into his own compositions. However, as Robin Leaver has rightly pointed out, such an evaluation does not do justice to the concept of composition in Luther's age.¹⁴ Luther spreads the ideas of the Reformation not only through his sermons but also through his chorales, for through both the *viva vox evangelii* is heard.

apostles have written little but spoken very much. ... Because the office of the New Testament is not put into stone and dead panels but put for the sound of the lively voice. ... By the living word God completes and fulfills the Gospel. Therefore more speakers than good authors must be the aim of the church. In this sense Paul also writes to the Galatians: 'I wanted, that I could be present with you now and change my voice' [Gal 4:20], because much can be negotiated more effectively with the voice, which cannot succeed with writings" (*D. Martin Luthers Werke* [Weimar: Bohlau, 1883–1993], 5:537, 10–25 [1519–21]). Michael Heymel points out that for Luther, the character of the proclamation of the gospel is heightened through the living and free human voice (cf. Michael Heymel, *In der Nacht ist sein Lied bei mir: Seelsorge und Musik* [Waltrop: Hartmut Spenner, 2004], 97–98).

¹¹ Cf. Billy Kristanto, "Musical Settings of Psalm 51 in Germany c. 1600–1750 in the Perspectives of Reformational Music Aesthetics" (PhD diss., Heidelberg University, 2009), 19–20.

¹² Martin Luther, *The Table-Talk of Martin Luther*, ed. William Hazlett (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publishing House, n.d.), 416, quoted in Robert E. Webber, *Music and the Arts in Christian Worship* (Nashville: Star Song Publishing Group, 1994), 258.

¹³ Cf. Martin Luther, "Table Talk," *LW* 54:206.

¹⁴ Cf. Robin Leaver, "Luther as Composer," *Lutheran Quarterly* 22 (2008): 394–95.

II. *Calvin and Music*

Compared to Luther, Calvin is frequently held responsible for a more skeptical view of music in the Reformed tradition. This is not entirely wrong, but the Genevan Reformer contributed some thoughts that in turn would enrich the theology of music in the post-Reformation era. In the last edition of his *Institutes*, Calvin discusses church singing in the context of common prayer in public worship. The first important principle is that voice and song must “spring from deep feeling of heart” if they are to have any value or benefit.¹⁵ Conversely, church singing “has the greatest value in kindling our hearts to a true zeal and eagerness to pray.”¹⁶ Thus, church singing must both come from the heart and kindle the heart. Only singing from the heart can kindle the hearts of our fellow human beings. While Luther sees the function of music as moderating (carnal) human affections, Calvin understands it as kindling (holy) human affections. For Calvin, church singing can serve as a remedy to cure lukewarmness in Christian life.

Following Augustine, Calvin reminds us of the danger of being more attentive to the melody than to the content of the words. Charles Garside rightly points out that “this moderation” spoken of by Calvin refers to Augustine’s preference to the words over the melody.¹⁷ Like Augustine, Calvin also condemns church music composed merely for sensory enjoyment. This is not to say that Calvin rejects enjoyment in itself. He clearly differentiates himself from Augustine when he writes that God’s gifts are meant “not only to provide for necessity but also for delight.”¹⁸ Calvin’s warning about sensory enjoyment should be understood within the context of his emphasis on the importance of understanding. Paul writes to the Corinthians, “I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also” (1 Cor 14:15). Faithful to Paul, Calvin believes that there will be no edification when there is no understanding. Mere enjoyment of music alone without the understanding of the words leaves the congregation unedified.

Unlike Luther, Calvin does not view music as having a special function in conveying the Word of God, and he does not develop the concept of the sonority of the word. Music is always the handmaiden of the word, never

¹⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 3.20.31.

¹⁶ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.20.32.

¹⁷ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.20.32; cf. Charles Garside, *The Origins of Calvin’s Theology of Music*, 1536–1543, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 69.4 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1979), 21; cf. Augustine, *Confessions* 10.33.50 (PL 32:800; trans. LCC 7:230–31).

¹⁸ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.3.2.

vice versa. In this context, it is just one of many means that can be used by the Holy Spirit. This is clear from a comparison between Luther's interpretation of 1 Samuel 16:14–23 and Calvin's. Whereas for Luther, it is not a coincidence that God has used the power of music to heal Saul, for through music the Word of God becomes *verba vocalia*, sounding word, for Calvin, the most important agent in Saul's healing is the Holy Spirit: God could have used means other than music to heal Saul had he so desired. One should not ascribe the healing of Saul to the natural power of music, which can liberate Saul from his depression only "for a short time."¹⁹

With regard to undifferentiated accommodation of secular music in the church, Calvin warns,

There must always be concern that the song be neither light nor frivolous, but have gravity and majesty, as Saint Augustine says. And thus there is a great difference between the music which one makes to entertain people at table and in their homes, and the psalms which are sung in the church in the presence of God and his angels.²⁰

Though Calvin does not give formal criteria for "gravity and majesty," he at least affirms the old Augustinian emphasis on devotion to God. Music that merely entertains humans cannot be used in the church. Calvin's differentiation between church music and entertainment music is not unique to him. The Council of Trent also warns about secular actions that should be avoided during the Mass.²¹ Calvin certainly cannot be held responsible for the secularization of music in later centuries.²²

Regarding musical instruments, Calvin teaches that they belong to the old dispensation, to the ceremonial law terminated by the appearance of Christ in the New Testament.²³ In his later commentary on Daniel, Calvin acknowledges that the use of musical instruments is "customary in the Church even by God's command."²⁴ There is a difference, however, between the intention of the Jews and that of the Chaldeans. For the Jews, God uses musical instruments to arouse them from sluggishness to worship with

¹⁹ Söhngen, "Musikanschauungen," 56.

²⁰ John Calvin, "Foreword [or Preface] to the Psalter," trans. Charles Garside, in Elsie Anne McKee, ed., *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety*, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist, 2001), 94.

²¹ Cf. *The Council of Trent*, Session XXII, ix.

²² Cf. Jan Smelik, "Die Theologie der Musik bei Johannes Calvin," in E. Grunewald, H. P. Jürgens, and J. R. Luth, eds., *Der Genfer Psalter und seine Rezeption in Deutschland, der Schweiz und den Niederlanden* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2004), 76.

²³ Cf. John Calvin's *Commentary* on Psalm 92:3.

²⁴ John Calvin's *Commentary* on Daniel 3:6–7 (John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*, trans. Thomas Myers [Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1852], 1:212).

greater fervor. For the Chaldeans, musical instruments belong to their idol worship. Calvin views the use of musical instruments as divine accommodation to childish and weak people. The ideal worship of mature Christians needs no musical instruments.

One might well question whether Calvin's biblical exegesis that places music as belonging to the ceremonial laws of the old dispensation is sound. Sound or not, Calvin's view on musical instruments has highly influenced Reformed tradition in the worship practice handed down in the so-called regulative principle of worship.²⁵ Needless to say, Calvin's view on musical instruments is strongly marked by his reaction against the Roman Catholic worship of his age. One needs to complement such a contextual view with different questions and needs that arise in the later post-Reformation era.

III. *The Post-Reformation Era and Music*

The post-Reformation theology of music in Germany is characterized by diversity and polemics over the influence of contemporary music style on church music. Important voices such as those of Müller, Großgebauer, Mithobius, Gerber, and Spener have shaped the post-Reformation theology of music. Whereas Calvin struggled against Roman Catholicism, post-Reformation German theologians faced different problems.

Heinrich Müller (1631–1675), whose theological writings can be found in Johann Sebastian Bach's theological library, is one of the most important forerunners of German Pietism. Though Joyce Irwin has described his theology as "individualistic mysticism" that moves away from both Luther and Lutheran orthodoxy,²⁶ Müller has arguably integrated Luther's and Calvin's thought in his theology of music. Echoing Luther, Müller highlights the importance of being sensitive to the various affections of different songs. The mouth should follow the mind, which is moved by either joy or sadness. People sing foolishly when they sing joyful songs in sorrowful times or laments in joyful times.²⁷

²⁵ For discussions on the regulative principle, see John Frame, "Some Questions about the Regulative Principle," *Westminster Theological Journal* 54.2 (1992): 357–66; T. David Gordon, "Some Answers about the Regulative Principle," *Westminster Theological Journal* 55.2 (1993): 321–29.

²⁶ Joyce L. Irwin, *Neither Voice nor Heart Alone: German Lutheran Theology of Music in the Age of the Baroque* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993) 76–77.

²⁷ Cf. Heinrich Müller, *Geistliche Seelenmusik: Bestehend In zehen Betrachtungen und vier hundert auserlesenen Geist- und Krafft-reichen, so wol alten, als neuen Gesängen* (Rostock: Richel, 1659), 112.

The reason for this sensitivity to context is Müller's basic principle that singing must primarily proceed from the heart and not vice versa. This is not to say, however, that Müller rejects the value of public church singing, for a fellow worshiper can be aroused and edified by the words that are sung full of spirit by those who sing with understanding.²⁸ Here Müller's thought echoes Calvin's emphasis on the involvement of heart and mind in church singing. Still under the shadow of Calvin, Müller views music as one of many possible means to arouse the human heart. The real agent who moves the heart is the Holy Spirit, who can use other means besides music.²⁹ Music has no exceptional value in God's workings; it is not necessarily next to the Word of God.

Following his Rostock colleague Müller, Theophilus Großgebauer (1627–1661) sees himself as a watchman who sounds the alarm concerning the devastated state of the church. He reacts against the form of Sunday worship that focuses exclusively on the sermon and disregards the singing of hymns,³⁰ and he laments the condition of church music that has been influenced by the new Italian music style:

Oh, the miserable condition! What is happening? After the Reformation the community of Christ did indeed achieve her freedom from the Babylonian Captivity to the extent that she is allowed to sing some German psalms and to hear the prophecies and psalms in her mother tongue. ... And just as the world now is not serious but frivolous and has lost the old quiet devotion, so songs have been sent to us in Germany from Italy in which the biblical texts are torn apart and chopped up into little pieces through swift runs of the throat; those are the warblers (Amos 6:5) who can stretch and break the voice like singing birds. ... There the organist sits, plays, and shows his art; in order that the art of one person be shown, the whole congregation of Jesus Christ is supposed to sit and hear the sound of pipes. This makes the congregation drowsy and lazy: some sleep; some gossip; some look where it isn't fitting; some would like to read but can't because they haven't learned how. But they could be well instructed by the spiritual songs of the congregation, which Paul exhorts.³¹

The issue is not merely a conservative versus progressive stance towards the new style; rather, it is primarily about the insistence on the old principle of Reformation, namely the participation of the whole congregation in public worship, without which the church would return to the Babylonian Captivity. Like Müller, Großgebauer echoes Calvin's thought in his warning about frivolous music without devotion.

²⁸ Cf. Müller, *Geistliche Seelenmusik*, 113, 147.

²⁹ Cf. Irwin, *Neither Voice nor Heart*, 75–76.

³⁰ Cf. Theophilus Großgebauer, *Drey Geistreiche Schrifften: 1. Wächterstimme. Aus dem verwüsteten Zion*. ... (Frankfurt and Leipzig: Wilde, 1710), 189.

³¹ Großgebauer, *Wächterstimme*, 208–9, quoted in Irwin, *Neither Voice nor Heart*, 84–85.

Großgebauer's *Wächterstimme* is countered by *Psalmodia Christiana*, published by Hector Mithobius (1621–1681), who represents the orthodox Lutheran theology of music. Mithobius shares Großgebauer's and Calvin's concerns when he laments on the condition of the majority of the congregation who sing without their hearts and without contemplating "what is being sung."³² Unlike Calvin, however, Mithobius advocates the continuity between the Jewish music of the old covenant (with many musical instruments) and the Christian music of the new covenant.³³ He is a passionate advocate of contemporary figural music. Yet this is not to say that he accommodates all kind of worldly styles of music. He rejects "the wanton, frivolous, confused and overly ornate manner of singing and playing ... as if one were in a pleasure house or worldly gambling house."³⁴ Again, one hears Calvin's distinction between religious and secular music here.

Later on, Christian Gerber (1660–1731) defends Großgebauer's voice in his book titled *The Unrecognized Sins of the World*. Echoing Großgebauer, Gerber attacks the contemporary Italian music style that only entertains the ear and whereby the text is chopped up "in pieces and mutilated."³⁵ Gerber also echoes Calvin when he warns, "God looks not at the external but at the internal; and where the internal is deficient the external is an abomination to him."³⁶

The issue of contemporary figural music is followed up by the father of Pietism, Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705). Spener reports the state of worship practice in his age, where the minds of the simple congregation is distracted by the complex figural music.³⁷ He, therefore, suggests fixed hours aside from Sunday worship for people who want to listen to that figural music. Pietism has contributed, perhaps unconsciously, to the liberation of

³² Hector Mithobius, *Psalmodia christiana ... Das ist, gründliche Gewissens-Belehrung, was von der Christen Musica, so wol Vocali als Instrumentali zu halten?* (Jena: Berger, 1665), 162.

³³ Konrad Ameln has pointed out the uniqueness of the copperplate of *Psalmodia Christiana* in his article "Himmlische und irdische Musik," *Neues musikwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch* 2 (1993): 57–59.

³⁴ Mithobius, *Psalmodia Christiana*, 269–70, quoted in Irwin, *Neither Voice nor Heart*, 96.

³⁵ Christian Gerber, *Die unerkannten Sünden der Welt, aus Gottes Wort, zu Beförderung des wahren Christenthums, der Welt vor Augen gestellt, und in achtzehn Capitel deutlich abgefasst*, vol. 1, chapter 81, quoted in Joseph Herl, *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism: Choir, Congregation, and Three Centuries of Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 203.

³⁶ Gerber, *Die unerkannten Sünden*, quoted in Herl, *Worship Wars*, 203.

³⁷ "Unkundig der Klänge und dessen, was bei ihrem Hören ein hierin erfahreneres Gemüt erfreut, hören sie [=die Mehrzahl der Einfältigeren] kaum zu, lassen vielmehr ihre Gedanken ziellos abschweifen, um sie hernach mit Mühe zur Ordnung zurückzurufen" (quoted in Karl Dienst, "Georg Philipp Telemann in Frankfurt am Main: Das gottesdienstlich-liturgische Umfeld," in Peter Cahn, ed., *Telemann in Frankfurt*, Beiträge zur mittelhessischen Musikgeschichte 35 [Mainz: Schott, 2000], 36); see also Kristanto, *Musical Settings*, 45–46.

sacred music from use exclusively in the worship service. While Calvin has warned about the danger of bringing secular music into the church, Pietism has helped introduce religious music to the concert hall.

IV. Contemporary Relevance

Both Luther and Calvin knew how to treasure the unique relation between music and human affections. Of course, music is not the only thing related to affections. Ignoring the power of music in influencing human affections, however, is a disadvantage for the church. Contemporary churches suffer from both the idolatry of human emotions and from lukewarmness. Firstly, our contemporary society worships human emotions, and so Luther's understanding of music as a mistress and governess of human affections is still relevant. Compared to the more deeply seated affections, emotions are superficial. This is not to say that emotions cannot be good in themselves, but when one looks at the transformation of the human soul in the book of Psalms, one notices that it happens not on the emotional but on the affective level. Psalms were not exercises for the fine-tuning of human emotions but, as Luther says, a transformation from carnal to holy affections.

Secondly, on the other side, we have the leftovers of a defective modern orthodoxy, with its "sound" theological formulations, that fails to touch the emotions and thus to spark holy fire and zeal for the kingdom of God. Calvin appealed to music as a remedy for lukewarmness and dullness. Music can be used to arouse the human heart to praise God. He emphasized the importance not only of understanding but also of affections. Though the description of the Reformed tradition as being cold, one-sidedly rational, and suspicious of affections should be regarded as inauthentic if not caricatural, Calvin never overestimated the role of music in worship. Music is just one of many means that can be used by the Holy Spirit. Nowadays, some Christians depend too much on music to attract church attendants by introducing undifferentiated contemporary Christian music as if music were the most important factor in stimulating church growth. Calvin, to the contrary, would say that church growth is a product of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Calvin's distinction between entertainment music at the table and psalms in the church is still very relevant to our contemporary situation. At the end of his article on the distinction between religious and secular music, Frank Brown rightly states, "One cannot conclude ... that there is no difference between religious music and secular, or that the church should simply

embrace every kind of secular style of music in a welcoming spirit.”³⁸ Undifferentiated adoption of all kinds of contemporary style in the church is unacceptable. Of course, the variety of music styles in our times has become much more complex than in Calvin’s time. For that very reason, “the ability to distinguish between spirits” (1 Cor 12:10) is needed now more than ever. Along with Augustine, Calvin emphasized the importance of devotion in worship. Congregational songs should be sung *coram Deo*. Singing in the presence of God and his angels—that is, the mystical elevation of the believers into the heavenly communion of saints—is of much higher importance than insisting on an entertaining music style.

Another issue that can arise in our contemporary worship is the insensitive or one-sided choice of songs. The congregation comes with different moods and affections. It is always good to have different kinds of songs in public worship: joyful and mourning, celebrative and contemplative, complex and simple, and so on. Müller reminded us of foolish singing, that is, when a mournful person sings a joyful song or vice versa. Church services with one-sided affection create a one-sided congregation. Müller also emphasized the importance of singing with understanding and fullness of spirit so that those who hear can be aroused by the words that come out of the heart.³⁹

On the one side, we have the problem of overestimating music in worship; on the other, we have the problem of underestimating singing in worship by focusing exclusively on the sermon, as Großgebauer pointed out. It should be noted that the Reformers taught *sola Scriptura* instead of *sola sermones*. From a Lutheran perspective, hymn singing too is a proclamation of the Word. From a Calvinist perspective, the *sola Scriptura* principle includes singing a hymn that has the Word of God as its content. Exclusive focus on the sermon was neither Luther’s nor Calvin’s original teaching. Großgebauer also reminds us of the danger of elitism, the use of music too complex for a simple-minded congregation. The result is the lack of participation in worship: the congregation comes to watch and becomes mere spectators. Unparticipative worship does not just happen because of complex music but can also be the result of entertaining music that leaves the congregation inactive. For Großgebauer, frivolous music leads to the loss of quiet devotion in worship.

Mithobius concurred with Großgebauer and Calvin when it comes to singing with the heart and with the contemplation of the words. Yet he

³⁸ Frank Burch Brown, “Religious Music and Secular Music: A Calvinist Perspective, Re-formed,” *Theology Today* 60 (2006): 21.

³⁹ Cf. note 28 above.

rightly corrected the Calvinist tradition with his idea of the continuity from the old to the new covenant, a thoroughly Calvinistic idea. Contrasting the old covenant (with its use of musical instruments) to the new covenant (with no musical instruments) ironically corresponds more with the Lutheran dialectic of law and gospel than with Reformed theology that generally insists on the continuity of the two covenants. Even Theodore Beza at the Mömpelgard Colloquium humbly acknowledged the use of musical instruments in worship as an *adiaphoron*.⁴⁰ Those who share the regulative principle should seriously consider Beza's authoritative voice. To oblige either the eschewal or the use of musical instruments in worship is unacceptable. Calvin has taught that the most important thing is to sing from the heart in the presence of God and his angels.

Finally, instead of absorbing every style of secular music into the church, Protestant Christianity should introduce sacred music to the public space, as Spener suggested.⁴¹ Spener's call to a moderate length of church singing is highly relevant for many contemporary Sunday services. The church is not a concert hall. Her main "calling" is not to promote good music, let alone to entertain people with music, but to be a house of worship and prayer. Liturgical music should not distract the congregation from worshipful devotion but rather advance it. Richness and diversity of beautiful music can be accommodated, developed, and taught beyond the church as a part of the cultural mandate.

Conclusion

Irwin concludes that the union of sacred and secular music in eighteenth-century Germany is not to be found in the Lutheran tradition before Bach, being a result "not of Luther's doctrine of vocation but of musicians' assertiveness over against the dominance of the clergy."⁴² Thus, the distinction between sacred and secular music was common not only in the Reformed but also in the Lutheran tradition, at least before the eighteenth century.

⁴⁰ Beza argues, against the Lutheran Jacob Andreae, that instrumental music does not move the hearts to God because it has no text that can be understood. Unlike the regulative principle, however, Beza clearly states that the use of musical instruments belongs to the *adiaphora*: "Therefore we also confess and do not deny that such instruments of music (*adiaphora*) are neither forbidden or commanded by God," quoted in Herl, *Worship Wars*, 197.

⁴¹ In the nineteenth century, Kuyper came to a similar conclusion, that arts should be liberated from "sacerdotal and political guardianship" in order to be able to maintain the sovereignty of their sphere (cf. Abraham Kuyper, *Calvinism: Six Lectures Delivered in the Theological Seminary at Princeton* [New York: Revell, 1899], 196).

⁴² Irwin, *Neither Voice nor Heart*, 151.

Even though since Bach, sacred and secular music seems to be the same, one should not forget that secular music at that time arose from Christian aesthetic principles. Pérotin, Machaut, Palestrina, Gabrieli, Schütz, Buxtehude, and Bach himself were church musicians. The secular music of our time originates from a totally different, nonbiblical worldview. Luther borrowed from secular tunes in his hymns, but it does not therefore necessarily follow that baptizing every kind of contemporary secular music style for use as worship music is justifiable.

Just as sound contemporary Christian theology should have its root in Christian theological tradition, so should contemporary Christian music be rooted in the tradition of Christian sacred music rather than in the secular style of its time with no reference to the tradition. By default, contemporary Christians are contemporary. There is no need to become contemporary, for we already are. Our calling is to cultivate every sphere, music included, based on a Christian worldview.

Reformational theologies of music have reminded us of the old Augustinian principle of the subservient role of music to the word. Good content needs a good container. Jesus said, “And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins” (Mark 2:22). Undifferentiated embrace of all kinds of containers is not faithful to Jesus’s teaching.

Despite the polemics between Lutheran and Calvinist traditions concerning the role of instrumental music in worship, both agree on the particular function of music in worship. For Luther, church singing is proclaiming the Word of God. The Lutheran Praetorius writes on the indissoluble connection between speech or sermon (*concio*) and song (*cantio*). For him, both occupations are needed for the complete perfection of church liturgy.⁴³ Through *concio* comes the knowledge of God, through *cantio* the praise of God. Praetorius reminds us of the importance of the idea of reciprocity in the Lutheran understanding of God’s gift.

For Calvin, church singing must arise from the depth of the heart. He sharply distinguished true inward worship from outward hypocrisy. Perhaps he was too critical of Roman Catholic worship—his attitude certainly influenced his view of musical instruments—but his concern found favorable echoes in the writings of some Lutheran Pietists. An eclectic and sound ecumenical view of various reformational theologies of music proves to be a fruitful starting point for engaging in our contemporary situation.

⁴³ Michael David Fleming, “Michael Praetorius, Music Historian: An Annotated Translation of *Syntagma Musicum I*, Part I” (PhD diss., Washington University, 1979), 4.

Whose Rebellion? Reformed Resistance Theory in America: Part I

SARAH MORGAN SMITH AND MARK DAVID HALL

Abstract

Students of the American Founding routinely assert that America's civic leaders were influenced by secular Lockean political ideas, especially on the question of resistance to tyrannical authority. Yet virtually every political idea usually attributed to John Locke was alive and well among Reformed political thinkers decades before Locke wrote the *Second Treatise*. In this two-part essay, we trace just one element of the Reformed political tradition: the question of *who* may actively and justly resist a tyrant. We focus on the American experience but begin our discussion by considering the early Reformers.

Students of the American Founding routinely assert that America's civic leaders were influenced by secular Lockean ideas, especially on the question of resistance to tyrannical authority.¹ Even scholars who recognize that many Founders were people of faith frequently fail to recognize the significance of that faith

¹ See, for instance, Carl L. Becker, *The Declaration of Independence: A Study in the History of Political Ideas* (1922; repr., New York: Vintage Books, 1942) and Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1955). More recent proponents of this position tend to make significantly more nuanced and careful arguments; see Michael P. Zuckert, *The Natural Rights Republic: Studies in the Foundation of the American Political Tradition* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996) and Jerome Huyler, *Locke in America:*

in shaping their political commitments. To give just one example by a scholar who takes religion seriously, John Fea, in his book *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?*, argues that Reformed ministers who supported the patriot side in America's war for independence (as virtually all of them did) were influenced by John Locke because the Bible does not sanction resisting tyrannical authority. He briefly considers the possibility that the Reformed political tradition might teach something different but rejects this idea because John Calvin "who had the most influence on the theology of the colonial clergy, taught that rebellion against civil government was never justified."² This claim in and of itself is disputable, as we discuss below, but more importantly, it ignores significant developments on the question of resistance among Reformed thinkers over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Virtually every political idea usually attributed to Locke was alive and well among Reformed political thinkers decades before Locke published the *Second Treatise* in 1689. These writers believed in natural rights, limited government, the importance of consent, and that tyrants should be actively resisted.³ In this two-part essay, we trace just one element of the Reformed political tradition: the question of *who* can actively resist a tyrant. It is striking that virtually no leading Calvinist leader of whom we are aware denies that tyrants can be forcefully resisted; the primary question is whether lesser magistrates must lead the resistance, or if the people or individuals

The Moral Philosophy of the Founding Era (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995). Because of strict page limitations, we keep our engagement with the secondary literature to an absolute minimum. We recognize that scholars have argued for other intellectual influences on America's founders. Alan Gibson provides a good overview of many of these schools, although he virtually ignores the possibility that America's Founders were influenced by Reformed political theology in *Interpreting the Founding: Guide to the Enduring Debates over the Origins and Foundations of the American Republic* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006). For a broader discussion of the Reformed political tradition, its influence in America, and the tradition's relationship to John Locke, see Mark David Hall, *Roger Sherman and the Creation of the American Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

² John Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?: A Historical Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 118–19, 231. Another scholar with more than a passing understanding of Reformed resistance theory who still gives virtually all credit to Locke for developing this concept is William T. Reddinger, "The American Revolution, Romans 13, and the Anglo Tradition of Reformed Protestant Resistance Theory," *American Political Thought* 5.3 (Summer 2016): 359–90, esp. 373, 378.

³ We are not the first to argue this idea, but it is still a minority position, especially among students of politics. See, for instance, Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966); Barry Alan Shain, *The Myth of American Individualism: The Protestant Origins of American Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); and David D. Hall, *A Reforming People: Puritanism and the Transformation of Public Life in New England* (New York: Knopf, 2011).

may do so. The focus of our two articles is on how this question has been answered by American political thinkers, particularly during the colonial and revolutionary period, but we begin by briefly sketching the development of this tradition in Europe.

I. *The Development of a Tradition in Continental Europe*

With a few notable exceptions,⁴ prior to the Protestant Reformation Christian thinkers taught that the Bible prohibited armed resistance to tyrannical governments. If a ruler ordered a citizen to disobey God, the citizen should refuse to obey—and take the consequences. Passive resistance was generally permitted, but active resistance, especially armed rebellion against a tyrannical ruler, was strictly prohibited. Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other early Reformers initially embraced this view, although they eventually concluded that active resistance could be offered in some cases.

Some of these early Reformers sanctioned active resistance *only* by inferior magistrates. For instance, Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562), in his lectures on Romans 13, published in 1558, and commentary on Judges 3, published in 1561, makes it clear that inferior magistrates who are constitutionally empowered to do so may resist a tyrant “when it cannot otherwise be done.”⁵ But he is equally clear that those “which only are subject and counted altogether private, ought not to arise against their Princes and Lords.”⁶

Vermigli’s position is often attributed to John Calvin—indeed, it is difficult to read his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* as arguing anything else—but Calvin’s positions developed over time. Space constraints prohibit us from examining every thinker we consider in this essay in detail, but because Calvin has been taken as *the* spokesman for the Reformed tradition, and because his views on these issues have been distorted by academics—particularly students of the American Founding—we consider them in some detail.

In his *Institutes*, Calvin makes it clear that private individuals are not to offer active resistance to even wicked tyrants. But he goes on to say that

if there are now any magistrates of the people, appointed to restrain the willfulness of kings (as in ancient times the ephors were set against the Spartan kings, or the tribunes of the people against the Roman consuls, or the demarchs against the senate of the Athenians; and perhaps, as things now are, such power as the three estates exercise in every realm when they hold their chief assemblies), I am so far

⁴ See, for instance, John of Salisbury *Policraticus* (1159).

⁵ Robert M. Kingdon, ed., *The Political Thought of Peter Martyr Vermigli: Selected Texts and Commentary* (Geneva: Droz, 1980), 9–11, 99–100 (quote from page 100).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 99.

from forbidding them to withstand, in accordance with their duty, the fierce licentiousness of kings, that, if they wink at kings who violently fall upon and assault the lowly common folk, I declare that their dissimulation involves nefarious perfidy, because they dishonestly betray the freedom of the people, of which they know that they have been appointed protectors by God's ordinance. (4.20.31)⁷

This passage has been understood by most commentators as encouraging lesser magistrates to offer active resistance—including armed rebellion—against a monarch who becomes a tyrant.⁸

However, if one looks beyond the *Institutes*, particularly to texts penned after 1559, a good case can be made that Calvin expands his teaching on this subject to permit private citizens to actively resist tyrants. According to Calvin scholar Willem Nijenhuis, three events in 1559 caused Calvin to begin to reconsider his views:

After concluding with Spain the Peace of Câteau-Cambrésis on 3 April 1559, the King of France could deploy his military potential to combat the Huguenots. In May the Synod of Paris accepted the *Confession de Foy* and the discipline of the French Reformed Church. The death of Henry II on 10 July and the accession of the weak fifteen years-old Francis II exposed the court to the increasing influence of the Guises, and thereby to a further politicization of the Huguenots.⁹

These events seem to have encouraged Calvin to embrace a more radical approach to resisting tyrants. For instance, in a 1560 sermon on Melchizedek, Calvin contends that Abraham was a private person who received a “special vocation” to pick up the sword to save his people from ungodly rulers.¹⁰ A wave of violence against the Huguenots beginning in 1561 apparently inspired even further movement. In a 1562 sermon, he contended that all citizens—public and private alike—have an obligation to pursue justice and righteousness: “We should resist evil as much as we can. And this has been enjoined on all people in general; I tell you, this was said not only to princes, magistrates, and public prosecutors, but also to all private persons.”¹¹

⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 2:1519.

⁸ Some have asserted that Calvin is encouraging lesser magistrates to offer only legal or constitutional resistance, not armed rebellion. See, for instance, Gregg L. Frazer, *The Religious Beliefs of America's Founders: Reason, Revelation, and Revolution* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012), 83–84. Particularly in light of Calvin's other writings on this topic, we find this view to be unpersuasive.

⁹ Willem Nijenhuis, “The Limits of Civil Disobedience in Calvin's Last-Known Sermons: Development of His Ideas on the Right to Civil Resistance,” in *Ecclesia Reformata: Studies on the Reformation*, vol. 2 (New York: Brill, 1994), 79.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

In his 1561 commentary on Daniel, Calvin writes,

For earthly princes lay aside all their power when they rise up against God, and are unworthy of being reckoned in the number of mankind. We ought rather utterly to defy than to obey them whenever they are so restive and wish to spoil God of his rights, and, as it were, to seize upon his throne and draw him down from heaven.¹²

Although in its immediate context this passage refers to those rulers who assert a right to be worshiped as if they were God himself, a broader reading could be that if the purpose of government is the good of mankind, then rulers who defy that purpose by their acts of tyranny and oppression are “ris[ing] up against God” as well. As such, they could be justly overthrown. Other parts of Calvin’s commentaries support this reading.

It is not necessary for the purposes of this essay to resolve definitively whether Calvin eventually embraced the view that private persons can actively resist tyrannical governments. We think there are very good reasons to believe he did, but even if he did not, it should be beyond dispute that Calvin did not embrace the doctrine of, as one political scientist puts it, “passive obedience and unconditional submission” to civic authorities.¹³ At a minimum, we find Calvin to not only sanction but encourage resistance by lesser magistrates. Moreover, the Reformed tradition does not begin and end with Calvin; other thinkers, confronted with tyranny as a political reality and not merely a theoretical problem, developed their own answers to the question.

Reformed thinkers are people of the Book, and so it would be nice to think their interpretation of the Bible is not influenced by contemporary events. On the other hand, specific problems may well force ministers and theologians to address particular issues or to rethink previous positions. Just as increasing violence against the Huguenots after 1560 apparently encouraged Calvin to become more radical, the Saint Bartholomew’s Day massacre of 1572 and the violence that ensued seems to have had a similar effect on other Reformed thinkers.

One of the most important works of Reformed political theology from this era was written by the pseudonymous Stephanus Junius Brutus (probably Philippe du Plessis-Mornay [1549–1623] or Hubert Languet [1518–1581]). *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos*, first published in 1579, seems to echo Calvin’s teachings regarding private persons in his *Institutes*, such as when the author

¹² Calvin, commentary on Daniel 6:22. *The John Calvin Collection*, vol. 7, AGES Digital Library (Albany, OR: AGES Software, 1998), CD-ROM. Unless otherwise specified, all references to Calvin’s works are from this collection.

¹³ Steven M. Dworkin, *The Unvarnished Doctrine: Locke, Liberalism, and the American Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 160.

writes that a people may justly revolt against a tyrant, but “when we speak of the whole people, we mean those who have received authority from the people—the magistrates, clearly, who are inferior to the king and chosen by the people, or constituted in some other way.”¹⁴ However, Brutus later notes that, on rare occasions, God specifically calls a private individual to resist or even kill a tyrant. He points to Moses, Ehud, and Jehu as biblical exemplars in this respect. But he cautions that “when God has neither spoken with his own mouth nor, extraordinarily, through the prophets, we should be especially sober and circumspect in this matter.”¹⁵ As well, if someone invades a country to which he has no title, “it is lawful for any private person [*privatus quislibet*] to oust this sort of tyrant, were he to force his way in.”¹⁶

It seems to us that early Reformed authors on this subject are struggling with a tension, if not a quandary. On the one hand, resistance by private persons seems the natural outgrowth of the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* and the derivative understanding of a right of conscience. On the other, these authors are elites who seem to fear opening the door to chaos and disorder of the sort seen in Münster (1524–25).

II. *The Development of a Tradition in England and Scotland*

Space constraints do not permit us to continue to trace the development of Reformed resistance theory in Continental Europe. It is our impression that it remained a bit more conservative than what developed in the Anglo-American world—that is, that Reformed thinkers were more likely to insist that active resistance be led by lesser magistrates and not by private persons.¹⁷ Across the channel, however, a consensus was beginning to emerge that active resistance to tyrants should be led by lesser magistrates, but, if they do not do their jobs, the people themselves have a right, and even a duty, to actively resist tyrants.

For instance, the clergyman John Ponet (1516–1556) contended in his *Short Treatise on Political Power* (1556) that private men should generally not kill tyrants, except

¹⁴ Stephanus Junius Brutus, *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos*, ed. George Garnett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 46.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 61–62 (quote from 62).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁷ Quentin Skinner makes a similar observation with respect to the sixteenth century in *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 2, *The Age of Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 210. Chapters 7–9 of this work provide an excellent, concise overview of the development of Reformed political thought.

where execution of just punishment upon tyrants, idolaters, and treacherous governors is either by the whole state utterly neglected, or the prince with the nobility and council conspire the subversion or alteration of their country and people.¹⁸

John Knox (1517–1572) clearly encouraged Scottish nobles to resist the tyrant Queen Mary, and works like his *Letter to His Beloved Brethren the Commonality of Scotland* can be read as urging private citizens to actively resist the tyrants if their superiors “be negligent or yet pretend to maintain tyrants in their tyranny.”¹⁹ Likewise, his good friend Christopher Goodman preferred that active resistance be led by magistrates, but he taught that if magistrates refuse to act, the people have a duty to resist tyrants. In his words, if the lesser

Magistrates would wholly despise and betraye the justice and Lawes of God, you which are subjects with them shall be condemned except you mayntayne and defend the same Laws against them, and all others to the utmost of your powers, that is, with all strength, with all your hart, and with all your soule.²⁰

More radically still, George Buchanan (1506–1582) argued in *The Right of the Kingdom of Scotland* (1579) that tyrants may be removed by “the whole body of the people” and “every individual citizen.”²¹

These arguments helped lay the intellectual foundation for the English Civil War (1642–1651), which joined members of Parliament with those who wanted a more thoroughly Reformed Church of England against the Royalists who, it was feared, wanted to return England to the Catholic faith. Early in the conflict Scotland’s Samuel Rutherford (1600–1661) published his important *Lex, Rex*, wherein he argued,

We teach that any private man may kill a tyrant, void of all title And if he have not the consent of the people, he is an usurper, for we know no external lawful calling that kings have now, or their family, to the crown, but only the call of the people.²²

More radically still, John Milton, whose commitment to Christian orthodoxy has been questioned (with good reason), but whose political views are

¹⁸ In Oliver O’Donovan and Joan Lockwood O’Donovan, eds., *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought, 100–1625* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 701.

¹⁹ Ibid., 694.

²⁰ John Goodman, *How Superior Powers Ought to Be Obeyed by Their Subjects and Wherein They May Lawfully by God’s Word Be Disobeyed and Resisted* (1558), as quoted in Herbert Grabes, ed., *Writing the Early Modern English Nation: The Transformation of National Identity in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 64.

²¹ Quoted in Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2:343.

²² Samuel Rutherford, *Lex, Rex, or The Law and the Prince* (1564; repr., Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1982), 33.

reasonably seen as a logical working out of Reformed resistance theory, contended in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1648) that “the people as oft as they shall judge it for the best, either choose him or reject him, retaine him or depose him though no Tyrant, meerly by the liberty and right of free born Men, to be govern’d as seems to them best.”²³

As radical as Milton’s position may be, for most Calvinist leaders the English Civil War—and, later, the Glorious Revolution of 1688—did not present a dilemma with respect to *who* may resist, as by almost any definition it was “lesser magistrates” who led the resistance. Although it would be profitable to trace the course of debates regarding the Civil War, the beheading of the perceived tyrant Charles I, and the Glorious Revolution in England, for our purposes it is necessary to turn to how these debates played out in Britain’s American colonies.

III. *John Cotton and John Davenport on the Regicides*

In a brief passage in his 1644 book *The Key of the Kingdom of Heaven*, John Cotton (1585–1652) explicitly denied the right of private individuals (and even of churches) to resist duly constituted civil powers. He did, however, note that “if some of the same persons be also be trusted by the civil state, with the preservation and protection of the laws and liberties” of the people—that is, if they could reasonably be regarded as holding the position of a lesser magistrate—it was entirely legitimate for such individuals to gather together with others so appointed “in a public civil assembly (whether in council or camp)” to redress injustice. It is worth noting, particularly in the context of the English Civil Wars, Cotton’s inclusive parenthetical “in council or camp”: granted that one of the major grievances against King Charles I was his refusal to regularly call Parliaments, it seems likely Cotton envisioned some sort of extra-Parliamentary body of nevertheless recognizable civil officers might be led to action on the people’s behalf. Arguably, this is indeed what happened a few years later in 1648, when the New Model Army forced the Long Parliament to disperse.²⁴

Cotton’s colleagues in New England were universally sympathetic to the English rebels, even sheltering the regicides Edward Whalley (1607–1675) and William Goffe (1605–1679) from royal retribution after the Restoration.

²³ John Milton, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1648), in *Areopagitica and Other Political Writings of John Milton* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund Press, 1999), 63.

²⁴ Larzer Ziff, ed., *John Cotton on the Churches of New England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 156; Francis J. Bremer, “In Defense of Regicide: John Cotton on the Execution of Charles I,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 37.1 (1980): 106–7.

Likewise, they offered asylum and support to their coreligionists fleeing French persecution. In 1689, the leader of the French Reformed congregation in Boston, Ezekiel Carré, published a sermon *The Charitable Samaritan* (1689) that “went quite far in legitimizing the Camisards’ armed resistance to Louis XIV’s dragoons.”²⁵ Carré used the parable to address the right of individual self-defense and implied that political resistance by private individuals was simply an extension of this right. We cannot address in any detail here arguments raised by non-English Reformed migrants to colonial North America, but once again, the genuine hazards encountered by Reformed Protestants under tyrannical regimes seem to have pushed toward a more individualistic understanding of the right of resistance.

IV. *The Glorious Revolution in America*

The aggressive efforts of the restored Stuart monarchy to assert control over British colonial America in the late seventeenth century provided plentiful opportunities for Reformed dissenters to refine their resistance theories. The previously independent colonies of Massachusetts, Plymouth, Connecticut, New York, and the Jerseys were consolidated under a single Royal Governor, Sir Edmund Andros, to form the Dominion of New England in 1686, and the colonists in those places found themselves stripped of their elected assemblies and subject to the arbitrary denial of their property rights. The hierarchical and autocratic nature of the Dominion government and the close ties of its leaders to the court of Catholic King James II further exacerbated tensions. When news of William and Mary’s accession to the throne reached America, popular rebellions broke out in Massachusetts and New York; similar motivations led to the overthrow of the proprietary government of the Catholic Lord Baltimore and his family in Maryland. In each instance, many (although not all) of the individuals involved can be clearly identified as Reformed, and much of the rhetoric used to justify the rebellions draws upon the previous century and half of the tradition we have sketched above.

Unsurprisingly, these arguments took their fullest form in Puritan Massachusetts, so we will look closely at those sources before briefly turning to New York and Maryland.

²⁵ Catharine Randall, *From a Far Country: Camisards and Huguenots in the Atlantic World* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 93.

1. “*Providence Hath Opened a Door for Us*”: *Massachusetts*

At noon on April 18, 1689, the leadership of the rebellion in Boston gathered the citizens together to hear a “Declaration” of the grievances against Andros and a justification for the decision to take up arms read aloud. Here, and elsewhere in their public statements, the leaders of the rebellion—men of substance, many of whom held positions of leadership in colonial society—were adamant that it was an unplanned, popularly conceived event.²⁶ So successful were they at propagating this narrative that Elisha Cooke (one of Massachusetts’s agents to the court of William and Mary) reported that in a council session regarding the propriety of the Revolution, “one of the Lords said, ‘I perceive the Revolution was there, as it was here, by the unanimous agreement of the people.’”²⁷ In other words, the primary understanding of resistance advanced by advocates of the Glorious Revolution in Boston was as an individual right: time and again, the rebellion is justified on the grounds of the people’s sense of “their own necessary safety and defense from the imminent dangers they apprehend they lie open unto.”²⁸

The argument from a natural right to self-defense almost by definition leads to a right of popular, individual resistance, if for no other reason than its logical link to the purposes of government and the rule of law. Indeed, in a broadside published on May 18, 1689, entitled “The Case of Massachusetts Colony Considered,” the pseudonymous author Philo. Angl. argued that since the good of the people was the fundamental law, if it had required them to overthrow their existing government, such an action was legitimate.²⁹ As the provisional council explained, the colonists’ actions were legitimate not only because they were taken in self-defense, but also because Andros’s government had been “illegal and arbitrary”:³⁰ illegal because in violation of the colony’s original charter, and arbitrary because Andros had ignored the rule of law and acted by fiat, trampling on “both the *Liberty and Property of England Protestants*.”³¹ For these reasons, Cotton Mather would later

²⁶ On the events leading up to the Revolution, see Ian K. Steele, “Communicating an English Revolution to the Colonies, 1688–1689,” *Journal of British Studies* 24.3 (July 1985): 333–57.

²⁷ Elisha Cooke to Simon Bradstreet, October 16, 1690, in Robert Earle Moody and Richard Clive Simmons, eds., *The Glorious Revolution in Massachusetts: Selected Documents, 1689–1692* (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1988), 462. Henceforth *CSM Records*.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁹ Richard C. Simmons, “The Massachusetts Revolution of 1689: Three Early American Political Broadside,” *Journal of American Studies* 2.1 (April 1968): 8–9.

³⁰ “Address to the King and Queen, 20 May 1689,” *CSM Records*, 77–78.

³¹ See [Rawson and Sewall], *The Revolution in New England Justified*, in W. H. Whitmore, ed., *The Andros Tracts*, 3 vols., Prince Society, V–VIII (Boston, 1868–1874; repr., 1971), 1:71–72.

argue that the April Revolutionaries were “not *resisting* an ordinance of God but *restraining* a cursed violation of his ordinance, [when they] imprisoned Sir Edmond Andros and his accomplices.”³² By this logic, the people of Massachusetts were not godless rebels,³³ but devout men anxious to protect the glory of God and his prerogatives.

Mather was not alone in this understanding: the anonymous author of another broadside distributed in the weeks immediately following the Revolution defended it having been taken “out of conscience and tender respect to God’s Glory, loyalty to His Highness our prince, and fidelity to our country.”³⁴ Likewise, Edward Rawson and Samuel Sewall (writing to defend New England to an English audience) argued that “the scripture speaks of a lawful and good rebellion, as well as of that which is unlawful.”³⁵ Andros and his minions had been “wolves ... among sheep in a wilderness,” they asserted, and the Revolution necessary to “keep them from ravening.”³⁶ New Englanders had patiently endured much injustice, acting only when it became obvious that the integrity of their community was in danger from Andros and “his creatures,” who “contrary to the laws of God and Men, commit[ed] a rape on a whole Colony.”³⁷ By alluding to the metaphor of the unified body and comparing the colony’s trials to rape, Rawson and Sewall invoked the highest level of personal right.

While the impetus of the Revolution might have been popular, the people of the Bay Colony also understood it to be providential. Many of the declarations accompanying the election returns from the towns for a new General Court after the Revolution include statements that described the revolutionaries as “such as God moved to seek the welfare of this people.” It was God who had “stirr[ed] up the hearts of so many of our [illegible] friends” and thereby had “deliver[ed] us, from such bondage and oppression (thereby opening to us a door at which we hope our liberties both civil and sacred may enter in).”³⁸ Although they acted as individuals, the citizens of Massachusetts understood their revolution and those who led it to be guided by

³² CM, *Parentator* (Boston, 1724), 117–18 (emphasis added).

³³ A crime they were accused of by John Palmer, *An Impartial Account* (London, 1690) in *Andros Tracts*, 1:56–57.

³⁴ Simmons, “Three Early American Political Broadside,” 10.

³⁵ [Rawson and Sewall], *Revolution in New England Justified*, in *Andros Tracts*, 1:129.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Gloucester, Beverly, Wenham, and Salem Village to COS (ND, C. May 1, 1689), *CSM Records*, 360. This language is also found in statements from Wenham, Beverly, Stowe, Milton, Boxford, and Manchester; *CSM Records*, 362, 363–64, 365, 366, 367, 380; Reading, May 6, 1689, *CSM Records*, 368.

the Holy Spirit. They saw their actions as not only made possible but also sanctioned by the overarching sovereignty of God's will.³⁹

In the public debate over the legitimacy of the revolution, this providential reading is joined by the suggestion that perhaps since many of the leaders of the rebellion had previously been elected to the colony's suspended 1686 government, they might be seen in some sense as a continuation of that earlier government. The author argued implausibly that since the Court had been dismissed prior to the fulfillment of its term, they might be considered to be "a standing Court, and adjourned," able to be recalled by the people to service, despite the three-year gap. He does not belabor this point, nor is it obvious that any significant number of his contemporaries found such an argument convincing. Nevertheless, it does suggest one possible reading of the Boston Revolution as justifiable on the grounds of an existing body of "lesser magistrates," albeit operating in absentia.⁴⁰

2. "Martyrs for Their Loyalty":⁴¹ New York

In May of 1689, news of the Boston Revolution reached the Puritan settlements in Suffolk County, on Long Island. Like the people of Massachusetts, Long Islanders not only found the Dominion of New England to be "arbitrary," they also suspected its leaders of colluding with the French with the intention of subjecting them to "Popery and Slavery." Thus, although they had "groaned under the heavy burdens imposed upon us by an arbitrary power for a considerable time," inspired by the example of their neighbors across the sound, the freemen of Suffolk County declared their intention of taking up arms for their "own self-preservation, being without any to depend on at present, till it pleases God to order better." The reference to their lack of "any to depend on" is curious, for unlike Massachusetts, the colony of New York had never enjoyed a popularly elected assembly, but (under both the Dutch and English) had been governed exclusively by a council of elite appointees accountable only to the powers overseas, and not to the people directly. This suggests that the reference is less a matter of practicality and more a matter of philosophy: as adherents to the Reformed tradition, Long Islanders would be familiar with arguments limiting political resistance to lesser magistrates. Their precision in clarifying that they are "without any to depend on" is thus a way of signaling to the broader world that they are not

³⁹ See the anonymous and undated "Opinion against Resumption of the Charter," printed in *CSM Records*, 359–60.

⁴⁰ Simmons, "Three Early American Political Broadside," 7–8.

⁴¹ "Loyalty Vindicated," (1698) in Charles M. Andrews, *Narratives of the Insurrections, 1675–1690* (1915; reprinted by The Scholar's Bookshelf, 2005), 401.

illegitimately usurping the role that would otherwise belong to the lesser magistrates as a matter of their office.⁴²

In the absence of such persons, however, the Suffolk freeholders seem to take for granted their right to resistance as individuals, stating not only that they will act in their own self-defense until “it pleases God to order better” but that it is their “bounden duty” to do so.

Herein we have endeavored nothing less, than what mere duty to God and our country doth call for at our hands, committing our enterprise to His blessing, and desire all our neighbors to join with us in praises and *all just actions* for the prosperity and safety of our country from all approaching dangers.⁴³

Here the right of resistance, although given pious overtones, is nevertheless presented as a matter of individual conscience and agency: the obligation to protect the community against the perceived threat to both their religious and political existence in the form of a French invasion falls not on the holder of particular office but on each citizen as citizen.

Even though their ties with their former colony of Massachusetts were significantly stronger than any they might feel toward the still majority Dutch population of New York, Long Islanders were nevertheless willing to make common cause with their coreligionists. It appears likely that they supported Jacob Leisler when he was selected by the city militia as the interim governor of the colony after they deposed Lt. Governor Francis Nicholson a few weeks later. At this point, the question of who was leading the revolution in New York grows increasingly complicated: Leisler, a staunch Reformed Protestant with a mixed Dutch and German ethnic heritage, was descended from that section of the nobility within the former Holy Roman Empire who “interpreted and enforced the laws of the temporal state”—Calvin’s “lesser magistrates,” in other words. Moreover, his grandfather, Doctor Jacob Leisler, was part of “a circle of Reformed jurists who sought to legitimate resistance to a monarch.” Historian David William Voorhees argues that Leisler not only knew about his family’s background in Europe but also viewed himself as acting in the role of a lesser magistrate (not as a private citizen) during the 1689 rebellion in New York.⁴⁴

⁴² “Declaration of the Freeholders of Suffolk County, Long Island, 10 May 1689,” in John Romeyn Brodhead, ed., *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Company, 1853), 2:577. See also “Lieutenant Governor Nicholson and Council of New-York to the Board of Trade, 15 May 1689,” in *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 2:575.

⁴³ “Declaration of the Freeholders of Suffolk County, Long Island, 10 May 1689,” in *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 2:577 (emphasis added).

⁴⁴ David William Voorhees, “The ‘fervent Zeale’ of Jacob Leisler,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 51.3 (1994): 451–65; the quote is on page 451.

Voorhees's careful reading of the extant Dutch records of the rebellion has uncovered the hidden religious commitments at the root of Leisler's political activism. Far from being the economically motivated opportunist of the traditional historical narrative, on this reading, Leisler appears as a man driven by a deep sense of religious calling: in light of the danger of encroaching papacy, "he believed that the hand of God compelled him to assume an active role."⁴⁵ This is certainly in keeping with the defense of Leisler's actions offered in *Loyalty Vindicated*, a 1698 pamphlet in which Leisler appears as a vigorous opponent of "the damn'd doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance" and to those false preachers (presumably Anglicans) who had told the people "that we ought patiently to hold our protestant throats to be cut by the command of a popish king." The author continues,

When Capt. Leisler with his friends had taken hold of that wonderful deliverance offered immediately from God to redeem his people from slavery upon earth, and popish damnation in Hell, to have false priests of Baal get up, and use their wicked eloquence to make the people believe a lie, even in the house of the God of Truth, and from the pulpit, to tell these captains of our temporal salvation to their faces, that being faithful to their God, their Country, and their laws, in the defence of the holy protestant religion, and the rights and liberties of Englishmen, and their thankful declaring for the most glorious Prince upon Earth their deliverer: was the blackest of treason and rebellion.⁴⁶

Note that Leisler's defenders here see the conflict not over who can resist but over the question of whether militant resistance is a legitimate option for Christians at all. Although it is somewhat unclear whether Leisler is meant to be seen as a private individual or as one of the "lesser magistrates," he (and "his friends"—one suspects this refers to popular supporters of the revolution like the Suffolk County freeholders) are portrayed to be representative of the true Calvinist position of a robust right of resistance. In contrast, the Anglican ministers who opposed the revolution are presented as "popish" and even heathenish—they are "false priests" who in deceiving the people are guilty of "treason and rebellion." Perhaps unsurprisingly, given this prejudicial treatment of the Church of England, we see support for Leisler often came from non-English sources: writing after Leisler had been imprisoned by the English for his actions, a group of Dutch apologists implored William and Mary to recognize that the rebellion had been motivated by a desire to preserve "the true reformed religion" from the threat of "the French enemies

⁴⁵ Voorhees, "The 'fervent Zeale' of Jacob Leisler," 450–51, 467.

⁴⁶ "Loyalty Vindicated," in *Narratives of the Insurrections*, 387–88.

[who] were already preparing to attack them,” and against whom Nicholson had refused to act.⁴⁷

3. “*So Great and General a Jubilee*”: Maryland

Although Maryland was ostensibly founded as a haven for the perpetually harried English Catholics, adherents to the Church of Rome were never more than a vocal minority among its actual settlers. Moreover, evidence suggests that as early as 1638, some subset of the Protestants in the colony were Puritan sympathizers. Puritan influence in Maryland only grew when the proprietary government formalized its position of religious toleration in the 1640s, including the resettlement of nearly two hundred Puritan households from nearby Virginia when that colony enacted anti-Puritan legislation. By the 1670s, Lord Baltimore was complaining that nearly three-quarters of the population were religious dissenters; to be sure, this included a significant number of Quakers, but it also would have included the strongly Calvinist Presbyterians and Independents (either Baptists or Puritans/Congregationalists). Thus, although the theological commitments of the leaders of the so-called Protestant Association who rebelled against the (Catholic) proprietors of Maryland in 1689 are difficult to pin down with any precision, it seems likely, given the dearth of confessional Anglicans in the colony, that at least a portion of the rank-and-file Associators would have identified themselves as members of the Reformed tradition. We will therefore briefly consider their declared justifications for taking up arms as part of the ongoing development of Reformed resistance theory.

For many years, although they had accumulated significant grievances against the proprietary government for failing to recognize their traditional rights, the freemen of Maryland had worked quietly through the existing political channels to achieve a satisfactory resolution. Even in the tumultuous political environment of 1689, they were willing to resign themselves to “mourn and lament only in silence, would our duty to God, our Allegiance to his viceregent [i.e., King William and Queen Mary], and the care and welfare of ourselves and posterity permit us.” In fact, for all three reasons—obedience to God, loyalty to the newly crowned King and Queen, and self-preservation—they found themselves compelled to overthrow the proprietary government. The Associators therefore declared themselves “discharged, dissolved, and free from all manner of duty, obligation, or fidelity to the deputies, governors, or chief magistrates here, as such ... they having ... endeavored the destruction of our religion, lives, liberties, and properties all which they are bound to protect and free to join in a divinely sanctioned liberation of the English nation as a whole.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ See “Memoir and Relation of what occurred in the city and province of New-York in America, in the years 1690 and 1691 ..., At The Hague, the 15th October, 1691,” in *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 809–12.

⁴⁸ The proprietors of Maryland, the Calvert family, were notorious proponents of Catholic absolutism, and this created significant conflicts with the freemen of the colony; see Sutto,

In the Declaration, the Protestant Associators acknowledge that the first duty of the Christian subject is to obey, even when such obedience brings them personal suffering, and to trust in the sovereignty of God to orchestrate a remedy. What is most interesting about how they justify their departure from this standard is the ways in which it obliquely refers back to Calvin's notion of a divinely appointed political deliverer. The Marylanders see William as such a figure, and thus as an indication that they are released from the *normal* state of suffering obedience to defend themselves under the aegis of an *extraordinary* intervention in the course of political affairs. The document does not use Calvin's terminology, but it does seem to cast William in the role of a divine deliverer and to suggest that the individual rebellion of the colonists was linked to this other event and somehow justified thereby.

Conclusion

As we have attempted to illustrate here, the true question among the international Reformed movement was not whether active resistance to political leaders could be legitimate, but *who* might legitimately initiate such resistance. The answer appears to have varied less according to particular philosophical convictions and more according to prudential grounds: where lesser magistrates were available, their interposition on the people's behalf was the expected avenue for resistance. Where such persons were lacking or unable to intervene on behalf of the faithful, Reformed congregations and their leaders seem to have been more than willing to take matters into their own hands, albeit often cloaking their individual agency with the language of divine providence and deliverance.

It is noteworthy that virtually every primary source we discussed above was written before Locke's *Second Treatise* was published or became available to colonists in America.⁴⁹ In the second part of this essay, we will continue to trace from the early part of this century to the War for American Independence and its immediate aftermath the question of who may actively and justly resist tyrannical authority.⁵⁰

Loyal Protestants, chapters 1, 2, and 7 especially. The quotations are from "The Declaration of Protestant Subjects in Maryland, 1689," in *Narratives of the Insurrections*, 305, 311–12.

⁴⁹ On the availability and use of Locke's works in America, see John Dunn, "The Politics of Locke in England and America in the Eighteenth Century," in *John Locke: Problems and Perspectives: A Collection of New Essays*, ed. John Yolton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 45–80.

⁵⁰ Forthcoming in *Unio cum Christo* 4.1 (April 2018).

Facing the Apologetic Challenges of Scientific Atheism

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Abstract

The contemporary challenges of scientific atheism to the Christian worldview should be viewed by Christian apologists as a conflict about truth and meaning. The Christian worldview makes sense of the rational intelligibility of the universe, while the reductionist approach of naturalism undermines the clarity of the design in created reality and is a worldview that destroys the ultimate meaning of life. This article focuses on the differences in worldview between Christianity and atheism and discusses some apologetic ways through which Christians can handle the challenges of atheism, often disguised as neutral, scientific realism.

I. *The Importance of the Subject*

Since 1965 everyone in Indonesia by law has to have a religion.¹ This implies that in this large country of 260 million people there should be no theoretical atheists—*those who believe that god or gods do not exist*—even though those who live as if a god or gods did not exist probably number millions.

¹ This paper was delivered at the seminar on *Reformed Theology and Its Contribution to the World* in Jakarta, Indonesia, hosted by Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Reformed Ingjili Internasional, Gereja Reformed Injili Indonesia, and World Reformed Fellowship.

Nominal Christians provide opportunities for the church to reach out to them, as is the case in Indonesia. They also give opportunity to atheists to try to convince them to become theoretical atheists, as has been happening in Western countries. In this regard, natural science is a useful vehicle of persuasion in the hands of atheists. At the heart of the matter lies the fact that nominal Christianity and secular living are only a tiny step away from theoretical atheism.

Growing up in South Africa, where almost everyone you know claims to be religious—more than 80% profess the Christian faith, according to national statistics—I am sad to observe the growth of nominalism and practical and theoretical atheism.² While theoretical atheists are taking on the Christian worldview in the public arena in a direct and even aggressive way, more and more people are turning away from God. It is uncertain what the influence of this small group of atheists really is in the decline of active religiosity of the people in South Africa. Nevertheless, the way the press and other media are used by atheists and their companions to challenge Christianity is not uncertain at all—it even includes going to court to ban Christianity from South African schools in favor of their so-called neutral atheist worldview.³

The purpose of this article is to gain a better understanding of the differences in worldview between Christianity and atheism, as well as to weigh some apologetic ways Christians can handle the contemporary challenges of atheism disguised as scientific realism and neutrality. While Africa is known as the most religious continent, and Africa south of the Sahara is where Christianity is growing the most rapidly, what is happening in South Africa as a leading country on this continent is important for the rest of the Christian world.

Because the era in which we live can be described as the “scientific” era, atheists use the credibility of science to spread their secular beliefs. In developed and developing societies where there is a dominance of science, religious discourse has lost or is losing its authority. Religious belief only makes sense to many if it can be theoretically (scientifically) demonstrated. The Oxford mathematician and Christian apologist John Lennox was invited to South Africa to talk on university campuses in 2013 and 2014.⁴

² According to research done by WIN-Gallup International, participation in religious activities in South Africa went down from 83% in 2005 to 64% in 2012.

³ Case no. 29847/14, Gauteng local division, Johannesburg.

⁴ John Lennox, the Oxford mathematician, became known after successfully debating (from a Christian life- and worldview) Richard Dawkins, the atheist writer and biologist from Oxford.

From the Cape to Potchefstroom the reaction was phenomenal, the number attending surpassing the capacity of auditoriums designed for hundreds and even thousands of people—showing the interest for arguments by scientists about the existence of God among students and scholars alike.

The influence of natural scientists on the debate about believing or disbelieving in God can also be seen in book sales. Today's bestsellers on God are the fruit of natural scientists such as Lennox, Francis Collins, Robert Winston, Victor Stenger, Robert Spitzer, and Leslie Wickman.⁵ Some of these are atheists, trying to give an apologia for their naturalistic worldview and disbelief in God. Others are apologists of the Christian faith, who work on the premise that to practice science means to learn more of the Almighty and his omniscience in his works.

While a worldview can be described as “what we presuppose ... a framework of beliefs and convictions that gives a ... unified perspective on meaning of human existence,”⁶ it is understandable that scientists who keep on asking questions in their endeavor must also come to basic questions of the origin and purpose of life and the world. This will eventually lead to the questions about God and the field of theology. One of the leading philosophers of our time, James P. Moreland, emphasized this trend: “If Christians are going to develop and propagate an integrated worldview, they must work together to integrate their theological beliefs and the assertions of science that seem reasonable.”⁷ The importance of an apologetic approach to the challenges of contemporary atheistic scientism is part of this.

Christians have to integrate their beliefs and scientific assertions if they want to make sense to many in our “scientific” era.

II. *Apologetics and Christian and Atheist Worldviews*

In his booklet about apologetics, John Njoroge states that apologetics is not the prerogative of only some known figures such as C. S. Lewis; rather, it

⁵ Francis Collins, *The Language of God* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007); Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 2006); John C. Lennox, *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* (Oxford: Lion, 2009); see also John C. Lennox, *God and Stephen Hawking: Whose Design Is It Anyway?* (Oxford: Lion, 2011); Robert J. Spitzer, *New Proofs for the Existence of God: Contributions of Contemporary Physics and Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); Victor J. Stenger, *God and the Atom* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2013); Leslie Wickman, *God of the Big Bang: How Modern Science Affirms the Creator* (Brentwood, TN: Worthy, 2015); Robert Winston, *The Story of God* (London, Bantam, 2011).

⁶ Philip G. Ryken, *What Is the Christian Worldview?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), 7.

⁷ James P. Moreland, “Introduction,” in James P. Moreland, ed., *The Creation Hypothesis: Scientific Evidence for an Intelligent Designer* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 11.

has been an integral part of Christian life for centuries.⁸ It is of utmost importance to the well-being and witness of the church and its members to influence culture and to strive for a change of social structures. To make the impact God is calling them to, Christians must understand the content of their calling so that they can take the applications of the truth of the gospel to all areas of life. Christian apologetics gives valuable insights for those seeking to better understand the Word of God on a worldview level.

1. *Faith and Evidence*

One of the most important questions in apologetic discussion is the authoritative role of experience. Even the best arguments will not be taken seriously if there is a negative view about the speaker's knowledge and insight. While the natural sciences in particular are seen by ordinary people as neutral and objective, philosopher Thomas Kuhn overturned the idea of a neutral science in the previous century by pointing out that even scientists evaluate and interpret their scientific data within such frameworks as their time, circumstances, and background.⁹ This aspect must be established early in a discussion about the origin and reason for everything. Like all other people, scientists have paradigms, preconceived beliefs, and worldviews that emerge in their work. All observations are theory laden. This does not mean that science is a subjectivistic and arbitrary social construction; rather, the critical questions scientists ask while doing research rest on their belief that it is worthwhile to search for truth.¹⁰

For instance, in order to explain to someone what makes research possible, natural scientists have to believe their basic assumptions. Ideas such as constancy in matter and fixed governing laws are essential to scientific work and, in the deepest sense, rest on an act of faith—faith based on the evidence of what happened in the past—while knowing that there must have been a time when things were different (for instance, at creation), and that there will be a time somewhere in future when things will change (as a result of entropy).

On the other hand, the idea people have that the Christian faith is a blind faith must often also be addressed. Faith is not something that exists where there is no evidence, but faith implies confidence that rests on sufficient

⁸ John Njoroge, *Apologetics: Why Your Church Needs It* (Atlanta: Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, 2010), 5.

⁹ Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

¹⁰ Lennox, *God's Undertaker*, 62

evidence.¹¹ Christians do not believe despite the absence of evidence; instead, they find proof in God's creation and written Word as final authority.

God gave us nature and culture, through which we form our understanding of the world. A direct appeal to the Bible is not sufficient in every circumstance. Even when dealing with something as directly biblical as the resurrection of Christ, one should notice that the Bible itself refers us to other evidences outside the written Word, such as the five hundred witnesses of 1 Corinthians 15:6 who could testify that Jesus really rose from the dead. Furthermore, Romans 1 says that God has revealed himself clearly in creation. Extrabiblical evidence can and should therefore be used by apologists, but (because of the influence of sin on humans and nature) always in a way that corresponds to the written Word.

Christianity and science are neither foes that stand against each other nor mutually exclusive, as naturalistic evolutionists sometimes suggest. The contrary is evident, for example, in the fact that Christianity was responsible for the birth of the modern sciences. Rodney Stark describes it as a generally accepted fact among scientists that science as we know it today probably would not exist if it were not for Christianity.¹² Ages of meditation will not bring empirical knowledge—and definitely not science—into existence. However, in an environment in which religion encouraged people to get to know and understand God's workmanship, it gave the opportunity for knowledge to grow and science to originate.

2. Theology and Other Sciences

Apologetics is not only a theological endeavor, but part of the calling of every Christian, and it should include all the different fields of scientific research. Among other things, Reformed apologetics can make use of nonreductive reformational philosophy because it takes God's revelation in an integral sense—including the radical diversity and totality of created reality. In his *Festschrift*, the apologist and theologian Cornelius Van Til replied positively to the reformational philosopher Hendrik Stoker's suggestions on a methodological combination of Reformed theology and reformational philosophy.¹³ In his study on the relation between Reformed apologetics and reformational philosophy, Guilherme Braun puts it as follows:

¹¹ John M. Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God: An Introduction* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1994), 57, 60.

¹² Rodney Stark, *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the End of Slavery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 124, 149.

¹³ E. R. Geehan, ed., *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Theology and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), 71–73.

Stoker's treatment of the relation between faith, knowledge and the revelation of creation converges with Van Til's position concerning the dependence of human consciousness on the Self-revelation of God¹⁴ He reaffirms Van Til's approach, while reinforcing the importance of God's Word-Revelation in an integral sense, i.e., including the meaning, diversity and totality of created reality by means of reformational non-reductionism. ... Stoker implicitly suggests a complementation to Van Til's understanding of the Word-revelation, which should not be reduced to Holy Scriptures, but rather include the other forms.¹⁵

Such philosophical input can help us understand different methods as consisting of the interplay of different theoretical and practical possibilities. Traditionally, methodological differences have led to the formation of different schools of apologetics. But without reducing one to the other, or mutually excluding one another in apologetic practice, methods can and should be used according to the person and situation in a manner that faithfully celebrates and defends the greatness of God in all creation. As sound methods represent different theoretical possibilities, their practice should be also situationally determined. Therefore, theoretical elaborations should not be taken to be exclusive; life encompasses much more than theoretical frameworks ever could.

3. Evidence and Proof

The idea of God as planner, creator, and sustainer of the universe is strongly opposed by naturalistic scientists, who see the universe as an accidental product of an aimless naturalistic mechanism. Lawrence Krauss emphasized that science should have nothing to do with God and religion, and referred to Nobel Prize winner Steven L. Weinberg's statement that religion is "an insult to human dignity."¹⁶ This emotional reaction is based on a naturalistic view that the idea of God is a subjectivist human fantasy, and even where there is no other explanation it is not a possibility that should be taken into account when a scientist seeks to explain the universe scientifically.

In discussions on faith and science it is often important to explain why the naturalistic belief that *you cannot believe anything that you do not have proof of* is not a valid one. John Frame answers this by stating that he believes Violet Frame is his mother and that his wife loves him without being able

¹⁴ Hendrik G. Stoker Sr., "Reconnoitering the Theory of Knowledge of Prof. Dr. Cornelius Van Til," Geehan, ed., *Jerusalem and Athens*, 25–71, esp. 29.

¹⁵ Guilherme Braun, *A Trinitarian Modal-Spherical Method of Apologetics: An Attempt to Combine the Van Tillian Method of Apologetics with Reformational Philosophy* (Potchefstroom: North-West University, 2013), 6.

¹⁶ Lawrence M. Krauss, "An Article of Faith: Science and Religion Don't Mix," *Council of Societies for the Study of Religion Bulletin* 29.2 (April 2000): 35.

to prove either. However, he has enough evidence to be convinced of its truth.¹⁷ In apologetics the method of sufficient evidence to believe something as being true is used, similar to what is done in court cases and research activities. It is not possible to live only according to what can be proved. Sufficient evidence provides sufficient reason.

And nature itself, correctly understood in light of Scripture, reveals God. When talking to unbelievers on the basis of the revelation of God in nature, it is not wrong to focus on evidence from nature.¹⁸ Because of these available evidences, the question can actually be asked whether contemporary atheist scientists want to see. Vern Poythress sums it up as follows:

We can use arguments to present to human beings both the testimony to God in creation and the testimony about the way of salvation opened by God through Christ. ... The arguments take place against the background of the knowledge of God that people already have, and which they suppress in their guilt. Theistic proofs ... may be used to try to awaken people to the reality of the God that they already know, even in their unbelief. ... So it should not be supposed that the unbelievers who listen to the proofs are innocent or entirely ignorant of God to begin with. And it should not be supposed that anyone will be convinced as he ought to be unless he experiences a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, which comes in connection with the application of the work of Christ. So theistic proofs ideally go together with the message of the gospel of Christ, which calls people out of darkness into forgiveness and reconciliation with God.¹⁹

4. *Methods and Approaches*

Where do we start an apologetic discussion about God and creation, and what method do we use? Because everything is from, through, and for God (Rom 11), there is a wide variety of things that could be mentioned and referred to in an apologetic discussion. There is also a variety of appropriate methods that can be used according to people and circumstances, to open their ears so that they can hear:

There are a wide variety of approaches and methods that we may use, consistent with our overall presuppositional commitment. Since proof is 'person variable' we are particularly interested in choosing an argumentative approach that makes contact with the individual or group we are talking to.²⁰

¹⁷ Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, 64.

¹⁸ Cornelius Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974), 197.

¹⁹ Vern S. Poythress, *Logic: A God-Centered Approach to the Foundation of Western Thought* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 176–77.

²⁰ Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, 67.

The point is not simply that arguments should be used differently on different occasions to give the audience a better way to hear and digest its impact, but that some arguments are better suited for certain apologists than for others. Natural scientists, for example, can use arguments from their specific field with greater authority than can lawyers, with whom other arguments would fit better, and former cult members could use an approach different from that of other apologists when reaching out to the cults.

Our Lord Jesus Christ set us the example of working differently with different people to open their ears to hear. In their book about the apologetics of Jesus, Norman Geisler and Patrick Zukeran describe different apologetic methods used by Jesus. With the rich man of Mark 10, he uses questions (the so-called Socratic method) to break through the former's wrong view on salvation. He points out logical consequences to demonstrate the absurdity of the Pharisees' accusation that he exorcised demons by the power of the devil: the premise must be wrong because it leads to a contradictory conclusion. When using parables, Jesus uses a parabolic method of apologetics, where a story about a situation that is familiar conveys his truth. "In practice, Jesus offers many different apologetic techniques, depending on what was needed on the occasion."²¹

The classic method of apologetics can be used successfully when linked to the Christian worldview it assumes. This approach can be useful to get certain people to hear the gospel. However, when the partner in dialogue comes from a more consistent and nonconflicting approach, a presuppositional approach is more effective, where the apologist brings the differences in premises and worldviews forward.²²

5. Defense and Attack

Besides the different apologetic methods suitable for different circumstances, there are also the two basic aspects of defense and attack that form part of doing apologetics. In 2 Corinthians 10 Paul did both. Deceitful persons became part of the congregation and tried to discredit Paul with the purpose of discrediting his message. Paul, knowing the truth of the gospel was at stake, took a strong apologetic stand against those proclaiming another gospel. His words in 2 Corinthians 10:3–5 speak of both defense and attack. An important part of the defense against those hostile to the Christian faith is to try to prevent them advancing. This "is a significant and crucial part of apologetics. ... But we must also be offensive. We must take up our weapons

²¹ Norman L. Geisler and Patrick Zukeran, *The Apologetics of Jesus: A Caring Approach to Dealing with Doubters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009), 196.

²² Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, 71–72.

and march against the enemy. ... The offensive team is determined to advance.”²³ Then Paul proceeds to proclaim the true faith.

III. *Defending the Faith*

1. *The Logic Argument*

The naturalistic view and its pretension that science is based on logic, evidence, and neutrality, while faith is illogical, is often one of the first things that has to be handled in apologetic discussion. The logic argument aims at showing that illogicality is actually on the side of the naturalistic view of contemporary scientific atheism.²⁴ Matter cannot give what it does not have. Yet naturalists claim, according to their atheistic belief, that matter—without life or intelligence in it—created intelligent life. If everything was made by chance, there would also be nothing to enforce logic as normative for us. Scientism is self-destructive, for the assertion that only science can bring truth is itself not derived from science.²⁵ If this were true, the statement would be false and self-contradictory.

Christianity sees God as a rational, omnipotent being who can be relied upon. The universe is God’s personal creation and therefore a rational, lawful, permanent structure, ready for man’s logical thinking and understanding of it. In opposition to the idea of polytheism, in which all of the gods act according to their own rules, Christians proclaim a God who rules all things according to his law and order—ordinances which were in place from the beginning of time for man to discover and work with (Gen 1:28; 2:19). Geisler and Frank Turek rightly say that it makes sense to believe that the human mind was established through God’s mind, with the effect that it can see truth for what it is and can reason logically about reality, because it was made by the architect of truth, logic, reason, and reality.²⁶ The universe is a created permanent structure that is reliable.

2. *The Life-Experience Argument*

That naturalism as a presupposition contradicts life experience is an argument that can easily be used in apologetic discussions. Due to the important role science plays in the worldview of many people today, the theory of

²³ K. Scott Oliphint, *The Battle Belongs to the Lord* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 78.

²⁴ H. G. Stoker, “Convinced by Scripture and Plain Reason: Reasonable Reformational Apologetics,” *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi*, Special Issue on Reformed Theology Today (2017).

²⁵ Lennox, *God’s Undertaker*, 43.

²⁶ Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Do Not Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 130.

evolution promoted by naturalistic science found wide acceptance. While many ordinary people believe it as a given, it must be explained that within evolutionism everything exists solely because of a physical process. This view puts pressure on people's faith in God. Paul Churchland summarized the view of evolutionary materialism and its consequences this way:

The important point about the standard evolutionary story is that the human species and all of its features are the wholly physical outcome of a pure physical process. ... If this is the correct account of our origins, then there is neither need, nor room, to fit any nonphysical substances or properties into our theoretical account of ourselves. We are creatures of matter. And we should learn to live with that fact.²⁷

To live with this naturalistic life and worldview is not easy, because daily life consistently contradicts the heart of these theories. Nancy Pearcey explains the dilemma of naturalistic scientists who state that humans are nothing but a great skin bag full of bio molecules but at the same time uphold that children should not be treated just as physical objects.²⁸ This discrepancy forces those that honestly look at the dilemma to say: "I maintain two sets of inconsistent beliefs."²⁹ Hence it is difficult to live with a naturalistic worldview because humans cannot both be treated as physical objects or machines and be viewed as free moral beings.

As part of his rejection of methodological naturalism (as if science could function neutrally), Moreland points out that scientific laws and theories require both observation and associated descriptive terms (e.g., *it is red, zinc*), as well as theoretical concepts and associated descriptive terms (e.g., *it is an electron, it has zero mass*).³⁰ This is not a neutral process; it is based on prior knowledge, presuppositions, and the focus of the researcher, among other things. In this process, the scientist often seeks to solve empirical and conceptual problems. There are empirical problems related to the observational aspects of science, such as how waves move and why. Conceptual problems can occur internally or externally. Internal conceptual problems arise when a defect or deficiency is found in the theoretical concepts of a theory. External conceptual problems can, for instance, come from philosophy or theology when they conflict with scientific theory.

²⁷ Paul Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984), 21.

²⁸ Nancy Pearcey, "Intelligent Design and the Defense of Reason," in William A. Dembski, ed., *Darwin's Nemesis: Phillip Johnson and the Intelligent Design Movement* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 238.

²⁹ Rodney Brooks, *Flesh and Machines* (New York: Pantheon, 2002), 147.

³⁰ James P. Moreland, "Theistic Science and Methodological Naturalism," in Moreland, ed., *The Creation Hypothesis*, 52–53.

To maintain a consistent evolutionary naturalism, atheistic scientists are constrained by their presuppositions to overlook even obvious things, such as what it means to be human. Strangely, scientists denounce the Christian view of reality as if it were guilty of the very kind of inconsistency of which naturalistic thinking is guilty. Sam Harris states that scientists aim at verifying their statements about the world or, at the very least, at making sure that they are not false, unlike those of religious believers.³¹ Yet those who think thus have to admit that in their life-experience human beings in their way of thinking do not simply function like programmed computers. It is not difficult to show them the discrepancy between what they know to be true and the implications of their naturalistic faith in science.

3. *The Premises Argument*

The naturalistic reduction suggests that the world should be comprehended only by means of what is observable.³² However, the complex information in creation (e.g., DNA code) points to one who is visible through his works, to a creator. The naturalistic premise that the universe can only be comprehended by what is measurable or observable is itself a presupposition and must be challenged by the apologist. Logically speaking, the premise that only what is measurable or observable is true cannot be verified by observable or measurable means, and therefore must by its very nature be unacceptable according to its own naturalistic approach. A good illustration of this is pointed out by Lennox when he writes that the famous atheist philosopher Bertrand Russell contradicts himself when he says that all human knowledge must come from (physical) science and that what science cannot discover mankind has no knowledge about.³³ How does Russell know this? According to his own definition, his statement is not a scientific statement, and thus he cannot have any knowledge about it. In spite of this, Russell believed it to be true.

The study of the various natural sciences and their respective fields cannot supply answers to everything in the world—as is the case with every specific field of study. Life, for instance, cannot be reduced naturalistically to its nonliving components. Life is more than its chemical composition. It also includes messages or information (DNA) that are expressed in the chemical composition—similar to the way in which messages or information are expressed by words printed in a book through the chemistry of ink

³¹ Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: Norton, 2005), 76.

³² According to Max Planck, “Wirklichkeit ist, was messbar ist.”

³³ Lennox, *God’s Undertaker*, 40–41

printed on paper. While words on paper show that an intelligent being wrote it, the information that makes life possible also points to an intelligent being. This information is suppressed by naturalists because of their reductionist presuppositions, while Christians can go where the information leads—to an intelligent cause.

4. *The Moral Argument*

The moral argument is one of the most effective and commonly used arguments against scientific naturalism because it shows the impossibility of a moral (and therefore human life) without moral behavior and fixed norms. If human beings originated naturalistically and consist of matter and nothing else, they are not accountable to anyone for their behavior³⁴ because all behavior follows out of determined natural processes. Without norms and accountability human beings are actually not human any more. Not only will there be no standards such as good or bad, right or wrong, but punishment also will not make sense because humans are slaves to their nature and their actions are results of physical-chemical processes. There would be no difference between killing a human being and killing an animal, a fish, a worm, a plant, or a bacterium, as they are all the result of a physical biological process. Naturalism dehumanizes and reduces man to an animal or less—a slave of a coincidental mechanistic physical processes.

Laws that science discover have an ordering function. Natural laws apply to matter, plants, and animals, as well as to the physical-biological side of man. In contrast, a norm is an order that applies to man made as image of God (Gen 1: 26–27), free to choose responsibly. This applies to all the aspects in which man is more than an animal. According to the twelve modalities that can be identified, seven of the ordering principles apply only to human beings, namely the provisions for the logical, linguistic, aesthetic, economic, juridical, ethical, and religious.³⁵

Without norms man would not be more than determined natural processes. Human life is impossible without morals. If man's origin were naturalistic, there would be no right or wrong, good or evil, or responsibility—everything would be allowed.³⁶

³⁴ Except for the norms imposed by society on the individual, if he or she wants to be part of society.

³⁵ Hendrik G. Stoker Sr., *Philosophy of the Creation Idea* (Potchefstroom, 2010), 96.

³⁶ See Ivan Karamazov in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. The only constraint would be someone's own limitation and what is imposed by the society on the individual.

5. *The Freedom and Responsibility Argument*

According to a Christian life and worldview, man has the possibility to choose—choices which are normatively testable. Human beings may choose and ought to choose according to God's will, to fulfill their purpose on earth. In community they should fulfill their duty, obey norms, and be held responsible for choices and even punished for wrongdoing. Beings cannot be human if they cannot think, plan, and live with responsibilities. They should not make choices randomly, because they are called to do what is required of them. Responsibility means that they must be able to justify choices.

Pearcey rightly criticizes the naturalistic approach when she points out that a worldview must describe the entire world and not just a part of it.³⁷ When evolutionary naturalists identify features that are characteristic of human beings, they have to acknowledge that human dignity and what gives meaning to their lives are not actually real. She refers to the natural scientist Marvin Minsky, who described the human brain in consistently naturalistic terms as nothing more than a three-pound computer made of meat. Yet Minsky admits that while in the materialistic world there is no place for a person's own choices and decision, he acknowledges that decision making is a concept without which the workings of the mind cannot be understood. He then states that there is no choice but to maintain that humans have freedom of decision, "even though we know this statement is false."³⁸ When defending the faith, it is important to refer to this discrepancy to invite naturalists to reconsider their views.

In direct contrast to the evolutionistic naturalistic view that reduces man to matter and his actions to chemical processes, biblical anthropology calls humans in the special service of God to realize God's destiny for the cosmos. By doing what they are intended to do, they fulfill their calling to the honor and glory of God.

6. *The Modalities Argument*

When defending the faith, it is important to highlight the higher functions of man and to set them in contrast to the degrading of humanity to physical and chemical processes by contemporary scientific atheism. Gilbert Chesterton regards it as surprising that the naturalistic view is accepted as a liberal, free-thinking philosophy, when in fact it is much more restrictive than views that are open towards transcendence and make room for the possibility of explanations beyond naturalism.³⁹

³⁷ Pearcey, "Intelligent Design and the Defense of Reason," 238.

³⁸ Marvin Minsky, *The Society of Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985), 307.

³⁹ Gilbert K. Chesterton, *Heretics / Orthodoxy* (Nashville: Nelson, 2000), 279–80.

The modalities argument rejects the notion of naturalism—that is, what is important is matter and numbers, “experimental reasoning concerning matter” or “abstract reasoning concerning quality or number.”⁴⁰ Within God’s creation different modal spheres can be distinguished. Besides basic ones, such as number, space, and physical, biotic spheres, which are also a feature of plants and animals, the physic/sensitive is unique to animals and humans. Furthermore, there are also higher or normative spheres that are exclusive to human beings. These are the logical, linguistic, aesthetic, economic, juridical, ethical, and religious. These twelve modalities are mutually and radically distinctive modal spheres.⁴¹ Thus, according to modal theory, naturalism reduces the higher modalities to the lower ones—stating something similar to the idea that the printed words in a book are only ink chemically bound to paper and nothing more. In the modalities argument, the higher functions of humans can be set in contrast to degradation to physical and chemical processes propagated by contemporary scientific atheism.

In the debate between Christian philosopher William Lane Craig and the atheistic evolutionist Peter Atkins, Atkins made the statement that we do not need the concept of God to explain anything and challenged Craig to mention something that cannot be explained by science. Craig mentions the following five points (as summarized by Geisler and Turek) that cannot be scientifically proven, but are all accepted as rational:

1. Mathematics and logic (science cannot prove, but presupposes it)
2. Metaphysical truths (for example that there are other minds than my own)
3. Ethical judgments (it cannot be scientifically proven that the Nazis acted wrongly, because morality is not subject to the method of natural science)
4. Aesthetic judgment (like the good, beauty cannot be scientifically proven)
5. Science itself (the belief that the scientific method discovers truth cannot be proven by the scientific method itself).⁴²

Plants, animals, and people can exist because of the laws of nature. But only people are able to reflect responsibly on what they do and should do

⁴⁰ The views of David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2004), 123.

⁴¹ Stoker, *Philosophy of the Creation Idea*, 96.

⁴² Geisler and Turek, *I Do Not Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, 126–27.

by the application of laws that are knowingly or unknowingly applied, either by scientific methods or intuitively. Therefore, the things Craig stated go beyond what can be established by natural law and relate to essential characteristics of man. This is to say that normative modalities are uniquely present in human beings. Humans' design must thus be distinguished from physical matter and other created entities. As the normative modalities (the logical, linguistic, aesthetic, economic, juridical, ethical, and religious) are alone part of human experience, man's design is unique. Only man is made after the image of God.

IV. *Proclaiming the Truth*

Apologetics is not only defending the faith, but also proclaiming the truth—describing the Christian worldview to those with other worldviews in a way that makes sense to them. It is not always easy to know when to defend the faith by showing the problems in another view and when to proclaim the truth. Usually, the discussion will have some of both, describing the Christian faith in such a way that those with other ideas can understand it and highlighting the flaws of other worldviews. Because it is not only about reasoning, but about faith and the convincing work of the Holy Spirit, any apologetic conversation should prayerfully seek God's guidance. It is he who prepares the hearts of people.

What follows is a short description of some arguments that proclaim the Christian worldview to those who do not accept the Bible as authoritative.

1. *The Epistemological Argument*

Albert Einstein described the comprehensibility of the world as a miracle. This miracle is constantly reinforced as our knowledge grows. The epistemological argument focuses on this and proclaims that the human mind and logic were specifically created to correlate with the structures of the world and to make sense of it. If the world had evolved by accident, there would be no reason why man and his understanding of experiences should flow directly into each other. The famous physicist John Polkinghorne finds the reason for the reasonableness of man, which logically corresponds to the reasonableness of the universe, in that they have the same origin—the much deeper reasonableness of God's "intellect."⁴³ God is the absolute origin, he is the only absolute, and therefore he is the one who enables rationality.

⁴³ John Polkinghorne, *Science and Creation: The Search for Understanding* (London: SPCK, 1988), 20–21.

2. *The Teleological Argument*

The teleological argument focuses on the purpose evident in the design of things. Scientific investigation only makes sense because things are designed with a purpose. Science tells us of a universe that is fine-tuned and delicately balanced to create the right conditions to exist and allow life. It is evident that it is part of a magnificent plan and that a planner is behind it. Therefore, by proclaiming an eternal God who is not bound to time, Christianity perfectly fits the picture of what enables science to exist and make sense.

3. *The Cosmological Argument*

The first verse in the Bible proclaims that there was a beginning, and that heaven and earth were created. At a given point in eternity, time and space came into existence. Centuries later, through their study of the universe, scientists came to the same conclusion: Time and space have originated. The cosmological argument states that because of the beginning of time and space in which the world came to existence, the universe has a cause. The first verse of Genesis goes even further. It states that there was a cause that brought space and time into being from spacelessness and timelessness. This cause, called God, is not bound to time and space, but eternal and omnipresent, capable of bringing forth space and time where there was no matter or duration. The cosmological argument assumes that finite reality depends on an infinite God. Furthermore, the fact that the world has a cause underlines the Christian idea that everything happens for a reason—according to God's plan.

Conclusion

Christianity proclaims that human beings are created in the image of God and therefore have responsibility and freedom that call for actualization. Without any relation to God the creator, who is the absolute origin of the cosmos, man would not have had the motivation to practice science and would not have seen the universe as designed with and for a purpose. Without both freedom and responsibility, the practice of science would not have emerged. Naturalism, on the other hand, undermines the clarity of the design of created reality. It is a worldview that destroys the ultimate meaning of life.

One should not stop at the contrast between the Christian and the naturalistic worldview, but also indicate the positive impact of Christianity upon a scientific attitude and motivation. Christianity encourages science. To the believer, the practice of science leads to the growth of admiration for God the Creator.

The biblical view of the relationship between faith and science is thus a positive one, and it is this that Christian apologetics should defend and proclaim. A Christian approach to science not only deals with specific questions in an isolated or “neutral” manner, but also seeks to reconnect insights to the whole and its absolute origin (God), integrating what it discovers into a life-encompassing framework. Accordingly, scientific practice is a deepening of experience and an activity through which the self opens to the cosmos. This may lead to a first or deepening experience of God as Creator.

An important task for contemporary apologetics is to show the consistency of the Christian worldview in its approach to faith and science. For if the challenges of scientific atheism are to be overcome, Christian answers will have to come with power and clarity.

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The Impact of Calvinist Teaching in Indonesia

AGUSTINUS M. L. BATLAJERY

Abstract

Of eighty-nine churches that belong to the Communion of Churches in Indonesia, forty-eight of them, located from Sumatra to Papua, declare themselves to be Calvinist or Reformed.¹ Calvinist communions are the largest of the Protestant denominations in Indonesia. This article illustrates how Calvinist thinking entered Indonesia and what kind of Calvinism is found in the Indonesian churches to the present. In theology and practice, these churches with their Calvinist background continue to keep the Calvinist or Reformed tradition alive.

Introduction

A 1998 monograph on Calvinism by Dutch church historian Christiaan de Jonge showing the relation between the churches in Indonesia and the Dutch Reformed (*Gereformeerde*) churches was the first publication about Calvinism in Indonesia, and it motivated Indonesians to more research.²

¹ Cf. Jean-Jacques Bauswein and Lukas Vischer, eds., *The Reformed Family Worldwide: A Survey of Reformed Churches, Theological Schools, and International Organizations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 220–70.

² Christiaan de Jonge was at that time a professor of church history at Jakarta Theological Seminary. His book, *Apa Itu Calvinisme?* (What is Calvinism?) was published in 1998 by BPK Gunung Mulia in Jakarta.

This article presents how John Calvin's teaching entered the Dutch East Indies³ and its impact on the churches in Indonesia, and it focuses on the parties that brought Calvinism and the characteristics of the Reformed faith they brought—the United East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* or VOC), the mission societies that worked at the initiative of para-ecclesiastical groups, and the mission bodies of specific Calvinist churches. Finally, the role of the Indonesian Evangelical Reformed Church (*Gereja Reformed Injili Indonesia* or GRII) in revitalizing Calvinist thinking will be presented.

1. Calvin's Teaching Arrives in the Dutch East Indies

The VOC was founded by the Dutch government as a shipping and trading company, and its primary objective was commercial, not religious. The right to govern all of the occupied territories of the Dutch Republic in Asia stretching from Persia to Taiwan (Formosa) were given to it, so the VOC was thus the “government” with which the emerging church in Indonesia had to deal.⁴ Its primary objective was to gain a monopoly in commerce between Asia and Europe.⁵

Because the VOC was the “Dutch government in Indonesia,” the need to attend to matters of religion could not be avoided. According to Calvinist understanding, as represented by article 36 of the Belgic Confession (1561), the government is to protect the church and to advance true religion, that is, Reformed religion,⁶ and so the VOC could not neglect matters of religion; in fact, it was responsible for them. Besides, two other factors made the VOC to attend to religious matters. First, the crews of ships and the VOC staff in Indonesia consisted partly of members of the Reformed Church. They needed spiritual care. Second, indigenous Catholic Christians who had become Protestants requested ministry from the Dutch as their new overlords after the Portuguese left.⁷ These responsibilities were spelled out concretely in what was called the second “letter of authorization”

³ At the time of the VOC, Indonesia was known as the Dutch East Indies.

⁴ Th. van den End, *Harta Dalam Bejana* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1979), 219; cf. H. Berkhof and I. H. Enklaar, *Sejarah Gereja* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1986), 237.

⁵ Th. van den End, *Ragi Carita 1* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1999), 33.

⁶ See Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss, eds., *Creeks and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 424; cf. Th. van den End, ed., *Enam Belas Dokumen Dasar Calvinisme* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2000), 53.

⁷ See Christiaan de Jonge, “Calvinisme di Indonesia,” in W. David, ed., *Toma Arus Sibak Ombak Tegar* (Ambon: Percetakan GPM, 1995), 21.

(*octrooi*) issued by the General Council to the VOC in 1622.⁸ Based on this, the VOC claimed that all matters of religion were in its hands, including public worship, organization, supervision, and finances. As a result, the VOC expelled the Catholic missionaries, considered to be Portuguese and Spanish spies, and replaced them with Protestant personnel. Catholics switched over to the Protestant, Reformed camp.

The VOC did not have its own way of organizing religious life, but instead followed the patterns of the Reformed Church in the Dutch Republic. In public worship, the liturgy was the same as in the Netherlands, down to the time of services. The VOC followed the presbyterian-synodal church order specified in the Synod of Dort (1618–1619) with modifications here and there; for instance, the VOC itself called ministers. It also followed the Three Forms of Unity: the Belgic Confession (1561), the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), and the Canons of Dort (1619). The Reformed Church in Indonesia was a copy of and was tied to the mother church in the Netherlands.⁹

So, as stated by de Jonge, the Christianity that colored the work of the VOC in religion, that was impressed upon the employees, and that was taught to Indonesians was the one and only true religion, the pure Christian faith taught by the Reformed Calvinist Church. For this reason, only the Reformed Church was permitted to serve in the Dutch East Indies at that time.¹⁰

As far as possible the VOC tried to make sure that the ways of the mother church in matters of organization, teaching, and church practice were followed.¹¹ The Three Forms of Unity became the foundation of teaching, both in preaching and other settings. According to Carel Theodorus, the obligation of a pastor and congregational teacher to hold to the Forms of Unity was spelled out in the church order of 1624. Pastors, visitors of the sick, and congregational teachers had to sign a manuscript of each of these documents.¹² In the area of organization, they put into practice the church order finalized by the Synod of Dort, which followed a presbyterian-synodal system.

⁸ De Jonge, *Apa Itu Calvinisme?*, 31.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 31–32.

¹⁰ De Jonge, “Calvinisme di Indonesia,” 22.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Carel Wessel Theodorus Baron van Boetzelaer van Asperen en Dubbeldam, *De Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië: Haar ontwikkeling van 1620–1639* (’s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1947), 39; cf. J. Mooij, *Geschiedenis der Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Weltevreden: Landsdrukkerij, 1923), 127.

The Indonesian people were introduced to Calvin's teaching not by a mission society of the church but through a commercial company.¹³ This had two consequences. First, the teachings introduced through the Three Forms of Unity did not take deep root in the indigenous people in the Dutch East Indies because the planting of religious teaching was not the goal of the VOC. Second, because the church was fostered by a state institution, the VOC, it became a state church, and any freedom of the church to organize itself ceased to exist until at least 1934, when congregations in Minahasa were organized to become an independent church called the Christian Evangelical Church. Note too that Calvinism in the Dutch East Indies was a result of the adaptation of Dutch Calvinism to the Indonesian context.¹⁴

II. *Reformed Doctrine and Para-ecclesiastical Mission Societies*

Calvinism also began to arrive in the Dutch East Indies at the end of the eighteenth century through mission societies founded at the initiative of members of several churches. The background of the formation of these mission societies involves changes in Europe during the seventeenth century: the Enlightenment and Pietism. Of these two streams, Pietism had the greatest influence on evangelistic efforts, including those in the Dutch East Indies.¹⁵ In the eighteenth century, interest in mission further increased as a result of its influence. After the establishment of the Baptist Missionary Society (1792) and the London Missionary Society (1795), which were especially aimed at evangelization, an initiative arose among Dutch Christians to form evangelistic mission societies.

A group of Christians formed a mission society called the Netherlands Missionary Society (*Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap* or NZG) in Rotterdam in 1797. In Germany, the Rhenish Mission Society (*Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft* or RMG) appeared in 1828. Besides these, there were Christians who started evangelistic activities on their own initiative.¹⁶

From the start, the NZG sent missionaries to South Africa, India, and the Dutch East Indies, but from 1839 until around 1900 the NZG worked in

¹³ See also Jan S. Artonang and Karel Steenbrink, eds., *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 99–132.

¹⁴ Van den End claims that the Calvinism that entered Indonesia in the seventeenth and eighteenth century was a tamed and castrated Calvinism. See Th. van den End, "Calvinisme dan Pengaruhnya Dalam Ajaran Gereja Protestan di Indonesia," in Agustinus M. L. Batlajery and Th. van den End, eds., *Ecclesia Reformata Semper Reformanda* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2014), 131.

¹⁵ Van den End, *Ragi Carita 1*, 139–42.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 151–52.

Indonesia only in specific areas, such as the Moluccas, Minahasa, Timor, East and Central Java, Karo in North Sumatra, Central Sulawesi, Bolang Mangondow, and later in South Sulawesi and Sawu.¹⁷ Even though all the NZG pioneers belonged to the Reformed Church, various theologies and streams of spirituality came together in its fold. Some followed the orthodox traditions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including those who interpreted these traditions according to the Pietist pattern of the eighteenth century. Some held on to the teachings of Calvin and the Three Forms of Unity, while others maintained relationships with the Pietistic Herrnhut movement or the revival in England. Others were influenced by the Enlightenment.¹⁸ They could work together because they emphasized the experience of Christian faith in love and witness, and they were not tied to specifically Reformed teachings and confessions of faith, church order, and liturgy. It was considered enough if they held to the Old and New Testaments and to the Creed.¹⁹ In the churches mentioned above, the fruit of NZG evangelization, the Calvinist heritage is seen in their use of the Heidelberg Catechism and the Psalter. Nevertheless, Pietism was also present.

Furthermore, in Batavia in the middle of the nineteenth century, a small group of Christians initiated evangelistic efforts. They established an organization of their own called the Society for In and Outward Mission in Batavia (*Genootschap voor In en Uitwendige Zending te Batavia* or GIUZ). Its goal was to expand the kingdom of God among Christians, unbelievers, and Muslims. Later it gave attention only to nominal Christians. The GIUZ had a branch in the Netherlands called the Java Committee, at first only channeling funds but later becoming the mother organization for missionaries to Angkola and to the Madurese people in the eastern part of Java. The work in Batavia was turned over in 1903 to the Netherlands Mission Association (*Nederlandsche Zendingsvereniging* or NZV).²⁰ This organization had worked in the Dutch East Indies since the period of the VOC and followed Calvinist teaching based on the Three Forms of Unity. The NZV had come into being in 1858, the Utrecht Mission Association (*Utrechtsche Zendings Vereeniging* or UZV) in 1859, and the Netherlands Reformed Mission Association (*Nederlandsche Gereformeerde Zendings Vereeniging* or NGZV) in 1859. These three organizations were established partly by the traditional Calvinist party and a group that left the NZG.

¹⁷ Th. van den End, *Ragi Carita 2* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1999), 19.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 12, 20.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

The NZV was established as a protest against the influence of modernism in the NZG, but those who established it were concerned that it too might be infiltrated with modernist thinking. Therefore, only those who confessed the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior and stated they would not work with anyone who denied his divinity could become members. The NZV worked in West Java among the Sundanese and the Chinese, and later in Southeast Sulawesi. The NZV inherited the theology of the NZG, which was not yet influenced by modernist thinking and which emphasized the Calvinist tradition of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The NGZV was active in Central Java and on Sumba. It was established by people who left the NZG and did not want to join the other organizations alongside it. The people who established it embraced orthodox theology and desired to hold fast to Calvinist theology. In 1894 the NGZV was incorporated into the Mission of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (*Zending der Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederlandsch Indië* or ZGKN, see next section) which worked in Central Java.²¹ The churches that resulted from evangelization by this mission manifested definite Calvinist teachings.

Later, one other mission organization, the Reformed Mission League (*Gereformeerde Zendingsbond* or GZB), was established in 1901 by a group of Christians from the Reformed (*Hervormd*) Church who had not left the Dutch Reformed Church during the events of 1886 (the so-called *Doleantie*). The name *Gereformeerde* (Re-reformed) indicates that the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century tradition was their reference, but some of their members had a spirituality with a Pietistic shade. With the help of the NZG, they began to work in Toraja and the area of the kingdom of Luwu in South Sulawesi. In organization, they followed the Mission of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (ZGKN).²² It is clear from the name (*Gereformeerde*) that the GZB was Calvinistic. Therefore, the churches in Toraja (*Gereja Toraja*) have a Calvinist identity, although a Pietist spirituality was is apparent among them.

Most of these mission organizations had a Reformed (*Gereformeerde* or *Hervormd*) background of Calvinism blended with Pietism. Other denominations such as the Mennonites also established missionary organizations. The Netherlands Lutheran Society (*Nederlandsch Luthersch Genootschap*), founded in 1872, worked on the Batu Islands off Sumatra. Its missionaries were trained at the Rhenish Mission Seminary in Barmen. A number of Free Evangelical Congregations (*Vrije Evangelische Gemeenten* or VEG) of

²¹ Ibid., 24–25.

²² Ibid., 25.

the Reveil (Revival) movement carried on mission work on the island of Samosir in cooperation with the *Unierte* (a combination of Lutheran and Calvinist) tradition. They worked in South Kalimantan, North Sumatra, and Nias.²³

None of these interchurch mission societies brought in Dutch Calvinism only.²⁴ They did not deliberately spread Calvinist teachings, as Calvinist thinking was mixed with Pietistic zeal. Leonard Hale in his research on the Pietistic heritage in the churches in Indonesia states that the missionary bodies worked under two flags, namely the Reformed background and Pietistic spirit.²⁵ The Reformed background can be found in the use of the Heidelberg Catechism by missionaries like Joseph Kam from the NZG, who translated it into Malay.²⁶ The Pietistic spirit is seen in the stress on holiness rather than confessional tenets. The important thing was the salvation of souls, not membership in a specific church. Nevertheless, because interchurch mission societies included Calvinists, it is understandable that Calvinist teachings and practices are found in churches scattered across nearly all parts of the archipelago. A presbyterian-synodical system is still used by many churches in Indonesia, and the election of presbyters and deacons is practiced. In some churches the Heidelberg Catechism is still used in catechism classes.

III. *Reformed Doctrine and Church Mission Organizations*

From the end of the nineteenth century (1892) to the middle of the twentieth century several smaller Reformed churches such as the *Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken* (CGK) and the *Vrijgemaakt Gereformeerde Kerken* started mission efforts.

Another mission organization was the ZGKN, which was founded by the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (*Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* or GKN) in 1886. This church's theology stated that evangelization is to be carried out by the local church itself, not by organizations established by individual Christians. When converts are baptized, they form a congregation on the same level as the GKN congregations in the Netherlands. The ZGKN began work in 1896 in Banyumas, Kedu, Yogyakarta, Surakarta,

²³ Ibid., 41.

²⁴ Cf. Aritonang and Steenbrink, eds., *History of Christianity*, 137–73.

²⁵ Leonard Hale, *Fujur Terhadap Pietisme* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1996), 67.

²⁶ See I. H. Enklaar, *Joseph Kam Rasul Maluku* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1980), 112; cf. Otjep Rahantoknam, *Het Netherlands Zendeling Genootschap op Amboina van 1815–1865* (Groningen: Landelijk Stennpunt Educatie Molukkers, 1986), 49.

and several other locations in Central Java.²⁷ In these congregations the Psalter and the Heidelberg Catechism (translated into Javanese) were used, and the formula for the administration of the sacraments was the one used in the Netherlands.²⁸ So the Calvinist character of the churches born from this mission is clear. This can also be seen in church organization: no congregation has a higher position or authority than the others, a characteristic of the presbyterian-synodal order.

Some mission organizations were not the offspring of the Reformed church. An example is the Mennonite Mission Association (*Doopsgezinde Zendingen Vereniging* or DZV), formed in 1847 by the Mennonite Church in the Netherlands. The characteristics of this church are the rejection of infant baptism, oaths, and military service, and congregationalism.²⁹ From 1851 it worked in North Central Java and later in North Sumatra (Angkola-Mandailing) as well. One of the churches that grew out of the work of this mission is the Evangelical Church of Java (*Gereja Injili di Tanah Jawa* or GITJ). At first, it manifested a congregational system of government, but later it moved in a moderate synodal direction. One of their missionaries, Pieter Jansz, was the first to translate the Heidelberg Catechism to be used as a teaching aid.³⁰ Even though this church was not Reformed, certain Calvinist teachings entered it through the use of the Heidelberg Catechism.

IV. Calvin's Teaching and the Gereja Reformed Injili

Finally, Calvinist teaching entered Indonesia through the Indonesian Evangelical Reformed Church in Indonesia (GRII) beginning in the 1980s. The objective of this movement is to bring the churches back to the basis of the revelation of God in the Bible championed by the Reformers, particularly Calvin and his followers to the present day.³¹ It holds to the Reformed confessions of faith: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Second Helvetic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.³² It founded the International Reformed Evangelical Seminary and spreads Calvinist teaching by translating Calvin

²⁷ Hommo Reenders, *De Gereformeerde zending in Midden-Java, 1859–1931* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2001), and Van den End, *Ragi Carita* 2, 238–39.

²⁸ Ibid., 240.

²⁹ Ibid., 21.

³⁰ Ibid., 233.

³¹ Stephen Tong, *Gerakan Reformed Injili* (Jakarta: Lembaga Reformed Injili Indonesia, 1999), 8.

³² Yakub Susabda, *Pengantar ke dalam Teologi Reformed* (Jakarta: Lembaga Reformed Injili Indonesia, 1994), 5.

and Reformed literature and promoting the writing of theological books. A well-known leader and theologian of this church is Stephen Tong.

So, from the end of the nineteenth until the middle of the twentieth century, mission societies were established by Reformed churches of the Dutch Reformed type. They did not bring in other than Calvinist teachings. However, because their area of work was limited, the churches established as a result of their work did not spread throughout Indonesia. Calvinist teachings were present in those churches when they became independent, and it exists in certain churches in Indonesia.³³ Later, the impact of Calvinism was also found among Baptist, Methodist, and Pentecostal churches.³⁴ Jan Aritonang states that the Baptists' teaching on the authority of the Bible and church and state was influenced by Calvinist teaching. John Melton points out that the London Confession (1647), the Philadelphia Confession (1742), and the New Hampshire Confession (1833), used by Baptist churches, are modifications of the Westminster Confession and have many similarities with Calvinist confessions.³⁵ In the Twenty-Five Articles of Religion of the Methodist church, the teaching about the Trinity, Christ, the sufficiency of the Bible, sin, salvation, and new life was influenced by Calvin's doctrines.³⁶ The same is true for the Pentecostal Church's teaching on sanctification.³⁷

V. *The Impact of Calvinist Teaching*

The question that arises is what kind of Calvinist teaching we find in the churches in Indonesia and what kind of Calvinistic heritage is present to this day.

1. *In the History of the Indonesian Churches*

Historical records show that when Protestantism was first brought to Indonesia, it had Calvinist features. Therefore, the first Protestant characteristics of Indonesian churches were those of the Reformed faith. For that reason, Indonesian churches with the largest membership are Calvinist or *Uniert*. When Calvinist teachings and practices were brought to Indonesia, they could not be fully implemented because they needed adaptation, but the

³³ For churches in Indonesia that can be categorized as Calvinist, see Bauswein and Vischer, eds., *The Reformed Family World Wide*, 230–31.

³⁴ See Jan S. Aritonang, *Berbagai Aliran Di Dalam Dan Di Sekitar Gereja* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1995), 139, 161, 169.

³⁵ John G. Melton, *Encyclopedia of American Religions* (Detroit: Consortium Books, 1993), 97.

³⁶ Aritonang, *Berbagai Aliran*, 161.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 169.

Calvinist influence was there. Moreover, even if it was nearly eradicated at the time by the administration's political policies, Calvinism lived on and spread to nearly all regions of the Indonesian archipelago.

2. Theological Discussions

To delve into the teachings of Calvin for a deeper understanding and to look for the meaning that it held for churches in Indonesia is interesting. This can be seen by what happened when three books about Calvinism were issued by the publisher Gunung Mulia.³⁸ The first time they were published, they sold out rather quickly.

Furthermore, during the last decade, interest in studying Calvin has emerged. There have been writings by Emanuel Singgih, Eben Nuban Timo, and Henny Sumakul. In his book *Reformasi dan Transformasi Pelayanan Gereja* (Reformation and Transformation of Church Ministries) published in 1997, Singgih discusses how Luther and Calvin reacted to the societal changes of their time. He sees not only that the Reformation gave an answer of faith to these challenges, but also that the Reformation brought about social change.³⁹ Calvin in particular was concerned about shaping and developing Christian character through discipline, and in the face of social changes marked by the reformation in Indonesia, we can take inspiration from Calvin by promoting the growth of personhood and liberty in the development of human individuality.⁴⁰ In his *Pemberita Firman Pencinta Budaya* (Preacher of the Word, Lover of Culture; 2005), Nuban Timo concludes that the predestination doctrine can be seen in Atoni Timorese carvings of *tiba*. A *tiba* is a cylindrical tobacco or betel box made of wood. Quoting J. A. Loeber Jr., Nuban Timo says that the ornamental carvings on the top of a *tiba* show the philosophical and dogmatic intention of the carver, which was, according to Loeber, to express the importance of customs and tradition (*adat*) that their forebears received from God and were considered sacred. According to Nuban Timo, the design of each *tiba* represents deep social and religious meaning closely related to God's stated directions for humanity.⁴¹ So, although Nuban Timo does not totally agree with the predestinarian teachings of Calvin, those teachings are reflected in the *tiba* as

³⁸ The three books referred to are de Jonge, *Apa Itu Calvinisme*; van den End, *Enam Belas Dokumen*; and Batlajery and van den End, eds., *Ecclesia Reformata Semper Reformanda*.

³⁹ Emanuel G. Singgih, *Reformasi dan Transformasi Pelayanan Gereja Menyongsong Abad ke-21* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1997), 49.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 55–60.

⁴¹ Eben Nuban Timo, *Pemberita Firman Pencinta Budaya* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2010). 141.

he presents it.⁴² Similarly, Sumakul has written a dissertation entitled *The Concept of Vocation in the Minds of Migrant Workers of the Christian Evangelical Church in Minahasa* [*Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa* or GMIM] *in Post-modern Time* (2005), in which he discusses the understanding of calling in the theology of Calvin during the postmodern era. He observes that for Calvin vocation is related to the omnipotence and the providence of God. It is important for the understanding of perseverance in how Christians answer the call and conduct their lives in a holistic sense, not only at home but also in their economic, social, and political lives. From the viewpoint of postmodernism, what Calvin and Reformed theology offer gives meaning to people's lives as Christians.

3. Calvin's Positive Influences in the Life of the Churches

Calvin's theology of unity influenced the ecumenical movement and the Protestant churches in Indonesia. The Dutch United East India Company (VOC) and mission societies in Indonesia left behind a legacy of Calvinist traditions preserved by the churches. Examination of the teaching, confession of faith, church order, liturgy, and other church practices reveal the following aspects:

The Batak Christian Protestant Church (*Huria Kristen Batak Protestan* or HKBP) in its confession of faith recognizes the Reformed doctrine of the true church as defined by the three signs of the church mentioned by Martin Bucer and Calvin. This is interesting because the traditional legacy of this church is not fully Calvinist but can be referred to as *Uniert*. Of the signs of the true church it is said,

We believe and confess that the church is the true church: 1) where the Gospel is purely preached; 2) where the true sacraments are administered in accordance with the Word of Jesus Christ; 3) where discipline is imposed to prevent sin.⁴³

Similar signs are indicated by another church in the Batak area of North Sumatra, the Gospel Propagating Christian Church (*Gereja Kristen Pemancar Injil* or GKPI) in its confession of faith. One point asserts that the church is called to be faithful to the ministry and calling ordained by Jesus Christ. That faithfulness is evidenced primarily in willingness to preach the word of God and administer the sacraments. It is those two features that signal the existence of a true church.⁴⁴ Similarly, in the Indonesian Methodist

⁴² Ibid., 153.

⁴³ Quoted from Lazarus H. Purwanto, *Indonesian Church Order under Scrutiny* (Kampen: van den Berg, 1997), 81–82.

⁴⁴ GKPI, *Pokok-Pokok Pemahaman Iman Gereja Kristen Protestan Indonesia* (Pematang Siantar: Sinode GKPI, 1993), 18.

Church, the understanding of the church is also Calvinistic and is expressed in the Twenty-Five Articles of the Methodist Faith (*Dua Puluh Lima Pokok-Pokok Kepercayaan Methodis*). Article 13 states,

The visible Church of Christ is a fellowship of faithful men where the pure Word of God is preached and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things.⁴⁵

If we examine the definition of the church in the Statement on Mutual Profession (Understanding) about the Christian Faith (*Pemahaman Bersama Iman Kristen* or PBIK), we see that the church's catholic and universal dimension is adequately presented. The church's scope is unlimited, crossing the boundaries of tribe, nation, language, and class: the church is catholic.⁴⁶ The catholic nature of the church of Jesus Christ is found in several Calvinist confessions of faith, such as article 27 of the Belgic Confession and chapter 25 of the Westminster Confession of Faith.⁴⁷ Chapter 4, article 13 of the Statement on Mutual Profession of the Christian Faith also echoes Calvin's teachings about the church and state. The government, as an institution ordained by God, is entrusted with the task of protecting people and rejecting evil, and the church is called to pray for and assist the government, but also to admonish it if it misuses its authority.⁴⁸

Some churches clearly identify themselves with Calvinism in their confessions. These include, for instance, the Toraja Church. In the introduction to its church order, it is stated that this is not detached from previous confessions but is "in connection with" them. Its Reformed confession refers to "The Three Documents of Unity, the Geneva Confession, the Westminster Confession, etc."⁴⁹ This church specifically considers those confessions to be its own as well. In this respect, many churches at the beginning of the twentieth century used the Heidelberg Catechism as a catechismal textbook before compiling their own handbooks upon becoming independent. Until 2002 there was still a church whose church order stated that the Heidelberg

⁴⁵ Quoted from Purwanto, *Indonesian Church Orders*, 100; cf. Lukas Vischer, ed., *Reformed Witness Today: A Collection of Confessions and Statements of Faith Issued by Reformed Churches* (Bern: Evangelische Arbeitsstelle Oekumene Schweiz, 1982).

⁴⁶ PGI, *Lima Dokumen Keesaan Gereja* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1994), 56; PGI, *Dokumen Keesaan Gereja* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2001), 29; PGI, *Dokumen Keesaan Gereja* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2006), 83.

⁴⁷ Th. van den End, *Enam Belas Dokumen*, 43 and 130; I. John Hesselink, *On Being Reformed Distinctive Characteristics and Common Misunderstandings* (New York: Reformed Church Press, 1988), 87.

⁴⁸ PGI, *Dokumen Keesaan Gereja* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2000), 81.

⁴⁹ Vischer, *Reformed Witness Today*, 48.

Catechism was used in that church.⁵⁰ The Catechism has also been used as a handbook for catechism courses in practical theology at seminaries.⁵¹ De Jonge observes that when theological schools were established in Indonesia, it was usually Calvinist theology that was taught. The lecturers were Calvinist, as were the handbooks of dogmatics that were used.⁵²

The Calvinist understanding that the Word of God and will of God must be upheld in all walks of life is still a model for Christians in society at large. The will of God must be conveyed not only in the church, but also to and in the world. This understanding is supported by the presence of Christians in politics, despite its tarnished image. Even in this case, the will of God must be upheld.⁵³ Zakaria Ngelow noted that the presence of Christians in national mass movements was motivated by a Calvinist understanding. Some Christian politicians, among them A. Latumahina and I. Siagian, have sought to justify their involvement in politics by referring to the teachings of Calvin and Abraham Kuyper. Referring to the view of Kuyper, they consider that Christian teaching underlies politics, as the government is the servant of God. They reject the view that religious affairs are separate from worldly affairs, that is, the affairs of state, and so Christians are not to be associated with politics;⁵⁴ instead, their understanding contributed to the formation of the Indonesian Christian Party (Parkindo) in 1945.

The church orders of many Indonesian churches with a Calvinist background follow a presbyterian-synodal system.⁵⁵ Some mention this system

⁵⁰ Article 4 of the Central Java Indonesian Christian Church [*Gereja Kristen Indonesia* or GKI] Church Order on doctrine states, "As a Reformed church, the Central Java GKI accepts the Reformation doctrine included in the Heidelberg Catechism." In chapter 4 of this Church Order it is stated that before arranging and assembling its own catechism books, the Central Java GKI used as its catechism book *Pengajaran Agama Kristen: Katekismus Heidelberg* [Christian Religious Teaching: The Heidelberg Catechism] published by BPK Gunung Mulia, Jakarta.

⁵¹ This, for example was in effect at the Fakultas Teologi, Universitas Kristen Indonesia Tomohon. The writer himself experienced this while studying at the Theological Seminary of the Protestant Church in the Moluccas in Ambon (*Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Gereja Protestan Maluku* or STT GPM), 1977–1981.

⁵² Christiaan de Jonge, "Calvinisme di Indonesia ditinjau dari Perspektif Teologi," in Batlajery and van den End, eds., *Ecclesia Reformata Semper Reformanda*, 77.

⁵³ Zakaria J. Ngelow, *Kekristenan dan Nasionalisme* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1994), 89–93; cf. Saut H. Sirait, *Politik Kristen di Indonesia: Suatu tinjauan etis* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2000), 210–14.

⁵⁴ Ngelow, *Kekristenan dan nasionalisme*, 91–92. Sutarno discusses this problem as well in his dissertation, "Het Kuyperiaanse model van een christelijke politieke organisatie: een onderzoek naar zijn doelmatigheid als middel om het politiek-staatkundige leven vanuit het christelijk geloof te beïnvloeden" (ThD diss., Free University Amsterdam, 1970).

⁵⁵ See, for example, GPM Church Order 1990. The introduction states, "For the sake of order within the life of the church, the Protestant Church of the Moluccas has decided to dynamically and creatively maintain, guide, and develop the structure and function of church

in the introductions and others in the bodies of the ecclesiological bases for their church orders.⁵⁶ The system consists of elements such as a council of elders and assemblies at the level of the classis and the synod. Also, the procedure for electing elders and for calling ministers, elders, and deacons is still practiced in certain churches.

In the worship service, the Psalms have not been eliminated from the treasury of ecclesiastical hymns even though many new hymnals have been published to enrich the Indonesian repertoire. In some congregations, Psalms are sung during a designated worship week every month. In others, the Psalms can be sung in any worship service.⁵⁷

One of Calvin's important contributions to the liturgy of the Calvinist churches was the *votum* (vow in the presence of God) from Psalm 124:8: "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." Calvin referred to this as the *adjutorium* (help).⁵⁸ According to Johannes L. Ch. Abineno, the *votum* is an element that characterizes the legacy of Calvin in the Reformed churches in Indonesia, inherited from the Dutch Reformed church.⁵⁹ The Synod of Dort required that this formula be used as a *votum*, the worshipful affirmation of the presence of God among his followers.⁶⁰ Calvin's other contributions to liturgy include the reading of God's law in the form of the Ten Commandments (or other authoritative passages to replace it) after the confession of sins and assurance of pardon. In the Lutheran tradition, by contrast, the order of worship does not include the reading of God's

leadership in line with the presbyterian-synodal order." Other examples are the 1982 and 1996 GPIB Church Orders, which give a special explanation of the meaning of what presbyterian-synodal means. Yet another one is the 1984 GKJ (*Gereja Kristen Jawa* or Christian Church of Java) Church Order. For these last two church orders, see Purwanto, *Indonesian Church Orders*, 28, 62. See also article 6 of the East Java GKI Church Order (1996) and article 2 of the GMIM Church Order (1999).

⁵⁶ Purwanto discovered this in his research on the various church orders from churches in Indonesia.

⁵⁷ The writer has had experience with several GPM congregations that alternate the ecclesiastical hymns to be used into four weeks. They are *Dua Sahabat Lama*, *Mazmur* (Psalms), *Nyanyian Rohani*, *Kidung Jemaat*, and *Pelengkap Kidung Jemaat*. The Protestant Congregations Church in Irian Jaya (*Gereja Jemaat Protestan di Irian Jaya* or GJPI), a Reformed Church in the Province of Papua established through the evangelistic efforts of the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten* in the Netherlands, only sings Psalms during worship.

⁵⁸ Rasyid Rachman, *Pengantar Sejarah Liturgi* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1999), 96.

⁵⁹ Johannes L. Ch. Abineno, *Unsur-unsur Liturgia yang dipakai Gereja-gereja di Indonesia* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2000), 3; cf. "Calvin's Liturgy," in Van den End, *Enam Belas Dokumen*, 417–18; Rachman, *Pengantar Sejarah Liturgi*, 96; T. Brienens, *De liturgie bij Johannes Calvijn* (Kampen: De Groot Goudriaan, 1987), 187–93.

⁶⁰ Rachman, *Pengantar Sejarah Liturgi*, 8–9.

law.⁶¹ According to Abineno, the order—confession of sins, forgiveness of sins, and proclamation of the word—is from Calvin.⁶²

Furthermore, the liturgy for the celebration of the Lord's Supper used by several churches is nearly identical to that of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. This can be seen in the words spoken by the pastor while breaking the bread and distributing the wine. A practice of testing or self-examination (*perhadliran*) carried out before Holy Communion still exists in worship services.⁶³ On Maundy Thursday it is meant as a reflection on the last supper of Jesus with his disciples in anticipation of his death.⁶⁴ This does not deviate from the order of Holy Communion in the churches of the Calvinistic tradition. The words in the Order of Matrimony used by the Dutch Church, remind us of the Indonesian church custom of announcing to the congregation that the couple intends to marry and requesting that any objections be made known.⁶⁵

Indonesian churches, which are enriched by variety, can learn from Calvin's sense of tolerance toward diversity. Variety is found in society in religion, tribe, and culture. There is a very popular national motto called *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* which means "unity in diversity." Calvin recognized diversity so long as differences do not amount to fundamental disagreements in faith. The diversity in different churches and in society is not a problem if it has nothing to do with basic factors. Churches in Indonesia reached an agreement about fundamentals in faith when they accepted the Statement on Mutual Profession (Understanding) of Christian Faith. In society, there is the *pancasila* (five basic principles of the state) that unite Indonesians.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, differences are still found in worship practices,

⁶¹ The Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship, a merger of the four largest Lutheran churches in the US and Canada, compiled the Lutheran Book of Worship in 1978. This book includes several liturgical settings used by the Lutheran Church. The reading of God's law, however, is not found in any of these settings. See Aritonang, *Berbagai Aliran*, 50.

⁶² Abineno, *Unsur-unsur Liturgia*, 29.

⁶³ In GPM.

⁶⁴ In certain congregations of the GPIB and in the GKI.

⁶⁵ Van den End, *Enam Belas Dokumen*, 496. After announcing several times the couple's plans to marry, some congregations follow the announcement with these words: "In essence the order of marriage is a worship service of the congregation, and for that reason the entire congregation is invited to attend." The author experienced this in the Central Java GKI in Salatiga. This practice is in line with Calvin's view of the service of marriage and is customarily used by churches in the Netherlands. See Rachman, *Pengantar Sejarah Liturgi*, 98–99; Van den End, *Enam Belas Dokumen*, 449; see also Brienens, *De liturgie*, 224–25.

⁶⁶ Derived from Sanskrit and Pali, the word *pancasila* means five principles: "Panca" (five) and "Sila" (principle). The five principles of *pancasila* are the principles of One Lordship, a Just and Civilized Humanity, the Unity of Indonesia, the Principle of Peoplehood Guided by the Spirit of Wisdom in Deliberation and Representation, and Social Justice for all the people of Indonesia.

in the way hymns are used during worship, in methods of evangelism, and so on. When those differences are not considered fundamental, the distance between churches is lessened.

Conclusion

The relation between the churches in Indonesia and Calvinism is evident. Studies on Calvin and his theology are to be promoted both in churches and in academic circles. Many publications widen the perspective of Indonesian Christians as to what Calvin's theological ideas mean and which are relevant in Indonesia today. The more studies there are on Calvin, the more Reformed teachings are useful to the churches in their presence and calling in the world. We must be thankful for the Reformed Evangelical Church of Indonesia (*Gereja Reformed Injili Indonesia*) and the publishing movement that took the initiative to translate and publish books about Calvin and Calvinism in Indonesian. In this way, the teachings of Calvin and Calvinism can be spread throughout Indonesia so that the churches may provide feedback on their relevance.

INTERVIEW

The Ninety-Five Theses Today: Interview with Drs. Timothy Wengert and Carl R. Trueman

PETER A. LILLBACK

(January 31, 2017)

PETER LILLBACK: *Our privilege is to interview Drs. Timothy Wengert and Carl Trueman because 2017 is the five-hundredth anniversary of the epoch-making event of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses on indulgences, and the beginning of the Reformation.¹ Professor Wengert, tell us who you are—what is your background, and what are you doing today?*

TIMOTHY WENGERT: I am Professor Emeritus at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, where I spent my career teaching Reformation history and the Lutheran confessions, having retired at the end of 2013. Since then I have been interested in this Reformation anniversary and have written several things that I would not have been able to do before retiring. As an ordained pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, as well as having been a professor for many years at one of their seminaries, I am interested in questions of ecumenism and how Lutherans relate to other Christians.

¹ An annotated translation of the Ninety-Five Theses with other documents can be found in Timothy J. Wengert, ed., *Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses: With Introduction, Commentary and Study Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015).

PL: *Thank you for being with us. Professor Trueman, tell us a little about your background and what you are doing these days.*

CARL TRUEMAN: I teach church history at Westminster Theological Seminary, and my real interest over the years has been English Reformed theology; I have had a sideline on Martin Luther ever since my PhD, when I looked at the reception of Luther's ideas and some of his texts in the English context. So, Luther has been something of an amateur passion for me over the years.

PL: *Carl and Tim (if I may), in a nutshell why are the Ninety-Five Theses so important?*

CT: The Ninety-Five Theses are important for a variety of reasons, perhaps primarily because they are seen as the trigger of the Reformation. It is surprising that a set of theses dealing with some obscure aspects of late medieval theology should kick start the Reformation. But they became a popular tract and triggered a series of events that brought Luther to the center of ecclesiastical attention, and so it is of singular historical importance.

PL: *Tim, what would you say is their theological heart? What was going on in Luther's mind as he begins this protest or at least the debate he wanted to start?*

TW: On the one hand, Luther really was exploring the problem of bad preaching in the sixteenth century, particularly as it related to the preaching of the Saint Peter's indulgence by Johann Tetzel. Also, preaching had, to his mind, abandoned the gospel. And you can see that in the Ninety-Five Theses themselves, particularly starting with thesis 21, where he attacks the preaching of indulgences.

PL: *Do you see Luther as already espousing an evangelical understanding of the gospel?*

TW: There is certainly debate about as to when Luther became a Lutheran or evangelical. I tend to think with Berndt Hamm, a retired professor at Erlangen, in terms of a series of shifts, so that the centrality of faith actually came very early for Luther: faith in connection to justification in 1509, the connection to justification and righteousness by 1513 as he began to lecture on the Psalms, and certainly when he lectured on Romans in 1515 and 1516.² But then he made another shift quite a bit after the Ninety-Five Theses, connecting faith and justification to the word of God. It's precisely in the hearing of God's word as law and gospel, or commands and promises, that believers are created through the word.

² Berndt Hamm, *The Early Luther: Stages in a Reformation Reorientation*, trans. Martin J. Lohrmann (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014).

PL: *So, one of the main concerns for Luther was preaching?*

TW: He clearly had in the back of his mind not only the preaching of others, but he preached a smaller indulgence himself, an indulgence of two hundred days given at a particular worship service in Wittenberg. He was expressing his own doubts; he clearly was worried about preaching. Secondly, he was concerned about where papal authority ends in relation to the sacrament of penance. So, the “heart” of the Ninety-Five Theses is thesis 5, where he says that the pope cannot give an indulgence for anything other than the ecclesiastical penalties that are listed in canon law and the penitential books, that is to say, not for divine penalties. Moreover, he argued—inaccurately, it turns out—that the pope would not want to claim this kind of authority. A “second heart” of the Theses is precisely the question of authority. Not that he was at all attacking papal authority, but rather talking about the limits of human authority vis-à-vis God’s punishment of the sinner, and God’s gospel.

PL: *Is that all?*

TW: A “third heart” comes in, among other places, in thesis 62, where Luther talks about the gospel of the glory and grace of God. And then you find Luther talking about God’s grace and God’s mercy, summarized best in thesis 92, where he condemns preachers once again by saying, “And thus, away with all those prophets who say to Christ’s people, ‘Peace! Peace,’ and there is no peace!” quoting from Jeremiah. In the next thesis, he says, “May it go well for all those prophets who say to Christ’s people, ‘Cross, Cross,’ and there is no cross!” There you find that Luther really centers his understanding of forgiveness of sins and the relaxation of God’s penalty on the cross of Christ and the way in which the cross is then borne by the Christian.³

PL: *Carl, you’ve spoken about how Luther’s theology is the theology of the cross. Do you see that already emerging in the Ninety-Five Theses, or does it develop later on?*

CT: I think it is certainly in the background of the Ninety-Five Theses. I would go back to the disputation of September 1517 against scholastic theology, which in many ways is a more explicitly radical document.

PL: *This would have been just a month preceding the Ninety-Five Theses?*

CT: Just a month. One of the ironies is that Luther says something much

³ Wengert, ed., *Martin Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses*, 26.

more explosive in September of 1517 and nobody seems to pay a bit of attention to it.

PL: *And what was that?*

CT: The disputation against scholastic theology, which is a major assault on the Aristotelian perversion of biblical exegesis and Christian theology by the intrusion of Aristotle's categories.

PL: *At that point is he attacking the Thomistic synthesis that occurred at an earlier time?*

TW: More than the Thomists, he is attacking his own teachers who are Nominalists. The only people who seem to react to the ninety-seven theses of September 1517 are some of his own teachers at Erfurt, who rather think he has lost his mind, but there is no public debate over them. In fact, he is disappointed. He keeps asking his friends, "Hasn't anyone read this? Don't they care what I said?" It is really quite explosive because he is attacking the scholastic method itself.

CT: He is calling at that point for a complete overturning of the way he had been taught theology. That is not really what he is doing in the Ninety-Five Theses; I think it is not as radical.

PL: *Carl, how does Tetzel appear in the Ninety-Five Theses? He is famous for his couplet, "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory [into heaven] springs" [cf. thesis 28]. Do you see Tetzel as directly involved in the Ninety-Five Theses?*

CT: I think so, and in the aftermath of the Ninety-Five Theses, Luther and his men ruin Tetzel fairly quickly. Andrew Pettegree's fine little book *Brand Luther* partly looks at how Luther and his followers harried Tetzel.⁴ It destroyed Tetzel's career and reputation. Of course, it is not just that jingle that Luther picked up on. It is also the apparent claim by Tetzel that if you were to rape the Virgin Mary, an indulgence would be enough to square it away [cf. thesis 75]. I think Luther went after the profane side of Tetzel, who was undoubtedly a good salesman, but not a particular clean-minded Christian, if we could put it that way.

PL: *Tim, as you look at the Ninety-Five Theses, what would be the one that would*

⁴ Andrew Pettegree, *Brand Luther: How an Unheralded Monk Turned His Small Town into a Center of Publishing, Made Himself the Most Famous Man in Europe—and Started the Protestant Reformation* (New York: Penguin, 2015).

have most captured the mind of the popular people in that day? Would there have been one?

TW: Let me first clarify. The Ninety-Five Theses were only available in Latin, as far as we can tell, and the first German translation came after Luther's death. We find a reference in the correspondence to someone in Nuremberg who had translated the Theses. Everyone has taken that to mean that they must have also been published, but there is no record of that at all. Luther's response to the offer to this translation—I think he had a copy in front of him—was to say “No, no. I'll write something else for the German people.”⁵ The Ninety-Five Theses were reprinted three times: in Wittenberg to begin with, in Leipzig, and in Nuremberg and Basel, where they are in booklet form. In about March of 1518, Luther published a German work called *A Sermon on Indulgences and Grace* consisting not of the theses but twenty paragraphs describing how penance is understood by the scholastics and then talking about the problems.⁶

PL: *Then it would be that message that made his theology more accessible to the people than the Theses themselves?*

TW: We know this for a fact because in the next two years there are at least twenty reprints of that single piece. And I think Pettegree says that's where “Brand Luther” begins. Because suddenly he has jumped over the academic community and is addressing what no one knew could exist, namely people and public opinion. Cardinal Cajetan, the papal legate, complains about this. Tetzel then writes a response which is never reprinted. And that is the contrast—Tetzel writing one thing and getting nobody to reprint it, and Luther writing about the issue and having well over twenty-five reprints in the next five or six years.

PL: *Coming back to the question, which portion of that sermon would have appealed to the popular heart? He taught many things, but what was the one thing that the average person following the debate would have held onto?*

TW: It shows also Luther's ability to communicate in German on theological issues in ways people can understand. What he does very often is to have a little dialogue with the reader. So he says in paragraph sixteen, “You may say then, or ask, ‘If this is the case, then I will not buy any indulgences at all,’” and Luther says, “That is exactly the point I am making.” Really

⁵ Cf. Wengert, ed., *Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses*, 38.

⁶ For a translation of this sermon with introduction, see Wengert, ed., *Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses*, 37–48.

Luther is undermining the entire practice of indulgences in that single sentence. One cannot help but think that people must have just about fainted the first time they read that kind of thing.

PL: *What impact did this have on the papal court when they realized that Luther was attacking it? Carl, what was going on?*

CT: Tim would be better qualified to answer than I, but my impression is that they underestimated the problem initially and that things moved very slowly. Of course, we are dealing materially with sixteenth-century Europe, where it takes a long time for messages to get relayed between Wittenberg and Rome, but the impression given by reading the material is that Rome massively underestimated what was happening. A complaint is sent to Rome, but initially there does not seem to be much pushback. Luther is free in April 1518 to travel outside the bounds of electoral Saxony to go to Heidelberg and to present what is, in some ways, a sharp and more aggressive form of his disputation against scholastic theology to an audience that includes some who will go on to be significant Reformers in their own right. So whether it is the geography or the complacency of the Roman court, I do not know, but things moved very slowly, and you get the impression that the threat was dramatically underestimated. But then, who would have thought that a monk nailing ninety-five theses to a castle door in some obscure German town would be the trigger to ultimately split the church and reshape society as we know it?

PL: *So why did it have that impact? If things moved so slowly and were underestimated, why did it create a popular revolt? Did it need the gold to stop flowing to Rome to get someone's attention?*

TW: Well, yes. Heiko Oberman, in his biography of Luther, contrasts the expectation for reform in different areas of society and church life with what he calls the “unexpected Reformation.”⁷ No one, Luther included, really expected what happened. Once we understand that, we can understand that the actors really, really do not know what is going on. When Archbishop Albrecht receives the Ninety-Five Theses with Luther’s letter in November 1517, suspecting heresy, he sends it to his faculty in Mainz for an opinion and then also to Rome.⁸ I have often thought that the decision to send these theses to Rome probably tipped the balance more than anything, so Rome

⁷ Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 111–206.

⁸ For a translation of and introduction to this letter, see Wengert, ed., *Martin Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses*, 27–36.

had to respond. The faculty at Mainz did make a response, and it was a rather mild negative response: “Well this guy is probably a little crazy.” Rome underestimates it: Sylvester Prierias, the papal theologian, wrote the first response and honed in on the question of authority, thinking that Luther has not really understood that his theses are about the question of authority.

But there again, it is a very slow process. In October 1518, Luther had an audience with Cardinal Cajetan, the papal legate, who was in the Holy Roman Empire in Augsburg at the time. Even then a congenial discussion takes place despite the fact that Cajetan just wanted to take Luther to Rome and be done with it, which no doubt would have been the end of Luther. But Cajetan engaged Luther in conversation about the actual issues in the Theses—whether one can trust the forgiveness of sins proclaimed by the priest—and he cannot imagine how that can be good theology. As Carl said, it is this very slow process with no understanding that there is a problem or that a groundswell of public support is beginning to take place—not so much among the princes, certainly not among many of the ecclesiastical leaders, but among the reading public of that time.

CT: This goes to the heart of one of the problems of teaching Reformation history today. Church splits are very cheap to us. We are very familiar with a diversity of denominations, but if you had been born in 1500, you would not have had the conceptual vocabulary to understand what was about to happen. I think if you had said to Luther in 1517, “Well, you could split the church . . .,” perhaps he would not have understood what that meant. When we look back to the Reformation, we have to be careful not to import our world into it, because they would have had no conception or even been able to imagine what was about to happen.

PL: *So what happens then? They sent the Theses, but before long, in 1521, Luther is already excommunicated. And there is tremendous tension. What went on in that period that created the conflict?*

CT: One of the key events is the Leipzig disputation of 1519.⁹ At Leipzig, it became clear to Luther that the issue is authority. Prior to that, perhaps, it was not so clear, but then Johann Eck pressed him and pressed him, “So you are saying the papacy is in error? Now you are saying the councils have erred? What is left?” Leipzig is theologically crucial for bringing the issue of authority to the fore. It was there all along, as Tim pointed out, but Leipzig makes it clear. On the other hand, the death of the Emperor Maximilian

⁹ Cf. Carl R. Trueman, “What Has Mussolini to Do with Hus?,” *Unio cum Christo* 3.1 (April 2017): 40–41.

stalls imperial action against Luther. It is not until late 1519, when Charles V was appointed as Holy Roman Emperor, that things started moving on Luther from an imperial front.

PL: *When Luther gets the bull, why does he have the courage to declare it to be from the antichrist? He could not imagine splitting the church, but now has the temerity to look at the head of the church and say that whoever sent this is Satan's minion. How did he get there?*

TW: Although he occasionally will say the pope is the antichrist, Luther actually is more likely to mean the papacy or even the papal court, the curia. What he thinks is that the corruption in Rome is devastating and that to be antichrist is not simply an apocalyptic word, but has to do with a failure to proclaim the gospel. What Luther sees is a failure to protect consciences that are afflicted by guilt and sin. The pastoral side of the Reformation is really where the pope most fails. For Luther, this is already the case in October 1518, when Cajetan refuses to deal with the question of the comfort that comes from the absolution and forgiveness of sins.

The reason I make the distinction between the papacy and pope is because at the end of 1520 Luther wrote a rather remarkable letter appended to the *Freedom of the Christian*, one of his important works on justification, addressed to Pope Leo. In it he says "I have never attacked your person, I am attacking the court, the curia, and the decisions that they are making." That, it seems to me, is where Luther's real worry lies.

CT: A distinction lost on Pope Leo.

PL: *At what point do we have the Lutheran Church? Is it when he burns the bull? Or has it begun before that? What is the birth of your church tradition?*

TW: On the one hand, Luther certainly sees continuity between himself and the ancient church and the medieval church, so there is no sense of break. Luther thinks that the pope is the one who has gone astray from the true church, so that he has not left the church at all. So then his question is, When did this start? And he would say about three hundred years ago. And that is where Luther's attack on scholasticism and the scholastic method and the use of Aristotle and certain aspects of Christian theology begins. There is a debate among Lutheran historians, including me, about when Lutheranism itself takes shape and you can say, "Ah, there is a Lutheran church." A lot of times Lutherans would say that the presentation of the Augsburg Confession in 1530 really begins it. Heiko Oberman has an interesting twist on that and argued in an essay he wrote in 1980 that the

beginning was actually the refutation of the Augsburg Confession.¹⁰ It is when the proponents of the Roman papacy at Augsburg write what is called the *Confutation* of the Augsburg Confession that there is the beginning of the break of the church.

PL: *In the Augsburg Confession there is a fascinating list of the abuses in the church that Luther had corrected, and there is not an article on indulgences; it just mentions them and the aftermath. Why is that?*

TW: It goes back to Carl's point that in 1519, when that debate took place between Luther and Eck, it really closed the door on the question of indulgences and focused much more on the question of authority in the church and specifically on how to preach and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, indulgences really become a minor issue in Augsburg. The Lutherans or the Saxon party, Philip Melancthon and some of the other theologians, want to make sure the debate is on the most important things; indulgences are really a minor result of theological problems that go much deeper.

PL: *Carl, what do Reformed or Presbyterian Christians need to know about Luther that you think is important?*

CT: I would say on a positive front—and personally at this point—one of the things that I have most appreciated about Luther is his theology of the word and his theology of preaching. One of the things that concern me as a seminary professor is that we do not produce as many good preachers as we should. It is not that we do not impart technical skills to students. I think some of it is down to the fact that we do not teach students what preaching is theologically, and Luther is fantastic at that—particularly his lectures on Genesis, the early chapters, where he develops this amazingly creative understanding of what God's word is. That is an important element for Luther. Secondly, and perhaps more negatively, although not in a negative way, I think the sacraments are important. And one of the things that Luther does is refuse to compromise on the sacraments. We live in a day when a kind of generic evangelical Protestantism has watered down some of those historic emphases. I appreciate that Luther falls out with Zwingli because he knew it was important enough to fall out about. So I would say that for me those two things—the emphasis on the theology of the word and his

¹⁰ For a translation of this article, see Heiko A. Oberman, "Truth and Fiction: The Reformation in the Light of the *Confutatio*," in *The Reformation: Roots and Ramifications*, trans. Andrew Colin Gow (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 167–82.

understanding that baptism and the Lord's Supper—are important aspects of the Christian church.

PL: *If you were to speak for Luther watching the Reformed world unfold, what would you say that at heart his deepest criticism would be of the Reformed tradition or the Presbyterian tradition of John Calvin, John Knox, etc.?*

TW: I think on some levels, Luther would find, and did find, many places of convergence between Calvin's and Martin Bucer's teaching and his own. The issue of the Lord's Supper and different understandings of Christ's presence shaped and in some ways distorted his reaction to the Reformed tradition. Certainly, the question of whether the finite can contain the infinite, as it was later said, was an aspect of that. Luther had an urgency to talk about how God actually comes and speaks to us, comes and is present with us. For him, those are central. And therefore, when he sees them being undermined in some way, he reacts strongly. That is why preaching becomes such an important gift that Luther brings, not simply to the Reformed tradition, but to my own Lutheran tradition, where preaching has also fallen on hard times. The other thing that Luther may have said as criticism of the Reformed tradition has to do with the divergent ecclesiology that Lutherans and the Reformed developed. Lutherans I think are more flexible when it comes to the forms the church can take and still be a true church. If you go back to some of the comments of Knox or Calvin, and certainly to the Puritan tradition, certain forms of the church, including having bishops and so on, are seen with suspicion by the Reformed. Lutherans seem not to care much about the form of the church. I mean we have bishops in some places; we have superintendents in others and so there is an ecclesiological difference that is important.

PL: *Your recent work must be one of the best studies on the Ninety-Five Theses. Tell us about that work and why readers should benefit by it.*¹¹

TW: I was fortunate enough to be the editor for volume 1 of *The Annotated Luther*, which is a six-volume set of Luther's most important works. Volumes 2–6 deal with different topics: word, sacrament, ethics, biblical interpretation, and the like. My volume, though, contains the early documents.¹² The Ninety-Five Theses, the letter to Albrecht, where he sends the Ninety-Five Theses as an attachment, and the sermon I mentioned on indulgences and grace were taken from that volume and put in a separate smaller booklet

¹¹ Wengert, ed., *Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses*.

¹² Timothy J. Wengert, ed., *The Annotated Luther*, vol. 1, *The Roots of Reform* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015).

with a new preface to the three documents and their background. For those interested in the Ninety-Five Theses, that is really the easiest way to get into that material.

PL: *Carl, you have recently written a book on Luther and the Christian life.¹³ What is its theme, and why might it be appropriate to consult it?*

CT: What I wanted to do in that book was look at Luther and try to think a way into Luther's mind from a pastoral perspective. How did he think about the Christian life as a pastor in Wittenberg? I deal with some of the background and history of Luther's intellectual development but then focus on word, sacrament, and confession as three key elements of Luther's pastoral practice. I was actually inspired by a collection of essays that Tim put together a couple of years ago, *The Pastoral Luther*.¹⁴ And it struck me that there was not much in English that looked at Luther from a pastoral perspective. So I was trying to fill a popular slot in the market. And I also wanted—I publish through Crossway, an evangelical publisher—to try to bring out the fact that Luther was not a twenty-first-century American evangelical. It is at the very points of difference that we might actually learn most from him. Robert Kolb did the introduction, Martin Marty did the afterword, and they are both Lutherans, so I seem to have passed muster with the heavyweights in the Lutheran tradition!

PL: *Tim, which of Luther's writings beyond the Ninety-Five Theses would be the one you would say, "This is the one I would recommend you read."*

TW: Without a doubt, it would be *Freedom of a Christian*. He wrote it in 1520. It is very positive, not a lot of polemics, and clearly talking about the nature of the gospel itself. In the middle of it are two paragraphs where he describes how not to preach and how to preach. So, for folks who are interested in being challenged by Luther in the present on the question of preaching that we have mentioned several times, *Freedom of a Christian* is a great one to look at.¹⁵

PL: *If you do not take that as your favorite Luther text, which would be the next one, Carl?*

¹³ Carl R. Trueman, *Luther on the Christian Life: Cross and Freedom* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

¹⁴ Timothy J. Wengert, ed., *The Pastoral Luther: Essays on Martin Luther's Practical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

¹⁵ A translation can be found in Wengert, ed., *The Annotated Luther, Volume 1*, 467–538 (the two paragraphs on preaching are on pp. 508–9).

CT: It would be the *Explanation of the Heidelberg Disputation*, which is a wonderful microcosmic presentation of Luther's theology. I have quoted the last theology thesis from the pulpit more times than I care to remember, "The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is lovely to it." I think in that short sentence, in some ways, you have the whole of Luther's theology in a nutshell. It is a beautiful statement.¹⁶

PL: *What do you do with someone like myself who read The Bondage of the Will (1525), and as a result became a Calvinist? Did I misread Luther?*

CT: I praise God!

TW: This goes back to the comment that I made about the convergences between the Reformed and Lutheran tradition and one of them certainly is our insistence that the will is bound and cannot come to faith on its own. This is one of the things most challenged by many in American churches today, where it would appear that religion really is a matter of the exercise of one's own will and intellect. Luther and Calvin and, in different ways Melancthon, and certainly the later Lutherans, insist upon the priority of God's grace alone, and they do not make faith into a work that we do. Rather it is the very thing that God does to make that which is not lovely, lovely which is really at the heart of it all.

PL: *So, as we conclude, is it fair to say that the classic sola mottos of the Reformation, which came up after the Reformation, but summarize its heart, are a fair way of affirming what brings Lutherans and Reformed people together?*

TW: I have done some work on *sola Scriptura* and discovered that Luther hardly ever uses that term, the Latin phrase—only twenty times in all of his Latin works. Nine of those twenty are when he says, "I will *not* argue *sola Scriptura*." What Luther says far more often is *solus Christus*; then, I think you are right. By faith alone, by grace alone, Christ alone, or sometimes he will also say the word alone, by which he means not simply the word in the book, the Bible, although he does mean that the Bible is the word of God, but also as it is proclaimed. I think that really is at the heart of the convergences between the Lutheran and the Reformed tradition.

PL: *Carl, any last word from your side as a professor at Westminster, a lover of Luther, and a Presbyterian pastor?*

CT: I have found Luther to be an immensely helpful figure. Not so much for his exegesis—I think his exegesis has perhaps not weathered the storms of

¹⁶ See Wengert, ed., *The Annotated Luther*, 1:67–120 (thesis 28, quoted here, is on p. 104).

time as well as Calvin's has—but for his clear theological understanding of key points and primarily the theology of the word. I have found him an immensely helpful resource.

PL: *How can we best celebrate this Reformation year?*

TW: Probably not by dressing a teenager up in a black robe and having him hammer something on the door of a church. In many of the talks that I have given both in 2016 and that I will be giving this year, I have been urging pastors to become better preachers. One of the hearts of the Ninety-Five Theses is Luther's disgust with bad preaching and what it does to the hearers. If people do not hear about the unsolicited unmerited grace and mercy of God in Christ as the true center of our preaching, then they are left with their own works, and to their own devices. The gospel itself really is lost. And that is what we need to commemorate, to figure out new ways of bringing that proclamation to people so that they hear the good news and the comfort that it entails.

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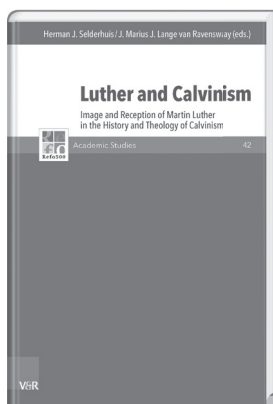
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Book Reviews

John M. G. Barclay. *Paul and the Gift*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015. Pp. 673.

It's not often that one gets the privilege of reading a book which you find yourself affirming chapter after chapter. John Barclay's *Paul and the Gift* is such a book. Having completed my own dissertation on the New Perspective on Paul under Dr. Stephen Westerholm about ten years ago,¹ I came to the conclusion that while there were some benefits to the New Perspective on Paul, it was still significantly flawed on several points. On the benefits side, in my judgment, the New Perspective approach pays more attention to the Jew-Gentile controversy as the context in which justification by faith through grace arose and corrects the mistaken assumption that the problem every Jewish person was facing was the matter of attempting to earn enough points to gain salvation. Those certainly are gains. The flaws, however, were the attempt to limit the "works of the law" into boundary markers, to make the whole first-century controversy about Jewish exclusivism and thus to understand justification as a social, ecclesiological issue rather than a soteriological one, thus diminishing the classic doctrine of justification through grace alone. Barclay then moves us further into a "Beyond the New Perspective" era, as he combines in a wonderful way what is best about both the old and the new perspective.

Barclay posits that much of the problem thus far has been one of definition. Too often, people use the word "grace" but mean something quite or entirely different by it. In Barclay's historical section, for instance, he suggests that "Augustine did not believe in grace more than Pelagius; he simply believed

¹ See Gerhard H. Visscher, *Romans 4 and the New Perspective on Paul: Faith Embraces the Promise* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009).

in it *differently*” (p. 77). Barclay takes us on a wonderful tour as he explores the significance of the concept of grace in Marcion, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Barth and other twentieth-century scholars. A similar tour through much of Second Temple literature follows.

As the title suggests, Barclay sets “grace” in the context of the frequent Pauline word “gift” and examines what he calls the “perfections” of a gift. He comes up with six ways in which one might consider a gift “perfected.” Contributing factors then are the degree to which a degree is *superabundant* (lavish), *singular* (in motive), *prior* (with respect to timing), *incongruous* (without regard to worth), *efficacious* (able to accomplish its purpose), and *noncircular* (unconditional). Barclay suggests that the idea of a “pure gift,” without any expectation of any kind of return, is an entirely modern one foreign to the ancient Greco-Roman world. In his estimation, Paul views the gift of God in Christ as having these “perfections” of being *superabundant*, *prior*, and *incongruous*; that is, it is given lavishly, before, and without any indications of worth. While it is unconditioned, it is not therefore unconditional, as there is certainly an expectation of response.

So how is it then that Barclay moves into a “Beyond the New Perspective” approach? This becomes particularly clear in Romans. New Perspective authors have promoted an approach which suggests that “works of the law” (Rom 3:20) are limited to those rites that serve as boundary markers distinguishing Jew from non-Jew and that the issue then is exclusivism rather than legalism. Says Barclay, “On this reading, what Paul critiques is not works-righteousness, but the ‘national righteousness’ that regards the Torah as a ‘charter of racial privilege’” (p. 539). Paul is defending a new openness, as the issue is not works or merit, but something more sociological in nature; his opposition then is not to legalism or works-righteousness, but to the exclusivism which ignores the fact that the only “badge” that’s valid for the new Christian community is *faith*. Barclay rightly concedes that the issue in Romans is not just the sinfulness of all humanity and the possible pretension that one might have some degree of meritorious works to boast about (Rom 3), but also a possible arrogance based on ethnic difference. The judgment of God will “take no account of the ethnic differences between Jew or Greek (2:6–11). ... Sin is counted as sin whether you have the Law or not (2:12–13)” (p. 467). Paul’s point then is that the gift of God in Christ is entirely *incongruous* on both fronts; the Giver regards neither ethical nor ethnic privilege when he graciously bestows life in Christ. New life “is experienced by human beings only inasmuch as they share in, and draw from, a life whose source lies outside of themselves, the life of the risen Christ” (p. 501). With Barclay’s reading, we get the best of both the old and the new

perspective worlds: no claims can be made on the basis of either works or race. The doctrine of the grace of God remains intact. "Because God acts in incongruous grace, and thus without regard to worth, there is no possible limit on the membership of this people, no ethnic frontier that would keep some nations out" (p. 488).

It is this understanding then of the gift of God in Christ that informs and forms Barclay's delightful reading of the rest of Romans as well as Galatians. It is the gracious, incongruous gift of God in Christ that shapes the people of God, both individually and corporately.

If anywhere I might have a quibble with Barclay, it is when he suggests, much like New Perspective adherents, that Paul does not set himself in any significant way "in principled opposition to Second Temple Judaism" (p. 490). He rightly acknowledges that whereas grace is everywhere in Judaism, grace is not everywhere the same (p. 565); but especially, on the point of *incongruity*—so significant in Barclay's reading of Paul—there is, I maintain, a principled difference. In a previous issue of this journal,² I have shown from the intertestamental literature that a belief very common in Judaism was that if anywhere there was a person who merited right standing before God, it was Abraham. Again and again, he is held up as the example *par excellence* of faith, virtue, and obedience. He was believed to have kept the law of Moses wondrously, despite the fact that he predated both the law and the life of Moses! Paul surely intends a contrast and a new sound when he references Abraham, of all people, as "ungodly" (Rom 4:5).

And if anywhere I am not entirely convinced, it is in his Romans 9–11 section, where he becomes optimistic about the future of the actual nation of Israel. Whereas the "first fruits" are evident as the gospel spills into the Gentile world, it will lead, again incongruously, to the "full inclusion" of Israel (Rom 11:12). One certainly hopes that Barclay's reading is right on this point, but I suspect that "Israel" can also be read later in these chapters as a reference to the complete body of those who are in Christ regardless of race. However, I dare not express disagreement too vociferously here, for Barclay is a master exegete, and I have not spent enough time in these chapters.

I also see little need for the contrast that Barclay draws in his concluding chapter between the earlier Paul (Romans, Galatians) and the later books (Ephesians, Pastorals), which Barclay unfortunately regards as "deutero-Pauline" and which supposedly focus more on works as "moral achievements." Perhaps the emphasis shifts, but the "originating context" of the

² Gerhard H. Visscher, "The New Perspective on Abraham?," *Unio cum Christo* 2.1 (2016): 39–66.

Gentile mission is certainly never out of sight (e.g., Eph 2:11, 14; Col 1:27; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 4:17).

Beyond a shadow of a doubt, though, this is a tremendous work that will have a significant impact on the future of Pauline studies. In my view, it settles the controversy generated by those who pushed for a new perspective on Paul. Best of all, as it does so, it places grace where it most certainly belongs—at the heart of the writings of the apostle. Many New Testament scholars will join me in looking forward to the promised second volume.

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John V. Fesko. *The Trinity and the Covenant of Redemption*. Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor, 2016. Pp. 414.

Dr. Fesko serves as a professor of systematic theology and historical theology at Westminster Seminary California. His new book is a comprehensive reflection of his careful and sound scholarship as a Reformed pastor and theologian on the subject. In many ways, the covenant of redemption (the *pactum salutis*) and the covenant of works were almost forgotten biblical doctrines even in the Reformed tradition in the twentieth century. Fesko's book is a welcome addition to the scholarship in the Reformed tradition to revive the importance of the biblical doctrines of both the covenant of redemption and the covenant of works. The author's desire is that "the church would rediscover the wonder, beauty, and glory of classic Reformed covenant theology," embracing the covenants of redemption, works, and grace (p. xx). The book has a brief introduction followed by three major parts. The book finishes with a concise conclusion and includes a valuable bibliography and subject index.

Fesko explores the "Historical Origins and Development" of the *pactum salutis* in the first part (pp. 1–48). He locates the origin of the doctrine of the covenant of redemption in ancient church history, including Jerome (347–420) and Augustine (354–430), although the doctrine appears *explicitly* in the middle of the seventeenth century in classical Reformed theology. During the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century in continental Europe, Theodore Beza (1519–1605) and Caspar Olevianus (1536–1587) played an important role in the development of the doctrine of the covenant of redemption. Beza dropped an exegetical and theological pebble "into the

theological pond and it rippled well into the seventeenth century,” with his exegetical and theological reflection on Jerome’s interpretation of Luke 22:29: “And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father appointed unto me a kingdom” (pp. 4–7). Fesko identifies the Scottish theologian David Dickson (1583–1662) as the first explicit advocator and expositor of the covenant of redemption “at the General Assembly of the Scottish Kirk in 1638” against the theological errors of Arminianism. After Dickson’s historic speech, churches began to adopt and codify the doctrine. Around the end of the seventeenth century, “the doctrine was a common staple in Reformed theology, officially codified in a number of confessions” (pp. 8–11).

Karl Barth (1886–1968) was the most influential existential Christomonistic monocovenantalist in the twentieth century, rejecting the proper distinction between law and gospel, as well as the distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. As a result, he radically reinterpreted the biblical doctrine of double predestination of election and reprobation, critiquing the classical Reformed interpretation as “a false mythology” in his interpretation of Romans 9. This is because he falsely sees Christ as simultaneously “the elected and rejected man.” Barth’s immediate followers invented a false “historical-theological thesis: Calvin vs. the Calvinists” (pp. 26–27). Against Barth and the Barthians’ false conceptions of double predestination and Calvin against the Calvinists position, Fesko argues that Reformed theologians did not interpret the doctrine of predestination as “a divine abstract choice.” Rather, they integrated “predestination, Christology, and soteriology” through the proper means of the biblical doctrine of the covenant of redemption (pp. 27–28).

In the second part, “Exegetical Foundations,” Fesko focuses on the biblical foundation of the doctrine of the *pactum salutis*, exploring several important texts such as Zechariah 6:13; Psalms 2:7; 110:1; Ephesians 1; and 2 Timothy 1:9–10 (pp. 51–124). His goal through exegesis of those biblical passages is to reveal that “there is indeed covenantal activity in the eternal intra-trinitarian deliberations regarding the salvation of the elect” (p. 51). He concludes that “the triune God executed an intra-trinitarian covenant to plan and execute the creation and redemption of a chosen people” (p. 124).

In the third part, “Dogmatic Construction” (pp. 127–354), the author discusses the doctrinal relationship of the *pactum salutis* with other important doctrines such as the Trinity, predestination, imputation, and the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation). He defines the biblical doctrine of the covenant of redemption as “the pre-temporal, intra-trinitarian agreement among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to plan and execute the redemption of the elect” (p. 131).

In doing so, Fesko notes that the *pactum salutis* is the covenant of redemption made among the triune God as God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. One of the major contributions of the author is that he makes a doctrinal connection between the *pactum salutis* and the proper distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace:

The *pactum salutis* is foundational for the covenant of works and grace. The Adamic covenant, or more specifically the covenant of works, is the only analog to the *pactum salutis* The covenant of works is the mirror image of the *pactum salutis*, as it is a typological portrait of the Son's threefold office (prophet, priest, and king) and work as surety in the covenant of grace. (p. 138)

In the late twentieth century, the *ordo salutis*, primarily based on Romans 8:28–30, was the object of severe criticism “within the Reformed tradition,” especially by G. C. Berkouwer (1903–1996) and Herman Ridderbos (1909–2007), the leading scholars in the Dutch Reformed tradition. Ridderbos as a New Testament scholar used the Pauline concept of the eschatological kingdom of God already and not yet as a hermeneutical and theological tool to reject the *ordo salutis*. This rejection, however, is primarily based on the denial of the proper distinction between law and gospel, which was the Protestant consensus of both Martin Luther and John Calvin for justification by faith alone (*sola fide*) and salvation by grace alone (*sola gratia*) during the Protestant Reformation. Fesko is thoroughly aware that this shift took place in the Reformed tradition. In light of the contemporary criticism and even rejection of the *ordo salutis*, he relates the *pactum salutis* with the *ordo salutis*, recognizing the logical order of salvation as “election, effectual calling, faith, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, and glorification” (pp. 315–16). He defends a close relationship between the *pactum salutis* and the *ordo salutis*:

The *pactum salutis* provides the original context to recognize the Trinitarian character of redemption, the foundation of the *ordo salutis*, and the relationship between the forensic and transformative aspects of redemption. In this case, the *pactum salutis* necessitates the logical priority of the forensic to the transformative aspects of redemption. (pp. 318–19)

Another major contribution of Fesko's book is how he meticulously and harmoniously integrates the three disciplines of biblical, historical, and systematic theology. It is a profound biblical, historical, and theological response to the contemporary movement of monocovenantalism within the conservative evangelical and Reformed community, in which the importance of a proper distinction between law and gospel and the proper distinction

between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace have been ignored, lost, and rejected. My perspective is that any hermeneutical and theological systems which ignore and reject the evangelical distinction between law and gospel fall into the category of monocovenantalism. The unfortunate outcome of monocovenantalism is the ongoing confusion over soteriology, including the doctrine of justification by faith alone (*sola fide*) and salvation by grace alone (*sola gratia*) among seminary students, missionaries, pastors, and seminary professors. In light of that, I am happy to introduce Fesko's book, which reflects sound scholarship by an insightful and gifted Reformed theologian and writer. This book will be a good resource and guide for those who struggle with monocovenantalism and for those who want to find answers to steer away from monocovenantalism. I think that Fesko's book can become a classic for students of the covenant of redemption, and they will find golden nuggets of truth and biblical doctrine.

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Diarmaid MacCulloch. *All Things Made New: The Reformation and Its Legacy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. 464.

The celebration of Luther's nailing his colors to the mast in 1517 has triggered a plethora of publications on the Reformation, or Reformations, as is now fashionable to say. In the past few years, publications have hit a high, with over twenty top-of-the-range titles from Oxford and Cambridge University Presses alone, to say nothing of popular potboilers.

Oxford professor of church history Diarmaid MacCulloch stands out from the crowd in the renewal of Reformation studies and has been one of the motors behind it, as well as being a controversial figure for reasons other than his academic views and prowess, including a BBC television series on sex and the church. However, if we believe in common grace, this should not obstruct appreciation of his important contributions, which stand in their own right, even if some of his opinions, such as how Pope Francis could bring the Roman Catholic Church into conformity with modernism on sexuality are superfluous and can be taken as a pinch of spice.

Prior to this recent effervescence, MacCulloch had weighed in with major works such as *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (1996) or *Reformation: Europe's House Divided* (2004) transatlantically retitled *The Reformation: A History*. Then came *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (2010) and *Silence: A*

Christian History (2013). MacCulloch has an interest in vast panoramas but also a fine attention to detail and fascinating flashes of insight. If he is primarily writing history, he does so with an eye to broader cultural questions, such as how collective memory shapes identity, and an interest in challenging the myths of popular hagiography.

MacCulloch has balanced the ship this time by fruitfully linking the English Reformers with their continental counterparts, particularly the Zurich men, attempting to see the Reformation on its own terms rather than making it what we would like it to have been. This book is a collection of published articles covering the period from 1500 to 1650 and deals directly or indirectly with the English Reformation rather than the Reformation at large. It is evident that MacCulloch is no ally of the Puritans and an enemy of the Tractarian Anglo-Catholic current in the Church of England. Himself a rather liberal Anglican who does “not now personally subscribe to any form of religious dogma” (*Reformation: Europe’s House Divided*, xxv), the author quietly enjoys exposing what he calls the “dirty little secret of High Church Anglicans”—that before the upheavals of the English civil war “the Church of England, despite many features of which [the] ‘moderate Puritans’ disapproved, was a Reformed Protestant Church to set alongside the churches of Scotland, Geneva, the Netherlands, Hungary or Poland” (p. 250).

The twenty-two chapters come from various sources over twenty years. Strangely, an important article from 2007 on “Bullinger and the English-speaking World” does not make the cut for this book. The book begins with Reformations across Europe, including a chapter on Calvin, who incidentally gets a pretty fair deal (although I doubt that MacCulloch is correct in his interpretation of Calvin’s refusal to sign the Athanasian Creed during the Caroli’s affair in 1537), bar a couple of asides from an author who appreciates objectivity more than he appreciates the Genevan Reformer himself. MacCulloch correctly points to Calvin’s dislike of the Anabaptist movement, but whether it was a prime worry for the Genevan Reformer in his French context may be debated.

The following three-quarters of the collection is devoted to England and its established Church, “a product of the Reformation, though a peculiar one” (p. 359), from the early reforms of Henry VIII to the development of Anglicanism in the late seventeenth century and beyond. The story line of the book could well be the destiny of “the Eton Mess of Anglicanism” (p. 361), that enigmatic entity the Church of England, which, failing to be a fully national church (p. 308) because of dissenters, became an establishment characterized by “exhilarating variety, engaging inability to present a single identity [and] admirable unwillingness to tell people what to do” (pp. 319–20).

The articles on the Prayer Book and the King James Bible (KJB) take some traditional varnish off both, the latter with a jibe against “King James only” folk who overlook that it was “commissioned by a monarch whose jovial bisexuality would cause them apoplexy at the present day” (p. 181). I learned that the KJB was only called “The Authorised Version” from the late 1820s, which seems to be the case. The use of the expression “authorised” can only be traced back to about 1814. Before that names for the KJB varied. There are also interesting texts on Henry VIII’s piety, Cranmer and tolerance, Mary and Elizabeth I, and a fascinating presentation of *The Bay Psalm Book*, a metrical Psalter and the first book printed in New England in 1640.

However, the jewel in the crown is a forty-page essay on “Richard Hooker’s Reputation” and the impact of his “enormous” *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie*, which eventually ran to eight books. This article helped me to understand the ambiguous latitudinarianism of the Church of England, and by implication Anglicanism, in a way I had not before. MacCulloch’s conclusion hits the nail on the head, focusing on Hooker’s principal concern: what constitutes authority in religion: “The disputes which currently wrack Western Christianity are superficially about sexuality, social conduct or leadership style.” But the problem is really elsewhere: “The contest for the soul of the Church in the West rages around the question of how a scripture claiming divine revelation relates to those other perennial sources of human revelation, personal and collective consciousness and memory” (p. 319). The problem that remains is as to whether MacCulloch’s distaste for “scrupulous scripturalism” and the Christology of Chalcedon, which surface in places (pp. 60–61), do not themselves ultimately destine us to those superficial disputes and dogmatism in the sheep’s clothes of relativism?

Although this marvelously documented book is impeccably scholarly, and its subject matter sometimes complex, its writing is generally readable, clear, engaging, and pithy, with flashes of wit. The reader is made to smile on occasion, even if not always to agree.

The last page is typically provocative: “The Anglican crisis began in 1533, and has not stopped since. That is why it is so satisfying to be an Anglican. Anglicanism is a trial and error form of Christianity ... an approach to God which acknowledges that He is often good at remaining silent and provoking more questions than answers” (pp. 361–62).

But can it simply be taken for granted that a “trial and error form of Christianity” is satisfying, and what is so satisfying about it? The Reformers themselves would have had little empathy with this attitude, which cannot claim their paternity, and even less that of the prophets and apostles; it

sounds more Erasmian than Lutheran. Is not pluralism the only dogma remaining for adventurist Christianity, a dogma that transcends all the articles of the creed and that risks sliding subtly towards new forms of intolerance? Some members of the present Anglican community may well feel that that is the danger today, and not just in the church but in the post-truth West at large.

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Ashley Null and John W. Yates III, eds. *Reformation Anglicanism: A Vision for Today's Global Communion*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017. Pp. 220.

The essays of this collection work together to make the point that the Anglican Communion has deep roots in the tradition of the Reformation. As the first in a new series, the Reformation Anglicanism Essential Library, it is a valuable volume in that it goes a long way to correct many assumptions, and possibly stereotypes, about what it means to be Anglican. For many who do not have much contact with Anglicans, the perception is often that the Anglican Church is the “middle way” between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. The essays of this book, however, dismantle that as a serious misunderstanding of how the Anglican Communion began. Each of the seven essays is historical in nature, and each intends to show how a specific feature of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation is native to the origins of Anglicanism. Yet, even though each essay has an historical point to make, each one also issues a challenge for Anglicans to return to their Reformed heritage.

Michael Nazir-Ali's essay tells the story of how Anglicanism became a truly global communion. One of the crucial features of this chapter is the depiction of the Anglican Church as missional. It makes the case that far from an isolated, national church, the Anglican Church has long had zeal to take the gospel to the nations, and it provides a helpful description and history of major mission organizations within the Anglican fold. The second chapter, “The Power of Unconditional Love in the Anglican Reformation” by Ashley Null, gives a more general theological history of the English Reformation. He presents a long view of the English Reformation, which began prior to Henry VIII's break with the Roman Church and had roots in medieval developments. John Wycliffe worked to get the Bible into English. Others promoted serious versions of personal piety. The humanist reforms

of Erasmus of Rotterdam had significant influence on the English clergy. With the event of Henry VIII's divorce, new opportunity rose for reform of the English church. Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, was influenced by Martin Luther and worked to shape the English Church in a truly Protestant direction, even though this met with fierce resistance. Although "Bloody Mary," Mary Tudor, violently opposed Protestantism, under Elizabeth I, Protestantism was restored and flourished in England.

The next four chapters address the role of specific Reformation tenets in Anglicanism: *sola Scriptura* by John W. Yates III, *sola gratia* by Null, *sola fide* by Michael Jensen, and *solī Deo gloria* by Ben Kwashi. There is some repetition within these chapters, most of them covering the same figures and events in the English Reformation, but with emphasis on the different Reformation slogans. Each essay provides a helpful overview of how the theology of the Reformation played a large role in reshaping the English Church. Although the repetition is in some ways a downside of the book, it also helps reinforce the point that the Anglican Communion has its beginnings in the ideas of the Protestant Reformation. In this way, the repetition underlines the point the book intends to make.

The last chapter, "A Manifesto for Reformation Anglicanism," issues a challenge to those in the Anglican Communion to return to their Reformation heritage. This essay by Null and Yates makes the case that Anglicanism is supposed to be biblically grounded in doctrine and ethics and is connected to the catholic tradition of the church. It is supposed to be focused on the gospel of justification by faith alone and is supposed to call people to grow in godliness. It is supposed to be engaged in the active mission of the church to spread the word of Christ, and to be episcopal and liturgical, two things to which the authors call special attention. The latter are likely to be the aspects that give trouble to many of the Reformed readers of this volume. Yet, Reformed people, at least in the opinion of this reviewer, should actually rejoice that the commitments of Reformed Protestantism are gaining ground across lines of church polity and liturgical practice. This, however, also makes the unstated point that there is significant diversity within the Reformed tradition, which is able to encompass those with varying ecclesiological and liturgical commitments. The challenge for Anglicans to return to the Reformation heritage is an important one for those in the communion and is encouraging in as much as it is an indicator of a growing presence of Reformed thinking within the Anglican Church. The book as a whole is an informative look at the history of Anglicanism and its foundational theology. It effectively sidesteps debate about controversial issues in the church's history and presents a clear, focused argument that no matter what else Anglicanism

may be, it is a movement born out of the Reformation, and it should be as committed to Reformation ideals as its first shapers were. I look forward to further volumes in the Reformation Anglicanism Essential Library series, as well as to the impact they will have for the Anglican Communion.

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Lyle D. Bierma. *The Theology of the Heidelberg Catechism: A Reformation Synthesis*. Columbia Series in Reformed Theology. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2013. Pp. ix + 249.

Lyle Bierma is P. J. Zondervan Professor of History of Christianity at Calvin Theological Seminary. *The Theology of the Heidelberg Catechism* is the culmination of Bierma's writings on the Heidelberg Catechism (hereafter HC), Caspar Olevianus (one of the drafters of the HC), covenant theology, and the sacraments. This volume was written for the 450th anniversary of the HC (1563) and complements *An Introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism: Sources, History, and Theology* (2005), a scholarly introduction to the Catechism by Bierma and other church historians. A consideration of the HC through this review is fitting as we remember the legacy of John Calvin and the later Reformation.

For Bierma, the Reformation in Heidelberg historically was built upon a Lutheran foundation and refined through Reformed traditions. He intends to show that in the HC we “encounter traces of the same grafting of Reformed branches onto a Lutheran vine” (p. 11).¹ For that purpose, after an introductory chapter that discusses most of the significant literature on the topic (in English, Dutch, and German), he engages in a detailed textual analysis and theological commentary on the Catechism itself in chapters 2 to 8. Those chapters show familiarity with a rich variety of confessional and catechetical Lutheran and Reformed sources. The book ends with possible applications to the present ecumenical context of the church and a modern translation of the Catechism (pp. 131–200; this 2011 translation is the official translation of the Christian Reformed Church, the Reformed Church in America, and

¹ In a previously published chapter on Melanchthon and the HC, Bierma has pondered the HC's relationship to Lutheran views, cautiously indicating that in the tapestry of the HC, some Melanchthonian colors are found but no specific sources can be identified. See Lyle D. Bierma, “What Hath Wittenberg to Do with Heidelberg?,” in Karin Maag, ed., *Melanchthon in Europe: His Work and Influence Beyond Wittenberg*, Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 103–21, esp. 120–21.

the Presbyterian Church [USA]). The volume includes detailed endnotes, a comprehensive bibliography, and a helpful index.

The introduction of the book starts with the paradox that the HC is widely considered as an ecumenical catechism and yet features little in ecumenical discussions (pp. 1–2). One also has to acknowledge that the HC is mostly used in Reformed churches and has frequently been analyzed as a Calvinian or Bullingerian document (pp. 2–3). Bierma contends that three factors nevertheless point in an ecumenical direction (p. 3): “another line of research,” the HC’s context, and its text. First, Johannes Ebrard spoke of its “Melanchthonian-Calvinian” character, and Wilhelm Neuser in his groundbreaking article identified four fathers of the catechism: Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli (p. 4). This type of analysis has had an appreciable following. Second, the context of the Palatine speaks in favor of a double influence from both Melanchthon and Reformed theologians (pp. 5–10). Several events define this context: Luther’s death (1546) and the fragmentation of Lutheranism, the Peace of Augsburg (1555) and the legalization of Protestantism under the Augsburg Confession (hereafter AC), Melanchthon’s death (1560), and movement in the city of Heidelberg closer to Reformed theology under Frederick III. During this time, Heidelberg hosted a variety of theologians (one Gnesio-Lutheran, as well as Philippists, late Zwinglians, and Calvinians); however, the Gnesio-Lutheran soon left, and the Reformed came to dominate the scene. (Pages 8–10 elaborate more specifically on Zacharias Ursinus and the others involved in the writing of the HC.) Third, a demonstration that the text of the HC stems from several traditions occupies the rest of the book (pp. 11–12) and shapes its methodology, which looks at the HC’s themes in light of contemporary Lutheran and Reformed catechisms.

The journey starts in chapter 2 with a consideration of the theme of comfort and the tripartite structure of the HC. “Comfort” appears in explicit ways, in connected themes, and in the catechism’s structure (pp. 13–15). After a thorough comparative analysis, Bierma concludes that there is a strong impact of Lutheran sources (especially Melanchthon) upon the choice of this theme, but that its formulation is marked by Reformed sources (p. 21). As to the structure—misery, deliverance, and thankfulness—Bierma identifies and discusses several possible sources: many Lutheran (among them Luther and Melanchthon) and Theodore Beza’s short confession (pp. 21–28). It is difficult to decide among them (p. 27), but Bierma discerns a common tradition strongly influenced by Lutheranism.

Closely linked to the structure is the pattern of law and gospel dealt with in chapter 3. Bierma speaks of “a basic Lutheran skeleton that is sometimes

fleshed out with material that appears dependent on Reformed sources or at least reflects a Reformed theological slant” (p. 29). In addition to a threefold structure, the HC retained five traditional elements of catechetical instruction (summary of the law, the Creed, the sacraments, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord’s Prayer). Ursinus’s catechisms and the HC distinguish themselves by doubling the treatment of the law and relating the five parts to the tripartite structure (pp. 30–31).² Here again, both Lutheran and Reformed influences emerge, with particular attention given to Beza in step with Walter Hollweg’s work (pp. 32–33). Among the several themes uncovered, we could mention that the more Lutheran victory motif (HC 1) is somewhat eclipsed later in the HC by the more Reformed penal satisfaction theme (HC 12–18; p. 39), and that the “Lutheran law-gospel dialectic” of the beginning makes way for the role of the law in thankfulness; thus the two traditions are united.

Faith and Creed, as well as providence and predestination, occupy the attention of Bierma in chapter 4. On faith, by using Melancthonian overtones “the very heart of the catechism [is introduced] ... with language that is not only familiar to Lutheran ears but resonant with the authoritative text of the AC” (p. 43). Bierma also indicates that the threefold structure of the exposition is marked by Lutheran sources and the personal character of HC 24 echoes Luther (p. 44). On providence (pp. 44–49), in the exposition of the first article of the Creed, one can detect influences from Calvin without excluding other Reformed influences and the impact of Luther. Bierma discusses the fascinating question of the near silence of the HC on predestination, which should not be read as a denial of the doctrine (implicitly present) but rather as an effort to navigate within the confines of the AC.

In chapter 5 on Christ and the Holy Spirit, Bierma starts with the comprehensive notion of deliverance (pp. 53–56), the focal point of the HC’s Christology. He compares here the HC with Luther’s Small Catechism and the Geneva Catechism (pp. 56–60); he also identifies influences by Beza on justification (p. 60) and points to the characteristic Reformed threefold office of Christ and doctrine of the atonement (pp. 61–63). Of special note is the HC dealing with the controversial Lutheran doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ (HC 46–49); it offers a nuanced answer in line with the Reformed and Philippists (pp. 63–64, see also p. 70). In the second half of the chapter on the work of the Holy Spirit, Bierma detects influences from Luther and

² An English translation is available in Lyle D. Bierma et al., *An Introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism: Sources, History, and Theology: With a Translation of the Smaller and Larger Catechisms of Zacharias Ursinus*, Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 163–223.

Melanchthon, Calvin, and John à Lasco. The question of the relationship of the Spirit with the church is discussed, and also of the divisions within the last part of the Creed (where Lutheran and Reformed differ; see pp. 68–69). On the Holy Spirit, there is therefore “an intricate blend of language from both traditions” (p. 70).

Chapter 6 deals with the sacraments.³ There are multiple interpretations of the HC’s view of the sacraments and no consensus at the moment (pp. 71–72). Bierma continues to argue for a dual—Lutheran (pp. 73–83) and Reformed (pp. 83–89)—background, especially in view of the need for a consensus document on this delicate topic. The definition of the sacraments that includes teaching and sealing has an affinity with Luther and Melanchthon but is not specific to them (pp. 74–75). Much of the interpretive debate has turned around Brian Gerrish’s analysis of “symbolic parallelism” (p. 76), where for Calvin the sign is equal to the blessing and for Heinrich Bullinger they are parallel. In fact, the picture is more complex, making it difficult to identify the HC’s exact position between Calvin and Bullinger. Bierma contends that the HC’s silence on the exact nature of the relationship between sign and blessing might be intentional to accommodate Calvin’s, Bullinger’s, and Melanchthon’s views (p. 81). The author, however, discerns some “Reformed language and emphases” (p. 83) such as the sacrament in relation to Christ’s death as a sacrifice (p. 85), covenant language, and the omission of the terminology of “substance” to accommodate the Zurich theologians (p. 87).

Bierma offers a short but enlightening chapter on the theme of the covenant (chapter 7). The catechism contains only a few explicit statements of that theme (p. 90). The common view that covenant theology was receding in Ursinus’s work and omitted because it was a theological novelty, inappropriate politically, and for catechetic purposes must be nuanced (pp. 91–95).⁴ Bierma agrees with scholars like Heinrich Hepppe that covenant is central to the catechism but wants a sounder methodology to establish that. Bierma suggests comparing the HC with other parallel works (e.g., by Ursinus) where the covenant theme is more explicit to help uncover implicit

³ Bierma has already dealt with the topic in a short monograph; see Lyle D. Bierma, *The Doctrine of the Sacraments in the Heidelberg Catechism: Melancthonian, Calvinist, or Zwinglian?*, Studies in Reformed Theology and History, New Series 4 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1999).

⁴ Note that Ursinus’s own commentary on the HC contains a section on the covenant after the exposition on the mediator (p. 96); see Zacharias Ursinus, *The Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism*, trans. G. W. Williard (1852; repr., Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, n.d.), 97–100 (available online: <https://books.google.com/books?id=RgdMAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>).

covenantal language in the HC (p. 95). Thus, HC 1 is covenantal and deals with the law-gospel theme (p. 96). Also, the HC's view of baptism is more than Melancthonian, as it adds the dual covenant benefit of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit (p. 97; for other references to this dual benefit, see pp. 98–99). In conclusion, the HC has few explicit references, but “a remarkable amount of covenantal material” (p. 100). This conclusion is further strengthened by Bierma's research on Olevianus (p. 225, n. 39).⁵

In chapter 8, Bierma's analysis of the theme of “good works and gratitude” confirms his general outlook on the HC as containing both broad Lutheran and specific Reformed influences, circling back to the pattern of HC 1 (p. 113). The definition of repentance can be associated with both traditions (p. 104), but the division of the Ten Commandments follows Lasco's and Calvin's catechisms (p. 105). The exposition of the law reveals a common Protestant hermeneutics. An interesting analysis of the links between good works, gratitude, and prayer follows (pp. 109–13). It comes out that prayer is closely connected to the law as a means of obeying it in conjunction with the work of the Spirit (p. 110).

Chapter 9 on ecumenism and contemporary application is of a different sort and might obtain a more mixed reception. Bierma first offers a realistic appraisal of the limitations and potential of the HC as an ecumenical document. In step with the studies of Heinz Schilling, he acknowledges the political dimension of confessions in the sixteenth century (p. 117).⁶ The remainder of the chapter stems out of Bierma's engagement in the life of the church and his efforts to bring the HC to bear to that context. Besides examples drawn from dialog with Catholics (p. 124) and Lutherans, the HC is taken as a common Reformed voice (p. 127); he also views the HC as having potential application for economic and social issues (p. 125–26). For instance,

⁵ Bierma dealt earlier with the use of Olevianus's commentary to interpret the Catechism. Lyle D. Bierma, “*Vester Grundt* and the Origins of the Heidelberg Catechism,” in *Later Calvinism: International Perspectives*, ed. W. Fred Graham, Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1994), 289–309. Bierma also published a translation of Olevianus's work; see Caspar Olevianus, *A Firm Foundation: An Aid to Interpreting the Heidelberg Catechism*, trans. and ed. Lyle D. Bierma, Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995).

⁶ See Heinz Schilling, “Confessionalization in the Empire: Religious and Societal Change in Germany between 1555 and 1620,” in Heinz Schilling, *Religion, Political Culture and the Emergence of Early Modern Society: Essays in German and Dutch History*, trans. Stephen G. Burnett (New York: Brill, 1992), 205–45, esp. 218–19. The political function of the HC is hinted at in Frederick's preface (p. 118). For the text of this important document, see George W. Richards, ed., *The Heidelberg Catechism: Historical and Doctrinal Studies* (Philadelphia: Publication and Sunday School Board of the Reformed Church in the United States, 1913), 182–99.

the exposition of the sixth commandment applies “certainly [to] war, capital punishment, abortion, and euthanasia, but also gender discrimination, homophobia, AIDS, environmental damage, and economic injustice.”

To conclude, Bierma offers a thorough and insightful historical and theological analysis of the HC—the main body of the book serving as a thorough commentary of the HC. Overall, perhaps a little more emphasis could be given to the biblical influences on the catechism. Only on a few occasions (e.g., Romans on p. 23; Hebrews 11 on p. 24) does he mention the Bible’s influence on the HC theology. (We could add, for instance, that 1 Pet 2 is used on several occasions and serves as a structuring text.) Prooftexts could further be used to evaluate the HC’s hermeneutics within the Protestant tradition of the sixteenth century. On the historical analysis side, Bierma has well shown the complexity and variety of backgrounds behind the HC. In light of his research, we might suggest a model for comprehending the background. Instead of the four fathers listed by Neuser, we could see a focus on three cities (Wittenberg, Zurich, and Geneva⁷) where the earlier generation (Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin) had some influence, but it was the later generation (Melanchthon, Bullinger, and Beza) that had the most influence on the HC.⁸ Further, Bierma does well to see the political and ecumenical context of the HC, but a comprehension of its theology could be enriched by further probing the social context of themes such comfort. For example, could contemporary persecutions and suffering (such as the 1562 massacre of Wassy), part of the pastoral context, illumine the context of the theology of the HC?

Bierma’s work on the HC is thus a welcome resource for the study of this historical catechism. The reader will be greatly rewarded in reading this book and will have a deeper understanding of the HC and Reformed theology.

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⁷ An interesting confirmation of the Genevan connection is that a German translation of Beza’s short confession, likely by Olevianus, was printed in Heidelberg in 1562, and the next year (1563) a German version of the French Confession was printed together with the short Beza confession in Heidelberg (pp. 21–22). This later work was published by Johannes Mayer, who also published the Heidelberg Catechism.

⁸ Ursinus, after studying with Melanchthon, visited both Geneva and Zurich before arriving in Heidelberg (p. 9). For more on Ursinus, see Derk Visser, “Zacharias Ursinus, 1534–1583,” in Jill Raitt, ed., *Shapers of Religious Traditions in Germany, Switzerland, and Poland, 1560–1600* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 121–39, esp. 122–25.

Christoph Stückelberger and Reinhold Bernhardt, eds. *Calvin Global: How Faith Influences Societies*. Globethics.net Series 3. Geneva: Globethics.net, 2009. Pp. 257.

This book was published in 2009 on the commemoration of the five-hundredth anniversary of John Calvin's birth. In the year 2017, with the five-hundredth anniversary of Luther's theses, it deserves to gain renewed interest. A compilation of thirteen articles on Calvin, the book begins by taking a close look at his thought and life and then considering how his theology spread globally, with some countries assessed for their reception of his thought.

The first article concerns Calvin's exegesis. He is rightly presented as an able biblical exegete. In fact, all the thoughts constructed in his magnum opus *Institutio* or applied in his pastoral ethics flow from here. Ekkehard W. Stegemann succinctly presents Calvin as a brief and lucid exegete, giving three examples of Calvin's treatment of Scripture. In the next article, Reinhold Bernhardt explores the heart of Calvin's theology: "Glory to God" in predestination and providential acts.

Shall we consider only what is good in Calvin and not what is problematic? What flaws in Calvin's ethics do we inherit? Perhaps it is not Calvin himself who is to be blamed, but Max Weber who misrepresents it in the socio-economic field. Christoph Stückelberger gives us an objective evaluation of Calvin, who can be claimed not as the father of capitalism, but rather as the father of a biblical economic ethics.

On the basis of chapter four's discussion of science, one cannot help but appreciate Calvin for accommodating to his age's cosmology. What Calvin "lacked" in science, he bountifully supplied in theological understanding in interpreting Moses's view of the cosmos.

Irena Backus in the subsequent article assesses two competing interpretations of Calvin's ideal view of women, one from the perspective of his wife and the other from that of his opponents.

On the continent of his birth, Calvinism has survived and managed to shape modernism. Georg Pfleiderer outlines the two theses of Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch that seek to appropriate the Calvinistic tradition in modern times, but Calvinism as such is arguably overtaken by the development of the Goliath capitalist empire.

The account of the reception of Calvinism in various parts of the world makes for interesting reading. Some authors take a retrospective outlook and others make future projections from current struggles. One way or the other, the various perspectives are well accommodated to their historical

local developments.

James D. Bratt traces different historical strands of Calvinism taking root in North America; there is not just one type of Calvinism, but various threads that weave into the social fabric of the present theological terrain and society.

In the South African context, Calvinism is claimed by both oppressor and oppressed. As Piet Naude suggests, the need of the hour is for reconciliation and visible unity. In China's context, Aiming Wang notes that there is as yet no recognized influence of Calvin in the modern Chinese world; hence it is necessary to interact with Chinese traditional Confucianism in the modernization of China.

According to Meehyun Chung, Calvin's influence in Korea is misshapen by Puritanism and fundamentalism, since it came indirectly via "American styled churches." In her article "Calvinism in Korea without Calvin? A Women's Perspective," she claims that Calvin was repressive to women. However, this kind of objection is not dissimilar to the objection against Paul's view of slavery. It is a historically laden and unfair criticism that uses subjective, if not anachronistic criteria, which the author seems to acknowledge in the fifth section of her article.

The two subsequent articles deal with Calvin's political thought, a subject that has bred disagreement rather than consensus, whether on the relation between church and state, or on how active or passive the church should be politically. Yeon Kyuhong observes the tension between two "Calvin" groups in Korea, the conservatives and the radicals. Despite the tension, it is acknowledged that Calvin's theology contributed to democratization in Korea.

The last two chapters about Calvinism in Indonesia were appropriate when they were written, but they are now rather outdated. The tension between state and church is still present, which results in the hesitancy of Calvinist Christians to get involved in politics. However, the recent blasphemy trial and imprisonment of Ahok, the governor of Jakarta, has attracted media attention worldwide. This new track shows how a Calvinist Christian can be in the political arena, and it affects the non-Christians who stood both for and against him. Ahok himself, a staunch defender of the fifth principle of *pancasila* (social justice), acknowledges that it is an expression of Abraham Kuyper's thought, which was well received by the Indonesian founding fathers as one of the basic principles of the nation. Hence, Calvinist Christians need to stand upon their principles, already formulated in *pancasila*, that provide a strong platform for Christian political action.

In summary, the book offers a variety of perspectives, as expected with various global contributors with distinctive theological emphases. Still, it is

valuable reading for those who would explore Calvin and adaptations of Calvinism in different contexts in a postmodern, culturally sensitive era. These 257 pages worth of reading and reflection make a welcome contribution to Calvin and Reformation scholarship.

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Christine Schirrmacher. *“Let There Be No Compulsion in Religion” (Sura 2:256): Apostasy from Islam as Judged by Contemporary Islamic Theologians: Discourses on Apostasy, Religious Freedom and Human Rights*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016. Pp. 620.

Christine Schirrmacher, Professor of Islamic Studies at the Evangelisch-Theologische Faculteit in Louvain, Belgium, and teacher of Islamic Studies at the University of Bonn in Germany, is a leading specialist on Islam in the West today, author of numerous books and articles in several languages.

In this hefty work, termed a postdoctoral thesis by the publisher, the positions of three contrasting Islamic scholars on the topic of religious freedom and apostasy are excellently documented and presented. Foreign language sources, particularly Arabic, are usefully translated and analyzed and so made accessible. It gives a good idea of what the West is up against, although this is little recognized—the most blind are those who do not want to see.

The main issue of the work is problematic for any religious faith—the situation of those who fall away, how this state of declension should be considered, and what can or should be done about it. Behind these questions lies the fundamental issue: what sort of freedom is permissible to unbelievers, and what are the rights of freedom of conscience? These are questions with which the Christian tradition has struggled since the time of the Reformation, with different responses, and the positions of the three Islamic scholars examined here have their equivalents in Christianity. Let’s not forget Pierre Bayle and his criticism of Calvin and Beza! So the scope of this study, while it is highly specific, has universal import. The choice is also one that is compelling, given the global movement of Islamic populations and hence their exposure to different cultural situations. This question is highly relevant for those who now have on their doorstep Muslim neighbors whose religious motivations are incomprehensible to liberal, secularized politicians and media commentators who wish all Muslims were like Sadiq Aman Khan, the present Mayor of London.

The three Muslim positions presented are: 1) thoroughgoing advocacy of religious freedom; 2) its bipolar opposite, the denial of freedom and its punitive consequences, including the death penalty for apostates (recent events mean that this is the position commonly retained in secularized contexts); and 3) the centrist position, in contrast with the left and the right, which advocates a median position that recognizes the rights of inner freedom of conscience, but falls short in practice: when a believer converts to another faith and manifests open apostasy, the death penalty is legitimate as the ultimate sanction. In Islamic theology, at present, this *via media* seems to be the most common position. For secularism, however, even this middle way is a form of extremism, as would be the position of many of our Protestant or Roman Catholic predecessors. It is interesting to note that two of the three positions advocate the ultimate penalty for unbelief, which means that many of the faithful must be exposed to this as the orthodox acceptable idea. This must have some knock-on effect in the way they consider “apostates” in general.

After an informative introduction presenting the question of religious freedom, what the idea of apostasy entails in Islam, its history, and the status of apostates in majority Muslim societies, the main views on the subject are introduced through the work of three influential twentieth-century Islamic theologians, two of whom are presently active.

Yusuf al-Qaradawi (1926–), based in Doha, Qatar, is the unofficial ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood (pp. 133–39) and one of Sunni Islam’s most influential scholars, known for his rhetoric and militant fatwas. He has allegedly authored over 120 books (none of which he has himself published in English), is the founder of IslamOnline.net, and has a weekly broadcast, “Sharia and Life,” on Al Jazeera that reaches sixty million Muslims. He has been sentenced to death in the best way possible (that is, in absentia!) in Egypt, and in 2017 several Islamic states sanctioned him. He condemns Shiite Muslims as heretics, and his fatwas have reputedly called for the death of American civilians and troops in Iraq, gay people, and Jews (p. 155—Israel is a military unit and the object of jihad).

In light of this, it is rather surprising that the author presents al-Qaradawi’s as representative of a centrist “moderate position,” but obviously she is using the word *moderate* in a particular context, one unfamiliar to our way of thinking. What Dr. Schirrmacher means is that al-Qaradawi is “moderate”—in quote marks—on the question of apostasy from Islam and does not call for execution every time he mentions the topic (p. 280). However, he does make it clear that punishment is a duty and apparently makes no exceptions. He draws the line between those who are inwardly inclined to other

beliefs and those who show outward signs of apostasy; it is these latter who are a danger to the community, the *umma*, which has to be protected. However, he does caution against the suspicion of other Muslims. Schirrmacher correctly remarks that this is a “concession to a purely hypothetical freedom of thought, which ... is by no means what the 1948 UN Declaration on Human Rights understands under the rubric of religious freedom” (p. 281). Religious freedom is limited to internal freedom of conscience, a freedom that does not extend to words and deeds that are considered apostate.

Al-Qaradawi has not the slightest doubt about the superiority of Islam and the need for its interests to be protected. Non-Muslims might look askance on executions, whippings, and the severance of members, but within the Islamic community ruled by sharia, this is part of the faith, whether it be Muslims or others who are punished. Nor does al-Qaradawi make any contextual concessions by toning sharia down or suspending it in the interest of religious freedom in places where freedom is the norm. So Schirrmacher considers al-Qaradawi the creator of an ideology with a lack of basis in reality, one that can survive only in his own thought-world or in a closed Islamic society (p. 285). This is not necessarily someone you might wish to have as your friendly Muslim neighbor.

If al-Qaradawi is “moderate,” Abu l-A’la Maududi (1903–1979) is another and more alarming kettle of *sunna*, representing a “restrictive” position. Founder of the political Islamist group *Jama ‘at-i-Islami*, Maududi was born in India, moved to Pakistan after partition in 1947, and in 1960 wrote the influential *Islamic Law and Constitution* (p. 406), proposing the state as a complete social system where nothing is personal and private, but where Islam controls all of life, including government. Maududi has “lastingly affected the society and politics of Pakistan and has influenced Islamist and Jihadist movement up to the present” (p. 404). He died in Buffalo, New York, in 1979.

Maududi, like al-Qaradawi, makes no claim to be progressive, instead issuing an uncompromising call for applying the death penalty for apostasy from Islam in the context of a comprehensive implementation of Islam, the Quran, and hadith. Maudadi wants to reshape modernity into a homogeneous Muslim society. Western secularism and Marxism are placed over against holistic Islam (p. 405). He has been one of the main influences in the Muslim renewal in the twentieth century, influencing the Muslim Brotherhood, Khomeini, and jihadists. In 1942 and 1943 he wrote on the punishment of apostates according to Islamic Law, a polemic with little theology that lacked even a definition of apostasy and avoided the question of what freedom of religion might mean for non-Muslims, as well as that of

what the motives for apostasy might be, and argued for the unconditional application of the death penalty to apostates (pp. 466–504). Ambiguities leave the door open for the condemnation of those who think differently, minorities of all sorts. Maududi disparages “the others,” and one trembles to think what becomes of them in the hands of Islamist zealots. Unfortunately, we know the answer to that question. Everything becomes germane to the maintenance of Islamic purity. The Islamic way defines what liberties are, for both Muslims and non-Muslims.

So what about compulsion in religion (Sura 2:256)? Maududi limits the “no compulsion” formula to the question of whether a person can be forced to accept Islam. There is “unabridged freedom in matters of faith” (p. 516). However, once over the threshold, a Muslim (this goes for children born in Islam as well) is in a position of being able to be forced to keep the commands of Islam, including with the aid of the state. So there is no equitable coexistence and no acceptable pluralism. Maududi claims that non-Muslims have a right to practice and propagate their faith in the “limits laid down by the law and decency” (which are not defined, p. 522). This is hypothetical and implies reduced rights and the “duty to submit” (p. 530). While rights are spoken of, they are always limited in an Islamic society. Maududi does not advocate terror and mayhem in Islamic conquest. However, he is for a homogenous sharia-based Islamic state order and allows little or no room for equality or pluralism. The way minorities are treated in Pakistan is an illustration of the absence of tolerance for those who dare break the mold.

Abdullah Saeed (1960–) is an Australian academic and scholar of Islamic studies who is currently the Sultan of Oman Professor of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Melbourne. He is particularly known for progressive views on religious freedom in Islam and is a prolific author. Recently he has

lamented the inadequate level of religious freedom in quite a number of Muslim majority countries and called for Muslim theologians to focus on the existing problematic topic of apostasy, to discuss it, and to distance themselves from the widespread practice of oppression of apostates seen up to now. (p. 287)

Saeed’s position within Islam, his target audience, and his significance are presented. Then Schirrmacher describes his analysis of apostasy in his primary work *Freedom of Religion, Apostasy and Islam* (2004) and *The Quranic Case against Killing Apostates* (2011). Working in the pluralistic context of Australian society, and with academic activities in the West, Saeed’s views, in contrast with other positions rooted within Islam, are very much affected by and geared to his background, peripheral as it is in the Muslim world.

His arguments tend to relativize the radicality of the other positions presented here by indicating their ambiguities and by using historical, theological, and contextual references. But Saeed is no liberal, secularized Muslim. He maintains that the Quran is divine revelation, and he proposes a renewed exegesis of its texts and a new way of thinking of sources (pp. 382–84, 387). From the perspective of the Protestant Reformation, we can understand that the debate resembles the one we know between Scripture and tradition.

Saeed defends Islam by arguing against the view that takes the death penalty for apostasy as a “‘divine law’ which for that reason limits religious freedom” (p. 362). The death penalty cannot be upheld on the basis of the few statements that are attributed to Muhammad. Saeed affirms,

Given that the Quran, as the most important source for Islam, emphasises freedom of belief and does not seem to support the death penalty, any contrary sayings attributed to the Prophet should be read with a high degree of caution. (p. 365)

On human rights also, he argues not simply to make them compatible with Islam but to positively derive them from the center of the Islamic tradition, providing common ground for Muslims and non-Muslims.

This position of openness, in contrast with the rigidity of the preceding ones, can provide a basis for a dialogue on tolerance and freedom in modern multicultural societies. We have to hope that this attitude increases and wins adherents within Islam, as well as among those with other worldviews who are already convinced. Whether Saeed’s views would “cut the butter” in the house of Islam is, however, another question. The danger for us in the West is to think hopefully that Saeed is representative, whereas it is probably al-Qaradawi or Maududi and the classic position on apostasy and human rights which sway Muslim minds, with the inevitable consequences.

Schirrmacher is to be praised for her seriousness, careful scholarship, and objectivity, as well as for the irenic tone that extends throughout her work, even when considering extreme ideas. I did regret the absence of an index and a glossary of Muslim usage, which would have helped novices such as myself. Investment in this subject, so foreign to our mentalities, will bring rewards when we as witnesses for Christ contact Muslims around us as fellow human beings. Is it not ignorance and fear of “the other” that spawn intolerance and hatred, whereas proximity brings hospitality, which is, after all, the message of the incarnation?

PAUL WELLS

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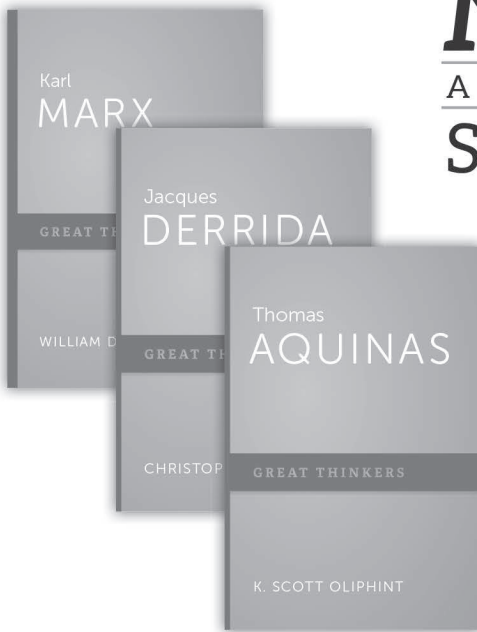
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Paul Wells
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