



CALVIN GLOBAL

How Faith Influences Societies

Editors Christoph Stückelberger / Reinhold Bernhardt

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PREFACE

Five hundred years after the birth of John Calvin, this sixteenth century reformer continues to shape theological and ethical reflections and actions in the twenty-first century. In the years 2008 and 2009 as Reformed churches throughout the world marked this fifth century after his birth, consultations and conferences in many countries have yielded the evidence that Calvin was truly globally influential not only 500 years ago but also throughout the centuries and even now in the 21st Century.

Global ethical questions have become more complex than they were in the sixteenth century. The twentieth century alone has witnessed wars in which grievous atrocities were meted out against human beings and creation, the vicious manifestations of racism supported by national political and military machinery, oppression and violence against women, and injustice in the economy and the management of the earth's resources. These are just a few of the challenges.

Under such circumstances how are people of faith in general, and the church in particular to respond in a manner consistent with their beliefs? Answers to questions of this kind are not easy to come by. It could be professionally untenable to make easy linkages between the sixteenth century and the twenty-first century. This becomes even more complex when one introduces different cultural contexts. The historical realities are not the same and it would be naïve to pretend they were. The genius of John Calvin is that his life and works give us the possibility to make some links, and therefore one can claim that the answers John Calvin provided in his life time in the sixteenth century have some relevance still in the twenty-first century. It takes mature and skilled theologians

and ethicists to make such connections with integrity. It is for this reason that we can give thanks to God for the essays contained here.

Through this volume several authors skilfully bring alive John Calvin's life, theology and ethics in a manner that demonstrates relevance to today and tomorrow. The volume breaks the divides of time and culture, as scholars from different continents with proven experience in faith and societal transformation draw on Calvin's legacy to show that the man, John Calvin who lived for only fifty-five years had an impact which went far beyond the Europe of his era. As an African theologian, I can affirm that Calvin's sharp theological mind and commitment to social justice are very relevant to people in the many diverse countries on all continents today. Churches and people of faith can draw from this and make a difference in society.

This work is not limited to a narrow field of ethical issues. It spans a broad spectrum of issues which challenge society in many contexts today, and has delved into some key theological ideas around which Calvin has sometimes been misquoted – at times even to support evil. By daring to bring these discussions into the open, the volume provides a critical tool with which people can confront those who have misinterpreted Calvin to support their own unjust stances. The book is a tool of hope and encouragement for Christians and people of other faiths who want to make a difference in society for a just and sustainable world.

In producing this volume, Globethics.net has once again demonstrated how it is at the cutting edge of contributing to societal transformation. Based on the lecture series of the Theological Faculty of the University of Basel, the editors Christoph Stückelberger and Reinhold Bernhardt offer the world a great gift in using their talents to give birth to this work that can undergird the actions of people of faith for change in the 21st Century. The Reformed family and all in the ecumenical family ought to give thanks to the editors and to all the authors for the essays contained here.

As new challenges emerge, and the victims of all forms of social injustice increase in many global contexts, and faithful people seek credible effective resources to undergird their life-giving action, this volume is certainly an important contribution in this direction. I commend it to all with gratitude to God. This is one of the fitting tributes to John Calvin, five hundred years after his birth.

Setri Nyomi
General Secretary
World Alliance of Reformed Churches
Geneva, October 2009

INTRODUCTION

Christoph Stückelberger / Reinhold Bernhardt

The protestant reformer John Calvin from Geneva (1509-1564) had arguably the greatest global influence of all the reformers. His 500th anniversary in 2009 is the occasion to reflect in this book on how he influenced and still influences societies through his faith and ethical vision for the Church, economics, politics and society. A special focus is given to the influence of Calvin in various contexts outside Europe, especially in Nord America (USA), Africa (South Africa) and Asia (China, Indonesia, South Korea).

The centre of Calvin's faith and ethics is based on his profound and innovative method of very broad biblical exegesis (contribution 1). That is the reason why this book begins with this. Calvin's overall goal was to show the sovereignty, grace and continuing care of God for human beings and the whole creation. Predestination and providence were not abstract dogmatic concepts, but formed a pastoral theology particularly for those like himself who were migrants and refugees, assuring them of God's care (contribution 2).

Calvin's economic ethics is profoundly based on the value of equity and caring for the poor. He was not the inventor of capitalism, but rather of the social responsibility of economic actors (contribution 3). His openness and curiosity for science was a door-opener for the development of science and technology in the Anglo-Saxon world, but remained anchored in the medieval world view (contribution 4). The same is true

of Calvin's concept of the role of women in family and church. The Reformation opened the door for participatory relationships between women and men, but at the same time it closed this door (contribution 5).

The following articles show how Calvin was used and abused – as many outstanding figures in history have been – for different purposes which show the ambiguity of the influence of faith on societies: Max Weber's theory of the spirit of Protestantism and his influence on capitalism was and still is very influential, more than his contemporary Ernst Troeltsch (contribution 6). In North America, the influence of Calvinism was key for building the United States and for the worldwide influence of Calvinism (contribution 7). In China, three different images of Calvin exist. Calvin could become a strong basis for the future ethics and structure of the Protestant church in China (contribution 8). In South Africa, Calvin was used for justifying Apartheid and being the basis for the struggle against Apartheid (contribution 9). In South Korea, Presbyterian churches have a great influence, but interpret Calvin's heritage in different ways and are a challenge from a women's perspective (contribution 10). Calvinists are both individualistic pietists and socially engaged Christians (contribution 11). In Indonesia, Calvin is used for justifying the political abstention of the church and for on the other side encouraging it to take responsibility in politics and society as a partner of the state (contributions 12 and 13).

Eight of the thirteen contributions were initially given as lectures in a series on Calvin organised by the two editors on behalf of the Theological Faculty of the University of Basel/Switzerland. They have also been made available in English and German on the website of the Calvin jubilee (www.calvin09.org). The additional contributions 7 and 9-13 show the debate about John Calvin especially in Asia.

We thank the Theological Faculty of the University of Basel and the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches for their support for the lecture series.

This book shows the commitment of the *Globethics.net* Foundation, the global network on ethics based in Calvin's city Geneva, to look for the diversity of values – in this case Protestant values – and their contribution to common global values and to humane and sustainable societies. We encourage readers to invite other people to download the book for free and look for other full text documents on ethics in the large online library on ethics of Globethics.net (www.globethics.net). We also invite you to comment the contributions of this book on the Forum pages of the same website of globethics.net.

Basel, October 2009

Christoph Stückelberger / Reinhold Bernhardt, editors

CALVIN AS A BIBLICAL EXEGETE

Ekkehard W. Stegemann, Switzerland

1. Scripture as a teacher of knowledge and wisdom

“God ... holds forth to all, without exception, a mirror of his Deity in his works, another and better help must be given to guide us properly to God as a Creator.” This mirror is the Holy Scripture, which “gathering together the impressions of Deity, which, till then, lay confused in our minds, dissipates the darkness, and shows us the true God clearly. God therefore bestows a gift of singular value, when, for the instruction of the Church, he employs not dumb teachers [works of creation] merely, but opens his own sacred mouth.” (Calvin, Institutes, I,6,1)

This well-known passage from Calvin’s Institutes makes it clear how he did not expect God’s secret to be revealed in his creation. God’s is concealed and mysterious (secret or *arcanus*). And God acts invisibly from his concealment. While everything depends on God and nothing occurs without him, his power unfolds from this concealment (Oberman 184). It is not hidden, obscure, or secret; that is Satan’s work. Satan acts insidiously, behind masks, like a caricature of God. God is, however, removed from humanity. The secret of life is, in the end, inaccessible. Even Christ, God who became man, is removed from that which is deci-

sive, and though he walked the earth as man, he did not leave heaven. We must also make mention of the philosophical axiom *finitum incapax infiniti*, even if Calvin did not expressly address this. The finite cannot grasp the infinite. This necessitates God's accommodation of the human in his incarnation, but also not least in scripture. While creation itself is a silent revelation, God's word, the Holy Scripture, ever constitutes a greater proximity to God and his dominion. Calvin's great idea was that this bridge created between the finite and infinite did not occur only once in Christ, but can occur continually through scripture, which indeed contains God's word, his speech, his call, and in which God "opens his own sacred mouth" (Inst. I, 6,1; vgl. Opitz 109). In doing so, God finds an accommodation, and renders understandable that which could not otherwise be understood. His word in scripture, however, as understandable as it is, must also be understood by people in order to have an effect. His teaching and wisdom in scripture are oracular, words of revelation. This is what sets it apart from all human speech. But the scriptures are still words in human language as they must be if humans are to grasp them. It is God who is speaking, but for him to be understood, "he deigns to consecrate the mouths and tongues of men to his service, making his own voice to be heard in them." (Inst IV, 1,5; Opitz 111)

And still, these words are not transparent whether intrinsically or through translation. The words require interpretation. The scriptures are a medium for God's message, more suitably so than his creation. God is not, however, identical with the message; teachers of the divine word remain needed and their instruction remains essential. As master teachers, who God holds in higher esteem than the natural signs of his power, they must provide their help.

Calvin laid out his understanding of the scripture in accordance with a passage in his favourite book of the Bible, the Second Epistle to Timothy (3:13-17, esp. 16; cf. C.O. 30, 381ff.):

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for re-proof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

Calvin derives a double insight from this, that scripture both constitutes an authority, i.e. *divinitus inspirata est*, which in the Vulgate is in fact a nearly verbatim translation of *theopneustos*, and its usefulness, i.e. *utilis est*. Scriptural authority lies in the fact that God spoke to people like Moses and the prophets. They are instruments of the Holy Spirit in their faithful witness to that which God had told them. This principle, Calvin said, is what distinguishes our religion from all others, *quod scimus Deum nobis loquutum esse*. When God, however, speaks either through the prophets or indeed “to us”, the human recipients of these words still require the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the same Spirit that provided Moses and the prophets with the certainty of their vocations, *nunc quoque testatur cordibus nostris*, also testifies to our hearts that he has used their ministry to teach us – ad nos docendos. God’s majesty thus emerges in scripture, which is why one must pay the same reverence to it as one does to God himself. Our eyes, however, only need to see those illumined by the Holy Spirit, the *illuminati*, the *electi* – or expressed somewhat less pretentiously, the believers. This is a circular argument, characterised by some as biblicistic and fundamentalist, that it takes one to know one, i.e. that the external testimony of the Spirit must correspond with a *testiminium internum* that internally convinces the elected of the inspired nature of scripture and is thus a witness to this nature itself. Calvin saw the Bible as a portable representative of God and the Holy Spirit. With the march of the spirit of historical enlightenment into the Protestant world, this view would find itself in severe crisis (cf. Oberman 230). It was, however, the great virtue of Protestant text scholarship that it methodically and continually used faithfulness to the text as a measure of self-evaluation. This would continue the Reformation principles of scripture except that Calvin viewed this faithfulness to the

text as, in the end, being due to God as its testator (cf. Oberman 231). If reverence is to be paid to scripture that is in fact due to God, this is only so because it “derives from him and nothing human enters into the mix” (383).

Calvin’s second insight from 2 Tim. 3:16 f. is the useful nature of scripture “in teaching, etc.” Why? Calvin responds “*quia perfectam bene beateque vivendi regulam contineat*”, that scripture contains the perfect rule, the ideal guiding light for a good and happy life. This sounds much like classical philosophy or humanism and could have been put by Erasmus in much the same way. This observation is indeed well on the mark; we must not fool ourselves. While this view is certainly about the individual and the congregation, it is constant in keeping its sights on edification. This quest must not be prioritised last, and speculation and senseless sophistry must thus be rejected out of hand. God did not want to feed our curiosity or desire to boast, or to give us something to gossip and theorise about, *sed prodesse* – but to give us something of use. Whatever or whomever Calvin may have had in mind, this would seem to be the work of Calvin, the proverbial strict and humorless Calvinist. But did this Calvin really exist? Calvin did maintain a strict discipline in his exegesis. We will come back to that. In particular, he always – nearly always – kept himself personally under control. But as clearly as he subscribed to self-control and “girding oneself against emotion” (Oberman 180), he was equally clear about not putting up with indifference or a lack of sympathy for others. Christians cannot be nonchalant, as he expressed it in French, without any warmth or sympathy.

This use is first and foremost manifest in doctrine and, following that, life instruction, which Calvin called, along with the Pauline verse, *institutio in iustitia*, instruction in justice, and a fine name it is, as I find. Calvin departs from the Vulgate in his own translation, including the following verse: Where the Vulgate translates “*ut perfectus sit homo Dei*”, Calvin writes “*ut integer Dei homo sit.*” The reason for this surely

lies in the Vulgate, which translates this as *teleios* (which is attested solely by witness D*, and which may have entered the text from the Latin tradition according to NA, 27th ed.), not however: *artios*. For Calvin, *integer* does not only have the positive meaning of “complete, perfect” but was used for *absolutus*, completely free, *in quo nihil sit mutilum*, in which nothing is reduced or mutilated. It is, however, more significant that Calvin, in the end, reflects on the historical context by pondering whether Paul only meant the Old Testament when he spoke of scripture. But how can it *absolvere* people in every way, i.e. perfect them and thus absolve them? Or conversely, are the apostles’ texts of the New Testament then in fact superfluous? Calvin responds that the New Testament adds nothing to the substance of the matter. The apostolic texts contain nihil, nothing other than pure (*merus*) and true (*germanus*) interpretation and explication (*explicatio*) of the Law and the Prophets. And when Calvin states that the addition of the Gospel fills out and illuminates the teachings, this is in fact the doctrine of scripture, i.e. the Law and Prophets, that is being illuminated. Both testaments thus contain the same substance. As Calvin put it, that which was revealed to the “fathers under the Law,” is the same as that which has been revealed to us through the Gospel (cf. Opitz 211). Calvin thus distinguishes himself both from the Baptists and from Luther with regard to the relation between the Old and New Testaments (cf. Puckett 38). He, however, connects this unity of the covenant of grace with the idea that the promise of salvation became increasingly illuminated until “all the clouds being dispersed, Christ the Sun of righteousness arose, and with full refulgence illumined all the earth” (cf. Opitz 216, Inst II, 10,20). There is, however, no opposition between the Law and the Gospel. I will return to this, as it is anchored in a remarkable interpretation of Paul. We will now, however, first look at the manner in which Calvin viewed his exegesis.

2. On the clarity and brevity of exegesis

In 1539, Calvin sent his exegesis of the Epistle to the Romans, his first biblical commentary, from Strasbourg to the Greek scholar Simon Grynaeus in Basel. In his dedication, Calvin remembered that he once spoke with Grynaeus during his time in Basel “on the best manner of interpreting scripture.” Both, as he wrote, agreed that “the chief virtue of an interpreter consists in clarity combined with brevity”; or perhaps more accurately translated “lucid brevity”¹ *perspicua brevitatis*. This was because it was the exegete’s sole aim to “open the mind of the writer (*mentem scriptoris*) he has set out to explain” with particular clarity (*patefacere*) and not to “deviate from his own purpose” or “wander out of its bounds”. At other times, Calvin spoke of the sense of scripture. Readers (*lector*) should not, in his view, deviate from the scope or centre of the thought. While Calvin and Grynaeus share the same view of brevity, Calvin does not fully spurn the exegeses of others who are in fact “more wordy and expansive.”

Calvin, a learned French humanist, adopted the principle of brevity from works such as Seneca’s rhetoric, on whose *De Clementia* Calvin wrote a commentary before his own *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. It is in this vein decisive, while following humanistic hermeneutics, that the “authors’ thoughts” are explained, and thus the argumentative sense of the text illumined, all in accordance with a philological and rhetorical analysis of the text and with its contextualisation in the framework of (cultural) history. This illumination is indeed served least well through digression and wordiness, but instead by adhering to an explicit or implicit dialogue with the many commentaries previously written on the text, whether by the Church Fathers, or Reformation exegetes such as Bucer and Bullinger, and Melancthon in particular. With regard to the Old Testament, we can also add that a dialogue with Jew-

¹ *Calvin Commentaries*, translated by Joseph Haroutunian, Philadelphia, 1958.

ish exegeses went without saying for Calvin, to the extent that he at times adopted the Jewish interpretations as most convincing, and criticised Christian exegeses when he viewed them as violating the text (cf. Puckett's brilliant monograph 52f.). Calvin equated "lucid brevity" with the lucidity, clarity, or perspicuity of scripture itself, as Luther had taught, who indeed served as a virtually paternal model for Calvin. For Luther, this was also connected with the term *claritas scripturae*. The chief opponent of this view of scripture was plain to see: the powerful Catholic Church and its hierarchy, which, along with its domination of the Roman letters of scripture, also aspired to have the authority to administer and explicate the sense and spirit of the text, which was at times thought to be obscure. When Luther, however, postulated the clarity of scripture itself, he meant that, in contrast with the manipulative treatment of the truth of scripture by church leaders, scripture itself contained a clear truth that could be understood by all; and this was indeed why it was to be translated and thereby made accessible to all. Phrased more pointedly, Luther, as translator of the Bible, provided the people with the opportunity to recognise their own lucid, clear truth themselves. The translation is there to achieve "the correct understanding of divine scripture for the improvement and increase of common Christendom" – as he stated in his Open Letter on Translating of 1530. Luther was fully convinced that scripture would have an effect of its own accord as soon as it was made accessible and understandable to "common Christendom", which is thus its own interpreter, *sui ipsius interpres*. A translated Bible would then – quite literally – bring God's word home to the people, making it accessible and understandable. Luther's exchange with Erasmus on a free or unfree will lent prominence to the topic of the clarity of scripture. Erasmus spoke of a certain lack of clarity in scripture, making it necessary for the pope to maintain his authority in order to provide an authentic interpretation to be taught as doctrine. Luther, in opposition, viewed the problem as residing not with scripture but with

the interpreters, their sin-occluded souls, and a lack of the Holy Spirit. It is not the interpreters who lend clarity to scripture, but the readers and interpreters who themselves require clarity.

Calvin agreed with this foundation of Protestant hermeneutics. In his *Institutes*, Calvin stated that it is the interpreter who needs illumination, not scripture. Calvin was, however, also a learned humanist. Although strongly influenced by Luther, Calvin remained humanistic in his hermeneutics, not only because he participated in a continual exchange with other humanists such as Erasmus, but also because he linked scriptural interpretation with the liberal arts (cf. Opitz 94ff.) Establishing the meaning of a text was, from this perspective, the same whether the text is the Bible or Seneca. Calvin, of course, also supported the translation of the Bible into national languages, of which his was French. He was, however, also aware that every translation was also an interpretation, thus standing between the original text and the exegete. As a preacher and exegete, Calvin therefore always relied on the Hebrew and Greek texts. As R. Ward Holder has pointed out, we cannot always with certainty say which Greek text he used for the New Testament (cf. McKim 224ff.). In general, however, we know that he made use of Erasmus' Basel Edition after 1548, and the edition of the Parisian printer Robert Stephanus (cf. Ganoczy/Schelder 136). For him, an interpretation must itself have *perspicuitas* in order to allow the clarity of the scripture to emerge. The authors' views – their *mens* – should appear in the commentary in “limpid clarity”. This required exegetic methods, i.e. grammar and rhetoric. The very concepts of clarity and brevity harken back to classical rhetoric, not only to Seneca but also especially to Quintilian. Calvin of course knew Quintilian's textbook on rhetoric extremely well, along with Cicero, Vergil, and Tacitus (cf. Obermann 175). But these concepts also derived from the legal hermeneutics and rhetoric (*Institutionis oratoriae libri XXII*) of the classical period and also from the legal studies of Calvin's time. He himself had been brought by his father to

study law. This fits in with Calvin's rejection of the allegorical interpretations of an Origen or Augustine, viewing them as more supportive of a sort of obfuscation than of the clear literal sense of scripture. Calvin therefore preferred the New Testament views of Chrysostom among the Church Fathers. For him, Interpreters had to follow the manner in which speakers present matters to others, and present their evidence (cf. Opitz 96). In contrast, however, to speakers, for whom rhetoric is the medium they use to persuade their listeners, and judges in particular, "Calvin is not attempting to persuade a judge but to present clear-cut access to the author's views and an easily understood depiction of these views" (Opitz 96). The *usus* or *efficacia* of scripture are the realm of the Holy Spirit. Calvin distinguished between the *sensus* (meaning) and the *usus* or *utilitas* for God's Church. As he wrote in his dedication to Grynaeus, he believed that he could work toward this goal, particularly through the brevity and succinctness of his commentary. At least he would attempt this. The use is clearly not identical with the meaning, but with the profit – Calvin indeed uses the French word profit in the introduction to the Geneva Bible (cf. Opitz 261) – that is achieved through the interpretation of scripture and the explication of its meaning. It is the "useful doctrine" of which Paul speaks, as we have just heard, which can only be found in Holy Scripture. God's word is scripture, and indeed all of it, the source and the measure of an understanding of God and oneself, the "sum total of our wisdom" (Inst. I, 1,11: 182), as Calvin phrased it in the humanistic tradition. It is, however, also the basis of entering into a discourse with other humanistic wisdom and its teachers. This is a matter of the right understanding, and especially of the right self-understanding of people before God, and thus also of the right teachings or right teachers. However, this could not be Seneca when it came to the heavenly or divine, or to the *regula* for a good and happy life. It was not permissible to mix "heaven and earth", i.e. philosophy and theological Christian philosophy (Opitz 91). The knowledge entailed in faith is to be distin-

guished from the knowledge of philosophy, or phrased differently: “The knowledge that is faith is not a once-and-for-all intellectual insight but a gradual restoration of fallen human nature that begins with an engrafting into the body of Christ” (Pitkin in McKim 197). This is a matter of *recognising* God and oneself in a self-understanding that transforms one from faith to faith in the imago Dei, and so “having been engrafted into the body of Christ, we are made partakers of the Divine adoption, and heirs of heaven”². (C.O. 25, 376; Commentary on John 17:3) Even while Calvin viewed Christian philosophy, as founded in the revelatory truth of the Bible and borne by the divine Spirit, as the only path to a good and happy life, this approach was also clearly geared toward a classical practical philosophy. The stoics indeed said that wisdom was the knowledge of divine and human things, while philosophy was the practice of a useful skill” (SVF II 35), and Calvin saw both of these as interwoven. For Calvin, there was therefore a *schola Dei* or school of God, harbouring a growth in faith, a growth of great practical use in a sort of transformation into the image of God, anchored in the Spirit that is imparted with faith.

3. Calvin as an exegete

Calvin put a great deal of exegetical thought into his biblical commentaries, which together constituted a complete programme, even with regard to the order of their appearance. He began with the Pauline Epistles and more specifically with his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. He did this not only because it was, canonically speaking, the first of the epistles, but also because Calvin saw this as the key to the Scriptures as a whole. Following other commentaries on Paul’s Letters, including the Epistle to the Hebrews, Calvin turned his exegesis to the Gospels beginning with John, not only because John constituted the key

² Translation by William Pringle.

to the other Gospels for Calvin, but also as the result of considerable irritation and tensions in Geneva, including the dispute over trinitarian theology that was launched by Michael Servetus (cf. Pitkin in Mckim 168). It is particularly interesting that Calvin did not write a commentary on Revelation, since Calvin, in contrast with Luther, did not interpret his own times apocalyptically. I will return to this point in a further example. I would also like to conclude with a few examples of Calvin's exegetical work, the greatness of which can hardly be overemphasised. This greatness, in my opinion, lies in his disciplined use of his expansive philological and rhetorical skills toward the illumination of the *mens auctoris*. In modern terms, he focused on the *intentio auctoris* or *operis*. He did not seek out that which was outside the text or which could be coded within the text. He instead preferred the *sensus literalis* and was not at all fond of allegorical interpretations. He was, nevertheless, open to the potential validity of differing interpretations, although he did mostly opt to disambiguate. He did not suffer speculative interpretation well, even if it contained the Christian dogma that Calvin himself shared. For example, Calvin rejected the interpretation in which the Hebrew plural *elohim*, which occurs in the very first verse of the Bible, is used to underscore the doctrine of the Trinity. He saw this as a forced exegesis, philologically obscure in that it misconstrues the Hebrew plural construction (cf. Puckett 5). While this garnered him the trite criticism of being a Judaiser, he did not give in. (Hunnius, Calvinus Judai-zans).

3.1 Romans 9:3 and 16:11

Calvin's Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, which, remarkably, took Calvin less than two years to write, can certainly hold its own in comparison with other Reformation commentaries such as those written by Bucer, Bullinger, and Melancthon. Calvin excelled by dint of his disciplined brevity in comparison with Bucer, and compared with

Melanchthon in that he interpreted the entire epistle and not just individual passages of seeming theological importance. Calvin did not use the epistle as a means of addressing dogmatic systems through examples from biblical passages, *loci* or *quaestiones*, even as he maintained a continual discourse with Melanchthon's interpretation, without making this explicit. He was interested in the meaning of the text in line with his understanding of scripture as the word of God. His focus was therefore on a verse-by-verse exegesis, which followed his own translations from the Greek. He chose parts of the text and individual words for further expansion and exegesis. His commentary excelled in its philological-rhetorical competence and disciplined contextual argumentation. The importance of rhetoric in today's interpretation of the Pauline texts has begun to be acknowledged again only since the 1980s; exegetes still have much to learn from Calvin.

Calvin, like all other Reformation figures, saw justification through faith as being the main theme of the epistle. None of the others, however, underscored as strongly the unity of the Law and the Gospel, the unity of God's promise and the covenant of grace, and the unity of all those elected by God since Abraham, who, in the end, all have Christ as their intermediary. This is why, of course, "Christ is the intermediary between God and people in the Old Testament as well, and is thus the point of reference for the faith of the Fathers" (Opitz 214). This is also why the fathers of Israel are also the fathers of Christians. The Law and Gospel are to be distinguished just according to their times. The Law, according to Christ, does however remain God's word and has not been abrogated. When Paul spoke in 2 Corinthians of a "ministry of death", this was accidental, i.e. due to people's corrupt nature (cf. Opitz 224).

Calvin's interpretation of Romans 10:4 ("*télos gàr nómu Christòs eis dikaiosúnēn panti*") reads: "Whatever the Law teaches, what it tells you, and what it promises, Christ is ever its goal (*scopus*). In his translation of *télos*, Calvin uses the Latin word *finis*, but its sense is that of a

“(final) goal” and not of a cessation. Calvin also uses the word *complementum* in this regard, i.e. “completion” or “fulfillment”, while also accepting *perfectio*, which was Erasmus’ choice. As he noted on Romans 1:17, the doctrine of justification or equality in faith was “confirmed in the Law” (“*testimonium habet a Lege*”). Calvin therefore views Romans 10:4 as an excellent passage to confirm “that the Law, in all its parts, refers to Christ,” including the “ceremonial law”.

It is also remarkable that Calvin, when Paul underscores genetic or ethnic ties with Abraham with the words “according to the flesh”, does not take this to be a reduction to exclusively natural, earthly kinship ties³, as continues to be quite common in exegesis through to our own times. This is clear in the interpretation of Romans 4:1, and particularly so in Romans 9:3. An explanation, common already during Calvin’s times, would seem to gradually reduce the affective nature of the descriptions of certain groups. These were groups about whose distance from Jesus Paul had shown great sadness in dramatic rhetorical terms (“I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart”). Those who, at first, are named with affection “my brethren”, later become “my kindred” and then only in earthly-natural terms. The words “according to the flesh” may then entail an unspoken opposition in the fact that Paul maintains another type of non-natural and non-earthly kinship with his “brothers and sisters in Christ.”

One can, however, also interpret “for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh” in Romans 9:3 (“...*hupèr tôn adelphôn mou tôn sungenôn mou katà sárka*”) in the opposite manner, as a rhetorical amplification of the preceding. Calvin’s interpretation of Romans 9:3 was indeed “The words, *my kinsmen according to the flesh*, though they contain nothing new, do yet serve much for amplification. ... For

³ Reichert, Angelika, *Der Römerbrief als Gratwanderung. Eine Untersuchung zur Abfassungsproblematik* (FRLANT 194), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001, p. 180.

the qualifying expression (*exceptio*), *according to the flesh*, is not in my view added for the sake of extenuation, as in other places,⁴ but, on the contrary, for the sake of expressing his faith (*fiduciae*)." As was common for the Reformation, *fiducia* most certainly had the connotation of a faith in salvation. Calvin thus meant that it was indeed because these "brethren" of Paul's were related according to the flesh, that he had faith in their salvation. In an allusion to Romans 11:17ff, Calvin underscored that Paul did not conceal "the fact, that he had sprung from that nation, the election of whom was still strong in the root, though the branches had withered."⁵ Accordingly, 9:4f continues with a series of positive statements about the Jews by God, beginning with the use of the honorific term "Israelites", which Paul uses to describe himself in 11:1 as well as "a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin." Calvin thus explains further that it is decisive that Paul views the Jews with their *insignis suis ornatos*, i.e. with the insignia and honours that differentiate them from the rest of humanity. "For God had by his covenant so highly exalted them, that by their fall, the faithfulness (*fides*) and truth of God himself seemed also to fail in the world." Paul clothed them with "the role or the quality of the chosen people", one which they do not then relinquish.

Calvin's interpretation has found rare resonance in more recent exegesis, C.E.B. Cranfield is one such admirer who speaks of Calvin's Commentary on Romans in glowing terms. He writes, for instance, that it is characterised by "an outstanding degree of that humility before the text which is shared to some degree by every commentator on a historical document who is of any worth, the humility which seeks, not to master and manipulate, but to understand and to elucidate".⁶

⁴ This likely refers to a passage such as Romans 8:5.

⁵ Cf. *Calvin-Studienausgabe*, ed. by Eberhard Busch et al., vol. 5.2. *Der Brief an die Römer: Ein Kommentar*, Neukirchen: Neukirchner Verlag, 2005, p. 466f.

⁶ Cranfield, E. B., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC), Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1975. Vol. 1, p. 40.

3.2 2 Timothy 3:1ff

I would now like to use the interpretations of two passages to illustrate the difference between Luther and Calvin. With regard to the first text, I will follow the guidelines set forth by Heiko Augustin Oberman. Luther interpreted 2 Timothy 3:1, in which Paul says: “You must understand this, that in the last days distressing times will come”, as a prophecy of the catastrophic church crisis that, in his view, reached its peak of chaos and injustice during the Reformation era. Luther concluded, first in his *De votis monasticis* of 1521 and even more so later in his *Weihnachtspostille* (Christmas sermon), that Paul was indeed speaking of Luther’s era with his “distressing times”. Calvin, who was surely aware of Luther’s sensational interpretation, was of a very different view. Calvin believed that Paul was speaking both of his own times and of an ever-present condition. Luther saw church history as a continual process of decay, culminating in the present: “*O vere tempora periculosa, de quibus Paulus praedixit*” (WA 8,635) (“O, the truly perilous times that Paul prophesied”). Calvin’s interpretation was, by contrast, fully unapocalyptic and unexcited (C.O. 30375ff.): “For him, ‘the last days’ encompasses the universal condition (*universus status*) of the Christian Church. Nor does he compare his own age with ours, but, on the contrary, informs Timothy of the future condition of the kingdom of Christ ... and that therefore the pastors of the Christian Church will have just as much to do with wicked and ungodly men as the prophets and godly priests had in ancient times.” (561) And while the biblical text makes mention of all the terrible sinners and their acts of wickedness, and Paul instructs Timothy to avoid such individuals, Calvin laconically remarks: “This exhortation sufficiently shows that Paul does not speak of a distant posterity, nor foretell what would happen many ages afterwards; but ... he applies to his own age what he had said about ‘the last

times'; for how could Timothy 'turn away' from those who were not to arise till many centuries afterwards? So then, from the very beginning of the Gospel, the church must have begun to be affected by such corruptions." It is remarkable how Calvin anchored his exegesis in common sense and historical contextualisation. As Paul instructed Timothy to avoid such sinners in his time, he is evidently not predicting a future time, well beyond Timothy's lifespan. Unlike the Vulgate, which translates the metaphor "in the final days", *en eschâtais hēméraires*, with the semantically enhanced Latin words *in novissimis diebus*, Calvin de-apocalypticises this with his translation, *extremis diebus*, in the outermost or "extreme" days. This is indeed philologically permissible since *eschatos* can also be used to mean the "extreme" especially in the sense of a location, "the end of the world", or in the sense of a heightened state such as "extreme danger". In connection with temporal nouns such as "day" or "time", however *eschatos* always refers to the latest, most recent, and thus final in a series of days or hours, with nothing to follow. This was translated as *novissimus* in the Vulgate, which, however, can also mean "the worst" in Christian Latin usage. (Thus the German terms *jüngster Tag*, often translated as *letzter Tag* in the Gospel of John (6:39ff), and *jüngstes Gericht*.) The semantic connection of 2 Timothy 3 to apocalyptic metaphors, which can indeed be viewed as a prophecy of the final days (thus giving way to Luther's interpretation, which was geared toward the Vulgate), also reflects upon the times of Paul's student as the addressee, which warrants Calvin's interpretation. In contrast with Luther, Calvin certainly had his focus in the right place in that the text spoke to Timothy's situation. However, it was unthinkable for Calvin to view the text as dramatically prophesying that Timothy's lifetime was the end time. But this could indeed be an appropriate interpretation. Paul prophesied to his student terrible, apocalyptic events for the final days during his own lifetime. Calvin seeks to de-dramatise matters in other places as well. In Romans 13:11ff, for example, Paul speaks to his

addressees about their own times (*kairos*), as the last times before the end, so that Paul can speak of this progress towards the end in that “we are *closer* to our redemption than at the time when we came to our faith.” According to Calvin, however, Paul only meant “the time that preceded faith.” The eras involved here are thus the Gospel and one’s coming to faith, indicating a true turning point; this, however, does not refer to times that are about to end, but the beginning of a present era in which the light of Christ shines out. This time had already begun with Paul and led to Calvin, which is why Calvin, unlike Paul, would not have been surprised that we are speaking about him here in Basel today.

Calvin was fully convinced that the texts of the Bible had to be interpreted within the setting of their time (Puckett 55). An interpretation that, however, would serve to illuminate the meaning of scripture, which was indeed a divine teaching to be put to use for the present. In the preface to the second edition of his *Epistle to the Romans*, Karl Barth famously wrote: “For example, place the work of Jülicher side by side with that of Calvin: how energetically Calvin, having first established what stands in the text, sets himself to re-think the whole material and wrestle with it till the walls which separate the sixteenth century from the first become transparent! Paul speaks, and the man of the sixteenth century hears. The conversation between the original record and the reader moves round the subject matter, until a distinction between yesterday and today becomes impossible. If a man persuades himself that Calvin's method can be dismissed with the old-fashioned motto, ‘The Compulsion of Inspiration’, he betrays himself as one who has never worked upon the interpretation of Scripture.”⁷ Together with Calvin, Barth postulated that there was no actual difference between Paul’s outlook and the situation of Christianity during Calvin’s (or Barth’s) times. It is indeed possible for a biblical book written by theologians and de-

⁷ Barth, Karl, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968, p. 7.

vout Christians to be read with the same interest, regardless of changes in the world. But Calvin would already seem to have a different range of expectations than Paul, as he did not expect the end of the world and decay of the cosmos any time soon. If, as Barth would say, this is indeed “to the heart of the matter”, this wall between the first and sixteenth centuries could not have become transparent. Instead, the intent of the reader would have determined the intent of the author, endowing the work with a meaning inserted by the reader and not the author. In other words, the discourse between the text and reader cannot assume that the heart of the matter is the same for both. We cannot extricate ourselves from the dilemma of historicism and the historicisation of biblical texts.

3.3 *Haggai 2:7*

As we have seen, Calvin saw the entire Old Testament as being directed toward Christ. It is, at the same time, interesting to note that he often criticised, as being contrived in nature, many interpretations that Christian dogmatists had much too readily inserted into Old Testament texts. This was at times an embarrassment to him, especially as a humanist, when Jews laughed at the Christian exegesis of the Old Testament. “We must always beware of giving the Jews occasion of making an outcry, as if it were our purpose, sophistically, to apply to Christ those things which do not directly refer to him.” (Comm. on Psalm 72; cf. Puckett 53).⁸ It is not that Calvin liked Jews very much, but he had a keen sense for intellectual and philological quality. He did not want to be laughed at by Jews if he could not succeed in anchoring his Christian interpretations in a clear philological and rhetorical basis: “We should not make ourselves into the objects of Jewish derision.” This constituted a recognition of an “opponent” who was not – in a prejudicial anti-Semitic manner – excluded from any ability to find truth. Luther was seldom, if ever, capable of achieving this stature. I would now like to

⁸ Translation by James Anderson.

demonstrate this with regard to the interpretation of a passage in the Book of Haggai. Gerhard Krause authored an excellent short piece on Luther's interpretation (in the 1957 *Festschrift* for Rudolf Hermann).

Luther wrote on Haggai 2:7 at different times, but always with a cutting anti-Jewish slant. In the text, the prophet says that God would soon shake the heavens and the earth, and then all the nations (*goyim*), to fill the Temple in Jerusalem with great splendour. After the shaking of the heathen nations, the Hebrew text states: *uva'u khemdath kol-haggoyim* ("the treasure of all nations shall come"). The change in grammatical number makes this phrase difficult, although it is likely a *constitutio ad sensum*. The Septuaginta, by contrast, translates the singular *khemdah* as a Greek plural (*ta eklekta*: "the treasures"), so that one can discuss whether the Hebrew consonants might constitute a defectively written plural. The Masoretes placed their vowel diacritics differently, however. The church father Jerome first used the plural of the predicate in his Latin translation. In his translation of the Hebrew text, however, he used the singular, with *khemdah* in a passive sense: "That desired (*desideratus*) by all peoples will come." In the Vulgate, Jerome translated: *Et veniet desideratus cunctis gentibus*. The Hebrew genitive/possessive construction is thus changed to a dative/indirect object. The Christologically more assertive version is thus the one that gains acceptance in the end. In his preface to Haggai in 1532, Luther wrote: "In another chapter, he prophesies that Christ will indeed come as the consoler of all nations, to show inconspicuously that the kingdom and *law* of the Jews will come to an end (WA.DB 11/II,320f., italics added for emphasis). In his notorious treatise "On the Jews and their Lies" of 1543, which was chiefly a reaction to the Jewish interpretation of biblical texts which Luther saw as a prophesy about Jesus Christ, Luther was of the opinion that the Jews did not accept the reading "consoler of all nations" and thus "crucified" the word *khemdah*. To this Luther added anti-Semitic insults with the upshot that the Jews' choice of the reading "treasures" reflected

their lusting after the heathens' silver and gold (cf. WA 53,477). We must also add that, in his *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen* ("Open Letter on Translation"), Luther criticised the 1527 Anabaptist translation of the Prophets into German, written by Denck and Hätzer and published in Worms, because Jews helped them in the translation, whether this was in person or in writing, but these were Jews who did not show great homage to Christ (WA 30/II,640). Denck/Hätzer translated: "*Ja, alle Völker will ich bewegen – die werden mit köstlichen Kleinodien kommen*" ("Yes, I will move all nations and they will come with sublime treasures"). Like the Jewish interpreter David Kimchi, the translators would seem to have made "all nations" into the subject and viewed the Hebrew consonants as a defective plural, while they read an additional preposition into the text, likely a *b-* ("in, among, with"): *with* sublime treasures.

Calvin interpreted the context of Haggai 2 with his focus on salvation through Christ and the conversion of the nations that took place in faith in Christ (cf. C.O. 94, 106; Puckett 5). "This is the reason why the Prophet says, *I will shake all nations, and they shall come*; that is, there will be indeed a wonderful conversion, when the nations [*gentes*, heathen nations] who previously despised God, and regarded true religion and piety with the utmost hatred, shall habituate themselves to the ruling power of God" and in fact voluntarily so.⁹ They come, however, because they are attracted by a hidden impulse: *Venient autem, quia sic trahentur arcano impulsu* (C.O. 94, 105). The prophet then adds: *Desiderium omnium gentium*. Calvin translates *khemdah* as *desiderium*, but then explains that this constitutes a double interpretation. The first of these is that the nations will come (plural) and bring that which they deem to be valuable (*pretiosum*) to offer to God in worship. The Hebrews would, in this interpretation, understand *khemdah/desiderium* to be everything that is deemed valuable. Others, however, understand this to mean: the *desiderium* of all nations will come (singular). And still

⁹ Translation by John Owen.

others say, Calvin added, that a further preposition was to be understood (either *b-* or *m-*), i.e. “they will come with what they desire or deem valuable”. This corresponds with the version of the Anabaptists, which Calvin is likely to have consulted as he did Kimchi’s version, to which he often referred. Calvin then also introduced the Christological interpretation: that of course the whole world had been waiting for Christ, as Isaiah had already established. Calvin, however, continued that this would not work due to the words that then followed in Haggai: “Mine is the silver, mine is the gold.” Calvin thus preferred the interpretation “that the nations would come, bringing with them all their riches, that they might offer themselves and all their possessions as a sacrifice to God.” So once again we can observe how Calvin favoured philological and contextual arguments over ideological ones.

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**GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AS THE CENTRE OF
FAITH: PREDESTINATION AND
PROVIDENCE**

Reinhold Bernhardt, Switzerland

The heart of Calvin's theology can be summed up in three words: "Glory to God". These words stand at the end of his "Institutes of the Christian Religion", which can be regarded as a large-scale commentary on this axiom: "*Soli Deo Gloria*" – "to God alone the glory". Calvin's whole theological thought, and also his activity in leading the church, can be understood as a development of this principle of the sovereignty of God.

This is an invitation: glory should be given to God. Wherever in Calvin's eyes this offering of glory is refused, he reacts with a sharp contradiction. That explains the basic polemical character which appears in his writing and the militant attitude in his action. With radical zeal he wants to defend the glory of God: in a letter to Nikolaus Zurkinden in Berne, who like Castellio was an advocate of the idea of tolerance, Calvin writes in 1559 (the year in which the third edition of the "Institutes" appeared): "Where the glory and truth of my God are at stake I had rather rage than not be angry, so that the affront with which his holy majesty is stained does not rebound on my head."

Calvin developed his doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of God at a time when absolutism in political practice and philosophical theory was

developing. In 1532 Machiavelli published his book “The Prince”, in which he calls on the prince to set himself even above ethical norms if it serves his unlimited exercise of power for the common good. In 1576 Jean Bodin’s “Six Books on the State” would appear, in which the sovereign’s claim to omnipotence is given a philosophical foundation. In the intervening period, when an absolutist ideal of rule was forming at the European courts – also in France, towards which Calvin’s gaze was always directed – Calvin developed his theology of the glory of God.

The discovery of the individual who takes his fate into his own hands was a characteristic of the Renaissance and Humanism. In his study “The Culture of the Renaissance in Italy”, in 1860 Jacob Burckhardt wrote: in the (Italian) Renaissance “the subjective arises with full force: the human being becomes a spiritual individual and recognises himself as such.” (1966, 123).

Calvin’s theology represented a resonance with this. Over against the glorification of the individual and the emphasis on the individual’s freedom, creative power and sovereignty Calvin set the glorification of God. So to some degree he applied the human ideal of Renaissance humanism to God, but he also restricted it exclusively to God, and thus criticised the high value attached to the human personality based on itself. To all the absolutising of man he opposed the absolutism of God. However, here lie also the beginnings of criticism of a worldly rule which provides itself with divine predicates. Thus the ground is laid for the development of the political right to resistance in Calvinism and an impulse is provided for the development of democratic forms of state.

Calvin’s doctrines of predestination and providence are to be understood against this basic background. They correlate with his emphasis on God’s omnipotence and sole rule of all. The doctrine of predestination is about the question of a human being’s eternal salvation or damnation. The doctrine of providence relates to what happens in the world and the way in which human beings live their lives.

In what follows I want first to portray the basic features of these two doctrines and each time sketch out a position through which Calvin saw it threatened and which accordingly he contested fiercely. Then we shall have to ask where and in what way these teachings can still claim validity for Christian thinking today.

1. Predestination

In Chapter 21 of Book Three of the “Institutes” Calvin gives a concentrated definition of the concept: “By predestination we understand God’s eternal ordinance by virtue of which he resolved what according to his will should become of every human being. For human beings are not all created with the same determination, but to one is assigned beforehand eternal life and to the other eternal damnation. Thus just as the individual is created for one or other purpose, so... he is predestined to life or death” (III, 21, 5).

For Calvin this doctrine of double predestination (*“gemina praedestinatiō”*) arises first out of an experience, secondly out of the theological axiom I have already mentioned and thirdly out of existential distress.

The experience is simply that there are people (and have been at all times), who do not give God the glory, who do not submit to his word and do not obey his commandments; just as Paul had to cope with the experience that the majority of the Jews – God’s chosen covenant people – showed themselves so closed to the fulfilment of the covenant in Christ. How can that be if – and now comes the theological axiom, which for Paul as for Calvin must not be called into question – God is the all-determining reality, specifically also in respect of the relationship between God and human beings? Nothing happens without God’s will, Calvin writes in the chapter on providence (I, 16,3). That also relates to everything that happens in the world in general and the question of salvation and damnation in particular. Disposal of these lies solely in God’s

hand. It is impossible for the Reformers, as it is for Augustine, to think that the grace of God is in any way dependent on the efforts of human beings, that a human being can influence the sovereign disposition of God even in the slightest way through their faith and the way in which they live their life – whether positively or negatively. In order categorically to reject this possibility he insists that God’s control over salvation is fixed from eternity.

In order to establish the basic Reformation conviction of the exclusiveness of the grace of God in the appropriation of salvation, Calvin fights against all forms of so-called Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism, which assume the possibility or even necessity of a human contribution to God’s saving action. Erasmus had required that human beings must be allowed at least enough freedom of will for them “to be able to turn towards what leads to eternal blessedness or turn away from it”.¹ Luther sharply rejected this. There is no free will in matters which concern the relationship with God. Human will is not to some degree neutral, so that it can incline towards the good as to the evil. It is deformed by the original sin which lies over the human race and must first of all be given a new orientation by God. “Non agunt, sed aguntur” – “We do not act but are acted on,” Luther wrote.² The human being is not master of his own will, yet follows this will and thus is responsible for his action. But he cannot influence his position before God with his deformed will. He cannot turn to God of his own accord. He cannot even want to – *non possit!*

Thus the doctrine of predestination correlates with the Reformation doctrine of justification with its *sola gratia* principle. According to this, the heart of man which is intrinsically crooked can be opened only when God turns to him in grace. First and only because God turns to human

¹ Erasmus, Desiderius, *De libero arbitrio diatribē sive collatio* (Selected Works 4, ed. W. Welzig), Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1969, 2006³, 1-195: quotation Ib10.

² WA 5,544, 11; 1,73, 26.

beings in grace can they turn to him. But election has its ground in nothing other than God himself – just as creation (“from nothing”) is grounded in God alone.

If this were not the case, if the divine decision were dependent on human behaviour (perhaps in the way in which God had already foreseen this behaviour), then he would have to make a contribution to his salvation and he could never be certain whether his merit achieved by being well-pleasing to God were sufficient. He would live in constant uncertainty about salvation. That precisely is the existential distress which Calvin – like Luther - deeply felt and which Calvin countered with his doctrine of the eternal decree of God. Therefore the issue here is ultimately a promise of the certainty of salvation. Faith is not the condition to be fulfilled in order to gain God’s election but the first and most important gift of the election performed by God before all time. It thus becomes to some extent an indicator of one’s own predestination to salvation.

On 14 November 1551 the Geneva pastors under the leadership of Calvin wrote a letter to their Zurich colleagues. It stated: “About this we are sufficiently united, that we are justified through faith’; but God’s mercy first seems to be firmly grounded in the fact that we can recognise faith as a fruit of his acceptance of us in free grace; but that he accepts us comes from his eternal election.” To safeguard the fact that the acceptance of human beings by God is a pure act of God’s grace, the Geneva pastors appeal to the eternal election.

The sovereignty of grace – that is the theological axiom from which the doctrine of predestination is derived. It is not itself the axiom, as Alexander Schweizer had asserted when he called Calvin’s doctrine of predestination the “central dogma” of his theology.³ That is already evident from the position that the doctrine of predestination occupies in the

³ Schweizer, Alexander, *Die protestantischen Centraldogmen in ihrer Entwicklung innerhalb der reformirten Kirche*, Zurich: Orell Füssli, 1854/56.

Institutes. In the first edition of 1536 it is still part of the doctrine of providence and is not yet developed there as double predestination. The idea of election is bound up with ecclesiology. In the later editions Calvin then detaches the notion of predestination from the doctrine of providence and assigns it to soteriology, whereas the doctrine of providence is attached to the doctrine of creation. But even after being made independent in this way, predestination occupies more of a marginal position. In the sermons and letters, too, the Reformer does not speak of this theme very often and not on his own initiative. He would not have devoted himself to the theme “had he not been driven by the enemies of the grace of God,” he wrote in “*De predestinatione*” (14).

Moreover we must reflect that the doctrine of predestination was not formed by Calvin. It derives from a passage of Paul in Rom. 8:29-30⁴, was developed by Augustine into an independent piece of doctrine, occurs in mediaeval theology, for example in Thomas Aquinas, and in all the Reformers, even in Bullinger,⁵ who criticised Calvin in this respect. Calvin took over the doctrine of eternal election but he sharpened it and the conflicts were kindled by the way in which he sharpened it.

Paul had not spoken of a predestination to damnation, i.e. he did not teach double predestination. Augustine spoke of not being elected, and so in substance knew of the idea of a double predestination, but did not use this term explicitly.⁶ Aquinas, too, uses the term “predestination” only for predestination to salvation but began from the assumption that there must therefore also be an indirect divine repudiation.⁷ According

⁴ “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.” See also Eph.1:3-6; 1 Peter 1-2.

⁵ Cornelis P. Venema, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Doctrine of Predestination*. Author of “the other reformed tradition”?, Grand Rapids MI 2002.

⁶ Cf. his writing “*De predestinatione sanctorum*”.

⁷ E.g. in STh Ia 23, 83.1.

to him God allows human beings to fall away from salvation and thus bring the verdict of damnation upon themselves. Here God's permission is imagined as an active desire of God. Calvin simply stated more clearly that God is also free to decree damnation – and he spoke of this clearly above all in the time of humanism. Thus it became the stumbling block.

The notion of a negative election to damnation, the idea that God whose goodness Calvin praised so highly and of whom Luther had said that he was a glowing oven full of love,⁸ gives human beings over to repudiation from eternity – that was offensive even for Calvin, so that he speaks of a “terrible decree” (HIII/23, 7H)

The doctrine of condemnation to eternal damnation was for Calvin only the necessary consequence of the doctrine of predestination, but not its real intention. The intention was to glorify God's grace and to assure believers of it, not to threaten non-believers.

Looked at precisely, Calvin did not depict the act of election as the cutting off of a mass which is to some degree indeterminate, which is then divided into two groups, one on the left and one on the right. In his understanding, election is not an alternative decision, not a twofold act of pardoning and repudiation, but a pure act of grace. An act of repudiation is not at all necessary, for all human beings are rejected and thus destined to damnation, because Adam's original sin lies on all. In his impenetrable grace God now raises some from this “*massa perditionis*” and thus saves them from the doom of sin and the punishment that thus threatens. So we must distinguish between the one act of grace and the twofold predestination which follows, both for the elect and the non-elect.

But even if the act of election is a sheer act of grace, the question of the righteousness of God still arises – the theodicy question. Why has God chosen some and not others? Calvin sharply rejects this question.

⁸ WA 10/III, 56a, 2f.

The Geneva Reformer writes off any accusation against God as “the impudence of a dog which barks at God’s righteousness but can do nothing about it” (I, 17,5).

In Romans 9.13 Paul already referred to the sovereign preference for Jacob over Esau described in Malachi 1.2f. The question “Why?” is forbidden – as it was also forbidden to Job, who had to recognise the sovereignty of God. “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted” (Job.42.2). God’s decree is unfathomable.

Yet according to Calvin the believer can, may and should rely on this in trust. For this God is not a numinous power, nor an arbitrary ruler whose actions are incalculable; he is not a hidden, unknown God but the reliable God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who has led his people out of captivity in Egypt and given them land and good instructions for living in this land. He is the just and gracious Father of Jesus Christ. He can be recognised from that. – It is there that his nature is evident: that he is a kind and gracious God, a God who wants his providence to rule over all creation. That is the theme of the doctrine of providence, to which I now want to turn.

2. Providence

According to Calvin, God allows the same sovereignty to prevail in his action in the world as prevails in his action in salvation.⁹ Here too Calvin emphasises that God is omnipotent and active everywhere: “God’s rule happens in such a way that he guides all individual events and thus everything comes from his determinate counsel” (I, 16,4-6). Nothing happens without God’s will.

⁹ I have dealt with Calvin’s doctrine of providence at greater length in Bernhardt, Reinhold, *Was heisst “Handeln Gottes”? Eine Rekonstruktion der Lehre von der Vorsehung Gottes*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1999, second edition in the series “Studien zur systematische Theologie und Ethik”, Vol.55, Berlin: LIT-Verlag, 2008, ch. II B.

But that does not mean that God's action nullifies human action. Calvin refuted such theological determinism as vigorously as on the other side the position he labels as "epicurean". What he means is all those philosophers and theologians who in his eyes restrict God's omnipotence and activity everywhere and thus "dream up a pointless and idle God" (I/16,4). Calvin has in view those who in the tradition of Aristotle speak of God as the ground of realisation of being (*primum movens*), but say that he does not bring about individual events in the world. In his time he encounters this position above all among those from the circle of the humanists who want to give the course of the world a certain dynamic of its own, allow human beings a relatively free shaping of their wills and make room for the activity of non-divine contingent forces such as fortune or chance. Calvin surveys all of these with biting polemic: "the world has always been filled with this plague" (ibid). Objecting tersely that "not one drop of rain falls without God's certain command" (I/16,5).

But much as it is the case that nothing happens without the will of God, so for Calvin on the other hand it is true that human action too does not happen without human will. Therefore the blame for evil is to be put not on God but on human beings. Calvin uses an illuminating comparison to resolve this apparent contradiction between God's activity in all things and the attribution of guilt to human beings. God is like the sun, whose light and warmth are good beyond doubt. But if the sun shines on rotting flesh, it will stink. Yet one cannot say that the rays of the sun are the material cause of the stink. They merely conjure up the stink from the rotting flesh (I/17,5). Thus it is the natural, "fleshly" man who stinks to heaven – and God's sunlight simply brings out this stink. God is active in all things, yet he is not the author of sin. The sin lies in human beings.

Zwingli went even further than Calvin in his doctrine of providence. Even more consistently than Calvin he had advocated the idea of the ab-

solute sovereignty of God, for example in his writing “*De providentia*” of 1530. For him it followed from the conviction that God is active everywhere that God must also have caused sin and evil. Calvin explicitly distances himself from Zwingli on this question. In a letter to Bullinger in 1552 he writes that to make God the author of sin is blasphemous.¹⁰ “To express myself confidentially, Zwingli’s book is so full of hard paradoxes that it is very far removed from the moderation that I observe.” So Calvin understood his position to be a moderate one.

This distancing from Zwingli can also be understood against the background that the same accusation had been made against him as he made against Zwingli. Hieronymus Bolsec in particular in 1551 charged that Calvin’s emphasis of God’s omnicausality led him to declare God the author of sin and evil and thus to relieve human beings of the guilt of sin. To this Calvin objects that God ordained the fall but is not its author. The human being – Adam – brought it about and must therefore be made responsible for it.

3. Critical evaluation

Even if Calvin does not want – like Zwingli – to draw the conclusion of theological determinism from his basic conviction of the absolute sovereignty of God, his theology of the glory of God is in danger of correlating the greatness of God with the lowliness, indeed the nothingness, of human beings. What seems to me to be problematical is not the image of God with its strong emphasis that God is omnipotent and “omni-active” but its connection with an image of humanity which is deeply governed by Augustine’s doctrine of original sin. Now this reading of the problem likewise affects Luther and Zwingli, if not more so. For Calvin – as also for Augustine and Luther – man is under the yoke of sin to such an extent that “of himself, of his nature, he can neither

¹⁰ CO XIV, 253.

strive for the good nor struggle over it" (II, 4,1). In human beings everything is extinguished "which belongs to the blessed life of the soul. This includes faith, love of God, love of neighbour and striving for holiness and righteousness; (also) the health of the mind and the uprightness of the heart (i.e. will) is lost (II, 2,12). In his sharp reckoning with Calvin in 1936 Stephan Zweig wrote: "In order to raise the divine as high as possible above the world Calvin immeasurably deeply demotes the earthly; in order to give the idea of God the utmost dignity, he robs the idea of human beings of its rights and dishonours it." If for Zweig Calvin also becomes the surface on which his own experiences with the National Socialist regime's rule of violence are projected, he does see very clearly this connection between the emphasis on the sovereignty of God and contempt for human nature.

With Calvin, as also with Augustine and Luther, the fact that human beings are first and foremost under grace, and that the natural human being is a creature of God – endowed with the highest honorific title, of being in the image of God – fades almost completely into the background. The excessive emphasis on the corruption of sin hardly leaves any room for the theological evaluation of the natural human being. God and human beings stand in an antithetical relationship to one another. The exaltation of God is not matched – as might suggest itself – by the greatness of God's creatures and works. Rather, "all human works, if they are regarded in and for themselves (are) nothing but filth and dirt; what is usually regarded as righteousness is with God sheer unrighteousness, what is regarded as purity is sheer pollution, what is claimed to be praise is sheer shame" (III, 12,4). There is nothing good in human beings themselves in their God-created natural state, gift of reason, corporeality and sensual nature. It is rotting flesh. All that is good is owed to the grace of God, which makes human beings new creatures.

Time and again Calvin praises the "*clementia Dei*", the loving-kindness of God. But in so doing he obscures this picture of God be-

cause he cannot think of the sovereignty of God as a sovereignty of universal grace. Thus, with the added emphasis that he gives to the Pauline and Augustinian motif of predestination, he comes into tension with Jesus' preaching of God: the message of unconditional grace which is for all human beings – precisely those who close themselves to it. The theme of this message is that it is not God who makes people lost; human beings have lost God and themselves in the way they direct their life, seek themselves and do not find themselves, because they seek themselves in themselves and not in the source of all life.

"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinner" (Mark 2.17). And to them – those who have lost themselves in life - he told the marvellous stories of the prodigal son, the lost sheep and the lost coin, to show them that God's grace is immeasurable. God seeks those who have lost themselves, goes to meet them and welcomes them with open arms. How deep is the gulf between this understanding of God and Calvin's notion that God abandons human beings to lostness (in an active way) according to an eternal decree? In the light of what is said in the gospels about the omnipotence of the love of God, I can think of election only as universal election in grace related to the whole of creation, not as an act of deliverance of individuals from the mass of the damned.

Here I follow the Leuenberg Agreement from 1973, which says: "In the Gospel we have the promise of God's unconditional acceptance of sinful man. Whoever puts his trust in the Gospel can know that he is saved and praise God for his election. For this reason we can speak of election only with respect to the call to salvation in Christ. Faith knows by experience that the message of salvation is not accepted by all; yet it respects the mystery of God's dealings with men. It bears witness to the seriousness of human decision and at the same time to the reality of God's universal purpose of salvation. The witness of the Scriptures to

Christ forbids us to suppose that God has uttered an eternal decree for the final condemnation of specific individuals or of a particular people.“

And so I can only agree with the clear opinion of Wilfried Härle, in which he states: “The notion of an (eternal) double predestination on the basis of which God chooses part of humankind and predestines another part to damnation can be designated in the light of the self-disclosure of God only as a misunderstanding which can be derived from an abstract understanding of the omnipotence of God, but never derived from the nature of God as love.”¹¹

In fact – as Max Weber has stated – Calvin’s doctrine of predestination has features of a “pathetic inhumanity”.¹² Calvin is only partly to be blamed for this. He stood in the tradition of Augustine’s doctrine of original sin which I regard as an aberration in the history of theology – not only in terms of the history of its effect but above all because it depreciates the dignity of the creatureliness of human beings. At this point I cannot follow Calvin’s position but follow the way shown by him and the other Reformers back to the biblical tradition. The God who ad-

¹¹ Härle, Wilfried, *Dogmatik*, Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter 1995, 2007, p. 506.

¹² Weber, Max, *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (1900), Hamburg: Siebenstern Taschenbuch Verlag, 1965, p. 122. English translation: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism with other writings on the rise of the West*, New York : Oxford University Press, 2009.

dresses me from here, the father-God who welcomes the “lost” son back with a great feast - to this God all glory is due: “*Soli deo Gloria*”.

NO INTEREST FROM THE POOR. CALVIN'S ECONOMIC AND BANKING ETHICS

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1. The relationship between faith and action in Calvin

Ethics is about answers to the question: What should I do? How can I, how can we, act responsibly together? From a theological perspective responsibility leads to the centre of faith and to act responsibly is the fruit of faith. Calvin's economic and business ethics, to which I shall turn today, can be understood only on the foundation of this indissoluble connection between faith and action.

The word "responsibility" leads to the centre of our theme. Linguistically to "be responsible" simply means to "respond", to "give an answer", and thus already points the way to the relationship between faith and action: responsibility, *Verantwortung*, *responsabilité* comes from the Latin *respondere*, answer, Antwort. *Re-spondere* contains the word *spondere*: commit oneself, promise, offer (sponsor). God offers his creation and himself, sealed in his covenant with human beings. *Respondere* means to react to this action of God with faith and action.

So to believe means to accept God's offer and respond in believing action and ethical behaviour.

Calvin's existence and theology were stamped through and through by his *situation* as a refugee and migrant, as has already been emphasised often in the framework of this lecture series.¹ In the political, economic and religious-ecclesiastical uncertainty of human existence, for Calvin God's magnificent offer consisted especially in his promise of providential care. God is constantly active, not only in the achievement of creation but in the "preservation and guidance of this work"; not only in general, but God "sustains, nourishes and cares for in special providence each individual that he has made, down to the smallest sparrow",² he writes in his *magnum opus*, the *Institutes*. For Calvin, the natural responsibility of human beings arises from God's providential care: "For he who has set his limit on our life, has at the same time entrusted us with care of it, has given us the understanding and means to maintain it."³ For Calvin, acting ethically from faith means making responsible use of means entrusted to us like the mind, material goods, inventions, research, etc. Even if "the glory is due to God alone" – the summary of Calvin's theology – and human beings of themselves are not capable of good, through the Holy Spirit God gives them a very great possibility of activity and responsibility. According to Calvin, God works through the gifts of both believers and non-believers. Thus in Calvin both sides of anthropology are clear: human beings are utterly corrupt through original sin and capable of nothing (as Reinhold Bernhardt outlined in his lecture). But the other side also exists in Calvin: as a new creation in Christ a human being is blessed with countless gifts. This very positive

¹ Cf. e.g. the contribution of Ulrich Gäbler in this lecture cycle.

² *Institutes* I, 16,1. (The standard English edition is *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, London and Philadelphia 1960.) Cf. also Fuchs, Erich, "Calvin's Ethik", in Hirzel, Martin Ernst/Sallmann, Martin (eds.): 1509 – Johannes Calvin – 2009. Sein Wirken in Kirche und Gesellschaft. Essays zum 500. Geburtstag, Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2008, 183-199, esp. 183-185.

³ *Institutes* I, 17,4.

attitude to the gifts of creation and to charisms has a great influence on Calvin's openness and orientation to the future, as we shall see.

The third book of the *Institutes* bears the title "In what way we participate in the grace of Christ, what kind of fruits grow out of it for us and what effects arise from it." Over more than 350 pages Calvin shows that participation in the grace of God "benefits us through the hidden working of the Spirit".⁴ So for Calvin, ethics is rooted in pneumatology and has an eschatological orientation. Thus ethical action has a completely new meaning for faith: justification by faith alone liberates us from a concern for salvation through justification by work, i.e. good works. Rather, justification brings freedom. We are loved and supported by God and contribute nothing by our action. And precisely in this way we become capable of loving and acting ethically: "Freedom from the compulsion of the law first makes us capable of joyful obedience."⁵

2. Acting from trust in God, out of freedom and with moderation

Calvin's ethic is methodologically and dogmatically stamped by four interconnected factors: his *trust in God*, his understanding of the *freedom* of the gospel, the understanding of the *law* which follows from that, and his *method of biblical exegesis*.

Trust in God stands at the centre of Calvin's theology. For him providence is not an abstract dogmatic construct but rather pastoral encouragement which creates hope. Similarly, the purpose of the doctrine of predestination was ultimately concerned with the care of souls, namely the certainty that we must not be concerned about the salvation of our souls but can give ourselves completely to our neighbours and service to the world.

⁴ *Institutes*, III, 1, title.

⁵ *Institutes*, III, 19,1.5.

The *freedom* gained in faith frees us from the compulsion of the law; we are free to use God's gifts. But it is not a free pass "to feasting and lavishness", "to the offence of the weak",⁶ to arbitrariness, libertinism or chaos. Rather, it frees us for a moderate life, orientated on righteousness. Drink good wine, but not to the point of drunkenness, because this burdens relationships; enjoy comfort, as long as one can also live with privation and thus also be free from material dependence. Thus Calvin is far removed from Puritanism. For him it is rather moderation, the right balance between too much and too little, which serves as the ethical guideline running like a scarlet thread through his ethical statements, as we shall see. Puritanism has not achieved this balance.

Does this freedom make *the laws* of the Bible superfluous? No, Calvin replies. The law has a threefold meaning: "The first application of the law consists in the fact that it shows us God's righteousness, that is, what is pleasing before God, and in this way reminds each individual of their unrighteousness (*usus elenchticus*)".⁷ It shows us as in a mirror our corruptness, so that the glory for our liberation is due only to God. The second significance of the law (*usus politicus*) is the political order, which like a "rein" or bridle makes possible fellowship and living together in society and "prevents everything from getting into a terrible mess; for this is what would happen if everyone might do what he wanted."⁸ This is as it were to promote the purely inner-worldly significance, not of the divine, but at least of "worldly righteousness", as Zwingli would say. The third, most important use of the law (*usus in re-natis*) consists in giving believers a guideline for life in obedience, a stimulus, an encouragement not to lose sight of the kingdom of God in their own actions. It confirms the covenant with God like a seal.⁹

⁶ *Institutes*, III, 19,9 and 10.

⁷ *Institutes*, II, 7,6-9.

⁸ *Institutes*, II, 7,10-11.

⁹ *Institutes*, II, 7,12-17.

That now leads to a *method of biblical exegesis* in Calvin – I refer to Ekkehard Stegemann’s lecture in this cycle – which takes the biblical texts very seriously, including the texts of the law, but orders and interprets them in the light of the freedom of the Gospel, redemption in Christ and the threefold understanding of the law.

3. Trust in God instead of greed and trust in money

This embedding of Calvin’s ethics in his dogmatics is important for me because in this way it can be shown that his business ethics does not derive opportunistically from the spirit of the time or from economic considerations but has a very deep theological foundation. The calmness of faith anchored in trust in God has great consequences for business ethics, as is shown by the following quotation from a sermon by Calvin, which sounds very topical (on Deut. 24.19-22): “People are so distrustful and are always fearful that the earth is not giving them their due. Therefore God says... ‘I let you flourish. My blessing and my grace will make you numerous, if you do this.’ There is no doubt that here God wants to correct this lack of faith... in which each imagines that he does not have enough. That is the reason why human beings snatch everything for themselves. They attempt to hold fast to it. They are never satisfied. The more they have, the more burning is their thirst, like a compulsive drinker even when he has drunk.”¹⁰

The Geneva Reformer Calvin expressed this criticism of greed and his trust in God’s blessing in a sermon on Deuteronomy 24.19-22 given on 11 February 1556, at a time of great tension and upheaval. It is also topical in 2009, which is a year of fear about jobs and endangered securities in face of the adjustments that the business and environmental cri-

¹⁰ Published in German for the first time in Jehle, Frank, *Du darfst kein riesiges Maul sein. Freiburger Vorlesungen über die Wirtschaftsethik der Reformatoren Luther, Zwingli und Calvin*, Basel: Gotthelf Verlag, 1996, 93.

ses require. I am impressed by the way in which Calvin succeeded in translating his deep trust in God's providence and care into a crystal-clear rational, future-orientated ethic and overall view of society. (In parenthesis it should be noted that the awareness that not money but ultimately only God can provide trust and security is stamped on many coins; in Switzerland we carry around coins in our purses "*dominus providebit*", "the Lord will provide", stamped on the Swiss five franc coin, taken over from the Bern coins of the *Ancien Régime*. Since 1864 "In God we trust" has been printed on US one dollar bills; in recent months some Wall Street bankers may have read this with new eyes.

I shall now demonstrate with due brevity Calvin's business and economic ethics, especially in four areas: his doctrine of interest ("banking ethics"); his understanding of property; his work ethic and his attitude to science. Calvin describes these in his *Institutes* but especially in his numerous sermons, particularly on Deuteronomy.¹¹ For this we need to take a short look at the economic development of Europe and especially of Geneva at the time of Calvin.

4. Geneva and economic "globalisation"

Especially from the end of the fifteenth century on, Europe experienced an extent of unprecedented economic growth. The time of 25 million (!) deaths from the plague, followed by agricultural crises and famines, was now followed by an upturn: the Renaissance and Humanism harnessed enormous spiritual and scientific forces. In 1543 Copernicus, a contemporary of Calvin, published the magnum opus of his astronomical researches, which was later called the Copernican shift. The discov-

¹¹ What in my opinion is the most important work on Calvin's business ethics in recent times remains the standard work by the late Lausanne ethicist and economist Biéler, André, *La pensée économique et sociale de Calvin*, Geneva: Georg, 1961, new edition 2009; English first edition: *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, Geneva: WCC publications, 2005.

ery of America by Christopher Columbus took place only 17 years before Calvin's birth; in 1499 the Portuguese Vasco da Gama reached India and in 1505 Balthasar Springer from the Tyrol, with a licence from the Portuguese king, sailed to India and along with others, opened up the way for commercial trade with India and the import of commodities to Europe. Trade and banking played a central role for business dynamics.

I shall take the Fuggers as an example of this whole development: "The first capitalist. How Jakob Fugger discovered Globalisation" stands on the title page of the March 2009 issue of *National Geographic Magazine*. From 1494, with Jakob Fugger,¹² the trading house of the Fuggers with its headquarters in Augsburg became what today we would call a global player. A network of its trade-relationships criss-crossed the whole of Europe (Geneva was at the interface between Venice and London, between Germany, Lyons and Spain); they carried on trade with India and South America. Three areas of business stood at the centre: production of and trading in textiles with factories especially from Central and Northern Europe; mining (gold, silver, copper, iron) especially from Austria and Hungary; and the construction of a modern banking system. In the sixteenth century the Florentine banking dynasty of the de Medicis, closely bound up with the papacy (Pope Leo X was a Medici) was replaced in the leading role by the banking house of Fugger, which was Catholic and likewise close to the Pope (in 1486 the Augsburg Council for the first time called the firm of Fugger a bank). As well as land and work, mobile money (capital) was an essential factor of production in the sixteenth century. The firm of Fugger organised the transfer of money from indulgences to Rome and also the transfer of benefices with which cardinals, bishops and abbots purchased nomination to these dignities from the Pope (nowadays this is called electoral corruption, as votes are bought with money). Despite the official Catho-

¹² Häberlin, Mark, *Die Fugger. Geschichte einer Augsburger Familie (1367-1650)*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2006.

lic prohibition of usury the Fuggers banked considerable bank dues and profits from currency exchanges like interest. They came under fire from Luther, who grumbled that “the Fuggers and such like companies really must be kept in check”.¹³ Following this, in 1522/23 the Nuremberg Reichstag limited the capital of trading firms to 50,000 guilders and forbade investments from abroad. The Fuggers were accused of monopolistic dealings. They complained that this was the end for big firms. Already at that time greed and abuses led to regulatory interventions by the state. Today Jakob Fugger would be called an oligarch and billionaire. As founder and patron he also financed social and cultural institutions. At his death in 1525 his legacy to his heirs amounted to between 400 and 700 million Swiss francs by today’s reckoning.

5. Calvin’s differentiated ethics of usury

Against this background it becomes clear that Calvin was certainly not the inventor of capitalism (Max Weber never claimed this. We shall return to the matter later). Rather, he lived at the time of a monetary economy run wild, but also of marked additional need of money for the further expansion of the economy and international trade. The Catholic Church was discredited on the one hand by its rigid official insistence on the Old Testament prohibition of usury and on the other by its entanglement in numerous scandals and a double morality, in that taking interest was officially prohibited but in fact tolerated and exploited by the Vatican. Melanchthon had already approved of exacting interest. Calvin’s attitude to usury can be demonstrated in exemplary fashion from his most important text in this respect, namely his letter to a banker.

¹³ Quoted from Brunner, Erwin, *Jakob der Reiche. Wie vor 500 Jahren ein Kaufmann aus Augsburg die Globalisierung erfand*, National Geographic, German edition, March 2009, 27-51 (51).

On 7 November 1545 the banker Claude de Sachinus wrote to Calvin, whom he describes as a brother (*frère*) in the faith and asked him for his opinion on levying interest. Contemporaries, he said, were of the view that levying interest, in so far as it was honest, fair (“*une sorte d’usure honnête*”) and in moderation (the right “proportion”) could also be advocated as Christian. But for him, indebted as he was to the Reformation, Holy Scripture alone was the criterion, even if it ran counter to his own business interests.¹⁴ Here is an expressive testimony of a Christian banker who in the market seeks the guidelines of the gospel!

Calvin for his part, with great intellectual honesty, wants to do justice to the biblical text which in the Old Testament pronounces a prohibition on usury and seeks to interpret it for his time according to the criteria mentioned, of God’s just care, Christian freedom and the threefold use of the law. He did this in a long letter which in all probability was addressed to the banker¹⁵

In it he describes how the meaning of the Old Testament prohibition of usury lies in helping the poor for whom payments of interest could be a threat to their existence. He would really have preferred to ban the levying of interest altogether, as it was often abused, and he also feared that if he spoke positively on usury, more people would allow themselves the practice than he thought right. Nevertheless money with inter-

¹⁴ “L’autorité des Saintes Ecritures a trop de valeur pour moi, pour que je me laisse détourner d’elle (même si elle affirme le contraire) par les préjugés des hommes, aussi savants soient-ils“ (“The authority of the Holy Scriptures has too much value for me that I should allow myself to be turned from it (even if it affirms the contrary) by the prejudices of men, however learned they may be”: *the letter of C. de Sachin to J. Calvin*, Calvinus Opera vol 12, cols 210-11, Extract from Cod Genev.109, fol 14, quoted from Dommen, Edouard, “*Calvin et le prêt à intérêt*”, in *Finance & bien commun/common good*, No 16, Autumn 2003, pp. 42-58 (44).

¹⁵ “Jean Calvin à l’un de ses amis“, *Calvini Opera Omnia*, tome 10, pp. 245-49, quoted from Dommen, Edouard, “*Calvin et le prêt à intérêt*“ (n.14), pp. 54-7. Cf. also Biéler, André, *Pensée économique et sociale* (FN 11), pp. 456-461. Amazingly the letter was first published only in 1565, twenty years after it was written!

est can also serve the common good (“*utilité commune*”). Thus we sense Calvin’s struggle over an answer which does justice to the Bible. Here the guideline cannot be a single biblical passage; it must be God’s Spirit and the “rule of justice” (“*règle d’équité*”). Finally he argues – cautiously – for “*quelques usures*”, a certain moderation in lending money with interest, but immediately adds: “I do not support it if someone proposes to make a profit by lending money as a profession. Moreover I do not concede anything that does not respect certain rules.” He mentions seven such “exceptions” (restrictive rules, special features, exceptions), which must be clearly observed. I now want to look at these individually, because they give a deep insight into Calvin’s ethics of usury and banking and could be described today as criteria for “a fair policy and rate of interest”:

Seven rules (exceptions) for levying interest:¹⁶

“The first (exception) is that one may not exact interest from the poor and that no one will be required to pay (interest) if he is in utter need or visited by misfortune.”

Poor people also need capital for their small trade or to build up a business, but they should receive it as an interest-free loan. So no interest from the poor. Repayment of capital is necessary, but without interest in the case of extreme need since even the repayment of the capital is then a great burden. Profit may not be earned on the back of the weak.

“The second rule is that no one who lends should be so much concerned for profit that he neglects his necessary duties as a result or, because he wants to keep his money safe, scorns his poor brother.”

Duties means charitable activity/giving money à *fonds perdu* for the poor. As well as investing, enough should remain for giving. Again the

¹⁶ Cf. also Stückelberger, Christoph, *Global Trade Ethics. An Overview*, Geneva 2003, pp. 170-171; also *Gerechter Preis?*, Institute for Social Ethics FSPC, Berne 1990, pp. 74f. The English translation of the ‘exceptions’ here is new and much closer to the French original text than the translation in the English edition of André Biélers book (FN 11).

criterion is that the gulf between poor and rich is reduced. It is also a rule against greed. "One should not take everywhere, always, everything and from all,"¹⁷ says Calvin in a commentary on Ezekiel 18.

"The third rule is that (in lending at interest) nothing shall get in the way that is not in harmony with natural justice, and that if one examines the matter by the rule of Christ, i.e. what you want people to do to you, etc., one will find them generally valid."

Here natural justice is the golden rule of reciprocity. This means the *usus politicus legis*, the reasonable and necessary use of the law in the sense of human justice for human society.

"The fourth rule is that the one who borrows should likewise have as much or more profit from the money lent (than the creditor)."

What the debtor can earn productively with the loan capital should produce at least as much profit as the interest for the creditor. Again the orientation towards the wellbeing of the neighbour and the Golden Rule are addressed, but there is more. Here it also becomes clear that Calvin had the levying of interest in view only for production of credits. He rejected consumer credits.

"Fifthly, that we do not judge what is allowed us either by the general and traditional usages (relating to interest), nor measure by the injustice of the world what is right and proper, but that we take our behaviour from the word of God."

Historical, economic, political or opportunistic criteria cannot be the guideline for exacting interest, but only what corresponds to God's will and serves his honour. The Reformation concern, going back to Paul, that one must obey God rather than man, is reflected here.

"Sixthly, that we take into account not only the personal benefit of the one with whom we have to do, but also what is useful for the public. For it is quite evident that the interest that the merchant pays represents

¹⁷ Dommen, Edouard, "Calvin et le prêt à intérêt" (FN 14), p. 47.

a contribution to the public (pension publique). So one must be concerned that the contract benefits rather than harms the common good.”

A trading and capital relationship not only concerns the two parties to the contract but also has effects on wider society (economic externals, macro-economic effects). The present economic crisis, which arose out of a financial crisis, makes this more than clear. Here Calvin's orientation on the common good (*bien public*) becomes clear, as it shapes all his ethics. Despite the emphasis on the individual in the Reformation and in Humanism, Calvin's whole ethics is orientated towards society. The action of the individual must take account of its effects on the whole.

“Seventhly, that one does not transcend the measure which the laws of the district or the place allow, although that is not always enough, for often they allow what they cannot change or limit by a law. So one must give preference to a new justice, which prunes what would become too much.”

Here reference is made to public order, which is to be observed but which, according to his fifth rule, is subordinate to the word of God and is to be critically questioned in the light of it. Nor can unethical banking be justified by pointing out that what the law does not prohibit is allowed. No, the law can only regulate the minimum. The creditor with his conscience must – in good Reformation fashion – go beyond that. Here Calvin addresses the *tertius usus legis*, the law as a guideline and encouragement for believers. For reasons of justice a limitation of profit, e.g. with a voluntary limitation (be moderate!) or capital tax, may be necessary.

6. Property and work ethics: for the common good

An important foundation of Calvin's ethics of business and interest is his attitude to property. Like the other Reformers Calvin rejects the hier-

archy of professions which was customary in Catholic doctrine at that time, according to which the spiritual state and within it the monastic state with a sharing of goods without private possessions is a higher state which goes with worldly possessions.¹⁸ Calvin's doctrine of property is again directly rooted in his theology,

God is the only property holder. All his creation belongs to him. God's providence means that he puts at the disposal of human beings what they need to live. Conversely, human beings have a duty to make responsible use of these rich gifts, as God's stewards (In the New Testament *oikonomos* – economist! Luke 12.45). They have been lent these gifts as their property with the obligation to use them (not let them lie fallow), not to waste them but to increase their value, always with an orientation on the common good. Today we would talk of the social obligations of property.

In the exposition of the Old Testament commandment cited at the beginning of this paper, to leave part of the fruits of the field for the poor (Deut.24.19-22), Calvin writes: "It is a privilege that God gives human beings and that we must value highly, if each may call his property his own without contradiction. Anyone who owns a field may reap the grain it produces and feed his family with it. Even if we can say in human fashion: 'That's mine', we should look to God, who has put us in this privileged position. The entirety should not remain in our hands. It must be distributed – on the one hand according to our possibilities and on the other according to our neighbours' need."¹⁹ In a simple and precise way, Calvin here formulates three far-reaching principles of business ethics: the social obligation that goes with property (with property, but bound up with the obligation to share fairly); a just division of burdens (e.g. taxation related to financial possibilities); and just need (distribution of the goods and services earned to combat poverty).

¹⁸ Biéler, André, *Pensée économique et sociale* (FN 11), p. 355.

¹⁹ Jehle, Frank, *Du darfst kein riesiges Maul sein* (FN 10), p. 95.

Calvin's message of faith, that God's rich blessing should accrue to all men and women, led him, like Luther and Zwingli, to what is called the Protestant work ethic: to work hard in order to be able to earn one's living by one's own efforts and not be dependent by being a mercenary or begging, and at the same time to live wholly from grace, knowing that salvation does not depend on good works. Consequently Calvin supported a prohibition of begging in Geneva. Thus Calvin's 1561 church order states: "To prevent begging, that runs contrary to any good order, it is necessary – we have ordained – for the Council to send some officials to the exits of the churches to drive away those who want to beg."²⁰ Begging and also unemployment, go against human dignity. The city state and the church have the responsibility to avoid unemployment: "To take his work from anyone is to scorn his life."²¹ The church and state community should create social institutions for the needy. Church diaconia and the beginnings of the "welfare state" become visible.

How much economic productivity and development depend on calculable and transparent political–legal frameworks and social networks has again been universally recognised since the crisis year of 2008. Calvin as a jurist was a pioneer not only in the development of a Protestant church order with clear ministries, services and responsibilities (and a church discipline which is too harsh for today's conditions). Constitutional principles of Calvin which are relevant for business ethics were for example the mutual obligation (*mutua obligatio*) between authority and subjects, the right of the state to raise taxes, the obligation of the state to protect property and further rights of the individual, the duty of the citizen to obey the state (combined with the right to resist in special situations). The state should also ensure fair, honourable rules for trad-

²⁰ Calvin, Johannes: *Gestalt und Ordnung der Kirche*. Calvin Studienausgabe Vol. 2, Neukirchen;: Neukirchner Verlag, 1997, p. 259.

²¹ Calvin Sermon 137 on Deut 24,1-6, Op Calv. Vol. 28, p. 162.

ing, which prevent “corruption” and “falsification of units of measurement” and protect the observance of contracts “in loyalty and faith”.²²

7. Science and technology to the glory of God

Economic activity is conditioned by complex interactions between cultural and religious values, political frameworks and scientific-technological achievements. Calvin expressed – more strongly than the other Reformers – his positive attitude, indeed his “great admiration” for science and technology as God’s gifts. As he puts it in his magnum opus, the *Institutes*; “So if the Lord wants to give us support through the help and service of the impious in natural science, the science of thinking or mathematics or other sciences, we should make use of it. Otherwise we would be scorning God’s gifts, which are offered to us in them, and rightly be punished for our sluggishness.”²³ Perhaps alluding to the astronomical researches of his contemporary Copernicus (magnum opus 1543), Calvin wrote in 1559: “Of course scholarship and precise work was needed to establish the movements, positions, distances and properties of the stars; and as in such research God’s providence emerges more clearly, so here it is all the more appropriate to raise one’s spirit to see his glory.”²⁴ So like all human activity science should ultimately serve the praise of God – *Soli Deo Gloria*. Calvin’s positive attitude to scientific research was as important for the economic development of the Anglo-Saxon world with a Calvinistic stamp as his attitude to interest and capital.

²² *Calvin’s Commentary on Lev. 19.35*, according to Biéler, André, *Pensée économique et sociale* (FN 11), 384.

²³ Calvin, John, *Instruction in the Christian Religion (Institutes)*, 1559/2007, II, 2,16.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 5,2.

“To use nature and not acknowledge its creator is shameful ingratitude,” Calvin²⁵ rages against the possible misuse of natural science. Of course the ecological question did not pose itself to him with today’s acuteness, but he laid the foundation for an ecological business ethic by asserting that God’s providence and grace embrace the whole creation in that God “holds all creatures in his hand”, as his Geneva Catechism says. The gifts of creation belong to all.

8. Calvin is different from Calvinism and Max Weber’s ideas

The popular and worldwide view that Calvin and Calvinism are the father of modern capitalism is false. Even the sociologist of religion, Max Weber, to whom the thesis is attributed, did not claim this and a century ago investigated only particular forms of Calvinism and not Calvin himself.²⁶

In his study of the “Vocational ethics of ascetic Protestantism” Max Weber observes: “For the following sketch it may be emphatically pointed out that here we are not considering the personal views of *Calvin*, but *Calvinism*, and also *in that form* to which it had developed at the end of the 16th and in the 17th century in large areas of his dominating influence, which at the same time were the vehicles of capitalist cul-

²⁵ Calvin, Johannes, *Auslegung der Genesis*, ed. by D. Goeters and D. Simon, Neukirchen: Neukirchner Verlag, 1956, p. 6.

²⁶ Stückelberger, Christoph, „Calvin, Calvinism, and Capitalism. The challenges of New Interest in Asia”, in Edward Dommen/James D. Bratt (eds.): *John Calvin Rediscovered. The Impact of his Social and Economic Thought*, Princeton Theological Seminary Studies, Princeton, 2007, pp. 121-131. Stückelberger, christoph, ”John Calvin und Calvin Klein. Reformierte Wirtschaftsethik im globalen Kapitalismus“, in Georg Pfeleiderer and Alexander Heit (eds.), *Wirtschaft und Wertekultur(en). Zur Aktualität von Max Webers “Protestantischer Ethik“*, Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2008, pp. 241-58 (257). So Calvin was not the father of capitalism, as he has been seen worldwide through Max Weber’s study on The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.

ture... Of course 'Reformed' is by no means identical with 'Calvinist'.²⁷

Max Weber was describing in particular a form of Scottish Puritanism (essentially that of Baxter) and presumably had read hardly any of Calvin himself but in practice exclusively referred to secondary literature from the second half of the nineteenth century. In his study, in 393 notes Weber quotes Calvin only once.

Moreover in the time of Calvin capitalism in its industrial and present-day form did not yet exist. The mercantile capitalism of the time of Calvin, the industrial capitalism of the 19th century and today's "ICT capitalism" which is essentially based on information and communication technologies (ICTs) and thus allows very rapid, volatile shifts of capital, must be distinguished. Their relationship to value cultures is very different.

In a fundamental study on Calvin, Calvinism and capitalism the late Max Geiger, the honoured Basle church historian of our theological faculty, came to the conclusion: "But there had better be no talk of a kinship between Calvin (Calvinism) and capitalism."²⁸ The historical development is very much more complex. My remarks should have made clear the differences between Calvin and Puritanism. Puritanism advocated hard work for the praise of God, Calvin's work ethics aimed at people being able to feed themselves, not be dependent on others and support others. Whereas Puritanism was really ascetic, hostile to pleasure and sex, for Calvin enjoyment was an expression of the grateful use of God's gifts, as long as this was done with moderation.

²⁷ Weber, Max, "Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus", in id., *Die protestantische Ethik*, I, Hamburg 1975, pp. 27-278 (195). English translation *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London 1965.

²⁸ Geiger, Max, „Calvin, Calvinismus, Kapitalismus“, in *Gottesreich und Menschenreich. Ernst Staehelin zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Max Geiger, Basel and Stuttgart: Helbing und Lichtenhahn, 1969, pp. 229-286 (286).

Particularly in the current debate about finance and the economic crisis, the lasting interest in Max Weber's thesis underlines that in addition to technological political and economic factors, economic development rests on important cultural, religious and ethical factors.

Listening carefully to Calvin allows us to combine

- Openness to progress and to the use of resources and development

with

- gratitude for God's gifts,
- humility and modesty in the awareness that God is the proprietor
- certainty that the God who is active at all times supports our lives
- the courage for justice which includes intervention on behalf of the weak.

Thus Calvin was and is a relevant pioneer for business ethics

- for doing business in the service of fellow men and women
- for a banking ethics which is committed to justice and the common good
- for an ethics of work and science which is committed to moderation
- for a political framework which combines the security of law with one's own responsibility.

And all this to the praise of God. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

CREATION AND SCIENCE IN THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN CALVIN

Jan Rohls, Germany

It is true that Copernicus, the canon of Frombork (Frauenburg), is never mentioned in Calvin's writings. But in a sermon on 1 Corinthians 10, the reformer explicitly warns against those who claim "that the sun does not move, and that it is the earth that moves and turns". He declares them to be possessed by the devil and attempting to "pervert the order of nature."¹ With these statements, the Geneva reformer shows himself to be a follower of the traditional Aristotelian-Ptolemaic model of the universe. Looking at the other reformers, this does not come as much of a surprise. Copernicus's magnum opus, *De Revolutionibus*, was printed in 1543 (the year of his death) with the help of the Wittenberg mathematician Georg Joachim Rheticus in the Lutheran town of Nuremberg; but this was by no means an indication that the Wittenberg Reformation had abandoned the geocentric model. Andreas Osiander, the Nuremberg reformer who wrote a preface to that edition, expressly wanted the Copernican theory to be understood as nothing more than a mathematical hypothesis. True, Melanchthon's son-in-law Caspar Peucer, who taught astronomy at the University of Wittenberg, advised his students to read

¹ Quoted in: Bouwsma, W.J., *John Calvin. A Sixteenth-Century Portrait*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989, p. 72.

Copernicus in addition to advocates of the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic model. But Peucer himself remained a believer in the old model, just like Calvin.

1 Creation as mirror of God

When Calvin talks about the world, he talks about the world created by God. By observing creation itself, he states, it is possible to recognise God as the creator of the world. For God has revealed himself in building the world, and he continues to do so to this day, so that human beings cannot open their eyes without beholding him. He has imprinted into his works true markers of his glory, markers that are so clear and obvious that it becomes impossible for even the most close-minded persons to justify their ignorance of God. Because “wherever you turn your eyes, there is no portion of the world, however minute, that does not exhibit at least some sparks of beauty; while it is impossible to contemplate the vast and beautiful fabric as it extends around, without being overwhelmed by the immense weight of glory.”² The “elegant structure of the world serv[es] us as a kind of mirror, in which we may behold God, though otherwise invisible.”³ To support these statements, Calvin refers to Hebrews 11:3 and Psalm 19:1: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.” The language of celestial bodies, known to all the peoples of the earth, bear witness to God so unequivocally that God cannot be unknown to any people, any nation. In Romans 1:19-20 – the classic quotation for natural gnosis – Paul expresses this notion even more clearly when he declares, “since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his

² Calvin, John, *Institutes* I, 5,1.

[<http://www.reformed.org/master/index.html?mainframe=/books/institutes>].

³ *Ibid.*

eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse”⁴. This is a gnosis that is open to and can be expected of the uneducated, albeit of course it can be further deepened by astronomy, science, and medicine. For not only the nature surrounding human beings, but also human beings themselves are clear evidence of God’s power, mercy and wisdom. Here, Calvin references the common Renaissance concept of human beings as microcosms. He criticises all those who attempt to supplant God as the creator by putting nature in his place. Above all, he attacks Epicurus and his followers because of their atomism and mechanism. In Calvin’s view, the purely atomistic, causal-mechanical explanation of nature fails to account for its utility. Likewise, he attacks the materialistic tendencies in the psychology of Aristotelianism. The soul cannot be reduced to physical body functions. “What has the body to do with your measuring the heavens, counting the number of the stars, ascertaining their magnitudes, their relative distances, the rate at which they move, and the orbits which they describe?”⁵ In Calvin’s view, the intellectual capacities of human beings can only be explained by postulating an immaterial, spiritual soul that is immortal because of its immateriality and thus serves as further proof of God’s existence. Calvin also rejects the suggestion of a “world soul” or the identification of God with nature, as argued by Lucretius, in favour of the notion that nature is the order posited by God. “Let each of us, therefore, in contemplating his own nature, remember that there is one God who governs all natures, and, in governing, wishes us to have respect to himself, to make him the object of our faith, worship, and adoration.”⁶

⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

⁵ *Institutes* I, 5,5.

⁶ *Institutes* I, 5,6.

2 True knowledge only through the scripture

Calvin leaves no doubt about his conviction that all of these insights are possible without the help of the written word. Indeed, every human being can attain this insight about God being the creator of the world simply through the observation of nature. The world reveals the power, the eternity, the mercy and wisdom of its creator; and it does so not only through the usual course of nature, but also through acts of God's providence. But even though God reveals himself in the world in this way, this does not lead to true gnosis as a rule, not even among the philosophers. For the "invisible Godhead is indeed represented by such displays, but [...] we have no eyes to perceive it until they are enlightened through faith by internal revelation from God."⁷ We may attain true gnosis, true knowledge of God not by observing the world, but only through the Scripture as the word of God. For "it is the proper school for training the children of God; the invitation given to all nations, to behold him in the heavens and earth, proving of no avail."⁸ However, this means that scripture is the only way of attaining not only true gnosis, but also true knowledge about the world. "Hence God was pleased that a history of the creation should exist - a history on which the faith of the Church might lean without seeking any other God than Him whom Moses sets forth as the Creator and Architect of the world."⁹ At the same time, this sentence clarifies the fact that in Calvin's time, the history of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 still was regarded as a unit, which was revealed to Moses by God. Calvin also thinks that he can calculate the time of creation based on temporal data given in the Holy Scripture: "[T]he present world is drawing to a close before it has completed its six thousandth year."¹⁰ This first of all makes it clear that the world is not

⁷ *Institutes* I, 5,14.

⁸ *Institutes* I, 6.4.

⁹ *Institutes* I, 14.1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

eternal, but has a temporal beginning. Questions such as why God did not create the world earlier are rebuked by Calvin with reference to Augustine, just like speculations about the infinity of space, which in his time had started to crop up already. Instead, he wants his description of the created world to operate within the limits given by the Mosaic history of creation. This means, then, that his concept of the world's origin is an entirely traditional one: the six days of creation.

This, however, represents a problem for Calvin. In the history of creation in Genesis 1, there is no mention of the creation of the angels, who nevertheless are an established presence throughout the Bible. Therefore, their creation should have been mentioned somewhere in Genesis 1. Accordingly, Calvin begins his description of the doctrine of creation with an explanation about why Genesis 1 is silent on the subject of the creation of angels, which is followed by his doctrine of the angels. Calvin sees the reason for not mentioning the angels in the need for accommodation - God's way of adapting his message to the recipients of the revelation as conveyed by Moses: "For although Moses, in accommodation to the ignorance of the generality of men, does not in the history of the creation make mention of any other works of God than those which meet our eye, yet, seeing he afterwards introduces angels as the ministers of God, we easily infer that he for whom they do service is their Creator. Hence, though Moses, speaking in popular language, did not at the very commencement enumerate the angels among the creatures of God, nothing prevents us from treating distinctly and explicitly of what is delivered by Scripture concerning them in other places."¹¹ According to this statement, then, the biblical history of creation in Genesis 1 leaves out the creation of angels because it focuses on the visible world that can be perceived by all human beings. By introducing the concept of accommodation, Calvin attempts to harmonise two divergent ideas. On the one hand, Calvin works under the premise that only

¹¹ *Institutes* I, 14,3.

the history of creation as the revealed word of God provides information about the creation of the world. But on the other hand, as early as in the history of the fall of humankind in Genesis 3, the existence of Satan and other angels is presupposed as a matter of course, even though they have not been mentioned in the history of creation. Without going deeper into the when and how of their creation, Calvin only deals with their function in the *Institutio*. However, these remarks make up the major part of the doctrine of creation in his dogmatics, while only a negligible part is assigned to the visible world, apart from human beings.

3 The function of good and evil angels

Calvin comments on the subject of angels in such great detail in order to fight misconceptions such as Manichaeism, which elevates the devil as the creator of all evil to the position of a second God. Instead, Calvin invokes the Nicene-Constantinople creed, which sees God as the creator of not only all visible, but also all invisible things, including, of course, the angels. Thus, the angels are creatures and ministers of God. However, Calvin rejects all speculations about the when and how of their creation: “[T]o stir up questions concerning the time or order in which they were created [...] bespeaks more perverseness than industry. Moses relates that the heavens and the earth were finished (Gen 2:1), with all their host; what avails it anxiously to inquire at what time other more hidden celestial hosts than the stars and planets also began to be?”¹² In his detailed description of creation, Calvin thus follows the hermeneutic rule to only look to the Scripture as God’s revealed word. This is also why he rejects all speculations about the hierarchy of the angels, as found in Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite’s work “On the Celestial Hierarchy”, as pure drivel. After all, even though archangels are mentioned in some passages of the Bible, and the names “Michael”,

¹² *Institutes* I, 14,4.

“Gabriel” and “Raphael” are also mentioned, it is hardly possible to draw any conclusions about the angels’ hierarchy or number from these scraps of information. Instead, Calvin is content with the biblical description of the function of the angels: heavenly spirits that serve as ministers to God, obeying his orders and revealing him to the world. Therefore, they can (among other designations) also be identified as gods, “because the Deity is in some measure represented to us in their service, as in a mirror.”¹³ They mainly serve to protect us, and this applies to all angels – therefore, Calvin rejects the question of whether every individual believer has been assigned one individual guardian angel, declaring this enquiry useless and impossible to answer with the help of the Bible. Calvin does, however, hold on to the existence of angels as spirits with their own being, and thus as immaterial substances, against the Sadducean notion “that by angels nothing more was meant than the movements which God impresses on men, or manifestations which he gives of his own power.”¹⁴

Calvin does not doubt the existence of evil angels any more than the existence of good ones, since the Bible mentions a multitude of evil spirits that vex humankind. The lord of the evil spirits is the Satan or the devil, who, contrary to the Manichean premise, is not a Godlike, uncreated, evil primordial being, but a fallen creature of God. As Calvin states, “this malice which we attribute to his nature is not from creation, but from depravation. Every thing damnable in him he brought upon himself, by his revolt and fall.”¹⁵ Calvin’s aim is to defend the goodness of creation despite the existence of evil angels led by Satan, and he can only succeed by adopting the traditional premise of a fall of the angels initiated by Satan. At the same time, he is well aware of the fact that the Scripture does not mention the fall of the angels any more than it men-

¹³ *Institutes* I, 14,5.

¹⁴ *Institutes* I, 14,9.

¹⁵ *Institutes* I, 14,16.

tions their creation. But he finds an explanation for this omission as well. Since “these things are of no consequence to us, it was better, if not entirely to pass them in silence, at least only to touch lightly upon them. The Holy Spirit could not deign to feed curiosity with idle, unprofitable histories. Therefore, instead of dwelling on superfluous matters, let it be sufficient for us briefly to hold, with regard to the nature of devils, that at their first creation they were the angels of God, but by revolting they both ruined themselves, and became the instruments of perdition to others.”¹⁶ Calvin refers to 2 Peter 2:4 for an explanation: “For [...] God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgement.” However, Satan actually is subject to God’s authority, so that his rebellion against God implies that God permits it, especially since Satan has already been defeated in Christ. As with the good angels, Calvin’s thoughts here have an entirely realistic bent. He therefore rejects the notion “that devils are nothing but bad affections or perturbations suggested by our carnal nature”¹⁷ as unbiblical. Satan and the evil spirits must really be sentient, intelligent spirits. Otherwise, statements such as 2 Peter 2:4 would be nonsensical: “For [...] God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgement.”

Only after he has dealt with the creation of angels and the fall of Satan and his followers, Calvin turns to the visible creation, which he sees as a *theatrum*, a glorious theatre. He explicitly refers to the comments on the six days of creation in Genesis 1 written by Basil of Caesarea and Ambrose. “From this history we learn that God, by the power of his Word and his Spirit, created the heavens and the earth out of nothing; that thereafter he produced things inanimate and animate of every kind, arranging an innumerable variety of objects in admirable order, giving

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ *Institutes* I, 14,19.

each kind its proper nature, office, place, and station; at the same time, as all things were liable to corruption, providing for the perpetuation of each single species, cherishing some by secret methods, and, as it were, from time to time instilling new vigor into them, and bestowing on others a power of continuing their race, so preventing it from perishing at their own death.”¹⁸ This means that Calvin argues for the constancy of the species, which God created as distinct and independent from each other. But it is not his intention to describe the creation of the world in detail in the *Institutio*. For this purpose, he refers to the Mosaic history of creation: “I have no intention to give the history of creation in detail, it is sufficient to have again thus briefly touched on it in passing. I have already reminded my reader, that the best course for him is to derive his knowledge of the subject from Moses and others who have carefully and faithfully transmitted an account of the creation.”¹⁹ This means, however, that we must turn to Calvin’s comment on Genesis 1 in order to find out more about his concept of nature.

4 The story of the seven days creation

In the introduction to his commentary on Genesis, we again encounter Calvin’s basic premise that God’s wisdom, power and mercy are reflected in the miraculous construction of the world. It is for this reason, says Calvin, that Moses begins his book with the history of creation. Calvin refutes the critical question of how Moses could have known about the creation of the world when he was not an eyewitness and could not have read about it in other books, with the notion that Moses had been informed about it by God himself. “For he does not put forward divinations of his own, but is the instrument of the Holy Spirit for the publication of those things which it was of importance for all men to

¹⁸ *Institutes* I, 14,20.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

know.”²⁰ But the history of the creation of the world has been spread through oral tradition as well. From Adam, the first human being, it was handed down to subsequent generations; and to protect it from distortion, Moses wrote it down on God’s behest. It already becomes clear in the introduction to his commentary that Calvin, entirely in keeping with the ancient and medieval commentaries on the six days of creation, views the world as finite and adheres to a geocentric model of the world. Here, he writes: “[T]he circuit of the heavens is finite, and [...] the earth, like a little globe, is placed in the centre.”²¹ Calvin thus rejects the notion of infinite space as well as that of infinite time.

Turning to the interpretation of the individual verses of Genesis 1, Calvin integrates the concept of creation from nothing, a *creation ex nihilo*, which actually had been established a lot later, into the history of creation. Indeed, the Hebrew term for “create” does not signify the shaping of an already existing material. Here, Calvin eliminates the idea of an eternal, shapeless material, which he rejects as erroneous and pagan. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, which means that he called into being the whole chaotic mass, the basic substance of the whole world. This becomes especially clear considering that water, over which the Spirit of God is hovering, is mentioned immediately afterwards. The Spirit of God hovering over the waters signifies that “this mass, however confused it might be, was rendered stable, for the time, by the secret efficacy of the Spirit.”²² True, “we now behold the world preserved by government, or order.”²³ But before the world was put into order through natural laws, when it was still in the state of sheer chaos, it could only be preserved by the efficacy of the divine Spirit. In his interpretation as a whole, Calvin intends to point out the world’s complete

²⁰ J. Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*. Transl. J. King.

[<http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/m.sion/calvgene.htm>]

²¹ Loc.cit. 11.

²² Loc.cit. 12.

²³ Ibid.

dependence on God. This also shows in his interpretation of the fact that the creation of light is mentioned at the very beginning, even before the sources of light, sun and moon, are created. Calvin explains this as follows: “It did not, however, happen from inconsideration or by accident, that the light preceded the sun and the moon. To nothing are we more prone than to tie down the power of God to those instruments the agency of which he employs. The sun and moon supply us with light: And, according to our notions we so include this power to give light in them, that if they were taken away from the world, it would seem impossible for any light to remain. Therefore the Lord, by the very order of the creation, bears witness that he holds in his hand the light, which he is able to impart to us without the sun and moon.”²⁴ Calvin strictly adheres to the concept of the six days of creation and rejects the idea that Moses could have split one act of creation into six days of work. This is another instance of God’s accommodation to the mental capacities of human beings. The creation of the world occurs in stages in order to capture our attention.

Calvin identifies the work of the *second day*, the firmament in the midst of the waters, with the circle of air settling all around the world. He interprets the water above the firmament, which is being separated from the water below the firmament, as clouds that menacingly hover above us in the air, and yet leave us space for breathing. Here, too, he points out the dependence on God: “We know, indeed that the rain is naturally produced; but the deluge sufficiently shows how speedily we might be overwhelmed by the bursting of the clouds, unless the cataracts of heaven were closed by the hand of God.”²⁵ Calvin does attribute the rain to the usual natural order, but this order can be overthrown by God at any time, as the Flood has shown. Likewise, the fact that we live on dry land can only be explained through God’s miraculous intervention,

²⁴ Loc.cit. 18f.

²⁵ Loc.cit. 20.

which caused the water on earth to collect in specific places. Then, on the *third day*, the earth received seeds and sprouts from God, so that the bare, infertile ground could bloom with life. Here, too, Calvin's main concern is to show the dependence on God. After all, herbs and trees are mentioned before the creation of the sun and the moon. Calvin explains this as follows: "We now see, indeed, that the earth is quickened by the sun to cause it to bring forth its fruits; nor was God ignorant of this law of nature, which he has since ordained: but in order that we might learn to refer all things to him he did not then make use of the sun or moon."²⁶ From this, the deeper meaning of the history of creation can be deduced: "that we may learn from the order of the creation itself, that God acts through the creatures, not as if he needed external help, but because it was his pleasure."²⁷ That which we perceive as the order of nature, e.g. propagation, thus is a direct result of God's will alone. It therefore is not an order immanent to nature itself.

This dependence on God also shows itself in the case of light, which at first lay scattered about on the first day of creation and was tied to carriers of light only on the *fourth day*. In this way, the ruling order of nature is established with the sun supplying the light of day and the moon and stars shining by night. In this way, the astronomical day that includes day and night is created. From that moment on, the sun and the moon provide signs, times, days and years. With its increasing proximity to the earth, the sun not only serves to warm up the land and thus to stimulate the natural growth process, but also to divide time into months and years. Especially in this regard, Calvin expressly points out that "Moses does not speak with philosophical acuteness."²⁸ He does not want to make a scientific statement about how big the sun or how small the moon is. "For as it became a theologian, he had respect to us rather

²⁶ Loc.cit. 21.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Loc.cit. 23.

than to the stars.”²⁹ According to Calvin, Moses speaks as a theologian and not as an astronomer. “Nor, in truth, was he ignorant of the fact, that the moon had not sufficient brightness to enlighten the earth, unless it borrowed from the sun; but he deemed it enough to declare what we all may plainly perceive, that the moon is a dispenser of light to us. That it is, as the astronomers assert, an opaque body, I allow to be true, while I deny it to be a dark body.”³⁰ As a theologian, Moses wants to be understood by the uneducated, common man and therefore focuses on sensual perception, which is open to everybody. He elucidates on the universally understood uses of the sun and the moon for humankind and refrains from providing scientific information about the astronomical world. Thus he seems to think of the moon as a source of light, the second biggest after the sun, even though Saturn, which appears to be smaller because of its distance from the earth, is really bigger than the moon. But this does not mean that Moses is a bad astronomer – Calvin is only interested in differentiating the functions of theology and astronomy. Theology is not responsible for astronomy as such, even if the latter does not contradict the former. Rather, he writes about astronomers: “Nevertheless, this study is not to be reprobated, nor this science to be condemned, because some frantic persons are wont boldly to reject whatever is unknown to them. For astronomy is not only pleasant, but also very useful to be known: it cannot be denied that this art unfolds the admirable wisdom of God. Wherefore, as ingenious men are to be honoured who have expended useful labour on this subject, so they who have leisure and capacity ought not to neglect this kind of exercise. Nor did Moses truly wish to withdraw us from this pursuit in omitting such things as are peculiar to the art [...]”³¹

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

On the *fifth day*, God creates birds and fishes, adding to their creation his blessing and his mission: “Be fruitful and multiply!” But the reproduction of fowl and fish is different from that of trees and plants in that it occurs through the process of procreation. Calvin interprets the bible passage in question to mean that not only the fishes, but also the birds were created out of the water. On God’s behest, then, the dead matter brings forth life as the water gives birth to fishes and birds. In contrast to creation from nothing, this means that the species are shaped from matter that had been created from nothing. The same concept applies to the creation of land animals on the sixth day, which also are not created from nothing, but formed from the earth. When the passage states that God created every one of these animals according to their kind, it points towards the permanent differentiation of the species that are preserved through procreation. This again makes clear that Calvin believes in the constancy of the different species as created by God. But at the same time, his interpretation of the history of creation in Genesis 1 shows that he does not pursue a specifically cosmological interest. He does not want to compile an encyclopedic record of the created natural world. What really, truly interests him about the history of creation is, above all, the creation of human beings. For Calvin, this represents the culmination of the history of creation; for humankind is God’s most important work.

What Genesis 1 has to say about the creation of human beings on the *sixth day* is also influenced by God’s accommodation of human beings: when the passage states that God had been deliberating with himself when it came to the creation of human beings, this does not mean that God at that time started to think about what form he wanted to give to human beings. “[J]ust as we have before observed, that the creation of the world was distributed over six days, for our sake, to the end that our minds might the more easily be retained in the meditation of God’s works: so now, for the purpose of commending to our attention the dig-

nity of our nature, he, in taking counsel concerning the creation of man, testifies that he is about to undertake something great and wonderful.”³² For “man is, among other creatures a certain preeminent specimen of Divine wisdom, justice, and goodness, so that he is deservedly called by the ancients ‘mikrokosmos’, ‘a world in miniature.’”³³ Calvin, who also starts his remarks on the subject in the *Institutio* with the description of human nature in the primal state before the fall, adheres to the traditional notion that a human being consists of a soul and a body. This means that his anthropology is influenced by Platonism, which is obvious already in his definition of the soul. The soul can also be called “spirit” and is characterised as “an immortal though created essence, which is [man’s] nobler part.”³⁴ More precisely, the soul is an autonomous entity independent from the body, as Calvin demonstrates in his interpretation of the Paulinian differentiation between flesh and spirit. He substantiates this hypothesis with the human likeness to God postulated in Genesis 1:27. “For though the divine glory is displayed in man’s outward appearance, it cannot be doubted that the proper seat of the image is in the soul.”³⁵ As Ovid notes, their upright posture separates human beings from animals; but this external characteristic only serves to manifest the image of God which is localised on the inside. Calvin attributes the fact that Genesis 1 uses two different terms for “image” (“*zelem*” and “*demut*”, which the Vulgata translates as “*imago*” and “*similitudo*”) to the Hebrew style. They are synonyms. Thus, he rejects the traditional interpretation that the *imago* refers to the fundamental substance of the soul while *similitudo* represents certain qualities of the soul. Instead, the Bible passage in question means the following: “God having determined to create man in his own image, to remove the obscurity which was in this terms adds, by way of explanation, in his likeness, as if he had said, that

³² Loc.cit. 25.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Inst. I.15.2.

³⁵ Inst. I.15.3.

he would make man, in whom he would, as it were, image himself by means of the marks of resemblance impressed upon him.³⁶ But human beings are created in God's image for the sake of their souls, which are defined by reason; and thus the likeness to God that is rooted in the rational soul extends to every aspect of the superior position of human beings among all the other kinds of living things. "Accordingly, by this term is denoted the integrity with which Adam was endued when his intellect was clear, his affections subordinated to reason, all his senses duly regulated, and when he truly ascribed all his excellence to the admirable gifts of his Maker."³⁷ According to Calvin, knowledge, righteousness and holiness are among these gifts characterising human beings in the primordial state. He expressly rejects the idea that human likeness to God is found in the dominion bestowed on human beings, instead of in the rational soul endowed with these gifts. Instead, he explicitly refers to Plato, who recognises God's likeness in the immortal soul. The soul, which is defined by reason and volition, is incorporeal, but it resides in the body, over which it rules.

With the advent of human beings, the work of creation has come to its end. When it says in Genesis 2:2 that God rested on the *seventh day*, it might appear as if now, after he has finished creating the world, he leaves it to its own devices. But Calvin does not share this opinion. In his commentary on Genesis, he writes: "The question may not improperly be put, what kind of rest this was. For it is certain that inasmuch as God sustains the world by his power, governs it by his providence, cherishes and even propagates all creatures, he is constantly at work."³⁸ The fact that God is the creator of the heavens and the earth thus also means that their perpetual preservation is attributed to his actions. But neither does God's resting mean that God has stopped creating new species.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Calvin, John, *Commentary* (note 20), 31.

“[I]t is to be observed, that in the works of the six days, those things alone are comprehended which tend to the lawful and genuine adorning of the world. It is subsequently that we shall find God saying, ‘Let the earth bring forth thorns and briers,’ by which he intimates that the appearance of the earth should be different from what it had been in the beginning. But the explanation is at hand; many things which are now seen in the world are rather corruptions of it than any part of its proper furniture. For ever since man declined from his high original, it became necessary that the world should gradually degenerate from its nature. We must come to this conclusion respecting the existence of fleas, caterpillars, and other noxious insects. In all these, I say, there is some deformity of the world, which ought by no means to be regarded as in the order of nature, since it proceeds rather from the sin of man than from the hand of God. Truly these things were created by God, but by God as an avenger.”³⁹ Thus, God’s resting means that the creation of the world has been finished in the sense of being perfected. God’s initial plan of the world as a work of art has been realised. Speaking of God’s resting thus only serves “to express the perfection of the fabric of the world; and therefore we must not infer that God so ceased from his works as to desert them [...]”⁴⁰ Thus Moses here portrays God as an artist, architect and rich house father who did not cease his efforts until his work was perfect and complete. Nature in its present state, on the other hand, is the result of the fall of humankind. God’s resting thus does not mean that God has withdrawn from the world after its creation.

5 Providence is God’s constant presence in his creation

On the contrary: in the *Institutio*, the doctrine of creation is followed by the doctrine of providence, which begins with the sentence: “It were

³⁹ Loc.cit. 32.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

cold and lifeless to represent God as a momentary Creator, who completed his work once for all, and then left it. Here, especially, we must dissent from the profane, and maintain that the presence of the divine power is conspicuous, not less in the perpetual condition of the world than in its first creation.”⁴¹ Providence is an essential complement to creation. Calvin decidedly rejects the idea that God indeed created the world, but that the preservation and guidance of creation can be traced to a power that God had endowed the world with during its creation. “[F]aith must penetrate deeper. After learning that there is a Creator, it must forthwith infer that he is also a Governor and Preserver, and that, not by producing a kind of general motion in the machine of the globe as well as in each of its parts, but by a special providence sustaining, cherishing, superintending, all the things which he has made, to the very minutest, even to a sparrow.”⁴² Therefore, God’s providence excludes random chance and coincidence. Even inanimate objects cannot work their God-given power unless they are steered by God. Thus, all created things are merely instruments of God’s work, which means that he can suspend their usual effects with the help of miracles. When it says in Joshua 10:13 that the sun stood still on Joshua’s orders, this miracle is supposed to show that the sun does not rise and fall every day because of a blind natural law. In the commentary about this particular passage, Calvin writes: “When, without hesitation, he opens his mouth and tells the sun and the moon to deviate from the perpetual law of nature, it is just as if he had adjured them by the boundless power of God with which he was invested. Here, too, the Lord gives a bright display of his singular favour toward his Church”.⁴³ This means that God’s providence does not mean that he leaves everything to a constant law of nature, but that it is rooted in his omnipotence. Therefore, it is inadmissible

⁴¹ *Institutes* I, 16,1.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Calvin, John, *Biblical Commentaries*. Transl. J. King [<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/calvin/cc07/index.htm>].

to attribute worldly events to stellar constellations and comet sightings with the help of astrology, because the movements of the stars and the appearance of comets themselves are dependent on God's will "[...] the providence we mean is not one by which the Deity, sitting idly in heaven, looks on at what is taking place in the world, but one by which he, as it were, holds the helms and overrules all events."⁴⁴ God's providence, then, is not mere prescience, but an action that also implies the dominion over the efficacy of the individual creature. Therefore, nothing happens by chance. Individual natural events, too, are effects of God's special providence. This position differs from the Stoic dogma that everything is subjected to *fatum* or *heimarmene* in that it does not attribute everything that happens to a causal nexus imminent to nature, but instead to God's wisdom and power. Calvin reconciles this God-given determinism with the notion of contingency in the following way: "though all things are ordered by the counsel and certain arrangement of God, to us, however, they are fortuitous, [because] the order, method, end, and necessity of events, are, for the most part, hidden in the counsel of God, though it is certain that they are produced by the will of God, they have the appearance of being fortuitous, such being the form under which they present themselves to us [...]"⁴⁵ This means that all the changes in the world are hidden effects of God's wisdom, power and will. Even though they may be contingent in their own nature, they are still necessary, because God has decided for them to happen.

6 Calvin paved the way for Christian physics

By now it should have become clear that Calvin, despite his fundamentally positive attitude towards astronomy as a helpful tool in discovering the divine wisdom in creation, does not consider a purely scientific

⁴⁴ *Institutes* I, 16,4.

⁴⁵ *Institutes* I, 16,9.

approach to the natural world to be sensible. In his view, this approach leads to misinterpretations, which can be avoided by focusing on the biblical history of creation. It is hardly surprising, then, that works are produced in Calvin's sphere of influence that take the Scripture as a basis for general physical models dealing with the origin and nature of the heavens and the four elements. In 1576, twelve years after Calvin's death, the *Physice Christiana sive de rerum creaturum origine et usu disputatio* was published in Lyon. It was written by Lambert Daneau, a Frenchman who taught at the Academy of Geneva at the time. The rationale for establishing this specifically Christian, i.e. biblical, model of physics is based on the idea that God, like every artist, would be best equipped to explain his own work, and that he does so in the Scripture. Therefore, physics must be based on the Scripture, or more precisely, on the history of creation. Calvin's influence on Daneau is clearly shown when the latter explains that the causal research of pagan physics remains stuck with a power immanent to nature, while Christian physics advances all the way to God as the origin of all things.⁴⁶ Therefore, only Christian physics fulfils the proper purpose of nature observation, i.e., to lead human beings to attain true knowledge of God, since it understands the natural world as a manifestation of God's power, wisdom and eternity. Daneau refutes the Aristotelian definition of physics as the science of being as being as long as it is in motion, stating that this would mean that invisible objects like angels could be the subject of physics. Instead, he defines physics as the science of corporeally and spatially limited things that can be perceived by the senses.⁴⁷ The world, which is only one, is the sum of all visible things, whose species have been created by God as independent from each other. Daneau defends the finiteness and spatial limitation of the world with the argument that other-

⁴⁶ Bizer, E., *Frühorthodoxie und Rationalismus*, Zürich 1963, 34f.

⁴⁷ L. Danaeus, *Physice Christiana sive de rerum creaturum origine et usu disputatio*, 3. Ed., Geneva 1580, 53.

wise, there would be two infinities – God and the world. In all probability, Daneau states, the world is the shape of a sphere, because that is the most perfect geometric form. That it is created also implies that it has a temporal beginning and will have a temporal end, thus, that it is not eternal. According to Daneau, it is even possible to establish the date of creation with the help of the Scripture – in 1575, when he wrote his book, he calculated the age of the world to be 5555 years. Its creator is God alone, who creates it from nothing. Plato's *Timaios* is invoked as extra-biblical testimony that the sole reason for the creation is not any lack on God's part, but God's goodness and his will to bestow it unto others. The purpose of the world is the glorification of God, insofar as the whole of creation praises its creator as an expression of God's power, wisdom and goodness.

In the second part of his *Christian Physics*, Daneau deals with the nature of created things, following the progression of the biblical story of creation as the work of six days. Here, he defines nature as the power bestowed on every species at the time of their creation that enables every individual thing to actualise its specific purpose or destiny. However, this means that Daneau shares the teleological concept of nature found in the Aristotelian *Physics*. Like Calvin, Daneau differentiates between the light created by God in the beginning and the luminary celestial bodies that were only created on the fourth day. On the second day, God created the space between heaven and earth, thereby separating the celestial from the terrestrial waters. The space in between itself is filled with aqueous and gaseous bodies. Above it expands the ether, beyond which lies the heaven of the blessed, the empyreum. Daneau pays special attention to the terrestrial waters with its peculiar sea creatures, praising it as a special theatre of the divine miracles of creation. In contrast, the firm land, the earth populated by birds and land creatures, has been created for the sake of human beings and for their use. Daneau assumes that the earth is positioned at the centre of the cosmos. In his

view, it also can be clearly deduced from the Scriptures that the earth, unlike the sky, does not move. Since creation progresses from the less perfect to the more perfect, the celestial bodies are only created on the fourth day after the plants. They are creatures and not gods. But they consist of a special material, of heavenly matter. They are not themselves sources of light, which has been created before them, but instead they are vessels in which God collects the light. Since they are arguably more perfect than the plants on earth they must belong to a more perfect sphere, which does not consist of the four elements, but of ether. Due to its god-given power, the ether is continuously moving, while the planets also have their own individual movements. The starry sky does not only bear witness to God's honour, but also serves as a secondary cause for the cycle of growth and decay on earth. Daneau's *Christian Physics* ends with the creation of animals.⁴⁸

Daneau is by no means the only scholar whose concept of nature is based on or influenced by the history of creation. A very similar approach can be found in the works of Girolamo Zanchi, who dedicated the third part of his *De Religione Christiana Fides* to the six days of creation. The work was published in 1585 in the Palatine town of Neustadt, where Zanchi taught at the Reformed Casimirianum during Heidelberg's intermediate Lutheran phase. Although Zanchi is an Aristotelian, he develops his doctrine of creation as an interpretation of Genesis 1 with corresponding additions like the ones that can be found in Calvin's work. The first part deals with the creation of invisible things, i.e., the angels; the second part is about the visible creation; and the third part is concerned with humankind in its primordial state before the fall. Zanchi shares Daneau's opinion that physics is a part of theology. After all, theology observes God through his works, among which are the creation and preservation of the world. Zanchi also agrees with Daneau on the concept of nature. He views the nature of a natural thing to be the power

⁴⁸ E. Bizer (note 45), 42ff.

that works within the thing itself. This is the Aristotelian concept of nature, since Aristotle regards nature as the power immanent in individual things, by which objects are either in motion or at rest.⁴⁹ In Zanchi's view, this is not only taught by Aristotle, but also by Moses. Nothing makes human beings realise God's immeasurable power, wisdom and goodness more clearly than this power residing in things. Zanchi assumes that Moses and Aristotle basically agree in their concept of the world, apart from Aristotle's belief in the eternity of the world. Otherwise, however, both hold the view that the search for causes leads, by way of the inner causes of things, to the first cause, which is God; and that there is an upward progression in the order of things from the less perfect to the more perfect.⁵⁰ An attempted synthesis of Mosaic history of creation and Aristotelian physics is also obvious the identification of water, above which God's spirit is hovering, as the first matter which, according to Zanchi, God had created out of nothing. Like the works of Calvin and Daneau, Zanchi's doctrine of creation shows an obvious Aristotelian influence despite its general basis in the biblical history of creation, and despite criticism of some of Aristotle's concepts, such as the premise of the world's eternity and the number of the spheres. But for Zanchi, as for Aristotle, Calvin and Daneau, earth is a body positioned at the centre of the world.

With his representation of the world based on the history of creation, Calvin did not only pave the way for Mosaic or Christian physics. Two years after Daneau's work was published, the Calvinist Guillaume De Salluste Du Bartas published his epic *La Sepmaine Ou Création Du Monde*. By 1632, the work had seen more than fifty editions. It was immediately translated into German, Latin, English and Dutch. It is a cosmological didactic poem, it follows the history of creation in its structure but also integrates the entire body of scientific knowledge of the

⁴⁹ Zanchi, H, *Opera theologica*, Geneva 1618/19, Vol. 3, p. 219.

⁵⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 222f.

time. Here, the Creator-God becomes an epic hero, and the depiction of the creation turns into a cosmological encyclopedia. Still, this poetic interpretation of the Calvinist doctrine of creation, much like Calvin's works themselves, moves entirely within the boundaries of the old world model and rejects the Copernican system.

5

**WOMEN AROUND CALVIN. IDELETTE
DE BURE AND MARIE DENTIERE**

Irena Backus, Switzerland

How did Calvin view the opposite sex? Did he consider women as appendages to men with no public voice at all in church matters? Did he value the union between man and woman as valuable independently of the necessity to procreate? What were his own sexual mores? We shall try to consider these questions today in relation to Calvin's wife Idelette de Bure, on the one hand and his female religious adversary, Marie Dentière on the other hand. Calvin's own sexual morality was only ever assessed by his contemporaries in a polemical context so that it is extremely difficult to say anything significant about it. His disciple and successor Theodore Beza in his first *Life of Calvin* published in 1564, remarks briefly on Calvin's private life during his marriage and after the death in 1549 of his wife, Idelette de Bure. Beza in what, we must remember, is a defence of the reformer against various attacks on his reputation notes that Calvin was married and that his marriage was most chaste despite the accusations of adultery levelled not so much at him as at those close to him (his sister-in-law, Anne Le Fert and his stepdaughter Judith). But according to Beza, similar things happened in the house of Jacob and David.

“But he has yet to be born, the man who could so much as suspect him of whom we speak. He lived for about nine years in the state of

chaste matrimony. After his wife's death he remained a widower for 16 years until his death. Who could be a stauncher enemy of any adultery? It is true that the Lord tested him on this through persons who were close to him. Far worse things happened in the house of Jacob and David."¹

1 Calvin's marriage with Idelette de Bure

Beza naturally does not mean that during his nine years of marriage Calvin abstained altogether from sexual intercourse with his wife. More likely, he means that during that time the marriage was untainted by adultery, in contrast with the marriage of his brother Antoine who was actually granted a divorce after his wife was convicted of adultery. As will be mentioned in more detail later, Calvin's stepdaughter Judith was also accused of adultery in 1562. Calvin and Idelette did in fact have at least one son of their own who died a few days after his birth in July 1542. This is attested very briefly by Calvin's correspondence for that year with Pierre Viret and Jean Sturm.² Calvin's adversary Jerome Bolsec, who was banned from Geneva after opposing Calvin on predestination and who re-converted to Roman Catholicism, comments extensively on the reformer's sexuality in his hostile biography published in 1577. He notes that Calvin had an iniquitous youth, the hallmark of any heretic. He points out that the reformer's father Gérard Cauvin was a blasphemer.³ We know in fact thanks to Jacques Le Vasseur, a hostile but

¹ Theodore Beza, *Discours de M. Théodore de Besze, contenant en bref l'histoire de la vie et mort de Maistre Jean Caluin avec le Testament et dernière volonté dudict Calvin. Et le catalogue des liures par luy compose*, n. p., n. 1., 1564, p. 33-34.

² See Herminjard, A.L., ed. *Correspondance des réformateurs dans les pays de langue française*, 9 vols, Geneva ; H. Georg and Paris, G. Fischbacher, 1866-1897, vol. 8, no. 1149 (letter from Calvin to Viret, 19 August [1542]), p.103 and no. 1173 (letter from Jean Sturm to Calvin, 29 October [1542]), p. 170.

³ (*Histoire de la vie, mœurs, actes, doctrines, constance et mort de Jean Calvin, jadis ministre de Genève. Recueilly par M. Hierosme Bolsec, docteur médecin à*

honest chronicler of the Noyon Cathedral, that although Gérard Cauvin speculated with the church's money and died excommunicated, there is no record of him ever having been convicted of blasphemy.⁴ Bolsec is also the first to claim that Calvin himself was convicted of sodomy as a young Catholic cleric, a crime for which he would have been burned at the stake had the sentence not been commuted at the last moment to branding with a fleur-de-lys on the shoulder. Under the weight of this opprobrium Calvin sold his benefices and left for Germany and Ferrara. As we know, the branding legend, for legend it is, had a very long posterity so much so that at the beginning of the 20th century Emile Doumergue was still defending Calvin's memory against it. According to Bolsec, Calvin's morals did not improve once he was installed in Geneva. Not content with the charge of sodomy, considered as a heresy in itself, Bolsec accuses the reformer of having intercourse with most of Geneva's married women under the cover of pastoral guidance. Although admitting that he has no proof of the reformer's promiscuity, Bolsec weaves together rumours put about by "several people of sound judgement" and calculated to make Calvin appear as the local lecher and his home as a seat of depravity. Interestingly enough he makes no mention of the reformer's marriage. This is how he describes his dealings with the opposite sex:

"I know that... there was talk of many married and unmarried women who regularly went to see him at his home unaccompanied, ex-

Lyon. Cited here after *Histoire des vies, meurs, actes, doctrine et mort des trois principaux hérétiques de notre temps, à savoir, Martin Luther, Jean Calvin et Théodore de Bèze, iadis archiministre de Genève. Recueillie par Noel Talepied C. de Pontoise et M. Hierosme Hermes Bolsec Docteur Medecin à Lyon. Le tout pour aduertir et diuertir les Catholiques de ne se laisser abuser par leurs doctrines mortiferes. Iouxte la copie imprimée à Douay par Iean Bogard, 1616, 39v. –124v.*, (Hereafter referred to as: Bolsec, *Calvin*).

⁴ Le Vasseur, Jacques, *Annales de l'Eglise de Noyon jadis dite de Vermand, ou le troisieme liure des Antiquitez, Chroniques ou plustost Histoire de la Cathedrale de Noyon*. Par M. Jacques le Vasseur, docteur en theologie de la Faculté de Paris, doyen et chanoine deladite Eglise, Paris, 1633, chap. 90, 1151).

cept for a small child carrying a Bible under his arm. If they met a relative or a friend along the way who asked where they were going, they would say demurely that they were going to visit that holy man to get a resolution to a doubt. And they stayed for a long time. There was particular talk and a rumour concerning the wife of a foreign nobleman who took refuge here for religious reasons and whose name I shall not reveal out of respect. I will say though that he lived near Geneva, just next to Saconay in the territory of Gex. The lady in question was young, beautiful and gay. She often went to dine with Calvin and stayed overnight when her husband was out of the country...⁵

“Rumour concerning the wife of a foreign nobleman” is a fabrication by Bolsec with a very remote basis in fact. His biographer is probably referring to Calvin’s fairly close relations with Jacques de Falais (d. 1556) and his wife Yolande de Brederode, both of whom he converted to the Reformation. Yolande was initially more responsive than her husband and the reformer did no doubt make use of her to influence her consort.⁶ However, there was no question of an intimate relationship. Moreover, things did not turn out as Calvin would have wished: de Falais did indeed convert and settled in 1548 for a short time in Veigy in the proximity of Geneva but the couple’s friendship with Calvin did not survive de Falais’ sympathies for Joris and Castellio or for that matter the nobleman’s support of Bolsec. Bolsec’s insinuation of Yolande’s adultery with Calvin would suggest that the erstwhile Carmelite was quite unconstrained by any sentiment of posthumous loyalty to his defender.

⁵ Bolsec, *Calvin*, 70r-70v.

⁶ The best recent treatment of the de Falais episode is by van Veen, Mirjam “*In excelso honoris gradu. Johannes Calvin und Jacques de Falais*”, *Zwingliana* 32 (2005), pp. 5-22. See also sources and literature cited *ibid*.

2 The life of Idelette de Bure

So was Calvin the most chaste of men even in his marriage, as Beza says, or was he an adulterous, amoral lecher, using his parishioners and even married noblewomen to satisfy his sexual cravings, as Bolsec would have it? We can provide some sort of answer to this question if we examine the figure of his wife Idelette de Bure⁷ and what is known about her relationship with the reformer. Idelette de Bure was the daughter of Lambert de Bure the Elder, a merchant of Liège and of Isabelle Jamaer, daughter of Antoine Jamaer and of Ydelecte. She was also the sister of Lambert de Bure, the Younger. The de Bure family was converted to Luther's doctrines around the 1520s. While Idelette's father retracted under pressure, her brother the younger Lambert was among those banished from Liège for contamination with the Lutheran heresy. He settled in Strasbourg judging by Calvin's letter of 1541 where he mentions his "wife's brother as living in the same city."⁸ By then Lambert was calling himself Lamprecht de Bure. As regards Idelette's marriage with Jean Stordeur, the Anabaptist, the evidence is not clear about where and when the marriage took place. There is a strong possibility that he is mentioned as "*Jean le tourneur*" in the list of those who were banished from Liège at the same time as Lambert de Bure the Younger, in 1533. The union between him and Idelette would have had to take place in Liège and been concluded in a Roman Catholic church as Liège had no Lutheran or for that matter Anabaptist preacher. It is also possible that a lawful marriage was never concluded. Calvin indeed refers in

⁷ Sée Heusser, G, *Calvins Ehegattin Idelette von Büren*, Basel: Verlag christlicher Schriften, 1884 ; Braekman, Emile M. : "Idelette de Bure, de vrouw van Calvijn", *Bulletin de la Société d'histoire du Protestantisme Belge* 10-7 (1986), pp. 175-190. Forthcoming : Braekman, Emile, *Idelette de Bure, épouse de Jean Calvin*, Paris, Olivetan.

⁸ Cf. Braekman, (1986) p. 177.

a letter to a *fout* (love-making union) of Idelette and Jean Stordeur and not to their conjugal union.⁹

Idelette had two children from her union - legal or not - with Stordeur. The first child was a son whom we know to have been an Anabaptist too. Indeed, later, after settling in Geneva, Idelette apparently complained to François Bauduin, Calvin's secretary, that Calvin would not allow his stepson to be brought up in the religion of his natural father but had him forcibly converted to his own. The second child was a girl Judith who also accompanied her mother and stepfather to Geneva. She did not marry until 1554, some years after her mother's death. In 1562 she was up before the consistory for adultery as Calvin wrote to Heinrich Bullinger: "I wrote recently to Blarer, but I could not write to you for I was overcome by fever. Shortly prior to that, shame came upon my house because of my stepdaughter's disgrace."¹⁰

To return to Calvin's own marriage to Idelette, we are not clear at what stage she and Jean Stordeur landed in Strasbourg. According to Charles Rahlenbeck's article "Idelette de Bure" (in *the Biographie nationale de Belgique* (Brussels), vol. 3, col. pp.167-168) they went straight from Liège to Basel but there is no evidence for this. Nathanaël Weiss, on the other hand,¹¹ suggests that they initially went to Geneva where they first encountered Calvin. They left the city when the Anabaptists were banished by the authorities on 19 March 1538 and moved to Strasbourg where Idelette's brother had been living. The Council Registers of Geneva refer to the matter quite explicitly: "Johannes Bomecomenus a printer and Jean Tordeur, a turner from Liège, men who stick to the opinion that baptism should not be administered to children, were interrogated and it was declared that they were to be banned

⁹ Calv. Opp. Vol. 12, col. 580.

¹⁰ Cf. Doumergue, *Calvin. Les hommes et les choses de son temps*, 7 vols, Lausanne-Neuilly, n. p. 1899-1927, vol. III, p. 574.

¹¹ "Un portrait de la femme de Calvin", *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire du Protestantisme français* 56 (1907), 226.

just as other members of this sect.”¹² As Calvin was also to take up residence in Strasbourg shortly afterwards, the three met up again when the reformer was put in charge of the French-speaking congregation. This sequence of events would explain why the Stordeurs attended Calvin’s sermons in Strasbourg and why they proved easy to convert even though Beza and Colladon in the second Life of Calvin of 1565 note that Stordeur had initially been one of Calvin’s “opponents” or “contradicteurs” in Geneva. Initially, they lived in the house of Lamprecht, Idelette’s brother. This is what Beza and Colladon say on the subject of the Stordeurs’ conversion in their 1565 Life of Calvin:

“ Il y eut aussi lors cest heur qu’il (Calvin) ramena à la foy un fort grand nombre d’anabaptistes qu’on luy adressoit de toutes parts...Il y eut aussi de ce nombre un nommé Jean Stordeur natif du Liège; lequel estant décédé peu après, il print sa veufve à femme...(ce qu’il fit par le moyen et conseil de M. Bucer).”

However, on his arrival in Strasbourg, in 1539 Calvin had no designs on Idelette and no plans to marry. Initially, he stayed at Bucer’s house then moved to a large house in what is now the rue du Bouclier. There he received and lodged several French guests and refugees, including an old lady called Madame du Verger, who took over the running of the household and stayed until 1540 when Idelette and her two children moved in after her marriage to the Genevan reformer. Initially, however, Calvin had no such thoughts although as shown by a letter from the beginning of his Strasbourg period, he had an idea of what marriage represented:¹³

“I give an impression of being against celibacy, but so far I am not married and do not know if I ever shall be. When I take a woman to be my wife, it should be to help me all the better dedicate myself to God,

¹² Geneva State Archives: R. C. vol. 30, fol. 202r.

¹³ Cf. Ollier, D., “*Le mariage de Calvin*”, *Revue chrétienne* (1892), pp. 210-226, esp. 211. See also Braekman (1986), p. 182.

by freeing me from all the banal, day to day cares and worries. I shall not on any account marry on account of fleshly desire, no one can reproach me with this.”

3 Calvin’s concept of marriage

This suggests that Calvin had the same conception of marriage as many ex-priests of the time. A wife was primarily either a sort of housekeeper or a person of the opposite sex offering legal protection against sexual promiscuity. However, in the eyes of his contemporaries, a Reformed minister had to be married, otherwise he exposed himself to charges of licentiousness. Philip Melancthon and Calvin’s Strasbourg friends, especially Martin Bucer, attempted to put him under pressure but the reformer could not be brought to commit himself. According to Heusler (after Bonnet and Staehelin), and Calvin’s own correspondence, the reformer was, nonetheless, engaged to be married on 28 Feb. 1539, or so he wrote to Farel. We do not know who the bride was but the wedding never took place and Calvin carried on as a single man. On 19 May 1539 Calvin declared in another letter to Farel: “Do not take me for one of these love-sick fools that forget everything on seeing a pretty face ... The only beauty that makes an impact on me is a woman who is gentle, chaste, modest, a good housekeeper, patient, and exclusively devoted to looking after her husband.” On 6th February 1540, Calvin tells Farel that he had been contemplating marriage again. Apparently the lady was of noble birth and wealthy, way above Calvin’s own social station. However, so far as the reformer was concerned there were two major obstacles to marriage. Firstly, the lady in question knew no French; secondly he feared that she would not be able to draw a line under her social origins and become a simple pastor’s wife. Indeed, the lady in question turned out to be unwilling to learn French and so nothing came of the marriage once again.

On 21 June 1540 he wrote again to Farel: "If you are watching out for my wedding, I fear it is quite pointless. I have not found any one so far and wonder if I should carry on searching" (Calv. Opp. 11, col. 52). However, Bucer and others were not to be discouraged. Jean Stordeur had died of the plague, leaving Idelette alone with their two children. She naturally could not return to Liège and so carried on living in Strasbourg where she had a brother. Bucer, on getting to know her, found that her modesty, as well as her cultured demeanour and her devoutness were the very qualities that Calvin was looking for in a wife. Nothing is known of their relationship prior to the actual marriage which took place in September of 1540 in Strasbourg. Idelette and her two children moved into the house in the rue du Bouclier and as Mme du Verger moved out, Idelette immediately took over the running of the household. Although the marriage was one motivated by external pressures and by Calvin's totally prefabricated vision of an ideal wife, it turned out to work, at least for the reformer, for we do not have any independent testimony by Idelette except for the briefest mention by Bauduin of her complaint about Stordeur's son being prevented from being brought up in his father's Anabaptist faith.

Be that as it may, one thing was clear from the outset. Although Idelette suffered from poor health it was entirely up to her to see to the running of the household, her two children as well as a sickly husband. She also helped the reformer by caring for the sick. Calvin was pleased with his choice and had nothing except words of praise for his wife in such testimonies as survive in his correspondence. He writes after his wife's sick-visit to Ami Porral, the syndic and chronicler of Geneva, in his last days: "Since my wife's visit, I have felt his courage and good mood increase, and this has come about not by chance but through the fact that she was guided by God's wondrous counsel."

Idelette was a cultured woman who knew Latin and who occasionally corresponded with Calvin's friends. François Bauduin wrote to the

reformer on one occasion “I greet your wife all the more confidently as it was she who answered my letter” (C.Opp. 13, col, 138). On another occasion Calvin wrote to Pierre Viret when Idelette was recovering from her difficult childbirth: “She can now dictate in Latin herself to a secretary. But even dictating tires her out completely” (C.Opp.11, col. 430). Indeed Idelette gave birth to a son on 28 July 1542 but the infant did not outlive the first few days and the mother never really recovered from the illness which followed the birth. Calvin took the death of his child as an expression of God’s will. As regards Idelette, a series of illnesses followed and she finally died in 1549 of “sleeping sickness”. The doctor Benoît Textor who was a friend of Calvin’s had already on one occasion nursed Idelette back to health but he could do nothing this time. In a letter written on 2nd April 1549 Calvin describes his wife’s last hours in a way which sheds rather more light on their relationship. As Idelette lay dying, Calvin reports, a friend of theirs François Bourgoing passed away. On hearing this Idelette exclaimed from her deathbed: “Oh! glorious resurrection”, and bade all those present to take note of Bourgoing’s heart suspended far above the ground. She then added: “Oh God of Abraham and all our fathers, the faithful have placed their hope in you from time immemorial; no one has ever been disappointed therefore I too place my hope in you and await the resurrection.”¹⁴ Shortly afterwards Calvin left her bedside as she was transported somewhere else. He was shortly summoned back to witness her very last moments and conducted the prayers at her bedside. He also pronounced a few words of consolation of the grace of Christ, of the hope of eternal life etc. He notes that Idelette listened very carefully to both the prayers and the instruction. She died peacefully very shortly afterwards (Calv. Opp. 13, col. 228-229). Calvin on his own admission (ibid.) plunged himself into work so as to forget the pain of her loss.

¹⁴ Calv. Opp. 13, col. 228-229.

In a letter to Viret of 7 April (Calv. Opp. 13, col. 230-231) he notes that were it not for the help of his friends, his naturally soft and sensitive nature would give way to the overwhelming grief. Indeed, Calvin has come a long way from his initial wish of having a wife who would take care of the day to day tasks and leave him free to devote himself to serving God. He discovered sometime in the course of their union the value of his wife as companion and friend as well as housekeeper. As he puts it in the same letter: "I have lost the best life-companion, one who, if it came to it, would have accompanied me willingly not just into exile and poverty but also into death. As long as she lived, she was a loyal helper in my ministry. She never bothered me with her problems. She never feared or fussed about herself; throughout her illness she never bothered me with her children." In an effort to ease his sick wife's cares and worries, the reformer offered to look after her children in her dying hours, the very children that she "never bothered him with" during their marriage. Idelette reacted to his offer by saying: "I have already commended them to the Lord" whereupon the reformer said that this did not stop him from doing his part. She apparently replied: "if they are in the care of the Lord, I know that they will be entrusted to you."

What conclusions can we draw from this scarce documentary evidence about Calvin's marriage? First and foremost, as we said above, Calvin came to appreciate his wife as a cultivated, kind and selfless companion, one totally devoted to him. As he got to know her, Idelette obviously became an individual to him rather than simply an impersonal conception of what a wife should be. One interesting feature of the marriage was that procreation was not its primary aim, contrary to the mores of the time. However, this does not mean that Calvin's union was a precursor of a modern marriage. Although Idelette was a highly cultivated woman, her role was to devote herself to her husband, assist him in parish work, and follow him wherever destiny took him, all this without expecting any help from him whatsoever. Her feelings mattered little.

Calvin never once asked himself if she was happy or how she conceived her role of “life-companion”. Moreover, although of great help in pastoral duties, Idelette was emphatically not supposed to take up any public duties in the church or have anything to say in matters of doctrine. The death bed scene is emblematic: it was Calvin’s job to say the prayers and pronounce words of consolation and instruction; Idelette’s duty was to listen attentively.

4 Marie Dentière for an active role of women¹⁵

The example of Marie Dentière (1495-ca. 1561) is extremely revealing of Calvin’s thoroughly negative attitude to women taking up a position on any public issues, especially religious issues. Like Idelette, Marie Dentière was of Belgian origins but there the similarity ends. Her father belonged to the lower ranks of nobility in Flanders and the original form of the name was d’Ennetières. Marie entered the Augustinian order at the convent of Prés-Porchins in Tournai where she received her education and eventually became its prioress. Like many Augustinian monks and nuns, she came under the influence of Luther’s doctrines early on and fled the monastery in 1524. Like most of Europe’s religious refugees at the time, she sought refuge in Strasbourg where she married Simon Robert who was eventually to become pastor at Bex. After some years spent in that region under the aegis of Guillaume Farel, Simon Robert died in 1533 leaving Marie widowed with children. The next we

¹⁵ On Marie Dentière see McKinley, Mary, ed., *Marie Dentière ; Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre and Preface to a Sermon by John Calvin*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2004 ; Graesslé, Isabelle, *Vie et légendes de Marie Dentière*, Centre Protestant d’Etudes, Geneva, 2003 Kemp, William and Desrosiers-Bonin, Diane, « Marie d’Ennetières et la petite Grammaire hébraïque de sa fille », *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance*, 55, (1998), pp. 117-134 ; Backus, Irena, « Marie Dentière. Un cas de féminisme théologique à l’époque de la Réforme ? », *Bulletin de la Société de l’Histoire du Protestantisme français*, 137 (1991), pp. 177-195.

hear of Marie Dentière, is 1535, the year of the Reformation in Geneva. By then she has married Antoine Froment, one of the key players in the city's Reformation movement. Marie Dentière was not merely a helper to Froment. She became an outspoken participant, preaching her opposition to religious celibacy and advocating an active role for women in the new church. In August of 1535 she accompanied Froment and Farel on their attempt to convert the Poor Clares Order of Geneva, urging the nuns to leave the convent and forsake celibacy. Jeanne de Jussie, the abbess of the convent wrote an account of the visit portraying Marie as a nun who had violated the vow of chastity, "a false abbess, wrinkled and with a diabolical tongue... who meddled in preaching and in perverting the people's devotion". In 1537 after Calvin's arrival in Geneva, Froment was made preacher in Thonon in the Chablais, south of Geneva but both he and his wife kept in touch with the Genevan events. When Farel and Calvin were expelled from Geneva in 1538, Marguerite, the pro-Reformation Queen of Navarre wanted to learn more about the events and she asked Marie Dentière whom she knew already for more information. Marie responded by sending to Marguerite a copy of one of the rare theological treatises written by women in the Reformation. The work was entitled the *Epistre tresutile*. What was the nature of the relationship between Marie Dentière and Marguerite de Navarre? Marie Dentière, in an earlier issue of the *Epistre*, mentions a small Hebrew Grammar written by her (Marie's) daughter Jeanne from her marriage with Simon Robert. Marguerite is referred to as Jeanne's godmother but no further details are given. Jeanne incidentally was to marry Jean-Raymond Merlin who became professor of Hebrew at the Lausanne Academy. Although dedicated to Marguerite, the *Epistre* was intended for a wider audience hence its publication in two issues both of 1539, one mentioning the Hebrew Grammar, the other omitting this reference. As both were to be destroyed by the Genevan authorities after being censored, only one copy of each of the two issues is extant. The *Epistre*

is highly critical of the Genevan authorities who expelled Calvin and Farel and also of the meagre role that women were allowed to play in the Reformation. She says:

“Have we two Gospels, one for men and another one for women? Slanderers and enemies of truth cannot accuse us of excessive impudence and arrogance, and true believers cannot claim that women lack all sensibility, if we talk about the Holy Scripture among ourselves.”

It is plain that Marie did not share Calvin’s view of what a good wife should be: a passive recipient of doctrine. It is equally important to note that Froment did not share Calvin’s view of women’s role in the church either. Indeed, it was he who helped his wife get the *Epistre* published by the Genevan printer Jean Girard in 1539. However, if Marie hoped for similar support from Calvin she was to be disappointed. In 1540 Froment was appointed pastor at Massongy, village between Thonon and Geneva, still within the jurisdiction of Berne. At that time his fellow-pastors in the region complained about him trading and speculating on wine apparently with the help of his wife who openly “ran a shop”. When castigated, the couple remained resolutely unrepentant. However, the first record of Marie’s confrontation with the Genevan leader dates from 1546 and has nothing to do with illicit shopkeeping. Calvin relates this encounter in a letter to Farel dated 1st september 1546 (*Calv. Opp.* vol. 12, no. 824, cols. 377-78):

“I am going to tell you a funny anecdote. Froment’s wife came here recently. In all the taverns, at almost all the street corners she began to harangue about long pastoral robes. When she realised that news of this had got back to me, she excused herself laughing the while and said that we dressed indecently, or else you (Farel) taught in error when you said that false prophets could be recognised by their long garments”.

Unfortunately there is no record of the sort of robe that Marie advocated for pastors in place of the long black one that was standard wear in the Genevan church. Calvin goes on to say that he argued with Marie

and rebuked her sharply when she said that the pastors were comparable to the Jewish scribes in Luke 20; 45 who wanted to flaunt their office by walking about in long garments. We can surmise from this that Marie found the clerical garment exaggerated and that she would have preferred something less conspicuous and less intrinsically “male” by way of a pastoral robe, a view shared by the radical reformers of the time. Calvin concludes his letter thus: “Feeling under pressure she complained about our tyranny, about how it was no longer permissible for people to speak their minds. I treated the wretched woman as I should have.” Calvin is totally contemptuous of Marie’s misguided but brave attempts to give women some sort of voice in religious matters and to alter the status of the pastor by making him wear less formal robes. Is the conviction hers or does she mirror her husband’s views? Froment was to preach a sermon in 1548 attacking the church leaders of Constance, Berne and Geneva for making their ministries into a source of private gain and losing sight of the spirit of the Reformation. As result of this sermon he was removed from his pastoral office at Massongy. From then on he made his living as a secretary. Marie’s reactions to these events are not known. Some historians think that she is the author of a preface to Calvin’s Sermon on the modesty of women’s dress published in 1561. Calvin had preached it in a series of sermons on 1 Timothy first published in that year but there is no reason for an explicit link between the initials denoting the author of the preface and the person of Marie Dentière. The only clues offered as to the likely identity of the prefacer are the initials themselves and a passing mention of “froment” in the sense of “wheat”, which appears both in the preface and Marie’s Epistre to the Queen of Navarre published under the name of M. D. “a Christian woman of Tournai”. It is very difficult to believe that Calvin’s attitude to women speaking out on religious issues altered between 1546 and 1561.

5 Opened and closed possibilities for women

Be that as it may, it was Calvin's view of the pastor's wife as essentially an exploitable and passive, albeit cultivated, being that took a foothold. He found Marie's alternative model to be too risible to merit more than a public rebuke. It did not even pose a serious threat. Marie had no female imitators in Geneva or in France. Her view of women's religious role coincided too closely with that of Anabaptist and other radical groups to merit serious attention.

If there is any conclusion to be drawn from the stories of these two women that Calvin confronted the most directly in his career, it is that his Reformation opened potentially all sorts of possibilities for religious expression which he, like Luther in another register, made sure to close off as quickly as possible. The position of women was one of these closed off avenues.

6

**CALVIN AND THE MODERN WORLD:
INFLUENCES, THEORIES OF INFLUENCE
AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS**

Georg Pfeleiderer, Switzerland

1. Two moderns

“At this time the Calvinist world is preparing for the celebration of its Reformer, and is doing so in the Geneva that has just done away with the Calvinist state church as a state church. Delegates from all parts of the world are coming together to bear witness to a quite extraordinary blossoming of the Calvinist churches. It is a remarkable scene for Germany, whose Lutheran Protestantism penetrated only northwards beyond its heartlands, to see this world celebration of a church which in truth is a daughter church of Lutheranism and yet has so far outstripped it. But the scene is even more strange and significant when we reflect how very different is the way in which in those countries the essence of Calvinist religion is bound up with political and social conditions from our way. Those countries too suffer under the crisis that modern science has prepared for Christian dogma and the modern way of life for Christian ethics, but they suffer far less because there the Christian idea as a whole, essentially regarded in a practical spirit, is treated in a less doc-

trinaire and philosophical manner is not burdened with the odium of an alliance with reactionary forces nor does it act as a divisive force in the political and social struggles.”¹

These lines must have been written at about the same time of year the end of May beginning of June, not so far from Basel – namely in Heidelberg – and precisely like this lecture cycle on the occasion of the Calvin jubilee; not, however for the 500th but the 400th anniversary of the Reformer’s birthday, precisely one hundred years ago today. Their author was the liberal systematic theologian Ernst Troeltsch. His view of contemporary Calvinism was full of admiration, indeed envy. In his view Calvinism in Western countries, especially in the USA, has succeeded where Lutheranism has failed in its much narrower heartlands: to accept the challenges of modernity and as a result become a strong power which determines the present, a religious community with a great potential for the future. The message that the text conveys is clear: there is in Calvinism self-confident, successful human action conscious of its responsibility, which is playing an active part in helping to shape modern society in the many different spheres of life. Whereas Lutheranism has more the sharp difference between a pious inwardness, a strong disposition and outside a hard, threatening hostile modern world, in which men or women can stand, but more with the sense of suffering than of actively and joyfully shaping the world. Granted, that is a short birthday eulogy; the scales need not be balanced like this. Of course a look at the extensive and numerous scholarly texts on the theme which Troeltsch composed in those years between 1905 and 1922 produces a more differentiated picture, but his concluding verdict is essentially the same: Calvinism, namely modern Calvinism, and thus especially American Puritanism is for him the religion or confession of modernity. And for Lu-

¹ Troeltsch, Ernst, “Die Genfer Kalvinfeier”, in id. *Schriften zur Bedeutung des Protestantismus für die moderne Welt (1906-1913)*, KGA 8, Berlin, New York 2001, pp. 111-117 (111).

theranism, at least for the mainstream church Lutheranism of his time, the precise opposite is the case: in decisive respects it rejects modernity and thus deprives itself of the possibilities of exerting a positive influence on modernity.

With this criticism of Lutheranism and his enthusiasm for American Calvinism Troeltsch made many opponents, indeed enemies, in German-speaking theological circles. But he did not stand alone. A similarly positive judgement can be found in two newspaper articles which appeared in the middle of February 1911 in the *Basler Nachrichten*² and in *Centralblatt des Schweizerischen Zofingervereins*³ about the lectures of John Mott, the secretary of the World Student Federation. What the author praises in him, namely his strong charismatic piety and his sense of ethical responsibility, combined with a high degree of pragmatic ability to get things done, corresponds precisely to what Troeltsch also admired in the modern American Calvinists: “In John Mott we have a basically sound man. John Mott does not think in short stretches as we do, but his personal life consists in being constantly on the way between the beginning and end points of those kingdoms (namely the moral kingdom of man and the kingdom of God) and vice versa and does not stop anywhere” (276). “He knows what he wants and he wants what he knows. In a word, he is what we give speeches and write books about; a personality” (275). “I do not hesitate to say that the fundamental notion of Calvin’s Institutes, the fellowship of the life of Christians, is made tangible

² Barth, Karl, „Vorträge von John Mott“ (1911), in id., *Vorträge und kleinere Arbeiten 1909-1914*, edited in collaboration with Herbert Helms and Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt by Hans-Anton Drewes und Hinrich Stoevesandt, Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe, III. Vorträge und kleinere Arbeiten, Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1993, pp. 285-87.

³ Barth, Karl, „ohn Mott und die christliche Studentenbewegung“ (1911), in *ibid.* pp. 266-84. Page references in the text that follows refer to this. For the circumstances of the origin of the two articles and reactions to them see the introduction by the editors, *ibid.*, pp. 266-69.

in an extraordinary way in his model, the unity of the religious conscience and the moral demand”(278).

The writer of these lines was an assistant minister in Geneva, about to take the leap to his first permanent post as pastor in the canton of Argau. His name is Karl Barth and he evidently thought nothing of Ernst Troeltsch, whom he met that same year at the Aarau student conference. “My abhorrence of Troeltsch...” Barth writes on 6 April 1911 to a friend “... has been substantially reinforced by Aarau. He looks like a brewer. If only he were not so clever.”⁴ But the great difference in origin and way of thinking and the hearty antipathy of the young Swiss assistant minister to the internationally known scholar do not change anything in their common way of thinking in this respect: both manifestly admire American Calvinism.

America and Puritan Calvinism – from this liberal Protestant European perspective they are both closely connected. Around 1910 many educated contemporaries in Europe all at once saw clearly that now unmistakably there are now two modernities, the European and the American. And that they could no longer dismiss the latter so simply as a retrograde cultural by-product of the former. America, North America, has produced its own modern culture and this is governed by the fact that in it religion, Christianity and modern culture are not the opposing tendencies that, as a rule, they are felt to be in Europe.

2. Reflexive modernity

One could think that these discoveries of modern North America went with a relatively uncritical enthusiasm about modernity, also with a quite uncritical ideal picture of the relationship between religion and modernity. But that is not the case either in Troeltsch or in Barth. Both

⁴ Barth, Karl, “La réapparition de la métaphysique da la théologie“ (1911), in *ibid.*, pp. 329-360 (editors’ introduction) (332).

are liberal theologians, but they are not uncritical apologists of technological progress. With the cry “Gentlemen, it’s all tottering”, the young lecture Ernst Troeltsch is said to have sprung to the lectern in the Wartburg in 1896;⁵ and already in his liberal theological phase Karl Barth too was anything but a naive cultural Protestant. The new attention to modern America and its Calvinist roots a century ago seems at least to be connected in a variety of religious intellectuals such as Troeltsch and Barth with the fact that they are aware of the inner crisis in modernity and precisely for that reason again begin to have new, fundamental thoughts about the relationship between religion and modernity.

It was precisely because liberal religious intellectuals such as Troeltsch or Barth were dissatisfied with the European syntheses of modern religion that they looked to America. What did they see there? Convincing combinations of authentic piety and a pragmatic will to shape culture, which not least also included a high degree of social responsibility and an awareness of the enormous social tensions which capitalism produces. These did not just remain individual virtues, from them grew strong collective traditions and powerful institutions emerged, first of all in the sphere of economic life but by no means only there. They also appeared in that sphere in which European religious intellectuals had felt (and still feel) so superior to the Americans, the sphere of education.

“Most colleges are originally works of Puritan sects and something of the spirit of the Pilgrim Fathers can still be traced in them”,⁶ noted a third intellectual observer of religion at that time in his travel diary, the sociologist Max Weber. Together with Ernst Troeltsch in September 1904 he undertook a trip to the USA. For both scholars the invitation from a Harvard scholar who was a friend to give lectures at a congress

⁵ Cf. Köhler, Walter, *Ernst Troeltsch*, Tübingen 1941, p. 1.

⁶ Weber, Marianne, *Max Weber. Ein Lebensbild*, with an essay by Günther Roth, Munich and Zürich 1989, p. 301.

arranged on the occasion of the World Exposition in St Louis seemed like a call. At that time both were spending a great deal of time engaged in or preparing major studies which had to do with the relationship between Christianity and modernity in a historical perspective. Both were convinced that in this respect the development of Western European Calvinism was decisive.

When Max Weber, together with his wife Marianne, well known for her activity in women's rights, and his scholarly friend Troeltsch travelled by ship to America, he had just completed the first part of his work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.⁷

It appeared in Germany while he was in America, so to speak in the absence of the author. He wrote the second part immediately after his return. The relatively short study is regarded as one of the classic key texts of more recent sociology of religion and culture, indeed of sociology generally. It has generated whole libraries of secondary literature and the discussions between its author and his critics fill a volume which is twice as thick as the study itself.⁸ Weber's text has often been described as an "overdetermined text"⁹ because it displays a remarkably high level of strata of meaning. That there are many dimensions is partly connected with the highly ambivalent picture that Weber draws of Puritanism, especially of American Puritanism and its relationship to modernity. On the one hand the Puritans of the eighteenth century, so the famous thesis runs, are the spirits which are really compatible with modernity: capitalism. On the other hand this friendliness towards capitalism is based on a

⁷ Weber, Max, *Die protestantische Ethik und der "Geist" des Kapitalismus*. Text on the basis of the first edition of 1904/05 with a list of the most important additions and changes from the second edition of 1920 edited and introduced by Klaus Lichtblau and Johannes Weiß, Bodenheim 1993. [English translation *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London 1977.]

⁸ Cf. Weber, Max, *Die protestantische Ethik II. Kritiken und Antikritiken*, ed. Johannes Winckelmann, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1982.

⁹ Hennis, Wilhelm, "Die 'Protestantische Ethik' – ein überdeterminierter Text?", in *Sociologia Internationalis* 33, 1995, pp. 1-18.

motive that is diametrically opposed to all earthly pleasures, for the sake of which capitalism really appeared. For Weber, Puritans are inner-worldly ascetics, modern monks, hard working professionals, who are not interested in spending money but only in earning money for the sake of earning money. Certainly, as Weber hastens to spell out, the Puritan spirit of acquisition did not generate capitalism historically, but to a degree it is “akin” to it, so that one could not have imagined a better lubricant. On the other hand, modern fully developed capitalism as an economic system with potentially universal dissemination is again characterised precisely by the fact that it cannot only dispense with all religious drives, but makes life very difficult for them, in the end even for the Puritans. For Weber, developed capitalism is to a great extent hostile to religion, not only because it pursues radical inner-worldly ends but because it threatens to make all inner or personal spirituality a matter of indifference, or indeed to exterminate it. The sociologist is at one with his professional theological friend, Ernst Troeltsch, in this insight into the hostility which modern capitalism represents for an individualistic culture of personality. Ernst Troeltsch and Max Weber were very different types of scholar, and they also had very different natures. Nevertheless they agreed for the most part in this general verdict. The ambivalence of modernity and religion in modernity, which they both diagnose, also has a personal foundation for them both. Both thinkers functioned to some degree as musicians who played on their instruments what they themselves experienced and partly also suffered: the high-flying feeling of self-worth and at the same time the alienations, the tensions and rifts modern men and women feel. By what are these rifts determined? Ultimately, according to both of them, by the tension between matter-of-fact, purposeful work and its effects shaped by the world, and the need of men and women for an individual personal meaning in life.

Weber’s study of Protestantism is the first substantial scholarly work that he was able to produce after a depression which lasted almost six

years. His depression was so bad that even lengthy periods of leave, many months of holidays in sunny Italy did not help: finally he had to give up his professorship. "It's always the same," his wife wrote at one point during these times to a friend "not to be able to do anything about the psychological pressure of the degrading situation, and in addition the feeling that for all of us, you and me and everyone, only being a professional person is really important."¹⁰ He published the Protestant Ethic as a freelance scholarly writer who had taken early retirement; it is his first step in a world outside the regulated structure of modern professional scholarship. Such depressive crises were alien to the nature of Ernst Troeltsch; rather, he made one of the most rapid rises of all the outsiders of the history of religions school and his "precious humour"¹¹ was praised on the American trip by even so serious a person as Marianne Weber. But in Troeltsch too the controversy with modernity and its relationship to religion was the expression of a direct search of his own for orientation and meaning. In both thinkers "Luther" and "Calvin", Lutheranism and Calvinism are not just historical entities but at the same time descriptions of their own present, and beyond that also more or less projected self-descriptions. There are also inner "Luther" and "Calvin" parts in both Weber and Troeltsch.

In all these constellations Troeltsch's and Weber's interpretations of Calvin and Calvinism are of course, like their authors, children of their times. This is the world of a hundred years ago, through whose mirror here we look at our subject. But this time is also highly informative for our own times especially because of this mirror. The relationship between our world and that "world of yesterday"¹² has often been noted;

¹⁰ Weber, Marianne, *Max Weber* (FN 6), p. 274; cf. Mitzman, Arthur, *The Iron Cage. An Historical Interpretation of Max Weber*, New York: Knopf, 1970.

¹¹ Weber, Marianne, *Max Weber* (FN 6), p. 292.

¹² Zweig, Stefan, *Die Welt von gestern. Erinnerungen eines Europäers* [1944/1970], 190.-197. Tsd., Frankfurt am Main, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992.

both times are governed by great dynamic thrusts of industrialisation, both eras are periods of globalisation, and thus connected with the heightening of meaning and at the same time relativisation of one's own cultural circle. In both times the issue was or is a redefinition of the place of one's own culture and its religious foundations in modernity, both historically but also culturally and geographically. Both modernities are in a sense postmodernities, namely times of a "reflexive modernity",¹³ as the sociologist Ulrich Beck has termed it, i.e. the light and shadow sides of modern societies clearly emerge.

Troeltsch and Weber are for their part classics of theoretical religious modernity. Their interpretations of the religion of modernity and its genesis are in some ways outdated; one can read many refutations of the "Troeltsch-Weber thesis". But these do not address the problem itself. Thus in what follows I want to look at their analyses a little more closely.

3. Questions and aims

Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch developed their great works on the genesis of modernity in the history of religions in close collaboration. In 1910 the two couples even rented two floors of the same splendid villa on Ziegelhäuser Landstrasse in Heidelberg directly on the bank of the Neckar. Nevertheless we should not simply throw the two thinkers and their theses into the one pot of the "Weber-Troeltsch thesis" as contemporaries did, mostly with pejorative intent. Both pursued clearly different aims. As Wilhelm Hennis has lucidly shown, Weber was ultimately concerned with illuminating the roots and deepest characteristics of "modern man". In Weber's view, the modern person, the functional professional with highly-developed inwardness, is a highly improbable

¹³ Beck, Ulrich and Lash, Scott, *Reflexive Modernisierung. Eine Kontroverse*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996.

product. The human being in himself does not tend towards such a characteristic; he enjoys pleasure but is also comfortable. He is traditional. He weighs the toil of work and the fruits of work in the scales; and if he has what he needs for the necessities of life he is generally content. Human beings in general are comfortable: as much work as necessary, *la dolce vita* as far as possible. But the typical capitalist is quite a different person; he is the precise opposite of such traditionalists; enough is never enough for him. He must always be more; but he does not really leave himself enough time to enjoy his fruits and never has any. According to Weber, the modern man is at the same time rationally organised to a high degree, namely he is perfectly rational in his purposes, but at the same time his drive, looked at precisely, is extremely irrational: money in order to have ever more money. Now, Weber's basic consideration goes on, these modern capitalistic human beings cannot have been produced by the capitalist system itself, for this has only material systems of reward. No beauty prizes are given for inner dispositions. But precisely such an inner disposition is the issue. Dispositions cannot be delivered by the economic system, they must be delivered by other systems; in the early modern time, in the fountainhead of modernity, there is only one candidate for that, namely religion. It was Calvinistic Puritanism that delivered the disposition to work which is most compatible with capitalism. Puritanism is the great institution for the breeding of modern man.

Ernst Troeltsch in fact took over this thesis, but the direction of his questioning was clearly different from that of his friend. He was not concerned, as Weber was, with the genesis of modern man but with the chances of religion persisting in modern conditions. Is modernity still capable of religion? In view of the differentiation of the modern world, in view of the highly developed capitalist economic system, are there still chances for religion, and if so, what do they look like? For Troeltsch religion is the organ for the individual experience of the meaning of life.

In view of the brokenness and purposive rational structure of modern society, can we still experience life as a unity, as a whole, as our personal individual life? That is Troeltsch's question. The answer, which lies in Weber's analysis of modern man, is, as I have already indicated, sceptical to a high degree. "The Puritan wanted to be a professional man – we must be." "For in that scepticism was transferred from the monastic cell to professional life and the inner-worldly morality began to dominate, it helped that powerful cosmos, bound up with the technical and economic presuppositions of modern mechanical and machine production, to build up an order of business which today determines the life style of all individuals who are born into this work, not only those directly involved in it economically – which are driven by overpowering pressures and perhaps will be until the last cinders of fossil fuel have burnt out."¹⁴ Modernity is, as Weber's famous metaphor runs, a "house as hard as steel"¹⁵ against whose smooth, sheer and solid walls the individual's needs for meaning rebound. Certainly we can make religious sketches of meaning, and notoriously many people do so (even if Weber regarded himself as religiously unmusical) but these sketches of meaning cannot be combined into a rational, common synthesis of meaning. In his cell each so to speak forges his own happiness or unhappiness. Just like religious convictions, for Weber ethical values too cannot be given a rational foundation; they remain "subjective". Responsibility lies in the professional roles that we play in life, but their ethically binding force cannot ultimately be given a rational foundation. Adopting them takes place either as it were mechanically, from a sober insight into the functional mechanisms of the modern world of machines, or on the basis of an irrational, personal decision. In his view the difference is not so considerable for the functioning of the modern social machine. With Weber, one could say in the sense of his own confessional typology, a

¹⁴ Weber, Max, *Die protestantische Ethik* (FN 7), p. 153.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

secularised Lutheranism in the end prevails, i.e. an attitude of the reduction of the religious to the private sphere, with an inwardly ultimately passive participation in external social roles. Through the Puritan synthesis of personal piety, intensive religious community life and active participation in shaping society, above all in the sphere of economic life, which he admired so much in America, Weber ultimately also regarded the American way of life as a transitional phenomenon, by no means the future of modernity.

4. Calvinistic modernisation 1: the Weber thesis

But in Weber's view, how did this "disaster"¹⁶ come about? In the beginning was – no, not Calvin but Luther. In complex philological studies (of which he was proud) Weber seeks to show that Luther in his Bible translation shaped that ambiguity of the concept of calling, which is so typical of our present-day relation to work. Luther translates with "calling" terms which in the original languages denote work, activity or obligation, etc. In this way he introduces into work that religious echo: being called by God to worldly work, *vocatio*. That is the decisive process: worldly work becomes the field of divinely-willed activity. The Middle Ages rated the pious work of the monks, worship, prayer, more highly than the lower, worldly work of the laity. Working in a worldly calling is the true worship of God. This by no means does away with worship, but it is not work. It is a joyful grateful Sunday celebration the theme of which is the basis of the possibility of our actively turning to the world: the wholly undeserved and undeservable gift of our justification through God in Jesus Christ.

But Luther and Lutheranism, according to Weber, have thus left it essentially good. In his works vocational work does not acquire any independent tone. The concern about a new righteousness by works is far

¹⁶ Ibid.

greater in Luther and the Lutherans than the demonstration that the doctrine of justification. Luther often explained that it was justification which had first really made good works possible. However, Weber concedes that Lutheranism was not homogeneous in this respect. Especially Pietism, which initially meant a concentration and intensification of the piety of the heart, the internalisation of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, also brings with it, at least in some of its currents, a strong reappraisal of diligent, industrious vocational work. But according to Weber diligence and industry here usually remain on well-determined tracks; it is more the diligence of an employee that Pietism produces. One carefully performs the work given to one, indefatigably and with a great sense of responsibility. It is from this block that the workers in successful factories in the eighteenth and nineteenth century are hewn: but entrepreneurial ambition, planned going beyond traditional business, the bold opening up of new markets, are not. Exceptions like August Hermann Francke in Halle confirm the rule.

By contrast, for Weber it is in fact Calvinism which first brings the real thrust into modernity. It produced, to be more precise, two decisive thrusts. The first is Calvin himself. Not only does he allow interest within certain limits, but above all he systematises Luther's theology and his understanding of faith. The doctrine of justification is developed further with rational theological consistency into the doctrine of predestination. Following the compulsion of the notion of the absolute decision of the divine will this is thought of as double predestination. The decisive question is now where the election of the elect, the rejection of the rejected is shown: in the testing of faith in life, in the whole way of living. Certainly believers too have their crises and tribulations, but ultimately they always rise above them. The consistently virtuous life lived out of faith will then prove the salvation of the one who leads it. Certainty of salvation and a confident, active shaping of life condition one another. Thus for Calvin, who theologically is an epigone, but by nature

strong in faith and self confident, the “*horribile erratum*” is in practice toned down. Believers certainly doubt time and again, but then they look at God’s guidance in their lives which they also recognise where they had to accept defeats, failure and suffering; these were the trials of God: “Whom the Lord loves, him he chastises.”¹⁷

The situation changes with the disappearance of that elitist confidence in the inferior successors to the great reformer. The ways of God in and with their lives were by no means as marvellous to less self-confident natures than that of the Geneva Reformer. Quite early on they feared that the internal and external failures that they had to swallow were in fact an expression of the lack of grace in their lives. To escape such intolerable prospects of the doctrine of predestination with, as Weber says, its “solemn inhumanity”¹⁸ they ran to theologians and asked them for clear indications. These were evasive and emphasised the “*syllogismus practicus*”, the doctrine of the inference from works, which already appears in Calvin but with no strong emphasis. Now one’s own restless, consistent, rational way of life in fact becomes the proof, not just the expression of election.

But, Weber’s next consideration was what is a better, clearer indication of diligence than economic success, than money? In his view a consistent orientation towards money is the plausible culmination of the rationalisation of a way of life. He now sees this spirit of money ideal typically realised above all in the early American Puritans. He finds the canonical text for this attitude in Benjamin Franklin: “Remember that Time is Money. He that can earn Ten Shillings a Day by his Labour and goes abroad, or sits idle one half of that Day, though he spends but Sixpence during his Diversion or Idleness, ought not to reckon that the only Expense; he has really spent or rather thrown away Five Shillings. Re-

¹⁷ Heb. 12, 6; after Prov. 3.11; cf. Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559), III, 8,6; cf. III, 4,32.

¹⁸ Weber, Max, *Die protestantische Ethik* (FN 7), p. 93.

member that Credit is Money. If a Man lets his Money lie in my Hands after it is due, he gives me the Interest, or as much as I can make of it during that Time. This amounts to a considerable Sum where a Man has good and large Credit, and makes good Use of it. Remember that Money is of a prolific generating Nature. Money can beget Money and its Offspring can beget more, and so on. Five Shilling turn'd, is Six. Turned again 'tis Seven Shillings and Three Pence; and so on 'till it becomes an Hundred Pound. He that murders a Crown, destroys all it might have produced, even Scores of Pounds."¹⁹

Here a new indefatigable work ethic is combined with a new capitalistic understanding of money. Economics generally is orientated on money. Money is no longer just the all-defining means but at the same time the all-defining end of doing business. The Aristotelian doctrine of chrematism (the doctrine of the money economy), which governed antiquity and the Middle Ages and even the Reformation, can be seen as the casualty, the dubious form of *oikonomia* turns it on its head: *oikonomia* is now chrematism. Business is money business and money business is the principle of the whole way of life. For Max Weber, Benjamin Franklin is the ideal-typical Puritan, and Puritanism, namely American Puritanism, is the ideal-typical religious capitalism. However, Weber clearly sees that this Calvinist spirit did not stand alone as the cradle of the capitalist system. Other Protestant groups too, the Pietists whom I have already mentioned and above all the adherents of the left wing of the Reformation, the so-called "sects", above all Baptists and Methodists, also belong in the picture. The central dogmatic mechanism, namely the doctrine of predestination interpreted with the "*syllogismus practicus*", does not appear with them. But as Weber says, they develop "surrogates" which are not so evident and efficient as that model theory, but have roughly similar effects.

¹⁹ Franklin, Benjamin, *Advice to a Young Tradesman, Written by an Old One*, 1748.

For Weber the criterion of all things remains Calvinist Puritanism. That can be seen well in his late writings on the sociology of religion relating to the business ethic of the world religions. He regarded the Puritan work structure as an ideal-typical frame to the phenomena which he investigated, observing relative proximities and usually great distances, and analysing with its help the contributions and progresses of religions towards the rationalisation of a way of life. Old Testament Judaism also produced such effects. However, the decisive thrust of rationalisation in world history, the effects of which we both live off today and yet also hold us prisoner, took place in the forests of North America in the eighteenth century, in conditions which externally do not have the remotest connection with the modern capitalist money economy. It is precisely because of this that Weber thinks that he can see here the birth of that spirit which today inspires and threatens the whole world – whether it wants it or not.

As I have said, Weber's thesis has often been criticised. Well-known contemporary historians like Felix Rachfahl accused him of talking nonsense in distinguishing a capitalist spirit from the capitalist system. When Weber concedes that the modern monetary system already came into being in fourteenth-century Italy – how should one then imagine a capitalism without an adequate “spirit” over several centuries?²⁰ In his 1913 book *Die Juden und Wirtschaftsleben* (The Jews and Economic Life) Werner Sombart attempted to trace modern capitalism and its spirit back to Old Testament Judaism, and saw in Puritanism nothing other than a modern Christian “Judaism”. Putting forward that the whole Puritan mythology of the Mayflower embarking for the promised land, down to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was just a matter of updating the Exodus story?

²⁰ Rachfahl, Felix, “Kalvinismus und Kapitalismus”, in Max Weber, *Die protestantische Ethik II* (FN 8), pp. 57-148 (107).

More than a century of research into Puritanism, especially the more recent research worldwide into the history of religion of the early modern period, have returned intensively to these and similar questions. In them, from a historical perspective not very much of Weber's thesis seems to be left. It is assumed today that all the confessions of early modernity, including Lutheranism and indeed Catholicism, have their own histories of modernisation and produced their own effects of modernisation. Tendencies towards a rationalisation of the way of life can also be observed in the other confessions. Pietism has already been mentioned and the positive assessment of earning money is likewise not an exclusive characteristic of a Puritan business disposition.

However, those who believe that Weber's basic thesis of Puritanism as the ideal type for a capitalistic disposition to business has clearly been historically refuted will be disappointed, and cannot have understood Weber's concept of the ideal type completely. In Weber the presupposition of the formation of the concept is that ideal types always represent a conceptual abstraction which therefore is never purely realised in history. And we should also remember that in Weber's view the formation of the capitalist spirit from the original spirit of the Reformation was a logical but not a necessary development.

5. Calvinistic modernisation II: the Troeltsch thesis

Ernst Troeltsch in essentials took over and shared the analysis of his professional friend Max Weber. He also took over from him a decisive concept in the *Social Teaching of Christianity* which he published in 1912, namely the ideal typical sociological distinction between church and sect, to which he added yet a third type, that of mysticism. For Troeltsch "church" is the "form" which administers supernatural salvation and gives sacramentally to its members. For him "sect" is a voluntary fellowship of committed Christians like an association. "Church" is

always aimed at the whole of society, the sect is particular. The church has learned to come to terms with the other great institutions of society as a whole, with the state; it attempts to permeate it as far as possible; it wants to be a state church or a church state, and if it cannot be that, it develops a two-kingdoms doctrine, in which the two have a place side by side at least in this time and this life. In this form too it remains orientated to the *Corpus Christianum*. By contrast the sect either actively fights against the state or it tolerates it. Its kingdom is not of this world: it is aimed at the small community of the holy, it is *ecclesia militans* or *ecclesia pressa*. "Mysticism" is not really a distinct form of fellowship over against the two others, it is rather piety lived out individually, and usually but not necessarily, a relatively intellectual piety. Mystics also communicate, but usually in literature and over wide distances.

For Troeltsch the ideal typical form of church Christianity is mediaeval Catholicism. Luther and Calvin, original Lutheranism and original Calvinism, bring decisive theological modifications to the Catholic Church system, in that they turn its pyramidal hierarchy upside down, they subjectivise faith and democratise the church. This does not alter the fact that both Reformers, and indeed the third, Zwingli, are orientated towards the model of the church. The original Reformation is a church reformation, it reforms the church but remains imprisoned in its sociological model. This can be observed particularly in Calvin's Geneva church-state system. Nevertheless already in Calvin himself unmistakable elements of the sect type are mixed into the religious model of forming a community. Calvin's community is the community of the saints: Christians, who preserve their faith in inner and outer assaults and oppressions. However, this is nevertheless a *corpus permixtum*. The division between elected and rejected is not made by any earthly body but by God himself at the end of time. That is the church element, but the sect element leads to a strict church discipline. Rationalised, consistently lived out in faith, an always active way of life is at the same time

the goal and object of external controls. Unlike Lutheranism, the Calvinist sect church has strong instruments of social disciplining at its disposal, which exercise something like a disciplinary effect on the characters it reaches.²¹

Despite this sociological mixed structure of Calvinism, for Reformed Protestantism too Troeltsch strictly distinguishes between old and new Protestantism. It was neo-Protestantism, now decisively combining itself with the nature of the sect, which first brought the real thrust towards modernisation in modern times. However, it was not this alone, but the expression of Puritanism in free churches in England and North America that pushed the old dogmatic differences between Calvinism and the Baptists into the background. American Puritanism, as Troeltsch observed during his time in the USA, is really a mixed form of Calvinism and the Baptists.

It is probably because of this sociological character of early modern Calvinism as a mixed form that from the beginning and to an increasing degree it was more positive than contemporary Lutheranism about the right to resist tyrannical authorities. This again was the fertile soil in which the contractual theories of secular modernity could grow, as outlined by John Locke and others. Troeltsch therefore also agrees with the famous thesis of the state law theoretician and historian, his Heidelberg colleague Georg Jellinek, according to which the founding notion of human rights in the American Constitution did not have its historical basis in a recourse to ancient conceptions of natural law but precisely in the political theology of early modern Calvinism.

With a view to this political potential of modernisation and liberalisation of Calvinism, the element that comes to the fore is Jellinek's view that the future of religion in modern times belongs to sociological mixed

²¹ Cf. Troeltsch, Ernst, *Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen*, Gesammelte Schriften, Vol.1, Tübingen, Mohr, ³1923 [English translation, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1931].

forms. That is his real thesis. His ideal is therefore what he calls an “elastically made *Volkskirche*” which comes to bear here. The strong social ties of church sect and, not to be forgotten, mysticism are fused in contemporary syntheses. Troeltsch also admired Calvinism greatly in this respect, but a certain reserve in the Lutheran Troeltsch is unmistakable, despite all his criticism of his own confession and the way it appears in the present. This is the reserve of the individualised, inward, educated Christian, of what one might call the modern mystic. The strong social discipline which has to some degree flowed into modern American Calvinists is alien to him. In open situations, as in Holland, for him the pleasure ceases. What is above all alien to him is the relatively uncritical combination of Christianity and the modern capitalist spirit.

6. Effects of theses of effect

Anyone who today, a century after Weber and Troeltsch, looks round the churches with a Calvinist stamp, cannot complain, at least at the level of church information, statements, about a lack of distance from capitalistic modernity. The Accra Declaration of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches states: “We reject the current world economic order imposed by global neoliberal capitalism. We reject the culture of rampant consumerism and the competitive greed and selfishness of the neoliberal global market system or any other system which claims there is no alternative.”²² These statements, published a century after Max Weber’s work on Protestantism, seem like a commentary on its contemplation of the disastrous future of capitalism. They continue its critical diagnosis, but without adopting its sceptical one with respect to possible

²² *The Accra Confession of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Covenanting for justice in the economy and the earth*, 11 August 2004, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 24th General Assembly, Accra, Ghana, paragraph 2.

alternatives. In their combination of a criticism of consumerism and a registering of sin they resemble a neo-Calvinism enriched with Weber's analysis of capitalism. The Puritan vigour intent on taking the world off its hinges and its clear distinctions between good and evil is combined here with the fight against the fruits of the works which their own forefathers have placed in the world. The true Holy Land praised and promised to the true saints in the New World here becomes the leading power of the anonymous "empire" as the "coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power that constitutes a system of domination led by powerful nations to protect and defend their own interests."²³

The fight of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches against the capitalist empire is to some degree a fight of David against Goliath. However, we cannot attribute the tottering of the giant that we observe today to David's five smooth stones. The strong tones perhaps explain and justify themselves from such a David feeling.

That the nucleus of the Calvinist doctrine of election, as received by later followers, was a great sense of insecurity is one of Max Weber's strongest psycho-historical theses. Today it may be regarded as outdated, because the infinite sense of loneliness among the early modern Calvinists was probably not as widespread as Weber assumed. Nevertheless, one of the theory's fruits is the decisive new interpretation which the doctrine of predestination has been given in the twentieth century.

It comes from Karl Barth. That "solemn inhumanity", thus a literal quotation of Max Weber by Barth, has "to be destroyed if the light of this doctrine is to shine".²⁴ Calvin's "electing God is a *Deus nudus absconditus*, not the *Deus revelatus*, who as such is also the *Deus abscon-*

²³ Ibid, no. 11.

²⁴ Barth, Karl, *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik II/2: Die Lehre von Gott*, Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981, p. 12. (English translation *Church Dogmatics II/2, The Doctrine of God*, Edinburgh 1957.)

ditus, the eternal God”.²⁵ Rather, it is necessary to start in a to some degree Calvinistic resolution from the “reality...” of the eternal togetherness of God and human beings “...as a concrete decision. Its content has a name and is a person. He is and is called Jesus Christ and precisely for that reason is no *decretum absolutum*.”²⁶ Jesus Christ is “the electing God and elected man in one”.²⁷ Nevertheless we should also go on with Calvin to speak of a double predestination, but now in such a way that God’s self-surrender in Jesus Christ “means that God puts himself, his deity, his power and his possession as God in question”²⁸ and takes “rejection ... damnation and death...” upon himself.²⁹

According to Barth, only a theologian who consistently starts from this *decretum concretum* is also capable of leaving behind the two complementary problem forms of modern Christianity, a - Lutheran - mysticism and a - Calvinist - asceticism.³⁰ Modern Christianity, also and including Reformed Christianity, is loyal to its Reformation heroes in that it keeps to their best purposes and clearly identifies their problematic sides. Calvin himself would have had nothing against this. To quote his own last words: “I have had many weaknesses which you had to tolerate and even all that I did is fundamentally worthless. However, I can only

²⁵ Ibid., p. 119.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 172.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 1, opening statement.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 177.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, pp.121,174.

say of myself that I willed the good, that my mistakes always displeased me and fear of God struck roots in my heart. Therefore I ask you to forgive me the bad. But if there has been something good, turn towards it and follow it!”³¹

³¹ Calvin-Studienausgabe Bd. 2, Neukirchen: Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1997, 299; quoted from Georg Plasger, *Johannes Calvins Theologie. Eine Einführung*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008, p. 16.

CALVINISM IN NORTH AMERICA

James D. Bratt

An old story about the founding of America puts English Calvinists on the ground floor of that enterprise.¹ In this account the “Pilgrim Fathers”, separatists from the Church of England, and their much more numerous, non-separating Puritan kin are the architects of a uniformly devout New England, which in turn becomes the model of the independent nation divinely destined to arise on the New World’s shore. By logical transition, then, the United States was set upon Calvinistic foundations.

The reality turns out to have been much more complicated. Recent historians have discovered how variegated the settlers of New England were (the Puritans having comprised at most one-third of the whole) and how unusual New England was as a British colonial settlement in North America. The earlier-established Virginia turns out to have been more typical of the lot, and thus the proper home of the authors of the great documents and feats of American Independence. But even in the con-

¹ The following article is reproduced with permission from Hirzel, Martin Ernst/Sallmann, Martin (eds): *John Calvin’s Impact on Church and Society 1509-1909*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009, pp. 49-66; in German: *1509 – Johannes Calvin – 2009. Sein Wirken in Kirche und Gesellschaft*, Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2008, pp. 71-94; in French: *Calvin et le Calvinisme: Cinq siècles d’influences sur l’Eglise et la Société*, Geneva: Labor et Fides.

ventional tale the Puritans' theology was always a sticking point quickly left behind for more widely valued qualities. It was the Puritans' solid character, or their contributions to liberty and education, all somehow emerging despite their distasteful predestinarianism, that won Americans' affection.

The revised story of America's origins thus gives a better forecast of Calvinism's destiny on the North American continent. Always controversial for the rigour as well as the substance of their theology, vastly outnumbered by populist denominations like the Methodists, and an embattled minority even when they have been the establishment, Calvinists have nonetheless exerted an disproportionate influence in the development of American politics, academia and national self-conceptions. They have been the leaven in a now-resistant, now absorptive loaf. Their external influences have come despite – or perhaps because of – chronic internal fissuring, for from the start Calvinists in North America have split along lines of ethnicity, polity and theological interpretation. Prospering as a minority, they have become many minorities, each shaping and being shaped by the niche where they have landed.

1. The Puritan legacy

The Calvinism that came ashore in New England in the 1620s and '30s had already been altered from Continental standards by the exigencies of England's protracted process of church reformation. Neither outlawed nor in power, English Calvinists negotiated an indeterminate space by building congregations that were in part voluntary associations of the likeminded. This gave rise to the localistic polity that would be one of the most powerful legacies of Puritanism in America. A second would be a habit formed in England that became standardised in America: the expectation that full church membership be accorded only upon the applicants' testimony of a personal experience that settled any

doubts about their election. In this manner the Puritans in New England aimed at making the visible and invisible churches as synonymous as possible. At the same time their churches were state-supported to the exclusion of all others. If zeal for purity and broad public sway proved to be unstable associates, the combination contained a great deal of America's religious future, which lay in the separate, even rival, elaboration of these two impulses.

Two other Puritan tensions also reverberated down through the American future. Their insistence on experiential conversion potentially amplified the authority of the human soul in things religious, a precedent unflinching invoked by later generations of searchers and freethinkers. On the other hand, from the Cambridge (Massachusetts) Synod of 1648 to Connecticut's Saybrook Synod in 1708 the Puritans moved toward establishing the Westminster standards as collective authority and so resolutely asserted God's sovereignty over all things. Many who would leave established Congregationalism nonetheless took along this theology into their new fellowships. Likewise, a tension between piety and intellect marked Puritanism from the start. It is no accident that Harvard College, founded just six years after the Puritans' first landing in 1630, evolved over the eighteenth century into the American bastion of Enlightened rationalism, or that virtually every one of the oldest Puritan congregations was Unitarian by the mid-nineteenth century. On the other hand, the exuberant revivalism that swept America from 1740 to 1840 drew from models and sources in classic Puritanism. The earnest heart and the formidable systematic head of John Calvin was carried over to the New World in this manner, and in this potent combination.

The Puritans aimed at thorough reformation not only in church but in state and society; theirs would be a "Bible commonwealth" founded upon a social compact between people who were at once fellow citizens and fellow church members. Until its original charter was revoked in 1684, Massachusetts restricted the franchise in colony-wide elections to

full church members. Yet the new charter formalised what had been the practice all along in local affairs, awarding the vote according to a property qualification that many could meet. Yet the “democracy” of the famous New England town-meeting should not be misunderstood; it aimed not to poll between discordant opinions but to establish and enforce communal consensus. Dissent was more begrudged by necessity than legitimated by right.

Still, cultivation of a responsible public ethos was high on the list of Puritan priorities – and high on the list of their accomplishments as well. Though the clergy were barred from civil office, they typically worked in close cooperation with the magistracy to shape a society that was at once formally secular and deeply Christian. Key instruments to this effect were not only churches, which all inhabitants were required to attend, but also the schools that appeared in nearly every town. Thus literacy, piety and social duty were each promulgated via the other. Commerce played a more ambiguous role. On the one hand, New England’s townships of small farmers and artisans generated a thoroughly, if modestly scaled, commercial nexus in which nearly everyone participated. On the other hand, a rough egalitarianism combined with suspicions of covetousness and luxury to keep market exploitation under control and to make the achievement of material prosperity as much a cause for introspection as for self-congratulation. Most of all, New England’s social behavior was marked by remarkably low levels of violence; its laws singled out crimes of aggression over those involving property, sexuality, or libel.

The Puritans took divine election to apply not only to individuals and churches among them but also to New England as a “nation”. This too gave as much occasion for lament as for celebration, so that the distinctive genre of colonial New England literature became the jeremiad – sermons recounting the myriad ways in which the chosen people had fallen short of their calling. The very punishments that God was visiting

upon them for these infractions became signs of hope, however, proof that God had not withdrawn his covenant from them. The rhetorical cycle traced out in the jeremiad would endure a very long time and at a very deep level in the American psyche, as the range of what counted as God's chosen nation gradually expanded to include, first, those adjacent territories where the children of New England spread in the search for land and opportunity, and later, but only in the 1820s, to the United States as a whole. The sense of national election could work to launch evangelism campaigns and crusades for social justice – and to launch holy wars against enemies. Not accidentally, the most epochal conflict in United States history, the Civil War (1861-65), joined those two prongs in fatal combination, as a war to thwart Southern disobedience became a war to abolish slavery. The fiercest and most accomplished rhetoric in that war on the Northern front came from New England ministers who consciously styled themselves as “sons of the Puritans”. Ironically, their equals on the Southern side were self-consciously Calvinistic Presbyterians.

Unfortunately, God's “New Israel” also had “Canaanites” near at hand to deal with. The grimmest annals in New England history recount the Pequot War (1637-1638) and King Philip's War (1675-1676) – proportionate to population, some of the costliest episodes in American military history. Land pressure, complaints about trade, and racism all played their part in causing the conflicts, but the sanction for genocide that Puritan leaders drew out of Scripture in these instances soaked their faith in the blood that condemns, not redeems. The more familiar Salem witch craze (1692) turned the hunt for the Lord's enemies inward, and its twenty victims count as the predictable sacrifice of an insular community trying to dam its tide of afflictions. The quiet anomaly of Salem is that such episodes did not occur more often in the region. For that New England's learned ministry and magistrates are due credit, as they usually nipped the folk mania of witch-hunting in the bud.

2. "The Great Awakening"

By the 1730s, under the strains of rapid economic growth and demographic dispersion, the New England pulpit triggered a new religious era that later historians would call the Great Awakening. Resoundingly Calvinistic sons of the region like Jonathan Edwards set this stage and upon it trod the British-born missionary George Whitefield (1714-1770), who spread the new model of heart religion across all the colonies. Combining theatrical charisma with a new emphasis upon the proximity of Christ's redeeming mercies, Whitefield simplified the exacting measures of Puritan conversion into a ready, wholesale plan. Still, Whitefield's was a Calvinistic gospel – he broke with his erstwhile Oxford friends, John (1703-1791) and Charles Wesley (1707-1788), over their Arminian² understanding of justification – and the Awakening can be understood in part as a wave of Calvinistic reform. It brought its converts to vital religious commitment; it multiplied colleges (Dartmouth and Brown in New England, Princeton in New Jersey, sundry academies in the South) to train ministers for further evangelisation. As in Calvin's own time it raised its adherents' religious sights beyond their native locale to an international vista. Yet the Awakening was Calvinistic only in part, for the Arminian Methodists on the Wesleyan side would eventually outnumber the converts Whitefield left. Furthermore, the most numerous fellowship among his progeny, the evangelical Baptists, however much they held to Reformed theology, repudiated the public sweep of magisterial Calvinism.

Baptists had been present in British North America from an early date, especially in Rhode Island where so many dissenters from the New England establishment fled or were exiled. Tolerated, they did not much

² A school of thought named after the Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) that amplified the role of human will and initiative in the process of salvation, over against the orthodox Calvinist position ratified by the Synod of Dort (1618-1619).

multiply there. The zeal of the Awakening radically altered the scale of things. New Light (pro-revival) New Englanders began to form their own churches under the principles of strict local control and renewed insistence upon experiential conversion as test of full membership. (That had eroded with the spread of the “Halfway Covenant”³ in the New England establishment from the last third of the seventeenth century.) Many “Separates” then took the logical next step of requiring believer baptism and leaving Congregationalism entirely. The movement spread steadily across New England from 1750 on but really flourished on the backcountry frontier, especially in Virginia and the Carolinas, where it was brought by New England missionaries. Theologically these Separate Baptists took a soft Calvinist line, insisting on agreement only in “essentials”, but mandated exuberant experience and strict discipline of life and fellowship as the definition of true Christianity. They met and gradually intermingled with Particular Baptists who had been evangelised by the more consistently Calvinistic Philadelphia Association founded in 1707 by streams of Welsh immigrants. Together, the Baptists’ lay leadership and localist polity made them self-sufficient as communities. Their hostility to established churches left them oscillating between radical libertarianism and world-renouncing quietism⁴ during the American Revolution, and their ethical sobriety made them one of the most effective instruments of social discipline on the post-revolutionary frontier without their assuming much claim upon or for the public order.

The Presbyterians, the third large body of Calvinists in colonial America, also expanded rapidly over the eighteenth century, bolstered

³ The Half-Way Covenant, affirmed by the Boston synod of 1662, opened the sacrament of baptism to children of parents who themselves had been baptized but had not experienced regeneration as was required for full church membership, so long as these parents professed believing knowledge of Christian doctrine, promised to obey church authority, and manifested a proper way of life.

⁴ An attitude distancing oneself from worldly affairs, particularly politics and warfare.

by immigration as well as revival. By Independence some 150,000 Scots and Ulster folk had poured into the colonies, typically settling along the Appalachian backcountry from Pennsylvania south. Religiously their communities showed stout Westminster orthodoxy alongside vivid folk religion, and strong church assemblies jostling with prickly individualism in a libertine environment. This Scots-Irish phalanx soon came into tension with home-grown Presbyterians who had become allied with New England Congregationalists of semi-presbyterian polity. The alliance favoured revivals and regional autonomy, less so doctrinal uniformity and synodical controls. The issue was joined in the subscription controversy at the Synod of 1729, which passed an Adopting Act that required clergy to affirm the spirit though not the letter of the Westminster Standards, as the immigrant, pro-subscription party wished. The battle resumed with the Awakening, and the anti-revival Old Side split from the more evangelical party at the Synod of 1741. The two were eventually reconciled in 1758 on New Side terms: subscription on doctrinal essentials, relative regional autonomy and attention to the evangelical spirit as well as the formal education of clergy. Both the split and the reconciliation were propelled by the Log College founded outside Philadelphia by William Tennent (1673-1746) to provide ministerial training on site to avoid the hazards of traveling to and (in his mind) absorbing the spirit of Scottish universities. Ulster-born but a New Sider, a champion of heart religion but also of theological education, Tennent helped mediate the two poles, just as his son Gilbert Tennent (1703-1764), a fire-breathing revivalist, soon settled down to good order in his Philadelphia pulpit.

Helpful in the church's reconciliation but much more influential in the new nation about to be born was John Witherspoon, a Scottish pastor brought to New Jersey in 1768 to preside over the college founded at Princeton. His evangelical past did not prevent Witherspoon from purging the curriculum that Jonathan Edwards had installed there and substi-

tuting for it the moral-sense ethics and common-sense epistemology of the Scots Enlightenment. If this conciliation of rationalism and revivalism muted the implications of Calvinist doctrines of sin, it served admirably to pump political leadership into the American Revolution. In fact, Princeton produced more office-holders on all levels of the infant nation than did any other American college. Witherspoon's political Calvinism emphasised the responsibilities of public service, the centrality of law both to legitimate and stabilise the revolutionary process. Witherspoon's most distinguished student was James Madison (1751-1836), principal architect of the U. S. Constitution. The document reflects the naturalised Calvinism that Madison took away from Princeton: utterly secular, trusting in no redemptions, arraying structural mechanisms to control indelible self-centredness.

3. Theological and Regional Divergences in the 19th century

Once national independence was definitively secured at the end of the Napoleonic wars, Princeton returned to its original intent of producing ministers, founding a separate theological seminary that also became a font of undiluted Calvinist orthodoxy. Leading the enterprise for half a century from his arrival on the faculty in 1822 was Charles Hodge (1797-1878): professor of systematic theology, the vastly learned editor of perhaps the foremost academic journal in the nation, a force for moderation in denominational councils, but an unbending advocate of what he took to be the timeless faith of the church. His system combined François Turretin's Reformed dogmatics, Francis Bacon's induction as theological method, Common Sense Realism as philosophical frame, and earnest polemics against any deviation from this profile. Hodge's regime would endure at Princeton until the Modernist quarrels of the 1920s, and then lived on in the scholastic wing of American Fundamen-

talism. Yet, for much of the nineteenth century, Princeton minted more ministers – and thus more professional leaders in local communities across the country – than did any other school in the land, cultivating in society as well as in church a respect for learning, a culture of sobre realism and civil respect, and a model of piety fulfilled in institutional service.

Post-revolutionary adjustments in New England were very different. Loyal Congregationalism perceived a tide of unbelief and licentiousness at loose in the young republic and rekindled the revival enterprise against it, redoubling their efforts when their churches were disestablished in Connecticut (1817) and Massachusetts (1833). They entered a Plan of Union (1801) with their old New York Presbyterian allies to practise comity in planting churches across New York and the Midwest. They brought additional allies into a remarkable phalanx of national voluntary agencies to promote education, Bible and tract distribution, and the reformation of public morals. This “Presbygational” complex aimed to rebuild the old Puritan holy commonwealth by voluntarist means, and it achieved remarkable success. Separately and together these Calvinist bodies founded more colleges and published more books and Bibles than did any other church, including the Baptists and Methodists who greatly outnumbered them. Their agency budgets compared respectably to those of the federal government, and their network of local affiliates rivaled those of the greatest organisers of the age, the political parties.

Yet the Presbyterians at Princeton, along the border states and in the South became increasingly troubled by these efforts and banded together in 1837 to end the Plan of Union, evicting the “New School” congregations formed under its aegis from the Presbyterian Church. The Old Schoolers cited, besides errors of polity, a theological degeneration in the inheritance of the sainted Edwards. Edwards himself had so altered the Puritans’ covenant theology to qualify his as a neo-Calvinism. Con-

version amounted to a “divine and supernatural light” being imparted immediately to the affections, there implanting an entirely new sensibility that wrought in the redeemed a new vision of reality and a new motivation for conduct – a “true virtue” that consisted in “love for being in general”, free of the calculated self-interest dear to Enlightened moral theory. Such love was impossible for those still dead in their trespasses, Edwards said; yet these too had free will to do as they pleased. They simply could not by their own volition wish to please God.

Edwards’ followers modified this system further to accommodate the voluntarist-individualist canon of the new democracy. Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803) deemphasised the bonds of original sin, which Edwards had robustly reasserted, while translating the master’s ethical rule into a command for “disinterested benevolence”. This necessitated love for the least regarded, Hopkins declared, and he made good on his word by preaching against slavery from his pulpit in Newport, Rhode Island, a centre of the American slave trade. New England’s revival passions thus always bore moral urgency. That combination peaked in the next generation at the hands of Nathaniel William Taylor (1786-1858), professor at Yale Divinity School, and Charles Finney (1792-1875), master evangelist of the Yankee diaspora. Out of revival urgency the two laid the entire guilt of sin at the door of each individual’s will, and taught the power of that will to submit immediately to the moral law of God, which constituted true conversion. This Charles Hodge denounced as worse than Arminian – as Pelagian.⁵ On the other hand Boston Unitarians spied in Taylor and Finney a hyper-Calvinism fixated on guilt and depravity and prone to legalism. In either case, Finney’s revivalism launched a fleet of social reformers to crusade against all of America’s sins, including slavery.

⁵ A theologian active c. 400 C.E., Pelagius taught salvation by human merit and decision, thus not by divine grace. Arminians deem grace to be necessary for salvation though accessible by human-initiated decision.

That activism helped prompt the Presbyterian split of 1837. The staunchest Calvinists among the Baptists voiced their own complaints at the same time, reasserting divine election in theology and the strictest localism in polity to forestall the erection of a new “religious establishment” by a Yankee “hydra” consumed with human pride and imperial ambition.⁶ These Particular or Primitive Baptists found New School deviations among fellow Baptists especially troubling, and their own campaigns via press and pulpit spread a resolute, populist form of Calvinism across the border states and rural South out to the plains of Texas.

Presbyterians in the South moved to withstand Northern critiques by discovering new doctrine. At the hands of James Henley Thornwell (1812-1862), a pastor and professor of theology at Columbia, South Carolina, the notion of “the spirituality of the church” sharply demarcated civil from ecclesiastical spheres and limited the church’s corporate authority to the latter. Not accidentally, slavery being deemed entirely a civil institution, Thornwell’s position exempted the foundation of Southern society from the church’s judgement. This did not prevent him, however, from writing the “Address to All the Churches of Jesus Christ throughout the Earth” (1861) by which Presbyterians in the new-found Confederacy warranted ecclesiastical separation from their Northern brethren and gave fulsome support to their region’s cause. Although Thornwell himself came to think that the South’s military reverses reflected divine punishment upon some abuses of the system, his denomination never doubted that their slave regime had biblical warrant and that Northern abolitionism necessitated all sorts of departures from orthodoxy. Their social outlook combined with rigorous Westminster confessionalism and Baconian common-sense hermeneutics to make the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) a strategic leader in

⁶ “Address to the Particular Baptist Churches of the ‘Old School’ (...),” in: Bratt (ed.): *Antirevivalism*, pp. 69-77.

the New South that emerged out of postwar Reconstruction, assimilating such change as was necessary within a matrix of tradition and order.

Leavening influences from Presbyterians above and Baptists below accentuated the disproportionately Calvinist aura of New South culture. Military defeat, economic straits, and the weight of a burdensome past reinforced the current of fatalism that was already strong in Southern lore and letters. "Calvinist" became the literary shorthand for this complex, which in fact derived as much from stoic and aristocratic sources as from Reformed theology. If scepticism about the illusions of progress helped rationalise the racial segregation of the South, warnings against pride and ambition could have been well used in the booming industrial North. Old School Presbyterians had warranted the Civil War upon constitutional grounds, while New Schoolers were more invested in it as a crusade to eliminate slavery. Notably, military and political triumphs eroded old theological tensions, and the two wings reunited in 1870 upon a moderate Calvinist base. The Congregationalists, who had been more uniformly of the crusader mind during the war, proceeded to become the friendliest ground for theological liberalism once the war was over.

In fact, more and more Northern Protestants in the last quarter of the nineteenth century became convinced that religion needed to innovate to match change in society and economy. As old theological distinctives faded, the traditionally Calvinist denominations became absorbed in a generic Protestant culture marked by prosperous respectability at home and a zeal for spreading "Christian civilisation" abroad. Thus in eight of the nine presidential elections from 1884 through 1916, the Democratic candidate was a Presbyterian – Grover Cleveland (1837-1908), William Jennings Bryan (1860-1925), and Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924). That each held political and theological attitudes clearly at odds with the others' illustrates the limits of denominational salience in the era. What religious historian Sydney Ahlstrom (1919-1984) said of the transit of Pu-

ritanism is equally true of the fading Calvinism of the Gilded Age: it showed a “crucial susceptibility (...) to transmute its power into secular impulses (...) virtually sacrific[ing] itself on the altar of civic responsibility.”⁷ *African Americans and Canadian* Presbyterian experiences in two other nations illustrate the limits and lure of the American compromise. The freed African Americans of the post-Civil War South were indeed a people set apart, organising separate churches when whites refused to fellowship with them as equals. For black Presbyterians, who were far less numerous than their counterparts among the Baptists and Methodists, this posed a severe challenge, since they had typically worshipped (in segregated seating) at white churches prior to the war. Their numbers grew to about seventy congregations by 1898 when, with Jim Crow at its peak, they formed an independent body, only to rejoin the PCUS as a separate and subordinate synod from 1917 until 1951. The factors that kept Presbyterian numbers low in the African-American community – the insistence upon an educated ministry and “good order” in worship – also boosted their disproportionate leadership in the community’s life, North as well as South. Presbyterianism both pointed the way toward the respectability that black achievers yearned for in the face of white denials of the very possibility and agitated politically to make sure that neither side became comfortable in any state short of justice. Thus the escaped slave turned Presbyterian minister Henry H. Garnet (1815-1882) became one of abolitionism’s most radical orators in the decades before the Civil War, while after liberation Francis J. Grimké (1850-1937) – born to a South Carolina slaveholder, educated at Princeton Seminary, and Garnet’s successor at the leading black church in Washington, D.C – numbered among the foremost Presbyterian clergy in the nation, black or white, feared for his logic and learning by anyone admitting to second-class arrangements for reasons of race.

⁷ Ahlstrom: *Religious History of the American People*, p. 348.

The Calvinist experience in Canada was much more placid and fit readily into the pan-Protestant culture that took hold everywhere in that nation outside Quebec from 1830 to 1930. Canadians were more orderly than the Yankees they decidedly did not want to emulate: the Methodists were more serene, the Baptists more uniformly Calvinistic, and the Presbyterians more closely tied to developments back in Scotland whence most of them had emigrated. The Free Church secession (1843) in that motherland registered strongly across the water, holding the sympathies of more Canadian Presbyterians than not by the time of Confederation (1867). Yet the seceders too had affinities for establishment, and the erosion of the Anglican hold on that status in Canada led both Presbyterian sides to functionally fill that gap. They did so with a quieter version of the American New Schoolers' campaigns for evangelism and regulation of public mores. They followed a like inclination for alliance building. Most Canadian Presbyterians were in one house by 1875, then proceeded through long negotiations with Methodists and Congregationalists into the United Church of Canada in 1925. Much less theological backlash attended this process than was the case for even smaller ventures in the United States, partly because Protestants in Canada felt called to enter a common front against consolidated Roman Catholic Quebec, partly because church-state collaboration in educational policy promoted cooperation across denominations in forming universities.

Calvinists in Protestant Fundamentalism

The roots of Protestant Fundamentalism in America lie in protests against any policy of accommodation. Charles Hodge's son, Archibald Alexander (1823-1886), and Benjamin Warfield (1851-1921), who eventually succeeded both Hodges on the Princeton faculty, published a robust assertion of Scriptural authority in 1881; Fundamentalists derived from it one pillar of their theology, a doctrine of biblical "inerrancy".

The other pillar would be dispensational premillennialism⁸, a wholesale remapping of eschatology that broke with traditional Reformed understandings of continuity in God's purpose and people but strongly reaffirmed divine sovereignty as well as biblical authority in an era that had begun to doubt both. Prime representatives of this doctrine were conservative Presbyterian clergy, including its chief publicist James Brookes (1830-1897)⁹ and its missions theorist Arthur T. Pierson (1837-1911).

Meanwhile, the rigorist ethics of "holiness" that was equally definitive of fundamentalism had a Reformed wing parallel to the more numerous Wesleyans and Finneyites in that movement. Named after the English conference site where its teachings were elaborated, Keswick holiness taught that an "in-filling" by the Holy Spirit would enable the believer to live "victoriously" over sin. The motivation to evangelism that drew off Keswick heroics, millenarian urgency, and confidence in Scriptural truth readily blended with the work of mainline church executives like the Presbyterian Robert Speer (1867-1947) to make the generation before World War I the great age of American missions. The Presbyterians were particularly effective in China, Korea, and Brazil; the Baptists were everywhere; the Congregationalists took pride in having started the movement a century before.

But controversy from the mission fields washed back into the United States to help trigger the attack upon theological modernism from which

⁸ The doctrine that Christ's return will precede (hence "pre") rather than culminate (as "post"-millennialism teaches) the thousand-year reign of perfection promised in some New Testament passages. Dispensationalism, popularised by John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) of the Plymouth Brethren in Great Britain, understands God's work in history as dividing into seven distinct phases, with the current epoch of the "church" or "grace" being sharply distinguished from that of "Israel" and soon to come to a catastrophic end.

⁹ A Presbyterian pastor long situated in St. Louis, Brookes presided over the Niagara Bible Conference, one of the principal avenues for disseminating dispensational premillennial teachings. Brookes' many writings further popularised the movement as did the definitive Scofield Reference Bible edited by his disciple, Cyrus I. Scofield (1843-1921).

fundamentalism proper was born. The principal Baptist and Presbyterian denominations in the North underwent tempestuous assemblies in the 1920s from which small, resolutely Calvinist bodies emerged, unable to tolerate further membership in what they took to be theologically compromised churches. The General Association of Regular Baptist Churches grew out of a rupture in Northern Baptist circles and continues to the present, combining traditional Calvinism with dispensational eschatology and strict behavioral codes. More notable for its intellectual sophistication was the Presbyterian quarrel provoked by Princeton Seminary professor J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937), whose *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923) cast the two terms of its title as entirely different religions. The denominational courts faulted him, however, for supporting a separate mission board from theirs, leading to Machen's 1936 departure to form the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). Holding to an unaltered understanding of their historic standards, the OPC's Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia cast itself as the true descendant of the "old Princeton" of Hodge and Warfield.

Fifty years later the drama was replayed among the southern Presbyterians when conservatives, protesting loose theology and political involvement on the part of the PCUS, withdrew into the new Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). Their founding statement replicated the title of Thornwell's "Address" and their conservative politics were never far from view. The PCUS in turn opened negotiations to reunite with their Northern counterparts, who had assimilated a number of smaller Presbyterian bodies already in 1958. The North-South union was accomplished in 1983, producing the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Given similar unions occurring on the Congregational side, the counter-play between ecumenical unity and separation for purity formed the principal twentieth-century plotline in the American churches with the oldest Calvinist roots. The unions have not halted the steady loss of membership that the ecumenical bodies have suffered since the late 1960s, nor the relative

strength gained by the purists via separation. On the other hand, those purists gained most who have decked their Calvinist theology with generic evangelicalism; thus the PCA is far larger than the OPC. In all these manoeuvres, the oldest tension in American Presbyterianism has played out, but across both sides of the current divide. The ecumenical PCUSA breathes the socially activist New School, loose-subscription spirit; yet like eighteenth-century Old Siders it is adamant about proper polity, and its seminaries today affirm Reformed tradition as the proper bed of theological instruction. The PCA, on the other hand, proclaims its doctrinal orthodoxy but promotes an evangelical spirit and allows internal variations on a New Side model. The OPC resembles the small sects sprinkled across the American Presbyterian past, tenacious for the issues that defined them in a distant time or place.

4 Impulses from Dutch and German communities

Some of the freshest impulses on the twentieth-century scene came from German and Dutch Reformed communities that had been present in America from colonial days but remained at the edge of British-derived developments. A major voice sounded already in the 1840s in the person of John Williamson Nevin (1803-1866), a native-born Presbyterian who quit those circles in disgust over the split of 1837 and joined the faculty of the German Reformed seminary at Mercersburg, Pennsylvania. Faulting Old School scholasticism and New School's revival alike, Nevin found in contemporary German theology an inspiring recovery of the church in its confessional heritage, its historical evolution, and its role in Christ's continuing presence on earth. Nevin resurrected for American Protestantism (and to the disbelief of his teacher, Charles Hodge) Calvin's eucharistic theology and saw in sacrament, confession, and liturgy the means of believers' lasting union with Christ and with each other. Castigating the entire "Puritan" heritage as rational-

istic, subjectivist, and sectarian, Nevin's Mercersburg theology offered a dramatic departure on the American scene - nicely enough, in the name of recovering stability and tradition. His offering proved premature but Philip Schaff (1819-1893), his German-educated colleague at the seminary, showed how mediating theology could work on the postwar scene. Moving to the New School-founded Union Seminary in New York City, Schaff became the supreme scholar-statesman of the Protestant mainline, directing a new Bible translation and the English publication of the Church Fathers, among a myriad of other projects.

Mercersburg's deeper impulse began to be recovered in the 1930s as mainline Protestants talked of church union but also of recovering an authentic voice for the church, free of cultural conformity. In one merger the German Reformed in the U.S. joined with the immigrant children of the Evangelical Synod formed out of the post-Napoleonic Reformed-Lutheran union in the motherland. That Synod happened to be the American home of the two strongest theologians on the mid-century scene, Reinhold (1892-1971) and H. Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962). In their "neo-orthodoxy" the cultural captivity of the church found its keenest critics, and Barthian dialectical theology its American counterpart. Without affirming the letter Reinhold asserted the spirit of Augustinian theology and the voice of Calvin himself. It was not in the offerings of secular rationalism, technocratic fixes, or assimilated religion that the world crises of economic depression, total war, and cold war could best be fathomed, thundered Reinhold, but in a restored understanding of sin - original sin, structural sin, the hidden self-interest of the good citizen and the pious mantle of the churchgoer. Reinhold's appeal especially touched the rising generation in American academia and government, steeling them to endurance in the cause of free civilisation while alerting them to their own compromises and illusions. H. Richard's attentions went principally to the church, for which he constructed not only a critical but a constructive ethics of responsibility that would

dominate mainline discourse into the 1970s. In the process he also worked as a pro-Calvinist church historian, rehabilitating Edwards and the Awakenings as the golden thread of the American Protestant heritage. His vision was fulfilled (and Nevin's spirit perhaps provoked) when the German Reformed & Evangelical church merged with the Puritan-descended Congregationalists.

Although they claimed to transcend it, the Niebuhrs clearly worked on the mainline side of the Protestant divide. Dutch Reformed voices helped rehabilitate fundamentalism's children who emerged from underground in the 1960s as "neo-evangelicals". The Reformed Church in America, planted in seventeenth-century New Netherland, had taken a guarded part in pre-Civil War evangelical collaborations, staying on the Old School side of theological debates but serving its own ethnic enclave. It was more enthusiastic for the missions enterprise later in the century and the Prohibition crusade at home. As part of its home missions extension it had helped Dutch immigrants in the 1840s-50s who settled in the farmlands of western Michigan and central Iowa, but since a crucial portion of the new arrivals had just passed through a bitter secession from the established Reformed Church in the Netherlands, suspicion of a quasi-established American Protestantism spread in the *kolonies* and led to the formation of a separate Christian Reformed Church (CRC). It hewed to the strict confessionalism of the Seceded Church in the Netherlands and drew in a majority of the newcomers to America.

The pietist orthodoxy of the CRC was soon modified by the neo-Calvinist influences of Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), a multi-talented Dutch visionary who founded a university, two newspapers, and a political party, on his way to becoming prime minister of the Netherlands early in the twentieth century. Kuyper's project had two purposes: to awaken orthodox Calvinists from their pietistic slumbers to intentionally Christian participation in every domain of modern life; and, as a strategic part of that labour, to mount a wholesale critique of secularism and

theological liberalism that would expose their inadequacies and warrant integral Christian options instead. These proposals had two corollaries that Kuyper freely granted: an explosion of the Enlightenment – but also an old Christian – notion of human objectivity in the articulation of knowledge and public policy, and a frank pluralism by which adherents of each “worldview” received their fair share of public space and respected that of others as a matter of Christian principle, not just out of begrudging toleration. Kuyper’s dicta, no less than his example in founding a distinctively Christian university, galvanised any number of Christian Reformed youth to academic labours, most notably philosophers on the order of Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987), Alvin Plantinga (1932-), and Nicholas Wolterstorff (1932-). Their work exploded the Baconian common-sense approach that neo-evangelicals had inherited from nineteenth-century Princeton and replaced it with a presuppositionalist method that by the century’s end dominated American evangelical discourse - and opened it to creative interaction with some types of postmodernism which Kuyper’s critique of power and pretensions to neutrality had anticipated by a century. At the same time, Kuyper’s mandates for full-spectrum political and cultural engagement pushed the Christian Reformed out of their ethnic enclaves after World War II and inspired evangelical activism after the collapse of the Cold War consensus in the 1960s. This Kuyperianism could cut Right as well as Left, generating something of an evangelical liberation theology in critique of American domination abroad, but also militating against an expansive state and defending the organic orders of creation in a manner very friendly to the Christian Right’s “family values” agenda of the past quarter century.

Along with the Niebuhrians and Kuyperians have sounded some surprising voices from the Calvinist residuum of the erstwhile mainstream. The 2005 Pulitzer Prize for fiction went to *Gilead*, the story of a soulful Presbyterian minister by the doughty Presbyterian author, Marilynne

Robinson (1947-). Her earlier collection of essays, *The Death of Adam*, stands in a long line of American mediations on the hollowness within the nation's experiment and on the possibility – explicitly averred in Robinson's case – that John Calvin had the essential things right, and not only for believers' eternal salvation but for moderns' life together. A fellow Presbyterian, pastor-novelist Frederick Buechner (1926-), has walked more mellow paths to inspire a new birth of interior spiritual reflection. Calvin's *Institutes* opined that the knowledge of God would lead to self-knowledge; Buechner and his followers have taken Calvin's other option, searching the self to open unto God. The Genevan's impact on the American psyche, politics, and cultural criticism has evidently not run out. If his predestinarian reputation will never endear him to American hearts, his long train of disciples still leavens American lives.

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8

**RACISM AS HERESY.
COMPLEX CALVINIST INFLUENCES
IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Piet Naude, South Africa

1. Introduction

It is a privilege to have been invited to take part in this lecture series of the Basel Faculty of Theology, my thanks to the organisers. Basel played an enormous role in the development of the Reformed tradition via the work and lives of both Calvin and Barth. This makes my visit even more special. My thanks also to the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches for the support that made my travel to Switzerland possible. I am deeply humbled by this occasion and trust that my contribution will enlighten our global understanding of the many faces of Calvin in the world today.

2. Heresy and Status Confessionis of Democracy Transition

The church declares a state of confession when a situation arises in which neutral or mediocre matters (*adiaphora*) become issues of grave importance that threaten the very heart of the gospel message, and thus

compel the church to witness and act over against this threat. Although the threat may be “ethical” in nature, the church interprets this as a theological or doctrinal matter, and considers such threat to the gospel a false teaching or heresy.¹

In the 20th century, three² such occasions arose:

First: In the German *Kirchenkampf* against National-Socialism, issues such as church structure, eligibility for church office and church discipline, became matters that fundamentally threatened the credibility of the gospel and compelled the Confessing Church in Barmen to accept a new declaration of faith in 1934.

Second: The ecumenical rejection of racism – especially as legalised in South Africa – led the Lutheran World Federation in Dar es Salaam (1977) to declare a *status confessionis* on matters of race-based church membership and the political system of apartheid. This was followed by two further declarations on the same matter by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Ottawa (1982) and the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa (1982). It was this latter church who subsequently adopted the Confession of Belhar³ (1986) against the heresy of a false gospel.

The third instance relates to the *Reformierter Bund* in Germany that in 1982 announced a *status confessionis* on the possession of nuclear

¹ For a conceptual and historical analysis read Dirk Smit, “A status confessionis in South Africa?” *Journal of Theology in Southern Africa* 47 (1984) pp. 21-46.

² A quite recent example that did not yet reach full confessional status is the processus confessionis announced by the World Council of Churches on issues of economic and ecological justice. Although the World Alliance of Reformed Churches adopted the Accra Confession in 2004 as fundamental critique against the “empire” of global capitalism and its devastating ecological impact, the Alliance itself recognises that Accra is not a confession in the traditional sense of the world. It could however become the fourth example of a status confessionis.

³ For the confessional text, accompanying letter and insightful discussion, see Daan Cloete and Dirk Smit (eds.), *A moment of truth. The confession of the Dutch Reformed Mission church 1982* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

arms as they judged that such arms fundamentally threaten the possibility of human life and put the core of the Christian faith at risk.

I was asked to speak about racism as heresy in its relation to the complex Calvinist effects in Südafrika. For the sake of this paper, I therefore focus on the second example of *status confessionis* referred to above: the declaration of racism as a heresy was primarily directed against the formation of separate Reformed churches for different races, and a Christian gospel that supported a political and legal system of state-enforced racial separation.⁴ The neutral matters of church membership and structure, as well as the political order of society, became matters of confession that relate to the core of the gospel message.

“But where does Calvin fit into this story?” one may ask. Let us make a short detour into South African history⁵:

The first permanent settlement of Europeans in South Africa in 1652 was of Dutch descent. As employees of the Dutch East India Company, directed to set up a half-way station between Europe and the East, they brought with them the Christian faith that was primarily shaped by the Calvinist stream of the Protestant Reformation. The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) was established under the auspices of the classis of Amsterdam, and held Scripture and the Three Formulaes of Unity (The Belgium Confession, Heidelberg Catechism and Canons of Dordt) in high esteem.

As local people of mixed race and black people converted to the Christian faith, they were baptised into the one DRC church. Due to social and language differences, it was decided by the Cape Synod of the DRC in 1857 that separate communion services would be held for indigenous people. This eventually led to the establishment of new sepa-

⁴ For an analysis of the heresy-debate, read John W de Gruchy, and Charles Villa-Vicencio (eds.), *Apartheid is a heresy*. (Cape Town: David Philip, 1983).

⁵ One of the best theological interpretations of South Africa's history, remains John W de Gruchy, *The church struggle in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979).

rate Reformed churches based on race: In 1881 the coloured Dutch Reformed Mission Church was established, followed by the black and Indian churches in 1963 and 1968 respectively. Together with the “white” mother church, these four churches formed the so-called “DRC-family” of churches in South Africa.

The European people of Dutch (and later French) descent, slowly built their own language and identity over against the colonial powers of the day – whether Dutch or British. They increasingly saw themselves as Afrikaners (“from Africa and speaking Afrikaans”) with nationalist ideals of political independence and self-determination. These nationalist ideals grew especially strong after the defeat in the English War of 1899-1902 and the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. When the National Party won the white elections in 1948, the path was opened for grand apartheid and an intensification of racial separation.

The political situation at that point sadly mirrored the racial segregation in the DRC-family and drew its moral legitimacy from a specific interpretation of the Christian gospel understood as Calvinism. This represents the first face of Calvin in South Africa. How could such a racial situation in church and society be derived from a call on the name of Christ and the Calvinist tradition? To answer this question, we need to take a diversion to the Dutch theologian, Abraham Kuyper.

3. The first face of Calvin in South Africa: Interpretations of Abraham Kuyper

Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), a self-professed (neo-) Calvinist since 1870, exerted enormous influence on church and society in The Netherlands during his life-time.⁶ Kuyper was a pastor, a brilliant

⁶ For an overview and evaluation of Kuyper’s life and work, read Luis E. Lugo (ed): *Religion, pluralism, and public life. Abraham Kuyper’s legacy for the twenty-first century*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2000 and Cornelis van der Kooi

scholar and theologian, and an active public figure who eventually became prime minister. He commenced his reflections on Calvinism with a series of Bible studies in which he worked out the basis for what became his formal dogmatic works published between 1888 and 1917.⁷

One should be careful not to draw a simple, direct line between Kuyper and Afrikaner Calvinism.⁸ However, the weaknesses in Kuyper's theology did create the opportunity for interpretations that could legitimately call on his - and by implication on Calvin's - authority and blessing. In highly simplified terms, three elements of Kuyper's vast thinking are relevant here: his cosmology based on a specific interpretation of general grace, his ecclesiology, and his view of human and social development.

3.1 Cosmology embedded in general grace

One of the key thrusts of Calvin's own thought, and a driving force behind Kuyper's thinking, is its conviction that the whole world and all spheres of society exist under the reign of God in Christ. Christian faith, therefore, does not only have personal significance, but has social transformative power. In the words of Hesselink: "Calvinism can never be accused of having a God who is too small, or a vision that is too narrow... In contrast to Lutheranism's quest for a gracious God, pietism's concern for the welfare of the individual soul, and Wesleyanism's goal

and Jan de Bruijn: *Kuyper reconsidered. Aspects of his life and work*. (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1999).

⁷ The most encompassing exposition of his thought is the broad overview of theology as a science in three volumes, *Encyclopaedie der Heiligen Godgeleerdheid* (1893-1894) en *De Gemeene Gratie*, also in three volumes (1903-1905). For fuller literature information, see W.H. Velema, "Kuyper as theolog. Een persoonlijke evaluatie na dertig jaar." In *die Skriflig* 23/ 91, September (1989).

⁸ Kuyper's influence should be read in the wider context of other theological influences, as well as the socio-political history of the Afrikaners. It would perhaps be fair to say that Kuyper himself cannot be held responsible for the brand of Kuyperianism that became a specific contextual theology for Afrikaans churches in South Africa in the first half of the twentieth century.

of personal holiness, the ultimate concern in the Reformed tradition transcends the individual and his salvation ... The concern is for the realisation of the will of God also in the wider realms of state and culture, in nature and in cosmos".⁹

One of many attestations to Kuyper's cosmological thinking, is found in the second chapter of his well-known Stone-lectures published as *Calvinism: Six lectures delivered in the Theological Seminary at Princeton. The L.P. Stone lectures from 1889-1899*.¹⁰

In line with this tradition, Kuyper's aim was to provide a theological basis for bringing the whole of reality under the rule of God. He accomplished this by constructing a cosmology in which there is a close analogy between Creator and creation, based on the notion of common grace (*gemeene gratie*). The created order is marked by a rich pluriformity and develops through time according to different particular life-principles. There are God-willed orders of creation like family, state and church that exist in sovereign spheres, but they are held together by God's common grace, which prevents the world from degenerating into chaos. General grace allows for the evolutionary development of life streams inherent to creation. In this way creation, including the different peoples of the world, fulfils its potential under God's reign and to God's glory.¹¹

Critique

Dutch theologian W.H. Velema's critique of Kuyper's over-emphasis on general grace is unambiguous: Velema argues that the dia-

⁹ John Hesselink, *On being reformed*. (Servant: Ann Arbor, 1983).

¹⁰ Abraham Kuyper, *Calvinism: Six lectures delivered in the Theological Seminary at Princeton. The L.P. Stone lectures from 1889-1899*. (New York: Revell, 1899).

¹¹ See Velema, "Kuyper as theologian", p. 58; Willie Jonker, *Die Gees van Christus*. (Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel, 1981), pp. 93-94; Cornelis Van der Kooi, "A theology of culture. A critical appraisal of Kuyper's doctrine of common grace." In *Kuyper reconsidered. Aspects of his life and work*, edited by Cornelis van der Kooi and Jan de Bruijn, pp. 98. (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1999).

lectic relationship between common and special grace is an element of Kuyper's idealistic philosophy and cosmology couched in Calvinistic terms, but not drawing on the intentions of Calvin himself. The only way out of this idealistic system, says Velema, is a radical break with common grace in order to restore some of Kuyper's Reformed intentions.¹²

This is confirmed by Kees van der Kooi from the Free University in Amsterdam. He refutes Kuyper's claim that he (Kuyper) merely developed Calvin's notion that some Divine indulgence remains beside the total corruption of creation and humankind. "It should be clear, however, that Calvin's point in speaking about general grace is entirely the opposite of Kuyper's. While in Calvin this general grace receives no further attention and the focus remains on mankind's total dependence on God's grace, Kuyper turns his attention to the subject of this common grace."¹³ Common grace in fact becomes a broad theory of culture based on an optimistic view of Western society, civilisation and scientific achievements.¹⁴

If through common grace God establishes orders of creation such as family, state and church, surely one can further argue that the existence, development and protection of different peoples – each as a separate people according to its own potential and law-stream (*wetstroom*) – be seen as the will of God? This is especially relevant for a people, like the Afrikaners, who are Christians and who believe that it is through God's providence that they were planted on the southern tip of Africa to be bearers of the light of the gospel.

It does not require a lot of imagination to see why Kuyper's Neo-Calvinist theology became so influential in Afrikaans South African

¹² Velema, "Kuyper as theolog", p. 69.

¹³ Van der Kooi, "A theology of culture", p. 97-98.

¹⁴ Van der Kooi, "A theology of culture", p. 98.

churches of Dutch origin.¹⁵ His own glowing respect for the Boers who resisted British colonisation, and who – inspired by God – trekked into the darkness of Africa to set up republics as a result of their Calvinistic heroism¹⁶, added a very personal dimension to this relationship. Afrikaners reinterpreted their own history as sacred history, analogous to the Israelite people of God. In short, “The blending of Afrikaner ‘sacred history’ and neo-Calvinism with its ‘sovereignty of spheres’ thus provided a powerful ideological base for Afrikaner nationalism and apartheid,” writes John de Gruchy.¹⁷

3.2 Ecclesiology

It is important to note that for Kuyper the institutional (i.e. external) form of the church does not belong to its essence. This implies that the traditional marks of unity, holiness, catholicity and Christian, are marks of the unseen church that will only be realised eschatologically.

The formation of various institutional churches (like in The Netherlands after 1886) is thus no threat to the spiritual unity of the church. In fact, the search for external, institutional unity is a form of “churchism” (*kerkisme*) that is to be resisted. The freedom of people to form their own churches should not be diminished. Differentiation amongst peoples will naturally lead to the development of different institutional

¹⁵ As early as 1882, the Rev S.J. du Toit attempted to translate Kuyper’s ideas into the political and ecclesial situation at the time. After 1907 post-graduate students chose to attend the Free University in Amsterdam rather than the State University in Utrecht, some of them returned to South Africa as avid Kuyperians. In the Gereformeerde Kerk, Kuyper’s ideas were carried forth by J.D. du Toit and H.G. Stoker, professors of theology and philosophy respectively. In the Dutch Reformed Church academics, F.J.M. Potgieter and A.B. du Preez, and church leaders, J.D. Vorster and A.P. Treurnicht, became the most significant proponents of a neo-Calvinistic revival in the 1930’s and beyond (see Kinghorn, *Die NG Kerk*, chapter 6).

¹⁶ Strauss “Abraham Kuyper, apartheid”, p. 13; Kuiper, “Groen and Kuyper”, p. 78.

¹⁷ John W. de Gruchy, *Liberating reformed theology. A South African contribution to an ecumenical debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 27.

churches. "The people amongst whom the church is formed are not the same. They differ according to origin, race, country, region, history, potential and psychological orientation, and also do not stay the same, but go through various stages of development."¹⁸ Because of this, the differences that separate person from person had to form a wedge in the unity of the external church. This pluralistic church-formation is "according to my firm conviction a phase of development to which the church should have come".¹⁹

Critique

Willie Jonker, an influential South African systematic theologian in the period after 1960, notes that Kuyper constructs the pluriformity of the church not on Scripture, or the intention of Calvin and the Reformation, but on his evolutionist and organic concept of history. Kuyper, under the influence of the nineteenth century individualism and idealism, introduces a subjectivist element into his ecclesiology. Church-formation becomes an issue of personal choice and the exercise of personal freedom. This can lead to the conclusion that it is a normal and God-willed development to establish separate institutional churches for groupings based on culture, psychology, or any other human factor. As Kuyper himself argues, these separate churches in no way detract from the unity of the church as a fundamental spiritual reality in Christ.²⁰

3.3 Human development

With regard to human and social development, Kuyper was a man of his times. He therefore shared the cultural biases of Europe in the latter

¹⁸ Abraham Kuyper, *Die gemeene gratie III* (Amsterdam: Hoveker, 1904), p. 223, my translation.

¹⁹ Kuyper, *Die gemeene gratie III*, p. 231, my translation.

²⁰ Willie D. Jonker, *Die Gees van Christus* (Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel, 1981), pp. 91-94; Willie D. Jonker, "Die pluriformiteitsleer van Abraham Kuyper. Teologiese onderbou vir die konsep van aparte kerke vir aparte volksgroepe?" In *die Skriflig* 23/3 (1989): 16-18.

half of the nineteenth century. Based on general grace, all people have a natural knowledge of God, and in principle the human race and all nations stand equal before God. This general grace forms the basis and stepping stone for special grace that leads to a higher knowledge of God in Christ. On the one hand, Kuyper follows Calvin by maintaining the unity of humanity based on God's counsel.²¹ On the other hand, his conception of common grace allows him to see the confusion of the Babel events as setting forth each nation or people according to their own type and law-stream.²²

According to Kuyper, a hierarchy then follows: The first level consists of people (for example in Africa) where natural or common grace has not yet developed to its full potential. Then there is a second level where one finds a greater impact of common grace, with pockets of developed areas, for example, in India and Japan. Following this, is a level of social systems where special grace dominates. This is the highest level of development where there is a maximum Christian effect on the whole of society. The pivotal examples of this are the European and North American civilisations.²³

This differentiation amongst people based on their participation in levels of grace is the hermeneutical key to understand, for example, Kuyper's view of the three children of Noah. They reflect the various developmental levels. The children of Shem received both common and special grace; those of Japhet benefited to a lesser sense from special grace; and the descendants of Ham show a lack of both forms of grace. Therefore, the descendants of Ham are to be temporarily subservient to

²¹ Velema, "Kuyper as theologian", p. 66.

²² P.J. Strauss, "Abraham Kuyper, apartheid and the Reformed churches in South Africa in their support of apartheid." *Theological Forum*, XXIII/1, March (1995): 12.

²³ See Strauss, "Abraham Kuyper, apartheid", p. 11; and the discussion of the Stone lectures by D.T. Kuiper, "Groen and Kuyper on the racial issue." In *Kuyper reconsidered. Aspects of his life and work*, edited by Cornelis van der Kooij and Jan de Bruijn, pp. 74-75. Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1999.

the other groups until they have reached the same level of development and civilisation.²⁴

Critique

Based on the analysis of Roman Catholic scholar, Alexandre Ganoczy, John de Gruchy²⁵ points to the ambiguity of Calvin's life and work. On the one hand stands the "young Calvin" with his positive, evangelical and liberating theology. On the other hand we find the "older Calvin" shows trends of domination and constriction. The historically first reception of Calvin in SA – and dominant until at least the mid 1970s – was via "imperial Calvinism" that was in essence "fearful of spontaneity, openness, equalities and diversities".²⁶ The neo-Calvinism espoused by Kuyper found public expression in his political activities. Jan de Bruijn argues that Kuyper was a child of European Romanticism and that his Calvinist politics were in part influenced by his romanticising of the glorious Dutch past and a specific brand of Dutch nationalism.²⁷ This nationalism was based on a theology that accorded undue weight to "a value of separateness".²⁸ And because it was embedded in a hierarchical view of civilisations, it paved the way for Afrikaner nationalists to claim legitimate *voogdyskap* (rule over) black people in South Africa as an expression of God's will, as well as a practice of equal but separate justice. For Kuyper "circumstances claimed victory over doctrine".²⁹

²⁴ See Strauss, "Abraham Kuyper, apartheid", p. 14, and the fine analysis by Kuiper, "Groen and Kuyper", pp. 74-78 based on original Kuyper sources.

²⁵ John W. de Gruchy, *Liberating reformed theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p.32.

²⁶ Woltersdorff as quoted by De Gruchy, *Liberating reformed theology*, p. 18.

²⁷ Jan De Bruijn, "Abraham Kuyper as a Romantic." In *Kuyper reconsidered. Aspects of his life and work*, edited by Cornelis van der Kooi and Jan de Bruijn, pp. 45-58. (Amsterdam: Vu Uitgeverij, 1999).

²⁸ Botman, "Is blood thicker", p. 355.

²⁹ Kuiper, "Groen and Kuyper", p. 81.

When these ideas blended with the socio-economic position of the Afrikaner people after 1929,³⁰ the scene was set for the development of Kuyper's (and Calvin's!) legacy into a theologically guided ideology. This close link between Calvin, *volk* and church, is quite evident in the journal series, *Koers in Krisis* ("Direction in crisis") started by Proff HG Stoker and FJM Potgieter in the mid 1930s. In the first editorial they write: "May this work be to the honour of God and the benefit of the volk, and may it conquer the heart of our volk. And may it unite all the Calvinists in South Africa, whatever their church, province or profession, to common Calvinist action in South Africa."³¹

(In fairness, one has to mention the ambiguities evident in the reception³² of Kuyper in South Africa. Scholars like Alan Boesak³³, John de

³⁰ I refer here to the rapid urbanisation of Afrikaners when both economic depression and severe droughts forced them to turn from an agricultural economy to an industrial one. For this they were not skilled, and they found themselves in an environment dominated by English capital. The well-known Carnegie Commission was set up to investigate the problem and make recommendations. It found that by the early 1930's about 300 000 Afrikaner people were living in poverty. (A similar study was undertaken for black people in the late 1980s.)

³¹ HG Stoker and FJM Potgieter, *Koers in Krisis* I, p.xii, 1935. I got this reference from the chapter by Robert Vosloo referred to below.

³² Kuyper has left a wide-ranging, complex and even contradicting legacy, which is, like any comprehensive oeuvre, open for more than one interpretation. No wonder Russel H. Botman, argues that Kuyper was indeed both liberative and oppressive! Read his "Is blood thicker than justice? The legacy of Abraham Kuyper for Southern Africa." In *Religion, pluralism, and public life*, edited by Lius E. Lugo, p. 354. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) The bases in Kuyper's work for a liberative understanding of Calvinism must be read against the historical context and specific occasion for which they were constructed. See specifically the discussion of Kuyper's rhetorical strategies for American and French audiences by Kuiper, "Groen and Kuyper". The reclaiming of Kuyper for liberation in South Africa should also be seen in its rhetorical context of fighting Kuyperianism at its worst with Kuyper himself. Whatever contrasting evidence, or even direct quotations are found to support contrasting views; it is the underlying and permeating structure of Kuyper's thought that should ultimately lead our interpretation. I declare my South African Reformed presuppositions openly, and probably err in the direction of a more critical, rather than an appreciative reading of Kuyper.

³³ Alan Boesak, *Black and Reformed. Apartheid, liberation and the Calvinist tradition*. (New York: Orbis, 1984), p. 87.

Gruchy³⁴ and Russel Botman³⁵ clearly attempt to retrieve the liberating elements of Kuyper's theology in their struggle to turn Afrikaner civil religion against its own source).

4. The second face of Calvin: Status confessionis and the Belhar Confession

Calvin's legacy in South Africa also took another trajectory, namely the resistance against a theology that made separateness a God-willed principle of creation. Let us look at a few of the important signposts along the way of the "other" Calvin³⁶:

4.1 Examples of an alternative Calvin

Already in 1969, Beyers Naudé, the well-known anti-apartheid activist, called Afrikaner South Africans back to the "real Calvin". He wrote a newspaper article, "What Calvin really stood for" in the *Rand Daily Mail* of 29 April 1969, and remarked: "If Calvin were to come alive and be in South Africa today, he would be the first to protest against and combat many of the concepts proclaimed by and posturing as Afrikaner Calvinism." Naudé made clear that a close reading of the *Institutes* (Book I, chapters 3, 5, 10 and 15), would find no support for the principle of diversity expressed in racial domination. What Calvin did profess,

³⁴ John W. de Gruchy, *Bonhoeffer and South Africa: Theology in dialogue*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), p. 107.

³⁵ Botman, "Is blood thicker," p. 354.

³⁶ What is discussed here, is obviously no exhaustive list. There are many other important voices not mentioned here. For a fuller version of Calvin in anti-apartheid memory, read Robert Vosloo, "Calvin and anti-apartheid memory in the Dutch Reformed family of churches in South Africa", published as chapter 8 in Johan de Niet, Herman Paul en Bart Wallet (eds.), *Sober, Strict, and Scriptural: Collective Memories of John Calvin 1800-2000* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 217-244. The newspaper article by Beyers Naudé is sourced from this discussion. For a broader and incisive analysis of Calvin's reception in South Africa, read Dirkie Smit, "Views on Calvin's ethics: reading Calvin in the South African context", *Reformed World* 57 (4), 2007, pp. 306-344.

was the unity of humanity created in the image of God and our solidarity in sin before God. Nor would Calvin support such a close and exclusive link between *volk* and church, and - despite being a leader in the reformation - Calvin maintained an remarkably open, ecumenical spirit as exemplified in his relations with German and Swiss Lutherans, as well as his letter of 29 March 1552 to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Beyers Naude's reinterpretation of Calvin, his early writings (1962) about a confessing church in South Africa, as well as his own example in the Christian Institute after he officially broke ranks with the white DRC in 1963, were powerful forces to build up an alternative view of Calvin and his work. In true prophetic spirit he wrote that, if only South Africans would heed the true message of another Calvin, "how vastly different our whole church and political life would be".

A very close link between Calvin, racism and heresy is exhibited in the contributions of Allan Boesak in the late 1970s and early 1980s. His work and leadership in the Dutch Reformed Mission Church and as president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Ottawa, provide perhaps the closest link between a reinterpretation of Calvin and the declaration of apartheid theology as a heresy.

In a speech at the South African Council of Churches conference in Hammanskraal north of Pretoria (1979) Boesak speaks on the struggle of the Black Church for justice. He summarises the classical nature of a confession by saying: "The struggle is not merely **against** an oppressive political and exploitative economic system, it is also a struggle **for** the authenticity of the gospel of Jesus Christ."³⁷ He then quotes at length from Calvin's commentary on Habbakuk to muster support for the oppressed against the actions of tyrants, because God hears the "cries and groaning of those who cannot bear injustice" (p.26).

In the same year (1979) Boesak wrote an open letter to the then Minister of Justice to explain the actions of civil disobedience supported by

³⁷ Boesak, *Black and Reformed*, p. 25; original emphasis.

black Reformed churches. He puts forward three fundamental ideas derived from Calvin: The Bible as Word of God that requires from us more obedience to God than to an unjust state³⁸; the Lordship of Christ over all spheres of life, including political life (p.37) and the notion that the state is called to justice and to serve its people. Boesak (p.42) refers directly to Calvin's letter to Francis I (preface to the *Institutes*): "For where the glory of God is not made the end of government, it is not a legitimate sovereignty..." The later call in 1985 for the fall of the National Party government was thus based on the idea of freedom so forcefully argued for by Calvin when he discussed the freedom to be indifferent to human, cultural, ecclesial and political obligations (*Institutes*, Book IV, chapters 8-12 and 20).

In 1986, the year in which the Belhar confession was formally adopted, John de Gruchy published an article in *Journal of Religious Ethics* (vol. 14, no.1) called "The revitalisation of Calvinism in South Africa". He made a strong argument, later developed into his well-known book, *Liberating Reformed theology* (1991), that Calvin's legacy needs to be appropriated via a critical, prophetic theology of social transformation that acts as vibrant alternative to the neo-Calvinist tradition that dominated South African church and political life for such a long time.

One can thus rightly argue that the same Calvin who was called upon to set up and defend a heretical gospel of racial separation, was called upon to witness and struggle against this heresy. The roots of the *status confessionis* in Dar es Salaam, Ottawa and Belhar, lie not only in the legacy of Karl Barth³⁹ and Dietrich Bonhoeffer,⁴⁰ but clearly also in

³⁸ Boesak, *Black and Reformed*, pp. 40-41.

³⁹ For a discussion of Barth's relation to the Belhar confession, read Piet J Naudé, "Would Barth sign the Belhar confession?" *JTSA* 129 (2007), pp. 4-22 and the earlier article by Dirk J. Smit, "Social transformation and confessing the faith? Karl Barth's views on confession revisited." *Scriptura* 72 (2000), pp. 67-85.

Jean Calvin. This will become even more evident if we look at the rejection clauses of the Confession of Belhar, written in October 1982, and formally adopted by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in 1986.

4.2 The rejections of a heresy in the Belhar Confession

Let us immediately focus on the content of the rejection clauses attached to the three middle articles on unity, reconciliation and justice.

4.2.1 What does Belhar reject with regard to the unity of the church?

Therefore, we reject any doctrine which absolutises either natural diversity or the sinful separation of people in such a way that this absolutisation hinders or breaks the visible and active unity of the church, or even leads to the establishment of a separate church formation.

Belhar does not deny the reality of “natural diversity” amongst people. To do that, would be to deny actual empirical realities. Contrary to an interpretation of Calvin that absolutises diversity to the point of making separation a principle of creation and the gospel, this diversity of background, culture and convictions is seen from the perspective of reconciliation in Christ. It is Christ who turns diversity and pluralities from threatening divisions to opportunities for reciprocal service and enrichment within the one visible people of God. The establishment of separate churches for different races is a denial of Christ’s reconciliation and therefore a sinful practice.

(We reject any doctrine) which professes that this spiritual unity is truly being maintained in the bond of peace whilst believers of the same confession are in effect alienated from one another for the sake of diversity and in despair of reconciliation;

Belhar clearly witnesses against the inadequacy of a mere “spiritual” unity. Obviously unity in and amongst churches is of a spiritual nature,

⁴⁰ The many contributions of John de Gruchy comes to mind. See his *Bonhoeffer and South Africa: Theology in dialogue*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

but when people share the same confession in the same country their “bond of peace” requires a visible unity. If one goes the route of separation here, you make diversity an aim in itself and you show yourself to be in despair of Christ’s reconciliation.

(We reject any doctrine) which denies that a refusal earnestly to pursue this visible unity as a priceless gift is sin;

If an ecclesiology is built on the assumed God-willed differentiation in creation and a view of the church as cultural prolongation of this separation, there will be no need nor urgency to pursue unity. Unity in the church is a priceless gift from God that is to be embraced. A doctrine that teaches otherwise, is sin and heresy.

(We reject any doctrine) which explicitly or implicitly maintains that descent or any other human or social factor should be a consideration in determining membership of the Church

The “weakness of some” not to receive Holy Communion with new converts from a different background, language and culture, and the missiological practice and method of converting people as an ethnic entity, became the principle for separate church formation. Once this ethnic or cultural principle comes to determine actual membership of the church, a false requirement beyond faith in Christ is set down. This doctrine is to be rejected as a false vision of the church in which human and social factors supersede our being in Christ.

4.2.2 What does Belhar reject with regard to reconciliation in society?

Therefore, we reject any doctrine which in such a situation sanctions in the name of the gospel or of the will of God the forced separation of people on the grounds of race and colour and thereby in advance obstructs and weakens the ministry and experience of reconciliation in Christ.

Article 3 of the Belhar confession moves from the unity of the church to reconciliation in society. The rejection clause refers to “in such a situation” and draws on the earlier statement of forced racial separation in a country that claims to be Christian. Note that Belhar does not make any reference to apartheid as political system. Belhar remains at the level of Christian doctrine. If the Bible teaches that the message of reconciliation is entrusted to the church, and a new doctrine is professed that sanctions enmity and forced racial separation as being the will of God or even the good news of Christ, such a teaching should be rejected as heresy and ideology.

Such a false teaching takes as its assumption that people from different racial groups are in principle not to be reconciled, except by physical and spatial separation. In this way the very possibility to minister and actually experience reconciliation in Christ, is obstructed in advance.

4.2.3 What does Belhar reject with regard to social and economic justice?

Therefore, we reject any ideology which would legitimate forms of injustice and any doctrine which is unwilling to resist such an ideology in the name of the gospel.

Article 4 builds on unity and reconciliation to proclaim justice to the poor, to those who suffer, and to those who are treated unjustly. In this particular case, Belhar rejects both an ideology and a false doctrine. It is not the task of a confession to write definitions. But one could infer with some certainty what the assumed notion of “ideology” in article 4 is, namely a belief system that legitimates and upholds a socio-economic dispensation that works for the unjust advantage of some and the exclusion from basic life necessities of others.

Belhar obviously addresses the specific situation of South Africa by around 1980. At that point the bitter irony of Afrikaner history had already emerged. Those who were poor and downtrodden under British

rule and who built themselves up with enormous effort; those who drew in great piety on the spiritual resources of being an elect people of God in a country where they were predestined to proclaim the gospel: those very same people became oppressors themselves. Those who were in their own self-understanding “slaves in Egypt”, used their newly gained political power after 1948 to intensify racial privileges through numerous laws that excluded black people from the land, the education system, and the economy of South Africa. Like Israel whom they sought to emulate, the former “slaves” became masters of new slaves. The false doctrine in this case is to see such injustice as the will of God.

How do good Christian people turn injustice into justice? Keeping our discussion above in mind, this was possible on three inter-connected bases.

First the understanding that white people were called by God to be guardians of the lesser black people and therefore should decide for them. Second the sense of justice that Afrikaners held and which they believed found best expression in equal rights, exercised in territorial separation so that blacks were not dominated by whites, but could actually develop to their full capacities. Third, there is the universal problem that theological convictions are, but for the grace of God, to a considerable degree shaped and then determined by socio-economic and other “non-theological” factors. The same theology that lifted Afrikaners up, was in a strange psychology of both sympathy and fear, used to keep black South Africans marginalised.⁴¹ The isolation of apartheid meant that Afrikaners were not exposed to the spirit of the Enlightenment that promoted democracy based on universal human rights. In fact, when the rest of the free world accepted that view formally in 1948, the grand project of apartheid moved directly in the opposite direction.

⁴¹ See The legacy of Beyers Naude 2005:55-62 for an incisive and moving account of Beyers Naude from 1967 on why Afrikaners held racial beliefs as they did.

If God reveals Godself to be in a special way the God of those who suffer, and if the church is called to stand where God stands, then a doctrine that legitimises separation and unjust privilege, and a gospel that is unwilling to resist such injustice, is a heresy.

5. Conclusion

The Belhar Confession ends with a call to obedience based on the Lordship of Christ. In the spirit of Calvin, it requires from us to witness against human laws and earthly powers, no matter what may follow.

Now that South Africa has gained political freedom, our task not over. It has just begun. We would do justice to the legacy of Calvin if we continue our struggle for visible unity in the Reformed Church family; reconciliation amongst diverse peoples in our country and foreigners that seek refuge with us; and if we strive for gender, ecological and global economic justice.

Calvin – no, the gospel of Jesus Christ as interpreted by Calvin in the sixteenth century – is as relevant today as it was 500 years ago.

9

**THE IMPORTANCE OF JOHN CALVIN FOR
THE PROTESTANT CHURCH IN CHINA**

Aiming Wang, China

The image Calvin has left in the Chinese world since the missionary era of the nineteenth century is very vague, sometimes controversial or even paradoxical. There are several images of Calvin existing side by side, at least three.

The first image depicts Calvin as one of the founders of the historical Protestantism, as the most influential source of the world-wide missionary movements for the past five centuries. The second image calls to mind a terrible dictator incapable of humour, the spiritual source of fundamentalism mixed with the doctrine of predestination. The third image is that of the founder of modern democracy in the form of reasonable capitalism.

Right at the outset I would like to affirm that a correct interpretation of John Calvin is of vital importance for the building up of the Protestant Church in China. The present interpretation will take account of these three images which have been prevailing in the Chinese world for a long time. By way of conclusion, I will explore the significance of Calvin's heritages for the Protestant Church in China.

1. Calvin's images in China

It is obvious that the first image originates from theologians and missionaries notwithstanding their post-1949 social marginalisation and lack of public influence. Calvin's heritage is embedded in parish practices, for example in the responsibilities assumed by laypeople, in diaconal services for the poor, administrative rules and discipline to name just a few.

Calvin's negative image in China, above all widely shared among intellectuals, has been inspired by Western literature. The novel "The Scarlet Letter" by Nathaniel Hawthorn (1804-1864), for example, has influenced Chinese intellectuals for quite a few generations with its depiction of Puritanism and Calvinism, presenting Calvin as a narrow-minded moralist and thus exposing him to a harsh criticism. The worst image comes from "The Right to Heresy: Castellio against Calvin" (1936) by the Austrian author Stefan Zweig (1881-1942).¹ Against the backdrop of 20th century politics, Calvin is depicted here as the spiritual fountain of tyranny and modern dictatorship. The Protestant missionary forces concomitant to the unfortunate colonisation of Africa and Asia in the 19th century did not contribute to the dissipation of this image. On the contrary, emotions aroused by the independence and sovereignty movements considerably intensified Calvin's negative image in conjunc-

¹ Cf. Ferdinand Buisson, *Sébastien Castellion*, Paris, 1892, 2 vol.; Stefan Zweig, *Castellion contre Calvin*, Paris, 1946. Albert Rilliet wrote: "The tardy scandal that caused this torture is homage to the spirit of the Reformation; it may not have been so much the rigour of the judges as their inconsistency that bestowed such a glare to Servet's demise. Everywhere else other than a reformation city, he would have perished without his memory relating to anything else than stake or its victim. In Geneva, his death inevitably made him the representative of a cause and martyr of a principle." Albert Rilliet, *Relation du procès criminel de Michel Servet*, Geneva, 1844. On this process: *Op. Calv.*, VIII, pp. 725-872. Cf. John Cadier, *Calvin, sa vie, son œuvre avec un exposé de sa philosophie*, PUF, 1967, p. 24.

tion with the totalitarian interpretation of predestination understood as the reservation of exclusive salvation of Calvinists.

These various images of Calvin have subsisted and evolved side by side in China for a very long period. This is still the case. Intellectuals, as a dominant class, have always controlled the historical impacts in conformity with the Confucian tradition for the past two millennia. Christianity ought to enter the Chinese value system and spirituality. This is a big challenge given the preconceived images and substantial cultural differences. Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) serves as a model case in this undertaking, both by virtue of his missionary determination and his strategy of accommodation.² In the Chinese world, his name has become a symbol for reciprocal respect between cultures.³

A socio-religious work by a German thinker, published in China in 1985, has fundamentally changed the negative image of John Calvin among intellectuals and elites in China. It is Max Weber and his famous book, "The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism". Since then, Calvin's image has changed into that of a historical figure who enabled the formation of a reasonable world based on democratic order, even though the interpretations of this book vary widely and are very controversial. Weber's hypothesis encourages Chinese elites to reflect on the reasons underlying the evolutions and subsequent successes of the European civilisation which dominates the modern history of humanity. Chinese elites are in search of the values and universal truth transcending na-

² "One of the first Jesuit missionaries to set foot in China was the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci, who formulated the model – often called 'accommodation' – for the approach of Jesuits in blending Christianity with Chinese culture. Ricci was one of the most remarkable men in history." David Mungello, *Chinese Responses to Early Christian Contacts*, in: *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, compiled by Wm. Theodore de Bary & Richard Lufrano, second edition, volume two, New York: Columbia University Press, 2000, p. 144.

³ Wolfgang Franke, a leading European Sinologue of the twentieth century called Matteo Ricci "the most outstanding cultural mediator between China and the West of all times." In Goodrich and Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, p. 1144.

tional or ethnic borders. For the Chinese intellectuals and elites, the decline of the Middle Kingdom following the opium war in 1840 and the subsequent colonisation have been the object of deep reflection on the destiny of their people.

Western thinking and spiritual systems have been gradually introduced in the Chinese world throughout the 20th century. Marxist works and philosophies from Britain, Germany, France, Russia, etc. are interpreted in the light of Confucianism. During the historical period following the national catastrophe of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the significance of Weber's thesis was highly enlightening for Chinese elites. Chinese tradition is characterised by the Confucianist ethic which has imposed fixed norms on all social behaviours in all walks of life for two millennia. Western civilisation is based on the ethic of the Geneva-based Reformer. This comparison wins over the Chinese elites and intellectuals in their search for the bases and ideas of Western models and the causes of Western accomplishment.

Briefly speaking, the three images of John Calvin in the Chinese world demonstrate the urgent need for the Chinese theologians to interpret Calvin's historical significance for the Church.

2. Calvin and the Protestant Church in China: en route towards the future

2.1. Calvin: a historical figure with influence on the whole of humanity

Calvin arouses the attention of Chinese intellectuals and elites in the current period of transition to its modernisation. In the Chinese world, i.e. the continent, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and diasporas in the USA and other places, Calvin's inspiration and spiritual, ethical and practical legacies have become the sources and forces for the future of the Chinese nation. The very existence of a connection between Calvin and

China's modernisation may sound astonishing given the fact that there is no recognised influence of Calvin in the Chinese world, be it his person, his works, his spiritual dimension, or the activities of his disciples in the Western world.

In the Sino-cultural world, however, the past several decades have seen numerous research activities on Calvin in the fields of politics, economics, ethics, commerce and history. At the same time, the Chinese Christian communities have also tried to discover Calvin's historical contributions outside the ecclesiological and missiological domains.

Briefly speaking, the current academic research on Calvin in China may be viewed under two aspects: one engaged by academic intellectuals, the other by Protestant theologians, first and foremost within the Union Theological Seminary, the only institute at college level in China. In a different category, there is still another aspect: a practical, non-academic aspect regarding Calvin's influence in China at the Parish level of the Protestant Church through mediation of pre-1949 missionary traditions. Diaconal and educational ideas for the poor, longings for civil justice etc. have been important contents of the sermons of parish pastors since the 19th century.

Nevertheless, no preparations of ceremonies or activities for the Calvin Jubilee 2009 have been undertaken by the China Christian Council (CCC) and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) as a nation-wide political and ecclesiastical organisation for Protestantism in China. For laypersons and pastors of the Protestant Church in China, however, it is clear that the Calvin Jubilee 2009 is the most important historical and pastoral event of the year to be remembered in their prayers and thoughts.

I have reason to believe that the Calvin Jubilee 2009 marks a really historic moment for the Chinese world. Through reflection and reconsideration it should be brought to light that Calvin has exercised a significant influence, albeit implicitly, for the Chinese nation.

2.2. My interpretations of John Calvin's legacy for Protestantism in China in three points

2.2.1 Interpretations of the Chinese reality as the background of theological reflection on Calvin in China;

2.2.2 Works of Chinese intellectuals (Marxists and Confucianists) regarding Calvin's thoughts;

2.2.3 Revival Theology in Chinese Protestantism with reference to ecclesiology in line with the legacy of Calvin.

2.2.1. Interpretations of the Chinese reality as the background of theological reflection on Calvin in China

Today's China may be interpreted under four aspects with a view to examining Calvin's influence on China: the political China, the economic China, the cultural China and the ethical China.

First, the current political China conveys a picture of a very particular country. There are two 19th-century German thinkers whose political theories build a firm ground of the political China as its fundamental State ideology embedded in its constitution and military forces. Chinese political elites believe that the only road towards truth and paradise is to be found in the theory of these German thinkers. This situation in China can be expressed by the concept of Marxism. After almost 2000 years of monarchical imperialist history, a deeper concern of the Chinese people is justice and equality before the law. The political China is aware of the fact that the Chinese people demand order and justice. Since the 1980s, elites have been looking for a road towards universal values transcending the Marxist doctrine. At this juncture, it is the mission of the Church in China to introduce Calvin's thoughts and this Reformers' practices by taking initiatives which may be classified as historical.

The political challenges concerning justice are very hard and serious ones for us. The phenomena of corruption, judicial abuses, control on press etc. will work as a strong break for China on its way towards political modernisation in the direction aspired by academics and scholars.

The economic China is of a particular importance for our present theme. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's reflections are very illuminating in this respect: "Concerning the relationship of worldly orders to each other and to the Church, the Lutheran doctrine of three estates (economic, political and ecclesiastical) attributes its decisive characteristic and permanent significance to a co-ordinate order rather than any sort of super-ordinate power, which means that the worldly orders are maintained by alien rule by the Church and vice versa. In my opinion, this doctrine must be replaced by one drawn from the Bible, namely the doctrine of four divine mandates: marriage and family, work, government, Church. These four mandates come from God as they carry out a divine mission based on and testified by the Revelation, as well as the divine promise."⁴ For China, the responsibility concerning economic matters means that a strict ethical position should be taken in conformation with the international commercial and ecological regulations including the ethics of international capital transfer⁵ etc. Problems relating to pollution, exploitation of labour and violation of copyright may trigger a crisis of credibility and economic morality in China. All this paves the road for the introduction of Calvin's thoughts in China.

The current cultural China in our globalised world may be interpreted as an alarm on the part of the Chinese authorities to protect traditional heritages. The call to reconsider Calvin's thoughts as being useful for the Chinese society dates back to the 1980s or earlier. Calvin, just as

⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, Geneva: Labor et Fides, 278 [printed in English by SCM Press in 1955]; Cf. "*Oeconomicus, politicus, and ecclesiasticus or hierarchicus.*" See Schmid, Heinrich, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, p. 604-23.

⁵ "Calvin did not regard the biblical prohibition of interest as being universally valid (for him, it was an aspect of Mosaic Law applied to the 'political constitution' of the State of Israel); he authorised interest in small doses as long as the charity and equality principles were respected (CR 24, 679-683). Cf. *Économique (Morale)*, by Higginson, Richard, *Dictionnaire critique de Théologie*, compiled by John-Yves Lacoste, Paris: PUF, 1998, p. 386.

Kant, Voltaire, Bacon etc., is considered first and foremost one of the greatest cultural figures in the spiritual development of humankind. Confucianism and Taoism build together China's cultural basis. However, this is no longer sufficient for our society. As traditional resources, they have to enter into dialogue with other values.

The ethical China in a spiritual sense is a specific terrain apt for accepting the values of Calvin's legacy concerning the moral life in a secular society. Confucianism and Taoism are fundamental spiritual elements of the Chinese world. There is a strong historic tendency to revive the great national tradition which was practically destroyed during the Chinese Cultural Revolution under the slogan of smashing the old world and establishing a new world. The ethic-related thoughts of the Calvinist tradition may contribute to a dialogue with the Chinese traditions concerning the norms and regulations in modern life including the moral stances on the nature of social life.

2.2.2. Works of Chinese intellectuals regarding Calvin's thoughts

The significance of Calvin's legacy will be rendered manifest inasmuch as the academic works of Chinese scholars will confirm the universal truths and values of Calvin's works. Once the research projects currently in progress in this field are concluded, China will be able to benefit from the research on Calvin which has been accomplished in the whole world, too.

The quintessence of Max Weber's socio-religious theory, "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" has effectively shed light on the interpretations of Calvin and his impact in China since the 1980s. Since then, Calvin has become one of the most important figures in the spiritual history of humankind in the Chinese world. Over the past few decades, Chinese intellectuals have translated many books and articles on Calvin written by Western scholars. Researches on different themes

related to Calvin are beginning to be published in China, too, above all on the political, social, judicial, commercial, and ethical themes.

One of these themes deserves particular attention: the encounter of the Calvinian Protestant ethic and the Chinese traditional ethic is a hot topic which has arisen in dealing with the urgent challenges which China should take up in this transitional period towards modernisation. The historical traces point to the interpretations and understanding of the terms and words used in the pertinent discussions and debates. In China, there are already some resources about Calvin which encourage us to reform, or at least change, the old existing structure in the political and economic fields. Calvin plays a tangible role in this process along with other Western thinkers who have exercised profound influences on modern China.

2.2.3 The Revival Theology in Chinese Protestantism with reference to the ecclesiology in line with Calvinian legacy

Calvin never regarded himself as a figurehead of the Reformation. His name appears only as a “label” of a confessing Church when he was leading the Reformation in Geneva. Historically speaking, the Church in the Reformed-Presbyterian tradition has pursued on a global scale the methods and ideas created and established by Calvin without his name being mentioned as a founder as is the case with the Lutheran Church. Over the past five centuries, Calvin has been exercising his influence through his works and legacy. His spiritual and religious ideas have left an ineffable impact on the direction of the history of Western civilisation as well as on the Christian history of missiology.

Our observation of the current state of Protestantism in China shows that Calvin’s influence experienced a shift during the 19th century by means of the Reformed-Presbyterian missionary activities coming from Europe and the United States. They left their marks in the pastoral and diaconal forms at the parish level within the Chinese Church. Its synodal

system is typical of the administrative methods of the Calvinist tradition. The principle of democracy within the Church comes from this tradition, too. His fundamental stance on the ecclesiastical ministry shaped the Church in many places in pre-1949 China. Luther's idea of universal priesthood was further developed by Calvin in the field of the institutional functioning of the Church. Duties and responsibilities of Christian people are linked with the calling of each and every individual in the secular world. By virtue of the four ministries as defined in accordance with the strict disciplines within the Church, the ministry of pastor was bestowed a particular status during the Geneva-based Reformation in the 16th century.⁶ Thanks to Calvinian ideas and practices, the Presbyterian tradition was the missionary force stronger than any other missionary forces in China. A large number of institutions such as hospitals, primary and secondary schools, diaconal relief centres for the poor and the elderly, and other charity services have been established and administered in China by Presbyterian missionaries. Christian groups or communities of the Calvinist tradition all over the world are characterised by their active and vigorous commitment in their socio-political activities, a lot more so than other Protestant traditions. It is to this tradition that we owe the initiatives taken in the fields of justice, responsibility, resistance in defence of human dignity and human rights, most of all for the protection of freedom of the press, of opinion and expression, and finally of conscience.

For the Protestant Church in China, a systematic introduction to Calvin's thoughts is still in an embryonic state despite the fact that the Parish basis of the Church has been organised all over China during the past two centuries under the influence of the Presbyterian tradition. The encounter of Calvin and Confucius will be one of the most important

⁶ *Calvin-Studienausgabe*, Band 2, *Gestalt und Ordnung der Kirche*, Herausgegeben von Eberhard Busch, Alasdair Heron, Christian Link, Peter Opitz, Ernst Saxer, Hans Scholl, 1997, Neukirchener, pp. 238-279.

themes for the Protestant Church in China, with the dominant ideas in China's national mentality and tradition still inspired by Confucianism, just as Western history is by the antique Greek spirit. The contact point between these two great spiritual systems is the interpretation of human nature and individual responsibility in the socio-political world. Calvin developed a highly fertile ethical and political system of thoughts drawing on biblical and ecclesiastical texts. The Chinese theologians will have to begin with this difficult task of simultaneously introducing in the Chinese mentality both Calvin's fundamental theories and ideas and the academic research works on Calvin's legacy.

The Nanjing Theological Review is the only theological journal in China which has published academic articles and interpretations of Western theologians and their thoughts in the past eighty years. Since 2006, we have been eager to publish the articles in time for the Jubilee 09. "Institutes of the Christian Religion" was partly translated by a Nankin-based Chinese pastor in the 1960s from an English version. It was subsequently published in Hong Kong in classical Chinese. The China Christian Council re-published it in simplified Chinese characters despite the insufficient quality of translation with a non-academic register. We acknowledge that we need time to carry out research on Calvin's legacy in the fields of bibliography, dogmas, ethics, sociology, economics, etc. in order to discover and interpret its historical significance.

Websites are beginning to play an important role for China's evangelisation. Calvin and the Reformation tradition have become highly attractive themes on Chinese websites.

3. Conclusion: Calvin's legacy must be brought to light in my Church

The Calvinian discipline of ministry is an important reference for Chinese theologians in their efforts to solve the problems provoked by

emotionally-laden radicalism and fundamentalism which often oppose order within the Church.

According to François Wendel, “The role played by discipline should be first and foremost a pedagogical one. It is nonetheless noticed that, whatever vital importance Calvin may have attributed to the ecclesiastical discipline, he avoided making it one of the main features of the true Church. [...] For Calvin, discipline is no less important, neither is it the very essence of the notion of the Church; it is simply a measure of defence and means of sanctification, and as such belongs to the realm of organisation, not the definition of the Church.”⁷

As early as 1538, Calvin ascribed a special importance to discipline for three different and complementary purposes. The first purpose is to honour God’s name against heretics and schismatics who stood for an open rebellion against the Word of God, risking to ruin the Church itself. He said, “For seeing that the Church is the body of Christ, she cannot be defiled by such fetid and putrid members, without bringing some disgrace on her Head. Therefore, that there may be nothing in the Church to bring disgrace on His sacred name, those whose turpitude might throw infamy on the name must be expelled from His family.”⁸

“The second purpose of discipline is that the good may not, as usually happens, be corrupted by constant communication with the wicked. For such is our proneness to go astray, that nothing is easier than to seduce us from the right course by bad example. To this use of discipline the apostle referred when he commanded the Corinthians to discard the incestuous man from their society: a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” (Inst., IV, 12, 5.)

“The third purpose of discipline is that those who are chastised by excommunication and become ashamed of it and begin to repent of his

⁷ François Wendel, *Calvin, sources et évolution de sa pensée religieuse*, Labor et Fides, Genève, 1985, p. 228.

⁸ *Inst.*, IV, 12, 5.

turpitude, may come for penitence. Hence it is also for their interest that their iniquity should be chastised that whereas they would have become more obstinate by indulgence, they may be aroused by the rod of the Church.” (Inst., IV, 12,5.)

François Wendel observes, “It is nevertheless well understood that, contrary to the worldly jurisdiction, penitentiary discipline is not, to Calvin’s mind, of a jurisdictional character in the proper sense of the word. It is not purely repressive, nor designed for the sole purpose of safeguarding the public order.”⁹ According to Philip Benedict, “Calvin resorted to three principal instruments of transforming the customs and manners of Genevan people. The first instrument was preaching. The ecclesiastical ordinances of 1541 prescribed twenty-six sermons per week, to be distributed among three parishes and ministries of the city. [...] His second instrument was the consistory. This disciplinary instance comprising some twenty members, in which pastors and experienced lay members were represented in roughly equal proportions, was elected every year from the lists prepared by the *Petit Conseil* (Senate). Its responsibility as conceived by Calvin was wide-ranging: maintaining the purity of the eucharistic community, bringing the sinners to shame and repentance, keeping the good from being corrupted by bad companies. [...] The third instrument was by-laws of which Calvin made use in order to reform the manners and behaviours of Genevans, for he made a clear distinction between worldly and heavenly governments. He held the view that each of these two governments should have its own jurisdiction and these two ‘kingdoms’ should be linked to each other. The civil authorities were God’s lieutenants on earth and were hence supposed to defend the true religion.”¹⁰

⁹ Wendel, François, *Calvin, sources et évolution de sa pensée religieuse*, Genève : Labor et Fides, 1985, p. 228.

¹⁰ Benedict, Philippe, *Calvin et la transformation de Genève*, traduit de l’anglais par Nelly Lasserre-Jomini, *Calvin et le calvinisme, Cinq siècles d’influences sur*

It is the third use of the law that has become a historical theme for the Church in China since it undertook to understand Calvin's legacy. For the Reformer of Geneva, "the third use of the law is its principal use which pertains more closely to the proper purpose of the law. The third use of the law is reserved to believers in whose heart the Spirit of God already lives and reigns."¹¹

Denis Müller comments on the third use of the law as follows: "For Calvin, this use of the law is connected to the vision which he had for the worldly growth in faith; by virtue of the 'daily doctrine of the law', a Christian may advance in his knowledge of God's will and in his daily practice of that knowledge. However, its pedagogical use does not match at all the idyllic image of obeisance; its sole function is to obstruct the laziness and sloppiness of flesh, in other words the rebellious will; the law acts like a whip or eternal sting to keep Christians awake"¹²

The principle of democracy, one of Calvin's most important issues, is the secret behind the advantages of the Reformed tradition for regulating the relationship between Church and State, between the two civil and ecclesiastical authorities respectively.

The Calvinian freedom of conscience must be interpreted with particular attention to the context of the Chinese traditional Confucianism in line with the current socio-political situation.

According to Calvin, "Christian liberty consists of three parts. First, the conscience of the believers, in their eagerness to seek the assurance of their justification in Christ, renounces and transcends the righteousness of the law. [...] The second part of Christian liberty, which depends on the first, is that the conscience, thus freed from the yoke of the law constrained by the necessity of the law, voluntarily obeys the will of God. [...] The third part of Christian liberty is that we are not bound be-

l'Eglise et la Société, éd. par Martin Ernst Hirzel et Martin Sallmann, Genève : Labor et Fides, 2008, pp. 21-23.

¹¹ *Inst.*, II, 7,12.

¹² Denis Müller, *La morale*, Genève : Labor et Fides, 1999, p. 33.

fore God to any observance of external things which are in themselves indifferent, but that we are now at full liberty either to use or omit them. The knowledge of this part of liberty is to us very necessary.”¹³

We have to interpret the theories concerning the ministry and responsibility of Christians living in a civil society in accordance with Calvin’s political and ethical thought. Correct interpretations of the doctrine of TULIP (total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irrresistible grace, perseverance of the saints) relating to the theology of predestination are necessary for a correct comprehension of Protestant theology in China.¹⁴

The Protestant Church in China was strongly influenced by American missionaries from the 19th century onwards. For this reason, Calvinism in China has been mixed and often confused with Evangelicalism or modern Puritanism which involves radical disciplines for individual moral and spiritual life. It sometimes looks as if Calvinism in China shows its fundamentalist side without including in its thinking the responsibility towards society as the Reformed Church does in the West.

The Protestant Church in China will cautiously study Calvin’s legacy, including the experiences and testimonies of various forms of Calvinism, Puritanism and Presbyterianism accumulated over the past five centuries in the whole world. Protestant missionaries had not really discovered the possibilities and means of introducing Christian dogmas and doctrine into the Chinese world before the advent of the People’s Republic. They showed conformist attitudes without taking account of the milieu into which they were thrown. Subsequently, chased away from China as early as 1950, they left behind them a Church still in need of formation and theological reflection. Since 1980, a large number of them have led many Chinese to Christianity all over China. At present, I

¹³ *Institution*, III, 19, 2-7, p.312, 313, 315-316.

¹⁴ Sur l’histoire du dogme de la prédestination, cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, Réginald, *La prédestination des saints et la grâce*, Paris : Desclée de Brouwer, 1936 ; Deluz, G., *Prédestination et liberté*, Neuchâtel : Delcahux & Niestlé, 1942.

estimate the number of Chinese Christians at around 60 million in the Protestant Church in China with only two thousand pastors fully trained to theological faculty level.

The Protestant Church in China has to be prepared to commit itself to the process of China's modernisation, by resorting to Calvin's legacy. First of all, I would wish to organise Chinese research on Calvin's works and examine the significance of the principles of the Geneva-based Reformation. Then I would like to encourage Chinese theology to tackle the political and social issues in Chinese society by drawing its inspiration from Calvin's ideas for his own time. Thirdly, I would like to affirm that the Church in China must play the role of the national conscience, firmly based on the Bible and the principles of the Reformation. I am convinced that, in consideration of the present Chinese tradition, Calvin's fundamentals will have a value of universal truth for the Chinese people to the same extent as those of other universally recognised thinkers.

**CALVINISM IN KOREA
WITHOUT CALVIN?
A WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE**

Meehyun Chung, South Korea

Korea is frequently called the “land of the morning calm”. But actually Korea in history was never a “land of the morning calm”. If we look at the map of Korea, we will quickly understand how geographical location determined its fate. Korea was surrounded by greater powers: China, the USSR and Japan. Thus this small country often became a victim in the struggle for supremacy. At the same time, it was also a bridge over which the culture of China found its way to Japan. Up to 1882, the USA, Great Britain, Germany, Russia and France pushed Korea to open up the country and allow them to carry on trade unhindered.

1. Protestant Mission Churches in Korea

Towards the end of the 19th century, the Protestant church in Korea – which for the most part is Presbyterian – was established from the USA, even if the first Korean church was created by a Korean who himself had received the Gospel in China. Korean Christians are indeed proud of this fact. But the Presbyterian/Evangelical Reformed Church was first given its structure through American missionary ventures. The first Presby-

terian missionary in the country was Horace Grant Underwood, who originated from Great Britain but had lived in the United States before arriving in Korea on April 5, 1885 together with his Methodist friend and missionary Henry G. Appenzeller, an American of Swiss heritage. Thus the Protestant church in Korea had a very strong character of “made in the USA”. Following Catholic mission activity in the 18th century, large-scale unrestricted foreign Protestant operations began in 1885: first the Presbyterians and the Methodists, later Baptists, Anglicans etc. White Protestant missionaries arrived in the company of colonial power greedy for expansion and the forced trade of foreign capitalists. The way in which they allocated the mission areas was the main cause of the current division into many Protestant churches.

Korea already had a very long tradition of religions based on writings, such as Buddhism and Confucianism. Hence the Bible was quickly accepted when Christianity came into the country. Reading the Bible contributed substantially to the literacy of the population, above all of women. The Bible has great authority for Christians. With economic growth, the church landscape also changed to some degree. But the living relationship with God, even if linked with the fear of God as judge, remained.

While secularisation became a glaring problem in western society, people in Korea were living through Japanese colonial rule and the dreadful Korean war. Throughout these difficult times they never lost their religious zeal or gave up on the search for God. In the socially and politically hopeless situation of the 19th century the proclamation of the gospel offered new hope, namely, the kingdom of God. This meant a certain liberation from submission to the old social and cultural conventions. A clear change of life practice and life orientation could be strongly detected among Christians. Mission accelerated modernisation in Korea. Schools, hospitals, and the women’s movements are some positive examples of innovations that came out of missionary activity.

The results of this missionary activity should be evaluated in a differentiated way.

The population of South Korea is now 18 percent Protestant, of which 69 percent are members of the Presbyterian Church. Another 11 percent are Catholic, while others are Buddhists, Taoists, Cheondoists, Confucians, or Shamanists. Although the roots of the Reformed Church of South Korea date back to Zwingli and Calvin, Martin Luther is much better known as a reformer than his counterparts Zwingli in Zurich and Calvin Geneva. While Calvin is less celebrated than Luther, he has had a great inner influence on the church with his doctrine of predestination, his understanding of being a Christian, and his ideas of the ministry and church structure. Unfortunately, his teachings were introduced to Korean Christianity in a one-sided, at times corrupted form by American styled churches. Unfortunately, so far as its theological impact is concerned, one cannot say much that is positive. By the churches "made in the USA" mentioned above, I mean a Christianity shaped by Puritanism and fundamentalism. Presbyterianism – which for Calvin actually stands in the theological mainstream – came to Korea twisted in many ways, from Switzerland via Scotland and the USA. Hence, the many new efforts to investigate the origins of the Swiss Reformation directly and deepen our knowledge of Calvin from the original texts and in the light of his historical context, instead of simply adopting American Calvinism. It remains our task to read Calvin correctly and interpret him better, as Karl Barth did in his time by renewing the doctrine of election, instead of repeating him uncritically.

In building its church, the Reformed Church in South Korea places strong emphasis on forms of piety including house fellowship groups, Bible groups, and early morning prayer. The Korean church is also strongly characterised by positive Calvinistic characteristics such as hard work, a disciplined life, and accepting one's profession as one's calling. The deep rifts within Korea's Reformed Church have been a chronic problem, resulting from the competitive nature of American

missionary societies. A renewed focus on their common roots in Calvin's teaching could provide impetus toward healing these differences and divides.

2. Calvinism without Calvin

To correct a negative prejudice is more difficult than to present a completely new idea. Calvin and Calvinism have been seen in very conflicting ways. 1) Conservative theologians, who stand politically on the right, teach Calvin and Calvinism only in a dogmatic sense, without understanding their social context. But they reference Calvin very gladly as a foundation for theological conservatism. 2) Progressive theologians, politically and theologically radical, find Calvin's thought and methods so conservative that no one can draw anything new from them. 3) For theologians sympathetic to feminism, Calvin's theology is misogynist and completely out of date. For women theologians in general, Calvin is not a particularly sympathetic figure. They find that the authoritarian structure of his theology leaves no room for real human dignity or women's freedom.

Calvin's doctrine of double predestination has had disastrous effects in Korea. It was used, always as a dualistic model, with friend and enemy images, against ideological dissidents and people of other faiths. "Faith in Jesus leads to heaven, lack of faith in Jesus leads to hell." This motto has nothing to do with Calvin. Nevertheless, the mechanism of blessing and curse was understood as deriving from Calvin. It was preached very frequently by street evangelists and was also important in the churches. Start from the fear of hell, and one can never be released from the feeling of sin and the fear of punishment. This thought has, rather, promoted within Christianity the blind acceptance of an unjust social system, a blind anti-Communism, and a readiness to defame the

other. Structural sin was scarcely noticed, while wealth was easily glorified and poverty execrated.

Reliance on God does not have anything to do with subservience before great secular power. But through the wave of American mission, America placed itself at the centre of great power. Fear of God was linked to fear of the great power America. Likewise submission to God was tied to Christian subservience to America. Fundamentalist-oriented conservative Christians tend not to promote political self-awareness or self-confidence. Leaning on God in order to escape from one's own anxiety and problems is not separated from dependence on America. Thus economic and political independence from America was not promoted. Calvin's doctrine of double predestination has had serious repercussions in South Korea, as it has been misused to stamp people with other beliefs or ideological points of view as enemies. South Korean churches, instead of labelling their North Koreans brothers and sisters as an "axis of evil", should work more actively toward building bridges and offer them humanitarian assistance. Calvin should be rediscovered to overcome ideological dualism.

3. The unfinished liberation of women

Christianity on the one hand brought liberation for women living in Korean traditions and religions that were hostile towards them. But on the other hand another, new repression of women developed within Christianity and the Christian churches. If we look more closely at the consequences of the introduction of the Christianity, there are contrasts and contradictions: the emancipation of women was a positive consequence, but unfortunately this liberation remained incomplete.

Western patriarchy and a Puritanism shaped by Calvinism were thoroughly mixed with Korean patriarchy. This had a powerful impact on Christianity, anchoring a new patriarchal system within it. As the his-

tory of the world church has shown, women played a tremendously important role in establishing the church in Korea. The devotion to church matters of the Korean Christian women, who were called “Bible women” or “evangelists”, was more important for the extension of Christianity than the success of the Nevius method (self-propagation, self-support, self-government). They visited houses with special fervour, in order to proclaim the gospel in a completely simple way and introduce church songs as well as the story of the Bible.

These women contributed fervently to building up the church. But in comparison with the ministers they were socially not very highly regarded and got much less pay, although in real terms they worked much harder than the ministers did. Already at that time, women were not treated equally within the church. Once the churches were established, women were excluded from a leading role. They were only allowed to serve as volunteers – industrious, dutiful, well versed in the Bible, and generous – in welfare and social work.

Calvinism and Calvin’s teachings on church offices were taken over literally, without attending to their historical or contextual background. The Confucian tradition, where one simply learns by heart the beliefs and the theories of the great teachers, also played a role in this. So Calvin’s teachings were taken over simply, without critical analysis. If one understands by Calvinism the American Puritanism that was implanted in the country by fundamentalist US missionaries, then it integrates into the Confucian structure very well. To learn Holy Scripture by heart, to accept the Bible word by word, without analysing it from a text-critical or historical-critical point of view, fits into this religious culture. Ministers, elders, deacons: that is the hierarchy (without doctors) given by Calvin. This hierarchy led to the exclusion of women from the higher positions of leadership with decision-making power and their use only in sectors of service. And in this way was formed an extra office, inter-

posed between elder and deacon, for women who excelled in devoted, faithful work.

All these things have to do with an understanding of the omnipotence of God that frustrated an understanding of God in relationship. The minister has authority as the proclaimer of God's word. Thus the church became minister-centred, and in the congregations no grassroots democracy could develop. The risk of the human lust for glory is rather high. A minister who founds a church and is successful in numerical terms is highly honoured, even though Calvin, to shield himself against human admiration, wanted the location of his grave to be kept secret. Here we can learn from Calvin how he intended his church order: Calvinism should do without Calvin.

4. Calvin for economic justice and integrity of creation

If I may emphasise Calvin's significance for the churches and for Christianity today, I would like to mention above all Calvin's Christian social ethics and his stress on community inspired by the Holy Spirit. Thanks to the Calvinian ethics with its stress on "worldly asceticism" and the "work ethic", Protestants developed specific hard-working and efficient patterns of life. That has certainly contributed positively to economic growth. To that extent it confirms what Max Weber wrote in his thesis on Calvinism and capitalism. But unfortunately Calvin's other economic ethics (see Christoph Stückelberger's essay in this book), namely, recognising structural sin, a bias for the poor, strong solidarity with the socially weak (refugees, orphans, widows among others), as well as care for the common good, was never emphasised. Korean Christians still face the task of promoting inculturation, expanding the horizon of faith (a perspective that looks beyond an egoistic focus on salvation, self- and family-centredness) and developing Christian ethics in the society. In this process, it would help to look more precisely at

Calvin's teachings and their social background and to interpret them in a more differentiated way.

Calvin's Christian social and economic ethics are of great importance both to the church and the society at large. One should be able to expect sustained protest from South Korean churches on matters such as the environmental damage caused by building golf courses, and their work to assist migrants done in solidarity with the weak. Calvin's heritage is an obligation to support economic justice and protect the integrity of creation.

5. Foundation for democratic Church structures

Calvin was of course not an infallible prophet. He was a man of his time. To expect from him a prescription valid for all time is absurd. Nonetheless there are many positive things that, with an understanding of the historical background at that time, one may also apply to today's problems. Even if a certain metaphorical problem exists, one may still emphasise certain things, such as his ecclesiology, in which Calvin understands the visible church as the mother of believers (*mater et magistra*): "But because it is now our intention to discuss the visible church, let us learn even from the simple title 'mother' how useful, indeed how necessary, it is that we should know her. For there is no other way to enter into life unless this mother conceive us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us at her breast, and lastly, unless she keep us under her care and guidance until, putting off mortal flesh, we become like the angels (Matt. 22:30). Our weakness does not allow us to be dismissed from her school until we have been pupils all our lives."¹ Western patriarchy and Calvinistic Puritanism have been strongly mixed with the traditional Korean patriarchy of Confucian origin. Particularly in the churches, one must learn to avoid discrimination by gender, race, or social class, and instead place as much esteem as possible on each individual. That is the essence of it. As

¹ Calvin, John, *Instit.*, IV, 1,4.

Calvin might have put it: Each of the organs of the Holy Spirit that form the body of Christ, is precious, as the Holy Spirit grants life to each part of the organism, without prejudice. With this vision, Calvin laid the foundations of a democratic church structure.

6. Dialogue of strengths and weaknesses

If we transfer and apply this concept to our own century, we may also learn from one another in the worldwide church and observe afresh our own weaknesses and strengths, even if different forms and standards can never be compared one to one or simply taken over. An example: The exchange programme between Korean and Swiss churches, which dates from the signing of the agreement (covenant) between the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches and two Presbyterian churches in South Korea (PCK and PROK), serves precisely for this purpose. The programme was prompted by a request from the Korean side to get to know the origins of the Reformation, since the Korean Presbyterian churches came into being via a detour through the USA. Conversely, something of the dynamic of the young churches abroad should flow back into Switzerland and Europe. An important goal of the exchange is to appreciate how the gospel is lived in other cultures. This programme can still contribute much to mutual enrichment, so that time and again we can become the church in our place and the worldwide church of Jesus Christ.

Too great a focus on one's own confession can lead to divisions in society. Such divisions among Protestants are now being exported throughout the world as the result of a missionary policy that replicates the errors of the European and American missions of the 19th century. It is more important than ever before that we work toward coalitions and cooperative efforts to overcome conflicts of spirituality and theology. Switzerland is the birthplace of Reformed churches, while the global presence and influence of the

movement is much stronger than is generally known in Switzerland. It remains an excellent idea for Switzerland's Reformed churches to maintain a theological dialogue with the newer churches of the world as a means of discovering each other's strengths and weaknesses. Instead of being viewed in a negative light or as mere history, this tradition could then be revived creatively to meet the needs of each situation.

11

THE KOREAN DEMOCRATISATION MOVEMENT AND CALVIN

Yeon Kyuhong, South Korea

1. Introduction

History is a process that looks for the future hidden in the past. In order to rethink the legacy of John Calvin in the context of 21st-century North-East Asia, we should begin by exploring the process of how the Korean churches understood Calvin and adopted his thought into their situation in the past.¹

The Korean church's participation in the democratisation movement of Korean society in the 1970s was a decisive moment for the emergence of the very "Korean" political theology. Particularly, the Korean Presbyterian churches' active involvement in the democratisation movement was rooted in the application of the theology and thought of John Calvin, the founder of Presbyterian theology, into their social context in the 1970s.

¹ The text was presented as theological reflection at the Northeast-Asia Area Council Meeting and Theological Consultation of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches WARC, November 12-14, 2008.

This presentation will reveal how Calvinism, and which elements of his theological thought, could influence the Korean Presbyterian churches' active participation in the Korean democratisation movement of the 1970s. Of course, the Korean Presbyterian churches' understanding of Calvin was by no means homogeneous. Different interpretations of Calvin's theology were held, resulting in severe conflicts and the division into two groups: the conservatives and the radicals. So our topic will be helpful, to some extent, in understanding the division of the Korean Presbyterians into conservative versus radical, and also in appreciating the church's creative application of Calvinism.

2. The conflict between the conservatives and radicals in the Korean church

Within the reality of denominational division in the Korean Presbyterian church in the 1960s, each Presbyterian denomination began to actively apply Calvin's theological thought to the Korean political, economic and social context according to its own denominational identity. Consequently, academic research on Calvin's theological thought was pursued and various issues were discussed at the denominational level. Among these issues, the relationship between church and state, and the issues of capitalism and the Christian ethics of Calvin, became the most popular. Two points should be mentioned as the background for this increased concern for Calvinism. First, the Korean Presbyterian church had become mature enough to consider that the church must be responsibly involved in social issues. The ecumenical controversy in 1959, resulting in a further denominational division, was caused by differing views on the church-state relationship. Secondly, in the politically unstable situation of Korean society after the student revolution of April 19, 1960 (19.4 civil revolution) the Korean churches experienced polemical division into two rival groups, conservatives and radicals, in

terms of the church-state issue. Consequently, theological controversy between the two groups seemed inevitable.

Although the political situation of Korea immediately after liberation from Japan in 1945 was also very unstable, the Korean church at that time enjoyed relative internal unity, compared with other social groups or organisations. Generally speaking, the Christian churches in South Korea tended to support the government. This pro-government position of the Korean churches can be explained by the following three factors: 1) their failure to deal with the issue of the collaboration of many Christians with Japanese imperialism; 2) their sense of religious identity with the U.S. and Rhee Seung-Man, the first President of the Republic of Korea and a church elder as well; 3) the fact that most of the national leaders who had returned from abroad were Christians. Under these circumstances, the Korean church's close relationship with political power was so strong that the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK) formed an election campaign committee for the presidential and vice-presidential election in 1952, and declared their official support for the presidential candidate Rhee Seung-Man.

In spite of this general trend of friendly church-state relationships, some Christian leaders during the later period of President Rhee Seung-Man's regime began to insist that the church must criticise the state's perpetration of injustice. With the 19.4 civil revolution against the Rhee Seung-Man government in 1960, many churches in Korea changed their earlier positive view on the state to a critical stance. However, not all the Korean churches turned their back on the government. While insisting on the separation of church and state, many churches still maintained their conservative view on the state. The conservative churches took an apparently indifferent position on political issues, but their compliance with government policy was in fact a form of political action. Some radical theologians opposed the Korean church's political indifference and passive looking-on. They further insisted that not only the church

but all the Korean people should be the guards of democracy. These differing views on the state associated with ecclesiology consequently reinforced distinctive denominational theology. Particularly the Presbyterian churches tried to reinterpret Calvin's theological thought on ecclesiology, capitalism and social ethics for the justification of their positions.

The military coup d'état led by General Park Jung-Hee on May 16, 1961 was an incident that undid all the achievements of the 19.4 civil revolution for democratisation. Nevertheless, the Korean church announced a statement through the NCKK that the military coup was an inevitable action against communism and against social inequity and decay. However, such a good relationship between the church and the military government could not last long. When the military proposed a 4-year extension of military government in 1963, the NCKK withdrew its support for the military government and, in a public statement, urged the military to return to their original position, leaving political affairs to civilians. With the struggle against the normalisation of diplomatic relations between South Korea and Japan, this statement was one of the few cases of opposition to the government by the whole Korean church. Nonetheless, Korean history witnessed the emergence of a military government.

The Park Jung-Hee military government adopted two main policies to justify the regime and dispel people's distrust of Park: a cultural policy for the revival of the national culture and an economic policy with a five-year plan for economic development. President Park Jung-Hee boldly decided to try to normalise relations with Japan in order to receive a major loan from Japan, which was supposed to be a must for Korean economic development. However, the decision was followed by strong mass resistance. The Korean church also opposed it. On July 1, 1965 two-hundred radical party theologians including Rev. Kim Jae-Joon, Rev. Kang Won-Young of the PROK and Rev. Han Kyung-Jik of the PCK, gathered together to issue the statement. And the Presbyterian

Church of Korea (PCK-Hapdong), a denomination representative of the conservative group, joined the resistance movement by calling for a week of prayer from July 4 and a three-day fast from July 8. However, such a united reaction of the Korean church against government policies disappeared around the time of the constitutional revision allowing a third term for Park Jung-Hee's presidency. After that, the rivalry between the conservatives and the radicals in the Korean church became more severe and polemic.

3. The Korean democratisation movement and Calvin's theology

In 1969 the Park Jung-Hee military government announced a plan for a constitutional revision. The main purpose was to withdraw the restriction of a two-term presidency and to gain a foothold for a long-term seizure of power. Radical politicians and Christian leaders immediately organised a pan-national committee to campaign against this. Rev. Kim Jae-Joon (PROK) was the chairman, and Mr. Ham Suk-Heon (Quaker) and Rev. Park Hyung-Kyu (PROK) were central figures on the committee. The committee issued a statement emphasising again the crucial prophetic role of the church against injustice. Conservative Christian leaders subsequently also issued a statement. Unlike the radical group, however, they argued that the church should maintain neutrality on political affairs according to the principle of separation of church and state. In addition, they criticised Kim Jae-Joon for his agitating actions that confused ordinary Christians. However, it soon became evident that the political neutrality they insisted on was nothing but a government-patronised position. The Korean Christian Council (KCC), organised by conservative church leaders Rev. Park Hyung-Yong and Rev. Park Yoon-Sun and others, issued a statement proclaiming support for the constitutional amendment. This statement was a clear indication that the

conservative churches wanted to maintain the status quo in the name of political neutrality. In response, the NCKK made it clear that support of the constitutional amendment was the position only of the KCC, not of the whole Korean church, and that the NCKK could not agree with it. The NCKK position was based on the conviction that "the political situation we face today can never be irrelevant to our faith."

In 1971 Park Jung-Hee proclaimed emergency martial law as a means of perpetuating his presidency, and prohibited all political activities. The following year, the military government formed the National Congress for Independent Reunification and, through it, approved the Yushin (Revitalising Reform) Constitution. The government propagandised a "democracy fitting to Korea" under the new Constitution, but it was, needless to say, contrary to true democracy. Nevertheless, the "New Christian Newspaper", run by the conservative churches, declared in a column series titled "Need for the Constitution for Revitalising Reform" that it would be a chance to create a Korean-style democracy. A conservative theologian, Rev. Dr. Kim Ui-Hwan, a member of the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK-Hapdong), justified the Constitution in an article "The matter of the political participation of the Korean church", arguing that "all political actions of the Korean church against the government were wrong, except in religious matters."

In the meantime, the radical group issued a statement in May 1973 thoroughly refuting the conservative group's theory of the separation of church and state. The statement, titled "Declaration of Korean Christians in 1973", confessed that resistance to unjust political suppression and social participation of the church were the ways to proclaim the Kingdom of Messiah on earth. By doing so, it theologically justified the church's participation in social issues. The confrontation between the conservatives and the radicals in the Korean church, caused by differing views on the church's political and social participation, became more se-

vere the following year, in the controversy about the church-state relationship.

On November 9, 1974 Prime Minister Kim Jong-Pil warned that the church would be punished for its political participation. The NCKK responded by issuing a statement declaring that "When the government tries to perpetuate its power against God's will, the church must denounce cooperation with it and must resist it." In a subsequent statement, the Korean Jesus Council (Hankuk Kidokkyo Hyeobewhae), a conservative association within the conservative group, criticised the NCKK for opposing the government and causing social disorder, insisting that "the church must comply with the government unless the government threatens religious freedom." The Korean Christian Council (KCC) also issued a statement; quoting the call for unconditional submission to the governing authorities, as written in the scriptures in Romans 13, the KCC argued that disobedience to the state is biblically wrong. It even asserted that the anti-government movement was only benefiting communist North Korea.

After 1974 there were few chances to seek a compromise between the conservatives and radicals in the Korean Presbyterian churches on the issue of the relationship between church and state. The conservative side maintained their pro-government position at the expense of the church's prophetic mission. The Christian press was also generally loyal to the government. On the other hand, the radical group led a strong anti-government movement for democracy and human rights. In the process of this struggle, the radical group had a chance to indigenise Calvin's political theology in the Korean context.

One of the fundamental reasons why the conservative party in the Presbyterian churches stood for the government can be found in their strong desire to protect their vested rights by maintaining the status quo. A no less significant reason, however, lies in the theological misunderstanding of both the principle of the separation of church and state, and

the state theory in Romans 13. The principle of the separation of church and state can be interpreted in two ways in terms of its logic: 1) The state must not intervene in religious matters. 2) The church must not be involved in political affairs. The conservative group held only the latter position. But John Calvin who established theocracy in Geneva opposed the government's arbitrary legislation of religion and worship. Calvin's opposition implies that the government as a human agency cannot restrict the church arbitrarily because all power belongs to God. Thus according to Calvin's theology, the principle of the separation of church and state should be interpreted as meaning the former position: that the state must not intervene in religious matters. If the state violates this rule, the church can legitimately criticise the state in the light of theocracy.

Romans 13, a key biblical text for the state theory, denies the absoluteness of any human power by declaring that all authority comes from God. The Apostle Paul in this text sees secular governors as servants of God and defines the limit of human power. The text thus allows the interpretation that the church can resist the state according to conscience bestowed by God, if the state violates God's will and human conscience. On the basis of this hermeneutical position on state theory, most Calvinists in church history could establish new political systems limiting the state's power and gain the fame of reformers. In this regard, the conservative Presbyterian Church's theology of the state is inconsistent with Calvin's theological thought in some aspects.

4. Creative adoption of Calvin's theology and the confession of faith

Under the system of the Yushin Constitution, the theological foundation of the resistant churches was Calvin's political theology and eth-

ics. The Christians and theologians who adopted radical elements in Calvin's theology, especially his thought on capitalism and state theory, and the relations between church and state, did not confine the matter merely to the theological realm, but extended it to level of the profession of faith in the church communities. The PROK's 'Confession of Faith' published in 1972 was the first fruit of such activities. This Confession as a historic document in the Korean church and follows along the lines of confessions of faith by other member churches of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches': confessions such as the Geneva Confession, the second Hevetic Confession and the Westminster Confession. Its more important meaning, however, lay in the fact that it provided Korean Christians participating in the democratisation movement with a basis of social mission and "acting" faith.

The PROK Confession consisted of an introduction and nine chapters and was based on the Incarnation (John 1:14) and the Servant God (*kenosis* Christology, Philippians 2:6-11). The purpose of this Confession, it said, was to disclose the truth of the Christian Gospel again in the midst of desperate evil surroundings and to seek a way to obey Christ.

The triune God found in the Scriptures is neither dogmatic nor a Being of the past. God still works today in the contradictory history of humankind for re-creation, redemption, liberation and healing. God takes care of all things in the universe and the created world in God's good will and providence. God is the Lord of all existence and wants to alone be worshipped. Dictatorship is a revolt against God's divine providence and a betrayal of the lordship of Jesus Christ. It is a sin arising from human selfishness and arrogance (Genesis 3:5; Romans 7:5-25). The evil of sin is universal and independently leads humankind and society into decay and corruption. Moreover, as it constructs social power and affects all humankind with unified force, it often reveals itself in a structural form against which no individual can stand. Biblical

law condemns such sin and the existence of evil. Only Jesus Christ can redeem humankind and society through His passion and death. His death as the summit of His passion is an expression of God's righteous love; it is an attack on cosmic evil and the power of sin leading the human into a desperate destiny; it is liberation from evil, and is reconciliation between God and person; and it is a decisive action for forgiveness of sins and salvation (Romans 1:1; 3:24; Galatians 1:4; 1 Peter 2:18).

Jesus Christ, being in very nature God, made himself nothing and took the very nature of a servant. The PROK Confession, based on *kenosis* Christology, suggested Jesus' life for others, service and self-sacrifice as a model for the Christian life. Thus, the object of Jesus Christ's service and sacrifice for us is that we do the same. The object of Jesus' service is indeed the world and others (neighbours) in the world. The Confession here claimed the kingship of Jesus Christ. Beyond the Korean church's traditional understanding of the dualistic principle of separation of church and state, the Confession suggested a theological foundation of Christian mission for the world. Of course, such a confession was possible under the direct influence of the *Missio Dei* theology, which defined the subject of mission as God's, the field of mission as the world, and the purpose of mission as humanisation.

In this regard, the Confession interpreted the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the perspective of political theology. Resurrection means that death as the final enemy of human beings has been swallowed up in life, and also means the victory of justice and love. That is, it means the recovery of those who suffered under oppressive injustice and violation of the law, the victory of the righteous defeated and the new life of the dead. Therefore, Christians must be friends of the weak and must take Jesus Christ's role of standing against social injustice and the structures of evil power. That is indeed a way of participation in Christ's passion and the new life of Christians in the Holy Spirit.

The Confession declared that the holiness of the church lay in working with Christ in the world and bearing trials for the transformation of the world. The church as the body of Jesus Christ is faithful only to Christ. Such faithfulness appears as missionary activity, the Lord's Great Commandment. Mission has two dimensions: one for the gathered church, and the other for the sending church. While worshipping and sharing fellowship in the gathered church, Christians work with Christ in the world in the sending church. In this, the Confession distinguished itself from the general Korean church trend of focusing mainly on church growth, without involvement in history.

The Confession was confirmed as the official Confession of the PROK in 1978 after a five-year review by the presbyteries. At the peak of the democratisation movement in Korean society the Confession inspired not only the PROK but many radical Christians beyond the PROK, strengthening their pride in and conviction of the church's role and responsibility in society.

Conclusion

In the Korean context, Calvin's theology contributed greatly to the democratisation movement of 1970s by providing a theoretical foundation for political theology and Christian social ethics. In the process, however, the radical churches' creative adoption of Calvin's theology must also be appreciated. While the conservative churches' understanding of the church-state relationship is close to Luther's two-kingdom theology, the radical churches saw the state in the light of Calvin's theory of God's absolute sovereignty and Christ's kingship. The radical churches creatively adopted Calvin's political theology and social ethics and successfully made them a theological basis for the Christian social movement.

In a sense, this presentation may be incomplete, for I cannot deal here with the statements and confessions presented by the Korean church after the 1970s. It might be an interesting task to explore how, and how much, the traditional Reformed Church's confessions influenced these. Let us leave that task for the future.

**FROM OPPRESSIVE CALVINISM
TO TRANSFORMATIVE CALVINISM
IN INDONESIA:
LEARNING FROM SOUTH AFRICA**

Emanuel Gerrit Singgih, Indonesia

1. Foreword

This article was originally written in September 1998, four months after the sudden fall of General Soeharto, who had ruled for almost thirty years as President of Indonesia. It was a turbulent time, where forces of the reformation have to face the forces of the former regime, which tries to hold on as long as possible to their former privileges and power. Former vice president Habibie was appointed by Soeharto to replace him as president, and Habibie formally stated that he would continue the reformation which was started by the students who had opposed Soeharto. But at that time it seemed that the situation was bleak and that the struggle for democracy and civil society was going into a crucial stage in the life of the Indonesian people. I was invited to talk to a group of student activists, who were mainly Christians at the city of Semarang, but among them there were also some Muslims and Buddhists. The topic is how religions in Indonesia should respond to the

Reformation (now with a big “R”). The term “*Reformasi*” in Indonesian has become a popular term to denote the post-Soeharto period.

At that time it was the students who became the spirit of the Reformation. It was they who started the big demonstrations after the monetary crisis hit South-East Asian countries in 1997 and created a change in the situation. But only a handful of Christians (mostly Catholics) were participating in the new movement. Even after the fall of Soeharto, many Protestants were at loss at how to respond to the Reformation. They decided to wait until the situation became stable (or until it was clear which part would win in the struggle). For some undisclosed reason, the talk was put off. Instead the group above asked me to send my article to them, which pretty soon was put on the internet and read by a wider audience. I suggested to my fellow Christians (in Indonesia, “Christian” means “Protestants” or “non-Catholics”) that one of the reasons was Calvinism as our theological heritage, which has become an oppressive theology because of its support for the *status quo*. However, I did not propose that Protestant churches in Indonesia should get rid of Calvinism, but by learning from South Africa, especially from John de Gruchy, try to revitalise and re-functionalise Calvinism to become a transformative theology.¹

After eleven years it could be asked whether the period of learning is over, or whether we should produce contextual theologies which do not necessarily have a denominational colour. While striving to do this, I think what I have stressed at that time, is that Calvin (via De Gruchy of course) can help us in rethinking the idea of the state and the idea of the people of God. This is still valid and worthy to be considered even now, when it is clear that democracy, free elections and civil society start to function in Indonesia.

¹ See De Gruchy, John W., *Liberating Reformed Theology*, Grand Rapids-Cape Town: Eerdmans-Philip, 1991.

2. Introduction

Theology does not consist of abstract ideas only. Increasingly people become aware that theology is a systematic reflection concerning the world around us and its concrete struggles. The world around us is Indonesia which is in the midst of a struggle to build or rebuild a civil society after the stepping down of president Soeharto on Ascension Day, May 21, 1998. What is hoped for is the making of a relevant theology for the churches in the present life of our nation and our country. This is what I try to offer in this presentation.

In this description of a relevant theology I cannot but rely on my background as a member of a Calvinist church (the Protestant church in Western Indonesia, which is the former colonial church, i.e. the state Calvinist church during Dutch rule in Indonesia). Although I am known as a contextual theologian who emphasised the local or the national dimension in doing theology in Indonesia, I never set aside Calvinism as my inherited theological convictions. As a Calvinist, I highly regard the Bible (that is why I am a biblical scholar first and only secondly a contextual theologian) and always try put my ideas on biblical bases, and of course these biblical bases are influenced to some extent by Calvinism, or better by John Calvin. I think Calvin has contributed deeply as to how the church could play a role in the life of a nation and country. He started from the understanding of the glory and image of God, and after that on the impact of this understanding on the relationship of one human being with another.

I learn about Calvin's understanding of the state and the people of God through John de Gruchy, a South African Reformed theologian. Of course as a student of theology in a former Reformed theological seminary (which is now an ecumenical and contextual theological faculty of a Christian University) I already studied ideas of Calvin concerning the state and the people of God, but I must confess that not until I re-read

these ideas through the eyes of De Gruchy did I become aware of its significance for the life of Christians in Indonesia. From him I learn that the Church in South Africa has had much experience in challenging the dominant false theology which supported the apartheid system from the state.

Perhaps we can learn from Christians in South Africa how the world can influence faith. I expressly formulate it that way, because we used to think that faith is something which is permanent, and ought to influence the world. On one hand I wholeheartedly agree that our faith should have influence in the world, but on the other hand our faith also ought to be open to positive and transformative ideas of the world, precisely in order to produce a relevant and functional theology. The faith which belongs to the majority of white South Africans at the time of apartheid is expressed in a certain oppressive Calvinism which supported the apartheid system, and the result is oppression of the majority of the people of South Africa, who are black or coloured and who are also Christians (albeit from different denominations: the majority of the white people join the Gereformeerde church, while the majority of the black people join the Anglican Church).

De Gruchy and his friends who have fought to dismantle the apartheid system are able to rekindle the dynamics of Calvinist theology so that this theology can be used to counter the official Calvinist theology of the apartheid state. The struggle to make the world more just and humane (the fight against apartheid) which was going on in the society of South Africa can push Christians to produce a new interpretation concerning Calvinism which is based on the thinking of Calvin, and in turn this new interpretation can influence the white majority to get rid of apartheid. In Indonesia, Christians are not facing apartheid, but the ideology of the state as all-powerful and centralistic, which is created by the regime of Soeharto. During his long reign, Soeharto and his regime (he named his regime, “the New Order”) has co-opted the other spheres

as well, including the church, and within the church people strived to adjust themselves to the demands of this ideology rather than resist this ideology. Our theological inheritance, namely Calvinism was “contextualised”, and had become supportive of the status-quo. As I have stated above, it is this form of Calvinism which makes us unresponsive to the demands of the Reformation. Our Calvinist faith needs to be infused by new blood, namely the thinking of Calvin. But this re-thinking of Calvin is brought about by changes within the society, not within the church. In this case I think it is society which is influencing the church. That is why I used the term the world influencing our faith.

3. When the state becomes an idol

The question of who is God, is fundamental. How we answer this question decides where our loyalty lies and the form of our loyalty towards Him. The question of who is God is closely related to the question of who are we as human beings: who am I and how is my relationship with my fellow human beings, my society and my environment. Calvin formulates it this way: without knowledge of ourselves as human beings we cannot possibly know God, and without knowledge of God we cannot possibly know human beings.² Calvin will agree to some extent that theology is related to anthropology. Our understanding of God also controls our understanding of ourselves. But at the same time Calvin emphasises that there is a fundamental difference between God and human beings. So it is very important to ask not only concerning who is God, but also what is his essence? “What is his nature?”³

² See Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I, 1,1.

³ *Ibid*, I, 2,2.

The difference lies in the absoluteness of God as Creator. Human beings and all the other creatures are not absolute, including those things which are created by human beings. Human beings cannot aspire to become absolute. If, however, they aspire to become like God, then it means that they have fallen into idolatry. The story of human beings is the story of the fall into idolatry, the hubris of human beings who uplift their understandings of race, nation, state, church, party, tribe, class, wealth and honour to become absolute, and by so doing they strive to set aside God. By changing God with their own creation which they have made absolute, they actually put themselves at the centre. Idolatry is worship of the self. According to Calvin, human beings are manufacturers of idols. It is our pleasure to manufacture idols.⁴

Usually we tend to regard idols negatively. Idols are symbols of paganism and paganism is against religion and against faith. But what Calvin wants to point out is not that aspect. The danger of idolatry lies in the fact that it consists of beautiful and glorious things, the high ideals that we all aspire to in our everyday life, even our image of God. In other words, the danger lies in our ideology or/and our theology. Calvin formulates it this way: idolatry is “impiety” but clothed with the language of “piety”.⁵ Why are people fascinated by idols? Because idols are attractive and full of promises, and by clinging onto these idols people feel that these promises will soon become reality, even concerning their ultimate aspirations. What is striking is that the effort of human beings to achieve their ultimate aspirations is termed “greed” or “covetousness” in the New Testament. Colossians 3:5 refers to sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed. In Ephesians 5:5, covetous-

⁴ Ibid., I, 11,8.

⁵ See Calvin, John, *The Epistles of Paul to the Romans and Thessalonians*, p. 53.

ness is mentioned in one breath, and even identified with worship of idols.⁶

Why is greed identified with idolatry and not the other evils? Because according to Calvin, "...this disease is widely spread, and infects the minds of many like a contagion, but is not reckoned as a disease, but rather praised in the common estimation".⁷ In the eyes of Calvin, what people regard as aspiration is precisely greed or avarice! For those who are used to the idea that Calvin is more or less responsible toward the rise of capitalism (and there are many who cling to this idea in our country!). I think Calvin promotes the sacralisation of hard work and "this-worldly asceticism", not sacralisation of accumulation of wealth at the expense of one's neighbour. That hard work and asceticism enabled people to save and in the end become rich and make investments is something which does not come into his considerations. Greed is closely related to money and power. According to De Gruchy who refers to Albert Nolan, the apartheid system which absolutised the Caucasian race is actually a camouflage to cover the urge to control all the assets in South Africa for the interests of the white minority. The roots of the doctrine of race supremacy is socio-economic vested-interests.⁸ So, the idol is Mammon, the god of greed.

The problem faced by the church in South Africa (and also by the church in Indonesia) is a battle to choose between God and Mammon. In the framework of this problem it is useless to argue that idols are powerless images or statues, because here Mammon is very powerful, as the whole system, including the state, is within his grip. The state is an extension of the idol, and is in itself also an idol. We have seen above how

⁶ See De Gruchy, *ibid.*, p. 104. Calvin's comment on this passage in *The Epistles of Paul to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, p. 198 is quoted by De Gruchy.

⁷ See Calvin, *ibid.*

⁸ See De Gruchy, *op.cit.*, pp. 105-106.

Calvin in an ironic way described the beauty and attractiveness of the idol. But beside that, the state as idol can also show its fearsome aspect, its “tremendum”. When the state becomes an idol, there is no freedom and all of its citizens are trapped in a gigantic prison called “the state” and are controlled by the state apparatus. This is the familiar story of the growth of a totalitarian society. How are we going to battle Mammon?

Calvin put forward the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. Because God is sovereign, human beings do everything for the glory of God (*Soli Deo Gloria*). If this idea is isolated from the other parts of his thinking, then the danger is that we glorify God at the expense of human beings. I think there are many adherents of Calvinism in Indonesia, who always stress on the glory of God, and are oblivious toward the plight of human beings. Perhaps the influence of the dominant Islamic orthodox thinking, where God is everything and human beings are nothing is still strong. But clearly there is the other side of Calvin’s thinking, where human beings are seen as taking part in the glory of God. It is through the obedience of Christ at the cross. In seminary we associate theology of the cross with Luther rather than with Calvin. But according to De Gruchy it is also evident in Calvin’s own theology.⁹ The glory of God is different from the glory of Mammon, because it is revealed through the humility of the cross. The humility of the cross is at the same time the glory of the cross. Through the glory of the cross, all the falseness and deceit of the glory of the idols are brought into its light, including the state! Calvin’s theology concerning the glory of the cross enables the church to regard the state as the state and not as an idol.

⁹ See de Gruchy, *op.cit.*, p. 122.

4. Elected People: evidence of God's preferential option

The notion of election is central in the Bible. In Calvin's thinking this idea of the elected people of God is related to the doctrine of predestination: if some people are elected, then logically others are not elected, or rejected. Seen in the framework of the one-sided emphasis on the sovereignty of God, this election and rejection becomes something that has been decided by God long ago, from the beginning of creation or even before that. It is the providence of God. But that is not in the end the intention of Calvin, or we can say later on he changed his mind on the function of the doctrine of predestination. He separated the teaching on predestination from the teaching of providence. The emphasis is on sureness and conviction that the life of the faithful is in the hand of God, no matter how difficult life is. It is intended as a doctrine of comfort. Predestination is not something that is arbitrarily distributed by God, but the grace of God, given freely to those who have no claim to that. It is the result of the people's reflection on God's grace to them.

If it is God's grace, then the basis for election cannot be the prosperity of the people, or their position of power and might, or their marvelous exploits. The problem with the notion of election is that the people of God tends to forget the factor of grace and cling to the idea of seeing themselves as being superior to the others. In South Africa many devout white church-going people felt that they are elect people, meaning, they are superior to the black people (this is my impression from De Gruchy's description of the idea of the elect among the whites). In Indonesia there are many Calvinists (the majority of Christians in Indonesia are Calvinists) who tend to regard themselves as being superior to Muslims, this is also caused by the fact that the majority of the Muslims are poorer than the Christians.

In the Old Testament, especially in Deuteronomy 7:7-8, the idea of election is placed in the framework of the Exodus: "The Lord did not set

his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (KJV). Because Israel is the smallest among nations, God’s heart is turned toward them, and God is in love with them. That is why He brought them out from the land of slavery. The relationship between God and Israel is described by using the language of love. According to De Gruchy, Calvin’s idea of the elect people of God is actually the same as the starting point of many theologians of the third world concerning the principle of “preferential option for the poor”.¹⁰ This principle is about God’s preference for the poor and the weak. It does not mean that only the poor or the weak can be saved, but God prefers them because their situation is desperate. For example, in hospitals around the world there are emergency wards. Those who are responsible for these wards, work very fast and efficiently to help the needy. But there are other parts of the hospital where people who need treatment have to wait for their turn. If people are asked to wait because a seriously ill patient needs attention, then this is normal, and nobody will protest. So does God in his dealing with people, he prefers the poor and the weak. The rich and the strong can wait as their life is not in immediate danger.

The idea of Exodus is of course accepted widely in the course of history. But we also have to be aware of the manipulations of this idea in the life of the people. Even in South Africa, the Dutch descendants who called themselves “the Boer people” identified their history with the Exodus. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the Boers are facing extreme hardship in a war, which is caused by

¹⁰ See De Gruchy, *op.cit.*, pp. 125-130.

the intervention of British imperialists in South Africa. In this war many Boer women and children were put into concentration camps (the first in modern history!), and many of them died because of the sufferings. It is imagined as the same as the period of slavery in Egypt. Also the Boers were doing a long journey (“The Trek”) to escape the arms of British imperialism, and this trek is imagined as the same with the journey of the people of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land. The trauma caused by this war helped many to forge a determination not to be treated again in the same way. They did not want to suffer again, and to do that they will do everything necessary, including to put suffering on others, for the sake of protecting themselves. This is the story of the birth of apartheid. Suffering caused trauma and in turn trauma caused superiority and aggressiveness towards others. Perhaps the official policy of modern Israel toward Palestine can be cited as a contemporary example. They have suffered terribly under the Germans and to avoid being back in the same situation, they make the Palestinians suffer.

So I think it is not enough just to get inspiration from the Exodus story. The Exodus also must be seen in the light of the theology of the cross. But also in the New Testament we can see the principle of the preferential option. Jesus said, “It is not the healthy that need a doctor, but the sick. I come to call not the righteous but the sinner” (Mark 2:17, my own translation). The first part of the verse is a simile, which explains the second part. It means that the phrases “the righteous” and “the sinner” cannot be understood in a dogmatic way to identify the righteous as those who are really hypocrites at heart, and the sinner as all who have accepted salvation in Jesus Christ. This is I think the popular exegesis of this verse in the congregations in Indonesia. The context of Mark chapter 2 helped us to understand “the sinner” and “the righteous” are terms to denote the place of people in society. In other words, they are religious terms, which even in the time of Jesus already have sociological connotations. “The righteous” are those who are regarded as the

respectable people, and “the sinner” are those who are living in the margins. It is for the latter that Jesus came. Also according to Paul, “the fools” in the eyes of the world, they are the chosen ones (I Corinthians 1:27-29). The notion of election is seen through the theology of the cross, and from this perspective, the suffering of the world gets meaningful.

It is this merger between the idea of Calvin concerning the elect and the principle of preferential option of the poor and the weak by De Gruchy, which I find most helpful in looking at the place of Christians among others in Indonesia. I propose that we follow this new understanding, rather than the old understanding of the people of God above, where Christians tend to feel superior to others, especially non-Christians. The people of God are precisely people who are open to serve the others, not in a condescending way but in a humble and contrite way. But there is a difference in context. Both in the context of Calvin and De Gruchy, the majority are Christians. But in Indonesia, the majority of the people are Muslims who are poor and weak. We need to acknowledge humbly that the Muslims, precisely because they are in the margins, are also the people of God! In “contextual” reflections by church people who have adjusted themselves to the ideology of the state, this new idea cannot take root, because the Muslims are suspected of harbouring aspirations to make Indonesia a Muslim state and nation, like Iran or at least like Malaysia, where Islam is the state religion. It is the state ideology *contra* the Muslim ideology!

So what we need is a new contextual ideology which is not related at all to the state ideology. I am not a supporter of the idea of a Muslim state, but a supporter of a civil society in Indonesia. The church should participate in the building of a civil society. In a civil society we do not look at others through the perspective of a state ideology, but through the theology of the cross. So there is a dialectical relationship between the church as the people of God and the majority as the people of God.

We have to be aware of this dialectic, as this is the only way we can deal satisfactorily with the problem of plurality of religions in Indonesia. In the state ideology we deal with ethnic plurality, in the theology of the cross we deal with ethnic plurality *and* religious plurality. Both are important in our new contextual theology!

5. A Postscript

In the foreword I referred to the students who played a crucial role in the fall of Soeharto in 1998. Their motivation was clear. After almost thirty years in power, Soeharto and his cronies were betraying the high ideals of the founding fathers of Indonesia, that is to make Indonesia free from the Dutch rule, so that the people can have a just and prosperous society. The country becomes a totalitarian state where everything is controlled by the state, and in turn the state is controlled by the circle around the president. In this situation where no one can control those who are in power, corruption and misrule becomes rampant. Outwardly, the country seems to be stable and prosperous, but the monetary crisis from 1997 onwards opens the eyes of the people that it is a “balloon-like prosperity”, financed by big loans from abroad, and thus very fragile. The really prosperous are not the people. In fact, the people are pressured to make many sacrifices, such as the villagers in the region of Kedungombo, Central Java, who are forced to leave their villages and lands, so that their former area could be flooded to become a reservoir to provide electricity for the industrial needs of the big companies. It is the circle around the president who becomes richer and richer. We can say that the student revolt not only had a political and social dimension, but also a religious dimension. The fall of Soeharto also meant the breaking of the state as idol. By breaking the idol the people becomes free but also the state becomes free. When the idol is gone, we can regard the

state as the state, nothing less and nothing more than that. It is part of the created reality around us.

But eleven years after the Reformation, we learn that the created reality around us is not only the state, but also the market and the community. These three entities are interdependent and form a kind of a triangle. But sometimes one of the corners tries to dominate the others, or one corner allies itself with the other corner, to dominate the third corner. During the period of the New Order, the state dominated the market and the community. Now it seems that the market is dominant, or the market and the state are allying themselves to the detriment of the community. But sometimes also, the community becomes dominant, as can be seen from the rise of primordialism in every part of Indonesia. Civil society moves within this triangle and tries to hold the triangle to be in a balance. Seen from a religious or theological perspective, the effort from civil society to hold the triangle in balance can be seen as an effort to prevent idolatry. Not only the state, but also the market, or the community could become (new) idols! Christians and the church are called to support civil society in its effort to hold the balance of power between the state, the market and the community. That is how I see the relationship between the church and the world in the context of Indonesia today. And all the time we have to be watchful, not to let our faith to be co-opted into one of the sphere of powers. What Calvin has taught us regarding the state and the people of God is still relevant today, if we broaden the scope of our vision to include the market and the community as part of that reality. By fighting against idols, we glorify God, especially in humanity coming alive (Irenaeus: *Gloria Dei vivens homo*), or better, we glorify God, especially in the liberation of the poor to full life (Romero: *Gloria Dei vivens pauper*).¹¹

¹¹ See De Gruchy, *op.cit.*, p. 137.

**RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
CHURCH AND STATE IN INDONESIA. A
RESPONSE TO AGUSTINUS BATLAJERY
FROM CALVIN'S PERSPECTIVE**

Robert Setio, Indonesia

1. Introduction

Calvinist churches in Indonesia¹, unlike their Catholic sister, have consciously taken a position of not being directly involved in political matters. They have rather opted to make benign comments about political events that do not require a deep or serious involvement in politics. Such a position may be seen as being derived from Calvinist understanding of the division of church and state, but it is in fact mirroring the legacy of the ideology of the New Order regime. The authoritarian regime, by arguing that politics is exclusively a matter of the government, succeeded in silencing anyone other than its own political ideal. The churches chose to live in accordance with the will of the regime so that it would not have to contradict the powerful government, and, at the same time, it would enjoy the protection of the government, however

¹ Presented in a seminar to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Calvin, organised by the Indonesia Christian Church (GKI), Jakarta, December 2008.

superficial it was. Now, as the times have changed and the country is in the transitional state to being a truly democratic country, the church should reconsider its position. Learning from Calvin's doctrine of the kingdom of God and the relationship between Church and State, this article proposes endorsing a more active involvement of the church in politics. As David VanDrunen has argued, Calvin and early Calvinism, despite our common understanding, did indeed have an optimistic view of the state and secular affairs. It is true that the doctrine of the two kingdoms teaches the difference between the spiritual kingdom represented by the church and civil kingdom embodied in the state. However, the difference is not meant to put the church in a higher position than the state or the other way around. Neither does it mean to disengage the church from the state. As a representation of God's rule in the world, the state organises all kinds of activities and relationships among the members of the society including the church. Even though the church has its own role as a reflection of God's redemptive act, it may not exclude itself from the world outside. The world should be understood as the sphere of God's creative work too. This positive understanding of the world and the state may provide a solid theological basis for the Indonesian Calvinist churches to become involved in political matters, not in order to strive for their own interests but to contribute to the interests of all that make up the state, especially in the realisation that Indonesia is a heterogeneous state and that Christianity is only a minority in the country.

First of all, I would like to emphasise my understanding of the explanation put forward by Agustinus Batlajery.² My understanding is: the notion of "theocracy" (God's sovereignty, to be precise) among Calvinists carries quite a strong rhetorical dimension. When the term was used

² His paper is titled *Teokrasi dalam Masyarakat Majemuk Indonesia Pasca Orde Baru (Theocracy in the Heterogenous Society of Post New Order Era)*.

during the identity establishment of the Protestants against the Pope's power in Rome, the rhetoric became "only God reigns, Pope does not."

Later on, in the Netherlands, the same notion was used in a different oppositional framework. It was no longer to oppose the Pope but towards the seed of humanism which is "the spirit of liberalism" triggered by the French Revolution. The most obvious was the model proposed by Abraham Kuyper and his *Gereformeerde*. They deliberately jumped into practical politics with the aim of maintaining the church's existence in the face of liberalism. Whether or not it succeeded is a different story.³

In the United States the story was different. Presbyterians who claimed themselves as Calvinists used theocracy to oppose the English government. The rhetoric was then "only God reigns, England does not". That opposition eventually resulted in the establishment of the United States of America. If we want to draw parallels with the present time, as argued by Kevin Phillips and quoted by Batlajery, the democracy practised in the States can also be attributed to the development of theocracy by the Calvinists.⁴

How is the implementation of Calvin's or Calvinism's theocracy notion in Indonesia, then? On this, Batlajery sounds a bit shy if not hesitant. He is reluctant to follow Calvin's or Calvinism's rhetoric either from the Netherlands or from the United States. His reason is that: in Indonesia, Christianity is not alone. There are several religions in Indonesia. *Corpus Christianum* - the implementation of Christian theocracy - is only suitable for western countries in the past when Christianity was still in its golden period and became the only religion available. The condition in Indonesia is different. It is impossible to implement *Corpus*

³ The recent phenomenon of "the empty" church in western Europe may be taken as a prove for the success of liberalism, nevertheless, for some, Christianity is still the belief of the people. The people still retain their belief but do not want to belong to a church.

⁴ As argued by Roger Trigg that Christianity in the U.S. should not be confined to the private sector only since it has a contribution in the formation of the secular society (Trigg 2007).

Christianum in Indonesia which is a multi religious country. Whenever theocracy is discussed and going to be applied, it has to be inclusive and cannot be limited to Christianity, let alone only Calvinism. Every existing religion and faith has a roles to take in shaping and implementing an inclusive theocracy, something which could be seen as normal, although in reality this form needs to be pursued further. On this, Batlajery himself will have to address the query.

While waiting for further explanation of the inclusive theocracy concept, I also take up part of another proposal made in Batlajery's writing. The proposal is similar to that of what was done by the *Hervormd* in the Netherlands for whom the church should play a prophetic role in politics. What it meant was that the church voiced the criticism towards the wrongdoings that took place in practical politics. However, the church limited itself to take that role only and did not once participate in practical politics. The church remained outside of practical politics. By doing so, it could be assured that its voice is more objective and not controlled by partisan or sectarian politics.

Although the truth in Mr. Batlajery's idea on the role of PGI (*Persekutuan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia* – Indonesian NCC) can be proven, especially in the present leadership, it needs further examination, however, whether or not the reason is the same with that of *Hervormd* church. Or, probably the reason is because PGI is not yet able to free itself from the way of thinking laid down and nurtured by the New Order regime, despite the fact that this regime no longer exists. At that time the authoritarian government succeeded in implanting the notion that politics was not supposed to be openly discussed. It was only politics according to the government that was allowed to be publicly discussed. Communities and religious institutions such as PGI had to voice the government's voice and unwaveringly support its policies. The government domination was often followed by the creation of a debilitating horrific atmosphere which left people with only two choices: go with the

government or be silent on political matters. We will discuss this issue further below. In the meantime, I will have a look at the possibility that the reason PGI and many churches in Indonesia took the stand of not going into politics and “just” functioned as the messenger of prophetic voice stemmed from the notion of separating the church from the state. I will put forward the result of David VanDrunen’s study which showed understanding which separated “the Kingdom of God” (church) and “worldly kingdom” (government/states) from Calvin and the early Calvinists. Such notion may have inspired the understanding of the Indonesian churches in their stand of staying away from political matters.

2. Calvin’s doctrine about State and Church in the light of God’s Sovereignty

As mentioned in Batlajery’s explanation, Calvin clearly stated who he addressed to in his *Institutio*. It was, as a matter of fact, King Francois I from France. However, taking a closer look at the book, people barely notice any idea concerning states, politics and the like which might have been suitable to be addressed to a king. Instead, the book discusses things mainly about Christianity. Therefore, it was no surprise that the book was better known as a doctrinal book rather than somekind of political guidance.

Furthermore, Batlajery also states that Calvin almost never mentioned the term theocracy. And whenever someone wants to learn about Calvin’s ideas on theocracy, it is better to learn his explanation on God’s sovereignty. In it, one can clearly see his idea on the duties and functions of the state. The main duties and functions of the state according to Calvin are stated by Batlajery in his elaboration. I just would like to underline a point: for Calvin, the state should be run based on the natural and moral laws. As a lawyer, it seemed that Calvin believed that nature and moral had their own justification. The reasons, in accordance with

rationalism, were objective and intact. They were not influenced by subjective and temporary interests. Thus, laws derived from nature and moral awareness were solid and reliable. A country needed such a foundation to serve the function of placing all its citizens in an equal position. For the citizens, the state needs to guarantee that there is equal (objective) treatment for every citizen that lives in it.

If Calvin put the notion of state and government in the frame of God's sovereignty, we can understand that he not only wished to have a nation which was bound to God - that is how theocracy is - but also one which projected God's sovereignty in its life. The state's officers were, on one hand, expected to always have respect and be bound to God and, on the other hand, in carrying out their duties, keep in mind that they were implementing God's sovereignty. When discussing God's sovereignty, Calvin often quoted verses from Psalms which described the vastness of God's power, that the power covered the whole universe without exception. The Psalms and other Old Testament books frequently include such descriptions of God, God was often understood as the all embracing God. Nature is often used in order to describe such a God. By looking at nature, people were expected to understand God's almightiness and become aware of God as Creator. Nature, therefore, would make people realise that God exists. Therefore, a state governed on the principles of nature would also make its people aware of God. Using wording similar to that Calvin frequently used: God has made Himself understood by people through nature and the state, if the state indeed reflects the natural laws which are open and not discriminative for all.

Calvin's understanding about a state gives an idea about the vastness of a state's role. We could even say that the position given to the state is too big. In that case, we need to ask whether it is proper to give the state such a big power?

It is true that the running of a country can be corrected. It is not always the case that a state's officers do what they are supposed to do. Natural laws and moral awareness do not always become the foundation of the officers' actions. When such things occur there should be correction. In this case, I think Calvin would not oppose correction towards the state. However, if everything is already settled, which is to say if the authority has indeed obeyed natural laws which are open and not discriminative, and if it listens to moral demands clearly, can we then give the state such enormous power? It seems that we need to allow space for cautiousness. We do not want the state to act as God. Our question is then whether Calvin indeed intended to give such enormous, even absolute, power to the state? In other words, was it just the state which was encouraged and supposed to manifest God's sovereignty?

In his article "The Two Kingdoms Doctrine and the Relationship of Church and State in the Early Reformed Tradition"⁵ David Van Druenen explained that actually Calvin, like Luther, also put forward the idea of differentiating church and state. Church for him represented God's kingdom, Christ's kingdom to be precise. While the state represented kingdoms in the world (although it is still in the framework of God's sovereignty). The two kingdoms did not only represent two different worlds but the rules applied to govern them were also different. Van Druenen stated, "Calvin distinguished clearly between Christ's redemptive rule in the spiritual kingdom, experienced now in the church, and God's providential rule in the civil kingdom, comprising the state and various areas of life outside the church."⁶

In addition to Calvin's opinion, Van Druenen also examined the viewpoints of three prominent Calvinist figures who lived in the early stage of Calvinism: Johannes Althusius (1557-1638, living in the border

⁵ In *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 49, 2007. Van Druenen mentions parts of the *Institutio* which contain the idea of the two kingdoms: II, 15,3-5; III, 19,15; IV, 20,1-2.

⁶ VanDruenen, pp. 743f.

of Germany-the Netherlands), Samuel Rutherford (1600-61, from the British islands), and Francis Turretin (1623-87, from Geneva). Van Drunen also studied two church documents: The Second Book of Discipline (1578) from the Scotland Synod Assembly and the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) (1646). The result of his research on these figures and church documents which represented Reformed Orthodoxy, showed that even if they did not always use the same language, they emphasised three kinds of important differentiation between church and state as they understood it from Calvin. These three are:

*First, he considers the spiritual kingdom to be redemptive in character while he considers the civil kingdom a realm of God's providential care, but not of his redemptive grace. Second, he sees the spiritual kingdom as spiritual and heavenly while he sees the civil kingdom as external and earthly. Finally, Calvin teaches that the spiritual kingdom finds expression in the present age exclusively in the church while he teaches that the civil kingdom finds expression especially in the civil government, along with other cultural matters such as scientific and artistic endeavors.*⁷

The differentiation in this regard could be easily understood as an effort to thrust the church forward because the church was considered able to reflect Christ both in channelling the redemptive grace and in its spiritual and heavenly character. However, if we can put aside for a while the conception that everything spiritual is of higher value than the physical, it is likely that we will no longer get the impression that the differentiation was intended to put the church in a higher position than the state. What we will get is just the difference between the church and the state but not in the sense that one is higher than the other. Church is indeed different from state but it does not mean that the church is higher than the state. The church and the state both have the mandate of realising the presence of God. However, the way this happens differs depending on

⁷ VanDrunen, p.747.

whether the church of the state do the implementation. If the church implements God's redemptive grace, the state implements *providentia Dei*.

VanDrunen himself wanted to use his research to give enlightenment to those who, in the context of secular society, often complained of the alienation of church or religion from the public discourse. In the United States, for example, the teaching of religious subjects is limited more and more. Even subjects that do not directly address religion, but, have religious connotations are also banned.⁸ In Europe we often hear that the church no longer has much attraction. There are more people who choose to be atheist rather than religious. In this kind of situation there are people who oppose and blame secularisation. In their view secularisation has caused religions especially Christianity, to collapse. Secularisation is viewed as the enemy of religions. Towards this kind of opposition, Van Drunen commented,

A number of influential schools of thought among contemporary Christian theologians take a decidedly negative view of the concept of the "secular," identifying it with an Enlightenment quest for autonomy, moral fragmentation, and the exclusion of religious discourse from the public square. In its place, they call for a specifically Christian approach to, and account of, the social realm. The Reformed two kingdoms tradition may provide theological reasons for believing that there are not just two alternatives, a secular social order that is amoral, anti-religious, individualistic, and grounded in autonomous reason, on the one hand, and a Christian social order that is moral, religious, communitarian, and grounded in orthodox theology on the other. The older Reformed idea of the civil kingdom suggests that a theologically rich Christian account of a secular realm is possible. Working from a two kingdoms doctrine, one might posit that there is a "secular" realm (in its etymological sense of concerning "this age"), a common space shared by all human beings despite religious differences. Yet this secular realm need not be dismissed as anti-religious or immoral, for Cod is

⁸ For example, the prohibition for teaching "Intelligent Design" by the Federal Court of Pennsylvania District in 2005. Trigg, p.7.

creator and sustainer of the civil kingdom and governs it by the law of nature. From this perspective, attempts to engage in common, non-religiously exclusive public discourse do not betray Christian truth but an endeavor that a rich theological account of reality suggests is a possibility and even a responsibility.⁹

In my view, Van Drunen's important message based on his study on Calvin's and orthodox Calvinists' opinions is not only meant for those (Christians) who are against secularisation in Western countries, but, also for us in Indonesia who need to learn to "let go" of "the taking over" of God's work by those outside the church. Politics, economics, culture, science and every single thing related to "secular," earthly matters cannot be regarded as low and less worthy. They also contribute to implementing God's presence although in different ways from the church.

I also think that the differentiation between the church and the state (we can now expand "the state" to matters outside the church) needs to be addressed in the discussion about the involvement of the church in politics. In the light of the differentiation, what soon comes to our realisation is that the church does not need to get involved in politics. The involvement of the church in politics will confuse the differentiation proposed by Calvin. The confusion of the differentiation may become the sign of the church's distrust towards the state: that the state is actually incapable of taking care of itself without the church's involvement. However, what comes across more strongly for me is that the confusion will affect professionalism. It is true that in Indonesia anybody can handle anything. Religion can be managed by those who are not expert in religion. And the same case applies to politics. It is even worse that in order to be a politician, one can just rely on his or her popularity, and not his or her professionalism. Eventually, we have to deal with dissatisfying outcomes of such practice. Therefore, it is important for us to learn

⁹ VanDrunen, p. 762.

from Calvin in order that we can have better outcomes resulting from professional endeavours and processes.

So far, I have tried to follow Calvin's viewpoints with an assumption that his opinions can serve as a reference on how to run the state. Now, I would like to outline whether the ideas could really be applied in Indonesia. In the introduction I already mentioned that there was a demand during the New Order Era to regard politics not as something that belonged to the public domain. The regime enforced the system in such a way that not everybody could get access to politics. Efforts to have political discourse outside the platform set up by the government were silenced. In short, the New Order regime wanted to deal only with politics according to the version that it established. Non governmental institutions including the church were also requested to be loyal to government policies. If any political discussion was to happen in the church, it had to be according to the government's version. In general, however, people did not have courage to talk about politics. Especially in certain communities such as GKI (Gereja Kristen Indonesia – the Indonesia Christian Church), the trauma caused by 1965 tragedy was still strongly imprinted. Eventually, people chose to be apolitical, or at least, not to discuss politics in the open. Considering that the situation had gone on for as long as the New Order regime was in power (over 30 years), it is very likely that people have still not got over this terrifying image of politics, even today. People do not have enough courage yet to talk about politics openly even though the situation has changed. For many, politics is still an alien territory.

This kind of condition has been more or less adopted by the church. The implication is that the church alienates itself from politics. The justification frequently used is that politics is not part of the church's business. The church only deals with spiritual matters while politics belongs to physical territory. Therefore, politics is not supposed to become the church's business. The separation between the church and politics which

seemed to be based on Calvin's proposition has to be seen as the consequences of the depoliticisation of civil society which was systematically and deliberately imposed by the New Order regime. In this regard, we need to make correction to such separation. It is clear that Calvin never imagined that his idea to separate between the church and the state would be used to justify fear towards the state when the state acts authoritatively and oppressively.

In line with this we need to reexamine the church's stand to choose not to involve itself in political affairs directly but only in voicing a prophetic voice. If the reason for it is that politics is considered dirty and that the church should not let itself become dirty by involving itself in politics, it is obvious that this viewpoint is not in line with Calvin's intention to separate between the church and the state. Calvin did not view the state as dirty; and that was the reason it could not be united with the holy church. For Calvin the state is the realm of God's sovereignty. It is not possible that something which is about God's sovereignty be considered dirty. Therefore, it was not possible that Calvin considered the state as dirty.

Considering all of these issues, we need to be cautious when trying to apply Calvin's system of the relationship between State and Church in the Indonesian context. Maybe we need to say that the differentiation between the church and the state does not suit Indonesian context as it is yet to free itself from the image of politics implanted by the New Order.

3. Political involvement of the church

What maybe more suitable with the situation in Indonesia is the model where the church directly involves itself in politics. Although this option still looks pretty new to most Christians in Indonesia, we need to consider this alternative seriously. It is not because we are not supposed to stay imprisoned in the fear of politics or be negatively prejudiced to-

wards it. It is also not because there have been more and more ministers going into the political world, that we should necessarily justify their options. This is because the political world in Indonesia is still seeking its format and is not yet stable. Under such conditions, it is a call for the church to take part in shaping the political world so that politics can develop in a more stable and healthy way. The endeavour is carried out with one goal: the betterment of life of the people of this nation. Without political stability and health it will be difficult for the people to have a better life. Often when the political situation is chaotic, there are certain parties who will provoke people to do certain things to give the provocators certain advantages out of the chaos but which will eventually cause disadvantages to the people themselves.

It can all be prevented if the political situation is in a good state. It is therefore mandatory for all parties to ensure that the politics in this country is really stable and conducive. For this reason the church has to take an active role.

The reference that we can use to encourage the involvement of the church in politics is the same with Calvin's statement about the state which said that the state is the territory where God reveals His sovereignty. Politics, similar with the state, can also be regarded as the territory where God reveals His sovereign. As the territory where God works and reveals His glory and love toward the people, politics must also be taken as the area of church service because the church should take part in managing whatever that becomes God's. The church also needs to humbly accept the fact that politics is the tool used by God to introduce Himself. The acceptance will not have any negative implications for the church's position as the locus of knowing about God. The church remains the locus of knowing about God, albeit, not the only one. Knowledge of God can also take place outside the church including through politics. This does not imply that the political world is free from issues that make it difficult for people to know about God from inside.

We cannot deny the impression or reality that politics is full of dirty intrigues and at complete odds with the character of God that we generally know of. However, this does not justify denying that God is capable of revealing Himself through politics. The dirty games that frequently happen in politics do not reflect God's existence for sure. Therefore, it has to be opposed. The political world has to be sterilised from all kinds of intrigues and fights which are never in line with the politics itself. Politics is supposed to be clean. It is not impossible to have clean politics. It takes actions to present clean politics. What is more important is the conviction that politics is indeed clean.

In terms of the extension of God's sovereignty, I personally agree with what Calvin proposed, however there are areas where I do not agree with him in regards to the notion that the church manages only spiritual matters. In my view, such exclusive understanding about the church is difficult to implement in Indonesia. Acute problems such as poverty, corruption, low level of education and many deadly diseases in this country will not allow the church to deal only with "heavenly" matters. I believe that it has been mentioned many times in different occasions by different people.

We have to admit that there are many who have the same opinion as Calvin, such as those who find it difficult to accept the church's deep involvement in social issues. It is true that the church's responsibility is to care for the spiritual life of its congregations, however that duty cannot be well implemented unless it is related to the physical aspects of life. Human being's spiritual life cannot be separated from, and even is closely related with physical needs. Crises related to the physical realm such as economics and politics will certainly impact spiritual life. On the other hand, spiritual crises will also make people unable to lead a normal life. In short, the separation between spiritual and physical will not make us understand life as a whole and will cause impairment.

In this regard we need to be concerned that when religion is positioned only as the source of spiritual life it will only make it an escape route from life's pressure. When the financial and political crises worsened, life's burden grew heavier, frustration escalated, the religion which offered "heavenly promises" became extraordinarily welcome. It seems that people could experience relief from daily life pressure through religious activities, especially through sermons using the catharsis model, however, is not this kind of relief fake? It is true that the emotional touch is important to address issues especially in the context of sermon, however, if it makes people deny the reality of life which they have to deal with as soon as the sermon is over, sooner or later they will find greater difficulty dealing with existing reality. People may have a more negative outlook to the world so that not only is religion separated from reality of life but also is opposite to the reality of life. This kind of condition is very open to violence. We need to consider that the perpetrators and provocateurs who commit violence for the sake of religion actually have the same notion that the world is the enemy of religion and therefore has to be destroyed. Another possibility of seeing religion as the enemy of the world is the ignorance of the world; that what happens to the world is not the business of the religion. If the world is translated as politics, then the attitude of ignorance to politics becomes the symptoms which appear in the surface. I think we face a lot of this kind of attitude in the church. Therefore, my disagreement with Calvin's exclusive view on the church also indicates my disagreement with attitudes which we often find in the church at the present time.

However we also have to keep in mind that in Indonesia, religion plays very crucial roles in the efforts of improving the people's life. It is because the people put religion in a central position in their life. It is true that even with its significant position, religion is not always successful in fulfilling its functions as inspirer and motor to overcome the problems faced by the community. In some cases religion fails to serve as the so-

lution and even becomes part of the problem itself. With this awareness in mind however, we still have strong reason to expect much from religion. It is not an exaggeration to say that for Indonesians, there is no problem that can be solved without having to involve religion. The result may not always be satisfying, yet trust in religion is not lost. The right response to this phenomenon is that religion takes part in the activities of running the state. If the church involves itself in politics, either in broader or practical terms, the people will take it as an appropriate step to establish better political conditions.

The next question is, however, should the church's participation be in the form of the establishment of a Christian political party? Or through involvement in the Christian parties that already exist? To put it frankly, I do not agree in full with it. The justification of my disagreement is that putting the church's participation in Christian parties will make the church seem to be totally moving into the territory of the state to use Calvin's term. The church would be seen to be identical with a political party, either in its own view or in the way others view it. Apart from political duties, the church still has other responsibilities. In other words, Christian political parties will limit the church's duties to the political domain alone.

In addition to the reasons previously mentioned, there is another more crucial reason: politics should reflect the real conditions of society. If the real condition in Indonesia is multi religions, and even 'multi' in different settings, too, (in Batlajery's words), then politics has to reflect this. Thus the involvement of church in the political world should be in the form of plural involvement. In the case of political party involvement, it has to be multi religions, multiethnic, multicultural etc. Only in this kind of condition can we discuss God's sovereignty which is all embracing. In this regard we need to learn much from Calvin. When talking about the state, he based the understanding on God's sovereignty. He used the understanding of *Christ's sovereignty* only when he

talked about church. He consciously differentiated one from the other. However the intention was not to differentiate between God and Christ in a confrontational manner. It is more appropriate to understand the differentiation understood as an effort to accept existing different customs. The custom of the church is different from that of the state. In the church's custom, what is more salient is Christ while in the context of the state, people are more familiar with the term God. Or, if we may say it the other way, God introduces Himself to the church through Christ while He makes Himself known as God to people in the context of the state. Fortunately, for the Indonesian context the differentiation is already appropriate and we simply need to use it.

If the church is willing to involve itself in politics, what steps are to be taken to implement the involvement? It is an appropriate question to raise since in the Indonesian context the church's involvement in politics may draw unfavourable reactions from those who are not Christian. We have to accept the fact that inter-religions relationships and the relationships between people in Indonesia is not yet smooth. The relationship is still often marked by suspicion and even competition which is ruinous. People often feel that their fellow human beings from other religions oppress them. The oppressed will feel that they are not being treated fairly. It is also believed that there are serious efforts to incite people to convert to other religions. The proofs of such incitement are often used as a means of provocation, creating tension. In terms of Christianity, there is strong impression that Christians are aggressive in inciting others to convert to Christianity. It happens because of the use of aggressive methods to provoke people to convert to Christianity. It is not only the viewpoint of people outside Christians, even among Christians there is a notion that there are certain groups of Christians or churches which aggressively seek to multiply the number of their congregations. The effort is made by attracting those who are already Christians but belong to other congregations. Therefore, if the effort is already viewed as disturb-

ing by fellow Christian, it will be felt to be all the more so by followers of other religions. This kind of condition is made worse by the emergence of new churches which, for certain reasons, do not want to join the existing churches includes the building of new churches. It results in the establishment of new church buildings in different places without any coordination. This unavoidable phenomenon makes people outside the Christian faith suspicious towards Christians. Christians are considered as not being sincere in living side by side with those from different religions. Christians are judged as trying to get opportunities to convert others to their religion or to join in their group. In order to prevent such endeavours, it is necessary to establish certain regulations especially through politics and laws. Various legal issues and political strategies are taken to ensure that Christians do not dominate others from different religions. As a result, Christians often feel restrictions on their actions. Thus the question of whether there will be a chance for the church to get involved in politics is a vast one.

The best strategy to deal with the situation is by being low profile, albeit, not being passive or apathetic. The church needs to be actively involved in politics by building a more attractive image. A few steps in this direction that the church could take would be to maintain the image of being tolerant and cooperative and by formation of young political cadres. This cadre formation is not intended to lead these young people to be the country leaders who will fight only for the Christians. Although, of course, they can be expected to always remember and be loyal towards the church. However, the loyalty should not be a short-sighted one. Their loyalty to the church cannot make them ignorant towards the existence of other people. The main values implanted in these cadres are not only to bring benefits for the church, but they have to be applied in all situations and in relations with anybody. Whenever the church is treated unjustly, they have to defend the church. However, they have to do the same whenever other parties outside the church get

similar unfair treatment. This kind of neutrality is hard to find, if we expect improvement in the future we need to put efforts to make it true by training our young people to get accustomed to being neutral. Without carrying out well-planned training, it will be difficult to expect that the present condition will get improved at all. It will be better if the church has a political cadre formation programme which aims at preparing future leaders in all aspects of life. However, it should be done according to each function to make it clear. For example the group which is prepared to fill positions in the government should be different from the group which is aimed at filling posts in community organisations.

It can be assumed that the results of the establishment of political cadres can only be seen after a long time. How about for now? Although we realise that we cannot do much about the present condition, the same endeavours can still be carried out. The platform is still the same: nationalism. The objective is also clear that is to build a society for the sake of the whole nation without looking at the differences of primordial and social backgrounds. What about the target? For sure, it is not for those who will just start in the political world, instead, it is for those already there. The church needs to organise training for politicians who are already active in politics. They may already know what to do and therefore they do not need further training from the church but we cannot just assume this is the case. At least the church needs to invite politicians who are the members of congregations to discuss this. Should it involve everybody? If the platform used by the church is politics with a pluralist character which reflects Indonesian society, the ones who should get the church's attention are the politicians with the same platform. The church needs to provide encouragement, support and blessings for these politicians so that in carrying out their duties, they can always hold on to the platform that they already chose and that are in line with the church.

The active role of the church is very much expected, so the church can implement its role as the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Without losing respect for those who choose to be outside politics and “just” voice the prophecy concerns, I want to put forward that it is difficult and unfair if, in such a position, the church demands improvement in politics. Obstacles arise because the church will be considered to not know the real issues of political life because it never directly gets involve. Therefore, if the church voices criticism, even though it is intended to encourage improvement, it will be considered as the voice of those who know nothing about politics. Consequently, the concerns will not be considered.

4. Conclusion

Calvin’s and Calvinism’s ideas are still very useful in the current Indonesian context. There are indeed issues that we need to consider as inappropriate, such as the differentiation between the church and the state if it is only used to support the movement of depoliticisation of civil society promoted by the New Order regime. We may also disagree with Calvin’s notions about the church’s duties being only to deal with spiritual matters. However, Calvin’s idea of the state as the realm of God’s sovereignty is still very relevant for us. It is a viewpoint which offers an alternative to the negative views about earthly matters. In this light, earthly matters cannot be considered as unimportant and having no relationship with God. The door to come to the territory outside the church is now open. From the same understanding we also learn that worldly matters should become the collective business of every community member of the society. If so, for the Indonesian context, the right platform to accommodate collective issues is the platform which has most similarity with the community’s condition; the platform which has a pluralist character.

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