

Herman J. Selderhuis / Arnold Huijgen (eds.)

# Calvinus Pastor Ecclesiae

Papers of the Eleventh International Congress  
on Calvin Research

V&R Academic

# Reformed Historical Theology

Edited by  
Herman J. Selderhuis

in Co-operation with  
Emidio Campi, Irene Dingel, Elsie Anne McKee,  
Richard Muller, Risto Saarinen, and Carl Trueman

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Herman J. Selderhuis / Arnold Huijgen (ed.)

## **Calvinus Pastor Ecclesiae**

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Calvin Research

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## Preface

Whereas there may have been some fear that after the 2009 Calvin-year, interest in the study of Calvin would diminish or even fade away, the eleventh International Congress on Calvin Research, held August 24–28, 2014 in Zurich, proved the exact opposite. The papers presented in the plenary sessions, the seminars and shortpaper sessions demonstrated that the interest in Calvin research is even growing and that there is still much to be discovered. In fact, we as editors had the unpleasant task to refuse some of the presented manuscripts, not for lack of quality, but to keep the size of this volume acceptable.

We wish to thank Wouter Beinema and Jaco van Rossum for their assistance in preparing the manuscript, and the Theological University Apeldoorn for financial support. Once again it was a pleasure to work with publishing house Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, for which we express our appreciation.

Like the titles of all previous congress volumes, the present title has been taken from one of the letters to John Calvin, though not from a single letter in particular, since Calvin was addressed as ‘pastor ecclesiae’ very often and by many colleagues. This is also the position in which he passed away, 450 years before this congress in Zurich took place.

Herman Selderhuis  
Arnold Huijgen



## **Part I. Plenary Papers**



Peter Opitz

## Calvin in the Context of the Swiss Reformation

Detecting the Traces

### Introduction

It is traditional for the first lecture at the International Calvin Congress to be given by the host institution. Research at the Institute for Swiss Reformation History at the University of Zurich focuses on the Swiss Reformation, and with our common interests in sources and perspectives in mind, it seems only right to launch the Calvin Congress here in Zurich by looking at our subject through that particular lens. To do so means considering Calvin as a Reformer and pastor who lived and worked in the political and intellectual field of the Swiss Reformation.

This approach is not entirely new. Yet many studies of Calvin start with the *Genevan* Reformer or limit their view to the city of Geneva, failing to acknowledge the immediate communication context into which Calvin was immediately adopted when he entered the political arena of the Protestant part of the Swiss Confederation. When it comes to Zurich and especially to Zwingli and the 'Zwinglians', Calvin is often presented as if he were dealing and negotiating with a distant and foreign communication partner, as remote as, if not even more remote than, Saxony.

Calvin could be very critical of the Zwinglians, and indeed of Zwingli himself. When the overzealous Zwinglian André Zébedée (who was from the Low Countries, not from Zurich) wrote that to expect a greater figure than Zwingli in the present century would be a sin, Calvin's polemical repost placed Luther much higher than the Swiss Reformer (Blanke: 1960, 21). Influenced by Luther's polemics, Calvin held that Zwingli, while a pioneer in the fight against superstition in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, went too far and thereby also denied a positive effect by the Eucharist.

As a consequence, Calvin scholar Francois Wendel (1963, 36f.) concluded, 'that one cannot under these conditions speak of any dependency of Calvin upon Zwingli is clear enough.' Wendel continued, however, in the next sentence, 'It is

indeed quite incomprehensible how certain contemporaries such as Bolsec and Westphal could have been so blinded (...) as to present Calvin as a successor of Zwingli, especially in what had to do with the doctrines of predestination and the Eucharist.’ What if Calvin’s enemies knew him better than a historian centuries later does?

Therefore, I would like to take you with me on four forays into some Zurich sources, asking what they can tell us about Calvin. While the exchanges between Calvin and Heinrich Bullinger that resulted in the Consensus Tigurinus in 1549 are well known, here our attention will be turned in particular to the early Calvin and his hidden relationship with Zwingli, the ‘pioneer’ of the Swiss Reformation (and of the global Reformed Reformation), whom Calvin never had the chance to meet.

## 1. First Foray: Guillaume Farel and His Network

Our first foray begins at the Reformation memorial in Geneva. We spy the great Reformer John Calvin, and to his right we find the beginnings of Calvin’s post-history: Theodore Beza, his successor, and next to Beza John Knox, who symbolizes the transition of the Genevan Reformation into the Anglo world. But the Reformation narrative does not begin with Calvin. Looking to Calvin’s pre-history, we see his best friend, Guillaume Farel, standing on his left. On a dramatic July night in 1536 Farel had famously adjured Calvin to risk the curse of God or stay and serve as Geneva’s reformer.

Yet, Farel’s significance should not be limited to this historical act alone. For decades Farel wrestled through any number of struggles alongside Calvin and stood in solidarity with his friend his entire life long. In 1549, he travelled with Calvin to Zurich to put his name to the Consensus Tigurinus; in 1553 he was present when Servetus was executed. Calvin addressed Farel as his ‘très chère frère et singulier ami’ (very dear brother and singular friend),<sup>1</sup> and in his dedication of his commentary on Titus to Farel and Viret, recorded on 3 December 1549, he wrote of a ‘holy connection’ between Farel, Viret and himself.

In a letter written one week later Farel added the Zurich Reformer as a fourth member of that sacred union (CO 13.477f; CO 13.496). That addition is highly revealing. Hidden in the gestalt of Farel lies the Swiss Reformation and a sense of its influence on Calvin’s works and thought.

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1 CO 11.42. See: Lange van Ravenswaay: 1983, 63–72. Due to the limited space, it is not possible to list all the important secondary literature on the topics to which I will refer. The works listed will give the reader access, however, to particular points of interests.

When Calvin met Farel, the latter was Zwingli's missionary to the French-speaking regions of Switzerland. As a reformer Farel bore the deep imprint of Zwingli and that mark never entirely left him, even as he agreed with Calvin on eucharistic discipline and adopted Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper. That Farel's *Sommaire* (Hofer: 1980) is no more than a French summary of Zwingli's *Commentarius* should come as no surprise. Let us visit some of the stations of the influences upon Farel.

In December 1523, after he had turned to the Reformation, Farel travelled to Basel. From there, Farel, who thought of himself as a 'jeune néophyte' (see Farel: 1930, 106), visited Zwingli in Zurich (see Pfister: 1947) to ask him for advice and direction. Despite the language barrier, a friendship between the two men was launched and with it a relationship between the Zurich Reformer and the French.

On 23 February 1524 we find Farel back in Basel, where he employed thirteen theses in a disputation with the Catholic clergy of the city<sup>2</sup> in consort with Oecolampadius, who had been in Basel since autumn 1522 and who completed the translation of the theses into German. Oecolampadius presented the thirteen theses to the city council of Basel, and, finally, sent them to Zwingli, writing in an accompanying letter that he wanted to let his 'spiritual father' know of their content.<sup>3</sup> The erection of these theses on foundations provided by Zwingli's theology was the work of not only Farel but also Oecolampadius. The latter had begun to correspond with Zwingli on 10 December 1522, shortly after he arrived in Basel. 'Whoever loves Christ', he had written, 'cannot do other than to also love Zwingli because he carries forth the things of Christ with such zeal and accuracy'.<sup>4</sup>

A close association and friendship soon sprang up between the Basel and Zurich Reformers. Oecolampadius appears to have requested Zwingli's opinion on all topics, writing to Zwingli, 'I consider everything that comes from you good, even when you are tough on me, because I am sure that you belong to Christ, and he is working though you'.<sup>5</sup> The two men attended the Colloquy of Marburg

2 First thesis: 'Absolutissimam nobis praescrpsit Christus vivendi regulam, cui nec addere licet, nec detrudere.' Second thesis: 'Sola nobis a deo praecepta ex fide fieri possunt, ut impium sit alicui factioni se adigere, aut sub aliis quam Christi praeceptis degere ...'. Herminjard: 1866, 91.

3 'Hulricho Zvinglio, ecclesiasto Tigurino, Oecolampadius et Bonifacius [Bonifacius Wolfhart, ca. 1490–1543] gratiam optant et pacem in Christo. En tibi schedam conclusionum a Gallo illo latine apud nos disputatam et ab Oeclampadio in maxima christianorum in vernacula interpretatam.' Egli: 1879, 218 f.

4 'Nam dum mihi de te tot praedicantur bona, quae absque singulari voluptate audire non possum, agnosco ego meam ignaviam. Et velim nolim animo trahor, me tibi commendem et insinuem, ut tua fragrantia refociller uberius ... aut quis non amaret eum, qui Christi negotium tanta diligentia agit? Qui oves suas tanta fide pascit? Qui lupis tam metuendus est, qui se murum opponit pro domo Israel, qui nobis priscos illos religionis cultores verbo et moribus exprimit? ...', Z 7.635.

5 'Omnia enim tua boni consulo, etiamsi severiter mecum ageres; persuasum enim mihi est, quod Christi sis et ille per te operetur.' Z 8.345.



together. Differences of theological opinion did not disturb this friendship; such disagreement was rather an essential part of their relationship.

Let us return to Farel's travels. After his time in Basel, from April 1525 until October 1526 he stayed in Strasbourg, where he interacted closely with Wolfgang Capito and Martin Bucer. At that time, both Capito and Bucer were also in intense contact with Zwingli, whom they sought out on their own initiative. Just how close Capito's theological development and perspective were to Zwingli's approach can be discerned even from 1516 on and is obvious in Capito's commentary on Habakkuk and Hosea.<sup>6</sup> As a preacher in Basel, Capito launched his own *lectio continua*, the consecutive interpretation of a single biblical book, a few months before Zwingli did so in Zurich (Stierle: 1974, 55, 176f). Capito also convinced Bucer of Zwingli's doctrine of the Lord's Supper (Kittelsohn: 1975, 147), and as a result Bucer stood at Zwingli's side in Marburg in 1529. Their common ground did not end with eucharistic teaching, however, for Capito and Zwingli held foundational theological accents in common, accents that they did not share with Luther.

Martin Bucer, too, perhaps the deepest and most direct influence on Calvin, carried clear traces of Zwingli in his fundamental theology. Both Capito and Bucer described the Zurich Reformer as the 'apostle' of the Strasbourg church,<sup>7</sup> and Bucer would subsequently request Zwingli's opinion on all of his actions and writings (Lang: 1972, 99). The index of the *Huldrych Zwingli Werke* tells of fifty-nine letters written by Bucer to Zwingli, in addition to seventy-three letters written together with Capito to Zwingli before Zwingli's early death (Locher: 1979, 458).

The Reformers whom Farel visited in Basel, Zurich and Strasbourg convened several times. Bucer, Capito and Zwingli also all took part in the Reformation disputation held in Berne in January 1528. After Zwingli's death, in 1531, Capito travelled through the Swiss Confederation, a journey that in January 1532 enabled him to compose the Berner Synodus. Capito had been entrusted with producing not simply a church ordinance for Berne, but also a key feature of the architecture of the Reformed Church after the defeat of Kappel (Locher: 1988).

Geneva would never have been reformed without the Reformation in Berne. Farel, who had also been present at the Berne Disputation, translated into French the theses debated at Berne. Subsequently, he served as Reformer of the region we now call Western Switzerland and reported in his letters to Zwingli on the

6 See: Heimbucher: 2008; for Bucer: 'Certus enim sum: qui evangelium tam doces fortiter et vivis adeo sincere, citra delectum nulloque personarum respectu quemlibet proximum non verbo tantum et lingua, sed opere et veritate diligis, quantumvis sit terrae filius nulloque nobilium merito.' Z 7.454.

7 '(...) nostrae ecclesiae velut apostolus es' Capito in a letter to Zwingli, Z 11.772. Bucer: 1960, 237. See also Z 8.279.

progress of the Reformation in these lands. On 1 October 1531, shortly before Zwingli's death, Farel wrote to Zwingli, 'I would like you to partake in my work and its fruit: I hear from Geneva that they are seriously considering Christ, and people say that they, if Fribourg allows it, will quickly accept the Gospel.'<sup>8</sup> Not only was Farel significantly involved in the Geneva Reformation by May 1536, but he also called Calvin to be his co-worker in the most westerly city within the Swiss Reformation's direct sphere of influence.

Even though necessarily brief, this first foray enables us to note that the reformations in the cities in which Calvin spent time—Basle, Geneva and Strasbourg—were all decisively shaped from the beginning by the reformation that originated in Zurich. Calvin entered this network of communication when he fled from France. Therefore, it is not surprising that the names Farel, Viret, Bullinger and Bucer so often appear as Calvin's correspondents. We know of 115 letters from Calvin to Bullinger and of 162 from Bullinger to Calvin between 1538 and Calvin's death. After Farel and Viret, Bullinger is in third place in terms of surviving correspondence with Calvin, and in first place among Reformers who were not Calvin's immediate colleagues in Geneva.

The thoughts and actions of almost all of Calvin's allies and of his important partners in dialogue were deeply shaped by the Swiss Reformation. These individuals certainly had their personal opinions, and, yes, they could quarrel. That Bucer and Bullinger argued about how to deal with the question of the Lord's Supper in relation to Luther as he aged and the Wittenberg Reformation is well known. Their difference of opinion was as much concerned with how to deal with Luther in light of the political context as with theological formulations. Their differing stances did not change the fact that they understood themselves to be bound together and to belong to the Swiss and southwest German Reformation, and not to the Wittenberg Reformation. The political prerequisites for their sense of common purpose were shaped by the confederation known as the 'Christliches Burgrecht', created on Zwingli's initiative.

One final example of this interconnectedness and common purpose will suffice: in 1536, the year in which Calvin's *Institutio* first appeared, a large volume with the correspondence between Oecolampadius and Zwingli was also published. The book contained, among other things, a description of Zwingli's life written by his old friend Oswald Myconius and a life of Oecolampadius written by Wolfgang Capito and Simon Grynaeus.<sup>9</sup> Calvin had attended Grynaeus' lectures on Romans and would dedicate his own commentary on Romans published in

8 'Apud Gebennenses non nihil audio de Christo meditari, et, si per Friburgenses liceret, aiunt excipiendum prompte evangelium.' Z 11.631.

9 Ioannis Oecolampadii et Huldrici Zvingli epostolarum libri quatuor (...) Basel 1536 [ZBZ 5.29].

1539 to the theologian (CO 10b.402–406). Martin Bucer wrote a foreword to this volume and therein defended Zwingli's doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The book documents that this circle of authors was conscious of a bond and a common theological basis. It speaks from within the communication network formed by Reformers who were influenced by Zwingli and Oecolampadius after 1531.

## 2. A Second Foray: The Expulsion from Geneva and Its Context

How did the network that Calvin entered in 1536 function? How did Calvin act within that network? What was the role of Zurich? Our second and third forays will seek to respond to these questions by engaging a range of examples. In this case, I have chosen themes for which research often focuses on Calvin alone: church discipline and philological biblical exegesis.

We begin with a letter that Calvin sent from Geneva to Heinrich Bullinger in Zurich on 21 February 1538. Together with his friend Farel, Calvin had tried to introduce reformed church ordinances to Geneva but had encountered both obstacles and resistance, and the Genevan city council eventually decided to expel both Reformers from the city. In this hopeless situation, Calvin poured out his heart to the Zurich Antistes and asked Bullinger for a meeting in order that they might discuss excommunication from the Lord's Supper as a necessary means of church discipline: 'If we would just be given the gift of one day to talk! (...) in my opinion, we will not have a solid church, in any case, if we do not implement Apostolic church discipline again.'<sup>10</sup>

Why did Calvin choose to write such a letter to Bullinger in particular? He would certainly have known that Bullinger was no proponent of excommunication in Zurich. To answer that question, we need first to take a step back. When Farel and Calvin proposed in their articles on the church ordinances for the Genevan Church that excommunication from the Lord's Supper be employed, they were not the first in the Swiss Confederation to voice support for such a measure.

Fourteen years earlier, in his theses of 1523, Zwingli had emphasized the importance of the practice of excommunication according to the Bible: as a means for the Christian community to exclude intractable sinners, and not, as had previously been the case, as a civil punishment for financial debts (Z 2.277–288). But he had provided no detailed or concrete notion of how such ex-

10 'Utinam vero dies unus ad liberam commentationem nobis daretur (...) Hoc tamen obiter indicabo, mihi videri, nos diuturnam ecclesiam non habituros, nisi restituta in integrum antiqua illa, hoc est, apostolica disciplina, quae apud nos in multis partibus desideratur. Nondum extorquere potuimus, ut pura sanctaque reduceretur excommunicationis observatio.' CO 6.154.

communication should be implemented. Zwingli held it crucial that the local Christian church community have the final word.<sup>11</sup> Zwingli seems to have sought, unsuccessfully, to introduce the practice of excommunication to the new Zurich church order drawn up very soon after (Z 4.31–34; Egli: 1973, 451–453, no. 944). Accepting the decision of the Zurich council, he then changed his mind. Now he was convinced that circumstances in Zurich were comparable not with the experiences of the first Christians in Jerusalem but with the situation of Israel. Like Old Testament prophets, the Reformers were not tasked to gather a small circle of real Christians and exclude all others, but rather were responsible for preaching God's word to the whole nation, allowing the Spirit to do what is alone the work of the Spirit.

But the matter was far from settled. The question of excommunication was inevitably posed again in each newly reformed municipality of the Swiss Confederation (Egli: 1899, 99–121). At the so-called 'Burgtag' held in Aarau in September 1530, with delegations from the Reformed municipalities of Zurich, Berne, Basel, Schaffhausen, St Gall, Mühlhausen, Biel, and Constance, Oecolampadius proposed excommunication be adopted as a communal practice.<sup>12</sup> The decision was postponed several times, until finally, at the assembly known as the 'Christliches Burgrecht', held on 16 November 1530 in Basel, the delegates decided that each city could introduce excommunication as appropriate to its own circumstances (see Z 11.131; and Kessler: 1902, 355). Here, then, was a typically Swiss solution. That method corresponded with the form of decision making in church affairs that Zwingli had championed with the concept of the synod. While the Reformed cities were to remain in contact and meet regularly, they also had the right to go their own way, following their own understanding of God's Word. From the start the Swiss Reformation had been characterized by an acknowledged and accepted degree of pluralism. Disagreement about the praxis of excommunication was therefore no obstacle to continued mutual support and solidarity among the Swiss Reformers. When Oecolampadius wrote to Zwingli on 26 October 1530, after Zurich had rejected the use of excommunication, he voiced no resentment, writing instead, 'our love is holier than to let this create the slightest distance between us.'<sup>13</sup>

When we return to Calvin's letter to Zurich of February 1538 but now set that text against this Swiss background, an explanation for Calvin's writing to Bullinger seems obvious: like Oecolampadius before him, Calvin also sought Zur-

11 'Haec, inquam, excommunicationis potestas non est magistratus; nam totius ecclesiae est', Z 3.879. See also Z 3.807.

12 'Oratio de reducenda excommunicatione', Staehelin: 1939, 507. Strickler: 1876, 787. See: Staehelin: 1939, 506–527. See: Staehelin, *Das theologische Lebenswerk Oekolampads*, 506–527.

13 'charitas nobis sanctor est, ut propterea vel tantillum ab eis alienemur' Oekolampadius, letter to Zwingli, 7 November 1530, Z 11.227 (no. 1130).

ich's support and backing, even for a measure that Zurich did *not* adopt. Calvin thus demonstrated that he did not consider his reformation in Geneva an isolated ministry and that it was not his intention to build a church according to his personal ideas and precepts alone; rather, he sought to act within the framework of the Swiss Reformation. He not only wanted Zurich's approval; he also needed that endorsement for political reasons. And he had good reason to expect that Zurich would support him even for a cause that did not follow official practice in Zurich. A comment by Beza in his Latin life of Calvin is in accord with this interpretation: Beza noted that when facing criticism of the Genevan ordinance on excommunication, Calvin had cited the support for his position found in the writings of 'the most learned men of the age', namely Oecolampadius, Zwingli, Zwick, Melancthon, Bucer, Capito and Myconius.<sup>14</sup> It is thus hardly surprising that after they were expelled from Geneva, Calvin and Farel immediately went to Zurich, where a synod of the Swiss Reformed churches was taking place.

In all, Calvin travelled five times to Zurich for conversation with Bullinger. That Bullinger was never in Geneva is not a sign of Calvin's greater ecumenical effort, but simply a consequence of contemporary political and intellectual power structures. On the occasion of the Reformers' stay in Zurich following their expulsion from Geneva, Bullinger took the opportunity to reprimand the two eager-minded Genevan Reformers, warning them to have rather more patience with the population (Stam: 2003). And fifteen years later, in the midst of the critical situation he faced in Geneva in 1553, Calvin was able to gain the support of Zurich for his position on discipline in relation to the Lord's Supper, even though such sanctions were not practiced in Zurich (CO 14.696–703).

### 3. A Third Foray: The 'hebraica veritas' and Its Experts

Our third foray brings us to an older Calvin and to the subject of exegesis. Calvin is known as one of the first exegetes of his time to have resolutely rejected allegorical interpretation of scripture as a method. Calvin's approach was founded on the idea of the 'Hebrew truth' (*hebraica veritas*). In the 1550s Calvin worked on exegetical lectures on the Psalms, from which his commentary on the Psalms finally emerged in 1557 (Opitz: 2008a). In his preface, Calvin praised Martin Bucer as an exemplary exegete. Bucer's comprehensive commentary on the Psalms lay on Calvin's desk, but what else would have been found there? Calvin gives us little specific information, for he was always very reluctant to reveal the sources that had helped him to formulate his ideas, but we have clues in

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<sup>14</sup> CO 21.133. The French version states that Calvin has 'always estimated and honoured' ('*toujours estimee et honorée*') the Zurich church (CO 21.25).

his repeated references to rabbinic commentators, particularly David Kimchi and Abraham Ibn Ezra. But we might well wonder whether Calvin's command of Hebrew was sufficient to allow him to read the Bomberg Bible and Jewish commentaries on the Psalms.

Calvin had, however, the ideal colleague in the printer Robert Estienne (Robertus Stephanus), who had come to Geneva from Paris and had proven skills in printing Greek and Hebrew Bible texts. Estienne's Protestant leanings had made his position in France precarious—the *Biblia sacrosancta*, which he printed in Paris in 1545, was prohibited in France the following year—and he determined to flee to Geneva. Once there, he placed himself in the service of the Reformation—and in the service of Calvin. In Geneva he printed a range of resources that included the *Lexicon hebraicum* of 1548 that drew on David Kimchi's *Book of Roots* (Opitz: 2008b).

While still in Paris, Robert Estienne had already had contact with leading figures in the Zurich church. His *Biblia sacrosancta*, which he brought with him to Geneva, was translated and adapted by Leo Jud, Theodor Bibliander and Konrad Pellikan, all of whom had worked directly alongside Zwingli (see Gordon: 2014). A decade later, the large *Biblia sacra latina* of 1556/57 appeared simultaneously with Calvin's commentary on the Psalms. The Bible contained a detailed index, annotations for the Old Testament with different translations, variants in the Hebrew verbalisms, and theological comments. Estienne wrote in his preface that he had used a transcript of a lecture by François Vatable as one source, but noted that he had drawn also on comments in another scholarly translation.<sup>15</sup> Which might that have been?

Konrad Pellikan (1478–1556), whom we have just met, was amongst the best and most renowned Hebraists in all of Europe. Present at the beginnings of the reformation in Basel, in 1525 Pellikan was called to the *Lectorium* in Zurich. He was a friend and associate of Zwingli who had taught Old Testament before him (see: Z 14.871–899; Migsch: 2009), but he was also acquainted with Calvin as part of the network of Swiss Reformers. In February 1538, Farel passed on personal greetings to him.<sup>16</sup> Pellikan also translated into Latin rabbinic commentaries on the Old Testament books, including works by David Kimchi and Abraham Ibn Ezra (Zürcher: 1975; Hobbs: 1999). Pellikan wrote in his diary, published as the *Chronicon*, that Robert Estienne from Geneva had visited him for eight days at the beginning of December 1549, and that Estienne had urgently requested his

15 *Biblia sacra latina, juxta veterem et S. Pagnini Veteris Testamenti, Theod. Bezae Novi Translationem cum notis Fr. Vatabli, etc.* Geneva 1556/1557; in the preface (Ad lectorem): 'Adiectae sunt annotationes cum ex aliorum translatione, tum vero ex Commentariis Hebraeorum ab ipso Vatablo diligenter excusis: quae commentarii vice lectoribus esse poterunt.'

16 'Salutant te fratres omnes, Calvinus praecipue', CO 6.156 (no. 94).

translation of the rabbinic texts. Pellikan agreed and Estienne finally sent his assistant Thomas Courtean to Zurich to bring Pellikan's texts to Geneva.<sup>17</sup>

It would be surprising if these texts had not found their way onto Calvin's desk. And precisely during this period, Calvin was writing his commentary on the Psalms and citing rabbinic scholars—without mentioning who had helped him to read them.

As our example suggests, the communication network of the Swiss Reformation greatly aided the interaction of humanist education and Reformed Bible exegesis. Without this network, Calvin's exegesis is simply unthinkable. In his interpretation of the Letter to the Romans, Calvin wrote in his famous preface, he had gone his own way only after learning from Simon Grynaeus of Basel and from Bullinger of Zurich. It seems clear that he had profited from the Old Testament scholarship undertaken in Zurich as well.

In an article on the 'Ecole Rhénane' (Roussel: 1988), the 'Rhine school of exegesis', Bernard Roussel has pointed to the exegetical network formed by Upper Rhine theologians. The Swiss sources remind us, however, that the River Rhine is fed by the Lake of Zurich (e.g: Opitz: 2008c).

#### 4. A Fourth Foray: Calvin's *Institutio* of 1536

How did Calvin, with his roots in France, gain access to the Swiss Reformation communication network? Every Calvin biography tells us that Farel convinced Calvin to stay in Geneva to help build up the Genevan Reformed church. However, Farel alone did not have the competence to appoint Calvin to that position. Calvin was only called to Geneva because not just Farel but also other Swiss Reformers with authority and status, and above all Heinrich Bullinger, saw Calvin as suitable for the task in hand. It was above all essential that Calvin's teaching fit within the framework established by the First Helvetic Confession, the *Confessio Helvetica prior* (Saxer: 2006), the common confession adopted by the Swiss and southwest German Reformers in Basel in January 1536. That theological statement was indebted to Zwingli's basic insights and bore the imprint of Oecolampadius and, above all, Bullinger. Simon Grynaeus, already encountered here as professor of Greek in Basel, was one of the authors of the confession, and Strasbourg Reformers Wolfgang Capito and Martin Bucer were also involved in

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17 'totus sum in iudaicis stoliditatibus nunc talmudicis, postquam transtuli integre tres eorum celebres Rabbinos in toto Biblia, rogatu Roberti Stephani, cui omnia Genevam misi, apud quem utilius resident quam meum, quibus usus sit suo tempore ad studiosorum profectum.' Riggenbach: 1877, 180.

its drafting—here, then, we find the entire circle of theologians who had stood at Zwingli's side in Marburg.

The background to the confession was made up of the Swiss Reformers' well-known rejection of Luther's understanding of the Lord's Supper, Luther's refusal to accept the Swiss as 'brothers', and the internal disagreement among Swiss and southwest German Reformers as to how to deal with this situation and its political consequences. While texts with varying interpretations of the Lord's Supper had been generated within the circle of Swiss and southwest German theologians, the common foundations of the 'Reformed' community were so strong that its members would not have considered its integrity threatened by differences of opinion on this issue, just as that community could also withstand differences over the practice of excommunication (Saxer: 2006, 52f).

The First Helvetic Confession's teaching on the Lord's Supper clearly goes beyond that of Zwingli's *Commentarius*. It builds on the later Zwingli, e.g. his *Fidei expositio* (1531) and was strongly influenced by Bullinger and Zwingli's younger colleagues. Bullinger always defended Zwingli, and he had to. Nevertheless, while evidently he did not feel the *Commentarius*'s doctrine on the Lord's Supper essentially wrong, he did view it as insufficient, as did also both Zwingli himself and, later, Calvin.

Calvin's criticism of Zwingli's doctrine of the Eucharist did not apply to what the First Helvetic Confession of 1536 teaches. Calvin himself said that he had read only Zwingli's early writings on the subject, and he criticized those 'Zwinglians' who wanted to stand by that early account at any price (Blanke: 1960, 31). While such Zwinglians existed, even Zwingli himself was not among them.

On first holding Calvin's *Institutio* in their hands—the first edition appeared in March 1536, two months after the First Helvetic Confession—Swiss Reformers Leo Jud and Konrad Pellikan would have been surprised and elated. This unknown French theologian was presenting Swiss doctrine precisely and succinctly.<sup>18</sup> Leo Jud, for one, may well have been struck by the similarities between the pattern of reasoning in the *Institutio* of 1536 and that in his own Zurich Catechism of 1534, a German text that had not been translated into Latin.

We have a clear indication that Calvin immediately sent a copy of his work to Bullinger, and the only imaginable reason for him to do so was surely to introduce himself into the circle of Swiss and southwest German Reformers. While we do not know specifically of Bullinger's reaction, we can surmise that he would have been somewhat reserved, for he was in the midst of his conflict with Bucer, and Calvin seemed to side with the Strasbourg Reformer. Calvin's proximity to

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18 Conrad Pellikan to Vadian: 'tam apertam et solidam veritatem ut contemni nequeat', Arbenz/Wartmann: 1903, 326; Leo Jud: CO 11.358–360.



Bucer was not reason, however, for the Zurich Reformer to prevent Calvin becoming a pastor in Geneva.

Which elements of Swiss doctrine did Calvin present in his *Institutio* of 1536? That question deserves a detailed answer, but we can list at least some of those points here.<sup>19</sup>

Unlike Luther, Calvin placed at the centre of his doctrine neither individual salvation nor comfort for the conscience when facing the wrath of God and struggling with the devil. Instead, he started in a typical humanist manner, with the place of man in creation and the range of human knowledge, as had Zwingli before him (OS 1.37; Z 3.638–640). The *Institutio* of 1536 was already mainly concerned with the honouring of God (OS 1.38; Z 3.911,30) and with God's rightful claim for his creation, including humankind. Man is defined as created in God's image, which in turn defines the purposes of human life, where true and false religion are encountered and true worship is a spiritual act and can encompass the struggle against idols and the veneration of images (OS 1.37f; 42–49). Calvin's text focuses on the church on earth, which is chosen by God and lives according to God's will (OS 1.42; 86–89). He talks of Christ not only as a personal redeemer but also as the Lord and 'captain' (dux) (Z 3.696) of the church and the world, who makes a 'covenant' with humankind (OS 1.40, 81, 84). The *Institutio* points to the Holy Spirit, who draws humankind to God, creates faith and awakes love towards God and humankind, indicating the close connection between what later would be termed justification and sanctification, as well as the doctrine of the 'internal testimony of the Holy Spirit' (OS 1.85.86f.; see Z 3.252; 265). As a consequence, faith is not only an act of trust in God's 'promissio'; it is also an inchoate movement towards God and God's holiness, an action that implies and gives birth to true repentance and the 'mortification' of the body. Such accents were particularly strong in the Swiss Reformation and part of Zwingli's teaching (OS 1.172; Z 2.480,6–11; 630, 3–11). And in some respects their presentation in Calvin's *Institutio* is more precise than in the writings of the Zurich Reformers.

In his discussion of the doctrine of the sacraments in the *Institutio* of 1536, Calvin uses terms also employed by the Swiss Reformers, speaking of the 'Lord's Meal', the 'Lord's Supper' and the 'Eucharist' (OS 1.136). He does not write of the 'Sacrament of the Altar', the standard expression for Luther. According to the *Institutio*, the Lord's Supper celebration is a symbolic act, with the sacraments 'external signs' and 'exercises',<sup>20</sup> and that celebration provides an *analogy* between a human action and a spiritual thing (OS 1.138; 150; Z 6.5, 157f). The

19 Unfortunately, the editors of Calvin's *Opera selecta* were not at all familiar with the writings of the Zurich reformers, as every glance at the footnotes reveals all too clearly; Calvin: 1936.

20 'signum externum', OS 1.118; 'exercitia', OS 1.119, 'quae putat sacramenta talia esse signa, ut, cum exerceantur in homine, simul intus fiat, quod sacramentis significetur.' Z 3.761,2f.

formulation in the *Institutio* of 1536 is quite similar to that in Zwingli's *Fidei expositio*, the First Helvetic Confession, and the much-later *Heidelberg Catechism*.<sup>21</sup> The *Institutio* further stressed that the Lord's Supper was a memorial meal in commemoration of the death of Christ, which happened once and for all times (OS 1.137; 145; see Z 3.804f). The sacrament 'does not bring about that Christ becomes the bread of life for us, but rather it calls us to remember that he became the bread of life for us'.<sup>22</sup>

The sacrament is a 'spiritual' communion with Christ by faith, as described in John 6 and by Augustine.<sup>23</sup> The Lord's Supper is at the same time a confession, in which we are bound as a community and made one body (OS 1.145, Z 3.807; 4.5, 161). All of the points included by Zwingli in his doctrine of the Eucharist were gathered together in the *Institutio* of 1536.

Similar thoughts and formulations can also be found in Luther's writings, particularly in his early works. Calvin's theological proximity to the Swiss Reformation becomes very clear, however, when we compare the key aspects of his *Institutio* of 1536 with the quite different foci of Luther's thought at that time, as manifest in Luther's personal 'confession', the Schmalkald Articles of 1537 (strikingly consistent with ideas at the heart of Luther's earliest writings as a reformer, for example *De virtute indulgentiarum* of 1518) with its climax in individual confession and absolution. We should not then be at all surprised to learn that the Swiss Reformers counted Calvin as one of their own.

Certainly the *Institutio* of 1536 judges Zwingli's doctrine of the Eucharist to be inadequate. Like Luther, Bucer and Bullinger, Calvin put much more weight on the faith-strengthening aspect of the Lord's Supper than did Zwingli's *Commentarius* (OS 1.122; but: Z 6.5, 158f). Yet, at the same time Calvin clearly maintained that the body of the resurrected Christ sits at the right hand of God, just as Zwingli always claimed (OS 1.140, 142). In addition, Calvin labelled proponents of the ubiquity of the body of Christ 'pigheaded' and 'obstinate sophists' and proposed that they tended to lapse into the Marcionite heresy (OS 1.140f). Even without mentioning Luther's name, Calvin passed judgment on the Wittenberg Reformer that was notably more harsh than any judgment he made of Zwingli.

An obvious question remains: how had Calvin come by all these ideas before 1536? We must not underestimate the size of Calvin's library even prior to 1536.

21 On the Heidelberg Catechism see: Opitz: 2013.

22 'Sacramentum ergo non panem vitae Christum esse facit, sed quatenus in memoriam nobis revocat panem esse factum (...) eius panis gustum et saporem nobis praebet', OS 1.138; 'ut mortem Christi, quam pro nobis pertulit, in memoriam revocemus', Z 3.345,37; 'Gustus olefactusque et ipsi huc advocator', Z 6.5, 160,16; cp. Z 5.584f; 681; Z 6.5, 156-160.

23 OS 1.138f; see Z 3.782-786; Calvin agrees with Zwingli that John 6 can be applied to the Lord's Supper.