
The Necessity of Reformation

SELECTIONS FROM THE WTJ

*Articles on Key Figures of
the Protestant Reformation.*



WESTMINSTER
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY
EST. 1929

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JOHN CALVIN'S VIEW OF THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT

ROGER NICOLE

THIS topic has received considerable attention in the recent past, perhaps in view of R. T. Kendall's very controversial book *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*.¹ An effort is made here to summarize the debate and to provide a brief evaluation.

It is often stated—and with considerable propriety—that Calvin did not write an explicit treatment concerning the extent of the atonement, in fact did not deal with this precise issue in the terms to which Reformed theology has been accustomed. It must be owned, of course, that the question had received some attention before Calvin. Notably Gottschalk in the ninth century had given express support to definite atonement² and the scholastics had discussed the topic and advanced a partial resolution in asserting that Christ's death was "sufficient for all men and efficient for the elect."³ Calvin alludes to and endorses this distinction but views it as insufficient for a proper analysis of 1 John 2:2.⁴ Nevertheless a full

¹ Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

² On Gottschalk one may still consult with profit Abp. J. Ussher's *Gotteschalci et praedestinatarum controversiae ab eo motae historia* (Dublin, 1631). It is found in J. Ussher's *Whole Works* (Dublin: Hodges et al., 1848-1864) 4.1-233.

³ Peter Lombard, *Libri quatuor sententiarum* 3.20.3 (Migne PL 192, col. 799). The reference comes from W. R. Godfrey, "Reformed Thought on the Extent of the Atonement to 1618," *WTJ* 37 (1975-76) 133-71, p. 136.

⁴ J. Calvin, *Comm.*, 1 John 2:2 (p. 244). The works of Calvin will be referred to in this article as follows. *OC* refers to Baum, Cunitz, and Reuss, *Opera Calvini*, vols. 1-59 (*Corpus Reformatorum*). *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* will be quoted from the translation by F. L. Battles (LCC 20, 21; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960). The Old Testament Commentaries are quoted from the edition of the Calvin Translation Society (30 vols; Edinburgh, 1845-1854). The New Testament Commentaries are quoted from the new translation edited by D. W. and T. F. Torrance (12 vols.; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd,

discussion of the scope of the atonement is not found in Calvin's writings, and the assessment of his position in this area has been varied.

Certain other Reformed theologians, contemporaries of Calvin or flourishing in the late sixteenth or the beginning of the seventeenth century, expressed a clear endorsement of definite atonement: e.g. Peter Martyr, H. Zanchius, T. Beza, J. Piscator, W. Ames, R. Abbot.⁵ As far as we know, they did not assert that they were conscious of differing with Calvin on this score, nor did Calvin take issue in writing with any of those who formulated the view during his life-time.

One of the earliest writers to claim that Calvin espoused universal atonement was Moyse Amyraut (1596–1664) who in his *Eschantillon de la doctrine de Calvin touchant la predestination*⁶ quoted certain passages from Calvin's commentaries in support of his own position on universal atonement. Amyraut's friend and supporter Jean Daillé (1594–1670) later published some 43 pages of excerpts from Calvin's works which he deemed in line with universal grace.⁷ A number of these ex-

1959–1972). The Sermons referred to are principally as follows: *Sermons on Isaiah's Prophecy* [Isaiah 52:14–53:12] (transl. T. H. L. Parker; London: Clarke, 1956). *Sermons on the Deity of Christ* (transl. Leroy Nixon; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), reprinted under the title *Sermons on the Saving Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980). The Tracts have been referred to as follows: *Tracts Relating to the Reformation* (transl. H. Beveridge; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844–51). *Calvin's Calvinism* [translation of Treatises Concerning Predestination and Providence] by Henry Cole (republished Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950). *Calvin: Theological Treatises* (LCC 22; transl. J. K. S. Reid; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954).

⁵ For details in this area the reader is referred to the strong above-mentioned article of W. R. Godfrey.

⁶ This work appeared first in 1636, conjoined with *Six sermons de la nature de l'Evangile* (Saumur: Girard & de Lerpiniere). It was later republished with a second edition of Amyraut's *Brief traité de la predestination* (Saumur: Desbordes, 1658) 167–228. With reference to the extent of the atonement Amyraut quotes Calvin's *Comm.* John 3:16; 1:29; Rom 5:18; Ezek 18:33; John 12:47, 48. He also quotes Calvin's *Treatise on Predestination* (*Calvin's Calvinism*, 93, 94, 99, 100, 125, 165).

⁷ Jean Daillé, *Apologia pro duabus . . . Synodis* (Amsterdam: Ravesteyn, 1655). The excerpts from Calvin are found on pp. 1044–87. The quotations are not arranged topically but listed according to their sources. Since Daillé's *Apologia* is a rare book, it may be well to provide here a list of the quotations that he adduces from Calvin's works. From the *Institutes* 3.24.15–17; 1.2.1;

cerpts relate to the design of the atonement, but it is really amazing to observe how most of these quotations are lacking in cogency with respect to the precise *status questionis*. Some, indeed, appear actually counterproductive, especially if replaced in their original context.⁸ Amyraut's opponents, notably Pierre DuMoulin (1568–1658),⁹ André Rivet (1573–1651),¹⁰ and Frederic Spanheim (1600–1649)¹¹ did not fail to

1.3; 1.4.1; 1.5.1, 10, 15. From the *Commentaries* Gen 3:15; 12:3; Deut 5:29; 29:4; 32:28; Ps 19:2, 3, 4, 7; 81:14, 15, 16; 107:1, 2, 6, 10, 22, 43; Hos 13:9. Matt 11:31, 33; 20:28; 22:2, 7, 9; 26:28; Mark 16:16; Luke 2:10, 32, 34; 3:23; 19:41, 42, 43; John 1:4, 5, 9, 10, 29; 3:14, 16, 17, 19, 36; 4:42; 5:40, 44; 6:33; 7:37; 10:36; 12:35, 46, 47; 14:17; Rom 1:16, 18, 19, 20, 21; 2:4; 5:18; 10:12, 18; 1 Cor 1:21; 8:11, 12; 15:21; 2 Cor 6:2; Gal 5:12; Col 1:28; 1 Thess 2:10; 1 Tim 1:15; 2:1, 3, 5; Heb 5:9; 6:4; 9:28; 1 Pet 1:20; 2 Pet 2:1; 3:9; 1 John 2:2; 5:9, 10, 11, 16; Jude 4. From the *Treatise on Predestination*, OC 8. 290, 297, 298, 300, 300–301, 306–7, 307, 309–10, 310, 335, 336 (ter), 340, 342, 349 (in *Calvin's Calvinism*, pp. 79–80, 92, 94, 97–98, 99–100, 110–11, 111, 116–17, 117, 163–64, 165 [bis], 166, 172, 176, 226).

⁸ Most of the quotations appear to relate to issues that are not in dispute, e.g. whether the gospel should be preached universally; whether God will condemn the reprobates because he did not elect them or because of their sins, including unbelief and obduracy in their response to the gospel; whether the sacrifice of Christ is appointed to be the only means of salvation in the whole wide world for sinful human beings; etc. Among the counterproductive quotations, one may note the following: *Treatise of Predestination*, OC 8.298 (*Calvin's Calvinism*, 94): "Christ was so ordained the Saviour of the whole world as that He might save those that were given to Him by the Father" (Daillé, *Apologia*, 1046). *Commentary on John* 1:29: "When he says 'the sins of the world', he extends this kindness indiscriminately to the whole human race, that the Jews might not think that the Redeemer has been sent to them alone." (Daillé, p. 1061). Similarly Calvin's treatment in the *Treatise of Predestination* of Georgius' handling of 1 John 2:2 is truncated by the omission of the key sentence in which Calvin shows clearly that he understood 1 John 2:2 in the sense of definite atonement by saying, "John does indeed extend the benefits of the atonement of Christ . . . to all the elect of God throughout what climes of the world soever they may be scattered." OC 8.336 (*Calvin's Calvinism*, 165). Quoted by Daillé, p. 1046. See below note 36, where the quotation is found more extensively.

⁹ *Examen de la doctrine de MM Amyraut & Testard*. (Amsterdam: n.p. 1638), 101–3. *Esclaircissement des controverses salmuriennes*. (Geneva: Aubert, 1649), 199–202. DuMoulin quotes Calvin's *Treatise on Predestination*, OC 8.259, 261, 270, 298, 300–301, 303, 336, 337 (in *Calvin's Calvinism*, 27, 30, 45, 94–95, 98–100, 104–6, 165, 166).

¹⁰ *Synopsis doctrinae de natura et gratia . . . Opera* 3.840–42. Rivet quotes Calvin's *Treatise of Predestination*, OC 8.298–99, 301, 336, and *On God's Secret Providence*, OC 9.292–93, 314 (*Calvin's Calvinism*, 95, 99, 100, 165, 275–77,

respond with explanations of Calvin's texts which showed them to be compatible with particularism. Furthermore they quoted other texts of Calvin, especially from his *Traité de la predestination*,¹² in which the design of the atonement and God's elective purpose are seen as inextricably related.

In July 1861, Principal William Cunningham published in the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* an article on "Calvin and Beza" in which he examined certain areas where it is claimed Beza differed from Calvin.¹³ One of these is the extent of the atonement, and Cunningham appears to be the first who referred to the following text of Calvin as reflecting a presumption of definite atonement. "I should like to know how the wicked can eat the flesh of Christ which was not crucified for them, and how they can drink the blood which was not shed to expiate their sins."¹⁴

This passage, found in a treatise on the Lord's Supper destined to refute the fiery Lutheran Tilemann Heshusius, is rendered stronger by the fact that Heshusius, in good Lutheran fashion, did believe in universal atonement and therefore would not find Calvin's argument persuasive at this point. But Calvin was so strongly oriented here that he appears to have forgotten that Heshusius would not share his presuppositions!

343-44); *Institutes*, 3.22.10, 11; 23.9; 24.17; *Comm.*, Ezek 18:23; Rom 10:16; 2 Peter 3:9.

¹¹ F. Spanheim, *Exercitationes de gratia universali* (Leyden: Maire, 1646). In this work Spanheim objects to the way in which Amyraut appeals to the authority of Calvin, as well as to the way in which he interprets Calvin's teaching (Preface, and pp. 324, 325, 824-34, et al.).

¹² Both Calvin's *Treatise of Predestination* and his work on *God's Secret Providence* are translated in *Calvin's Calvinism*, together with *A Brief Reply in Refutation of the Calumnies of a Certain Worthless Person* [Castellio]. The first treatise occupies pp. 19-186 and 223-256. The second treatise is found on pp. 257-350. The third treatise occupies pp. 189-206. It is also found in J. K. S. Reid (ed.), *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, 331-43.

¹³ W. Cunningham, "Calvin and Beza," *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 10 (1861), 641-702. Reprinted in *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1862) 345-412.

¹⁴ Cunningham, *Reformers*, 396. The quotation is drawn from Calvin's treatise, "On Partaking of the Flesh and Blood" (J. K. S. Reid [ed.], *Calvin: Theological Treatises*) 285. This is also found in Beveridge's edition of Calvin's *Tracts* 2.527. The location in *OC* is 9.282.

William Cunningham's article, as is usual with this author, is a very solid and searching study. In addition to discussing the important quotation of Calvin noted above, Cunningham reasoned that Calvin's emphatic repudiation of a universal saving will and endorsement of election and reprobation as well as his particularistic interpretation of passages invariably appealed to by hypothetical universalists (1 Tim 2:4; 1 John 2:2) reflect a line of thought in which particular rather than universal redemption finds a fitting place.¹⁵

Under the title *Christ in Our Place*¹⁶ Paul van Buren published in 1957 a doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Basel in 1954. This deals with Calvin's doctrine of the atonement as a whole, but it contains significant statements about Calvin's view of the extent of the atonement. Van Buren emphasized Calvin's endorsement of the substitutionary character of the priestly work of Christ. He quotes some passages of Calvin where a universal reference of Christ's work is indicated, and yet, says van Buren, "We find Calvin holding back from the consequences of his own exegesis"¹⁷ in limiting the redemptive impact of Christ's death to the elect in places where the Scripture used the word "all." Thus the universalist van Buren acknowledges particularistic elements in Calvin and deals with them as if they were a failure to accept the logical implications of his premises. Van Buren lays great stress on Calvin's affirmation of the universal call and of the penal substitutionary nature of atonement, but he views particular election and redemption as conflicting with Scripture and the remainder of Calvin's theology. This, however, is reading Calvin with Barthian glasses and van Buren's criticism of Calvin here is not very damaging, especially since at several points in the book Calvin's thought is presented as involving a definiteness in Christ's work centering on those of mankind who will actually be redeemed.¹⁸

¹⁵ Cunningham, *Reformers*, 398-402.

¹⁶ Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁸ Cf. especially the whole chapter on "The Church as the Body of Christ," 127-35.

In a very thought-provoking review of van Buren's book,¹⁹ John Murray notes that Calvin does assert the propriety of a universal offer of salvation, but holds a "fast line of distinction between the elect and the reprobate," and specifically reflects on the particular reference of the atonement in his comments on 1 John 2:2 and 1 Tim 2:4, 6. Furthermore, the close connection between the sacrifice of Christ and saving union with Christ militates in favor of definite atonement.

In 1969 Brian G. Armstrong in his very able work *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*,²⁰ expressed the view that Amyraut was a true representative of the original Calvinian thought and that his opponents (DuMoulin, Rivet, Spanheim, etc.) were the ones who by their scholastic method had deviated from the direction articulated by the Geneva Reformer. He quotes Calvin's commentaries on John 3:16; Rom 5:10; Ezek 18:23; 2 Pet 3:9 and his sermons on Isaiah 53, 1 Tim 2:3-5, and 2 Tim 2:19, as well as the passage from the *Treatise on Predestination* in which Calvin refers to John 3:15. The most significant of these texts will be adduced and weighed below, but we may be bold to say that they do not appear to provide sufficient evidence to warrant the statement that the position "that Calvin himself favored the view that Jesus died only for the elect . . . flies in the face of the evidence in Calvin's writings,"²¹ or is "untenable."²² Calvin's distinction between the "secret" and the "revealed" will of God, strongly emphasized by Armstrong as establishing a point of correspondence between Amyraut and Calvin,²³ does not provide support by logical inference in favor of universal atonement and is in fact regularly found in Reformed theologians, even those who by Armstrong's standards would be rated as having become "scholastic."

¹⁹ John Murray, review of P. van Buren, *Christ in Our Place*, *WTJ* 22 (1959-60) 55-60, also found in *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976-82) 4.310-14.

²⁰ Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 137.

²² *Ibid.*, 138. It is noteworthy that although Armstrong refers to my discussion of this topic in my 1966 Harvard thesis, he does not undertake to evaluate the texts and arguments advanced there.

²³ *Ibid.*, 188-99.

Norman F. Douty published in 1972 a volume entitled *The Death of Christ: A Treatise Which Considers the Question: "Did Christ die only for the Elect?"* A revised and enlarged edition appeared in 1978.²⁴ Douty refers repeatedly to Calvin and quotes his comments on Mark 14:24; John 1:29; 3:16, 17; 12:47; 16:7; Rom 5:18; Gal 3:10, 11; Col 1:14 mostly to demonstrate that the words "all," "world," "many" are construed by Calvin as having a race-wide reference. He also lists the passages quoted by Armstrong and concludes his book with a reference to Calvin's last will and testament. The important words are as follows: "... I ... seek ... to be washed and purified by the great Redeemer's blood, shed *for the sins of the human race*."²⁵

The French original reads "shed for all poor sinners," and the absence of the article might favor the connotation "all kinds of poor sinners." The point of Calvin appears here not to be whether Christ offered himself for the whole race or for the redeemed only—a matter that would scarcely be relevant to the last will and testament—but rather that Calvin's hope of justification rested in God's willingness to receive "poor sinners" among whom Calvin did not hesitate to number himself.

An unpublished 197-page Th.D. dissertation of James William Anderson on "The Grace of God and the Non-elect in Calvin's Commentaries and Sermons" was presented to the Faculty of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 1976. The conclusion is that Calvin's sermons favor universal atonement. Unfortunately I have not yet had access to this work mentioned by Robert Peterson (*Calvin's Doctrine of the Atonement*, 90).

1979 saw the appearance of R. T. Kendall's *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*.²⁶ In this volume the author attempts to document that there is a great chasm between Calvin's theology and that of his successor Beza, followed in turn by William Perkins and others and culminating in the West-

²⁴ Irving, Texas: Williams and Watrous, 1978.

²⁵ Douty, *ibid.*, 2d ed., 17. This text is found in English translation in Calvin's *Tracts Relating to the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1844) 1.lxxxvi. The Latin form is found in Calvin's *Life* by Beza. The French text is "... pour tous povres pecheurs" (OC 20.299).

²⁶ Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

minster Assembly, which unconsciously was veering in the direction of Arminianism rather than proceeding in the path delineated by Calvin. This extremely paradoxical thesis appears to rest primarily upon the observation that Calvin grounded the assurance of faith in the conviction "that Christ died indiscriminately for all men"²⁷ and included this assurance in the very "essence of faith."²⁸ The same position is espoused in Kendall's essay on "The Puritan Modification of Calvin's Theology" in *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World*,²⁹ a work otherwise in line with traditional Calvinism. Kendall's position was very vigorously disputed in devastating reviews by A. N. S. Lane,³⁰ W. Stanford Reid,³¹ and especially Paul Helm.³²

On the face of it Kendall's view appears well-nigh incredible, for it implies that practically all the Calvinist successors of Calvin from Beza to Warfield and beyond, passing through the Synod of Dort delegates and the members of the Westminster Assembly, were basically wrong concerning the major direction of their theology. To call the Westminster Assembly doctrine of faith "crypto-Arminian"³³ is preposterous. Kendall's position impugns also practically all the Arminian theologians for failing to recognize that Calvin was their ally in the matter of the extent of the atonement, and the Calvinists with respect to the nature of faith! Frankly, it is easier to believe that Kendall is wrong rather than this whole galaxy of theologians!

The close connection posited by Kendall between universal atonement and the assurance of faith must also be challenged,

²⁷ R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism*, 13.

²⁸ Westminster Confession of Faith 20.3.

²⁹ W. Stanford Reid, editor; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982. Kendall's essay is found on pp. 199-214.

³⁰ A. N. S. Lane's review appeared in *Themelios* 6 (1980-81) 29-31. His article on "Calvin's Doctrine of Assurance" in *Vox Evangelica* 11 (1979) 32-54 also has a bearing on the discussion.

³¹ W. Stanford Reid's review appeared in *WTJ* 43 (1980-81) 155-64.

³² Paul Helm's review article appeared in *SJT* 24 (1981) 179-84. A fuller discussion is provided by his book *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982). Helm's work is in turn the object of a critical review by Charles Bell, "Was Calvin a Calvinist?" in *SJT* 36 (1983) 535-40.

³³ Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism*, 209.

for universal atonement is neither necessary nor sufficient for assurance. It is not necessary since my understanding of how the work of Christ affects others is not essential for a perception of how it affects me. It is not sufficient since on Kendall's showing, all covered by the atonement will not be saved; assurance, if it is to be reliable, needs to be grounded in something that actually makes a difference between the saved and the lost.³⁴

Kendall devotes two pages to discussing Calvin's view of the extent of the atonement. Here he quotes largely the same passages of Calvin we have encountered earlier,³⁵ one of which is so wrested from its context as to appear to have a meaning opposite to that which Calvin explicitly delineated.³⁶ An argument is also drawn from the fact that Calvin did not object to the articles of the Council of Trent where Christ's death

³⁴ This point is very effectually argued by Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists*, 48–50.

³⁵ Calvin's *Comm.*, Isa 53:12; Mark 14:24; John 1:29; 3:16, 33; 12:46; 15:9; Rom 5:11, 18; Gal 5:12; Heb 9:28. Two references to Calvin's *Sermons of Isaiah's Prophecy* (on Isa 53:12) are precisely of the same import as the commentary on that passage.

³⁶ Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 148. This passage refutes Georgius' interpretation of 1 John 2:2. "John does indeed extend the benefits of the atonement of Christ, which was completed by His death, to all the elect of God throughout what climes of the world soever they may be scattered. But though the case be so, it by no means alters the fact that the reprobate are mingled with the elect in the world. *It is also a fact, without controversy, that Christ came to atone for the sins of the whole world.* But the solution of all difficulty is immediately at hand in the truth and fact that it is whosoever believeth in Him that shall not perish, but shall have eternal life. For our present question is, not what the power or virtue of Christ is, nor what efficacy it has in itself, but who those are to whom He gives Himself to be enjoyed. Now if the possession of Christ stands in faith, and if faith flows from the spirit of adoption, it follows that he alone is numbered of God among His children who is designed of God to be a partaker of Christ. Indeed, the evangelist John sets forth the office of Christ to be none other than that of gathering together all the children of God in one by His death. From all which we conclude that although reconciliation is offered unto all men through Him, yet, that the great benefit belongs peculiarly to the elect, that they might be gathered together and be made together partakers of eternal life." *Calvin's Calvinism* 165–66 (OC 8.336). By quoting only the sentence in italics, Kendall violated Calvin's intent.

for all men is affirmed.³⁷ But these articles simply affirmed that no other remedy to original sin and no other access to justification can be found in the whole world than through the passion of Jesus Christ. In the midst of so many questionable tenets of Trent it is understandable that Calvin would not interpose an objection at this point. On the other hand in response to Trent's 15th Canon on justification in which personal assurance of predestination is disallowed, Calvin asserts the possibility of it although not its necessity, even though predestination, justification, and adoption are particular, not universal blessings.³⁸ In terms of this logic it is difficult to see why Calvin should have insisted on universal atonement as indispensable for the assurance of faith!

Kendall avers that Calvin distinguished sharply between expiation, which is universal, and intercession, which is particular, as well as election.³⁹ Yet Calvin says, "Whenever the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ is preached to us, we must at the same time add the prayer that He made."⁴⁰ The same close connection can be observed in the *Institutes* 2.15.6 and in many other places.

Altogether we find Kendall flatly asserting that Calvin held to universal atonement on the basis of a handful of statements which are not compelling, to say the least, and of a logical nexus between assurance and universal atonement, which re-

³⁷ Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism*, 14–15. Kendall's reference "OC 7, 371 ff" is very vague. A reference to universal atonement appears in "the admonition of the pontifical legates" (p. 378), but Calvin here concentrates his fire on the unworthiness of the council's participants and the groundlessness of the charges levelled against the Reformation. He expressly says, "It were irksome to follow out every single point" (*Piget singula persequi*, p. 390). This in any case is not a part of the "Decrees." The "Decrees" in which a universal atonement may seem to surface must be the 3rd of the fifth session (on original sin, OC 7.419–20) and the 2nd and 3rd of the sixth session (on justification, OC 7.430–31. [Calvin numbers these as 3rd and 4th]). Calvin's decision not to express dissent is found respectively on pp. 423, 443.

³⁸ Calvin, *Tracts* (ed. H. Beveridge) 3.105, 155 (OC 7.440, 479).

³⁹ Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism*, 15–18.

⁴⁰ J. Calvin, *Sermons on Isaiah's Prophecy* (London: James Clarke, 1956) 148 (OC 35.685).

mains wholly unconvincing.⁴¹ On the other hand he chose to disregard "certain statements by Calvin himself which, some thought, support a different view" on the grounds that he is "satisfied that what [he has] shown about Calvin's position will stand."⁴² Others are doubtful about that.

In *Calvin's Doctrine of the Atonement*⁴³ Robert A. Peterson broaches the question of Calvin's view on the extent of the atonement at the very end of his dissertation. He is positive that Calvin held to a universal offer of grace and rejected universal salvation, but he holds that the diversity of the evidence concerning Calvin's position on the extent of the atonement prevents a conclusion on this point.

In an Appendix to his Ph.D. dissertation Curt D. Daniel discusses the question, "Did John Calvin Teach Limited Atonement?"⁴⁴ This is by far the most extensive treatment of this topic I have ever seen. It provides more quotations of Calvin related to this precise issue than any previous writer; it discusses adequately and fairly the arguments advanced by those who have published materials in this area; it has extensive bibliographies of previous studies; it takes cognizance of three Aberdeen doctoral dissertations that were not available to me by Robert Letham, Robert Doyle, and M. Charles Bell.⁴⁵

Lest it should appear that this study makes the present essay superfluous, it must be added that Daniel's conclusion is that Calvin held to universal atonement, while I, even after examining the data and arguments advanced by Daniel, remain convinced that the balance of evidence favors the opposite

⁴¹ Most of the Calvin passages advanced by Kendall are dealt with in some detail by Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists*, 38-46 and shown not to provide substantial support for Kendall's contention. See also below our own treatment of some of these.

⁴² R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism*, vii.

⁴³ Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1983. See pp. 90-92.

⁴⁴ Curt D. Daniel, "Hyper-Calvinism and John Gill" (University of Edinburgh, 1983). The Appendix occupies pp. 777-828.

⁴⁵ C. Daniel, "Hyper-Calvinism," footnotes on pp. 781-83; R. W. A. Letham, "Saving Faith and Assurance in Reformed Theology: Zwingli to the Synod of Dort" (Aberdeen: 1979, 2 vols); Robert Doyle, "The Context of Moral Decision Making in the Writings of John Calvin" (Aberdeen: 1981); Charles Bell, "Saving Faith and Assurance of Salvation in the Teaching of John Calvin and Scottish Theology" (Aberdeen: 1982).

view. Daniel makes a comment to the effect that most of the contenders in this area tend to ascribe to Calvin the view which they hold themselves, that is to say, they appear to have yielded to the temptation to annex Calvin in support of their own position! Unfortunately this remark seems to apply also to Daniel's treatment and to the present article. One may hope, however, that in spite of a natural bias there is enough objectivity in both presentations to make them of some value.⁴⁶

The April 1983 issue of *The Evangelical Quarterly* was largely devoted to the same subject. It contains two articles by authors who assert that Calvin taught universal atonement (J. B. Torrance, M. Charles Bell), one by P. Helm who denies it, and one by Tony Lane, who leaves the matter in some suspense.

Charles Bell⁴⁷ examines certain Calvin passages which are quoted to support a view of definite atonement. He argues that they do not carry conviction, especially if it be acknowledged that in his biblicism Calvin did not recoil from accepting the tension between particular election and universal atonement. Bell also criticizes Kendall for his disjunction of atonement and intercession which, Bell avers, did remain indissolubly connected in Calvin's thought.

J. B. Torrance⁴⁸ presses the thesis that the successors of Calvin operated with a scholastic Aristotelian conception of God, which in turn undermined the biblical idea of divine love, stiffened the concept of God's covenants with humanity, asserted the priority of law over grace and thus damaged the thrust of Calvin's biblical insights and articulation. Torrance holds that the logic of the incarnation must emphasize the priority of grace and love throughout God's *opera ad extra*, so as to manifest the perfect unity in triunity of the Father who loves all his creatures, the Son who died for all, and the Spirit

⁴⁶ C. Daniel, "Hyper-Calvinism," 781, 782, 827. Correspondence with Dr. Daniel has elicited the fact that he originally held to definite atonement and thought that Calvin also held that view. His further studies have led him to the opposite conclusion both as to Calvin's position and as to his own understanding of Scripture. It is appropriate to mention that I made ample use of Dr. Daniel's work for its documentation of arguments supporting the position that Calvin held to universal atonement.

⁴⁷ M. Charles Bell, "Calvin and the Extent of the Atonement," 115-23.

⁴⁸ EQ 55 (1983) 82-94.

who draws humans to the Father.⁴⁹ Torrance does recognize a mystery here, but he does not face sufficiently squarely the fact that this construction leads to outright universalism (which is surely not Calvin's view) or introduces a fundamental disparity between the Father's and the Son's saving will, which is universal, and that of the Holy Spirit, which is particular. It is not surprising that he names favorably Barth, Moltmann, and Rahner⁵⁰ (to whom he infelicitously conjoins the name of the Jansenist Pascal) and quotes with great approval James Orr in a passage of *Progress of Dogma* where Orr is critical of Calvin as well as of the later Calvinists! What Torrance advocates here can in any case not be promoted in the name of Calvin, even if some perplexity remains as to what his exact teaching may have been concerning the extent of the atonement and the nature and number of the covenants. Calvin's endorsement of double predestination, of the ultimate bifurcation of human destiny, and of the forensic nature of the atonement is too clear to permit any doubt on that score. Torrance is surprised that a supralapsarian like Samuel Rutherford could also be "the saint of the covenant,"⁵¹ but this is not really puzzling to a thorough Calvinist.

Paul Helm,⁵² whose work has already been noted with reference to a critical appraisal of R. T. Kendall, wrote a stimulating article dealing with the Covenant principle before Calvin, in Calvin, and after Calvin. He marshalls evidence to show that certain well-formulated covenant structures can be found in Augustine, that all essential features of covenant theology, notably the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son and the covenant of works between God and Adam, as well as the covenant of grace between God and the redeemed, have unmistakable roots in Calvin's theology. The later emphases, he avers, were stimulated by the need to respond to the onset of Arminianism, but the fundamental principles were in place in Calvin and a number of others well before the beginning of the seventeenth century. It would be

⁴⁹ Ibid., 84.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 85.

⁵¹ Ibid., 94.

⁵² Paul Helm, "Calvin and the Covenant: Unity and Continuity" *EQ* 55 (1983) 65-81.

difficult to imagine two articles more sharply conflicting than J. B. Torrance's and Paul Helm's!

In an exceptionally richly documented article, Tony Lane⁵³ explores the position of Calvin over against later developments within Reformed thought and over against some claims made with respect to Calvin's views by neo-orthodox scholars. On the specific question of definite atonement, Lane presents the arguments on both sides of the aisle and leaves the matter unresolved.⁵⁴ In his conclusion he warns that we should beware of pressing Calvin into a logical mold.⁵⁵ This is very true, but should be tempered by the principle that we should beware also of pressing him into an illogical mold!

One dominant feature of Calvin's hermeneutics and theology is his emphasis upon divine grace as contrasted with every man-made or man-initiated basis for preference. Thus for Calvin there is ultimacy in God's choice of some to be the recipients of his special favor, and this leads to the doctrine of predestination, in fact of the *gemina praedestinatio*. For Calvin there is radical disablement in man, so that God's grace is indispensable even for, we could say especially for, the first movement of man's soul away from sin and toward God. Sinful man still functions as a human being, but his faculties have been so encompassed and enmeshed by evil, his mind so darkened, his emotions so debased, his will so weakened and misdirected, that he has become totally unable to extricate himself from his plight and even to desire, on his initiative, to be delivered and restored to the fellowship of God. Thus only the efficacious, creative grace of God can accomplish the miracle of regeneration by which a man, on the initiative of God and the sovereign operation of the Holy Spirit, is effectually changed at the very core of his being, and his dominant disposition oriented toward God. Whenever God does accomplish this miracle he also safeguards the new life thus implanted and brings it to ultimate maturity; thus grace is seen as indefectible or inamissible. All of these positions are so clearly delineated and so frequently asserted in Calvin that

⁵³ Anthony Lane, "The Quest for the Historical Calvin" *EQ* 55 (1983) 95-113.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 99-101.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 113.

it appears unnecessary to attempt here to substantiate them by quotations of, or even references to, the texts.

A sensitive point emerges, however, when one seeks to ascertain Calvin's assessment of the relationship of the work of Christ to this sovereign, differentiating purpose of grace. Is Christ as mediator, in the thought of Calvin, the representative of mankind at large, or did he come into this world principally as the head of the covenant of grace and specifically for the purpose of representing and redeeming the elect? The answer to this question may not be as easy as may appear at first.

In the first place, Calvin does not discuss it, at least not in the terms to which we may have grown accustomed, in that part of the *Institutes* where he deals with the sacrifice of Christ (2.16).

Secondly, a certain ambiguity resides in some terms which are of crucial importance in this connection. For instance, "all" may vary considerably in extension: notably "all" may mean, all men, universally, perpetually and singly, as when we say "all are partakers of human nature"; or again it may have a broader or narrower reference depending upon the context in which it is used, as when we say "all reached the top of Everest," where the scope of the discourse makes it plain that we are talking about a group of people only which set out to ascend the mountain. It is not always easy to determine with assurance what is the frame of reference in view: hence controverted interpretations both of Scripture and of individual theologians.⁵⁶ The same remarks could be made about other terms such as "every," "world." The pronoun, "we" and related forms ("us," "our") present sometimes a similar ambiguity: do they refer to "us men," or to "us Christians"?

⁵⁶ In some cases there is a genuine possibility that a shift of extension occurs within one sentence, as, for instance, in 1 Cor 15:22: "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive," where in terms of the express statements of Paul, it appears necessary to say that the two "all" are not coextensive, but that the parallelism rather holds with respect to the relationship of men in general to Adam, as compared to that of the redeemed to Christ (cf. Calvin's commentary on this text).

In the third place Calvin's manifest emphasis upon a universal indiscriminate call of the gospel to men may perplex the issue. Some would contend that such a call presupposes a universal provision, and tends to coalesce with it. Others insist that it is not so, and that the universal statements in Calvin are keyed to the scope of the external call and should be related to this only.

In the presence of these factors which make a decision difficult, it is not surprising that opinions as to Calvin's position have varied. The desire to have the support of this most capable theologian, or conversely, to appear as different as possible from him, has no doubt exerted some influence upon the conclusions reached by individual scholars.

I. Those who have asserted that Calvin held to a universal atonement have advanced mainly the following arguments:

1. Calvin, they urge, views Christ's mediatorship to have a race-wide reference and not to be restricted to the elective purpose of God.

This argument is bolstered by a reference to Calvin's Commentary on 1 Tim 2:5, or by an emphasis upon the cosmic significance of the work of the Redeemer.

To this we reply that there are manifestly certain benefits which accrue to humanity at large and to the cosmos from the atoning work of Christ, that Calvin is not loath to acknowledge these, but that the specific purpose of Christ's mediatorship is related to the impetration of salvation, which is done for those whom the Father has given him, drawn as they are from all imaginable categories in the human race, not from some narrowly defined group, like the Jews, or the poor, or males, etc., but from gentiles, or the rich, or females, etc., as well. This is the precise point of Calvin's Commentary on 1 Tim 2:5.

The universal term 'all' must always be referred to classes [*genera*] of men but never to individuals [*personas*]. It is as if he had said, 'Not only Jews, but also Greeks, not only people of humble rank, but also princes have been redeemed by the death of Christ.' Since therefore he intends the benefit of His death to be common to all, those who hold a view that would exclude any from the hope of salvation do Him an injury.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Transl. T. A. Smail, p. 210 (OC 52.270).

It is not fair to Calvin to separate the last sentence from the remainder of the paragraph and to pretend on that basis that he advocates a universal atonement. Calvin emphasized strongly the soteriological character of Christ's mediatorship.⁵⁸ He specifically rejects the speculations of Osiander and others as to whether Christ would have been mediator and become incarnate if no redemption were needed.⁵⁹ This discussion takes more than two-thirds of the chapter devoted to the necessity of mediatorship by the God-man. Some passages of Calvin in which universal language appears may well be explained from the vantage point of Calvin's immense concern for the exclusivity of Christ's mediatorship as the only way of true access to God, and contrasted with outlooks in which other intermediaries (Mary, the saints) or other principles of acceptance with God (good works, attainment in sanctification) were imagined to be effective. Here again a study of Calvin's Commentary on 1 Tim 2:5 will be instructive.

2. In asserting, as he does repeatedly, the legitimacy of a universal, indiscriminate offer of salvation to any and to all, Calvin, they urge, presupposes a universal atonement as the logical necessary foundation for such a call.

To this we reply in acknowledging readily that Calvin does indeed assert the propriety of, yea, the divine mandate for an indiscriminate call to salvation addressed to any and all human beings that may be reached by language. We furthermore believe that Calvin was right in line with Scripture, and that those who would restrict the call to the elect are mistaken. But the proposition that the prerequisite for an indiscriminate call is a universal provision, which is the base of the whole argument, appears to us palpably and demonstrably false. Most of the well-meant offers and invitations, human as well as divine, are not grounded in coextensive provision! All that is really requisite for a well-meant offer is that, if the terms of the offer be complied with, that which was offered will in fact be delivered. This is precisely what occurs with the gospel (John 6:37), but no one fulfills the terms except those whom the Father draws (John 6:44, 65). Whether or not God has

⁵⁸ Cf. the important thesis of H. Schroten, *Christus, de Middelaar, bij Calvin* (Utrecht: den Boer, 1948). Note especially pp. 154 and 481.

⁵⁹ *Institutes*, 2.12.4-7.

made a provision for those who do not come has nothing to do with the sincerity of the offer. No solid argument can therefore be built in favor of universal atonement on this basis.

3. Calvin, they urge, takes at face value certain biblical texts which appear to teach God's universal saving will. Here Calvin's Commentaries on Ezek 18:32 and on 2 Pet 3:9 are often quoted.

To this we reply that with respect to Ezek 18:32 as well as to 2 Pet 3:9, Calvin expressly distinguished between the revealed, preceptive will of God by virtue of which an appeal may be extended to all humans, and the secret, decretive will of God which draws unto him only the elect. The very strong language Calvin uses in his comments on these passages relates to the obligation to present an indiscriminate universal invitation, as already noted under 2 above.

4. Calvin, they urge, asserts with Scripture that some for whom Christ died may perish (Rom 14:15; 1 Cor 8:11) or will perish (Heb 10:29; 2 Pet 2:1). These texts, perhaps more than any others in Scripture, give the advocate of definite atonement reason to pause and ponder. And Calvin does not, either in his commentaries or in the *Institutes*, provide any explanation of their relationship to the extent of the atonement.

To this we reply that in the context of the problem of weaker brothers, Paul affirms that they will not perish but God will make them to stand (Rom 14:4). Thus Paul's statements do not so much represent an expression of doubt as to God's perseverance with his own for whom Christ died, as a castigation of the selfishness of so-called "strong" Christians who would give priority to their own exercise of Christian liberty over the spiritual eternal interests of their weaker brothers.

The warnings of Hebrews and 2 Peter, on the other hand, do relate to people who will ultimately be lost. They do not support universal atonement, since the grounds of condemnation are the special privileges enjoyed by these apostates including "being sanctified by the blood of the covenant" and "being bought by the Master." There is no way in which these benefits can in these verses be extended to the universality of mankind. If these apostates are thought to have been regenerate at any time, however, it would appear that the scope

of the atonement exceeds the scope of ultimate salvation. This would also raise a difficulty with the doctrine of perseverance. The solution may be found in viewing the description of Hebrews and 2 Peter as expressing what the apostates at one time professed to have rather than what they had in fact.

This is in any case what Calvin has opted for, as is apparent when he calls the offenders of Heb 10:29 "hypocrites . . . usurping a place among the faithful."⁶⁰ This is confirmed by his treatment of Heb 6:4-6 and 10:29 in the *Institutes*.⁶¹ Calvin's silence on the relationship of these four texts to the extent of the atonement should not, in all fairness, be construed as an endorsement of universal atonement, not any more than his silence in his commentaries on the relation of these texts to the doctrine of perseverance provides a substantial basis for affirming that Calvin did not believe in perseverance. Other passages prove beyond dispute that he did believe in it!

5. Calvin, they urge, did repeatedly assert universal atonement as is manifested from the following categories of statements culled from the *Institutes*, the commentaries, the sermons, and the tracts.

a. Christ suffered "for the redemption of mankind"⁶² or "for the salvation of the human race."⁶³

He ordained that Christ should be the Redeemer, who would deliver the lost race of man from ruin.⁶⁴

When he says 'the sin of the world,' he extends this kindness indiscriminately to the whole human race, that the Jews might not think that the Redeemer has been sent to them alone.⁶⁵

He was condemned for our sins . . . to expiate all sins.⁶⁶

b. By Christ's death "all the sins of the world have been expiated."⁶⁷

⁶⁰ *Comm.* Heb 10:29 (p. 150).

⁶¹ 3.2.11; 3.3.21, 23; etc.

⁶² *Sermons on the Deity of Christ*, 55.

⁶³ *Institutes* 3.1.1. See also the statement in Calvin's testament quoted by Norman Douty (cf. n. 25).

⁶⁴ *Comm.*, 1 Pet 1:20 (p. 249). cf. also Calvin's statement in the previous paragraph, "He ordained Him . . . for the salvation of the world."

⁶⁵ *Comm.*, John 1:29 (Vol. 1, p. 32).

⁶⁶ *Comm.*, John 19:12, (Vol. 2, p. 175).

⁶⁷ *Comm.*, Col 1:14 (p. 308).

God commends to us the salvation of all men without exception, even as Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world.⁶⁸

Wipe away the iniquities of the world.⁶⁹

Burdened with the sins of the whole world.⁷⁰

Paul makes grace common to all men, not because it in fact extends to all, but because it is offered to all. Although Christ suffered for the sins of the world, and is offered by the goodness of God without distinction to all, yet not all receive him.⁷¹

On him was laid the guilt of the whole world.⁷²

Our Lord Jesus was offered to all the world . . . suffered for all.⁷³

He must be the Redeemer of the world. He must be condemned, indeed, not for having preached the Gospel, but for us He must be oppressed. . . . He was there, as it were, in the person of all cursed ones and of all transgressors. . . . He was there . . . in our name. . . . He forgot Himself in order to acquit us before God. . . . It was all one to suffer the shames and disgraces of the world, provided that our sins be abolished and we be absolved from our condemnation.⁷⁴

It is not enough to regard Christ as having died for the salvation of the world: each man must claim the effect and possession of this grace for himself personally.⁷⁵

God is satisfied and appeased, for he bore all the wickednesses and all the iniquities of the world.⁷⁶

c. Christ was there in the place of all sinners.

So we see that Jesus Christ was laden with all our sins and iniquities.⁷⁷

He took upon himself and suffered the punishment that, from God's righteous judgment, threatened all sinners.⁷⁸

. . . found before the judgment seat of God in the name of all poor sinners.⁷⁹

⁶⁸ *Comm.*, Gal 5:12 (p. 99).

⁶⁹ *Sermons on the Deity of Christ*, 156.

⁷⁰ *Comm.*, Matt 26:39 (Vol. 3, p. 152).

⁷¹ *Comm.*, Rom 5:18 (pp. 117-18).

⁷² *Comm.*, Isa 53:12 (Vol. 4, p. 131).

⁷³ *Sermons on Isaiah's Prophecy*, 141. The OC at this point have the reading "pour nous tous" (35.678).

⁷⁴ *Sermons on the Deity of Christ*, 95-96.

⁷⁵ *Comm.*, Gal 2:20 (p. 44). See also this same thought repeatedly asserted in Calvin's *Sermons on Galatians*, 106, 107.

⁷⁶ *Sermons on Isaiah*, 74.

⁷⁷ *Sermons on Isaiah*, 70.

⁷⁸ *Institutes* 2.16.2.

⁷⁹ *Sermons on the Deity of Christ*, 155-56.

He willed to appear before the judgment seat of God in the name of all poor sinners (for he was there as it were, having to sustain all our burdens).⁸⁰

To this we reply that this is indeed an impressive list of statements, which could probably be extended still further. In a number of cases, however, we note that the pronouns "we," "us," and the adjective "our" appear in alternation with "mankind," "all," etc. even within the quotations presented here,⁸¹ and that many times they appear in a larger immediate context that we could not take the space to adduce here.⁸² Those to whom Calvin refers by such pronouns are not merely members of the human race, but are most commonly those who confess Jesus Christ as their Savior. The context would be determinative in each instance.

In some cases Calvin makes it clear that he contrasts the broad scope from which the elect are drawn, with a narrow-minded outlook that would restrict salvation to the Jews,⁸³ or to a few people.⁸⁴

In the context of several of these quotations a major concern of Calvin is to emphasize the exclusivity of the atoning impact of the cross in contrast to those (especially the Roman Catholics) who posited other mediators or other sources of merit.⁸⁵

Calvin is also concerned to express the sufficiency of the work of Christ so that no one inclined to claim this work and to cast himself or herself on the mercy of God should feel discouraged by thinking that somehow the cross would not avail for him/her.⁸⁶ This sufficiency is also important with reference to the indiscriminate, universal offer of grace⁸⁷ and to the personal guilt of those who reject this offer.⁸⁸

⁸⁰ Ibid., 52. See also the quotations footnoted 71 and 74 in the present article.

⁸¹ This applies to quotations 66, 74, 76, 79.

⁸² This applies to quotations 67, 69, 72, 73, 75, 77, 78, 80.

⁸³ See for example his comments on 1 John 2:2 and quotation 65.

⁸⁴ See quotation 73 and comments on Matt 20:28; Mark 14:24.

⁸⁵ This applies especially to quotations 62, 67, 75, 76, but is a major point of emphasis for Calvin throughout his work.

⁸⁶ See e.g. quotation 57, 73.

⁸⁷ See quotations 57, 63, 68, 73.

⁸⁸ See e.g. quotations 73, 103.

Finally in the context of many of the above quotations expressions are used that connote the actual application or attainment of salvation, not merely an impetration that would still await appropriation: "our sins are forgiven" or "wiped away,"⁸⁹ God is "satisfied" or "appeased,"⁹⁰ "we are justified,"⁹¹ "we are exempt from condemnation,"⁹² "we may partake of the Lord's Table,"⁹³ we are "saved,"⁹⁴ "delivered,"⁹⁵ "restored to life,"⁹⁶ "reconciled."⁹⁷ In this respect, as in so many others, Calvin's language parallels very closely the usage of Scripture. (See for instance Rom 5:18; 8:32; 1 Cor 15:22; 2 Cor 5:14; Heb 2:9; 1 John 2:2). Neither the Scripture nor Calvin can be fairly interpreted to teach universal salvation, but the passages advanced as supporting universal atonement simply do not stop there. It is of course legitimate to distinguish, as Calvin clearly does, between impetration and application,⁹⁸ but it is improper to separate these, since they always go together. The choice, therefore, is not between universal atonement and definite atonement as properly representative of Calvin's theology, but rather between universal salvation and definite atonement.

⁸⁹ Quotations 65, 67, 69, 74, 75, 77.

⁹⁰ Quotations 65, 71, 75, 76, 78, 79, 80. Calvin does not seem to manifest a difference between the scope of expiation and propitiation, although Dr. Daniel appears to point to such a distinction ("Hyper-Calvinism," 787 n. 16).

⁹¹ Quotations 65, 71, 79, 80.

⁹² Quotations 71, 74, 76, 78.

⁹³ *Comm.*, Mark 14:24; Quotation 102.

⁹⁴ Quotation 64.

⁹⁵ Quotations 64, 76, 78.

⁹⁶ Quotation 64.

⁹⁷ Quotations 65, 67, 69, 78, 79.

⁹⁸ This distinction appears notably in quotations 63, 64, 71, 73 and 75. It is also articulated in *Sermons on Isaiah*, 117, and in *Sermons on the Deity of Christ*, 100, quoted by Dr. Daniel. The crux of the matter resides in the fact that Christ's impetration involves the gift of the Holy spirit to secure repentance and faith in those whom God intended to save. Thus salvation does not occur apart from appropriation, but appropriation is seen by Calvin as a gift of God rather than a performance by the creature. Human beings thus are seen as responsible for their sinful rejection of Christ, when offered, but only the Spirit, whose intervention was secured in the atonement, can lead a sinner to repent, believe and accept the proffered salvation. See *Calvin's Calvinism*, 164 (OC 8.335).

6. Calvin, they urge, far from emphasizing the use of the word "many" rather than "all" in passages like Isa 53:11, 12; Matt 20:28 (Mark 10:45); 26:28 (Mark 14:24); Rom 5:15, 19; Heb 9:28 (as upholders of definite atonement are wont to do), on the contrary does interpret some of them as connoting universality.

"Many" sometimes denotes "all."⁹⁹

This word "many" is often as good as equivalent to all. And indeed, our Lord Jesus was offered to all the world.¹⁰⁰

"Many" is used not for a definite number, but for a large number. . . . And this is its meaning also in Romans 5:15, where Paul is not talking of a part of mankind but of the whole human race.¹⁰¹

The word *many* does not mean a part of the world only, but the whole human race.¹⁰²

He says many meaning all, as in Rom. 5:15. It is of course certain that not all enjoy the fruits of Christ's death, but this happens because their unbelief hinders them.¹⁰³

To this we reply that these quotations are indeed remarkable, since a good opportunity to assert definite atonement is here obviously by-passed. What is stated, however, is not different from the passages noted under 5c and the same kind of response would apply.

It is interesting to note that conversely Calvin does occasionally state that "all" refers to some parts of the race rather than the whole of mankind.

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. . . . He is speaking of classes and not of individuals, and his only concern is to include princes and foreign nations in this number.¹⁰⁴

Who does not see that the apostle is here speaking of *orders of men* rather than of individuals?¹⁰⁵

He expressly declares that salvation comes to all men, having especially in mind the slaves. . . . He does not mean individuals, but rather all classes of men.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ *Comm.*, Isa 53:12 (Vol. 4, p. 131).

¹⁰⁰ *Sermons on Isaiah*, 141.

¹⁰¹ *Comm.*, Matt 20:28 (Vol. 2, p. 277).

¹⁰² *Comm.*, Mark 14:24, (Vol. 3, p. 139).

¹⁰³ *Comm.*, Heb 9:28 (p. 131).

¹⁰⁴ *Comm.*, 1 Tim 2:4 (pp. 208-9).

¹⁰⁵ *Calvin's Calvinism* 105 (OC 8.303).

¹⁰⁶ *Comm.*, Titus 2:11 (p. 373).

When He says *all*, it must be limited to the elect. . . .¹⁰⁷

When He says *all* it must be referred to the children of God, who are His flock.¹⁰⁸

We are commanded to pray for all . . . [but] the prayers which we utter for all are still limited to God's elect.^{108a}

II. The following arguments may be advanced to support the contention that definite atonement more closely approximates Calvin's view.

1. The strong structure of Calvin's theology in terms of the divine purpose does appear to imply this specific reference. It seems difficult to imagine that Calvin would posit as the purpose of Christ an indefinite, hypothetical redemption, when at so many other points it is plainly apparent that the specific elective purpose of God is the controlling feature of his outlook.

2. Repeatedly Calvin asserts that God's purpose of election is ultimate and that we cannot go behind it! To assume a hypothetical redemptive purpose more inclusive than the election of grace is doing precisely what he precludes. It is difficult to assume that Calvin would open himself to such self-contradiction.

Before the first man was created, God in His eternal counsel had determined what he willed to be done with the whole human race.

While we are elected in Christ, nevertheless God reckons us among his own prior in order to making us members of Christ.¹⁰⁹

3. Calvin makes it quite plain that he views repentance and faith and all other recreative benefits of salvation to have been merited for the elect by Christ. What Christ has accomplished on the cross is not so much to secure the salvability of all humans, as actually to accomplish the salvation of those whom he does redeem.

This point is made very apparent in the whole chapter 17 of Book 2 of the *Institutes* entitled, "Christ rightly and properly

¹⁰⁷ *Comm.*, John 6:45 (Vol. 1, p. 164).

¹⁰⁸ *Comm.*, John 12:32 (Vol. 2, p. 43).

^{108a} *Comm.*, John 17:9 (Vol. 2, p. 140).

¹⁰⁹ "Articles concerning Predestination" in J. K. S. Reid (ed.), *Calvin: Theological Treatises* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954) 179 (OC 9.713-14). See also *Treatise of Predestination*, *Calvin's Calvinism* 32-33 (OC 8.262). *Comm.*, Ezek 18:32 (*in fine*) (Vol. 2, pp. 266-67). Many other passages could be quoted.

said to have merited God's grace and salvation for us." We may also refer to our note 98 where the relationship of repentance and faith to the saving work of Christ is articulated in Calvin's spirit.

4. Calvin, as well as the Scripture itself, frequently conjoins in the same sentence certain benefits which accrue only to the elect, with references to the effects or intent of the death of Christ, e.g. "Christ, who died for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification" (Rom 4:25).¹¹⁰

In this connection it is important to note that there is in Calvin a great prevalence of the use of "we" (and related forms) with respect to those who are viewed as elect and redeemed.¹¹¹

5. Calvin, following Scripture,¹¹² conjoins closely the priestly work of Christ in his substitutionary death with this priestly work as intercessor.

First He offered the sacrifice of His body, and shed His blood, that He might bear the punishment due to us; and secondly, that the atonement might be powerful He performed the office of an advocate, and interceded for all who entered this sacrifice by faith.¹¹³

Whenever the death and passion of our Lord Jesus-Christ is preached to us, we must at the same time add the prayer that he made.¹¹⁴

Now Christ's intercession is specifically stated to be particular (John 17:9), and so it is represented by Calvin.¹¹⁵ This undoubtedly is what has led R. G. Kendall to posit that Calvin assumed a different scope for the oblation and the intercession of Christ. But this position flies in the face of Calvin's text, and has not received wide acceptance, even among scholars who believe that Calvin held to universal atonement. But if oblation and intercession are recognized to be coextensive, they will both be universal or both be particular. The clear-

¹¹⁰ See above our last answer to I.5.

¹¹¹ See above our first answer to I.5.

¹¹² Isa 53:12; Rom 8:34; 1 John 2:1, 2.

¹¹³ *Comm.*, Isa 53:12, trans. Parker, in *Sermons on Isaiah*, 136.

¹¹⁴ *Sermons on Isaiah*, 148. See the whole development pp. 143-51. See also *Institutes*, 2.15.6.

¹¹⁵ See *Comm.*, John 17:9 (Vol. 2, pp. 140-41), and *Sermons on Isaiah*, 145: "a privilege, which is kept only for the children of God."

cut particularity of intercession becomes therefore a telling argument for the equal particularity of the atonement.

6. Calvin deals with texts which are usually associated with a universal saving intent in a way which shows that he was mindful at that very moment of the particular elective purpose of God. This is explicitly brought to the fore in the commentaries in Ezek 18:32; John 3:16; 2 Pet 3:9. In the commentaries and sermons on 1 Tim 2:4 and Titus 2:13 the word "all" is interpreted to refer to "all kinds or classes of men." In relation to John 1:29 and 1 John 2:2 the word "world" is viewed as intending to transcend a nationalistic Jewish particularism. Similar interpretations are to be found in the *Institutes*¹¹⁶ and in the *Treatise on Predestination*.¹¹⁷

Now we have never met an upholder of universal atonement who would favor such an interpretation. In fact we have never met one who would hesitate to use all these texts in support of his/her view. Surely if Calvin held to universal grace, he would not find it suitable, let alone necessary, to provide such explanations for these passages. In fact, the greater the confidence that such Scriptures do in fact teach universal grace, the stronger the evidence that Calvin did not hold this doctrine, since, according to this view, he would have been led to evade the clear meaning of the texts in order to conform to the demands of his system.

7. The embarrassment which some of Calvin's universal expressions may cause the upholder of definite atonement may be alleviated by the consideration that Calvin meant to place special emphasis on the indiscriminate call of the gospel.¹¹⁸ It is certainly in this sense that Calvin himself interprets 2 Pet 3:9 and the same hermeneutic may apply to his own statements.

8. There are in Scripture as well as in Calvin passages where the particular intent of Christ's death is stressed. Christ gave himself for his people (Matt 1:21), for his friends (John 15:13), for the sheep (John 10:15), for his church (Eph 5:23-26; Acts 20:28), for us (Titus 2:14). Calvin's commentaries on these

¹¹⁶ E.g. *Institutes*, 3.24.15, 16.

¹¹⁷ Calvin's *Calvinism*, 90-106, 165-67 (OC 8.300-304, 336-37). In our footnote 36, a substantial quotation of Calvin on 1 John 2:2 is to be found.

¹¹⁸ For specific instances see our note 87.

passages, as well as those on John 11:52 and Heb 2:9 reflect this particularity.

9. Calvin's statement in response to Heshusius, dealing with the participation of unbelievers in the Lord's Supper and quoted above,¹¹⁹ deserves special attention: "I should like to know how the wicked can eat the flesh of Christ which was not crucified for them, and how they can drink the blood which was not shed to expiate their sins."

This appears to be a categorical denial of universal atonement. Bell¹²⁰ and Daniel¹²¹ have tackled this statement and attempted to explain it as reflecting the viewpoint of unbelievers who were not acknowledging the relevance to them of Christ's work rather than Calvin's own position. But then the argument against Heshusius would be very weak, since it was precisely his contention that the unbelievers desecrated the Lord's Supper by failing to discern the reality of Christ in, with, and under the natural species as well as the universal relevance of his atoning work. They manifested the latter form of unbelief by failing to appropriate this work in repentance and faith.

10. Calvin follows Scripture in the terms he commonly uses to describe the atoning work of Christ: "reconciliation," "redemption," "propitiation." To these may be added the term "satisfaction," not found *per se* in Scripture, but commonly used by theologians. All these terms connote an accomplishment that actually transforms the relationship between God and the sinner. What kind of reconciliation would be this, if estrangement continued and ultimately were to be sealed for eternity? What kind of propitiation would be this, if God continued to look upon the sinner as a child of wrath? What kind of redemption would be this, where the captives would remain in bondage after the ransom has been paid? What kind of satisfaction would be this, where God would not be satisfied but still enact punishment in the day of judgment? The language of Calvin does not fit a mere potential blessing which remains ineffective pending some performance by the sinner,

¹¹⁹ See page 200 and note 14.

¹²⁰ C. Bell, "Calvin and the Extent of the Atonement" *EQ* 55 (1983) 119-20.

¹²¹ C. Daniel, "Hyper-Calvinism," 817-19.

which would then make it truly operative: it connotes a basic act of God, who then sees to it that it is implemented unto the salvation of all those he purposed to save.

11. Calvin functions clearly with the concept of penal substitution,¹²² that is to say Christ on the cross underwent the divine penalty which God would otherwise inflict on the sinner. Who does not see that if this is so, and if the atonement is universal, no one will be punished at the last judgment? But this is contrary to Scripture and to Calvin. It is difficult to imagine that Calvin failed to perceive the necessary link between substitution and definite atonement, or that, having perceived it, he carried on without giving regard to this matter!

12. Calvin's strong trinitarian view would certainly lead him to recognize a unity of purpose between the three Persons of the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But universal atonement introduces a fundamental disjunction between the universal intent of the Son who gave himself for all and the particular purpose of the Father who elected only some people, and of the Holy Spirit, who confers regeneration, faith, and repentance to the elect only. Here again it is difficult to imagine that Calvin would remain unaware of such a fatal flaw at the heart of his theology.

13. A historical difficulty appears when we attempt to explain how Reformed thought moved so quickly from Calvin's alleged endorsement of universal atonement to the very emphatic support of definite atonement by all but one or two of the delegations at the Synod of Dort. What happened in these fifty-five years to cause the Reformed community to make such a drastic shift? Usually the name of Beza is associated with this change, but can we really accept that his influence was so very far-reaching that he practically single-handedly reverted the whole trend in Reformed circles, putting himself at loggerheads not only with Calvin, but as it is alleged, with Scripture itself, and this without producing any major work centering on this topic? Somehow a lot more light should be

¹²² References could be given in great number. See particularly his *Sermons on Isaiah's Prophecy* and *Institutes* 2.16.5-6, 10, 11.

shed on this area before such an unlikely development can be assumed to have taken place.

Our conclusion, on balance, is that definite atonement fits better than universal grace into the total pattern of Calvin's teaching.

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JOHN CALVIN AND GENEVAN PRESBYTERIANISM

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I. Introduction: *The Question of Calvin's Church Polity*

The Geneva consistory held a crucial place in the thinking of John Calvin. Doubtless, Calvin never would have returned to Geneva apart from a concession on the Genevan government's part that he be allowed to establish a consistory.¹ Theodore Beza, his successor as the moderator of the Company of Pastors, wrote about the centrality the consistory in Calvin's philosophy of ministry in his biography: "Or afin que on entende comment Calvin s'y est porté: premierement d'entré il protesta de n'accepter point la charge de ceste Eglise, sinon qu'il y eust consistoire ordonné et discipline ecclesiastique convenable: pour ce qu'il voyoit que telles brides estoient necessaires et qu'il n'estoit point question de dilayer."² Clearly, it was Calvin's deep conviction that he could not properly fulfill his ministry apart from the establishment of a consistory with full ecclesiastical authority.

Scholars such as Lefferts Loetscher and Robert Kingdon have recognized the significance of Calvin's church polity when it comes to Presbyterian church government. Without hesitation, Loetscher declares, "John Calvin . . . was the chief formulator of Presbyterianism. . . . Calvin more than any other one man gave to Presbyterianism its distinctive character."³ As to the form of government which Calvin established in Geneva, Loetscher asserts, "In Geneva, Calvin developed one of his most distinctive achievements—Presbyterian church government."⁴

The proof which Loetscher offers for this statement is succinct: "He provided for four types of church officers: pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons. The clergy were equal, without superior bishop over them, and the lay elders, twelve in number, were elected . . . to share with the clergy in church government."⁵ This indeed is the traditional understanding of what constitutes Presbyterian government in contrast to Episcopalianism

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¹ Robert M. Kingdon, *Adultery and Divorce in Calvin's Geneva* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995) 11.

² Theodore de Beze, *Vie De J. Calvin* (Paris: J. Cherbuliez, Libraire, 1864) 48.

³ Lefferts A. Loetscher, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978) 23.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵ *Ibid.*

(which places authority in a higher clergy, the bishops) and Congregationalism (which gives governing authority to the local congregation). Since the Genevan church was neither ruled by a bishop nor the congregation, but by a consistory comprised of pastors and elders having ecclesiastical authority over multiple congregations, it follows that the church in Geneva had a Presbyterian form of government.

Although Kingdon does not put it as boldly as Loetscher, he too sees the roots of Presbyterianism going back to Geneva. Writing about the Geneva Company of Pastors, he says, "It provided the collective leadership for the newly Reformed Church of Geneva and may thus be regarded as the first Reformed Presbytery, depending, of course, on how one defines presbytery."⁶ Kingdon, likewise, recognizes Calvin's opposition to the episcopal form of government which long had dominated the medieval church. Writing about Calvin and Geneva's civil magistrates, Kingdon says, "They were all in violent reaction to the type of church government that had preceded the Reformation in Geneva, the monarchical government of a single prince-bishop. This single individual . . . was . . . the supreme leader of the local church."⁷ Glenn Sunshine concurs that Calvin opposed the traditional episcopal arrangement of government by superior bishops in a hierarchical structure: "He rejected any form of episcopal jurisdiction or authority, arguing instead for equality among all pastors."⁸

Over against the views of Loetscher and Kingdon stand Basil Hall and Thomas Torrance, who both maintain that Calvin was not a Presbyterian. Hall asserts, "For Presbyterians Calvinism includes the explicit claim that Calvin was the founder and upholder of the Presbyterian system of church government and doctrine—a claim which is not quite justifiable."⁹ In addition to this declaration that Calvin was not a Presbyterian, Hall adds that Calvin had no real problem with episcopal church polity: "Calvin was not a doctrinaire Presbyterian, and he did not disapprove of episcopacy as long as prelacy, or the secularizing of the episcopal office, was avoided."¹⁰ Torrance is equally dogmatic when he says concerning Calvin, "He was definitely not a *Presbyterian!*"¹¹ This statement is made because, he maintains,

⁶ Robert M. Kingdon, "Calvin and 'Presbytery': the Geneva Company of Pastors," *Pacific Theological Review* 18 (1985) 43.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁸ Glenn S. Sunshine, "Reformed Theology and the Origins of Synodical Polity: Calvin, Beza and the Gallican Confession," in *Later Calvinism* (ed. William Fred Graham; Kirksville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1994) 148.

⁹ Basil Hall, "Calvin Against the Calvinists," in *John Calvin: A Collection of Distinguished Essays* (ed. Gervase Duffield; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966) 22. Hall offers no arguments in support of his position that Calvin was not Presbyterian in his church government.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹¹ Thomas F. Torrance, "The Eldership in the Reformed Church," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 37 (1984) 509.

the role of the Genevan elders differed somewhat from that of modern Presbyterian elders.¹²

Perhaps the fundamental weakness in the position of both Hall and Torrance is that it fails to take into account Calvin's own assessment of what he had achieved in the establishment of the Geneva consistory. Shortly after the consistory began its meetings near the end of 1541,¹³ Calvin wrote a letter to his friend Oswald Myconius (dated March 14, 1542) in which he said the following concerning his successful effort to establish the Geneva consistory: "Nunc habemus quaecunque presbyterorum iudicium et formam disciplinae, qualem ferebat temporum infirmitas."¹⁴ Already, in 1542, it was Calvin's judgment that the Geneva church possessed a Presbyterian judicatory and a form of discipline. Since Calvin believed that he had established a Presbyterian Court, it appears to be inappropriate to say that he was not a Presbyterian.

Apart from Calvin's own assessment that Geneva possessed a *presbyterorum iudicium*, it may be convincingly demonstrated that Calvin was indeed Presbyterian in his church polity. The essential elements of classical Presbyterian government were, in fact, found in the Geneva church. The similarities of perspective on church government found in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1643-48) and the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* (1541) are remarkable. The basic argument which is set forth in this paper is quite simple: If it can be demonstrated that the fundamental elements of Presbyterian polity expressed in the *Westminster Confession* are likewise articulated in Calvin's *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, the conclusion must be drawn that Calvin established a Presbyterian government for the church in Geneva.

In the argument which follows, we shall examine two major issues where the polity of the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* seems almost to resurface in the *Westminster Confession*. First, there is the perspective in each document that there is a government in Christ's church, and this government is entrusted to ecclesiastical assemblies (be it the Geneva consistory or a Puritan Presbytery) composed of fit ministers and fit elders (who have been delegated

¹² Ibid. Torrance does not provide a substantial defense of his thesis. He maintains that in the Church of Scotland there was a departure from Calvin's governmental model when "with the Melvillean revolution, the Church embarked upon a course in which it was to substitute *elders*, set apart for life in place of Calvin's deacons, . . . while restricting the functions of deacons in the Church of Scotland mainly to the gathering and distributing of the alms of the congregation in its social care of the needy." It seems to me that it is a far better procedure in seeking to ascertain the essential elements of Presbyterianism to examine the creed of Presbyterianism—the *Westminster Confession of Faith*—than to look to the structure of the Church of Scotland as the determiner of what Presbyterian government actually is.

¹³ Robert M. Kingdon, "Calvin and the Establishment of Consistory Discipline in Geneva: The Institution and the Men Who Directed It," *Nederlandsche Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 70 (1990) 162.

¹⁴ *Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia* (59 vols.; Corpus reformatorum; Brunsvigae; Apud C.A. Schwetschke Et Filium, 1873; hereafter CO) 11. 379.

to the church assembly). In addition, there is an emphasis that the members of Christ's church are to be in submission to this ecclesiastical government. Secondly, each document stresses that the ecclesiastical government in Christ's church has judicial power. Both the *Ordinances* and the *Confession* argue that an ecclesiastical court may summon sinners before it to give an account of their ways, may conduct a trial, and, in the case of a guilty verdict, may bring censures against the person (verbal, and even excommunication).

II. "Ministers with Other Fit Persons": *The Presbyterian Government of the Churches*

Contrary to the sixteenth-century Anabaptist mentality, which either remained indifferent to the issue of church polity or favored a congregational form of government in which the local congregation held final authority,¹⁵ the *Westminster Confession* shows great interest in the subject of church government and places ecclesiastical power in the hands of a selective group of individuals: "The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of His Church, hath therein appointed a government, in the hand of Church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate" (30:1).¹⁶ This governing authority as it is exercised by the officers of the church occurs in connection with their service on the church's governing assemblies: "For the better government, and further edification of the church, there ought to be such assemblies as are called synods or councils" (31:1). Ministers and elders are the two types of church officers who meet in these assemblies to govern the church: "The ministers of Christ . . . with other fit persons, upon delegation from their Churches, may meet together in such assemblies" (31:2). *The Form of Presbyterian Church-Government*, which was also produced by the Westminster Assembly, makes it very clear that this mentioning of "other fit persons, upon delegation from their Churches" is a reference to the office of elder:

As there were in the Jewish church elders of the people joined with the priests and Levites in the government of the church, so Christ, who hath instituted government, and governors ecclesiastical in the church, hath furnished some in his church, beside the ministers of the word, with gifts for government, and with commission to execute the same when called thereunto, who are to join with the

¹⁵ Paul Peachey asserts concerning the Anabaptists, "Anabaptism and Church Organization," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 30 (July 1956) 215, "One is struck by the general indifference to, and even occasional hostility toward, the question of polity." Among the early Anabaptists, he says (p. 227), there was an "absence of power structures." Robert Friedman, in *The Theology of Anabaptism* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1973) 126, speaks about the Anabaptist notion of congregational government: "It appears quite helpful to call the Anabaptist brotherhood a church of order. . . . For in it the corporate body determines in principle the pattern of life for its members and assumes the final authority over their behavior."

¹⁶ All citations from the *Westminster Confession of Faith* are from the original text found in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990).

minister in the government of the church. Which officers reformed churches commonly call Elders.¹⁷

It is important to note that the emphasis of the *Confession* is not upon what the *Form of Government* calls "Congregational Assemblies," which is made up of "the ruling officers of a particular congregation" and which has limited ecclesiastical jurisdiction over only one congregation.¹⁸ The *Confession* has in mind "synods or councils" (31:1) composed of "ministers . . . with other persons, upon delegation from their Churches" (31:2; emphasis added). Obviously, since these officers are delegated from their respective churches, the jurisdiction of these ecclesiastical assemblies is over multiple congregations. The *Form of Government* elaborates upon this when it says, "The scripture doth hold forth, that many particular congregations may be under one presbyterial government."¹⁹ As to the matter of Synodical Assemblies, it declares, "Synodical assemblies may lawfully be of several sorts, as provincial, national, and oecumenical. It is lawful and agreeable to the word of God, that there be a subordination of congregational, classical, provincial, and national assemblies, for the government of the church."²⁰

This same fundamental idea articulated in the *Confession*—the fact that there are to be ecclesiastical assemblies composed of fit ministers and fit elders with authority over particular congregations—lies at the very heart of Calvin's *Ordonnances Ecclésiastiques*. Like the Westminster Divines, Calvin was convinced that this form of government was established by Jesus Christ himself. The introduction to the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* states, "It has seemed to us adviseable that the spiritual government of the kind which our Lord demonstrated and instituted by His Word should be set out in good order so that it may be established and observed among us."²¹

The ecclesiastical assembly in Geneva, composed of ministers and elders, which had authority over the particular congregations of the Geneva Church was called the *Consistoire ecclésiastique*.²² And just as the *Westminster Confession* (31:2) expresses concern that ecclesiastical assemblies (speaking in this

¹⁷ *The Subordinate Standards and Other Authoritative Documents of the Free Church of Scotland* (Belfast: The Franklin Press, 1933) 307-8.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 310.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 311.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 314.

²¹ *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin* (trans. Philip E. Hughes; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966) 35. This volume provides a good English translation of the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, hereafter cited as *RCP*.

²² *Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs de Genève au temps de Calvin* (ed. Jean-François Bergier and Robert M. Kingdon; Geneva: Droz, 1964) 1:5. E. William Monter, *Calvin's Geneva* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967) 137, maintains that the name *Consistory* came from the designation which had been used for an old episcopal court which had primarily dealt with marriage cases.

instance about synods) be composed of "fit" ministers and "fit" elders, the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* written a century earlier sounded the same note: the consistory must have "fit" ministers and "fit" elders.

With respect to the minister who would sit on the consistory, his suitability included the necessity of an inward sense of God's call to the pastoral office: "To the end that nothing disorderly should be done in the Church, no man ought to undertake this office without vocation."²³ This sense of a Divine summons, however, did not automatically open the door into the pastorate. The aspiring ministerial candidate must endure an intense examination of his doctrine and conduct by the Company of Pastors in order to discern his "fitness":

The examination consists of two parts, the first of which concerns doctrine, to ascertain whether he who is to be ordained has a good and sound knowledge of Scripture, and then whether he is a *fit* and proper person to communicate it to the people in an edifying manner.

To ascertain whether he is *fit* to teach, it will be necessary to proceed by way of interrogation and by privately hearing him expound the teaching of the Lord.²⁴

The aspiring candidate for the ministry must not only be a gifted man, but he must also be blameless as to his manner of life: "The second part of the examination process concerns his life, namely, whether he is of good morals and has always conducted himself without reproach."²⁵

It should be kept in mind that these measures which were adopted to secure a qualified ministry were done in the context of Calvin's dissatisfaction with the competence of the local ministers at the time of his return to Geneva.²⁶ Early in 1542, Calvin described the pastors of the Geneva Church in a letter in uncomplimentary terms:

Our colleagues are rather a hindrance than a help to us; they are rude and self-conceited, have no zeal, and less learning. But what is worst of all, I cannot trust them, even though I very much wish that I could: for by many evidences they shew they are estranged from us, and give scarcely any indication of a sincere and trustworthy disposition.²⁷

Clearly, Calvin did not merely accept the status quo of a rude, ignorant, and untrustworthy ministry. The program of ministerial examination

²³ *RCF*, 36.

²⁴ *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ William G. Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994) 54-56.

²⁷ See Calvin's letter to Myconius (March 14, 1542) in *Letters of John Calvin* (trans. Jules Bonnet; New York: Lenox Hill, 1972) 1:314.

which was implemented in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* helped to bring about an upgrading—a real reformation—in the quality of Geneva's ministry.²⁸

This stress upon the importance of ministerial fitness helps to explain the phenomenon of an entirely foreign ministry in Geneva. William Bouwsma makes this observation: "What was accomplished in Geneva was done without the support of native clergy; indeed, no Genevan served as a pastor in the city between 1536 and the end of the century."²⁹ Kingdon offers the likely explanation that a foreign ministry was necessary to meet the high educational requirements for a Geneva pastor: "The reason for this influx of foreigners into the pastoral corps was the educational requirements attached to the job. All were expected to have advanced training, at the university level, if possible, including instruction in Greek and Hebrew. There were simply no native Genevans with this kind of background."³⁰

Calvin took the matter of ministerial fitness to be a very serious thing indeed. But there was no less of a concern in Calvin's thinking for "fit" elders.³¹ The *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* state that the elected elders are to be "good-living and honourable men, without reproach and beyond all suspicion, above all who fear God and possess the gift of spiritual prudence."³² Another requirement was that he be one of the civil magistrates who governed the city-state of Geneva. Each of the lay elders who served on the consistory sat on one of the three councils which ruled the Geneva Republic. The *Ordinances* put it this way: "As this church is now placed, it will be desirable to elect two from the Little Council, four from the Council of Sixty, and six from the Council of Two Hundred."³³ The benefit of this arrangement is obvious: the governors of the church (*governors* is the term Calvin uses for *elders* in *Institutes* IV. III. 8)³⁴ would be men with a proven ability to govern the state. Naphy makes an interesting point regarding eight of these elders who were added to the consistory in the years 1546–1547. All of these men continued to serve together on the consistory for the next six years; and seven of them, at one time or another, had served on

²⁸ Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation*, 75.

²⁹ William J. Bouwsma, "The Peculiarity of the Reformation in Geneva," in *Religion and Culture in the Renaissance and Reformation* (ed. Steven Ozment; Kirkville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1989) 56.

³⁰ Kingdon, "Calvin and the Establishment of Consistory Discipline," 164.

³¹ Williston Walker, *John Calvin: The Organiser of Reformed Protestantism, 1509–1564* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906) 270, recognized the fundamental significance which the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* gave to the office of elder: "No section of the *Ordonnances* was more important than that having to do with the . . . elders."

³² *RCP* 41–42.

³³ *Ibid.*, 41.

³⁴ All references in the text to Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* are the 1559 edition (ed. John T. McNeill; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960).

Genevan civil courts.³⁵ Obviously, these gifts of judicial discernment would be highly valued on Geneva's new ecclesiastical court. It can be seen, then, that the governors of the church, in a very real sense, had to meet higher requirements than the governors of the state. Only two men out of the twenty-five who composed the Small Council were to be elected elders, while only four came from the Council of Sixty and six from the Council of Two Hundred.³⁶ Surely, we see Calvin's recognition in this structure that not every man who ruled over the Republic was necessarily fit to rule over the church of Jesus Christ.

This fact, that the church's elders had to meet more exacting standards than the state's governors, appears in the manner in which the election of elders was to proceed according to the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*. The sorting and sifting process of finding suitable elder candidates was a collaborative effort involving both the Small Council and the Company of Pastors:

Accordingly we have decided that the manner of their election should be as follows: the Little Council shall consult with a view to nominating *the most suitable and competent men that can be found*; and, in order to effect this, it shall summon the ministers for the purpose of conferring with them.³⁷

Calvin, as the moderator of the Venerable Company of Pastors, would have been very concerned in these consultations that the elder candidates who were to be presented to the General Council³⁸ for election to the eldership would be "godly, grave, and holy men" (*Institutes* IV. III. 8).

Once "the most suitable and competent men" had surfaced, there was a movement to the second stage in the sorting and sifting process which brought in the Council of Two Hundred, which was a new institution in Geneva established early in the sixteenth century:³⁹

. . . and then they shall present those on whom they have agreed to the Council of Two Hundred for their approval. If they are *approved and found worthy*, they shall take a special oath, the form of which shall be drafted as for the ministers.⁴⁰

The third stage in the process of putting fit elders into office occurred in the annual election of men to serve on the various committees of both the civil and the ecclesiastical realms. It was in this annual February election that the General Council selected men to serve a one-year term on the Small Council, the Council of Sixty, the Council of Two Hundred, and the various standing committees of the civil government. When it came to the church, qualified men were elected to serve a one-year term as elders on the consistory, while other suitable men were chosen to serve for one year as

³⁵ Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation*, 77-78.

³⁶ Kingdon, *Adultery and Divorce*, 12-13.

³⁷ *RCP*, 42.

³⁸ The General Council was made up of all the men in Geneva, twenty years old and above, who were either citizens or members of the bourgeois. See Kingdon, *Adultery and Divorce*, 12.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *RCP*, 42. Emphasis added.

deacons.⁴¹ While it is true that a man could only step into the office of an elder on the basis of his selection by the masses in the General Council, it should be noted that the slate of elder candidates presented to the people numbered only twelve individuals.⁴² Twelve, of course, was the number of elders for which the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* made provision.⁴³ It is evident from these considerations that the decisive determination as to who the church's elders would be was not left to the will of the masses. In order to find the most suitable and competent men possible for the eldership, Calvin so crafted the church constitution that the political elite in the Small Council along with the Company of Pastors determined who was—and who was not—qualified for this important office.

Finally, Calvin's ongoing concern that the twelve men on the Bench of Elders be suitable for the office entrusted to them is reflected in the establishment of a "term eldership." Every year, the lay elders sitting on the Geneva consistory had to face the fact that their appointment to serve was subject to a possible reversal. The *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* declare, "And at the end of the year after their election by the Council they shall present themselves to the Seignury so that it may be decided whether they should be retained or replaced, though, so long as they are fulfilling their duties faithfully, it will be inexpedient to replace them frequently without good cause."⁴⁴ This statement would place every elder on notice: Unfaithfulness with respect to one's duties will result in the removal of one's name from the annual slate of twelve nominees. With Calvin's determination to have "the most suitable and competent men that can be found," he might well have been the first to recommend to the Small Council that a particular man be terminated from the eldership.

We have shown that the Westminster Divines' position that there should be ecclesiastical assemblies of fit ministers and elders with authority over multiple congregations was comparable to the ecclesiastical polity which Calvin formulated for Geneva. One of Calvin's great achievements was establishing the consistory which had binding authority over the particular churches within the Geneva Republic. In this connection, it should also be stated that each document, the *Westminster Confession* and the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, maintains that there must be submission to the authority of this ecclesiastical government.

The *Westminster Confession* speaks about the necessity of submission with reference to the decisions of synods and councils (31:3):

⁴¹ Robert M. Kingdon, "The Control of Morals in Calvin's Geneva," in *The Social History of the Reformation* (ed. Lawrence P. Buck and Jonathan W. Zophy; Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1972) 6-7.

⁴² Robert M. Kingdon, "Calvin and the Family: the Work of the Consistory in Geneva," *Pacific Theological Review* 17 (1984) 5.

⁴³ *RCF* 42.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

It belongeth to synods and councils, ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience, to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of His Church; to receive complaints in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same: which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, *are to be received with reverence and submission*; not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in his Word.⁴⁵

The concept of submission to ecclesiastical authority was crucial in Calvin's thinking. He repeatedly maintained the clergy's authority over the laity,⁴⁶ and he instructed his congregation of their duty to submit to the government in Christ's church.⁴⁷ He reasoned that if the clergy are authorized to command, the laity are obligated to obey.⁴⁸ This perspective in Calvin's theology has led some scholars to label Calvin as authoritarian. Bouwsma, for example, states, "There is clearly much evidence to support the notion of a severe and authoritarian Calvin."⁴⁹

The problem with construing an "authoritarian Calvin" is that it does not seriously take into account the strong emphasis in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* that Geneva's ministers, including Calvin himself, were likewise accountable to ecclesiastical government. The principle of submission began from the very moment that a man sought the pastoral office. The pastoral candidate's submission to the Company of Pastors is first manifested in his own subjection to their examining his doctrine and life.⁵⁰ Furthermore, his submission to the established confessional perspective of the Geneva church is reflected in this requirement of the *Ordinances*: "Moreover, in order to avoid all danger of some false belief being held by the one who is to be received, he will be required to declare that he accepts and adheres to the doctrine approved in the Church."⁵¹ Once a ministerial candidate had been installed into office, the principle of accountability and submission to his brethren in the ministry continued. The transition to this new subject in the *Ordinances* is made by this statement: "Moreover, just as it is necessary to examine ministers carefully when one wishes to elect them, so also it is necessary to have a good system whereby to hold them to their duty."⁵²

This principle of ongoing submission to the Company of Pastors is reflected in the very practical requirement that all the ministers of the

⁴⁵ Emphasis added.

⁴⁶ William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 220.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 219.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *ACP*, 36.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, 37.

Geneva church were obligated to attend a weekly meeting to discuss biblical doctrine. The authority of the Venerable Company over each pastor with respect to this weekly duty is put in straitforward language: ". . . and no one shall be exempted from this without legitimate excuse."⁵³ Each minister's accountability to the discipline of the Geneva Company of Pastors is no less blunt: "Any man who is negligent over this is to be reprimanded."⁵⁴ Even those pastors who ministered in the hinterland surrounding the walled city of Geneva were required to submit themselves to this requirement of the church constitution:

As for those who preach in the villages under the jurisdiction of the Seigneurie, our ministers of the city should exhort them to attend whenever they are able. In the event of absence for a whole month, however, this is to be treated as gross negligence, except in the case of illness or some other legitimate hindrance.⁵⁵

It should be recognized that the ministers in Geneva were subject not only to the Company of Pastors, but also to the Geneva consistory (which included all the pastors *and the lay elders*). William Monter and Robert Kingdon in several studies point out that the number of men sitting on the consistory varied from the moment it began to function in 1542 until the time of Calvin's death in 1564. When the consistory first began functioning in 1542, there were nine pastors; a generation later, in 1564, the number had increased to nineteen. During this same time period, the number of lay elders remained fairly constant at twelve.⁵⁶ It was the full consistory, then, numbering between twenty and thirty men, which was given the responsibility in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of maintaining discipline over the ministers.

Each minister who desired to serve the Geneva church needed to recognize the determination of the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* regarding his accountability and submission to the consistory government: "Discipline will be imposed on him who merits it."⁵⁷ The kind of discipline which would be imposed would depend, of course, upon the nature of the crime or vice which had been committed. It is at this point that the new church constitution provided two broad categories of possible ministerial sins. First, there are listed eighteen offenses which fall into the category of the impermissible — "crimes which are altogether intolerable in a minister."⁵⁸ Secondly, there follows a list of sixteen vices which are described as "faults which may be endured provided that a fraternal admonition is offered."⁵⁹ It is interesting

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 37-38.

⁵⁶ See E. William Monter, "The Consistory of Geneva, 1559-1569," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 38 (1976) 469. Cf., Kingdon, "Calvin and the Family," 5-6.

⁵⁷ *RCP* 38.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

that even here, in this first category of intolerable crimes, the theme of submission to ecclesiastical authority surfaces: the third intolerable offense is "rebellion against ecclesiastical order," while the seventh is "leaving one's church without lawful permission."⁶⁰ Likewise, the necessity of the minister's submission to the basic confessional stance of the church surfaces in the third vice which would merit, at the very least, "a fraternal admonition": "The advancing of some doctrine or manner of conduct not accepted in the Church."⁶¹

On the basis of these two broad categories of sins, the consistory and/or the civil magistrates took jurisdiction of a case.⁶² Here, the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* set forth three basic possibilities. First, if the minister had not only sinned, but had also in so doing committed a civil offense, the case would go immediately to the civil magistrates: "... the Seignury shall take the matter in hand and, over and above the ordinary punishment customarily imposed on others, shall punish him by deposing him from his office."⁶³ The fourth "intolerable" crime listed would certainly fit into this category: "Blasphemy which is open and deserving of civil punishment."⁶⁴

A second possible disciplinary procedure regarding a minister would involve the commission of an "intolerable" crime which would not be considered a civil offense. This would be the procedure, for example, for a pastor who might rebel against the existing ecclesiastical authority. In such cases, as the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* put it,

... the first investigation belongs to the ecclesiastical consistory, the delegates (commis) or elders together with the ministers shall attend to them. And if anyone is convicted of them they shall report it to the Council, with their decision and judgment—but in such a way that the final judgment concerning the punishment shall always be reserved to the Seignury.⁶⁵

This passage shows a dual jurisdiction—the case first appears before the ecclesiastical court and then it goes to the civil court, the Seignury.

The third possible disciplinary procedure related to ministerial vices—things "which may be endured provided that a fraternal admonition is offered."⁶⁶ Such cases would not come under the jurisdiction of the civil authorities: "With regard to lesser vices which should be corrected by simple

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 39.

⁶² When I speak about the civil magistrates or the Seignury in the following discussion concerning the discipline of the Genevan ministers, I am referring to the Small Council which stood at the apex of the hierarchy of the three councils which governed Geneva. The Small Council was composed of twenty-five citizens who wielded the real power in the Republic of Geneva. Harro Hopfl, *The Christian Polity of John Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 132, makes the point that "they exercised the power of life and death."

⁶³ RCP, 39.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 38.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 39.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 38.

admonition, the procedure shall be according to the order of necessity, in such a way that in the last resort cases shall be brought before the Church for judgment."⁶⁷ When it came to such vices as "curiosity in searching out vain questions" and "negligence in studying and especially in reading the Holy Scriptures,"⁶⁸ the case would never come before the civil magistrates. In fact, it would only be in the last resort that the case would come to the consistory for judgment. It could well be that a "simple admonition" would be sufficient to correct the erring brother.⁶⁹

All of this discussion underscores the fact that the citizens of Geneva, the rank-and-file church members were not the only ones who were subject to the authority and discipline of the Geneva consistory. Kingdon and Monter have done well in describing the nature of the ecclesiastical power exercised by the consistory over the Geneva church, but it must be remembered that the pastors were no less subject to the consistory's authority and discipline. The *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* not only assert that "discipline will be imposed on him who merits it," but they go on to describe in explicit terms how this discipline will be carried out.

III. *Discipline in God's House: "The Censures of the Church"*

Thus far, in examining the Geneva consistory, it has been demonstrated that it resembles a presbytery in terms of its composition (ministers and elders) and its authority over both congregations and pastors.⁷⁰ We shall now consider the nature of the ecclesiastical power exercised by the consistory. Once again, we find major similarities between the perspectives articulated in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (the classic creed of Presbyterianism) and the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*. The Confession (31:3) provides this statement regarding the nature of ecclesiastical power:

It belongeth to synods and councils, ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience, to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of His Church; to receive complaints in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same. . . .

As it can be seen, here, ecclesiastical power in Presbyterian doctrine is both executive and judicial, but not legislative. Executive authority is reflected

⁶⁷ Ibid., 39.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Douglas Kelly, *The Emergence of Liberty in the Modern World* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992) 13-14, refers to the Consistory as a "church session." It is much more appropriate to speak about it as being a presbytery. Unlike a session, the Geneva Consistory had authority over several congregations.

in the statement that synods and councils may "set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of His Church." Thus, such bodies may produce directories of worship and forms of government.

But the real emphasis of the *Westminster Confession* is upon the judicial authority of the church's governing assemblies. In the preceding quotation (31:3), synods and councils "determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience," and they "receive complaints in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively . . . determine the same." The judicial nature of ecclesiastical power not only surfaces in the entirety of Chapter 30 ("Of Church Censures"), but even in the midst of a discussion in Chapter 20 on the subject of Christian liberty and liberty of conscience. Concerning those who sin by maintaining false and erroneous opinions and practices, the *Confession* states (20:4), "They may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the Church. . . ." This statement assumes that ecclesiastical power, which is judicial in nature, resides in the courts of the church. Church courts may do three things, two of which are explicitly asserted and one which is implied: first, they may summon people before them to give an account of their opinions and practices;⁷¹ secondly, they may (implicitly) conduct a trial which may result in a conviction of guilt; and thirdly, in the case of a guilty verdict, they may bring censures against a person. The specific censures mentioned by the *Confession* are "admonition," "suspension from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for a season," and "excommunication from the Church" (30:4).

A careful study of the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* makes it clear that Calvin likewise viewed the consistory as being a court with judicial power. To be sure, it was an ecclesiastical court and not a civil one, and, thus, its jurisdiction was ecclesiastical rather than civil. This point is made in the closing paragraph of the *Ordinances*:

All this is to be done in such a way that the ministers have no civil jurisdiction and wield only the spiritual sword of the Word of God . . . and that there is no derogation by this consistory from the authority of the Seigneurie or the magistracy; but the civil power shall continue in its entirety.⁷²

The spiritual jurisdiction of the consistory, rather than any civil jurisdiction, is specifically mentioned in connection with marital cases:

⁷¹ This concept of people being "called to account" (*Westminster Confession*, 20:4) is expanded upon in the Westminster Assembly's "Form of Church-Government." Speaking about the power which is common to all ecclesiastical assemblies (congregational, classical, and synodical), the Divines assert, "It is law, and agreeable to the word of God, that the several assemblies before mentioned have power to convent, and call before them, any person within their several bounds, whom the ecclesiastical business which is before them doth concern," quoted in *The Subordinate Standards*, 310.

⁷² *RCP*, 49.

Regarding disputes in matrimonial cases, since this is not a spiritual matter but mixed up with civil law, it shall remain a matter for the Seignury. Nevertheless we have advised that the duty of hearing the parties should be left to the consistory, so that they may report their decision to the Council for it to pass judgment.⁷³

This recognition that ecclesiastical power is limited to a spiritual jurisdiction reappears a century later in the *Westminster Confession's* statement that "synods and councils are to handle, or conclude, nothing, but that which is ecclesiastical: and are not to intermeddle with civil affairs which concern the commonwealth" (31:5).

The fact that the consistory was an ecclesiastical court with a spiritual jurisdiction is seen in the type of cases that the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* contemplate as coming before it. Basically, a Geneva parishioner would find himself or herself before the consistory because of either a doctrinal or a behavioral problem.⁷⁴ The *Ordinances* speak about the possibility of a doctrinal aberration, assuming that such a case belongs to the consistory's jurisdiction: "If anyone speaks critically against the received doctrine, he shall be summoned for the purpose of reasoning with him."⁷⁵ When it comes to problematic behavior, the *Ordinances* provide two specific examples which the consistory would respond to because they clearly fall into the category of a spiritual issue: "If anyone is negligent to come to church in such a way that a serious contempt of the communion of Christians is apparent, or if anyone shows himself to be scornful of ecclesiastical order, he shall be admonished. . . ."⁷⁶ Both of these examples may be classified as "religious" behavioral problems. Kingdon contends that the consistory in the early days gave much attention to religious deviations:

In the beginning, particularly, it devoted much of its energy to wiping out vestiges of Roman Catholicism. It stopped such practices as the saying of traditional prayers in Latin. It punished those who left Geneva to receive Catholic sacraments. It complained of acts labelled "superstitious" to which Catholic authorities had not objected. For example, a number of Genevans were disciplined for going to a country spring to collect samples of water believed to have miraculous ability to cure certain diseases.⁷⁷

The consistory in Calvin's time (1542 to 1564) was also committed to dealing with "moral" behavioral problems. The consistory registers (as delineated by Kingdon, Monter, and Watt) show that the spiritual jurisdiction of the consistory embraced such moral aberrations as domestic quarrels, disagreements between neighbors, fornication and related sexual offenses,

⁷³ Ibid., 45.

⁷⁴ Walker, *John Calvin*, 274.

⁷⁵ *RCE*, 48.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Kingdon, "The Control of Morals," 9.

the sin of lying, stealing, vandalism, public insults to the pastors, rebelling against the authority of the consistory, and many other sins as well.⁷⁸

Having established that the jurisdiction of the Geneva consistory was spiritual, it remains to be demonstrated that it was in fact a church court, possessing the authority of summoning sinners before it, conducting trials, and censuring the guilty. The evidence shows that the Geneva consistory was, in Kingdon's words, "a quasi-judicial body, whose members . . . were expected to function in part as judges."⁷⁹

1. *Summoning Sinners*

The *Westminster Confession's* position that sinners in the church "may lawfully be called to account" (20:4) reflected a practice which had been in effect in the Geneva church for more than a century. In fact, the Geneva consistory actually had a paid employee, called the "officier," who had the responsibility of summoning people to consistory meetings for the purpose of questioning.⁸⁰ This was precisely what Calvin had in mind already in 1541 when he produced the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*. Concerning the basic order which was to be observed regarding the catechetical instruction of the children and their admission into the communicant membership of the church, the *Ordinances* provide this warning: "Those who contravene this order *shall be called before* the Company of elders or delegates."⁸¹ Disobedience to the proper structure would not be the only action/act which would merit a consistory summons. The consistory would not tolerate dissent from the Reformed faith: "If anyone speaks critically against the received doctrine, he *shall be summoned* for the purpose of reasoning with him."⁸²

It is clear from these two examples that insubordination, when it came to proper procedure or Protestant doctrine, would result in an appearance before the consistory. Inappropriate moral behavior would likewise bring the same result. As Jeffrey Watt puts it, those who were summoned before the consistory had or were accused of having violated "the Reformed moral code."⁸³ This is not to say that every sin conceivable brought a directive to appear before the consistory. The *Ordinances* distinguish between sins which are scandalous and those which are not. Scandalous sinners must be called before the consistory: "As for those notorious and public vices which the Church cannot condone, if they are faults which deserve admonishment

⁷⁸ See Monter, "The Consistory of Geneva," 467-84.

⁷⁹ Kingdon, *Adultery and Divorce*, 17. Cf., Torrance, "The Eldership," 504-5.

⁸⁰ Kingdon, "Calvin and the Establishment of Consistory Discipline," 163.

⁸¹ *RCF*, 47. Emphasis added.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 48.

⁸³ Jeffrey R. Watt, "Women and the Consistory in Calvin's Geneva," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 27 (1993) 429.

only, it shall be the duty of the elders or delegates *to summon* those who have offended.”⁸⁴ Ordinary sinners, manifesting the faults and weaknesses common to all, were to be dealt with in a much different way: “Secret vices should be rebuked in secret and . . . no one should take his neighbor before the Church to accuse him of some fault which is neither notorious nor scandalous, except after finding him rebellious.”⁸⁵

This fact that the consistory maintained the right—and exercised the practice—of summoning sinners before it to give an account assumes the reality of both formal and informal spiritual oversight in the Geneva church. The importance of formal oversight surfaces in the existence of the office of elder which had this responsibility outlined in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*:

Their office is to watch over the life of each person, to admonish in a friendly manner those whom they see to be at fault and leading a disorderly life, and when necessary to report them to the Company, who will be authorized to administer fraternal discipline and to do so in association with the elders.⁸⁶

The *Ordinances* also assume that in the Christian community of Geneva there would be an informal oversight of the Christian brethren with respect to one another. Reference is made in the *Ordinances* to rather stubborn sinners who “mock at the specific admonitions *of their neighbor*.” This was not a matter, as Kingdon suggests, of “a fair amount of spying by the residents of Geneva on each other.”⁸⁷ Undoubtedly it goes back to Calvin’s determination to be biblical in relationships in the Christian community. Indeed, in the context of his discussing this informal brotherly oversight, Calvin plainly alludes to the procedure outlined in Matt 18:15-17 and adds these words: “As for correcting such faults as may be in the life of each person, one must proceed according to the order which our Lord has commanded.”⁸⁸

2. *Conducting Trials*

Although the *Westminster Confession* does not explicitly refer to the authority of the church courts to conduct trials, it does assume this right in a number of places, particularly in its discussion on church censures. Having discussed the necessity of censures (30:3), the *Confession* makes a significant statement concerning its listing of three possible specific censures (30:4):

“For the better attaining of these ends, the officers of the Church are to proceed by admonition; suspension from the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper for a season;

⁸⁴ *RCP* 48. Emphasis added.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁸⁷ Kingdon, “The Control of Morals,” 10.

⁸⁸ *RCP* 48.

and by excommunication from the Church; *according to the nature of the crime*, and demerit of the person.”⁸⁹

Obviously, this text assumes that the church judicatory, which is imposing the censure, has conducted a formal investigation of the person and thus fully recognizes the nature of his crime and his particular demerit.

The *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* are much more explicit concerning the fact that the consistory would indeed conduct formal trials to determine the innocence or guilt of those who were summoned before it. Regarding its discussion of ministerial discipline, the *Ordinances* explicitly assert that the consistory would conduct a trial if a minister was charged with the commission of an intolerable crime: “With regard to other offenses of which the first investigation belongs to the ecclesiastical consistory, the . . . elders together with the ministers shall attend to them.”⁹⁰ As Kingdon says, the minister, like anyone else summoned before the consistory, would be “cross-examined by the entire body of elders and pastors.”⁹¹ In such cases in which the minister was found to be guilty, the procedure would be as follows: “And if anyone is convicted of them they shall report it to the Council, with their decision and judgment. . . .”⁹²

Later, in the section dealing with marriage, the *Ordinances* again bring up the idea that the consistory is a judicial body, even making provisional determinations in marital disputes:

Regarding disputes in matrimonial cases, since this is not a spiritual matter but mixed up with civil law, it shall remain a matter for the Seignoury. Nevertheless we have advised that *the duty of hearing the parties should be left to the consistory*, so that they may report their decision to the Council for it to pass judgment.⁹³

Kingdon, who has conducted an intensive examination of the Registers of the Geneva consistory, helps to explain the historical outworking of this passage in *Adultery and Divorce in Calvin's Geneva*. He demonstrates that marital cases often involved several sessions of the consistory along with the inclusion of multiple witnesses. In the end, however, it was the Small Council alone which had the authority to grant a legal divorce.

3. *Censuring the Guilty*

As we have seen, the *Westminster Confession* takes a strong position on the administration of censures by the church courts. Admonition, suspension from the Lord's Supper, and excommunication are listed as possible censures which may be measured out by the officers of the church (30:4). Such disciplinary measures were not a matter of vindictiveness. Regarding the

⁸⁹ Emphasis added.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 39.

⁹¹ Kingdon, “Calvin and the Family,” 7.

⁹² *RCP*, 39.

⁹³ Ibid., 45.

necessity of ecclesiastical discipline, the *Confession* stresses that there were positive ends in view (30:3):

Church censures are necessary, for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren, for deterring of others from the like offenses, for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honour of Christ, and the holy profession of the Gospel, and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer His covenant and the seals thereof to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.

The notion, articulated by the *Confession* (30:4) that “*the officers of the Church*” are given the authority to exercise discipline, was, of course, a major theme in Calvin’s thinking.⁹⁴ As William Naphy affirms, this emphasis in Calvin distinguished him from many of the ministers who were in Geneva when he returned in 1541. Many of them believed that Calvin’s approach was usurping power which really belonged to the civil government.⁹⁵ Calvin’s approach toward church discipline also distinguished him from most of the other Reformers. As Bouwsma puts it, “In other Protestant communities, the right to excommunicate had been retained by the magistrates and was little exercised; in Geneva alone it was substantially taken over by the ministers.”⁹⁶ Kingdon elaborates on this by focusing on alternative forms of Protestantism. As to Lutheranism, he writes, “In practically every one of these areas. . . . Lutheran attempts to establish ecclesiastical institutions of discipline failed . . . discipline, including all attempts at control of morals, remained the sole responsibility of secular governments in almost all Lutheran lands.”⁹⁷ Zwinglian Christianity was quite similar. Kingdon cites the Republic of Bern, which favored the Zwinglian variety of Protestantism, as an example of a bastion of Protestant religion which opposed significant disciplinary power being given to church officers:

Bern complained repeatedly about the way in which individual “children of Geneva” had been treated. And Bern made it absolutely clear that it did not want the principle of consistorial excommunication, which it felt undermined its own plenary powers to control law, to be adopted in any part of the territories under its control.⁹⁸

Clearly, Calvin’s reform program in Geneva, featuring discipline at the hand of church officers, was exceptional in terms of Protestantism as a whole.⁹⁹ It should be noted, however, that it was not unique. Upprichard argues that the influence of Martin Bucer on Calvin’s ecclesiastical polity

⁹⁴ Emphasis added.

⁹⁵ Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation*, 56.

⁹⁶ Bouwsma, “The Peculiarity of the Reformation in Geneva,” 75.

⁹⁷ Kingdon, “Calvin and the Establishment of Consistory Discipline,” 159-60.

⁹⁸ Kingdon, *Adultery and Divorce*, 20.

⁹⁹ Walker, *John Calvin*, 266.

was substantial. He maintains that "Calvin's organization in Geneva of the consistory . . . was based on Bucer's *Kirchenpfleger* and *Kirchenkonvent*."¹⁰⁰ The Board of *Kirchenpfleger* corresponded to the lay elders in Geneva who sat on the consistory, while the *Kirchenkonvent* was identical to Geneva's Company of Pastors. The significant thing is that the Reformed church in Strasbourg was governed by both the ministers and the elders who administered church discipline—"all that had to do with holy admonition and censure."¹⁰¹ Thus, it may be more proper to speak of Bucer as being the "founder" of Presbyterianism. However, it may still be maintained that Calvin was its "father." This is because, as Burleigh observes, the form of ecclesiastical government as established by Calvin in Geneva spread throughout the world—going to France, Scotland, England, Holland, Hungary, the United States, and elsewhere.¹⁰² Indeed, it was Geneva and its particular church polity, rather than Strasbourg, which served as a model for all the Calvinistic churches of the world.¹⁰³

One must recognize, then, that the disciplinary program of the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* was unique in its historical context. Another feature of the *Ordinances*, which is one of its most striking characteristics, is that it bears the imprint of a first-class legal mind. Calvin, of course, had been well-trained in the law at the universities of Orleans and Bourges. The *Ordinances* noticeably reflect Calvin's legal training and his concern for proper legal procedure. His desire for proper order is set forth in this statement: "As for correcting such faults as may be in the life of each person, one must proceed according to the *order* which our Lord has commanded."¹⁰⁴ Although the *Ordinances* do not provide biblical citations at this point, it seems clear that Calvin constructed the disciplinary procedure for the Geneva church largely on the basis of Matt 18:15-17.

¹⁰⁰ R. E. H. Uprichard, "The Eldership in Martin Bucer and John Calvin," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 61 (1989) 27. Although Robert White, "Oil and Vinegar: Calvin on Church Discipline," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 38 (1985) 37, concurs that Bucer's influence on Calvin was decisive, he also suggests that the impact of Oecolampadius upon Calvin's thinking still needs to be assessed. Glenn Sunshine, "Reformed Theology and the Origins of Synodical Polity," 142, likewise draws attention to Calvin's dependence upon Bucer and Oecolampadius for his ecclesiology. Akira Demura, "Calvin's and Oecolampadius' Concept of Church Discipline," in *Calvin's Ecclesiology: Sacraments and Deacons* (ed. Richard Gamble; New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1992) 302, agrees that Calvin learned much in Strasbourg, but he suggests on the basis of the 1537 Articles that Calvin already had his distinctive views on church discipline in seed form before he ever went to Strasbourg: "Already in the 1537 'Articles,' there are some indubitable signs of a peculiarly Calvinistic view of church discipline in marked distinction from such Swiss cities as Zurich or Bern."

¹⁰¹ Uprichard, "The Eldership," 23-24.

¹⁰² John H.S. Burleigh, "What Is Presbyterianism?" *The Evangelical Quarterly* 23 (1951) 8-9.

¹⁰³ Kingdon, "Calvin and the Establishment of Consistory Discipline," 169. Cf., E. William Monter, "Daily Life and the Reformed Church," in *The Reformation* (ed. Pierre Chaunu; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990) 249.

¹⁰⁴ *RCP* 48. Emphasis added.

This orderly structure of discipline is reflected, first of all, in the distinction which Calvin makes between informal discipline (which would occur outside of the Thursday consistory meetings) and formal discipline (which would occur in the weekly meeting of the consistory). This distinction first appears in the discussion in the *Ordinances* of the office of elder: "Their office is to watch over the life of each person, to admonish in a *friendly manner* those whom they see to be at fault and leading a disorderly life."¹⁰⁵ This friendly admonition would occur in a one-on-one conversation between the elder and the parishioner. Incidentally, this reference to a "friendly" admonishing shows the inappropriateness of the claim which Kingdon once made that the consistory instituted a "moral reign of terror" (a claim which he now admits showed too much sensationalism).¹⁰⁶

We shall also note that the elders were not the only ones who were allowed to participate in this type of informal discipline. Every church member in Geneva had some responsibility, although on an informal level, with reference to church discipline. The *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* recognize this and demand the recognition that not all cases of sin should be taken to the consistory: "This requires that secret vices should be rebuked in *secret* and that no one should take his neighbor before the Church to accuse him of some fault which is neither notorious or scandalous, except after finding him rebellious."¹⁰⁷

Because of the wide-spread myth that the consistory tyrannized the inhabitants of Geneva, it needs to be stated that not every person who was summoned before the consistory was actually punished. Many people who appeared before the consistory benefited from its ministry of reconciliation. Monter states, "Contrary to a tenacious legend, the Elders spent more time reconciling neighbours, kin and spouses than they did punishing various kinds of sinners."¹⁰⁸ Also, obviously enough, there would have been people summoned who upon investigation proved to be innocent. In addition, there is one type of case anticipated in the *Ordinances* in which wrongdoing resulted in something less than a censure: "If anyone speaks critically against the received doctrine, he shall be summoned for the purpose of *reasoning* with him." Here, the first step of the consistory is to *reason* with the offender, rather than to rebuke him. In fact, to be reasoned with in such a fashion should not be regarded, say the *Ordinances*, as something of which to be ashamed: "If he is amenable he shall be dismissed without scandal or disgrace." The consistory would only move to the level of censure if he refused to be corrected. First, there would be the verbal rebukes, then there would be excommunication: "But if he is stubborn he shall be admonished for a number of times until it becomes apparent that there is need of greater

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 41. Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁶ This original claim is found in Kingdon, "The Control of Morals," 12. Kingdon backs off from this perspective in "Calvin and the Family," 7.

¹⁰⁷ RCP, 48. Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁸ Monter, "Daily Life and the Reformed Church," 246.

severity, and then he shall be forbidden the communion of the supper and denounced to the magistrate.”¹⁰⁹ This statement which stands at the beginning of the final section of the *Ordinances* (which deals with the specifics of disciplinary procedure) is significant because it shows that the consistory had the power to administer two levels of censure: on a lesser level, a verbal admonishing; and on a more severe level, excommunication from the Lord's Supper.

With respect to these verbal censures, the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* use several terms to describe them (the French nouns *remonstrances* and *admonitions*, for example), but the most frequent word is the French verb *admonester*, “to admonish” (used five times in the final disciplinary section of the *Ordinances*).¹¹⁰ Most cases, Kingdon observes, were concluded with a verbal censure, neither needing to reach the point of excommunication, nor needing to be transferred to the jurisdiction of the Small Council which handled civil infractions.¹¹¹ Kingdon also makes an interesting observation regarding the participation of Calvin, the moderator of the Company of Pastors, in the process of delivering verbal admonitions: “Calvin, reportedly, was especially good at it. In fact, he confessed that he was sometimes too good at it, that he got carried away by his indignation and displayed an excessive and unnecessary zeal in bawling out sinners.”¹¹²

The highest level of punishment which could be measured out by the consistory was excommunication. Indeed, the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* call it “correction with punishment.”¹¹³ The consistory's power to excommunicate was something over which Calvin refused to compromise. He even threatened to leave Geneva if the government dared to tamper with this power.¹¹⁴ Calvin's refusal to negotiate over the issue of excommunication was not based upon the later Reformed doctrinal conception that discipline should be viewed as one of the indispensable marks of a true visible church. This mark accompanied the true preaching of the Word of God and the proper administration of the sacraments. In Calvin's thinking, the Word and the Sacraments are the only two distinguishing marks of Christ's church: “Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists” (*Institutes* IV. I. 9).¹¹⁵

Calvin's unyielding insistence upon the power of consistory excommunication was based upon his passion for *good order* in the church of Jesus Christ (*Institutes* IV. I. 15):

¹⁰⁹ *RCP*, 48.

¹¹⁰ *Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs*, 1:12.

¹¹¹ Kingdon, *Adultery and Divorce*, 17-18.

¹¹² Kingdon, “Calvin and ‘Presbytery,’” 47.

¹¹³ *RCP*, 49.

¹¹⁴ Kingdon, “Calvin and the Establishment of Consistory Discipline,” 166. Cf., Kingdon, *Adultery and Divorce*, 19-21.

¹¹⁵ Glenn Sunshine, “Reformed Theology and the Origins of Synodical Polity,” 149, maintains that this is one area where Beza went beyond Calvin, adding correct polity as a third mark of a true church.

I confess it a greater disgrace if pigs and dogs have a place among the children of God, and a still greater disgrace if the sacred body of Christ be prostituted to them. And indeed, if churches are *well ordered*, they will not bear the wicked in their bosom. Nor will they indiscriminately admit worthy and unworthy together to that sacred banquet.¹¹⁶

For Calvin, if the church would be *well-ordered*, the wicked not only had to be removed from the church's bosom, but they had to be removed (maintain the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*) by the consistory itself: "If, then, we wish to have the Church *well ordered* and maintained in its entirety, we must observe this form of government."¹¹⁷

The *Ordinances* describe this maximum censure of ecclesiastical discipline in the following ways: "he shall be forbidden the communion of the supper," "he shall be separated from the Church," and "they shall . . . be made to abstain from the supper."¹¹⁸ Such statements do not merely reflect good intentions. William Monter shows, from the consistory registers, that a large number of people were excommunicated from the Geneva church in the last years of Calvin's life and in the years immediately following his death in 1564. A decade after the *Ordinances* were drafted, there were only four people excommunicated. The next year (1552), there were still only four people. In 1559, the year in which the final edition of the *Institutes* came out, over two hundred were excommunicated. In the year that Calvin died, the number jumped to three hundred. Five years later (in 1569), 535 people were censured with excommunication.¹¹⁹

To give a balanced picture, we must recognize that most of these excommunications were brief in duration. Monter states, "A guilty person was expected—indeed required—to show signs of repentance rapidly, and apply to have his excommunication lifted after missing only one of the four annual communions."¹²⁰ Also, the phenomenon of over five hundred excommunications per year must be understood in terms of the nature of the Geneva church. It was not a gathered-assembly church model, in which the church is a distinct entity in the midst of the larger society. In Geneva, there was a complete identification between the church and the society. As Roland Bainton observes, Geneva exhibited "that parallelism of church and state which had been the ideal of the Middle Ages."¹²¹ Since Calvin held to a territorial church model, where all the inhabitants of the Geneva city-state necessarily belonged to the church, it stands to reason that there would be

¹¹⁶ Emphasis added.

¹¹⁷ *RCP* 36. Robert White, "Oil and Vinegar," 25, summarizes Calvin's thinking on the place of discipline in these words: "Discipline . . . belongs not to the church's *esse*, but to its *bene esse*."

¹¹⁸ *RCP* 48-49.

¹¹⁹ Monter, "The Consistory of Geneva," 476.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 477.

¹²¹ Roland Bainton, *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1952) 117-18.

a high number of annual excommunications.¹²² More specifically, this number of annual excommunications must be viewed against the background of the actual size of the Geneva church. Naphy affirms that the population of the city itself, excluding certain possessions held by the Republic of Geneva, generally numbered about 12,000 inhabitants during the time of Calvin's ministry.¹²³ However, due to a large influx of Protestant refugees from France, the population of Geneva by 1562 probably swelled to somewhere between 18,000 and 20,000 people.¹²⁴ Five hundred annual excommunications in a population of 20,000 people is not outrageous.

Needless to say, implementing ecclesiastical discipline by the consistory had a number of effects. To begin with, it was a means for the pastors to gain control. As Bouwsma contends, in Geneva the ministers succeeded "in establishing, through the power of excommunication, effective control over an urban church."¹²⁵ But there was also the effect which all of this had on the purification of the Genevan society. Monter argues that the consistory was "the effective motor behind the establishment of the first 'Puritan' society."¹²⁶ Kingdon elaborates upon this in describing the corruption of Pre-Reformation Geneva. It was a society characterized by moral laxity and debauchery, legal prostitution, illegitimate children, drunkenness, and gambling.¹²⁷ Post-Reformation Genevan society presented a striking contrast to this lax state of affairs. Kingdon describes the change:

After the Reformation, by the seventeenth century, behavior in Geneva had changed dramatically. A new lifestyle had developed that was sober and austere, that contained characteristics we in the Anglo-Saxon world have come to label "Puritan."¹²⁸

As can readily be anticipated, such "vigorous discipline" was bound to result in resistance.¹²⁹ For over a decade, until the middle of the 1550s, there was great opposition to Calvin's program of vigorous consistory discipline. The group opposing Calvin were called the "children of Geneva."¹³⁰ The

¹²² Kelly, *The Emergence of Liberty*, 12.

¹²³ Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation*, 122, 192.

¹²⁴ E. William Monter, "Crime and Punishment in Calvin's Geneva, 1562," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 64 (1973) 282.

¹²⁵ Bouwsma, "The Peculiarity of the Reformation in Geneva," 66.

¹²⁶ Monter, "The Consistory of Geneva," 467.

¹²⁷ Kingdon, "Calvin and the Establishment of Consistory Discipline," 167. Cf., Kingdon, "The Control of Morals," 4.

¹²⁸ Kingdon, "Calvin and the Establishment of Consistory Discipline," 167. Cf., Monter, "Daily Life and the Reformed Church," 244.

¹²⁹ Calvin believed in what he called a "vigorous discipline." Speaking about the kind of sinners who are members of the visible church—"many ambitious, greedy, envious persons, evil speakers, and some of quite unclean life"—he says, "Such are tolerated for a time either because they cannot be convicted by a competent tribunal or because a vigorous discipline does not always flourish as it ought" (*Institutes* IV. I. 7).

¹³⁰ Kingdon, *Adultery and Divorce*, 18-20.

Geneva pastors had to contend with a long list of abuses. Bouwsma writes about such things as open letters of dissent and Calvin's sermons being interrupted by unruly protestors.¹³¹ On a more subtle level, there were people who dishonored Calvin by publicly saying that he was not a good man; one person called his dog by the name 'John Calvin.'¹³² Amazingly enough, opposition to Calvin's discipline program has continued, in some sense, to the present day in terms of the undying misrepresentation of Calvin as being an autocrat—"the Genevan Dictator, ruling a cowed population with a rod of iron."¹³³

It is true that Calvin believed in what he himself called a "severe discipline." In his discussion of the moral debauchery of the Papacy, he takes the bishops of Rome to task because they merely winked at sin, even though the office of a bishop is "to curb the people's license with *severe discipline*" (*Institutes* IV. VII. 29).¹³⁴ Although Calvin maintained that there is a place, at times, for a certain severity in the discipline process, he did believe that this ought to be a controlled severity:

Nevertheless, all this is to be moderated that no severity should have the effect of overwhelming the offender, but rather that the disciplines imposed should act as medicines to bring sinners back to the Lord.¹³⁵

This perspective, as articulated in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, hardly fits in with the repetitions of a tyrannical autocrat of Geneva. Like the *Westminster Confession* (30:3) which came a century later, the *Ordinances* see a redemptive and beneficial end for church discipline: it is for the purpose of bringing "sinners back to the Lord."

Finally, concerning the judicial power of the consistory, it should be noted that its highest punishment was excommunication. The *Ordinances* make this point in two ways. First, it states that "the ministers have no civil jurisdiction and wield only the spiritual sword of the Word of God."¹³⁶ Calvin and the rest of the consistory never put a single heretic (including Servetus), a single murderer, or a single adulterer to death.¹³⁷ They may well have concurred with a particular execution, but it was the Small Council alone which had the power of the supreme penalty of capital punishment. Secondly, the *Ordinances* not only specify what the consistory could not do, but they also buttress the already established powers of the civil rulers:

¹³¹ Bouwsma, "The Peculiarity of the Reformation in Geneva," 74.

¹³² Kingdon, "Calvin and the Family," 12. Cf., Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation*, 66.

¹³³ Hopfl, *The Christian Polity of John Calvin*, 139.

¹³⁴ Emphasis added.

¹³⁵ *RCF*, 49.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Kingdon, *Adultery and Divorce*, 118-119.

There is no derogation by this consistory from the authority of the Seignury or the magistracy; but the civil power shall continue in its entirety. And in cases where there is need to administer some punishment or to restrain the parties, the ministers together with the consistory having heard the parties and administered such reprimands and admonishments as are desirable, shall report the whole matter to the Council, which thereupon shall take steps to set things in order and pass judgment according to the requirements of the case.¹³⁸

This specified limitation upon the power of the consistory—this separation between the jurisdiction of the ministers, on the one hand, and the jurisdiction of the magistrates, on the other—was in sharp contrast to the previous history of Geneva when it was ruled for centuries by a prince-bishop, who possessed both civil and ecclesiastical authority.¹³⁹ This structure which distinguished between ecclesiastical government and civil government was also in marked contrast to the arrangement which had long prevailed in Rome in which the Pope was both the head of the church and the temporal prince of the Papal States. Interestingly enough, this doctrine that the rulers of the church have a limited jurisdiction resurfaces in the Presbyterianism of the *Westminster Confession* (31:5): “Synods and councils are to handle, or conclude, nothing, but that which is ecclesiastical: and are not to intermeddle with civil affairs which concern the commonwealth.” This seventeenth-century limitation of ecclesiastical authority is in full continuity with the Geneva church constitution: “Ministers have no civil jurisdiction.”¹⁴⁰

At the same time, although the *Ordinances* conclude with this limitation on the consistory's jurisdiction, the main point of the *Ordinances* is that there is such a thing as an ecclesiastical government which is distinct from the civil government. It was the consistory, not the civil magistrate, which had judicial power in the church. Again, this point, as well, is strongly maintained in the Presbyterian scheme of the *Westminster Confession* (30:1): “The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of His Church, hath therein appointed a government, in the hand of Church officers, *distinct from the civil magistrate*.¹⁴¹ Calvin's never-ending fight for the consistory's exclusive right to censure by excommunication, along with its exclusive right to readmit a person into the communion of the church, was appropriated in seventeenth-century confessional Presbyterianism. The *Westminster Confession* declares (23:3), “*The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven*.”¹⁴² There is no room in the Westminster Assembly's Presbyterian polity for an Erastian conception of the civil magistrate exercising discipline in Christ's church.

¹³⁸ *RCP* 49.

¹³⁹ Kingdon, *Adultery and Divorce*, 7, 11.

¹⁴⁰ *RCP* 49.

¹⁴¹ Emphasis added.

¹⁴² Emphasis added.

Furthermore, there could be no evasion of the authority of the officers of the church by getting the civil magistrate to lift a censure of excommunication. The *Confession* later states (30:3) that church officers alone have the keys committed to them, by which "they have power . . . to shut that kingdom against the impenitent . . . by . . . censures; and to open it unto penitent sinners . . . by absolution from censures."¹⁴³ It was in the Berthelier case, that Calvin showed that he would not compromise over the exclusive right of the consistory to lift a sentence of excommunication.¹⁴⁴ The Presbyterians assembled for the *Westminster Confession* took exactly the same stance.

IV. Conclusion: The Essential Elements of Presbyterianism

This discussion has demonstrated the legitimacy of conceiving that the historical roots of Presbyterian polity go back to John Calvin and the Geneva Church. It is true that Genevan Presbyterianism is not precisely identical to the mature, fully-developed Presbyterianism of the Westminster Assembly's *Confession* and *Form of Government*, which deposit ecclesiastical authority on sessional, presbyterial, and synodical levels. But the previous discussion shows that the essential elements of Presbyterian polity as expressed in the *Westminster Confession* were found a century earlier in the ecclesiastical polity articulated in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*.

Already in 1542, Calvin could say concerning the ecclesiastical polity of the Geneva Church: "Nunc habemos quaecunque presbyterorum iudicium et formam disciplinae."¹⁴⁵ In the preceding development, something of the significance of this statement has been unfolded. In the Geneva consistory, Calvin envisioned an ecclesiastical assembly composed of fit ministers and fit elders with authority over both congregations and pastors. As a body invested with judicial power, it would be an ecclesiastical court with a spiritual jurisdiction, and possessing the authority of summoning sinners, conducting trials, and censuring the guilty. This was the nature of Genevan Presbyterianism, and these are the essential elements of what it means to have a Presbyterian government in the church of Jesus Christ.

¹⁴³ Emphasis added.

¹⁴⁴ Kingdon, "Calvin and the Family," 9.

¹⁴⁵ CO, 11.379.

CLARITAS SCRIPTURAE
IN THE EUCHARISTIC WRITINGS OF MARTIN LUTHER

MARK D. THOMPSON*

In the complex of ideas which go to make up Martin Luther's doctrine of Holy Scripture, perhaps none is more enigmatic than his concept of the clarity of Scripture (*claritas Scripturae*). Luther insists that the meaning of Scripture is both accessible and intelligible, while at the same time recognizing the continued need for explanation and a sensitivity to what we might call the "textures" of the biblical material.¹ Such an insistence appears to be a critical link in the bridge between Luther's statements about Scripture and his use of Scripture, i.e., between his doctrine of Scripture and his hermeneutic.

Scholarly analysis of Luther's concept of *claritas Scripturae* often has been confined to his debate with Erasmus in 1524-25, a debate which was first and foremost about the nature of the human will.² Here, without a doubt, is found his most sustained treatment of the subject.³ Nevertheless, this

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¹ By this is meant the varieties of context, expression, signification, and genre within material which presents itself as having a single primary author.

² E.g., R. Hermann, "Von der Klarheit der Heiligen Schrift. Untersuchungen und Erörterungen über Luthers Lehre von der Schrift in De servo arbitrio," in Horst Beintker, ed., *Studien zur Theologie Luthers und des Luthertums: Gesammelte und nachgelassene Werke* (ed. H. Beintker; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981) 170-255; Friedrich Beisser, *Claritas Scripturae bei Martin Luther* (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 18; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966); E. Wolf, "Über 'Klarheit der Heiligen Schrift' nach Luthers 'De servo arbitrio,'" *TLZ* 92 (1967) 721-30; Ulrich Duchrow, "Die Klarheit der Schrift und die Vernunft," *KD* 15 (1969) 1-17; Otto Kuss, "Über die Klarheit der Schrift: Historische und hermeneutische Überlegungen zu der Kontroverse des Erasmus und des Luther über den freien oder versklavten Willen," *Schriftauslegung: Beiträge zur Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments und im Neuen Testament* (München: Schöningh, 1972) 89-149; Rudolph Mau, "Klarheit der Schrift und Evangelium: zum Ausatz des lutherschen Gedankens der *claritas scripturae*," *Theologische Versuche* 4 (1972) 129-43; Ernst Wilhelm Kohls, "Luthers Aussagen über die Mitte, Klarheit und Selbsttätigkeit der Heiligen Schrift," *Lutherjahrbuch* 40 (1973) 46-75; Peter Neuner & Freidrich Schröger, "Luthers These von der Klarheit der Schrift," *TGl* 74 (1984) 39-58; H.-C. Daniel, "Luthers Ansatz der *claritas scripturae* in den Schriften 'Assertio omnium articulorum' und 'Grund und Ursach aller Artikel' (1520/21)," *Thesaurus Lutheri: Auf der Suche nach neuen Paradigmen der Luther-Forschung* (ed. Tuomo Mannerman; Helsinki: Luther-Agricola Gesellschaft, 1986) 279-90.

³ Particularly, *WA*, xviii, 606.1-609.14 = *LW*, xxxiii, 24-28 & *WA*, xviii, 652.23-653.35 = *LW*, xxxiii, 89-91. Throughout this article, Luther's works are cited by volume, page and line of the standard critical edition *Weimar Ausgabe* (*WA*) as well as by volume and page of the standard English edition *Luther's Works* (*LW*).

debate is far from the only context in which Luther asserts the clarity of Scripture. Another such context is the series of debates about the Lord's Supper which increasingly occupied Luther almost from the moment he published his first great treatise on the subject, *De Captivitate Babylonica Ecclesiae*.⁴ This article examines Luther's statements about Scripture's clarity in these eucharistic writings as a prelude to a more accurate exposition of his doctrine and practice.

I. The Eucharistic Context for Luther's Statements about Holy Scripture

Luther's first published work on the Lord's Supper appeared in December 1519.⁵ It was one of a trilogy of sermons he had preached earlier in response to requests from friends who were alarmed at the confusion that was already emerging over the sacrament. Some of the characteristic lines of Luther's treatment of the subject can be observed even at this early stage, including his insistence that this meal is "a sure sign from God himself" (*eyn gewiß zeychen von gott selber*),⁶ his focus on the "union" (*voreynigung*) between Christ and the believer in the Supper,⁷ and his refusal to speculate beyond the promise of God.⁸ Four months later, a Franciscan friar from Leipzig, Augustinus von Alveld, began a series of attacks upon Luther which raised the issue and called for soundness when it came to the difficult passages in Scripture.⁹ *De Captivitate Babylonica Ecclesiae* was in part a response to this attack and contains Luther's appeal to "the clear Scriptures of God" (*evidentes dei scripturae*).¹⁰

Luther soon had to expound his eucharistic theology in the light of pressure from other reformers as well as from the theologians of Rome. During his absence from Wittenberg following the Diet of Worms, Zwilling and Karlstadt had accelerated the process of liturgical change. Resulting confusion and even alarm led Luther to write his next two pieces on the Supper in early 1522: one endorsing the abrogation of private masses,¹¹ and the other mapping out a restrained program of reform.¹² Here again Luther appeals to "Christ's clear, unmistakable Word" (*verbum certum et*

⁴ Published October 1520. WA, vi, 497-573 = LW, xxxvi, 11-126.

⁵ *Eyn Sermon von dem Hochwirdigen Sacrament, des heyligen waren Leychnams Christi. Und von den Bruderscafften*. WA, ii, 742-58 = LW, xxxv, 49-73.

⁶ WA, ii, 744.8-9 = LW, xxxv, 52.

⁷ WA, ii, 748.29 = LW, xxxv, 59.

⁸ "It is enough to know that it is a divine sign in which Christ's flesh and blood are truly present. The how and the where, we leave to him" (*wie und wo, laß yhm befohlen seyn*). WA, ii, 750.1-3 = LW, xxxv, 60-61.

⁹ Augustinus von Alveld, *Super apostolica sede, an videlicet divina sit iure nec ne* (Leipzig, 1520).

¹⁰ WA, vi, 505.24 = LW, xxxvi, 24.

¹¹ *De Abroganda Missa Privata Martini Lutheri Sententia*. WA, viii, 482-536 = LW, xxxvi, 133-230.

¹² *Von beider Gestalt des Sakraments 1522*. WA, x-ii, 11-41 = LW, xxxvi, 237-67.

fidele Christi)¹³ and “the pure and clear gospel” (*das helle lautter Euangelion*).¹⁴

From 1523 almost all of Luther's writing on the Supper center on his defense of the real presence of Christ against a succession of spiritual interpretations of the words of institution by Karlstadt, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Schwenckfeld, and others.¹⁵ While there is ample evidence that Luther was aware of the distinctive approaches of each of these opponents, his responses all contained the same basic argument, one that can be found as early as the sermon preached to the Bohemians in April 1523: “the words stand there clear, unadorned, and plain: ‘This is my body’” (*die wortt helle, durre und klar da stehen: “Das ist meyn leyb”*).¹⁶

It was almost inevitable that the struggle over the meaning and practice of the Supper would resolve into a battle over biblical texts. It could not be otherwise given the fundamental conviction which Luther shared with almost all the other reformers namely, that Christian theology must be wholly biblical.¹⁷ Accordingly, Luther's writings on this subject are replete with quotations and allusions to the text of Scripture. In the face of rival interpretations of the key texts, he repeatedly appealed to the clear, plain sense of the words.

1. Clarity, the Promises, and Saving Faith

Luther's eucharistic literature reveals that the clarity of Scripture is not a matter of incidental interest to him. It is indispensable to the dynamic of genuine Christian living, that is, faith in the promise of God. Luther insists, “God does not deal, nor has he ever dealt, with man otherwise than through a word of promise, as I have said. We in turn cannot deal with God otherwise than through faith in the Word of his promise” (*fide in verbum promissionis eius*).¹⁸

¹³ WA, viii, 412.4-5 = LW xxxvi, 134.

¹⁴ WA, x-ii, 22.24 = LW xxxvi, 247.

¹⁵ *Vom Anbeten des Sakraments des heiligen Leichnams Christi (April 1523)* WA, xi, 431-56 = LW xxxvi, 275-305; *Eyn Brieff an die Christen zu Strasburg widder den schwermer geyst (17 December 1524)* WA, xv, 391-97 = LW xl, 65-71; *Wider die himmlischen Propheten von den Bildern und Sakrament (December 1524 & January 1525)* WA, xviii, 62-125, 134-214 = LW xl, 79-223; *Sermon von dem Sakrament des Leibes und Blutes Christi wider die Schwarmgeister (September 1526)* WA, xix, 482-523 = LW xxxvi, 335-61; *Das diese Worte Christi (Das ist mein Leib etc) noch fest stehen wider die Schwarmgeister (April 1527)* WA, xxiii, 64-283 = LW xxxvii, 13-150; *Vom Abendmahl Christi. Bekenntnis, 1528 (February 1528)* WA, xxvi, 261-509 = LW xl, 229-262; *Vermanung zum Sacrament des leibs und bluts unsers Herrn (November 1530)* WA, xxx-ii, 595-626 = LW xxxviii, 97-137; *Kurz bekentnis D. Mart. Luthers, vom heiligen Sacrament (September 1544)* WA, liv, 141-67 = LW xxxviii, 287-319.

¹⁶ WA, xi, 435.7-8 = LW xxxvi, 280.

¹⁷ David C. Steinmetz, “Scripture and the Lord's Supper in Luther's Theology,” *Int* 37 (1983) 253-265 esp. 254.

¹⁸ WA, vi, 516.30-32 = LW xxxvi, 42.

For Luther the Christian life is responsive and the focus of that response is the Word of God which comes to us in the shape of promises. Such promises are indispensable given the hidden nature of God and his glory in the world. Here the theology of the cross (*theologia crucis*) emerges once again as a controlling motif for Luther. The glorious God presents himself to us in humility and only by faith will we recognize his presence, yet that faith can itself only exist because of God's promise. This highlights the futility and perversity of all attempts to relate to God apart from his promise. On the one hand, the Christian has no sure ground on which to stand if left with merely his or her senses; on the other, the very attempt to engage with God apart from his promise is a proud and empty human work.

Thus it is not possible that a man, of his own reason and strength, should by works ascend to heaven, anticipating God and moving him to be gracious. On the contrary, God must anticipate all works and thoughts, and make a promise clearly expressed in words (*ein klar außgedruckt zufagen thun mit worten*), which man then takes and keeps in good, firm faith.¹⁹

Luther is even bold enough to describe salvation itself in terms of this dynamic of promise and faith.

It is plain, therefore, that the beginning of our salvation is a faith which clings to the Word of the promising God (*initium salutis nostrae esse fidem, quae pendeat in verbo promittentis dei*), who, without any effort on our part, in free and unmerited mercy, takes the initiative and offers us the word of his promise.²⁰

The promise of God is indispensable, but then so too is the clarity of that promise. An obscure promise would be hardly an advance over the ambiguities of nature and history. How could faith be firm when its object is unknown? Without a clear and certain Word, faith is merely superstition. However, since God has given a clear promise we not only can but we must trust it, for in trusting the promise we trust the Promiser. Faith is, therefore, both given and demanded. Precisely because its clear meaning makes faith both possible and necessary, the Word of God captures us. This is the language Luther repeatedly uses to describe his own experience of the Scriptures. In 1524 he told the Christians at Strasbourg: "I am a captive and I cannot free myself. The text is too powerfully present (*der text ist zu gewalltig da*), and will not allow itself to be torn from its meaning by mere verbiage."²¹

Luther does, of course, recognize a time in the past when due to incomplete revelation the promises appeared obscure. Such was the case of the

¹⁹ WA, vi, 356.13-18 = LW xxxv, 82-83.

²⁰ WA, vi, 514.15-17 = LW xxxvi, 39.

²¹ WA, xv, 394.19-20 = LW xl, 68. Note also Luther's famous words at the Diet of Worms: "I have been conquered by the Scriptures adduced by me and my conscience is captive to the words of God" (*victus sum scripturis a me adductis et capta conscientia in verbis dei*). WA, vii, 838.7-8.

promise-amidst-the-curse in the Garden of Eden, as well as the initial promise to Abraham. However, Luther points out that in grace God did not allow such obscurity to endure, but he repeatedly enlarged and clarified those promises.²² By the time we move to the New Testament and stand in the presence of Christ, this clarification is complete. Under the Gospel, then, the dynamic of clear promise and firm faith has its fullest expression.

The promise Christ attaches to the Supper is to be seen in the light of this dynamic. For Luther the words of institution are in fact the critical element in the Supper. They are the clear promise of the one who gives himself for the forgiveness of sins. Without them genuine faith would be impossible. For this reason their importance cannot be understated.

Everything depends, therefore, as I have said, upon the words of this sacrament (es ligt alles an den Worten dieses sacraments). These are the words of Christ. Truly we should set them in pure gold and precious stones, keeping nothing more diligently before the eyes of our heart, so that faith may thereby be exercised.²³

For Luther, faith in the clear promise of God finds a particular focus in the self-giving of Christ. The Supper is, by virtue of Christ's own words, a testament and the words of institution operate as the words of the testator whose gift is intimately connected to his death.²⁴ If they are not clear then the gift cannot be received. Our claim to the gift is based upon the clear words of the testament.

Now here stands the text, stating clearly and lucidly (*lautet klar und helle*) that Christ gives his body to eat when he distributes the bread. On this we take our stand, and we also believe and teach that in the Supper we eat and take to ourselves Christ's body truly and physically.²⁵

This broad context for Luther's focus on the clarity of the words of institution goes a long way towards explaining the strong emotion which regularly mars his writing on this subject. Those who challenged the clarity of this promise were not merely tampering with a second order doctrine. They were assaulting the fundamental structure of life under the Gospel of Christ. The appeal to metaphor was seen by Luther as a sleight-of-hand which concealed the devil's long-held strategy of driving a wedge between the believer and the source of faith.²⁶

2. Clarity and Detailed Attention to the Text of Scripture

In his treatises and sermons on the Supper, Luther associates the clarity of Scripture with the concrete form of the biblical text. He does not restrict

²² *WA*, vi, 356.20-357.9 = *LW*, xxxv, 83.

²³ *WA*, vi, 360.29-32 = *LW*, xxxv, 88.

²⁴ *WA*, vi, 359.13 = *LW*, xxxv, 86.

²⁵ *WA*, xxiii, 87.28-32 = *LW*, xxxvii, 28-29.

²⁶ *WA*, xxiii, 64-73 = *LW*, xxxvii, 13-18.

clarity to the divine encounter which gave rise to the text, but repeatedly mounts arguments based upon the precise words (and indeed the order of those words) in a particular passage. Just as the word of God comes to us in the shape of promises, so too, Luther insists, the promises come to us in the form of precise words with which we are not at liberty to tamper. Some of Luther's strongest invective is reserved for those who fail to explain "the words *as they stand*" (*die Wörter wie sie lauten*) and "the order *in which they stand*" (*die Ordnung wie sie da stehet*).

In 1520 he pointedly remarked upon the careless attention von Alvelde had given to the words of 1 Cor 11 in the latter's defense of the Roman practice of withholding the cup from the laity.

Here again our brilliant distinguisher of kinds, treating the Scriptures with his usual brilliance, teaches that Paul permitted, but did not deliver, the use of both kinds . . . according to a new kind of grammar (*deinde quod nova grammatica*), "I have received from the Lord" means the same as "it is permitted by the Lord," and "I delivered to you" is the same as "I have permitted you." I pray you, mark this well. For by this method not only the church, but any worthless fellow, will be at liberty, according to this master, to turn all the universal commands, institutions, and ordinances of Christ and the apostles into mere permission.²⁷

The words of Scripture are not infinitely flexible, Luther warned. Placed in a given context they have a definite meaning which can be discerned and must be respected. Later in the same treatise, Luther expounded this principle, which he believed validated his own rejection of transubstantiation while maintaining the real presence of Christ in the elements.

But there are good grounds for my view, and this above all—no violence is to be done to the words of God (*verbis divinis non est ulla facienda vis*), whether by man or angel. They are to be retained in their simplest meaning as far as possible. Unless the context manifestly compels it, they are not to be understood apart from their grammatical and proper sense, lest we give our adversaries occasion to make a mockery of all the Scriptures.²⁸

This led Luther on occasion to contrast the words actually used in a given passage with those which would be necessary if that passage were properly understood by his opponents. This device was meant to draw attention to the precise words of Scripture, and prevent recourse to a more general exposition. One of the best examples of this kind of argument is found in Luther's treatise from early 1525 against Karlstadt.

Why does he [Paul] not put it thus: "Whoever unworthily eats this bread is guilty of profaning the blood of the Lord. Whoever unworthily drinks of this cup is guilty of profaning the body of the Lord."? If Dr. Karlstadt's meaning were correct, one of the two would be enough. Indeed, it would be sufficient if he had

²⁷ WA, vi, 500.21-23, 500.28-32 = LW, xxxvi, 16.

²⁸ WA, vi, 509.8-12 = LW, xxxvi, 30.

said, "Who eats and drinks unworthily is guilty of profaning Christ or the death of Christ." But inasmuch as Paul makes the unworthy drinking of the cup to mean the same as profaning the blood, and the unworthy eating of the bread to mean the same as profaning the body, the clear, natural sense of the words is that the body is in the eating, and the blood is in the drinking. And no one can produce an argument to the contrary which has any show of validity.²⁹

For Luther the clarity of Scripture cannot be isolated from the words of Scripture. However, this inevitably raised the issue of Holy Scripture as a translated text as well as questions about the necessity of a knowledge of the original languages. Luther was, of course, acutely aware that the Scriptures were not originally written in German or even Latin.³⁰ He often appealed to the meaning of Greek words and the structure of Hebrew idiom. In his 1523 work, *Von Anbeten des Sakraments des heiligen Leichnams Christi*, he stressed the importance of competence in the biblical languages.

I know for a fact that one who has to preach and expound the Scriptures and has no help from the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages, but must do it entirely on the basis of his mother tongue, will make many a pretty mistake. For it has been my experience that the languages are extraordinarily helpful for a clear understanding of the divine Scriptures (*zum lauttern verstandi gotlicher schrift*). This also has the feeling and opinion of St. Augustine; he held that there should be some people in the church who could use Greek and Hebrew before they deal with the Word, because it was in these two languages that the Holy Spirit wrote the Old and New Testaments.³¹

Nevertheless, at least in Luther's mind, recognizing that a knowledge of the original languages was indispensable for serious biblical study was in no way inconsistent with an affirmation of the clarity of Scripture.³² Good translations preserved the clear meaning of the original Hebrew or Greek texts. Conversely, a knowledge of the biblical languages enabled the interpreter to dispel any obscurity or confusion that might result from inadequate translation. Luther's *An die Radherm aller Stedte deutsches lands*, from 1524, connected a neglect of the languages with the scholastic complaints of obscurity in the Scriptures.

This is also why the sophists have contended that Scripture is obscure (*Die schrift sey finster*); they have held that God's Word by its very nature is obscure and employs a peculiar style of speech. But they fail to realise that the whole trouble

²⁹ *WA*, xviii, 174.36-175.8 = *LW* xl, 184.

³⁰ This is evident despite Luther's comment in 1526: "Therefore we must build firmly on these words and stand fast in them, and thus we will be able to give a proper answer to the heretics. For these words are expressed in clear enough German" (*Denn sie sind klar und deutsch genug*). *WA*, xix, 508.28-30 = *LW* xxxvi, 351.

³¹ *WA*, xi, 455.30-456.3 = *LW* xxxvi, 304.

³² Neither does Luther appear to feel the tension identified by Alister McGrath between the principle of *sola Scriptura* and a robust insistence upon the necessity of the *die Sprechen*. A. E. McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987) 138-39.

lies in the languages. If we understood the languages nothing clearer (nicht liechters) would ever have been spoken than God's Word.³³

Luther's affirmation of the clarity of the words of Scripture extended to the order of those words, i.e., to grammar and syntax. This concern for grammar is evident in the 1527-28 exchange between Luther and Zwingli. In his *Daß diese Worte* "Das ist mein Leib" etc. ewiglich den alten Sinn haben werden etc., Zwingli had taken exception to the way Luther translated John 6:63. Luther had rendered ἡ σὰρξ οὐκ ὠφελεῖ οὐδέν as *Fleisch ist kein nütze* ("Flesh is of no avail"), omitting the article. Zwingli insisted on the article, and further, he construed it with demonstrative force: "This very flesh is of no avail."³⁴ In this way, according to Zwingli, Christ himself pointed believers away from a physical understanding of eating his flesh and drinking his blood. In *Vom Abendmahl Christi. Bekenntnis*, 1528 Luther took up the point.

Now this spirit must acknowledge that in this passage, "The flesh is of no avail," there is no pronoun but an article. Yet he makes a pronoun out of it not only in the translation, where he says *das* is equivalent to *eben das*, "precisely this", but also in his interpretation that in this passage "the same flesh" is referred to as that of which Christ had previously spoken, "My flesh is food indeed". Here, then, he demonstrates that he falsifies (*verfelsschet*) the Word of God and treats the common people shamelessly. For an article never refers to an antecedent or to particular objects, as a pronoun does, but merely indicates things in general, which could be equally well understood if the article were omitted, though the style would not be so nice and elegant. Therefore it is impossible according to the rules of grammar that "flesh" here should mean Christ's flesh in particular, to which he had previously referred. It must mean flesh in general, and we could with perfect propriety speak of it without the article, namely thus: "Flesh is of no avail."³⁵

This reference to the rules of grammar (*praecepta grammaticorum*) is in effect simply another form of the appeal to the plain meaning of the words. It was Luther's answer to sidestepping that plain meaning which, he believed, was involved both in the Roman teaching about transubstantiation and the spiritual interpretations of the Supper by the Swiss. Luther was convinced that without constraint by the ordinary rules of grammar there could be no certainty of interpretation. He was making precisely this point when he described von Alvelde as an Aristotelian theologian "for whom nouns and verbs when interchanged mean the same thing and any thing" (*cui nomina et verba transposita eadem et omnia significant*).³⁶ However, Luther also recognized the limitations of grammar, remarking that "something

³³ *WA*, xv, 41.2-5 = *LW* xlv, 363-64.

³⁴ Huldrych Zwingli, *Das diese Worte: "Das ist mein Leib" etc. ewiglich den alten Sinn haben werden etc.* (1527) *CR*, xcii, 967.

³⁵ *WA*, xxvi, 363.11-364.7 = *LW* xxxvii, 243.

³⁶ *WA*, vi, 500.13-14 = *LW* xxxvi, 16.

higher than the rules of grammar must always be present when the grounding of faith is concerned" (*Es mus alles ettwas höhers seyn, denn regule grammaticae sind, was den glauben soll gründen*).³⁷ While important, grammatical detail alone is not enough to establish Christian doctrine.

In the debates with Karlstadt, one of the arguments actually concerned the punctuation of the Greek text. Karlstadt had insisted that the expression "this is my body" stands independently of the command "take and eat," the separation being indicated by a period and a capital letter.³⁸ Luther responded by appealing to the order of the words over and against the human conventions of punctuation marks and capital letters.

Suppose my book had no periods or capitals and yours had both. Our faith might come to depend on ink and pen, and even on the disposition of writer and printer. That would be a fine foundation! To put it briefly, we must have sober, lucid words and texts which by reason of their clarity are convincing (*es sollen dürre, helle sprüche und text da seyn, die mit klarem verstand uns zwingen*), regardless of whether they are written with capital or small letters, with or without punctuation. For even if it were true (which it is not) that a period and capital indicated something new, should it follow in regard to Holy Scripture that my faith should rest not on expressions and words alone but on frail periods and capitals which really say or sing nothing? That would indeed be a false foundation.³⁹

Luther, obviously, was aware of the secondary nature of the punctuation marks in the text. In isolation, they are a shaky basis for proper interpretation. In contrast, Luther concentrated on the words and the natural grammatical and syntactical relationships between the words.

Luther's eucharistic literature undermines any suggestion that his concept of *claritas Scripturae* merely attaches to "the essential content of Scripture" (*der wesentliche Inhalt der Schrift*), understood as "such Christian dogmas or articles of the faith as the Trinity, the incarnation, and the saving work of Christ."⁴⁰ Here it becomes evident that he regarded the very words of the text themselves, understood naturally and in terms of their context, as clear (*klar*) and lucid (*hell*). Luther was willing to develop his concern for the particularities of the eucharistic texts in the strongest possible terms: "We want the text of the Supper to be unambiguous, simple, sure, and certain in every word, syllable, and letter" (*eynerley, einfeltig, gewis und sicher haben ynn allen worten, syllaben und buchstaben*).⁴¹

³⁷ *WA*, xviii, 157.23-24, 157.29-30 = *LW* xl, 167.

³⁸ Andreas Bodenstein (von Karlstadt), *Dialogus oder ein Gesprächbüchlein von dem greulichen und abgöttischen Missbrauch des hochwürldigen Sakraments Jesu Christi 1524* (Autographa Reformatorum: Tract. Luther XXXV) 147.

³⁹ *WA*, xviii, 148.17-149.2 = *LW* xl, 158-59.

⁴⁰ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (3 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), i, 29-30.

⁴¹ *WA*, xxvi, 265.29-30 = *LW* xxxvii, 167.

3. *Clarity, the Literal Sense, and the Possibility of Metaphor*

The prominence Luther gave to a clarity which attaches to the very words of Holy Scripture does not mean he was insensitive to the variety of ways those words could be used. He was aware of the medieval discussions of signification (*significatio*).⁴² In fact, Luther continued to recognize the legitimacy of allegory and metaphor, long after the hermeneutical shift which Gerhard Ebeling has detected as early as the *Dictata super Psalterium*.⁴³ What Luther deplored was a hasty retreat into allegory which jeopardized a responsible reading of the text on its own terms.

Who has so weak a mind as not to be able to launch into allegories? I would not have a theologian devote himself to allegories until he has exhausted the legitimate and simple meaning of Scripture (*donec consumatus legitimo scripturae simplicique sensu fuerit*); otherwise his theology will lead him into danger, as Origen discovered.⁴⁴

The use of Origen's name was, no doubt, deliberately provocative. Nevertheless, the centuries immediately prior to Luther had witnessed a growing debate about the integrity of the literal or historical sense in the face of widespread allegorized spiritual interpretation. Luther's recognition of the need for restraint in the use of metaphor and allegory needs to be seen against that background, where notions of Scripture's clarity had already been connected to the sufficiency of the literal sense.⁴⁵

Luther was determined that the straightforward grammatical meaning of the biblical text should not to be evaded. In his own terms, "the natural meaning of the words (*die natürliche sprache*) is queen, transcending all subtle, acute, sophistical fancy."⁴⁶ Here he goes beyond Aquinas' insistence that all spiritual interpretations are based on the one literal sense,⁴⁷ suggesting that in many cases there need be no spiritual sense at all. The onus of proof lies with those who claim that a spiritual interpretation is necessary, not with those who are content with the words as they read. Here is the prior question which must be settled before a spiritual interpretation may be introduced as evidence in a theological debate.⁴⁸

⁴² e.g. *WA*, xxvi, 379.16-380.1 = *LW* xxxvii, 253. An important analysis of the medieval discussions of signification can be found in the two-volume work of Gillian Evans. G. R. Evans, *The Language and Logic of the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984-85).

⁴³ These lectures were delivered 1513-15. Gerhard Ebeling, "Die Anfänge von Luthers Hermeneutik," *Lutherstudien I* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1971) 1-68, esp. pp. 4-7.

⁴⁴ *WA*, vi, 562.23-26 = *LW* xxxvi, 110.

⁴⁵ e.g. Hugh of St Victor, *In Salomonis Ecclesiasten*, praef. (*PL*, clxxv, 114-15).

⁴⁶ *WA*, xviii, 180.17-18 = *LW* xl, 190.

⁴⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.I, art. 10.

⁴⁸ "It simply won't do to play around with tropes in the Scriptures. One must first prove that particular passages are tropes before one uses them in controversies." *WA*, xxvi, 319.21-23 = *LW* xxxvii, 209.

This was, obviously, an important feature of Luther's dispute with those who espoused a spiritual reading of the eucharistic words of institution. One of the earliest of these *Significatisten* was Kornelis Hendriks Hoen (Hoenius). While creating a catalogue of the holdings of a small library in the Lowlands, Hoen had come into contact with John Wessel Gansfort's ideas on the sacrament.⁴⁹ These he developed in a brief letter which was written in 1520 and published in the summer of 1523 by Hinne Rode of Utrecht.⁵⁰ As well as insisting that John 6 provided the critical background for the words of institution, Hoen argued that in the latter context the word "is" (*est*) ought to be understood figuratively, with the same meaning as "signifies" (*significat*). Hoen died at the Hague in 1524, but his arguments were taken up by others. They appear in a more strident form in Zwingli's letter to Matthew Alber of Reutlingen dated 16th November 1524.⁵¹

Luther repeatedly called on all who held this view to prove that the words of institution should not just be taken as they read. Without such proof their interpretations could not be the basis of a Christian understanding of the sacrament. In this connection he declared only two types of evidence to be admissible. The first was an appeal to the Scripture passage itself.⁵² Each text must provide its own indication that a metaphor, or any other kind of figurative language, is intended. Reference to the use of such language in other parts of the Scripture would not suffice; the particular text under review must settle the question. Therefore, in this case, the Last Supper narrative itself must be shown to demand a spiritual interpretation.

Not only are they under obligation to prove from Scripture that "body" is the same as "sign of the body", and that "is" is the same as "represent or signify," but one thing more: even though they should produce such an example in one passage of Scripture (which, however, is impossible), they are still under obligation to prove that it is necessarily so (*auch so müsse sein*) here in the Supper as well, that "body" is "sign of the body" . . . Our present quarrel is not primarily

⁴⁹ Wesseli Gansfortii Groningensis, "De Sacramento Eucharistiae," *Opera: Facsimile of the Edition Groningen 1614* (Monumenta Humanistica Belgica 1; Nieuwkoop, De Graaf, 1966) 658-705.

⁵⁰ *Epistola christiana admodum ex Bathavis missa, sed sprete, longe aliter tractans coenam dominicam etc.* (CR, xci, 512-18). The addressee of the letter is unknown, though various suggestions have been made, including both Erasmus and even Luther himself. Marc Lienhard, *Luther: Witness to Jesus Christ. Stages and Themes of the Reformer's Christology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982) 197. It is possible that a copy of the letter was brought to Luther in 1521 by Hinne Rode and George Saganus. Hoen's views are mentioned in a letter by Luther in April 1523, though he does not attribute them (WA, xi, 434.5-437.11 = LW xxxvi, 279-88). Similarly in his letter to the Christians at Strassburg on 17th December 1524 (WA, xv, 394.17-19 = LW xl, 68).

⁵¹ *Ad Matthaeum Alberum, Reutlingen ecclesiasten, de coena dominica Huldrychi Zwinglii epistola* (CR, xc, 335-354). There is some doubt about the extent of Hoen's influence on Zwingli. Did he persuade Zwingli to abandon the traditional understanding of the words of institution, or did he merely clarify which term contained the trope? W. P. W. Peter Stephens, *Zwingli: An Introduction to his Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) 98.

⁵² WA, xi, 434.20-22 = LW xxxvi, 279.

whether somewhere in the Scriptures "body" means "sign of the body," but whether in this text of the Supper it has this meaning.⁵³

However, this would prove an extraordinarily difficult thing to establish, especially when Luther went on the offensive by arguing that the metaphorical nature of Zwingli's examples from other parts of the Bible was also open to doubt.⁵⁴ Under Luther's scrutiny the number of undoubtedly metaphorical texts in Scripture dwindled. Even the "I am" sayings of Jesus, he maintained, were expressed and understood in terms of being (*wesen*) rather than representing (*deuten*).⁵⁵ The effect of Luther's argument was to make the recognition of genuinely figurative language in the Scripture extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible. When even the fact that Jesus stood there whole and entire as he distributed the bread and wine at the Last Supper was not enough to indicate that something other than a literal equation was meant by the words "This is my body . . . this is my blood," his opponents were entitled to ask just what *would* be enough. Luther's practice, it could be argued, did not always reflect his own principle.

Luther's second potential proof that a particular passage involves a metaphorical or figurative sense introduced further tension into his approach to the question. It involved an appeal to an express article of faith.

This then is our basis. Where Holy Scripture is the ground of faith we are not to deviate from the words as they stand nor from the order in which they stand, unless an express article of faith compels a different interpretation or order (*es zwingt denn eyn ausgedruckter artickel des glaubens, die wort anders zu deuten odder zu ordenen*). For else what would happen to the Bible? For instance, when the Psalmist says, "God is my rock," he uses a word which otherwise refers to natural stone. But inasmuch as my faith teaches me that God is not natural stone, I am compelled to give the word "stone," in this place, another meaning than the natural one. So also in Matt. 16, "On this rock I will build my church." In the passage we now are treating no article of faith compels us to sever it and remove it from its place, or to hold that the bread is not the body of Christ. Therefore we must take the words just as they stand, making no change and letting the bread be the body of Christ.⁵⁶

It is a somewhat circular argument when an article of faith cannot be proved on the basis of a metaphorical text and yet the articles of faith themselves determine whether or not any particular text is metaphorical.

⁵³ WA, xxiii, 97.23-28, 97.30-32 = LW, xxxvii, 34-35.

⁵⁴ WA, xxiii, 99.22-23, 99.26-30 = LW, xxxvii, 36.

⁵⁵ WA, xxiii, 103.15-22 = LW, xxxvii, 38-39;; cf. WA, xxvi, 383.14-384.42 = LW, xxxvii, 255-257.

⁵⁶ WA, xviii, 147.23-35 = LW, xl, 157-58; cf. "In Scripture we should let the words retain their natural force, just as they read, and give no other interpretation unless a clear article of faith compels otherwise" (*Man sol ynn der schrift die wort lassen gelten, was sie laüten, nach yhrer art und kein ander deutung geben es zwingt denn ein öffentlicher artickel des glaubens*). WA, xxvi, 403.11-13 = LW, xxxvii, 270.

Luther, however, did not resolve this problem nor apparently even recognize it as such. His concern was simply to exclude that kind of flat reading of the biblical text which would lead one to make ridiculous or even blasphemous affirmations about God. Where this was the likely result one must recognize the presence of divinely intended figurative language.

Luther did in fact go beyond a bare acknowledgement of the presence of figurative language in Scripture. He provided what he considered a sound perspective from which properly to interpret such language once its necessity had been established in either of these ways. He argued that biblical metaphor must remain consistent with the pattern of God's dealing with the world. God involves himself with his world in a movement from type to antitype, from sign to reality. This movement is never reversed: the sign always comes first and the reality later.⁵⁷ When this pattern shows itself in the language of Scripture, we are able to say that biblical figures always point forward to their fulfilment. Such an observation allowed Luther to dismiss Oecolampadius' spiritual interpretation of the Supper as "a backward-pointing, inverted trope" (*ein rücklinger verkehrter tropus*).⁵⁸ Once again Luther is not beyond criticism at this point. Did he really do justice to the paschal context of the Last Supper with its emphasis upon "remember" as well as "wait"? Did he really take into account the future reference of the Supper in both the Gospel accounts ("until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of my father") and the teaching of Paul ("we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes")?⁵⁹ Nevertheless, what is evident is that in this argument Luther is deliberately seeking to allow the phenomena of Scripture to determine the believer's approach to Scripture, and this quest is itself founded upon his convictions concerning *claritas Scripturae*.

As far as Luther was concerned, there was no good reason to abandon a literal understanding of the words "This is my body . . . this is my blood." Neither Zwingli nor any of the others had provided a convincing case for the presence of metaphor in any of the texts and, given the category of miracle in God's dealings with his people, a reading of the words as they stand was perfectly intelligible, if not perfectly explicable. Luther was able to conclude, "if now we have these words with a sure interpretation known to everyone, and no other interpretation is proved, we can call them clear, lucid, plain words and texts (*klare, dürre, helle wort und text*)."⁶⁰

4. *Clarity and the appeal to context*

In the course of the eucharistic debates, Luther regularly referred to "the context of a passage" (*die umstende des texts*) as critical for its proper interpretation. He dismissed von Alvelde's appeal to John 6, for example, on the

⁵⁷ *WA*, xxvi, 382.25-383.1 = *LW* xxxvii, 254.

⁵⁸ *WA*, xxvi, 381.28-29 = *LW* xxxvii, 253.

⁵⁹ Matt 26:29; 1 Cor 11:26

⁶⁰ *WA*, xxvi, 404.21-23 = *LW* xxxvii, 270.

basis that the context clearly revealed it was not treating the sacrament but faith in Christ. Later, in response to Zwingli's use of verse sixty-three of that chapter, Luther argued that the word "flesh" in the expression "the flesh is of no avail" could not be referring to Christ's physical body precisely because in the context Jesus contrasts flesh and spirit: "the spirit gives life but the flesh is of no avail" (τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν τὸ ζωοποιοῦν, ἡ σὰρξ οὐκ ὀφελεῖ οὐδέν).⁶¹

This leads to an important observation about Luther's understanding of *claritas Scripturae*. While he insists that clarity extends to the words of Scripture themselves, those words almost never appear *by themselves*. Grammatical and syntactical features unite words to form expressions and those expressions occur within the context of wider units of thought. Isolated from such connections, Luther argued, it would be possible to make even the clearest text appear obscure.

But our fanatics proceed the other way around: they tear out of a text an obscure, ambiguous word which pleases their fancy, ignore the context, and then run around trying to use it to make a lucid, clear text obscure and ambiguous, and then claim that it is the pure truth (*wollen damit einen hellen, klaren text tunkel und wanckel machen*). This is the method of the devil, who is lord of darkness and tries with darkness to extinguish the light . . . Not that the Scriptures are obscure; but their imagination is blind and lazy, so that it cannot view the clear words correctly, just as a lazy man does not open his eyes to see the real light but takes a glimmer to be the light.⁶²

Luther believed this is precisely what Zwingli had done by suggesting, on the basis of punctuation, that the words "This is my body" form an independent sentence, and therefore that their meaning is to be isolated from the action of breaking, distributing, and eating the bread. Yet Luther claimed that Zwingli's suggestion failed to do justice to the context.⁶³

This passage is not a kind of unnecessary addition, as this wanton spirit insists, but is part of the context (*es steht mitten unter andern Worten*) and is as intimately connected with it as any phrase could be . . . For if it were an additional statement it ought not be in the midst of other words nor involved with such as refer to eating.⁶⁴

If the extraction of a word or phrase from its context could serve to obscure its true meaning, then conversely, on those occasions where at first glance a biblical expression appears obscure, a close examination of the context could vindicate its clarity. This is exactly what Luther sets out to do throughout his eucharistic literature.

⁶¹ WA, vi, 502.7-10 = LW xxxvi, 19.

⁶² WA, xxiii, 195.19-21 = LW xxxvii, 96.

⁶³ WA, xxiii, 225.3-9, 225.16-18 = LW xxxvii, 112, 113.

⁶⁴ WA, xviii, 145.22-24, 146.3-4 = LW xl, 155, 6.

The context of the passage (*Die umstende des texts*) supports our interpretation much better, if one examines it simply and impartially as it should be done. I offer no comparison, but the text says explicitly that the Jews and the disciples alike were offended at the words of Christ about eating his flesh . . . Taking the total context into account (*der text mit allen umstenden*), and without using any comparison, I say the text thus yields an interpretation far superior to the gloss of the fanatics.⁶⁵

Of course the widest possible context for any particular text was Holy Scripture itself and so, not unexpectedly, we observe that Luther often endorsed the patristic principle of the *analogia fidei*.⁶⁶ As far as he was concerned, this principle was worked out in two complementary directions. Firstly, it affirmed that the message of the entire Bible provides a framework for interpreting any individual passage within it. Outside of his eucharistic literature, Luther made influential contributions to biblical interpretation by his radical concentration on Christ as the center of Scripture⁶⁷ and extended reflection on the movement between law and gospel as its underlying dynamic.⁶⁸ Secondly, the *analogia fidei* affirmed that any difficulties in understanding one passage of Scripture may be resolved by appeal to other passages bearing on the same subject.⁶⁹ Fundamentally, this procedure could only be judged legitimate because of Luther's conviction that all Scripture has the same primary author, viz., the Holy Spirit. The connection between the *analogia fidei* and the clarity of Scripture could be presented in this way: God has not left us with an obscure Scripture precisely because he has left us an entire Scripture. If the initial impression is that a particular text is obscure, then that can only be an initial impression. The unity of Scripture takes us beyond initial impressions to the true clarity of word of God.

5. *The critical nature of Claritas Scripturae*

As we have now seen, in the course of Luther's various debates over the Supper he repeatedly affirmed the clarity of Scripture. It remained, in fact, the key argument in those debates as far as Luther was concerned. Nevertheless, as has also been evident in our discussion, such an argument was far from a naive literalism on Luther's part. He was acutely aware of the nature of Scripture as a translated text, the need for sensitivity to the

⁶⁵ *WA*, xxvi, 431.31-34, 432.13-14 = *LW*, xxxvii, 287, 287-88.

⁶⁶ This concept, with its presupposition of an essential unity to Scripture, can be traced to a particular understanding of ἡ ἀναλογία τῆς πίστεως in Romans 12.6. It was Augustine who made it popular in the West. *De Doctrina Christiana*, iii.2 (CCSL, xxxii, 77-78).

⁶⁷ e.g. *WA*, iii, 620.5-6; *WA*, x-i/1, 15.1-10 = *LW*, xxxv, 122; *WA*, xlvii, 66.18-24 = *LW*, xxii, 339; *WA*, lii, 802.1-8; *WADB*, viii, 10.1-12.8 = *LW*, xxxv, 235-36.

⁶⁸ *WA*, vii, 23.29-30 = *LW*, xxxi, 348; *WA*, x-i/2, 159.7-19; *WA*, lvi, 424.8-426.9 = *LW*, xxv, 416-18.

⁶⁹ *WA*, xxiii, 225.1-2 = *LW*, xxxvii, 112.

various uses of biblical language, and the prime importance of context (including the context of the entire Scripture with its Christological focus) for rightly understanding individual texts. However, Luther also went further, by exploring the impact such an understanding of Scripture should have on the life of the individual Christian, the theologian, and the church itself.

Luther saw the clarity of God's sure Word of promise as the divine answer to the persistent assault of the devil upon the heart and mind of the individual believer. Such an assault was bound to produce acute spiritual turmoil (*Anfechtung*) which centered on the disposition of God towards us in view of our continued sinfulness. This, Luther maintained, was the experience David had described at a number of points in the Psalter.

But where there is no faith, there no prayer helps, nor the hearing of many masses. Things can only become worse. As Psalm 23 says, "Before my eyes you have prepared a table for me against all my affliction." Is this not a clear verse (*Ist das nit ein clarer spruch*)? What greater affliction is there than sin and the evil conscience which is always afraid of God's anger and never has rest?⁷⁰

In this matter, as in others, Luther was generalizing from his own experience of spiritual turmoil (*Anfechtung*) to the experience of Christians in all ages. He did not see himself as uniquely the object of the devil's attack. The words of David, Paul, and even James, convinced him that he was right to warn all Christians of the danger. Nevertheless, he did recognize a particular relevance of the promise of Christ to his own extraordinary situation.

I myself experience daily how extremely difficult it is to lay aside to a conscience of long standing, one that has been fenced in by man-made ordinances . . . How often did my heart quail, punish me, and reproach me with its single strongest argument: Are you the only wise man? Can it be that all the others are in error and have erred for so long a time? What if you are mistaken and lead so many people into error who might all be eternally damned? Finally, Christ with his clear, unmistakable Word (*Christus mit seynem eynigen, gewissen wortt*) strengthened and confirmed me, so that my heart no longer quails, but resists the arguments of the papists, as a stony shore resists the waves, and laughs at their threats and storms!⁷¹

Ultimately, this resolution of Christian anxiety on the basis of the clear Word of God was simply an extension of Luther's argument about promise and faith as the basic dynamic of the Christian life. To his mind, the promise of God is always the most effective counter to the accusations of the devil. It was the clarity of that promise which ensured its benefit could be appropriated by the believer.⁷²

⁷⁰ *WA*, vi, 376.30-377.1 = *LW* xxxv, 109-10.

⁷¹ *WA*, viii, 482.27-28, 482.32-483.8 = *LW* xxxvi, 134.

⁷² *WA*, viii, 412.17-19 = *LW* xxxvi, 134.

The clarity of Scripture had further implications for those who practice theology. As we have seen, Luther insisted that an article of faith must be established on the basis of clear passages of Scripture, and not on such secondary features as punctuation or even metaphorical interpretations. Further, he rejected any theological assertion which was supported only by appeals to ecclesiastical authority, or the application of natural reason. In *Das diese Worte Christi (Das ist mein Leib etce) noch fest stehen wider die Schwärmgeister* (1527), Luther explained why he was so determined in this regard. Once again his explanation involved the virulent opposition of the devil to the gospel of Christ. The devil's objective, Luther reminded his readers, is that "no one may be saved and persevere in the Christian truth."⁷³ To accomplish this, the enemy continues to do all in his power to distract Christians from their only defense, which is the fortress (*das schlos*) of Scripture. Whether by promoting preoccupation with external constraint and human tradition or a prolonged quarrelling and dissension over meaning which soon wearies all, the devil "resists and hinders at every point." Indeed, Luther claimed that the treatises to which he was responding were evidence that the devil now has gone to work on the Sacraments. The only strategy in the face of this unrelenting attack is God himself, and a determined stand upon his promises. Holy Scripture is the only "sure, impregnable fortress (*gewisse, unbetriegliche festung*) we seek and desire."⁷⁴ That is why all those who practice theology must be careful to support their arguments with "clear, sober passages from Scripture which the devil will not overthrow" (*dürre helle sprüche dar legen, die der teuffel nicht soll umbstossen*).⁷⁵

Precisely because Scripture is clear it provides the church with a sure basis for bold and confident action. This connection between biblical teaching and church practice is particularly evident in the preface to Luther's attack on the Roman tradition of whispering the canon of the mass.⁷⁶ The lingering opposition in Wittenberg to changes in the practice of communion were, in Luther's opinion, due to a refusal to accept that his exposition was faithful to the clear teaching of Scripture on the matter. Worse still, they betrayed a cavalier attitude to the Scriptures themselves.

For I fear that people still hold it to be true and do not believe that it is such an abomination as we say, else they would have a different attitude toward doing something about it . . . And I particularly lament that, although it is so clearly written and preached that they could easily read or hear it (*so klerlich geschrieben und gepredigt ist, das sie es doch mochten lesen odder hören*), yet they simply stop their ears and will neither hear nor see what is intolerable for them.⁷⁷

⁷³ *WA*, xxiii, 65.13-14 = *LW*, xxxvii, 13.

⁷⁴ *WA*, viii, 483.25-26 = *LW*, xxxvi, 134.

⁷⁵ *WA*, xviii, 164.29-30 = *LW*, xl, 175.

⁷⁶ *Vom Greuel der Stillmesse* (1525). *WA*, xviii, 22-36 = *LW*, xxxvi, 311-28.

⁷⁷ *WA*, xviii, 22.26-28, 22.31-34 = *LW*, xxxvi, 312.

In contrast, both in the theological argument and the transformation of church practices, Luther repeatedly took his stand on the clear teaching of Scripture. He considered this to be the only appropriate response of the Christian. Accordingly, on the matter of distributing the Sacrament in both kinds, Luther yielded no ground to his opponents.

For in this matter the text of the gospel is so clear (*da ist der text des Euangelii so klar*) that even the papists cannot deny that Christ instituted the Sacrament in both kinds and gave them to all of the disciples. Therefore it is your duty, on pain of forfeiting your salvation, to let nobody deny or disfigure it.⁷⁸

We should remember that Luther's affirmation of *claritas Scripturae* cannot finally be isolated from his other affirmations about the nature of Holy Scripture. Even when we limit ourselves to his eucharistic literature, we are faced with a web of interwoven connections. Although it has remained beyond the scope of this article to explore these connections in detail, it is possible to identify some of them. Perhaps the most prominent is his association of the clarity of the biblical text with his conviction that its primary author is the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God speaks "well, clearly, in an orderly and distinct fashion (*feyn, helle, ordenlich und deutlich*)."⁷⁹ Other related ideas include the authority of Scripture, the unity of Scripture, and the sufficiency of Scripture. Outside the eucharistic literature, Luther's own explanation of his abandonment of medieval methods of biblical interpretation reinforce the suggestion that his convictions about Scripture's clarity actually operate as a critical link in the bridge between his statements about Scripture and his use of Scripture.

II. Conclusion

Luther's eucharistic literature alone will not allow us to marginalize the concept of *claritas Scriptura* in his theology. It cannot be simply dismissed as a polemical construct fashioned to counter the arguments of Erasmus in 1524. Rather, it finds a place in a range of other debates as well, with other reformers as well as with the theologians and apologists of Rome. It is intimately connected with the dynamic of promise and faith which itself arises out of the *theologia crucis*. The evidence we have examined reveals that the concept deserves more prominence in treatments of Luther's doctrine of Scripture. When this is done, Luther is properly seen against the background of medieval discussion of the issue as well as a contributor to the later expositions of *perspicuitas Scripturae* by Johann Quenstedt, Francis Turretin, and others. He is also seen as a pastor whose theological concerns were never entirely divorced from individual and corporate Christian life.

⁷⁸ WA, x-ii, 20.28-21.1 = LW, xxxvi, 245.

⁷⁹ WA, xviii, 101.20 = LW, xl, 118.

In these ways an appreciation of Luther's understanding of the clarity of Holy Scripture enables his heirs to renew their appreciation of the coherence of his thought and practice.

A DANGEROUS IDEA?
MARTIN LUTHER, E. Y. MULLINS,
AND THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

MARK ROGERS

I. Introduction

Timothy George has written, “[Martin] Luther’s greatest contribution to Protestant ecclesiology was his doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Yet no element in his teaching is more misunderstood.”¹ What George calls misunderstanding has at times been explicit departure from Luther’s foundational doctrine of the universal priesthood. These misunderstandings and departures were widespread in certain segments of Southern Baptist theology in the twentieth century. For example, Herschel Hobbs, perhaps the most influential Southern Baptist during the last half of the twentieth century, explained two problems with Luther’s doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. The first objection was related to infant baptism, and secondly, Hobbs wrote, “[Luther’s] view that ‘every Christian is someone else’s priest, and we are all priests to one another’ ignores the idea that every Christian has free access to God. It is my view that this denies the principle of the competency of the soul in religion. In this respect Luther’s thinking was still influenced by his Catholic theology.”²

Hobbs’s focus on soul competency and the priesthood of the individual believer is representative of a twentieth-century Baptist theology heavily influenced by E. Y. Mullins (1860–1928). Mullins, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for twenty-nine years, was the most significant Southern Baptist theologian of the early twentieth century. His theological system, with the doctrines of soul competency and the priesthood of all believers at its core, set the course many Southern Baptists later followed. This article will explain in what manner E. Y. Mullins’s doctrine of the priesthood of all believers was similar to, and different from, Martin Luther’s understanding of the same doctrine.

In his recent book, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution—A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First*, Alister McGrath describes Luther’s doctrine of the universal priesthood, saying he had a “democratizing agenda” which aimed to give every Christian a right to interpret the Bible for himself in

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¹ Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1988), 95.

² Herschel H. Hobbs, *You Are Chosen: The Priesthood of All Believers* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 14.

a church with “no ‘spiritual’ authority, distinct from or superior to ordinary Christians.”³ McGrath builds on this one-dimensional description of Luther’s doctrine to argue for the continuity of Luther’s reforms with the “fundamentally democratic nature of Protestant theology” in its subsequent development.⁴ This article will argue that in addition to continuity, important discontinuity is evident between Luther’s doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and that of later Protestant theologians. E. Y. Mullins is just one among many American Protestants who have departed in significant ways from Luther’s understanding of the universal priesthood, but will serve as the primary example. This article will first describe Luther’s doctrine, giving special attention to the progress and change observable in Luther’s writings between 1519 and 1535. McGrath’s argument draws entirely on Luther’s pre-1522 writings, and, as a result, fails to give an accurate and complete picture of Luther’s teaching on the priesthood of all believers, the right of private judgment, and the nature of the church. An examination of Luther’s post-Peasants’ War writings uncovers hierarchical and anti-democratic views in Luther’s theology, which are impossible to reconcile with democratic and individualistic tendencies in later Protestantism. After focusing on Luther, I will briefly describe Mullins’s doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. The purpose is to show the continuity with Luther’s doctrine, as well as the radical discontinuity between Mullins and Luther. I will conclude by pointing to the significance of the history of this doctrine for contemporary evangelicalism.

II. *Martin Luther and the Priesthood of All Believers*

Eric W. Gritsch has claimed, “Luther’s doctrine of the common priesthood of all believers, developed particularly in his treatises of 1520, is one of the most revolutionary doctrines in the history of Christianity.”⁵ In 1520, Luther published three works that called for a revolution to the medieval Catholic understanding of the church. *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* was published in August. In the book, Luther attacked the three walls the medieval Catholic church had built to protect its authority. All three walls related to the unique status, position, and authority of the pope: his power was above the temporal estate, only he could interpret the Scriptures, and only he could call a council.⁶ These walls were based on the “chain of being” ontology of medieval Catholicism, which affirmed a major divide between clergy and laity.⁷ The clergy was closer to God and was needed to help the lay people draw near to Christ. For

³ Alister McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution—A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 53.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 232, 237-38.

⁵ Eric W. Gritsch, “Introduction to Church and Ministry,” in *Luther’s Works* (ed. Jaroslav J. Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann; 55 vols.; St. Louis: Concordia, and Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955–1986), 39:xix (hereafter *LW*).

⁶ Martin Luther, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation, in Three Treatises* (2d ed.; rev. James Atkinson; trans. Charles M. Jacobs; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 11-12.

⁷ For a concise summary of this ontology, see John Witte, *Law and Protestantism: The Legal Teachings of the Lutheran Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 106.

Luther this was much more than just a political problem concerning the relationship between the spiritual and temporal estates. As Cyril Eastwood has explained, "It seemed to Luther that a massive barrier made up of Church, Priesthood and Sacraments, had been raised up between the believer and Christ."⁸

Luther sought to demolish the barriers of the church, priesthood, and sacraments through the rest of 1520 by arguing that all Christians are priests. He wrote in *To the Christian Nobility*, "There is no true, basic difference between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, between religious and secular."⁹ He continually pointed to 2 Pet 2:9 as his main evidence for the common priesthood of believers, "You are a royal priesthood, a priestly realm."¹⁰ Luther argued that the princes of Germany were priests just as much as the pope. Therefore, if the pope departed from orthodoxy, his fellow priests, the nobility of the German nation, could and should call a council for the reform of the church.¹¹

Luther returned to the argument that all Christians are priests several times in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, published in October 1520. In this second work, Luther attacked the sacramental system that was keeping Christians in spiritual captivity. Luther applied the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers in several ways. First, since all Christians were priests, all should take the Mass in both kinds. Second, lay people were not dependent on the priesthood for absolution from sins. Instead, since all Christians are priests and hold in common the power of the keys, Luther said, "I have no doubt but that every one is absolved from his secret sins when he has made confession, privately before any brother."¹² Third, Luther argued there was no such thing as a special ordination or consecration that could set a Christian apart from the laity as a priest. Instead, all Christians were anointed by the Holy Spirit and made priests at their baptism.¹³

By breaking down the barriers that he saw between God and believers, Luther sought to restore the common Christian's access to God. While Luther continued to hold to a distinction between official ministers and the common Christian, Brian Gerrish explains that it "must be understood as a distinction within the royal priesthood, within the one spiritual estate; and it says nothing about one's standing before God or freedom of access to His presence."¹⁴ Luther, pointing

⁸ Cyril Eastwood, *The Priesthood of All Believers: An Examination of the Doctrine from the Reformation to the Present Day* (London: Epworth Press, 1960), 9.

⁹ Luther, *Christian Nobility*, 14.

¹⁰ For examples of his use of 2 Pet 2:9, see *ibid.*, 21, 29; Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, in *Three Treatises* (2d ed.; ed. and trans. A. T. W. Steinhauser; rev. Frederick C. Ahrens and Abdel Ross Wentz; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 244; Luther, *The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests*, in *LW*, 38:187; Luther, *Concerning the Ministry*, 1523, in *LW*, 40:21-22; Luther, *Dr. Luther's Retraction of the Error Forced Upon Him by the Most Highly Learned Priest of God, Sir Jerome Emser, Vicar in Meissen, 1521*, in *LW*, 39:236.

¹¹ Luther, *Christian Nobility*, 14, 21.

¹² Luther, *Babylonian Captivity*, 214. See also Luther, *The Keys*, 1530, in *LW*, 40:321-78.

¹³ Luther, *Babylonian Captivity*, 244.

¹⁴ Brian Gerrish, "Priesthood and Ministry in the Theology of Luther," *CH* 34 (1965): 411.

to Rom 12:1, said that Christians are not dependent on a special priestly class to make sacrifices for them. Instead, all believers are priests and are called to offer their own bodies as holy sacrifices and to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving to God.¹⁵ The leveling of Christians into one, priestly estate had many practical implications. For example, soon after Luther published his ideas, priests and monks began to marry. Communion was given to both pastors and the congregation in both kinds, since all were one church and equally spiritual. Another implication of Luther's revolutionary doctrine was that since all Christians were priests, all had the right and responsibility to read the Bible. In 1521 Luther translated the New Testament into vernacular German so that all Christians could carry out their priestly function of knowing and ministering the word of God to each other.

For Luther, the priesthood of all believers was derived from their union with Christ, the great High Priest. Paul Althaus explains the Christ-centeredness of Luther's doctrine well, "The church is founded on Christ's priesthood. Its inner structure is the priesthood of Christians for each other. The priesthood of Christians flows from the priesthood of Christ."¹⁶ Christians are united to Christ by faith at the point of regeneration. From then on, Luther says, "We are priests as he is Priest, sons as he is Son, kings as he is King."¹⁷ Just as Christ was both a priest and the sacrifice, "so all of us too as Christians are truly a holy priesthood and the sacrifice itself, as Paul elucidates in Romans 12 [v. 1], where he teaches that we should sacrifice our bodies as a priestly sacrifice."¹⁸ The emphasis in Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is on Christ's priestly work.

Luther's understanding of the priestly functions of all Christians was also based in part on their union with Christ in his work. Like Christ, Christians were to intercede for one another, teach the word to one another, and bear one another's burdens.¹⁹ For Luther, the priesthood of all believers was much more than a teaching that all Christians could approach God without a human mediator. Instead, Christians were supposed to minister and act as priests for one another. In his 1523 work *Concerning the Ministry*, Luther listed the seven functions of the Christian priest: "To teach, to preach and proclaim the Word of God, to baptize, to consecrate or administer the Eucharist, to bind and loose sins, to pray for others, to sacrifice, and to judge of all doctrine and spirits." All of these actions were to be done for one another within the body of Christ. All were important, Luther explained, but "the first and foremost of all on which everything else depends, is the teaching of the Word of God."²⁰ Luther went on to show how Christians were to baptize with the word, consecrate the Eucharist

¹⁵ Luther, *Dr. Luther's Retraction of the Error*, in *LW*, 39:235; see also Luther, *The Private Mass*, in *LW*, 38:187.

¹⁶ Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 313-14.

¹⁷ Luther, *Concerning the Ministry*, in *LW*, 40:20.

¹⁸ Luther, *Dr. Luther's Retraction of the Error*, in *LW*, 39:235.

¹⁹ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 313-14.

²⁰ Luther, *Concerning the Ministry*, in *LW*, 40:21.

with the word, bind and loose with the word, and carry out all of the other priestly functions based on the word and with the word.

In summary, Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers was, first, Christ-centered, with each individual believer deriving his status as a priest from his union to Christ through faith alone. Second, Luther's doctrine was community-centered, with each believer serving as a priest to other believers, helping them draw near to God and maintain justifying faith throughout life. Gerrish rightly observes:

The individualistic interpretation of the common priesthood, according to which each man is his own, self-sufficient priest, misses the entire direction of Luther's thinking. The priest faces toward his neighbor, and serves him in the things of God. To be sure, it is the privilege of the priest that he has free access to God. Luther can therefore state categorically that we need no other priest or mediator than Christ. . . . But it must, of course, be interpreted by Luther's repeated insistence that to be a priest is to be a priest *for others*.²¹

Some Protestants after Luther have neglected or rejected the communal emphasis in Luther's construction of the universal priesthood, but it lies at the heart of his writings on the subject. Third, Luther's doctrine was word-centered. The Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* showed up clearly in Luther's understanding of the priesthood of all believers. He wrote, "When we grant the Word to anyone, we cannot deny anything to him pertaining to the exercise of his priesthood."²² Therefore, we see that three main points of Evangelical theology come together in this one area of Luther's doctrine: biblical authority, salvation by faith in Christ alone, and the priesthood of all believers.

With such a strong view of the ministry duties given to all Christians, the question arises, what place was there for a formal ministry in the theology of Luther? Part of the answer is that official ministers were to carry out the priestly functions on behalf of the congregation. The official ministry had a delegated authority from the common priesthood. Luther explains, "Through baptism . . . we are all born simply as priests and clerics. Afterward, some are taken from the ranks of such born clerics and called or elected to these offices which they are to discharge *on behalf of all of us*" (emphasis mine).²³ The main purpose for this delegation of ministry, Luther says, is good order. If all Christians tried to carry out the offices of the priest, "there might be shameful confusion among the people of God, and a kind of Babylon in the church, where everything should be done in order."²⁴

²¹ Gerrish, "Priesthood and Ministry," 410-11.

²² Luther, *Concerning the Ministry*, in *LW*, 40:23.

²³ Luther, *The Private Mass*, in *LW*, 38:188. In another place Luther writes, "Therefore we are all priests, as many of us as are Christians. But the priests, as we call them, are ministers chosen from among us. All that they do is done in our name; the priesthood is nothing but a ministry" (*The Babylonian Captivity*, 244-45).

²⁴ Luther, *Concerning the Ministry*, in *LW*, 40:33.

This state of circumstances did not mean that official ministers alone should proclaim and minister the word. Luther made a distinction between the private and the public ministry of the word. All Christians should act as priests by ministering the word in private, meaning that they should teach and exhort with the word in their home and with their friends. On the other hand, only those who were officially recognized and set apart for the ministry should carry out the public ministry of the word in the congregational setting.²⁵ Luther explained, "The community rights demand that one, or as many as the community chooses, shall be chosen or approved who, in the name of all with these rights, shall perform these functions publicly. . . . Publicly one may not exercise a right without consent of the whole body or of the church."²⁶ Luther said exceptions should be made in times of emergency, such as when a person was away from any church body.

As noted above, Luther's understanding of how the priesthood of believers should work itself out in practice underwent change during the 1520s. This change was most evident in the way Luther gave increasing control to the civil and church authorities, and in his increasingly negative view of the ability of the common Christian to judge doctrine rightly. Gerrish points out that "Luther's teaching on ministry and priesthood is presented in a variety of historical contexts: particularly, the polemic against Rome, the demand for evangelical pastors, and the threat of the radical reformers."²⁷ Luther's polemic against Rome, concentrated between 1521 and 1523, has been dealt with above.

The second historical context Gerrish identifies is concentrated in 1523. As Luther's ideas started to take hold, many churches struggled to find Evangelical pastors to lead them. The system in the medieval Catholic Church had been for bishops to appoint priests over local parishes. As the whole system of the priesthood was overthrown, along with the established bishoprics, some method for obtaining pastoral leadership had to be decided. The solution many turned to was for local congregations to appoint their own pastors. In 1523, Christians from Leisnic in Electoral Saxony wrote to Luther asking him to write a biblical defense of their right to appoint their own pastor. Luther responded quickly, publishing a pamphlet titled, *That a Christian Assembly or Congregation Has the Right and Power to Judge All Teaching, and to Call, Appoint and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proven by Scripture*.²⁸ That year he wrote on the same topic in *Concerning the Ministry*, which was a response to similar problems Bohemian Christians were facing. In both documents, Luther based his argument on the fact that as priests, all Christians have the right and ability to judge the accuracy of doctrine.²⁹ Not only that, but each Christian has the right and duty to proclaim the

²⁵ Gerrish summarizes Luther's public/private distinction well. See block quote on pp. 131-32 below.

²⁶ Luther, *Concerning the Ministry*, in *LW*, 40:33.

²⁷ Gerrish, "Priesthood and Ministry," 407-8.

²⁸ Martin Luther, *That a Christian Assembly or Congregation Has the Right and Power to Judge All Teaching, and to Call, Appoint and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proven by Scripture*, 1523, in *LW*, 39:301-14.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 39:307; Luther, *Concerning the Ministry*, in *LW*, 40:36.

word publicly when there are no orthodox ministers around. Since each individual Christian has the ability to judge doctrine, and the right to proclaim the word, "How much more then," Luther argued, "does . . . a certain community as a whole have both right and command to commit by common vote such an office to one or more, to be exercised in its stead."³⁰

In summary, as of 1523 Luther had a high view of the common Christian's ability to discern doctrine and appoint preachers. This led him to affirm a proto-congregationalism in which the congregation together had the authority to judge doctrine, and each individual Christian was responsible to proclaim right doctrine if others failed to do so. Alister McGrath explains that according to Luther, "The church is . . . held accountable to its members for its interpretation of its sacred text and is open to challenges at every point."³¹ McGrath's statement would be true if he were talking only about Luther's 1523 writings. However, events occurred soon after 1523 that altered Luther's understanding of the common Christian, congregationalism, and the role of the state in enforcing right doctrine and establishing a Christian ministry.

In 1524, Thomas Müntzer and other fanatical Zwickau prophets were calling for the peasants to rise up and use violence to crush those who oppressively ruled over them. Luther responded to this challenge in a pamphlet titled, *Letter to the Princes of Saxony Concerning the Rebellious Spirit*. In this open letter, Luther made a distinction between doctrinal deviation and violent revolution. He wrote, "There must be sects, and the Word of God must be under arms and fight. . . . Let the spirits collide and fight it out. If meanwhile some are led astray, all right, such is war. But when they want to do more than fight with Word, and begin to destroy and use force, then your Graces must intervene, whether it be ourselves or they who are guilty, and banish them from the country."³² According to this quotation, as of 1524 Luther still thought the civil authorities should allow religious sects to argue publicly for their views, and should only step in when sects became violent. He was still confident that the common Christian could rightly discern doctrine, and that the truth would win out in a free and open warfare of ideas.

The German Peasants' War, a massive, violent uprising of peasants, miners, and lower-class urban dwellers, began in 1525. Perhaps as many as 100,000 people were soon dead. That summer Luther wrote a response to the uprising, *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes*, calling on the German princes to use the sword to put an end to the peasants' rebellion. Gritsch has explained that after the Peasants' War the "congregationalism, so strongly emphasized by Luther [in 1523], had to give way to the state church."³³ In 1523 Luther had interpreted 1 Cor 14:29-30 to mean that the entire congregation should weigh what is taught, and that a common Christian has the right to teach without an official

³⁰ Luther, *Concerning the Ministry*, in *LW*, 40:36.

³¹ McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea*, 53.

³² Martin Luther, *Letter to the Princes of Saxony Concerning the Rebellious Spirit*, 1524, in *LW*, 40:57.

³³ Gritsch, "Introduction to Church and Ministry," 304.

call when he believes the truth is not being rightly taught.³⁴ In 1532 Luther wrote *Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers*, which gave instruction to a magistrate in Wartburg about how to handle the Anabaptist “interlopers” infesting Germany. At this point Luther interpreted 1 Cor 14 completely differently:

Thus we read in St. Paul: “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said,” etc. [1 Cor. 14:29]. This of course is said only of the prophets, and of which ones should speak and which should weigh what was said. What is meant by “others”? The people? Of course not. It means the other prophets or those speaking with tongues who should help in the church with preaching and building up of the congregation, those who should judge and assist in seeing to it that the preaching is right.³⁵

Luther had come to believe that the common Christian did not have the right and responsibility to judge doctrine and proclaim the word publicly in the absence of good teaching. Instead, he wrote that all teaching must be done by properly called and commissioned preachers. A proper call could only come through the established state church hierarchy, not the congregations themselves. Also, unlike in 1523, Luther no longer thought princes should allow the open engagement of ideas and the presence of non-violent sects. In 1532 Luther called on princes to press down all furtive and clandestine preaching in the name of proper order and the unity of the church. Luther’s view of the ability and role of the common priesthood had clearly changed. He wrote of the common German Christians as “common stupid folk” and “uncouth, undisciplined, shameless people.”³⁶

According to Luther, post-1524, the Apostle Paul was not calling the common Christians to teach and preach in the presence of error and to call and appoint pastors in the churches. Instead, Luther said, Paul was calling the congregation to listen submissively to the established ministry. As Gerrish points out, Luther’s focus had moved from the “question [of] how to obtain a sufficient supply of preachers, [to] how to check the growing band of eager, self-made preachers who [were] overrunning Saxony.”³⁷ As the question changed, so did Luther’s understanding of 1 Cor 14 and the priesthood of all believers. Understanding the changes Luther made after 1525 in how the priesthood of all believers should be practically worked out is essential to understanding Luther’s view. Many later Protestants, focusing exclusively on the pre-1525 writings of Luther, have presented an inaccurate description of Luther, which emphasizes the right of private interpretation, congregationalism, and the ability of common Christians to discern right teaching on their own. All of these

³⁴ Luther’s early position is summarized in this quotation: “A Christian has so much power that he may and even should make an appearance and teach among Christians—without a call from men—when he becomes aware that there is a lack of teachers, provided he does it in a decent and becoming manner. This was clearly described by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 14 [v. 30]” (*That a Christian Assembly or Congregation Has the Right and Power to Judge All Teaching*, in *LW*, 39:310).

³⁵ Martin Luther, *Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers*, 1532, in *LW*, 40:392.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 40:393.

³⁷ Gerrish, “Priesthood and Ministry,” 407.

ideas would have been more nuanced, and possibly rejected, by Luther in 1532. Luther never gave up on the idea that believers, including official teachers, must be accountable to one another in their biblical interpretation, and that all Christians were priests toward one another. But after 1524, as he began to see the danger of uneducated and spiritually immature Christians making up their own theology, he emphasized accountability among official teachers, both to the orthodox fathers of the church and to spiritually mature lay people (usually nobles). Luther's mature doctrine of the priesthood of all believers still held to the priesthood of every Christian, but his hierarchical ecclesiology and distrust of the common Christian's ability was far from a "democratizing agenda."

III. E. Y. Mullins and the Priesthood of All Believers

Southern Baptist leader Al Mohler asserts, "More than any other individual, E. Y. Mullins shaped the Southern Baptist mind during the first half of the twentieth century."³⁸ Harold Bloom calls Mullins "the most neglected of major American theologians . . . the Calvin or Luther or Wesley of the Southern Baptists."³⁹ Mullins graduated with the first undergraduate class at Texas A&M and went to study for the ministry at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS) in Louisville, Kentucky. He studied there with the original faculty, including James P. Boyce and John Broadus, from 1881 to 1885. After seminary Mullins pastored three churches. He first served a church in Kentucky, then moved to Lee Street Baptist Church in Baltimore, and then to the Baptist Church in Newton Centre, near Boston, Massachusetts. He became the fourth president of SBTS in 1899 after a major controversy over Baptist ecclesiology brought about the resignation of William Whitsitt. Mullins helped bring peace to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and led SBTS to unprecedented growth. Mullins exercised vast influence through his leadership and theology for the next twenty-nine years at the helm of the SBC's first and largest seminary.⁴⁰ He started the theological journal *The Review and Expositor* and published several popular and influential books. He served as president of the SBC from 1921 to 1924 and as president of the Baptist World Alliance from 1923 to 1928. He chaired the committee that wrote the Baptist Faith and Message in 1925, a doctrinal statement the SBC still uses.⁴¹ Through his denominational leadership and his influential theological writings, Mullins impacted the course of Southern Baptist life and thought for the rest of the twentieth century.

³⁸ R. Albert Mohler, introduction to *The Axioms of Religion*, by E. Y. Mullins (ed. Timothy and Denise George; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 20. Mullins's *The Axioms of Religion: A New Interpretation of the Baptist Faith* was published in Philadelphia by Griffith & Rowland Press in 1908 and has been reprinted many times.

³⁹ Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 199.

⁴⁰ For the most current and detailed analysis of Mullins's presidency at SBTS, see Gregory A. Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859–2009* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 230–307.

⁴¹ The Baptist Faith and Message was revised in 1963 and in 2000.

Mullins's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers was one of his most significant and enduring contributions to Southern Baptist thought. The best place in his corpus to find his understanding of the doctrine is *The Axioms of Religion* (1908). This was Mullins's most popular work, and according to Fisher Humphreys, "It probably has done more than any other single volume to define Baptist identity in the twentieth century."⁴² In *The Axioms*, Mullins based his doctrine of the universal priesthood on the idea of the soul's competency in religion. In fact, Mullins claimed that the one great foundational contribution of Baptists to Christianity is the idea of the soul's competency in religion. Each Christian has the capacity to hear from God directly without any human mediators. And since all Christians are equally competent, there is no logical reason that any person would be dependent on another person for help in getting to God. Therefore all were priests; "the priesthood of all believers . . . is but the expression of the soul's competency." On this basis, Mullins rejected any systems of church government, sacraments, or the priesthood that would interfere with the soul's immediate experience with God. He wrote, "Observe then that the idea of the competency of the soul in religion excludes at once all human interference, such as episcopacy and infant baptism, and every form of religion by proxy. Religion is a personal matter between the soul and God."⁴³

Mullins argued that all Baptist distinctives flow logically from the idea that each Christian is competent, under God, to carry out all matters of religious life. Soul competency led logically to democratic church government, the priesthood of all believers, the right of private judgment, and the separation of church and state. In each case, Mullins was jealous to maintain the integrity of religion as a personal experience between the individual and God, uninterrupted by bishops, priests, creedal enforcement, or government power.

According to Mullins, his individualistic understanding of the priesthood of all believers was far from an anarchist position, with each individual free to do whatever he wanted to do. In fact, he argued that the doctrine of soul competency and its outworking in Baptist theological distinctives promoted the Lordship of Christ more effectively than any other system. Since the competency of the Christian "is derived from the indwelling Christ," Mullins argued, "man's capacity for self-government in religion is nothing more than the authority of Christ exerted in and through the inner life of believers, with the understanding always, of course, that He regulates that inner life in accordance with His revealed Word."⁴⁴ As Jesus exerts his Lordship, he makes all believers equally competent priests, and sets them free from all illegitimate forms of authority.⁴⁵ This Christ-centered principle is also how Mullins made his case for democratic church government. Democracy in a church made up of regenerate members

⁴² Fisher Humphreys, "E. Y. Mullins," in *Baptist Theologians* (ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1990), 335.

⁴³ Mullins, *Axioms*, 65, 66.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 65-66.

⁴⁵ E. Y. Mullins, *Freedom and Authority in Religion* (Philadelphia: Griffith & Rowland Press, 1913), 317.

is not mere majority rule. Instead, Mullins argued, "Democracy in church government is simply Christ Himself animating His own body through His Spirit. The decisions of the local congregation on ecclesiastical matters are the 'consensus of the competent.'" ⁴⁶

IV. *Similarities between Luther and Mullins*

Mullins's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers shared commonalities with that of Martin Luther. Mullins himself expressed his indebtedness to Luther and the other Reformers for their teaching of justification by faith and their discovery that the Bible taught that all Christians are priests. The first main point of similarity between Luther and Mullins was that they both expressed their understanding of the priesthood of believers in opposition to the Catholic Church. Both were firmly against the Catholic understanding of the sacraments and the priestly system. While Mullins was much more ecumenically open than Luther, both saw no room for compromise when it came to the tyrannical practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Because of Catholicism, Mullins explained, "The great elemental truth that all souls have an equal right to direct access to God passed out of human thought so far as the Roman Catholic Church was able to influence thought" during the middle ages.⁴⁷ For Mullins, Luther was a great hero who had taken down most of the barriers that the Catholic Church had built up between humanity and God: the sacramental system, the priesthood, the hierarchy, the church, and the pope. Mullins saw himself as carrying on the spirit of Luther in opposing Catholic error and extending his reforms against all vestiges of Catholicism still remaining in Protestant churches. These vestiges included infant baptism, episcopal church government, state churches, and sacramental views of the ordinances.⁴⁸

A second similarity between Luther and Mullins was that they both promoted the idea that the Christian could have direct access to God without any human mediator. For both men, the dangers of Roman Catholic theology were not mainly ecclesiological, but soteriological. Their repeated assertions that all believers are priests were deeply connected with their conviction that a person is saved by faith in Christ alone, and not by the mediating work of any spiritual class of Christians. Mullins was self conscious in his continuity with Luther on this point, "In its deepest and essential meaning it [Luther's battle] was a revolt against spiritual tyranny, it was the assertion of the fundamental truth of our religious axiom that all souls have an equal right to direct access to God." This should not obscure the fact that Mullins also saw significant discontinuity between Luther and himself. For example, Mullins said that he and other Baptists "[had] carried the Reformation principle of justification by faith far beyond the dreams of Luther and the other reformers."⁴⁹ This discontinuity

⁴⁶ Mullins, *Axioms*, 66.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁴⁸ Mullins, "Baptist Theology in the New World Order," in *Axioms*, 285.

⁴⁹ Mullins, *Axioms*, 101, 67.

will be dealt with at greater length in the section below. What is important for this section is that even though Mullins thought Baptist theology did so in a more complete way, both men sought to restore the believer's direct access to God by faith.

A third similarity is that both Mullins and Luther believed that an official ministry was biblical and necessary. Luther believed that ministers were those called to carry out the ministry of the word for the common priesthood. Their ministry was delegated from the common priesthood for the sake of order. Later, Luther taught that the congregation must submit to the teaching of properly sanctioned pastors, and that visiting preachers should check with the parish pastor first before preaching publicly in an area.

Mullins, like Luther, also affirmed the role of pastors. His reasoning, though, was more pragmatic. Speaking of the priesthood of all believers, Mullins explained, "This . . . of course does not forbid the setting apart of ministers or officials to perform certain specified duties for the sake of convenience or expediency in the church."⁵⁰ For Mullins, pastors had little authority. In fact, Walter Shurden has pointed out that Mullins was "so intent on establishing the equality of all believers, [that he] failed completely, in his chapter on Baptist ecclesiology [in *The Axioms of Religion*], to even discuss the role of the pastor."⁵¹ Mullins, a pastor himself early in ministry and a trainer of pastors for the final thirty years of his life, certainly believed in the importance of the pastoral office. It seems he struggled, though, to articulate a strong view of the pastorate in light of his radically democratized ecclesiology. Both Mullins and Luther affirmed the place of an official ministry, with Luther giving more special authority to pastors as they alone were entrusted with the public ministry of the word.

V. Differences between Luther and Mullins

While there was significant continuity between Luther's and Mullins's doctrines of the universal priesthood, there was even more pronounced discontinuity. The fundamental difference between the two is that Mullins based his understanding of the priesthood of all believers on his belief in the competency of the soul. Whenever Luther wrote about the priesthood of all believers he pointed to 1 Pet 2:9 as the reason for his belief. Mullins almost always grounded his teaching on the competency of the soul. Mullins's accent was on the individual's ability to commune with God, while Luther placed a much stronger accent on the dependence of all Christians upon one another in a common priesthood. Mullins's optimism concerning the competency of the common Christian in all religious matters contrasts sharply with Luther's post-1524 pessimism about common Christians' ability to interpret the Bible and judge doctrine on their own. Fundamental differences between Luther and Mullins are evident in at least three ways.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 94.

⁵¹ Walter B. Shurden, "The Priesthood of All Believers and Pastoral Authority in Baptist Thought," in *Proclaiming the Baptist Vision: The Priesthood of All Believers* (ed. Walter B. Shurden; Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 1993), 147.

First, Mullins emphasized competent individualism whereas Luther focused on the interdependent priesthood of all Christians. Mullins believed the Baptist principle of soul competency was consistent with the Western ideal of individualism. Al Mohler explains that “‘soul competency’ was interpreted by Mullins to mean that *each individual soul is independently competent* to adjudicate all matters of religious importance” (emphasis mine).⁵² Mullins had a strong emphasis on the right of the individual, as a priest, to go to God on his own. He did not talk about the responsibility of each Christian to serve as a priest for one’s neighbor. In fact, Mullins rarely talked about the importance of Christian community at all. At times he pointed to the image of the church as a body, but only used the image to teach about each member’s equality, never their interdependence.⁵³

Mullins’s emphasis was much different than that of Luther’s community-centered understanding. Paul Althaus summarizes Luther’s teaching this way:

The priesthood means: We stand before God, pray for others, intercede with and sacrifice ourselves to God and proclaim the word to one another. Luther never understands the priesthood of all believers merely in the “Protestant” sense of the Christian’s freedom to stand in a direct relationship to God without a human mediator. Rather he constantly emphasizes the Christian’s evangelical authority to come before God on behalf of the brethren and also of the world. The universal priesthood expresses not religious individualism but its exact opposite, the reality of the congregation as a community.⁵⁴

When the communal focus of Luther’s teaching about the universal priesthood is understood, a clear discontinuity becomes evident between his doctrine and the individualism of Mullins’s view.

A second difference is that Luther and Mullins held different positions on the right of private judgment. In the early 1520s Luther believed that all Christians together had the right to judge doctrine and the ability to call their own pastor. After 1524, Luther’s view of the common Christian’s ability became much more negative. In 1532 he argued that civil and church leaders must defend right doctrine and protect their people from the presence of error, or else chaos would result. However, it would be wrong to say that Luther held to what is now often called the right of private judgment, even before 1525. Gerrish explains that while Luther did talk about private interpretation, he meant something very different from the modern connotation of a believer interpreting the Bible by himself, free of traditional or congregational restraints. Gerrish explains what Luther meant by private interpretation:

In general, every Christian is under the obligation to witness to God’s Word in the “private” sphere. The word “private” perhaps suggests to us something different than it did to Luther. Nowadays, when a Protestant speaks of the “right to private interpretation,” for example, he pictures the individual Christian alone with his Bible; and the

⁵² Mohler, “Introduction,” 15.

⁵³ Mullins, *Axioms*, 118.

⁵⁴ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 314.

meaning of the common priesthood has often been explained in this way. For Luther, on the other hand, the priesthood of all believers was being exercised privately when one brother mediated the Word of God to another in personal converse. In this context "private" means simply "non-official."⁵⁵

Mullins, on the other hand, argued, "Obedience to Christ is personal. Proxy obedience is not obedience. Hence every man should read and interpret the Scriptures for himself."⁵⁶ Mullins held a much more consistently positive view of the individual Christian's ability to interpret the Bible than did Luther. This led him to affirm repeatedly the right of private judgment as a necessary implication of the priesthood of all believers. Mullins believed this right of private judgment was a Reformation principle, stating, "Since the Reformation this axiom has found expression in nothing more than in the exercise of the individual's right of private interpretation of the Scriptures." And again, "The objective principle of the authoritative Scriptures asserts that every man has a right to read and interpret the Word of God for himself, under the guidance of the Spirit, untrammelled by human tradition."⁵⁷

There is some complexity to Mullins's belief in the right of private judgment. The complexity mainly stems from his affirmation of creeds, or "restatements of doctrine," as helpful. For example, he was the primary author of the Baptist Faith and Message in 1925. And in "Baptists and Creeds," an unpublished essay recently discovered in his private papers, Mullins defended the use of creeds saying that the SBC was not a "free-lance club." In the short essay, Mullins argued that "Baptists have always insisted upon their own right to declare their beliefs in a definite, formal way, and to protect themselves by refusing to support men in important places as teachers and preachers who do not agree with them."⁵⁸ The essay is undated, but it appears Mullins wrote it in the 1920s as he began to see "deadly tendencies" at work against the gospel among Baptists.

So, at times, Mullins did affirm the use of creeds and confessions for some purposes. His belief in the right of private judgment, therefore, was not unqualified or absolute. However, when the entirety of his writings is taken into account it is clear Mullins held strongly to the right of private judgment. Creeds should not be binding. They were helpful public statements that any group of Baptists were free to make, but did not have authority over the individual conscience and should not restrict freedom of thought. Creeds were useful to a point, but if they were used to exert authority, they interfered with the direct lordship and guidance of Christ in the individual's life. In the end, Mullins's most lasting theological legacy for Baptists was his advocacy for "man's capacity for self-government in religion."⁵⁹

A third area of disagreement between Luther and Mullins has to do with their views of church government. For Mullins, democratic church government was

⁵⁵ Gerrish, "Priesthood and Ministry," 416.

⁵⁶ Mullins, "A True Denominationalism," in *Axioms*, 279.

⁵⁷ Mullins, *Axioms*, 102.

⁵⁸ Mullins, "Baptists and Creeds," in *Axioms*, 189.

⁵⁹ Mullins, *Axioms*, 66.

the only valid option, and flowed logically out of his view that all Christians have the ability to interpret the Bible for themselves. He argued, "Because the individual deals directly with his Lord and is immediately responsible to Him, the spiritual society must needs be a democracy. That is, the church is a community of autonomous individuals under the immediate lordship of Christ."⁶⁰ A fundamental assumption underlying democratic church government was the concept of regenerate church membership, a pivotal Baptist distinctive. If each member had been regenerated and had a relationship with Christ, Christ would exercise his rule over the church by personally leading each individual through the system of congregational church government. Mullins believed that any form of episcopacy or oligarchy interfered with the priesthood of all believers. Mullins noted the difference between himself and Luther on this point. He lamented that "Luther turned over the government of the church to the temporal power," and that even though Luther "admitted that the real church and real authority is the local congregation," Luther "said in his characteristic fashion that the 'wild Germans' were not yet ready for congregationalism."⁶¹ Luther's and Mullins's differing views on church polity stemmed from their different understandings of the priesthood of all believers and the competency of the common Christian. While there were additional differences between the two leaders, such as the proper subjects of baptism, the three listed above are sufficient to show the discontinuity between Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and that of E. Y. Mullins.

VI. *Conclusion*

This article has focused narrowly on just two theologians—albeit significant ones—at different points in the Protestant movement. However, this narrow study has shown that there are important differences in the way Protestants have understood the priesthood of all believers, the right of private judgment, and the competency of common Christians. Many twentieth-century evangelicals, like Mullins, have advocated a doctrine of the priesthood of all believers that is more democratic and individualistic than what Martin Luther advocated 400 years earlier. While there is important continuity between the two, it is incorrect to claim that the democratic and individualistic theology of twentieth-century theologians, like Mullins, was the result of a "democratizing agenda" set in motion by Luther.

Many additional, and more significant, formative factors were active on twentieth-century pastors and theologians, influencing them to diverge from Luther's more community-focused and hierarchical formulation of the universal priesthood. Fisher Humphreys argues that Mullins "was intoxicated by personal freedom, even by personal rights—a category which owes more to the Enlightenment than to the New Testament—even to the loss of the indispensability of society and relationships for personal life."⁶² Mullins himself said that

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 117-18.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 122-23.

⁶² Humphreys, "E. Y. Mullins," 346.

in addition to the Reformation principle of justification by faith, his “doctrine of the soul’s competency in religion stemmed from . . . the intellectual principle of the Renaissance” and “the Anglo-Saxon principle of individualism.”⁶³ Mullins’s individualistic focus was not merely an inevitable outgrowth of Luther’s “democratizing agenda.” The democratic, egalitarian, individualistic nature of much American evangelicalism in the twentieth century was not the result of the Reformation. Recent historians have demonstrated that unique democratizing impulses have been active in America influencing evangelicalism since the First Great Awakening,⁶⁴ and Gregory A. Wills has argued that the rising tide of modern subjectivism and individualism moved many evangelicals away from Puritan-like, “church-oriented evangelicalism” in the mid-nineteenth century, toward a pietistic “promotion of an individual spirituality” by the mid-twentieth century.⁶⁵

The Enlightenment, American democracy, modern subjectivism: these factors, rather than Luther’s doctrine of the universal priesthood, moved much of American evangelical theology in a radically democratic, egalitarian, and individualistic direction. The result is that the priesthood of all believers, a doctrine that should build Christ-centered, Bible-saturated, interdependent community in the church, has, in many pockets of evangelicalism, morphed into a teaching that encourages radical individualism and undermines the significance of the church’s life together. Luther’s doctrine was not perfect. Few evangelicals will want to return to a reliance on a state church system or limitations on religious liberty. But a proper understanding of Luther’s teaching and this doctrine’s development in history could help churches recover a more biblical, Christ-centered view of the priesthood of all believers, and thereby a more biblical community life within the church.

⁶³ Mullins, *Axioms*, 67.

⁶⁴ Nathan O. Hatch makes a convincing case that “the theme of democratization is central to understanding the development of American Christianity, and that the years of the early republic are the most crucial in revealing that process” (*The Democratization of American Christianity* [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989], 3). Thomas Kidd argues that the American Revolution did not start the democratization process in American evangelicalism. A strong egalitarian impulse was present within evangelicalism from its beginnings in the mid-1740s (*The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007], 289).

⁶⁵ Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785–1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 139.

THE DISREGARDED DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT IN THE
EXPOSITION OF HEBREWS BY JOHN OECOLAMPADIUS (1482–1531)

JEFF FISHER

I. *Introduction*

At the center of the Christian faith is the death of Christ. Yet there is significant disagreement about what was actually accomplished by the death of Christ. In recent theological scholarship, atonement theology has been the subject of intense criticism, heated debates, and widespread controversy. These arguments have primarily focused on what model or theory of the atonement is most appropriate for the Christian faith.¹ This dispute has compelled scholars to reassess the traditional understanding of the doctrine, to revisit what the biblical texts say, and to explore what the history of Christian witness reveals about the development of theological classifications.

This study seeks to correct an oversimplified portrayal of the teaching of the first-generation Reformer in Basel, John Oecolampadius (1482–1531) and the development of atonement theology in the early Reformed tradition coming out of Switzerland.² Correctly understanding his teaching is important because Oecolampadius was an influential reformer, who taught during a very significant transitional period in the history of theology. Oecolampadius is best known for assisting Erasmus with the first edition of the *Novum Instrumentum* in 1515 and standing alongside Zwingli at the Marburg Colloquy in 1529. Yet he was regularly considered an important figure in his own right, frequently receiving praise

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¹ See, e.g., James K. Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, eds., *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006); Mark D. Baker and Joel B. Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: The Atonement in New Testament & Contemporary Contexts* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000); Derek Tidball, ed., *The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008).

² For biographical information on Oecolampadius in English, see Diane Poythress, *Reformer of Basel: The Life, Thought, and Influence of Johannes Oecolampadius* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011); E. Gordon Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation* (London: Epworth, 1969), 3–47. The most comprehensive biography is Ernst Staehelin, *Das Theologische Lebenswerk Johannes Oekolampads* (Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationgeschichte 21; Leipzig: Heinsius, 1939; repr., New York: Johnson, 1971). The letters and smaller works of Oecolampadius can be found in Ernst Staehelin, *Briefe und Akten zum Leben Oekolampads* (2 vols.; Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationgeschichte 10 and 19; Leipzig: Heinsius, 1927 and 1934; repr., New York: Johnson, 1971).

from his contemporaries for his philological, exegetical, and theological abilities. Even one of his opponents, the papal nuncio Aleander, recognized Oecolampadius as “learned in three languages, and one of the outstanding scholars in the world of German scholarship.”³ Hans Guggisberg summarizes the perception of Oecolampadius among his contemporaries as “undoubtedly a courageous man and the most knowledgeable theologian among the reformed preachers.”⁴

By the age of 21, Oecolampadius had earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in theology from the University of Heidelberg. He was ordained as a priest at some point prior to April 1510, when he began serving in his home town of Weinsberg. Over the next decade, he continued his study of theology and the biblical languages at the universities of Stuttgart, Tübingen, and Basel, earning his Doctorate of Divinity from the University of Basel in 1518. Oecolampadius became an expert in the biblical languages and the early church fathers. He was one of the rare preachers of the time who was “trilingual”—having acquired Greek, Hebrew, and Latin in order to explain the meaning of the Scriptures. By May 1519, while serving as the cathedral preacher at Augsburg, he had already begun to align himself with Luther sympathizers and to preach views that were more evangelical than traditional. Following his return to Basel near the end of 1522, he was appointed as the professor of Old Testament at the University of Basel in June 1523. His biblical lectures sometimes drew overflow crowds of over 400 people. These lectures and some of his sermon series were eventually published as seventeen different commentaries covering twenty-one books of the Bible.⁵ Functioning in the dual role of preacher and professor, Oecolampadius led the way for the Reformation to be embraced in Basel, and played a significant role in the theological development of the Swiss Reformation.

II. Categorization of Oecolampadius

In his influential volume on the development of the doctrine of justification, *Iustitia Dei*, Alister McGrath makes assertions about Oecolampadius that need to

³ Staehelin, *Briefe und Akten*, 1:129 (no. 105).

⁴ Hans R. Guggisberg, *Basel in the Sixteenth Century: Aspects of the City Republic Before, During, and After the Reformation* (St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1982), 31. Examples could be given from Wimpfeling, Froben, Erasmus, Zwingli, Luther, Bucer, Calvin, and Bullinger. See Staehelin, *Briefe und Akten*, 1:24, 129; 2:715; James Brashler, “Oecolampadius, Johannes (1482–1531),” in *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters* (ed. Donald K. McKim; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007), 782; E. L. Miller, “Oecolampadius: The Unsung Hero of the Basel Reformation,” *Iliff Review* 39, no. 3 (1982): 6, 12.

⁵ His published commentaries were on 1 John (1524, 1525), Isaiah (1525, 1558), Romans (1525, 1526), Malachi (1526), Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi (1527), Daniel (1530, 1553), Job (1532), Daniel and Job (1553, 1567), John (1533, 1535), Jeremiah (1533, 1558), Ezekiel (1534, 1558), Hebrews (1534), Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and Jonah (1535, 1558), Psalms 73–77 (1544, 1554), Matthew (1536), Genesis (1536), and Colossians (1546). Ten of these commentaries were first published after his death and six were republished after his death, mostly in Geneva in the 1550s. All his previously published works on the prophets and Job were printed together as one work in 1558 and 1577. At least portions of four of the commentaries were translated into German, and two were translated into French.

be corrected.⁶ Critical readers have often identified the need for more in-depth study on some of the historical details in *Iustitia Dei*.⁷ While the recent third edition addresses some of the concerns expressed about the earlier versions, McGrath himself notes “it is still an uncomfortable fact” that some of the work is based on older scholarship.⁸ The portrayal of Oecolampadius’s theology is among the historical details that are based on outdated scholarship. McGrath asserts that Oecolampadius was an early humanist who held to “subjective” views on justification and the atonement.⁹ His summary of the atonement theology of Oecolampadius is that “Christ’s death upon the cross exemplifies the divine love for man, which is intended to move man to moral excellence.”¹⁰ In an article published prior to the original edition of *Iustitia Dei*, McGrath more specifically maintains,

[Oecolampadius] differs from Zwingli in developing a subjective theory of the Atonement, which could be seen as representing an even greater emphasis upon the ethical nature of justification. In contrast to Zwingli’s “Anselmian” theory of the Atonement, Oecolampadius develops an “Abailardian” theory.¹¹

McGrath’s portrayal of Oecolampadius’s views is based on the conclusions of Henri Strohl’s book on the Reformation published in 1951.¹² McGrath reiterates the exact same conclusions that Strohl makes, and uses the same references to Oecolampadius’s writings as Strohl did. When Strohl’s work on Oecolampadius is considered, it also becomes apparent that he drew most of his conclusions from selected portions of the biography of Oecolampadius by Ernst Staehelin published in 1939.¹³ With the exception of the sermons on 1 John, Strohl only

⁶ Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). As an example of its influence, N.T. Wright states that Alister McGrath’s “remarkable two-volume history of the doctrine . . . is required reading for anyone who wants seriously to engage” with discussions about the doctrine of justification (N. T. Wright, *Justification: God’s Plan and Paul’s Vision* [Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009], 79–80, 83).

⁷ For example, Gerald Bray praised McGrath’s work for successfully bringing justification back to the center of theological discussion, but he also called for further engagement with the recent debates about justification and the need for more in-depth study on some of the details of the historical background (Gerald L. Bray, “Alister E. McGrath and Justification,” in *Alister E. McGrath and Evangelical Theology* [ed. Sung Wook Chung; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003], 24–32).

⁸ Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (3d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), x.

⁹ For a critical response to McGrath’s portrayal of Oecolampadius’s teaching on justification, see Jeff Fisher, “The Doctrine of Justification in the Teaching of John Oecolampadius (1482–1531),” in *Since We Are Justified by Faith: Justification in Protestant Reformation Theologies* (ed. Michael Parsons; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2012), 44–57.

¹⁰ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (1986), 2:33–34. Note that the 3d edition of *Iustitia Dei* now has only one paragraph about Oecolampadius, but asserts the same conclusions with a more abridged line of reasoning than the previous editions. See McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (2005), 251.

¹¹ Alister E. McGrath, “Humanist Elements in the Early Reformed Doctrine of Justification,” *ARG* 73 (1982): 9–10.

¹² See Henri Strohl, *La pensée de la Réforme* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1951), 106–8.

¹³ Strohl states that his conclusions are based on the themes found in Oecolampadius’s sermons on 1 John, Mark, and Colossians, the catechism authored by Oecolampadius, the new Reformation order, and the lectures on Hebrews. Cf. Strohl, *La pensée de la Réforme*, 107–8, with Staehelin, *Das*

interacts with the portions of Oecolampadius's writings which are summarized in Staehelin. It was based on this selective study that Strohl concluded that Oecolampadius did not hold to the doctrine of Anselm. Strohl justified this conclusion from statements in Oecolampadius's lectures on Hebrews where it seems that Oecolampadius taught that the sacrifice of Christ did not appease the anger of God since God does not change his feelings, but rather fluctuations in our faith makes it *appear* as if God were angry or appeased.¹⁴ McGrath simply imports these conclusions by Strohl into his portrayal of the theological development in the early stages of the Reformation.¹⁵ Since very few scholars have done much research on Oecolampadius in general, this portrayal by McGrath has essentially gone unchallenged. For example, Thomas Fudge observed, "For a man so highly regarded in the sixteenth century, it is a curiosity that he has faded so in Reformation historiography."¹⁶ Bruce Gordon and Amy Nelson Burnett have also noted that Oecolampadius has drawn little scholarly attention.¹⁷ Yet a few authors have observed aspects of Oecolampadius's writings that present a different picture than McGrath has given us.¹⁸ When the writings of Oecolampadius

Theologische Lebenswerk, 463-64 on the church-visitation policy; 490-92 on Mark; 494 on Colossians; 221-32 on 1 John; 586-88 on the catechism. In every case, Strohl has adopted Staehelin's quotation or description of "the new life" and identified this as the totality of Oecolampadius's teaching.

¹⁴ Strohl, *La pensée de la Réforme*, 108. Strohl also finds this idea in Oecolampadius's commentary on John where Oecolampadius taught that the essential reason for the death of Christ was that God decided to strengthen our hope (see *ibid.*, 106-8.) Notably, Strohl does not cite the primary texts, but rather he cites Staehelin, *Das Theologische Lebenswerk*, 572, 578.

¹⁵ Compare McGrath, "Humanist Elements in the Early Reformed Doctrine of Justification," 9-10; McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (1986), 2:33-34; McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 198; Strohl, *La pensée de la Réforme*, 106-8.

¹⁶ Thomas A. Fudge, "Icarus of Basel? Oecolampadius and the Early Swiss Reformation," *JRH* 21 (1997): 268. On the occasion of Oecolampadius's 500th birthday in 1982, Ed Miller could easily assert that Oecolampadius was almost absent in English-speaking treatments of the Reformation (Miller, "Unsung Hero," 5). See also the much earlier comments by Schaff and Staehelin about the little work on Oecolampadius that had been done since the 1840s (Philip Schaff, "The Reformation in Basel: Oecolampadius," in *History of the Christian Church* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910; repr. of 3d ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972], 116; Staehelin, *Briefe und Akten*, 1:vii).

¹⁷ Bruce Gordon, *The Swiss Reformation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 109; Amy Nelson Burnett, "Contributors to the Reformed Tradition," in *Reformation and Early Modern Europe: A Guide to Research* (ed. David Whitford; Kirksville, Mo.: Truman State University Press, 2008), 35.

¹⁸ Akira Demura comments that Oecolampadius's views on justification are reminiscent of Luther's doctrine of justification, but not quite as "forensic" as Calvin's and there is a "clear-cut statement on the imputation theory of justification" (Akira Demura, "Two Commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans: Calvin and Oecolampadius," in *Calvinus Sincerioris Religionis Vindex* [ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser and Brian G. Armstrong; Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1997], 169-70). Diane Poythress contends in her dissertation that Oecolampadius "held to a fully Reformed view" of the doctrine of justification, and comments in footnotes that McGrath "wishes to liberalize Oecolampadius' teaching" and that Strohl's synopsis of Oecolampadius's teaching is "an exaggeration of one aspect of the Reformer's writings" which would have been corrected by a broader reading of his writings beyond the French translation of the sermons on 1 John published in 1540 (Diane Poythress, "Johannes Oecolampadius' Exposition of Isaiah, Chapters 36-37" (Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1992), 583, 584-85, 588, 589, esp. nn. 82, 99.)

are more fully explored, it becomes apparent that McGrath's categorization of Oecolampadius needs to be revised.

III. *Definitions for Atonement*

If labels and categories are going to be applied to historical figures, then it is essential that we understand what we are looking for in order to discern whether a certain person, like Oecolampadius, actually taught what a certain label or category includes. McGrath himself outlines various theories of the atonement in his *Christian Theology*. He acknowledges that while Peter Abelard did not teach that the cross was only a demonstration of the love of God without any sense of sacrifice, he identifies that Abelard's emphasis upon the *subjective* impact of the cross is what makes his theory distinctive. And therefore, the category of an Abelardian moral influence theory is the teaching that Christ's death was a public demonstration of the extent of God's love intended to evoke a response of love from humanity.¹⁹ In contrast to the subjective Abelardian theory, the objective view is the Anselmian satisfaction theory of atonement.²⁰ McGrath recounts that Anselm of Canterbury answered the question why God became man by reasoning that people had an obligation *to offer an infinite satisfaction of honor* to God because of their sin, and since only God could meet that obligation, the God-man came to *pay this satisfaction* in order to obtain forgiveness of sins.²¹ Gwenfair Walters provides a useful summary in stating, "For Anselm the goal was to preserve God's honor; for Abelard it was to propound God's love. Anselm focused on the objective; Abelard on the subjective. Anselm emphasized the effects of the atonement on God, and Abelard the effects of the atonement on humanity."²² In addition to the satisfaction theory of atonement, a further *objective* theory of the atonement, known as penal substitution, began to emerge in the sixteenth century as the Reformers modified Anselm's theory to focus less on the debt of sin in terms of *honor*, and more on the ideas of penalty and punishment in terms of *justice*.²³ This view of the atonement teaches that all humans are sinners and deserve the wrath, judgment, and punishment of God, but that Christ's death appeased the wrath of God by paying the penalty of sin as a substitute on behalf of those who believe in him. As we consider the

¹⁹ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (4th ed.; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2007), 343-44.

²⁰ This distinction between "subjective" and "objective" is described in numerous sources about the atonement. An "objective" view is that something objectively happens apart from any appropriation or acceptance by the person, and a "subjective" view is that something happens when a person accepts and applies the lesson or example based on faith. See, e.g., Beilby and Eddy, *The Nature of the Atonement*, 14-20; Frank A. James III, "The Atonement in Church History," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical and Practical Perspectives* (ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 209-19.

²¹ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 325-28.

²² Gwenfair M. Walters, "The Atonement in Medieval Theology," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical and Practical Perspectives*, 245.

²³ James, "The Atonement in Church History," 211.

writings of Oecolampadius, these are the elements that will be used to categorize his teachings on the atonement.

IV. *The Teachings of Oecolampadius*

To assess Oecolampadius's views, we will primarily consider his exegesis from his commentary on Hebrews. The main reason for this selection is that it is the source that McGrath and Strohl cite to argue that Oecolampadius held to an Abelardian view of the atonement.²⁴ The Hebrews commentary comes from one of the last series of exegetical lectures by Oecolampadius, which he taught from the spring of 1529 to the fall of 1530.²⁵ His commentaries based on his earliest lectures and sermons will also be briefly incorporated in order to demonstrate that statements made in his later teaching on this subject do not differ greatly from his earlier teaching.²⁶ When these writings are considered, it will become very apparent that applying the label of Abelardian to Oecolampadius's teaching on the atonement cannot be maintained. In saying this, there is no dispute that Oecolampadius emphasized right living, morality, ethics, love for God and others, and the new life in Christ based on our response to Christ's love on the cross. Evidence for these elements abounds in his writings. For instance, Oecolampadius identified in the middle of these lectures on Hebrews that in his sacrifice, "Christ gave an example, whose footsteps you should desire to follow."²⁷ The claim that is being challenged is that Oecolampadius's ethical and moral emphasis demonstrates an *exclusively* moral influence theory of the atonement which rejected an objective satisfaction theory of the atonement.

The conclusion—made by Strohl and echoed by McGrath—that Oecolampadius rejected the satisfaction theory of atonement is mostly based on Oecolampadius's comments on Heb 1:3.²⁸ In that passage Oecolampadius

²⁴ See Strohl, *La pensée de la Réforme*, 107-8.

²⁵ See Staehelin, *Das Theologische Lebenswerk*, 566-71. The commentary was published posthumously in August 1534 as *In Epistolam ad Hebraeos Ioannis Oecolampadii, Explanaciones, ut ex ore Praelegendis Excerptae, per quosdam ex Auditoribus Digestae Sunt* (Strasbourg: Mathiam Apiarium, 1534). Two of Oecolampadius's students assembled their notes to compile the commentary from v. 2:5 to the end. See also Staehelin, *Das Theologische Lebenswerk*, 571-72; Staehelin, *Briefe und Akten*, 2:756-58 (no. 976).

²⁶ The commentaries are *In Epistolam Ioannis Apostoli Catholicam Primam, Ioannis Oecolampadii Demegoriae, Hoc Est, Homiliae Una & Viginti* (Nuremberg: Apud Iohann Petreium, 1524); *In Epistolam B. Pauli Apost. ad Rhomanos Adnotationes à Ioanne Oecolampadio Basileae Praelectae* (Basel: Andream Cratandrum, 1525); *In Iesaiam Prophetam Hypomnematon, hoc est, Commentariorum, Ioannis Oecolampadii Libri VI* (Basel: Cratander, 1525). For the historical background of the lectures on which these commentaries were based, see Staehelin, *Das Theologische Lebenswerk*, 190, 213, 219, 221, 231-32.

²⁷ Oecolampadius, *In Epistolam ad Hebraeos*, 108a: *Christ exemplum dedit, illius vestigia insequi cupias*. (Translations, here and throughout, are my own.) See also *ibid.*, 102a. Oecolampadius specifically taught that because the unique sacrifice of Christ was better than the former sacrifices, Christians ought to strive to imitate the true, heavenly example of Christ even more zealously than the ancients lived with reverence to God and holiness in life.

²⁸ "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb 1:3 ESV).

rhetorically presented possible objections, "If we are saved only by the mercy of God, why was the cross imposed on Christ? Is it possible that by this suffering of the Son, the Father has become mutable? And was he not able to make his righteousness sufficient, except by the blood of Christ?"²⁹ He then responded by applying the notion of impossibility in the tradition of Philo to say that God does not change his will or go from angry to gentle, even with regard to the suffering of the Son.³⁰ Strohl extracts the next statement from Oecolampadius's line of reasoning to claim that Oecolampadius taught that it only *appears as though* God is sometimes angry and sometimes appeased, but that God's anger was not actually appeased or his mind actually changed by the death of Christ. Oecolampadius stated, "Rather we experience variation from [God] in ourselves from which our sense of election (which strives toward God with a pure conscience) fades when the covenant of peace and life is violated by unbelief."³¹

Unfortunately, Strohl's conclusion was not based on the whole context of the passage, nor the rest of the commentary, nor the rest of Oecolampadius's writings. Both the sentences immediately before and after the one that Strohl highlighted reveal that the context for Oecolampadius's answers to these objections comes from the doctrine of election. Oecolampadius previously stated, "Not only did God never impute sin to the elect ones, but he always considers and considered them as elect ones."³² Oecolampadius then proceeded by contending that "to speak about predestination differently is not right."³³ Oecolampadius's response to these hypothetical objections is that from God's perspective, God's feeling or mind toward an elect person never changed, because that person was always considered elected. Rather, God always loved and delighted in those whom he *always* considered chosen. Oecolampadius is not rejecting the Anselmian satisfaction theory, but instead is answering how one can uphold both God's immutability and the meaning of the suffering and death of Christ.

This passage, which Strohl cites as evidence that Oecolampadius rejected a satisfaction theory of the atonement, actually teaches that the death of Christ shows us God's love because the *satisfaction*, which he does not demand from us, has been provided by the death of Christ.

²⁹ Oecolampadius, *In Epistolam ad Hebraeos*, 10a: *Diceret autem quis. Si per solam Dei misericordiā salvamur, quare crux imposita est Christo? Nunquid hac filii passione Deus pater mutabilis factus est? & non potuit iustitiae eius satis fieri, nisi per sanguinem Christi?*

³⁰ *Ibid.*: *Respondemus, apud Deum plane nullam fuisse vel esse vicissitudinē voluntatis, ut in natura sua ex mansueto iratus fiat, vel ex irato mitescat, etiam patiente filio, utriusque humana infantilitas de Deo sit balbutiat.* For Philo's original argument see Philo, "On the Unchangeableness of God," in *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged* (trans. C. D. Yonge; rev. ed.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), 158-73.

³¹ Oecolampadius, *In Epistolam ad Hebraeos*, 10a: *Atqui nos in nobis variationem experimur ex eo quo electionis sensus qui sincera conscientia erga Deum nititur, evanescit, violato foedere pacis & vitae per incredulitatē.* Strohl refers to this comment when he writes, "C'est selon les fluctuations de notre foi que Dieu nous apparaît parfois en colère et parfois apaisé" (Strohl, *La pensée de la Réforme*, 108).

³² Oecolampadius, *In Epistolam ad Hebraeos*, 10a: *Electis quoque Deus nunquam imputavit peccatum, sed eos semper pro electis habet & habuit. . .*

³³ *Ibid.*: *Adde quod de praedestinatione loqui aliter phas nō est. . .*

Accordingly, we think that [God is] now angry, now pacified, just as we ourselves would be affected—besides, it would not have been considered by our consciences and minds, which are thus terrified by sins, that they are not at all promised that God would be propitious to them *without some satisfaction*. Consequently, declaring that he loves us very much, God chose the most holy way by which we would be purified from unfaithfulness and we would not at all doubt that he is propitious to us—as he *does not demand satisfaction* from us, but so that we might recognize his highest love toward us, he did not spare his only begotten Son, but he handed over him who was made our brother to death on a cross, and so with him [he will give us] all things.³⁴ (emphasis mine)

Strohl is correct that Oecolampadius identified a result of recognizing the love shown to us in Christ's death is that "we are influenced into newness of life every day."³⁵ However, according to Oecolampadius, that is the result of the fact that the death of Christ enabled us to become partakers of the Spirit, *by whom* we are led into the newness of life. In another comment on this verse, Oecolampadius noted, "Moreover by his death, Christ cleansed our sins, and *clearly made satisfaction*, if indeed we truly believed" (emphasis mine).³⁶ He even went so far as to say:

And on that account those who teach satisfaction by our works, *or in another sacrifice other than [Christ's] alone*, or who teach that there is enough suffering for us here, or some other way to please the Father, they reveal themselves to know neither God nor the mystery of salvation, and they wretchedly lead away from Christ and torture consciences.³⁷ (emphasis mine)

Oecolampadius is clearly *not* rejecting a satisfaction theory of atonement in his comments on Heb 1:3, and in fact is saying that anyone who teaches otherwise is wrong.

Throughout Oecolampadius's teaching from Hebrews he articulated a satisfaction theory of the atonement.³⁸ In his explanation of how the Eucharist differed from the ceremonies in the OT, he pointed out that one of the major differences was "that Christ had not yet suffered at that time, nor *made satisfaction on behalf*

³⁴ Ibid., 10b: *Itaque nunc illū iratū, nunc pacatū censemus, prout affecti fuimus ipsi, praeterea cōscientiis & animabus nostris nō fuisset cōsultum quae peccatis sic terrentur, ut absque aliqua satisfactione, Deū sibi propitiū, nequaquam polliceantur. Igitur Deus declarans se nos maxime amare, elegit sanctissimam viam, qua purificaremur ab infidelitate, & ipsum nobis propitiū, nequaquam dubitaremus, dum non poscit ex nobis satisfactionem, sed ut dilectionem ipsius erga nos summam cognosceremus, unigenito filio suo non pepercit, sed factum fratrem nostrum, in mortem crucis, pro nobis tradidit & ita cum illo omnia.*

³⁵ Ibid.: *Hoc utique satis est . . . dum Spiritus eius participes efficimur, per quem in novitatem vitae, ut filii dei, quotidie inducimur.* See Strohl, *La pensée de la Réforme*, 108.

³⁶ Oecolampadius, *In Epistolam ad Hebraeos*, 13a: *Morte autē Christus peccata nostra expurgavit, & plane satisfecit, siquidem vere crediderimus.*

³⁷ Ibid., 10b: *Deus ab aeterno cognovit & prefiniuit. . . Et ideo qui satisfactionem nostris operibus vel alteri sacrificio, quam unico isti, vel qui satis passionem nobis hic vel alibi ad demerendum patrem docent, prouident se nec Deum, nec mysterium salutis nosse, misereque à Christo abducunt, & conscientias torquent.*

³⁸ For further examples not cited here see *ibid.*, 33a-34b, 68b-69a, 84b, 96b, 103a, 104a, 108b. Oecolampadius particularly teaches a satisfaction theory of atonement in his discussion of Christ as priest and his comparison of the old covenant sacrifices to Christ in chs. 7-10.

of sins" (emphasis mine).³⁹ When he addressed the very question that led to Anslem's theory of the atonement—why God became a man in Jesus—Oecolampadius contrasted Christ with sheep or bulls which were not able to satisfy God because they were of a different nature than humans.⁴⁰ He then drew the conclusion:

Therefore, it was necessary that a human *make satisfaction* on behalf of humans, but one of such kind who was willing and able; however, he would not have been able unless he was the son of God and of divine nature . . . [and] he would not have been able to die unless he was made human.⁴¹

Oecolampadius offered many other examples of an objective view of the atonement in his Hebrews lectures as well.⁴²

Yet the satisfaction theory of atonement and the moral influence theory are not the only theories present in his lectures on Hebrews. Oecolampadius actually taught a rather all-encompassing theory of the atonement that weaves together several themes. For one, he identified that the death of Christ *confirmed the covenant* between God and man in a way that the Levitical sacrifices could not.⁴³ He taught what could anachronistically be called a "Christus Victor" theory of the atonement in highlighting that the death of Christ defeated the devil.⁴⁴ Oecolampadius specifically observed on Heb 2:14, "But it does not say: He might abolish death, but *him who was holding the power* of death, the devil, as the author of sin, so also of death. . . . And therefore because Christ was without any sin, he defeated the devil" (emphasis mine).⁴⁵ Oecolampadius repeated multiple times in his exposition of ch. 2 that Christ's death defeated (*vicit*), deprived (*exueret*), and subdued (*conficeret*) the devil when he destroyed (*aboleret*) death.⁴⁶ Most notably, in the same section where he addressed the reasons Christ became a man, Oecolampadius concluded:

³⁹ Ibid., 106a: *Respondet hic Paulus, veteris legis caeremonias accusationem peccatorum habuisse, & non puram gratiarū actionem, quemadmodum nos habemus in Eucharistia, ratio est, quod.*

⁴⁰ See ibid., 30a-b: *Atqui arietes & tauri non potuerunt sanctificare homines, nedum Deo pro illis satisfacere, puta alienae ab hominibus naturae. Potuit ergo unus Christus homo factus, suo nos sanguine emulare ab omnibus peccatis, & quem admodum olim sacerdos eiusdem naturae esse debuit cum populo, pro quo apud Deum intercedebat, atque adeo passionum humanarum expertus, ut facile illi cōpati posset.*

⁴¹ Ibid., 33b: *Hominem ergo oportuit satisfacere pro hominibus, sed talem qui & vellet & posset, nō potuisset autem nisi filius Dei fuisset & divinae naturae. Quia Christus mortuus est & resurrexit, certi sumus mortem esse abolendam, non potuisset autem mori, nisi fuisset homo factus, neque resurgere & redimere, nisi fuisset innocens et Deus.*

⁴² See, e.g., ibid., 36b: *illū nobis placat & peccata populi sui suo sanguine expiat.* See also ibid., 84b, 103a where he emphasizes the sufficiency and importance of Christ's death in expiating sin.

⁴³ See ibid., 100b, 110a.

⁴⁴ The classic work on this theory of the atonement is Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement* (New York: Macmillan, 1931; repr., Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2003).

⁴⁵ Oecolampadius, *In Epistolam ad Hebraeos*, 33b: *Nō dicit autem: Aboleret mortem, sed eū qui mortis habebat imperium diabolum, ut autorem peccati, sic etiam mortis. . . . Christus itaque absque omni peccato quia erat, vicit diabolum.*

⁴⁶ See ibid., 33b-35a.

By the death of Christ, death itself is removed, the devil decisively defeated, and hell is demolished for those who believe. Weigh carefully this, I beg you, how much you received the kindness in Christ, so that you may be pleasing to him and you may live innocent in all respects, you may hate sin, and you may pursue love towards all people.⁴⁷

In the very same passage where he articulated that only by the death and resurrection of the God-man could satisfaction be made on behalf of humans, Oecolampadius also taught that the death of Christ defeated the devil and provided the proper motivation for living a morally upright life.⁴⁸ Similarly, in his exposition of Heb 9, Oecolampadius observed that the author finally reaches the point where he states *how* Christ redeemed us. In a way that admittedly sounds very similar to Abelard's answer to that question four centuries earlier, Oecolampadius affirmed, "Truly, by this most perfect way of all he wished to cleanse us from sin, so that recognizing his kindness, we may continually present ourselves pleasing to him" (emphasis mine).⁴⁹ But in addition to upholding that the purpose of Christ's death was that we would live rightly as a response to his kindness, Oecolampadius explained:

What was accomplished by his blood is summed up by one word, namely, redemption . . . λύτρωσις not only signifies propitiation or redemption, but the price of redemption from slavery and the penalty. We deserved the most extreme slavery and death, [but] Christ paid the price of his blood on behalf of we who are redeemed. . . . Moreover, he redeemed the elect in such a way that he bore not only the guilt, but also the entire penalty.⁵⁰

This is quite explicitly the language of what today would be called a penal substitution theory of atonement. In his exposition of how Christ redeemed us, Oecolampadius specifically articulated that Christ took the guilt and the penalty by paying the price of death with his own blood for those who are redeemed.

These concepts are found in multiple contexts of his Hebrews lectures. In sections of his exposition where he seized the opportunity to attack the Catholic mass, he specifically condemned "the nonsenses of the Papists, who shamelessly

⁴⁷ Ibid., 33a-b: *Est causa, aut si mavis causae superioris expositio, cur hominem assūperit, quasi diceret, nisi ita humiliatus, & patri obediens ad mortem usque fuisset, diabolus non fuisset victus, vel si victus, nostrae tamen cōscientiae admodum sauciae, eius non potuissent certo persuaderi & pacificari. Voluit ergo Christus per passionem atque adeo mortem suā, mortis & autorem & principem diabolum abolere, hoc est, potestate nocendi exuere. . . . Miserrimum est mortī esse obnoxium sicut & mortis metu excruciaci, atqui ab [note] utroque Christi beneficio liberati sumus. Christi em- morte, mors ipsa sublata, diabolus devictus, & infernus credentibus est destructus. Perpende hic quaesō, quantum in Christo acceperis beneficium, ut illi gratus sis & per omnia innocens vivas, peccatum odias, charitatēque erga omnes secteris.*

⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, 33b.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 96b: *Sanguis vitulorum & hircorum non potuit expiare peccata, sed Christi salvifici sacrificiū, cuius sanguis ad expianda peccata totius mūdi abūde sufficit. Hoc sane omnīū perfectissimo modo à peccatis nos emūdere voluit, ut illius beneficiū agnoscentes, gratos nos illi perpetuo exhibeamus.*

⁵⁰ Ibid., 97b: *quidque suo sanguine effecerit, uno verbo complectitur, nēpe redemptionem . . . λύτρωσις non solum propitiationem seu redemptionem significat, sed & pretiū redēptionis à servitute & poena. Nos extremam servitutem & mortem merebamur, Christus pretiū sanguinis sui pro nobis redimēdis dedit. . . . Redemit autem sic electos, ut non modo culpam, sed & poenam omnē auferat.*

say that Christ is still being sacrificed in their wicked Mass . . . [and] has not rather been completed *by Christ enduring to the end the punishment of death*" (emphasis mine).⁵¹ In his discussion of the OT saints in ch. 11, Oecolampadius even questioned the traditional interpretation that Enoch never died, because then "Christ would not have paid the price of redemption" for him.⁵² He also observed that even though Isaac, like all of us, was required to pay the penalty of death, "[y]et it is of divine kindness, that he wanted to save those who deserved eternal death, and to take up our sins by another sacrifice, namely by Christ, who was designated by the ram stuck in the thorn-bushes."⁵³ Throughout his Hebrews lectures, Oecolampadius taught that the penalty and punishment which every person deserved was paid by Christ's death for those who believe. If there is any sense in which Oecolampadius did not hold to an Anselmian satisfaction theory of the atonement, it would have to be because he emphasized that Christ's death satisfied the payment of the penalty rather than the honor every person owes to God. It cannot be sustained that Oecolampadius rejected the Anselmian satisfaction theory of atonement in favor of an Abelardian theory of atonement. A moral influence theory is surely present in his lectures, but Oecolampadius also unmistakably offered a much more comprehensive account of what was accomplished by Christ's suffering and death.

If we consider briefly his earliest writings, we likewise find that in the same sermon or the same lecture Oecolampadius taught multiple aspects of the atonement which could be labeled with different theories.⁵⁴ For example, in his Romans lectures from 1524, he commented on Rom 4, "For as Christ was handed over on account of sins, so on account of Christ we ought to avoid sins. And as Christ rose again, so it will be right for us to walk in the newness of life."⁵⁵ This is the language which Strohl and McGrath identify as evidencing a moral

⁵¹ Ibid., 54a-b: *esse nugas Papistarum, qui imprudēter dicūt Christū adhuc sacrificādū in sua impia Missa, quasi vero in illa primū figurae cōpleātur, & nō potius impletae sint Christo supplicii mortis perferētē.* See also *ibid.*, 82b, 104a.

⁵² Ibid., 125b: *quanto tēpore Christus praecium redemptionis non persolvit . . .*

⁵³ Ibid., 134b: *Quēadmodū Isaac ad poenā postulatus fuit, ita omnes nos postulamus, sumus enim filii mortis. Benignitatis tamē divinae est, aeternae mortem meritos, voluisse servare, & alio sacrificio satisfactionem pro peccatis nostris sumere, nempe Christo, qui designatus fuit per arietē.*

⁵⁴ In Oecolampadius's first published writing in 1512 when he was still a Catholic priest, we already discover in his sermon series on the last words of Christ that he emphasized the Christian duties that Christ was demonstrating on the cross, but he also depicted the death of Christ as a triumph over Satan and as the taking on of the endless eternal punishment that each person deserved. These sermons are far more allegorical and mystical than his later sermons, but already demonstrate a theory of the atonement with multiple aspects rather than simply being Abelardian. See Johann Oecolampadius, *Declamationes Io. Oecolampadii de Passione et Ultimo Sermone, hoc est Sacrosanctis Septem Dictis Domini Nostri Iesu Christi in Cruce, sub Typo Concionatoris Migraturi* (Strasbourg, 1512), esp. sermons 16 and 17.

⁵⁵ Oecolampadius, *In Epistolam ad Rhomanos*, 46b: *Nam sicut Christus traditus fuit propter peccata, ita propter Christum & nos abstinere debemus à peccatis. Et sicut Christus resurrexit, ita & nos in novitate vitae ambulare debet. Benedicimur autem morte et resurrectione Christi, ut moriatur vetus Adam, & resurgat novus.*

influence theory.⁵⁶ However, earlier in his exposition of this same chapter, Oecolampadius taught, "For however much pertains to the *penalty*, if we are converted to Christ, [then] he himself *made satisfaction on behalf of all our sins*."⁵⁷ Oecolampadius also used language very similar to Abelard when he commented on Rom 6:

Behold, the son of God (that innocent and immaculate one) died on account of you, so that thereafter you yourself may abstain from sin. . . . It ought to be considered how excellent that sacrifice is, and how much love, and how much suffering, and how much innocence was offered, so that willingly you would leap to do good, *moved by the love of Christ*.⁵⁸

There is certainly an ethical or moral emphasis on right living, but there is more than that. Oecolampadius also taught, "It is the glory of God that sins are freely dismissed by the merit of Christ without our satisfaction. Thus all people need the glory of God, because they all lack righteousness."⁵⁹ Several times throughout his lectures on Romans, Oecolampadius referred to Christ's death as a satisfaction for the wrath of God based on Christ's merit or righteousness.⁶⁰

Similarly, in his sermon series on 1 John from 1523, where Strohl identified several ways that Oecolampadius taught a moral influence theory of atonement, we see that there is more. Oecolampadius definitively rejected a mere "moral example" theory of atonement when he taught, "If he urged nothing more than an example of a life produced by teaching and by works . . . then let us also deify Socrates and call him savior."⁶¹ However, he further proclaimed, "There is indeed satisfaction and propitiation for us in Christ, more than sufficient in every way."⁶² Likewise, he stated,

Clearly before grace we bring nothing so holy that we do not deserve damnation, and do we still dare to claim anything in ourselves? Indeed Christ came, who appeased the Father, and reconciled us to him, whose righteousness is our righteousness, who as redeemer and priest *made satisfaction for sins* by his one sacrifice.⁶³

⁵⁶ See Strohl, *La pensée de la Réforme*, 107-8; McGrath, "Humanist Elements in the Early Reformed Doctrine of Justification," 9-10.

⁵⁷ Oecolampadius, *In Epistolam ad Romanos*, 41a: *Nam quantum ad poenam attinet, si convertamur ad Christum, ipse pro peccatis omnibus satisfacit. . . . Iam de quo dominus poenam sumit, illi adhuc peccatum imputat.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 66b: *Hic spectandum est, quale sit sacrificium illud, & quanta charitate, quantisque doloribus, & quantae innocentia sit oblatum, ut sponte prosilias ad benefaciendum proximo, Christi charitate motus.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 35b-36a: *Gloria dei est, quod gratis dimittuntur peccata per meritum Christi absque nostra satisfactione. Ita omnes egent gloria dei, quia iustitia carent.*

⁶⁰ For further examples of the satisfaction theory of atonement in his Romans lectures, see *ibid.*, 36a-b, 64b-65a, 68a, 92b.

⁶¹ Oecolampadius, *In Epistolam Ioannis Primam*, 18b-19a: *Si nihil amplius egit, quam exemplum vitae doctrina operibusque exhibuit, an non idipsum possent praestare, etiam hodie hypocritae? Deificemus igitur & Socratem, & salvatorem appellemus.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, 52b: *Est enim nobis satisfactio in Christo, propitiatioque modis omnibus plus quam sufficiens.*

⁶³ Oecolampadius, *In Epistolam Ioannis Primam*, 76-77: *Planè ante gratiam nihil tam sancte agimus, quod non mereatur damnationem, & adhuc arrogare nobis aliquid audemus? advenit enim Christus qui placuit patrem, & nos illi conciliavit, cuius iusticia, nostra est iusticia, qui redemptor & sacerdos uno sacrificio pro*

In this sermon series as well, Oecolampadius included both a “subjective” moral influence and an “objective” satisfaction theory of the atonement.

Already in his first series of lectures in 1522, Oecolampadius explained from Isa 9 that in contrast to what the people in Isaiah’s day understood, “Now we know that by the blood of Christ *he satisfied the Father on our behalf*, and thousand of hells—the *penalties owed for our sins*—were dismissed according to the merit of Christ . . . so great is the merit of faith in Christ, that prior sins are not imputed since Christ *made satisfaction* on behalf of these.”⁶⁴ Likewise, in his explanation of Isa 53, Oecolampadius challenged Jewish interpretations when he asked, “How will this apply to the Jews? Where are those *who died for others*?” and declared, “It is not necessary to refute those who explain this saying to be about Moses. For he did *not make satisfaction* for the Gentiles or for the Jews, or even for himself.”⁶⁵ Instead, Oecolampadius emphasized that this passage referred to Christ, who died “not on account of his own sins, but on account of the sins of the people.”⁶⁶ He specifically argued that Christ “became sin, so that he might free us from sin. . . . For he himself is our righteousness and he carried iniquities on their behalf for *satisfaction to be made*. Where now are those who attribute righteousness to their works as if they *made satisfaction* by them?”⁶⁷ Not only did Oecolampadius identify Christ as the substitute for sins, he also affirmed that “the blood of Christ is the price that was paid on behalf of our sins.”⁶⁸ In these early sermons and lectures, even where there was a strong moral and ethical emphasis, Oecolampadius still upheld an objective satisfaction theory of the atonement which included the concept of Christ’s death paying the penalty and the price for sin on behalf of those who put their faith in him.

V. Conclusion

A survey of all these different writings reveals that Oecolampadius held to far more than a subjective moral influence theory of the atonement in the tradition of Peter Abelard. If forced to categorize his views on the atonement, Oecolampadius cannot rightly be called moralist or subjective, but rather his teaching embraced not only a satisfaction theory of the atonement, but it already

peccatis satisfecit. Further examples of the satisfaction theory of atonement in the 1 John sermons are easily apparent on pp. 18b, 23b, 48b.

⁶⁴ Oecolampadius. *In Iesaiam*, 81b: *Scimus nunc per sanguinem Christi patri pro nobis satisfactum, & mille infernorum poenas nostris peccatis debitas, in merito Christi dimissas . . . sed quod tantum est fidei in Christum meritum, ut priora peccata non imputentur: quandoquidem pro his satisfecit Christus.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 264a: *Quomodo hoc Iudaeis conveniet? ubi mortui sunt pro aliis? . . . Non opus est ut refellatur, quod quidam exponunt de Mose hoc dictum. Neque enim ille satisfecit pro gentibus, vel pro Iudeis, vel etiam pro seipso.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*: *hoc est, mortuus est, non propter sua peccata, sed propter peccata populi.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 264b: *Factus enim est peccatum, ut liberaret nos à peccato. . . . Ipse enim nostra iustitia est, & iniquitates portavit pro eis satisfaciendo. Ubi nunc sunt qui suis operibus iustitiam tribuunt tanquam illis satisfaciunt?*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 264a: *Id est imposuit ei peccata nostra, sicut et supra. Mulctatus est, quod proprie ad pecuniam refertur. Christi vero sanguis precium est, quod pro peccatis nostris est dinumeratum.*

conveyed the components of a penal substitution theory of the atonement. This theory may not have been expressed in Oecolampadius as often or as centrally as it was in someone like John Calvin, whose view is often considered the classic example of penal substitution, although Calvin also taught other aspects of the atonement in conjunction with penal substitution.⁶⁹ This study of Oecolampadius's teaching on the atonement offers a necessary correction to McGrath's portrayal of Oecolampadius and the early Swiss Reformation, and sheds further light on the timeframe for the decisive shift in the sixteenth century on teachings about the atonement.

Perhaps the most significant role that this analysis can play is to present a prominent and highly praised humanist theologian, who ardently stressed ethics and moral living, but also taught a penal substitution theory of the atonement. One of the most common complaints today about the penal substitution theory of atonement is that it leaves little room for the ethical behavior and exemplary love that Christ gave to us on the cross.⁷⁰ Oecolampadius provides us with an early Reformed example of one whose emphasis on moral living was grounded in a view of the atonement that included satisfaction and penal theories. He likewise is a noteworthy example of one who drew from a wide range of biblical imagery to advocate a broadly comprehensive theory of the atonement that incorporated many aspects of what Christ accomplished with his death. Correctly hearing the voice of Oecolampadius on the atonement provides us with a more accurate picture of how the theology of the atonement developed during an important time when doctrines were being reassessed and transformed and may even provide us with a little more clarity for the current controversies.

⁶⁹ See Henri Blocher, "The Atonement in John Calvin's Theology," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical & Practical Perspectives*, 279-303. Blocher looks at Calvin's sermons to show that he did not embrace a single view of the atonement but included penal substitution as a main component of his view.

⁷⁰ Numerous examples could be given for this critique. See, as one example, Baker and Green, *Recovering the Scandal*, 31.

THE BREAKDOWN OF A
REFORMATION FRIENDSHIP:
JOHN OECOLAMPADIUS AND
PHILIP MELANCHTHON

JEFF FISHER

In October 1529, the Reformation took a significant turn following the events of the Marburg Colloquy. At that meeting, the Swiss Reformed and the Lutherans came together and agreed upon fourteen articles of faith, but could not reach agreement on the final article—the presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper. The colloquy is famous for the boisterous exchanges between the two main figures, Luther and Zwingli. However, two other men played critical roles, not only at the colloquy, but also in the entire discussion over the Lord’s Supper and the broadening gap between the Lutherans and the Reformed. These two men were Luther’s main associate, Philip Melanchthon, and Zwingli’s colleague, Johannes Oecolampadius. Oecolampadius was the one who first debated with Luther at the colloquy, and it was his particular views on the Eucharist that received the greater attention and engagement from the Lutheran side. Although Oecolampadius and Melanchthon may best be known together for participating on opposite sides at the Marburg Colloquy, their relationship actually extended back far earlier and went far deeper than simply being on opposite sides of an important debate.

This article focuses on the development and breakdown of the relationship between Oecolampadius and Melanchthon in connection with events at the time of the Reformation. Despite the significance of both these figures, and the uniqueness of their friendship, there has been little exploration of this topic.¹ This may be partly due to the inherent difficulties in labeling any two historical figures as friends, particularly when seeking to substantiate that friendship from letters of the Renaissance era. One must be careful not to allow the politeness of Renaissance letter-writing etiquette to skew the perception of a relationship

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¹ See, e.g., *Melanchthons Briefwechsel: Kritische und kommentierte Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Heinz Scheible and Christine Mundhenk (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, forthcoming 2017), vol. 13, *Personen L–Q*. This volume will include a description of the relationship between Melanchthon and Oecolampadius, but these entries are intentionally short and intended primarily for increased understanding of the correspondence with Melanchthon.

to appear more favorable than it was.² With these cautions in mind, our analysis of the contexts in which the lives of these two men intersected and the correspondence they exchanged demonstrates that there was a genuine friendship between them. As we explore the extent of affection and appreciation these two Reformers held for each other, it will become apparent that their friendship was at first close, became complex, and eventually crumbled. In part, this examination challenges the claim of Wilhelm Maurer that Melanchthon ended their friendship in 1525 because Oecolampadius had forsaken their common humanist and theological interests.³ More broadly, it identifies significant ways in which the friendship between Melanchthon and Oecolampadius mirrored the relationship between those associated with Luther and those associated with the Swiss Reformed. The complicated friendship between Oecolampadius and Melanchthon serves as a reminder that the divisions over theological issues significantly affected real people's lives, feelings, and relationships. To see how the contours of their relationship fluctuated, this study is arranged into six chronological segments.

I. *The Beginning of a Genuine Friendship (1513–1518)*

The lives of Oecolampadius and Melanchthon first intertwined because both men were deeply involved in the Renaissance humanist movement. The very names by which we know them remind us of this fact. The man later known as Oecolampadius was born Johann Hussgen (or Husschyn, Heussngen) in the south German village of Weinsberg in 1482.⁴ Fifteen years later, the man later known as Melanchthon was born Philipp Schwartzertdt in February 1497.⁵ Both of these men changed their names to a Latinized Greek version of their German names. Oecolampadius (Οικολαμπάδ) was derived from *Hausschein* ("house

² See, e.g., Timothy J. Wengert, "We Will Feast Together in Heaven Forever': The Epistolary Friendship of John Calvin and Philip Melanchthon," and Bruce Gordon, "Wary Allies: Melanchthon and the Swiss Reformers," in *Melanchthon in Europe: His Work and Influence beyond Wittenberg*, ed. Karin Maag (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 22, 46. Wengert, in particular, demonstrates how Renaissance letter-writing etiquette made the relationship between Melanchthon and Calvin sound more friendly than it actually was.

³ Wilhelm Maurer, *Der junge Melanchthon zwischen Humanismus und Reformation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 1:68–69.

⁴ The definitive biography of Oecolampadius is still Ernst Staehelin, *Das theologische Lebenswerk Johannes Oekolampads*, Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte 21 (New York: Johnson, 1939). The best English biography is E. Gordon Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009). A more recent biography is Diane Poythress, *Reformer of Basel: The Life, Thought, and Influence of Johannes Oecolampadius* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2011).

⁵ The most comprehensive biography of Melanchthon is Heinz Scheible, *Melanchthon: Eine Biographie* (Munich: Beck, 1997). For an evaluation of other Melanchthon biographies, see Timothy J. Wengert, "Beyond Stereotypes: The Real Philip Melanchthon," in *Philip Melanchthon: Then and Now (1497–1997)*, ed. Scott Hendrix and Timothy J. Wengert (Columbia, SC: Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, 1999).

lamp”) and Melanchthon (Μελαγχθων) from *Schwarzerd* (“black earth”). While still under the name Johannes Huszgen, Oecolampadius enrolled at the University of Heidelberg in 1499 where he earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in theology in May 1501 and October 1503.⁶ Sometime prior to April 1510, he was ordained as a priest and became the preacher at St. John’s Church in his home town of Weinsberg. This post lasted less than three years, before he left to pursue further theological studies. He matriculated as an older student at the University of Tübingen on April 9, 1513.⁷ Only a few months earlier, Philip Melanchthon had also matriculated at Tübingen—as a fifteen-year-old—on September 17, 1512.⁸ Like Oecolampadius, he too had previously attended the University of Heidelberg, a decade after Oecolampadius had been there.⁹

Despite the age difference, the two quickly became friends at Tübingen as fellow participants in the circle of Johann Reuchlin, one of the leading humanists of the time.¹⁰ Reuchlin regularly welcomed guests that Melanchthon, his great-nephew, brought to his home.¹¹ While at Tübingen, these two worked together at Thomas Anshelm’s printshop.¹² As a younger student, Melanchthon looked up to his older friends. Maurer remarks, “Of these [friends], Oecolampadius exerted the most profound and lasting influence on Melanchthon.”¹³ They not only had an educational friendship, but Melanchthon also honored Oecolampadius like a father.¹⁴ Around this time, Oecolampadius gave Melanchthon a

⁶ See Ernst Staehelin, *Briefe und Akten zum Leben Oekolampads*, 2 vols., Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationgeschichte 10, 19 (Leipzig: Heinsius, 1927, 1934; repr., New York: Johnson, 1971), 1:1–3 [Nos. 1, 3–4]; hereafter abbreviated *BuA* with volume and page number cited and entry in brackets.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:23 [No. 15].

⁸ Scheible, *Melanchthon*, 20.

⁹ Melanchthon was at Heidelberg from October 1509 to September 1512.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Maurer, *Der junge Melanchthon*, 1:11, 65–67. Maurer asserts that in order to understand the friendship between Melanchthon and Oecolampadius, we must also understand the relationship between Reuchlin and Oecolampadius. See also Staehelin, *Das theologische Lebenswerk*, 58–59.

¹¹ See Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation*, 5.

¹² Timothy J. Wengert, “Biblical Interpretation in the Works of Philip Melanchthon,” in *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Alan Hauser and Duane E. Watson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 2:324. See also *BuA* 1:37–38 [No. 30]; and Philipp Melanchthon, *Melanchthons Briefwechsel: Kritische und kommentierte Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Heinz Scheible and Walter Thüringer, 10 vols. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1977–), 1: No. 13 (hereafter abbreviated *MBW* followed by volume and entry number). *MBW* includes helpful summaries of letters and documents with dating and background information. The full text of many of these entries can be found in *Melanchthons Briefwechsel Texte*, ed. Richard Wetzl et al., 17 vols. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1995–) (hereafter *MBWT* followed by volume and entry number), which is a critical edition of Melanchthon’s letters and documents. For all the references the entry number is identical, with only the volume numbers sometimes differing for *MBW* and *MBWT* (e.g., *MBW* 1; *MBWT* 3: No. 820). The reference for the present n. 12 is *MBW* 1; *MBWT* 1: No. 13.

¹³ Maurer, *Der junge Melanchthon*, 1:65.

¹⁴ For Melanchthon’s reflections on his time in school with Oecolampadius, see *Philippi Melanchthonis opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. Carolus Gottlieb Bretschneider, Corpus Reformatorum 1–28

new edition of Rudolf Agricola's *Dialectic* as a gift.¹⁵ This book was a gift that Melanchthon treasured deeply for a long time, as it would be crucially important in shaping his theological method.¹⁶

Oecolampadius apparently left Tübingen around the summer of 1514 to teach at Heidelberg, to study the biblical languages at Stuttgart, and to begin writing a Greek grammar in his quest for the humanist ideal of "homo trilinguis" (skilled in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin).¹⁷ By the fall of 1515, he had finally settled in Basel to assist Erasmus on his *Novum Instrumentum* and to enroll at the University of Basel.¹⁸ While the time that Melanchthon and Oecolampadius were together at Tübingen was only a little more than a year, Manschreck affirms that "no one did more for him in his youth than Oecolampadius."¹⁹ Similarly, Scheible maintains that meeting with Oecolampadius was "more fruitful for his scholarly career than anything that the University offered him."²⁰ Their short time together at Tübingen formed a strong foundation for their friendship.

Melanchthon remained at Tübingen until the summer of 1518 while Oecolampadius was traveling to different places. From 1516 to 1518 Oecolampadius traveled back and forth for various lengths of time between Basel and Weinsberg, preaching regularly, lecturing on Lombard's Sentences, fulfilling his priestly duties, but apparently failing to fulfill his annotating duties for Erasmus's second edition of the Greek NT.²¹ Oecolampadius informed Erasmus in March 1517 that he would provide the work that he owed so that "Erasmus does not frivolously honor Oecolampadius."²² Notably, he also mentioned to Erasmus that "Philip Melanchthon sends me numerous letters," and "always remembers you, always admires, always asks to be commended to you."²³ Oecolampadius even suggested Melanchthon as a possible candidate for the work. He wrote, "If

(New York: Johnson, 1963), 4:720–21 [No. 2418] (hereafter abbreviated CR followed by volume and page number): *Oecolampadius ... patrem colebam*.

¹⁵ CR 4:716 [No. 2418]; BuA 1:23n1 [No. 15]. Agricola's "De inventione dialectica libri tres" was first published in Leuven in 1515. It cannot be determined whether Oecolampadius was in Heidelberg, Basel, Weinsberg, or Tübingen when he gave the book to Melanchthon. Cf. Maurer, *Der junge Melanchthon*, 1:67; Wengert, "Biblical Interpretation of Melanchthon," 324.

¹⁶ See Scheible, *Melanchthon*, 22; Wengert, "Biblical Interpretation of Melanchthon," 324–25.

¹⁷ Staehelin, *Das theologische Lebenswerk*, 59–61; Maurer, *Der junge Melanchthon*, 1:66–67; Scheible, *Melanchthon*, 22. Staehelin explains that the order in which he did these things cannot be definitively determined.

¹⁸ See BuA 1:24–31 [Nos. 17–25]; Staehelin, *Das theologische Lebenswerk*, 61–68. Oecolampadius received the Licentiate in Theology in October 1516.

¹⁹ Clyde L. Manschreck, *Melanchthon, The Quiet Reformer* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975), 39.

²⁰ Scheible, *Melanchthon*, 22.

²¹ See Staehelin, *Das theologische Lebenswerk*, 68–87; Maurer, *Der junge Melanchthon*, 1:67.

²² Oecolampadius to Erasmus dated March 27, 1517 (BuA 1:32–33 [No. 27]): *Dabo enim operam, annuat Deus, ne frivole Oecolampadium oranrit Erasmus*.

²³ BuA 1:32–33 [No. 27]: *Crebras ad me dat literas Philippus Melanchthon.... Semper tui meminit, semper admiratur, semper commendari tibi rogitat: plane dignissimus Erasmi amore, qui alter futurus est Erasmus facundia, ingenio, eruditione, vita*. None of these letters mentioned is extant.

any of the Germans will surpass Erasmus, he will.... I did not hesitate to have put his name before you."²⁴ When Erasmus responded, he agreed with the idea: "About Melanchthon I also feel very clearly and I hope so magnificently that Christ wants that young man to be present with us for a while. He will utterly obscure Erasmus."²⁵ Though the desire was never attained, this correspondence reveals the great respect Oecolampadius had for Melanchthon.

Similarly, Melanchthon's respect for Oecolampadius is evident from his exchanges with Pirckheimer near the beginning of 1518 about a poem in which Melanchthon had praised Oecolampadius among others. Pirckheimer admonished Melanchthon, "Cease to praise out of duty," and complained that Melanchthon's lavish praise was too much in general, and his view of Oecolampadius in particular was only accurate "unless you wish to consider the desire rather than what is accomplished."²⁶ This admonition does not seem to have affected either Melanchthon's letter writing etiquette or his perspective on Oecolampadius's worthiness of praise.

II. *The Development of a Reformation Friendship (1518–1520)*

While Melanchthon was finishing his studies at Tübingen, Oecolampadius was offered two significant opportunities to move from Weinsberg to a new location. On March 13, 1518, Erasmus invited Oecolampadius to return to Basel to assist him more closely with the second edition of his Greek NT. A few weeks later, on March 30, Reuchlin was asked to make recommendations for the Greek and Hebrew chairs at the University of Wittenberg. He replied on May 7 with the suggestions of Melanchthon for Greek and Oecolampadius for Hebrew.²⁷ Melanchthon accepted the position to become a professor at the University of Wittenberg, and arrived on August 25, 1518.²⁸ Oecolampadius, however, chose to return to Basel. Gordon Rupp perceptively notes that the story of the Reformation would be much different if Oecolampadius had "been drawn into the orbit of Luther, rather than of Zwingli."²⁹ A similar statement

²⁴ BuA 1:32–33 [No. 27]: *Si quisquam Germanorum, Erasmus praestabit. Id Beatum nostrum beatius apud te eiusdem nomine egisse non dubitarim.*

²⁵ Erasmus to Oecolampadius from July 1517 (BuA 1:38 [No. 31]): *De Melanchthon et sentio praeclare et spero magnifice, tantum ut eum iuvenem nobis Christus diu velit esse superstitem. Is prorsus obscurabit Erasmus.* Erasmus had earlier praised Melanchthon in his *Annotations* published in 1516 (CR 10:470).

²⁶ Willibald Pirckheimer to Melanchthon near the end of 1517 (CR 1:23; MBW1; MBWT 1: No. 13): *Desine igitur ea tanquam officiosa laudare, quae nisi facerem, plane inhumanus videri possem.... Nam quod Oecolampadium et Capnionem, tanquam in illos benefices fuerim ... nisi tu magis voluntatem quam rei effectum considerari velis.* See also CR 1:26; BuA 1:23 [No. 15].

²⁷ See BuA 1:65–66nn4–5 [No. 38] for the possible scenarios.

²⁸ BuA 1:72–75, esp. n. 6 [No. 43]. It may be that Oecolampadius did not actually ever have the option of going to Wittenberg, because by the time Reuchlin's recommendation was received, he may have already made the decision to go to Basel.

²⁹ Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation*, 13.

could be made about the friendship between Oecolampadius and Melanchthon had Oecolampadius gone to Wittenberg rather than Basel.

There seems to be four major reasons Oecolampadius decided to return to Basel in 1518 rather than go to Wittenberg. First, he had been invited there to assist Erasmus again, although it seems that he did not contribute to the work on the second edition of the Greek NT. Second, he came back to the University of Basel to complete the requirements for the Doctorate of Divinity, which he would ultimately earn in December 1518.³⁰ Third, he wanted his translations of several church fathers and his *Handbook of Greek Grammar* to be published in Basel.³¹ Interestingly, both he and Melanchthon published Greek grammars that same year—Melanchthon's in May and Oecolampadius's in September.³² In the afterword of Melanchthon's grammar, he announced plans of a project with other scholars, including Oecolampadius, to restore the *Aristotelica*.³³ While this goal was never achieved on this project, Melanchthon's respect for Oecolampadius's work is evident from his use of Oecolampadius's Greek grammar in revising his own grammar for its second edition in 1520.³⁴ Finally, it seems that Oecolampadius was not quite ready yet to align himself so closely with the theology—and the controversy—related to Luther. When Oecolampadius returned to Basel, he was appointed as the confessor priest (*poenitentiarius*) at the Basel Cathedral, indicating at least some alignment still with the traditional church.³⁵

Though we do not have any direct correspondence between Melanchthon and Oecolampadius from this time, it is quite apparent that they trusted and respected each other as friends and fellow scholars. Despite moving in different directions, Oecolampadius and Melanchthon intended to remain aware of one another's work and maintain their friendship. Oecolampadius expressed this desire to Reuchlin in September 1518 when he wrote, "I wish to know where our Philipp Melanchthon is spending his time—whether he resides with you or has gone to Saxony. Though I am not able to follow him in body, I will follow him in spirit and with letters."³⁶

³⁰ BuA 1:77–78 [No. 46].

³¹ On these projects, see BuA 1:66–69, 75–77 [Nos. 39–40, 44–45].

³² Johannes Oecolampadius, *Dragmata graecae literaturae* (Basel: Cratander, 1518); and Philipp Melanchthon, *Institutiones graecae grammaticae* (Hagenau: Anshelm, 1518). Six more editions of Oecolampadius's grammar were published from 1520 to 1546. Melanchthon had more than 40 editions of his grammar published from 1520 to 1590.

³³ CR 1:26–27 [No. 13]: *Accingimur enim non vano conatu ad instauranda Aristotelica.... Habemus ceu subsidiales laboris huius nostri clarissimos Germaniae viros, Capnionem, decus nostrum, Bilibaldum Pyrchaimer, Georgium Simler, Wolfgangum Hagenoum, Ioannem Icolampadium, omnes externarum quoque literarum adsertores*. These plans were restated in the 1522 edition of Melanchthon's grammar as well. See also CR 1:275 [No. 97]; BuA 1:111n2 [No. 73].

³⁴ See BuA 1:111n2 [No. 73]: *alioqui, quod ad scholas meas attinet, uti potuissem vel Urbano vel Oecolampadio*.

³⁵ BuA 1:65–66 [No. 38].

³⁶ Oecolampadius to Johann Reuchlin from September 1518 (BuA 1:71–72 [No. 42]): *Philippus*

Both men also sought to facilitate mutual relationships with other like-minded men. Oecolampadius had encouraged Melanchthon to contact Wolfgang Capito in Basel because of their common theological interests, and Melanchthon sought out Capito.³⁷ Near the end of 1518, when Oecolampadius had completed his doctorate, he left Basel again to become the cathedral preacher in Augsburg.³⁸ While there, Melanchthon encouraged Christoph Scheurl, a professor of jurisprudence at Wittenberg, to write to Oecolampadius. Scheurl relayed to Oecolampadius that Melanchthon, “our common friend, the delight of the Wittenburgers, directed me to have his letter delivered to you. He promised no little about your virtue, integrity, humanity.”³⁹ Scheurl offered himself to Oecolampadius in whatever way could be useful and stated, “if in no way I am able to be useful to you, use at least the service of a friend in transmitting letters to Wittenberg ... where there are very many good, learned friends to me, and among them Philipp, who commonly sends and receives letters by me.”⁴⁰

Sometime around the summer of 1519, Oecolampadius had his “break-through to the Reformation understanding,” when he began expressing views that were more evangelical than traditional.⁴¹ Oecolampadius does not seem to have had a dramatic conversion experience, but rather his involvement in the humanist movement—and his friendship with Melanchthon in particular—played a significant role in his shift toward Reformation views. Melanchthon had praised Oecolampadius in the preface he wrote for the first part of Luther’s *Lectures on the Psalms*, published in March 1519.⁴² More significantly, the earliest extant correspondence between Oecolampadius and Melanchthon is a published report in the form of a letter to Oecolampadius dated July 21, 1519, about the Leipzig Disputation between Johann Eck and Martin Luther.⁴³

Melanchthon ille noster, ubi agat, scire velim, an apud te resideat an Saxoniam ingressus sit. Ego corpore eum sequi non possum, animo sequar et literis.

³⁷ Melanchthon in Wittenberg to Capito in Basel dated May 17, 1519 (*MBW1*; *MBWT1*: No. 57).

³⁸ See *BuA* 1:72–75, 78–81 [Nos. 43, 47–50].

³⁹ Scheurl in Nuremberg to Oecolampadius in Augsburg dated July 20, 1519 (*BuA* 1:97 [No. 62]): *noster Melanchthon, communis amicus, deliciae Wittenburgenses, iussit tibi epistolam suam reddi, nihil non pollicitus de tua virtute, integritate, humanitate.*

⁴⁰ *BuA* 1:97 [No. 62]. *Me tibi offero, qualemcumque inter familiaris locum rogito: si in nullo tibi prodesse possum, utere saltem officio amici in transmittendis litteris Wittenbergam, ubi ex Italia rediens docendo discere potui, ubi amici mihi sunt plerique boni, docti, et inter hos Philippus, qui ad me quotidie epistolas mittunt accipiuntque.*

⁴¹ See Staehelin, *Das theologische Lebenswerk*, 93–94, 100–113. For evidence of this shift beginning as early as May 1519, see *BuA* 1:85–90, 99–100, 108–9 [Nos. 55–58, 61–66, 70].

⁴² See the preface to Martin Luther, *Psalmenvorlesung in D. Martin Luthers Werke, kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 72 vols. (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1883–1993), 5:24 (hereafter *WA* with volume and page number); *CR* 1:70–73 [No. 36]. Melanchthon stated that after 400 years of the domination of scholastic theology, men like Erasmus, Reuchlin, Oecolampadius, and Capito had been raised up to bring true theology to light.

⁴³ Melanchthon to Oecolampadius dated July 21, 1519, published as “Epistola de Lipsica disputatione” (*CR* 1:87–96 [No. 43]; *BuA* 1:97–99 [No. 63]; *MBW1*; *MBWT1*: No. 59). Gordon says that

In this letter, Melanchthon not only gave a report about the disputation, but he specifically appealed to his friendship with Oecolampadius. Melanchthon acknowledged the reality of letter-writing etiquette that often was “approached with friendship then with enmity, then with such frivolous flatteries.”⁴⁴ He quoted an adage of Clericus and cited the way Aristotle expressed kindness that was not always proper. But he desired that their friendship not be like that, but grounded in the spirit of Christ with their souls united out of genuine love, so that their friendship could not be shaken. Melanchthon wrote that he wanted to be able to discern when kind words were expressed that they were genuinely from friends.⁴⁵ He specifically assured Oecolampadius, “There is clearly indeed no one among mortals whose kindness was shown more to me, already from the time of boyhood until now, than yours, and it was truly generous.”⁴⁶ He pledged continuing friendship to Oecolampadius while requesting that he consider the questionable views spoken at the disputation. It is worth noting that Oecolampadius was the first person to whom Melanchthon sent his report. In a letter to Spalatin a week after his letter to Oecolampadius, Melanchthon apologized that he had not previously written about the disputation and explained to him that he had written the letter to Oecolampadius.⁴⁷ A few days later Melanchthon sent Spalatin a copy of the letter he had written to Oecolampadius, along with a transcript of the disputation.⁴⁸ Melanchthon did the same with John Lang in Erfurt.⁴⁹

The exchange of writings over the Leipzig Disputation significantly drew Oecolampadius into the Reformation movement. Eck responded to

Melanchthon “wrote first in July 1519” to Oecolampadius, but as noted above in n. 23, there was prior correspondence that we do not have anymore (“Wary Allies,” 47). The Leipzig Disputation took place from June 27 to July 10, 1519. See also Scheible, *Melanchthon*, 58.

⁴⁴ BuA 1:98 [No. 63]; MBW1; MBWT 1: No. 59: *In utrumque spiritus incumbit pariter, ut inadita sit amicitia tum simulati, tum nugacibus istis blanditiis.*

⁴⁵ BuA 1:98 [No. 63]; MBW1; MBWT 1: No. 59: *Nam eiusmodi auspiciis animos nostros optimus ille sinceræ caritatis spiritus conciliavit, ut amicitiam nostram neque labefactari ullo casu in tam varia omnium rerum humanarum vicissitudine posse sperem, neque vulgaribus illis et per gratias pedaneis suffragiis id genus literarum, qualibus fere aluntur amicitie, altius acturam radices.... Atque utinam illius queam grato pectore beneficium agnoscere, qui talem non dico Thesea, sed Christiana fide amicum nobis iunxerit.... Neque enim rationes nostre sinebant equare beneficium beneficio, qua parte quandoquidem tu prestos, queso permittite vincere nos amando. Aristoteles eum, qui beneficio quempiam affecerit, ab illo tantum vult amari, quantum meretur beneficium aut certe beneficii gratia. Argute ille quidem, sed non omnino probe; neque enim nobis scopus est amoris nostril beneficium ullum tuum, sed ille auctor amicitie nostre Christi spiritus. Tu interim quidquid officii amico dedisti, communi charitatis iure debebas; vicissim in nominibus tuis nos quoque sumus non defuturi officio, si quando casus aliquis ferret.*

⁴⁶ BuA 1:97–99 [No. 63]; MBW1; MBWT 1: No. 59: *Nemo enim plane mortalium est, cuius presentior in me iam inde a puero usque fuerit beneficentia, quam tua, eaque vere liberalis ac prorsus τό γυμνόν τῶν χαρίτων refert.*

⁴⁷ Melanchthon to Spalatin on July 29, 1519 (CR 1:103–5 [No. 45]; MBW1; MBWT 1: No. 60).

⁴⁸ See the letters from Melanchthon to Spalatin in August 1519 (CR 1:107–8, 118–19 [Nos. 47, 49]; MBW1; MBWT 1: No. 61, 63).

⁴⁹ Melanchthon to Johannes Lang dated August 11, 1519 (CR 1:105–7 [No. 46]; MBW1; MBWT 1: No. 62).

Melanchthon's publication within a few days, and then Melanchthon responded again with his "Defense against Johann Eck" in August 1519.⁵⁰ In his response, Melanchthon wrote, "Oecolampadius is, in my view, more pious than to ever want to abuse his name and misrepresent him in any way."⁵¹ In fact, it is likely that Oecolampadius was the editor and author of the foreword to the collection of writings by Melanchthon and Eck about the Leipzig Disputation published later that year.⁵² Additionally, near the beginning of 1520, a satire against Eck entitled "The Unlearned Lutheran Canons" was published anonymously.⁵³ Eck complained that it hurt him more than any other publication, and Luther praised it because it "eloquently and loftily attacked the sophist."⁵⁴ When the work was translated into German, Oecolampadius wrote the afterword.⁵⁵ He is assumed to have been the original author as well. Apparently, Luther said that Oecolampadius had confessed to Melanchthon that he was the author of the writing.⁵⁶ In an event as crucial to the Reformation as the Leipzig Disputation, the relationship between Melanchthon and Oecolampadius was a featured component, as each of them grew in their connection to the movement and in their relationship with one another.

III. *The Silence of a Complicated Friendship (1520–1522)*

Within a few months after the Leipzig Disputation, Oecolampadius began to express discontent with his work as the priest in Augsburg. He grumbled that he did not have a proper outlet for his gifts or a place for his desire to study.⁵⁷ So in April 1520, without consulting any of his friends, he entered the Brigittine

⁵⁰ "Defensio Philippi Melanchthonis contra Johannem Eckium theologiae professorem" (CR 1:108–18). See also BuA 1:99n3 [No. 63].

⁵¹ CR 1:108–18 [No. 48]: *sanctiore apud me loco Oecolampadius est, quam ut eius nomine ad calumniandum quemcumque abuti velim.*

⁵² See BuA 1:99–100n1 [No. 64a]. This collection was published as *Lypsicae disputationis epitome* (Augsburg: Grimm & Wirsung, 1519).

⁵³ *Canonicis indociti Lutherani* appeared in Strasbourg, Wittenberg, and Erfurt.

⁵⁴ Luther to Spalatin dated January 10, 1520 (Martin Luther, *Luther's Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters*, ed. Preserved Smith and Charles M. Jacobs, 2 vols. [Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1913–1918], 1:272–73 [No. 216]). Eck's complaint is mentioned in the letter from Luther to Spalatin on February 27, 1520 (*D. Martin Luthers Werke, kritische Gesamtausgabe: Briefwechsel*, 18 vols. [Weimar: H. Böhlau Nachfolger, 1930–1985], 2:56 [No. 261]; hereafter WA Br with volume and page number).

⁵⁵ BuA 1:108–9 [No. 70]. Staehelin provides background on the events in n. 1.

⁵⁶ See *Luther's Works*, American Edition, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, 55 vols. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg and Fortress, and St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–1986), 48:149n2 (hereafter AE with volume and page number); Luther, *Luther's Correspondence*, 1:272–73n3; Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation*, 75; Ernst Staehelin, *Oekolampad-Bibliographie*, 2nd ed. (Nieuwkoop: de Graaf, 1963), 15 [No. 15]; BuA 1:109n1 [No. 70].

⁵⁷ Oecolampadius wrote years later, "But I myself was searching for quiet and rest so that I could be freed for both letters and prayers; for in these things I found a certain happiness" (BuA 2:27 [No. 465]). See Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation*, 15–16.

monastery in Altomünster with the condition that he could leave when he wanted. It seems that Oecolampadius felt the need to retreat from his work to find clarity in his thinking about all that was happening around him, and that he desired to read and translate more of the church fathers.⁵⁸ A month after the move, Wolfgang Capito expressed his disapproval to Melanchthon that Oecolampadius had ill-advisedly made the decision by himself to withdraw to the monastic life.⁵⁹

During his time at the monastery, Oecolampadius published several translations of patristic writings, as well as treatises on the Eucharist, the Virgin Mary, and auricular confession. In each of these works he used traditional language, but was clearly moving towards evangelical ideas.⁶⁰ His work *That Confession Ought Not Be Burdensome to Christians* (1521) particularly caused a great deal of unrest among the monastic community and eventually forced him to flee from Altomünster in February 1522.⁶¹ While Luther was hidden away in Wartburg, he became aware of Oecolampadius's treatise on confession and wrote to Melanchthon about it.⁶² A few months later he asked Melanchthon to provide him with a copy.⁶³ It is apparent that Melanchthon remained informed about what Oecolampadius was doing, even though Oecolampadius was strangely silent toward Melanchthon.

While at the monastery, Oecolampadius remained in correspondence with Reuchlin, Pirckheimer, Erasmus, Hedio, and Adelmann, but not Melanchthon. In September 1521 Melanchthon wrote to Pirckheimer, "I wrote, I believe, three times to Oecolampadius about a certain necessary matter, which, because he does not respond, I supposed I should actually communicate with you.... Further, with him being silent, I ask that you be willing to prove your kindness to me

⁵⁸ Some writers also note a mystical side that may have been sympathetic to monastic life. Others also speculate that he may have had doubts about his preaching ability because of his weak voice and lack of experience. See Bruce Gordon, *The Swiss Reformation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 109; Ed L. Miller, "Oecolampadius: The Unsung Hero of the Basel Reformation," *Illiff Review* 39 (1982): 10; Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation*, 15–16.

⁵⁹ Capito to Melanchthon from May 1520 (CR 1:163–64 [No. 73]; MBW 1; MBWT 1: No. 92). See also the exchanges between Pirckheimer and Adelmann about Oecolampadius entering the monastery (BuA 1:116–17 [No. 78]).

⁶⁰ E.g., Eric Northway observes that in Oecolampadius's treatise on the Eucharist, *Sermo de sacramento Eucharistiae* (Augsburg: Grimm & Wirsung, 1521), he explained the Eucharistic presence in a way that moved towards "a dynamic significationist position" ("The Reception of the Fathers and Eucharistic Theology in Johannes Oecolampadius [1482–1531], with Special Reference to the Adversus Haereses of Irenaeus of Lyons" [PhD diss., University of Durham, 2008], 107–18). See also Staehelin, *Das theologische Lebenswerk*, 142–46.

⁶¹ Johannes Oecolampadius, *Quod non sit onerosa Christianis confessio paradoxon Ioannis Oecolampadii* (Augsburg: Grimm, 1521). The work was first published in Augsburg on April 20, 1521, and again in Basel by Andreas Cratander in June 1521. See BuA 1:142–43, 145–47 [Nos. 98, 102].

⁶² Luther in Wartburg to Melanchthon in Wittenberg on May 26, 1521 (WA Br 2:346–52 [No. 413]). See also BuA 1:150n5 [No. 105].

⁶³ Luther in Wartburg to Melanchthon in Wittenberg dated July 13, 1521 (WA Br 2:356–61 [No. 418]; MBW 1; MBWT 1: No. 151).

in this matter.”⁶⁴ Melanchthon was specifically seeking to ask Oecolampadius to provide him with writings of Greek fathers he wanted to translate. When Pirckheimer wrote back a few weeks later, he indicated that Oecolampadius did have those books, but that Pirckheimer was unable to obtain them for Melanchthon.⁶⁵

Although Oecolampadius did not communicate with Melanchthon during this time, he had some awareness of what his friend was doing. During his time at the monastery, Oecolampadius also wrote the pamphlet “Judgment about Doctor Martin Luther,” in which he expressed some favorable opinions.⁶⁶ In the very last line of this work Oecolampadius commented, “We have those other novelties from these ones who returned from the wedding of Philip Melanchthon: you will read [about it] on the posted schedule.”⁶⁷ This is the only reference we have from Oecolampadius about the monumental occasion of Melanchthon’s marriage to Katharina Krapp in November 1520.

Oecolampadius’s friends had been imploring him to leave the monastic life from the time he arrived. He later would report that he had become ill at times from the rigors of fasts and night-watches. However, it seems that the biggest reason he left the monastery was because he could not avoid engaging in the theological quarrels outside the monastery walls.⁶⁸ For several months, Oecolampadius journeyed around again before he returned to Basel in November 1522. Soon after his arrival, on December 10, Oecolampadius wrote to Zwingli for the first time to seek his friendship.⁶⁹ This began the development of a strong friendship that would ultimately have significant implications for the relationship between Oecolampadius and Melanchthon.

IV. *The Fluctuation of a Distant Friendship (1523–1524)*

Despite the silence from Oecolampadius during his time in the monastery, Melanchthon expressed the desire for a renewed friendship. After Oecolampadius had established himself as a key figure in Basel, in May 1523 Melanchthon offered Oecolampadius the opportunity to come to Wittenberg if the situation

⁶⁴ Melanchthon in Wittenberg to Pirckheimer in Nuremberg from September 1521 (*BuA* 1:161 [No. 113]; *MBW* 1; *MBWT* 1: No. 171): *Scripsi, credo, ter ad Oikolampron et de re quidem necessaria, quam, quia ille non respondet, puto tecum quoque communicandam esse. Audacter autem; nam ita postea mihi mos erit tecum commentari. Scis profiteri Graeca me in Saxonibus iuventuti, si nihil aliud, certe studiose. Rogavi Oikolampron, ut meam adiuvet operam suppeditetque Graecos aliquos theologos. Nam hos cupio potissimum interpretari. Porro, cum ille taceat, idem te quaeso, in hac re velis experiri me benignitatem tuam.*

⁶⁵ Pirckheimer to Melanchthon from September 1521 (*MBW* 1; *MBWT* 1: No. 171a).

⁶⁶ Johannes Oecolampadius, *Oecolampadii iudicium de doctore Martino Luthero* (Leipzig: Schumann, 1520).

⁶⁷ Oecolampadius, *Iudicium Luthero*, A-iii-b: *Eas alias habemus novitates ex his qui redierunt e nuptiis Philipp Melanchtonis: in schedula leges posita.*

⁶⁸ See Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation*, 17.

⁶⁹ *Huldreich Zwinglis sämtliche Werke*, ed. Emil Egli et al.; *Corpus Reformatorum* 88–101 (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zurich, 1905–1959), 94:634–35 [No. 258] (hereafter CR followed by volume and page number); *BuA* 1:200 [No. 136]; [No. 258].

in Basel became unbearable because of the difficulties that resulted from promoting Reformation ideas. He wrote:

If so far I wrote nothing to you, my brother, I prefer you ascribe any evil whatsoever rather than to suppose any unchanged love. My mind remains toward you as long as we are going to be the same in Christ.... O how often I desire to actually speak in person. Whatever your situation in Basel is, I would prefer you to be with us; my home, my dwellings are yours. So, consider what your plans may bring. If there is nothing else that may dissuade, nowhere else than here will you be more beloved by all the good men. Let this be more than enough for now. If only you would answer shortly!⁷⁰

But once again Oecolampadius did not pursue the opportunity to go to Wittenberg, but instead remained in Basel.

Earlier that spring, Oecolampadius had begun teaching his first biblical lectures at the university, on the book of Isaiah. Because of his success with these lectures, he was soon appointed as a professor at the University of Basel in June 1523.⁷¹ The audience at Oecolampadius's lectures often included about four hundred people, including pastors and students from the university.⁷² Luther was informed about Oecolampadius's lectures on Isaiah, and wrote to Nicholas Grebel that same month, "I am glad indeed that John Oecolampadius is lecturing on Isaiah, though I hear that many are not pleased, but that is the fortune of Christian teaching."⁷³ Since it would be six more years before Basel would officially institute the Reformation ordinances, there were indeed many people who did not approve of Oecolampadius's teaching. Among those who were not pleased was Erasmus.

The friendship between Oecolampadius and Erasmus had begun to break down already by the end of 1522 as Oecolampadius pushed harder for reform.⁷⁴ Erasmus would later express his displeasure when he bemoaned that "Oecolampadius is reigning among us."⁷⁵ With knowledge of Erasmus's discontent,

⁷⁰ Melancthon to Oecolampadius dated May 21, 1523 (CR 1:615 [No. 242]; BuA 1:221 [No. 154]): *Si hactenus nihil ad te scripsi, mi frater, malo cuius imputes potius, quam ut suspiceris aliquid de amore immutatum. Manet idem animus erga te, donec in Christo iidem futuri sumus.... O quoties cupio coram etiam colloqui! Quisquis est Basileae status tuus, mallem te nobiscum esse; mea domus, mei lares tui erunt. Propterea vide, quid ferant rationes tuae. Si nihil est, quod alio avocet, nusquam gentium quam hic carior eris bonis omnibus. Nunc plura non licuit. Utinam tu brevi respondeas!*

⁷¹ For the background on these first lectures, see Staehelin, *Das theologische Lebenswerk*, 189–90; Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation*, 19. Though he had not been appointed as a professor when he began the lectures on Isaiah, he was permitted to teach as a doctor of theology.

⁷² See Rudolf Wackernagel, *Humanismus und Reformation in Basel* (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1924), 343, 346; Poythress, *Reformer of Basel*, 13. Northway refers to it as "a consistent crowd of about four hundred people" ("Fathers and Eucharistic Theology," 55).

⁷³ WA 12:56. For an English translation, see Luther, *Luther's Correspondence*, 2:187 [No. 589].

⁷⁴ See, e.g., the letter from Basilius Amerbach in Basel to his brother Bonifacius Amerbach in Avignon (BuA 1:200 [No. 137]).

⁷⁵ See the letters from Erasmus to Zwingli in October 1523 and Zwingli to Oecolampadius on October 11, 1523 (CR 95:125 [No. 319]; BuA 1:259 [No. 178]). The year of this comment is incorrect in Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation*, 19.

Luther wrote to Oecolampadius himself on June 20, 1523, to encourage him in his teaching on Isaiah.

Certainly we have exceedingly approved your spirit and this excellent deed. And Philip does not cease to make you more distinguished to me every day; with unique joy, he takes pleasure in remembering you. May the Lord strengthen your intention in lecturing on Isaiah, though it was written to me that Erasmus is displeased. Do not let his displeasure trouble you.... You ought rather to be glad if what you think about the Scriptures displeases him, for he is a man who neither can nor will have a right judgment about them, as almost all the world is now beginning to perceive.⁷⁶

In March 1525 Oecolampadius's lectures were published as the first Protestant commentary on Isaiah.⁷⁷ Two months earlier, Erasmus had expressed his displeasure with Oecolampadius again when he discovered that in the dedication of the Isaiah commentary, it would read, "*our* great Erasmus," implying association with Oecolampadius's teaching.⁷⁸ In contrast, when Luther published his Isaiah commentary in 1532 he wrote, "Oecolampadius has quite satisfactorily translated Isaiah," and "Oecolampadius has sufficiently done good work in the grammar, although occasionally he may differ from us."⁷⁹

Maurer states that the relationship between Oecolampadius and Erasmus fell apart because Melanchthon sought to pull Oecolampadius to Luther's side on the issues related to the freedom of the will.⁸⁰ Near the end of 1524, there was an exchange between Erasmus and Melanchthon that included their evaluations of Oecolampadius. Erasmus had listed Oecolampadius among those who offended him, with the qualification that "Oecolampadius is a little more

⁷⁶ Luther to Oecolampadius dated June 20, 1523 (*BuA* 1:222–23 [No. 157]): *Certe vehementer nos probavimus hunc spiritum tuum et egregium facinus. Neque cessat Philippus te mihi quotidie maiorem facere, singulari gaudio in tui memoria delectatus. Dominus etiam roboret institutum tuum in legendo Isaia, quamquam ad me scriptum est, Erasmo displicere....* For an English translation of the letter, see Luther, *Luther's Correspondence*, 2:190 [No. 591].

⁷⁷ *BuA* 1:277, 360 [Nos. 193, 248]. The lectures were published as Johannes Oecolampadius, *In Iesaiam prophetam hypomnematon, hoc est, commentariorum, Ioannis Oecolampadii libri VI* (Basel: Andreas Cratander, 1525).

⁷⁸ Erasmus to Oecolampadius dated January 25, 1525 (*BuA* 1:353–55 [No. 242]): *quid dicturi sunt, quum in tua praefatione legerint, 'magnus Erasmus noster,' praesertim quum ipsa res nullam daret occasionem nominandi mei? Si scripsissem in Esaiam, aut sit tu de libero arbitrio erat, quur nostri faceres mentionem.*

⁷⁹ *WA* 31.2:2: *Oecolampadius satis diligenter transtulit Esaiam. WA* 25:88: *In Grammatica autem satis bonam operam navavit Oecolampadius, quamquam alicubi a nobis discrepet.* For examples where Luther specifies his disagreement with Oecolampadius, see *WA* 25:152, 160. Luther also praised Oecolampadius's teaching on Isaiah in the preface to Melanchthon's *Annotations on John* (*WA* 12:57.18–19). On the significance of Luther's use of Oecolampadius's Isaiah commentary, see Stephen G. Burnett, "Reassessing the 'Basel-Wittenberg Conflict': Dimensions of the Reformation-Era Discussion of Hebrew Scholarship," in *Hebraica Veritas? Christian Hebraists and the Study of Judaism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Allison P. Coudert and Jeffrey S. Shoulson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 188–90.

⁸⁰ Maurer, *Der junge Melanchthon*, 1:67.

modest, and yet with him, too, I would desire gospel integrity.”⁸¹ In Melanchthon’s response to Erasmus, of all the people he had listed, Melanchthon asks, “As you construct your list where you assemble the most wicked of all bipeds, I ask why is it that you also associate Oecolampadius with the like, I ask what is proper?”⁸² Erasmus explained that he had not included Oecolampadius in the list *in the same way* as the others:

So far I have praised no one with regard to magnificence or thought more than Oecolampadius; yet also this professed ‘most candid friend’ spoke of me unfavorably not only with words in some colloquies and sermons, but truly also in his books several times he obliquely mentions it more than necessary.⁸³

Erasmus did specifically identify that he was displeased with Oecolampadius’s views on the will, but also that he was offended by Oecolampadius’s allegation that he had copied Oecolampadius’s work on confession. As the relationship between Erasmus and Oecolampadius declined, it seems that Melanchthon was especially eager to defend and support his friend Oecolampadius.

The strength of the relationship between Melanchthon and Oecolampadius can also be seen in that they once again facilitated mutual relationships with other like-minded men. When people traveled from Wittenberg to Basel, Melanchthon frequently encouraged them to meet with, or even stay with, Oecolampadius. For example, in September 1523 Melanchthon wrote to Oecolampadius that Hieronymus Schurf was visiting Basel and requested, “I want you to welcome him just as you would me.”⁸⁴ Similarly, in April 1524 Luther wrote to Oecolampadius that Joachim Camerarius, the close friend of Melanchthon, would be visiting Basel, and that Melanchthon might be coming with him.⁸⁵ While Melanchthon did not travel to Basel at that time, Camerarius did visit Oecolampadius and reported it to Melanchthon. Melanchthon then wrote to Oecolampadius:

⁸¹ Erasmus to Melanchthon dated September 6, 1524 (CR 1:669 [No. 286]): *Oecolampadius ceteris Paulo modestior est, et tame nest, ubi in illo quoque desiderem Evangelicam sinceritatem.*

⁸² Melanchthon to Erasmus dated September 30, 1524 (CR 1:674–76 [No. 289]; MBW1; MBWT 2: No. 344).

⁸³ Erasmus to Melanchthon dated December 10, 1524 (BuA 1:181–91 [No. 128]; CR 1:688–94 [No. 302]): *Oecolampadium non annuero portentis illis nec huic similes, etiamsi permulta sint, quae merito de his queri possim. Hactenus de nemine magnificentius vel sensi vel praedicavi quam de Oecolampadio; tamen et hic professus amicum candidissimum non solum dictis aliquot in colloquiis et in concionibus me perstrinxit, verum etiam in libellis suis aliquocies attingit oblique idque adeo praeter causam.*

⁸⁴ Melanchthon to Oecolampadius dated September 8, 1523 (BuA 1:252–54 [No. 173]; MBW 1; MBWT 2: No. 292): *Caetera Hieronymus ipse, quem volo sicut alterum me complectare.* Melanchthon greeted Oecolampadius with the phrase τῆς ἐκκλησίας λαμπάδι (of the church of ‘the Lamp’) indicating his respect for Oecolampadius as the leader of the church in Basel. He also specified that he suggested to Schurf to speak with Oecolampadius.

⁸⁵ Luther to Oecolampadius around April 15, 1524 (BuA 1:275–76 [No. 191]).

Joachim made known to me your courtesy with the greatest words. Although I had no doubt that you were going to receive him in the way that the erudition and honesty of the young man deserved and were going to readily pursue every kind of duty, still I rejoice that even his soul was satisfied.⁸⁶

In that same letter, Melanchthon commended to Oecolampadius another friend who had decided to travel to Basel.

When Melanchthon wrote to Oecolampadius about another young man traveling to Basel carrying letters, he voiced his complaint that Oecolampadius was not writing to him. Melanchthon lamented that when he sent his letter, "I did not do it with the motive of such pleasure, but out of duty.... I did not send [the carrier] off without my letter to you, even though you seem to hold back from this kind of duty to me."⁸⁷ This complaint by Melanchthon was not uncommon. Melanchthon conveyed this same sentiment in letters he wrote in February and September of 1524. Melanchthon entreated Oecolampadius, "If only you would write, my Oecolampadius, that you would write constantly so that you may teach the genuine gospel.... If only sometime it may be allowed for us to meet!"⁸⁸ Several months later, Melanchthon complained, "You may hardly believe how annoying your silence is to me, my Oecolampadius, especially with regard to the disturbances in your region."⁸⁹ In these letters, Melanchthon frequently shared with Oecolampadius some of the things that were happening in Wittenberg and asked that Oecolampadius would tell him what was happening in Basel. He also expressed concern about the effect that the debates between Luther and Karlstadt on the Lord's Supper would have for the evangelical cause, and emphasized the influence Oecolampadius could have, particularly with regard to the iconoclasm occurring in Zurich.⁹⁰

The silence on the part of Oecolampadius may indicate his lack of interest in cultivating a close friendship with Melanchthon. However, it may also be that Oecolampadius was so engrossed in the very affairs about which Melanchthon

⁸⁶ Melanchthon to Oecolampadius dated June 11, 1524 (*BuA* 1:283–84 [No. 199]): *Joachimus amplissimis verbis praedicavit mihi humanitatem tuam. Ego, quanquam non dubitabam, quin esses eum excepturus, quemadmodum meretur adulescentis erudition et probitas, comiter et prosecuturus omni genere officiorum, tamen gaudeo illius animo etiam satisfactum esse.*

⁸⁷ Melanchthon to Oecolampadius from 1524 (*BuA* 1:312–13 [No. 214]; *MBW* 1; *MBWT* 2: No. 340): *Id ego non illius tantum caussa perlibenter feci, sed officii etiam mei ratus sum esse, ne quem hinc dimitterem sine meis ad te literis, tametsi tu mihi nonnihil cessare videris in hoc genere officii.* In his valediction, Melanchthon tells Oecolampadius to write back. Staehelin suggests July or October as possible dates for the letter (*Das theologische Lebenswerk*, 313n1). *MBW* dates it as the beginning of September.

⁸⁸ Melanchthon to Oecolampadius dated February 14, 1524 (*BuA* 1:266–67 [No. 183]; *CR* 1:786 [No. 368]; *MBW* 1; *MBWT* 2: No. 311): *Utinam, quod facias, mi Oecolampadi, facias perpetuo, ut evangelium ἀκριβῆως doceas et, quantum fieri potest, vulgi, hoc est porcorum, spurcitiem coherceas.... Utinam liceat aliquando nobis congregari!*

⁸⁹ Melanchthon to Oecolampadius dated September 30, 1524 (*BuA* 1:318–19 [No. 220]; *MBW* 1; *MBWT* 2: No. 345): *Vix credas, quam molestum mihi sit silentium tuum, mi Oecolampadi, praesertim in his motibus vestrae regionis.*

⁹⁰ See *MBW* 1; *MBWT* 2: Nos. 292, 311, 326, 340, 345.

wanted more information that he did not have opportunity to write. Northway surmises that the silence may have been because Oecolampadius was changing his position on the Eucharist and did not know how to communicate that to his friend.⁹¹ Whatever the reasons were, Melanchthon's desire for more correspondence from Oecolampadius would eventually be fulfilled as a result of this growing disagreement over the Eucharist.

V. *The Challenges of a Devoted Friendship (1525–1528)*

The friendship between Melanchthon and Oecolampadius faced its greatest challenge in the controversies about the Lord's Supper. Already at the beginning of 1525, Melanchthon was aware of Oecolampadius's changing views on the Lord's Supper. On January 12, he wrote to Oecolampadius that he had been reflecting on the questions concerning the Eucharist about whether the word "is" was a trope and where Christ's body was after he ascended.⁹² Melanchthon stated that he saw no reason to depart from the actual words in the Gospels and Paul, and sided with Luther on the doctrine of the real presence in the Eucharist.⁹³ In a letter to Thomas Blarer, Melanchthon referred to the letter he had written to Oecolampadius and explicitly affirmed his view on the real presence of Christ.⁹⁴

This is the point at which Maurer claims that the friendship between Melanchthon and Oecolampadius was over. He asserts that with the letter on January 12, 1525, Melanchthon cut off the bond of friendship from Oecolampadius in the same month that Erasmus had rescinded his friendship with Oecolampadius as well.⁹⁵ He states, "On the basis of Christian humanism, [their friendship] was closed; in the name of Reformation theology, they had been separated."⁹⁶ Maurer argues that this break in friendship was the fault of Oeco-

⁹¹ Northway, "Reception of the Fathers," 60–61, 127–28. He cites the letter from Oecolampadius to Veit Bild from October 23, 1524, where Oecolampadius expresses that "to be fed by Christ is meant in a spiritual sense" (*BuA* 1:332 [No. 230]). Northway also raises the possibility that Oecolampadius wanted to "stay out of Luther's crosshairs." See also Thomas A. Fudge, "Icarus of Basel? Oecolampadius and the Early Swiss Reformation," *JRH* 21 (1997): 274.

⁹² Melanchthon to Oecolampadius on January 12, 1525 (*BuA* 1:338–39 [No. 236]; *MBW* 1; *MBWT* 2: No. 370): *Me non nuper, optime Oecolampadi, exercet haec quaestio περί εὐχαριστίας varieque reputanti omnia nihil tutius adhuc visum est, quam ne discederem a verbis tum historiae evangelicae tum Pauli. Nam τρόποι verbi 'est' me nihil movent, nec dubito, quin in Christi coena naturale corpus Christi sumperint discipuli. Dicis: quid post Christi a nobis discessum? Redine corpus toties? Ἀποπτον profecto et a communi sensu valde abhorrens; sed hic me Paulus cogit, ut sentiam, Christum voluisse hoc etiam modo in ecclesia versari.*

⁹³ Luther believed that Oecolampadius had taken a merely symbolic view of the Lord's Supper, which may have influenced Melanchthon's perception of what Oecolampadius was saying (*AE* 36:345).

⁹⁴ *MBW* 1; *MBWT* 2: No. 372. See the discussion in Northway, "Reception of the Fathers," 120–27.

⁹⁵ Maurer, *Der junge Melanchthon*, 1:68–69.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:69.

lampadius, because he had already abandoned their mutual foundation of humanism with his treatise on confession from 1521. As evidence for this evaluation, Maurer cites a letter between Alciato and Amberbach from July 13, 1521, which shows praise for Melanchthon's courage and blame for Oecolampadius's effort.⁹⁷ While perhaps it could be argued that the trajectory of a breakdown was already set back then or in 1525, there are still many examples from each of them after this point that they were devoted to their longstanding friendship.

A possible indication of the fracture between Oecolampadius and Melanchthon is the lack of evidence that either Melanchthon or Luther expressed interest in Oecolampadius's commentary on Romans first published in August 1525.⁹⁸ Since Luther and Melanchthon had previously been very interested in Oecolampadius's treatise on confession, his sermons on 1 John, and his commentary on Isaiah, it seems that their silence on such an important biblical and theological work is significant. Their silence is particularly notable given all that they would have agreed with in Oecolampadius's Romans commentary.⁹⁹ While this indicates the increasing rift between Oecolampadius and Melanchthon, it still cannot be maintained that their friendship was over at this point.

During the summer of 1525 Oecolampadius published his important treatise "On the Genuine Words of the Lord," in which he publically expressed his spiritual view of the Lord's Supper.¹⁰⁰ Oecolampadius's view on the Lord's Supper was similar to that of Zwingli, but differed from Zwingli's affirmation that Jesus' words, "This is my body" should be understood, "This signifies my body." Rather, Oecolampadius located the metaphor in "my body," so that the saying of Jesus should be understood as, "This is a *figure* of my body."¹⁰¹ This treatise was published in Strasbourg rather than Basel because it was so controversial. It was condemned by the Sorbonne in Paris, refuted by Erasmus, banned in Basel, and Oecolampadius was threatened with expulsion or arrest. He wrote to Zwingli in October 1525 that he was in trouble with the city council more than ever.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Ibid. Note this is four years earlier than the supposed breach.

⁹⁸ BuA 1:379–80 [No. 268]. Johannes Oecolampadius, *In epistolam b. Pauli apost. ad Romanos adnotationes* (Basel: Andreas Cratander, 1525, 1526); *In epistolam b. Pauli apostoli ad Romanos annotationes: cum indice* (Nuremberg: Petreius, 1526).

⁹⁹ See Jeff Fisher, "The Doctrine of Justification in the Writings of John Oecolampadius (1482–1531)," in *Since We Are Justified by Faith*, ed. Michael Parsons (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2012), 51–57.

¹⁰⁰ BuA 1:370–72 [No. 261]. The treatise was published as Johannes Oecolampadius, *De genuina verborum Domini, 'Hoc est corpus meum' juxta vetustissimos auctores exposition* (Strasbourg: Johann Knobloch, 1525). For the most significant aspects of this work, see Northway, "Reception of the Fathers," 132–35.

¹⁰¹ Oecolampadius asserted that he was following Tertullian in identifying that the phrase *hoc est corpus meum* was equivalent to *hoc est figura corporis mei*. For helpful summaries of Oecolampadius's developing views on the Lord's Supper, see Northway, "Reception of the Fathers," 64–65 and 135–43.

¹⁰² BuA 1:404 [No. 290]; CR 95:395–96 [No. 396].

The majority of the correspondence between Melanchthon and Oecolampadius for the next few years revolved around disagreements about the Lord's Supper. But even with these disagreements, each of them expressed a genuine devotion to maintain their friendship. Of course, there is no doubt that each would have preferred the other to come into agreement on the matters regarding the Lord's Supper.¹⁰³ However, as Amy Nelson Burnett points out, when Melanchthon's correspondence with others in Basel diminished after 1525 over the Lord's Supper controversy, Oecolampadius remained his only friend in Basel.¹⁰⁴ In fact, the two regularly appealed to the importance of their long friendship with one another, even while contending for their own theological position. While one might argue that this was merely epistolary rhetoric to obtain theological advantage over the other, in the case of these two, it seems that their previously established friendship and expressed desires to maintain that friendship indicate that they had some intention to remain friends.

We do not have Oecolampadius's original response to Melanchthon's letter from January 1525, but in a follow-up letter dated November 25, 1525, he reiterated his feelings, which Bruce Gordon calls "a moving testament to his friendship with Melanchthon."¹⁰⁵ Oecolampadius began the letter:

My Philip, what I testified to you in my last letter, I anxiously will be remembering, certainly let the most sacred bond of our friendship not be violated by me, no matter what we may disagree about doctrines in the meantime. Even if you might seem toward me more severely rude—that I suspect to be less so in the future.¹⁰⁶

Oecolampadius explained that he had not written earlier because he heard a rumor that Melanchthon had died. This rumor had given Oecolampadius intense sorrow that was only comforted by knowing that for Melanchthon to depart was to be with Christ, which was preferable by far.¹⁰⁷ Oecolampadius described the destructive events in his hometown, the misery of his parents, the rage of the princes and bishops, the exile and death of many friends and supporters, and how Erasmus had written about him. He also appealed to Melanchthon about the Lord's Supper.

Moreover, that which refers to my publication [*De genuina verborum*], I very much want you to persuade the most watchful Martin [Luther] and Pomeranius that

¹⁰³ Scheible comments that Melanchthon attempted to pull Oecolampadius to his side, because at that time he felt the differences with the Zwinglians were stronger than with the Catholics and he wanted to save the unity of the church (*Melanchthon*, 104).

¹⁰⁴ Amy Nelson Burnett, "Melanchthon's Reception in Basel," in *Melanchthon in Europe: His Work and Influence beyond Wittenberg*, ed. Karin Maag (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 71.

¹⁰⁵ Gordon, "Wary Allies," 48.

¹⁰⁶ BuA 1:418–20 [No. 304]; MBW 1; MBWT 2: No. 429: *Mi Philippe, quod postremis ad te litteris testatus sum, anxie memor ero, nempe ne sacrosanctum amicitie nostre foedus per me violetur, utcunque interim de dogmatibus contraveritamus, etiamsi erga me tu viderere severiusculus, id quod futurum suspicor minime.*

¹⁰⁷ BuA 1:418–20 [No. 304]; MBW 1; MBWT 2: No. 429. Oecolampadius is clearly alluding to Phil 1:21.

nothing be written with a hostile mind and with depraved dispositions! Where anything was provided with faith, declare such things. May the lovers of disputes not loosen the indestructible love with belittlings! Many attack us, but we are not ignorant of who the instigator is, some are more devoted [*dicatores*] than learned [*doctiores*]. . . . It is reported that you will be writing against Zwingli, which will also be against me, specifically on the subject of the Eucharist. Do not look down on us as ignorant ones, nor treat friends as enemies!¹⁰⁸

Oecolampadius declared that they were dedicated to Christ and would rather perish eternally than preach anything against Christ. At the end of the letter, he again appealed to Melanchthon's love so that he would try to soothe the fierceness of the others associated with him.¹⁰⁹

We do not have any indication of a response from Melanchthon to this letter. His response may have been lost, he may have intentionally remained silent, or he may simply not have provided a written response. However, this does not mean that we can say nothing about how Melanchthon responded to Oecolampadius's appeal to their friendship. In letters to other people during this time period, both Melanchthon and Oecolampadius mention one another.¹¹⁰ Most of the time Melanchthon referred to the teaching or writings of Oecolampadius on the Lord's Supper, such as in the letter he wrote to Luther and Bugenhagen in September 1527.¹¹¹ In these letters, Melanchthon sometimes mentions his friendship with Oecolampadius, but more frequently he distinguishes the attitude of Zwingli and Oecolampadius. For example, in a letter to Spalatin, Melanchthon observed that almost nothing new was being said about the Lord's Supper despite all the works being published. But he specifically noted that Zwingli had written a threatening letter to Luther.¹¹² It seems that already at this point, Melanchthon identified Zwingli as more the cause of dispute than Oecolampadius.

We also see other people, such as Theobald Billikan, in the middle of the action between Melanchthon and Oecolampadius. Billikan had written to

¹⁰⁸ BuA 1:418–20 [No. 304]; MBW1; MBWT2: No. 429: *Ceterum quod ad libellum meum attinet, maximopere velim observandissimo Martino ac Pomerano persuadeas nihil hostili animo et depravatis affectibus scriptum! Qua quisque fide peditus sit, res ipsa declaret. Non obtreactionibus rixarum amatores indissolubilem charitatem solvant! Multi nos impugnant, sed quo impulsore non ignoramus, dicatores quidam quam doctiores. . . . Fama est te scripturum adversus Zwinglium, id quod et contra me erit, presertim in materia de eucharista. Ne contempseris ignotos, et amicos ne excipias tanquam inimicos!*

¹⁰⁹ BuA 1:418–20 [No. 304]; MBW1; MBWT2: No. 429: *Haec non propter te solum scribo, quem suoapte ingenio modestissimum veritatisque amantissimum scio, sed ut ferociorum, si qui isthic, animos demulceas. Habebis scio veritatis rationem, sed et charitatis non minorem.*

¹¹⁰ For examples, see MBW1: Nos. 445, 473, 478, 539, 662; MBWT2: Nos. 445, 473, 478; MBWT3: Nos. 539, 662; and BuA 1:450–51, 562; 2:176, 189 [Nos. 325, 410, 571, 578]. Oecolampadius particularly wrote to Zwingli about Melanchthon.

¹¹¹ Melanchthon to Luther and Bugenhagen dated September 16, 1527 (MBW1; MBWT3: No. 593; WA Br 4:249–51 [No. 1145]).

¹¹² Melanchthon to Spalatin dated May 4, 1527 (MBW1; MBWT3: No. 539; CR 1:865 [No. 440]).

Oecolampadius in January 1526 to understand more about his figurative interpretation of the Lord's Supper and to get the letter that "Philip Melanchthon promised you would give to me."¹¹³ Oecolampadius responded with a public letter in February, published as the "Apologetica Joannis Oecolampadii."¹¹⁴ Melanchthon and Billikan then exchanged letters, in which Billikan reported that he was not displeased with all things "Oecolampadian." One of the letters Melanchthon had written to Billikan, he asked him later to burn. Billikan obeyed the request, and stated that he had done so not because there was something unworthy in Melanchthon's letter, but out of friendship.¹¹⁵

After a long silence Oecolampadius wrote again to Melanchthon in May 1528. He appealed again to their friendship in the midst of their theological disagreements, "I will still rightly enjoy our old friendship, even as 'the scum of the earth' in your holy radiance, I delight writing to you without regard to elaborate prefaces."¹¹⁶ He complained that the new term *Schwärmer* was not appropriate to be used against them, because they too loved Christ and were moved by piety. He commented in this letter that some of what Luther had written in his confession about the Lord's Supper did not differ much from his own view.¹¹⁷ He also reported on a few personal matters, including the fact that he had gotten married.¹¹⁸

Once again, Melanchthon remained silent. We know that Melanchthon had not responded by December based on a letter that Oecolampadius wrote to Konrad Sam where he commented, "Besides I did not hear even a word from Melanchthon, although ... through my letter I admonished him that he urge those with him to consider our people better. I modestly did what I could."¹¹⁹ These comments reflect Oecolampadius's consistent view that while others had abandoned all courtesy toward them, he still had hope that Melanchthon could be reasoned with. Though their friendship was deteriorating, it had not yet completely dissolved.

¹¹³ Theobald Billikan to Oecolampadius dated January 16, 1526 (*BuA* 1:451–52 [No. 326]).

¹¹⁴ Johannes Oecolampadius, *Apologetica Joannis Oecolampadii: de dignitate eucharistiae sermons duo; ad Theobaldum Billicanum, quoniam in verbis coenae alienum sensum inferant; ad ecclesiastas Suevos antisyngramma* (Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1526). See *BuA* 1:459–62 [No. 329].

¹¹⁵ See *MBW* 1; *MBWT* 3: No. 529 for Billikan's description of these letters.

¹¹⁶ Oecolampadius to Melanchthon May 21, 1528 (*BuA* 2:189–90 [No. 579]; *MBW* 1; *MBWT* 3: No. 686): *Ular adhuc iure veteris amicitiae, etiam peripsema mundi, tuoque candore sancte fruatur, citra praefationis apparatus tibi scribens.*

¹¹⁷ *BuA* 2:189–90 [No. 579]; *MBW* 1; *MBWT* 3: No. 686. Oecolampadius was referring to Luther's "Vom abendmal Christi, bekendnis," published in March 1528.

¹¹⁸ At age 45, Oecolampadius married the 26-year-old Wibrandis Rosenblatt, the widow of Reformer Ludwig Keller. Following Oecolampadius's death, she would marry Capito, and then Bucer, giving birth to eleven children to four Reformers. Three of those children were Oecolampadius's.

¹¹⁹ Oecolampadius to Konrad Sam December 21, 1528 (*BuA* 2:271–72 [No. 624]): *Caeterum de Melanchthone ne verbum quidem audiui, quamvis in nundinis Francofordinis per epistolam eum monuerim, ut cum suis ageret, nostra melius respicerent. Egi autem id quam potui modeste.*

VI. *The Decline of a Divided Friendship (1529–1531)*

Near the end of 1528, the Elector Philip of Hesse recognized the need for a thorough discussion on the Lord's Supper. He proclaimed, "Lord willing, I will make Oecolampadius with his people and Luther with his people come together at my employ and expense, even if I have to spend six thousand florins!"¹²⁰ Much of the correspondence by Melanchthon and Oecolampadius at this time was about organizing and preparing for the colloquy that would be held at Marburg.¹²¹ The focus of a letter from Oecolampadius in March 1529, for example, was on their differences over the Lord's Supper, particularly christological views. In that letter, though, Oecolampadius again expressed that he "certainly desired to keep their friendship," and lamented that Melanchthon had been silent.¹²² He specifically asked for the courtesy that their former friendship be honored, and pleaded that unless some bad misfortune had happened to Melanchthon, rather than perpetual silence, "I at least deserve the grace to know if you have rejected our friendship."¹²³

Melanchthon responded to Oecolampadius only a few weeks later:

To the most learned man Doctor Johannes Oecolampadius, his friend, Philip Melanchthon. I have received a few of your letters, which were greatly pleasing to me because there exists in them many unambiguous indications of your old kindness towards me and desire for a most constant friendship. For my spirit is the same toward you—as it always has been. Moreover, I always cherished with admiration your uncommon learning and virtues, and I loved you greatly and with a certain singular loyalty. If only these were the times that we might be able to delight in this our friendship. But this terrible dissension about the Lord's Supper falls upon [us], which hindered our old practice of kindness [and] has the habit of bringing contention between us. However, it did not shake my favor towards you. And so, if

¹²⁰ BuA 2:287 n. 5 [No. 639]: *Deo volente faciam Oecolampadium cum suis et Lutherum cum suis meo conductu et sumptu convenire, etiamsi sex millia florenorum exponere deberem*. Staehelin notes that already as early as March 30 it was being reported that "Doctor Martin and Philipp Melanchthon with Zwingli and Oecolampadius are supposed to come together at Nuremberg and talk about their division over the sacrament" (BuA 2:335–36 [No. 673]).

¹²¹ See BuA 2:337–43 [Nos. 674, 676, 677, 679]; and MBW1; MBW.T 3: Nos. 777, 778, 784, 788, 802, 804, 805.

¹²² Oecolampadius to Melanchthon on March 31, 1529 (BuA 2:292–95 [No. 645]; MBW1; MBW.T 3: No. 766): *Magis absentem literis interpellare tuam humanitatem, Melanchthon ornatissime, hactenus non sum veritus, sed pristinae familiaritatis necessitudinem qualibuscunque tandem epistolarum, certe amicarum, si non eruditarum, officiis conservare studui*.

¹²³ BuA 2:292–95 [No. 645]; MBW1; MBW.T 3: No. 766: *Tum sane iucundum mihi foret ex hac vita migrare, id quod, opinor, ex variis meis ad te literis accepisti, nisi forte malo infortunio nullae ad te pervenerint, quod suspicari licet ex perpetuo silentio tuo. Nondum enim ausim insimulare, te, quem cuncti mansueto Christi spiritu praeditum testantur, ita surrexisisse supercilium, ut litas familiarium inauditas sine response dimittas. Itaque satis mirari non possum; optima quaeque de te mihi polliceor, et ne verbo quidem spes fovetur. Merear tandem id gratiae, ut sciam te amicitiae renunciassse*.

you are missing any kindness from me, I want you to blame the times more than my faith.¹²⁴

Melanchthon clearly did not perceive their friendship as over. He explained his silence toward Oecolampadius by contending that he had been a spectator of the drama more than an actor in this affair. He even professed, "So if your opinion about the Lord's Supper was satisfying to me, I would openly declare it."¹²⁵ However, he reaffirmed that he would not depart from his conscience on the meaning of the words and could not agree that the body of Christ is absent from the elements. He urged Oecolampadius to consider the dangers of using clever interpretations of what the church fathers taught about the Lord's Supper and warned him about holding to a doctrine that did not teach the real presence. Despite the majority of the content of the letter, Melanchthon stated, "But this is not to set up a disputation; I only wrote these things so that you might recognize my perpetual kindness towards you. And yet I did not want to hide what I think."¹²⁶ He concluded the letter with the request that Oecolampadius "consider well that I wrote my letter with the noblest and friendliest spirit."¹²⁷

The response from Oecolampadius did not occur until at least July. Before Melanchthon had heard back from Oecolampadius, he wrote to Johann Lachmann to warn him about the Zwinglians. In that letter he included the comment, "You know that I have an old friendship with Oecolampadius. But I wished he had not fallen into their alliance."¹²⁸ This statement appropriately summarizes Melanchthon's feelings about Oecolampadius. The good friendship they had formed had been sabotaged by Oecolampadius's being drawn into Zwingli's camp.

The final letter between these two was from Oecolampadius to Melanchthon in August 1529. Although he had written to Zwingli at the end of July that he did not want to write anything before the scheduled colloquy, when Melanchthon's previous letter was published, Oecolampadius decided to write to Melanchthon again.¹²⁹ This letter to Melanchthon was later reworked after the Marburg Colloquy and published in the spring of 1530 as part of "Dialogue on

¹²⁴ Melanchthon to Oecolampadius dated April 1529 (*BuA* 2:308–10 [No. 652]; *MBW*1; *MBWT* 3: No. 775). This letter was later published as Philipp Melanchthon, *Epistola Philippi Melanchthonis ad Johannem Oecolampadium de coena Domini* (Hagenau: Secorius, 1529).

¹²⁵ *BuA* 2:309 [No. 652]; *MBW*1; *MBWT* 3: No. 775: *Itaque si mihi vestra sententia de coena Domini placeret, simpliciter profiterer.*

¹²⁶ *BuA* 2:309 [No. 652]; *MBW*1; *MBWT* 3: No. 775: *Sed non institui nunc disputationem; tantum haec scripsi, ut meam erga te benevolentiam perpetuam cognosceres. Neque tamen volui, quid sentiam.*

¹²⁷ *BuA* 2:310 [No. 652]; *MBW*1; *MBWT* 3: No. 775: *Postremo te rogo, ut hanc meam epistolam optimo atque amicissimo scriptam animo boni consulas.*

¹²⁸ Melanchthon to Johann Lachmann dated June 3, 1529 (*MBW* 1; *MBWT* 3: No. 790): *Scis mihi veterem cum O amicitiam esse. Sed optarim eum non incidisse in hanc coniurationem.*

¹²⁹ Oecolampadius to Zwingli from July 1529 (*BuA* 2:342–43 [No. 679]).

What the Ancients Understood about the Eucharist.”¹³⁰ The bulk of the letter is a concise summary of Oecolampadius’s views on the correct interpretation of Scripture, the teaching of the church fathers, the connection between the Supper and the resurrection, a critique of the notions of ubiquity and the real presence, and the two natures of Christ. Only in the opening of the letter do we get an insight into Oecolampadius’s thoughts about his relationship with Melanchthon:

So, my Philip, if it absolutely cannot happen that we may dispute between us with the customary duty—which would be most pleasing—then it is good that we deliberate so our old friendship remains unharmed and not shaken in these troubled and dangerous times of ours.¹³¹

Like Melanchthon earlier, Oecolampadius blamed the troubled times. He reiterated his desire that harmful words not be written, and he affirmed their mutual desire for a colloquy in which they could discuss the matters face-to-face.

Though this is the last piece of correspondence between the two of them, they would soon meet together at the Marburg Colloquy in October 1529. Melanchthon’s proclivity for writing letters is clearly evident from the number of letters he wrote around the time of the colloquy and while he was at the colloquy itself.¹³² In a letter to Christian Beyer on September 30, 1529, he described the experiences of their arrival, which included his assessment, “Oecolampadius, Hedio, and Bucer greeted us with enough friendliness that they seemed to me so moved that if the occasion were not troublesome, they would gladly be at peace.”¹³³ Scheible describes the impression that these three men were still happy to see each other before the debate began.¹³⁴ Gordon likewise maintains, “Thus, at least from the perspectives of the two friends, Melanchthon and Oecolampadius, the road to Marburg was paved with good intentions.”¹³⁵

When the colloquy began, Philip of Hesse did not immediately let the two heads debate with one another. Rather Zwingli spoke with Melanchthon and Luther with Oecolampadius.¹³⁶ Only in the plenary did Luther debate with both

¹³⁰ Johannes Oecolampadius, *Quid de eucharistia veteres tum Graeci, tum Latini senserint, dialogus* (Basel: Johann Herwagen, 1530); BuA 2:444–47 [No. 748]. See also the letters from Oecolampadius to Zwingli on April 26, May 4, and June 3, 1530 (BuA 2:436–37, 438–40, 447–48 [Nos. 740, 742, 749]).

¹³¹ Oecolampadius to Melanchthon around July/August 1529 (BuA 2:343–50 [No. 680]; MBW 1; MBWT 3: No. 812): *Igitur, mi Philippe, si fieri omnino nequit, ut solitis inter nos certemus officiis, id quod gratissimum esset, boni consulamus, vel amicitiam illam nostrum veterem in tantis temporum nostrorum difficultatibus ac periculis manere salvam et non labefactam.*

¹³² From September 30 to October 18 Melanchthon wrote at least 10 letters.

¹³³ Melanchthon to Beyer on September 30, 1529 (MBW 1; MBWT 3: No. 820): *Tantum salutarium nos Oecolampadius, Hedio, Bucerus satis familiariter, qui mihi sic videntur affecti, ut, si causa non esset mota, libenter quiescerent.*

¹³⁴ Scheible, *Melanchthon*, 104–5.

¹³⁵ Gordon, “Wary Allies,” 48.

¹³⁶ See BuA 2:367–87 [Nos. 695–696, 698–700]; MBW 1; MBWT 3: Nos. 825, 826, 829, 831, 832, 837, for reports about the opening of the Colloquy and later descriptions about the events that

Zwingli and Oecolampadius. Scheible recounts that Melanchthon described himself and others present as mutes, who only spoke a few words.¹³⁷ Unfortunately there are no other accounts that describe the interaction between Melanchthon and Oecolampadius at the colloquy itself. At the conclusion of the colloquy, the two sides agreed on fourteen articles, but could not reach agreement on the Eucharist. The division between the Swiss Reformed and the Lutherans had been solidified. And it seems that the same was true for the friendship of Melanchthon and Oecolampadius.

There is no extant correspondence between Oecolampadius and Melanchthon after the Marburg Colloquy. Both men comment in other writings that they have read letters written by the other, but these are most likely public letters that had been circulated rather than personal letters sent directly to them.¹³⁸ The relationship between Oecolampadius and Melanchthon at this point seems to have been exclusively limited to their respective stances on the Lord's Supper. After the Marburg Colloquy both of them published works on the Lord's Supper. Melanchthon published a treatise on select "Sentences" from church fathers about the Lord's Supper.¹³⁹ In response, Oecolampadius published a work that included a fictitious dialogue between himself and a character named Nathaniel who followed Melanchthon's view on the Lord's Supper.¹⁴⁰ This work also included the entire treatise by Melanchthon to which Oecolampadius was responding, and two letters previously written between Oecolampadius and Melanchthon. In July 1530, Melanchthon wrote to Luther, "Oecolampadius wrote the 'Dialogue' against me, which seems to me to be more accurate than otherwise he is in the habit of writing."¹⁴¹ He noted that once again the issue was primarily about the tradition in the church fathers, but said nothing about their friendship.

In an attempt to reach some kind of agreement between Luther and the Swiss Reformed, Martin Bucer interacted frequently with Melanchthon, Oecolampadius, and many others.¹⁴² Before the Marburg Colloquy, Oecolampadius expressed his eagerness for news about negotiations between Bucer and

transpired. For an English translation of the debate between Oecolampadius and Luther, see *Word and Sacrament 4*, trans. Martin E. Lehman, vol. 38 of AE (Philadelphia: Portress, 1971), 3–89. See also Bard Thompson, *Humanists and Reformers: A History of the Renaissance and Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 453.

¹³⁷ Scheible, *Melanchthon*, 105.

¹³⁸ E.g., Oecolampadius mentions a detail from Melanchthon's letter in his letter to Zwingli dated September 30, 1531 (*BuA* 2:693–94 [No. 938]).

¹³⁹ Philip Melanchthon, *Sententiae veterum aliquot scriptorium, de coena Domini, bona fide recitatae* (Wittenburg: Joseph Clug, 1530).

¹⁴⁰ Oecolampadius, *Quid de eucharistia veteres tum Graeci, tum Latini senserint, dialogus*.

¹⁴¹ Melanchthon to Luther dated July 21, 1530 (*MBW* 1; *MBWT* 4: No. 982): *Oecolampadius scripsit contra me Dialogum, ut mihi videtur accuratius, quam solet alioqui scribere*. See also *MBW* 1; *MBWT* 4: No. 1064, where Melanchthon wrote about the same thing to Camerarius.

¹⁴² See *MBW* 1; *MBWT* 4: No. 1045; *MBW* 2; *MBWT* 5: Nos. 1118, 1122, 1196; *BuA* 2:493, 498–99 [Nos. 781, 783].

Melanchthon at Augsburg in September.¹⁴³ Bucer had already begun mediating between Melanchthon and Oecolampadius as early as 1527, and continued after the colloquy.¹⁴⁴ However, no resolution could be met on the differences over the Lord's Supper. Burnett aptly states, "Oecolampadius's death in November 1531 prevented any re-kindling of their friendship that might have occurred in the wake of Bucer's mediating activities."¹⁴⁵

The final crumbling of the relationship between Oecolampadius and Melanchthon can be observed from a letter that Oecolampadius wrote to Capito in September 1531—only two months before he died. He specifically wrote about true friendship to affirm his friendship with Capito, and asked Capito not to compare him to Luther, Erasmus, and Melanchthon who "indeed were loved by you ... but when God honored you with remarkable talents to be cultivated, they again did not recognize it—in the same way they did not with others."¹⁴⁶ Oecolampadius likely includes himself among those from whom Erasmus, Luther, and even Melanchthon had rescinded their friendship. It seems that at this point, Oecolampadius had conceded that his friendship with Melanchthon was not what it used to be—and that his own companions could never have the kind of friendship Oecolampadius once enjoyed with Melanchthon.

After Oecolampadius died in November 1531, Melanchthon wrote to his good friend Camerarius, "Bucer wrote to us about the death of Oecolampadius, but I suspect him to have been killed with suffering of the soul. Indeed he was not a man able to endure so great and so sudden a thing [as Zwingli's death]."¹⁴⁷ Despite their differences, Melanchthon seems to have retained respect for Oecolampadius. In contrast, Luther attributed the sudden death of Oecolampadius to the devil's attack.¹⁴⁸ Mattox identifies the contrasting responses to Oecolampadius's death by Luther and Bullinger as an illustration of "all the pathos, and much of the tension, intrinsic to an age of bitter religious controversy, apocalyptic angst, and deepening Christian division."¹⁴⁹ It was this

¹⁴³ Oecolampadius to Zwingli dated September 27, 1530 (*BuA* 2:498–99 [No. 783]; *CR* 98:158–59 [No. 1106]).

¹⁴⁴ E.g., see Bucer to Oecolampadius dated May 11, 1527 (*BuA* 2:63–66 [No. 485]); and Bucer to Melanchthon from February 1531 (*MBW*2; *MBWT* 5: No. 1122).

¹⁴⁵ Burnett, "Melanchthon's Reception in Basel," 72.

¹⁴⁶ Oecolampadius to Capito dated September 17, 1531 (*BuA* 2:681–83 [No. 932]): *Utinam peius nemo de te sentiat quam ego! Neque ego amicitiae renunciabo, semel tam sancte in Christo vel vulgariter tum cognito coepte. Lutheris, Erasmi, ac Melancthonibus, non est, ut me compares. Nam illi quidem a te dilecti fuerunt ... at illi, quum te Deus miris dotibus colendum honestarit, non ita vicissim observarunt, quemadmodum nec alios. Aliter te diligere cepi ego.*

¹⁴⁷ Melanchthon to Camerarius dated January 13, 1532 (*MBW*2; *MBWT* 5: No. 1210): *De Oecolampadii morte scribit Bucer nobis, sed ego suspicor eum animi dolore extinctum esse. Neque enim potuit rem tantam et tam subitam perferre homo, ut nosti, non satis paratus ad tantam inclinationem ac ruinam potius istam spectandam.*

¹⁴⁸ See *BuA* 2:753–54 [No. 974]; *WA* 38:204–5.

¹⁴⁹ Mickey Mattox, *Oecolampadius: An Exposition of Genesis* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2013), 16.

pathos that both Oecolampadius and Melanchthon blamed as the culprit for the breakdown of their friendship.

Ten years later, Melanchthon reflected on his time with Oecolampadius at Tübingen and the gift of Agricola's *Dialectic* he had received from Oecolampadius. He referred to Oecolampadius as "excellent in learning, prudence, and piety" whom he "honored as a father."¹⁵⁰ Northway maintains that Oecolampadius and Melanchthon had remained "tentative 'friends.'"¹⁵¹ Likewise, Gordon asserts, "Oecolampadius was the type of man with whom Melanchthon most enjoyed contact: irenic, scholarly and moderate in temperament."¹⁵² Any further references to Oecolampadius by Melanchthon are generally about something written on the Lord's Supper with no commenting about their former friendship.¹⁵³ However, the impact of their relationship may have led to Melanchthon changing his position on the Lord's Supper. Scheible comments that "the scholarly exchange of letters about the Lord's Supper" between Oecolampadius and Melanchthon "gradually dissuaded him from his strict Lutheran position."¹⁵⁴ Similarly, Kusakawa follows the suggestion of Quere when he notes, "Although the precise extent to which Oecolampadius' criticism affected Melanchthon is still unclear, Melanchthon's statements became more nuanced thereafter.... [These] may well have been a response to Oecolampadius' criticisms."¹⁵⁵ It would certainly be difficult to argue that it was the friendship with Oecolampadius that influenced Melanchthon to shift in his views on the Lord's Supper more than the actual teaching of Oecolampadius. However, it seems that it was indeed their friendship that made it even feasible for Melanchthon to be open to listening to Oecolampadius at a time when many others were quickly dismissing and belittling those with differing views.

¹⁵⁰ MBW 3; MBW/T 10: No. 2780; CR 4:715–22 [No. 2418]: *Oecolampadius, quem doctrina, prudentia, et pietate excellentem non secus ac patrem colebam, donavit*. See also BuA 23n1 [No. 15].

¹⁵¹ Northway, "Reception of the Fathers," 73–74.

¹⁵² Gordon, "Wary Allies," 48.

¹⁵³ See, e.g., the letter from Melanchthon to Thomas Cranmer dated May 28, 1550 (MBW 6: No. 5810).

¹⁵⁴ Scheible, *Melanchthon*, 104. Poythress more strongly claims that Oecolampadius's *Dialogue* carried "such a weighty argumentation that Melanchthon never again gave whole-hearted consent to the Lutheran view and eventually moved quite close to the Reformed position" (Diane Poythress, "Johannes Oecolampadius' Exposition of Isaiah, Chapters 36–37" [PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1992], 68). See also Northway, "Reception of the Fathers," 73.

¹⁵⁵ Sachiko Kusakawa, "Melanchthon," in *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology*, ed. David Bagchi and David C. Steinmetz (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 60. Kusakawa also notes that changes to Melanchthon's view found in the *Apology* of May 1531 were possibly the result of Oecolampadius (p. 64). See also Ralph Walter Quere, *Melanchthon's Christum Cognoscere: Christ's Efficacious Presence in the Eucharistic Theology of Melanchthon* (Nieuwkoop: B. De Graaf, 1977), 245–47, 310–11; and Wilhelm H. Neuser, *Die Abendmahlslehre Melanchthons in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung (1519–1530)* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, 1968).

VII. *Conclusion*

The relationship between Johannes Oecolampadius and Philipp Melanchthon was certainly complicated. Even taking into account the politeness of Renaissance letter-writing etiquette, there is no doubt that a true friendship existed between Oecolampadius and Melanchthon from 1513 when they first met in school all the way until the decisive events at the Marburg Colloquy in late 1529. Oecolampadius made a tremendous impact on his younger colleague's formation as a humanist and a theologian. Likewise, Melanchthon played a significant role in Oecolampadius's embracing Reformation teaching. While the depth of their friendship vacillated throughout the years, they both repeatedly expressed their desire to maintain their long friendship—even after 1525 when it was obvious that they did not agree on the Lord's Supper. They each lamented the silence from the other at different points in their lives, and communicated that they expected much from each other because of their friendship. But their friendship crumbled as they stood on opposite sides of the divide over the Lord's Supper and as they were seen in relation to their more vociferous colleagues. Melanchthon wished that Oecolampadius had not followed Zwingli, and Oecolampadius wished that Melanchthon would have done more to calm Luther. Their friendship, unfortunately, mirrored the relationship between the Lutherans and the Swiss. There was great hope and expectation at the beginning, with efforts to grow together over the years, but disagreements about the Lord's Supper inevitably split them apart, never to be reconciled again.

GUILLAUME FAREL'S SPIRITUALITY: LEADING IN PRAYER

THEODORE G. VAN RAALTE

I. Introduction

Guillaume Farel (1489–1565), a French Reformer rather neglected by scholars in the English-speaking world, merits greater consideration, especially by those who study that crucial question of the *initia reformationis*. Considered historically, Farel's credentials are impressive: the first French-language exposition of the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed for Protestants,¹ issued by at least thirteen different printers between 1524 and 1545;² the first French-language dogmatics of the Reformation which went through several editions between 1529 and 1552;³ the organization of the first Reformation churches in the French-speaking Swiss cantons;⁴ and the first French-language liturgical forms for the new churches (baptism, marriage, Lord's Supper, manner of preaching, and visitation to the sick).⁵ Higman has shown that up to 1551 Farel had

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¹ The term "Protestants" is not out of place, since Farel's 1537 *Confession de la foi* begins with the verb *protester*: "*Premièrement, nous protestons. . .*" See Irena Backus and Claire Chimelli, eds., *La vraie piété: Divers traits de Jean Calvin et Confession de foi de Guillaume Farel* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1986), 45. Unless otherwise specified, all English translations in this article are my own.

² A critical edition of this 1524 work is now available. See Guillaume Farel, *Le Pater Noster et le Credo en François* (publié d'après l'exemplaire unique nouvellement retrouvé par Francis Higman) (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1982).

³ A critical edition of this work is now available, but is unfortunately based on an inferior version of the text (see n. 81 of this article). See Guillaume Farel, *Sommaire et brève déclaration* (ed. Arthur-L. Hofer; Neuchâtel: Belle Rivière, 1980).

⁴ See the collaborative effort at a biography of Farel published on the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in Neuchâtel, which resulted in an impressive and large collection of scholarly essays, though a number of their conclusions must now be challenged, especially as recent bibliographic advances demand it. These advances will be reviewed within this article. See Comité Farel, *Guillaume Farel 1489–1565: Biographie nouvelle, écrite d'après les documents originaux par un groupe d'historiens, professeurs et pasteurs de Suisse, de France et d'Italie; Ornée d'un portrait en couleurs et de vingt-cinq planches hors texte* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1930).

⁵ Guillaume Farel, *La manière et façon qu'on tien en baillant le saint baptisme* (Neuchâtel: Pierre de Vingle, 1533 [microfiche; Zurich: IDC, 1980]). See also Farel, *La manière et façon qu'on tient es lieux que Dieu de sa grâce a visités: Première liturgie des églises réformées de France de l'an 1533* (ed. Jean-Guillaume Baum; Strasbourg: Treuttel & Wurtz, 1859).

published twenty-six editions of various works involving sixteen titles.⁶ In light of the above, it does not suffice to turn aside momentarily for Farel in the midst of studying Calvin.⁷ Farel deserves to be known for himself.

Most of his works were shorter and more basic than Calvin's, but the important factor in the study of Farel has more to do with his pivotal place in the history of the French Reformation and the proximate effect of his works than their size or the complexity of their thought.⁸ These writings were more occasional than systematic, written by one whose bold preaching made him the first agent of the Reformation among the French-speaking Swiss, where he indeed oversaw the reform of Montbéliard, Aigle, Neuchâtel, Morat, Vaud and its villages, and even Geneva.⁹

⁶ See Francis M. Higman, *Piety and the People: Religious Printing in French, 1511–1551* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996). Higman shows that although Calvin takes pride of place as the most-published person in these years with 77 editions involving 46 different titles, Farel holds his own, albeit far behind, with 26 editions involving 16 titles (see pp. 5–6). The French Vernacular Book Project is now augmenting Higman's list. See <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/reformation/book/eng/index.shtml> (accessed 13 January 2007).

⁷ The normative status of Calvin in modern historiography has unfortunately obscured the actual historical events of the Reformation among the French-speaking Swiss. Popular works reduce Farel to the finger-shaking prophet who kept Calvin in Geneva in 1536. More careful works also put Farel in Calvin's shadow. In 2004 Bodenmann rightly identified this attention to Calvin as one of the reasons why there is no critical edition of Farel's corpus (Reinhardt Bodenmann, "Farel et le livre réformé français," in *Le livre évangélique en français avant Calvin = The French Evangelical Book Before Calvin* [ed. Jean-François Gilmont and William Kemp; Turnhout: Brepols, 2004], 37–38).

On the matter of Farel's first meeting with Calvin, does anyone mention that Calvin's record of this event describes, within a page, the same treatment at the hands of Martin Bucer in Strasbourg two years later? Calvin writes that Bucer "employed a similar kind of remonstrance and protestation as that to which Farel had recourse," and gives the detail that Bucer set forth the example of Jonah. See John Calvin, *Commentary on the Psalms*, in *Calvin's Commentaries* (22 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 4:xlii–xliii. Setting these somewhat coercive efforts in their historical setting of the early Reformation era also requires that we realize the fact that Farel and others were in the business of securing Reformed preachers and teachers; it was Farel who secured Viret in 1531 and Froment in 1532, among others.

For an example of the great-thinker model where Farel serves the narrative as little more than a lackey of Calvin, see Justo L. González, *Reformation to the Present Day* (vol. 2 of *The Story of Christianity*; San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1985), 65.

⁸ Seven of Farel's writings are under 20 folios in length, four between 20 and 50 folios, one is about 60, and four surpass the 90 folio mark. See Bodenmann, "Farel et le livre réformé français," 28.

⁹ I know of no English histories that adequately treat Farel, but there is now a superb treatment (a published dissertation) that integrates the social and political history of the period with its religious history. See Michael W. Bruening, *Calvinism's First Battleground: Conflict and Reform in the Pays de Vaud, 1528–1559* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005). The 1990 translation of Heyer's 1872 study on Farel cannot be relied upon as a scholarly work, but does give the English reader access to the outlines of Farel's thought. The translator has dropped all of Heyer's sources as found in a substantial number of original footnotes, and even dropped a paragraph here and there. He has also failed to provide the English reader with any trace of the date of the French work which he has translated. Compare Henri Heyer, *Guillaume Farel: Essai sur le développement de ses idées théologiques* (Geneva: Ramboz & Schuchardt, 1872); with Henri Heyer, *Guillaume Farel: An Introduction to His Theology* (trans. Blair Reynolds; Text and Studies in Religion 54; Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990). Gordon unfortunately focuses only on Zwingli and the German-speaking Swiss Reformation; see Bruce Gordon, *The Swiss Reformation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002). Walker's classic,

This article aims to contribute to the study of Guillaume Farel by moving the discussion ahead in more than one respect. In the first place, no study of Farel can be undertaken today apart from a careful interaction with the tremendous bibliographic advances of the last several decades, thanks to Francis Higman and Jean-François Gilmont, among others. I hope to bring English readers up-to-date with this discussion.¹⁰ It will be evident that recent findings have important implications with respect to studies of both the early Farel and the early reform movement among the French-speaking Swiss. Secondly, I intend to accomplish this bibliographic update within the context of an examination of Farel's spirituality in his earliest writings—a study never yet undertaken. However, since Farel's spirituality or piety in general is too wide in scope for this article, I will scrutinize his spirituality through the particular window of his doctrine and practice of prayer.¹¹

The bibliographic portions of the article will form the opening discussion of each section. This discussion can stand on its own and must be worked into the two other deeper levels of detail. At the deepest level, the study of prayer will provide data from the documents for first-order conclusions about Farel's emphasis on prayer and its role in his program. These conclusions will in turn generate some modest suppositions for the middle level of detail—Farel's spirituality.¹²

relying on Kidd's collection of documents, gives a dated but mainly accurate overview; see Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), 345–48. Kidd's partial collection is arranged chronologically and his brief introductions give some guidance to the English reader; see B. J. Kidd, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the Continental Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), 477–521. Four older nineteenth-century works, one nearly inaccessible, are noted by K. R. Hagenbach, *History of the Reformation in Germany and Switzerland Chiefly* (trans. Evelina Moore; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1878), 330 n. 2. Doumergue's monumental work on Calvin includes a fine chapter on Farel; see E. Doumergue, *Jean Calvin: Les hommes et les choses de son temps* (4 vols.; Lausanne: Georges Bridel, 1902), 2:150–72. More readily available is E. Doumergue, *Calvin in Het Strijdpark* (trans. W. F. A. Winckel; Amsterdam: W. Kirchner, 1904). See also n. 4 of this article.

¹⁰ In brief, almost all scholars writing prior to 1980 on the works of Farel have assumed a date four years too early for his *Summaire* and have not had access to his *Le Pater Noster*. As a result, they did not realize the enormous influence of the latter in its connection with later known works, and they misconstrued the development of many of the polemics of the former by dating them too early. A new critical biography of Farel should be undertaken.

¹¹ I have wondered whether to use the word "spirituality" or "piety" or "devotion." In Farel's time *spiritualité* still largely referred to ecclesiastical jurisdiction in contrast with the "temporal" realm, whereas *piété* had come into use via Gerson and then Calvin, together with *coeur* and *intérieure*. *Dévotion* had an important place, and certainly occurs in Farel's writing. While "devotion" or "piety" might fit Farel best, the meaning of the former has narrowed while the latter has suffered pejorative connotations since late nineteenth-century historiography. Given the already existing use of "spirituality" in the secondary literature on Farel, I have decided to adopt this term. "Spirituality" in this article should be understood unambiguously as "being filled/led/taught by the Holy Spirit and acting accordingly." Besides period dictionaries, see Sister Lucy Tinsley, *The French Expressions for Spirituality and Devotion: A Semantic Study* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 58–71, 136–39, 151–53, 289–90.

¹² A number of recent studies have begun to address the question of Farel's spirituality, although some are simply bibliographic studies. Chr. Burger, "Farel's Frömmigkeit," in *Actes du colloque Guillaume Farel: Neuchâtel, 29 septembre–1er octobre 1980* (ed. Pierre Barthel, Rémy Scheurer, and Richard Stauffer; 2 vols.; Cahiers de la Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie 9.1 and 9.2; Geneva:

The entire study, in all its aspects, will hopefully provide at least some balance to the popular caricature of the restless, fiery, even violent, Guillaume Farel.¹³

Investigating Farel on prayer should prove fruitful. Already in the sixteenth century his contemporary Beza spoke of Farel's "most fervent prayers" which could not be heard "without feeling almost as though [one] was being carried up to heaven."¹⁴ Hower's 1983 dissertation argues that Farel is responsible for

Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie, 1983), 1:149-60. (The proceedings of this 1980 conference will hereafter be cited as *Colloque Farel*.) See also Francis M. Higman, "Farel, Calvin, et Olivétan: Sources de la spiritualité gallicane," *Colloque Farel*, 1:45-61; and Louis-Ed. Roulet, "Farel: Agent bernois? (1528-1536)," *Colloque Farel*, 1:99-106. See also Robert G. Hower, "William Farel, Theologian of the Common Man, and the Genesis of Protestant Prayer" (Th.D. thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1983); and Michel Peronnet, "Images de Guillaume Farel pendant la Dispute de Lausanne," in *La Dispute de Lausanne, 1536: La théologie réformée après Zwingli et avant Calvin* (Textes du colloque international sur la Dispute de Lausanne [29 septembre-1er octobre 1986]; Lausanne: Presses Centrales Lausanne S.A., 1988), 133-41. Finally, see Francis M. Higman, "Theology for the Layman in the French Reformation, 1520-1550," *The Library*, ser. 6, 9 (1987): 105-27.

¹³ "Restless": this term is used quite uncritically, even by those who do not study his movements. The Comité Farel in its biography also highlights this trait of Farel. At the very least we have to recall that Farel was the man who was pastor of Neuchâtel for 27 years (1538-1565), through thick and thin.

"Fiery": for a recent study accentuating Farel's "fiery" character, complete with his *virgic beard* ("fiery beard") which apparently made *een enigszins woeste indruk* ("a rather fierce picture") for sixteenth-century persons, see M. A. van den Berg, *Vrienden van Calvijn: Een amicale biografie* (Utrecht: De Banier, 2006), 98. Using stronger expressions, Holtrop generalized from a January 11, 1552, letter of Farel to Calvin regarding Jerome Bolsec that it, "expressed the vitriol and simplism that we have come to expect from the 'firebrand'" (see Philip Holtrop, "The Bolsec Controversy from 1551 to 1555: Theological Currents, the Setting and Mood, and the Trial Itself" [Ph.D. diss., Harvard University], Bk. 2, Pt. 1:901). Barth went so far as to construct "Fareliism" in his efforts to enthrone his own version of Calvin when he wrote, "Fareliism, that is pastoral daring and rashness to the glory of God . . . is not really Calvinism" (Karl Barth, *The Theology of John Calvin* [trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 245).

"Violent": Hall, for the most part parroting Barth, writes, "Farel, a storm-trooper of the evangel rather than a theologian, found that breaking altars, pictured windows, and statues of the saints, was not a very effective reformation and that he needed the help of a man with a gift for organization and a sound theological training to help him in Geneva" (Basil Hall, *John Calvin: Humanist and Theologian* [London: The Historical Association, 1956], 17). If the caricature originated with the humanist Erasmus, it certainly received a new impetus from neo-orthodox writers. Erasmus, whose relations with Lefèvre were distant, met Farel in Basle and filled some of his letters with fierce invective against Farel and other evangelicals, using words like "subversion," "lying," and "lawbreaking." His derisive term for Farel was *Phallicus*. See Erasmus, "Letters 1536 to 1534, [from the years] 1523 to 1524" (trans. R. A. B. Mynors and Alexander Dalzell; vol. 10 of *Collected Works of Erasmus*; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), letters 1496, 1510.

¹⁴ Theodore Beza, *The Life of John Calvin* (trans. Henry Beveridge; n.p.: Banner of Truth, 1982), 23. Sayous quotes the French, ". . . et ses prières étaient si ardentes" (André Sayous, *Études littéraires sur les écrivains français de la Réformation* [Paris: Gratiot, 1854], 38). Beza's work on Calvin first appeared as a preface to Calvin's *Commentary on Joshua* in 1564 but a year later it was augmented, perhaps in collaboration with Colladon. A third, more developed edition appeared later. Thus, there are at least three versions circulating, as one will also find in English. Gardy's brief biographical note stands in need of further study. Frédéric Gardy, *Bibliographie des œuvres . . . de Théodore de Bèze* (Geneva: Droz, 1960), 104.

"the genesis of Protestant prayer."¹⁵ Although I find such a description historically problematic, one certainly may argue that Farel's attention to prayer is the most sustained and thoroughly treated topic in his writings. One must include his written and published prayers in such a study, for these were published as models. Unfortunately, due to space, we must exclude detailed study of both a published prayer of Farel from 1543¹⁶ and his 1533 liturgy.¹⁷ I will restrict the study to four early works of Farel, the first three dating from 1524 and the last from 1529.

II. *The Disputation at Basle (February 1524)*

The stage may be set with the first recorded words we currently have from Farel on prayer. Their historical context particularly helps us set his view of prayer in the context of and yet apart from the spiritual and devotional practices of his day.

In April 1523, at the age of thirty-four, Guillaume Farel finally left the comfort of the circle of French humanists who had gathered around Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples. Farel had joined Lefèvre in Paris perhaps as early as 1515 or 1516,¹⁸ and then followed him from Paris to Meaux in 1521 as part of a group of humanists who contributed to reform within the church under the bishop Guillaume Briçonnet, the whole group enjoying royal protection through Margaret of Alençon, the king's sister. However, as their reforms drew the attention of opponents, Briçonnet was forced to make a disciplinary decree. Likely as a result of this Farel was either sent away or left voluntarily.¹⁹ He attempted to preach in his native Gap but was not well received. Afterward he journeyed to Basle to meet the German-speaking Reformers there, possibly as early as July 1523.²⁰

¹⁵ Unfortunately, Hower's 1983 dissertation followed the 1930 Comité Farel in listing Farel's *Le Pater Noster* as lost. The work had in fact been announced as rediscovered at the 1980 Colloque Guillaume Farel and was then published in a critical edition by Higman in 1982. Hower's elucidation of the continuities and discontinuities from those preceding Farel to Farel himself also lacks detail.

¹⁶ Except for a brief comment, for which see n. 76 and connected text.

¹⁷ Farel's liturgy would yield some data regarding his use of the Lord's Prayer in the liturgy, and would accentuate his directives to the other ministers, to whom the rubrics are directed. For example, under the prayers for the sick they are directed to spare nothing, giving to the sick even bread, wine, or candy, if they possess it. See Farel, *La manière et facon qu'on tien en baillant le saint baptisme*, 51. Farel's liturgy would need to be studied in connection with the Bern Service Book. See Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite in the Sixteenth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 158-64.

¹⁸ P. E. Hughes, "Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (c. 1455-1536): Calvin's Forerunner in France," reprinted in *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism: A Fourteen Volume Anthology of Scholarly Articles* (ed. Richard C. Gamble; New York: Garland, 1992), 2:10-11. However, Hughes's source does not exactly support the 1515 date and another source mentions 1516.

¹⁹ Henry Heller, "Reform and Reformers at Meaux, 1518-1525" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1969), 300-301; Comité Farel, *Biographie nouvelle*, 115; David Nichols, "Heresy and Protestantism, 1520-1542: Questions of Perception and Communication," *French History* 10 (1996): 200.

²⁰ N. Weiss, "Guillaume Farel: Ses premiers travaux," *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire du protestantisme français* 68 (1919): 194; Peter G. Bietenholz, *Basle and France in the Sixteenth Century: The Basle Humanists and Printers in Their Contact with Francophone Culture* (Geneva and Toronto: Librairie Droz and University of Toronto Press, 1971), 91.

Attempting to promote reform, he gained government approval for a disputation in Basle and posted thirteen theses in Latin to be argued on March 3, 1524.²¹ The fourth thesis concerns us here.

Farel argued, "Long-winded prayers (*verbosiores preces*) which are against the command of Christ, and not according to the Christian pattern of rule, cannot be prayed or instituted without danger: so that it will be better to pay out to the poor whatever is offered in these matters, and not to contribute to the funding of so many evils."²² Unfortunately no record of the disputation's proceedings is known, but judging by the reference to things given for the praying of these prayers and the possible benefits for the poor, it appears that Farel has in view memorial masses endowed by the laity (individuals or corporations) to be carried out by the priests. These endowments were called chantries, and the masses performed were low masses performed by chantry priests. The literature terms them variously as funerary, requiem, or memorial masses.

Thomas Lambert relates the rapid development of chantries in Geneva in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, both those which simply paid a priest to perform extra masses and those which resulted in the erection of dedicated altars and even new buildings or attachments to the existing cathedral. In the years 1516 through 1518 the diocese around the city of Geneva counted some 1,435 endowed chantries. The cathedral of St. Pierre itself housed one hundred chantries by 1536, in addition to its twenty-three altars (Geneva was not unique in this regard).²³ Since one of the legal requirements for founding a chantry stipulated that sufficient funds had to be set aside for both its institution and maintenance, Farel could argue that this practice denied the poor much of what they might have received.

The expression *verbosiores preces* literally means "more abundantly-worded prayers,"²⁴ but one must not think that Farel is opposing long prayers as such. He himself was quite capable of lengthy prayers, as we shall see. The prayers of

²¹ Interestingly, as a result of disagreement between the university and bishop on the one hand and the city magistrates on the other, the city government ordered that the dispute must take place, and further, that all citizens must attend. Hagenbach, *History of the Reformation*, 331; cf. Comité Farel, *Biographie nouvelle*, 123. On the strategic importance of religious disputations in the Pays de Vaud, see Bruening, *Calvinism's First Battleground*, 137-41.

²² "Quae contra praeceptum sunt Christi verbosiores preces, et non secundum Christianam formam regulatae sine periculo orari non possunt, nec institui: ut praestiterit quae in haec conferuntur pauperibus erogari, et non tantorum fomenta malorum fovere . . ." (Aimé-Louis Herminjard, *Correspondence des réformateurs dans les pays de langue française* [9 vols.; Geneva: H. George, 1866], 1:194). A photocopy of the 20 x 33 cm. placard, reduced in size, can be viewed as plate 1-1 at the end of *Colloque Farel*, vol. 1.

²³ Thomas A. Lambert, "Preaching, Praying and Policing the Reform in Sixteenth-Century Geneva" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1998), 77-78, 90-92. When a large number of funerary masses were commissioned, one priest might rush the altar to perform his mass before the other was finished, lest he lose his mass fee (92).

²⁴ Estienne's definition of *verbosus* is, "that hath muche prattering or much tonge, that is full of words. Qui ha beaucoup de language. Abondant en parolles" (Robert Estienne, *Dictionariolum Puerorum tribus linguis Latina, Anglica, & Gallica* [Amsterdam and New York: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum and Da Copo Press, 1971 (photo reprint of 1552)], s.v. "*verbosus*").

many words must refer to the multiple repetitions of the Lord's Prayer, Kyrie Eleison, Hail Mary, and so forth, said in all the mass celebrations, prayers which were usually repeated mindlessly and thought to be beneficial by virtue of being spoken. Farel could argue against both clergy and laity practices in this regard. Although "the laity considered the clergy to be the specialists in prayer,"²⁵ yet the laity also undertook *verbosiores preces*. While the priest performed the mass behind the screen, the worshipers were expected to say their prayers quietly, that is, to repeat the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and other set prayers while using their rosary beads to count the number. After Geneva accepted the Reformation in 1536, and after the consistory was established in 1541, they had to deal with a great number of cases of "muttering" (*barbotement*), that is, with those who attended the Reformed worship services but maintained the old practice of quietly saying their prayers in Latin, thus distracting others from the sermons.²⁶ The consistory's concern post-1541, and surely also Farel's concern here in 1524, has everything to do with the connection between the heart and the mouth. Abundantly worded prayers were not spiritual if the heart was not engaged. As we shall see, Farel's style of praying and his admonitions regarding prayer will have everything to do with the moving of the affections toward the love of God and one's neighbor.

Thesis four combines an inner and an outer spirituality, the proper outer being love for the poor, and the inner, by implication, being that prayer in which the human spirit is activated by the divine Spirit to be lifted up to God. Ozment, who thinks of the thirteen theses as preparatory for Farel's *Summaire*, rightly points out their very practical approach to living the Christian life,²⁷ a life which Farel viewed as spiritual and in which prayer was key.

III. *L'Épître chrestienne tresutile* (August 1524)

L'Épître chrestienne tresutile was written to promote the reading of the Scriptures in the vernacular, serving particularly as a promotion for Jacques Lefèvre's translation of the New Testament into French.²⁸ It is the first known letter of its

²⁵ Lambert, "Preaching, Praying and Policing," 95; see also 97-98.

²⁶ *Barbotement*, translated as "muttering" by Kingdon and others, is a negative word connoting the idea that such prayers "carried no real meaning to those who said them, and were repeated in the superstitious hope that God will be pleased simply by hearing a prayer even if it could not be understood by the petitioner" (Robert Kingdon, "Worship in Geneva Before and After the Reformation," in *Worship in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* [ed. Karin Maag and John D. Witvliet; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004], 49-50). For examples of consistory exhortations regarding muttering, see pp. 42-45. Cf. Lambert, "Preaching, Praying and Policing," 102.

²⁷ Steven E. Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities: The Appeal of Protestantism to Sixteenth-Century Germany and Switzerland* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 68.

²⁸ Lefèvre's complete NT in French appeared first in 1523, according to Higman, *Piety and the People: Religious Printing in French*, 92. Lefèvre had first published the Gospels, writing his dedicatory exhortation on June 8, 1523, and then the rest of the NT with its dedicatory exhortation on November 6, 1523. The complete NT must have been assembled by the printers immediately, but it could not have been well-known until April 1524, when Lefèvre published a new and revised edition. See Eugene F. Rice Jr., ed., *The Prefatory Epistles of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and Related Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 449, 457. Cf. Heller, "Reform and Reformers," 305-6.

kind in French and was published anonymously. Although Gilmont listed its Farel's authorship as doubtful in his fine, scholarly, and exhaustive bibliography of Farel,²⁹ Denommé and Kemp, with the collaboration of Gilmont, have since returned to the defense of Farel's authorship.³⁰ They argue on the basis of internal and external considerations, such as many parallels to Farel's other writings and several circumstances in Farel's life that match the letter.³¹ The reason for Gilmont's categorization as "doubtful" in 1983 hinged on his reconsideration of an invoice sent to Farel (dated August 28, 1524) from the bookseller Jean Vaugris of Basle wherein some two hundred copies of Farel's prayer book, *Le Pater Noster et le Credo*, were billed at a cheaper rate per copy than fifty copies of "letters" in the same invoice. Gilmont reasoned that these "letters" could not refer to *L'Épître chrestienne* because their higher price indicates that they had to be longer than *Le Pater Noster* whereas in fact *L'Épître chrestienne* is shorter. Thus, the invoice can no longer function to support Farel's authorship. This is the one argument that Denommé and Kemp do not overcome. It seems to me that three responses can be advanced. First, prayer books were purposefully printed inexpensively so as to find wider distribution.³² Second, the cost per letter had to be greater than the cost per prayer book since there were fewer letters printed, with the result that the setup cost had to be recovered in fewer items.³³ Finally, the two works are actually the same size, both at three quires of eight folios, the last quire ending in both cases at folio four verso!³⁴ Besides this answer to Gilmont's objection, we can also point to further internal evidences favoring Farel, not noted by Denommé and Kemp. These include phrases common in the undisputed writings of Farel, such as, "the good Jesus,"

²⁹ See Gilmont for the previous scholarship (e.g., Tricard, who subscribed to Farel's authorship). Jean-François Gilmont, "L'œuvre imprimé de Guillaume Farel," in *Colloque Farel*, 2:140.

³⁰ Isabelle C. Denommé and William Kemp with the collaboration of Jean-François Gilmont, "L'Épître chrestienne tresutile (c. 1524): Un écrit de Guillaume Farel? Présentation et édition," in *Le livre évangélique en français avant Calvin*, 43-69. After an introductory section on the question of authorship (43-51), Denommé and Kemp present a critical edition of the letter (52-69). Although their conclusion on Farel's possible authorship speaks tentatively of trying "d'apporter, sinon une réponse, du moins quelques esquisses de solution" (51), their actual arguments vouch quite strongly for Farel (44-47, 50).

³¹ Denommé and Kemp, *L'Épître chrestienne*, 43-51.

³² See the editor's introduction to Luther's works on prayer, Martin Luther, *Devotional Writings 2* (vol. 43 of *Luther's Works*; ed. Helmut T. Lehmann; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 7. Cf. Heller, "Reform and Reformers," 69.

³³ Although it is true that the labor for typesetting was low, the number of copies in this case is extremely low, since a small edition at the time was considered to be about 750 copies. One should also consider the option that higher quality paper was used for the "letters," especially if "letters" does refer to *L'Épître chrestienne*, which was addressed secondarily to a woman of nobility. For printing information see Higman, *Piety and the People: Religious Printing in French*, 4. On the recipient of the letter see Denommé and Kemp, *L'Épître chrestienne*, 47-48.

³⁴ It appears to me that here Gilmont was averted from his usual thoroughness, for he states that the letter was only 20 folios whereas the prayer book was about 30. Counting the markings in each critical edition shows otherwise (I also counted the number of words per folio side to account for the possibility of different fonts in the original printings). Gilmont, "L'œuvre imprimé," 140.

"poor souls," "the sweet Jesus," "the good God," "this good Lord," "his good Spirit," "his great kindness," and the name "Jesus" by itself.³⁵

While the thrust of the letter regards the reading of Scripture, the letter also speaks of prayer needing to be offered in the vernacular in order to be edifying to the people. These parts of the letter, once read in light of the rest of the evidence presented in this article, also argue for Farel's authorship. Let us examine these parts briefly.

Typical of Farel's writings, the author states his prayer for the readers early on, that they might "come to the reading of the very dignified Word of God, casting all your heart upon this good Lord by humble prayer made with the firm faith that he will give you his good Spirit, according to the unshakeable truth of his promise to us." Farel here ties the Spirit and Word together, and specifies the engagement of the heart in both the reading of Scripture and the uttering of prayer. He continues stating his prayer for them, that out of his great kindness God would open his heavenly kingdom to them, illumine their hearts to make them new creatures who will live completely in Jesus Christ, loving none other but him.³⁶ "Love," "kindness," "new" are all very positive. But the struggle with sin is pictured as equally real. Later, as the writer reviews the gospel and the law, he turns to the need for the Spirit and the struggle of the renewed sinner to love God. In this context the pastoral tone that pervades the letter heightens with rhetorical questions reminiscent of Rom 7.³⁷ A few pages later the letter takes on the voice of the gospel, directly addressing the readers, "O poor thief, who wanted to disrobe the Deity and wanted to make himself God . . . poor, damned, and despairing, who . . . is condemned . . . the very merciful God sends you his grace and pardon and desires that the sentence not be executed."³⁸ The believer is assured that they are now received by God, "with the benign Savior Jesus" as their brother, and "the priceless sweetness of the very benign Jesus" as their own by the promises of God, with the result that they may be filled with joy.³⁹ Throughout the letter one encounters a deeply pastoral tone, a concern that the readers should put their faith in Jesus and his merits, that the readers should have confidence in Jesus' conquering of the world. For such consolation and courage to form and to have their effect in the church, the "praying" and "speaking" must be conveyed in the vernacular.⁴⁰

³⁵ *Au bon Jesus, pauvres ames, le doux Jesus, le bon dieu, ce bon seigneur, son bon esperit, sa grande bonté*, all of which occur already on the first page of the letter (*L'Épître chrestienne* [ed. Denommé and Kemp], a2r [p. 54]) and are repeated variously throughout. A comparison of Farel's language (and perhaps that of Lefèvre's other students also) to that of Lefèvre (and, ideally, all of these to the language of their predecessors and contemporaries) would help us evaluate the historical continuities between Lefèvre and Farel in context. Lefèvre certainly spoke of the sweet Jesus and the good God. For a few examples see Heller, "Reform and Reformers," 172, 308. See also Rice, ed., *The Prefatory Epistles*, 450. I shall hereafter assume that Farel is the author of *L'Épître chrestienne*.

³⁶ *L'Épître chrestienne* (ed. Denommé and Kemp), a2v (pp. 54-55).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, a5r-a5v (pp. 56-57); also noted in the introduction, p. 50.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, a7r-a7v (p. 58).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, a7r-b2r (pp. 58-60).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, b7r (p. 64).

As we have seen, the topic of prayer was unavoidable in the pastoral context of this letter, and certainly was not avoided. The letter ends with these words, "I pray you, remember me in your prayers, in order that [I] may be able with dignity to make progress in the holy word of God, in the honor and glory of the very holy kindness of God. Amen."⁴¹

IV. *Le Pater Noster et le Credo* (August 1524)

We turn now to a work that clearly belongs to Farel, his explanation of the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed. Aside from the preface, the work proper was thought for many years to have been lost, until a copy was found by Francis Higman around 1980 in the National Austrian Library in Vienna. He published a critical edition in 1982 (see n. 2). With this publication we come to the heart of the article and, it would seem, to the heart of Guillaume Farel.

The most remarkable feature of this work on prayer deserves to be stated up front. It is written as a prayer, in direct address to God throughout. In fact, not only is this the case with the exposition of the Lord's Prayer, but also of the Apostles' Creed which follows. Indeed, one must consider whether one of the indices of Farel's authorship is this penchant for direct address. On prayer, Farel appears to prefer showing over telling. Could it be that this matter of "form," which has a dramatic effect on the "content," is one of the important things that made Farel's work so popular?

The popularity of Farel's *Pater Noster et le Credo* has been amply documented by Francis Higman in at least four scholarly articles, in addition to his introduction to the critical edition. After having undergone modifications, Farel's work was incorporated by others into *Le livre de vraye et parfaite oraison*, a devotional manual that received royal approval in 1528 and even Sorbonne clearance in 1549, when certain phrases were omitted or toned down. It saw wide distribution among Roman Catholics and Evangelicals alike, an interesting case of trans-confessional piety.⁴² It may even have spawned the first traditional Roman Catholic response to the "new genre."⁴³ Higman traces some three printings of the preface, fifteen of the exposition of the Lord's Prayer, and twenty-eight of the Apostles' Creed.⁴⁴ Nichols remarks that printers showed a preference for these little manuals of piety and instruction.⁴⁵

In Farel's little manual, the exposition of the Lord's Prayer is, according to Higman, from Farel alone, "from his own pen," whereas the *Credo* "has mostly

⁴¹ Ibid., c4v (p. 69).

⁴² Francis M. Higman, "Histoire du livre et histoire de la Réforme," *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire du protestantisme français* 148 (2002): 848; cf. Nichols, "Heresy and Protestantism," 201.

⁴³ Higman, "Theology for the Layman," 112. Later in this article I will address the phrase "new genre."

⁴⁴ Francis M. Higman, "Luther et la piété de l'église gallicane: *Le livre de vraye et parfaite oraison*," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 63 (1983): 91-111. See also Higman's introduction to his critical edition of Farel's *Le Pater Noster et le Credo*, 26.

⁴⁵ Nichols, "Heresy and Protestantism," 200.

exploited the exposition of Luther in the *Betbüchlein*.⁴⁶ Based on his introduction to the critical edition, Higman gives the impression that Farel faithfully follows Luther's exposition after having supplied his own introduction.⁴⁷ Indeed, the flow of the text follows Luther, and, of course, the structure of the Apostles' Creed. We do notice, however, writes Higman, several small changes which improve the thought (two examples are then supplied), and there are two additions which suggest some independent theological formulation on Farel's part.⁴⁸ Higman's appended notes single out seven places where Farel has made additions to Luther.⁴⁹ It appears to me that we may add a few more lines, so that of the 297 lines of this prayerful exposition of the Creed, about 111, or one third, are Farel's own.⁵⁰ In this way we can appreciate all the more that Farel has put together the exposition with particular thought to the French situation, and not merely as a copyist of Luther.⁵¹

⁴⁶ "De sa propre plume" and "à largement exploité l'exposition de Luther du *Betbüchlein*" (Higman, "Luther et la piété de l'église gallicane," 92). Higman specifies elsewhere that the commentary on the Creed, "after the introductory pages, is translated from Luther's *Betbüchlein*, with some modifications to the text, and with a change from Luther's third-person form of reference to God" (Higman, "Theology for the Layman," 109). According to Higman, Farel did not read German and must have had a helper, possibly Anémard de Coët (see *Le Pater Noster et le Credo* [ed. Higman], 18). Since Oecolampadius had earlier in the year translated Farel's thirteen theses at Basle into German, he might also be a candidate. See N. Weiss, "Guillaume Farel: La dispute de Bâle: Le conflit avec Erasme (1524)," *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire du protestantisme français* 69 (1920): 119.

⁴⁷ "À partir de là et jusqu'à la fin de l'exposition, la version de Farel suit fidèlement le text de Luther" (*Le Pater Noster et le Credo* [ed. Higman], 16).

⁴⁸ The two additions enlarge upon: (a) the contrast between being able to choose only sin apart from grace, and being unable to sin under grace, in the sense that God's grace and Spirit cancel its effects; and (b) the need for Christians to seek suffering in this life (*Le Pater Noster et le Credo* [ed. Higman], 16).

⁴⁹ Higman identified the following lines as additions from Farel: 362-69; 382-93; 401-3, 435-41; 457-62; 511-13; 565-76. One must also count lines 279-318, since these form Farel's own introduction, as Higman notes. The entire work encompasses lines 265-576 in the critical edition. Excluding the text of the Creed at the beginning (265-78), this makes it 297 lines long. Higman has identified 84 of these lines as additions from Farel. It is doubtful, however, whether lines 435-41 should count as an addition. See *Le Pater Noster et le Credo* (ed. Higman), 66-68.

⁵⁰ Specifically, I am adding lines (in some cases parts of lines) 322-24, 327-29, 339, 351-54, 357, 359, 371-75, 380, 419, 466-68, 493-94, 520, 531-32, 534-36, 546-49. It should also be noted that here and there Farel drops a line or two of Luther. I offer this small adjustment with the full realization that in doing so I am fully dependent on Higman's fine critical edition and his many fine articles on the pedigree of Farel's *Pater Noster*. For the comparison, Luther's *Betbüchlein* can be found in English translation in *Luther's Works* (see Martin Luther, *Devotional Writings* [vol. 43 of *Luther's Works*; ed. Gustav K. Wienke; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968], 24-29). For the German, see Martin Luther, *Eine kurze Form des Glaubensbekenntnisses* (from the year 1522) (vol. 10.2 of *D. Martin Luthers Werke*; Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1907; repr., Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1966), 388-95; cf. *Eine kurze Form der zehn Gebote, eine kurze Form des Glaubens, eine kurze form des Vaterunsers*, of the year 1520, in vol. 7:214-20).

⁵¹ Moore carefully studied the German influences on the French Reformation, highlighting Luther's important place. Yet he was also careful to distinguish translation as such from the movement of ideas. Thus, he writes of Lutheran ideas being given expression in French form. In this context he highlights the eloquence of Farel. See W. G. Moore, *La Réforme allemande et la littérature*

Farel introduces his booklet with a description of prayer as “one of the most noble fruits” produced by faith when that faith has regard only for the kindness, mercy, and benevolence of God. “Prayer” is here placed in parallel with the “lifting up of the spirit and understanding to God.”⁵² Note that Farel’s definition is not first of all based on words being spoken, but on the orientation of the person’s spirit and mind. Further, this orientation is only possible when an earlier prerequisite is fulfilled—faith—and therefore by definition Farel’s conception of prayer functions for believers only. In terms of the believer’s contemplation of God, Farel’s approach is also very positive, appealing to the contemplation of God’s mercy with no word of fear for God’s wrath.

At the same time, as Farel moves from the what to the how of prayer, he stipulates the need for “very great humility and reverence of heart, and a very great zeal of spirit, in thinking all the words which are in the spoken prayer.”⁵³ Such reverence, he writes, arises out of honor for the one to whom we are praying. In humbly honoring him, Farel prays, “I bend the knees of my heart before you.”⁵⁴ This honor of God becomes important within the prayer also as the grounds of an appeal for pardon, namely, that Christians, who are named after Christ, not carry that name in vain, but that God sanctify that name.⁵⁵ It is remarkable that Farel speaks of human sin being committed against “your divine power” and against “your holy benevolence,” not against God’s holiness as such.⁵⁶ In this sense the prayer portrays humans as entirely lost, yet greatly loved by the God who mercifully desires to forgive and save them.

The “very great zeal of spirit,” with which prayer must be expressed, pervades Farel’s own written prayers. The title page of this work states that it is made in the form of a prayer “beneficial for inflaming the heart and spirit in the love of God.” Similar words occur in the introduction to the Creed, which he wrote as a prayer “to inflame faith in God.”⁵⁷ This word *enflamber* certainly speaks of zeal, yet it may in a sense be balanced with the word *consolation*, which appears close behind it in the title page of the prayer. It is a zeal driven by love

française: Recherches sur la notoriété de Luther en France (Strasbourg: Publications de la Faculté des Lettres à l’Université, 1930), 169-70.

⁵² *Le Pater Noster et le Credo* (ed. Higman), a1v-a2r, lines 13-16 (pp. 35-36).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, a2r, lines 23-24 (p. 36).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, a4v, line 100 (p. 41).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, a5v-a6r, lines 130-32 (p. 42).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, a5v, lines 126-28 (p. 42).

⁵⁷ Bodenmann draws attention to both of these, noting Beza’s characterization of Farel’s voice as animated with a zeal that would inflame his hearers, especially in the moment of prayer (“Farel et le livre réformé français,” 25). What Bodenmann does not relate is Farel’s fuller text within the Creed, well worth quoting: “Jaçoit ainsy qu’il n’est nul besoing quant à toy, qu’aucun descouvre son coraige, c’est à dire la foy, l’esperance, la fiance et l’amour qu’il a en ta justice, bonté et misercorde; toutefois, quant à nous, il est fort besoing de souvent exciter, esmouvoir et enflamber nostre dormant, lasche et froit coraige, ou esprit, par fervente meditation de cueur, laquelle soit aydee par oraison de bouche, procedante de l’ardant desir de l’esperit” (*Le Pater Noster et le Credo* [ed. Higman], b3r-b3v, lines 291-99 [p. 49]).

and expressing love, so as to pursue and supply comfort for believers.⁵⁸ Therefore Farel also prays that the governing of new affections according to the will of God might follow upon the slaying of the carnal affections of the flesh.⁵⁹ Prayer seeks grace for holy living. Farel's practice of prayer has little in common with mere external forms.

In this regard, Farel specifically directs that his prayer book is meant to be used, "in place of the rosary."⁶⁰ His introduction speaks similarly against the mere muttering of the lips, using the same root of the word that recurs in the Geneva consistory's minute books of the 1540s.⁶¹ Prayer, then, although it begins with the lifting up of the spirit to God, includes the understanding as well, and comes to expression when one is "thinking all the words which are in the spoken prayer."⁶² Here Farel invokes 1 Cor 14 wherein the Apostle Paul writes about the need for sounds uttered in the church to be edifying. Under this rubric we may also understand Farel's chastisement of the pastors who have neglected "the sheep of God" instead of instructing them in a language which is understandable.⁶³ All of the foregoing elucidates Farel's purpose in writing this little manual. He wants it to be accessible to those who do not understand Latin, those whom he and Lefèvre often call "the simple people."⁶⁴ He wants them to be able to take it anywhere, hence it is a "little booklet which can easily be carried in the hand by anyone."⁶⁵ By means of these prayers the believers ought to find consolation for their souls. If they pray diligently, their very prayers will become the means by which the kingdom of heaven is opened, as Farel exhorts his readers: "Therefore let each one devote himself to prayer for the infinite mercy of God, that it be his good pleasure to open to us the kingdom of heaven, by the true understanding of the Scriptures which he alone gives."⁶⁶ We may summarize that Farel intends his prayer book to be used by all French evangelicals, at any suitable time, wherever they find themselves.

In *Le Pater Noster* abundant use of *très* and of adjectives for God demonstrates Farel's own passion, as do his articulations of our absolute dependence on God's mercy and his abundant confessions of sin.⁶⁷ Farel writes that God wants

⁵⁸ We have here another side to the epithet of "fiery" for Farel, one certainly not governed by the connotation of violence.

⁵⁹ *Le Pater Noster et le Credo* (ed. Higman), a6v, lines 154-62 (p. 43).

⁶⁰ "S'ensuite l'exposition de ceste orayson faicte en forme d'orayson, pour lire due chapelet, quant on aura loysir" (ibid., a4r, lines 72-74 [p. 40]).

⁶¹ "... et non pas ainsy seulement barbouler des levres sans rien entendre" (ibid., a2v, lines 30-32 [pp. 36-37]).

⁶² Ibid., a5v, line 125 (p. 42).

⁶³ "Jusques à maintenant les brebis de dieu ont esté tresmal instruictes, par la grand negligence des pasteurs, qui les devoient instruire de prier en languaige qu'on entendist" (ibid., a2r-a2v, lines 27-30, [p. 36]). Throughout the introduction the roots *entendre* (understand) and *instruire* (teach) recur.

⁶⁴ Ibid., a3r, line 47 (p. 37).

⁶⁵ Ibid., a2v, lines 42-43 (p. 37).

⁶⁶ Ibid., a3r, lines 50-54 (p. 38).

⁶⁷ Restricting myself to *Le Pater Noster* proper, excluding *Le Credo*, I will simply list the words by line number. *tresmisericordieux* (99, 138), *trescher* (138, 148), *tresbening* (118, 223), *treshumblement* (244).

to be called our Father in order that we might not doubt that God wishes to give believers everything out of his tender mercy.⁶⁸ Thus, while Farel's God is almighty, he is not distant; he most certainly hears all the prayers of his people. One of the most poignant expressions of Farel's prayer is reserved for the end, when believers pray that God would deliver them "from the eternal sorrow of hell, in which no one will be able to praise you nor to confess your name nor your kindness."⁶⁹ Farel is teaching the French evangelicals how those who confess God's initiative and sovereignty in salvation should pray: they should appeal to the glory and praise of his holy name. Further, Farel gives his readers the sense that the worst punishment imaginable is the denial of the opportunity to praise God. Following this, the prayer makes its request in one final formulation: "And because it is your holy will that sinners be converted and live in you, and with you, I pray you, O almighty Father . . ." One cannot help but notice the very positive framework of Farel's style of prayer. He presents God in all his mercy and kindness, his desire to impart salvation and restore sinners to communion with him. These emphases must have helped make this prayer as popular as it was.⁷⁰

It may be noted, finally, that Farel addresses God in the *tu* form, not the *vous* form. Lefèvre's translation of the New Testament, which appeared around the same time as Farel's *Pater Noster*, also uses *tu*.⁷¹ Higman, commenting on another work elsewhere, relates that the Reformers "seem almost always to have preferred the 'tu' form" in their prayers. *Tu* was always used in the Lord's Prayer.

Other expressions such as *grande miséricorde* could be listed (e.g., 77). Confessions of sin occur in varying degrees as follows: 83-85, 87-89, 122-23, 127-28, 137-47, 174, 214-17. On the other hand, the confessions of and allusions to God's mercy, kindness, sweetness, love, desire to forgive, and desire to convert sinners are too abundant to list them all. The following will suffice: 77, 86-87, 89-91, 95, 109, 112-19, 125-26, 166-72, 197-99, etc.

⁶⁸ Ibid., a4v, lines 90-91 (p. 40).

⁶⁹ Ibid., b2r, lines 252-54 (p. 47).

⁷⁰ Although I have restricted most of my detailed study of the themes of prayer to *Le Pater Noster* proper, it may be remarked that in *Le Credo* Farel's additions to Luther are in line with the earlier prayer. Listing them simply by line number, I enumerate the following emphases: (a) the believer's absolute dependence on God, that without God's grace and Holy Spirit, the believer can do nothing but sin, whereas any good in the believer stems entirely from the work of God (383-92), so that no one is to trust in their own accomplishments, etc. (351-54); (b) the believer's total submission to God, such that the believer seeks only God's glory and praise, whatever the circumstances (362-69); (c) the need to seek suffering at the present time in connection with sanctification (457-62, 466-68); (d) some elaboration regarding the reception of the keys of the kingdom by all the church, and not just by Peter (546-49). A number of these additions may be termed rhetorical, as when Farel piles up the kinds of things believers might trust in but should not (352-54), and when he provides a balanced list of positive and negative circumstances in which the believer's faith in God must stand firm (365-69), as well as when he prays about the evil powers (372-75). His introduction has been somewhat elaborated on already in this article; the peroration returns to the confession of the Trinity with which the introduction ended, doing so in the context of a final prayer that Farel writes in the first person singular, a prayer for faith and trust in order to the maintenance of this confession until God delivers the one praying from this mortal life into the perfect confession, love, and eternal praise of God (565-75).

⁷¹ *La sainte Bible en françois, tradlatée selon la . . . traduction de Saint Hierome* (trans. into French by Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples; Anvers: Martin Lempereur, 1534).

Some of the traditionalist doctors used *vous* in their prayers, but not all.⁷² As one charting the course for the French Reformed writings, Farel's use of *tu* is not new, but fits within his context.⁷³ It also fits Farel's sense of closeness to God; near the end he specifically calls Jesus "our brother," as he also did in *L'Épître chrestienne*.⁷⁴ Indeed, Higman identifies the personal relationship of believers to God as the first of three central themes of Farel's spirituality.⁷⁵

The *tu* whom Farel addresses throughout the prayer, including the creedal section, is the first person of the Trinity, the Father. This is clear from the constant use of the second person possessive regarding the Son and Spirit, *ton chier filz* and *ton saint esperit*. However, some years later, in another published prayer for the persecuted church, Farel directly addresses not only the Father, but also *Seigneur Jesus, doux Jesus, Saint Esprit*, and *Esprit de verité*. Burger, who studied this prayer, concludes that Farel wants his readers to discount their present troubles in light of the one great calling to rescue for Christ the greatest possible number of souls seduced by the pope. Indeed, one may identify mission as one of the recurring petitions in Farel's prayers. The publication of this written prayer, in two editions (1543 and 1545), shows that Farel's directives to the church on prayer remained living for him two decades later.⁷⁶

If we step back and think about the role of Farel's little prayer book in the early French reform movement, at least two remarks are pertinent. First, given Farel's remark about prayer opening the kingdom, he must have a theological reason for publishing his explanation of the Lord's Prayer and the Creed in the form of a prayer. Namely, he believes that by the increase of heartfelt prayer the nascent French reform movement will advance, for God has promised to work out his will in response to the prayers of believers. True change needs true prayer. Prayer functions as a means of grace, both at the level of the individual believers and at the level of the corporate church. Secondly, the fact that Farel altered Luther's exposition of the Creed so that he formulated it as a prayer simply shows that for Farel prayer was a rather natural form of communicating

⁷² Higman, "Theology for the Layman," 114 n. 8.

⁷³ Perhaps it is interesting to note in this context that Calvin's only French letter to Farel (in the year 1540) uses the *vous* form rather than *tu*. This is likely Calvin's expression of respect for a man 20 years his senior (in spite of Calvin's strong reprimands in the letter!). See Francis M. Higman, "Calvin and Farel," in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor: Calvin as Confessor of Holy Scripture* (ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 223.

⁷⁴ Note that these are lines originating in Farel, not Luther: "mesmemet tous les merites de ton benoit filz Jesus nostre frere" (*Le Pater Noster et le Credo* [ed. Higman], c3v, lines 534-35 [p. 61]). Cf. "Jesus, qui s'est fait ton frere" (a7r [page 58]).

⁷⁵ Higman identifies the following three marks: "le rapport personnel du croyant à Dieu," "la dépendance entière du croyant envers Dieu," and "la purification intérieure du croyant par le Saint Esprit" (*Le Pater Noster et le Credo*, 15).

⁷⁶ Guillaume Farel, *Forme d'oraison pour demander à Dieu la sainte predication de l'évangélie* (Geneva: Jehan Girard, 1545). This work is a re-publishing of *Oraison tresdevote en laquelle [sic] est faite la confession des pechez* from 1543. I have taken my quotations from an edition of 1865, contained within Guillaume Farel, *Du vray usage de la croix de Jesus-Christ* (Geneva: Fick, 1865), 278-88. A careful comparison of the two editions was undertaken by Chr. Burger, "Farel's Frömmigkeit," in *Colloque Farel*, 1:149-60.

ideas, not only toward God but also toward others. In other words, prayer functions partly as a teaching tool. By means of this form, Farel hopes the contents will be learned not just in the head, but also in the heart. Farel aims to reform persons, not merely institutions. For Farel, "understanding" speaks of the mind, yet to "pray" requires the spirit being lifted up as well. In other words, the whole person must be engaged. Only then will their affections be inflamed with a love informed by Scripture. One wonders to what extent Farel's work reflects his own spirituality, and undoubtedly the connection must be strong.

We have seen, to this point, three works of Farel from the year 1524. I wish now to review Farel's early "dogmatics," before drawing conclusions.

V. *Summaire* (1529)

Scholars prior to 1980 generally accepted the date of 1525 for Farel's *Summaire*,⁷⁷ since this was the date printed on an edition said to be from Turin.⁷⁸ It has since been conclusively shown that the *Summaire* was composed in 1529.⁷⁹ The "Turin" publication was actually the third edition, a pirated one, printed by Simon du Bois in Alençon between 1530 and 1534.⁸⁰ Two earlier printings by Pierre de Vingle (1529 and 1531) are attested in archival records but have not been recovered. The most reliable edition, it seems, is that of 1534 from Pierre de Vingle.⁸¹

What does the *Summaire* contain?⁸² It is a forty-two chapter summary of the evangelical faith, the first of its kind in French, presenting the essential points of

⁷⁷ Both *Sommaire* and *Summaire* occur in the literature; I have chosen to use *Summaire*.

⁷⁸ This printing was discovered in the British Museum in 1929. Acceptance of the date can be found, e.g., in the 1930 biography, Comité Farel, *Biographie nouvelle*, 39; also, E. Droz, "Pierre de Vingle, l'imprimeur de Farel: 23 reproductions," in *Aspects de la propagande religieuse* (Travaux d'humanisme et renaissance 28; Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1957), 57-60; Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities*, 68; and finally, in 1983, Hower, "William Farel," 40.

⁷⁹ The first scholar to question the 1525 date was Elfriede Jacobs. She defended a thesis on this matter in 1975 and then published her dissertation on Farel's sacramental doctrine in 1978. See Elfriede Jacobs, *Die Sakramentslehre Wilhelm Farel's* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1978), 29-44. At the same time Higman argued in detail for a 1528/1529 date of composition. See his conclusion: Francis M. Higman, "Dates clés de la Réforme française: Le *Sommaire* de Guillaume Farel et *La Somme de l'Écriture sainte*," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 38 (1976): 245. Support for this thesis can be found in Gilmont, *L'œuvre imprimé*, 119. See also David N. Wiley, "Toward a Critical Edition of Farel's *Sommaire*: The Dating of the Editions of 1525 and 1542," in *Colloque Farel*, 1:203-20. French printers altered date and place in an effort to evade detection under censorship laws.

⁸⁰ Higman, "Dates clés," 241-42.

⁸¹ Recently Higman has provided a handy and up-to-date summary of the dates and statuses of the first four editions. See Francis M. Higman, "Farel's *Summaire*: The Interplay of Theology and Polemics," in *Le livre évangélique en français avant Calvin*, 72 n. 1. Note that Hofer's work is unfortunately based on what has turned out to be the inferior third edition. See Guillaume Farel, *Sommaire et brève déclaration* (ed. Hofer).

⁸² Presently no scholarly English translations of any of Farel's works have been published. I thank Jason Zuidema of McGill University for sharing with me in 2007 his English translation of the 1534 edition of Farel's *Summaire*, which he is preparing for publication. An earlier translation of Farel's

the gospel teachings in a chapter format with a table of contents.⁸³ Positive gospel teaching and negative rejections of Roman Catholic doctrines and practices stand side by side.⁸⁴ Chapter 24 is entitled, "Prayer and Praying."⁸⁵ Prayer is also mentioned or alluded to in chapters 9, 20, 22, 26, and 40.

Farel specifies the role of heart and mouth in the same way as his 1524 work, but in more detail, when he writes, "Prayer is an ardent speaking with God, in which man does not know what he must say or ask, but the Spirit who is in believers prays for us with great inexpressible groanings. In prayer the mouth is not really required to speak, but only the heart."⁸⁶ Later he specifies, "Never let the tongue speak to pray if the heart is not with God."⁸⁷ Reminiscent of prayer as one of the most noble fruits of faith, prayer is also spoken of as "the true sacrifice of praise by which one honors and glorifies God."⁸⁸ This time stronger warnings occur against the idolatry of praying to any other, and a warning against mindless "muttering" also occurs.⁸⁹

A study of Farel's spiritual view of prayer should also turn to his chapter on the Spirit and the new man, chapter 9. He calls the Holy Spirit, "the movement

Summaire and his 1533 liturgy was made by Blair Reynolds and published as a staple-bound booklet. However, the translation is not dependable; e.g., the second sentence of Farel's chapter on God (ch. 1) is translated in part as the opposite of its French original. Chapters 19 and 26, among others, also provide examples of unintelligible translation. In addition, the work suffers from an inexcusable lack of editing. See Guillaume Farel, "*Manner and Method*" and "*Summary and Brief Declaration*" (trans. Blair Reynolds; University Monograph Series; Bristol, Ind.: Wyndam Hall Press, 1985). Translations given in this article are my own and are drawn from the 1534 de Vingle printing.

⁸³ Higman remarks, "It is characteristic of Guillaume Farel that he should perceive the need for something which did not yet exist: a systematic reference work which would order the 'new' teachings in an accessible form, in French, and with that fundamental reading aid, a Table of Contents" (Higman, "*Summaire: Interplay of Theology and Politics*," 74).

⁸⁴ One of Higman's arguments about *Summaire* is that, written in 1529, it forms a transition from the earlier positive advancement of Reformed teaching to the later polemical rejection of the traditional doctrines and practices. He posits a change in tactics on the part of the Reformers, as they realized that their essentially positive message was not yielding the expected results. This conclusion bears scrutiny. I wonder, was not the reform movement by definition polemical from the start? See Higman, "*Summaire: Interplay of Theology and Politics*," 84-85.

⁸⁵ Original: *De priere et l'oraison*. "Prayer and Praying" is the translation suggested by Zuidema (English translation of Farel's *Summaire* forthcoming).

⁸⁶ "Oraison est ung ardent parler avec Dieu, auquel l'homme ne scait qu'il doit dire ne demander: Mais l'Esperit qui est es fideles par grandz gémissements qu'on ne scauroit dire, prie pour nous. En l'oraison la bouche n'est ia resquise qu'elle parle: mais le coeur seulement" (Guillaume Farel, *Summaire et brève déclaration* [Neuchâtel: Pierre de Vingle, 1534], E i). Following Zuidema's example, I note only the recto pages, concurring thereby with the original. Page numbers to the Hofer edition will follow in parentheses (in this case: 150).

⁸⁷ Ibid., E ii (154).

⁸⁸ Ibid., E i (152). Cf. art. 22: "Et pourtant le coeur Chrestien, ardent en l'amour de nostre pere, pour son honneur et gloire, affin que Dieu soit honoré et magnifié" (D vi [140]).

⁸⁹ The word is *barbotant*, a variation of *barbotement*. See *Summaire*, E ii (154). This word also occurs in chs. 21 and 42 (D v [136]; K viii [318]). Since context determines meaning, note the following in ch. 21: "et aux barboteurs qui ne font que murmurer parolles sans entendement, honnorantz Dieu des leures, auquel ilz servent en vain suyvantz la doctrine et commandementz des hommes."

and affection which God gives to man, the Renewer.”⁹⁰ Here Farel writes of the Spirit subduing human “presumption and rashness,” bringing believers in submission to the Word of God, and making them steadfast against all the world’s vanity and lies. He states, “Much better would it be to know this by experience than by a book.”⁹¹ He continues, “Nevertheless, [the Bible] is written for the elect, in order that they might passionately desire and pray that the Spirit be given to them to make them into new men.”⁹² Note Farel’s sustained emphasis on the interior of humans, the heart and spirit, and on experience. He advances a robust spirituality, viewed in terms of the believer’s affections being led and moved by the Spirit.

Such spirituality is not individualistic. It puts forth the fruit of love for one’s neighbor. In chapter 27, regarding the adoration of the saints, Farel relates that believers should instead pray for each other, helping their fellows by praying for them. The Scriptures, he argues, are full of such requests for each other. Love for God ought to grow by means of these intercessions, for then more thanks will be rendered to God in response to his answers. Practical love for the neighbor was obviously expected to grow out of such prayers.⁹³

Based on these teachings, it will not do to picture Farel as a trouble-making or violent character, or, at least, not as one who desired to act that way.⁹⁴ Farel’s doctrine of prayer in its unity with the affections of the heart and the dynamic of the Holy Spirit is about practically living close to God and loving one’s neighbor. Some of his language may sound mystical, as when he speaks of the Spirit as God’s affection and movement, and when he puts the heart ahead of the tongue; however, he also firmly roots the Spirit’s work in the Word, such that it is the Spirit himself who directs believers to the Word to make them hold to it and submit to it. Farel’s doctrine of the right use of the law in the life of the believer also permeates the *Summaire*.⁹⁵

It is rather striking that in this chapter-by-chapter setting forth of doctrine Farel cannot avoid the mode of second-person direct address. The *Summaire*

⁹⁰ “L’Esprit est le mouuement et affection que Dieu baille à l’homme le renouuellant” (ibid., B v [70]).

⁹¹ Ibid., B vi (72).

⁹² Ibid., B vi (74).

⁹³ Ibid., E viii (174). Farel’s emphasis on love for the neighbor spans his entire writing career.

⁹⁴ Indeed, some of the Farel-Calvin correspondence suggests just the opposite. Farel comes across as the humble one who transparently acknowledges his faults to the twenty-years-younger Calvin, whereas Calvin at times hardly holds himself back in reprimanding Farel. See, e.g., Preserved Smith, “Some Old Unpublished Letters,” *HTR* 12 (1919): 206-14; and compare this to Higman, “Calvin and Farel,” 214-23. Doumergue comments that Farel objected to being addressed as *L’Apôtre des Allobrages* and told his friends to address their letters very simply, to *G. Farel, Genève* (*Jean Calvin*, 2:168 n. 3).

⁹⁵ See Charles Partee, “Farel’s Influence on Calvin: A Prolusion,” in *Colloque Farel*, 1:179, 181. Oberman provides an influential article on the change in Calvin and Farel’s relationship in 1559; see Heiko A. Oberman, “Calvin and Farel: The Dynamics of Legitimation in Early Calvinism,” *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 1 (1999): 7-40. One of his students, Michael W. Bruening, has responded in a careful and considerate dissertation, showing that Calvin sought legitimation from the beginning; see Bruening, *Calvinism’s First Battleground*, 6-7, 176-79, 199-209.

begins in what one might expect of a manual of doctrine: a third-person presentation of what must be believed. However, in chapter 29 Farel moves to three rhetorical questions on the number of souls seduced by the papacy. A paragraph later he addresses his readers directly, "Christians, pull yourselves away" from the pope who lays on a heavy burden, and "come" to Christ who took our burden.⁹⁶ In chapter 35, entitled "The Power of Pastors," Farel argues that the entire power of pastors lies in properly teaching the people the simple Word of God. He mourns the fact that all kinds of foolish books are available while the true Word is not allowed to be read by the simple people for whom God intended it. In the emotion of his rhetoric, Farel addresses the sun and the earth regarding this horror. Then he turns directly to God and inserts a prayer consisting of some thirteen rhetorical pleas that God grant justice. These pleas express such a longing, convey such a zeal, and hold God to his Word so fiercely, that it would have been hard for an evangelical to be unmoved when reading them. This brings Farel to direct his admonitions against those who deny the Scriptures, in the form of four questions and two statements to the effect that it would be better if they had not been born. Finally, he ends with, "Rise up, O God . . . make the trumpet of the holy gospel to be heard."⁹⁷ In terms of teaching prayer, once again we encounter Farel teaching by example. Direct address to others and direct address to God seem to bring out Farel's most powerful rhetoric and most moving emotions.⁹⁸ Scholars often wonder what his sermons would have been like and mourn the fact that we have no collection of them.⁹⁹

VI. *Prayer in Farel's Historical Context*

It has not been possible to investigate Farel's 1533 liturgy, his sermons at the Disputation of Lausanne in 1536, his prayers for the believers at Metz in 1543 and 1545, nor his later works. Each of these would also prove fruitful for the topic at hand, but none is likely to alter the basic thesis of this article: Guillaume Farel exhibited a robust spirituality in a time of reformation, and exhorted others to the same, especially by his examples of prayer. Farel's attention to the life of prayer for the believer played a very practical role in the Reformation. As Higman suggested regarding *Summaire*, leave it to Farel to perceive the need for something which did not yet exist and put it together.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ *Summaire*, F vii (200). Cf. ch. 27, where Farel had already exhorted the "Christians" directly.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, H ii–H iv (240–48). Note here the recurring emphasis on mission.

⁹⁸ Direct address also occurs in art. 38 on marriage, speaking to believers and addressing the magistrates. Art. 39 speaks to fathers. Art. 41 addresses the champions and warriors who go out with the Word of God as their sword. Art. 42 reads like a sermon, complete with a host of imperative verbs.

⁹⁹ In fact, we do possess two speeches that may be properly titled sermons. At the Lausanne Disputation in 1536 it was actually Farel who carried the debate, speaking 40 percent of the time, taking care of the opening and closing remarks, and leading almost all of the devotions. His opening sermon was one long call to prayer. The entire proceedings were transcribed and are available in a carefully done 1928 edition; see Arthur Piaget, *Les Actes de la Dispute de Lausanne 1536, publiés intégralement d'après le manuscrit de Berne* (Mémoires de l'université de Neuchâtel 6; Neuchâtel: Paul Attinger, 1928). Cf. Peronnet, "Images de Guillaume Farel pendant la Dispute de Lausanne," 133–41.

¹⁰⁰ See n. 83 above.

But this raises the question of precisely what was original about Farel's attention to prayer. Does Farel mark the genesis of Protestant prayer, as Hower argued? If the question of exactly what makes a prayer "Protestant" is difficult, the question of beginnings is even more dangerous. Praying did not stop before the Reformation and restart with it. Nor did it wait for Farel to write in 1524. Farel's main source on the Apostles' Creed was Luther's *Betbüchlein*, written in 1522, but drawn from materials on the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Commandments already published in 1520. A separate tract for "simple laymen" on the Lord's Prayer had already come from Luther's pen in 1519. Farel, then, appears to be the first French Protestant to write on prayer, but not the genesis of Protestant prayer in general. More examination of context must follow before concluding just what was original about Farel's attention to prayer.

Besides the older, hand-copied manuscripts, numerous prayer books had come from the new printing presses in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Wiencke introduces Luther's devotional writings by highlighting these personal prayer books which had been used in the medieval church for centuries.¹⁰¹ Luther realized that on the practical level, the theology of these prayer books needed to be challenged and replaced with the new doctrines. As early as 1517 he published a book of the seven penitential Psalms to counteract the prayer books. Several sermons were also published with the same intent. Luther introduces the *Betbüchlein* itself with a rant against these prayer books.¹⁰² In the time before Sorbonne censure, Luther's works quickly flowed into the French territories. It is obvious enough that Farel used Luther's exposition of the *Credo* from the very book that also contained Luther's exposition of the Lord's Prayer, thus the lines of continuity are tight.

The lines of continuity can also be drawn closer to Farel if we look, for example, at Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples. On February 16, 1524, Lefèvre wrote *Vne Épistre comment on doit prier Dieu, etc.* This letter introduced seven Psalms in French translation with the argument that God intends for believers to pray in their own language. He quotes both Col 3:16 and 1 Cor 14:19, with the obvious connotation that Latin prayers are improper for those who do not understand them.¹⁰³ Prayer, then, had the attention of Farel's teacher, the humanist Lefèvre.

Prayer also held the attention of one of Farel's antagonists, the humanist Erasmus. Although this aspect of his work is little known, Erasmus was, one might say, in the habit of publishing prayers, whether to Jesus or to Mary. One year before Farel, Erasmus had even published an extended paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer divided into seven parts for the seven days of the week. It was indeed meant to

¹⁰¹ Fassler provides an outline and analysis of one such prayer book from the fifteenth century (Margot Fassler, "Psalms and Prayers in Daily Devotion: A Fifteenth-Century Devotional Anthology from the Diocese of Rheims: Beinecke 757," in *Worship in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, 15-40). Higman notes Gerson's popular *Opus tripartitum* containing the Creed, the Prayer, and the Commandments, produced in French and Latin in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Other simple "catechisms" like it also functioned to help people pray. See Higman, "Theology for the Layman," 107-9.

¹⁰² The above depends upon Luther's *Devotional Writings* 2 (ed. Wiencke), 5-6, 11-12.

¹⁰³ Rice, *Prefatory Epistles*, 468-70. Both Lefèvre and Briçonnet were interested in developing lay piety. See Heller, "Reform and Reformers," 69, 208, 304.

serve as a new kind of prayer book.¹⁰⁴ A few months after Farel's *Le Pater Noster* Erasmus published, "On Praying to God," a lengthy essay covering all the rubrics of prayer.¹⁰⁵ In spite of discontinuity between Erasmus and Farel as to what reform should look like (Erasmus labored for reform, but also strongly opposed the evangelicals), it is from Erasmus that we find an earlier version of the form that otherwise seems unique to Farel, namely, a paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer. Note well, however, that Erasmus stuck to Latin, Farel to French. This difference is as decisive as the differences in doctrine (e.g., Erasmus included prayers to Mary). But the paraphrasing style as such was new for prayer books of the time, since the late medieval practice simply adhered to precise quotations.¹⁰⁶ Lambert remarks that late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century persons showed, "a marked preference for following a set text when praying."¹⁰⁷ Thus, looking at Farel's and Erasmus's paraphrases respectively, Higman and O'Malley write of "the new genre."¹⁰⁸

But at the same time, there was also a longer history of similar written prayers. Higman states, "This form of first-person meditation goes back to a long medieval tradition of devotional poetry and prose (for example many of the works attributed to Gerson)."¹⁰⁹ One may certainly turn the mind all the way back to Augustine's *Confessions* for the greatest example of an entire book written as a prayer. Such a form of teaching certainly puts the reader *coram Deo* and is more likely to engage the heart along with the mind. Farel belongs to the line of those teachers who sought to do something to counter the mindless repetition of prayers, to tie once again individual spiritual life to the inner life and work of the Holy Spirit. There certainly was a sense in which Farel's project sought to challenge a prevalent practice of the time, even if many traditional teachers also spoke against it.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ Erasmus's English editors complain about a "collective amnesia" with regard to Erasmus's spiritual writings, and provide translations of a range of published prayers from him. See Erasmus, *Spiritualia and Pastoralia* (vol. 69 of *Collected Works*; ed. John W. O'Malley and Louis A. Perraud; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), xi-xii. The prayers, with introductions, are found on pp. 1-151. Their translated titles and dates are: *Prayer to Jesus, Son of the Virgin* (1499); *Paeon in Honour of the Virgin Mother* (1499); *Prayer of Supplication to Mary, the Virgin Mother, in Time of Trouble* (1503); *The Lord's Prayer* (1523); *Liturgy of the Virgin Mother Venerated at Loreto* (1523); *Prayer to the Lord Jesus for Peace in the Church* (1532); and *Some New Prayers* (1535).

¹⁰⁵ Erasmus, *Spiritualia and Pastoralia* (vol. 70 of *Collected Works*; ed. John W. O'Malley; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 141-230.

¹⁰⁶ See the editors' comments in Erasmus, *Spiritualia and Pastoralia*, 69:xvi-xix. See also Fassler, "Psalms and Prayers in Daily Devotion," 16-22.

¹⁰⁷ Lambert, "Preaching, Praying and Policing," 398.

¹⁰⁸ See Higman, "Theology for the Layman," 112; and O'Malley's comments in Erasmus, *Spiritualia and Pastoralia*, 69: xvii. Higman is referring to works that offer *commentary* on the Creed, Lord's Prayer, and Commandments rather than just the bare text. O'Malley writes that Erasmus was "showing in actual practice and in a fully fleshed-out model how one might pray the Lord's Prayer in a more sustained way than by simply reciting the formula," and that this was a new genre for him.

¹⁰⁹ Higman, "Theology for the Layman," 109.

¹¹⁰ Certainly medieval preachers also exhorted the laity to pray from the heart. But, concludes Lambert, most frequently people "learned and recited the basic prayers in Latin" and thus could not

Daily life was affected by the changes. The medieval hours of prayer, regulated by the ever-present bells in the cities, came to an end when the Reformation was accepted. Lambert writes, "The disappearance of the Divine Office from Geneva . . . could not have been a minor event. The new religion offered nothing to replace these liturgical or liturgically-minded prayers that structured the day of the pious person."¹¹¹ Nothing at all? Perhaps Farel's prayer book? Or perhaps Luther's? I would suggest that the bells and the books preceding the Reformation are precisely the reasons why Farel stated that his prayer book could be used whenever one was at leisure to do so, in place of the rosary, and could be easily carried in the hand. He was clearly offering an alternative.

VII. *Farel's Particular Contribution to the Reform of Prayer*

Did Farel's *Le Pater Noster et le Credo* contribute to the renewal of prayer? Considering its popularity, it must have. Considering the success of the Geneva consistory at ending the "muttering" during sermons, there must have been some positive replacements of the tools of piety which the people had enjoyed prior to the Reformation.¹¹²

With the foregoing contextual factors in mind, what was "new" about Farel's attention to prayer? First, his prayer book was the first one of any confessional allegiance to be written entirely in the French language. Second, his prayer book, to be used in place of the rosary, served as a simplification of the medieval prayer books; instead of setting forth tens or hundreds of prayers for as many occasions, he stuck to the basics of the Lord's Prayer and the Creed. Together with the Commandments, these were to become the steady diet of many reform-minded persons. Third, his integration of the inner person—the heart and spirit—with the praying lips, was new for many of his readers, though at the same time connected to certain streams of late medieval piety. Fourth, his use of direct address did not merely take the form of an already written text, like the medieval prayer books, but struck out on its own with something fresh. This in itself could make it either attractive or repelling, depending on whether one was conservative or reform-minded. Fifth, Farel's use of direct address was intended to function as a teaching tool, particularly

understand them very well (Lambert, "Preaching, Praying and Policing," 400-401; emphasis in the original).

¹¹¹ Ibid., 103-4; see also 71-104. Lambert's answer to the problem focuses on the consistory records of Geneva (post-1542) where the concern was with delinquents and the effort was simply to get them to recite the Lord's Prayer and the Creed, let alone anything more elaborate. But given what Lambert relates about Calvin's view of the time to be spent in prayer (half to three quarters of an hour each morning), it is evident that the more faithful Genevans did more than pray the Lord's Prayer. Cf. *ibid.*, 405, 455-59.

¹¹² After five years the instances of *barbotement* in the Geneva consistory's records drop off (Robert Kingdon, *The Registers of the Consistory of Geneva in the Time of Calvin* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], xxi). It is interesting to note that a certain Anna who appeared before the Geneva consistory in September 1542 stated that she had learned the prayer and creed from Farel himself. Evidently Farel also worked "from house to house." See Lambert, "Preaching, Praying and Policing," 445.

since he used it for both the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed. This could remind us of Augustine's *Confessions*, and it certainly seems more likely to teach the heart and mind at once. Sixth, Farel contributed directly to the revamping of prayer among the French evangelicals, both in France and Switzerland, since his publications reached many. Finally, it may be commented that Farel's deep piety, having been in close contact with Lefèvre's mystical tendencies,¹¹³ maintains a strong sense of love and devotion and experience, but never seeks to go beyond the Scriptures or outside of them. It seems clear that Farel understood that the Spirit of prayer is the Spirit of Scripture.

We should also note at least one thing Farel does not do, at least not explicitly. He does not recommend that his *Le Pater Noster* be used as the basis for free prayers. Rather, it is to be used "in place of the rosary." Would not this lead medieval persons to understand that it is a new form prayer? One also needs to think about what it would have meant to the average medieval to read the ending of *L'Épître chrestienne*, where Farel writes, "Remember me in your prayers." Would this have meant the saying of the Lord's Prayer or perhaps a Hail Mary, with Farel also held in their minds? Note that even Farel's disputation against the *verbosiores preces* did not as such exclude form prayers, but fit within a context that opposed their mindless repetition. Thus, Farel's emphasis on the employment of the heart in prayer does not necessarily translate into the promotion of free prayers. The Lord's Prayer certainly can be prayed from the heart.

Looking back a few years, I did not find Luther suggesting the use of free prayers in the years 1519 to 1522.¹¹⁴ Later, in 1535, Luther wrote an extremely practical guide for prayer, and described his own practice of dwelling on the various petitions of the Lord's Prayer as he prayed. "Occasionally," he stated, "I may get lost among so many ideas in one petition that I forego the other six."¹¹⁵ Luther exhorted his readers to take such experiences for the guidance, indeed, the preaching of the Holy Spirit. In other words, he recommends free prayer. But this was 1535, not 1524. Perhaps the context of the bells and the mass wherein the prayers were all the same, and especially the context of the prayer books, wherein precise prayers were given for every detail of life—from getting out of bed to washing hands and eyes to leaving the house, and so forth¹¹⁶—had such a bind on the people that Luther and Farel did not yet in the 1520s feel free to recommend free prayers as strongly as Luther did in 1535. Perhaps they also considered the lack of biblical knowledge among their readers to be a hindrance to free prayer. One might then view Farel's paraphrase as a step towards free

¹¹³ I take Lefèvre's mysticism to be an established fact, although one must also notice Lefèvre's development towards evangelicalism as his career evolved. In the latter he was unlike and aloof from Erasmus. For either of these arguments, see Heller, "Reform and Reformers," *passim*.

¹¹⁴ Note that this research is very limited at this point. I have not researched Luther's sermons, for example.

¹¹⁵ Luther, "A Simple Way to Pray," in *Devotional Writings* 2, 198. Note that he begins this treatise by explaining that when he grows cold or joyless in prayer, he returns to prayer by rote: he takes his "little psalter" and says "quietly to myself and word-for-word the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and, if I have time, some words of Christ or of Paul, or some psalms, just as a child might do" (193).

¹¹⁶ Fassler, "Psalms and Prayers in Daily Devotion," 16-17.

prayers, radical enough in its precise time. At any rate, he had to supply something specifically evangelical for those who preferred to follow a set text but were warned against *verbosiores preces*. In *L'Épître chrestienne* Farel states his own prayer for those who are going to take up the New Testament in French. His prayer is obviously freely composed, yet based on Scripture. But one could not expect the majority of the readers to be able to accomplish the same; many still preferred a set text, so he supplied it.

Farel's definition of prayer in *Summaire* four years later might be regarded as a small step towards free prayer, when he more clearly makes the distinction between the spirit of prayer and the words of prayer. In *Summaire* Farel more clearly speaks of the believer's need to pray for the Spirit, as well as the benefit of intercession for fellow believers (in place of prayer to the saints). Yet he provides no new models for such prayers, and his instructions therefore can only be fulfilled by employing free prayers. Farel's prayer of 1543, republished in 1545, was another freely composed prayer, written with a view to a specific situation of persecution. Here again Farel was showing the way in the manner of free prayer, trying to help the church present to God an expression of its grief. While one cannot read into Farel's mind, nor think of history as trying to attain to what it came to be, there certainly was a transition taking place in the Reformation era with respect to prayer. I have attempted at least a tentative reconstruction of a small portion of this history.

VIII. *Offering Balance to the Negative Image of Farel*

Moving outwards to the wider considerations of Farel's doctrine and use of prayer as a window on his spirituality, does this study offer a balance to some of the prevailing images of Farel? Peronnet ends his article on Farel at Lausanne with a number of images of Farel, writing of Guillaume Farel, "preacher and minister opening the sessions with exhortations and prayers."¹¹⁷ Indeed, anyone who reads the proceedings of the Dispute of Lausanne will come away with a profound sense of Farel, master of rhetoric, imploring his hearers to pray, to believe, to confess, and to love. Roulet considers the thesis that Farel was a kind of double agent, first of all a political emissary of Bern, then a preacher, as the early Farel worked his way through the Swiss cities. Roulet concludes rather strongly against it: "Farel is the agent of the Lord or, in any case, of the Gospel, not of the Bernese."¹¹⁸ Higman engages the image of Farel the warrior and says that it is only part of the truth. He points out that Farel put himself to the patient work of reforming the church of Neuchâtel, where he was pastor for twenty-seven long years (1538–1565). Higman continues, "And there is also another aspect of Guillaume Farel, which perhaps even surprises us by its moderation, its gentleness, its irenic character. One finds it in his correspondence, even with those who, like Girard Roussel, clearly display their disagreement with him; and one finds it especially in the little text of [*Le Pater Noster*]."¹¹⁹ Finally, he writes of

¹¹⁷ Peronnet, "Images de Guillaume Farel pendant la Dispute de Lausanne," 141.

¹¹⁸ Roulet, "Farel: Agent bernois? (1528–1536)," 104.

¹¹⁹ Higman's introduction to *Le Pater Noster et le Credo*, 8-9.

Farel's vibrant and rhythmic style, "representing well the profound spirituality and burning conviction of Guillaume Farel, traits which, thanks to this large dissemination [of *Le Pater Noster*], have strongly marked the piety and the language of the church in the French language."¹²⁰ Higman is not the only one to highlight Farel's pastoral heart. Bodenmann, in a telling note, terms Farel's work on the Lord's Supper, "a pastoral explanation" of the *Consensus Tigurinus* on this point.¹²¹ Wiley also highlights as a motif in *Sommaire*, Farel's advice to Christians on how to love their neighbor, something he calls a "practical and pastoral concern."¹²²

Whence then the negative images? Farel himself would admit his faults readily, but how is it that his zeal for prayer and pastoral sensitivity have been minimized, even cast aside? It is unlikely that the rhetoric of Erasmus's letters had that much influence. Could it be that some have read Farel through the eyes of Calvin too much? Although he appreciated Farel, Calvin could also be ruthless in his letters to him (see n. 94). At the turn of 1558–1559 Calvin appears to have cut short his relationship with Farel over the latter's late and indecorous marriage.¹²³ The possibility of Calvin's contribution to the negative image would need further investigation. On the other hand, Barth and company must take some responsibility for having caricatured Farel as foil for their other caricature, Calvin, the man ahead of his times. What about Beza's portrayal of Farel? Early on we noted Beza's comment about the ardent prayers of Farel. But there was also a verse composed by Beza which went like this, "The Church of France recently admired Calvin, because no one taught more learnedly. It also recently admired you, Farel, because no one thundered more powerfully."¹²⁴ Presumably this is to be taken positively, but how many readers of history would later associate the Farel of profound piety and pastoral love with this bit of verse?

Surely there are many more lines to trace in discerning the reasons for the various images of Guillaume Farel. This article has not tried to trace all the lines and images nor to present an exhaustive history of Farel. But one image has come into view that offers some balance to the negative images: through the window of prayer we have observed spiritual, pastoral, and servant-like traits at work in Farel. He supplied many of the first-order spiritual needs of the Reformation among the French-speaking Swiss. He gave himself to the work, heart and soul, and his passionate engagement must have brought many of the Swiss to favor the "new" doctrines.

¹²⁰ *Le Pater Noster et le Credo*, 26. See also Higman, "Sommaire: The Interplay of Theology and Polemics," 73, where he repeats his view that Farel's *Le Pater Noster* explains the Lord's Prayer "eirenically."

¹²¹ Bodenmann, "Farel et le livre réformé français," 17.

¹²² Wiley, "Toward a Critical Edition of Farel's *Sommaire*," 203; cf. 218.

¹²³ Oberman, "Calvin and Farel: The Dynamics of Legitimation," 25–28.

¹²⁴ "Gallica mirata est Calvinum Ecclesia nuper, Quo nemo docuit doctius./Est quoque te nuper mirata, Farelle, tonantem,/Quo nemo tonuit fortius" (E. Doumergue, *Jean Calvin*, 2:172).

AN EARLY DOCTRINAL HANDBOOK:
FAREL'S *SUMMAIRE ET BRIEFVE DECLARATION*

ROBERT WHITE

It is the fate of forerunners to be speedily eclipsed by those whose way they have prepared. Guillaume Farel was one such forerunner. He is best remembered today, outside of Switzerland, as the energetic Reformer who, in July 1536, detained Calvin in Geneva and extorted from him the promise to assist in the work of church-building. Yet the Farel of 1536 was no neophyte. He already had a long and impressive career behind him as a gospel preacher, church planter, evangelist, educator, and Christian apologist, beginning with the Meaux reform movement of the early 1520s and followed by pastoral charges in Montbéliard (1524–1525), Strasbourg (1525–1526), and Aigle (1526–1530), where he served as the missionary agent of the Bernese government. The celebrated Lefèvre d'Étaples, leader of the Meaux circle, had been his mentor; he knew Erasmus as an unforgiving critic; and he counted as friends Capito and Bucer in Strasbourg, Oecolampadius in Basel, and Zwingli in Zurich. He was present when Bern voted to adopt the Reformation in 1528, and played a decisive role in the introduction of the Reformation to Neuchâtel (1530) and Geneva (1532 onward).¹

It is not, however, these facts that interest us here. Our concern is rather with Farel's efforts to formulate, in the decade preceding Calvin's advent, a reasoned statement of Christian belief adequate to the needs of a burgeoning reform movement in France and French-speaking Switzerland. The statement in question is the amply named *Summaire et briefve declaration d'aucuns lieux fort necessaires à ung chascun chrestien pour mettre sa confiance en Dieu et ayder son prochain*.² No copy

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¹ The standard work on Farel's career is the collectively written *Guillaume Farel, 1489–1565: Biographie nouvelle* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1930). Additions and corrections are supplied by contributors to the *Actes du colloque Guillaume Farel: Neuchâtel, 29 septembre–1er octobre 1980* (ed. Pierre Barthel, Rémy Scheurer, and Richard Stauffer; 2 vols.; Cahiers de la Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie 9.1 and 9.2; Geneva: Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie, 1983), hereafter cited as *Colloque Farel*.

² *Summary, with Brief Explanation, of Certain Points Most Necessary for Each and Every Christian to Place His Trust in God and to Help His Neighbor* (English translations of Farel's work are the author's.) The title is, in itself, a recapitulation of the two tables of the Law. Various aspects of the *Summaire* are examined by Francis M. Higman, "Dates-clé de la Réforme française: Le *Sommaire* de Guillaume Farel et *La Somme de l'Écriture sainte*," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 38 (1976): 237–47; Elfriede Jacobs, *Die Sakramentslehre Wilhelm Farel's* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1978), 29–44; Gottfried W. Locher, "Farel's *Sommaire* und Zwingli's *Commentarius*," in *Colloque Farel*, 1:137–46; David N. Wiley, "Towards a

exists of the first edition, published by Lyons printer Pierre de Vingle in 1529, and condemned the following year by the Parliament of Dole. The oldest extant edition, from the presses of Simon Du Bois, of Alençon, dates from around 1533, although the title page bears a false address and date ("Turin, 1525"). It is this printing which, by default, forms the base text for a study of the *Summaire*.³

I. General Characteristics

The *Summaire* was written, on Farel's own admission, at the instigation of Oecolampadius, whom Farel had known since 1524 and who, some time later, urged him to compose a work of instruction "in the common tongue, for those who knew no Latin, briefly outlining a number of points which were not well understood."⁴

The book begins with a foreword addressed to "all who love our Lord and desire to know the truth." Farel has in view, in the first place, readers who, sincerely alarmed by the church's spiritual condition, have not yet grasped the extent of its apostasy. "Because of the gross blindness, confusion, and gloom into which the world has been plunged, [no one] can see how much everything has been altered and spoiled: nothing pure is left."⁵ Such readers are reminded that spiritual declension is precisely what prophets, apostles, and Jesus himself foretold, and that only an unbiased reading of the Scriptures can lead to an understanding of God's truth. At the center of Scripture stands the Lord Jesus, "the Sun of righteousness," whose light alone can dispel the darkness of error, and whose Holy Spirit illumines the blind and ignorant. The *Summaire* is thus a tool designed to allow the Scriptures to be read evangelically. From time to time, however, Farel hints at the existence of a second type of reader for whom the book is, at least in part, intended—the lay or, more particularly, the clerical leader who exercises real power in the community and who is capable of great good and great mischief. This kind of reader is urged to use Scripture as God meant it to be used, and not as a pretext for persecuting believers. Such a reader

Critical Edition of Farel's *Summaire*: The Dating of the Editions of 1525 and 1542," in *Colloque Farel*, 1:203-18; Hans H. Esser, "Die Stellung des *Summaire* von G. Farel innerhalb der frühen reformierten Bekenntnisschriften," *Zwingliana* 19 (1991-1992): 93-114.

³ The Du Bois edition seems from internal evidence to be a "pirated" or unauthorized version of the original 1529 text. Two modern versions of the 1533 *Summaire* have appeared in print: a facsimile edition, *Summaire et brève déclaration* (ed. Arthur Piaget; Paris: Droz, 1935), and a version accompanied by a modern French adaptation, *Summaire et brève déclaration* (ed. Arthur-L. Hofer; Neuchâtel: Belle Rivière, 1980). All references in this article are to the (unpaginated) Piaget edition, hereafter cited as *SBD*.

⁴ Farel, "La Raison pour quoy ceste oeuvre a esté faicte," appendix to his *Summaire: C'est une brève déclaration* (Geneva: [Jean Girard], 1542), S.2v. This edition, which for the first time bears Farel's name on the title page, contains much new material. Five editions of the *Summaire* are known to have appeared between 1533 and 1552. For full bibliographical details, see Jean-François Gilmont, "L'Oeuvre imprimé de Guillaume Farel," in *Colloque Farel*, 2:118-22.

⁵ *SBD*, a.2r-2v.

is exhorted to destroy sin but to save transgressors, to “administer severe corrections with the utmost charity . . . using good and proper remedies”; he is, above all, to “learn the Savior’s kindness and gentleness (*benignité et douceur*), and not the Pharisees’ cruelty and rage.”⁶

The *Summaire* is thus a hybrid work. It is first and foremost an invitation to the bruised idealist, the well-intentioned seeker, to consider the scriptural foundations of Christian belief and to live according to its precepts. It is also a plea for moderation and comprehension addressed to those who, armed with punitive powers, are in a position to help or hinder the gospel’s advance.⁷

Farel’s work consists of forty-two chapters of widely varying length and quality, written not, perhaps, at one stretch, but over a period of time and according to a somewhat flexible plan. David Wiley is probably correct when he discerns topical allusions in parts of the book that point to a date of composition no earlier than spring 1528.⁸ The same cannot, however, be said of the first third of the book which appears to be of an earlier date, and is certainly closer to Farel’s original concept of a highly condensed, introductory manual.

The material that first meets us in the *Summaire* consists of succinct notes (the longest scarcely four octavo pages) arranged over fifteen chapters according to a contrastive pattern: God and man (chs. 1–2), law and gospel (chs. 4–5), sin and righteousness (chs. 6–7), flesh and Spirit (chs. 8–9), unbelief and faith (chs. 10–11), merit and grace (chs. 12–13), human tradition and Scripture (chs. 14–15). Chapter 3 (“Jesus Christ”) stands alone, its placement no doubt dictated by the Son’s dual nature as both God and man. Chapters 16 through 36 constitute a much larger amalgam of material whose theme may be loosely defined as the church, its nature, powers, and practices. This section of the work is noticeably more prolix in style and diffuse in content, the author’s initial concern to *explain* being in part overtaken by the need to *defend* evangelical doctrine and to *discredit* where possible contrary positions. Here, along with some fundamental teachings on the power of the keys, the sacraments, prayer, good works, and the forgiveness of sins, a number of controversial developments appear, tricked out in places by rhetorical flourishes suggestive, in one commentator’s words, of a preacher in

⁶ *SBD*, a.3v-a.4r. The suggestion has been made that these last remarks are addressed to evangelical pastors (Wiley, “Towards a Critical Edition,” 214). The severe nature of Farel’s admonitions makes this highly unlikely. He alludes among other things to those who “trample upon the food meant for the sheep” and who “create havoc, striking out with [their] horns” (*SBD*, a.3v)—classic images of Romanist oppression. An abusive and misguided group of individuals is what he has in mind.

⁷ Whether the plea for moderation is heard or not, Farel is aware that he faces formidable opposition. He designates active opponents by a variety of terms, ranging from the relatively mild “unbelievers,” “prayer-mumblers,” and “popish devotees,” to “madmen full of empty dreams,” “idolators,” “God-punishers,” “shedders of blood,” and “the church of the wicked” (*SBD*, c.1r, e.4v, g.7r, h.4v, l.6v, m.7r, n.8v). Behind them all stands the Antichrist, identified not with the Pope and his curia (who appear in the *Summaire* in their own guise), but with the Prince of darkness, whose servants they are, but whose reign will not long endure (*SBD*, g.8r). While such combative language serves to demonize Farel’s enemies, it also reminds his readers of the solemn nature of the choice set before them, and of their need of sustaining grace.

⁸ Wiley, “Towards a Critical Edition,” 215–16.

full flight.⁹ The cult of saints, the practice of auricular confession, the “fantasies and inventions” of false pastors, the prohibition of vernacular versions of the Bible, all arouse Farel’s sternest condemnation. Less colorful, but no less trenchant, are the barbs that he directs at the veneration of relics, pilgrimages, indulgences, belief in purgatory, obligatory fasting, priestly absolution, and, preeminently, the Mass. Three further chapters on the sword and temporal powers, on marriage, and on the education of children (chs. 37–39) suffice to define the Christian’s responsibility to society. The doctrine of the last things—preparation for death, the resurrection, and the judgment day (chs. 40–42)—fittingly brings the *Sommaire* to a close. These chapters, with the exception of a short piece that warns against misplaced charity, mark a return to the more irenic tone of the book’s beginning.

Farel paints with a broad brush, often repeating the same strokes or else returning to add further touches to a canvas previously completed. A detailed evaluation of his work is impossible here. It will be enough perhaps if we examine a small number of doctrinal loci which, together, occupy a central place in Farel’s theological thinking. What, then, does the *Sommaire* have to say about issues of revelation, the work of Christ, and the church and its ministry?

II. *The Knowledge of God*

Farel’s interest in problems of epistemology is limited to a single question: how may God be known? Speculative issues such as the nature and mode of man’s knowledge before the Fall, the status of reason since its impairment by sin, and the role of conscience as a moral guide do not concern him. Nor does he posit, on the analogy of Rom 1:19–20, a residual awareness of God (what Calvin calls a *sensus divinitatis*) which might be either innate or deduced from the data of nature. Farel is perhaps humanist enough to concede that our knowledge of the visible world is both real and valid.¹⁰ In the things of God, however, intuition and intellect are alike useless. Worse, in assuming a form of piety, they offer a false religion instead of the true. He writes:

Human teaching, which presumes to meddle in what pertains to the soul’s salvation and to the worship of God, is merely an abomination in God’s sight, vanity, devilish

⁹ Hofer, in Farel, *Sommaire et brève déclaration*, 243 n. 11, 281 n. 24. An example of Farel’s preacherly style is provided by the following protest against the ban on the circulation of the NT in French (*SBD*, k.2r–2v): “Ah God! What horror is here! How, O sun, can you continue to shed your light upon a country like this? How, O earth, can you sustain such people and bear fruit for such a nation which so scorns and despises your Creator? And you, Lord God, are you so full of mercy and so slow to anger when you have been so outrageously used? Have you not appointed your Son to be king over all? Must [your] holy precepts . . . be suppressed as evil, wicked, and harmful to all who read them? Is the holy gospel to be like the law of Mohammed, which none but a few dare read or speak of?”

¹⁰ Only in ch. 39 (“The Education of Children”) does Farel speak positively of the arts and sciences, commending the study of botany, zoology, history, public affairs, and languages as “useful in the service of God and one’s neighbor” (*SBD*, m.4v–m.5v). These disciplines remain strictly subordinate, however, to the study of Scripture, without whose light we are blind.

lies and precepts, error and empty deceit. Such teaching seeks in vain to serve God; instead, it draws down his wrath upon all who follow it.¹¹

Between God's wisdom (*sagesse*) and man's shrewdness (*prudence*) there is no common measure. Unredeemed human nature can merely assess (*juger*) and reckon (*estimer*) according to its own lights, when what is needed is certainty (*assurance*), understanding (*entendement*), and knowledge (*connaissance*). Unbelief and self-will distort the workings of our mind; in our efforts to reach up to heaven, "we stumble and fall into the ditch."¹² Natural theology is not an option open to natural man.

If God is to be known he must disclose himself. Knowledge of him and of his purposes comes only through special revelation, the written word of Scripture. It is Scripture that dispels our natural ignorance of God and condemns our pretensions to autonomy. All that is not according to God's Word is sin.¹³ The formal principle of the Reformation is thus unambiguously affirmed: by Scripture alone is God known and his will made plain. To know God is to know him as he presents himself in Scripture. There, and only there, we see, not what God is, but what he is *like*. Not God's essence, but his nature, his character, his attributes, those qualities that his acts in history show him to possess—these for Farel constitute a proper and sufficient knowledge of God.¹⁴

To know God is, above all else, to know him as good. That is the statement that Farel places at the head of his first chapter, and it runs as an unbroken thread throughout the *Summaire*. The creation is his generous gift to humankind; the original image we bear is his; the catastrophe wrought by Adam's sin is repaired "by the great kindness of God"; to receive salvation "begets such trust in God's great goodness that nothing can part us from his love."¹⁵ God's goodness is that of a Father who is both wise and full of solicitude for all he has made. To know him as Father is also to know the Son who came from the Father and who delights to do the Father's will. The word of Scripture points to and culminates in Jesus, "Word and wisdom of the Father," to know whom is to have eternal life.¹⁶ Farel does not expressly say that to know Christ is to know God, but that God cannot be known apart from Christ is the clear and consistent message of the *Summaire*: "[He who] has eternal life has nothing more to do with the creature and with other empty things; he has knowledge of the Father through the Son, in whom he knows and comprehends God's great kindness and endless mercy."¹⁷

¹¹ *SBD*, c.6r-6v.

¹² *SBD*, c.2r.

¹³ *SBD*, a.8r-8v, c.3v.

¹⁴ Farel's approach thus anticipates that of Calvin, who in his 1559 *Institutes* (1.2.2) invites his readers to ask, not "What is God?" but "What is he like?" (Calvin, *Opera selecta* [ed. Peter Barth and Wilhelm Niesel; 5 vols.; Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1926-1952], 3:35). In his autobiographical fragment, "La Raison pour quoy," (S. 7v), Farel specifically disclaims any interest in God's "essence," which is "in every respect, incomprehensible."

¹⁵ *SBD*, a.7r-7v.

¹⁶ *SBD*, b.1r, b.2v.

¹⁷ *SBD*, b.2v.

The epistemological problem thus resolves itself into the question of how Scripture, which reveals God to man, is to be read—or more accurately, how Scripture's revelation of God's goodness to man is to be appropriated. Scripture's message is addressed principally to the human heart. To have its full effect it must engage our wills and our affections. It must awaken the keenest sense of gratitude. It must engender a "true and lively faith." In his chapter on faith, Farel speaks of it as a singular gift of God, "a true apprehension (*sentement*), experience, and knowledge of God our Father who is good, perfect, powerful, and wise, and who for his love's sake . . . has redeemed us through Jesus our Savior."¹⁸ There is no tension between faith and Scripture: the closest synergy exists between the two. "Where there is no light of faith, and no brightness from God's Word, there reign the powers of darkness."¹⁹ The Word strengthens and confirms faith; faith in turn attests the truthfulness and authority of the Word, "against every human opinion, experience, and understanding."²⁰ As in Calvin, Scripture authenticates itself to the believing reader as God's Word, in that it comes from the Spirit who knows the deep things of God, and who opens the understanding, prompting obedience to what is written and confidence in the promises it contains.²¹

The nexus between faith and Word rules out the possibility of any extra-biblical or extraordinary revelation, to which various sixteenth-century illuminist and spiritualist circles laid claim. Farel's rejection of ecclesiastical tradition as a second or co-equal source of truth is motivated by the same consideration. He dismisses out of hand Romanist pretensions to be a church "gathered in Jesus' name . . . and so led by the Holy Spirit as to commit no error."²² To seek to know God without and apart from Scripture is not to know him at all.

Implicit in all that the *Summaire* says about revelation is the assumption that Scripture is perspicuous: all teaching is to be weighed against "the manifest Word of God."²³ Farel knows nothing of the distinction between Scripture's "apparent" and "real" sense. He is silent, too, on the possibility of a hermeneutic problem such as was already dividing Lutherans and Zwinglians on the question of the Eucharist. He nowhere asks through what interpretative filter Scripture is to be read. Between the reader and the sacred text no intermediary is necessary save the Spirit who is its author, and who inscribes its message on the human heart. It is not therefore for the individual reader to make what sense he can of Scripture. There is no question of a right to private judgment. The Spirit brings the reader into subjection to the Word; he speaks with one

¹⁸ *SBD*, c.2v.

¹⁹ *SBD*, c.2r, c.3r.

²⁰ *SBD*, c.3r.

²¹ *SBD*, b.8r-8v. In an avowedly popular work, Farel avoids any reference to the Scholastic distinctions between implicit and explicit, formed and unformed faith. Faith is for him an undifferentiated trust in God's mercies and in the sure promises of his Word. Such a definition places Farel firmly within the classic Reformed tradition.

²² *SBD*, c.7r.

²³ *SBD*, d.2r.

voice, and he speaks consistently. His testimony to God's goodness in redeeming sinners and in adopting them as his children is unvarying. Farel's reading of both the OT and the NT centers wholly on the theme of a redemption conceived in heaven and executed on earth. A theology of grace is the essential interpretative category which the *Summaire* explicitly offers the reader. There are few pages in the book where the imprint of grace and the concomitant response of thankfulness are not found.

The expectation of the Spirit's aid in deciphering the biblical text does not, however, imply a passive role for thought or conscious reflection. So frequently does Farel ask his readers to examine, appraise, test, and apply themselves to Scripture that, on one level, reading the Bible appears as a pedagogic exercise requiring the utmost diligence. In concluding his long chapter on Holy Scripture, the author lays down a precise strategy for successful study of the written Word. Nothing less than a literary-critical reading will do:

We must treat and handle Scripture with all fear and reverence toward the God of whom it speaks, carefully considering it not in bits and pieces but as a whole; noting what comes before and what after, why it was written and for what purpose. See too whether what is said appears more plainly and openly elsewhere, comparing one Scripture with another. For . . . although all who speak have done so by the Holy Spirit, he speaks more clearly in one place than in another.²⁴

Bare reason or unaided intelligence can never be a privileged means of access to the message of the Bible. But when made whole by regeneration and illumined by faith, they are the means by which God chooses to be known and loved.

III. *Jesus the Savior*

Farel's doctrine of man makes the merest reference to humanity in its first state of innocence. A single allusion to Adam's lordship over nature suggests what our original destiny might have been. The *Summaire* contains no doctrine of general or common grace to relieve its presentation of man as "wicked, helpless, deranged, and reckless, full of falseness and hypocrisy, thinking only evil and sin, in which he is conceived and born."²⁵ The belief of Erasmus and his fellow humanists in the relative value of human virtue finds no echo here. Man's all-encompassing sin is, with God's surpassing goodness, the essential premise on which Farel's work rests.

Humanity needs a Savior. Farel's favorite term to designate the author of salvation is simply "Jesus" or, less frequently, "Jesuchrist" (a common sixteenth-century spelling). The more honorific "our Lord Jesus" usually occurs in

²⁴ *SBD*, d. 1r-1v. Farel's hermeneutic method is essentially that of the humanists. A close parallel exists with the practice, for example, of his old mentor, Lefèvre d'Étaples, who insists on the importance of style, literary genre, and context, and on the necessity of interpreting Scripture by Scripture. Farel parts company with Lefèvre, however, in refusing to recognize any distinction between the Bible's "literal" and "spiritual" sense. Cf. Guy Bedouelle, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et l'intelligence des Écritures* (Geneva: Droz, 1976), 173-89.

²⁵ *SBD*, a.8r.

formulaic expressions such as “according to our Lord Jesus’ command” or “as our Lord Jesus taught.” The solemn designation preferred by Calvin, “our Lord Jesus Christ,” is found only once in Farel, appropriately in the *Summaire*’s concluding line. References to Jesus’ threefold office are rare. There are two allusions to Jesus as king, but as yet his rule is largely hidden from the world. Of the prophetic office there is no trace; and the priestly is present by implication, in those passages which portray Christ as mediator and advocate, and in others—much more numerous—which speak of the shedding of blood for sins.²⁶

Jesus’ intimate relationship with God the Father is everywhere stressed, and his complete deity affirmed. He is the “most dear Son” in whom reside the Father’s might and power, and who possesses by reason of his divine origin fullness of life, wisdom, grace, and righteousness. Since the Father wholly indwells the Son, to receive Jesus is to receive the Father. Through the Son we have the inheritance of heaven and eternal life; we are delivered from sin, becoming God’s sons and heirs and being made new as at the first creation.²⁷

Farel’s high Christology is steeped in references to the NT writings—chiefly John’s Gospel and Paul’s Epistles—so much so that at times he does no more than assemble a catena of proof texts, many of them freely paraphrased:

[Jesus], made obedient to the Father [Heb 5:8], born of a mother—of a virgin, no less—apart from man’s seed, made subject to the law [Gal 4:14], did not insist on his own glory or will [Phil 2:7], but on that of the Father [John 4:34], doing and saying nothing of himself but only of the Father who was in him [John 5:30; 14:24], reconciling the world to himself [2 Cor 5:19]. He so humbled himself that he died for us, he the just and blameless for us the unjust and evil [1 Pet 3:18], offering his body and blood in order to purify our souls [Heb 9:14; 1 John 1:7].²⁸

The reader of the *Summaire* is left in no doubt that Jesus’ death makes full atonement for sin. The motive force behind the atonement is the Father’s love; the necessity for it is the Father’s justice; the means by which it is effected is the Son’s obedience. Farel is perfectly orthodox in the way he views the cross. In very basic terms, Jesus “suffered for us,” “died for us,” “abolished our death and destroyed our wickedness.” There is a strong preference for penal categories in the *Summaire*: sin incurs the law’s curse; sinners are debtors to the law’s commands; the penalty they have incurred through their lawlessness is borne by Jesus; the curse pronounced on the transgressor falls on him, the innocent, so that God is able to give “full remission of punishment and guilt, and to pardon

²⁶ See, e.g., *SBD*, b.1v-2r, d.4v, d.8v, e.6r, f.8v, g.5r, h.7r.

²⁷ *SBD*, a.7v, b.1v, e.3v, f.2v, f.4r.

²⁸ *SBD*, b.1v. Farel shows little interest, on the other hand, in questions of typology. Two brief allusions to the Suffering Servant of Isa 53 (*SBD*, h.4r, h.8v) exhaust the OT promise of a God-ordained deliverer. The Jewish sacrificial system is represented as prefiguring the unique sacrifice of Jesus (c.7v-8r). None of the usual elements that form the Gospel narrative of Jesus’ earthly humiliation appear in the *Summaire*, and the popular motif of the *afflictiones Christi* is pointedly avoided. Nor does Farel explore the cosmic reach of Christ’s work in creation and redemption, a prominent theme in the Ephesian and Colossian letters.

everything for his love's sake through Jesus our Lord."²⁹ Christ died not in an attenuated sense as our representative, but as our substitute. The vicarious nature of his death is conveyed by recurring images of sacrifice, burden-bearing, and washing. His body and his blood are the perfect offering whereby sin is atoned for; he carried our sorrows and weaknesses on the cross; through him our souls are purged and cleansed. All three images are sometimes combined in one powerful statement: "He shed his precious blood for the forgiveness of sins, and to purge us of our transgressions; he is the Lamb of God who bears the sins of the world; . . . when we believe this our hearts are purified and our souls quickened."³⁰

By grace the believer is thus transported from death to life. All that was lost through Adam's sin is now restored, and more besides. For while Adam knew the Creator's power and providence, the believer knows the Father's love; Adam's inheritance was earthly, the believer's is heavenly. Through Jesus we are called to a life no longer corporal and corruptible but spiritual, not subject to decay. Through him all things are ours.³¹

It is tempting to look in the *Summaire* for a full-orbed statement of justification by faith. Some who have done so find Farel less than convincing in his readiness to follow Luther.³² The chapter that bears the title "Righteousness" (ch. 7—"Justice" in French) defines the term as "God's true image which shines through regeneration effected by God's Word and received by faith."³³ Justification here is merely a synonym for the new birth, an antecedent to the new life conferred on those who by faith have entered God's family. To be justified is not so much to be *declared* righteous as to be *made* righteous, since Farel passes immediately to the idea of the fruit borne by the sanctified life: "Through the knowledge he has of God, [the believer] bears fruit, knowing how to choose what is good and to condemn what is bad, . . . rejecting help from any but God, and shunning all that is not found in his clear and simple command."³⁴ Further light on Farel's understanding of justification is provided by the chapter on "Merit" (ch. 12). Here the author comes closer to Luther, thanks in part to a textual borrowing from Paul:

If then we are justified and saved by grace, it is not by works. . . . He who works is paid not as a gift of grace but as a debt which is owed to him, which he has deserved. But to him who believes, his faith is counted to him for righteousness (*sa foy luy est reputée à justice*), without works.³⁵

²⁹ *SBD*, n.7r-7v. The idea of God's wrath against sin is present as a secondary theme in the *Summaire*. For Farel, following Paul (Rom 4:15), it is the law that reveals God's wrath (b.3v). It is because Christ's death fully satisfies the law's demands that divine mercy can replace wrath; it is for the same reason that the attempt to win salvation independently by works is denounced as a blasphemy of Antichrist (h.8v).

³⁰ *SBD*, h.7r.

³¹ *SBD*, b.2v.

³² Stauffer, "Farel à la Dispute de Lausanne," in *Colloque Farel*, 1:114-15.

³³ *SBD*, b.5v.

³⁴ *SBD*, b.6r.

³⁵ *SBD*, c.5r. Cf. Rom 4:4-5.

Nowhere else in the *Summaire* does the explicit notion of imputed righteousness occur. The author appears on the whole happier with less forensic categories of thought.³⁶

Farel's doctrine of salvation is predestinarian in character. God's love is an electing love, directly related not to his being or essence as God, but to his redemptive purposes. Predestination is, in Farel's thinking, an extension of God's saving work in Christ, rather than an exercise of his omnipotence. His Holy Spirit quickens those whom he has ordained to life before the foundation of the world. His decree, rooted in his gratuitous good pleasure, is immutable and, to the reverent mind, admirable, embracing in its unconditional and universal reach the soul "born and bred in Turkey, and the babe which dies in its mother's womb."³⁷ The *Summaire* does not treat the question of election in a systematic way. The issue is always raised *en passant*; its truth is assumed, never argued for, still less defended. The paradox of God's justice and his indiscriminate love, of human volition and divine determination, of limited and unlimited atonement, of the selective operation of grace and the universality of the gospel call—the moral and theological tensions implicit in the doctrine of special election are passed over in silence. Farel is content if his readers understand that salvation is wholly God's work, neither an act of unfettered free will nor a reward for merit. The glory of it is God's alone.

Election in Farel is overwhelmingly positive: sinners are elected to salvation, not to perdition. The nearest approach to a doctrine of double predestination is found in the penultimate chapter, "Resurrection" (ch. 41), where reference is made to God's patience "toward the children of wrath appointed to death (*ordonnez à la mort*)."³⁸ The phrase is unique, and the rest of the *Summaire* knows nothing of a final reprobation grounded in God's hidden counsel. Where the idea of reprobation might be expected to occur—in connection, for example, with the themes of faith, repentance, justification, and regeneration—it is conspicuously absent. In the final analysis, it is not God's predestinating will that, for Farel, deprives sinners of saving grace; it is God's law that condemns them to judgment, and unbelief that closes the kingdom of heaven to them.³⁹ In the meantime, evil-doers may yet have recourse to repentance; for such as do repent, "gentle Jesus waits to receive them into his mercy."⁴⁰

IV. Church and Ministry

It is Farel's understanding of the church which best betrays the relatively early date of the *Summaire*. The chapter "Church" (ch. 16) follows immediately the

³⁶ See also *SBD*, b.3v, where, in discussing "The Law and Its Power" (ch. 4), Farel is again led to cite Paul on justification (Rom 10:4): "[The law] shows us that we must seek Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law and who justifies all who believe in him."

³⁷ *SBD*, n.4v.

³⁸ *SBD*, n.1r-1v.

³⁹ *SBD*, c.2r-2v, d.3r-3v, d.5v-6r, h.4v, h.6v. When, on rare occasions, Farel speaks of "reprobates" (*reprouvez*), it is in a non-technical sense. The term is bracketed with "unbelievers," "the lost," "the wretched," and designates those who refuse the gospel offer of forgiveness. (See *SBD*, n.1v, n.2r-2v.)

⁴⁰ *SBD*, n.7v.

author's treatment of Holy Scripture, and inaugurates a long series of twenty chapters related to the church's essence, worship, and practice. Throughout, the firmest distinction is drawn between true and false church, and here more than anywhere else in the book polemic mixes freely with exposition.

For Farel, the necessity of the church arises from the fact that every believer is, without exception, united to Christ by faith and incorporated into his body. Since the body is one, all who are members are one, sharing a common life (as God's adopted children), having a common purpose (to please the Father), and advancing to a common destination (heaven). Here again, Farel shows himself to be an attentive student of the NT, and chiefly of Paul:

The church of Jesus Christ is the holy assembly of believers joined in true faith to the body of Jesus Christ whose members they are [1 Cor 12:27]. Because Jesus is the true Son of God, all his members are, through him, sons of God [Eph 1:5]. Jesus is the head, true Christians are his body [Col 1:18]. He is the husband, believers are his spouse [Eph 5:23-25?] whom he purged with his blood [1 John 1:7], bestowing salvation on his body and saving his people from their sins.⁴¹

The *Summaire* flatly rejects the notion of the church as a hallowed space. It is not tied to a particular place, but exists wherever two or three meet in Jesus' name. It allows for no distinctions based on a hierarchy of functions or on man-made ordinances. With Luther, Farel affirms the spiritual equality of all believers; unlike Luther, he does not enunciate a doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, but recognizes the sacrifice of praise, along with prayer, as the church's one essential offering to God. The church is a faith-community whose principal concern is to "hear and believe the holy voice of Jesus."⁴² Here the simple are taught and the lesser are accorded the greater honor; any who possess a particular gift of God employ it for the good of all; those who exhort and warn and those who interpret Scripture ("in the common tongue") do so in order to edify. The idealized nature of the church as Farel sketches it combines elements both of Jesus' model of selfless service (Matt 20:25-27 and parallels), and of the interdependent pattern of church life outlined in 1 Cor 12-14. Either way, the sympathetic reader of the *Summaire* cannot fail to set Farel's ideal against the reality of the Roman church, with its monarchic leadership, its rigid separation of laity and clergy, its arcane rituals, and its neglect of Scripture.

Farel's individualistic pneumatology accords little direct importance to the role of the Holy Spirit in the church's work and witness. Nothing is said of the Spirit's descent at Pentecost or of his bestowal of various charismata by which the whole body is edified. It is as the author of Scripture and as its interpreter that he is first of all active in the believer's life. He is the divine pledge (*arrhe*) of our sonship and ultimate salvation; he renders us obedient to God's command and jealous of his honor; he makes us imitators of the Father's goodness.⁴³

⁴¹ *SBD*, d.1v.

⁴² *SBD*, d.2r.

⁴³ *SBD*, b.8v-c.1r, c.3r, d.6r, m.6v. The *Summaire* tends to present a functional or instrumental view of the Holy Spirit. His deity is not expressly affirmed. He is described not as a person, coequal with Father and Son, but as an impulse (*mouvement*) and disposition (*affection*) by which men are made

Farel's definition of the church, although framed in very general terms, implies a high degree of visibility. The church assembly ("congregation") needs to grow in its understanding of God's truth. There is therefore a teaching function, variously represented by the terms prophecy, exhortation, and admonition. That this function belongs primarily to the pastorate is implied but only explicitly stated in a later chapter, "The Good Shepherd" (ch. 34). Here Jesus appears as the archetype of the "good, true, and faithful pastor" who nourishes his flock with the Father's teaching, "instructing his sheep and disciples according to Scripture which he opens to their understanding."⁴⁴ The Christian pastor thus patterns himself on the Savior whose minister he is, earnestly desiring the salvation of the souls committed to him, following sound doctrine, setting by his life a worthy example, and careful to see that human traditions do not encroach on believers' freedom. Paul's portrait of the faithful "bishop" (1 Tim 3:2-6) is held out as an additional model for pastors to follow.⁴⁵

To the pastor, too, is committed the administration of the sacraments. In common with all the mainstream Reformers, Farel recognizes only two, baptism and the Lord's Supper. No attempt is made to argue for their biblical or historical basis or, with the sole exception of the Roman Mass (ch. 19), to consider alternate sacramental theologies. The classical definition of the sacraments as the visible sign of God's promised grace is implicit in the text of the *Summaire*, but Farel's preference is to view them as tokens of the love-fellowship enjoyed by Christ's people: "The sacraments are a sign and affirmation of things as they should be among believers; their purpose and effect is to preserve, enhance, and increase charity one toward the other."⁴⁶ The issue of infant versus adult baptism does not arise, although Farel's text suggests that he has the latter in mind: to seek baptism is to declare openly one's wish to "follow and live for Jesus."⁴⁷ The Lord's Supper is, more particularly, a sign of Christian unity. It affirms that all believers are members of the one body. "They confess that our Lord gave up his body in death so that we, out of love for him, might love one another, and lay down our lives for each other."⁴⁸ Zwingli's influence is perhaps to be discerned in the notion that the second sacrament is not only a eucharist, but more especially a memorial meal: "Taking the bread of blessing and drinking from the cup, we rehearse (*racompter*) and remember (*rememorer*) our Lord's death until he comes."⁴⁹ As to the question of who may share in the sacraments, no test save that of Christian profession is applied. Nothing could be further from the Anabaptist model of a "pure" church than Farel's insistence on a "mixed body" ecclesiology: "We do

new (*SBD*, b.8r). Farel does not specifically associate the Spirit with the work of conviction or repentance; he is much more attentive to the lessons of Rom 8:14-16 and 26-27, where the Spirit both assures us of our adoption as God's children and helps us in our inarticulate prayer (d.6r, f.1r). That Farel held to the full deity of the Spirit emerges from Erasmus's account of a meeting with Farel in July 1524 (Erasmus, *Opus epistolarum* [ed. P. S. Allen; 12 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906-1958], 5:570-71; letter of 27 Oct. 1524 to Antony Brugnarius).

⁴⁴ *SBD*, i.6r.

⁴⁵ *SBD*, i.7v-8r.

⁴⁶ *SBD*, d.4r.

⁴⁷ *SBD*, d.4v.

⁴⁸ *SBD*, d.4v.

⁴⁹ *SBD*, d.4v-5r.

not know the heart as God knows it. . . . We know only externals. . . . Many who use the sacraments are far from possessing the reality to which they point, for they are common to the good and the bad, as is anything which is merely external.”⁵⁰

Farel’s concept of the church is one which nevertheless admits the necessity of discipline. In a mixed church scandals may arise which threaten the peace and unity of the fellowship, and which require firm means in order to bring sinners to repentance. The topic is treated at some length in the chapter “Excommunication” (ch. 32). The model applied, as later also in Calvin, is the threefold pattern of intervention outlined in the First Gospel (Matt 18:15-17). Sentence is pronounced not by the few but communally, by the whole church (“all members of the parish”), the ultimate sanction being exclusion from the Lord’s Supper (but not, significantly, from normal social intercourse). Farel envisages excommunication as a temporary discipline, to be applied not vindictively but out of love, in the spirit of prayer, and with the earnest hope of a rapid amendment.⁵¹

It is perhaps not surprising, given the authority vested in the clergy of the Roman church, that the *Summaire* should twice address the question of the powers of the pastor and of the obedience owed to him (chs. 35 and 36). No formal process of ordination or calling is envisaged: the pastor appears to function within the local congregation by common consent.⁵² The authority he exercises is conferred solely by the Word. To him are committed the keys of the kingdom, not by virtue of his office or rank, but by virtue of the gospel he proclaims. “Whoever believes, truly heaven is open to him, he is loosed from his sins. . . . He who does not believe, heaven is shut, he remains bound.”⁵³ Since confession of sin is made to God alone, the pastor is not, as the priest is, in a position to abuse the penitent’s trust. And since forgiveness of sins is God’s prerogative, absolution is not within the pastor’s power to bestow. For the rest, while the faithful minister has a right to be supported by the congregation he serves, he

⁵⁰ *SBD*, d.5r. Farel’s discussion of the sacraments is surprisingly brief. It is nevertheless clear that he had no interest in Luther’s doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and even less in the efficacy of the sacrament *ex opere operato*. Without faith, the sacraments are empty signs (*SBD*, d.5r-5v): “Our salvation cannot lie in externals, so that in availing ourselves of them we are saved, or in being deprived of them we are damned.”

⁵¹ *SBD*, i.2v-3v. Calvin’s 1536 *Institutes* cites Matt 18, and makes the sentence of excommunication consequent upon “the vote of the believers.” So too in the *Instruction and Confession of Faith* of 1537. It is not until 1543 that the *Institutes* assigns the power of excommunication to a representative group, the pastors and the assembly of elders. Cf. Calvin, *Opera selecta*, 1:187, 416.

⁵² The term “pastor” is invariably used by Farel to designate the minister of the Word, except once where the term “elder” (*ancien*) is used (*SBD*, k.6v). No clearer picture of church structure or organization is to be found in the *Summaire*. The book envisages no body beyond the local congregation which appears to function, internally, by consensus. Here we have a simplified pattern of ministry based, in essence, on Farel’s own experience in Montbéliard, Strasbourg, and Aigle, where he exercised a pastoral role partly by consent of the church members, partly by leave of the local authorities.

⁵³ *SBD*, d.3r-3v. Farel discusses the power of the keys, usually regarded as providing dominical authority for the exercise of discipline, without reference to discipline itself. The latter, as we have seen, is principally a requirement of charity, grounded in the need to bring the wayward to repentance. For parallels with Bucer and Calvin, see Alexandre Ganoczy, *Le Jeune Calvin* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1966), 175-78.

has no right to its unconditional obedience. It is God who commands obedience, not the man or the office. In a final blow aimed at Rome's pretensions, the *Summaire* exhorts believers to test the preacher's doctrine and, if found wanting, to repudiate both message and messenger. Farel thus assigns the Christian pastor to a position of permanent probation, and in so doing places the church yet again under the rule of *sola Scriptura*.⁵⁴

There is no hint of triumphalism in Farel's concept of the church. Antichrist and his servants are unrelenting in their opposition. The call to suffer and, if need be, to die for the gospel, is addressed to all members of the church, and to none more than its pastors and evangelists. The return of Jesus as king and the vindication of the elect are of course sure. Farel's eschatology is nevertheless devoid of millenarian or apocalyptic overtones. Believers live by faith within a time frame of indeterminate length leading up to and culminating in the resurrection and final judgment. The *Summaire* does not hold out the promise of easy or rapid victory. What it does offer, however, is the vision of a church where kingdom values are actively pursued and practiced. Put simply, the church of Christ is a servant church. It could hardly be otherwise, given Jesus' example and the explicit teaching of the Gospels and Epistles. The theme of duty to neighbor, announced in the *Summaire's* title, finds expression in a number of contexts linked by the idea of conformity to the Father's will and zeal for his glory. Thus Christians are urged in obedience to the Spirit to seek "the honor and glory of God, our kind and everlasting Father, loving him with all our heart and, for his love's sake, giving our neighbor assistance and support in every upright way."⁵⁵ Good works are the natural outcome of the Holy Spirit's work in us. They are not so much the *test* of the regenerate life as its inevitable *expression*. Faith grafts us, to use a metaphor dear to Farel, on to the good root, Jesus, who enables us to bear much fruit. Active charity is never conceived as an extra-religious activity, nor as an enlightened social obligation. If Farel interprets Matt 25:35-40 narrowly so as to make mutual help the norm among Christians, no such restriction applies to his gloss on Rom 13:10 or Gal 5:14, where forgiveness irrespective of the offense or the offender is in view: "The end of the law is charity. Whoever loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law."⁵⁶ Every religious observance becomes an opportunity for generous self-giving. The sacraments thus remind us to love as Christ has loved

⁵⁴ *SBD*, k.5r-5v. The duty of Christians to "prove" the doctrine of their preachers is already highlighted in a liturgical work by the Meaux reformers, *Epistres et Evangiles pour les cinquante et deux dimanches de l'an* (1525). See the exhortations for the Third Sunday in Advent, the Tuesday after Pentecost, and the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost (Lefèvre d'Étaples and collaborators, *Epistres et Evangiles* [ed. Guy Bedouelle and Franco Giacone; Leiden: Brill, 1976], 13-14, 223-24, 269-70). The idea of lay oversight was one of the forty-eight propositions censured by the Sorbonne when it condemned the work in Nov. 1525.

⁵⁵ *SBD*, c.1v.

⁵⁶ *SBD*, h.2r; cf. e.3v. According to Steven E. Ozment (*The Reformation in the Cities* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975], 72), "Farel, anticipating fateful developments in later Calvinism, cites . . . simple faith and service to one's neighbour as the singular way the faithful may signal their 'election'." The text he cites is a 1534 variant of the Du Bois edition and is in part freely translated. Placed in the context of the last judgment (*SBD*, n.5v-6r), Farel's statement simply affirms that there is a

us: they bid us see that no one suffers want, and encourage us to risk our lives in each other's service if that is what is required. Fasting, when undertaken voluntarily, in love, and not as a work of merit, gives us freedom to use our resources to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, and show pity to all who are in dire need. Alms-giving, to cite a third example, is dismissed as an empty gesture unless motivated by genuine compassion for the poor—not only friends and neighbors, but enemies also, “all whom the Lord brings to you, and to whom you can do good, knowing their necessity.”⁵⁷ Ultimately, compassion is an expression of the reasonable service we owe God; it is, properly speaking, an act of worship, rendered to the all-wise and all-loving Father by his grateful children. The reality of the Spirit is demonstrated not in ritual or external performance, but in help of neighbor: “[God] has no need in himself of us or our goods; it is in our neighbor that he wills to be served, inasmuch as what we do to our neighbor we do to God.”⁵⁸

V. Conclusion

In his later explanation of the history of the *Summaire*, written in 1542, Farel complains of the reception accorded his work by certain critics. Some have read into the book meanings that were not there. Others, equally ill-intentioned, have treated the work as if it were a systematic treatise containing the sum total of Farel's theology. In so doing they have failed to appreciate the difference between “a short entrée and introduction,” which the *Summaire* is, and “a full and elaborate exposition,” which it is not. As a result, the book's omission of any reference, for example, to infant baptism or to the doctrine of the Trinity, has given rise to the charge that the author is either intellectually inept or dangerously heterodox.⁵⁹

In assessing the *Summaire*, we would do well to heed Farel's complaint. To regard the book as a first, rather awkward draft of Calvin's 1536 *Institutes* would be quite to misunderstand the purpose of each work and the very differing circumstances in which each author was placed. No one was more conscious of the difference than Farel himself. By 1542 the success of Calvin's *Institutes* was such as to make the *Summaire*, in Farel's eyes, redundant. Marginally useful it might continue to be, but to all intents and purposes the book had done its work. History had moved on to the point where more than an elementary presentation of Christian truth (“some small taste”) was required. The need now was for a more

qualitative difference between the works of believers and non-believers, a difference wholly attributable to the action of God's Spirit in the lives of his children. Here as elsewhere in the *Summaire*, election is a gift to be received, not a condition to be proved.

⁵⁷ *SBD*, c.7v, f.4v-5r.

⁵⁸ *SBD*, c.6v, n.6r.

⁵⁹ “La Raison pour quoy,” S.6v-8r. Farel's complaint is directed above all at his former Meaux colleague, Pierre Caroli, who in 1537 lay charges of Arianism against Calvin, Farel, and Viret. The charges were not sustained, and Caroli was severely sanctioned by the synods of Lausanne and Bern (May-June 1537). He was to renew his attack on the “Farellists” in 1545. See Calvin, *Défense de Guillaume Farel et de ses collègues contre les calomnies de Pierre Caroli* (ed. Jean-François Gounelle; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994), 1-25, 53-76.

substantial presentation which could be thoroughly “chewed over.” Calvin’s work, since 1541 available in French, amply supplied that need.⁶⁰

Farel’s theological expertise is not that of an original or systematic thinker. But it is that of a man who has thoroughly mastered Scripture in the original tongues and who fully understands its meaning. It is useful in this connection to place the *Summaire* in the context of Farel’s earlier career. What such an exercise reveals is not the embryonic nature of his theological thinking, but its relative maturity and consistency. To Lefèvre and the Meaux reformists Farel owed, at an early date, belief in God’s grace as the sinner’s sole resource, and in Scripture as the undisputed authority in matters of belief.⁶¹ His first published work, the Thirteen Theses proposed for debate in Basel in February 1524, articulates a number of polemical themes characteristic of the *Summaire*, and includes an unmistakable (Lutheran?) affirmation of justification by faith.⁶² In August of that same year his short commentary on the Lord’s Prayer and Apostles’ Creed, *Le Pater noster et le Credo en françoys*, appeared in print. The book’s preface offered a rapid but broad précis of a number of Christian fundamentals, including revelation, the person and work of Jesus (“true God and true man, our only Savior and Mediator”), the church, faith, and works. In addition, four trinitarian formulae (borrowed, it is true, largely from Luther) leave no doubt as to Farel’s orthodoxy.⁶³ Finally, Farel’s French liturgy, *La Maniere et fasson qu’on tient en baillant le saint baptesme*, composed in all probability in 1528, makes specific provision for infant baptism, in line with

⁶⁰ “La Raison pour quoy,” S.7v-T.2r. Farel’s reluctance to reissue the *Summaire* should not be construed as an admission of theological weakness. To claim, for example, as Georges Bavaud has done (*La Dispute de Lausanne* [Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1956], 185), that Farel articulated a *faith* which Calvin turned into a *theology* is to set up a false dichotomy which is fair to neither Reformer. As Higman has shown in another context, by 1540 theological fashion was beginning to change: the demand was not so much for the shorter catechetical, devotional, or polemical works of earlier years, but for more substantial “study works,” of which Calvin’s *Institutes* was a typical example (Francis Higman, “Ideas for Export: Translations in the Early Reformation,” in *Renaissance Culture in Context: Theory and Practice* [ed. Jean R. Brink and William F. Gentrup; Aldershot, U.K.: Scolar Press, 1993], 100-113).

⁶¹ Cf. Farel’s autobiographical text (c. 1548), “Epistre à tous seigneurs et peuples,” in his *Du vray usage de la croix* (Geneva: J-G. Fick, 1865), 162-75. A useful review of Lefèvre’s theology is provided by Richard Stauffer, “Lefèvre d’Etaples, artisan ou spectateur de la Réforme?,” in *Interprètes de la Bible* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1980), 11-29.

⁶² On the Thirteen Theses, see A.-L. Herminjard, *Correspondance des Réformateurs dans les pays de langue française* (9 vols.; Geneva: H. Georg/Paris: G. Fischbacher, 1866-1897), 1:193-95; N. Weiss, “Guillaume Farel: La Dispute de Bâle (1524),” *Bulletin de la Société de l’Histoire du Protestantisme Français* 69 (1920): 115-45. Cf. Thesis 8: “Whoever hopes to be saved and justified by his own powers and strength, rather than by faith, sets himself up and makes himself as God by his free will (*per liberum arbitrium*), and is blinded by impiety.” Farel’s attack on free will put him immediately at odds with Erasmus, whose defense of the doctrine (*De libero arbitrio*) was published six months later, in Sept. 1524. Luther’s rejoinder (*De servo arbitrio*) followed in 1525.

⁶³ Farel, *Le Pater noster et le Credo en françoys* (ed. Francis Higman; Geneva: Droz, 1982), 35-38. The greater part of the exposition of the Creed was borrowed from Luther’s *Bethbüchlein* of 1522. Farel’s preface describes faith as that which is founded on “holy doctrine” and which, contemplating the “abyss” of God’s goodness, issues in good works.

the universal practice of the church.⁶⁴ It seems safe to conclude that, in composing the *Summaire*, Farel was far from enunciating doctrines that were unfamiliar to him, imperfectly assimilated, or heterodox in their intention. The same impression of continuity and consistency emerges from a study—too large to be undertaken here—of Farel's correspondence between 1525 and 1528, where theological issues are freely canvassed and confidently handled.⁶⁵

A similar conclusion might be drawn from a study of Farel's post-1529 works, notably the Genevan *Confession of Faith* of 1536 and his contribution to the Lausanne Dispute of the same year.⁶⁶ That he owed a substantial debt to the German and Swiss Reformers of the first generation is clear, although the extent of that debt has yet to be established.⁶⁷ The idea that Farel was Zwinglian until 1536 and Calvinist after that date is, as Elfriede Jacobs observes, impossibly simplistic.⁶⁸ When all is said and done Farel remains, in his own right, the most influential voice in French Protestantism in its early years, and its most persuasive advocate. That he refined his theology with the passage of time is of course true, but the fundamentals were clearly in place by 1529. Later changes tend to be, as Henri Heyer long ago recognized, nuances, not radical revisions.⁶⁹

A reading of the *Summaire* reveals in the first place a passion for Scripture and its proper interpretation that makes the appeal to other authorities superfluous, at best a diversion, at worst a fertile source of error. The Protestant insistence on a return *ad fontes* finds no stauncher champion than Farel, who on his own admission owed his conversion solely to the power of Holy Writ⁷⁰ and who, in the course of his "brief explanation" of Christian belief, makes no statement

⁶⁴ Farel, *La Maniere et facon qu'on tient en baillant le saint baptesme* (ed. J.-G. Baum; Strasbourg: Treuttel & Wurz/Paris: J. Cherbuliez, 1859), 16-25. The liturgy is concerned with infant baptism alone; there is no separate form proposed for adult baptism. The work also contains a form for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The theology that underlies it is exactly that of the *Summaire*.

⁶⁵ Among the important letters of the period, see those published by Herminjard, *Correspondance des Réformateurs*, 1:393-98 (to Johann Bugenhagen [Pomeranus], 8 Oct. 1525); 2:18-21 (to Zwingli, 9 June 1527); 2:41-51 (to Noël Galéot, 7 Sept. 1527); 2:64-69 (to the nuns of Vevey, 14 Oct. 1527); 2:78-87 (to Martin Hanoier, 1528); 5:398-411 (to Nicolas d'Esch, 16 Oct. 1526).

⁶⁶ The *Confession of Faith* (1536), generally agreed to have been authored by Farel, though containing an expanded doctrine of the church, the sacraments, and civil authority, contains nothing intrinsically at odds with the *Summaire* of 1529. On Farel's interventions in the Lausanne Dispute, see the transcript published by Arthur Piaget, *Les Actes de la Dispute de Lausanne* (Neuchâtel: Secrétariat de l'Université, 1928).

⁶⁷ Both Melancthon's *Loci communes* (1522) and Zwingli's *De vera et falsa religione* (1525) were known to Farel (Herminjard, *Correspondance des Réformateurs*, 5:409-10). On the possible influence of Zwingli's work, see Locher, "Farels *Sommaire* und Zwingli's *Commentarius*," 137-46. Olivier Fatio believes that the *Summaire* represents an autonomous synthesis of elements derived from Zwingli on the one hand and Oecolampadius and Bucer on the other ("Farel," *TRE* 11 [1983]: 30-36).

⁶⁸ Elfriede Jacobs, "Die Abendmahlslehre Wilhelm Farel's," in *Colloque Farel*, 1:162.

⁶⁹ Henri Heyer, *Guillaume Farel: Essai sur le développement de ses idées théologiques* (Geneva: Ramboz & Schuchardt, 1872), 133. Between Farel's first and subsequent editions of the *Summaire*, Heyer finds evidence of Calvin's influence in the more developed doctrines of the Trinity, the Lord's Supper, and faith and works. Despite its age, Heyer's study offers a highly valuable introduction to Farel's theology.

⁷⁰ "Epistre à tous seigneurs et peuples," 175. Cf. Henri Meylan, "Les Etapes de la conversion de Farel," in *L'Humanisme français au début de la Renaissance* (Paris: Vrin, 1973), 253-59.

and advances no claim, which is not confirmed by Scripture itself. As to the substance of his theology, two features might be singled out for mention. The first is his abiding sense of God's goodness. This, as we have seen, is the first and fundamental lesson of revelation; it is the very heart of piety as Farel understands it. With Luther and Calvin, but more visibly than Calvin,⁷¹ Farel celebrates the fatherly goodness of God, who treats us infinitely better than we deserve and who, by a supernatural act of grace in Jesus and by the vivifying power of the Spirit, rescues us from death and by faith joins us to his Son, adopting us into his family, acknowledging us as his heirs, leading us once delivered from the body to everlasting bliss and, in the interim, making us like himself. A second aspect of Farel's theology is directly related to the first: the importance he attaches to works of mercy, works motivated not by fear or the desire for reward but by gratitude to God for all his kindnesses. Remarkably, since references to the Epistle of James are extremely rare in the *Summaire*, the idea of active charity is so prominent in the book as to constitute a third (or, with discipline, a fourth) mark of the church. Faith without works is not what Farel understands by a "true and lively faith," and if Romanist insistence on meritorious works is, for him, the death of true religion, so too is the divorce between right doctrine and right living.⁷² Farel is doubtless averse to the notion of the *imitatio Christi* as a spiritual discipline. But when stripped of its medieval trappings, the idea of following Jesus' pattern of costly servanthood lies close to the surface of the *Summaire*, and challenges our propensity to make self-esteem and personal advancement, rather than love, our aim.

⁷¹ See the remarks of Brian A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 22-31, and the literature cited there.

⁷² The belief that faith must issue in love was a popular theme among the Meaux reformers; it was duly censured by the Sorbonne as contrary to apostolic teaching. Cf. Lefèvre d'Étaples and collaborators, *Epîtres et Évangiles*, 113 (exhortation for Quinquagesima Sunday): "If the faith we have is without love, it is not faith. It is dead faith, imperfect faith, faith which is not living; for living faith works by love."

THE THUNDERING SCOT: JOHN KNOX THE PREACHER

RICHARD KYLE

I

"I love to blow my Master's Trumpet," proclaimed John Knox. This little phrase is pregnant with meaning; it succinctly captures the very essence of his ministry. Historians have focused on Knox as the leader of a reformation, the instigator of a rebellion, and an opponent of female rule. While these impressions may be valid, they do not reflect Knox's self-perception and the way his contemporaries viewed him. He saw himself as a simple preacher proclaiming God's Word, a watchman warning the people to obey God. His contemporaries—both his supporters and opponents—also regarded him as a preacher.¹

As a minister, Knox performed many tasks—preaching, administering the sacraments, counseling his parishioners, organizing churches, writing confessional statements, and more. But preaching was his priority. God called him to preach and Knox had no doubt about his vocation. In his aptly titled biography, *Trumpeter of God*, W. Stanford Reid has captured this theme. Believing himself to be called as were the Hebrew prophets, Knox's chief purpose in life was to summon people to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Like John the Baptist, he saw himself as a "voice crying in the wilderness," an instrument trumpeting the divine message. This "trumpeter theme thus became central to his thinking."² Or as Douglas MacMillan puts it: this "total commitment to preaching and to what preaching alone can achieve provides the real key to understanding Knox as a man, a Christian, and a reformer."³

The First Blast of the Trumpet (1558) alerted people to the notion of Knox "blowing his master's trumpet." But he began to trumpet God's message much earlier than this. In 1547 at St. Andrews, Knox received a dramatic call to proclaim God's Word. And it did not take him long to obey this summons: the next week he was in the pulpit preaching his first sermon. Knox did not embark upon his preaching career until age 32. Except for the occasions when he had no access

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¹ John Knox, *The Works of John Knox* (ed. David Laing; 6 vols.; Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1846–1864), 4:367–71; 6:229–31 (hereafter, *Works*); J. Douglas MacMillan, "John Knox—Preacher of the Word," *Reformed Theological Journal* (November 1987): 5; James Kirk, "John Knox and the Historians," in *John Knox and the British Reformations* (ed. Roger A. Mason; Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1998), 20.

² *Works*, 6:229–31; W. Stanford Reid, *Trumpeter of God* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1974), xiv.

³ MacMillan, "John Knox—Preacher of the Word," 6.

to a pulpit, he preached for more than twenty-five years, until a few days before his death in 1572.⁴ Knox apparently had skills as a leader, a politician, church organizer, pastoral counselor, and perhaps even as a writer. But preaching was his greatest strength. He could skillfully interpret Scripture. And according to contemporary accounts, he was a forceful, compelling preacher with considerable charisma who could motivate people to action.⁵

The task of preaching was central to Knox's life and career. Why have most modern historians not picked up on this theme? In part, examples of Knox's preaching are scant; he only wrote down a few sermons.⁶ But we are not totally without evidence. We have some tracts that were versions of earlier sermons. In fact, many of Knox's writings, even his *History*, have a sermonic cast to them. Knox was so focused on preaching that "he only took to his pen when his voice was silent," said Maurice Lee. Knox's *History* was a sermon without an audience, a preaching book, "one long inflammatory speech in behalf of God's truth," as the reformer saw it.⁷ Another window to Knox's sermons are the impressions of his contemporaries. Both his followers and opponents voiced their reactions to the reformer's sermons—some singing his praises, others expressing their outrage.⁸

Knox's preaching has been neglected for other reasons. Earlier biographers such as Thomas M'Crie have accorded great importance to Knox's preaching.⁹ But in the modern era, few historians have emphasized this subject. Why? For one reason, in the early twenty-first century, the sermon does not play the central role that it has in the past. In an age of television and cheap paperbacks, sermons are no longer the primary shaper of ideas. Another factor is the transitory nature of a sermon. The impact of a sermon largely depends on chemistry, charisma, and emotions—subjects that are not easily measured by biographers. Thus historians have turned to more accessible themes.¹⁰

II

The Reformation did not invent preaching. Christian preaching has an ancient lineage, being rooted in the Old Testament prophets and the message of

⁴ *Works*, 1:187-93; 6:xxii-xxv, 1-iii, 634; 4:373-420; Carol Edington, "John Knox and the Castilians: A Crucible of Reforming Opinion?" in *John Knox and the British Reformations* (n. 1 above), 30.

⁵ *Works* 1:192, 193; 6:643, 644; James Melville, *The Diary of Mr. James Melville, 1556-1601* (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1829), 21, 26; John Bishop, "John Knox: Thundering Scot," *Preaching* 8 (September/October 1992): 73, 74.

⁶ *Works*, 4:87-114; 6:221-71. These represent Knox's only fully intact sermons. Aspects of others can be found in his *History* and in his tracts. See *Works*, 1:189-92; 4:87-114.

⁷ Maurice Lee, "John Knox and his History," *Scottish Historical Review* 14 (April 1966): 80, 87, 88.

⁸ *Works* 1:192, 193; 2:371, 379, 384, 388, 497, 498; 6:230-32, 633, 643, 644; Melville, *Diary of Melville*, 73, 74.

⁹ Thomas M'Crie, *The Life of John Knox*, 2 Vols. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1818).

¹⁰ MacMillan, "John Knox—Preacher of the Word," 7-9.

the apostles. The patristic era also produced many remarkable preachers. Some examples include Origen, Basil of Caesarea, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nazianzus, Ambrose, and Augustine. The early Middle Ages saw the art of preaching fall into a long night of obscurity until the high Middle Ages experienced a revival of preaching. The preaching of the crusades and the rise of scholasticism prodded such a surge. But another decline set in. The church of the late medieval world focused on the sacraments, prompting the parish clergy to adopt a fundamentally sacramental role. Thus preaching was neglected and what existed became frivolous and decorated with illustrations. Yet some outstanding preachers still could be found, including John Wycliffe, the Lollards, John Hus, Nicholas of Cusa, Jean de Gerson, John of Capistrano, and Savonarola.¹¹

Still, the Reformation did return the Bible to the people, and in the process it ushered in a new era of biblical preaching, in both quality and quantity. Most of the reformers, including Knox, preached several times a week. Bullinger preached through the Bible in about fifteen years. Luther's sermons fill twenty volumes, Calvin's forty. In fact, except for Philip Melancthon, all of the major reformers were preachers.¹²

Differences between medieval and Reformation preaching go beyond quantity; they also concern quality. The churchmen of the Middle Ages adopted a fourfold method of biblical interpretation: literal, moral, allegorical, and anagogic. But in general, the medieval preachers regarded the Bible in a figurative sense, thus reducing the authority of Scripture. The reformers reversed this trend. In various degrees, they opted for a literal interpretation of Scripture. And this change fostered the recovery of expository preaching; that is, the reformers worked their way through the Bible passage by passage. Their sermons were biblical, emphasizing the Gospel, and the reformers never doubted that they were preaching the "Word of God." Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Bullinger, Oecolampodius, Knox, and nearly all the major reformers were faithful biblical preachers. Of the leading reformers, Calvin had the greatest impact on Knox's preaching, second only to those he encountered in Scotland.¹³

¹¹ See John S. Baird, "Preaching," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (ed. Walter A. Elwell, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 868-69, Hughes Oliphant Old, "History of Preaching," in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith* (ed. Donald K. McKim, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 286, 287, E. C. Dargan, *A History of Preaching: From the Apostolic Fathers to the Great Reformers, AD 70-1572* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903), Yngve Brihth, *A Brief History of Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965).

¹² See T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), W. P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), David G. Buttrick, "Theology of Preaching," in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 289, 290.

¹³ See Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952), T. H. L. Parker, *The Oracles of God: An Introduction to the Preaching of John Calvin* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1947), Old, "History of Preaching," 287, Buttrick, "Theology of Preaching," 289, H. A. Oberman, "Preaching and the Word in the Reformation," *ThTo* 18 (1961): 16-29, B. A. Gerrish, "Biblical Authority and the Continental Reformation," *JSOT* 10 (1957): 337-40.

However, before having any direct contact with the Continental reformers, Knox began to thunder from the pulpit. Who taught him how to preach? Knox had a number of homegrown Scottish models, some of whom had come under the influence of the Continental preachers. As on the Continent, preaching in the Scottish Catholic Church had sunk to low levels. The content of their sermons and homilies revolved around devotion to Mary, the Mass, the sacraments, and good works. Still, a few priests must have preached God's Word, for Knox acknowledged that some "would occupy the pulpit and truly preach Jesus Christ." But most did not.¹⁴

Undoubtedly, the early Scottish Protestants had the greatest impact on Knox's preaching. Patrick Hamilton was a preacher at St. Andrews from 1523 to 1527. On the Continent, he came under the influence of Erasmus, Luther, and Tynsdale. In Scotland, he eloquently preached justification by faith. So disturbing was his message that the church declared him a heretic and had him burnt at the stake. Yet he inspired other men who would have a direct impact on Knox.¹⁵ More immediately, Knox came under the influence of several former Dominican friars—Thomas Guilliams and John Rough. These fiery preachers directly ministered to Knox, who recorded their impact in his *History*. He described Guilliams as a fluid speaker with solid judgment, wholesome doctrine, and adequate knowledge for that day. Nevertheless, Guilliams was too moderate in his opposition to Catholicism for Knox's liking. Knox characterized Rough as more simple and not that well learned, but more rigorous in combating the Catholic faith.¹⁶

Of these early Protestants, George Wishart had the most enduring influence upon Knox's preaching. Wishart had been exiled to the Continent where he came under the sway of the Swiss reformers. He returned in 1542, first to England and then to Scotland. During 1544–45, he popularized the doctrines of the Swiss reformers, including justification by faith, the Apostles' Creed, and a fierce condemnation of Catholic doctrines and practices. Wishart was a charismatic orator who preached with a fiery passion. His thundering denunciation of Catholicism attracted many who desired the purification of religion and

¹⁴ *Works* 1:105; D. A. Bray, et al., "Preaching: Themes and Styles," in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 668; Denis McKay, "Parish Life in Scotland," in *Essays on the Scottish Reformation, 1513–1625* (ed. David McRoberts; Glasgow: Burns, 1962), 85–115; Ian B. Cowan, *The Scottish Reformation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 70, 71.

¹⁵ *Works*, 1:13–19; James E. McGoldrick, "Patrick Hamilton, Luther's Scottish Disciple," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 28 (1987): 81–88; James Edward McGoldrick, *Luther's Scottish Connection* (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1989), 46–54.

¹⁶ *Works*, 1:95, 96; Stewart D. Gill, "'He made my tongue a trumpet . . .'" John Knox, The Preacher," *RTS* 51 (1992): 104; Richard Kyle, "Guilliams, Thomas," in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, 380; Cowan, *Scottish Reformation*, 101; Reid, *Trumpeter of God*, 11, 24, 25; Edington, "John Knox and the Castilians," 30, 39, 40.

society. In his *History*, Knox records his approval of Wishart's sermonizing: he glorified God by preaching his Word with vehemence. As a result many were converted to the Protestant faith.¹⁷

Scottish Protestant preaching took the teaching of Scripture as its only authority. In fact, according to the *Scots Confession*, the mark of the "true Kirk of God we believe, confess, and avow to be, first, the true preaching of the Word of God." Given this importance, Scotland needed many preachers. While Knox may have been renown for his preaching, there were other gifted Scottish preachers such as William Harlow (1500–75), John Willock (1512–85), John Craig (1512–1600), David Fergusson (1525–98), Andrew Melville (1545–1622), and Robert Bruce (1554–1631).¹⁸

III

Knox did not blow his master's trumpet without considerable preparation, both spiritually and intellectually. The basis for his pulpit ministry lay in his conversion experience and dramatic call to the ministry. He had cast his anchor in Jesus Christ and received a call to preach, which he interpreted as coming directly from God. To be sure, Knox cannot be regarded as a sophisticated theologian. Still, he had a solid grasp of Reformed doctrine, even though he expressed it in a practical if not systematic manner. But more importantly, Knox was a man of the Word. He diligently studied Scripture, describing himself as "sitting at his books" and using the church fathers as a guide to the Bible. Consequently, he acquired a commanding knowledge of Scripture, which allowed him to have a thorough understanding of Christian doctrine and a detailed recollection of biblical events. And Knox used his knowledge to carefully prepare his sermons.¹⁹

From the pulpit, Knox could roar with the voice of authority. This great confidence came from his conviction that the Bible was God's Word and his only job was to proclaim it. Despite his occasional reliance on other sources, throughout his public ministry, he claimed Scripture as his sole authority in religious matters. In regard to religion—especially worship—human beings could not add to nor subtract anything from what God expressly commanded.²⁰ Undoubtedly, this reliance on Scripture had a twofold effect: Knox's sermons could be inflexible, but they also had great authority.

¹⁷ *Works*, 1 125–55, 534–37, Gill, "John Knox, The Preacher," 105, James Kirk, "The Religion of Early Scottish Protestants," in *Humanism and Reform* (ed. James Kirk, Oxford Blackwell, 1991), 382, 383, Ridley, *John Knox*, 37–44, Edington, "John Knox and the Castilians," 39

¹⁸ *Works*, 2 110, James Philip, "Preachers," in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, 665, 666

¹⁹ *Works*, 3 75, 351, 4 310, 314, 315, 322, 383–86, 390, 392, 393, 492–94, 511, 512, 519, 524, 5 32, 33, 39, 62, 75, 170, 171, 180, 326, 331, 332, 344, 419, 6 194, 202, 501, 505, MacMillan, "John Knox—Preacher of the Word," 16

²⁰ *Works*, 3 34, 166, 4 44, 80, 231, 446, 469, 470, 478, 5 59, 310, 421, 2 93, 96, 112 are but a few examples. See also Richard Kyle, *The Mind of John Knox* (Lawrence, Kans. Coronado Press, 1984), 30–36, Richard Greaves, "The Nature of Authority in the Writings of John Knox," *Fides et Historia* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1978) 30–51

His approach to Scripture impacted his preaching in still other ways. Not only did he regard the Bible as the authoritative Word of God, but he upheld the perspicuity of Scripture, that it is clear and intelligible to the average person. Phrases such as “the plain Word of God,” “the express Word of God,” “the plain Scripture,” and the “strict Word of God” constantly bombard even the casual reader of Knox’s works.²¹ In one of his encounters with Queen Mary of Scotland, Knox insisted that the Bible was intelligible to all people, and thus the native meaning of the Bible with the aid of the Holy Spirit sufficed. The Holy Ghost had inspired every verse and, as God, he can never be self-contradictory. Therefore, the meaning of vague texts must be in agreement with the interpretation of distinct passages: “The Word of God is plain in the self; and if there appear any obscurity in one place, the Holy Ghost which is never contrarious to himself, explains the same more clearly in other places: so that there can remain no doubt, but unto such as obstinately remain ignorant.”²²

How did this impact Knox’s preaching? Because he believed that the plain Scripture, with the aid of Holy Spirit, was understandable to most people, he primarily used the literal method for ascertaining the meaning of a particular passage.²³ Thus his sermons also proclaimed the literal meaning of Scripture. They were direct and clear, and left little doubt as to their meaning. Like Scripture itself, they didn’t need any sophisticated explanation. Actually, Knox took a rather low view of his own preaching. He did not see himself as interpreting the Bible, but declaring what was self-evident. He was simply God’s mouthpiece, his voice, proclaiming the truth entrusted to him. Like Joshua, he was but a rude trumpet for God.²⁴

In yet another way, Knox was prepared for an international preaching ministry. He knew several languages. The reformer had an adequate knowledge of Greek and learned some Hebrew during his stay in Geneva; thus he could study Scripture in its original languages. Moreover, he preached in several languages. Knox’s native tongue was Lowland Scots, but he chose to preach and write in English. For this, some have criticized him, but English allowed him to reach a wider audience with the Gospel of Christ. Knox spoke French—which he may have learned during his stay in a French galley—and he put it to good use in Dieppe. On his trips to and from the Continent, he stayed in Dieppe, sometimes for weeks. And he utilized his time well, preaching frequently, encouraging believers, and winning converts to the Protestant faith. And his command

²¹ *Works*, 3 34, 35, 37, 38, 4 437, 468, 5 516 These citations are only a few examples of these phrases

²² *Works*, 2 284

²³ *Works*, 5 261, 262 See Richard Kyle, “The Hermeneutical Patterns in John Knox’s Use of Scripture,” *Pacific Theological Review* 17, no. 3 (1984) 19-32, Kyle, *Mind of Knox*, 42-45

²⁴ Lord Eustace Percy, *John Knox* (Richmond John Knox, 1966), 53, Geddes MacGregor, *The Thundering Scot* (Philadelphia Westminster, 1957), 44

of French did not leave him during his years in Scotland. On his deathbed, he requested that Calvin's sermons in French be read to him.²⁵

Knox left us with few examples of his preaching. Still, general characteristics of his pulpit style can be ascertained. Like most of his Protestant counterparts, he preached long sermons several times a week. In Geneva, Knox preached three times a week and the sermons lasted between two and three hours. As the minister at St. Giles in Edinburgh from 1559 to 1572, he sermonized twice on Sundays and three times during the week. Indeed, Knox knew nothing of the once-a-week, twenty-minute sermon so common in the modern church. What's more, Knox suffered from a minister's occupational hazard—he could not stop preaching. As noted previously, his writings had a sermonic quality. And “even in private conversations, he lectured as if he was in the pulpit.”²⁶

The word “extemporaneous” can mean several things: uttered on the spur of the moment, or carefully prepared but delivered without notes or text. The latter meaning can be applied to Knox's preaching style. He did not write his sermons down before delivering them. On two occasions, however, he had them published after the fact, and the substance of other sermons found their way into some of his writings. Rather, the reformer would speak from the notes made on the margins of his Bible. Still, he carefully prepared his sermons. He studied the passages, constructed an outline for the message, and even planned the exact words he would use to express his thoughts. Despite not using a written text, Knox could recall the substance of his sermons several days and even years after they had been delivered. This indicates that they had been well prepared.²⁷

The medieval preachers employed an allegorical interpretation of Scripture, which had many hidden meanings. Like other reformers, Knox broke from this trend and preached expository sermons, messages setting forth the clear explanation of a passage. His general pattern was twofold. He would take a book in the Bible, such as the Gospel of John or Isaiah, and preach through it verse by verse. Or he might select a doctrinal or practical subject like prayer and build a sermon from a text related to that topic. Whether he selected a biblical book or subject, the method was the same. Knox would begin with an exposition of the passage, thus assuring his listeners that he was preaching God's Word. Next, he drew doctrinal or practical implications from the text, at times attacking Catholic teachings and leaders or addressing spiritual issues.²⁸

²⁵ *Works*, 6 642, 643, 4 257-60, MacMillan, “John Knox—Preacher of the Word,” 16, 17, Ridley, *John Knox*, 241-64

²⁶ Gill, “John Knox, The Preacher,” 107, MacGregor, *Thundering Scot*, 57, 89, MacMillan, “John Knox—Preacher of the Word,” 16, Ridley, *John Knox*, 481

²⁷ *Works*, 3 263-65, 4 87-114, 6 223-73, MacMillan, “John Knox—Preacher of the Word,” 16

²⁸ *Works*, 4 87-114, 6 223-73, Reid, *Trumpeter of God*, 76, 77, Gill, “John Knox, The Preacher,”

In closing a sermon, Knox applied the text and doctrinal implications to contemporary topics and people—the state of society, political leaders, villains, heroes, and more. And in doing so, he often drew parallels that stretched to the limit his literal approach to Scripture. Such applications brought down the wrath of the political and ecclesiastical establishments upon Knox. Even by the standards of the day, he could be brutally pointed in his references to contemporary leaders and institutions. He went well beyond inferences, making many direct comparisons: Mary Tudor with “Jezebel, that cursed idolatrous woman;” England with Israel or Judah; Catholicism with idolatry; the papacy as Anti-christ; Queen Elizabeth with Deborah, and more.²⁹ Such parallels were hardly diplomatic; they came as a bludgeon. For example, in the reformer’s later years, Maitland of Lethington, a supporter of Mary Stewart, complained that Knox “in his sermons . . . has slandered me as an atheist, and enemy to all religion. . . .”³⁰

When Knox blew his master’s trumpet, the sound could be harsh—and he knew it. He acknowledged that, in part, this could be his fault. But he attributed the strident blast of the trumpet largely to the mandate of his office as a preacher. In several of Knox’s confrontations with Queen Mary, she noted the offensive manner in which he spoke, both from the pulpit and in private conversations: “Your words are sharp enough as you have spoken them . . .,” said the Queen. Or in another place: “I have . . . borne with you in all your rigorous manner of speaking. . . .” To this, Knox insisted that he took no joy. Rather, it was a necessity of his function as a preacher. Regardless of the consequences, the trumpet must blow: “Without the preaching place, Madam, I think few have occasion to be offended at me; and there, Madam, I am not master of myself, but must obey Him who commands me to speak plain, and to flatter no flesh upon the face of the earth.”³¹

Knox’s pointed applications partly arose out of his method of interpreting Scripture. He often transferred people and events from the Old and New Testaments to his own time so literally that it seemed as though history had repeated itself.³² Knox constantly compared Israel and Scotland, and Israel and England—comparisons that often went beyond analogies or lessons and seem to become historical equivalents. For example, in *A Faithful Admonition*, Knox recalled his last sermon preached before King Edward VI in 1553. This message, which condemned Edward VI’s ungodly ministers, paralleled the wicked officials of David and Hezekiah with the hidden papists in Edward’s ministry. Old

²⁹ *Works*, 3:286, 293-96, 298; Reid, *Trumpeter of God*, 77; Gill, “John Knox, The Preacher,” 108.

³⁰ *Works*, 6:635; Percy, *John Knox*, 48.

³¹ *Works*, 2:333, 334, 387.

³² V. E. D’Assonville, *John Knox and the Institutes of Calvin: A Few Points of Contact in Their Theology* (Durban: Drakensberg Press Limited, 1968), 74, 75; Kyle, “Hermeneutical Patterns in Knox’s Use of Scripture,” 31.

Testament Israel became England; David became Edward VI; Ahithophel became Dudley, Edward's minister; and Shobna became the Marquess of Winchester, Edward's treasurer.³³

Also in *A Faithful Admonition*, Knox paralleled the English Reformation with the story of the disciples at sea: the calm part of the voyage compared to the rule of Edward VI while the storm corresponded with Mary Tudor's rule and the return of Catholicism.³⁴ John Knox, indeed, saw the drama of biblical times, particularly that of corporate Israel, being re-enacted in sixteenth-century England and Scotland. No wonder he made pointed applications in his sermons—comparisons that often got him into trouble.

The content of Knox's sermons rested on his view of God and his Old Testament emphasis. Divine immutability—that perfection of God by which he is devoid of all change—significantly influenced nearly all areas of Knox's thought, including his preaching. Because God's nature has not changed, neither can his law. What was condemned in the Old Testament (idolatry, immorality, injustice, and more) cannot be overlooked in the sixteenth century. Thus from the pulpit, Knox would vehemently denounce such sins. He demanded that God's law and justice be upheld in Scotland and England as they had been in ancient Israel. Otherwise, the same divine punishments (plagues, natural disasters, and invasions) would befall the Scots or English.³⁵

A key factor determining the content of Knox's sermons was his Old Testament emphasis. His literal Old Testament hermeneutic, drawn from Deut 12:32, provided the window from which he viewed Scripture and much of life. This verse demanded that all aspects of religion conform to God's commands. Nothing should be added or subtracted from God's express instructions. This line of thought provided the impetus for much of Knox's sermons and writings. In fact, this drive to purify religion drove him to denounce Catholicism from the pulpit.³⁶

Knox upheld the unity of Scripture and regarded the entire Bible as important. Why then, did he preach more from the Old Testament than the New? Largely because the reformer was preoccupied with corporate issues that are more readily addressed by the Old Testament—namely, the purification of religion, the covenant, the reformation of religion on a national scale, the legal establishment of Protestantism, the overthrow of the Catholic Church, and

³³ *Works*, 3 280ff

³⁴ *Works*, 3 288-90

³⁵ *Works*, 2 442, 443, 445-47, 3 171, 191, 247, 4 399, 6 408, Richard Kyle, "The Divine Attributes in John Knox's Concept of God," *WTJ* 48 (1986) 165-67

³⁶ *Works*, 3 29-70, Richard Kyle, "John Knox and the Purification of Religion: The Intellectual Aspects of His Crusade Against Idolatry," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 77 (1986) 265, 266, Percy, *John Knox*, 116, Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 277-78

resistance to ruling authorities who promoted idolatry (i.e. Catholicism). Such objectives could be achieved by means of corporate models, which could only be found in the Old Testament.³⁷

Knox favored the Old Testament, but in his preaching he did not ignore the New Testament. Like an Old Testament prophet, the reformer could thunder from the pulpit. But Knox the prophet was also Knox the pastor and Knox the evangelist. While he intensely sought the corporate purification of religion, he also concerned himself with individuals. His preaching called people to repentance and faith in Christ. As a pastor, his sermons and letters addressed spiritual problems: he comforted believers in distress, encouraged them to live a godly life, and instructed them in Christian doctrine. In fact, after Queen Mary's rule had ended in Scotland and Protestantism was more secure, Knox's sermons evidenced a different tone.³⁸

IV

Knox's specific sermons bear witness to many of the characteristics already noted. Unfortunately, he left us with only two messages. Still, aspects of other sermons have been recorded in Knox's *History* and impressions of others can be found in the writings of contemporaries. I will note six sermons presented in several locations: St. Andrews, England, central Scotland, Stirling, and Edinburgh.

Knox received his call to the ministry in 1547, probably in late April. Shortly thereafter he began to blow the trumpet in the parish church of St. Andrews. For his first sermon, he chose Dan 7:24 and 25 as his text. This passage concerned the rise and fall of four empires, depicted as beasts: the Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman. Knox equated the last beast with the Catholic Church, arguing that the Roman Church had arisen out of the ruins of the Roman Empire. In this first sermon, Knox shot a volley at the Catholic Church; its doctrines and practices conflicted with those of Scripture. This church did not teach the doctrine of justification by faith. And worse yet, he spoke of the Roman church as "the Man of Sin," "the Antichrist," and "the Whore of Babylon."³⁹

This first blast of the trumpet set the tone for the rest of Knox's ministry. He anchored his sermons in Scripture, preaching with great conviction because he believed the Bible to be God's Word. He emphasized the doctrine of justification by faith, uplifting Christ as Lord and Savior, and shepherd of the church. On the negative side, he vehemently lashed out at the Catholic Church. So strong was his denunciation of the Roman Church that his listeners could be heard saying, "Others hewed (cut) the branches of the Papistry, but he strikes at the root, to destroy the whole."⁴⁰

³⁷ Richard Kyle, "John Knox: A Man of the Old Testament," *WTJ* 54 (1992): 65; Richard Kyle, "The Christian Commonwealth: John Knox's Vision for Scotland," *JRH* 16 (1991): 248.

³⁸ Reid, *Trumpeter of God*, 208, 249; Gill, "John Knox, the Preacher," 109, 110; Kyle, "Hermeneutical Patterns," 24.

³⁹ *Works*, 1:189-91. See Richard Kyle, "John Knox and Apocalyptic Thought," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 15 (1984): 449-69.

⁴⁰ *Works*, 1:189-92.

So successful was Knox's first sermon that it confirmed his call to blow his master's trumpet. He never seemed to doubt this call again, even during stressful times. For example, when chained to the oar of a French galley near St. Andrews, he pointed up to the church and noted that this is "where God first opened my mouth to his glory. . . ."⁴¹ Two factors related to Knox's first sermon confirmed his call to preach: he firmly believed that he had preached God's Word and his listeners reacted quite positively. They confirmed his call to a pulpit ministry.⁴²

Knox's sermon in Amersham, England, offers another perspective of his preaching. In attacking Catholicism, he did so with considerable political skill. Edward VI died on July 6, 1553, and for nearly two weeks the issue of succession hung in balance. Who would be the next monarch: Jane Grey or Mary Tudor? During this time, Knox preached a sermon in the Protestant stronghold of Amersham. In 1554, he penned *A Faithful Admonition to the Professors of God's Truth in England*, and he included portions of the sermon preached earlier in Amersham.⁴³

Written in exile, *A Faithful Admonition* sharply attacks Mary Tudor, England, and Catholicism. But what we have of the sermon is more moderate. He warns England against papistry and against a marriage alliance with Catholic Spain: "But 'O England, England' if you obstinately will return into Egypt: that is, if you contract marriage, confederacy, or league, with such princes as maintain and advance idolatry . . . you shall be plagued and brought to desolation. . . ." As harsh as this may sound, he spoke largely in generalizations and did not even mention Mary. He only attacked Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, whom he compared to Nero.⁴⁴

Knox's *Exposition upon Matthew IV* provides an excellent window to his preaching: it represents one of his two published sermons. In 1555–56, Knox visited Scotland from Geneva. He embarked upon a preaching mission throughout Scotland, ministering to the privy kirks. From what we can tell, most of Knox's messages during this trip had a pastoral and evangelical tone; they aimed at instruction in biblical doctrines and for an informed decision to the claims of Christ. One of these sermons was on Matt 4, which he subsequently wrote down for circulation among his friends. Years after his death, it was published in England.⁴⁵

This sermon focused on verses one to four of this chapter, which dealt with Christ's temptation in the wilderness. Knox used this passage to attack the Catholic practice of Lent, arguing that it had no scriptural basis. But more important, the reformer began the sermon with an outline, providing us with an example of his style of biblical exposition. He began by defining temptation and shows how it is used in Scripture. Second, he tells us who is tempted and when this temptation occurred. Next, Knox describes how Christ was tempted.

⁴¹ *Works*, 1:228; 3:3.

⁴² Reid, *Trumpeter of God*, 48, 49; MacMillan, "John Knox—Preacher of the Word," 12.

⁴³ *Works*, 3:307–9.

⁴⁴ *Works*, 3:308, 309; Ridley, *John Knox*, 146–48; Kyle, *Mind of Knox*, 258–60.

⁴⁵ *Works*, 4:87, 88; Ridley, *John Knox*, 229; MacMillan, "John Knox—Preacher of the Word," 12, 13; Frank D. Bardgett, *Scotland Reformed: The Reformation in Angus and the Mearns* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1989), 46–49.

Last, he answers why Christ suffered these temptations and the benefit received from them. Then Knox ends the sermon with an application: "The very life and felicity of man consists not in abundance of corporal things. . . ." ⁴⁶

Knox's 1559 sermon at Stirling took a different tack: for victory to come to the Protestants, they must turn to God. While spiritual, his message also had political overtones and some have regarded it as the turning point of the Scottish Reformation. Knox returned to Scotland in May 1559. But by November 1559 when Knox preached his sermon at Stirling, the Protestants were a dejected and depressed group. They needed inspiration; and Knox gave it to them. He rallied the congregation, and some observers have regarded this message as Knox's best. The essence of this sermon is recorded in his *History*. ⁴⁷

Knox's message at Stirling is another example of his verse by verse expository preaching. At St. Giles, his sermons had been on Ps 80:1-4. In Stirling, he continued the exposition, basing his message on verses four to eight. Instead of trusting in God for victory over the Catholic forces, apparently the congregation had turned to the Protestant nobility, especially the Hamiltons. For this, Knox condemned them. But armed with many Old Testament examples, he said that if they would repent and turn to God, victory would come. Knox's sermon electrified the congregation. They met for prayers and then took some more mundane steps to secure victory—namely negotiations with the English for military assistance. Years later, sources independent of Knox's *History* recalled how he had raised the flagging morale of the Protestant cause. ⁴⁸

On August 19, 1565, Knox preached from Isa 26:13-21. This sermon reveals much about Knox's sermonizing; it has been published in full, and to the message Knox attached a preface giving the rationale for his preaching style. July 1565 saw the marriage of Queen Mary and Lord Darnley, who was also proclaimed king. Darnley wavered between Catholicism and Protestantism, sometimes visiting the services of both faiths. On August 19, he attended St. Giles church, listening to Knox's sermon while on a throne erected especially for him. ⁴⁹

In this sermon, Knox utilized his usual preaching style, a verse by verse exposition and a substantial application of the passage to contemporary life. The reformer told his listeners that kings do not have absolute power; it is limited by God's Word. Thus they cannot do whatever pleases them but must obey God's commands. Knox warned his audience against those who would persecute God's faithful followers. He also made passing references to idolatry and papal abomination, linking them to Old Testament figures. God gave Ahab victory over Benhadad. Did he then correct his idolatrous wife Jezebel? No! Knox

⁴⁶ *Works*, 4:95, 96, 100, 101, 105, 111; Reid, *Trumpeter of God*, 159.

⁴⁷ *Works*, 1:465-73; MacMillan, "John Knox—Preacher of the Word," 13, 14; Stewart Lamont, *The Swordbearer: John Knox and the European Reformation* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), 112.

⁴⁸ *Works*, 1:465-73; "A Historie of the Estate of Scotland, From the Year 1559 to the Year 1566," in Vol. 1 of *The Miscellany of the Wodrow Society* (ed. D. Laing; Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1847), 72; George Buchanan, *The History of Scotland* (6 vols.; Glasgow: Blackie and Son, 1845), 2:422; Reid, *Trumpeter of God*, 183, 184; MacMillan, "John Knox—Preacher of the Word," 13, 14; Ridley, *John Knox*, 358, 559.

⁴⁹ *Works*, 6:223-86.

closed by contending that God would punish those who fought for or supported idolatry.⁵⁰

This sermon was milder than most Knox preached. He made only one direct reference to Scotland and did not mention Queen Mary or Darnley. The sermon still angered King Darnley. Why? The message was longer than usual. Undoubtedly, Darnley personalized Knox's comments regarding female rule, idolatry, and Ahab and Jezebel. Darnley complained to the Privy Council, who ordered Knox not to preach when the King and Queen were in Edinburgh. However, the Edinburgh city council objected, declaring that Knox was free to preach when he wished.⁵¹

In response to the Privy Council's order, Knox published his sermon as proof that he had not attacked the King and Queen. To this sermon he affixed a preface, describing his philosophy and style of preaching. He did not write his sermon down because God had called him to preach, not to write books for future generations. Rather, he diligently studied a particular passage beforehand and then trusted the guidance of the Holy Spirit and his feelings for the mood of expression. What about the sharpness of Knox's tongue? To this he declared that he desired to offend no one, but in respect to preaching: "I consult not with flesh and blood what I shall propose to the people, but as the Spirit of my God who has sent me, and unto whom I must answer . . . so I speak. . . ."⁵²

Knox returned to St. Andrews in May 1571 and spent over a year there. Now in his fifty-ninth year, he was an old man in poor health. But to the very end of his life, he could still be a pulpit thumper, preaching with great vigor and vehemence. During his stay at St. Andrews, he continued his usual expository style followed by an application of the passage. For most of the time, Knox based his messages on the book of Daniel.⁵³

Knox's sermons at St. Andrews have not been recorded. Some contemporaries, however, did register their reactions to the reformer's preaching. Though old and ill, he preached each day. Walking with a cane, he had to be helped into the pulpit. Once there, he became energized. For about a half an hour he spoke quietly while explaining the passage, but when he began to apply the text to contemporary events, his oratory heated up. Knox openly attacked a number of political leaders by name—Grange, the Hamiltons, the Castilians, and even Queen Mary. On one occasion, a witch was brought to church and fastened to a pillar while Knox denounced her in a sermon. After the service, she was executed. Young James Melville, who took notes of Knox's sermons, said the reformer's preaching electrified him, so much so that "he could not hold a pen to write."⁵⁴

⁵⁰ *Works*, 6 229-73, Reid, *Trumpeter of God*, 239, Ridley, *John Knox*, 439-41

⁵¹ *Works*, 2 497-500, 6 223-25, Ridley, *John Knox*, 440, 441, W Stanford Reid, "The Coming of the Reformation to Edinburgh," *CH* 42 (1973) 34

⁵² *Works*, 6 223-31

⁵³ Ridley, *John Knox*, 502, 503, Reid, *Trumpeter of God*, 270, 271, Bray, "Preaching Themes and Styles," 668, MacGregor, *Thundering Scot*, 218, 219

⁵⁴ Melville, *Diary of Melville*, 26, 33, 58, Ridley, *John Knox*, 502, 503, Reid, *Trumpeter of God*, 270, MacGregor, *Thundering Scot*, 220, 221, M'Crie, *The Life of John Knox*, 2 192, 193

V

What were the results of Knox's preaching? Did his sermons further the Protestant cause in England and Scotland? Or did he pound the pulpit in vain? These are difficult questions. But any evaluation of Knox's preaching must take into consideration the immediate reaction of his contemporaries and long-term factors.

The Scottish Reformation established Protestantism in Scotland. To a considerable extent, the Reformed faith prevailed. What role did Knox play in these events? Recent scholarship has viewed the Scottish Reformation from several vantage points. Some see it as a social movement; others focus on the Reformation in the various cities or areas of the countryside. Still, some see the revival in sixteenth-century Scotland more as a revolution than a reformation of religion. And other scholars minimize Knox's role in these developments. They point to the work of others and say that the Reformation was well underway before Knox returned to Scotland in 1559.⁵⁵

There are certainly elements of truth in these arguments. While the importance of other individuals and factors should not be minimized, Knox must be seen as the leading figure of the Scottish Reformation. He gave the movement direction and helped to change the future of Scotland. How did he do this? By his writings or diplomacy? No! He wrote much, and at times exhibited some political skill. However, Knox was first and foremost a preacher, and his impact came through his sermons, which were many. The sixteenth century differed from our day. Preaching counted. Before the age of nearly universal literacy and mass communications, preaching was a primary means of conveying ideas and motivating people. And Knox excelled at this means of communication.

The long-term impact of Knox's preaching can be measured in other ways. He influenced preaching in Scotland by institutional developments and by example. The *First Book of Discipline*, which Knox coauthored, endeavored to provide Scotland with a sufficient number of qualified preachers. Good preaching was central to the long-term success of the Reformation, a fact that Knox and his colleagues well knew. To legalize Protestantism was not enough. The people of Scotland had to sincerely embrace the Reformed faith and this could come primarily through preaching. On a personal level, Knox set a standard for preaching in Scotland. His careful preparation, solid exposition, sound evangelical doctrine, and forceful presentations were imitated throughout Scotland.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ A few examples of these trends are as follows: Michael Lynch, *Edinburgh and the Reformation* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1981); Bardgett, *Scotland Reformed*; Cowan, *The Scottish Reformation*; Gordon Donaldson, *The Scottish Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960); Mary B. Verschuur, "The Outbreak of the Scottish Reformation of Perth 11 May 1559: Knox's History Re-Examined," *Scotia: American-Canadian Journal of Scottish Studies* (1987): 41-53.

⁵⁶ Robert M. Healey, "The Preaching Ministry in Scotland's First Book of Discipline," *CH* 58 (1989): 343-45; Gill, "John Knox, The Preacher," 110; W. Taylor, *The Scottish Pulpit from the Reformation to the Present Day* (London: Charles Burnet, 1887), 62; James Kirk, *Patterns of Reform* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 95-153.

Knox's contemporaries certainly recognized him as a great preacher. His supporters praised his oratorical skills while his opponents cursed his sharp tongue. To fear a speaker, as his opponents did, is to acknowledge his ability. Undoubtedly, Knox was a fervent and compelling speaker. After his first sermon, his listeners said that "Master George Wishart spoke never so plainly. . . ." James Melville said that in the pulpit, Knox was "so active and vigorous that he was like to beat the pulpit into pieces. . . ." And at his graveside, the Regent Morton declared, "Here lies one who neither flattered or feared any flesh." But apparently Knox did more than pound the pulpit. Contemporary historian George Buchanan also praised his eloquence.⁵⁷ Still, in assessing the impact of Knox's preaching, a problem arises. Much of the praise heaped upon Knox was either recorded in his *History* or came from his supporters. And such sources had an obvious bias, presenting Knox's own version of the events.

⁵⁷ *Works*, 1:192; Melville, *Diary of Melville*, 26, 33; Bishop, "John Knox: Thundering Scot," 74; MacMillan, "John Knox—Preacher of the Word," 14, 15; David Calderwood, *The History of the Kirk of Scotland* (ed. T. Thomson; Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1842), 3:242.

JOHN KNOX, PASTOR OF SOULS

W. STANFORD REID

JOHN KNOX has been called everything from a "trumpeter of God" to a "nasty old man" since his death in 1572. While some have held him in deep reverence, as in his own day, believing that he was the man who brought about the Reformation in Scotland, others have declared him to be vain, inconsistent, uxorious, and a jackal.¹ It is not, therefore, easy to sum up his character or his achievements in a few well chosen words which everyone will accept. One side of his personality, however, has been frequently overlooked by both his admirers and his detractors, that is, his role as a pastor of souls. It is to this aspect of the man that this article would draw attention.

As one reads his letters, whether to individuals or to congregations and nations, one gains the impression that he had a very great interest in the spiritual welfare of those who were facing problems either spiritual or political. He genuinely sought to understand and enter into the doubts and difficulties of those whom he was seeking to assist. At the same time, he sought to bring to bear on their questions and situations the teachings of the Scriptures from a Reformed perspective in order that they might find help, consolation, and encouragement which would enable them to deal with their problems. His approach was not, however, what might be called a purely "spiritual" one, for in much of what he said one finds a hard-headed Lowland Scottish common sense, often tinged with humor and irony, which went right to the point of the matter at hand. By these means he was able to offer help when it was needed.

Yet, while one may speak in this way of Knox, very little direct information concerning his pastoral activities is available

¹ For two expressions of the different views, cf. W. S. Reid, *Trumpeter of God* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1974) and G. Donaldson, "Knox the Man," in *John Knox: A Quartercentenary Reappraisal*, ed. Duncan Shaw (Edinburgh: St. Andrews Press), pp. 18ff.

from the reformer himself. He sometimes complains that he cannot do all that he would because of physical weakness or lack of time, but that is as far as he goes.² Nor do we have much direct information from others, with perhaps the exception of James Melville, who in his memoirs tells us something of Knox's dealings with the students at St. Andrews when he was in exile there from Edinburgh during the last year or so of his life. To understand his interest in and performance of his pastoral work one must look elsewhere and hope to find indirect evidence which will give some indication of his attitudes and endeavors.

Fortunately, we do have a source which gives this indirect information concerning his pastoral activity: a considerable collection of letters which he wrote in response to specific questions submitted to him by various people. We also have letters which he wrote to former congregations and to Protestant groups under persecution. Then too, we have a few passing comments of his own which give some indication of how he showed pastoral concern and of the contacts which he had with people who were looking for help. In this way, from his side, we can build up something of a picture.

From the side of those who were the sheep of his flock we may likewise gain some understanding of how he acted as a shepherd. The fact that questions were put to him, questions of many different sorts, indicates that he was seen as one who had a real interest in people's problems. He was recognized by many as being ready and willing to give aid and assistance in whatever way he could. This comes out especially clearly in his letters to Mrs. Bowes, but undoubtedly characterized his dealings with many others as well.

His care was first and foremost for individuals. Moreover, while he was called upon by men for help at times, those who sought his counsel most frequently were women. The majority of his extant letters are directed to Mrs. Richard Bowes, Mrs. Anna Locke, and his "Sisters in Edinburgh." They seem to have kept in constant contact with him, seeking his advice and depending upon him for consolation and guidance. Eventually both Mrs. Bowes and Mrs. Locke went to Geneva during his pastorate in

² John Knox, *Works*, ed. D. Laing (Edinburgh: Stevenson, 1864), III, 390f.

the English congregation there, during the reign of Mary Tudor.³

Because of his female consultants Knox has been criticized and lampooned, for did he not write *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*? If he was in reality a misogynist, why did he have all these female admirers? This is the question asked by Robert Louis Stevenson in one of his essays.⁴ But Stevenson and others of Knox's detractors have not understood the situation. With the abolition of the confessional many women felt a need for spiritual help and guidance. As a result they turned to the reformers for instruction and assistance. We find, therefore, that Calvin, Bullinger, Luther, and many of the English reformers were constantly being consulted by pious women who had nowhere else to turn for instruction and advice. Collinson brings this out very clearly in his article on Mrs. Locke. Knox, for his part, was no exception, and as far as we can see there was nothing sexual involved but simply his desire to help meet the needs of women who, although faced with spiritual problems, were deeply committed to the Protestant cause.⁵

In Knox's case this comes out most clearly in his writing to Mrs. Bowes. She was the daughter of Sir Roger Aske of Aske and wife of Richard Bowes, Captain of Norham Castle. While Knox was the minister of the Protestant congregation in Berwick, after his release from the French galley in 1549, Mrs. Bowes seems to have become a Protestant, presumably against her husband's and most of her family's wishes. This may account in part for her lack of assurance and her tendency towards melancholy, which is apparent in the letters which she wrote to

³ P. Lorimer, *John Knox and the Church of England* (London, 1875), p. 147; P. Collinson, "The Role of Women in the English Reformation illustrated by the life and friendships of Mrs. Anne Locke," *Studies in Church History*, II (1956), 261ff.

⁴ R. L. Stevenson, "John Knox and his Relations to Women," *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (London: Collins, 1936), pp. 299ff.

⁵ However, Professor Trevor-Roper feels that Knox should be analyzed from a Freudian perspective in order to show how his dealings with Mrs. Bowes had sexual overtones ("John Knox," *The Listener*, 80 [1968], 745f). Collinson also declares that Mrs. Locke was the only woman whom Knox ever loved (*Loc. cit.*). The evidence for both these positions is, however, somewhat difficult to identify!

Knox. Marjory, her fifth daughter, seems to have been the only member of the family who went with Mrs. Bowes, and eventually, again contrary to the wishes of the family, she became Mrs. Knox.⁶ Thus Mrs. Bowes, who was originally addressed in his letters as "Belovit Sister," became his "Deirlie Belovit Mother," and as his mother-in-law she had an even greater right to call on him for help.

Although we do not have the letters which she wrote to Knox, she apparently kept those which he wrote to her and used them as a kind of work of spiritual counsel, with the result that they are still extant today. Reading between the lines of Knox's replies, one is able to see that she missed the opportunity to consult a father confessor for spiritual guidance, and so turned to him. Although at times he displays a certain amount of impatience with her questions, nevertheless he shows a very different side of his character from that usually attributed to him, in the gentleness and sympathy with which he deals with her. As he put it in writing to her from Newcastle-on-Tyne in 1553:

Think not Sister, that I esteme it any trubill to comfort yow ;
be sa bold upon me in godliness, as ye wald be upon any
flesche, and na uther labouris save onlie the blawing of my
Maisteris trumpet sall impeid me to do the uttermaist of my
power.⁷

Shortly afterwards, writing from London, he tells her that he never prays without mentioning her in his prayers, and confides that when helping three other "honest pure wemen" he told them of her problems, which were similar to theirs, they all wept together, praying for her.⁸ Here is a John Knox somewhat different from the usual picture.

Mrs. Bowes' basic problem seems to have been that of an uncertainty and lack of assurance of her salvation. It may have been that under constant pressure from her family, especially her husband, to return to the Roman Catholic fold, she was worried lest she had made a wrong decision in accepting the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone. In reply to

⁶ Knox, *Works*, III, pp. 333f., pp. 374f.

⁷ *Ibid.*, III, pp. 368f.; cf. Lorimer, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁸ Knox, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 379f.

her worries, Knox points out that her very anxiety on this score indicates that she is a Christian, and then he adds:

To embrace Chryst, to refus idolatrie, to confess the truth, to love the memberis of Chrystis body, are the giftis of God: therfoir he can not repent that he hath maid yow partaker thair of.⁹

He also assures her that Christ's words "many are called but few are chosen," do not apply to Christians. When she is worried that she does not worry enough over her sins, he points out that the soul needs a rest the same as the body, and he repeatedly assures her that he is praying that she will receive the comfort and peace of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

Such letters, however, did not entirely satisfy Mrs. Bowes, for in November or December of 1552 she wrote him about God's having repented for having chosen Saul to rule over Israel. Obviously she feared that God had repented of his calling of her. To this query he wrote two replies. The first letter, dealing principally with his difficulties in Newcastle, ends with a short statement that God's repenting of having made Saul king does not refer to Saul's salvation. In a later letter, written in March 1553, he takes up the question of anthropomorphisms in the Bible, and then goes on to say that since Saul was always reprobate, this matter of God's repentance does not apply to Christians, so she need not worry.¹¹

Another problem of Mrs. Bowes was that she was tempted to sin. Did this mean that she was not a Christian? To this Knox replied that all these temptations are of the devil whom she should "lauch . . . to skorne and mock . . . in your hart. . ." The Devil tries all Christians. "He is a roaring lyon seiking whome he may devour; whome he has devourit alreadie, he seikis na mair." Although she may feel, as she does, that she has not repented enough of her sins she must remember that her salvation depends not on any perfection in herself, but in Christ alone. In another letter he tells her that to be tempted is not to sin, and even if we do but repent we are forgiven. In one of his longest letters he even goes so far as to tell her of his own temptation

⁹ *Ibid.*, III, pp. 348ff.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, III, pp. 350f., 373ff., 386f.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, III, pp. 356ff., 362ff.

to pride, and how God has weaned him from it.¹² It is abundantly clear that when Knox is speaking of temptation he knows whereof he speaks.

One is also cheered by the fact that Mrs. Bowes also had difficulties with the matter of the unpardonable sin, as do many today who are young in the faith. She wrote to Knox in great perplexity as to whether she had committed it or not. To this query he replied that the unpardonable sin is

to blasphem the word of lyfe whilk anis we haif professit, and to fall back (not of fragilitie, but of hatred and contempt) to sic ydolatrie and abominatiouns as the wickit mantenis; whair of I am maist surelie persuadit in the Lord Jesus that your hart shall never do.

He believed that she was certainly grafted into the body of Christ, and although she might have to suffer for this, she would never be lost.¹³

Mrs. Bowes' problems, however, were not always of her own concoction. With a husband and family largely opposed to her new religious beliefs she was constantly being pressured to attend mass. Knox, on the other hand, was constantly urging her to stand firm against the persuasions of those who would have her return to the Roman Church. He repeatedly reminds her of God's sovereignty over all her troubles, which he is using for her perfection. At the same time, while consoling her he tells her of his own "dolors" but ends with the encouraging words, ". . . and thus rest in Christ; for the heid of the Serpent is alreadie brokin down, and he is stinging us upon the heill."¹⁴

Yet Knox also acknowledged that the help was not all from one side. He confessed that he had his own weaknesses and failed on various occasions to do as he should. Moreover, he also recognized that many of his problems were similar to hers, and confessed that his contacts with her had helped to strengthen him. As he pointed out in his exposition of Psalm Six, God had called her to be one of his own and had given her the courage to fight the enemy: the Devil, her own flesh, those who were the enemies of Christianity, even some of her natural friends. Her

¹² *Ibid.*, III, pp. 365ff., 380, 386f.

¹³ *Ibid.*, III, p. 369.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, III, pp. 361f., 355f., 352f.

boldness in the cause of Christ had often strengthened him when he had been faint in the cause. The Spirit of God had given her such strength that she was able to reason and speak, and to give comfort and consolation to those in trouble. "And theirfoir, Mothher, be not moveit with any wind, but stick to Chryst Jesus in the day of this his battell."¹⁵

While our attention is directed principally to Knox's letters to Mrs. Bowes, who was, as he once explained, one of the crosses he had to bear, others also wrote to him. One could only wish that they had been as careful to preserve his letters as was she. One of these other consultants was a man, Thomas Upcher, an Englishman living in Basel in 1556 and 1557. He apparently complained that he felt deserted by God. To this Knox replied that this was no uncommon experience, for God does at times leave us to our own devices in order that we may realize that our whole strength must be in him alone. He forces us back to trust in him and to seek his blessing more fully and completely.¹⁶

To the queries of his "Sisters in Edinburgh" the answers were not nearly so simple, for they faced him with two very practical and dangerous questions. The first related to women's wearing apparel. He began to reply to this question by saying that women should not dress for ostentation, but he would not prescribe dress for either man or woman, since individuals differ. He insisted, however, that the rule against women carrying men's arms or clothes was based upon the difference in their functions. If men give up their place of rule and

gif wemen, forgetting thair awn weakness and inabilitie to rule, do presume to tak upon thame to beir and use the vestementis and weaponis of men, that is the offices whilk God hath assignit to mankynd onlie, thay sall not eschape the maledictioun of Him wha must declair himself enemy, and a severe punisser of all thois that be malicious perverteris of the order establissit be his wisdom.¹⁷

Here we hear echoes of *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*.

The other question concerned the eating of meat offered to

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, III, pp. 142, 153.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 241ff.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 225ff.

idols. Apparently the good ladies felt that eating in a Roman Catholic friend's home might bring them under the condemnation of committing this sin, which was so prevalent in Corinth in apostolic days. Knox, however, makes a distinction between worship and meeting together in a home for social purposes. Christians should flee the mass, which would be eating meats offered to idols, but for social gatherings in homes he saw no problem. The only question he raised was whether their so doing would lead a weaker brother into error. He also insisted that Protestants must be prepared, even in social gatherings to give their witness if the Romanists attempted to defend their errors.¹⁸ In this advice he seems to have shown balance and judgment.

It may also have been in answer to questions by some individuals that Knox wrote a statement concerning baptism, the Lord's Supper, the eating of blood, and the giving of tithes. No indication appears on the document either as to the questioners' identity or as to the date, although from its location in the M'Crie collection it would seem to have been written around 1556. In dealing with these questions, Knox shows first of all his knowledge of both Scripture and theology and secondly his common sense. He rejects the idea of the need for another baptism if one has already received Roman Catholic baptism in the name of the Triune God. The sign was received in ignorance, but it is one's faith, not the sign which is important. Furthermore, even if one has fallen away from the Gospel second baptism is not required, but a proper use of the Lord's Supper. With regard to the eating of blood, he points out that that was an Old Testament regulation, but that such ceremonial laws are now abrogated by Christ. And finally he rejects the idea of paying tithes to priests, for they are now done away with in the New Testament dispensation.¹⁹

Knox, however, did not feel that his pastoral duties ended with the writing of letters to individuals who raised questions with him. He was the pastor, during his life, of a number of congregations, and he always seems to have had a deep consciousness of his responsibility to meet their corporate needs.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 230.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 119f.

Furthermore, he felt, as one who was called to "blaw his maister's trumpet" faithfully in all circumstances, that in a sense he was pastor to all those who believed the Gospel. He was interested in the congregations as a whole and sought to give leadership wherever and whenever the opportunity arose. Consequently, his pastoring was carried on over a very wide area, and throughout his life.

One may divide Knox's congregational pastorates into two parts, one in the British Isles and the other on the Continent. He began his ministry in St. Andrews while in the castle where the murderers of Cardinal Beaton had found refuge. His second congregation was that in Berwick-on-Tweed, to which he was appointed by the Duke of Somerset on his release from the French galley *Notre Dame*. Because a good many Scottish Protestants began to move into Berwick, apparently attracted by Knox, he was moved to Newcastle-on-Tyne for a short time. But as he was proving to be an overly influential figure in the north, the Duke of Northumberland decided to move him to London where he was offered first a bishopric, which he turned down, and then a London parish, to which he gave the same response. He then spent the last few months of the reign of Edward VI (1547-1553) as a royal chaplain travelling through south east England seeking to refute the teachings of a growing group of Anabaptists.

With the accession of Mary Tudor to the throne on the death of Edward VI he found it necessary to leave for the Continent where he planned to spend some time in Geneva studying. Other English refugees, however, soon appeared in Frankfort-am-Main and lacking a minister called Knox to fill that position. Unwillingly he took up the duties, but was probably quite happy to lay them down when a group of refugees who had come from Strasbourg succeeded in having him forced out of Frankfort because he would not use the second Edwardian *Book of Common Prayer*. He then retired to Geneva once again, only to be followed by over two hundred of the Frankfort congregation who elected him to be their pastor. There he served from 1556 until Elizabeth came to the English throne and his congregation left for home. With no more congregation to which to minister, he then departed for Scotland to become one of the

leaders in the Reformation there, eventually taking over the pastorate of St. Giles Kirk in Edinburgh.²⁰

Knox's first congregational pastoral writing was to the group which had been with him in St. Andrew's Castle. It consisted of an introduction to, and summary of, a "Treatise of Justification" written by Henry Balnaves, one of those who had been in St. Andrews Castle and who was imprisoned in the tower at Rouen. The treatise was smuggled to Knox, who was at that time in the galley *Notre Dame*. How he had the opportunity to write anything we do not know, but he did and the document was then smuggled out and sent to Scotland. Who read it is also not known; but it was eventually found, after Knox's death, by his secretary in the papers of the Laird of Ormiston, who had been one of Knox's major supporters among the gentry of Lothian.²¹ It is possible, however, that it was circulated in manuscript within Protestant circles for it would have been too dangerous at that time to have it printed.

Balnaves' treatise was very clearly a Lutheran document setting forth the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Knox declared in his introduction that this was also the position he held: "The substance of justification is, to cleave fast unto God by Jesus Christ, and not by our selfe, nor yet by our workes."²² Yet, while approving of the doctrine of justification by faith alone, Knox also stresses the necessity of the Christian's performing good works, as a proof of his faith. He does this by fulfilling the calling to which God has appointed him, but above all by his faithful testimony to the grace of God. In his introduction Knox points out that such a testimony may well lead to persecution and even death; nevertheless, he seeks to encourage the congregation by dwelling on the fact that as God in his grace already has obtained the victory in and through Jesus Christ, he will give them the ultimate victory over all opposition. This was to be his dominant theme throughout the whole of his ministry.²³

The next pastoral epistle which Knox wrote was sent from

²⁰ For a more detailed account, cf. Reid, *op. cit.*, chaps. VI-VIII.

²¹ Knox, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 3ff.; Jas. MacKinnon, *A History of Modern Liberty* (London, 1906), II, p. 400.

²² Knox, *op. cit.*, III, p. 15.

²³ *Ibid.*, III, pp. 17ff.

London in 1552 to his former congregation in Berwick. He was at the moment in controversy with Archbishop Cranmer and some of the government officials over the subject of kneeling at the Lord's Supper. In this letter, although he spends considerable time and space urging on the congregation the necessity of living godly and sober lives, his real objective seems to have been to give them guidance with regard to the use of the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer*. He explains that while he was not in favor of the Prayer Book in many respects, particularly in its demand that the recipients of the elements in the Lord's Supper should kneel, yet he feels that since they and the magistrates agree on basic doctrinal matters they should conform. At the same time he says that they should constantly pray that God would touch the magistrates' hearts to the end that they would be willing to remove this and some other matters from the liturgy. He then concludes by calling upon them to show mutual charity to each other by taking care of the poor in their number, "not stoutt, stubborn and idill vagabonds, I meane, but orphanes, widowes and others impotent."²⁴ These were two principles to which he returned on other occasions.

In 1553 Edward VI died to be succeeded by his sister Mary, daughter of Catherine of Aragon and a devoted Roman Catholic. It was not long before persecution of Protestants began and Knox on the advice of some of his friends left for the Continent, whence he addressed a letter "to the Faithful in London, Newcastle and Berwick." His principal theme in this communication was to call them to repentance for the faithlessness of so many of the professed Protestants and to warn of impending divine judgments if they failed to maintain their witness. He rehearsed the number of times that he and others such as Grindal, Haddon, and Lever had warned the Protestants, particularly those in the court, but they had replied: "They wald heir no mo of their sermonis: they were but indifferent fellois (yea and sum of thame eschamit not to call thame prating knaves)."²⁵ He denies that they should take into their own hands the work of removing idolators, for that is the responsibility of the magistrate; but he urges them to stay away from the mass, and if necessary to suffer

²⁴ Lorimer, *op. cit.*, pp. 261ff.

²⁵ Knox, *op. cit.*, III, p. 176.

exile or even death for their faith. He had often admonished his congregations that "the last Trumpet was then in blawing within the Realme of England, thairfoir aucht everie man to prepair himself for the battell."²⁶

Such was the tenor of his thought in later letters which he sent to his former congregations. In May of 1554 he dispatched from Dieppe "Two Comfortable Epistles to his Afflicted Brethren in England" in which he sought to encourage them by pointing out that the time of reckoning for their persecutors was approaching and urging them to stand firm. Then in July, when the Roman Catholics in England were exerting great pressure on the Protestants, he sent "A Faithful Admonition to the Confessors of God's Truth in England." In this writing he not only warned the Protestants not to compromise with Romanism since it was the work of the devil, but also made a very outspoken attack on the Roman Catholics, including Mary and her husband, Philip II of Spain, for their persecution of the Protestants. His violence and outspokenness were to cause him considerable trouble later on in Frankfort, but one can see that he was very much wrought up over the news which he had recently received from England.²⁷ But even in his most depressed moods he still held out hope of ultimate victory.

By these and similar writings, Knox sought to strengthen and encourage the Protestants with whom he had had dealings to be strong enough to resist the temptation to fall away from the faith. No doubt, under the stress of Mary's attempts to bring England back to Rome, many had a tendency to conform, while at the same time saying in their hearts that they did not believe all that was being said and done. This was undoubtedly the position taken by Sir William Cecil, whom Knox later excoriated for his compromising. To this end he constantly pointed to the fact of the faith which they had professed and called upon them to resist all efforts to make them compromise by even an outward conformity. At the same time he constantly sought to encourage them by pointing to the fact that God was sovereign and had already gained the victory through his Son, Jesus Christ. There is little doubt that he was in this way able to

²⁶ *Ibid.*, III, p. 205.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, III, pp. 229ff., 259ff.

strengthen and fortify the many Protestants who were then undergoing persecution.

Knox's energies, however, were not devoted solely to encouraging persecuted Protestants. As a pastor he believed that he must give positive teaching to his people. In 1550 he had been faced with the necessity of debating and defending his doctrine of the Lord's Supper before the Council of the North. This he had done with considerable *éclat*, setting forth the principle that no man has any right or authority to add to or "statue anything to the honour of God not commanded by his own word." In his "Vindication of the Doctrine that the Mass is Idolatry" he set forth very clearly the position that in matters pertaining to worship the Scriptures are the only authority. Although his debate took place in 1550 it was not until 1553 that his account was published. At the same time he attached to this document another, which set forth a positive statement of the nature of the Lord's Supper. In this he insisted that Christ gives himself

to be receavit with faith and not with mouth, nor yit by transfusioun of substance. . . . For in the Sacrament we receave Jesus Christ spirituallie, as did the Fathers of the Old Testament according to St. Paulis saying.

To this spiritual feast one must come in unfeigned repentance and faith, knowing that not it, but Christ alone saves.²⁸

Probably a short time after landing in Dieppe, at the same time that he was writing to the faithful in London, Newcastle, and Berwick, he also had published "A Confession and Declaration of Prayer." Some believe that this had been written around 1550 and perhaps published then, but the only extant copy is dated 1554 and historically seems to fit in well with the difficulties under which the English Protestants were living and worshipping at the time. He defines prayer as "ane earnest and familiar talking with God," to whom we declare our miseries and from whom we ask help and to whom we give praise and thanksgiving. He insists that Christians must pray with concentration, in the Spirit and for the glory of God. Troubles are often a spur to prayer, both private and public. Private prayer should be made where there is little chance of distraction, and

²⁸ *Ibid.*, III, pp. 33ff., 73ff.; Lorimer, *op. cit.*, pp. 51ff., 293ff.

public prayer in the gathered congregation at appointed times and places.

But mark weill the word 'gartherit'; I mean not to heir pyping, singing, or playing; nor to patter upon beidis, or bukis whairof thai haif no understanding; nor to commit idolatrie, honoring that for God whilk is no God in deid.

He then goes on to state what public prayer, or common prayer, should be like, giving a short order of service and of the Lord's Supper, finally ending with a warning as to what will happen to England unless the people repent.²⁹

When we think of Knox's views on public worship which he outlined in his declaration on prayer, it naturally brings us to his views on public worship as set forth in the *Book of Common Prayer* (1552) and also in the *Form of Prayers and Administration of the Sacraments* (1555), which was the directory for public worship of his congregation in Geneva. Numerous attempts have been made to prove that he favored the Edwardian second Prayer Book, but the facts do not bear out this contention. When the revision of the 1549 book was being prepared, he took a very strong stand against some of its provisions, such as kneeling to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. True, he advised his congregation in Berwick to follow it for "charity's sake" but from his description of the service he had usually held, it would seem that his form of liturgy was rather far from that envisaged in the Prayer Book. Furthermore, when pastor of the refugee congregation in Frankfort, he had taken a very strong stand against the use of it as being unbiblical; and later on he had some very drastic criticisms to make of it when writing to Mrs. Locke. Although some have attempted to pass off his criticisms voiced to Mrs. Locke as those of one frustrated by Queen Elizabeth's attitude towards him, his earlier statements show that he had always had very grave doubts about it.³⁰

Therefore, after his dispute over the use of the Prayer Book and his consequent expulsion from Frankfort, the form of service adopted in his congregation in Geneva was of a very different order. He did not actually prepare it, but it seems to have met

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23; Knox, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 83ff.

³⁰ Cf. W. S. Reid, "John Knox's Attitude to the English Reformation," *Westminster Theological Journal*, XXVI (1963), 1ff.

his requirements for he used it without question, and also had a similar service book adopted in Scotland after the Reformation was consummated there. Fundamentally, the *Form of Prayers* was based on Calvin's *Forme des Prières*, although it was no slavish imitation or mere translation. Rather than an obligatory liturgy, it was a directory, which sought to simplify the service and to make it as biblical as possible. The service consisted of a confession of sin, a psalm, an invocation, Scripture reading and sermon, the pastoral prayer, a psalm and benediction. Undoubtedly Knox and those who were with him hoped that this would be the order of service adopted in England when "Bloody" Mary was succeeded by her Protestant sister, Elizabeth.³¹

This brings out one other matter of importance. The service of worship is entitled "the interpretation of Scripture." Knox believed that the center or climax of the service was the exposition of Holy Writ, a belief which explains his insistence on the importance of his own preaching. He constantly refers to his preaching as "blowing my Maister's trumpet," a term that was very accurate in describing his proclamation, for apparently it was frequently a sounding of an alarm or the summoning to battle. Although we do not have many examples of his preaching while in England or on the Continent, he was undoubtedly a very vigorous and convincing prophet of the Gospel. In fact, one of the reasons for the Duke of Northumberland's removal of him from Berwick and Newcastle to London was that he was gaining too much influence through his preaching in the north. But his preaching was no less vigorous when he was in London. He was extremely active, first of all in preaching throughout the country, attempting to counteract the influence of the Anabaptists who were beginning to filter into Kent and East Anglia. He also had to preach, however, before the king and the court, which seems to have led to considerable conflict with the courtiers, who were frequently at the best compromisers and at the worst hypocrites. Knox and the English preachers such as Haddon, Grindal, Lever, and others spoke very bluntly to their audiences with relatively little effect. Nevertheless, he continued to preach whenever he could for, as he said in his exhortation to England speedily to accept the Gospel:

³¹ Knox, *op. cit.*, IV, pp. 160ff.

it is not, nor wil not be, the chanting or mumbling over of certeyne Psalms, the reading of chapters for Mattens and Even-song, or of Homelies onely, be they never so godly, that fede the soules of the hungrie shepe. Christ Jesus, himself, his holy Apostles, and that elected vessel, Paul, do teach us another lesson, all commanding us to preach, to preach and that to preach Christ Jesus crucified, &c. What efficacie hath the lyvinge voice above the bare letter red, the hungry and thirstie do feelee to their comfort.

Even before he left England, preaching had become the great means by which Knox felt the Reformation must be propagated and which was the one most efficient way in which the sheep should be fed.³²

On the Continent, while writing his various letters of exhortation to his former congregations or to the Scottish nobles and commons, preaching was still his great interest as the one way of feeding "the hongrie shepe." There is almost a Miltonian touch in his view of the proclaimed word. At Frankfort, Geneva, and finally at Dieppe he was constantly blowing his Master's trumpet. In fact, he was so successful at Dieppe that a number of the local gentry and their wives joined the Reformed church.³³ But even more important, in 1555 just after his return from Frankfort to Geneva, he was called to return to Scotland to help with the reform movement which was developing at that time. There he spent his time preaching and consulting with the leaders of the movement, but his preaching seems to have been his most important occupation, for he travelled throughout the country holding services in the houses of various prominent Scottish Protestants, and finally concluded his campaign by holding services for ten days in "The Bishop of Dunkeld's Great Lodging," an inn situated in the heart of Edinburgh across the High Street from the salt trone.³⁴ He wrote to Mrs. Bowes saying that he had never expected to have such a response to his preaching in Scotland, and that the country seemed well on the way to a true reformation of religion.³⁵

³² *Ibid.*, V, p. 519.

³³ G. and J. Daval, *Histoire de La Reforme à Dieppe* (ed. E. Lesens, Rouen, 1878), I, pp. 9ff.

³⁴ John Knox, *History of the Reformation in Scotland*, ed. W. C. Dickinson (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1949), I, p. 122.

³⁵ *Works*, III, p. 218.

During his stay in Scotland, Knox preached one sermon which seems to have been particularly effective. It was on the subject of the first temptation of Christ, and he was requested by those who heard it to write it up for their perusal, particularly as many of them were faced with very serious trials and temptations in the face of the persecution which was being mounted against those of the Reformed faith. How far the written sermon is a complete demonstration of his sermoning method, it is hard to say; but, from our point of view, the pastoral tone which he uses throughout indicates clearly that he regarded his sermons as a means of pastoral leading and instruction of the congregations. As he explains at the end:

Thus are we taucht, I say, by Chryst Jesus, to repulse Satan and his assaltis by the Word of God, and to apply the exempellis of his mercies, whilk he hath schewit to utheris befor us, to oure awn souls in the hour of tentation, and in the tyme of oure trubillis. For what God doith to ane at any tyme, the same aperteaneth to all that hang and depend upon God and his promissis; and thairfoir, how that ever we be assalait by Satan, oure adversarie, within the Word of God is armour and weaponis sufficient.⁸⁶

The period from his settling in Geneva in 1556 until his final return to Scotland in 1559 was a time of intense activity for Knox in his refugee congregation. However, he continued to have a great interest in and concern for the supporters of the Reformation in both England and Scotland, particularly the congregations in Newcastle and Berwick and the leaders of the Scots who were in danger of compromising with the Roman Catholic forces led by the Queen mother, Mary of Guise. The outcome of this interest was a series of letters written to the English congregations and to the Scots, containing warnings against apostasy and falling away to the idolatry of the mass. At the same time he sought to encourage them by expressing his confidence that the victory would ultimately be theirs. Probably more important, however, were two letters which he sent to Scotland in 1558, one to the nobles, telling them that as the born counsellors of the realm they were duty bound to reform the church if Mary of Guise failed to take the necessary action, and

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 113.

the other to the commonalty of Scotland, urging them to take the necessary action if the nobles failed to fulfill their obligations. He felt that as a pastor it was his duty to insist that not merely the leaders, but also the common people had the duty to bring about reform. This was their responsibility to God of which he was reminding them.³⁷

In 1559 on the accession of Elizabeth to the English throne, Knox's position changed radically. His congregation in Geneva, made up almost entirely of English members, quickly disappeared as they all packed up and went home, some to regain possession of their properties and others to find positions in the re-established Church of England. He, therefore, returned to Scotland where he assumed an important role as the spiritual leader of the Reformation movement. Sir James Croft, the English official in Berwick, reported that Knox had returned and had become the center of the reform movement.³⁸ Henceforth, Knox was to be the principal propagandist of the reform movement, but more by voice than by pen. Shortly after he had landed in Scotland early in May of 1559 he wrote to Mrs. Locke in London:

The longe thirst of my wretched heart is satisfied in abundance, that is above my expectatioun for now, fortie days and moe, hath my God used my tongue in my native countrie, to the manifestatioun of his glorie. . . . The thirst of the poore people, als well as of the nobilitie hier, is woundrous great, which putteth me in comfort, that Christ Jesus sall triumphe for a space heir, in the North and extreme parts of the earth.³⁹

From this time on, particularly after he was installed as the minister of St. Giles Kirk, Edinburgh, preaching became Knox's great means of pastoral guidance and direction. On one occasion he preached a sermon which annoyed Henry Darnley, Mary Queen of Scots' husband, for which he was accused of treason. In reply he wrote out the sermon, making some interesting statements in his preface regarding his view of the pastoral aspects of preaching. He explains that he had not sought to set forth in writing expositions of Scripture

³⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, passim.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, VI, pp. 28f.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, VI, pp. 26f.

for considering myselfe rather cald of my God to instruct the ignorant, comfort the sorrowfull, confirme the weake, and rebuke the proud, by tong and lively voyce in these most corrupt dayes, than to compose bokes for the age to come, seeing that so much is written (and that by men of most singular condition), and yet so little observed; I decreed to containe my selfe within the bondes of that vocation, whereunto I founde my selfe especially called.⁴⁰

As Knox's writings amount to six rather portly volumes, one hates to think what he might have produced had he felt himself called to be a writer! It is clear, however, that he felt called to act as a shepherd of the sheep primarily by his preaching.

This becomes quite clear when, on one occasion, he was summoned to appear before the queen to answer for some remarks made in a sermon concerning her. She told him that if he had anything to say about her he should come to her privately and let her know his opinion. To this he replied that this was not the work to which he was called, but that if she wished to know what he thought about her and her actions she should attend public service where she would hear him expound the Word of God for both her and her subjects.⁴¹

Yet while preaching was his primary concern he also had to deal with the problems of individuals. We find him, for instance, writing to Calvin in Geneva at the end of August 1559, asking about the propriety of baptizing the bastards of Roman Catholics or excommunicated persons unless one of the parents had submitted to discipline or the children were of an age to ask for baptism themselves. Apparently he was having his problems in this matter, as Reformed ministers have had from that time onward. Calvin replied by advising that they should be baptized as they may have had Christians in their forebears and the covenant was made for many generations. But he added that they must have sponsors who would be prepared to ensure that they would have a proper training in the faith as they grew up.⁴²

Another problem concerning which he was consulted related to the matter of conforming to the English church's form of worship and government. Probably in the year 1566, he had

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, VI, p. 229.

⁴¹ Knox, *History*, II, pp. 44f.

⁴² Knox, *Works*, VI, pp. 75f, 94ff.

received a letter from a group in England complaining about the necessity of conforming to Anglican ceremonies and the like. He had advised them to conform, however, since the Church of England's basic doctrine was acceptable, although in certain external matters they did not see eye to eye with the bishops. They replied that they did not wish to follow this advice and planned to set up their own churches on a separate Reformed basis. Knox has been attacked for his advice to these people, being accused of inconsistency and also of submitting to Elizabeth, although earlier he had condemned the Anglican Prayer Book. This does not seem to be fair, however, for we must remember that he gave the same advice to the congregation in Berwick in 1552. It may be, of course, that since the Thirty-Nine Articles had been made the doctrinal standard of the church, he had even more hope that the English church would be brought into greater conformity with "the best Reformed Churches." But certainly he was not inconsistent with his earlier position.⁴³

He has also been accused of inconsistency in advising the Protestants in Dieppe not to compromise with Roman Catholicism by agreeing that mass should be carried on there. Some of the Protestants in Dieppe had apparently written him in 1565 to say that they had reached some sort of agreement with the Roman Catholics in this regard. To this Knox replied that what they had done was sinful. For this he has been attacked by writers such as Jasper Ridley, who accuse him of not following the same advice he had given to the English Puritans. It is true that he did not give them the same advice, but his position was quite consistent with the advice which he had given earlier to the English congregations under Mary Tudor. To recommend toleration of Anglican ceremonies, since there was basic agreement on doctrinal matters, was very different from giving the same advice where Romanism was concerned.⁴⁴

That Knox was a pastor of souls with a deep interest in the spiritual welfare of those who came under his care can hardly be doubted. Some have accused him of arrogance in his statements and in his attitudes. He tended to lay down the law to his

⁴³ Lorimer, *op. cit.*, pp. 298ff; J. Ridley, *John Knox* (London: Oxford, 1968), p. 463.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 461f.

congregations and to his consultants as though he were divinely inspired. It is true also that when he spoke in the pulpit he felt that he was being guided by the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵ He, therefore, tended to be dogmatic and sometimes rather drastic in the application of his exposition of Scripture. On the other hand, we must keep in mind the situation in which he found himself both in England and in Scotland, where he was dealing with people who knew little of the Gospel or its application and people who were always willing to compromise some of the most basic doctrines of the Christian faith if the threat of persecution or trouble should be made against them. Those were difficult times, and the need was for leadership which was firm and at times perhaps even drastic. Yet, we can also see that while he could indeed blow his master's trumpet with a very loud noise, at other times, when dealing with doubting and uncertain souls, he could sound a much softer and sweeter note. It was undoubtedly this capacity to play two different roles in his pastoral work that enabled him to wield a wide influence upon the Reformation, both in his own country and in other lands.

Knox was a true pastor according to the precepts of Paul to Timothy. He preached the word, was instant in season and out of season, reproved, rebuked, exhorted with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim.4:2). He was a man for his time, called of God to his work. He might do less well in our day; but, on the other hand, it might be that a few more John Knoxes are what we need to give the proper guidance and strength to the contemporary church.

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⁴⁵ Knox, *Works*, VI, p. 230.