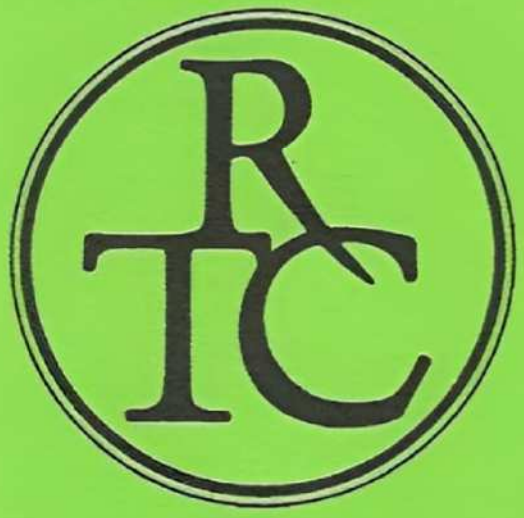

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CALVIN'S SPIRITUALITY

Richard C. Gamble

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This topic is a difficult one for a number of reasons. If one were to look in the massive index to the *Institutes* under the word "Spirituality," nothing would be found. While difficult, it is also an important part of theology in the English language. In 1549 a section of the Institutes was separately translated into English as "The Life and Conversation of a Christian Man." The section appeared later under the title *Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life* - which is still in print.

A major difficulty is how one defines the concept.[1] Some may prefer to use the word "piety" over "spirituality" to describe Calvin's teaching. For Calvin, spirituality was first the knowledge of the nature of God and of God's gracious actions on behalf of the elect. Second, piety or spirituality concerns the human response to that knowledge. This paper will deal with the second part.

1. The Christian life in the *Institutes*

Calvin's view of the Christian life, the human response to the knowledge of who God is and what he has done, was ably presented in *Institutes* III.6-10. Calvin connected the Christian life with the doctrines of regeneration and repentance, and taught that a true Christian feels a special love for righteousness. The object of regeneration is to observe God's righteousness in believers' lives, through their obedience, which confirms the believer's adoption.[2]

Calvin presented the importance of personal holiness (motivated by the fact that God is holy) and the second part, holiness related to others (because of our communion with his saints). There was thus a twofold motive for the Christian life: first a love of righteousness, and then a rule to direct the believer's new zeal.[3] Foundational to the Christian life are the commands (in Leviticus and I Peter) to be holy because God is holy.[4]

Calvin underlined that believers are bonded and united to Christ. The bond of the believers' union with God (through Christ), is holiness. Believers

must therefore live in holiness.[5] In union with God, believers are to conform themselves to Christ's likeness.[6]

In their union with Christ, believers also have adoption as sons and daughters. There was one condition to adoption, according to Calvin. The believer's life must "express Christ, who is the bond of our adoption." By not pursuing righteousness with devotion, the believer then renounces their union with Christ.[7] True union with Christ means that believers desire to show themselves to be sons.

Believers who are established in Christ know that they are clean and do not want new pollution. Also, since the believer's Head (Christ) is located in heaven, then believers need to no longer love the things of the earth, but rather to love heaven, where Christ their head is located.[8]

Furthermore, believers must not despair even though they have not yet attained perfection. Important was that they make daily progress in their piety and righteousness. Calvin argued that marks of that progress are that they take the word of God for their guide; that they sincerely cultivate righteousness; that they walk, according to their capacity, in the ways of the Lord; and that they persevere.

The Christian life, if the believer has learned Christ, is to put off the old man.[9] Therefore, Christianity is not something that resides in the head only, but will permeate the whole soul and dwell in the inner affections.[10]

The cross of Christ is part of the standard by which every man ought to regulate his life. Armed with patience, the believer becomes persuaded that Christ's cross has great value for him. The cross invites the believers to meditate on the future life. It shows how believers are to use this life- and its comforts, without abusing them toward this end.[11]

2. The Christian life in Sermons and Commentaries

As united to Christ, the Genevan believer was to live a sanctified, that is, a separated, life. Calvin's sermon on Ephesians 5:25-27 is helpful to understand how he communicated the use of the word sanctification. "Now first of all, there is the word 'sanctify'," said Calvin, "which means that we should be separated from the world in order that we may be joined to the Son of God."[12] It was only within the church that such separation from the world was possible.

The *Commentary* on the Psalms gives further insight into the connection between sanctification and separation. Calvin insisted that members of the church of Christ be separate from sin in their own personal lives.[13] But church members were also to be separate from sinners like idolaters, and to do their best to break any bonds with those who were impious.[14] Calvin acknowledged that to be separated from all sinners would mean to have to flee from every

individual - which he was convinced the Bible did not teach. Nevertheless, the body of Christ, for Calvin, was to be unified in its commitment to holiness and to be separate from unbelievers.[15]

Calvin presented his thoughts on sanctification and separation clearly to his congregation in 1555, when he preached from Deuteronomy. In these sermons, Calvin admonished the Genevans to certain actions, combined with guidance as to how to fulfil those admonitions. His instruction for his flock was that they were not to have familiarity with the ungodly. By "familiarity" Calvin meant eating and drinking - that is, simple friendship. Such friendship necessarily corrupted the believer and offends God. If a Genevan believer had to be in the wicked's company, it had to be because of some type of necessity. Such company can turn the believer from righteous paths and honest behaviour. For someone to willingly entangle, to have "familiar acquaintance" with the wicked, "is a manifest tempting of God. And if we say there is such strength and steadfastness in us as they can not win us: we deceive ourselves. Verily as who should say that God knoweth us not better than we ourselves do."[16]

Calvin's exegesis of II Corinthians 6:14f. was consistent with his preaching from Deuteronomy. The text: "not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship does righteousness have with unrighteousness and what communion light with darkness?" had been understood as a prohibition for Christians to marry non-Christians. However, Calvin disagreed with that standard interpretation.[17] Calvin believed that the context of Paul's teaching was broader - shunning all idolatry necessarily prohibited contracting marriage with unbelievers. Paul's message was to keep Christians from activities that were improper, for believers to separate from "those things that are peculiar to unbelievers."18. There are undoubtedly certain idolatrous activities performed by those outside of Christ from which Christians must separate themselves.

Christ's church, and the individual Christian within the church, was to be separate not only from sin, but also from the world. Calvin described the world as "...everything connected with the present life, apart from the kingdom of God and the hope of eternal life."[19]

The world was the place of pleasure and delight, a place that captivates the heart and causes a withdrawal from God.[20] Calvin believed that John taught it to be shameful to be entangled with the world.[21] Calvin interpreted Paul's admonition to "redeem the time" to mean a withdrawal from all the allurements that lead people astray, specifically both the cares and pleasures of the world. It meant any hindrance.[22] A good summary of Calvin's view of the Christian's relationship to the world is the short sentence: "Between these two extremes there is no middle ground: either the world must be worthless to us or it holds us bound by unchecked love of it."[23]

In conclusion, Calvin held that the Christian life was to be ordered according to God's commands. God's commands included a life of holiness. No dishonour should be brought to Christ by those who bear his glorious name.

An important part of the human response to the knowledge of God himself and what he has done for us is expressed by the believing community in proper worship.

3. Spirituality and Worship

Since all of the Christian life was to be ordered according to divine mandate, Calvin's teaching in the Institutes on mixing the human with the divine in worship is clear. Such mixtures were an abomination- yet those mixtures (like ecclesiastical pomp) were always attractive to men and women.[24]

But God so hates being worshipped by human ideas that he takes away his kingdom from those who so corrupt worship.[25] There can be no mixture of God's divine command with human rites.[26] When there is such a mixture, the Holy Spirit rejects that worship.[27] God will not subject himself to human whim.[28]

Calvin spoke on divine worship in his commentary on John. As the man of faith Abraham worshipped, so men and women of faith will always worship God. To worship God aright, it will be according to God's directives.[29] Worship must be according to God's word and will not be acceptable to God even if we offer it with "good intentions".[30] "Besides, as we cannot ascend to the height of God, let us remember that we ought to seek from His word the rule by which we are governed."[31]

Also, true worship is "spiritual", that is, it comes from the inner depths of the heart. That "spiritual" worship included self-denial and commitment to whole hearted obedience to God's commands.[32] To worship in "spirit and truth" meant to abandon familiar rites of human invention and to cling to the purely spiritual.[33]

Calvin understood that God is a spirit and that men are flesh. Men want worship that corresponds to their own dispositions. We yearn to make things up that have public display "but have no solidity." Thus, modesty meant to hold in suspicion whatever is gratifying according to the flesh.[34]

Separation from sin and the world is done only within the church. Worship is performed, in a manner acceptable to God, in the visible church. Another important function of the church, and necessary for true spirituality, is the discipline of her members. Church discipline played an important role in keeping sin out of the church and keeping the church out of sin.

4. Spirituality and liberty of conscience

Calvin taught that Christ's redemption had freed the Christian conscience

before God. Redemption released Christians from the obligation to observe human ceremonies, or to comply with human regulations concerning spiritual matters that were not mandated by Scripture. This latter category concerns what has been termed "adiaphora", or "indifferent things." From the beginning of his ministry, Calvin defended the liberty of conscience from all external pressures. However, in Calvin's thinking spiritual freedom must not be confused with political or economic freedom. A person may lack political, or even physical freedom (e.g. be bound in chains) - and nevertheless retain liberty in his conscience.

There is a consensus in contemporary evangelicalism that the church has the right to regulate "adiaphora" like the time of worship on Sunday morning. The eleven o'clock hour is not divinely mandated. Calvin was convinced that the church was obligated to regulate those parts of the Christian life that most (if not all) American evangelicals would consider outside the church's legitimate authority.

For example, since all citizens were to attend the public worship of God, Geneva closed all of its taverns during that time, fining both the tavern owner and any patrons who might flout the law and enter a tavern during the hours of worship.[35]

Hand in hand with Calvin's teaching regarding liberty of conscience was also his notion of the divine law against "excess". Calvin was convinced that the Scriptures taught that moderation, or temperance (no excess), was a guiding rule for the whole of the Christian life.[36] If that is the Scripture's teaching, then all excess in worldly goods must be avoided.[37]

Specifically, Calvin argued that the believer's clothing should be frugal and inexpensive. Calvin stood against luxurious display and extravagance, which he maintained necessarily inclined men and women away from chastity.[38] There was only one effective way to ensure that God's people walked in accordance to the divine law - creating human law that enforced it. Thus, Geneva legally regulated public dress.[39]

Geneva also eliminated dancing by the year 1546.40. There should be no dancing on the Sabbath and no dancing at weddings.[41] Genevans were not even permitted to dance when they were outside of Genevan territory.[42]

The issues were clear for Calvin. All dancing was prohibited because it invited sexual promiscuity. Any activity that was evil in itself, that was not capable of redemption, had to be eliminated. There was no room in Geneva for "moderate sinning".[43]

In conclusion, in a rather revolutionary fashion, Calvin insisted that these legal restrictions were not simply applied to the peasants. The very highest levels of Genevan power could not defeat the enforcement of this regulation.[44] All Genevan citizens profess the name of Christ - and must therefore walk according to the law of God.

The tightness of the relationship between professing Christ - and walking according to God's law - has engendered contemporary discussion. Another way to state the issue is how close is the relationship between forensic justification and concomitant sanctification?

5. Contemporary discussion: spirituality and union with Christ

A recent controversy has erupted on the pages of *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* that relates to Calvin's view of spirituality. The previous analysis has demonstrated that Calvin linked the Geneva citizen's profession of faith to a life of faith.

Thomas Wenger argued that there has been a recent shift in Calvin scholarship, specifically regarding how Calvin viewed the relationship between justification and sanctification. The "new" argument subsumes Calvin's soteriology under the rubric of union with Christ - which eliminates the previously held distinct priority of justification over sanctification.45.

A response was then made to Wenger by Marcus Johnson. He acknowledged that Wenger is correct to emphasize the importance of the heart of Protestant soteriology. The debate centres on Calvin's *ordo salutis*, that is, how justification and sanctification (as well as adoption and union with Christ) relate. Wenger charges that the newer research has perhaps misappropriated these basic soteriological doctrines and pitted Calvin against the era of the Protestant scholastics.46. Johnson countered that more work needs to be done on the relationship between Calvin's method and content (particularly relative to Melanchthon's influence), that the new research does not assert a false *ordo salutis*, and that contemporary scholarship should deal with Calvin's notion of the "indissoluble bond" between justification and sanctification.47.

This presentation has underlined that there was a close connection between Christian profession and spiritual maturity in Calvin's actual practice in Geneva.

Notes

1. For further information, see Richard Gamble, "Calvin and Sixteenth-Century Spirituality: Comparison with the Anabaptists," *Calvin Theological Journal 31*, (1996), pp.334-338.
2. Calvin, Institutes III.6.1, p.684.
3. Calvin, Institutes III.6.2, p.685.
4. Calvin, Institutes III.6.2, p.685
5. Calvin, Institutes III.6.2, p.686.
6. Calvin, Institutes III.6.2 and 3, p.686.
7. Calvin, Institutes III.6.3, p.687.
8. Calvin, Institutes III.6.3, p.687.
9. Calvin, Institutes III.6.4, 6p.87.

10. Calvin, Institutes III.6.4, p.688.
11. Calvin, Institutes III.8-10.
12. See Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians* 5:25-27, p.577. For other places in Calvin where the word "sanctification" denotes "separation" see *Commentary* on I Corinthians 1:2 and his *Commentary* on Ephesians 5:25.
13. Calvin, *Commentary* on Psalm 97:10 vol. VI: p.67: "He shows from the very nature of God, that we cannot be judged and acknowledged to be his servants unless we depart from sin, and practice holiness. God is in himself the fountain of righteousness, and he must necessarily hate all iniquity, unless we could suppose that he should deny himself; and we have fellowship with him only on the terms of separation from unrighteousness." From the New Testament, Calvin said in his Sermons on Ephesians 2:13-15, 196: "Again, let us see to ourselves that we walk in pureness of life and with such conscience towards our neighbors that we may do no man wrong or harm, and finally let us withdraw ourselves from all the defilements of the world."
14. Calvin, *Commentary* on Psalm 16:4, 220. "Break off all bonds with impiety,...and keep ourselves pure and uncontaminated from all the pollution which corrupt and vitiate the holy service of God."
15. Calvin, *Sermon* on I Corinthians 10:19-24, C.O. 49:675: "La religion emporte qu'ils soyent comme un corps uni pour estre separe d'avec tous incredules."
16. Calvin, *Sermons* on Deuteronomy #51, p.308. In another place Calvin said, "They that fall into familiarity with the wicked, do cupple themselves with them, so as they be led out of the way and marred by them, insomuch that whereas little Gods before, now they become stark Devils. Therefore let us beware we mingle not ourselves with the despysers of God and with the wicked, unless we intend to become like them."
17. Calvin, *Commentary* on II Corinthians 6:14, p.257. "Many are the opinion that he speaks of marriage, but the context clearly shows that they are mistaken."
18. Calvin, *Commentary* on II Corinthians 6:16, p.259. "Paul's doctrine is of too general a nature to be restricted to marriage exclusively, for he is discoursing here as to the shunning of idolatry, on which account, also, we are prohibited from contracting marriages with the wicked."
19. Calvin, *Commentary* on I John 2:16, p.187. Cf. *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists at Matthew 24:42*, p.160: Christians are "not to satiate themselves with the world, if they wish to advance with speed to the kingdom of Christ."
20. Calvin, *Commentary* on I John 5:4, p.255. "The term world has here a wide meaning, for it includes whatever is adverse to the Spirit of God: thus, the corruption of our nature is a part of the world: all lusts, all the crafts of Satan, in short, whatever leads us away from God." This definition is supported in the commentary at *Galatians* 6:14, pp.184-185, "Whatever is opposed to the spiritual kingdom of Christ is the world, because it belongs to the old man; or, in a word, the world is the object and aim of the old man."
21. Calvin, *Commentary* on I John 2:17, p.188. "...it is then a shameful thing for us to be entangled with the world, which with all its benefits will soon vanish away." These words are echoed in Calvin's sermon on Ephesians 5:15-18, *Sermons*, 541: "We know that our happiness does not consist in this transitory life which does not continue, but is like a shadow that soon vanishes away."
22. Calvin, *Commentary* on Ephesians 5:16, p.314. Calvin expresses a similar statement in "The Golden Booklet": "So that we, despising the world, may wholeheartedly aspire to meditate upon the life to come." See Ford Lewis Battles, *The Piety of John Calvin*, p.75.
23. Battles, *Piety*, p.74.
24. Calvin, Institutes IV.10.12, p.1190. "So today not only the untutored crowd but any man who is greatly puffed up with worldly wisdom is marvelously captivated by ceremonial pomp."

25. Calvin, *Institutes* IV.10.23, p.1201. The Kingdom "is taken away whenever he is worshiped by laws of human devising, inasmuch as he wills to be accounted the sole lawgiver of his own worship."
26. Calvin, *Institutes* IV.10.23, p.1202. "And truly, when the children of Israel corrupted themselves with many idolatries, the cause of all that evil is ascribed to this impure mixture: they have transgressed God's commandments and have fabricated new rites." "Although they did not sin in ceremonies, their empty pomp was not approved by God; but meanwhile, because men had introduced devices foreign to his word, he did not desist from avenging the violation of his worship." "From this we gather that a part of the reverence that is paid to him consists simply in worshiping him as he commands, mingling no inventions of our own."
27. Calvin, *Institutes* IV.10.23, p.1202. "I say further: although in some contrived worship impiety does not openly appear, it is still severely condemned by the Spirit, since it is a departure from God's precept."
28. Calvin, *Institutes* IV.10.24, p.1203. "Many marvel why the Lord so sharply threatens to astound the people who worshiped him with the commands of men and declares that he is vainly worshiped by the precepts of men. But if they were to weigh what it is to depend upon God's bidding alone in matters of religion (that is, on account of heavenly wisdom), they would at the same time see that the Lord has strong reasons to abominate such perverse rites, which are performed for him according to the wilfulness of human nature"
29. Calvin, *Commentary* on John 4:20-24, p.154. "It is as if she inquired at God himself in what manner he chooses to be worshipped; for nothing is more wicked than to contrive various modes of worship without the authority of the word of God."
30. Calvin, *Commentary* on John 4:22, p.159. "We ought not to attempt anything in religion rashly or at random; because, unless there be knowledge, it is not God that we worship, but a phantom or idol. All good intentions, as they are called, are struck by this sentence, as by a thunderbolt; that men can do nothing but err, when they are guided by their own opinion without the word or command of God."
31. Calvin, *Commentary* on John 4, p.164.
32. Calvin, *Commentary* on John 4, p.161. "The worship of God is said to consist in the spirit, because it is nothing else than that inward faith of the heart which produces prayer, and next, purity of conscience and self-denial, that we may be dedicated to obedience to God as holy sacrifices."
33. Calvin, *Commentary* on John 4:20-24, p.163. "What it is to worship God in spirit and truth...is to lay aside the entanglements of ancient ceremonies, and to retain merely what is spiritual in the worship of God; for the truth of the worship of God consists in the spirit, and ceremonies are but a sort of appendage."
34. Calvin, *Commentary* on John 4:24. "But they ought first of all to consider that they have to do with God, who can no more agree with the flesh than fire with water." "God is so far from being like us, that those things which please us most are the objects of his loathing and abhorrence."
35. Philip E. Hughes, Register [from 1546], p.57. "1. People are not to invite one another to excessive drinking, under penalty of three sous. 2. Taverns are to be closed during public worship."
36. Calvin's "Regula mediocritatis" is well known. See Ford Lewis Battles, "Against Luxury and License in Geneva," Interpretation 19 (1965), p.184.
37. "They [Genevans] would rather mix things human and divine, and break all laws, than stop being enslaved to the highest luxury...Oh if poverty were sometime hallowed in churches and in public, people would not be ashamed thereafter to admit it in private." Calvin, "Concerning Luxury" as cited by Battles, "Against Luxury and License in Geneva," Interpretation, p.194.

38. Battles, "Against Luxury and License," Interpretation, p.185. "Lavish, expensive, and effeminate dress makes us worse than dumb animals. Conspicuous spending is wicked. Luxury...presses upon men as yet uncorrupted and makes it well neigh impossible for men and women to lead a chaste life. Luxury of the rich is a sin against the poor; public and private vices breed each other. In its lust and extravagance, the present age is shameless: dancing, eating, drinking, dressing lavishly, using the mirror, hating offspring. Actors flourish while the poor starve."
39. Calvin, *Commentary* on Genesis 3:21, p.182. "In the meantime, it is not to be denied, that he would propose to us an example, by which he would accustom us to a frugal and inexpensive mode of dress."
40. P. E. Hughes, *Register* [from 1546], p.58. A law stated that anyone who "dances the fling or some similar dance shall be imprisoned for three days and shall then be sent before the Consistory."
41. William Naphy, *Calvin and Genevan Reformation*, pp.32, 96-98.
42. W. Naphy, *Calvin and Genevan Reformation*, p.215. By 1561 the French Reformed Church had outlawed dancing throughout the nation anyway. See discipline article 11 as found in Calvinism in Europe, 1540-1610, ed. A. Duke et al. (Manchester & NY: Manchester University Press, 1992), p.76. See also Menna Prestwich, "Calvinism in France," 95-97 in International Calvinism 1541-1715, ed. M. Prestwich (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1985.
43. *Sermons on Deuteronomy* as cited by H. Höpfl, *The Christian Polity of John Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p.183. Apparently, Zurich did not prohibit all dancing at the time of the Reformation. It was regulated, but not prohibited. See Höpfl, p.202.
44. Calvin wrote to Farel in 1546 concerning a dispute which included dancing. Two of the most prominent families of Geneva were involved. Calvin reported to Farel that he asked in Consistory, "...whether their house was inviolably sacred, whether it owed no subjection to the laws?" Later, both families were thrown into prison. See Calvinism in Europe, 1540-1610, ed. A. Duke et al., p.29.
45. Thomas L. Wenger, "The New Perspective on Calvin," in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (June, 2007), pp.312-327.
46. Marcus Johnson, "A response to Thomas Wenger", *JETS* (September, 2008), pp.546-547.
47. Johnson, "A response to Thomas Wenger", pp.548-555.

CALVIN ON IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

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Introduction

The context of this presentation is related to what are known as the five points of Calvinism, or TULIP. The fourth of these five points doctrine is the "I," or "irresistible grace." The five points are not intended to be a full expression of Calvinism, but were composed as a result of a specific historic controversy - with a Dutch group known as the Remonstrants. "Irresistible grace" must be comprehended on the basis of the earlier letters. The first is total depravity, the second is unconditional election, and the third is limited atonement.

To put this teaching in context, if humanity is lost in sin, that is, totally depraved, then there is nothing within humanity itself that can generate saving grace.[1] If, because of sin, man can do no good thing (total depravity), then salvation must rest in a sovereign decree of God that is not dependent upon human good works (unconditional election).[2] Since salvation is entirely dependent upon God, and God cannot perform meaningless or powerless acts, then Christ's death on the cross is numerically limited to those who are saved. Christ did not die for the reprobate. No one can thwart God's decree of election (Limited Atonement). Because man can do nothing on his own to merit salvation, and Christ has done everything necessary to procure salvation, "irresistible grace" answers the question of the application of this benefits for the elect sinner.

By himself, the unconverted sinner hates God and despises any offered salvation. Knowing that reality, God calls the sinner to himself in a fashion that cannot be resisted.

The major objection to irresistible grace is that it appears to deny human freedom. If grace is irresistible, it appears that someone doesn't "choose" Christ. A second objection is that reprobation is equally irresistible. But the biblical teaching of irresistible grace is not unique to Calvin. Thomas Aquinas (1221-74) taught double predestination, clearly and unequivocally. Thomas Bradwardine (1295-1349) championed double predestination against Ockham. John Wycliffe (1320-1384) taught double predestination, too. Luther, Zwingli, and Bucer held to double predestination and it is argued by many that

Melanchthon did not entirely abandon double predestination.

The reasons why Calvin is particularly known for the doctrine of double predestination arises out of three debates: first, the Lutheran/Reformed debate of the 1550s over double predestination; second, the Reformed vs. Remonstrant discussion which culminated in the Synod of Dort (1619); and finally the Reformed vs. Socinians - and their emphasis on human autonomy.

Calvin's historical context: debates against Pighius and Jerome Bolsec

Albert Pighius was a Dutch Roman Catholic theologian who responded against the 1539 (second) edition of Calvin's *Institutes*.[3]

Calvin's work *Against Pighius* came out in 1543.[4] Calvin addressed only six of Pighius' ten subjects. He focused on the bondage and liberation of the human will. Before Calvin could address predestination fully, Pighius died.[5] However, the issue of predestination would not lack attention!

Jerome Bolsec had served as a monk and lived in Paris. Leaving the Roman Church, he became a court physician and lived outside the city of Geneva. Bolsec was against Calvin's notion of predestination and accused Calvin of making God the author of sin.

The ministers of Geneva asked the other Swiss Protestant churches for advice as to what to do with him and his theological stance. The theological issue on the table concerned the universality of salvation. As a result of the uproar, Bolsec was banished from Geneva.[6]

Calvin's *On eternal predestination* came to the light of day in 1552 from the printer Crispin. *On predestination* has its own history. It began with the controversy against Pighius. Calvin did not have the time to address the topic for another nine years, but was later compelled by Bolsec's charges. These are related issues.

Calvin on irresistible grace in the *Institutes*

There are two kinds of grace: operating vs. co-operating. Calvin entertained no doubts that the unconverted mind was not capable of performing any good works. Any good thoughts or actions performed by a man were connected to God's prior grace. In fact, good works can only be accomplished by God's people who have been regenerated.[7]

It was simply not possible for a natural man, in even the very smallest degree, to have ability to do good in some or any type of cooperation with God.[8] However, to shore up the mistaken notion that such "cooperation" was possible, a doctrine developed in the Church differentiating between operating and cooperating grace. This so-called "cooperating" grace also became termed "subsequent" grace.[9] Operating grace required the person to will what was

good. Combined with, and subsequent to, this operating grace there was cooperating grace, which supposedly aided operating grace. Calvin disagreed with this whole construction – because, while it correctly attributed the effectual desire for good to God's divine grace, it nevertheless insinuated that man, out of his own nature, ineffectually desired good to some degree.

Bernard of Clairvaux had also held to a similar teaching, said Calvin. Whilst maintaining that a good will was God's work, he wrongly believed "that of his own nature he longs for such a good will." Calvin criticized Bernard, who incorrectly attributed his view back to Augustine.[10]

The labyrinth of this erroneous teaching on grace became more complex over time. Later medieval theologians then taught that when persons cooperated with "subsequent" or "cooperative" grace, the cooperation came simply by not nullifying the first grace. If one had sufficient mental ability to reject God's offered grace, and did not reject it, then he was rewarded by God for not rejecting it. In contrast to all of this complexity, Calvin painted out the simple teaching that God's grace is always irresistible.[11] Calvin then noted that this convoluted teaching on cooperative grace was held by the "sounder" Schoolmen![12]

Calvin remarked that medieval theologians wrongly taught that grace was offered to all people indiscriminately.

Sole source of every good work

In I Corinthians, Paul spoke about his apostleship. In that context, some medieval theologians had "stumbled" and alleged that Paul saw himself in some sense as cooperating with God's grace toward him. But Calvin underlined Paul's statement, that it was not that Paul cooperated with God's grace, but rather that Paul's own labors themselves were the fruit of God's grace. Calvin rightly noted that this was the thrust of Paul's own modification of his speech. In fact, it was not actually Paul who laboured, but it was God's grace that was with him. The explanation for the earlier theologians' error, as Calvin understood it, was because they were misled by a wrong interpretation or translation of Paul's Greek phrase. Specifically, "For to take the words literally," said Calvin, "the Apostle does not say that grace was a fellow-worker with him, but that the grace which was with him was the sole worker."[13] Continuing, God's grace was requisite for human actions.

Requisite for human actions.

In Book 2, section 5 of the *Institutes* Calvin considered the three classes of precepts - but this subtlety, according to Calvin, was of no avail to the defenders of free will. The first are biblical precepts enjoining men and women

to turn to God. The second are precepts which simply speak of the observance of the Law. The third class of precepts enjoins believers to persevere in the grace of God.[14]

The relationship between grace and salvation

Christ is not only the minister, but also the author and prince of the believer's salvation. Divine grace is not obscured by this mode of expression. The merit of Christ is not opposed to God's mercy, but depends upon it. Calvin then proved the compatibility of the two from various passages of Scripture. Christ, by his obedience, truly merited divine grace for us. This grace was obtained by the shedding of Christ's blood, and his obedience even unto death. In this way Christ paid our ransom. He concluded with a classic attack against the presumptuous manner in which the Schoolmen had handled this subject.[15]

Grace and good works.

Faith is, and must be, sure and firm. Faith cannot be satisfied with simple opinion, which can always change. Nor will it be satisfied with an obscure definition. Faith requires a full and decisive certainty.

Because unbelief is deeply rooted in the human heart, and because we are so inclined toward it, in fact, there is not one single person who will ever truly believe that God is good and faithful until the believer goes through serious struggles. When faith is put to the test, believers entertain doubts and experience waverings. Many believers do not want to give full credence to the source of their certainty - which is the authority of God that his promises are true. At this point Calvin cited the Psalms: "'The words of the Lord' (says David, Ps. 12:6) 'are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth purified seven times.' 'The word of the Lord is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him,' (Ps. 18:30)." The same truth is articulated at Proverbs 30:5 - and nearly the whole of Psalm 119. Yet Calvin rightly noted that God's recommendation of his word was a rebuke to unbelief and intends to drive away the doubt that can fester in hearts.[16]

God's divine mercy to his people is meant to be a comfort, while many still carry anxiety within their hearts because they doubt that God will be merciful toward them. While they think that they are persuaded of God's mercy, they still confine that mercy within incorrect boundaries. They acknowledge an abundance of grace in a general sense, that it has been shed forth for many, but they baulk at the idea that God has been merciful to them individually. Calvin's analysis finds their fault in questioning whether "they can reach to it." Their knowledge of God's grace falls short, and is incomplete. It does not calm their disturbed minds; the mind continues to harass itself with

deep doubts.[17] From the foundation in the nature of the human heart and God's mercy, the next section looks at God's calling.

Calling a work of grace.

In *Institutes* III.21, Calvin presented his thoughts on eternal election, by which God predestinated some to salvation and others to destruction. In the first and second sections, Calvin argued that election and predestination are useful and sweet doctrines. Ignorance of this biblical teaching covers over God's radiant glory and promotes human pride. These doctrines can give certainty of salvation and peaceful rest to guilty consciences. In the second and third sections, Calvin said that some shun this doctrine out of a false modesty. Calvin then went on to recognize that there were problems to the doctrine - that believers must be careful not to be excessively curious, and that even if irresistible grace is particularly difficult for the profane to endure, that difficulty cannot be used as a reason to hinder teaching all the truths of God's word. Calvin turned to back in church history to remind his readers that even during Augustine's time an objection was made that this doctrine was dangerous for believers. Calvin's solution was simple yet profound. Since God has revealed it, believers must embrace it.

Calvin also dealt with the mistaken notion of God's so-called "foreknowledge" as the cause or basis of predestination. God doesn't just "offer" salvation - rather, he "assigns" it.[18] Particular election is certain because God made an "eternal covenant of life" or vitae aeternae pacto. God collected us and bound us to him with insolubili nexus, in a "special mode" of election.[19]

This great doctrine, according to Calvin, is confirmed by biblical proofs. He confirmed that the orthodox doctrine was founded on a careful exposition of our Saviour's words as well as from passages in Paul's writings. Election is first an inward *vocatio*, then *iustificatio*.[20] Election works hand in glove with the external call of the preached gospel.[21]

Calvin also refuted some of the objections taken from ancient writers, that is, from Thomas Aquinas, and then from more modern writers. Calvin dealt with the topic of reprobation, which is founded entirely on the righteous will of God. Calvin refuted those who have opposed this doctrine. He tackled the difficult problem of those who held to election, but then denied reprobation.[22]

The special election, which otherwise would remain hidden in God, is manifested by his effectual calling. Though the Lord, by electing his people, adopted them as his sons, we, however, see that they do not come into possession of this great good until they are first called; but when they are called, the enjoyment of their election is (in some measure) communicated to them. For this reason the Holy Spirit which they receive is termed by Paul both the "Spirit of adoption," and the "seal" and "earnest" of their future inheritance.

By his testimony he confirms and seals the certainty of future adoption on their hearts.[23]

Calvin believed this teaching was in accord with the Old and New Testaments.[24] Based on John 6:46 and 17:6, Calvin acknowledged that God teaches his elect effectually when he brings them to faith: "Not that any man has seen the Father, save he which is of God, he has seen the Father," (6:46). Again, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world," (17:6). He says in another passage, "No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draws him," (John 6:44).[25]

Irresistible grace presupposed the doctrine of total depravity (T), unconditional election (U), and limited atonement (L). Calvin disagreed with the medieval notions of a *donum superadditum*, where Adam in the garden could have chosen either to follow his lower nature and be dragged into hell, or with that gift raise himself up beyond the body and its passions. Adam's nature was much more exalted, and thus the fall was to greater depths.[26]

From this definition Calvin differentiated between the more philosophical notions of necessity and compulsion. After the fall, men and women always sin and must sin because of (external) compulsion rather than from a necessity as being human. Total depravity is inherited by all, but was not inherent in human nature as created. After the fall, God's image in humanity has not been completely lost, but even with the image remaining, the unconverted can do no good.[27]

Calvin spoke clearly: "We admit that man's condition while he still remained upright was such that he could incline to either side. But inasmuch as he has made clear by his example how miserable free will is unless God both wills and is able to work in us, what will happen to us if he imparts his grace to us in this small measure?"[28]. In conclusion, because of God's nature and the depths of human sin, Calvin was convinced that grace was irresistible.

Notes

1. Thus, understanding total depravity, realizing "the perversity of our wilful suppression of the truth in unrighteousness, employing those gifts as weapons against a good Creator" we begin to see humanity's great need for deliverance. We are born in original sin with its concomitant guilt and corruption. See Michael S. Horton, "A shattered vase: the tragedy of sin in Calvin's thought", in *A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes: Essays and Analysis*, ed. Joseph Hall and Peter Lillbach, (Philipsburg: P&R, 2008), p.157.
2. Calvin's teaching is probably best summarized at *Institutes* II.3.5.: "Because of the bondage of sin by which the will is held bound, it cannot move toward good, much less apply itself thereto; for a movement of this sort is the beginning of conversion to God, which in Scripture is ascribed entirely to God's grace." "Nonetheless the will remains, with the most eager inclination disposed and hastening to sin. For man, when he gave himself over to this necessity, was not deprived of will, but of soundness of will." "Therefore simply to will is of man; to will ill, of a corrupt nature; to will well, of grace."

3. His work is called, *De libero hominis arbitrio et divina gratia*, libri decem (1542).
4. *Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrinae de servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii adversus calumnia Alberti Pighii Campensis* was published in Geneva by Gerard. The Latin text is *CO* 6:225-404. There is also an English text, *Calvin's Calvinism: Treatises on the Eternal Predestination of God and the Secret Providence of God*, trans. Henry P. Cole (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987). See L. F. Schulze, Calvin's Reply to Pighius (Potchefstroom: Pro Rege, 1971). The best translation is John Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will. A Defense of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice Against Pighius*, ed. by A. N. S. Lane, and translated by G. I. Davies (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996).
5. For further information see L. F. Schulze, "Calvin's Reply to Pighius - A Micro and a Macro View" in Richard C. Gamble, *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism*, Vol.5.
6. Wulfert de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), pp.118-119.
7. Calvin, *Institutes* II.2.6.
8. Horton, "A shattered vase: the tragedy of sin in Calvin's thought", states it well: "In other words, there is no foothold of goodness anywhere in us - in our mind, will, emotions, or body - where we could rise up to God. Sin has corrupted the whole person, like a poison that works its way in greater or lesser intensity throughout the entire stream. Yet, despite ourselves, this does not eliminate the possibility of reflecting God's glory. Humanity is therefore not as bad as it could possibly be, but as badly off as it could possibly be. There is no residue of obedient piety in us, but only a *sensus divinitatis* that we exploit for idolatry, self-justification, and superstition. Thus the same remnants of original righteousness that allow even pagans to create a reasonably equitable civic order in things earthly provoke them in their corruption to false religion in things heavenly", pp.160-161.
9. Calvin's analysis of the doctrine cited Peter Lombard, *Lib.2* Dist.26.
10. Calvin, *Institutes* II.2.6.
11. Calvin cited *De Vocatione Gentium*, Lib.2, cap.4.
12. Calvin, *Institutes* II.2.6. "For Lombard ultimately declares (Lib.2 Dist.25), that our freedom is not to the extent of leaving us equally inclined to good and evil in act or in thought, but only to the extent of freeing us from compulsion. This liberty is compatible with our being depraved, the servant of sin, able to do nothing but sin."
13. Calvin, *Institutes* II.3.12.
14. Calvin, *Institutes* II.5.8.
15. Calvin, *Institutes* II.17.1-6.
16. Calvin, *Institutes* III.11.15.
17. Calvin, *Institutes* III.11.15.
18. Calvin, *Institutes* III.21.7. For more information, see R. Scott Clark, "Election and Predestination: The Sovereign Expressions of God," Institutes 3.21-24. In *A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes: Essays and Analysis*, pp.110-111.
19. *OS* 4.377.28-29, 34-35.
20. Calvin, *Institutes* III.22.1-10.
21. OS 4.416.10.
22. Calvin, *Institutes* III.23.
23. Calvin, *Institutes* III.24.1-2.
24. Calvin, *Institutes* III.24.2. "Moreover, this is clearly demonstrated by the nature and dispensation of calling, which consists not merely of the preaching of the word, but also of the illumination of the Spirit. Who those are to whom God offers his word is explained by the prophet...(Isa. 65:1)."
25. Calvin, *Institutes* III.24.1. He cited Augustine *(de Grat. Chr. Cont. Pelag.*, Lib.1, c.14, 31) "If, as the Truth says, every one who has learned comes, then every one who does not come

has not learned. It does not therefore follow that he who can come does come, unless he have willed and done it; but every one who has learned of the Father, not only can come, but also comes; the antecedence of possibility the affection of will, and the effect of action being now present."

26. See Horton, "A Shattered Vase", p.153.
27. See Horton, "A Shattered Vase", pp.157-160.
28. Calvin, *Institutes* II.3.10. Horton, "A Shattered Vase", p.161, comments on this section: Calvin "took issue with the popular notion that God simply holds out his hand in an offer of pardon to those who turn themselves toward him - and that this constitutes the grace of God in regeneration."

CALVIN'S PASTORAL CARE

Robert L. W. McCollum

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It is readily acknowledged by all Calvin scholars that John Calvin was the great theologian of the Protestant Reformation. His *Institutes of the Christian Religion* bear eloquent testimony to this fact. Robert Reymond accepts the *Institutes* as "the most influential systematic theology ever written"[1] and John Murray describes them as "the opus magnum of Christian theology"[2] Few would disagree with their estimation, especially when it is recognised that most systematic theologies written since the Reformation, including the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, show a great dependency on Calvin's work.

Calvin was a master theologian, and as such he has bequeathed the Church, in the *Institutes*, an invaluable legacy. However, I want to suggest that Calvin probably would not have regarded himself first and foremost as a theologian. Rather, during his 28 years in the ministry (25 in Geneva and 3 in Strasburg) he would have regarded himself primarily as a pastor. Calvin was someone who had a deep affection for the individual members of the Church. Their spiritual health he watched over with the utmost care. Calvin's pastoral care and concern is observed in different aspects of his life and work, several of which will now be considered.

Pastoral Care through his Theological Writing

Why did John Calvin write the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*? As a theological treatise, to help subsequent generations in the church to understand the great doctrines of the Christian faith? Yes, that the *Institutes* have done, but that is not why they were originally written. Calvin himself informs us in the preface of the first edition that he

> toiled at the task of writing it, chiefly for the sake of my countrymen, the French, multitudes of whom I perceived to be hungering and thirsting after Christ... to help those who desire to be instructed in the doctrines of salvation.[3]

To appreciate his concern we must remember the spiritual context in which he wrote. The errors of Roman Catholicism had dominated Europe for

centuries. The rites and rituals of that false system had so confused the people that the way of salvation was hidden from view. How successful was Calvin in reaching the French? At the time he wrote the first edition of the *Institutes* in 1536 very few of the French were Christians. However, by the time of his death in 1564 there were 2,150 Huguenot congregations, made up of 2 million members out of a total population of 20 million.

The people of Calvin's day needed to understand the way of salvation, by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone. As well as that, Calvin believed that one of the chief needs of his day was to help men and women, through the Word and by the Spirit, to come to an assurance of salvation. He wanted them to have the assurance that they were in a right relationship with God; to know that they were members of God's family, to know that in Christ and through Christ they possessed eternal life. Calvin recognised that Roman Catholicism had for centuries failed to make known to people the mercy of God to be found through faith in Christ's finished work upon the Cross. As Ronald Wallace wrote about Romanism, "The obscure and trivial ceremonies which it had invented as embellishments of its confessional and penitential system led nowhere." In contrast, writes Wallace, "The Gospel is meant to ensure that the soul attains peace: i.e. to a joyful, continual, radiant assurance."[4]

With the concern of a true pastor Calvin, in the *Institutes*, was seeking to do the work of an evangelist, to show sinners the way to Christ, and then having found him, to come to a true assurance of faith in him. Two references from the *Institutes* illustrate this:

> To have faith is not to fluctuate, to vary, to be carried up and down, to hesitate - finally, to despair: rather, it is to possess continued certainty and complete security of mind, to have a place to rest in, plant your foot.[5]

> No man is a believer...except him who leaning on the security of his salvation confidently triumphs over the devil and death.[6]

From these references and others it is clear that the pages of the *Institutes* are studded with sentences and even paragraphs to help the struggling soul. This demonstrates that Calvin's theological writing was often pastoral in its aim. In fact sometimes we could say his theological writing was entirely pastoral in its direction and motive.

One of his books was published with the interesting and rather unusual title *Concerning Scandals*. By scandals, Calvin meant the difficulties, the problems, the obstacles, the alluring diversions, the tempting compromises, the persecution and slander that the followers of Christ have to contend with in this world. And such problems were being faced by many true believers in Calvin's 16th century European world. That he was aware of what believers were enduring is clear from the explanation he gave for this publication. He writes,

"A serious book appears because many people create a demand for it." He later went on to write, "My concern is for the weak, for when their faith is shaky, then it is our place to support it with a sustaining hand."[7] He therefore wrote *Concerning Scandals* to disciple those who had come to faith in Christ, those who had committed themselves to the service of Christ and had begun to run the Christian race. He wrote it in order to describe clearly, for the benefit of his Christian readers, the kind of obstacles they would meet, and the nature of the temptations they would face, as they sought to live the Christian life. It does not take too much imagination to see how helpful this book would have been to many young Christians in Europe, who at that time faced many trials for the sake of Christ. Remember it was at the time the *Institutes* were first published that William Tyndale was arrested at Vilvorde, near Brussels, and burned at the stake (1536) because he had the temerity to translate and publish the Bible in the English language. Persecution was also becoming increasingly rampant in France, Calvin's native land.

Calvin was always conscious of the menacing threat that the enemies of the Gospel posed to believers in general, and to the existence of the Reformed Churches in particular. It is not surprising therefore to find him in his controversial writings, castigating his opponents. In so doing the pastoral element is often to the fore. The true pastor, he often affirmed, has two different voices - the one for calling the sheep, the other for frightening away the wolves. In Calvin's words,

> Then only do pastors edify the church, when besides leading docile souls to Christ, placidly, as with the hand, they are also armed to repel the machinations of those who strive to impede the work of God.[8]

All Calvin's theological writings bear eloquent testimony to the fact that he was in no way a cold, detached, theologian. Rather, he was a warm hearted, caring pastor who was always looking out for the spiritual well-being of others.

Pastoral Care through his Letters

John Calvin was an avid letter writer. How he found time, among his many other duties, is difficult to comprehend. He cared for people, especially the Lord's people, and so he corresponded with people from all over Europe.

Calvin, as has already been stated, saw himself more as a pastor than a theologian - an under-shepherd of God's flock. He recognised that souls, precious souls, immortal souls, had been committed to his charge. Calvin had a deep sense of the worth of the individual soul and men knew that he cared for them and valued them profoundly. Their value in the mind of Calvin was because Christ had died for them. In this atmosphere of pastoral care, respect and compassion flourished, and men could approach Calvin about anything.

knowing they could confide in him. "You brought me to birth in Christ," writes one correspondent. "I opened my heart to him as a child would to a father," writes another. An imprisoned aristocrat under sentence of death thanked Calvin for not abandoning him, and for how he was consoled and received food for his soul in the letters received from the Reformer. A former student testified that, thanks to Calvin, he had not given in to despair. Another assured him that he knew nothing, apart from the Bible, more calculated to strengthen his faith than the friendly letters in which Calvin exhorted and warned him. From this correspondence it is evident that Calvin was very approachable - the mark of a true and loving pastor.

Many of Calvin's letters were addressed to prisoners and to those soon destined for martyrdom. It was a bleak and bitter age for the French. Pastors were trained at Geneva and then sent back to France to accomplish whatever ministerial charge they could. Often, however, their heroic pastorate would end in arrest, imprisonment and finally martyrdom at the stake. As soon as Calvin heard of their arrest he would write to them to inform them of the prayerful and loving interest of the church at Geneva; to encourage them and to prepare them to face death for the gospel's sake. These letters are amongst the most moving of any written by the Reformer.

We have some knowledge as to how these letters were received. Louis de Marsac, soon to suffer at the stake in Lyons, was imprisoned there in company with another young man, also destined to be burned at the stake. The first of these two managed to get a reply to Calvin, which read,

> Sir and brother,...I cannot express to you the great comfort I have received...from the letter which you have sent to my brother Denis Peloquin, who found means to deliver it to one of our brethren who was in a vaulted cell above me, and read it to me aloud, as I could not read it myself, being unable to see anything in my dungeon. I entreat of you, therefore, to persevere in helping us with similar consolation, for it invites us to weep and to pray.[9]

In true and heartfelt sympathy, Calvin identified with the afflicted in their situation; he endured their suffering at if he was by their side, as if he was a prisoner with them. We can picture him joining with them in heart and mind. This is real identification, not mere verbiage - the captives were conscious, even in their prison cells, of the reality of the communion of the saints. In one such letter, for example, he wrote,

> although we are not at present in your condition, yet we do not on that account leave off fighting together with you by prayer, by anxiety and tender compassion, as fellow-members, seeing that it has pleased our heavenly Father, of his infinite goodness, to unite us into one body, under his Son, our head.[10]

To those about to be interrogated, Calvin had much to say. Where

necessary he would get a letter back suited to the particular needs of each accusation. Calvin did not put words in these prisoners' mouths. He knew that, in the last resort, nothing was as telling as a simple personal testimony. Calvin had such confidence in the work of the Holy Spirit on such occasions that he refused to draw up a confession of faith that the martyrs would simply have to learn and repeat. "I have not sent you such a profession of faith as our good brother Peloquin asked me for," he writes, "for God will render that which he will enable you to make, according to the measure of mind which he has allotted you, far more profitable than any that might be suggested to you by others."[11]

His correspondents came from a broad section of humanity. As well as writing to men imprisoned for their faith, he wrote to fellow Reformers, such as John Knox in Frankfurt, Heinrich Bullinger in Zurich, Philip Melanchthon in Wittenberg, Guillaume Farrell in Neuchatel and of course to Martin Luther, the great pioneer of the Reformation. He wrote to earls and to dukes in Scotland who were in a position to influence the spread of the gospel. For example, of particular interest to Reformed Presbyterians, who have been greatly influenced by the legacy of the Scottish Reformation, is a letter to the Earl of Arran, written on 1st August, 1558, less than a year before John Knox returned to Scotland from Geneva. It is important to put this letter in its context. More than a year earlier (March 1557) Scottish nobles had written to John Knox, the pastor of the English congregation in Geneva, inviting him to return and lead the work of Reformation in Scotland. Sometime later, afraid of the consequences of Knox's bold proclamation of Reformation truths, they wrote again to Knox asking him to delay his return. This infuriated Knox and annoyed Calvin. An excerpt from Calvin's letter to the Earl of Arran reads,

> Thus Monseigneur, let the poor blinded persons whom you see wandering in darkness be to you a mirror, in which to contemplate the inestimable blessing which has been bestowed on you, of being enlightened by the Sun of righteousness, which is our Lord Jesus Christ, to the end that you might arrive at the life which is in heaven. And let this contemplation rouse you to give to him your whole heart...and strengthen you in true perseverance.[12]

As well as writing to the nobility in Scotland, Calvin wrote letters to the nobility in France and in these letters we find the pastoral motive is nearly always dominant. For example, his first letter to Admiral Coligny is written to "furnish you with a proof of the interest I have in your salvation."[13] He had been informed that Coligny, in prison in St. Quentin had been reading religious books and that he was concerned to find hope and comfort for his soul. Calvin in his letter was full of pastoral counsel for it was all about God and his glory and the promise of Christ. The very same day Calvin wrote an encouraging and helpful letter to Coligny's wife, Madame de Coligny. It was a letter of spiritual

counsel, to a woman who had been described as "deeply pious".

Calvin's correspondence with Seigneur D'Andelot, Coligny's younger brother is typical of his pastoral ministry among the great in France. D'Andelot was imprisoned by Henry II for allowing the Reformation to be preached freely in his great estates in Brittany. When Calvin heard of D'Andelot's faith, courage and the sacrifices that he had made for the sake of the gospel, he immediately put pen to paper. This was on 10th May, 1558,[14] and Calvin wrote a long letter of personal advice to D'Andelot to encourage him in his faith and to inspire him to remain resolute in the hour of trial. This was followed on July 12[15] by another letter of a more urgent nature. Calvin had heard that great pressure was being put on D'Andelot to relent and submit to the King's wishes. Calvin pleaded earnestly with him to remain steadfast. God was going to test him. Through this trial he can now become more fully conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Let him not turn aside, wrote Calvin, from the simplicity of Jesus Christ and be prepared to offer the complete sacrifice if necessary. In the same month Calvin heard that D'Andelot had given in and immediately he dispatched a third letter. The shame of the public scandal is mentioned, but only in passing. Calvin must have been heartbroken over the possible consequences of his recantation for the many believers in Brittany. But nothing of this is alluded to. The whole letter is one of compassion to a fellow Christian who is beginning to suffer remorse, but Calvin was seeking to turn it into more than remorse. He sought to turn his remorse into true repentance. Calvin emphasised the seriousness of the sin and endeavoured to show him that the way back was open. He gave him advice on how to become a stronger Christian when he found this way.

It did not matter to whom Calvin was writing, or what was the initial purpose of the letter, Calvin always seized the opportunity to challenge his correspondent about spiritual matters. For example on 10th December, 1558, he wrote a letter to the King of Navarre (a principality of France in the 16th century), with the express purpose of obtaining shelter in his province for Spanish Lutheran refugees, some of whom had arrived in Geneva. However, towards the end of the letter the Reformer began to speak to the king about his own spiritual standing with God.

> Sire...prepare yourself with the greatest magnanimity in order to bear yourself with constancy when necessity shall require it. For however you keep yourself in the background, God will put you forward to maintain his cause. So arm yourself beforehand, I entreat you, Sire, exercising yourself in the word of God and suffering yourself to be taught thereby, so that wealth, honours, high rank, royal dignity, shall not prevent you from bearing the yoke of Jesus Christ, and so aspiring to the Kingdom of Heaven.[16]

Three years later, on 16th January, 1561, we find Calvin writing this time

to the Queen of Navarre, who had recently become a Christian. In the letter he congratulated her on her conversion and then went on to outline her principal duties as a Christian princess. An extract from the letter reads:

> Wherefore Madame, I pray you to prize the mercy of God as it deserves, not only because it has brought you all at once out of the darkness of death to show you the light of life in his Son, who is the true Sun of righteousness, but also because he has deeply imprinted on your heart a faith in his gospel, giving to it a living root, that it may bring forth its due fruits....Having then received so great and inestimable a benefit, you have reason to be so much the more zealous to dedicate yourself (as you do) entirely to Him, who has bound you so closely to himself.

And in his conclusion Calvin asked the Queen

> to consider the dignity and grandeur in which this God of goodness has brought you up, that this should be in your esteem a double tie to bind you to obedience to him, seeing that it is from him that you hold everything, and that according to the measure which each one has received, he shall have to render a stricter account.[17]

This is but a sample of the pastoral care Calvin provided through the 100s of letters that he wrote.

Pastoral Care through Preaching

Calvin believed that God meant preaching to be a pastoral event; that through the preaching of the Word, Christian men and women would be brought to a liberating assurance of faith. Summarizing Calvin's view of preaching as a pastoral event, Ronald S Wallace writes,

> True preaching is meant to open the door of the kingdom of God to the hearer. Through preaching the fullness of the grace of God promised in the New Testament is meant not simply to be offered to people, but presented to them with such reality and power that Christ not only knocks on the door, but also enters to take possession of the heart. Therefore pastoral care should be given to the individual even from the pulpit.[18]

Preaching in Geneva became a pastoral event. Commenting on Psalm 125:2 Calvin pointed out, "Whenever God speaks to all his people in a body, he addresses himself to each individual."[19] A survey of Calvin's sermons demonstrates that there was always something personal about his preaching. People were cared for pastorally from the pulpit, Calvin maintained, through teaching. The pastor, he wrote, "is elected principally for the sake of teaching."[20] In Calvin's view the man who is a good pastor is the man who is "diligent in teaching". And of course with reference to what was being taught Calvin was quite forthright - nothing less than Scripture. "Let the ministers of

the church," he exhorted, "faithfully attend to the ministry of the Word, not adulterating the teaching of salvation, but delivering it pure and undefiled to God's people."[21] Such a responsibility demanded a commitment on the part of the pastor to intense study. Calvin asked, "How shall pastors teach others if they be not eager to learn?"[22] Thus "all godly teachers," he insisted, "must indeed study diligently, so as not to ascend the pulpit till they have been fully prepared."[23]

Calvin in the 16th century was a model to all his contemporaries with respect to how a faithful pastor ought to prepare for the pulpit and preach in the pulpit. In preparation for preaching he spent many hours exegeting the text and in the course of his pulpit ministry preached thousands of sermons instructing and building the congregations who sat under his ministry in Geneva and Strasburg. In preparing to preach Calvin was also aware of people listening to him who were facing many hardships and trials. And so the note of comfort and consolation was often sounded in the sermons he preached. And in his writings Calvin pressed this responsibility on others who were set apart for pastoral ministry. In the *Institutes* he maintained that it is the duty of the pastor "to comfort the people of God by the gospel teaching."[24] Calvin went as far as to say in this regard,

> The most important duty of the minister of the word is, to comfort wretched men, who are oppressed by afflictions, or who bend under their weight, and, in short, to point out what is true rest and serenity of mind.[25]

Care through Personal Work

Calvin's view of the pastoral office is such that if a minister has a true pastoral concern for those to whom he is preaching, he will endeavour to visit them in their homes. Calvin did not cease, like the apostle Paul, to admonish, both "publicly" and "from house to house". Calvin wrote,

> Whatever others may think, we do not regard our office as bound within so narrow limits that when the sermon is delivered we may rest as if our task was done. They whose blood will be required of us are to be cared for much more closely and vigilantly.[26]

Calvin believed that the pulpit work of even the most well disposed preacher could often fail to bring the soul to Christ. He commented,

> It often happens that he who hears general promises that are intended for the whole congregation of the faithful remains nevertheless in some doubt, and still is troubled in mind as though he had not yet received forgiveness.[27]

From this we see that Calvin believed that preaching often required to be

supplemented by a pastoral interview. It was possibly from Calvin that Richard Baxter drew up his plan for pastoral care in Kidderminster, in the 17th century. He also believed it was often necessary to visit people in their home to apply the sermon more personally to their situation. In Calvin's words, "It is not enough that a pastor in the pulpit should teach all the people together, if he does not add particular instruction as necessity requires and occasion offers."[28]

Like Martin Bucer, he lamented that many preachers in his day were either too short-sighted in their view of the ministry or too lazy to visit the homes of those who listened to them from the pews. Bucer wrote to Calvin in 1547,

> I must greatly praise you for visiting the brethren, for you know with what pain I have observed that the duty of piety and love, on the part of the clergy - to visit, warn, and comfort the people, - is greatly neglected.[29]

Lack of pastoral visitation meant in Calvin's opinion a failure in the task of meeting the needs of the individual soul. Such pastors, he believed, looked on the church building as an auditorium, and on the congregation as an audience. They took the easy way of avoiding the sharp evangelistic edge of the Gospel, and the close application of their teaching to the individual soul which could be accomplished in a home visit.

Not only did Calvin visit, but he encouraged the burdened individual, who could not find consolation through his own private approach to God, to seek his pastor for private consultation.

> Let every believer remember that, if in private he is so troubled and afflicted with a sense of sins that without the aid of others he is unable to find freedom from them, it is his duty not to neglect the remedy which God provides for him, namely to find relief in a private confession to his own pastor - and for his solace he should privately implore the help of him whose duty it is, both in public and in private, to comfort the people of God by the Gospel teaching.[30]

Calvin believed that it was appropriate that this interview, between the pastor and individual church member, should take place regularly before each celebration of the Lord's Supper. In Strasbourg, when he was given the care of the French congregation, he found himself with a congregation small enough to put into effect such an arrangement. Calvin learned a great deal from the experience and insights of Martin Bucer, who recommended such personal and private consultation. Calvin described his pastoral arrangements, and his purposes, in a letter to William Farel:

> When the day of the sacrament of the Supper draws nigh, I give notice from the pulpit that those who are desirous to communicate must first of all let me know. At the same time I add for what purpose, that it is in order that those who are as

> yet uninstructed and inexperienced in religion may be better trained; besides that, those who need special admonition may hear it; and lastly, that if there be any persons who may be suffering under trouble of mind, they may receive consolation.[31]

What a commitment, illustrating for pastors and elders in the 21st century the true concern Calvin had for the souls of his hearers and the glory of God.

Calvin had a special concern for the sick. He saw this as one of the important duties of the minister. To help other ministers in Geneva and throughout Europe he wrote a special tract on this subject, entitled *Visitation of the Sick*. An excerpt from this document reads:

> Now the greatest need which a man ever has of the spiritual doctrine of our Lord is when His hand visits him with afflictions, whether of disease or other evils, and especially at the hour of death, for then he feels more strongly that ever in his life the assaults of the devil, who then uses all his efforts to beat down the poor person, and plunge and overwhelm him in confusion. And therefore the duty of a minister is to visit the sick, and console them by the Word of the Lord, showing them that all which they suffer and endure comes from the hand of God and from his good providence, who sends nothing to believers except for their good and salvation. He will quote passages of Scripture suitable to this view.
>
> Moreover, if he sees the sickness to be dangerous, he will give them consolation, which reaches further, according as he sees them touched by their affliction; that is to say, if he sees them overwhelmed with the fear of death, he will show them that it is no cause of dismay to believers, who having Jesus Christ for their guide and protector, will, by their affliction, be conducted to the life on which he has entered. By similar considerations he will remove the fear and terror which they may have of the judgement of God.[32]

It should be noted that such pastoral visitation, especially of the sick, brought the poverty as well as the physical suffering of the people before the pastor and the church. Thus the pastoral ministry become one of caring for the whole man; for all the personal needs of individual members. Wherever the Reformation went, observes Gordon Rupp, "Poor relief was to be an important stress...running though its story like a gold thread."[33] In Geneva Calvin established a fund from which the deacons used to grant relief to the poor.

Yes, Calvin was a great theologian, a great commentator and a great preacher; nevertheless as a pastor he was outstanding. In his work as a pastor he is a challenging role model and worthy example. The documents of the time bear witness to the extraordinary effectiveness of this aspect of his ministry. In a letter to Crespin, Des Gallars, one of Calvin's closest colleagues in Geneva, described in detail how Calvin dealt with people:

> No words of mine can declare the fidelity and prudence with which he gave counsel. The kindness with which he received all who came to him, the clearness

> and promptitude with which he replied to those who asked his opinion on the most important questions, and the ability with which he disentangled the difficulties and problems which were laid before him. Nor can I express the gentleness with which he could comfort the afflicted and raise the fallen and the distressed.[34]

Those who sought his counsel found in him, not only wisdom, but the strength that God often communicates to people through a trusted pastor. Anton Laborier in a letter to his wife, prior to his martyrdom, illustrates the genuine devotion people had for Calvin:

> Anna, my good sister (wife), you know that you are still young, and are about to be separated from my society. If such be God's good will for us, comfort yourself in Him, and with the thought that Jesus Christ is your father and your husband....Pray to Him without ceasing for His holy word. Seek...the counsel of our right-minded friends, especially that of M. Calvin. He will not let you come to harm if you act according to his wish; and you know that he is led by the Holy Ghost. If you marry again, and I advise you to do so, I beg you, hearken to his opinion, and to do nothing without him.[35]

Conclusion

The very nature of Calvin's ministry in Geneva meant that it was often in the public eye, either in the pulpit of Geneva or lecturing to students at the university. However, in dealing with people pastorally he had the ability to detach himself from his public character to reveal a very personable, intimate side to his personality. This was the quality which enabled people to find themselves comforted, encouraged and enlightened by his intimate conversation. He had the ability to come very close to people, lending to all who sought his help, a sympathetic ear. With this approach people were attracted to Calvin and many in his day testified to the blessing our Reformer was to them as they listened to and responded to the wisdom that came from his lips.

Calvin was a model as a caring pastor in the 16th century. He continues to be a model for those who have been ordained to the pastoral office in the 21st century. He was a brilliant theologian. He was a mighty preacher, but undergirding all these aspects of his fruitful ministry was the warm caring heart of a pastor who loved his people. The example of Calvin's pastoral care ought to challenge and encourage every true servant of Jesus Christ today. Among those who consider themselves Reformed, pastoral care is sometimes neglected. This ought not to be the case. If it is, we stand rebuked by Calvin and by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, the good pastor, who laid down his life for the sheep. We ought to be prepared to lay down our lives, as Calvin was, so that people under our pastoral care may blossom spiritually and bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ.

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JOHN CALVIN AS A PREACHER OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

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On 2nd. July, 1909, at a celebration of the 400th anniversary of Calvin's birth, held in Calvin's St. Peter's Church in Geneva, as he stood in Calvin's pulpit, Emile Doumergue (a respected Calvin scholar) stated,

This is the Calvin who seems to me to be the real and authentic Calvin, the one who explains all the others, Calvin the preacher of Geneva, moulding by his words the spirit of the Reformed in the sixteenth century.[1]

Fifty years later Harold Dekker, introducing a selection of Calvin's sermons on Job, likewise states,

> It is one of the anomalies of history that John Calvin has become best known as a systematic theologian in spite of the fact that he considered himself to be first of all a preacher. He believed that his sermons, not the Institutes, were his most important contribution. Although he did serve as a part-time lecturer in theology, this was for him always a secondary role. He looked upon himself primarily as a pastor.[2]

Ninety years later the renowned Calvin scholar T. H. L. Parker likewise insists, "It is impossible to do justice to Calvin's work in Geneva unless preaching be given the main place."[3]

Calvin's Old Testament preaching output was prodigious. In 1549 the Council of Geneva ordered the introduction of daily (daybreak) preaching (6 a.m. in summer, 7 a.m. in winter). It fell to Calvin, who already preached on the Lord's Day (frequently twice), to deliver the daily sermon at St. Peter's on alternate weeks. On the Lord's Days he usually preached from the New Testament in the morning, though he occasionally preached from the Psalms in the afternoon (in fact he eventually preached all through the Book of Psalms). The weekday sermons, however, were always from the Old Testament. Calvin's method was simply to preach consecutively and expositionally through entire books, taking anything from 4 to 20 verses at a time. To underline how important consecutive expositional preaching was to Calvin, we may note what happened when he was banished from Geneva in 1538 only to be invited back in 1541, over 3 years later. Calvin's own words describe his

first day back in his pulpit in St. Peter's:

> Everyone was very alert and expectant. But, entirely omitting any mention of what they were sure they would hear...I took up the exposition where I had stopped, indicating by this that I had only temporarily interrupted my office of preaching.[4]

Thus Calvin underlines the importance of the Old Testament and of expositional preaching - not to mention the point that he never should have been away!

In this way Calvin preached through Genesis, Deuteronomy, Job, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, all of the so-called "major" prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah and Lamentations, and Ezekiel), and the twelve so-called "minor" prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi) and Daniel. To give an idea of the number of sermons per book, there were 342 on Isaiah, 200 on Deuteronomy, 174 on Ezekiel, 159 on Job, 123 on Genesis, 107 on 1 Samuel, 87 on 2 Samuel, 43 on Amos.

The reason we have access to many of the sermons is that in 1549 a group of French and Waldensian refugees in Geneva hired a full-time secretary (Denis Raguenier) to make a shorthand transcript of each sermon and then write out careful full copies which were put into folio volumes (Raguenier did this job for eleven years until he died). This allows us to follow the sequence of Calvin's Old Testament preaching from 1549 until his death in 1564. In 1549 - 1550 he completed Jeremiah; in 1550 Lamentations; in 1550 - 1552 he preached through eight of the "Minor Prophets" and Daniel; 1552 - 1554 Ezekiel; 1554 - 1555 Job (Soon after the exposition of Job began he completed his studies on the Psalms which he had preached intermittently on Lord's Days); 1555 - 1556 Deuteronomy; 1556 - 1559 Isaiah; 1559 - 1561 Genesis; 1561 Judges; 1561 – 1562 1 Samuel; 1562 - 1563 2 Samuel; 1563 - 1564 1 Kings[5]

Calvin preached through the Old Testament extemporaneously, without manuscript or notes, taking with him into the pulpit only his Hebrew Old Testament, or his own translation of the passage for the day. It was not that he did not prepare. Indeed he states in a sermon on Deuteronomy 6:16,

> If I should enter the pulpit without deigning to glance at a book and frivolously imagine to myself, "O well, when I get there God will give me enough to say," and come here without troubling to read, or thinking what I ought to declare, and do not carefully consider how I must apply Holy Scripture to the edification of the people - well then I would be an arrogant upstart and God would put me to confusion in my audaciousness![6]

Before preaching, Calvin carefully exegeted the passage to be expounded and read the commentaries (the early church fathers and the scholastics as well

as the contemporary Reformers), before pondering how he was going to apply the passage to the needs of his congregation at that particular time. He was able to absorb this mass of material, sift through it in his mind, sort it and store it in his amazing memory. When we read his sermons we see how he moves from explanation to application all the way through the sermon. The sermons were of moderate length, at an average speed of delivery lasting around forty minutes, and their length is consistently the same. However, due to Calvin's breathing problems, it is thought that his delivery took nearer an hour.

Probably the main reason why Calvin did not make more detailed preparation was the great daily pressure he was under. His onerous preaching duties were in addition to his regular theological lectures, his pastoral work of visiting and counselling his flock, his demanding civic duties and his massive correspondence. His contemporary, Colladon, gives us a fascinating glimpse of Calvin's life:

> Calvin for his part did not spare himself at all, working far beyond what his powers and regard for his health could stand. He preached commonly every day for one week in two. Every week he lectured three times in theology. He was at the "Consistoire" on the appointed day and made all the remonstrances. Every Friday at the Bible Study (what we call the "Congregation") what he added after the leader had made his "declaration" was almost a lecture. He never failed in visiting the sick, in private warning and counsel, and the rest of the numberless matters arising out of the ordinary exercise of his ministry. But beside these ordinary tasks he had great care for the believers in France, both in teaching them and exhorting and counselling them, and consoling them by letters when they were being persecuted, and in interceding for them, or getting another to intercede when he thought he saw an opening. Yet all that did not prevent him from going on working at his special study and composing many splendid and very useful books.[7]

We could underline the great burden he carried for the suffering church in his homeland of France. For example, in six months between 1534 and 1535 in Paris alone no less than 27,000 Calvinists were burned to death. It was of course this particular persecution that moved Calvin to write the *Institutes* in defence of the suffering church, but it should not surprise us then that at times his sermons bristle with righteous and grieving indignation.

We must also bear in mind that Calvin's work was carried out in a state of progressive and almost continuous ill health during the last twenty-three years of his life. A modern medical doctor has detailed Calvin's ailments and the list, as Calvin himself would say, "would make one's hair stand on end" - gout, excruciating kidney stones, chronic pulmonary T.B., asthma, intestinal parasites, ulcerous haemorrhoids, irritable bowel, chronic migraine, septicaemia (from which he died aged fifty-five).[8] In spite of ill-health Calvin was what would be called today a "workaholic." Williston Walker, in his life of Calvin says,

> Calvin kept long hours in his study. He slept little as he says himself. By five, or at the latest six, in the morning his books were brought to him in bed and his amanuensis was ready. Much of the morning, even on the days when he preached, he lay on his couch, believing a recumbent position better for his weak digestion, but always at work. After the single meal which constituted his daily repast in the latter part of his life, he would walk for a quarter of an hour (or at most twice that time) in his room and then return to the labours of his study. Sometimes, chiefly when urged by his friends, he would play a simple game, quoits in his garden or "clef" on the table of his living room. He was not indisposed to a pleasant garden or a cheerful outlook from his windows. But his few recreations were briefly enjoyed.[9]

Certainly in Calvin's day and for decades thereafter his Old Testament sermons were well known and read widely in all the countries of the Reformation. Indeed at the time they were something of a publishing phenomenon (especially between 1553 and 1593). They were printed by the hundred in the original French and smuggled to the suffering Huguenots in France. They were read from the pulpits of vacant congregations. They were translated into English and German and went like hot cakes! For example, when the complete set of 200 sermons on Deuteronomy was published in 1581, the demand was so great that a new edition was turned out less than two years later. The entire set of sermons on Job went through five editions in ten years. The sermons on the Ten Commandments went through five editions in three years.

On the other hand, there was in the seventeenth century a steady decline in the use of the printed sermons, there being no further printings until the mid nineteenth century. In fact in 1805 no less than forty-four precious folio volumes of original unpublished manuscripts were actually sold by the Library of Geneva to a bookseller, the price being determined by the weight of the paper. Due to this astounding blunder most of Calvin's sermons on the Old Testament prophets are now lost - although, thanks to Adolphe Monod, eight of the forty-four volumes were eventually rescued from a junk shop and returned to the Library of Geneva. Thankfully five more also turned up at the end of the century.

In the remainder of this article we will look briefly at three things: how Calvin viewed the Old Testament; how he said it should be preached and how he preached it himself.

1. How Calvin viewed the Old Testament

This subject is worthy of a paper in and of itself. If space permitted, Calvin's masterful exposition of it in Books One and Two of the *Institutes* could be studied in detail. For example in 1.6 he states the need for the Old Testament ("the Law was given and the prophets afterwards raised up to expound it...the main object of the Law and the Prophets being to testify to

Christ."[10]·) In 1.7 he dwells on the key importance of the Holy Spirit in establishing canonicity, in opposition to the Roman claim that the Church must decide this, going on in the next chapter to give confirming proofs of canonicity for those who by the Holy Spirit embrace scriptural authority. In 1.9 he deals firmly with those who teach the insufficiency of Scripture and say that we must have fresh revelation today. In 1.13, while establishing the deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit from the Old Testament, he takes a stand on the Angel of the Lord: "I am quite inclined to agree with those who consider that this is Christ."[10.] Chapters 14 to 17 then deal with such Old Testament themes as creation, the image of God and sovereign providence.

In Book 2.1 he deals with the Fall. Chapters 7, 8 and 9,and especially chapters 10 and 11, are important as they deal with the Law and its relation to the Gospel:

> the religion of the gospel has always existed among God's children and if we speak of the difference between the covenant God made with Israel before Christ came and that which he has made with us since Christ has been revealed, we may state the whole truth in one word,"There is in substance no difference at all: the difference belongs entirely to the method of administration," the Old Testament and the New are really one and the same revelation of the grace of God."[11.]

Calvin then spells out the differences, for example how,

> in former times the Lord directed the thoughts of his people towards their heavenly inheritance by promising and giving earthly blessings as a foretaste of it...such as the inheritance of the promised land...but we...maintain that in the promise of Canaan they saw as in a mirror the promise of a better country which is a heavenly.[12.]

He then moves on to a second difference, namely the use by the Old Testament of types and shadows. The third is that the Old Testament is an administration of the letter, written on stone, ministering bondage, death and condemnation and passing away, whereas the New is of the spirit, written on the heart, ministering liberty, life and righteousness and abiding for ever. Finally in the Old Testament the Lord more or less restricted the covenant of his grace to one chosen nation, so that the calling of the Gentiles especially marks the New as superior to the Old. The Jews are children, Christians are young men.

While we do not have space to dwell at length on Calvin's teaching on the Old Testament in the *Institutes*, it is interesting how many of his emphases there come together in a sermon he preached on 2 Timothy 3:16-17 in 1555. Calvin comments,

> When Paul speaks of the Holy Scripture he does not mean that which he or the

> other apostles and evangelists were writing then, but the Old Testament. At that time the only scripture was the Old Testament. Hence we see that he meant that in the Christian church the Law and the Prophets should always be preached, for this is a teaching which ought to abide for ever. Paul plainly shows us that if we will do homage to God and live in subjection to Him we must receive that which is contained in the Law and the Prophets. Without exception men should conclude that, since God has spoken in His Law and in His Prophets, they must keep to the whole...If we want to show our faith and obedience to God, the Law and the Prophets should rule over us and we should make them our rule and know that the teaching of the Law and the Prophets is a permanent and immortal truth, not decaying, not variable. God did not deliver a temporary teaching to serve a particular age, He intended it to have its force to-day, and would rather the world perished and heaven and earth lay in ruins than that the authority of either the Law or the Prophets should be abolished...St Paul does not say, "Moses was an excellent man"; he does not say, "Isaiah possessed wonderful eloquence"; he does not claim anything for them personally. But he says that they were organs of God's Spirit, that their tongues were so guided that they put forward nothing of their own, but that it was God who spoke by their mouth, so that we must know that the living God made use of them and that they were faithful dispensers of the treasure committed to them.[13]

So for Calvin the authority of the Old Testament lies in its divine inspiration. Of course he also speaks here of God's Word found in the Gospel (or New Testament). He then addresses himself to the question - If the Law and the prophets have such perfection why the need for the Gospel? He states,

> The reply is easy. The Gospel was not given in order to add anything to the Law and the Prophets. Let us read through everything contained in the New Testament and we shall not find one syllable added to the Law and the Prophets. It is only a declaration of what had already been taught there. It is true that God has shown greater favour to us than to the Fathers who lived before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that things are much clearer to us now, but yet nothing has been added[14]

Thus Calvin taught the sufficiency of the Old Testament, the New only declaring more clearly what it taught. For him, rejecting the authority of the Old Testament is rebellion against God. "Creatures undertake war against God if they will not accept Holy Scripture - Why? - Because Paul says it is not of man's making, there is nothing earthly here."[15]

This leads Calvin in passing to deal with three enemies of his position who would attempt to add to scripture :-

(i). "The Papists." Calvin attacks papal claims to speak authoritatively in God's name, what he calls "the poison of false doctrine put into a golden cup."[16] In reality, he says, "They do nothing but put forward their own dreams

and imaginings and that is all!"[17] He then dismisses a list of practices because they are not commanded in scripture - "fasting on saint's days, traipsing about to altars and chapels, hearing Masses, going on pilgrimages - a labyrinth of nonsense!"[18]

(ii). Those Anabaptists who looked for new revelations of the Spirit. He calls them "cracked - brains" who, he says, blaspheme against Holy Scripture by saying it does not provide an immediate relationship with God, this coming through personal revelations of the Spirit. "No," says Calvin, "where is God's Word to be found except in the Law, the Prophets and the Gospel? - this is where God has delivered to us His will."[19]

(iii). The Antinomians. These he calls, "disgusting scoundrels" and "rascals," who want, "the Law cast out of the church and no more named." They declare, "It is fulfilled" and their slogan is, "No more Law and Prophets for us!" "No," says Calvin, Paul teaches plainly here that, "if we want to show our faith and obedience to God, the Law and the Prophets should rule over us and we should make them our rule and know that they are a permanent and immortal truth."[20]

There is something else he says here which is intriguing. Dwelling on Paul's teaching that the Scripture is "profitable," he states that the purpose of this is,

> that Holy Scripture may be sweet and lovely to us and that we may be inflamed with a desire and zeal to profit by it, seeing it is given to us not only to show us what is the majesty of God, but to edify us unto salvation...the Holy Scripture will not be profitable to us if we are not convinced God is its author and we shall certainly not feel the life of God's Spirit inflaming us[21]

but if we let ourselves be, "governed by God we will have a good and true seal to our faith."

In speaking this way is Calvin not speaking of what is called the "unction" of the Spirit in preaching as well as in private study? In a letter to the Duke of Somerset[22] Calvin complained that there was so little "living" preaching there. Preachers, like Archbishop Cranmer, wrote out their sermons word for word and then dressed them up in artificial rhetoric before reading them off. Calvin writes that preaching must not be too mechanical, or fettered to a word-for-word recital of what was prepared earlier. There must be a place for the work of the Holy Spirit as the living Word is proclaimed. Though Scripture is uniquely inspired and is objectively the Word of God and that gives the sermon its authority, yet, on the other hand, the sermon becomes effective when the Holy Spirit is at work in both preacher and hearer. Fascinatingly there

is a parallel here with Calvin's view on the efficacy of the Lord's Supper as a means of grace, again a mediating view between Luther and Zwingli.

2. Calvin's view on how the Old Testament should be preached

In his book *Calvin the Preacher of Geneva* Doumergue puts together quotes from Calvin that speak of how to preach the Law and the Prophets. The preacher is more than a messenger; he is the very mouth of God by which God makes known his will. As an ambassador sent by the king the preacher speaks in the name of his master - "Thus says the Lord." Thus, Calvin says,

> Let the preachers attempt nothing by their own brains, let them bring forth, as coming from God, all that they proclaim...when I expound Holy Scripture I must always make this my rule : that those who hear me may receive profit from the teaching I put forward and be edified unto salvation. If I have not that affection, if I do not procure the edification of those who hear me, I am a sacrilege, profaning God's Word...and when preachers bring forth what they proclaim as coming from God they must maintain the majesty of God and so contrive that the doctrine is received in all fear and that no-one can give voice to opposition...Let them argue with the mountains, let them rise up against the hills, in other words let them not be dazzled by men, but let them show that the Word that they carry, that is committed to them, is like the royal sceptre of God under which all creatures bow their heads and bend their knees. Let them boldly dare all things and constrain all the glory, highness and power of this world to obey and to yield to the divine majesty; let them by this same Word have command over everyone; let them edify the house of God, overthrowing the reign of Satan; let them lead the flock to pasture and kill the wolves; let them bind and let loose thunder and lightening, if that is their calling, but all in God's name.

Having come to that crescendo the author notes how Calvin's tone then changes. He continues,

> St. Paul had a tender heart...the more tender the affections of love are, the more praiseworthy they are...Never use gall - vinegar which purifies wounds yes, but pour in a little oil which soothes with the vinegar...Use not too great a severity, but rather a gentleness, bright and cheerful...the duty of a pastor is to cry within himself before causing others to cry, to be anguished within before showing any signs of indignation and to keep within himself more sorrow than he gives to any others.[21]

3. How Calvin preached the Old Testament himself

Here we will focus on three matters briefly - his method, his style and his themes.

(i) His method. As stated already this was extemporaneous, consecutive

exposition (i.e. explanation and application of a passage) through whole books. In his first sermon he would set out the general theme and do so in a memorable way. For example, in his first sermon in Deuteronomy he explains how God's people had received the law at Sinai and been disobedient, so that now God is giving them a summary, a repetition of the Law, taking them back to basics, not giving them something new. Rather it is

> as when some children have done badly at school and have been dreadful donkeys, had a year without progress - so they must go back to their A, B, Cs. That in sum is the argument of the book.[24]

Another example is the masterful way he begins the introductory sermon on Job:

> The story which is here written shows us how we are in the hand of God and that it belongs to him to order our lives and to dispose of them according to his good pleasure, and that our duty is to submit ourselves to him in all humility and obedience, that it is quite reasonable that we be altogether his both to live and to die; and even if it shall please him to raise his hand against us, though we may not perceive for what cause he does it, nevertheless we should glorify him always, confessing that he is just and equitable, that we should not murmur against him, that we should not enter into dispute, knowing that if we struggle against him we shall be conquered. This in brief is what we have to remember from the story.

A few paragraphs on we have this:

> Job maintaining a good case pleads it poorly, and the others bringing a poor case plead it well. When we shall have understood this it will be to us as it were a key to open to us the whole book[26]

It has often been noted that, just as the Reformation was a rediscovery and return to the doctrines of the early church, so it was a return to their way of preaching, a return to the homily in place of the scholastic sermon. The homily was expositional rather that topical, it flowed with the movement of the passage rather than being bound to a structure, and it was expressed in plain conversational statements rather than in rhetorical forms. Such was Calvin's method. He worked through his section verse by verse, phrase by phrase, explaining things in classic historical-grammatical terms. The basic principle of interpretation was that Scripture must be interpreted by Scripture. Thus he interpreted the text not just in its immediate context, but in the context of the whole Bible. So the skeleton of the sermon was the text and the flesh was its application to the needs of his congregation. As an assiduous visitor and counsellor Calvin was intimately acquainted with his people's needs.

Dekker makes the statement in his Introduction to Calvin's *Sermons on Job*,

> Calvin's treatment of a text was never moulded by its abstract significance in terms of systematic theology. His sermon was never fashioned by a scheme out of his dogmatics - no, the text must be exposited in its context.[27]

We see this illustrated in his treatment of a classic text from Job that is often brought to bear on dogmatic textbooks' discussions of the afterlife, Job 19:25 - 27. Readers of Calvin's sermons on Job will be surprised to see that Calvin resists a discourse on the resurrection of Christ, in fact treating vv.25 and 26 in two separate sermons! We must, he says, not take the verses out of context, but look at them from Job's point of view, the main point being (in the first sermon) that God's ultimate judgments transcend those of men. So he spends time on the earlier part of the passage, on family relations, the punishment of the wicked, the need to beware of hypocrisy. Of course in the following sermon (vv. 26 - 29) he does speak of the resurrection, but from Job's point of view. Job is speaking at a time, "when there was not yet great doctrine, when possibly the Law was not yet written", Job only having "a speck of light." He then says to his people - "What excuse will there be to-day, when God declares the resurrection to us so exactly and explicitly and gives us such beautiful promises of it?"[28] He then takes them briefly into 2 Corinthians 5:1 and 1 Corinthians 15:36 to speak of the comfort the truth of the resurrection is to believers in their afflictions.

From what we know of when the sermons were preached, we can see how Calvin applied his text to his current situation. An example is his sermon on Job 32:1 - 3. We know from the date of the sermon that Calvin was under great strain and pressure, it being the aftermath of the Servetus affair and a time when the Libertines were fiercely attacking his exposition of the doctrine of predestination. In his sermon Calvin makes two points. First, Elihu was a Buzite. Thus he was outside the covenant line. Yet he knew God and showed true piety. Such godliness, Calvin maintained, leaves the heathen without excuse and vindicates God against the charge of unfairness when he condemns those who had not the full light of the Gospel (one of the main criticisms of his opponents against the doctrine of predestination). Second, Elihu had a capacity for indignation. This was righteous indignation, however, says Calvin, being an anger that is proper against the enemies of God - such as are the Libertines, those "profane villains" who are "mockers of God" and act "like dogs and swine"!

Thus in their structure Calvin's sermons follow the structure of the text closely and he then applies each point or idea as it emerges, to his current situation. In the introduction he would summarise the previous sermon and often in the call to prayer at the end he would summarise the main ideas he had highlighted in the sermon.

(ii). His style of preaching. Essentially his style was simple, plain, direct, clear and earnest. This is seen when we read the sermons aloud. He avoids academic, technical or abstract words. Instead he uses graphic, picturesque, vivid language, with illustrations drawn from everyday life to give warmth and colour. He liked to use proverbial sayings, for example - "Sicknesses come by horse and go away on foot." The greedy are those who, "would drink the sea and the fishes." Then there is the humorous way he has Moses objecting to having to go up Mt. Sinai on behalf of the people - "O that's fine! It's all right for me to and break my legs, climbing up there. So I will go and see what it's all about! So what? - I quit the scene!" (Does one sense here Calvin's frustration at always having to be the one who is volunteered in a crisis in Geneva?). Instead of saying, "It's bad," he says, "It makes the hair stand on your head." Instead of saying, "I accuse him," he says, "I spit in his face." He uses vivid language from people's experience. For example, "When the devil lights the fire he also pumps the bellows." For him when the godly become downcast they "drag their legs and droop their wings." He says, "We [Calvin in preaching often uses the first person plural] are as astonished with this doctrine as if someone had just hit us on the head with a hammer." He speaks of the wicked as being "pickled in their sins" or being like "men at full noonday walking off a cliff." Speaking of God's providential working in our lives, he says for example that God is like the doctor who finds "that no gentler means will serve than the letting of blood," or else he gives us as his children "many lashes with the whip so that we are compelled to consider him." He often uses metaphors and similes from farmyard life. Sinners "bark like dogs", or are like "restless horses". The proud are people who "without wings want to take the moon in their teeth", or who "admire their feathers like peacocks." When you point out peoples' sins, they "throw their snouts on the ground like hogs." When we turn over false doctrine in our heads we are like "horses chewing our bits." God's truth makes us "pull in our horns." In our pride we are "hopping like toads, yet imagine we are like runaway horses."

So it is a plain and vigorous style, forceful, clear, simple. He always develops his point with impeccable logic. He has been accused of being too blunt, or even crude on occasions, but equally he can be very gracious and tender. In one sermon he pictures God as the loving father trying to win over a reluctant child by being gracious to the point of indulgence and saying, "I'll give you a lovely hat; I'll buy you a pretty dress."

(iii). His themes in preaching the Old Testament. We can only focus on a few here.

(a) The power of the Law. As we have seen, for Calvin the Old Testament is a preliminary Gospel in which is found all the New Testament doctrines. It

is to be interpreted in a historical-grammatical sense, for only then will it speak to the hungry and thirsty soul. Speaking of the Old Testament in a sermon on 1 Timothy he asks,

> Of what use is the Word of God? It is food for our souls and it is also medicine. We have the bread and meat which are food for our souls, but it supplies even more. When we are sick from our vices, so that we have many wicked corruptions and cupidities, we must be cleansed of these, and the Word serves us as a purge, sometimes as a bleeding, sometimes as a beverage, sometimes as a fast; in short, all that the human doctors prescribe for the human body, to heal it of its maladies, is less than one tenth of how the Word of God can be used by us for the spiritual health of our souls.[29]

This was why Calvin preached as he did, not choosing a topic to "meet the needs of the hour," but simply expounding the whole counsel of the whole Word, knowing that the Holy Spirit would apply it as needed to the hearts of his hearers.

(b) The greatness of God. His preaching is always God-centred. He stresses the sovereign providence of God. For example, in the sermons on Job he stresses that though God's ways may seem strange, even vexing, Job must rest in the ultimate goodness of the divine purpose. He dwells on the incomprehensibility and inscrutability of God in his secret will, so that there is a mystery in his dealings with his children. Like Job we need to put our hands over our mouths and, instead of rationalising, yield entirely to the hidden grace of the sovereign, majestic God. He is the God of sovereign predestination who elects a people of total inability to eternal life. Because Calvin found such comfort in the doctrine of election, overtones of it can be heard in all his preaching. In speaking of Bildad in Job 9:1-6, whose position, he says, is tantamount to attributing free will to man, Calvin says this "upsets the first foundations of our faith."[30] For him, it could be argued, the basic error of Rome, on the one hand, and the Anabaptists on the other, was the espousal of free will. He also defends reprobation against the Libertines. For him the work of the Holy Spirit is key, giving us new life, causing us to take the gift of salvation, speaking through the Word. As he states in one sermon,

> Let us note that it is not enough for us to receive the Word which will be preached to us by the lips of a man. It will be nothing but a sound which can vanish in the air without benefit to anyone. But after we have heard the Word of God He must speak within us by his Holy Spirit...For also repentance is a peculiar gift proceeding from the Holy Spirit, who shows us that God has pity on us and that He does not will that we perish, but that he is drawing us to Himself.[31]

(c) The sinfulness of man. The theme of man's total depravity pervades

Calvin's preaching. In a sermon on Deuteronomy he states,

> We are already guilty of having destroyed the image of God. To be sure, that proceeds from the origin of the first man, but we are nevertheless not blameless...the Law convicts us, showing us how incapable we are...so that we may lament, seeing the wretchedness we are in, that we may grow faint and in our guilt present ourselves before God to be condemned and urge him to do what we cannot...man will always believe that he is worth something and prize himself indeed, in spite of God. When God hits us over the head with great hammer blows we still hold our heads high and think there is some righteousness in us.

Preaching on Psalm 119 he states,

> As for evil, we are more diligent in it than in anything else; in short, there is no one who is not altogether too adept at it...When it comes to walking in the commandments of God, we cannot lift a finger; we have broken arms and legs; in short, it is not only that we are feeble, but that we are to all intents dead.

Preaching on Gen.15:6 he says,

> It only takes a fly to deflect us from the good path ... in confessing that there is nothing but wrongdoing in us and that it is by faith that we receive what God offers, we bring Him nothing of ourselves, but come to Him completely empty.[32]

(d) The need of salvation. Calvin's sermons betray a burden for the salvation of his hearers. Indeed the main aim of preaching is the salvation of souls. He often assured those sitting under his ministry that the fact that they were actually in church listening to the sermon is evidence that God is drawing them towards salvation and that they should make the most of their opportunity. A typical example of this was when he stated in one sermon,

> It is Christ who takes from us all fear and terror. It is He who can give us assurance and resolution that even to the end we shall remain safe and sound if we call on God. As Solomon says, "His name is a strong tower and the righteous will have in Him a good and assured retreat." Also says the prophet Joel, "Although the world be turned upside down, whoever calls upon the Name of the Lord will be saved." This is especially applied to the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ, in order that we may be entirely persuaded that, although our salvation may be, as it were, in suspense, and though we may see, as it were, a thousand hazards, yet God will always keep us in his protection, and we shall feel that his power is always near us, and ready to help us, provided we seek it by prayer of mouth and heart.[33]

(e) The vital importance of prayer in the believer's life. Calvin's exhortations in his preaching, with his characteristic use of the first person plural subjunctive ("May we..."), often rise to the level of prayer. It is a subject which he often addresses in its own right. To take one typical example:

> The principle exercise of our faith is prayer. Now faith cannot exist without waiting. It is not possible for God to humour us as soon as we have opened our mouths and formed our request. But it is needful that He delay and that He let us languish oftentimes so that we may know what it is to call upon Him sincerely and without pretence, so that we may declare that our faith is so founded upon the Word of God that it checks us as a bridle, so that we may be patient to endure until the opportune time to help us shall have come[34].

In conclusion we quote the words of John A. Broadus, assessing the history of preaching,

> Calvin gave the ablest, soundest, clearest expositions of Scripture that had been seen in a thousand years...such careful and continued exposition of the Bible, based upon sound exegesis and pursued with loving zeal, could not fail of great results, especially at a time when direct knowledge of Scripture was a most attractive and refreshing novelty.[35]

Finally the words of T. H. L. Parker, as he assesses Calvin's Old Testament preaching between 1549 and 1564:

> Before he smiles at such unusual activity of the pulpit, the reader would do well to ask himself whether he would prefer to listen to the second-hand views on a religion of social ethics, or the ill-digested piety, delivered in slipshod English, that he will hear to-day in most churches of whatever denomination he may enter, or three hundred and forty-two sermons on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, sermons born of an infinite passion of faith and a burning sincerity, sermons luminous with theological sense, lively with wit and imagery, showing depths of compassion and the unquenchable joyousness of hope. Those in Geneva who listened Sunday after Sunday, day after day, and did not shut their ears, but were "instructed, admonished, exhorted and admonished," received a training in Christianity such as had been given to few congregations in Europe since the days of the fathers.[36]

Notes

1. Quoted in *John Calvin: Expository Preacher* by Leroy Nixon (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1950), p.38.
2. John Calvin, *Sermons from Job*, Introduction by Harold Dekker, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), p.ix.
3. T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin* (Berkhamstead: Lion Publishing, 1975), p.114.
4. T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1992), pp.59-60
5. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching*, pp.150-152.
6. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching*, p. 81: cf. *Sermons from Job*, pp.xiv-xv.
7. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching*, pp.62-63.
8. Charles L. Cooke, "Calvin's Illnesses and Their Relation to Christian Vocation" in *John Calvin and the Church: A Prism of Reform*, edited by Timothy George (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), pp.59-70.
9. Williston Walker, *John Calvin, the Organiser of Reformed Protestantism* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906) pp.433-434.

10. J. P. Wiles, *Instruction in Christianity: A Summary of Calvin's "Institutes"*, Introduction by J. I. Packer (Redhill: Sovereign Grace Union, 1966), p.26.
11. J. P. Wiles, *Instruction*, p.52.
12. J. P. Wiles, *Instruction*, pp.120-123.
13. J. P. Wiles, *Instruction*, p.124.
14. Quoted in Parker, *Calvin's Preaching*, pp.9-11.
15. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching*, p.15.
16. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching*, p.10.
17. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching*, p.10.
18. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching*, p.11.
19. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching*, p.15.
20. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching*, p.9.
21. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching*, pp.9-10.
22. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching*, p.10.
23. Quoted in Calvin, *Sermons from Job*, p. xiv.
24. Quoted in Nixon, *John Calvin: Expository Preacher*, p.58.
25. Quoted in Parker, *Calvin's Preaching*, p.82.
26. Calvin, *Sermons from Job*, pp.3-5.
27. Calvin, *Sermons from Job*, p.xvii.
28. Calvin, *Sermons from Job*, pp.125-126.
29. Quoted in Nixon, *John Calvin: Expository Preacher*, p.93.
30. Calvin, *Sermons from Job*, p.48.
31. Quoted in Nixon, *John Calvin: Expository Preacher*, pp.102-103.
32. Nixon, *John Calvin: Expository Preacher*, pp.79-80.
33. Nixon, *John Calvin: Expository Preacher*, pp.97-98.
34. Nixon, *John Calvin: Expository Preacher*, p.117.
35. J. A. Broadus, *Lectures on the History of Preaching* (New York: Sheldon & Company, 1876), p.115.
36. Parker, *John Calvin*, pp.109-110.

JOHN CALVIN ON WORSHIP

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In the early 21st century, much evangelical worship is in chaos, with so-called 'worship wars' and what seems to be an increasing tendency to worship worship instead of worshipping God. Such worship may be lively, yet it is too often bereft of depth and dignity. Although the picture is not all dark, with encouraging signs in many places, there is a need for an underlying principle, a solid foundation on which God-honouring worship can be grounded. To this, Calvin can make a valuable contribution.

In studying Calvin's view of worship, several mistakes are possible. We might attempt to deify him, taking all he taught and did as normative – an impiety to which he would have been most vehemently opposed. We might seek to enlist him as the champion of our particular "liturgy". But, while it is true that there are churches today which are still close to Calvin's form of worship and that others which claim to hold his theology need to ask themselves why their worship pattern is so different from his, no church can claim him completely. Perhaps the greatest danger, however, is that we ignore him as an outdated relic with nothing relevant to contribute.

The truth is that, as one of the leaders of the greatest revolution in worship in the history of the world, he has more to teach us about worship than almost anyone since the apostles. We will consider first the pattern of worship which he established and then, more importantly, seek to understand why he acted as he did. We will find him of major help in a time of confusion and crisis.

The Importance of Worship

The fact is that the early 16th century saw a radical change in worship patterns in an astonishingly short period. For a Roman Catholic to enter a Protestant place of worship for the first time in, say, 1560 would have been a devastating shock. There would be no priests, vestments, crucifixes, candles, images, statues, relics, Latin, altar or sacrifice. This would have been the most dramatic physical evidence of the spiritual earthquake which we call "The Reformation."

Calvin himself states the pre eminence which he gives to worship in, for

example, his 1544 treatise, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, where he indicates the two great pillars of Christianity – and note the order!

> If it be inquired, then, by what things chiefly the Christian religion has a standing existence amongst us, and maintains its truth, it will be found that the following two not only occupy the principal place, but comprehend under them all the other parts, and consequently the whole substance of Christianity, viz., a knowledge, firstly, of the mode in which God is duly worshipped; and, secondly, of the source from which salvation is to be obtained.[1]

Worship comes first because it is at the centre of our existence, the reason for which humans were created. "It is the worship of God alone that renders men higher than the brutes, and through it alone they aspire to immortality."[2] It is, moreover, both our duty and a source of rich spiritual blessing, for

> he commands us to worship and adore him with true and zealous godliness...to contemplate, fear, and worship his majesty; to participate in his blessings; to seek his help at all times; to recognize, and by praises to celebrate, the greatness of his works – as the only goal of all the activities of this life.[3]

As the highest and focal point of human existence, nothing can be more important.

Worship and Theology

For Calvin, worship relates to theology in two ways. Firstly, it flows from theology. What we believe about God and about ourselves will inevitably shape how we worship, for worship reflects doctrine. It is not to be governed by pragmatism but by our understanding of truth. His view of worship is intensely theological.

This is probably why he does not devote a separate section specifically to worship in his writings. He does deal with the subject in several tracts, such as *Forms of Prayer for the Church* and *Form of Administering the Sacraments*,[4] but most of his teaching is to be found either in his commentaries, on relevant verses, or in various appropriate parts of the *Institutes*. See for example part of his comment on John 4:22:

> However much in their obstinacy those who worship God from their own notions or men's traditions flatter and praise themselves, this one Word thundering from heaven overthrows every divine and holy thing they think they possess: 'Ye worship that which ye know not.'[5]

Much of what he has to say about worship in the *Institutes* is to be found in four places: the doctrine of God, especially that he is spirit (1.11); the explanation of the moral law, especially the 2nd Commandment (2.8); prayer

(3.20); the limited authority of the church (4.10). He is showing us by his method that worship is not a subject on its own, but rather our response to truth and intertwined with it.

Two doctrines in particular undergird Calvin's view of worship. Firstly, the doctrine of God – in his glory, majesty, sovereign power and infinite grace. Reverence, submission, adoring wonder and heartfelt gratitude are to be rendered to him, for all is to and for and because of him. Secondly, the doctrine of man – particularly his depravity, which makes Calvin profoundly suspicious of all purely human ideas and inventions in worship. "Man's nature, so to speak, is a perpetual factory of idols."[6]

> Under the pretense of holy zeal, superstitious men give way to the indulgences of the flesh; and Satan baits his fictitious modes of worship with such attractions, that they are willingly and eagerly caught hold of and obstinately retained.[7]

How then can fallen, rebellious humans acceptably worship a glorious, sovereign God? The problem is resolved by what has become known as the regulative principle, the formative governing principle of Reformed worship, that

> the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men...or any...way not prescribed in the holy Scripture.[8]

It is God's prerogative to decree how he is to be worshipped, not only as Creator with supreme authority over his creatures, but as Redeemer, by whose grace alone in Christ we are able to enter his presence and not only live but be welcomed. In his Word he has taught us how to worship and we are to obey that Word in humble gladness, not daring to intrude our own ideas, suggesting in effect that we know what pleases God better than he does.

Calvin states the principle simply: "If...we...only follow what God demands, our worship will be pure, but if we add anything of our own, it is an abomination."[9] Yet he recognizes how unwelcome this is to human pride:

> I know how difficult it is to persuade the world that God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His Word. The opposite persuasion which cleaves to them, being seated, as it were, in their very bones and marrow, is, that whatever they do has in itself a sufficient sanction, provided it exhibits some kind of zeal for the honour of God.[10]

But God knows our weakness and calls us in his mercy and wisdom from the folly of our own imaginings to the secure paths of his commands, as Calvin explains in his exposition of the second commandment:

> The purpose of this commandment, then, is that he does not will that his lawful worship be profaned by superstitious rites. To sum up, he wholly calls us back and withdraws us from petty carnal observances, which our stupid minds, crassly conceiving of God, are wont to devise. And then he makes us conform to his lawful worship, that is, a spiritual worship established by himself![11]

It was the implementation of this regulative principle which swept away the gospel-concealing ceremonies of Romanism and opened for many the door into a true experience of worship.

Three Features of Calvin's View of Worship

The centrality of the Word

Whereas the mass lay at the heart of Roman Catholic worship, for Protestants the central act was now the reading and preaching of the Bible. No liturgical distinction was made between these, with preaching followed immediately upon the reading, both being described as "the Word". Through the Word, God himself addressed his people and "this ought to add not a little to our respect for the Gospel, that we must think of it as told not so much by men themselves as by Christ with their lips."[12] As the preacher expounds the Word, he does so in expectation that the message coming from his mouth will, by God's grace, pass powerfully and effectively into the hearts of his hearers as the direct speech to them of their Creator and Redeemer. The method adopted was *lectio continua*, with whole books being consecutively expounded in simple language, so that the people could understand. Preaching was to be colourful and vivid, enabling the hearers to "see" the truths being declared:

> Let those who want to do well in carrying out the task of the ministry of the Word learn not only to converse and to speak publicly, but especially to penetrate through into the conscience so that people can see the crucified Christ and his very blood as it flows. If the church has that kind of artists, it will need neither wood nor stone...and will in fact not need any images any more at all.[13]

This conviction about the reading and preaching of the Word as the high point of worship was given architectural expression by a central raised pulpit in Reformed meetinghouses, whereby all eyes were directed to the Word as the focus of attention. The centrality of Scripture was expressed not just in preaching, but in the whole service, which was entirely Word-dominated. It began and ended with verses of Scripture. The prayers were full of Scriptural quotations and allusions. Scripture was sung as praise. Nothing else was included apart from the Bible, for "from first to last, Calvin's liturgy is an encounter with the truth of Holy Scripture."[14]

> It was through the Word that the Church was brought into being; it is through the same Word always being given afresh that the Church is continually renewed in its life and preserved as a Church.[15]

Congregational singing

An equally obvious change was the development of congregational singing. In Romanism, the priest chanted in unintelligible Latin and where there was singing, a trained choir performed complex polyphonic pieces, so that the praises of the people were muzzled. But the redeemed have an irrepressible impulse to praise, to celebrate God's presence, to give thanks for salvation. Yet music is a powerful force. It can be dangerous and is often the way in which error has entered the Church. Zwingli eliminated music altogether from the communion service and replaced it with responsive reading. To avoid this extreme, there was a need for God-honouring, appropriate praise.

Calvin is the father of congregational psalm-singing, for he had the psalms translated into metrical versions in modern French, saw that suitable music was provided and encouraged and taught the people to sing. For him, the Book of Psalms was the God-ordained and God-provided manual of praise:

> There is no other book in which we are more perfectly taught the right manner of praising God, or in which we are more powerfully stirred up to the performance of this religious exercise.[16]

Apart from their appropriateness for worship and thanksgiving, the psalms were of enormous pastoral value, ideally suited to express the more trying experiences of the believer.

> I have been accustomed to call this book...'An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul'; for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated[17]

> No one is able to sing things worthy of God except that which he has received from him. Therefore, when we have looked thoroughly, and searched here and there, we shall not find better songs, nor more fitting for the purpose, than the Psalms of David, which the Holy Spirit spoke and made through him. And moreover, when we sing them, we are certain that God puts in our mouths these, as if he himself were singing in us to exalt his glory.[18]

In 1537 Calvin proposed to the city council of Geneva that congregational singing be introduced. The proposal was defeated and it was in Strasburg that the Psalter began to take shape. The first edition appeared in 1539, consisting

of 18 psalms and 3 hymns (the Song of Simeon and metrical versions of the 10 Commandments and the Apostles' Creed), mostly translated by Clement Marot, with a few by Calvin himself. He concluded that he was not gifted in this area and did not pursue it. Marot followed Calvin to Geneva and added other versions, eventually contributing 49 psalms. The work was completed by Theodore Beza, an entire Psalter appearing in 1562. It proved to be a publishing phenomenon, with 62 editions appearing in three years.

The 125 tunes of the Genevan Psalter, most of them probably contributed by Louis Bourgeois, were simple and singable and singing was at first in unison. Calvin was concerned that music should always be the servant of the text:

> We should be very careful that our ears be not more attentive to the melody than our minds to the spiritual meaning of the words.[19]

It should be appropriate for the worship of the Almighty:

> Care must always be taken that the song be neither light nor frivolous; but that it have weight and majesty...and also, there is a great difference between music which one makes to entertain men at table and in their houses, and the Psalms which are sung in the Church in the presence of God and his angels.[20]

Musical instruments were eliminated from worship on the grounds of the regulative principle:

> Musical instruments were among the legal ceremonies which Christ at His coming abolished; and therefore we, under the Gospel, must maintain a greater simplicity.[21]

> Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law.[22]

Psalm-singing proved astoundingly influential.

> Today it is hard to imagine the effect of fresh and excellent verse translations set to eminently singable, clear, simple melodies. It was in this way that the Bible first came home to every layman...It swept Europe and became the most powerful proselytising instrument of the Reformed tradition. Even strict Lutherans with their unrivalled hymnody spoke with some irritation and envy of '*le sirene Calviniste*'.[23]

A visitor to Geneva in 1557 described how

> on the weekdays, when the hour for the sermon approaches...all shops are closed, all conversation ceases, all business is broken off, and from all sides the people

> hasten to the nearest meeting-house. There each one draws from his pocket a small book which contains the Psalms with notes, and out of full hearts, in the native speech, the congregation sings before and after the sermon.[24]

The psalms were sung in homes, at work, in the sickroom, on the battlefield. Martyrs sang them on their way to death, as they were tied to the stake, as the flames kindled. It was reported that some bishops ordered that the tongues of Huguenots be torn out so that they could not sing psalms as they were dying. They shaped, as almost nothing else, the piety of Calvinism.

Maintenance of balance

Many other areas of Calvin's teaching on worship could be considered. The place of the Holy Spirit is a huge topic in itself, pointing to perhaps our greatest present need. But something should be said about Calvin as a man of balance and moderation. This is not his popular reputation, which is of a clinical fanatic, pushing to extremes. In fact, his teaching is exquisitely balanced and sane. Four examples may be noted.

Tradition and innovation. What is striking about Luther and Calvin, men who promoted enormous, far-reaching change, is that they were both conservative in temperament, reluctant revolutionaries. They were eager to stress that what they were seeking was not a new church, but a return to the scriptural and primitive pattern – a "re-formation". Calvin's criticism of the unscriptural errors of the past

> does not mean that I esteem the ancient councils less than I ought. For I venerate them from my heart, and desire that they be honored by all. But here is the norm that nothing of course detract from Christ.[25]

> We willingly embrace and reverence as holy the early councils, such as those of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus I, Chalcedon, and the like...For they contain nothing but the pure and genuine exposition of Scripture, which the holy fathers applied with spiritual prudence to crush the enemies of religion who had then arisen.[26]

His title for the Genevan service book was: *The Form of Prayer and Manner of Ministering the Sacraments according to the Use of the Ancient Church*. He was critical of

> many unlettered persons, (who) when they are told that men's consciences are impiously bound by human traditions...apply the same erasure to all the laws by which the order of the church is shaped.[27]

No one could doubt Calvin's attachment to the past who had been present

at the 1536 dispute in Lausanne between Reformed and Catholic theologians. On the fourth day he stood up and destroyed the case of his opponents with a staggering array of quotations from the Fathers – all from memory and without any notes. This is valuable to remember in an age when the past is contemptuously disregarded.

Word and sacrament. Although the Word was central for Calvin, we must not overlook how important the sacraments were in his thinking. His teaching on them takes up 45% of Book 4 of the *Institutes*, 14% of the whole work. For him the Lord's Supper was far more than a memorial:

> That sacred partaking of his flesh and blood by which Christ pours his life into us, as if it penetrated into our bones and marrow, he also testifies and seals in the Supper – not by presenting a vain and empty sign, but by manifesting there the effectiveness of his Spirit to fulfil what he promises.[28]

He wanted the Supper observed on a weekly basis, but was overruled by the Geneva city council which opted for four times per year. Calvin accepted reluctantly, but to the end of his life was never reconciled to this practice. The sacraments were God's visual aids to help people grasp the truth of the gospel.

> He admitted that human nature needs to be appealed to in worship through visible rites as well as through the spoken word. But he believed that God had amply provided for our need in this respect by the institution of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Word and those two sacraments constitute the image in which God Himself has chosen both to represent and present Himself to His people. It is not for man to seek to improve on what God has ordained.[29]

At a time when most evangelicals have a Zwinglian, hyper-spiritual view of the sacraments, Calvin's teaching needs re-examined.

Order and freedom. Calvin arranged for set prayers to be read out in worship, and for the 10 Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed to be read or sung regularly. In other words, there was a fixed, written liturgy of a sort with which few of us are familiar. He was cautious about allowing too much freedom to the individual minister, although there was also an important place for prayer in the minister's own words – and the sermon was at the heart of worship. There was thus a balance between form and freedom.

This balance is seen also in that, although firm and intensely principled, he often displays a tolerant, moderate spirit, a willingness to compromise in incidentals for the sake of the greater good. When the English congregation in Frankfurt divided over liturgical rites, he found it "absurd that division arises among brothers who have been banished from their home country and who took flight all together for the sake of the same faith."[30] Many of the follies in

the Anglican liturgy should be tolerated in the present crisis. When John Hooper was imprisoned in England for refusing to wear the vestments of a bishop, Calvin wrote to Bullinger: "I had rather he had not carried his opposition so far with respect to the cap and linen vestment, even though I do not approve of these."[31]

> We need not be too finicky about things that are not so necessary, provided that external displays do not pollute the simple institution of Christ...We must especially beware lest the consensus of the faithful be torn over external observances and the bond of charity be broken.[32]

A certain divergence among various churches could even be desirable as a way of showing in what true unity existed. God has permitted us a degree of freedom.

> Because he did not will in outward discipline and ceremonies to prescribe in detail what we ought to do (because these depended upon the state of the times, and he did not deem one form suitable for all ages), here we must take refuge in those general rules which he has given, that whatever the necessity of the church will require for order and decorum should be tested against these. Lastly, because he has taught nothing specifically, and because these things are not necessary to salvation, and for the upbuilding of the church ought to be variously accommodated to the customs of each nation and age, it will be fitting (as the advantage of the church will require) to change and abrogate traditional practices and to establish new ones. Indeed, I admit that we ought not to charge into innovation rashly, suddenly, for insufficient cause. But love will best judge what may hurt or edify; and if we let love be our guide, all will be safe.[33]

We may not all agree as to whether or not Calvin was correct in this view, but those who insist that God's will is for believers everywhere to worship in a way that is identical, even to details, need to realise that they cannot claim the support of John Calvin.

Feeling and restraint. No one emphasised more clearly and warmly that God is to be worshipped passionately, from the heart. The mind is to be enlightened, but then all the emotions are to be involved. God wants us to respond to him "not coldly and perfunctorily," but always with "a burning affection that breaks out impulsively and impetuously."[34] Psalm singing "has the greatest value in kindling our hearts to a true zeal and eagerness to pray."[35]

Yet at the same time he was aware of the human tendency to let emotions run out of control. Worship was to be marked by dignity and decorum, as befitting those bowing before the Almighty. One of his favourite words in connection with music was that it should be "moderate" – never taking a primary place, never overshadowing the words, never stirring up unworthy agitation or excitement.

> We find by experience that it has a sacred and almost incredible power to move hearts in one way or another. Therefore we ought to be even more diligent in regulating it in such a way that it shall be useful to us and in no way pernicious.[36]

One of the key fruits of the Spirit and evidence of his presence is self-control. Calvin comments on "let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe" (Heb.12:28) that "although readiness and joy are demanded in our service, at the same time no worship is pleasing to him that is not allied to humility and due reverence."[37]

How much we need this pastoral wisdom, keeping a true balance between mechanical ritual and mindless emotionalism!

The Order of Worship

Martin Bucer at Strasburg had taken Acts 2:42 as the scriptural pattern for the elements of worship: teaching, fellowship (alms), breaking of bread and prayers (including the singing of praise). Calvin followed Bucer, although the pattern was modified at Geneva, sometimes against his will. The minister led, wearing a plain black robe with a black velvet cap. The invocation was from Psalm 124: 8: "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth". This was followed by a general confession of sins and expression of repentance, with the people usually kneeling. Psalms were interspersed throughout the service. Promises of forgiveness were read (the Strasburg absolution was omitted in Geneva after protests: "I yielded too easily", said Calvin). In Strasburg, the 10 Commandments were sung, interspersed with the Kyrie Eleison, replaced in Geneva by a psalm. (It is interesting that while Lutherans had the Decalogue before confession to stimulate repentance, Calvin placed it after confession, as the commitment to obedience of the sinner saved by grace). A prayer for illumination was offered in the minister's own words. After this came the reading of the Word and the sermon. This was followed by the offering of alms, prayers of intercession. The Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed were sung or spoken. The Lord's Supper was celebrated:

> When bread and wine have been placed on the Table, the minister should repeat the words of institution of the Supper. Next, he should recite the promises which were left to us in it; at the same time, he should excommunicate all who are debarred from it by the Lord's prohibition. Afterward, he should pray that the Lord, with the kindness wherewith he has bestowed this sacred food upon us, also teach and form us to receive it with faith and thankfulness of heart, and, inasmuch as we are not so of ourselves, by his mercy make us worthy of such a feast. But here either psalms should be sung or something be read, and in becoming order the believers should partake of the most holy banquet, the ministers breaking the bread and giving the cup. When the Supper is finished, there should be an exhortation to sincere faith and confession of faith, to love and behavior worthy of Christians. At the last, thanks should be given and praises sung to God. When

these things are ended, the church should be dismissed in peace.[38]

This worship was formal, reverent and heart-felt, under clear leadership, yet truly participatory. It was a dialogue between God and the worshippers. It had shape, balance and purpose.

Current "worship wars" seem by comparison depressingly shallow and trivial. In all the confusion, God is dishonoured and his people impoverished. There is a second way in which worship and theology are related. In the not so long run, Reformed theology will not survive if it is divorced from Reformed worship. Abandoning one will lead inevitably to abandoning the other.

We need to hold on or return to the solid rock of the regulative principle. By it, God's glory is promoted, human depravity restrained and Christian experience given full expression. We may not always agree on the details of how the principle is to be applied, but we should urge believers to adopt as a starting-point that God is to be worshipped only in the way which he has appointed.

> The greatest single contribution that the Reformed liturgical heritage can make to contemporary...Protestantism is its sense of the majesty and sovereignty of God, its sense of reverence and simple dignity, its conviction that worship must above all serve the praise of God...In our evangelistic zeal we are looking for programs that will attract people. We think we have to put honey on the lip of the bitter cup of salvation. It is the story of the wedding of Cana all over again, but with this difference. At the crucial moment when the wine failed, we took matters into our own hands and used those six stone jars to mix up a batch of Kool-Aid instead. It seemed like a good solution...Unfortunately, all too soon the guests discovered the fraud...There is but one thing to do...After presenting the problem to Jesus, Mary turned to the servants and said to them, 'Do whatever he tells you' (John 2.5). The servants did just that and the water was turned to wine, wine rich and mellow beyond anything they had ever tasted before.[39]

Notes

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27. *Institutes*, 4.10.27.
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31. Cited in Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva and the Reformation*, p.136.
32. Cited in William J Bousma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.224.
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JOHN CALVIN: THEOLOGIAN OF MISSION

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The idea that John Calvin can be thought of as a theologian of mission seems incredible to many. When they think of John Calvin, they imagine a cold, harsh figure, obsessed with the sovereignty of a God who randomly saves a few whilst damning multitudes. What place could mission have in the theology of such a man? It is perhaps surprising that scholars who are in a position to find out the truth of the matter share this view of Calvin. Some examples will provide insight into this picture of the Genevan Reformer.

For some, the (supposed) problem is the character of Calvin himself. Thus Will Durant in his 11 volume *History of Western Civilization* said of Calvin:

> We shall always find it hard to love the man, John Calvin, who darkened the human soul with the most absurd and blasphemous conception of God in all the long and honored history of nonsense.[1]

An even more damning verdict is to be found in Erich Fromm's claim that Luther and Calvin 'belonged to the ranks of the greatest haters in history'.[2] The theology of such a man is unlikely to have much to say on mission.

Others would not go to such extremes, and their evaluation of Calvin would on the whole be rather more positive, yet they argue that in practice, like many of the other Reformers, Calvin took little interest in mission. It is not uncommon to find this failing being attributed to Calvin's theological outlook. Thus missiologist Gustav Warneck laid the blame on Calvin's doctrine of predestination. Thus he writes,

> We miss in the Reformers, not only missionary action, but even the idea of missions...because fundamental theological views hindered them from giving their activity and even their thoughts a missionary direction.[3]

Calvin's view of the sovereignty of God, especially as expressed in h

decree of predestination, has been vilified by many, and it has often been regarded as harmful to, if not entirely destructive of, the whole missionary enterprise of the Church. It appears obvious to many that a man who held such views could have little of value to contribute to a theological understanding of mission. If that were the case, this would be an extremely brief paper.

The portraits of Calvin which these authors have painted, however, are in fact caricatures rather than accurate representations. The Genevan Reformer had a passion for mission, understood as the preaching of the gospel and the nurture of those who professed faith. Ample evidence of this passion is provided by his training and sending missionary pastors to other parts of Europe, especially to his native France, and even on an abortive mission to Brazil.[4] Calvin and his associates in the Genevan Consistory made a vast contribution to the evangelisation of France. That zealous missionary endeavour was also built on a firm foundation of biblical theological principles which will be our concern in this present study.

A consideration of Calvin's theology of mission could take one of two approaches. On the one hand, it would be possible to survey Calvin's theology and draw out of it those elements which, it appears to us, are particularly relevant to the subject of mission, regardless of how Calvin himself viewed the matter. Alternatively we could examine Calvin's writings with a view to discovering the principles which he himself regarded as of significance for the Church's missionary calling. The former approach would yield what might best be termed as a 'Calvinistic' theology of mission, which would no doubt be of considerable value. The latter, however, offers the possibility of listening to Calvin's missionary heart, of understanding the theological underpinnings of his missionary endeavours. It is this second approach which we will adopt, identifying several key principles scattered through his writings (especially his commentaries), setting them in the wider context of his theology and seeking to draw some contemporary applications.

1. The sovereignty of God

It has often been claimed that belief in the sovereignty of God discourages interest in evangelism and mission. We noted above that a writer of the eminence of Gustav Warneck could give expression to such a view with reference to the Reformers. If that is indeed the truth of the matter, then John Calvin, who all agree held a high doctrine of the sovereignty of God, should be a singular example of such a mentality. What is the point of evangelizing if salvation is determined solely by the decree of God?

Calvin had in fact no difficulty in this regard. Indeed we find the opposite to be the case. For Calvin it is the decree of a sovereign God that ensures that those whom he had freely elected will certainly come to saving faith:

> Although it is now sufficiently clear that God by his secret plan freely chooses whom he pleases, rejecting others, still his free election has been only half explained until we come to individual persons, to whom God not only offers salvation but so assigns it that the certainty of its effect is not in suspense or doubt.[5]

In Calvin's view this sovereign work of God in no way nullifies human responsibility to believe the gospel message. No sinner will be saved without calling on the Lord for mercy, but it is God who motivates and enables that call:

> When we receive the promises in faith, we know that then and only then do they become effective in us...For by so promising he merely means that his mercy is extended to all, provided they seek after it and implore it. But only those whom he has illumined do this. And he illumines those whom he has predestined to salvation.[6]

The two elements must both be kept clearly in view. Without repentance and faith, none will be saved, yet it is the sovereign grace of God that brings about the response to the gospel that is necessary for salvation. It is in fact the conviction that God will grant to his elect such a saving response that enables preachers to proclaim the message with confidence. Such a view inevitably raises questions as to the compatibility of the universality of the gospel invitation with the particularity of election. Calvin, however, remains wholeheartedly committed to the twin biblical truths 'that all are called to repentance and faith by outward preaching, yet that the spirit of repentance and faith is not given to all'.[7]

Preachers are necessary for the spreading of the gospel message, and Calvin also asserts that the sending of the gospel by means of preachers is a token of the love of a sovereign God who has determined to raise up a people who know and love him. Commenting on Romans 10:15 ('How shall they preach, except they be sent?'), Calvin writes,

> Paul's meaning is that when any nation is favoured with the preaching of the Gospel, it is a pledge and proof of the divine love...It is certain, therefore, that God visits that nation in which the Gospel is proclaimed[8]

It is the will of God that the Gospel should be spread throughout the world and so in times of adversity his people can take encouragement from the certainty of the divine plan. Commenting on Isaiah 2:3, Calvin writes,

> Whatever may be the condition of your affairs, and though you should be oppressed by afflictions on all sides, still continue to cherish this assured hope, that *the law will go forth out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*; for this is an infallible decree of God, which no diversity or change of events will render void.[9]

A conviction that the Lord reigns not only motivates his people to engage in mission, it also comforts them with the assurance that his purpose will be fulfilled in the salvation of multitudes.

The divine role in the work of mission is, in Calvin's view, comprehensive, since it is the sovereign Lord who provides the necessary opportunities for the spread of the gospel. Thus with reference to Paul's words in I Corinthians 16:9 ('For a great door...is opened'), Calvin comments,

> ...the Lord was opening up an 'entrance' for him to spread the Gospel...He calls it 'effectual' because the Lord was blessing his labour, and making his teaching efficacious by the power of His Spirit.[10]

This principle holds true for the evangelistic work of the church after the age of the Apostles. Commenting on the phrase 'A door was opened unto me' (II Corinthians 2:12), Calvin writes,

> he means that an opportunity of furthering the Gospel had presented itself...when an opportunity for edification presents itself, we should realize that a door has been opened for us by the hand of God in order that we many introduce Christ into that place and we should not refuse to accept the generous invitation that God thus gives us.[11]

Such a clear statement by Calvin counts strongly against the portrayal of the Reformers by Oxford scholar Alister McGrath in his recent study of the history of Protestantism, entitled *Christianity's Dangerous Idea*. Arguing that in its formative phase Protestantism had little interest in mission or evangelism, McGrath goes on to assert that 'Neither John Calvin nor Martin Luther had any particular concern to reach beyond the borders of Christendom'.[12] Calvin's goal, according to McGrath, was 'primarily that of the reformation of Catholics – that is to say, the conversion of people from one form of Christianity to another'.[13] Thus the entire Genevan input to gospel work in France ceases to be 'mission' and is in fact 'reformation'. Calvin's own words cannot be squared with such assertions.

Calvin's teaching, along with his practice, in fact demonstrates what a powerful missionary motive is provided by belief in the sovereignty of God. There is no hint of the attitude ascribed by opponents to those who hold to a high view of the sovereignty of God, namely that God can and will save whomsoever he wishes without assistance from men. It is certainly true that at times some have fallen into such false views of the connection (or lack of one) between God's sovereignty and missionary endeavour. This was the case among Particular Baptists in eighteenth century England, giving rise to the rebuke directed at the young William Carey by John Ryland, Sr., 'When God ceases to convert the heathen, He will do it without your aid or mine!'[14] Carey

himself was committed to a much more biblical, and Calvinistic, understanding of God's sovereignty which led to his spending himself in the cause of the gospel in India.

This is precisely what we would expect. A belief in the sovereignty of God such as John Calvin held is a powerful motive for missionary endeavour. As Calvin recognised, a conviction that God reigns leads to a confidence that sinners will be saved. In his classic work *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, J I Packer puts it thus:

> So far from making evangelism pointless, the sovereignty of God in grace is the one thing that prevents evangelism from being pointless. For it creates the possibility – indeed, the certainty – that evangelism will be fruitful. Apart from it, there is not even a possibility of evangelism being fruitful.[15]

The reason for this, as Packer goes on to show, is the spiritual blindness of sinners and their total inability to change themselves. This is abundantly evident from texts such as I Corinthians 2:14, Romans 8:7ff and Ephesians 2:1. As Packer says, 'However clear and cogent we may be in presenting the gospel, we have no hope of convincing or converting anyone'.[16] If the diagnosis of man's spiritual condition is more optimistic, of course there will be less of a sense of dependence on divine action. When the deadness of the sinner is accepted, however, it is clear that a miraculous work by a sovereign God is man's only hope of salvation, and God has promised to work in this way in order to bring his elect to salvation. This is the secret of 'successful' evangelism. As Packer says, 'You and I cannot make sinners repent and believe in Christ by our words alone; but God works faith and repentance in men's hearts by His Holy Spirit'.[17]

One of the greatest examples of the outworking of Calvin's view of the vital link between the sovereignty of God and mission is David Brainerd, who wore himself out in the work of evangelizing the Indians of New England in the early eighteenth century. In his 'Reflections' on the diary and journal of Brainerd, Jonathan Edwards writes of the profound influence of experimental Calvinism, the 'doctrines of grace', in shaping the life and ministry of this pioneer evangelist.[18] Brainerd believed and lived out the doctrine of salvation by the sovereign grace of God, and regarded the sovereign working of God as the reason for any progress that the gospel made among Indians. This is borne out by many entries in both the diary and the journal. In one appendix to the journal Brainerd writes of the great problems that he experienced in communicating Christian truth to the Indians and the means used to resolve the problems. He continues,

> But if it be asked after all how it was surmounted, I must answer, God Himself was pleased to do it with regard to a number of these Indians, by taking the work into His own hand, and making them feel at heart that they were both sinful and miserable'.[19]

Belief in the sovereignty of God is of the utmost importance for mission. It is not a piece of theological abstraction but a living and practical source of missionary zeal. Among the effects of this belief noted by missiologist Howard Peskett in an article in the *Dictionary of Mission Theology*, we note:

> It assures us that he is in control of mission, so it is not out of place to manipulate success or imagine that it is our responsibility to bring in the kingdom.
>
> It gives us our only hope of lasting success in evangelization, for we know that underlying all our patient, thoughtful and enterprising efforts to preach the gospel, it is God who calls, stirs, saves and keeps those who cast themselves upon his mercy.[20]

2. The command of God

Calvin had a big vision for the proclamation of the gospel because God's plan of salvation is vast in scope. God in grace sends out his people to proclaim the gospel and to offer salvation to sinners on a worldwide basis. Thus in commenting on Paul's exhortation to Christians to pray for all kinds of people, including rulers, in I Timothy 2:3, Calvin writes,

> ...the apostle's meaning here is simply that no nation of the earth and no rank of society is excluded from salvation, since God wills to offer the Gospel to all without exception. Since the preaching of the Gospel brings life, he rightly concludes that God regards all men as being equally worthy to share in salvation. But he is speaking of classes and not individuals and his only concern is to include princes and foreign nations in this number.[21]

The Church has an ongoing, worldwide mandate to spread the gospel. It is not accurate to claim, as scholars such as Alister McGrath do, that in Calvin's view the Great Commission of Matthew 28 was only for the apostles and was fulfilled in their evangelistic ministries, leaving present-day evangelism as the province of the 'Christian state'.[22] In fact, when commenting on Matthew 28:18 Calvin decries the false apostolate of the 'Roman Pope and his band' and goes on to assert,

> No-one can be a successor of the Apostles unless he uses his labours for Christ in preaching the Gospel. Whoever does not fulfil the role of teacher cannot rightly use the name of Apostle: this is the priesthood of the New Testament, to slay men by the spiritual sword of the Word, as a sacrifice to God.[23]

The Great Commission continues to be God's mandate for his Church, a principle exemplified in the various elements of the Genevan missionary endeavour. It is abundantly clear that they did not believe they were exempt from God's command.

It may be granted that the 'Great Commission' did not play as great a rôle in the Reformation period as in later centuries, and there were some who denied its continuing validity for the Church. In his historical survey of Christian missions David Bosch comments,

> Although the 'Great Commission' also featured during the Reformation and Protestant orthodoxy, the person really to be credited with putting it on the map, so to speak, was William Carey in his 1792 tract entitled *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*, in which he, with the aid of a simple yet powerful argumentation, demolished the conventional interpretation of Matthew 28:18-20.[24]

It is indeed Matthew 28:18-20 that provides the theological basis for Carey's missiology. Having noted how the commission given to the apostles 'was as extensive as possible',[25] Carey alludes to the views of some theologians that God will bring about the conversion of the heathen by means as yet unknown to us and that, since the apostles have no successors, Christians now have no warrant to carry out this commission. Carey responds by pointing out, among other things, that the cessation of the command to teach all nations would also entail the cessation of baptism (a view held by none but Quakers), that ministers who have already gone to preach to the heathen have done so with no valid commission, and that the promise of God's presence in the world was also limited to the apostles. Regarding the latter Carey comments, '[B]ut this is worded in such a manner as expressly precludes such an idea'.[26] One by one the proffered excuses are dealt with, including the view that there are as many heathen at home to evangelize as there are overseas. No argument presented against the continuing obligation of Matthew 28 can stand. As Carey says,

> Where a command exists nothing can be necessary to render it binding but a removal of those obstacles which render obedience impossible, and these are removed already.[27]

If the world is being traversed by Roman Catholic missionaries and English traders, what is holding back Protestant missionaries?

This biblical text, perhaps more than any other, has motivated generations of God's people to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth. As Omri Jenkins has commented, 'That such an enterprise of grace and glory should be committed to men for any part of its fulfilment is a matter of sheer condescension and mercy'.[28] The preaching of the gospel with the goal of discipleship is the God-ordained means of building his Church and making known to the nations his saving acts in Jesus Christ.

Such a commission is entirely at odds with the prevailing cultural perspectives of Western Europe and North America, and indeed those of many other parts of the world which have been shaped by pluralistic or syncretistic worldviews. It is no longer 'politically correct' to suggest that other religions or philosophies are wrong or harmful; claims to possess 'the truth' are dismissed as arrogant or regarded as potentially dangerous. Disciple-making in obedience to the Great Commission has thus come to be seen as oppressive and threatening. Such claims may readily be linked with allegations about the imperialist motivation of western missionaries and the damaging effects of their activities on local cultures. On this basis the mandate of Matthew 28 should be a matter for shame and apology.

When every allowance has been made for past failures of wisdom and sensitivity, however, the fact remains that Christ has commanded his Church to engage in worldwide mission, as Calvin rightly understood. Obedience is therefore not optional for those who accept Matthew 28 as 'God-breathed' Scripture (to use Paul's terminology in II Timothy 3:16). Omri Jenkins sums up the matter well:

> If the Bible is indeed the very Word of God in written form, the infallible authority in all matters of truth and practice for his people 'to the end of the age', then this commission, in all its parts, must be heeded and obeyed, no matter what men may say or do against it. It was the Lord's final word to those he called his own, the great company of the redeemed, the church he is building and against which the powers of hell will not prevail.[29]

3. God's unfolding purpose

A further element in the missionary thinking of Calvin and the Genevan Church has been identified by W. Stanford Reid. He notes,

> Basic to all their thinking was the doctrine of creation. The sovereign God has made all things, and they are therefore His. And although through man's sin alienation has taken place, it is the responsibility of those who are God's people to bring creation back to Him. This is the mission of the Church until Christ's return in glory.[30]

Redemption has a cosmic scope and will therefore not be complete until the last day. The Church therefore has an ongoing task of mission to the world. As Calvin comments on Romans 8:21,

> this passage shows us to how great an excellence of glory the sons of God are to be exalted, and all creatures shall be renewed to magnify it and declare its splendour ... God will restore the present fallen world to perfect condition at the same time as the human race.[31]

As Paul indicates, the renewal of creation is bound up inextricably with the glorification of the Church of God which will finally have been gathered in in its entirety. Until that day comes, evangelism must continue, in the certainty of God's ultimate triumph.

Calvin reiterates this point with reference to the building of the Church. In commenting on Micah 4:1-2 he says,

> there is no Church, except it be obedient to the word of God, and be guided by it: for the Prophet defines here what true religion is, and also how God collects a Church for himself.[32]

On the same verse he also says,

> there is no other way of raising up the Church of God than by the light of the word, in which God himself, by his own voice, points out the way of salvation. Until then the truth shines, men cannot be united together, so as to form a true Church.[33]

The building of the Church, with a view to God fulfilling his cosmic plan of redemption, necessitates the continued preaching of the gospel.

As Calvin rightly indicated, Romans 8, in particular verse 21, sets out the Christian's hope of the culmination of God's redemptive purpose when the glorification of God's people is accompanied by the renewal of the non-human creation. Thomas Schreiner comments,

> the futility, decay, and frustration of the present world signal its incompleteness and failure to reach its full potential...The return of nature to its purpose will coincide with the freedom of the children of God...[Paul] envisions a future salvation that will engulf the entire cosmos and reverse and transcend the consequences of the fall. The redemption anticipated by the elect will also affect the created order.[34]

Since there is a measure of restoration by the grace of God in the lives of redeemed sinners on this side of the eschaton, we may expect a measure of restoration in the physical creation as the people of God take up their calling to exercise dominion over the earth to the glory of God. In this sense we may agree with the assertion of Indian theologian Ken Gnanakan that 'Christian mission, if it is to develop in greater sensitivity to God's total concern, must develop a truly ecological concern'.[35] This should not, however, lead to any diminution of concern for the proclamation of the gospel with a view to the salvation of sinners.

Creation and redemption must be viewed in relation to the kingship of Christ over all things. It is Christ who will bring about 'the regeneration' (Matthew 19:28, NASB), who will 'reconcile all things to himself...whether things on earth or things in heaven' (Colossians 1:20). As Sidney Rooy comments, 'The only authentic evangelism is one which is oriented by this

radical and all-encompassing redemptive work of our Lord'.[36]

4. The Kingship of Christ

Calvin's zeal for mission is also rooted in his belief in the worldwide reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. By the preaching of the gospel sinners are brought into subjection to their rightful King. This reign of Christ is depicted, according to Calvin, in the Old Testament prophets. Commenting on Isaiah 2:4 ('And he shall judge among the nations'), Calvin writes,

> after the coming of Christ [God] began to reign by himself, that is, in the person of his only-begotten Son, who was truly *God manifested in the flesh* (I Tim.iii.16)...And again he confirms the calling of the Gentiles, because Christ is not sent to the Jews only, that he may reign over them, but that he may hold his sway over the whole world.[37]

The prophet Micah also, in Calvin's view, speaks of the reign of Christ and the place of God's Word in relation to it. On Micah 4:3 ('For from Zion shall go forth a law') he refers to Psalm 110 and says,

> Christ does not otherwise rule among us, than by the doctrine of his Gospel: and there David declares, that this sceptre would be sent far abroad by God the Father, that Christ might have under his rule all those nations which had been previously aliens.[38]

Later, on the same verse, he stresses that Christ's reign has not spread as yet to the extent that God has decreed:

> as the kingdom of Christ was only begun in the world, when God commanded the Gospel to be everywhere proclaimed, and as at this day its course is not as yet completed; so that which the Prophet says here has not hitherto taken place.[39]

The fulfilment of the prophetic visions is to be found in the Gospel records of Christ's ministry, in particular his exaltation after the resurrection. Thus Calvin writes with reference to Matthew 28:18,

> He particularly makes himself Lord and King of heaven and earth, because when He draws men into obedience by the preaching of the Gospel He is establishing the throne of His Kingdom upon earth, and when He regenerates His people to new life and calls them to the hope of salvation, He is opening the heavens to raise them to blessed immortality with the angels.[40]

Such a prospect should act as a powerful motivation for the preaching of the gospel, as it clearly did in Calvin's case.

The history of the Church affords numerous examples of the powerful motivating force provided by an understanding of the kingship of Christ for missionary work and missionary prayer. Thus when Jonathan Edwards sought to promote prayer for world mission by the publication of his *An Humble Attempt*, his focus was on the revival of religion and the advancement of Christ's Kingdom on earth. It is not necessary to share Edwards' postmillennial eschatology to be stirred by such words as these:

> It is evident from the Scripture, that there is yet remaining a great advancement of the interest of religion and the kingdom of Christ in the world, by an abundant outpouring of the Spirit of God, far greater and more extensive then ever yet has been...The world is made for the Son of God; his kingdom is the end of all changes...it is fit, therefore, that the last kingdom on earth should be his'[41]

Many Old Testament prophecies and New Testament promises are cited to support Edwards' belief that the gospel will prevail universally on earth before Christ's return.

Before setting out the duties of Christians in promoting world mission, William Carey comments in his *Enquiry*,

> If the prophecies concerning the increase of Christ's kingdom be true, and is what has been argued concerning the commission given by him to his disciples being obligatory on us be just, it must be inferred that all Christians ought heartily to concur with God in promoting his glorious designs.[42]

Modern biblical scholarship has rightly emphasised the fact that 'kingdom' in the New Testament has a strongly dynamic significance, 'reign' rather than 'realm'. The risen and exalted Christ wields 'all authority in heaven and on earth' (Matthew 28:18) with the goal of bringing all things into subjection to himself. Central to the exercise of sovereign power is his raising up by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit 'a willing people' (Psalm 110:3), a vast multitude who willingly submit to Christ's authority and seek his glory. The Church is thus the community of the Kingdom and is sent by the King to proclaim the good news of his redemptive victory and to bring every aspect of life into conformity with his royal will. The reigning Christ ensures that God's eternal purpose will be brought to a triumphant conclusion, when every knee will bow 'in heaven and on earth and under the earth' (Philippians 2:10), and the work of mission will be complete.

5. The Christian's desire

A final theological foundation for Calvin's missionary endeavour may be identified, namely the desire welling up within those who have experienced

God's saving grace that others would share in this glorious blessing. The gospel is a message that demands to be shared since it is the entrance into such great privileges.

Calvin considers this issue in a sermon on Acts 6:7-9, preached on 24th August, 1550. Commenting on Luke's expression 'the word of God increased', Calvin notes that this takes place when the message is received and acted upon by those who hear: 'God's word grows in us when those who were formerly ignorant and unbelieving yield in obedience to God and to our Lord Jesus Christ in order to be guided and governed by his Holy Spirit'.[43] The seed of the word must be sown and that is done when believers, by word and by example, seek to lead others to a knowledge of God. As Calvin goes on to say,

> ...we see unbelievers as poor lost sheep. Our Lord has not given us insight into his truth for our advantage alone, but for sharing it with others. Because we see them as madmen casting themselves into hell, we must, to the extent we can, prevent them from doing so and procure their salvation.[44]

Great privileges entail great responsibilities. Calvin expresses this vividly in his comments on Isaiah 2:3 ('And shall say, Come'):

> By these words he first declares that the godly will be filled with such an ardent desire to spread the doctrines of religion, that every one not satisfied with his own calling and his personal knowledge will desire to draw others along with him. And indeed nothing could be more inconsistent with the nature of faith than that deadness which would lead a man to disregard his brethren, and to keep the light of knowledge choked up within his own breast. The greater the eminence above others which any man has received from his calling, so much the more diligently ought he to labour to enlighten others.[45]

There is no excuse for selfish pursuit of salvation. Like Calvin, we long to share the word of life.

Notes

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3. Quoted by James, art. cit.
4. I have examined Calvin's missionary practice in more detail in 'The Missionary Zeal of John Calvin', *Lux Mundi*.
5. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559 edition), ed. John T McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 volumes (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), III.xxi.7.
6. John Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxiv.17.
7. John Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxii.10.
8. John Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul The Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, translated by Ross Mackenzie (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1961), on Romans 10:15.

9. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, translated by William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1947), on Isaiah 2:3 (I.97).
10. John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul The Apostle to the Corinthians*, translated by John W Fraser, (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1960), on I Corinthians 16:9.
11. John Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul The Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, translated by T A Smail (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1964), on II Corinthians 2:12.
12. Alister McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea*, (London: SPCK, 2007), p.175.
13. ibid.
14. See Timothy George's account of the episode in *Faithful Witness. The Life and Mission of William Carey*, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1991), pp.53ff.
15. J I Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1961), p.106.
16. J I Packer, op, cit., p.108.
17. J I Packer, op. cit., p.113.
18. *The Diary and Journal of David Brainerd*, 1902 edition, (Edinburgh and Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust), vol.2, pp.320ff.
19. *The Diary and Journal of David Brainerd*, vol.2, p.222.
20. Howard Peskett, 'Sovereignty of God' in *Dictionary of Mission Theology, Evangelical Foundations*, edited by John Corrie, (Nottingham and Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007), p.369.
21. Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul The Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, on I Timothy 2:3.
22. Alister McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea*, pp.175-6.
23. John Calvin, *A Harmony of the Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke, Volume III, and The Epistles of James and Jude*, translated by A W Morrison (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1972), on Matthew 28:18.
24. David J Bosch, *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), p.340.
25. William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*, in George, *Faithful Witness*, p.E.5.
26. William Carey, op. cit., p.E.6.
27. ibid.
28. Omri Jenkins, *The Great Commission*, (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 1997), p.22.
29. Omri Jenkins, op.cit., pp.25-26.
30. W Stanford Reid, *The Reformed Theological Review*, vol 42, No 3 (1983), p.65.
31. John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul The Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, on Romans 8:21.
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33. ibid.
34. Thomas R Schreiner, *Romans*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), p.437.
35. Ken Gnanakan, *Kingdom Concerns. A theology of mission today*, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), p.65.
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37. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah*, on Isaiah 2:4 (I.99).
38. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, Volume III, on Micah 4:3.
39. Ibid.
40. John Calvin, *A Harmony of the Gospels*, Volume III, on Matthew 28:18.

41. Jonathan Edwards, *A Call to United Extraordinary Prayer*, (Fearn: Christian Heritage, 2003), pp.69,81. Published in 1747, the book's full title is 'An Humber Attempt to promote Explicit Agreement in Visible Union of God's People, in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth, Pursuant to Scripture Promises and Prophecies concerning the Last Time'.
42. William Carey, op. cit., p.E.52.
43. John Calvin, *Sermons on the Acts of the Apostles, Chapters 1-7*, translated by Rob Roy McGregor (Edinburgh and Carlisle PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2008), p.334.
44. John Calvin, *Sermons on the Acts of the Apostles, Chapters 1-7*, p335.
45. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah*, on Isaiah 2:3, (I.94).

BOOK REVIEWS

Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods, Eckhard J Schnabel, IVP (Apollos), 2008, pbk., 518 pages, £16.99

Almost a century has passed since the publication of Roland Allen's ground-breaking *Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours?* Since then the church has become truly global and our knowledge of the Greco-Roman world has increased enormously, which has led Eckhard Schnabel to offer this re-working and development of Allen's fundamental, unsettling question: How closely are we following apostolic precedent in our missionary endeavours? The author, professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, is building here on the foundation of his massive two-volume *Early Christian Mission* (2004), which has gone far to establish him as the doyen of contemporary students of mission. This is a detailed, provocative and absorbing work.

The book is divided into three main sections. Parts 1 to 3 are descriptive, surveying from the New Testament documents Paul's missionary work, his understanding of his task and the message which he preached. Parts 4 and 5 are synthetic, as Schnabel systematises his material into the methods and goals which the apostle followed. Part 6 is hermeneutical and pragmatic, as these principles are applied to the task of missions in the 21st century.

There are few ground-breaking discoveries in these pages. We are told, for example, that Paul's goals were: to preach the gospel, especially to Gentiles; to reach as many people as possible; to lead individuals to saving faith in Christ; to form and build up communities of believers; and to train new missionaries. His methods were: oral proclamation of the gospel; geographical movement; going to wherever people were willing to listen; bringing the message to every nationality, class and culture; and standing apart from the approach and rhetoric of the professional speakers of that era. Schnabel's treatment is thorough – at times exhausting as well as exhaustive – and tighter editing might have improved the whole by pruning a few dozen pages. As the author himself acknowledges, "this book is already too long" (p.419). But occasional prolixity is a minor fault in a work so satisfying, where every passage is examined and conclusions are grounded so solidly on Scripture. To read these pages carefully is to obtain a firm grasp of exactly what was happening in Paul's ministry.

The final chapter is outstandingly helpful. In it, Schnabel exposes the weaknesses in much current evangelicalism: dumbing down the gospel to make it more acceptable; infatuation with methodology and technology; success measured in worldly terms; the practice of targeting homogeneous people

groups; seeker-driven and purpose-driven churches; the idolisation of individuals. He writes, "The cause of missionary 'success' is not rhetorical brilliance, refined communication strategies or any other method or technique of evangelism or church administration. The effective cause of people coming to faith in Jesus Christ and becoming active members of local communities of followers of Jesus is the power of God and of the Holy Spirit" (p.401). He concludes, "Theology, the discipline which teaches followers of Jesus about God, the Son and the Spirit, is central and must remain fundamental for churches and for their missionary work... Christians truly worship the one true and living God only when they let God be God. And when they do, they will be a light to the world and the salt of the earth" (p.458).

Today's church needs to understand and act upon this book.

Edward Donnelly

How Effective Sermons Begin, Ben Awbrey, Mentor, 2008, pbk., 383 pages, £10.99

We are living at a time in the history of the Christian church when there appears to be no appetite for preaching. Dr. Awbrey faces this challenge by demonstrating that the answer lies not in shorter or lighter sermons but in better preaching. The emphasis of this book is on how to preach so that people will listen. The preacher must begin his sermons in such a way that the listener is compelled to pay attention; getting the impression from the outset that this is a *'must hear'* sermon. The way this is effected, Awbrey contends, is through the sermon introduction. In the nine chapters of this well written book the reader is presented with much helpful material pinpointing not only the necessity of gripping introductions, but also the essential ingredients of an introduction.

In the introductory chapter Awbrey presents six convictions which a preacher must possess if he is to excel in the work of introducing sermons. These convictions, which he develops and supports from biblical texts as well as historical sources, give the reader an appetite for the book as a whole. For example, his second conviction is, 'The preacher must believe that the message to be preached is one of great value'. He recognises that for this to be true the preacher must be excited about what he has discovered in the biblical text as being of great value to him. He will then preach it in a passionate, persuasive manner as something of immense value to his congregation. The point Awbrey is at pains to make is that the true earnestness of the preacher should be apparent in the introduction. He makes the telling point, 'For a preacher not to burn with a fire for the truth of the message he will preach is more than just a lamentable situation'.

In a very practical manner Awbrey gives his readers what he considers to be the four main elements which should be part of an introduction: 'securing interest, stating the purpose, setting the context and providing the sermon proposition'. Having identified these elements he then, in separate chapters, illustrates the place and value of each. A most helpful chapter underlines the importance of having a stated aim in each sermon. The author believes that there is a predominance in the church today of what he calls 'unintentional preaching'. This in turn leads, he suggests, to a lack of passion in the act of preaching because the preacher has no objective in mind for his congregation.

Throughout the book there are some very telling quotations from able preachers and homileticians. For example he calls upon C. H. Spurgeon to illustrate what he means by purposeful preaching:

'Some are dead, you must rouse them; some are troubled, you must comfort them; others are burdened, you must point them to the burden-bearer. Still more are puzzled, you must enlighten and guide them; still others are careless and indifferent, you must warn and woo them.'

The introduction should inform the congregation of the main aim or principle purpose of the sermon. Through this, hearers will understand that the sermon is not an end in itself but, with the blessing of Christ, is an agent to bring about change in their lives.

Through this publication Dr Aubrey has provided a valuable resource for those teaching homiletics courses in Theological Colleges and Seminaries. It will also prove a very helpful refresher course for those already ordained to Christian service. Not only does he set before his readers the fruits of his own study from the Scriptures but he also draws upon the rich treasury of Christian literature on the subject of preaching. A series of questions follows each chapter to reinforce the teaching given and the challenge presented.

The reviewer highly recommends this book and believes that if the contents are carefully read and put into practice by preachers, it will certainly lead to better preaching. Better preaching will increase the appetite for listening, which with God's blessing, will lead to the growth and prosperity of the Church and the glorification of Christ.

Robert McCollum

A Scottish Christian Heritage, Iain Murray, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2006, hbk., 403 pages, £16.00.

According to the author, Iain Murray, this book is not intended to be in praise of things Scottish as such, nor is it a summary of Scottish Church history. The author, acknowledging his indebtedness to the writings of Scottish divines, sets out to remind his readers of the great heritage available in the older

Scottish literature. His view of the church in Scotland is reasonably objective. He perceptively states that "what made the Scottish church so eminent in the Christian world was far more what they held in common with other churches than anything that they held alone."

The book is in three parts:

Part One is biography and Murray deals with five men who had a significant place in the spiritual life of Scotland. He gives his usual well-crafted summary of the lives of John Knox, Robert Bruce, John Macdonald, Thomas Chalmers and Horatius Bonar. The author is careful and perceptive as he draws out practical lessons from the lives of these men. Some examples will suffice. John Knox is described as "an international Christian" and though the word most frequently associated with him was "battle", still he is shown to have exercised a ministry of encouragement. "From the first years that we have anything from his pen, we find him engaged in a ministry of encouragement."

The chapter on Robert Bruce is particularly pertinent to Christians living in the West in the twenty first century. We might well be inclined to assume that ministry today is especially difficult because of the prevalence of evil and the increasing hostility being directed at the Christian church., but, as Murray points out, "We are not the first generation called to stand fast in an evil day." Much of Bruce's life was spent in a period which James Melville described as one of "doleful decay", yet in such times Robert Bruce faithfully proclaimed the whole counsel of God. His preaching was particularly noted for its power. It is said that "no man in his time spoke with such evidence of the power of the Spirit."

Bruce's life is also a testimony to the manner in which joy in Christ can be known whatever the times. Like every Christian he experienced times of darkness and, indeed, knew something occasionally of a sense of "desertion", but more often he lived in a spirit of godly joy. "I am," he said, "the happiest man that ever was born, happy that ever I served God."

Each of these brief biographies has a timely application both to the individual believer and to the times in which we live.

In the second part of the book Murray takes up the theme of mission and highlights this in two chapters covering "The Missionary Spirit of the New Hebrides" and then a biographical study of Robert Moffat and his work in southern Africa. This story is deeply moving and humbling. Moffat encountered crushing difficulties and setbacks, but he never wavered in his commitment to bring the gospel to the various tribes among whom he laboured. Even when the London Missionary Society raised the possibility of withdrawing, Moffat and his companion were determined to remain at their post. "We felt our souls riveted to the country and its people." They did at last ..e days of great spiritual blessing and a marvelous transformation among the

people.

In the final part the author addresses what he calls "Church Issues" and covers several topics, including "The Problem of the elders" and "The Tragedy of the Free Church of Scotland". This section of the book is necessarily more limited in its scope as it concentrates on areas of Scottish church life which may not seem at first to have an immediate relevance beyond Scotland itself. That, however, is not the case. There are in particular some interesting and thought-provoking comments about Presbyterianism which are valuable for the many churches around the world which follow that system of government.

In his foreword Iain Murray affirms that, "The best Christian books never leave us as mere spectators." His own work should admirably fulfil that purpose.

Knox Hyndman

Lamentations: Living in the ruins, John L. Mackay, Mentor, 2008, hbk., 231 pages, £19.99

This latest contribution from the Professor of Old Testament at the Free Church College, Edinburgh, who is now justifiably renowned internationally as a commentator, is to be greatly welcomed. John Mackay is already responsible for the excellent Mentor Commentaries on Exodus and Jeremiah, as well as on the Minor Prophets in the 'Focus on the Bible' Commentary series. As he says, the Book of Lamentations can be easily overlooked, or even viewed popularly as a dreary book with nothing much to say to today's upbeat society. As he shows, however, the book could not be more relevant, for while there is much to challenge faith that will find a resonance in today's society, there is also much to build faith up. In fact we can find comfort for our own situations of disaster, disorder and despair.

The Introduction to the book is sane and balanced, as Mackay interacts with the challenges of modern scholarship. After placing the book in its historical setting, he has a fascinating discussion of the much debated matter of authorship, in which he falls short of accepting Jeremianic authorship, assuming the poet to have been an eyewitness of the fall of Jerusalem who was influenced by Jeremiah's ministry. On this point some conservatives will wish to differ. The sections that follow on the literary structure of the book and its message and application are excellent.

The great strength of the commentary is the careful and scholarly way the text is approached and exegeted to make the message plain. In the outline followed, we move through the five chapters following the Hebrew alphabetic acrostic pattern with our sure-footed guide. Then, after each of the fifteen sections has been thoroughly explained, we come to what is one of the great

strengths of the book and that is the fifteen sections entitled 'Reflection', in which the relevance of the section and how it may be applied today is discussed. It was these sections that the present reviewer found particularly helpful. As is this reviewer's wont, he turned to study in detail the treatment of one or two 'key' passages, for example 3:19-39. He is glad to report that he was not disappointed!

Excellent exposition is followed by excellent application. It is to be hoped that this fine work will encourage more ministers to preach on the Book of Lamentations and more believers to read and study it in their private devotions

Norris Wilson

Writing the Rapture, Crawford Gribben, Oxford University Press, 2009, hbk., 258 pages, £16.99

The amazing success of the 'Left Behind' series of novels by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B Jenkins, which began with *Left Behind* (1995) and ended with the twelfth volume *The Glorious Appearing* (2004), has drawn the attention of many readers and critics, both Christian and non-Christian, to the phenomenon of 'prophecy novels'. Until this point few outside its readership were aware of this genre of Christian fiction, and so the 'Left Behind' story came as a surprise. It should not. As Crawford Gribben, now lecturing in Early Modern Print Culture at Trinity College, Dublin, shows, the history of prophecy novels stretches back to the very beginning of the twentieth century. The genre is far from new, even if it has evolved in recent years into something very different from its earlier manifestations.

Gribben does not aim to provide an exhaustive account of the development of prophecy novels, although in the course of his study he surveys an impressive range of material. His goals rather are to give an account of the development of the salient elements of evangelical prophecy belief and a description of what he terms 'an increasingly important element of the American cultural mainstream' (p.167). Prophecy novels are an accurate barometer of these trends and so give profound insights into the evangelical culture which spawned them.

Although some British authors have contributed to the genre, it is largely an American phenomenon, although with worldwide reach, especially in recent years. It is, as the author notes, a very diverse body of literature, such that he uses the term 'genre' with a degree of hesitation. Widely differing perspectives have been expressed at various times, as for example regarding the source of the greatest spiritual threats faced by Christians. It has at different times been

identified with Rome, Communism and anti-Christian forces within the United States, to name only the most prominent candidates. Concern for the future of Israel has not always excluded a degree of anti-Semitism in some novels. Prophecy fiction is not, as many would assume, the exclusive preserve of evangelical writers. Many such surprises await the readers of *Writing the Rapture*.

After an introduction which sets the scene and warns against treating prophecy fiction as the product of a homogeneous religious culture, the study is structured in historical fashion through seven chapters. These are in turn 'The Eclectic Roots of Prophecy Fiction' (the years around the turn of the twentieth century), 'The Orthodox Consolidation of Prophecy Fiction' (from around 1910 up to the 1940s), 'Prophecy Fiction and the Second World War', 'Prophecy Fiction and the Cold War' (the era of Hal Lindsey's very influential *The Late Great Planet Earth*), 'Prophecy Fiction and Evangelical Political Reengagement', 'The Left Behind Phenomenon', and finally 'Prophecy Fiction after Left Behind'.

Many matters raised in this excellent study deserve consideration, prophecy novels being almost exclusively by and for white American men, for example, but due to constraints of space we will focus on Gribben's conclusions which merit careful attention. There is a paradox at the heart of the recent prophecy fiction phenomenon: the novels describe an embattled faithful remnant that has been pushed to the margins of an unbelieving society, yet they sell millions of copies and have clearly moved to a position in the cultural mainstream of America. A cultural majority flocks to buy books that portray it as a threatened minority. American evangelicals are discovering that they are considerably further from the cultural margins that they imagined and, if traditional dispensational theologians are correct in their interpretation of Scripture, the return of Christ is also further away than ever. Curiouser and curiouser! The very success of prophecy fiction, as Gribben demonstrates so tellingly, has 'undermined the central tenets of dispensational cultural theory' (p.170). Even more devastating is his argument that prophecy fiction demonstrates an increasing erosion of central evangelical theological commitments. It may come as a considerable shock to many to realise that 'in the vast majority of evangelical prophecy fictions, the Cross is obvious only by its absence' (p.170). Evangelical understanding of the gospel and of the need for the cross is being fatally redefined, indicating that evangelicalism has lost its theological coherence and, we might add, its biblical foundations. If, as Gribben asserts, prophecy fiction demonstrates the changing identity and increasing cultural power of evangelical America, there are dark clouds on the horizon. This is a fascinating tract for the times that should be of interest far beyond students of evangelical imaginative literature.

David McKay

BOOK NOTICES

Living at the Crossroads. An Introduction to Christian Worldview, Michael Goheen and Craig Bartholomew, SPCK, 2008, pbk., 205 pages, £10.99

Christianity is not simply a collection of isolated theological doctrines – it is a complete worldview that is to shape every area of life. That is the contention of Michael Goheen and Craig Bartholomew in this follow-up study to their previous book *The Drama of Scripture*. Drawing on the work of theologians such as Abraham Kuyper and James Orr, together with more recent contributions from, for example, Al Wolters, Brian Walsh and Richard Middleton, the authors demonstrate the necessity for Christian "worldview thinking" if the gospel is to be brought in all its richness and life-changing power to our contemporary culture. Christians are living "at the crossroads" – the intersection of the biblical story (creation/fall/redemption) and the currently popular story of humanism in its various forms. They need to be able to understand, articulate and live out the Christian story – the true story of God's creative and redemptive work. Goheen and Bartholomew begin by examining the concept of worldview, then proceed to expound the fundamentals of the Christian worldview – creation, sin and restoration. The following two chapters survey what the authors call "The Western Story", an examination of the path travelled by western thought up to the advent of modernity and (actually closely allied to it) postmodernity. To assess our present situation the authors next ask, "What time is it?" Four signs of the times provide the answer: postmodernity, consumerism and globalization, the renascence of Christianity in the southern hemisphere, and the resurgence of Islam. The concluding chapters consider what a faithful, relevant Christian witness will look like, together with examples from areas such as business, politics, creativity and art, scholarship and education. In *Living at the Crossroads* Gohen and Bartholomew have provided a vital resource which should help Christians to think and live faithfully in a challenging and hostile society, and which can be highly recommended.

Fires of Faith. Catholic England under Mary Tudor, Eamon Duffy, Yale University Press, 2009, hbk., 249 pages, £19.99

Eamon Duffy, Professor of the History of Christianity at the University of Cambridge, is perhaps best known for his revisionist account of the Reformation in England, in which he argued that Catholicism had much greater

support among ordinary English men and women than had usually been acknowledged. He turns his attention, and revisionist inclinations, in his latest book to the religious conditions prevailing under Mary Tudor, in particular the burning of 284 Protestant martyrs in a period of less than four years. Without in any way justifying the burnings, Duffy argues that they were not uniquely barbaric in the context of the times, and that the Marian persecuting policy was not a fatal mistake, but almost succeeded in extinguishing evangelical witness in England. Regarding the burning of heretics, he is able to quote, for example, the Reformer John Frith who stated that burning was a fitting punishment for heretics such as Anabaptists, and himself became the first Protestant martyr under Mary. With copious detailed reference to original sources, Duffy considers issues such as the influence of Cardinal Pole, Catholic polemics and attempts to persuade Protestants to recant, reasons for resort to force and the judicial process that was followed, conflicting policies on the part of churchman and secular authorities, the justifications offered for the policy of burning heretics, and much more. His aim is to get behind the stereotypes of "Bloody Mary" and the perceived hagiology of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*. He argues, for example, that support for the martyrs was much less than has sometimes been supposed, many people having happily returned to "the old religion" with the death of Edward IV. It is certainly striking how readily the general population of England adapted to the radical religious changes that characterised the Tudor period. Duffy's arguments will undoubtedly provoke spirited reactions from historians, both in support and in disagreement. Rebuttals will need to reckon with the weight of material amassed by Duffy as he makes his case for the fundamental importance of the religious policies of Mary and Pole in the development of the wider European Counter Reformation.

Ancient Christian Doctrine. 1. We Believe in One God, Gerald Bray (ed.), IVP Academic (USA), 2009, hbk., 159 pages, $50.00

Ancient Christian Doctrine. 2. We Believe in One Lord Jesus Christ, John Anthony McGuckin (ed.), IVP Academic (USA), 2009, hbk., 191 pages, $50.00

Ancient Christian Doctrine. 3. We Believe in the Crucified and Risen Lord, Mark J. Edwards (ed.), IVP Academic (USA), 2009, hbk., 194 pages, $50.00

Ancient Christian Doctrine. 4. We Believe in the Holy Spirit, Joel C. Elowsky (ed.), IVP Academic (USA), 2009, hbk., 309 pages, $50.00

Recent years have seen a revival of interest among evangelicals in the writings of the Early Church Fathers, something which would not have surprised a Reformer like John Calvin, who had a deep knowledge of the Fathers. The four volumes under review are part of the latest project by IVP in the United States designed to make this part of the heritage of the Christian Church more accessible to modern readers. These volumes bring together extracts from many of the Fathers on the doctrine of God, of Christ (his person and work) and of the Holy Spirit (including repentance, justification, *theiosis* and sanctification). The five volume set, when complete, will provide a patristic commentary on the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, a vital touchstone of orthodoxy throughout the history of the Church. Each editor, in addition to selecting the extracts, surveys the subject under consideration and provides an introduction to each section of his book (structured according to the different statements of the Creed). With a selection of extracts, readers are largely in the hands of the editors, and it would be easy for a slanted view of a topic to be presented. In this case, however, the editors are eminent scholars, with a formidable knowledge of their fields and a solid commitment to the theology of the Creed, and so readers may have confidence in their work. In general, the most representative voices among the Fathers have been chosen. There is of course no substitute for reading the original works of the Fathers, not least so that the parts are seen in the context of the whole treatise, but few will have the time or opportunity for extensive patristic studies. These volumes, therefore, serve a valuable purpose, and may stimulate some to deeper study of the sources.

The Theology of John Calvin, Charles Partee, Westminster John Knox Press, 2009, hbk., 345 pages, £26.99

A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes. Essays and Analysis, edited by David W. Hall and Peter A. Lillback, P. & R. Publishing, 2008, hbk., 508 pages, $35.99

There are many ways in which to approach Calvin's theology. One of the most fruitful is the study of his great work *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which reached its definitive form in 1559. The two books under review provide, by significantly different methods, profound insights into Calvin's rich theological legacy.

The Theology of John Calvin is the work of a veteran Calvin scholar who works his way systematically through the *Institutes*, expounding Calvin in dialogue with a wide range of writers old and new. Inevitably Partee has to locate himself on the spectrum of views of Calvin which have developed

especially in modern times. His favoured term for his position is "No-school Calvinist", in contrast, for example, with Barthians, Schleiermacherians and Reformed scholastics (as exemplified by, for example, Richard Muller). His aim is to try to listen to Calvin in his sixteenth century context as faithfully as possible, eschewing any artificial schematising. How successful Partee's efforts in this direction may be, his readers can judge for themselves. A significant proportion of the study is given over to interaction with other Calvin scholars, which can at times obscure Partee's evaluation of Calvin himself, but his book undoubtedly provides a substantial amount of valuable exposition of Calvin's theology.

A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes comprises a collection of papers by twenty theologians from leading conservative Reformed seminaries in the United States. Together they provide an exposition of most chapters of the *Institutes*, only a few being omitted. The names of many of the authors will be immediately recognisable: William Barker, Robert Reymond, Douglas Kelly, Michael Horton and Derek Thomas, to name but a few. The style of the papers varies considerably, with some being close expositions of Calvin's text, whilst others, such as David Hall on Calvin's view of civil government, range more freely over related material. The scope of each also varies, with some covering a chapter or two, others dealing with several chapters and Robert Godfrey surveying the *Institutes'* entire instruction on worship and the sacraments in a single chapter. Taken together, however, they offer a comprehensive introduction to a master work of theology.

What Does the Lord Require? A Guide for Preaching and Teaching Biblical Ethics, Walter C. Kaiser Jr., Baker Academic, 2009, pbk., 256 pages, $19.99

Walter Kaiser's latest contribution to biblical studies is a refreshingly new approach to Christian ethics – preached and taught. Having established in the introduction the importance of the Bible for godly living, he proceeds in the following eighteen chapters to consider many of the most pressing ethical issues from a biblical standpoint. Issues covered include racism and human rights, gambling and greed, media, entertainment and pornography, divorce, abortion, homosexuality, genetic engineering, alcoholism and drugs, animal "rights" and care for the environment. The range is considerably wider than many evangelical books on ethics. The pattern of each chapter is first a summary of the biblical material, then a sermon outline on the subject from a relevant text, a short bibliography and finally several discussion questions. This is a helpful book, not least in the assistance it offers in preaching from the

ethical material in Scripture.

A Christian Directory, Richard Baxter, with a foreword by J. I. Packer, Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2008, hbk., lx & 948 pages, $60.00

Richard Baxter of Kidderminster (1615–91) has become known as one of the greatest Puritan pastors. Much of his pastoral wisdom is brought together in *A Christian Directory* (1673), the first of the four volumes of his *Practical Works*. The beginning of its (lengthy) sub-title indicates its scope: *A Sum of Practical Theology, and Cases of Conscience*. It is, in effect, an early textbook of Christian ethics. The stress throughout is on the practical application of biblical truth so that Christians may "perform all duties...overcome temptations...escape or mortify every sin." This massive and exhaustive tome is divided into four parts, dealing with personal godliness (Christian Ethics), family life (Christian Economics), church life (Christian Ecclesiastics) and social life (Christian Politics). Baxter reviews a very wide range of practical issues and brings the truth of God to bear on them. He considers, for example 174 'ecclesiastical cases of conscience' and considers 81 matters relating to contracts, borrowing, lending and usury. Few stones are left unturned in a work which is a rich storehouse of biblical wisdom. The challenge now is to translate that wisdom into the language and culture of the twenty-first century.

Grasping Truth and Reality. Lesslie Newbigin's Theology of Mission to the Western World, Donald Le Roy Stults, James Clarke & Co., 2009, pbk., 295 pages, £25.00

After many years of missionary service in India, Lesslie Newbigin returned to the United Kingdom in 1974 to discover that his homeland was a mission field as much in need of the gospel as India. His prolific writings in the intervening years have made a major contribution to missiology in the modern and postmodern West. Of greatest significance is Newbigin's critique of the baneful influence of the Enlightenment on western culture, especially through its exaltation of human reason apart from divine revelation. The West has come to be characterised by "scientism" – the belief that only what may be discovered by scientific methods can count as "truth", and the result has been the growth of scepticism and a loss of any sense of purpose. In *Grasping Truth and Reality* Donald Le Roy Stults has provided a wide-ranging exposition and evaluation of Newbigin's theological convictions and their outworking in his penetrating cultural critique of the West. He considers too the means by which Newbigin proposed to respond to the contemporary missionary challenge

which he had identified. The book is by no means an uncritical summary of Newbigin's thought. At several points, for example, the author disagrees with elements of Newbigin's understanding of the Enlightenment and his views on the validity of contextualization.. This is a valuable study of the work of a theologian and missiologist who, read critically, has much still to teach us today as we seek to evangelise our pagan society.

Reading Ethics. Selected Texts with Interactive Commentary, Miranda Fricker and Samuel Guttenplan (eds.), Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, pbk., 331 pages, £18.99

This is an introductory textbook on philosophical ethics which aims to do more than provide students with information. The "interactive" format is designed to train students to analyse ethical texts critically and so come to their own conclusions. The six chapters consider in turn goodness, justice, reasons for action, subjectivism and objectivism, morality and obligation, and boundaries of moral philosophy. Each chapter follows the same pattern: an introduction to the topic, two or three substantial extracts from major writers in the field, introduced by the editors, then a detailed commentary on the texts, interspersed with questions to stimulate thinking. The extracts are taken from Aristotle, J. S. Mill, Philippa Foot, Plato, John Rawls, David Hume, John McDowell, J. L. Mackie, Thomas Nagel, Immanuel Kant, Bernard Williams, Martha Nussbaum and Raimond Gaita. The result is a stimulating introduction to basic themes in moral philosophy which encourages students to think for themselves – a format which could usefully be copied in other disciplines.

Light and Heat: The Puritan View of the Pulpit, R. Bruce Bickel, The Northampton Press, 2nd printing 2009, hbk., 178 pages, $12.00

Bruce Bickel attributes many of the failings of the contemporary church to a loss of a high view of preaching such as characterised the Puritan age. In the two studies which make up this book (first published in 1999), Bickel examines first the Puritan view of the pulpit and then the content of the gospel which the Puritan's preached. The first paper surveys the direction of preaching (its conviction, character and content), the demands of preaching and the duties of the pastor (catechizing, counselling, comforting and communing). The second paper deals with the Puritan doctrine of God, man, the person and work of Christ, repentance and faith and assurance. Useful bibliographies are included. For anyone seeking a concise introduction to Puritan preaching, along with generous quotations from the sources, this is an excellent starting point.

Calvin Celebrated. The Genevan Reformer and His Huguenot Sons, Alan C. Clifford, Charenton Reformed Publishing, 2009, pbk., 168 pages, £9.95

Described as 'A Contribution to the John Calvin Quincentenary', this book contains concise studies of Calvin and of five French Reformed theologians and pastors – Mo□se Amyraut, Jean Daillé, Fulchran Rey, Claude Brousson and Antoine Court. All are described as Calvin's 'Huguenot Sons'. There is much interesting information packed into these pages, especially concerning Frenchmen about whom we know little yet should know much. Helpful bibliographies are included after each chapter. It must be kept in mind, however, that the book is written from the perspective of support for the interpretation of Calvin defended by Amyraut and known by his name – Amyraldianism. This is the view that Christ's atoning sacrifice was offered for all mankind, although applied effectually by the Holy Spirit only to the elect. The author, Alan Clifford, has championed this view of Calvin in a number of publications, and this is reflected in these studies. In a book review his position cannot be debated adequately. Suffice to say that other Calvin scholars have rejected this view of Calvin, and some suggest that the extent of the atonement was not a question that he actually addressed. (We might also say that, should Calvin have in fact held a position that we believe to be contrary to Scripture, he was wrong, regardless of how much we respect him). In the opinion of some, Amyraldianism was "the grave digger of the French Reformed Church". A wider study of the history of the Huguenots would be needed to evaluate this accusation. With these caveats, Clifford's book can be recommended for discerning reading.

Continental Calvinian Influences on the Scottish Reformation. The First Book of Discipline(1560), Jack C. Whytock, The Edward Mellen Press, 2009, hbk., 160 pages, £64.95

In a day when the very idea of church discipline is derided, even within the church, it is good to have a study such as this which takes us back to the roots of Reformed church order and discipline as exemplified in the *First Book of Discipline* produced by Knox and other Scottish Reformers. No such document appears on the scene of history without antecedents, and this study by Jack Whytock aims to discover some of the roots of the Scottish book in continental Reformed church practice. Dr. Whytock is presently Director of Haddington House Trust, Prince Edward Island, Canada, and an ordained minister of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, well known to those of us engaged in inter-church relations. In successive chapters the author insiders the influence exercised on the Scots by John Calvin, John à Lasco,

Valérand Poullain and the French Reformed Church. Tracing lines of historical influence is always difficult, and in some of these instances the lines, as the author recognises, are not entirely clear. His treatment, however, is helpful and stimulating, and his conclusions carefully nuanced, for example regarding the necessity of a middle course between excessively slack and excessively strict discipline. Whytock's "Practical Reflections" bring the relevance of his study right up to date. An ample bibliography and thorough index round out a most thought-provoking volume.

Baptism in the Early Church. History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries, Everett Ferguson, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009, hbk., 975 pages, £33.99

This massive study by Everett Ferguson, Distinguished Scholar in Residence at Abilene Christian University in Texas, aims to examine every significant source in the first five Christian centuries relating to the understanding of baptism. Written sources, both theological and liturgical, along with artistic and archaeological remains, are called as witnesses in what must be the most thorough study of the subject penned in many years. Everett's knowledge of the primary works is truly encyclopaedic: few relevant sources can have escaped notice. He begins with a survey of modern literature on baptism, then proceeds to evaluate possible antecedents of Christian baptism. These embrace both pagan and Jewish practices, together with the ministry of "John the Baptiser", and Ferguson also examines the significance of the Greek terminology for baptism. The next part of the book surveys New Testament evidence throughout the canon. The rest of the book examines evidence from the second to the fifth centuries, ranging across the geographical spread of the Church, quoting the original sources extensively. In the concluding chapter the author offers a number of conclusions which will prove controversial. He concludes that the origins of baptism are to be found in the command and practice of Jesus, together with the baptism of John and some Old Testament passages relating to washing. He argues that the Church understood baptism chiefly in terms of sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ and regeneration from above. Baptism, he claims, was regarded as an essential element in salvation, not as a human work but as God's work of grace, dependent on the atonement made by Christ, and requiring faith in the recipient. Immersion was the normal means of baptising, Everett argues, with exceptions in the case, for example, of deathbed baptisms. As far as infant baptism is concerned, Everett contends that its origins are to be traced to the emergency baptism of sick children expected to die soon. Many will wish to dissent from the conclusions Everett offers, some on the grounds of his New

Testament interpretation, some on his reading of the later sources. It must also be borne in mind that at some points the beliefs and practices of parts of the Church may have diverged from apostolic principle or practice. Sustaining such objections will require hard scholarly work of a level equal to that of Ferguson, whose weighty tome has set a benchmark for further study and debate.

David McKay