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## Like Angels Among Them: John Calvin and the Protestant Pastorate

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree  
in History

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## Abstract

One of the most significant challenges faced by sixteenth century Protestants was the need to define the character and function of the ministerial office. Having rejected the medieval model of a cleric who mediated contact with the Divine via the sacramental system, Protestants were confronted with the task of redefining the clerical task in light of their core values of *sola fide* and *sola Scriptura*. The first generation Reformers, however (men like Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli and Martin Bucer), had proven unable to meet this challenge in a sustained and substantial way. Thus, the task fell to the next generation of Protestant leaders. As a second generation reformer John Calvin was able to reflect at length about the matter of pastoral formation and he developed a comprehensive vision of how the new Protestant clergy were to function.

Ultimately, Calvin devised a model of pastoral function that not only succeeded in firmly establishing the Reformation in Geneva, but strengthened the evangelical cause throughout the whole of Europe. The model Calvin created directed pastors towards the Apostle Paul as an exemplar of pastoral excellence and articulated a clear sense of how the critically important task of preaching was to be undertaken by the ministers and received by the laity. Calvin also worked to clarify acceptable standards of conduct for the clergy and to regulate clerical-lay interaction by depicting ministers as professional men. Finally, he developed institutional structures that helped to train, support and supervise the men who assumed the ministerial mantle.

This study presents a comprehensive overview of Calvin's understanding of the pastoral office and attempts to assess the ways in which Calvin's personal experiences shaped the development of that model.

## Keywords

Christian History, Protestant Reformation, John Calvin, Ministry, Professionalism.

## Acknowledgments

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Jeffrey W. Temple  
Soli Deo Gloria  
Western University, 2016

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## Introduction

One evening in the year 539B.C., with his city under siege, Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, held a feast for a thousand of his nobles. During the course of that feast, Belshazzar commanded that the gold and silver vessels pillaged from the Temple in Jerusalem should be brought for use in the festivities. In response to this sacrilege, God sent an ethereal hand to inscribe a message of judgment on the wall of the feasting chamber. Terrified by this supernatural revelation and unable to decipher its meaning, Belshazzar summoned the kingdom's wise men and charged them with deciphering the inscription. When they proved unable to read the writing on the wall, Belshazzar was advised by the queen mother that there was one man in the kingdom, "in whom [there was] a spirit of the holy gods." This man, she claimed, had proven his worth to previous Babylonian kings by correctly interpreting dreams and by accurately predicting the future. The man she spoke of was Daniel: Jew, exile and prophet of the living God.

Commenting on this series of events some two thousand years later, John Calvin minced no words in his assessment of Belshazzar's character and actions. Calvin began by excoriating the king for his "amazing stupidity" in feasting while the invading Persian armies were literally at his very gates.<sup>1</sup> Calvin's most pointed and repeated criticism of Belshazzar, however, focused on the king's failure to employ Daniel's interpretive expertise more immediately. The fact, says Calvin, "that King Belshazzar [was] ignorant that such a prophet [was] in his kingdom [was] wicked and brutish sloth," especially in

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<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *John Calvin's Lectures on the Book of the Prophecies of Daniel: Daniel 1-6*. T.H.L. Parker trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), Daniel 5:1, 204. Hereafter cited as: Comm. Daniel, chapter:verse, page number.

light of the fact that, Daniel was well known in the kingdom and “God had been pleased to distinguish him with an indisputable mark, so that everyone should have their minds fixed on him as if he were a heavenly angel.”<sup>2</sup> Daniel’s extended and faithful service should have ensured that he possessed a sufficient degree of notoriety within Babylonian society that Belshazzar ought immediately to have sent for him.<sup>3</sup> Instead, the king’s first instinct had been to rely on the wisdom of false teachers, a decision which confirmed for Calvin that Belshazzar “freely wished to wander in darkness, as all the reprobate do.”<sup>4</sup> As far as Calvin was concerned, chief amongst Belshazzar’s sins was his failure to recognize Daniel as one of God’s prophets; a sin compounded by his failure to employ Daniel’s prophetic gifts to his benefit and edification.

Calvin’s outrage at Belshazzar’s failure to recognize and heed one of God’s servants was not confined to the distant Babylonian past, however. Indeed, for Calvin, Belshazzar’s shortcomings were all too frequently mirrored by sixteenth-century Protestants, many of whom were, Calvin believed, either unable to identify or unwilling to heed God’s servants in their own time. While Belshazzar’s failure to recognize the presence and authority of God’s servants in his court might have aroused Calvin’s exegetical hackles, he was equally outraged by the widespread failure of sixteenth century evangelicals to recognize and submit to the authority of the pastors who staffed the fledgling Protestant churches. Calvin’s outrage aside, the fact that Protestants during the first decades of the Reformation era evinced such confusion regarding the identity and function of the true pastor should hardly prove surprising. The firestorm of the

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<sup>2</sup> Comm. Daniel 5:10-11, 218-219.

<sup>3</sup> Comm. Daniel 5:12, 220.

<sup>4</sup> Comm. Daniel 5:10-11, 219.

Reformation profoundly reshaped the dogmatic and ecclesiastical landscape of the sixteenth century and the role and position of the clergy had hardly escaped unscathed. Arguably, the transformation of the early modern cleric from sacerdotal priest into a preaching pastor represents the very core of the changes wrought by the Reformation.

For pastor and laity alike the Reformation was, at its heart, a pastoral matter. The publication of the *Ninety-Five Theses* was itself an expression of Luther's pastoral concerns regarding the care and shepherding of the faithful. Only as time passed did Luther come to see that the issues at stake dealt with the essence of faith and the very nature of salvation. Further, as the movement spread it tapped into the wellspring of anticlerical sentiment that afflicted the early modern church. The intensity of this anticlerical sentiment has inclined some historians to conclude that, at a fundamental level, the Reformation can be understood best as an "uprising against the clergy" the clarion call of which was a near ubiquitous demand for the preaching of the pure Gospel.<sup>5</sup>

In an article dealing with early efforts at redefining the theory and practice of pastoral care, David Cornick reflected on the character and course of this shift from Roman priest to Protestant pastor. He began by discussing how the concept of pastoral care had been understood in the medieval church, especially in the days following the Fourth Lateran Council. He noted in particular how the Council's statements regarding the cure of souls (which the Council, referencing Gregory the Great, had identified as the "art of arts"), placed considerable importance on the "sacramental cycle" in general, but

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<sup>5</sup> Andrew Pettegree, "The Clergy and the Reformation: From 'Devilish Priesthood' To New Professional Elite," in *The Reformation of the Parishes: The Ministry and the Reformation in Town and Country*. Andrew Pettegree ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 1.

most importantly on the rites of penance and the mass.<sup>6</sup> Of the two, argued Cornick, it was the mass (which, at the moment of the elevation of the host, united heaven and earth as God was manifested in the wine and wafer), that held pride of place in the doctrine of the church and the hearts of the people.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, concluded Cornick, the mass can rightly be identified as the “central symbol of Western Culture from c.1200 to c.1600.”<sup>8</sup>

The preeminence of the mass had the concomitant effect of privileging the sense of sight in the dogma and liturgy of the late medieval church. In the intensely visual world of the medieval church, what mattered most of all was seeing. This prioritization of both sight and the mass can be clearly demonstrated by the placement of the high altars and the proliferation of side-chapels, as well as by the introduction of squint holes into the screens around the altars.<sup>9</sup> Cornick also noted that, for those medieval congregants who were unable to see the host, the church buildings were adorned with many other images on which believers could focus their attention, such as statues, murals, or relics.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> David Cornick, “The Reformation Crisis in Pastoral Care,” in *A History of Pastoral Care*, G.R. Evans ed., (London: Cassell, 2000), 223.

<sup>7</sup> Cornick, 224. In her article dealing with the ways in which woodcuts depicting the Zwinglian practice of communion presented a vision of Eucharist that contrasted starkly with the medieval understanding of the mass, Lee Wandel noted that the mass had been the focus of an increasingly intensified lay devotion since the thirteenth century. Wandel also noted that the ritual celebration of the mass had been designed to place the Eucharist at the centre of religious life. Lee Wandel, “Envisioning God: Image and Liturgy in Reformation Zurich,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 24:1 (1993), 28-29.

<sup>8</sup> Cornick, 225. See also: “At the centre of the whole religious system of the later Middle Ages lay a ritual which turned bread into flesh – a fragile, small, wheaten disk into God.” In: Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1. Roland Bainton made similar claims in his assessment of the ministry in the Middle Ages. He noted that the primary function of the medieval cleric was the performance of the sacraments and, in that context, the mass and penance were considered to be of the greatest significance. In addition, Bainton also commented on the intensely visual character of the medieval church, in terms of both the elevation of the host and the elaborate decoration of the church buildings themselves. See: Roland Bainton, ‘The Ministry in the Middle Ages’ in *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, ed. R. Niebuhr and D. Williams (New York: Harper, 1956), 96.

<sup>9</sup> Cornick, 224, 225.

<sup>10</sup> Bainton noted that those at the back of the church who had difficulty seeing and hearing the service, were “encouraged to occupy [themselves] with private devotion” to which end “the Church was richly endowed



Evidence that this emphasis on sight and the mass transcended the medieval era and continued to be priorities in Roman church of the sixteenth century can be found in Thomas Cranmer's complaint that the laity cried out to priests to hold up the host that they might see their Maker.<sup>11</sup> The Fourth Lateran Council then, and indeed the Roman church for the next three centuries, had devised a system in which the primary task of the clergy, in terms of the rule and cure of souls, centred on the continued performance of the sacramental cycle – a performance which culminated in God manifesting Himself visibly to His people in the Eucharistic elements.<sup>12</sup>

The corollary of this emphasis on sight was a relative devaluation of the value of hearing and by extension of the value of preaching. Such a claim does, of course, require a degree of qualification. Amongst contemporary Reformed believers, there has been a widespread tendency to believe that, prior to Luther, the Bible had been effectively chained shut by the Roman Church and that the activity of preaching had been almost entirely lost to Western Christendom. In fact, however, far from being devoid of preaching, a long tradition of vibrant preaching can be said to have characterized the late medieval world. Whether it was through the diligent efforts of the many itinerant friars, or the more flamboyant activities of men like Savonarola, the medieval faithful were

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with symbolism that it might be 'a book to lewd [ignorant] people that they might read in the imagery and painture [what] the clerks read in the book.'" Bainton, (1956), 96.

<sup>11</sup> Cornick, 225.

<sup>12</sup> Rubin writes of how, in the central Middle Ages, as claims about the "nature of the Eucharist became more ambitious and well defined, the mass came to be seen as something of an "archsacrament" (Rubin, 36). See also Roland Bainton's discussion of the ministry in the Middle Ages, in which he noted: first, that the foremost function of the medieval clergyman was the performance of the sacraments, and further that, for adults, the "the great sacrament was the Mass" (Bainton, 96).

routinely directed towards Scripture as the standard for godly living.<sup>13</sup> In addition to the fact that preaching was a frequent activity in the West in the half-century leading up to the Reformation, the mass itself was not a mono-sensory experience. The performative drama of the medieval mass involved the fusion of a multiplicity of visual and oral cues. Indeed, as the host was elevated and the clerical invocation pronounced, “all [of] the senses were called into play.”<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, since the Roman Church in the days prior to the Reformation was a sacerdotal church, which had at the heart of its liturgy and ecclesiology the sacrament of the mass, hearing the ‘voice’ of God in the preaching had for centuries been secondary to seeing Him in the mass.<sup>15</sup> The primacy of the visual and the relative devaluation of the preaching inclined Oberman to conclude that preaching had served an exclusively preparatory function. That is to say, the preaching of the late medieval world aimed to communicate Scriptural truths in such a way so as to prepare the believer “for the

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<sup>13</sup> Heiko Oberman, “The Preaching of the Word in the Reformation,” in *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, v.25, 1960, 7. See also Wilhelm Pauck’s consideration of the ministry during the Reformation where he noted: “To be sure, also before the Reformation, the sermon played a great role in Christian life.” And also: “Just prior to the Reformation, [preaching] came once more into the general vogue.” Wilhelm Pauck, “The Ministry in the Time of the Continental Reformation,” in *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, ed. Niebuhr and Williams (New York: Harper Brothers, 1956), 110.

<sup>14</sup> Rubin, 60.

<sup>15</sup> After having noted that, just prior to the Reformation, preaching had come once more into vogue, Pauck continued on to say that, despite this, “preaching had never been in the very centre of the Christian life.” Pauck, 110. In his consideration of the character and function of the medieval clergy, Bainton also raised the question of “how much preaching there was in the Middle Ages.” Bainton concluded that: “At any rate the [contemporary] literature of complaint and denunciation demonstrates that some people were fully alive to the need of preaching in the parishes and did their best to remedy the deficiencies. On the other hand, the activity of the friars in invading the parishes in order to supplement the work of the priests, particularly at the point of preaching, is itself proof that [the medieval clergy] were indeed remiss. Or if not remiss, they were incompetent or impeded.” Bainton (1956), 100. See also: “The medieval priest was primarily a specialist in sacred ritual, above all the Mass. True, preaching [had] assumed [an] ever-greater importance in the high and later Middle Ages in a way that [had] paved the way for Protestant emphasis on the Word. But the sermon formed no necessary part of the Mass.” In R. Emmet McLaughlin, “The Making of the Protestant Pastor: The Theological Foundations of a Clerical Estate” in *The Protestant Clergy of Early Modern Europe*, C. Scott Dixon and Luise Schorn-Schutte ed., (New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 2003), 60.

[subsequent] infusion of grace in the sacrament of penance” and, having been so cleansed, to communicate with God via the mass.<sup>16</sup>

This centuries-old emphasis on sacrament and sight, however, would be challenged by Luther and his fellow reformers who instead gave pride of place to the proclamation of the Word of God. For Luther and the other mainstream reformers “the very reality of the Church was grounded in preaching.”<sup>17</sup> This paradigm shift in understanding about the foundation of the church was a product of Luther’s emphasis on the doctrine of *sola fide*. What mattered for Luther was faith and, insofar as faith in Christ was itself dependent on the Bible, nothing was of greater importance than spreading the Word both in print and from the pulpit.<sup>18</sup> It is against this backdrop that the emergence of the new Protestant conception of the ministerial office needs to be understood.<sup>19</sup>

Luther’s conviction that salvation was achieved by faith alone in Christ alone would ultimately move him to formulate and articulate the concept of ‘the priesthood of all believers’. If salvation was to be achieved via a personal faith in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, then there was now no further need for a separate clerical caste which, via the sacraments, mediated the relationship between God and man. Instead, Luther insisted that all Christian believers, by virtue of their faith, could be said to hold the office of priest. Luther was, however, quick to point out that this did not mean that every believer

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<sup>16</sup> Oberman (1960), 8.

<sup>17</sup> Pauck, 110.

<sup>18</sup> Pauck, 111. “*Sola fide* cut Catholicism at its root. It also changed the function of the Catholic priest from one centred on the sacraments to one in which the clergy were defined by the preaching of the Good News.” McLaughlin, 60.

<sup>19</sup> Pauck, 112.

could, or should, assume the formal task of ministering to the Christian community. Rather, for the sake of decency and good order in the Church, certain individuals “were to be set apart from the group of believers to undertake the task of preacher.”<sup>20</sup> From the earliest days of the Reformation, then, the reformers’ conception of the new Protestant clergy was rooted in the conviction that, while the minister occupied a special office within the church, the occupation of this office, which set the pastor apart from the laity in terms of function, did not cause him to differ from them in kind. Further, the task of minister was, in theory if not always in practice, one which could be held by any member of that community. Finally, the chief task which was to be carried out by these new Protestant clerics was the proclamation of the Word of God.

Luther’s articulation of the doctrines of *sola fide* and the priesthood of all believers, then, completely overturned the notion of, and the need for, a separate, hierarchically structured priesthood.<sup>21</sup> Any assessment of the early decades of the Reform movement, however, will make it clear that while these principles may have been widely acknowledged within the Evangelical camp, putting these ideas into practice proved easier said than done.<sup>22</sup> The reformers soon came face-to-face with the reality that their radical redefinition of the clerical task meant that, for many Protestants, it was

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<sup>20</sup> Pauck, 112. “Luther asserted that every Christian [had] the power of the keys...but that no one should exercise this power unless publically authorized to do so. This notion [became] the common property of the Reformation.” Pauck, 113.

<sup>21</sup> Pauck, 112.

<sup>22</sup> Dixon and Schorn-Schutte made the same observation regarding the practical challenges which the Reformers faced in working out the pragmatic details of putting this new vision of the clergy into practice: “It followed from this that a clerical estate with a unique or elevated status had no need to exist. But this rather abstract condition was difficult to realize in practice, especially in the early years of the movement.” C. Scott Dixon and Luise Schorn-Schutte, ‘Introduction: The Protestant Clergy of Early Modern Europe,’ in *The Protestant Clergy of Early Modern Europe*, C. Scott Dixon and Luise Schorn-Schutte ed., (New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 2003), 3.

not at all clear how faithful ministers could be identified; nor was the exact nature of their function within the ecclesiastical community self-evidently clear. Serious and challenging questions soon emerged about matters such as the scope of clerical authority and what their relationship was to be vis-à-vis the laity and existing structures of civic and ecclesiastical authority. The reformers had radically redefined centuries-old beliefs about the way in which salvation was to be both sought and obtained. As a consequence of this remarkable paradigm shift, it also became necessary to redefine the essential character and function of the Church itself. Significantly, the individual who stood at the centre of this massive effort to redefine faith and church was the Protestant pastor.<sup>23</sup>

While there was a widespread awareness amongst early Protestant leaders that measures needed to be taken to develop and disseminate a lucid and comprehensive vision of the place and function of the pastor within the church, the first generation of reformers made little headway in terms of providing practical solutions to this problem. Luther's thoughts about the ministerial office, for instance, were deeply coloured by his understanding of the doctrine of *sola fide* and *sola Scriptura*, his assertions about Christian equality as expressed in the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, and his concern to preserve the believer's spiritual liberties. To begin with, Luther's commitment to the principle of *sola fide* ensured his recognition of the need for some form of clerical office within the new Protestant Churches. Why? Because, *sola fide* taught that salvation could only be achieved by faith and, Luther claimed, this saving faith could only find its origin in the Word of God. By the Word of God, Luther did not mean, at least first and foremost, the simple written text of Scripture but, rather, the

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<sup>23</sup> Dixon and Schorn-Schutte, 1.

proclaimed Word of God as it was expressed via preaching. For Luther, as for Calvin, it was the proclaimed Word which worked faith – a faith that in turn justified and saved the sinner. Further, for Luther, faith was not something which was “implanted in the soul once for all, and then left to grow naturally of itself.”<sup>24</sup> Rather, its continued health and existence required that it be constantly nourished by the proclamation of the Gospel message. The most immediate and vital task of the Church, then, was to unceasingly proclaim the Gospel message. Such ceaseless proclamation required that there be those within the community who were capable of carrying out this task. If the proclamation of the Word was to be the defining characteristic of the true church, then, by extension, the provision of capable and orthodox preachers was of the utmost importance and necessity.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, while Luther’s doctrines of *sola fide* and *sola Scriptura* underscored the necessity of having preachers within the church, his notions about the priesthood of all believers rather muddied the waters when it came to speaking definitively about the identity and authority of those preachers, particularly in reference to the body of lay

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<sup>24</sup> B.A. Gerrish, “Priesthood and Ministry in the Theology of Luther,” In *Church History* v.34, n.4 (1965), 409.

<sup>25</sup> Pauck presents a number of Luther’s core principles regarding the office of pastor in his survey of the development of the pastoral office during the time of the magisterial Reformation. There he wrote: “Here are the characteristic statements of Luther: ‘Next to the preaching office, prayer is the greatest office in Christianity. In the preaching office God speaks with us. In prayer I speak with God.’ ‘God speaks through the preacher. When we preach we are passive rather than active. God is speaking through us and it is a divine working [that is happening].’ ‘The preaching office is the office of the Holy Spirit. Even though we do the preaching, baptizing, forgiving of sins, it is the Holy Spirit who preaches and teaches. It is his work and office.’ .... ‘There is nothing more precious or nobler on earth and in this life than a true, faithful parson or preacher.’” Pauck, 114-115. As will become clear in the subsequent sections of this work, Calvin held to and expounded each of these core principles as set out by Luther. He too would insist that a properly understood and functioning ministerial office was critical to the health and welfare of the Christian community. He too would teach that when the minister’s proclaimed the unaltered Word of God that they were speaking as with the voice of God Himself. He would also insist that whatever authority a minister might have within the Christian community that the work of gathering in the souls of the faithful always remained the work of God alone and that God had surrendered none of His glory or power in employing men to be co-workers in the work of saving souls.

believers. In his efforts to ascertain whether or not a clearly developed and coherent view of the ministerial office could be discovered in Luther's work (a task made difficult by the fact that Luther never produced a dedicated and focused work on the subject of the special ministry), Bryan Gerrish noted that there was a very real tension in Luther's thought between an inclination to see the special ministry as having its root and origin within the larger body of the royal priesthood – to which all believers belonged – and the tendency to situate the origin of the ministry within the context of Divine decree and institution.

On the one hand, Luther held unequivocally to the contention that all believers were, by virtue of baptism and faith, priests of the living God. Indeed, Luther declared: “We are all equally priests, that is, we have the same power in the Word and any sacrament.” In this context, Luther insisted that every believer had “the right and power to preach,” in so far as “there is only one office of preaching God's Word, and this is common to all Christians.”<sup>26</sup> That is to say, by virtue of their common priestly identity, every believer has the right to minister – that is to proclaim the Gospel. This did not mean, however, that everyone should necessarily exercise this right within the context of a worship service. Gerrish referenced several comments from Luther's work *On the Councils* in support of these sentiments: “The whole group cannot do this, but must commit it, or allow it to be committed, to just one. Otherwise what would happen if everyone wanted to speak?”<sup>27</sup> The very universality of the priesthood necessitated that, for the sake of orderly and efficacious worship, some members of the church be charged

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<sup>26</sup> Gerrish, 410.

<sup>27</sup> Gerrish, 414.

with the particular task of carrying out the church's call to proclaim the Word. The origins of the special ministry were to be found within the larger body of believers and this meant that the special ministry derived its authority and identity from below and that it existed as little more than an expedient solution to the problem of maintaining order within a liturgical setting.<sup>28</sup>

However, while Gerrish acknowledged that such a view of the ministry could be derived from Luther's work, he insisted that such sentiments were demonstrative of a subordinate line of thinking in Luther's thought and that on balance Luther was inclined to view the existence of the special ministry as being rooted in Divine prescription rather than human expediency. From this perspective, said Gerrish, Luther understood that the necessity of the church hearing the proclaimed Word required the identification of men who had been specifically gifted for the execution of that task.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, Luther drew a sharp distinction between the public and private proclamation of the Word. Private proclamation of the Gospel occurred when individual believers mediated the Word of God to another person in the context of personal interactions.<sup>30</sup> Gerrish claimed that, for Luther, this was the type of ministerial conduct that had been granted to all believers by virtue of their common priestly identity. By contrast, however, Luther also spoke of a public ministerial function – one carried out in an official capacity before the congregation.<sup>31</sup> Luther argued that the minister held an office within the church, an office which set him apart from the laity not in kind or degree, but in function. For

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<sup>28</sup> Gerrish, 408, 415.

<sup>29</sup> Gerrish, 413.

<sup>30</sup> Gerrish, 416.

<sup>31</sup> Gerrish, 413.



Luther, the chief task of those who held the office of minister was to preach publically to, and within the confines of, a specific, local congregation. This view of the ministry, concluded Gerrish, represented the dominant line of thinking for Luther, and it was reflective of his belief that Christ had not simply committed the Word and sacraments to the Church, but that He had Divinely decreed that the proclamation of that Word and the administration of the sacraments should be carried out by specially designated officials.<sup>32</sup>

The difficulty, however, is that no matter how committed Luther might have been to the view that there ought to be men specifically set aside for the office of minister, he did little to develop a clear system of principles outlining what these ministers should look like, how they should be chosen, what qualifications they ought to have, or what kind of authority the minister was able to exercise over the laity – or vice versa. The absence of such development is reflective of the deep division which Luther drew between the role of the Law and the role of the Gospel in the life of the believer and the implications that this division had on his view of the Church, the nature of Church discipline and the place of the offices within the Church.

In Luther's thought, the Law – understood as the Divine Law revealed in Scripture and encapsulated in the Ten Commandments – served two specific functions. In the first place, Luther taught that the Law served as means of restraining the depravity and the wickedness of the human race. Secondly, the Law served as an assault on the conscience, revealing to individuals the true depth of their depravity and, by extension, the punishment they faced for having broken the Law of a holy and just God. Having been confronted with their sinfulness, and the impossibility of repaying their debt to God,

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<sup>32</sup> Gerrish, 415.

the individual would thus be forced to seek reconciliation and redress outside of themselves. In contrast to the Law, however, which made clear one's enslavement to sin, Luther insisted that the joy of the Gospel message was its promise of a means of escape from the impossible demands of the Law. It offered, in the sacrifice of Christ, free payment for sin, a gift that could only be appropriated by faith, through grace. In this context, then, the Law served a preparatory function in that it readied the believer to hear and to accept the Gospel message – it was the Law that led the believer to the gates of Heaven, and faith, worked by Holy Spirit via the Gospel message, which would lead them through.

It is important to recognize that for Luther, once someone had been redeemed by faith in Christ, the Law no longer played a significant role in their life. For Luther, the believer lived a rather dualistic existence the character of which is summarized in the phrase *simul justus et peccatore*. The believer, taught Luther, possessed two natures. On the one hand, in the instant that the believer, through faith, acknowledged Christ's sacrifice on the cross as the only grounds for their salvation, they were immediately released from the bondage of sin and penalty of death. Nevertheless, the believer continued to be clothed with mortal flesh, flesh that remained inclined to sin and destruction. Despite the obvious tension between these two natures, Luther believed that, having been redeemed from bondage to sin, believers would organically, and without the fearful goading of the Law, now live out what that Law had once demanded of them.<sup>33</sup> As a consequence of this conviction, Luther was not predisposed to develop an

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<sup>33</sup> Richard Marius, *Martin Luther: The Christian Between God and Death* (Harvard: The Belknap Press, 1999), 230.

institutional framework for the church capable of providing oversight in terms of the belief and conduct of the faithful as, in his estimation, there was no need for such a structure. As a by-product of this deeply held conviction, the concept of ecclesiastical office, ministerial or otherwise, was never a matter of primary concern for Luther.

By contrast, the Swiss Reformer Ulrich Zwingli gave the matter of ministerial identity and function more focused consideration. To be sure, Zwingli's shared sense of the primacy of the Word ensured that there were structural similarities between the German and the Swiss Reformations.<sup>34</sup> Further, when speaking about Zwingli's contributions to the task of redefining the clerical task, it is important to understand that his thoughts on this matter were shaped and coloured by his reactions to the Roman Catholic hierarchy on the one hand, and the radicalism of the Anabaptist on the other. The bi-polar quality of his thought about the ministry can be seen most clearly from the fact that the two of his works which deal the most directly with the special office of minister, *The Shepherd* (1523) and *The Ministry* (1525), were directed against the Roman church and Radicals respectively.<sup>35</sup>

In *The Shepherd*, first delivered as a sermon in 1523 and published the following year, Zwingli contrasted the true pastor with the false shepherd. He began by contending that the false shepherd was someone who did not teach, or did not teach God's Word, or who did teach God's Word but did so with the impure motive of achieving his own advancement rather than God's glory. Furthermore, Zwingli contended that false shepherds also included all those who failed to live lives worthy of and reflective of the

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<sup>34</sup> Cornick, 234.

<sup>35</sup> W. P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 276.

message they proclaimed. This applied most particularly to those who had no care for the poor, but who sought instead after their personal wealth and security.<sup>36</sup> The anti-Roman sentiments that were characteristic of much of late medieval anti-clericalism are abundantly clear here.

Alternatively, the good shepherd is the man who does preach and who, in doing so, proclaims nothing but the Word of God. Zwingli understood the minister as being first and foremost a preacher.<sup>37</sup> Zwingli also insisted that true shepherds would rebuke those who were in need of chastening and that they would not cease to proclaim God's Word in the face of opposition, nor when, from a human perspective, their labours appeared to bear no fruit. Further, Zwingli called on faithful pastors to complement their preaching with a holy and blameless lifestyle and to carry out their task in a manner that revealed a deep and genuine love for the sheep.<sup>38</sup>

In *The Ministry*, Zwingli took aim at the Anabaptist view of the pastoral office. In this text, Zwingli's primary concern was the self-appointed character of the Anabaptist preachers.<sup>39</sup> He was outraged that Anabaptist preachers, having responded to a professed sense of internal calling, had taken up the ministerial mantle, had begun teaching, preaching and re-baptizing and he was horrified at the confusion they were causing among the faithful. In *The Ministry*, Zwingli turned to Ephesians 4 in order to

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<sup>36</sup> Stephens, 276.

<sup>37</sup> Stephens, 274.

<sup>38</sup> Stephens, 276. In his assessment of the influence of Zwingli's thinking about the ministry on Martin Bucer, Willem van't Spijker provided a similar assessment of Zwingli's view of ministerial character and function: "Zwingli depicted the image of the ideal preacher of the gospel of whom the Reformation had produced so many: independent, brave, willing to bear the cross and witnessing against the sins of the people." In Willem van't Spijker, *The Ecclesiastical Offices in the Thought of Martin Bucer* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 217.

<sup>39</sup> Stephens, 277.

argue that when Christ had instituted the ministerial office He had not intended that every believer should exercise that office. Zwingli argued emphatically that no one had ever rightly taken up the task of being a pastor without having first been called by God and men. He was insistent that any internal sense of calling had to be authenticated by a formal calling by a congregation. Indeed, Zwingli pointed out that Christ Himself had not been so bold as to have taken up His own office, but was instead sent by His Heavenly Father. In summary, Zwingli's primary concern was the defense of a well-ordered ministry. No one "must presume to take the ministerial office on himself but must be commissioned by God and the church."<sup>40</sup>

It must be noted that while Zwingli had progressed beyond Luther in terms of thinking in concrete ways about the character and function of the Protestant clergyman, he too failed to provide evangelicals with a comprehensive and systematic view of the ministerial office. Curiously, like Luther, the reason for this lacuna can be found, at least partially, in his understanding of the role of the Law and Gospel in the life of the believer. Unlike Luther, Zwingli maintained that the Law had a continued relevance in the life of the redeemed and renewed believer. Whereas Luther had insisted that the believer had been completely freed from the Law and all its demands, Zwingli contended that the law continued to serve as a rule for holy and thankful living in the believer's life. It was, in effect, a standard to which believers could and should be held. Holding believers to such a standard, however, necessitated that the Church exercise a degree of discipline over the faithful, and that in turn required that there be those within the community who were both charged with the task of oversight and empowered to carry

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<sup>40</sup> Stephens, 277.

out that task. In identifying such individuals, however, Zwingli was directed by his inclination to understand the church as being co-terminous with the civic community. For Zwingli the civic and the ecclesiastical communities were essentially one and the same. Proceeding from this premise, Zwingli turned to the city magistrates whom he called upon, by virtue of their simultaneous status as believers and civic authorities, to take responsibility for the exercise of discipline within the church. As a result, Zwingli never saw the necessity, as would Bucer and Calvin, to develop a well-defined view of an independent system of ecclesiastical offices.<sup>41</sup> And by extension he was never motivated to fully flesh out a vision of what the new Protestant cleric would look like or to reflect at length about how those clerics would function within an ecclesiastical context.

Ultimately, from amongst the ranks of the first generation Reformers, it was Martin Bucer who provided the most thorough-going consideration of ecclesiastical organization in general and the ministerial office in specific. To begin with, Bucer was adamant that Christ effected the forgiveness of sins within the context of a community of believers and that the primary means by which He accomplished this task was via preaching.<sup>42</sup> Bucer acknowledged that God could most certainly have chosen to accomplish the salvation of sinners in some other fashion. Yet, in His wisdom, God had decided to involve men as co-workers in the salvific process; a decision which Bucer was quick to point out did not imply that God had, in any way, ceded any of His own glory or authority to men. For Bucer the church remained, ever and always, a Christocracy: an institution in which Christ, through His Spirit, ruled as Head over the body, which was

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<sup>41</sup> van't Spijker, 218.

<sup>42</sup> van't Spijker, 465.

the Church.<sup>43</sup> As a corollary, however, of recognizing that God had chosen to enlist men in the working out the salvific process, Bucer (in concert with Luther and Zwingli) understood that the existence of the special office of the ministry was rooted in God's sovereign decree.<sup>44</sup> The existence of the pastoral office was rooted the Divine will and was to be part of any well-ordered and established church.<sup>45</sup> According to van't Spijker, these sentiments can be found in Bucer's earliest expressions about the special offices and, despite occasional shifts in emphasis, they remained central to his understanding of office throughout the whole of his career as a reformer.<sup>46</sup>

It is also important to recognize that, just as with Zwingli, Bucer's understanding of office evolved in response to the twin poles of Rome and Radicalism.<sup>47</sup> Each of these forces had a dramatic impact on the development and implementation of his ecclesiastical system in Strasburg. With respect to Rome, Bucer had severed the traditional connection between the clergy and the sacraments. Gone was the centuries-old dependence of the laity on the "priest and his power."<sup>48</sup> Instead, Bucer followed Luther in asserting that all believers enjoyed an inherent spiritual equality. Bucer's vision of the new Protestant cleric situated him squarely in the ranks of the body of believers, amongst whom he too

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<sup>43</sup> van't Spijker noted that Bucer's understanding of the special offices must always to be seen against the backdrop of his pneumatology and ecclesiology (463).

<sup>44</sup> van't Spijker, 463.

<sup>45</sup> In terms of the sources Bucer turned to when thinking about the ecclesiastical offices, his primary source of inspiration was the Bible, which he believed to be totally and unequivocally the Word of God. Bucer was prepared to turn to the history and tradition of the church for guidance; while the church's history could never be normative for him in the way that Scripture was, it could serve as a source of wisdom and guidance when considering ecclesiological and liturgical matters.

<sup>46</sup> van't Spijker, 464.

<sup>47</sup> van't Spijker, 465.

<sup>48</sup> van't Spijker, 466.

was required to submit to the authority of the proclaimed Word.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, the only thing that differentiated the minister from the body of believers in general was a difference in task, which was itself, said Bucer, a reflection of a difference in gifts. In Bucer's estimation, then, what set the minister apart from his fellow believers was the receipt of certain charismata (which Bucer understood to mean gifts given to an individual by Christ, via the Spirit), which were to serve the express purpose of building up the Church.<sup>50</sup> The charismata of the pastor, then, did not elevate him above the ranks of his fellow believers; rather they brought with them a different and unique calling and responsibility in the church. That calling was the duty to instruct others in the Word. By emphasizing preaching as the chief task of the minister, Bucer gave voice to one of the core tenets of evangelical theology: the notion that the real presence of Christ was not to be found in the Eucharist, but in the proclaimed Word of God. Indeed, claimed van't Spijker, at the core of Bucer's view of office lay the conviction that "Christ was not merely represented by the minister [but that] he was himself actually present in the ministry of the church."<sup>51</sup> For Bucer, Christ acted in the midst of His people via the preaching delivered by those whom He had enlisted as pastors.<sup>52</sup> In this context, the minister and the congregation should understand themselves as being inextricably bound together – not in a relationship of superior and inferior, but as being "bound together by

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<sup>49</sup> van't Spijker, 466.

<sup>50</sup> van't Spijker, 468-469.

<sup>51</sup> van't Spijker, 463.

<sup>52</sup> van't Spijker, 465.



the bond of the Word and the power of the Word officially proclaimed to the congregation.”<sup>53</sup>

Bucer also rejected the position of the Anabaptists, whose conception of the ministerial office had been shaped by a very different view of the church. Unlike the Anabaptists who envisioned the church as a community comprised exclusively of the elect, Bucer understood the church to be a covenant community. Within that covenant community the “only criterion for evaluating the preacher [was] the question of whether they proclaim[ed] Christ.”<sup>54</sup>

Finally in Bucer’s ecclesiology, he insisted that there was no essential difference between the bishop (*episcopos*) and the presbyters (or elders). Yet, while no essential difference may have existed, there remained a functional division between these two tasks. Bucer drew a distinction between those whom he identified as ruling elders and those who were teaching elders. The chief function of the presbyter or ruling elder was the exercise of ecclesiastical discipline. Thus, in Bucer’s system, “the elders [were to] be involved in admitting candidates to the ministry of the Word and their office also [involved exercising] oversight over the minister and the congregation.”<sup>55</sup> At the head of the presbyterate, stood the figure of the *episcopos*. It was his task to oversee the overseers, although his primacy was “functionally determined” and he labored very much as the *primes inter pares*.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> van’t Spijker,469.

<sup>54</sup> van’t Spijker,467.

<sup>55</sup> van’t Spijker,470. See also Martin Greschat, 149 for his discussion of Bucer’s view of the elder’s task.

<sup>56</sup> van’t Spijker,472.

Ultimately, this demonstrates that while Luther, Zwingli and Bucer had wrestled with the problem of defining the place and function of the minister within the context of a new Protestant ecclesiology, and each of them contributed to its resolution in a number of ways, their efforts were often ad hoc and piecemeal in nature. The earliest leaders of the reform movement (particularly Luther, who was constantly confronted with the need to respond to new crises and controversies as they arose) had simply lacked the opportunity to reflect on this matter in a sustained and focused way. At the same time, while Luther and Zwingli were cognizant of the need, neither man had really been inclined to develop a systemic solution to the problem. As a result, the task of providing a systematic and detailed solution to this problem fell to the next generation of reformers.<sup>57</sup> The second-generation reformers had the luxury of time and were thus able to develop more-considered theological responses to the problems of church organization and ministry.<sup>58</sup> It was also the next generation of leaders who saw most clearly the dire consequences that had resulted from the failure to develop a clear and substantial understanding of the pastoral office. The individual who had the most success in terms of providing practical and concrete solutions for the perplexing problem of how to define the nature and function of the clergy, was John Calvin.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> As Greschat noted in his assessment of Bucer's thinking about the offices, Bucer never developed a view of the offices that was as sophisticated as the one developed by Calvin. He did not, for instance, differentiate between the tasks of the offices as meticulously as Calvin would. Martin Greschat, *Martin Bucer: A Reformer and His Times* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 149.

<sup>58</sup> Pettegree, 8.

<sup>59</sup> In commenting about the challenge that the Reformers faced in striking a biblically normative balance in the interactions between Protestant cleric and lay person, Pauck concluded that "John Calvin succeeded in making it real." He went on to state that Calvin had accomplished "what in Zurich, Basel, Strasburg, and other places [had] remained either a plan or a fragment or an ineffective compromise." Pauck, 129.

Calvin's engagement with this particular question was occasioned both by his awareness of the needs of the wider Protestant world, and by his own personal experiences as a pastor. In terms of a broad awareness of the needs of the movement as a whole, Calvin was conscious of the danger posed by the failure of his predecessors to develop a more complex and nuanced sense of ecclesiology. On a number of occasions Calvin expressed the sentiment that, while Luther was to be lauded for having begun a mighty work, such praise could not obscure the fact that much work remained to be done. He noted, for instance:

We remember with amazement how deep was the abyss of ignorance and how horrible the darkness of the papacy. It was a great miracle of God that Luther and those who worked with him at the beginning in restoring the pure truth were able to emerge from it little by little. Some claim to be scandalized because these good persons did not see everything at once and did not finish and polish such a difficult work. It is as though they were accusing us of not seeing the sun shine as fully at dawn as at midday.<sup>60</sup>

This is clearly a reference to the Radical wing of the Protestant Reformation – a group which, collectively, had concluded that the early Reformers had not progressed nearly far enough in their efforts to reform the church. The chaotic consequences of the Radicals' effort to 'complete' Luther's work had rocked the wider Christian world to its core and as a young man Calvin was not unaware of how a lack of clarity about essential doctrinal and ecclesiastical matters had contributed to these developments. Calvin, then, was cognizant of the need for the Protestant movement to develop a more comprehensive and systematic theology.

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<sup>60</sup> Quoted in: William Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 10.

Calvin's personal experience, however, especially the tumultuous years of his early pastorate, also conspired to impress upon him the urgent need to formulate a clear vision of the ministerial office within Reformed ecclesiology. That Calvin's early years as a minister proved so tumultuous had a great deal to do with the city in which he laboured. In 1536, Calvin was dragooned by the fiery French preacher William Farel to labour alongside him in the task of reforming the church in the Swiss city of Geneva. Geneva's entrance into the ranks of the evangelical camp had occurred only a short time prior to Calvin's arrival there and the transition had not been a seamless one. During the first decades of the sixteenth century Geneva had existed as a city-state under the control of a local prince bishop. This prince-bishop not only exercised spiritual authority within the city, but also held sway in many matters of civil jurisdiction. The prince-bishop was himself part of a larger regional power structure. He was in actuality the representative of the nearby Dukes of Savoy whose territories bordered Geneva's. Indeed, the prince-bishop was frequently a member of the Savoyard household himself. Given the city's population (roughly 12,000 souls at the time) as well the city's strategic economic and military location, the Savoyard dukes considered Geneva to be the linchpin of their northern marches and had long sought to consolidate their hold on the city.<sup>61</sup>

Within the city itself, however, there were growing calls for Geneva to throw off Savoyard influence and secure her political independence.<sup>62</sup> The strongest voices in

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<sup>61</sup> Although as Collins has pointed out, Geneva's significance in terms of international trade had been in decline since the late fifteenth-century as the trade fairs in Lyons had grown in size and influence. The economic hardships created by the decline in trade also shaped Calvin's ministry in the city. Ross William Collins, *Calvin and the Libertines of Geneva* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., 1968), 61.

<sup>62</sup> The threat of being annexed by Savoyard power had been intensified by the accession of Duke Charles III in 1504. Over the next decade Charles energetically laboured to bring the city under his direct control.

support of this cause came from the ranks of Geneva's wealthy merchant class. Those dedicated to the cause of Geneva's independence were known as the *Enfants de Geneve* and they sought to achieve their aim by allying themselves with other already independent city states who were members of the nearby Swiss Confederacy – most notably the cities of Freiburg and Bern. While both cities agreed to support Geneva in her bid to oust Savoyard power, Bern was particularly amenable to the Geneva's request for aid. Bern had long had an eye for the Savoyard hinterland of the Pays-du-Vaud and, lacking any other direction to grow, was only too happy to “expand at the expense of Savoy's northern Marches.”<sup>63</sup> Bern and Geneva forged a defensive pact with Bern promising military aid in defense of Geneva's bid for independence. The final battle in the effort to achieve that independence occurred in the winter of 1535 when Savoyard forces attacked Geneva in a last-ditch effort to regain control of the city. With the support of Bernese troops, however, Geneva won the day and Savoyard power was overthrown once and for all.

While Bern had been willing to offer Geneva her armies in support of their shared animosity towards Savoyard power, her offer of allegiance was not without strings. In 1528, Bern had become a Protestant city and as a condition of supporting Geneva in her struggle against Savoy, Bern had required that she be able to send Protestant ministers to preach Reformed doctrines in Geneva. This was not Geneva's first experience with

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His was resisted by civic leaders who sought to maintain Geneva's traditional rights and privileges. Collins, 67-68.

<sup>63</sup> Stephen Ozment, *The Age of Reform: 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press: 1980), 359.

evangelical doctrine. Lutheran ideas had been discussed in Geneva as early as 1524, but until this point there had been little in the way of enthusiasm for Reformed theology.<sup>64</sup> From 1532 onwards, however, things began to change as Bern actively began to mission Geneva for the Protestant cause.<sup>65</sup> Their champion in this cause was William Farel who was dispatched to the city with the goal of converting it to the Protestant cause. During the first several years Farel enjoyed considerable success. The first official evangelical worship service was conducted on Good Friday 1533.<sup>66</sup> The following year, Peter Viret was dispatched to assist Farel in shepherding the growing Protestant flock. Following a public disputation in 1534, the celebration of the mass was suspended in May of 1535. Ultimately, in May 1536, the city council ratified a decision to formally adopt the new Protestant faith.

The success that Farel, and by extension the Protestant cause, enjoyed, however, proved to be something of a pyrrhic victory. To begin with, although the city's leaders had unanimously agreed to "to live in this holy evangelical law and Word of God, as it is proclaimed to us, ... [and] to abandon all Masses and other papal ceremonies and abuses, images and idols", many devout Catholics remained in the city; devout Catholics who continued to hear mass in secret and to have their children baptised by Roman priests.<sup>67</sup> Further, in achieving what he had, Farel had been dependent on the support of the *Enfants*, a group whose acceptance of Reformed doctrine was inextricably entwined with their quest to achieve Geneva's political independence. As far as the *Enfants*, and

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<sup>64</sup> Thomas Lambert, *Preaching, Praying and Policing the Reform in Sixteenth Century Geneva* (Doctoral Dissertation: University of Wisconsin-BruceMadison: 1998), 55.

<sup>65</sup> Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 256.

<sup>66</sup> Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 70.

<sup>67</sup> Collins, 94.

eventually a significant portion of the city's leaders were concerned, the cause of Reform and independence were not only synonymous but dependent on the continued goodwill of the Bernese authorities. In reality, rather than being motivated by firm doctrinal conviction, the acceptance of evangelical doctrine by the Genevan populace was to a significant extent simply the cost of doing business.

These, then, were the troubled waters into which Calvin plunged when he arrived in Geneva in July 1536. He encountered a city but recently converted to the Protestant cause; one in which many citizens remained devoted to the Roman faith and church. It was a city whose conversion was a necessary concession to the political and military realities imposed upon her by her closest ally. It was a city fiercely protective of its political, religious and economic liberties. Finally, it was a community deeply suspicious of outsiders and reluctant to cede power or influence to foreigners either within or outside her walls. As Farel and Calvin worked to bring about a more dogmatically and liturgically comprehensive Reformation, they soon met resistance from the very people who had once supported their efforts.

Their troubles began almost immediately. In January 1537, Farel and Calvin (apparently on their own initiative) presented the Genevan Small Council with a document entitled: *Articles Sur Le Gouvernement de l'Eglise*. Comprised of twenty-one articles, the *Articles* articulated a number of principles which the two pastors hoped would inform future ecclesiastical development within city. These *Articles* called for a more frequent celebration of the LORD's Supper; the creation of a consistorial body to oversee the government of the church; the exclusive exercise of excommunication by the consistory; a call for congregational singing of psalms during worship and the

requirement that the city's youth receive catechetical instruction.<sup>68</sup> Emboldened by the modest degree of support the *Articles* received, the two pastors then drafted a *Confession of Faith*. Based largely on material drawn from Calvin's *Institutes* (first published in Basel in 1536, prior to Calvin's arrival in Geneva), Calvin and Farel presented this *Confession* to the council with the request that every citizen be required to take an oath to uphold and abide by it. It seems reasonable to conclude that the primary purpose of the *Confession* and the oath that accompanied it was the identification of citizens with continued Catholic loyalties.<sup>69</sup> In short order, however, ambassadors from Bern heard of the pastors' demand and immediately voiced their objections. They insisted that the oath required by the pastors was too difficult to keep and, as a result, many people would be led to commit perjury.<sup>70</sup> Given the importance of the alliance with Bern in maintaining her independence, many of Geneva's citizens were reluctant to support the pastors over and against Bernese wishes.

The confessional oath was not the only controversial issue, however. There was also the matter of who would have the power to impose the censure of excommunication. In the *Articles* the pastors had stated that the exercise of church discipline fell within the purview of the office-bearers of the church rather than resting with the city council. Indeed, for Calvin it was imperative that control of liturgy and discipline ought to reside

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<sup>68</sup> Jean Calvin, "Articles Concerning the Organization of the Church and of Worship in Geneva" in *Calvin's Theological Treatises*, ed. J.K.S. Reid (Philadelphia: Westminster: 1954), 48-55. For more information regarding the content and organization of the 1537 Articles see: Collins, 99-102; Alister McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 98; Gordon (2009), 70-71.

<sup>69</sup> Collins, 102.

<sup>70</sup> William Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 27.



in the hands of the officers of the church. The city magistrates, however, thought differently. They were none too keen about handing over the power of discipline to the church authorities. From their perspective, they had not waged a fierce struggle to overthrow their prince-bishop only to turn around and place control of the Genevan church into the hands of a cleric of a different religious persuasion. The fact that Calvin and Farel were foreigners only made their demands all the more suspect in the eyes of the magistrates.

To be fair, Calvin can hardly have been expected to appreciate the complexities of the Genevan political and ecclesiastical climate.<sup>71</sup> Nor could he have appreciated how threatening his requests regarding the confessional oath and control of discipline appeared to the Genevan populace and magistracy. From the perspective of the pastors, the reluctance to accede to their demands was evidence of a hardhearted resistance to sincere Gospel living, rather than an offense occasioned by their incursion into a complex web of socio-political sensibilities. Faced with what they perceived to be a moral and spiritual intransigence, Calvin and Farel became ever more strident in their calls for the Genevans to embrace the Reformation in real and substantive ways. In doing so, they provoked further hostility, particularly amongst the ranks of the *Enfants* (also known as the Libertines) who remained dedicated to securing Geneva's political and religious liberties and their own influence within the city.

The civic elections of 1538 brought matters to a head when a faction determined to appease Bern at any cost carried the day. The newly elected magistrates intended to adopt the liturgy of the Bernese church as part of this strategy of appeasement. Doing so

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<sup>71</sup> Naphy (1994), 27.

would have involved the restoration of baptismal fonts, the use of unleavened bread in celebrating the LORD's Supper, and the restoration of worship services at Christmas, New Year's, Annunciation and Ascension Day. Calvin and Farel were outraged. Their ire stemmed not from any profound objection to the practices as such; rather, they resented the intrusion of civic authority into the life and government of the church. Calvin responded by declaring that the magistracy was nothing more than a council of the devil. The council, in turn, reacted by forbidding either man to preach. Calvin and Farel ignored the injunction and continued preaching – with the proviso that they refused to celebrate the Eucharist until such time as the conflict was resolved. Ultimately, frustrated by the intransigence of the pastors, the council voted to banish both Calvin and Farel from the city.

It would be an understatement to say that being stripped of his office and exiled from the city had a profound impact on the young Calvin. Beyond the sense that he had failed God as an individual, or even that he had fallen short as a believer, Calvin was rocked by the overwhelming sense that he had fallen short in his specific and very personal calling as a minister. In so doing he had failed not only to shepherd his own soul, but also to care for those whom God had entrusted to him as a pastor of the Geneva church. His expulsion from Geneva caused him to endure a crisis of conscience as he struggled to understand what circumstances had led to his undoing and what role he might have played in bringing those circumstances about. During this dark night of the soul, Calvin wrestled mightily with the question of whether he was fit to call himself a pastor and whether it would be wise to seek out or accept such a calling in the future.

Something of his anguish can be felt in a letter written to his close friend Louis du Tillet in which he contemplates the potential folly of seeking out another pastorate in the future:

Above all, however, on looking back and considering the perplexities which environed me from the time I first went thither, there is nothing I dread more than returning to the charge from which I have been set free. For while I, when I first entered upon it could discern the calling of God which held me fast bound, with which I now console myself, now on the contrary, I am in fear lest I tempt Him if I resume so great a burden, which has first been found to be unsupportable.<sup>72</sup>

Despite the misgivings expressed in the days following his expulsion from Geneva, Calvin would once again take up the mantle of pastor. After leaving Geneva Calvin made for the city of Strasburg where, under the gentle tutelage of Martin Bucer, his fears of once again entering into the ministry were confronted and overcome. During his time in Strasburg, Calvin was given charge of a small congregation of refugees who had fled persecution in their native France. At Bucer's urging, Calvin laboured to organize these displaced souls into a structured ecclesiastical community. In the relative calm of Strasburg, a city more firmly established within the Protestant community and more tolerant of both differing religious sentiment and foreigners, Calvin was able to experiment with different liturgical practices and, ultimately, to develop and refine his own sense of ecclesiology. For Calvin, a sound ecclesiastical structure needed to be constructed on the foundation of a clear understanding of office.

In Calvin's ecclesiastical framework, if the church was to survive and thrive, it needed to be served by four-fold ministry. In the first place, men were to be appointed as pastors and given the charge of preaching the Word of God. In addition, they were to

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<sup>72</sup> Quotations from Calvin's letters have been taken from: Jules Bonnet, *Calvin's Letters*, 4 volumes (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1858). Henceforth, Letters will be cited as: *Letters*: date, volume, page number. Thus for the above quotation see, *Letters*: July 1538, v.1:72.

teach biblical doctrine to the faithful, administer the sacraments, and, along with the elders, to admonish those who proved wayward in either doctrine or conduct. The task of theological education and pastoral training was to be the bailiwick of the doctors of the church. Those who served as elders were charged with overseeing the life and conduct of believers, admonishing them should they prove wayward and, if necessary, imposing the spiritual sanction of excommunication. Finally, the ministry of mercy was to be carried out by the deacons. Their task was to care for the poor and to distribute alms to those in need. Together these men were tasked with caring for the spiritual and physical needs of a local congregation and Calvin considered the existence and proper function of these offices to be essential if the church was to effectively carry out her task of proclaiming the Gospel to a world darkened by sin.

The peacefulness of Calvin's sojourn in Strasburg was ended in 1540 when the circumstances he most dreaded came to pass: he received a call to return to Geneva to once again serve as pastor. The events of early 1540 had conspired to ensure that the syndics most responsible for Calvin and Farel's expulsion had either been disgraced or had died.<sup>73</sup> The positions of syndic were now held by Guillermines (supporters of Farel) and the council set about the task of convincing Calvin to return to his post. Far from being eager to go back, Calvin made it clear that he had little if any desire to return to the crucible from which had been cast.<sup>74</sup> He prevaricated as long as he could until, in the end, it was only the imprecations of Bucer which caused him to relent. His acquiescence was not without condition, however. He wanted there to be no further misunderstanding

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<sup>73</sup> T.H.L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1992), 79.

<sup>74</sup> In a letter to Farel Calvin wrote, "Pardon me if I dread this place as fatal for me." *Letters*: 21 October 1541

between himself and the Genevan authorities. The Genevans had to understand that “to have him would be to have what he stood for, a Church governed by the Word of God and the system of discipline he had tried to enforce before.”<sup>75</sup> The condition of his surrender, so to speak, was that the church would possess a “settled government” the parameters of which were to be outlined in a new document Calvin had drafted, the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* (1541).<sup>76</sup> The *Ordinances* were essentially a type of ecclesiastical and liturgical blueprint in which Calvin outlined the type of church he intended to build if he returned to Geneva. What is particularly significant about the *Ordinances* is that they open with a presentation of Calvin’s four-fold vision of office. More significantly yet, the character and function of the ministerial office is the very first topic to receive Calvin’s attention. Calvin’s terms were accepted, he returned to Geneva, and the *Ordinances* were passed into law on 20 November 1541. Thereafter, the *Ordinances* served as the basis for all future ecclesiastical development in Geneva.

It is worth pausing for a moment in order to reflect on the significance of the change in organization and priority illustrated by the *Articles* of 1537 and the *Ordinances* of 1541. Historians and theologians alike have often remarked that there appears to have been very little change in Calvin’s core theological convictions over the course of his career. Such sentiments are easy to understand. In reading through Calvin’s sermons, for instance, one can only be struck by the sense that the theological concerns and commitments expressed in his earliest orations differ but little from sermons delivered near the close of his life. That this is so, may very well be the product of a deliberate

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<sup>75</sup> Parker, 80.

<sup>76</sup> *Letters*: 16 September 1541, v.1:284.

effort on Calvin's part to present himself as man who, after a dramatic conversion experience, had "remained unchanged both theologically and ecclesiastically."<sup>77</sup> There can be no doubt that the inclination to view Calvin's thought as static and unchanging has hindered efforts at providing a genuine and textured biography of the Reformer. Though shifts and deviations in Calvin's thought may be few and far between, these anomalies provide valuable insights into the heart and mind of this most reticent of men.

One such deviation, one which has received little in the way of scholarly attention, can be found in the different priorities expressed by the *Articles* and the *Ordinances*. In 1537, Calvin's primary concern was clearly the Eucharistic celebration. Given his historical context, one in which debates about the nature and efficacy of the Eucharist raged so fiercely, separating not only Catholics and Protestants but fostering divisions within the Protestant camp itself, Calvin's decision to privilege this topic is understandable. In the *Articles*, Calvin contended that that a more frequent celebration of communion would foster unity amongst the Genevan faithful; a contention entirely in keeping with his professed motives for having published the first edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* but a short time before. In the first edition of the *Institutes* (1536) Calvin indicated that, amongst other things, he hoped to unify the increasingly fractured Protestant movement by providing Protestants with a brief, lucid summary of core evangelical beliefs. The organization of the 1537 *Articles*, then, is reflective of Calvin's preoccupation with a controversy that was of both local and overarching concern to himself and Protestantism as a whole.

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<sup>77</sup> Cornelis Augustijn, "Calvin in Strasbourg" in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor*, Wilhelm Neuser ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 167.

The *Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1541*, however, express a markedly different priority. While the *Articles* had opened with a consideration of the LORD's Supper, now the topic of the officers of the church takes precedence. Why this shift away from the burning issue of sacramental theology at a time when there were few more pressing matters being debated in the Christian world? The answer lies in the context in which these documents were written. The *Articles* were produced at a time when Calvin's career as a leader in the Genevan church had just begun. By contrast, the *Ordinances* were composed by a man reflecting back on a traumatic time in his life and in the life of the church that he served. The upheaval Calvin experienced in his personal and professional life during those years convinced him that a lack of clarity about the place and function of the pastor within the Christian community was one of, if not the, most immediate needs faced by the fledgling Protestant churches.

It is worth noting that the shift in emphasis evident in the *Articles* and *Ordinances* was mirrored by a simultaneous repurposing of the *Institutes*. In its first iteration, Calvin had envisioned the *Institutes* as kind of doctrinal primer for Protestants. His goal had been to provide a concise summary of core Protestant beliefs and to do so in such a clear and persuasive way that the fierce dogmatic controversies which had so divided Protestants during the days of the Reformation would be quelled. The second edition of the *Institutes*, published in 1539 (while he was in Strasburg, pastoring a small congregation and struggling to clarify the essential qualities of pastoral life and work), opened with a new statement of purpose. In his preface to this edition, Calvin made clear that now his "object in this work was to prepare and train students of theology for the study of the sacred volume, so that they both have an easy introduction to it, and be able

to proceed in it, with unfaltering step....”<sup>78</sup> This motivation had further developed by 1543 (after his return to Geneva) when the third edition of the Institutes was published. In this edition, the ministerial office has become the *nervi*, that is the nervous centre which worked to hold the body of Christ together.<sup>79</sup> During these years then, whether in the pragmatic documents drafted to govern the daily operations of a local church, or in the theological reflections of his greatest work, we find Calvin increasingly convinced by the notion that the only thing more important to the health of the church than a well-educated and critically minded laity, was a well-educated, well-trained clergy.

This then is the explanation for the rather remarkable change in priority exhibited by the *Articles* of 1537 and the *Ordinances* of 1541. Calvin’s personal and professional experiences had moved him to reprioritize his sense of the most immediate challenges faced by the Protestant churches. Whereas, during his earliest days as a leader in the Protestant world, his attention had been focused on the divisions caused by the sacramental controversies, he had now come to believe that a lack of understanding about the offices of the church in general and the office of minister in particular was a greater threat to the growth and stability of the Protestant churches. Again, his concerns in this regard were neither theoretical, nor exclusively theological. His personal trials and travails had convinced him that it was imperative that the scope of pastoral authority be clearly defined and communicated to the faithful. The health, indeed the very survival of the church depended, on a clear understanding of just who the minister was and what place and function he had within the ecclesiastical community.

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<sup>78</sup> See also: Gordon (2009), 92.

<sup>79</sup> Augustijn, 172.



This project, then, is concerned with examining the development of Calvin's thinking about the character, function and authority of the new Protestant clergy. As a starting point, it is important to recognize that Calvin had identified a role model, an exemplar of pastoral excellence, who provided a foundation on which Calvin would construct his view of the ministerial office. That exemplar was the Apostle Paul. To be sure, Calvin acknowledged that, as an apostle, Paul's task was not exactly analogous with that of a minister who was bound to a specific, local congregation. Nevertheless, Paul's determination to proclaim a Gospel message unsullied by the addition of human fancy, as well as his willingness to endure suffering and hardship in execution of his duties, motivated Calvin to identify him as a model worthy of emulation by all faithful pastors. In addition to identifying Paul as a model of pastoral excellence, however, Calvin also developed a particularly intimate sense of the relationship that existed between himself and Paul; a relationship he understood as being rooted in their shared calling and task. The depth and intensity of this perceived bond becomes clear as Calvin, in print and from the pulpit, presented himself in ways that depicted the two men as inhabiting a shared authorial and, ultimately, authoritative space. Calvin, for instance, regularly presented his personal experiences in Geneva as being directly analogous to Paul's experiences as a preacher in the apostolic age. At times he will go so far as to speak with the 'voice' of Paul in an effort to make clear to his audience that he and Paul were brothers-in-arms. The goal of Calvin's efforts was to cement his authority as a pastor in Geneva and, by extension, the authority of pastors throughout the Protestant world. The underlying, yet unmistakable message being conveyed was that those who proclaimed the same message as Paul and endured the same trials and travails in so doing, should be received with the

same respect and honour as Paul himself might expect to enjoy. The use of Paul as exemplar and the unique personal connection between Calvin and Paul will be explored in the first chapter of this work.

Having highlighted Paul as a paradigm of pastoral conduct, Calvin turned his attention to defining the essential purpose of the institutional church. Calvin understood that a necessary consequence of the doctrines of *sola fide* and *sola Scriptura* was the reprioritization of preaching as the church's primary task. He also understood that this reprioritization would powerfully shape perceptions about how the ministerial office was to function within the ecclesiastical community. The second chapter of this study will open with a consideration of Calvin's conviction that God had placed the treasure of the Gospel within the storehouse of the church. In His Divine good pleasure, God had also deigned to enlist men, specifically ministers, in the work of sharing that Gospel with the world. We will see how Calvin attempted to establish a clear understanding of the interaction between Divine and human activity in this process. Specifically, Calvin's explanation of the relationship between the voice of the pastor and the Word of God will be examined. This chapter will also make clear Calvin's sense of how ministers could be effective preachers and the terrible costs that would be incurred should they fall short in the execution of their duties.

Identifying a role model and elucidating a clear understanding of the core task of preaching, however, would have amounted to little if that vision could not be effectively communicated to the faithful. Calvin was faced with the challenge of selling his vision of the pastorate to the Genevans and the wider Protestant world. In chapter three, we will consider how Calvin attempted to convince his audience (both local and international) of

the need to heed the message brought by faithful pastors and to submit themselves to their authority. To accomplish this goal, Calvin employed a strategy of describing the new Protestant pastor in professional terms. Calvin presented the ministers as professional men who served their communities by providing them with the essential service of Gospel proclamation. The rhetorical strategies (particularly the metaphorical identification of pastors as a type of physician) which Calvin employed in his bid to convince others to accept his vision of a professionalized pastorate will also be examined.

Professionalizing the pastorate also shaped the way in which Calvin understood the relationship between the pastor and the pew. In place of the centuries-old notion of separate spiritual caste that served an intermediary function between God and man, Calvin posited the existence of a professional-client relationship. The pastors, by virtue of their education and calling, possessed an insight into the Word that was critical to the salvation of the believer. As such, they were to be received by the community with the same trust and respect that a doctor bringing life-saving medical intervention could expect to receive. This professional-client relationship, however, was not simply a one-way street. In fleshing out the parameters of this relationship, what emerged in Calvin's thinking was the concept that a spirit of 'mutual teachability' ought to govern interactions between pastors and lay folk.

In this third chapter, particular attention will be paid to how Calvin's vision of pastoral office manifested itself in his preaching. In relative terms the significance of Calvin's sermons has often been underappreciated. Indeed, Calvin's sermons have traditionally been viewed as little more than a mirror, reflective of the sentiments

expressed in his commentaries.<sup>80</sup> In reality, however, the sermons were addressed to a very different audience, an audience with very different expectations than the formally trained clerics for whom the commentaries were intended. In his commentaries, Calvin assumed that he was speaking to an educated audience, one fluent in ancient languages and familiar with the history and literature of the classical world.<sup>81</sup> In contrast the sermons were directed towards ordinary believers and evinced an exegesis and application of the text that reflected the local context in which they were delivered.<sup>82</sup> An examination of his sermons provides a rich opportunity to examine Calvin's direct and explicit efforts at teaching everyday believers how they were to receive and interact with those who occupied their pulpits.

While the first three chapters of this study provide a conceptual overview of how Calvin understood the ministerial office, the final chapter focuses on the institutions Calvin developed in order to train, support and supervise those called to the ministry. The ministerial task as Calvin envisioned it was a daunting one and Calvin quickly discovered how difficult it was to find men who not only possessed the requisite talents and mettle to undertake it, but who could be relied upon to faithfully carry that task out over the course of a lifetime. Calvin was also mindful of the danger that the authority he had invested in the pastorate could all too easily be exploited for personal gain. To that end he devised and established two specific institutions designed to support and supervise the ministry.

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<sup>80</sup> Randall Zachman, "Expounding Scripture and Applying it to Our Use: Calvin's Sermons on Ephesians," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56:4 (2003), 481.

<sup>81</sup> Zachman (2003), 485.

<sup>82</sup> Zachman (2003), 481, 483.

In the first place, Calvin understood the importance of education in creating a professional pastorate to serve the churches. During the early years of the Reformation pulpits in Protestant churches had often been staffed with recently converted Roman Catholic priests. Although the dedication and sincerity of such converts was often quite genuine, in many instances that sincerity was not complemented by a thorough understanding of Protestant dogma, or a clear sense of their function within these fledgling churches. Calvin sought to rectify this situation by establishing a seminary in Geneva; a seminary where students, under the care and guidance of the doctors of the church, could receive an orthodox education that would prepare them to carry out their tasks in a competent and professional manner. Founded in 1559, this seminary was known as the Genevan Academy, out of which grew what is today the University of Geneva.

Calvin also established the Venerable Company of Pastors, an organization whose function is perhaps best understood as a professional standards committee. The Venerable Company counted as members all of the Genevan pastors, both those from within the city and those who served in the rural parishes surrounding Geneva. Pastors were required to attend the weekly sessions of the Company. During these meetings pastors would be required to exegete assigned biblical texts in a public forum as a means of assessing their continued orthodoxy. These meetings also provided an opportunity for the exercise of mutual censure. Ministers who were suspected of dereliction in the execution of their tasks, or who were believed to be guilty of personal indiscretions that might imperil the honour of the ministry, were disciplined by the Company. The records of the activities of this Company during Calvin's lifetime make it possible to draw a

comparison between the ideal pastor, as presented in Calvin's literary and sermonic work, and the actual life and conduct of the Genevan pastorate.

Finally, there are reasons to believe that a consideration of the theory and practice of Calvin's sense of the ministry might yield additional fruit by providing an opportunity to draw closer to Calvin as a man. Over the past five centuries numerous historians and theologians have endeavoured to paint a portrait of Calvin's inner self. The results of their efforts has been remarkably diverse and often unsatisfying. That this is so is in many ways Calvin's own fault. Throughout his long career Calvin remained extremely reticent to speak of himself or of his personal experiences and, as a result, unlike his charismatic contemporary Luther, Calvin has proven very difficult to understand as a person.

Perhaps, however, the search for the 'real' Calvin might be more profitably pursued if it were approached from a more oblique angle. As will become clear, he was a man completely consumed by a sense of calling. He firmly believed that his ministerial mantle had been laid upon him by God and that he was required to set aside his own desires in favour of heeding the call of Christ. For Calvin, the office of minister was not merely a job, it was a calling woven into the very fabric of his being. In examining Calvin's understanding of how the ministerial office was to be effectively carried out, we are provided with an unexpected window into the mind of this most reticent of men.

## Chapter One - The Apostle Paul as Pastoral Paradigm

In the course of Christian history, the image of the Apostle Paul has proven to be exceedingly malleable. For centuries, Christians from various traditions have turned to Paul to find an analogue of their personal experiences as believers, or to serve as an exemplar of a particular pattern of behavior or thought. Like many before him, Calvin would also take advantage of the malleability of this Pauline image. In turning to Paul, Calvin's motives were both personal and professional. From a personal perspective, during the early years of his pastorate (particularly the tumultuous years between 1536 and 1541) Calvin developed a propensity to think of himself as possessing a special and deeply personal bond with the Apostle. He came to see Paul as a kind of kindred spirit to whom he was bound by the bonds of a shared calling and experiences. This sentiment came to colour the whole of his ministry in Geneva, not only in the way he carried out his task, but also in how he sought to explain the nature of his calling to his parishioners. In terms of professional utility, Calvin found in Paul a model of pastoral excellence that served his larger aim of guiding the wider Protestant community towards a better understanding of ministerial identity and function. This chapter will consider how, in employing Paul to these ends, Calvin situated himself within the context of both long-standing Christian practice and a contemporary understanding of public self-fashioning. In these years Paul became a source of personal inspiration and motivation for Calvin, but Calvin also extracted from the Pauline experience a set of general principles that could be universally applied to the exercise of the pastoral office.

Before proceeding to consider these questions it is important to note that this is not the first study to identify the significance of Calvin's relationship with Paul. Several

scholarly forays have been made in this direction, the most notable of which is an article by R. Ward Holder in which he noted both the continued importance of studying the “fate of the clergy during the Reformation,” and the paucity of scholarly efforts to come to an understanding of what Calvin actually believed about the pastorate.<sup>83</sup> Holder argued that if this situation was to be remedied scholars would need to move beyond the rather skeletal theology of the ministry which Calvin had presented in the *Institutes* and engage in a more thorough assessment of Calvin’s *Commentaries*.<sup>84</sup> Holder’s initial exploration of this topic inclined him to suggest that, for Calvin, Paul served not only as a source of true Christian doctrine, but also as a “paradigm of pastoral practice.”<sup>85</sup> He clearly demonstrated how, for Calvin, Paul became an exemplar of the master cleric; one who provided a model of correct pastoral counseling, demeanor and constancy.<sup>86</sup> Of particular note were Holder’s reflections regarding Calvin’s presentation of Paul’s suffering as an apostle as a means of making clear to contemporary pastors that, though their calling was not an easy one, they needed to remain faithful in executing their task, regardless of the personal cost.<sup>87</sup> Holder was, however, rightly cautious in his assertions about Calvin’s use of Paul as an archetypal model for pastors. He recognized that Calvin remained deeply conscious of Paul’s unique status as an apostle rather than a pastor.<sup>88</sup> Calvin was aware of the different type and degree of authority exercised by the apostles, as well as the global scope of that authority. Ultimately Holder concluded that while

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<sup>83</sup> R. Ward Holder, “Paul as Calvin’s (Ambivalent) Pastoral Model,” *Dutch Review of Church History* 84:1 (2004), 284. Bruce Gordon has also provided some commentary about Calvin’s Pauline attachment.

<sup>84</sup> Holder, 285.

<sup>85</sup> Holder, 285-286.

<sup>86</sup> Holder, 286-287.

<sup>87</sup> Holder, 290.

<sup>88</sup> Holder, 293.



Calvin regularly employed Paul as an example to be emulated by Protestant pastors, Paul could not serve as an exact model of pastoral conduct.

As useful and insightful as Holder's article is, there remain a number of ways in which his ideas might be further developed. In the first place, the extent to which Calvin spoke about the character and function of the pastoral office in his sermons needs to be reckoned with. Holder pointed out that Calvin's *Commentaries* provide a rich source of material to consider in coming to a fuller understanding of Calvin's theology of the ministry. However, in his *Commentaries* Calvin was addressing a primarily academic and clerical audience and the vision of the ministerial office presented therein is often more technical in tone and content. Calvin's sermons, however, were directed at a different audience, one with different needs and expectations. If we are to fully appreciate Calvin's understanding of the ministerial office and his efforts to communicate his vision of that office to the laity, a thorough evaluation of his sermons must be undertaken. Not only is a consideration of Calvin's sermonic efforts well advised, it will also reveal that, even from the pulpit, Calvin chose to present Paul as an exemplar of pastoral conduct. Further, as will be demonstrated below, in his preaching Calvin deliberately and intentionally communicated to his audience his sense of the intimate bonds of fellowship that existed between himself and Paul as men who shared a common call to proclaim God's Word. In this way, Calvin attempted to solidify both his personal authority as a pastor in Geneva, and by extension the authority of Protestant pastors everywhere.

In turning to Paul as a means of confronting contemporary doctrinal and ecclesiastical challenges Calvin positioned himself within a tradition as ancient as

Christianity itself.<sup>89</sup> The New Testament, for instance, provides evidence of the ways in which the earliest Christians had rationalized and justified certain beliefs and practices by referencing the authority of teachers like Paul and Apollos. Despite Paul's strident condemnation of such behaviour, his outrage seems to have done little to dissuade subsequent Christians from continuing to employ his name and image to solve their various problems. In fact, relying on some form of Pauline approbation became a frequent characteristic of later patristic literature.<sup>90</sup> Amongst the church fathers, however, John Chrysostom stands out as having developed a particularly intense and complex relationship with the Apostle. In her evaluation of this relationship, Margaret Mitchell acknowledged that citing Paul as a pivotal figure in the mind of an early Christian exegete hardly seems worthy of note. In Chrysostom, however, Mitchell insisted that she had found an example of a Pauline interpreter who was deliberately, explicitly and openly "governed by a mental image" of the Apostle.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, so ubiquitous and pervasive were the expressions of Chrysostom's devotion to Paul,

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<sup>89</sup> For an example of a medieval thinker who had also developed a specific interest in Paul, consider Karl Froehlich's article, "Which Paul? Observations On The Image of the Apostle in the History of Biblical Exegesis," in *New Perspectives in historical Theology: Essays in Honour of John Meyendorff*, ed. Bradley Nassif (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996). There Froehlich noted that the image of Paul which emerges in the work of Aquinas must be understood within the context of Aquinas's perception of himself as a teacher. For Aquinas, said Froehlich: "Teachers are the essential mediators of the life giving truth, and Paul was the first of them (294)." Froehlich went on to cite the work of Otto Hermann Pesch, who "...described Aquinas's Paul as the 'professor among the apostles.' Indeed, Thomas saw in the Paul of the Epistles not only the teacher of the content of Christian doctrine but also the master of its scholastic presentation, *the professional role model for the precious teacher's own aspirations* (emphasis mine; 294)." In that same article, Froehlich reflected on the humanist pre-occupation with Paul, noting that the humanists had: "discovered the individual behind the text, Paul the towering human genius whom they could celebrate and strive to imitate (297)." Calvin was then, hardly the first person to turn to Paul for either personal or professional inspiration – nor to see in Paul aspects of himself and the struggles of his own age.

<sup>90</sup> Indeed, Mitchell noted that the fourth and fifth centuries were a time of "unprecedented attention to the Pauline epistles in commentary form." Margaret Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline interpretation* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 66.

<sup>91</sup> Mitchell, xiv.

contended Mitchell, that they ought to be understood as representing the interpretive key necessary for a proper understanding of the entirety of Chrysostom's exegetical efforts.<sup>92</sup>

In the course of her consideration of Chrysostom's relationship with Paul, Mitchell asked two very important questions. In the first place, she raised the question of why Chrysostom might have singled out Paul as an individual worthy of emulation. Secondly, she wondered what Chrysostom had hoped to accomplish via his imitation of Paul. With respect to the first question, Mitchell noted that, in selecting Paul as the focus of his mimetic program, Chrysostom made a choice for which there was a strong biblical warrant. After all, had Paul himself not called upon believers to imitate him as he had imitated Christ?<sup>93</sup> In addition to this biblical rationale, Chrysostom's justification for imagining such an intimate bond between himself and the Apostle seems to be rooted in the conviction that the "pastoral and theological challenges" which he had experienced in his own ministry were analogous to those endured by Paul.<sup>94</sup> In essence, for Chrysostom, there was an "easy correlation" between the trials and travails which he had experienced and those addressed by Paul during the time of his earthly ministry. It was the "shared vexations" of the pastoral life which motivated him to view Paul as a kind of soul mate.<sup>95</sup> Further, his sense of Paul as kindred spirit appears to have been intensified by his inclination to understand Paul "as a monastic" who, like himself and on account of ecclesiastical demands too great to be ignored, had been forced to eschew the call of the desert in favour of remaining tied to the world and the church.<sup>96</sup> Ultimately, however, as

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<sup>92</sup> Mitchell, xvii.

<sup>93</sup> Mitchell, 66.

<sup>94</sup> Mitchell, 382.

<sup>95</sup> Mitchell, 68.

<sup>96</sup> Mitchell, 68.

significant as these motives may have been, Mitchell concluded her consideration of this matter with the acknowledgement that there remains an “inexplicable personal dimension” to Chrysostom’s devotion to Paul – one which cannot be easily identified nor quantified.<sup>97</sup>

With respect to the question of what Chrysostom hoped to accomplish via his emulation of Paul, Mitchell was quick to note that Chrysostom’s devotion to Paul was not undertaken without rationale or purpose. To begin with, Chrysostom’s investigation into and presentation of Paul’s character was not a project calculated to yield purely personal rewards. Rather, as an outgrowth of his sensitivity regarding the contextual similarity between the world of the Apostle and his own time, Chrysostom remained convinced that a deep awareness of Paul’s life and conduct could prove both instructive and formative for Christians in the Late Antique world. To that end, his oratory was always “a robustly public matter, a form of discourse aimed a particular effect.”<sup>98</sup> Rhetorically, Chrysostom aimed at crafting and presenting a personal portrait of Paul through the medium of the spoken word.<sup>99</sup> The primary goal of Chrysostom’s oratorical portraits of Paul was, in effect, to make the dead saint alive in the presence of his listeners and to set him before them as a model worthy of imitation.<sup>100</sup> The presentation of this Pauline image was, in turn, calculated to result in the transformation of the entire community of Antioch and, later, Constantinople. As Mitchell noted, Chrysostom aimed to revamp these cities into a

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<sup>97</sup> Mitchell, 68.

<sup>98</sup> Mitchell, 382.

<sup>99</sup> Mitchell, 381.

<sup>100</sup> Mitchell, 381.

“conglomeration of believing households joined by a common meeting place within the spacious courtyard of the great Church.”<sup>101</sup>

Ultimately, for Chrysostom, Paul served as both an exemplar of the worldly ascetic, and a “rhetorical vehicle for social construction” in his own day and age.<sup>102</sup> To that end, claimed Mitchell, Chrysostom consciously fashioned himself in the image of his apostolic hero, as a means of vivifying the Apostle in the sight of his congregation, so that they might enjoy the same intimate and transformational encounter with Paul that Chrysostom had experienced in reading Paul’s letters. Further, via this presentation, he hoped that his listeners would be encouraged to become like the Apostle themselves.<sup>103</sup> As a final comment regarding Chrysostom’s relationship with Paul, it is worth noting that the many Pauls sketched out by Chrysostom in his preaching and exegetical efforts often bore a striking resemblance to John himself, a situation which Mitchell argued, Chrysostom quite deliberately fostered via his “mimetic engagement with his beloved Paul.”<sup>104</sup>

A similar expression of identification with and devotion to the Apostle was displayed by Chrysostom’s African contemporary and fellow bishop Augustine of Hippo. The character and scope of the relationship between Paul and Augustine has been elucidated in a recent article by Thomas Martin. Martin, as had Mitchell, began his article with the observation that acknowledging the debt owed to Paul by any Christian exegete hardly seems too obvious to warrant stating. Indeed, Martin noted that from the mid-fourth to the mid-fifth century, Christian authors and intellectuals throughout the

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<sup>101</sup> Mitchell, 402.

<sup>102</sup> Mitchell, xix.

<sup>103</sup> Mitchell, xxi.

<sup>104</sup> Mitchell, 382.

Mediterranean world had undertaken a sustained assessment of the Pauline corpus – to such a degree, he suggested, that, in terms of its general exegetical context, this era might reasonably be referred to as the “century of Paul.”<sup>105</sup> And yet, as Mitchell had posited with Chrysostom, Martin insisted that, amongst the sea of Pauline interpreters, there remained something unique about Augustine’s particular understanding of his relationship with Paul.<sup>106</sup>

Martin argued that Augustine’s reliance on Paul could demonstrably be said to have bracketed the entirety of his career as an exegete and preacher.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, claimed Martin, in every context (written or proclaimed), the voice of Augustine is ubiquitously undergirded by the voice of Paul. So deep and so “carefully crafted” was the connection which Augustine formed between himself and the Apostle that it is often difficult to determine where Paul ends and Augustine begins.<sup>108</sup> Again, in a fashion reminiscent of Chrysostom, it was Augustine’s conviction that the challenges and experiences he encountered in his own time were analogous to those experienced by Paul that seems to have provided the foundation and motivation for the construction of this relationship. As he matured as a believer and advanced in his career as bishop, Augustine turned evermore towards Paul, to the extent that he would often appropriate the words and language of Paul in order to describe the events of his own life.<sup>109</sup>

Like Chrysostom, however, Augustine’s Pauline affections were neither formed nor communicated without purpose. The intimate relationship which Augustine

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<sup>105</sup> Thomas Martin, “Vox Pauli,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8:2 (2000), 241.

<sup>106</sup> Martin, 242.

<sup>107</sup> Martin, 237-238.

<sup>108</sup> Martin, 243.

<sup>109</sup> Martin, 243.

imagined as existing between himself and Paul was not a relationship that existed exclusively for Augustine's personal spiritual benefit. Rather, Augustine attempted to derive a pragmatic benefit from this relationship for the living Church.<sup>110</sup> As Martin noted, the doctrinal debates which flourished during this time (and in which Augustine was deeply immersed) were debates which hinged on the proper interpretation of Pauline teachings. In this context, Augustine endeavored to establish the veracity of his position on these matters by appealing directly to Paul as the ultimate arbiter of truth within these debates. To that end, Augustine, particularly in the context of his preaching, employed a specific oratorical technique known as *sermocinatio*, in order to, rhetorically speaking, directly involve Paul in the doctrinal debates of the fourth and fifth centuries.

The *sermocinatio* was a rhetorical device calculated to reflect the rhythms of actual conversations.<sup>111</sup> Essentially, in his preaching, Augustine attempted to craft a three-way conversation, one which reflected a dialogic interaction between himself, Paul and his congregation. Within the context of these imagined conversations (which figure prominently in Augustine sermonic efforts), the Apostle is portrayed as able to speak on his own behalf. Indeed, when introducing such conversations, Augustine would call upon his congregation to give an ear to Paul himself.<sup>112</sup> The benefits of employing the *sermocinatio* were two-fold. In the first place, the speaker is given the opportunity to step back from the line-by-line exegesis of the text and to re-invigorate the message with some dialogue. More importantly, however, these dialogues created a point of contact

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<sup>110</sup> Martin, 238. Here Martin reflects on the pragmatic quality of Augustine's identification with Paul, noting that this was a deliberate and goal oriented strategy. As such, in part, says Martin, the goal was to raise the quality of the preaching and teaching amongst North African believers.

<sup>111</sup> Martin, 257.

<sup>112</sup> Martin, 255.

between Paul and Augustine's congregation – one in which Paul could be presented as affirming and confirming Augustine's interpretation of Paul's teachings.<sup>113</sup> By extension, of course, the veracity of Augustine's doctrinal statements, as well as his personal authority as bishop, were symbolically reinforced by Paul's voice

Having an appreciation of Chrysostom's and Augustine's personal and rhetorical relationship with Paul is a necessary precondition for understanding Calvin's view of the pastoral office. Calvin was intimately aware of and informed by the writings and thought of both of these men. Calvin, for instance, was not only aware of Chrysostom's writings, he had praised Chrysostom for his virtue as a preacher and expositor of Scripture in his preface to the 1540 edition of Chrysostom's works. Indeed, Calvin saw in his shared calling as a preacher a common cause with Chrysostom. Further, to speak of Calvin's (and indeed any Reformer's) debt to Augustine, would require a thesis in itself. In this context, however, what is of importance is the awareness that Calvin not only understood himself as having a common cause with Chrysostom or Augustine, but that, like both of these Fathers, Calvin also employed Paul as a rhetorical strategy and pedagogical paradigm. Like Augustine and Chrysostom, Calvin also drew an unusually close bond between himself and the person of Paul – a bond which Calvin believed was based on their shared experiences and calling. Like Chrysostom and Augustine, Paul's voice, as mediated by Calvin, figures prominently in Calvin's exegetical and sermonic work. However, where Chrysostom had found in Paul the model of the "worldly ascetic," and

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<sup>113</sup> Martin, 254.



Augustine had found a model of doctrinal purity and orthodoxy, Calvin turned to Paul as a vocational paradigm for the ministry.<sup>114</sup>

By employing Paul in ways reflective of the Fathers, Calvin not only positioned himself within the broader context of Christianity history, he also acted in a manner that reflected contemporary humanist practices. Specifically, in attempting to fashion a distinctly Pauline image of himself in the minds of his listeners Calvin was involved in a deliberate act of public self-fashioning, a common strategy employed by humanists of that era. Stephen Greenblatt's seminal research on this topic has demonstrated that the concept of self-fashioning was very much a part of the Early Modern mindset. Greenblatt noted that the sixteenth century witnessed "an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process."<sup>115</sup> He suggested that people were attuned to the idea of creating a "distinctive personality" with which to address the world – one based on a "consistent mode of perceiving and behaving."<sup>116</sup> This construction and presentation of 'self', Greenblatt noted, could take place via speech or action and aimed at the representation of one's true nature. Further, Greenblatt claimed that this process could prove transgressive of boundaries between literary characters and the 'self' which was being shaped. Finally, the attempt to fashion public selves could also be shaped by forces outside of an individual's control.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> It should be noted that Chrysostom was also aware of the value of Paul as a model for pastoral practice. Mitchell noted that, among the various rhetorical portraits of Paul devised by Chrysostom, Paul also appears as the model priest: "...Paul the urban pastoral ascetic, the precise paradigm of [John's] own vocation: The blessed Paul filled out for us the portrait of the excellent priest." Mitchell, 382.

<sup>115</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 2.

<sup>116</sup> Greenblatt, 2.

<sup>117</sup> Greenblatt, 3.

A particularly well developed example of sixteenth-century efforts at self-fashioning can be found in the writings of the Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus – a man whose scholarly acumen Calvin, during his post university days, had initially hoped to emulate and even surpass! In her study of Erasmus, Lisa Jardine explored the ways in which Erasmus very deliberately attempted to construct a public persona and reputation for both himself and, by extension, for the larger humanist movement. To this end, she claimed that Erasmus had engaged in a deliberate act of self-fashioning, one which she claimed could be found carefully crafted in his printed works with all of the clarity and skill of Albrecht Durer.<sup>118</sup> Jardine referred to this act of self-presentation in the written word as the creation of a “print portrait.”<sup>119</sup> In her study, she sought to explicate how Erasmus had successfully crafted such a persona (one laden with meaning and intent) in the minds of his readers.<sup>120</sup> Jardine began by noting that, in the creation of this print portrait, Erasmus had gravitated towards the familiar figure of Jerome as a means of both asserting his own skill as a humanist scholar and lending credibility to the larger humanist project.<sup>121</sup> Jardine asserted that, far from engaging in a slavish and mechanistic imitation of Jerome, Erasmus had hoped that his attempt to impersonate Jerome as closely as possible would provide a wellspring of personal inspiration.<sup>122</sup> The ultimate end of these efforts, claimed Jardine, was an attempt to transfer to Erasmus, as a scholar, the aura that had once surrounded the holy men of the Late Antique world. What we discover in these efforts, argued Jardine, is the “transition from sacred to learned as the

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<sup>118</sup> Lisa Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters: The Construction of Charisma In Print* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 14.

<sup>119</sup> Jardine, 9.

<sup>120</sup> Jardine, 59.

<sup>121</sup> Jardine, 4.

<sup>122</sup> Jardine, 59

grounds for personal spiritual salvation.”<sup>123</sup> Via this print portrait, one which presented Erasmus to literate society as one garbed in the mantle of Jerome, Erasmus sought to accrue to himself, and by extension the whole of the humanist endeavor, all of the “grandeur and intellectual *gravitas*” of this ancient church father.<sup>124</sup>

The most explicit example of Erasmus’ efforts at inhabiting the same authorial and authoritative space as Jerome can be found in his biography of the Father, the *Hieronymi Stridonensis Vita* published in 1516.<sup>125</sup> Erasmus began this work by announcing his intent to set forth Jerome’s life as model for both scholarship and piety.<sup>126</sup> In order to achieve this goal, Erasmus claimed that he had elected to rely exclusively on Jerome’s own writings as the source material for his *Vita*, and that doing so was an attempt to strip away the centuries-old accretion of miraculous and hagiographical accounts that had encrusted the story of Jerome. Jardine noted that Erasmus’ efforts to produce an entirely factual biography represented a dramatic departure from the traditional function of the *Vita*. Rather, Erasmus’ *Vita* takes its place alongside biographies by Virgil and Petrarch, works which sought to present accounts of individuals who represented devotion to intellectual growth and education.<sup>127</sup> The

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<sup>123</sup> Jardine, 59.

<sup>124</sup> Jardine, 4. It is also worth highlighting Jardine’s reflection that Erasmus was convinced that “the advancement of learning was so urgent and important a task that it entitled the practitioner to use every ingenious method at his disposal to ensure that the cause prospered (pg. 4).” Jardine sought to defend Erasmus against charges of constructing a system in which primary goal was to centralize power in his own hands. Similar statements could, I think, be made about Calvin. There can be no denying that in his efforts at self-fashioning and public portraiture, efforts which sought to align Calvin with Paul and to derive the concomitant authoritative benefits of such an alliance, Calvin was involved in a project that was by definition self-empowering. Like Erasmus, however, Calvin was driven by the conviction that the welfare of the larger cause justified such efforts.

<sup>125</sup> For an overview of the importance of the literary and historical significance of the *Vita* see: John B Maguire, "Erasmus' Biographical Masterpiece: Hieronymi Stridonensis Vita" *Renaissance Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (1973): 265-273.

<sup>126</sup> Jardine, 60.

<sup>127</sup> Jardine, 62.

Jerome presented by Erasmus was not the “self-mortifying penitent” but, rather, the scholar, whose library and books must be understood as most fully characterizing the scholar-saint.<sup>128</sup> The logical conclusion of such an understanding of Jerome was that, if one wished to fully emulate the saint as an example, such emulation would require adopting a life of study. Sharing in Jerome’s aura of sanctity required sharing in his devotion to the study and exegesis of both the secular and sacred texts of the classical world.<sup>129</sup> Ultimately, by presenting Jerome in such a fashion (and indeed going so far to claim a kind of ownership of Jerome’s works as a result of his editorial labours) Erasmus was clearly attempting to place an image of himself as a copy of Jerome within the minds of contemporary readers. Of critical importance is Jardine’s assertion that Erasmus fully expected his readers to “follow the trails that he laid.”<sup>130</sup> That is to say, Erasmus believed that his readers could and would perceive his efforts to inhabit the same authorial and authoritative space as Jerome, and that such a recognition would elicit an acknowledgement of Erasmus’ position as the foremost spokesperson for the new humanist learning.

Jardine’s contention that Erasmus had claimed Jerome “not simply as his model but as his own” is of particular importance for this study.<sup>131</sup> She noted how in his *Vita* Erasmus had often employed language which aligned his personal experiences with those of Jerome. As an example, Erasmus had chosen to portray Jerome’s time in the Syrian desert as being analogous to the kind of intensive periods of study undertaken by humanist scholars – particularly those inclined to follow an Erasmian program of

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<sup>128</sup> Jardine, 67.

<sup>129</sup> Jardine, 67.

<sup>130</sup> Jardine, 26.

<sup>131</sup> Jardine, 68.

learning.<sup>132</sup> Ultimately, Jardine concluded that Erasmus had so closely bound himself together with Jerome that the image of Jerome presented in the *Vita* was, rather “disconcertingly”, a self-portrait of Erasmus himself. Critically, however, she argued that Erasmus’ Jerome was more than just a disguise. Referencing the insights of Rice and Olin, Jardine noted that: “We revive a figure from the past because he meets a present need, suggests a present strategy, can be used to beat a present enemy and further a present cause, makes a legitimate call for change and reform.”<sup>133</sup> Ultimately, as Erasmus had turned to Jerome, so Calvin would turn to Paul and for precisely these same reasons. By publically self-fashioning an image of himself that was overtly Pauline in its construction, Calvin labored not only to further the cause of establishing pastoral authority in Geneva and abroad but to transfer Paul’s authority to himself and to use that authority to enact genuine change and reform in the church that he pastored.

At this juncture, it might be argued that Paul was not the only biblical persona to be employed by Calvin as a model for Christian emulation. Barbara Pitkin, for instance, has demonstrated how Calvin employed King David in a similar fashion. Pitkin considered Calvin’s exegesis of the Psalms and reflected on how David figured prominently for Calvin as a paradigm of faith for sixteenth-century Christians. She began by noting that for Calvin the primary function of the Psalms was not to convey information about faith, but to be illustrative of faith in action.<sup>134</sup> In this context, Calvin found in David an individual whose words and deeds exemplified how Scripture ought to

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<sup>132</sup> Jardine, 68-69

<sup>133</sup> Jardine, 74.

<sup>134</sup> Barbara Pitkin, “Imitation of David: David as Paradigm for Faith in Calvin’s Exegesis of the Psalms,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 24:4 (1993), 857.

serve as a guiding light for all believers.<sup>135</sup> In his exegesis of and preaching on the Psalms, Calvin frequently identified David as a model to be imitated by Christians in his own time. Again, Calvin's motives for presenting David in such a mimetic fashion was his conviction that David's historical and spiritual circumstances were closely analogous to those experienced by sixteenth-century Christians.<sup>136</sup>

While it is certainly fair to say that Paul was not the only biblical figure whom Calvin used as a model, it also important to note that there remains something unique about the way in which Calvin turned to Paul. In the first place, whereas David served as a model for all Christian believers, in so far as all believers have been called to put their faith into action, Calvin's Paul served as a model for a specific subset of those believers – that is to say, the pastors who shared Paul's vocational call as a minister of the Word. Further, while Calvin presented David and other biblical figures as individuals worthy of emulation, he did not associate himself with those figures as fully as he did with Paul. Like Chrysostom, Calvin presents himself as occupying the same space as Paul – as sharing a deep and intimate bond with the apostle, a bond based on the challenges of a shared vocation – and, in so far as his understanding of his calling was concerned, he forged no similar connection with any other biblical personage.

Where Pitkin's consideration of Calvin's use of David proves particularly instructive, however, is in her assertion that by closely examining Calvin's rhetorical strategy of presenting David as paradigmatic of faith in action, we discover that Calvin has revealed, in a surprisingly intimate way, a number of his most deeply held theological

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<sup>135</sup> Pitkin, 851.

<sup>136</sup> Pitkin, 862.

convictions.<sup>137</sup> That is to say, a thorough assessment of Calvin's David yields unexpected and valuable insight into the heart and mind of Calvin himself – an interior landscape which we know so little about! Critically, similar insights into Calvin's sense of identity and self can be gleaned by conducting a thorough examination of the ways in which Calvin presents Paul as a vocational paradigm for pastors. In presenting his vision of Paul the pastor, a man with whom Calvin imagined he enjoyed a surprisingly close relationship, we can catch glimpses of the man whom Calvin believed himself to be – or, at the very least, the man who he was attempting to be.<sup>138</sup>

Having established Paul as Calvin's predominant, if not exclusive, mimetic model and having situated Calvin within both a traditional and contemporary context of behavior, the deeply personal character of Calvin's relationship with Paul must be examined. In so far as we know relatively little about the earliest years of Calvin's life the exact origins of his relationship with Paul are difficult to chart. From his surviving work, however, it is clear that the intensity of Calvin's feelings for Paul crystalized during the first years of his ministry in Geneva. In order to appreciate what motivated Calvin to bind himself so closely to the Apostle something must be said of his personal history, his conversion to the Protestant faith, and his journey towards the ministry and Geneva.

Calvin was born in 1509 in Noyon to Gerard and Jeanne Cauvin (Calvin being a later Latinization of the family's surname). Gerard served as the secretary to the local bishop and like many fathers of the time he considered education to be the most secure

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<sup>137</sup> Pitkin, 844-845.

<sup>138</sup> Mitchell made similar observations regarding Chrysostom's depiction of Paul: "The Pauls whom Chrysostom paints bear striking resemblance to John himself, even as John was quite self-consciously pushing that process along by his mimetic engagement with his beloved Paul (Mitchell, 382)."

means of advancing the family's fortunes. To that end, he used his position in the church to provide his sons with the best possible educational opportunities. For the young Calvin this meant that his primary and secondary education (financed by ecclesiastical benefices obtained for him by his father) were undertaken in the home of a local noble family (the Montmors) and ultimately concluded with a university education in Paris. There Calvin obtained both a Master's degree in the Arts and proceeded, according to his father's wishes to study the law.

His legal studies led him to Orleans where, in the course of a timeline we know frustratingly little about, he was converted to the Protestant cause. This process seems to have involved encouragement from his cousin, Pierre Robert Olivetan (who was involved in the production of a French Bible) and Melchior Wolmar (a leading professor of Greek). In his limited reflections on these events, Calvin indicates that his conversion was a gradual process, prolonged by his disinclination to break with the faith of his youth. Whatever the case may be, once that conversion occurred, the result was a complete break with his past beliefs and a new, unshakeable commitment to the tenets of evangelical doctrine.

Calvin's keen mind and gifts as a teacher ensured that he quickly progressed from recent convert to a position of increased responsibility and leadership with the Huguenot community. These leadership activities resulted in increased notoriety and it was not long before Calvin came to the attention of the Sorbonne – the bastion of medieval scholasticism and the champion of Gallican Catholicism. It was his association with the new rector of the University of Paris, Nicolas Cop (an individual with humanist inclinations and a degree of Lutheran sympathy), that ultimately sealed his fate in the



eyes of the leaders of the Sorbonne. On 1 November 1533, Cop delivered his inaugural address as rector – one in which he called for reform within the church. His address sparked outrage in the Sorbonne and in the subsequent investigation a copy of Cop's address, written in Calvin's hand, was discovered in the rector's apartment. As a result, both men were forced to flee the city.

After a period of mendicancy Calvin arrived in Basel where, in 1536, he published the first edition of what would become his most famous work, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. While the long-term impact of the *Institutes* on the history and character of the Protestant faith is a question for another time, its rather unexpected impact on the trajectory of Calvin's personal life is significant here. In 1536 Calvin left Basel and set out for the city of Strasburg. His travels, however, were diverted by the outbreak of war on the roads ahead and, unexpectedly, Calvin found himself taking refuge in the Swiss city of Geneva. His intention had been to take refuge in Geneva for but a single night but William Farel had other plans for this talented young man. In fact, Calvin's decision to detour to Geneva profoundly shaped the remainder of his life. For, on that August night, Calvin received an unexpected request to assume a leadership role within the Protestant movement. This call to arms was delivered by William Farel, a man whom Calvin would later see as having delivered a Divinely sanctioned summons to assume the mantle of minister in Geneva.

Somehow or other, Farel had been alerted to Calvin's arrival in Geneva. Farel, who had read the first edition of Calvin's *Institutes*, was convinced that the author of this brief, yet remarkably lucid and comprehensive tract, had been sent by God to aid in the task of truly reforming the Genevan church. Farel rushed to the inn where Calvin was

staying and there he begged Calvin to remain in Geneva and to help transform a church that had become Protestant for largely political reasons into one that was truly convinced by and committed to Reformation doctrines. Calvin's initial reaction to Farel's request was to beg off and to insist that he intended to be on his way to Strasburg where he hoped to pursue a life of scholarly pursuits. Farel, however, was not dissuaded by Calvin's protestations. His fiery temper soon broke through and, as Calvin later recounted in the "Preface" to his Commentary on the Psalms:

...he proceeded to utter an imprecation that God would curse my retirement, and the tranquility of the studies which I sought, if I should withdraw and refuse to give assistance, when the necessity was so urgent. By this imprecation I was so stricken with terror, that I desisted from the journey which I had undertaken; but sensible of my natural bashfulness and timidity, I would not bring myself under obligation to discharge any particular office.

So began Calvin's career as a churchman in Geneva and in short order he found himself laboring beside Farel to establish a church that was free from papal superstition and Reformed in heart as well as name. During the earliest days of his tenure in Geneva, Calvin did not occupy a specific office within the church. Rather, his initial task was that of a teacher – one charged with lecturing about the Bible to the Genevan faithful. He did not, however, remain in the background for very long and, as Ozment noted: "almost overnight Calvin assumed [the] leadership of the Genevan Reformation." Although Calvin was never formally ordained to the office of minister, by the spring of 1537 he had begun to preach in the city.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Gordon (2009), 71.

Calvin recounts the details of how he assumed the mantle of minister in Geneva in the preface to his *Commentary on the Psalms*. In his description of these events, the undoubtedly Pauline overtones of his presentation have not gone unnoticed. Calvin's explanation of how he came to hold a leadership position with the Protestant movement broadly, and the Genevan church specifically, is presented within the context of what might be called a conversion narrative. And, in so far as the story of Paul's Damascus road conversion has become something of an archetypal conversion story, it is, perhaps, no surprise that Calvin's account of his own 'conversion' to the ministry would mirror Paul's. Nevertheless, the parallels remain striking and are worthy of further reflection. In his account, Calvin, like Paul, was travelling down a road – in this case to Strasburg rather than Damascus. Like Paul, Calvin had a clear sense of where he was headed and what he hoped to accomplish when he arrived at his destination. Like Paul, Calvin's travels were suddenly arrested by a Divinely issued summons. And, just as with Paul, this unexpected summons dramatically changed the trajectory of Calvin's life. What is perhaps most significant, however, is that for both men, their 'roadside' conversion represented more than a simple call to faith. As part of their experience, both Paul and Calvin received a commission and a call to action and office. Reflecting on Paul's conversion in Acts 9, Calvin noted how remarkable this call to action was. Being converted from a state of unbelief to belief was one thing, said Calvin. However, being converted from being a wolf to being a shepherd was something else entirely.<sup>140</sup> To be sure, their shared calls to

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<sup>140</sup> Quotations from Calvin's commentaries will be cited in the following format: Comm. Passage (page

action were not completely identical. Paul was commissioned to become the apostle to the Gentiles, a call which came directly from Christ. By contrast, Calvin's call to become a minister in Geneva came from Farel. Nevertheless, the parallels are striking. It is also worth noting that, in both cases, following the reception of their call to office, neither Paul nor Calvin leapt immediately into the fray. Paul, rather than immediately taking up his apostolic labours spent time preparing himself to take up his calling – first at the feet of Ananias in Damascus and later in a time of reflection and prayer. Similarly, Calvin balked at immediately being ordained to office and he began his career in Geneva as a kind of lecturer or teacher of the new Protestant doctrines.

Despite the fact that the Pauline overtones of Calvin's reflections on his entrance into the ministry are both obvious and unsurprising, they remain a crucial component in understanding how Calvin understood the task of the minister generally, as well as his own particular circumstances as a pastor. From his earliest days in Geneva and as a leader in the Protestant cause, Calvin believed himself to have received a very direct and personal call to take up the task of the ministry. It would be impossible to overstate the impact that this sense of calling and vocation had on Calvin and his life. As Benoit noted in his reflections about the importance of understanding Calvin as a pastor: "once he had accepted his vocation, nothing could turn him from it."<sup>141</sup>

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number). Comm. Acts 9:5, 260.

<sup>141</sup> Jean Daniel Benoit "Pastoral Care of the Prophet" in *John Calvin: Contemporary Prophet*, Jacob Hoopstra ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1959), 52.

Evidence of the intimacy of the relationship which Calvin envisioned as existing between himself and Paul can also be found in much of Calvin's public discourse. In a way deeply reflective of Augustine's use of the *sermocinatio*, Calvin often appropriated Paul's voice when he operated in a public context. Take for instance the opening remarks of a letter Calvin dispatched to the Genevan Church in October of 1538: "To my dearly-beloved brethren in our Lord, who are the relics of the Dispersion of the Church at Geneva."<sup>142</sup> To anyone familiar with the ways in which Paul opened his letters to the churches of Palestine and Asia Minor, the Pauline tone of Calvin's address is immediately apparent. In that same letter, Calvin continues on to pronounce a blessing upon the Genevan believers: "The mercy of God our Father, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, be continually multiplied upon you by the communication of the Holy Spirit."<sup>143</sup> Compare Calvin's words with Paul's opening benediction in his letter to the Corinthian church in II Corinthians 1:1-2: "To the Church of God in Corinth, together with all the saints throughout Achaia: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." The Genevans who received and read Calvin's letter in 1538 could hardly have failed to recognize the clearly Pauline overtones of Calvin's address, nor would they have failed to understand that they were receiving a letter from a man who believed himself to have the authority to employ such an address and who expected them to respond to him as they would to Paul.

The overtly Pauline character of Calvin's prose can be seen not only in how he addressed himself to the Genevans, but also in how he spoke to his closest confidants

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<sup>142</sup> *Letters*, 1 October 1538, v1:82.

<sup>143</sup> *Letters*, 1 October 1538, v1:83.

about how he understood his task as pastor within that city. In a letter to Farel in April of 1539, Calvin, who was in Strasburg at the time and was reflecting on the efforts to return him to Geneva, noted that: “Therefore whether I remain where I am or remove, many cares, many troubles and difficulties pursue me.”<sup>144</sup> Again, contrasting Calvin’s comments with Paul’s proves illustrative. In Acts 20:22ff, Paul bids farewell to the elders of the Ephesian church. There he comments: “Compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.” Could Farel have failed to have noticed the parallels between Calvin’s comments, reflecting on whether he should submit to the apparent direction of the Spirit and leave Strasburg (a place of relative comfort and safety) to return to the tempestuous waters of Geneva and the sadness expressed by Paul as he departed from Ephesus for Jerusalem, where he knew he would face naught but suffering and likely death? The parallels become even clearer when we consider Calvin’s letter to Farel in September 1541 where Calvin, having decided to return to Geneva wrote: “But when I remember that I am not my own, I offer up my heart, presented as a sacrifice to the Lord.”<sup>145</sup> Surely the echo of Paul’s comments to the Ephesian elders that he considered his “life to be worth nothing...if only [he might] finish the race...the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace” are apparent.

Calvin’s decision to contextualize and present his return to Geneva in Pauline terms was not restricted to his private correspondence, however. In his sermon on Acts

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<sup>144</sup> *Letters*, April 1539, v1: 111.

<sup>145</sup> *Letters*, 24 April 1541, v.1:256-257.

14:22, Calvin addressed these comments to his congregation: “Nor did [Paul] seek some retreat where he might enjoy his ease like a veteran soldier, but [he] actually goes back to the places where a short while ago, he had been badly treated.”<sup>146</sup> His Genevan audience would not have missed the obvious parallels between Paul’s experiences and Calvin’s – who himself had departed from the relative peace of Strasburg in order to return to a locale where, not long ago, he had been poorly treated. In a similar fashion, Calvin once lamented to his congregation that there was “so much confusion and disorder” in the Genevan church that he was “ashamed to preach the Word of God” among them. So great was his frustration that he confessed that he wished that God might take him out of this world instead!<sup>147</sup> Undoubtedly, his audience would have recognized the resonance between Calvin’s desire to be removed from Geneva and Paul’s monologue in Philippians 1 in which he concluded that, as much as he wished to be with Christ, it was better for the Church if he remained and continued his labours amongst them.

At times Calvin appropriated Paul’s voice and he imagined conversations that the Apostle might have had as he reflected on the exigencies of carrying out his work. Calvin employed the strategy of speaking with the voice of a particular biblical personage at times when he wished to make a particularly direct criticism of the Genevans’ behavior. In presenting his thoughts this way, he was able to create a kind of authorial space from which he could make particularly bold or challenging claims, without appearing to have made those claims himself, or in his own interests. Though Calvin employed the voices of a range of biblical figures (Moses, David, Daniel and Micah for

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<sup>146</sup> Sermon, Acts 14:22 , 16.

<sup>147</sup> Sermon, I Tim 3:14-15, 124.

instance), he often turned to Paul in moments when he wanted to communicate something about the nature of ministry, or the vexations that pastors experienced as they carried out their task. As an example, consider this passage taken from Calvin's commentary on II Corinthians 4:7, where he imagines, in a conversational way, the sentiments Paul might have expressed to his Corinthian audience:

It is as if Paul had said, 'Those who use the abasement of my person as an excuse for detracting from the honour of my ministry are unjust and unreasonable judges.' For a treasure does not become less valuable through being deposited in a vessel of no value. In fact it is common practice for great treasures to be stored in earthenware pots. Thus they do not realize that things have been so ordered by the special providence of God that there should be in ministers no appearance of excellence in order that no greatness of theirs should obscure the power of God. Since therefore the abject condition of ministers and the outward abasement of their persons give God occasion for glory, it is foolish and wrong to measure the worth of the Gospel by the person of the minister.<sup>148</sup>

In a number of instances, Calvin also describes the circumstances of his personal life in distinctly Pauline terms. In his comments on II Corinthians 6:5, for instance, Calvin offered the following reflections on Paul's ability to remain calm and peaceful in the face of trials and travails:

The calmness and gentleness of Paul's character were matched by the courage he showed in standing undaunted in the face of tumults and he claims for himself the credit of meeting them with bravery, although he hated them. It is not simply that he was unmoved by tumults – for that could be said of all rioters – but that he was not thrown into alarm by tumults that other people had stirred up. Both things are required of ministers of the Gospel, that they should be to the utmost of their power men of peace and yet should also pass undaunted through the midst of commotions without turning from the right course, even though the heavens should fall.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Comm. II Cor. 4:7, 58.

<sup>149</sup> Comm. II Cor. 6:5, 86.



These reflections about Paul's conduct can be compared to Calvin's presentation of his own success in quelling a riotous situation which had developed in Geneva. In a December 1547 letter to Viret, Calvin recounted a series of events involving a public disturbance in Geneva that very nearly got out of hand. Prior to a meeting of the Two Hundred (the larger Council in Geneva that ranked below the Syndics and Small Council in power), Calvin describes a situation in which his opponents within the city had stoked the general populace to a point on the border of insurrection. In these super-charged conditions, Calvin spoke of how he had thrown himself in the crowds surrounding the "senate house" to the "amazement" of nearly everyone present. Calvin tells of how he was seized upon by the crowd and how he shouted to them that he had come to surrender his body to the sword and that if they wished to shed blood to begin with him. His exhortations, he insisted to Viret, calmed the crowd to the point that even his fiercest opponents were pacified for a time. When new tumults arose inside the senate house, Calvin again threw himself into the fray, once again offering himself as a peace offering. He delivered "long and vehement" speeches which he deemed suitable for the occasion and in so doing calmed the crowd once and for all – avoiding by his efforts a "great and disgraceful carnage." Calvin then, in his account of these events (events which Bonnet notes remained fresh in his mind until some seventeen years later on his death bed), presents himself as exhibiting the type of calm and courage that Paul so vibrantly exhibits in the above quotation.

Calvin's relationship with Paul was a deeply personal one which provided him with a sense of purpose, encouragement and an authoritative position from which he could work to establish both his own authority and the authority of the ministerial office

in general. Paul, however, came to serve an additional purpose in Calvin's thinking about the ministry. In drawing ever closer to Paul, Calvin discovered that, in addition to serving as a personal role model, Paul could be set forth as an exemplar of vocational excellence for all pastors. He came to see Paul's ministry as presenting "a living picture" of a faithful shepherd of God's people.<sup>150</sup> To that end, Calvin called upon "all those...that teach the church [to] follow the example of the apostle."<sup>151</sup> Of course, as Holder noted, the analogy was not an exact fit. As an apostle Paul had been directly and personally called by Christ and charged with a ministry that encompassed the known world. Regular pastors, however, remained rooted in a local setting and were called by different means. Nevertheless, out of his closeness to Paul, Calvin derived a number of principles that could be applied broadly to pastors everywhere and in all times.

In what ways did Paul exemplify the kind of generic behaviours that ought to be adopted by faithful pastors throughout the ages? In the first place, Paul was to be emulated in the way in which he had taken up his task.<sup>152</sup> It was critical for Calvin that the position of apostle was not one which Paul had either seized or sought out; rather it had been "imposed on him by God."<sup>153</sup> For Calvin this was the foundation on which Paul's authority rested and again and again he noted how Paul had taken great pains to "prove that he was an apostle, not as one that had been put forward by men's favour, nor as one who had been brought into it haphazardly, but as one put forward by God's free

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<sup>150</sup> Comm. II Cor. 6:3, 83.

<sup>151</sup> Serm. Titus 1:10-12, 175.

<sup>152</sup> See for instance – Comm. Gal.1:1, 8: "The first fact, that he was not called from men, he had in common with all true ministers of Christ. As no man should take this honour to himself, so neither is it in the power of men to bestow on whom they wish."

<sup>153</sup> Comm. 1 Cor. 1:1, 15.

goodness.”<sup>154</sup> The connection which Calvin drew between the circumstances of Paul’s calling and his authority as an apostle can be clearly seen in his commentary on Colossians 1:23, where he noted that in seeking “to secure for himself right and authority, [Paul] declares that this office was laid upon him.”<sup>155</sup>

Calvin also called on pastors take note of Paul’s motivation in the execution of his task. In a sermon on Galatians 2:6-10, Calvin entertained the notion that perhaps Paul might reasonably be characterized as having acted in his own self-interest and having sought nothing more than to “establish his own authority and worth.”<sup>156</sup> Calvin responded to this charge by once again reflecting on the manner of Paul’s calling. Because Paul recognized that his authority had its origins outside of himself, says Calvin, he also refused to keep any of the glory of the task of ministry for himself.<sup>157</sup> Further, far from seeking his own comfort or well-being, Calvin insisted, Paul was unconcerned about his personal reputation and standing.<sup>158</sup> Indeed, rather than acting in calculatedly self-interested ways, Calvin noted how Paul had endeavored to cement his authority by

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<sup>154</sup> Sermon, Eph. 3:1-6, 232.

<sup>155</sup> Comm. Col. 2:23, 317. See also Calvin’s sermon on Ephesians? (232), where Calvin noted that Paul had not thrust himself forward as a preacher, nor was he drawn forward by a desire to please men; rather, had had been made a preacher by God’s call and he strove mightily to carry out his calling.

<sup>156</sup> Sermon, Gal. 2:6-10, 129.

<sup>157</sup> Comm. I Cor. 3:10, 73: “Paul always takes great care not to divert to himself the least little bit of the glory that belong to God. For he carries everything back to God and leaves nothing for himself, except that he was an instrument.

<sup>158</sup> Comm. II Cor. 1:18, 20 – “But Paul sets little store on what men think of him personally as long as the authority of his teaching is preserved....” See also: Comm. II Cor. 13:8 (174) – “That is why [Paul] says that the man who fights and labours solely for the sake of the truth will not take it amiss, should the need arise, to be considered a reprobate in the eyes of men, provided that no harm is done to the glory of God, the upbuilding of the church and the authority of sound teaching.” Sermon, Gal. 1:8-10 (50): “because this shows us that he has no regard for his own person, and that he simply wants to honour God and ensure that His Word is accepted by all without reservation.”

demonstrating a clear love for his flock.<sup>159</sup> After “showing in the greeting that his authority rests on the role that had been imposed upon him,” Calvin said, “Paul now procures acceptance for his teaching, by expressing his love towards them.”<sup>160</sup>

Further, Paul was driven by the desire to ensure that people would acknowledge the truth of his message and heed his rebukes. Paul, Calvin wrote, asserted “his apostleship, [in order] to keep [his audience] from treating what he [said] as being of no importance.”<sup>161</sup> Paul’s demonstration of authority served also to ensure that those who heard him would “listen to his rebukes with patience.”<sup>162</sup> Calvin concluded that Paul was working to establish not just his own authority, but the authority of all those who followed him as pastors and teachers. Indeed, says Calvin, “Paul everywhere labour[ed] by his recommendation, to make those whom he [knew] to be faithful servants of Christ very dear to the churches.”<sup>163</sup> Paul’s purpose, claimed Calvin, was to “win authority for himself and those who are like him for the sake of God’s glory and the good of the church.”<sup>164</sup> Paul’s concern to establish the authority of future ministers can be clearly seen, Calvin suggested, in the context of his relationship with Timothy. In his reflections on Timothy’s ministry, Calvin considered how Paul had commended Timothy to the Church “as if he were another Paul.”<sup>165</sup> In doing so, Calvin claimed, Paul was:

...laying claim to the public authority that belonged to him before all men, and he [was] doing it the more carefully because, with his death approaching, he wish[ed] to gain approval for the whole course of his

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<sup>159</sup> Comm. Philippians 1:8, 231: “It was too, of the first importance that Paul’s love should be thoroughly made known to the Philippians. For it will in no small degree win credit for the teaching, when the people are persuaded that they are loved by the teacher.”

<sup>160</sup> Comm. I Cor. 1:4, 20.

<sup>161</sup> Comm. I Tim. 1:1, 187.

<sup>162</sup> Comm. I Cor. 1:4, 20.

<sup>163</sup> Comm. Col. 1:6, 303.

<sup>164</sup> Comm. II Cor. 6:3, 83.

<sup>165</sup> Comm. I Tim. 1:2, 107.

ministry, and to set the seal on his doctrine which he had spent so much labour in teaching, that it might be held sacred by posterity, and to leave a true representation of it in Timothy.<sup>166</sup>

A proper calling and right motivation were the foundation upon which faithful pastors were to carry out their primary task of proclaiming the Gospel message. Here too, Calvin highlighted the excellence of Paul as a pastoral model. The language Calvin employed to describe Paul's labours as a preacher is at times quite extraordinary. In a sermon on Galatians 6:1-2, Calvin noted that Paul lived in the world "like an angel of God."<sup>167</sup> These comments echo an observation which he had made in an earlier sermon on Galatians 1:1-14, when he noted that Paul had been willing to sacrifice his reputation as "a holy man, something like an angel" in his zeal to serve Christ.<sup>168</sup> On what grounds could Calvin liken Paul to an angel? In his proclamation of the Gospel Paul had served as a Divinely sanctioned messenger and thus, from a functional perspective, was comparable to the angels who served God by making His will known to men. Further, Calvin noted that as a trustworthy emissary Paul had delivered the message entrusted to him without altering or confusing it in any way. Paul, Calvin stated, had "preached the gospel in purity and held it forth in simplicity."<sup>169</sup>

In summary, Calvin's thinking about the pastoral office was closely connected to the person and work of the Apostle Paul. At a profoundly personal level Calvin, like Chrysostom before him, found in Paul a close spiritual companion whose experience as a shepherd of God's people closely paralleled his own. From Augustine, Calvin borrowed the *sermocinatio*, a methodology which allowed him to speak in the context of his own

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<sup>166</sup> Comm. II Tim. 1:1, 289.

<sup>167</sup> Sermon, Galatians 6:1-2, 590.

<sup>168</sup> Sermon, Galatians 1:1-14, 70.

<sup>169</sup> Sermon, Titus 1:10-12, 175.

time with the voice and, by extension, the authority of Paul. Simply possessing a personal understanding of Paul's value and authority, however, did not solve the pragmatic problem of teaching the evangelical community about how the new Protestant cleric would function. Thus, following in the footsteps of Erasmus and other humanist scholars, Calvin forged for himself a public persona – one that was distinctly and deliberately Pauline in its character. Like Erasmus, Calvin trusted that his audience would recognize and respond to his overtly image-laden prose and speech. Behind this conscious imitation of Paul, lay Calvin's conviction that if he could successfully establish his authority in Geneva in the way that Paul had established his authority amongst the churches of the Apostolic era, then he could accomplish in Geneva what Paul had accomplished centuries before. Calvin was certain that if the Genevans, and by extension Protestants everywhere, could be taught to respond properly to pastors who had been rightly called and who carried out their calling faithfully, the evangelical cause would flourish both within and beyond the Genevan borders.

Reaching this goal, however, necessitated a clear understanding of the pastors' most important task, which was the preaching of the Word. In the following chapter, Calvin's efforts to establish the church as the exclusive repository of preaching and to present preaching as the sole means by which God effected salvation will be examined. His efforts to accomplish these goals remained undergirded by his identification of Paul as the ultimate pastoral role model. Pastors cast in the mold of Paul could lay claim to an inherent authority within the community; a right to be heard and received as men who brought a message from God.

## Chapter Two - The Pastor in the Pulpit

As a consequence of the Reformation doctrine of *sola fide* Protestant theologians were forced to develop a vision of the church that differed radically from traditional medieval ecclesiology. In their efforts to conceptualize the church as an institution the Reformers confronted the essential question of how believers ought to communicate with God. Medieval theologians had concluded that God was most fully encountered in the sacraments and had identified the mass as the means by which believers could most intimately connect with Him. Protestant thinkers, however, emphasized the *kerygmatic* character of the church.<sup>170</sup> In the Protestant ecclesiology of the sixteenth century the church was defined as being the exclusive repository of the Gospel message. Salvation could only be achieved when individuals encountered God via the proclamation of that Gospel. The task of the church was to gather in the souls of the elect by sharing with them the Gospel message of salvation by faith alone, in Christ alone, through grace alone. So profound was this transformation that Protestants came to describe preaching in terms once reserved for the sacraments as they translated the real presence of Christ from the Eucharistic elements to the proclaimed Word of God.

This *kerygmatic* vision of the institutional church had a concomitant impact on the ways in which Protestants (and indeed Calvin) thought about the ministerial office. If preaching was the singular way in which salvation was effected it was critical that this

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<sup>170</sup> *Kerygma* is a Greek word used in the New Testament for preaching. It is closely related to the Greek term *kērússō* meaning “to cry out or proclaim as a herald.” Old discussed and defined the concept of a *kerygmatic* preaching in his study of the history of preaching. Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, 4 volumes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), v.4, 133.

task be carried out correctly. In this chapter Calvin's understanding of the *kerygmatic* character of the church will be demonstrated. Additionally, his efforts to ensure a proper understanding of God's decision to enlist preachers as co-workers in the salvific process will be examined. Finally, Calvin's thinking about how ministers were to carry out the task of preaching within a church structured in such a fashion will be considered.

Calvin, like the other mainstream Reformers, believed that the church was an instrument which God had designed in order to bring about the salvation of His children. Calvin was clear that the receipt of "salvation and eternal blessedness" required having "faith in the [G]ospel."<sup>171</sup> And, according to His will and good pleasure, God had chosen to deposit this salvific Gospel in the Church. Calvin, then, insisted that: "for those to whom [God] is a Father the church [must] also [be a] Mother."<sup>172</sup> It was the Church into whose bosom God was "pleased to gather his sons," and by whom the faithful were to be shepherded from spiritual infancy until such time as "by her motherly care" they "at last reach the goal of faith."<sup>173</sup> Further, the possession of the Gospel message and, by extension, the forgiveness of sins was "so peculiar to the Church" that it could not be attained or enjoyed outside the "communion of the Church."<sup>174</sup> Thus, for Calvin, the Church was the both the exclusive repository of divine truth and the sole means by which God dispensed grace; salvation was neither to be sought nor found beyond her walls.

Calvin's sentiments about the necessity of the church cannot be separated from the historical or doctrinal context in which they were formed. From a dogmatic

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<sup>171</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1559 Edition, Ed. John. T. McNeil, Trans. By Ford Lewis Battles (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans: 1995), 4.1.1. Henceforth cited as: Inst. Book.chapter. paragraph.

<sup>172</sup> *Inst.* 4.1.1.

<sup>173</sup> *Inst.* 4.1.1.

<sup>174</sup> *Inst.* 4.1.22.



perspective, the potential implications of the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* were foremost in Calvin's mind. Calvin was concerned that, should the implications of *sola Scriptura* be worked out to their logical extremes, some individuals might choose to entirely reject the preaching ministry of the institutional church in favour of an exclusively personal engagement with Scripture. Worse yet, such people might begin to seek after extra-biblical revelation in the form of visions, dreams or prophecies. Calvin's dogmatic fears manifested themselves in a historical sense in Radical Reformers, sometimes collectively referred to as the Anabaptists. These Anabaptists, Calvin lamented, believed that they had no need for the "common ministry of the Church" and had either invented "secret revelations of the Spirit for themselves" or had claimed that the "private reading of Scripture [was] enough" for them.<sup>175</sup> Refuting such errors required the recognition that when Paul had spoken of the "usefulness of Scripture" he had not intended that "everyone should read, but that teachers ought to administer it, which is the duty laid upon them."<sup>176</sup> Indeed:

...since all wisdom is contained in the Scriptures, and neither we nor our teachers should seek it from any other source, he who ignores the help of the living voice and is content with silent Scripture will find how wrong it is to disregard a way of learning enjoined by God and Christ. Let us remember that the fact that the reading of Scripture is recommended to all does not annul the ministry of pastors so that believers should learn to profit both by reading and by hearing, since God has not ordained either in vain.<sup>177</sup>

In this quotation Calvin unequivocally rejects the possibility of seeking spiritual wisdom outside of Scripture or the institutional church in which it was proclaimed, whether in the

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<sup>175</sup> Comm. Eph. 4:12, 181.

<sup>176</sup> Comm. II Tim. 4:1, 332.

<sup>177</sup> Comm. II Tim. 4:1, 332.

form of some kind of personal revelation or by rejecting the preaching in favour of an exclusively personal reflection on Scripture.

The use of sacramental language and imagery to describe the preaching was also a feature of Calvin's reflections on the *kerygmatic* nature of the church. An example of such language can be found in his sermon on Galatians 5:4-6 delivered in early 1558. In this sermon, he informed his congregation that every time the Gospel was proclaimed, it was as if Christ Himself was being crucified in their midst. It was, he insisted, as if "we were seeing His blood flowing and were washed in it through the power of the Holy Spirit."<sup>178</sup> He made a similar comment in his explication of Galatians 3:1 where he stated that:

Let those who discharge the ministry of the Gospel aright learn not only to speak and declaim but also to penetrate into consciences, so that men may see Christ crucified and that His blood may flow. When the church has such painters as these she no longer needs wood and stone, that is, dead images, she no longer requires any pictures. And certainly images and pictures were first admitted to Christian temples when, partly, the pastors had become dumb and were mere shadows...[and] partly when they uttered a few words from the pulpit so coldly and superficially that the power and the efficacy of the ministry were utterly extinguished.<sup>179</sup>

God, then, had stored up the treasure of the Gospel in the church with the intent that in her care it would be both safeguarded and shared. Further, in order to ensure the successful sharing of the Gospel God had decided to raise up "pastors and teachers [in His Church] through whose lips he might teach his own."<sup>180</sup> And here we find what is one of the most significant elements of Calvin's thinking about the ministry: it was an

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<sup>178</sup> Sermon, Galatians 5:4-6, 481.

<sup>179</sup> Comm. Galatians 3:1, 47.

<sup>180</sup> *Inst.* 4.1.1.

office whose existence and efficacy were rooted in a Divine decree. It was, quite simply, God's will that the message of salvation be entrusted to and proclaimed by the ministry of men. The "preaching of the heavenly doctrine [has] been enjoined upon the pastors" Calvin declared in his *Institutes*.<sup>181</sup> This was the "order by which the Lord willed his church to be governed" and the faithful were to follow His dictates in this regard.<sup>182</sup>

What was crucial, Calvin insisted, was the recognition that God had not been obligated to act in this fashion. He was in no way obliged to have included men as partners in either proclaiming the Gospel, or in making it efficacious. Indeed, the salvation of the elect might have been achieved in a number of alternative ways. Calvin pointed out, for instance, that God could have chosen to reward faith with an immediate perfection: "We see how God, who could in a moment perfect His own, nevertheless desires them to grow up into manhood solely under the education of the Church."<sup>183</sup> Equally, had He so desired, God might have chosen to labour entirely independent of human activity: "God might Himself have performed this work [i.e. the ministry] Himself if He had chosen."<sup>184</sup> In an effort to motivate sinful men to receive the Gospel more readily, God might have communicated directly with His children, speaking to them with the words of His own mouth. "If [God] spoke from heaven," Calvin reflected, "it

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<sup>181</sup> *Inst.* 4.1.5

<sup>182</sup> *Inst.* 4.3.1.

<sup>183</sup> *Inst.* 4.1.5.

<sup>184</sup> *Comm.* Eph. 4:12, 180. See also, *Comm.* I Cor. 3:9, 72, where Calvin wrote: "Here an extraordinary thing is said about the ministry, that, while God is able to carry things out by Himself, He takes us, insignificant men that we are, to Himself as helpers, and uses us as instruments." See also Calvin's commentary on I Cor. 36 (69): "Similarly there is nothing to hinder God from being able to implant faith in sleeping men, without their doing anything, if He so wished."

would not be surprising if his sacred oracles were to be reverently received without delay by the ears and minds of all.”<sup>185</sup>

Calvin spent considerable time musing about the potential employment of angels as Divine agents of Gospel proclamation.<sup>186</sup> After all there are a number of instances in Scripture where angels serve as God’s ministers, announcing both His judgements and His salvific work. Calvin was in fact rather concerned that these angelic activities might be misinterpreted and he took steps to ensure that their role as Divine emissaries was correctly understood. An example of Calvin’s concern regarding angelic activity can be found in his consideration of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream about a great tree that was felled (a dream which decreed that, as punishment for his hubris, the king would live as one of the beasts of the field) Calvin’s attention was particularly drawn to the seventeenth verse of chapter four. In that verse, Nebuchadnezzar’s vision was said to reflect the “decree of the angelic watchers (NASB).” Calvin noted how this phrase had given rise to considerable consternation amongst earlier commentators in so far as it appeared to grant to the angels a providential authority that ought to have been attributed solely to God. Such fears could be allayed, however, Calvin insisted, if it was remembered that:

...it [was] not unusual in Scripture for God to join the angels with himself, not as equals, but as his ministers; yet ministers to whom he ascrib[ed] the great honour of deeming them worthy to be summoned to his counsel. .... Hence in this place also they are said to decree along with God, not of their own will or of themselves, as they say; but because they subscribe to God’s judgement.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> *Inst.* 4.3.1. See also in the same section: “I am constrained once more to repeat what I have already explained. He could indeed do it either by himself without any sort of aid or instrument, or even by angels; but there are many reasons why he prefers to do it by means of men.”

<sup>186</sup> Calvin noted in his commentary on Acts 9:6 that the desire for God to communicate with His people by angels or other supernatural means was common place: “All men would like the angels to fly to them, or that the heavens be immediately rent and the visible glory of God issue forth from there.”

<sup>187</sup> *Comm. Dan.* 4:17, 167-168.

A parallel demonstration of this type of angelic activity can be found in the sixth chapter of Daniel. This chapter recounts the events surrounding Daniel's contravention of the law to pray exclusively to King Darius and his subsequent sentence of being thrown to the lions. It also explained how Daniel was saved from being devoured by an angel that appeared and stopped the lions' mouths. In his consideration of this miracle, Calvin emphasized Daniel's care not to accord to the angel any glory or praise for his rescue. Rather, he noted, Daniel insisted that: "My God sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths and they have not harmed me (Daniel 6:22 NASB)." Thus, concluded Calvin, "Daniel plainly ascribe[d] the office of helping to angels in such a way that all power rested with God. He [said] that he was saved by the hand and work of an angel; but he represent[ed] the angel as a minister of his salvation, not its Author."<sup>188</sup>

Ultimately, Calvin claimed, neither the "ancient folk" of biblical days, nor the believers of his own time had been entrusted to the care and ministry of the angels. Rather, God had "raised up teachers from the earth to perform the angelic office" of proclaiming the good news of salvation through Christ.<sup>189</sup> The Gospel was to be "dispensed to [believers] by the ministers and pastors of the Church, either in the preaching...or the administration of the sacraments."<sup>190</sup> The Church, then, "[was] the pillar of the truth because by its ministry the truth is preserved and spread."<sup>191</sup> As her chief guardians and administrators, the ministers were to ensure that "the doctrine which

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<sup>188</sup> Comm. Dan. 6:22, 265.

<sup>189</sup> *Inst.* 4.1.5.

<sup>190</sup> *Inst.* 4.1.22.

<sup>191</sup> Comm. I Tim. 3:15, 231.

God had put in her hands” did not “pass from the memory of men.”<sup>192</sup> As we shall see, Calvin recognized that God’s decision to employ the services of men in working out His providential plans bestowed upon mankind a singular honour. But more immediately he was cognizant of the great responsibility that rested “upon pastors to whom had been entrusted the charge of such an inestimable treasure.”<sup>193</sup>

Calvin, however, lamented the sad reality that God’s decision to entrust men with the ministry of the Gospel had regularly been misunderstood, often with dire consequences. In the first place, Calvin went to great lengths to demonstrate that God’s decision to work alongside men in carrying out the work of salvation in no way compromised or diminished His Personal authority or honour.<sup>194</sup> God remained, Calvin insisted, the exclusive Author of salvation; it was “a gift...[that] came from Him alone and [was] effected only by His power.”<sup>195</sup> Calvin recognized that such claims seemed to place him at odds with various biblical passages that ostensibly granted man an equivalent role in the salvific process. In Exodus 14:31, for example, the Israelites are said to have believed in God and His servant Moses. Further, in his first letter to Timothy, Paul appears to express similar sentiments; Calvin reflected at some length, for instance, on the apparent strangeness of Paul’s having ascribed “to Timothy the work of saving the Church.”<sup>196</sup> Calvin attempted to resolve this dilemma by pointing out that “it [was] a common thing for God to transfer to His ministers the honour due to Himself

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<sup>192</sup> Comm. I Tim. 3:15, 231.

<sup>193</sup> Comm. I Tim. 3:15, 231.

<sup>194</sup> Comm. I Tim. 4:16, 249: “But God’s glory is in no way diminished by His using the labour of men in bestowing salvation.” See also Comm. Acts 5:29 (146): “God sets men over us with power in such a way that He keeps His own authority unimpaired.”

<sup>195</sup> Comm. I Tim. 4:16, 249.

<sup>196</sup> Comm. I Tim. 4:16, 248.

alone” and that He did so “not to take anything away from Himself, but to commend the efficacy of His Spirit which He pour[ed] forth in them.<sup>197</sup> He reminded his readers that it was, after all, God Himself Who had “made men [into] good pastors.”<sup>198</sup> In addition to having created the ministry, He alone rendered their labours effectual.<sup>199</sup> Biblical texts which appeared to equate the role of God and man in the work of salvation, he wrote, reflected a common Scriptural practice, whereby, “after mentioning the Name of God it also subordinate[d] ministers in the second place.”<sup>200</sup> This common practice of Scripture reflected the close ties that existed between God and His ministers; ties which bound them so tightly that the ministers were “inseparable from Him.” Therefore, when men were honoured with God’s titles, God “[was] not stripped of His own honour; but because the work [was] carried out by their agency, they [were] commended in this way.”<sup>201</sup> Proceeding from this premise, Calvin could confidently assert that when the Israelites were said to have “believed in God and his servant Moses...their faith [was] not being torn apart” and given partly to man and partly to God.<sup>202</sup> In the same manner it had not been wrong for Paul to attribute the salvation of the elect to Timothy’s “faithfulness and diligence” as a minister.<sup>203</sup>

Calvin’s musings about the division which emerged in the Corinthian Church between those who wished to follow Paul and those who favoured Apollos are

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<sup>197</sup> Comm. Acts 26:18, 276.

<sup>198</sup> Comm. I Tim. 4:16, 249.

<sup>199</sup> Comm. Acts 2:47, 90: “For ministers achieve nothing by planting and watering unless He makes their work effectual by the power of His Spirit.”

<sup>200</sup> Comm. Acts 15:28-29, 54.

<sup>201</sup> Comm. Acts 7:35-36, 195. See also Comm. Gal. 4:19 (83): “True it is the work of God that we are begotten and born; but because He employs a minister and preaching as His instruments for that purpose, He ascribes to them what is His, so joining the power of His Spirit with the activity of men.”

<sup>202</sup> Comm. Acts 15:28-29, 54.

<sup>203</sup> Comm. I Tim. 4:16, 248.

particularly illustrative of his feelings on this matter. As a means of leading the Corinthians to a proper understanding of human involvement in the inculcation of a saving faith Paul, wrote Calvin, had employed a metaphor “by which the nature of the Word and the value of preaching [were] most appositely illustrated.”<sup>204</sup> That metaphor, of course, was the image of the farmer sowing and watering in his fields. It would not have been difficult, argued Calvin, for God to have made the earth “bring forth food on its own.” However, He desired that man would “draw out, or rather force out...produce by means of a great deal of...sweat and frustration.” It was, therefore, God’s will that man labour in order to provide life giving food for himself. Within this context of Divine will and human labour, however, it must be remembered that, while “the attentiveness of the farmer [was] not ineffective...nevertheless it [was] only by the blessing of God that they were made to yield.” The same analogy and conclusions could be made and drawn for the work of the minister. Like the farmer, ministers were “cultivators” who, by their labours in the Church, diligently planted and watered, giving “the earth as much aid as they [could]” until such time as it brought “forth what it had conceived.” “But the actual bringing of their labour to fruitfulness, [was] in very truth a miracle of divine grace, not a product of human industry.” Paul, wrote Calvin, had used this comparison between farmer and minister to teach the Corinthians (and by extension all believers) that “there ought to be no boasting in any man” is so far as “faith allow[ed] [for] no glorying except in Christ alone.”<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Except for the final quotation, this quotation and all of the subsequent quotations in this paragraph can be found here: Comm. I Cor. 3:6, 69.

<sup>205</sup> Comm. I Cor. 3:6, 68.



While the diminishment of Divine glory and agency was a matter of grave concern, Calvin also acknowledged that God’s decision to involve men as co-workers in the proclamation of the Gospel had resulted in the Gospel being ridiculed. Proud and rebellious persons might argue that the majesty and authority of the Gospel had been “dragged down by the baseness of men.”<sup>206</sup> After all, how could a man, clothed in the rags of his sinful flesh, hope to deliver unsullied the holy decrees of God? Why should anyone humbly submit to the words of a man who, like themselves, was stained through and through with sin? Calvin attempted to counter these objections by insisting that, “[h]uman depravity [was] no reason for [failing to] cherish something instituted by God.”<sup>207</sup> Similarly, in his consideration of the Corinthian devaluation of Paul’s labours on account of the meanness of his person, Calvin insisted that it would be foolish to “measure the worth of the Gospel by the person of the minister.”<sup>208</sup>

Calvin not only attempted to counter misunderstandings about and objections to God’s plan of involving men as His coworkers, he also sought to demonstrate how God’s decision to work via the mouths of men was an expression of His Divine power, as well His desire to honour and love His children. First, Calvin insisted that working alongside men was an expression of God’s extraordinary power. By empowering men to become ministers, God had accomplished something that only God could do – He had brought

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<sup>206</sup> *Inst.* 4.1.5.

<sup>207</sup> Comm. I Tim. 2:2, 206. The context from which this quotation was drawn actually involves a discussion on Calvin’s part about why magistrates and princes who are sinful should still be honoured and prayed for – however, I would argue that his sentiments on that issue closely parallel his feelings about honouring sinful pastors.

<sup>208</sup> Comm. II Cor. 4:7, 58.

forth life out of death.<sup>209</sup> Further, Calvin argued, in acting as He had, God had bestowed on men an unparalleled honour by “consecrate[ing] to himself the mouths and tongues of men in order that his voice may resound in them.”<sup>210</sup> Finally, in calling men to labour alongside Him, God had demonstrated His love for His sheep. The institution and employment of human ministers was clear evidence that Christ was faithful to His promise that, far from leaving His Church alone, He would be with them always:

Indeed He has given assurance of His intention to be present in power and succour...to His own people even to the end (Matt. 28:30) – even as in truth He is present in His ministers. ...Jesus did not depart without first having provided for the government of the Church, whereby we recognize His concern for our salvation.<sup>211</sup>

The use of men as ministers of the Gospel further manifested God’s love for His people by demonstrating His willingness to accommodate Himself to their weakness. Rather than “thunder at us and drive us away” with the majesty of His voice, God “provid[ed] for our weakness in that he prefer[ed] to address us in human fashion through interpreters [in order to] to draw us to himself.”<sup>212</sup>

Calvin also argued that God’s decision to work via the minister not only accomplished the purpose of drawing His children more closely to Himself, it also served to bind believers more tightly to one another. By proclaiming His word via the mouths of men, God knit the faithful together “as if by a common bond, seeing that they stand in

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<sup>209</sup> “Certainly God’s goodness is wonderful, for He makes men ministers of life, despite the fact that they possess nothing but the stuff of death, and are not only liable to death in themselves, but also bring death to others.” Comm. Acts 11:4, 323.

<sup>210</sup> *Inst.* 4.1.5. See also: “In employing men’s work for accomplishing their salvation, God has conferred on men no ordinary honour.” Comm. Eph. 4:12, 181.

<sup>211</sup> Comm. Acts 1:2, 23.

<sup>212</sup> *Inst.* 4.1.5.

need of one another's help."<sup>213</sup> Nothing, claimed Calvin, "foster[ed] mutual love more than for men to be bound together with this bond: one is appointed pastor to teach the rest, and those bidden to be pupils receive the common teaching from one mouth."<sup>214</sup>

Calvin declared that the ministry was "the chief sinew by which the believers [were] held together in one body."<sup>215</sup> Simply stated, for Calvin:

The sum of it [was] that...the Gospel [was to be] preached by certain men appointed to that office, [and that this was] the economy by which the Lord wish[ed] to govern His Church, that it [might] remain safe in this world, and ultimately obtain its complete perfection.<sup>216</sup>

Having outlined Calvin's vision of the *kerygmatic* character of the church it becomes clear that such an ecclesiology placed extraordinary demands on the ministers who served in that church. If the church was the sole repository of the Gospel and hearing that Gospel was the exclusive means of attaining salvation, then any failure on the part of the ministers in proclaiming that Gospel imperiled the souls of those whom they had been sent to serve. How, in Calvin's estimation, were pastors to effectively and faithfully carry out the task of preaching in such a setting? Calvin's first concern was that the minister needed to take special care to maintain the purity of the Gospel message. In his biography of Calvin, William Bouwsma reflected at length about Calvin's fears regarding the danger of mixing the heavenly with the profane. Bouwsma drew attention to Calvin's repeatedly expressed concerns about the danger of "mixing together things totally different" and he demonstrated how, for Calvin, the term mixture held

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<sup>213</sup> Comm. I Cor. 3:5, 69.

<sup>214</sup> *Inst.* 4.3.1.

<sup>215</sup> *Inst.* 4.3.2.

<sup>216</sup> Comm. Eph. 4:10, 178.

connotations of adultery and promiscuity. Calvin, he wrote, “abominated mixture;” it was, claimed Bouwsma “one of the most pejorative terms in his vocabulary.”<sup>217</sup> Such folly could only result in the destruction of all the substances involved in such a mixture.

Nowhere, however, was Calvin’s fear of mixture more clearly demonstrated than in his constant warnings to pastors that they not contaminate the Gospel message with ‘profanities’ produced by the human mind or imagination.<sup>218</sup> As a means of illustrating this point, Calvin compared ministers to master builders. In so doing, his goal was to “remind [ministers] of their duty.” They were to “observe...the correct method of building aright” which hinged, principally, on keeping “Christ as the Foundation.” Subsequent construction on this foundation, however, required that they “mix no straw or stubble in the building.” They were, rather, “to complete the whole building from pure doctrine.”<sup>219</sup> It was, he declared, “exceedingly harmful to corrupt doctrine even in the smallest degree.”<sup>220</sup> This had been the tragic mistake of the false apostles whom Paul had warred against in Corinth. They “had claimed to preach the Gospel of Christ,” but by mixing it with their “own inventions, they had destroyed the main force of the Gospel and so [peddled] a false corrupt and spurious Gospel,” which could never effect the salvation

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<sup>217</sup> All quotations in this paragraph can be found in: Bouwsma, 34-35.

<sup>218</sup> Calvin’s concern to bring the pure Word of God was shared by Zwingli, who wrote in *A Friendly Request and Exhortation of Some Priests...* (1522): “Now, ye wise and pious men, it is our purpose truthfully to preach the holy Gospel as unadulterated as possible for the good of the common Confederation.” In: *Ulrich Zwingli, Early Writings* ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson (Durham: The Labyrinth Press, 1987), 176.

<sup>219</sup> All of the quotations in this paragraph can be found in: Comm. Acts 4:17, 116-117.

<sup>220</sup> Comm. II Tim. 1:13, 301.

of God's elect.<sup>221</sup> In contrast a faithful pastor was to have "such zeal for pure doctrine that he [would] never depart from it."<sup>222</sup>

To guard against such disastrous results the master builder was to be guided by the 'plan' which had been given to them. Paul, wrote Calvin, had expressed this sentiment in the First Epistle to the Corinthians when, after establishing his personal credentials as a master builder, he had exhorted all the pastors who would come after him "to continue the work to keep the building in conformity with the foundations all the way through to its completion."<sup>223</sup> In concert with the imagery of a master builder, Calvin also described the ministers as architects who "in erecting buildings work to a plan, so that all parts agree in true proportion."<sup>224</sup> That architectural plan was, of course, Scripture and, echoing Paul's warnings to Timothy, Calvin warned pastors "not to depart from the form of teaching which [they] had received, and to regulate [their] method of teaching by the rule laid down for them."<sup>225</sup> Indeed, the ministers had been granted the "Word as a canon by which to build the Church properly and in order."<sup>226</sup>

Concomitant with the duty to bring the pure Gospel was a responsibility to bring the entire Gospel. It would, after all, be quite possible for a minister to preach pure doctrine while at the same time editing out portions of the Gospel that he or his listeners found unpalatable. Calvin emphatically denounced the exercise of any kind of editorial

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<sup>221</sup> Comm. Gal. 1:6, 13.

<sup>222</sup> Comm. Titus 1:9, 361.

<sup>223</sup> Comm. I Corinthians: Theme of the First Epistle, 10-11.

<sup>224</sup> Comm. Gal. 6:16, 118.

<sup>225</sup> Comm. II Tim. 1:13, 301. See also Comm. 1 Cor.41: "The addition, *stewards of the mysteries of God*, describes the character (*genus*) of the ministry. By that he means that their function is confined to dispensing the secret things of God. In other words they hand over to men, 'from hand to hand' as we say, not what suits their own taste, but what the Lord has committed to their charge."

<sup>226</sup> Comm. Gal. 6:16, 118.

license on the part of pastors. After all, had Paul not written to Timothy that: “All Scripture [was] inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness (II Tim. 3:16, NASB)?” God in His wisdom had chosen to reveal what He had in Scripture and the pastor was not to “arrogate to himself the presumption to tear to pieces or mutilate Scripture, to pick this or that as he pleas[ed], to obscure some things, and suppress many things, but he [would] teach whatever [was] revealed in Scripture.”<sup>227</sup>

Calvin’s personal experiences as a pastor provide evidence of a willingness to toe the line when it came to preaching the entirety of the Gospel message. Calvin faced considerable criticism from within Geneva and the larger Swiss Protestant community for his willingness to deal with the doctrine of predestination in his sermons to the laity. His contemporaries were concerned that dealing with such a thorny doctrine in the worship services would only create fear and conflict amongst the common people.<sup>228</sup> In the face of calls to relegate the concept of predestination to the ivory tower Calvin, responded that in His divine wisdom God had chosen to speak of predestination in Scripture, and he was therefore bound to speak of it to the body of believers at large. He also emphasized the comfort that teaching of predestination could bring to believers. He would not

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<sup>227</sup> Comm. Acts 20:26-27, 180. Luther also expressed similar concerns in the instructions he gave to parish visitors: “Therefore we have instructed and admonished pastors that it is their duty to preach the whole gospel and not one portion without the other.” Luther, A.W., v.40, 275.

<sup>228</sup> The controversy spawned by Calvin’s willingness to preach about the topic of predestination was perhaps the most heated when it involved the Bernese clergy, who for a variety of reasons, both personal and doctrinal, repeatedly maligned Calvin and the other Genevan pastors for their teaching of this doctrine. The frustration which their opposition caused Calvin can be keenly felt in his letters, particularly those between 1555 and 1558. One letter in particular, to Farel in November of 1555, highlights Calvin’s difficulties in this regard. He spoke of the attacks he faced from the Bernese clergy and noted that “...there is danger if any mention is made of predestination.” *Letters*, 23 November 1555, v.3:237.

compromise the unity and integrity of the Gospel in order to placate those who preferred that the topic of predestination be restricted to an exclusively academic context.<sup>229</sup>

If a pastor was to carry out his task as a preacher effectively, he not only had to bring the pure and unexpurgated Gospel, he also had to bring that Gospel in a certain way. In the first place, the minister was to proclaim the Gospel in love. Paul, remarked Calvin, had believed it to be a “matter of first importance” that his “love should be thoroughly made known to the Philippians.”<sup>230</sup> Why should this be so? Because it lent considerable “credit”, or authority, to a pastor’s teaching when “the people [were] persuaded that they [were] loved by the teacher.”<sup>231</sup> The good teacher formed his pupils not just by words of his mouth, but he opened “his own heart to them so that they [might] know that all his teaching [was] sincere.”<sup>232</sup> Such sincerity would assure his audience that he desired nothing but “to behave kindly to [them]” and this confidence would motivate his listeners to “be converted to moderation and [to] behave teachably and obediently [towards him].”<sup>233</sup> Ministers were to remember that in order to “to be loved you must be loveable.”<sup>234</sup>

This pastoral love would manifest itself in several ways. To begin with, the minister needed to be conscious of his solidarity with the congregation. He needed to bring the Gospel as one who remained himself a willing student of the Word of God. No

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<sup>229</sup> Comm. Acts 20:20, 165: “But Paul prescribes such zeal for edifying, so that a pastor may omit nothing as far as he is concerned, that is beneficial to know. For teachers, who keep their pupils at first principles, so that they never attain knowledge of the truth, are bad teachers.”

<sup>230</sup> Comm. Philip 1:8, 231.

<sup>231</sup> Comm. Philip 1:8, 231.

<sup>232</sup> Comm. II Tim. 3:9, 326.

<sup>233</sup> Comm. Gal. 4:12, 79.

<sup>234</sup> Comm. Gal. 4:12, 79.

one, suggested Calvin, was “fit to teach in the Church, unless he voluntarily humbl[ed] himself, to be a fellow-disciple along with the others.”<sup>235</sup> Pastors who were unwilling to continue learning were quite simply unfit to teach others.<sup>236</sup> The expression of a sincere love would motivate the congregation to assume an attitude of teachableness; but the minister must himself be “teachable if [he] would duly teach others.”<sup>237</sup> No man, pastor or otherwise, declared Calvin, was “so self-sufficient in the fullness and completeness of his knowledge that he would gain nothing by listening to other people.”<sup>238</sup>

Proclaiming the Gospel in love also meant that the pastor could not be motivated by thoughts of personal gain or enrichment. For, Calvin reasoned, a man might proclaim the purest doctrine, he might preach the Word in its entirety and he might very well bring the Gospel in the plainest of fashions, unsullied by academic frills or human fancies; nevertheless, a “man who [taught] most purely [might],...not be of a sincere mind.”<sup>239</sup> Simply put, clergy who were not motivated by a “right zeal” could deliver irreproachably orthodox dogma, while at the same time blunting the sword of the Word by employing it for selfish gain. For Calvin, avarice – defined in a rather broad way – was the great danger here. Pastors whose proclamatory efforts were calculated to ensure their personal fame or fortune had corrupted the true doctrine “by wrongfully abusing it to serve their own ends.”<sup>240</sup> By contrast, a “right zeal” was focused on ensuring the spiritual increase

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<sup>235</sup> Comm. Acts 9:26, 272.

<sup>236</sup> Comm. I Tim. 4:13, 246: “For how can pastors teach other unless they themselves are able to learn, and if so great a man is admonished to study to make progress day by day, how much more to we need such advice? Woe to the slothfulness of those who do not pursue the oracles of the Spirit day and night to learn how to discharge their office.”

<sup>237</sup> Comm. Col. 4:17, 362.

<sup>238</sup> Comm. Cor. 14:31, 303.

<sup>239</sup> Comm. Philip. 1:16, 235.

<sup>240</sup> Comm. II Cor.2:17, 36.



of those over whom he been given charge.<sup>241</sup> The authority granted to the pastor by virtue of his office was to be an authority of service, not selfishness – the welfare of the sheep and never the self was always to be the primary focus of the good bishop. Calvin wrote forcefully of this in his comments on II Corinthians 4:5, where he noted that “here all pastors of the Church are reminded of their rank and condition for, whatever the title of honour they may have...they are nothing more than servants of believers, for the only way to serve Christ is by serving His Church as well.”<sup>242</sup> Preachers who forgot this reality might pretend to be friends of the Bridegroom, but were in reality seducers and adulterers who sought the “bride’s love [for] themselves.”<sup>243</sup>

Proclaiming the Gospel in love also meant being concerned with the ‘medium’ as well as the ‘message’. The loving, ‘teachable’ pastor not only needed to ensure that the Gospel was proclaimed purely and in its entirety, but also that its riches were easily accessible to his audience. Ministers needed to consider the manner in which they proclaimed God’s Word. Calvin emphasized the principle of accommodation. The “wise teacher” had the “responsibility of accommodating himself to the power of comprehension” of his audience.<sup>244</sup> By beginning with first principles and gradually instilling his teaching bit by bit, the wise teacher, without pushing his listeners beyond

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<sup>241</sup> See Comm. I Cor. 4:2, 85: “For it is not the case that everyone who teaches the truth is consistently faithful, but only the person who desire from the bottom of their heart to serve the Lord and to advance the Kingdom of Christ.”

<sup>242</sup> Comm. II Cor. 4:5, 56.

<sup>243</sup> Comm. II Cor. 11:2, 140. See also Comm. I Tim. 6:2, 276: “for it is almost impossible to overstate the amount of harm done by hypocritical preaching, whose only aim is ostentation and vain display.”

<sup>244</sup> Comm. Acts 3:1, 66.

their limits, would hope to see incremental growth in doctrine and maturity. Imparting too much, too fast, said Calvin, “would only result in a loss.”<sup>245</sup>

Calvin also believed that good preaching should be deeply impassioned. In his biography of the Reformer, Bouwsma noted that Calvin attempted to be as passionate as possible when he was on the pulpit; Calvin, insisted Bouwsma, understood the cool detachment of scholarship as entirely unsuited to the task of preaching.<sup>246</sup> Possessing great biblical or dogmatic knowledge, then, was not a sufficient qualification for the office of pastor. To be a good pastor meant being able to clearly and effectively communicate that knowledge to the faithful. Those who lacked the aptitude for communicating with the common man would only keep “their knowledge shut up within themselves,” wrote Calvin, and they ought “to sing to themselves and the muses – and go do something else.”<sup>247</sup>

The ministers had the Divinely mandated task of proclaiming the pure and full Gospel message in a passionate and accessible fashion. That they faithfully carry out this task was of paramount importance since the execution of God’s will in the world and the salvation of the souls of the faithful were dependent on the preaching. The necessary and logical corollary of this position, however, is that those who set out to oppose or silence the faithful pastor in his proclamatory efforts were by default working to destroy the Church and, indeed, make war on God Himself.<sup>248</sup> And, said Calvin, there would be no shortage of people who would set themselves against God and His under-shepherds. In

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<sup>245</sup> Comm. Acts 3:1, 66.

<sup>246</sup> Bouwsma, 126.

<sup>247</sup> Comm. 1 Tim. 3:2, 225.

<sup>248</sup> See Calvin’s discussion of II Corinthians 13:3, 171, where he spoke of Paul’s anger against those who opposed his ministry. Calvin says that Paul had good grounds for calling them “rebels against Christ.”

fact, it is important to note that Calvin, rather paradoxically, felt that as an inevitable consequence of doing his job competently and with due diligence, the conscientious pastor would encounter both criticism and opposition. Not only would the devil and wicked men seize upon his every misstep as grounds for abuse, but “even when [he did] all [his] duties correctly and commit[ted] not even the smallest error, [he would] never avoid a thousand criticisms.”<sup>249</sup> Indeed, lamented Calvin, “the more sincerely any pastor strives to further Christ’s kingdom, the more he is loaded with spite, [and] the more fierce do the attacks upon him become.”<sup>250</sup>

That this would be the case was, perhaps, not intuitively obvious. Did the minister not bring the Gospel of peace and reconciliation? How then could their labours, especially when diligently carried out for the wellbeing of the community, cause such a negative reaction? How could the faithful messengers of peace create such animosity and opposition? To answer this question, Calvin spoke of the two specific quarters from which ministers could expect attack. In the first instance, ministers had to realize that their chief foe was the devil and that in Satan they faced an implacable opponent who would never cease to assail them. Calvin began by noting that if it was God who had granted the ministers their authority, and if it was the “command of Christ” that ministers be honoured, then, “it [was] certain that the contempt of them [came] from the instigation of the devil.”<sup>251</sup> The devil’s efforts to foster hatred for the ministry, he reasoned, were motivated by his awareness that, if the ministry of the Church could be overthrown, then

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<sup>249</sup> Comm. I Tim. 5:19, 263.

<sup>250</sup> Comm. I Tim. 5:19, 263.

<sup>251</sup> Comm. Gal. 4:14, 81.

“the upbuilding of the Church would fail.”<sup>252</sup> As such, there was “nothing that Satan plots more than” to overthrow the ministry Christ had ordained in the Church.<sup>253</sup> Calvin seems to have been deeply conscious of diabolical efforts to undermine the ministry in his own day and age. In the course of his examination of Acts 17:1 he commented: “Accordingly, *today* when we see so many furious enemies set themselves in opposition to the faithful ministers of Christ, let us realize that it is not men who cause the war, but that Satan, the father of lies contrives all things in order to overthrow the Kingdom of Christ.”<sup>254</sup>

In his consideration of these diabolical attacks, Calvin likened the ministers to standard bearers in the army of God. As “those who marched before the rest” no soldier in God’s army could expect to be more directly attacked or to “sustain greater or more grievous wounds.”<sup>255</sup> Further, this satanic assault might take a variety of forms, be it the ‘blunt force trauma’ of open warfare, or less direct and more “insidious” attacks. Interestingly, Calvin also noted that Satan might choose to try ministers by raising discord within their own homes and families.<sup>256</sup> On this basis, Calvin warned those who aspired to the ministry that the “government of the church” was not something to be undertaken with joy and delight; far from it, it was rather, “a hard and bitter warfare” in which Satan “would leave no stone unturned” in his efforts to destroy the church.

In addition to these diabolical attacks, ministers could also expect to endure more mundane afflictions. Human as well as demonic foes would not be in short supply; and

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<sup>252</sup> *Inst.* 4.1.11.

<sup>253</sup> *Inst.* 4.1.11.

<sup>254</sup> Comm. Acts 17:13, 103. Emphasis mine.

<sup>255</sup> Comm. II Cor. 10:4, 129.

<sup>256</sup> Comm. Acts 17:13, 103.

while those foes might at times come from outside the fold, ministers also needed to be ready to defend themselves against attacks from within the church. By the very nature of their task as preachers of the Word, said Calvin, ministers were in the business of giving offense. Quite simply, when a minister faithfully proclaimed the Word of God everyone who heard him became a potential enemy. Again, why should this be the case, why would the proclamation of the Gospel of peace have such riotous results? Because, Calvin noted, there were as many enemies of Christ as there were lusts of the flesh.<sup>257</sup> All that was required to transform an otherwise docile member of the congregation into a vitriolic opponent of the ministry was that a preacher speak out too strongly against that person's particular sin. Under such conditions it was no surprise "that godly and faithful teachers [would] always have to deal with enemies in great number."

For Calvin, at the core of its institutional identity lay the *kerygmatic* calling of the church. In His Divine Wisdom God had decided to endow the church with the riches of the Gospel and to charge her with the task of proclaiming that message to the world. God had also chosen to enlist men to assist Him in delivering that message. Calvin recognized that the calling to work with God in accomplishing the salvation of His children was both an indication of God's love and an extraordinary responsibility. In so far as the proclamation of that Gospel message was the exclusive means of attaining to a saving faith it was incumbent on the church and the men who served her as pastors to ensure that this message was delivered purely, powerfully and effectually. With this recognition in mind and based on the Pauline model he had established as a guideline for pastoral excellence, Calvin considered the practical ways in which ministers could carry out their

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<sup>257</sup> Comm. Acts 19:24, 161.

task in the world. This necessitated dealing with the question of how ministers were to be perceived and received by the communities they served. It also meant taking steps to ensure that these pastors consistently and efficaciously delivered the Gospel message in the relatively improvisational and very public context of the weekly worship services. Finally, Calvin needed to awake in both the pastors and the laity a keen sense of what exactly constituted an acceptable level of edification and service. As will be demonstrated in the following chapter, in order to meet these challenges, Calvin developed a view of the minister which presented him as a professional man who offered his community an essential service and who interacted with his community in the context of professional-client relationship.

## Chapter Three - The Pastor as Professional

By identifying preaching as the primary task of both the institutional church and the pastors who served that institution Calvin had overturned the centuries-old perception that the primary task of clergy was to offer the sacraments to and on behalf of believers. It is just as crucial to recognize, however, that when this new vision of the ministerial task was combined with Lutheran notions about the priesthood of all believers, it challenged not just traditional notions about clerical function, but also deep-seated beliefs about how the clergy were to interact with the laity. For centuries the Roman Catholic clergy had interacted with Western European believers as a separate, privileged spiritual caste. That privileged position was, of course, rooted in their exclusive ability to act as intermediaries between God and man; an exclusivity symbolized by their control of the dispensation of grace via the sacraments. In light of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, however, the shift from sacerdotal priest to preaching pastor required that Protestant leaders not only had to explain how the new Protestant clergy would function differently within the context of the Christian community, they also had to spell out how those clerics would interact with that community. The reformers faced the not insignificant task of explaining to the fledgling Protestant faithful just how their relationship with the new Protestant clergy was to function.

Calvin attempted to meet this challenge by presenting the pastor as a professional man and by suggesting that optimal interaction between pulpit and pew could be expressed in terms of a professional-client relationship. Further, in Calvin's estimation, this professional-client relationship was to be a dynamic one in which each party was to be fully cognizant of the expectations and duties they had vis-a-vis the other party.

Making such an argument will require some elaboration in so far as the dominant historiographical trend in the study of the history of the professions has been to suggest that, prior to the early nineteenth century, the professions did not exist at all.

The ‘classic’ interpretation of the development of the professions was persuasively set forth by Carr-Saunders and Wilson in their seminal work, *The Professions*. In their study, Carr-Saunders and Wilson drew a distinction between what they labelled the ‘traditional’ or ‘preindustrial’ professions and the ‘modern’ professions. They argued that the pre-industrial professions could only be understood as professions in a very limited sense. To begin with, the pre-industrial professions, they claimed, had emerged within the context of the church or the guild system.<sup>258</sup> Further, they insisted that what had set these so-called professions apart from other occupations was not the possession of a specialized body of knowledge, but the fact these professions were recruited from and served the needs of the gentry.<sup>259</sup> Thus, they claimed, the boundaries between profession and mere vocation had been demarcated by social class rather than by other more quantitative characteristics.

Carr-Saunders and Wilson posited that only with the social and economic changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution did it become possible to speak of the emergence of the professions in a formal sense. These modern professions were now identifiable by the possession of qualifying organizations and the professional man by the ability to lay claim to a specialized body of knowledge or skill.<sup>260</sup> This understanding of the history of

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<sup>258</sup> A.M. Carr-Saunders & P.A. Wilson, *The Professions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 291.

<sup>259</sup> Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 295.

<sup>260</sup> Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 299-300, 303-304.



the professions has been followed by many sociologists and historians (most notably by Marxist historians) since their work was published in 1933.

More recently, however, this view of the historical development of the professions has begun to be challenged. In a recent study of the emergence of the professions in early modern England, for instance, Wilfrid Prest commented on the process by which Carr-Saunders's and Wilson's interpretation has been called into question by the scrutiny of subsequent historical research.<sup>261</sup> In particular, Prest pointed to the work of Geoffrey Holmes and Edward Hughes as examples of how this classic interpretation has increasingly been challenged. Prest reflected on the importance of Holmes' 1982 monograph, *Augustan England*, which he claimed represented the first sustained challenge to the assertion that the pre-industrial professions had been the exclusive preserve of the gentry and aristocratic families. Holmes' research clearly established that professional men of Augustan England had been drawn from across several social strata of English society rather than just from amongst the gentry. Hughes' work was important for having postulated that most professions had a longer history than Carr-Saunders and Wilson had suggested. Hughes argued that most of the professions had origins which could be traced back to a time before the emergence of the qualifying associations which Carr-Saunders and Wilson had suggested were hallmarks of the emergence of the modern professions.<sup>262</sup>

As part of this larger trend to question the Carr-Saunders/Wilson thesis, the work of Rosemary O'Day on the professionalization of the English clergy is particularly

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<sup>261</sup> Wilfrid Prest ed., *The Professions in Early Modern England* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 4.

<sup>262</sup> Prest, 4.

important to understanding why Calvin might have chosen to employ this particular strategy of explaining the how the ministers and the laity were to interact with each other. O'Day's work focused on examining the transition of the English clergy from an "estate" to an "occupational profession" in the days following the onset of the Reformation. O'Day argued that, prior to the Reformation, the English clergy ought not to be conceived of as a professional group, but rather as comprising an estate. What had set the pre-Reformation clergy apart from the laity was their possession of a unique "vertical relationship" with God. The uniqueness of that relationship was, of course, destroyed by the articulation of Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.<sup>263</sup> Luther and the subsequent luminaries of the mainstream Protestant movement were quick to point out, however, that they had not meant to imply via this doctrine that there was no need for any clergy at all.<sup>264</sup> If each man was his own priest, it did not necessarily follow that each man was his own teacher and pastor.

The task that faced the new Protestant clergy, therefore, was to justify their continued existence to the laity. In this situation, claimed O'Day, since they could no longer function as special intermediaries between God and man, the Protestant leaders began to rationalize their existence as being tied to the provision of an essential service, which involved, "teach[ing] and prepar[ing] the laity to receive salvation."<sup>265</sup> Their new identity, therefore, was not to be predicated on the possession of an exclusive, vertical

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<sup>263</sup> Rosemary O'Day, "The Anatomy of a Profession: The Clergy of the Church of England," in *The Professions in Early Modern England*, ed. W. Prest (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 33.

<sup>264</sup> Calvin, for instance, suggested in a sermon on Galatians 6:6-8 (602), that the presence of a minister was so important to the formation of a church that it could be classified as one of the identifying characteristics of the true church: "What, therefore, are the marks of the Church? They are to be a gathered flock, with a pastor that leads the sheep to the Lord Jesus Christ."

<sup>265</sup> O'Day, 32. See also Calvin's comments about the activities of the minister: "therefore, it is the responsibility of those of us called to preach to apply all our energies to lead men to salvation and to bring them to honour God." Sermon, Micah 7:1-13, 392-393.

relationship with God, but on a new, horizontal relationship with His people. As a result of this process, the Protestant clergy were transformed from an estate into a group of men involved in a common occupation. To be sure, as O'Day noted in her study, this process did not occur overnight, nor did it occur without sometimes heated debate, about what the exact nature of the ministry actually was.

Now, while O'Day was focused on the experience of the English clergy, there is much in her argument that resonates with Calvin's attempts to communicate to the Genevans and to the larger Reformed world a model that would govern and inform the day to day interaction of the Protestant ministers with their charges. In the first place, as O'Day noted in the prefatory comments to her article, a profession can only flourish when the society in which it operates recognizes and acknowledges it as providing a necessary service and therefore works to provide an environment in which it can freely operate. This is exactly what Calvin sought to achieve both from his pulpit in Geneva and via his various written works; he laboured to explain to the Protestant faithful why they needed men like himself, and why they needed to provide ministers with the freedom to carry out their task in a full and unimpeded fashion. In doing so he was trying to define for the laity the parameters of the new relationship that would exist between the ministers and their parishioners. For Calvin, all of this was based on the premise that the ministers, as a collective body, were providing an essential service – indeed, the most essential service – in so far as they were intent on labouring with God via the proclamation of the Word to accomplish the salvation of people's immortal souls.

Calvin's effort to depict the new pastor in professional terms and to communicate that vision of professionalism to the faithful (both inside and outside of Geneva) can be

most profitably explored through an explanation of the various metaphors he employed in his attempts to educate people about the ministerial office. Calvin employed a wide variety of metaphors in his discussion of the ministry, including:

- (a) Construction metaphors – the minister as: builder, mason, architect.
- (b) Educational metaphors – the minister as: teacher, school-master, pupil.
- (c) Military metaphors – the minister as: warrior, standard-bearer, watchman, guardian.
- (d) Managerial metaphors – the minister as: steward, overseer.
- (e) Caregiver metaphors – the minister as: father, shepherd.

Out of all of these metaphors, however, he relied most heavily on the metaphor of the pastor as a type of physician. Throughout his work, but particularly in his sermons, Calvin drew parallels between the professional activities of physicians and the work of the pastors as a means of outlining the professional qualifications and qualities of the faithful pastor and of describing the nature of the professional-client relationship he believed ought to regulate interaction between those in the pulpit and those in the pew.

How, then, did Calvin employ this medical metaphor to present the pastor as a professional man? Calvin proceeded from the premise that everyone in the congregation (pastors and laity inclusively) was ‘sick’. The illness with which they were collectively afflicted was, of course, the disease of sin. Throughout his work, both written and proclaimed, Calvin routinely spoke of sin in terms of disease. Sin was, for him, an illness, a cancer, a contagion, a poison in both the individual body and in the body of believers as a whole. Several examples of this trend within his thinking should be sufficient to make this point clear. In a 1538 letter to William Farel, for instance, Calvin referred to the doctrinal and spiritual differences which were dividing the Church as a “pestilential ulcer.” In his commentary on I Timothy 5:24, he wrote that nothing frustrated him more than being unable “to banish from the church [those] who are

destructive plagues, [who] spread their venom by secret arts.” In a sermon on Galatians 2:3-5, Calvin stated that we must “resist such rogues as may enter in, recognizing that they are like deadly plagues and more harmful even than those who turn aside out of the way and altogether openly declare that they despise the Gospel.” Further, as with any virulent disease, sin was highly contagious. Calvin noted in one of his sermons that, “when evil increases and becomes contagious, that is to say, when one person corrupts another, we must vehemently oppose them...and this does not only apply to errors which corrupt pure gospel doctrine but to all corruption and vice.” Finally, the disease which afflicted the totality of the congregation was a lethal one and the prognosis for those afflicted with it was not simply a physical death, but an eternal, spiritual death as punishment for sin against a Holy God.

What made this illness particularly vexing for the pastor-physician, however, was that their patients, blinded as they were by the deadening effects of sin, were either unaware of the fact that they were ‘sick’, or, at the very least, were unaware of the true extent of their illness. Further, even when they had been alerted to the severity of their condition, many of them were prone to minimize the severity of their condition, or even ignore warnings altogether. As Calvin opined in a sermon, few responded with honesty and sincerity to the Gospel message. Thus, even in a best case scenario, these were patients who were not only in need of constant reminder about the existence and virulence of their illness, but they also needed to be goaded into remaining faithful to their treatment regime.

In this rather grim situation, how were the patients to be awakened to the gravity of their situation? This could only be accomplished, Calvin insisted, via the power of

God's Word. He noted in a sermon dealing with the third chapter of Micah, that: "The true office of God's Word is to reveal to men their sins, in the hopes this will so humble and displease them that they will beg God's pardon."<sup>266</sup> Thus, the preaching would reveal to all who heard it both the nature of the disease which afflicted them and the grim prognosis if that disease was left untreated.<sup>267</sup> Faithful preaching could accomplish more than this, however. The 'Good News' of the Gospel, claimed Calvin, was that there was a cure for the disease of sin. Better still, insisted Calvin, he could even recommend a physician who could dispense that cure. That physician, of course, was God Himself. In a sermon delivered on 24 July 1549, Calvin informed his congregation that, "God uses His office of physician to convert our lies into truth."<sup>268</sup> The use of the term office to describe God's role as Physician is noteworthy. The implication of the term was that God was not be thought of a some kind of amateur or quack physician. Calvin was telling his audience that the task of healing sinners was not some form of part-time activity for God; it was rather, an essential component of Who God was.

As a physician, then, God sought to 'cure' people of sin, and to free them from the eternal consequences of that illness. In order to accomplish this task, the medicine which He prescribed was the Gospel message that sin had been defeated in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. In December of 1551, Calvin told his congregation that "The medicine for our spiritual ills is to be found in Jesus Christ alone, who shed His blood to

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<sup>266</sup> Sermon, Micah 3.

<sup>267</sup> Sermon, Galatians 4:11-14, 402: "These two statements teach us how a man who is responsible for preaching the Word must conduct himself. He is not to encourage sin by flattery, for he must rebuke people sharply in order to bring to their senses those who have been duped by Satan, and to wake in them a fear of God's judgement."

<sup>268</sup> Sermon, Jeremiah 17:9-11, 184.

cleanse us.”<sup>269</sup> Further, God had chosen to dispense that medicine first through the labours of the prophets, then the apostles, and subsequently via the proclamatory efforts of the ministers. As has been shown in the previous chapter, Calvin had taken great pains to demonstrate that the efficacy of that medicine was not diminished by virtue of having been administered by human messengers. And thus the minister, in so far as he was God’s ambassador in proclaiming His Word and Will, was also to function as God’s physician, making available and effectual the healing power of the Gospel message. Quite simply, God had charged the ministers with the task of being spiritual physicians, acting in His stead and with His authority.

How, then, was the pastor to carry out his task as ‘physician’? Calvin began by recommending that, when treating the illness of sin, ministers were to be careful to deal with the root cause of the disease, and not to become sidetracked by flailing at the symptoms. “A good physician,” Calvin claimed, “does not merely cool down the fever in the hands and feet; he applies his talents to get to the root of the illness.”<sup>270</sup> Getting to the root of that illness was going to require effort and diligence on the part of the pastor – an effort and diligence that began with a comprehensive diagnostic process. After all, Calvin observed:

One could well preach with his eyes closed, that is without looking at the people to whom he preaches. But what purpose would there be in that? .... Medicines must be provided according to the vices of the people. A physician does not put all his remedies in a big pile to dole them out to just anybody, for then he would no longer be a physician. A physician carefully studies the illness and prescribes medicine accordingly. And this is what we must do.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Sermon, Micah 6:6-8, 350.

<sup>270</sup> Sermon, Micah 3: 9-10, 183.

<sup>271</sup> Sermon, Jeremiah 18:11-14, 252.

That “we”, of course, referred to the pastors. This competent and thorough diagnosis was to be followed up by an equally thorough effort at treatment. In a sermon on Titus 1:1-10, Calvin stated that:

The surgeon who [has] a wound to heal, [cuts] away all the rotten flesh, or if there be any apostume, he [purges] it to the quick, to take away all the infection and corruption; so must the ministers of the Word of God do, if they wish to discharge their duty faithfully toward those committed to their care....<sup>272</sup>

It is important to take note of Calvin’s underlying assumption that, just as with the physician, if a pastor was incompetent, corrupt, or lazy, people would die.<sup>273</sup> And while medical malpractice might endanger the patient’s physical health, ministerial malpractice imperiled the patient’s soul. Interestingly, Calvin was quick to point out that the pastor-physician could not be held responsible for the consequences suffered by patients who refused to follow the ‘doctor’s’ orders. In one of his sermon on Deuteronomy Calvin offered the following reflection:

A physician prescribing an order does not permit his patient to eat whatever he wants, or to do anything amiss at all, no matter how little it seems, but he says, ‘I will have you do such and such.’ Now if the sick man were to step aside to the slightest degree, very well, he is not yet incurable, the physician will still have care of him. But if he overturns everything, and casts off all order, and plays the madman, well, he will have payment as he deserves.<sup>274</sup>

Further, Calvin pointed out that, on this side of eternity, the pastor-physician would never be able to completely cure his patients. In a sermon on Galatians 1:8-10, Calvin raised the following question: “Now which is better, that the one who is caring for the

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<sup>272</sup> Sermon, Titus 1:1-10, 176.

<sup>273</sup> Sermon: “What will become of us then, unless those who bring the Word of God, [those] who ought to be our physicians, take care to protect us from what they know to be harmful?”

<sup>274</sup> Sermon: Deuteronomy



sick should grant his every desire, or that he should help him control his desire...?”<sup>275</sup> It is the element of control that needs to be emphasized here. Calvin, like any pastor, knew that he could never completely cure the disease which afflicted his patients. Sin was a terminal condition which would ultimately result in the death of each and every patient. What he could offer, however, was a treatment regime which would help the faithful control their desires, to manage the disease as it were. Thus, while Calvin could offer no remedy that would forestay the ‘first death’, he could offer a defense against the second.

Ultimately, then, the task of the pastor-physician was a daunting one. Making one’s congregants aware of the depth of the spiritual illness which afflicted them, and convincing them of the need to employ such treatment as was available was a task that would require both strength and a degree of forcefulness on the part of the pastor. Further, the laity also needed to be forewarned that, in their efforts to alert the faithful to the gravity of their condition, their pastors would be required to employ a certain vehemence in their preaching. In a sermon on Galatians 4:11-14, Calvin informed his congregation that, when the circumstances demanded it, that they were to allow themselves to be harshly dealt with in the preaching.<sup>276</sup> Their humble submission to the sometimes painful truths revealed by the minister’s preaching was to be encouraged by the knowledge that the faithful pastor was motivated by the best interests of his

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<sup>275</sup> Sermon, Galatians 1:8-10, 62.

<sup>276</sup> Sermon, Galatians 4:11-14, 404. For Calvin a willingness to accept rebuke in the preaching was reflective of a right understanding of and attitude toward the worship services – services he compared to a classroom setting where the faithful were instructed by God: “...if we would be well instructed in the school of God, we must confess ourselves guilty; we must be pricked to the heart; we must be reprov’d for our faults (Sermon: II Tim 3:16-17, 137).” See also: Sermon, Galatians 1:8-10, 60: “Thus, when anyone comes to a sermon, above all else he should be ready to be rebuked where necessary, and he should realise that if he is not comforted by it, it is to his profit.”

listeners.<sup>277</sup> Calvin reflected in a sermon on Micah 3 that the process of crying out against sin was not one which was enjoyable for the ministers either. Speaking with the ‘voice’ of the prophet Micah, Calvin informed his congregation that: “It is very difficult for me to cry out against you, to expose your iniquities, and to condemn and accuse you in the Name of God. This is a very painful task for me and very strange to you. But it must be done in spite of you. God wishes it to be so, and I will do it. Well you may resist me, but you will never conquer me.”<sup>278</sup>

The need for the pastor-physician to speak out so vehemently against sin also explained why the proclamation of the Gospel message had the rather surprising tendency to result in the creation of conflict rather than peace.<sup>279</sup> After all, was not the pastor-physician charged with bringing healing rather than creating upheaval? Calvin noted in one of his sermons that the reality was that “it [was] upsetting for men to speak of renouncing their passions” and that “as long as God condemned [men’s] vices” there would always be those who would rise up in anger against the men who delivered that Divine condemnation of their sins.<sup>280</sup> In these circumstances, lamented Calvin, everyone

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<sup>277</sup> Sermon, Galatians 4:11-14, 402: “Yet, because we all too often excuse our sin, preachers cannot afford to hold back, if they do, they are betraying us.” It would appear, however, that not everyone in Calvin’s congregation was so easily persuaded by this argument and there were those in Geneva who found Calvin’s approach rather too painful to be borne without comment. In a sermon on Jeremiah 15:10-11/14-15 (52), Calvin commented: “They do not say, ‘I do not wish to be preached at.’ Instead, they say, ‘Is it not necessary to do so in all kindness? Yet it seems that those who preach wield the whip. What kind of preaching is that? It is good that they preach by love!’” See also: Sermon, Deut.5:20, 212: “And how are we answered? ‘The gospel teaches that the world is to be won through gentleness. Didn’t Jesus call sinners to himself in complete kindness, pardoning their faults? Therefore, shouldn’t those who preach the gospel use this approach?’”

<sup>278</sup> Sermon, Micah 3:5-8, 174.

<sup>279</sup> On the one hand, claimed Calvin in a sermon on Micah 6:1-5, 335: “Wherever and whenever the Gospel is preached the message is this: ‘God wishes only that the world be at peace with Him.’” However, he also asked in a sermon on Jeremiah 15:10-11/14-15, 49: “So when we bear the banner of peace, why does it lead to war?”

<sup>280</sup> Sermon, Sermon: Jeremiah 15:10-11/14-15, 49. See also: Sermon II Samuel 12:13, 554-555: “It is quite true that we become angry when someone comes to urge us to recognize our sins; we are especially stunned

who heard the Gospel had the potential to become an enemy of God and His ambassadors; it required only that the minister speak out against the particular sin of a given individual and he too could be transformed from a docile lamb into a raging lion. In a sermon on Micah 2:6-7, Calvin observed that, “Many are content that the Gospel is preached, as long as they are not fingered and reproached for their faults. As soon as the preacher digs into their shit to discover their faults, they become furious.”<sup>281</sup> These circumstances were further exacerbated, said Calvin, by the activity of the devil, who was constantly at work to stir up those who could not bear the full preaching of God’s Word.<sup>282</sup> Ultimately, however, Calvin reminded his listeners, “The Word of God does not bring war, for it is we who rise up against it.”<sup>283</sup>

In looking back at the ways in which Calvin employed the metaphor of minister as physician, the question becomes one of motivation: why did he choose to employ and so fully develop this particular metaphor? Ultimately, there are several reasons that might be suggested as an explanation for his use of this rhetorical strategy. In the first place, the Bible itself provided considerable support for the comparison of ministers and

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when someone speaks with great force and penetration. That is because we just want someone to sing to us peacefully and gently tickle our ears!” See also: Sermon Jeremiah 15:10-11/14-15 (50): “Now the first day you preach against avarice. .... The second day, you preach against lewdness; the third day you preach against hate and grudges; the fourth day you preach against greed and mundane pleasures. But people cannot allow that. .... Here then is a new band of enemies given to blasphemy and cursing. .... Thus we will have a new war.”

<sup>281</sup> Sermon, Micah 2:6-7, 105. See also: Sermon, Micah 2:8-11, 128: “Pay attention to Micah’s words. Although he spoke to the Jews of his time, this same vice reigns among us now more than ever. Hear how men grumble when the minister warns them of God’s threats. See how they gnash when he mounts the pulpit to reproach them. Why? They wish that God would leave them alone to wallow in their own shit. When he stabs them to the quick, they become quite insolent towards Him, which grieves Him more than anything else they could do in the world.”

<sup>282</sup> Sermon, Galatians, 504.

<sup>283</sup> Sermon, Jeremiah 15:19-21, 86.

physicians. Christ, for instance, during the time of his earthly ministry devoted a great deal of time to healing people from their physical ailments and illnesses. In a more direct sense, Scripture also connected the activity of healing to the work of the overseers in the book of James.<sup>284</sup> There the presbyters of the church were commanded to anoint the sick with oil and to pray over them for healing. As such, there were clear biblical grounds for linking these two professions at a metaphorical level.

There is reason to think, however, that, in addition to the biblical grounds for employing the metaphor of the pastor-physician that Calvin's personal life and circumstances might also have helped to suggest this particular metaphor as a viable strategy for describing the ministerial office to his congregation. In his biography of Calvin, William Bouwsma observed that the topics of illness and death were very much on Calvin's mind, and that he was acutely aware of his own gradual physical decline over time.<sup>285</sup> Even the most cursory survey of Calvin's letters will bear out the truth of Bouwsma's reflections, and it is remarkable that a man who was generally so reluctant to reveal much of himself in his writings, nevertheless wrote so extensively and precisely about his physical ailments and maladies.

In a similar fashion, Charles Cook noted that Calvin, "wrote about his medical problems in the same superb prose that characterized all his work" and that he "enumerated his problems with a meticulousness that would satisfy any contemporary

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<sup>284</sup> James 5:14-16: "<sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? *Then* he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; <sup>15</sup> and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him." (NASB)

<sup>285</sup> Bouwsma, 30.

hospital inspection team.”<sup>286</sup> Cook undertook a survey of Calvin’s comments about his physical health in an attempt to provide a contemporary assessment of the various ailments which had afflicted the reformer. The list that he drew up was not an insubstantial one and it served to highlight the reality of the daily pain and discomfort which Calvin endured. On the basis of his survey, Cook concluded that Calvin suffered, at one time or another, from: gout, kidney stones, pulmonary tuberculosis, intestinal parasites, hemorrhoids, spastic bowel syndrome and frequent migraines. What is important here, however, is Cook’s contention that, beyond the simple fascination of cataloguing his illnesses, a clinical assessment of Calvin’s medical history could lead historians to a better understanding of Calvin’s personality and perhaps shed some light on his theological development as well. Based on this conviction, Cook proffered three observations about how Calvin’s health might have shaped his character and theological development. In the first place, he suggested that Calvin’s personal struggles with illness made him keenly aware of the tenuousness of life. Secondly, Cook argued that Calvin’s chronic pain could help to explain why Calvin spoke so frequently of sickness (both his own and the sicknesses of others) in his letters. Finally, reflected Cook, Calvin’s conditions might also help historians and theologians to understand the rather stark dichotomy that Calvin drew between the passivity of the body and the activity of the spirit.<sup>287</sup>

Perhaps, following along the path that Cook has mapped out, there is more that can be said about the impact of Calvin’s physical health on his life and thought. Indeed, it

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<sup>286</sup> Charles Cook, “Calvin’s Illnesses and Their Relation to Christian Vocation” in *John Calvin & the Church: A Prism of Reform*, ed. Timothy George (Westminster/John Knox Press: Louisville, 1990), 60-61.

<sup>287</sup> Cook, 67-69.

may be that the litany of Calvin's illnesses also shaped his ecclesiology as well as his theology. To make this claim, it must be noted that, as a result of the many afflictions he endured, Calvin regularly sought the advice of a variety of physicians and, despite his normal reserve in writing about himself, on a number of occasions Calvin spoke in his letters about these interactions. Indeed, it is remarkable that even though we remain unaware of the names of some of his siblings, his letters reveal to us the names of the primary physicians who cared for him during his tenure in Geneva.<sup>288</sup> In fact, in a letter addressed to the physicians of Montpellier and written near the very end of his life, Calvin not only provided a concise and detailed summary of his various ailments, he also noted the names of the physicians who had treated him during his time in Paris.<sup>289</sup> Given the reality that Calvin suffered throughout his life from a range of painful and debilitating ailments, and given that he regularly sought the aid of physicians in an effort to find relief from his symptoms, is it not possible that his frequent interactions with these professional men sparked in his mind a comparison with his own task as a pastor? As these professional men laboured to heal him of his physical illnesses (illnesses which were caused by sin and would result in death) was he not engaged in a similar effort to help the faithful overcome their spiritual illnesses (illnesses that also had their root cause in sin and could lead to an eternal death)? In these circumstances, the metaphor of the pastor-physician must have appeared to Calvin as particularly effective, not to mention personally relevant, means of conveying to the Genevans how they were to receive and interact with the new Protestant ministers.

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<sup>288</sup> Bernard Textor was Calvin's primary physician until Textor's death in 1556. Textor was followed by Philbert Sarazin who cared for Calvin until Calvin's death in 1564. Cook, 60.

<sup>289</sup> *Letters*, 8 February 1564, v.4:358-360.

Further, the comparison of task of the pastor with that of a physician is perhaps not surprising when one considers the fact that, at a personal level, Calvin was himself a 'professional' man. Following the completion of his Master's degree Calvin, in accordance with his father's wishes, had continued on to study for and obtain his licentiate. As a consequence of his legal training, Calvin would have been aware of efforts on the part of lawyers to define themselves in professional terms. At the heart of this professional identity was an emphasis on advanced academic education as opposed to the acquisition of skill via an apprenticeship model. Equally, regular contact with doctors both inside of and beyond Geneva must have alerted Calvin to the efforts of physicians to achieve similar goals. Though sixteenth century physicians lagged behind their legal counterparts in terms of defining themselves in professional terms they were, however, involved in a struggle to differentiate themselves from local healers, midwives and quack practitioners on the basis of advanced education and the provision of an essential service. Having been trained as a lawyer and subsequently serving as a pastor, the choice to employ the language of a third profession (one with which he was intimately familiar) seems something of a logical progression. Ultimately, by discussing the task of the minister in reference to that of the doctor Calvin was able to explain the function of one emerging profession in terms of another relatively familiar and increasingly well-established profession.

In summary, then, Calvin's decision to present and explain the person and function minister via medical terms and analogies was reflective of a deliberate and pragmatic effort to rationalize the existence of new Protestant clergy in professional terms. By suggesting that, while the clergy no longer existed as a separate, spiritually elite caste,

they continued to be a necessary part of the Christian life because they provided an essential service, Calvin sought to persuade Protestants of the continued need to have a clergy and, by extension, of the need to foster an environment that was favourably disposed towards those clergy carrying out their task in a full and uncompromised way.

There were, however, a number of practical consequences to envisioning the ministerial office in these kinds of professional terms. The first and most important of these consequences was that if the continued spiritual health of the faithful was contingent upon the professional exercise and expression of ministerial authority, then it was of paramount importance that the faithful be able to correctly identify who was and who was not a faithful pastor. After all, the dangers of submitting to ministrations of a false teacher would be akin to availing oneself of the services of some form of quack physician. Simply stated, the faithful were risking their spiritual health and security if they placed themselves in the care of a shepherd who lacked the requisite professional skills. Indeed, as noted in the previous chapter, since it was through the preaching that the salvific work of God was accomplished, no one who had not been duly scrutinized and vetted could be allowed to instruct the faithful.<sup>290</sup> Wolves in sheep's clothing, claimed Calvin, were the greatest threat faced by any congregation.<sup>291</sup> Because false prophets proffered a message of their own devising, rather than liberating the faithful from the bonds of sin, such teachers only ensured that their listeners became ever more deeply enslaved to the sinful desires of the flesh. In effect, claimed Calvin, to heed the

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<sup>290</sup> Sermon, Micah 2:6-7: "Where is the power to save all believers? Is it not in the preaching of the Gospel, as Saint Peter says? The instant that men are deprived of God's Word they are banished from salvation and from all good things." See also Calvin's sermon on Micah 3:5-8 (168): "When...His teaching is falsified, this amounts to destroying God's glory and sending poor souls straight to hell."

<sup>291</sup> Sermon, Galatians, (112).



teachings of false prophets would have the effect of “adding thirst to drunkenness.”<sup>292</sup> In this context the faithful had to be absolutely certain that they were being addressed by men who had been properly vetted as ‘official’ spokesmen for God.<sup>293</sup> If identification of qualified, professional ministers was so crucial, how could a positive identification be made?

For Calvin, the identification of a faithful pastor was a two-part process with an internal and an external component. The first part of the identification process involved the recognition of faithful pastors at an internal, spiritual level. In this portion of the process, Calvin insisted, it was God who took the leading role. Indeed, he claimed, the faithful ought to take great comfort in the knowledge that God would help them to correctly identify those whom he had sent. In a sermon dealing with Jeremiah 17:13,15,16, Calvin encouraged his listeners with the observation that “God not only reveals to ministers what is their office, but [H]e also reveals to all what ministers must be heard.”<sup>294</sup> He expressed similar sentiments in a sermon on the first chapter of Micah, where he declared that God would “guarantee” everything that was said in His Name.<sup>295</sup> How would this internal validation of true pastors work itself out? God, said Calvin, never failed to ensure that true and faithful preachers would be recognizable, by providing “some mark of his glory to the end that his Word [could be] easily recognized

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<sup>292</sup> Sermon, Micah 3:1-4, 16.

<sup>293</sup> Sermon, Deut. 5:28-33, 277: “And this is that which we must look for when we attend the sermon, that we might be able to have this point ratified and even signed in our consciences: that we possess God’s Word on which our life is dependent.”

<sup>294</sup> Sermon, Jeremiah 17:13,15,16, 204.

<sup>295</sup> Sermon, Micah 1:3-5, 18: “Although it is merely a mortal man who announces God’s promise to be our Father, we can rest assured it is true; for God fully guarantees whatsoever is said in His name.”

as celestial.”<sup>296</sup> The converse of the statement was also true; while God would identify faithful pastors by highlighting the celestial origin of their message, He would also work to expose those who falsely claimed Divine approbation for their work: “Micah makes the same point when he says that God will confuse and shame the false prophets, [and] expose their wickedness and turpitude to all the world, that everyone will come to know them to be the seducers and deceivers they really are and how they have perverted God’s teaching.”<sup>297</sup> While preaching on Ephesians 3:1-6, Calvin cautioned his listeners that such Divine aid was in part contingent upon the exhibition of a right attitude towards the preaching. He assured them, however, that when they gathered together in the correct way, that is with properly docile and teachable hearts, they could rest in the knowledge that God would “never allow [them] to be deceived, but he [would] so guide [them] by his Spirit that [they should] be assured that [their] faith [came] from him and [was] grounded upon his power, and that it [did] not come from men.”<sup>298</sup>

This Divinely assisted process of internal recognition, however, was to be complemented by a more concrete, pragmatic process of external recognition. Calvin outlined a number of marks by which faithful pastors could be identified. These marks involved an examination of both the way in which a particular pastor had obtained his office, as well as the way in which he conducted himself in the exercise of that office.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Sermon, Deut. 5:4-7, 55.

<sup>297</sup> Sermon, Micah 3: 5-8, 171.

<sup>298</sup> Sermon, Ephesians 3:1-6, 233-234. See also Inst. 4.1.6: “Meanwhile, anyone who presents himself in a teachable spirit to the ministers ordained by God shall know by the result that with good reason this way of teaching was pleasing to God...” See also: Sermon, Jeremiah 16:18-12, 113: “When we come to be taught, we must pray that God does not permit that the preacher spreads his sound in vain, since the Word of God is good seed. Let us pray that He cultivates us so that this seed bear fruit and that we strive all our life to serve him.”

<sup>299</sup> Sermon, Galatians 1:1-2, 12: “How can we know whether such people are pleasing to [H]im? Well, firstly they need to have been appointed in a lawful way. Then they need to have been selected because

To begin with, Calvin placed considerable emphasis on the question of how a particular individual had entered into the ministry. In this respect, his chief concern was the matter of ‘calling’. In Calvin’s estimation, one of the chief characteristics of the true pastor was that he had been lawfully called to his office. A lawful ‘calling’ involved a process whereby a given congregation of believers, acting prayerfully, communally and in good order, extended a ‘call’ to a particular individual, inviting that man to take up the duties of the ministry in their midst. In this respect, Calvin’s primary concern was that no man should ever thrust himself forward for the task. The issue here was not that no one should ever desire to be a minister, for that would contravene Paul’s counsel to Timothy that those who desired office in the church desired a good thing. Rather, Calvin’s point was that those who hoped to serve as pastors would never thrust themselves forward for the task, but would rather patiently wait for, and humbly respond to, a call extended to them by a given congregation.<sup>300</sup> Far less would any true servant of God seize the office by force, by deception, or in any other irregular fashion.<sup>301</sup>

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they possess the necessary gifts to exercise that office. This is how we may know beyond all doubt the pastors whom God owns and approves. It is not enough to have been ‘called’ to this position; a person must fulfill the charge which has been committed to him.”

<sup>300</sup> Sermon, Ephesians 1:1-3, 9: “For if a man were the most gifted and most excellent in the world, yet if he thrusts himself forward under his own impulse, he disturbs all order.” See also: Sermon: Ephesians 2:16-19, 208: “It is not for men...to put themselves forth unless God sends them.” Further, Calvin noted in a sermon on II Tim. 2:16-18, 55, that this was a troublesome issue in his own time: “There are many in this day who put themselves forward to teach; and what is the cause of it? Ambition [carries] them away; they disguise the Word of God, and thus Satan [goes] about to deprive us of the spiritual life.”

<sup>301</sup> Calvin dealt with this issue in a sermon on Ephesians 3:1-6, 232, where he discussed the way in which Paul had assumed the office of apostle: “Here St. Paul intends to prove that he was ordained an apostle, not as one who had thrust himself forward through rashness or folly, nor as one that had been put forward by men’s favour, nor as one who had been brought into it haphazardly, but as one put forward by God’s free goodness.” Paul, of course, had been called to the extraordinary office of apostle, an office which Calvin, as noted earlier, believed had ceased as a regularly functioning office of the church. Paul’s call had come directly from Christ and Paul had emphasized the directness of that call as a means of ensuring his listeners that he had not sought or obtained his position of authority by himself or for himself (see Calvin’s

Having a call, however, even a lawful one, was not enough. Calvin insisted that Divinely sanctioned pastors could also be identified by the manner in which they carried out their task. Calvin spoke of this reality in a sermon on Ephesians 1:1-3 where he reflected that it was not “enough for a man to be called, except [that] he discharge his duty with a pure conscience and with integrity in his office....”<sup>302</sup> In discussing the issue of pastoral competence and lifestyle, we encounter a further consequence of Calvin’s decision to explain the ministerial office in professional terms. After all, it stands to reason that professional men would and indeed should be held to professional standards. And Calvin was clear about the reality that, just as one would expect one’s doctor to exhibit certain professional behaviour and to live a healthy lifestyle, so too a true pastor could be identified by the way in which they conducted themselves in public and in private.

Calvin raised the matter of ministerial conduct and lifestyle in both his academically oriented works and in his preaching.<sup>303</sup> For instance, in his exegesis of I

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discussion of Paul’s defence of his apostolic authority in *Inst.* 4.3.13. In contrast to Paul’s experience, Protestant ministers of Calvin’s day could not lay claim to such a direct and personal call from God as a means of validating their authority. In lieu of this, Calvin shifted the emphasis away from some form of inner, Divine call, to the external process of the congregational call. To be sure, Calvin did make a place for the experience of a personal, spiritual sense of calling in those who hoped to serve as pastors (see for example, *Inst.* 4.3.11, where Calvin spoke of the inner, secret call “of which each minister is conscious before God”). However, for those called to the ‘regular’ office of the ministry, this internal sense of calling could only be approved and validated by the external call of the community, as it was expressed in a lawful, ordered extension of a call to serve.

<sup>302</sup> Sermon, Ephesians 1:1-3, 9.

<sup>303</sup> The concern about pastoral lifestyle was, of course, motivated by Paul’s instructions to Timothy (I Tim. 3) about the necessary personal qualifications for holding office in the church. Calvin was not alone amongst the reformers in considering these verses, and in demanding the ministers lead blameless lives. Zwingli, for example, in a consideration of this same section of Scripture wrote: “So we see that he is to be of a pious and decent life, so that one could not easily accuse him of a disgraceful method of living.” Zwingli (*Early Writings*), 182.

Timothy 4:16, Calvin noted that unless a “sanctified life” was added to “diligence in teaching” the minister’s efforts would amount to nothing.<sup>304</sup> He expressed similar sentiments in his comments on Titus 2:7, where he wrote: “Doctrine will have little authority unless its power and majesty shine in the life of a bishop as a mirror.”<sup>305</sup> Further, from the pulpit Calvin repeatedly and emphatically instructed his congregation about the absolute necessity that ministers live a blameless life.<sup>306</sup> He explained to his listeners the rationale for these strenuous calls for upright pastoral lifestyles in a sermon on Micah 3:1-4, where he noted that “the way leaders live changes the whole life of the community, either for the better or worse.”<sup>307</sup>

What then were the parameters of professional behaviour which Calvin outlined for those who held the office of minister? In both his academic and public discussions of the pastoral office Calvin identified a range of attitudes and behaviours that were either to be positive practiced or studiously avoided by the professional pastor. In the course of Calvin’s theological writings, a variety of traits are mentioned as positive attributes that the good shepherd was to evince. To begin with, ministers were to evidence a general willingness and desire to carry out their task. A genuine desire to ‘be’ a minister and to

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<sup>304</sup> Comm. I Tim. 4:16, 248.

<sup>305</sup> Comm. Titus 2:7, 371.

<sup>306</sup> Here too, there was to be a mutual interchange between the pastors and the laity. See for instance Calvin’s sermon on Titus 1:7-9, 157: “The minister ought to behave himself well, in a godly manner; and the people ought to refrain from all kinds of wickedness. The ministers must point the way, and set good examples; and the whole body of the church regulate their lives according to what is here taught them.”

<sup>307</sup> Sermon, Micah 3:1-4, 147. See also: Sermon, Titus 1:7-9, 157: “Why should the ministers of the Word be sober, just, and holy? Why should they be modest, not given to wine, not to strife and blows? ... To the end that they prove their doctrine by a godly life, and so ratify it that it may be received more readily: and likewise that the people may follow their examples, and endeavour to imitate all those virtues which they see in their shepherds.” See also: Sermon, II Samuel 1:17-27, 26: “For instance, if a man is excellent in many things, if he serves the church of God and exhibits many exquisite qualities – in short, if he is worthy of being highly esteemed and honoured – and yet has some little vice, that can be enough to disgust us so much that the good that the Lord has granted him is quite obscured.”

carry out the duties of that task was not to be confused with the naked ambition for self-advancement that Calvin so strenuously and continuously decried. Those who had properly prepared themselves for office, and had a “godly desire to ‘apply their knowledge to the edification of the Church’ could rightly desire office if they but made “free-will offerings of themselves...even before they [were] admitted to office.”<sup>308</sup> This was of course in line with the godly desire for office of which Paul had written to Timothy in his first epistle to that fledgling pastor.

This sincerity of desire would make itself known in the degree of diligence with which the pastor carried out his duties. Pastors were never to be inactive or lazy, but unceasingly alert to danger and constantly engaged in the exercise of their responsibilities. Calvin made a comparison between the ministers and the steward of a busy household. Such a steward had many responsibilities, responsibilities that were carried out for the welfare of the master and of the home. A man in such a position would be “busy day and night in anxious care that nothing go amiss through his carelessness, inexperience or negligence.”<sup>309</sup> The faithful pastor should never fall prey to sloth, but should eagerly labour to display to all men the “visible results of God’s power.”<sup>310</sup> In addition to constant activity, Calvin also required constant vigilance on the part of the pastor. The pastors were to be “always on the watch” for wicked men and doctrines that laboured to infiltrate the church and harm the faithful.<sup>311</sup> As an aside, Calvin was also of the opinion that the minister must be so completely engaged in his

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<sup>308</sup> Comm. I Tim.3:1, 222.

<sup>309</sup> Comm. I Tim. 3:15, 230/31. For an additional example of the comparison between the ministers and stewards see also: Comm. Titus 1:7, 359.

<sup>310</sup> Comm. II Tim. 1:7, 294.

<sup>311</sup> Comm. Titus :1:11, 363.

task that he had no room for other occupations. There was to be no ‘moonlighting’ for the fully engaged pastor – the ministry was to be his only task and focus.<sup>312</sup>

To willingness, activity and vigilance, Calvin added the trait of empathy. The exalted authority of the pastor did not allow him to sit above the congregation in splendid isolation. The good pastor had to be able to empathize with those under his care. He had to be capable of feeling and sharing the burdens of their everyday lives. It was, said Calvin, “right” that the ministers “bear the concerns of the church on his heart” and that he empathize “with its sorrows and [grieve] for its sins.”<sup>313</sup> The faithful pastor was to love his sheep, and part of that love involved an ability to share in their sufferings and to look on their shortcomings not with anger, but with grief.<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> Comm. Acts 6:2, 160.

<sup>313</sup> Comm. II Cor. 12:21, 167.

<sup>314</sup> Such empathy was not to be diminished by separation in either distance or time. In his examination of Philippians 2:26, Calvin noted that: “It is a sign of a true pastor, that when [Paul] was far away and willingly detained by a religious duty, he was nevertheless concerned that his sheep were distressed on his account, he was worried about their grief.” In his own conduct Calvin demonstrated such concern from a distance. During his time in Strasburg, a situation engendered by his earlier expulsion from Geneva, Calvin continued to demonstrate a pastoral concern for the welfare of the Genevan Church. This continued concern can be seen from his letters to the Genevans, encouraging them to submit faithfully to the ministers who had been set over them (*Letters*, 25 June 1539, v.1:119). His continued care can also be seen in his *Reply to Sadoletto*, which was written in response to Sadeletto’s effort to woo the Genevan church back to the Roman fold. In his *Reply*, he provided the following rationale for his having risen in defense of his former congregation: “Although at the present I am discharged from the administration of the church of Geneva, this cannot and ought not to stop me from maintaining paternal love and charity toward it. I say that I am obliged to be bound always in faith and loyalty to that which God has ordained me.” Further, in August 1554, many years after his return to Geneva, Calvin continued to evince a pastoral care for his former flock in the French Church in Strasburg. In that month, Calvin wrote a letter to Dr. Marbach in Strasburg in defense of the embattled Garnier, who was then minister of the French congregation which he had once pastored. Calvin explained that his letter, which had been occasioned by the renewal of the Sacramentarian controversy with the Lutherans, was written to protect his former congregation “the dispersion” of which “would give me like anguish with the tearing out of my bowels.” Bonnet, v.3, p.54. In a subsequent letter to the ministers of Strasburg, he wrote that he considered it “an unhallowed act to sever myself from that church of which I was formerly a minister.” (*Letters*, 13 January 1555, v.3:116)

Ministers were also to be peaceable men, and not given to quarrelling. This was especially the case when it came to interacting with other ministers.<sup>315</sup> Those who were ambitious and self-serving might struggle to ensure that the government of the church was carried out in accordance with their own wishes. Equally, they might bridle under the guidance of a pastor who was more experienced or esteemed than they. Such contentions betwixt the clergy, said Calvin were a grievous wound to the church.<sup>316</sup> They ought rather to be disposed “to help each other and when any of them has worked with greater success, the others should congratulate rather than envy him.”<sup>317</sup>

If, from a positive perspective, ministers were to be desirous of the task, diligent in their labours, as well as being empathetic and peaceable men, what activities, attitudes or behaviours were they to avoid? Of all the personal qualities a minister ought not to possess, avarice topped Calvin’s list of traits to be avoided.<sup>318</sup> Avarice, he cautioned,

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<sup>315</sup> Calvin was deeply aware of the difficulties that could be caused by rifts among the clergy. In his consideration of Calvin’s career in Geneva, William Naphy noted how Calvin had come to see the divisions between the Genevan pastors as a key factor in creating the circumstances that had resulted in his expulsion in 1538 (Naphy, *Consolidation*, p.?) Additionally, later in his career, when he faced considerable hostility from a number of the Bernese pastors (in large part due to his willingness to deal with the doctrine of predestination in his preaching), Calvin dispatched a letter to the Seigneurs of Berne in which he wrote: “Now I entreat you so much the more to maintain the fraternity and union which ought to exist between ministers of the gospel, and to take away the scandal which is but too common of seeing the appearance of division and discord among us.” *Letters*, March 1555, v.3:166.

<sup>316</sup> Here again, Calvin’s personal experience testifies to a pragmatic working out of his academically expressed sentiments. In a letter written to Heinrich Bullinger Calvin spoke of the need for “all of those on whom the Lord has laid any personal charge in the ordering of his Church, [to] agree together in a sincere and cordial understanding.” He continued on to say, that Satan deliberately labored to foster disagreement amongst the clergy, and, as such, ministers needed to redouble their efforts to “cultivate friendly fellowship” with one another. *Letters*, 12 March 1539, v.1:93-94. Similar sentiments were expressed some years later in a letter to Myconius, in which he wrote: “...for I dread factions that must always necessarily arise from the dissension of ministers.” *Letters*, 12 March 1539, v1:290.

<sup>317</sup> *Comm. Titus 1:5*, 356-357.

<sup>318</sup> *Comm. Daniel 5:11*, 219: “We know that we are altogether too prone to be led by the world’s enticements. In particular, ambition blinds us and disturbs all our senses. There is no worse pest; when anyone sees that he can acquire either esteem or honour he does not look at what is right or what God permits, but is carried away by a blind frenzy.”



would inevitably lead to the “corruption of doctrine.”<sup>319</sup> For Calvin, the ambitious pastor who won adherents for himself rather than Christ, and who sought after his own comfort rather than the well-being of the faithful was “the most harmful of all diseases” and a “deadly poison” in the church.<sup>320</sup> Calvin warned against all forms of personal ambition on the part of the pastor, but he singled out the desire for money as being particularly egregious. It was, he claimed, “a pestilent disease when prophets and teachers lov[ed] money or [were] ready to receive gifts.”<sup>321</sup> He warned his readers that where “money [was] not despised” sin and vice would flourish, as pastors adulterated the Word of God to secure their own financial wellbeing.

It should be noted, however, that Calvin did not forbid the pastor from receiving any financial compensation for their labours; nor did he deny that congregations were obliged to provide for their pastors. As a professional man, providing an essential service to believers, the faithful pastor deserved to be compensated for his labours. Indeed, the faithful were to care for their pastor’s material needs and their failure to do would demonstrate a base ingratitude on their part. In fact, Calvin commented that the financial neglect of a faithful pastor by his congregation was simply a mask for a deeper contempt for the

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<sup>319</sup> Comm. Gal. 1:10, 17.

<sup>320</sup> Comm. I Cor. 1:12, 27. See also Comm. Acts 20:30, 185: “Therefore ambition is the mother of all heresies. . . . Accordingly, it is inevitable that both the teaching of salvation is destroyed, and the safety of the flock goes for nothing, when the passion for mastery prevails.”

<sup>321</sup> Comm. Daniel 2:48, 114. As an aside, in a letter to the Church of Lyons in May of 1562, Calvin dealt with the question of whether pastors should be allowed to lend money at interest. He concluded that, while he did not want to pronounce a binding judgment on the matter, it was his personal belief that, while not absolutely wrong, the practice was to be avoided. His concern was that some pastors might abuse such a situation to profit unreasonably, and as such he advised the Protestant clergy against doing so. He did add this caveat, however, that a lending at interest was at least better than ministers becoming involved in any kind of mercantile activity, in so far as such activities would take him away from his ministerial labours. *Letters*, v.4:253.

Word of God.<sup>322</sup> Interestingly, such neglect must have been a reality of which Calvin had first-hand experience, because he commented he had seen the fear of poverty dissuade a number of otherwise faithful men from pursuing the ministry at all. In his comments on I Timothy 5:17, he claimed that fears of being ill-cared for by their congregations was a strategy deliberately employed by the devil as a way to dampen the enthusiasm of prospective candidates for the office of pastor. Such men were so scared of “poverty and want” that they had avoided shouldering the burdens of the ministry and pursued other careers entirely. Further, by insisting that pastors be paid a salary for their labour, Calvin rejected the primitivist Anabaptist vision of the clergy as itinerant pastors who, in the model of Paul, supported themselves through their own labours and activity.

In addition to avarice, Calvin cautioned pastors against displaying too great a levity in their personal lives. For instance, in a sermon on the sixteenth chapter of Jeremiah Calvin wondered what would happen “if, after [preaching] a minister [went] out to have some fun?”<sup>323</sup> Would he not succeed only in invalidating what he had said on the pulpit by the display of vice in his lifestyle? A more exhaustive list of the vices to be avoided by the ministers was provided in Calvin’s sermon on Titus 1:7-9, where he noted that, “...the good shepherd must be blameless; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre....”<sup>324</sup> Perhaps most spectacularly, Calvin insisted that not only did the minister’s current conduct need to be above reproach, but even their

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<sup>322</sup> Comm. Gal. 6:6, 112.

<sup>323</sup> Sermon, Jeremiah 16:8-12, 107-108.

<sup>324</sup> Sermon, Titus 1:7-9, 159.

past was to be free from grievous wrong-doing.<sup>325</sup> In cases where pastors failed to live up to these personal and professional standards Calvin insisted they were to be publicly rebuked and admonished.<sup>326</sup> Ministers who had not just fallen briefly into sin, but had committed some form of serious public sins, or who had been identified as wolves in sheep's clothing were to be "treated as accursed people, and as devils, and [were to] be excommunicated"<sup>327</sup>

It should be noted, however, that Calvin occasionally tempered his more strenuous comments about the need for ministers to live upright and holy lives with the request that the laity be willing to look beyond the sinful failings of their pastors. Calvin acknowledged, of course, that no man was blameless before God or his neighbour, and it was not the day-to-day shortcomings that were to prohibit a man from holding the office of minister, but rather, any form of "scandalous disgrace" or "extraordinary fault."<sup>328</sup> He concluded that:

...when those who preach the Word of God do not govern themselves as they should, but manifest a contradiction between their life and their doctrine, let us not fail to accept in all reverence what they bring forward from God. For it is not reasonable that we pay attention only to the evil we see, so as to tarnish his Word and his honour.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> In this regard, a rather interesting case presents itself in the records of the Venerable Company. In April of 1556, the election to the office of minister of Pierre Duc was proceeding apace, until a rumour emerged that he had "entered into some usurious contract...." Interestingly, even though Duc was exonerated of the charge, his examination for the ministry was halted, "to ensure that no evil suspicion should attach to the sacred ministry...." Although, he was allowed to continue in his post as a teacher in Geneva, and would later become a minister in Dombes in 1562, his case demonstrates how seriously Calvin and the Genevan pastors took this matter. Philip Hughes, trans. & ed., *The Registers of the Company of Pastors of Geneva During the Time of Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 316. Hereafter cited as: R.O.C.P., page number.

<sup>326</sup> Sermon, Galatians 2:11-14, 149: "Indeed, Paul says in that other passage to Timothy, that those who have sinned [publically], though they be pastors who are responsible for teaching and guiding the flock, should be rebuked before all...."

<sup>327</sup> Sermon, Galatians 1:6-8, 45.

<sup>328</sup> Comm. I Tim. 3:2, 223.

<sup>329</sup> Sermon, II Samuel 3:12-27, 122.

Calvin's sensitivity to the damage that could be done to a minister's personal reputation, as well as to the larger Protestant cause, by ministers whose personal lives were called into question, was fueled by more than mere exegetical speculation. Several examples of how poor ministerial misconduct had, in Calvin's estimation, imperiled the entire Protestant cause can be noted. In the first place, Calvin had witnessed first-hand the consequences of William Farel's ill-advised decision to marry a woman more than half a century his junior. In the summer of 1558, Farel, who at that the time was pastor of a congregation in Neuchatel, shocked his colleague with the announcement that he planned to marry Marie Thouet, the teenage daughter of his housekeeper. To say that Calvin was appalled would be an understatement. Deeply conscious of the potential Farel's choice had to besmirch the honour of the ministry, and to damage the public image of the entire Protestant cause, Calvin refused to attend the ceremony, let alone to officiate it as Farel had initially requested. His fears about a potential public relations disaster were not unfounded. Criticisms about sexual immorality had been a key facet of pre-Protestant, anticlericalism, and the potentially 'lecherous' implications of Farel's actions could only have resulted in many of the same criticisms being levelled against the new Protestant clergy. In an article dealing with the relationship between these two men, Heiko Oberman, noted that Calvin was not alone in his assessment of the potential for disaster. Oberman noted that, following the wedding on 15 October 1558, "a minister of the imperiled underground congregation in Paris reported shock and foresaw a

disastrous fallout.”<sup>330</sup> Further, Oberman interpreted the sudden cessation of correspondence between Farel and Calvin, which up until that time been substantial, as a consequence of Farel’s marriage. He is undoubtedly correct in this regard. Given Calvin’s feelings about the absolute necessity of irreproachable pastoral conduct, it is hard to imagine a set of circumstances he would have found more disappointing. So keenly did he feel this shortcoming on the part of Farel that his letters to his mentor almost entirely ceased after 1558, only to be taken up again on his death bed in 1564.

A second example of Calvin’s fears about the ways in which immoderate action and lifestyle on the part of the minister could jeopardize the larger Protestant movement can be found in a letter to the Church at Sauve, which Calvin and the Genevan ministers dispatched in July of 1561.<sup>331</sup> This letter, which was addressed to the leaders of the church, was occasioned by acts of iconoclasm perpetrated by the Huguenots faithful in Sauve – acts in which their pastor had played a leading role. What particularly bothered Calvin and his colleagues was the immoderate zeal demonstrated by the pastor, a certain M. Sartas. The Genevan pastors were shocked “at such temerity in a man whose duty it was to moderate and restrain others.”<sup>332</sup> The larger fears of Calvin and the Genevan pastors, however, was not simply that the pastor Sartas had failed to provide a model of temperance and moderation for his congregation, but that he had endangered the large Huguenot cause. They wrote that it was “...astonishing

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<sup>330</sup> Heiko Oberman, “Calvin and Farel: The Dynamics of Legitimation in Early Calvinism,” in *Journal of Early Modern History*, 2:1 (1998), 47.

<sup>331</sup> Letters, v.4:205-207.

<sup>332</sup> Letters, v.4:205.

that he should be so stupid as not to think of the handle which he [had] given to the crafty to ruin everything.” In these circumstances, they called on the leaders of the church to “separate...from him who was the principal instigator” of these events and, in light of his “rebellious conduct [to] cut him off from your society.”

A final example of Calvin’s fears in this regard can be found in a letter of May 1562 addressed to the Church in Lyons. This letter was written in the wake of the Massacre at Vassy, after which the Huguenots had risen up to seize control of Lyons by force. The rebels had been led by one of the ministers, a certain Jaques Rufi, and following the seizure of the town a number of Catholic churches were ruthlessly looted. Outraged by this behaviour, Calvin, on behalf of the ministers of Geneva, sent them a letter in which he condemned the behaviour of the Lyonese in general, and their ministers in particular. He wrote that: “It is an unbecoming act in a minister to play the trooper or captain, but it is much worse when one quits the pulpit to carry arms.” Such actions he claimed, might be forgiven in some measure because of the inflamed passions and the heat of the moment. But to incite or participate in the looting which followed, he insisted had been entirely inexcusable. In light of such ministerial misconduct, he called upon the Lyonese Church to “...separate yourselves from them, [rather than to] bring disgrace on the gospel by associating with them.”

Having established the minister as a professional man and having mapped out a blueprint of professional behaviour that faithful pastors were to exemplify, Calvin now faced the challenge of explaining to rank and file believers how they were to interact with the men who served them as pastors. This proved more

difficult than it might first appear. Calvin had painted a portrait of the pastor as a professional man. That pastor had a Divinely sanctioned calling and a Divinely ascribed task of proclaiming the Gospel message. Calvin had worked to establish the authority of these pastors by linking them to the person and work of Paul and by presenting them as professional men who provided an essential service to their community. From the elevated view of the pulpit, however, these pastors looked out upon a congregation deeply committed to the notion of the priesthood of all believers. Calvin was confronted with the inescapable tension between a professional pastorate that claimed an authoritative right to teach and rebuke and a laity infused with the egalitarian spirit of spiritual equality before God.

In order to resolve this tension Calvin envisioned an ecclesiastical community that was governed by what might best be described as a spirit of ‘mutual teachableness’. In this community, every believer, layman and cleric alike, was to be simultaneously a teacher and a student. It was to be a community in which “all Christians were to have the right to judge the truth of the doctrine being taught to them [on the basis of] their own investigation of Scripture.”<sup>333</sup> The establishment of this community, however, hinged on the clergy and laity interacting with each other in a ‘teachable’ fashion. And, in so far as within this relationship each party had certain rights and obligations regarding the other party, Calvin laboured in his preaching to ensure that the members of each group were cognizant of their particular privileges and responsibilities.

Before describing these various rights and obligations, however, something must be said about the concept of ‘teachableness’ as Calvin understood it. To begin with, the

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<sup>333</sup> Randall Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 69.

idea of teachableness figured prominently in Calvin's own life. Indeed, any discussion of Calvin and the concept of teachableness must begin with the account of his conversion as he presented it in the preface to his *Commentary on the Psalms*. In a rare instance of autobiographical reflection, Calvin wrote of how, despite his initial reluctance and his "obstinate addiction" to the teachings of the Roman church, he was moved to embrace the Reformed faith by a "*subita conversione ad docilitatem*", that is, by a 'sudden conversion to teachableness'. Calvin scholars have expended considerable time and energy attempting to unravel and interpret this particular phrase, and it bears further investigation here.<sup>334</sup>

To begin with, for Calvin, "the primary connotation of conversion [was] not salvation but vocation, [it was] a call to service."<sup>335</sup> This meant that Calvin's understanding of his own conversion was inextricably intertwined with his sense of having been called to assume a public ministry. Further, the depiction of his conversion as having occurred suddenly is indicative of Calvin's belief that this vocational summons had come directly from God. In this respect, the word *subita*, rendered 'sudden' in English, does not refer so much to a temporal suddenness, but to a sense of unexpectedness. Further, Calvin's use of this particular term must be understood in light of his preceding comments in which he had spoken of his timidity and his desire for the quiet, withdrawn life of the scholar. In light of these personal characteristics, Calvin had

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<sup>334</sup> On this issue see especially: Wilhelm Neuser, "Calvin's Conversion to Teachableness," in *Calvin and Christian Ethics: Papers and Responses Presented at the Fifth Colloquium on Calvin and Calvin Studies*, ed. Peter De Klerk (Grand Rapids: Calvin Studies Society, 1987), 55-77. As well as: Heiko Oberman, "Subita Conversio: The Conversion of John Calvin" in *Zwingliana* 19(2): 279-295. And finally: David Rylaarsdam, "A Teachable Teacher: Docilitas and the Vocation of John Calvin" in *Marginal Resistance: Essays Dedicated to John C. Vander Stelt*, ed. John H. Kok, (Sioux Centre: Dordt College Press, 2001), 165-186.

<sup>335</sup> Oberman (1992), 291.



considered himself very much “unsuited for public office” and thus his ‘conversion’, his vocational call to the ministry, had been entirely unexpected.<sup>336</sup> Additionally, the suddenness of his call emphasized the “vertical dimension of [this] unprepared [for] illumination from above.”<sup>337</sup> It was, as Oberman noted, not a conversion of Calvin, but a “conversion brought about in Calvin.”<sup>338</sup>

Calvin, therefore, understood himself to have been converted in the sense that he had been unexpectedly called by God to assume the task of minister in the Protestant Churches. What then of the term “*docilitatum*”, or teachableness? It is important to recognize that in his presentation of these events, Calvin insisted that his conversion was only made possible by his having first been rendered docile, that is to say ‘teachable’. As such, Rylaarsdam has argued that Calvin understood this turn towards docility as an essential component in his preparation for taking up his new vocation: “God made him teachable so that he could teach others.”<sup>339</sup> If *docilitas* was such an important concept for Calvin, what then did he mean by it? In the first place, Calvin understood *docilitas* to mean “a positive and earnest disposition [towards] sound Christian teaching.”<sup>340</sup> To be teachable, then, meant that one was “ready and open” to receive and learn from the Word.<sup>341</sup> As such, Calvin sometimes spoke of *docilitas* as precondition for receiving faith. However, he also spoke of *docilitas* as an attribute of faith itself, that is, as an

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<sup>336</sup> Oberman (1992), 287-289.

<sup>337</sup> Oberman (1992), 289.

<sup>338</sup> Oberman (1992), 289.

<sup>339</sup> Rylaarsdam, 175.

<sup>340</sup> Rylaarsdam, 168.

<sup>341</sup> Rylaarsdam, 168.

essential characteristic of those who already possessed faith.<sup>342</sup> For Calvin, this meant that believers were to remain perpetually teachable, “always pressing on in sanctification, never static, a permanent student in God’s school.”<sup>343</sup> The dynamic character of this teachableness was particularly important for Calvin. Docility did not equate with passivity; rather, it involved an active response, it was very much a call to action. In summary then, to be teachable was to be always ready and willing to submit oneself to the presentation of God’s Word. It was not, however, to be a passive and uncritical submission, but one which required a dynamic and critical reception of that Word. In terms of dynamism, in particular, such docility made it possible to teach others what one had learned as a faithful student in God’s school. Further, because *docilitas* was in some fundamental way a component of faith itself, for Calvin, teachableness was a trait to be exemplified not just by those who had the responsibility to teach, but by all believers; thus, it was a topic he regularly raised in his writing and preaching.<sup>344</sup>

Within this community of the ‘mutually teachable’, what then was required of the clergy? The chief duty of the pastor was of course to preach the word of God to the

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<sup>342</sup> In this assertion, Neuser does not agree with Rylaarsdam. In his consideration of Calvin’s use of the term Neuser insisted that, in almost every instance where Calvin used the term *docilitas*, “...it did not refer to belief itself but rather to an initial stage on the road to belief, ‘It describes a student or hearer who must learn more (58).’” As such, Neuser contended that Calvin understood *docilitas* exclusively as a vigorous “turn to the Holy Scripture, or to the Gospel, or the teaching of Christ (64).” In his response to Neuser’s paper on teachableness, however, Brian Armstrong expressed “serious reservations” about Neuser’s conclusions that *docilitas* was the “vestibule to faith (81).” In contrast to Neuser, Armstrong argued that *docilitas* was a component of faith for Calvin, and not necessarily a weak and insufficient component at that (81); Rylaarsdam has expressed a similar view of *docilitas*. In light of Calvin’s emphasis on the need for continued learning and the need to constantly turn towards Scripture, I have chosen to follow Rylaarsdam’s interpretation, rather than Neuser’s. Importantly, however, Neuser did make it clear that Calvin often spoke of *docilitas* in the context of the ‘school of Christ’. Neuser demonstrated that, for Calvin, teachableness was intimately connected with the preaching, and that it carried with it implications of obedience and submission towards that preaching (65).

<sup>343</sup> Rylaarsdam, 169.

<sup>344</sup> Rylaarsdam, 167. Neuser noted that Calvin used the term *docilitas* or *docilis* occur over 100 times in his commentaries. Neuser, 59.

laity.<sup>345</sup> In the ‘classroom of God’ the ministers were the schoolmasters, and as such, the ability to effectively teach others was a qualification so basic, so intrinsic, to the ministerial office that Calvin singled this talent out as an absolutely indispensable trait of the true pastor: “We must have the skill to teach people how what we have learned from Scripture can be applied to their own benefit. That, I say, is the gift that the prophet is most especially blessed with.”<sup>346</sup> In terms of content, they were of course to teach only what they had been given; as noted in the previous chapter, ministers were to build according to the plan of Scripture and so to continue building on the foundation that had been laid by the prophets and apostles. To deviate from this plan by introducing material of their own fancy and devising would be to defile the Gospel and so imperil the souls of all who listened to them.<sup>347</sup>

Crucially, however, this was not all Calvin had to say about the ministers as teachers. He insisted that if ministers were to have any hope of being effective teachers,

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<sup>345</sup> Ministers, Calvin told his congregation, had been “...charged with the office of instruction.” Sermon, Micah 3:5-8 (167). And it was to be instruction with a purpose; the goal of every sermon (and lecture), Calvin insisted, was that “...we be better instructed in God’s Word.” Sermon, Micah 3:5-8 (170).

<sup>346</sup> Sermon, Micah 3:5-8 (173). See also: “And especially and above all, [Paul] required that the ministers be apt to teach; and this virtue belongs to them only: for this cause also they are chosen.” Sermon, I Tim. 3:3-4 (264).

<sup>347</sup> Calvin’s warnings against the introduction of human fancy into the preaching were legion. These few quotations serve as but a few illustrations of an issue he discussed frequently in his preaching. Sermon, Deut. 6:1-4, 291: “Moses was the most excellent prophet whom God ever brought into being. Yet in this text he does not take liberty to teach what his own judgement dictates, for he know that he is a mortal man, subject to the law like other men. This is why he maintains that what he reports he received from God; he only passes it on from [God’s] hand to our [hand].” Sermon, Deut. 27: 1-10, 5: “Let us note then, that pastors are not appointed to set forth whatsoever doctrine seems good to themselves, or to bring men’s souls into subjection and bondage to them, or to make laws and articles of faith at their own pleasure; but rather only to bring about the rule of God, that His Word may be harkened to.” Sermon, Jeremiah 15:17-19, 79: “When God says ‘as my mouth’, He reveals that we must speak only His word if we are to exercise the office He has given us. When a man speaks by his own will, he speaks not as prophet, apostle or doctor of the Church; he speaks for himself alone...”

they had to demonstrate a willingness to continue their own learning.<sup>348</sup> That continued learning was to manifest itself most particularly in their relationship with the Word of God:

For although Jesus Christ has appointed certain men to be leaders and guides to show other men the way, yet it does not follow that they are so wise that they must not be learners as well as the rest. For he that speaks must take instruction by it himself, and a man will never be fit to declare God's will to other men, unless he himself learns daily.<sup>349</sup>

Calvin drew a close connection between the depth of a minister's relationship with the Word and the authority of his office.<sup>350</sup> Ministers who failed to demonstrate an unceasing willingness to deepen their knowledge of Scripture risked losing their authority: "A man must be totally grounded in God's teaching in order to have the authority to speak."<sup>351</sup> Indeed, the minister was to show via his life and conduct that he was the first and most eager student of the Word, and that he was willing to submit to its teachings and tenets.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Sermon, Titus 1:7-9, 159: "When we teach others, we must be willing to be taught also. For if we are not willing to learn, that others may profit by our instruction, we shall never be able to do our duty."

<sup>349</sup> Sermon, Ephesians 4:11-14, 382. Further, Calvin emphasized in a sermon on I Tim. 5:16-18, 511, that the minister's study of Scripture was not an end in itself; it was not simply a practice that had as its ultimate goal the personal betterment of the pastor. Rather: "Moreover, they that will be counted shepherds, must apply themselves precisely to this Word. And how? Is it to make a secret study of it in a closet? No...but to teach the whole church. .... It had been enough to have said, Word, but he shows us that we must not make a private speculation of it as we think good, we must do it so that others may profit with us, and the whole church receive instruction." Knowing God's will as expressed in Scripture was, then, closely connected to effective preaching: "He speaks of judgement, because the preacher must be certain of God's will in order to teach others how to apply it to their benefit." Sermon, Micah 3:5-8, 176.

<sup>350</sup> "If we are to preach faithfully, it is necessary that we have the substance of the Word of God in our hearts, as if we had eaten some good meat of which the substance remained in us." Sermon, Jeremiah 15:12-23/15-17, 61. And: "Furthermore, those whose task is to proclaim the Word should not merely taste a drop of it on their tongue, but should be replenished by taking in its substance." Ibid. 62-63.

<sup>351</sup> Sermon, Micah 3:5-8, 167.

<sup>352</sup> Sermon, II Samuel 7:1-13, 303: "So today, although God is using men to teach us, as he always has, and although he wants us to be guided by their doctrine in the hope of life eternal, all the more must teachers recognize themselves to be disciples and come to his school, just as God has ordained it from all time." See also Calvin's sermon on Galatians 1:11-14 (65) where he made the following comment about himself as a preacher to his congregation: "As for myself, as I speak to you now, I must not bring anything of my

The ministers, however, were not only to be eager students of the Word, they also had to be willing to learn from those around them.<sup>353</sup> Such instruction was to come in the first instance from the doctors of the Church. Zachman drew attention to Calvin's call for ministers to "hear the interpretation of Scripture set forth by the doctors of the church in their lectures and/or commentaries."<sup>354</sup> Further, ministers were also to be willing to take instruction from their peers. To that end, Calvin established a practice in Geneva known as the *congrégations*, whereby the collective body of the Genevan clergy gathered every Friday morning to discuss Scripture and doctrine.<sup>355</sup> In these *congrégations*, the pastors from the city and the countryside came together and were led by one of their number (with each pastor taking their turn in the weekly rotation) in a discussion of a particular passage from Scripture. Interestingly, the lectures delivered in the *congrégations* were open to the public.<sup>356</sup> These Friday morning *congrégations* were further supplemented by a series of doctrinal propositions that were to be propounded by one of the ministers and subsequently debated in a congenial manner by the whole body of the clergy; this informal debate took place on Friday afternoons as part of the meeting of the Venerable Company and, in contrast to the *congrégations*, was conducted behind closed doors.<sup>357</sup>

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own, nor elevate myself above other people. In this, I am addressing the whole congregation, and therefore the message applies to myself first of all, and next to everyone else here without exception."

<sup>353</sup> "For no one will ever be a good teacher, if he does not show himself teachable, and always ready to learn; and the man will never be met who is so self-sufficient in the fullness and completeness of his knowledge that he would gain nothing by listening to other people." Comm. I Cor. 14:31, 303.

<sup>354</sup> Zachman (2009), 67.

<sup>355</sup> On the practice of the *congrégations* see: E.A. de Boer, "Calvin and Colleagues. Propositions and Disputations in the Context of the *Congrégations* in Geneva" in *Calvinus Praeceptor Ecclesiae*, ed. H.j.Selderhuis (Geneva: Droz, 2002), 331-342.

<sup>356</sup> de Boer, 333.

<sup>357</sup> de Boer, 333. The minutes of the Company of Pastors have this to say about the purpose of this disputation: "Every Friday after midday each one of the brethren in his turn shall propound conclusions

The purpose of these meetings was twofold: in the first place, they provided a means of ensuring the doctrinal and exegetical orthodoxy of the pastors; secondly, these gatherings ensured that the pastors continued their personal study of the Word.<sup>358</sup>

Finally, pastors were to be willing to receive instruction from the laity – even from those whom they might deem far less learned than themselves. In respect to learning from the laity, Zachman pointed to Calvin’s discussion of Acts 18:26, where Calvin spoke of Apollos’ willingness to accept instruction from Priscilla and Aquilla (both lay people and one a woman), despite the fact that he was one of the most august teachers in the Church.<sup>359</sup> In summary then, in order to remain properly teachable, ministers had to show themselves willing to receive instruction from the Word, from the doctors of the Church, from their colleagues, and from the laity.

How then were the laity to live and function within the community of the mutually teachable? To be properly teachable, that is to be good students in God’s classroom, the laity had to approach the sermons with a proper attitude towards both the preaching and the men who addressed them. Calvin demanded that, as good students, they were to arrive eager, attentive and ready to learn.<sup>360</sup> In this regard, proper focus was

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from Scripture, against which the other shall argue in a moderate tone and without strife. And that they avoid the outward show and loud verbal contest of the sophists, so that it can be called a quiet exchange of disputable topics, rather than a disputation. So everyone shall be trained in the doctrine of godliness in order to be rendered firm and more well grounded.”

<sup>358</sup> De Boer quoted from the 1541 *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* in order to elucidate the aim of these weekly colloquies: “Now as it necessary to examine the ministers well when they are to be elected, so also it is necessary to have the right order to duty. To this end it will be expedient in the first place that all ministers, in order to preserve purity and concord of doctrine among themselves, gather on a set day of the week to hold a conference on the Scriptures.” De Boer, 332.

<sup>359</sup> Zachman (2009), 68.

<sup>360</sup> Calvin was quick to point out that simply showing up and sitting quietly in the pew would not be enough to satisfy God. Sermon: Deut. 28:36-45, 187: “just as we see many folk who think that it is enough to be in

paramount; the laity were to recognize that God was acting graciously in instructing them and, therefore, they were not to be “preoccupied with the things of this world” during the preaching.<sup>361</sup> Beyond leaving their daily troubles at the door, the good student was also to divest himself of any preconceived theological pretensions or fancies he might have:

To be well taught in God’s school, we must not bring anything of our own thoughts, neither must we think our own imaginings good, but we must be fools in ourselves, that is to say, empty of our own thoughts, and we must give place and free access to the Word of God, so that we accept, without contradicting, what is uttered by [H]is mouth.<sup>362</sup>

Just as the minister was to not to proclaim from the pulpit any doctrine of his own devising, so too the laity were not to entertain in the pew any theological fantasies of their own making. Further, Calvin warned his congregation that, as with any unruly student, those whose attention wandered, or whose behaviour proved disruptive, could expect that they would be reprimanded by the schoolmaster.<sup>363</sup> Finally, lay believers were to remember that “God want[ed] his Word, when it is preached, to be received with all reverence.”<sup>364</sup> In so far as the ministers were charged with speaking nothing other than what they had received from God, when they did preach faithfully it was as if God

attendance at [the] sermons, and it seems to them that God has been given His due if they have made a ceremonial appearance.” See also: Sermon II Samuel 2:1-7, 51: “There are many who will return from the sermon much more ignorant than they came, because they are only interested in ceremony and come out of duty. They even bring books with them to make a good show. But they only mutter without any understanding, and derive no profit from the Word of God, because they have not applied their spirit to it.”

<sup>361</sup> Sermon, Deut.4:44-5:3, 43.

<sup>362</sup> Sermon, Ephesians 5:15-18, 544. See also: Sermon, Deut. 5:8-10, 66: “And above all, when it is a matter of worshipping God, we are not to give attention whatever to our imagination. But we are to follow in all simplicity what [H]e has ordained by [H]is Word, without adding anything to it at all.”

<sup>363</sup> Sermon, Galatians 5:7-10, 493: “If a schoolmaster sees that his pupils are chatting together while he is speaking, or ‘building castles in the air’, and they do not hear what he says, the cane will come out, and quite rightly.

<sup>364</sup> Sermon, II Sam. 7:1-13, 303. See also: Sermon, Galatians 4:11-14, 411: “The best homage that we can render to God is to remain silent before him and [to] listen to his Word, captivated and transfixed, attributing all authority to him, and submitting under his royal sceptre.”

Himself was speaking and, thus, said Calvin: “We must all submit to their teaching without the slightest waxing or waning. We must all become students with God as our teacher.”<sup>365</sup> Calvin expressed these thoughts even more explicitly in a sermon on Deuteronomy 27:11-15, where he first noted that God spoke “by the mouth of His priests as if He were there visibly in His own person.” As such, the faithful were to “receive it as from God Himself and so be silent in listening to it, making no reply or criticism of it.”<sup>366</sup> The corollary, of course, was that ‘students’ who refused to listen silently and attentively and who resisted the proclamation of the Gospel were resisting God rather than men.<sup>367</sup> To these rebellious students Calvin addressed the following warning:

Those who wish to be at peace with the ministers of God must take care to transform themselves and overcome their stubborn pride by which they say, ‘We will do as we have been accustomed to.’ Otherwise, let them make peace with the Devil....<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> Sermon, Micah 1:1-2, 16. See also: Sermon, Deut. 27:1-10: “But at the same time we must also note that when those who are appointed ministers of the Word of God perform their office faithfully, then they may speak with masterly authority.” Calvin also, of course, also pointed out that obediently submitting to the preaching of the ministers was never cause to listen to men rather than God; God was always to remain the Headmaster of His own school: “The lesson we ought to learn is that although we respect those who are called to be pastors, and who bring us God’s Word, we are to listen to God above any other and remember that our Lord Jesus is the only head of the church.” Sermon, Galatians 1:1-2, 11-12.

<sup>366</sup> Both quotations from, Sermon, Deut. 27:11-15, 31. See also: Sermon, Ephesians (363-364): “For we show very clearly that we do not take God for our King, nor are we willing to honor our Lord Jesus Christ when He is sent to us, if we do not allow ourselves to be governed by the preaching of the gospel, to which we must yield such obedience as to receive its doctrine beyond all doubt.” Calvin seems to have had some reservations about how likely he was to find such willing and obedient students: “And although men confess that it is necessary to receive the Word of God without resistance, nevertheless, with great trouble we find one out of a hundred who submits in good earnest to the authority which it merits. And why is this? Because we do not apprehend at all the majesty of God which is revealed here.” Sermon, Deut. 5:4-7, 51-52.

<sup>367</sup> Sermon, Jeremiah 17: 13, 15, 16: “We cannot fight against them or reject them [lest] we do battle against God.” See also: Sermon: Deut. 5:16, 147: “And if you do not receive [H]is lieutenants when he sends them to you, that is a definite sign that you equally reject [H]is yoke, and as a result [H]is justice is violated and [H]e feels insulted by you.”

<sup>368</sup> Sermon, Jeremiah 15:17-19, 77. Calvin issued a similar warning in a sermon on Jeremiah 15:19-21 (85): “Let those who assail, torment and make war on ministers be advised that we can well counter-attack. .... What, then, will those who make war against the ministers of God gain? We teach all not to make war against those God has sent: No matter how well those rebels fight, God will show that mortal men profit nothing by raising up against Him.” The ultimate counter-attack of the ministers against those who rebelled, however, might only be felt in eternity: “Saint Paul says that those whom God has charged to preach His Gospel will take vengeance on those who rebel and hold the Gospel in contempt. Note, then,



Calvin's call for an absolute and uncritical reception of the Gospel as proclaimed by the ministers, however, must be placed within the larger context of his understanding of teachableness. As has been noted above, for Calvin, being teachable required a certain 'docility' in the face of the proclaimed word. However, such docility was not to be equated with the passive internalization of all that was delivered to them from the pulpit. Far from it! Teachableness, for Calvin, was an inherently active and critical disposition, one which forbade the laity from blindly accepting the preaching *carte blanche*. Calvin discussed this relationship between docility and critical reception in a sermon on II Samuel 7:18-23, where he told his congregation:

Let us also deign to hear it, and make ourselves submissive to receive it. Moreover, since it is easy for us to hear the Word, let us be very careful to exercise discretion and prudence, so that we do not accept everything that is said to us. Faith is joined to discretion, not that man should be wise and subtle in order to dispute against God, but on the contrary, discretion means, as I see it, absence of contradiction to what God has once for all declared.<sup>369</sup>

Thus, Calvin instructed his congregation that they were to 'test the spirits', measuring and evaluating the proclaimed word against their own knowledge of Scripture. In this way, said Calvin, the new Protestant believers were not to be like those of the Catholic faith, who were expected to receive obediently and uncritically all that was declared orthodox by the Roman pontiffs.<sup>370</sup>

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that whosoever refuses to accommodate himself to the Gospel teaching and to receive it in all humility will suffer precisely the punishment which it pronounces against him. Our salvation or eternal death lies in the voice of the Gospel." Sermon, Micah 1:11-16, 51.

<sup>369</sup> Sermon, II Samuel 7:18-23, 375.

<sup>370</sup> Sermon, Ephesians 3:1-6, 233: "It is true that we ought to examine the doctrine, and the we must not receive all things that are preached indifferently, even like brute beasts (after the manner of the papists,

Thus far, the discussion of Calvin's view of the ministry has been largely theoretical and conceptual in nature. Through that discussion it has also become clear that standards which Calvin had set for pastors were rather extraordinary. He had set out the Apostle Paul as the standard of purity and devotion against which all pastors were to measure themselves as they carried out their tasks. Further, Calvin's sense of the critical importance of preaching in effecting the salvation required that pastors had to be practically angelic when they entered the pulpit. To that, Calvin sketched out a standard of professional conduct demanding enough to challenge the most capable and devoted of men. Calvin's experiences in Geneva soon made it apparent that Protestant pastors were going to need a significant degree of institutional support if they were going to successfully carry out their task. In the next chapter, Calvin's efforts to assist pastors by developing institutions capable of producing, supporting and overseeing an orthodox and professional clergy will be considered.

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who call it simplicity, to be without any understanding at all) but we must bear such honour to God's name that when the doctrine of holy Scripture is expounded to us, each one of us must withdraw himself from the world and forsake his own reason, so that we may submit ourselves with true obedience and humility to thing things which we know have come from God."

## Chapter Four - Institutional Support: The Academy and the Venerable Company

Thus far, the discussion has focused on investigating Calvin's conceptual model of the ministerial office. Through this discussion the remarkable demands Calvin made of the ministers have become apparent. Calvin had set out the Apostle Paul as a standard of purity and devotion against which all pastors were to measure themselves. His sense of the critical importance of preaching in effecting salvation required that pastors be practically angelic when they entered the pulpit. Finally, the standards of morality and professionalism to which Calvin held himself and his fellow pastors were extraordinarily high. As Calvin's career in Geneva progressed past the tumultuous first years of exile and return and into the 1540s, however, it quickly became apparent that translating the Pauline and professional model he had so carefully crafted in print and the pulpit into the real world context of daily life in Geneva was going to be a serious undertaking. In this chapter, Calvin's efforts to develop such institutions will be considered. We will see how, in order to meet the challenge of providing orthodox and professionally trained pastors, Calvin labored to develop a seminary in Geneva. Known as the Genevan Academy, this institution became a source of pastors and missionaries that faithfully served the Protestant world for generations. In terms of overseeing the pastorate, Calvin organized the Venerable Company of Pastors. The Company would, in many respects, function as professional standards board dedicated to ensuring that once qualified men had been installed into office they completed their task in a faithful and professional way.

The dawning realization about just how difficult it would be to assemble an orthodox and committed group of pastors was occasioned in part by Calvin's personal

experiences as a pastor in Geneva. He soon discovered that even with his clear sense of calling, his highly developed sense of pastoral authority and responsibility and his iron willed determination to live up to the standards exemplified by Paul, staying clear of controversy proved easier said than done. Calvin was unable, for instance, to entirely avoid scandal within his own home. In chapter two, Calvin's belief that Satan might attack a minister by fostering discord in his own family was discussed. These particular reflections about the devil's willingness to incite domestic strife in the minister's home were made in his commentary on the book of Acts, which was published in 1550. Just two years prior to the publication of these comments, Calvin's sister-in-law Anne de Fer, the wife of his brother Antoine, had been accused of adultery. While on that occasion she was exonerated, in 1557 she was caught committing adultery with Calvin's servant Daguët, a hunchback who later came to also be suspected of having stolen from his master. Antoine petitioned for and received a divorce from his wife, who was subsequently banished from Geneva. Matters did not end there, however, as shortly after these events Calvin's step-daughter Judith was also charged and convicted of adultery. On this occasion Calvin was so overcome with embarrassment that he refused to leave his house for several days after the events became public knowledge.<sup>371</sup> Calvin then was no stranger to the reality of domestic upheaval and its impact on the efficacy of his ministerial labours.

Calvin also experienced the sting of having his personal character and professionalism called into question. In a letter to Farel on 10 February 1555, Calvin complained bitterly of the foes that plagued him with trumped up charges of having used

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<sup>371</sup> Parker, 102. On this issue see also: *Letters*, 7 January 1557, v.3:308; 3 February 1557, v.3:314).

his position as minister to amass a personal fortune. In his editorial comments on this letter, Bonnet made reference to another letter written on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October to Peperinus in which a frustrated Calvin complained “All know how frugally I live at home. They see that I am at no expense for the sumptuousness of my dress. It is known to everybody, that my only brother is neither very rich, nor has obtained anything by my influence. Where then can that buried treasure be lying hid? They give too that I have robbed the poor. .... But if while alive I cannot escape the reputation of being rich, death will at last vindicate me from that reproach.”<sup>372</sup>

Calvin’s goal of staffing the Genevan church with committed and competent pastors was further complicated by contextual challenges that originated both within and outside of Geneva. His first challenge was the ubiquitous Protestant difficulty of finding men both willing and able to carry out the task. In the early years of the Reformation movement, evangelical churches were often forced into an economy of makeshifts when it came to finding men to fill the ministerial office. As the history of the Reformed church in Geneva makes clear, the earliest pastors in the movement were often recently converted clergy from the Roman church – many of whom had received little in the way of formal education in evangelical doctrine and who had little to no understanding of what it meant to serve as a minister in the newly established Protestant churches. To be fair, there were few alternatives in so far as no clear consensus regarding pastoral function and authority had yet been developed. There was a broad awareness that such circumstances were less than ideal and that steps would need to be taken to ensure that

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<sup>372</sup> *Letters*, 10 October 1555, v.3:235.

such men were properly educated and prepared to take up this critical task, and yet, as Calvin begin his career in Geneva, little progress had been made in terms of viable solutions to this vexing problem.<sup>373</sup>

When Calvin returned to Geneva in September 1541, one of his most immediate and pressing concerns was to establish a well-organized church, a task that was made all the more difficult by the lack of suitable colleagues to aid him in this endeavour.<sup>374</sup> The desperate need to find replacements for the ousted Roman clerics, replacements who could provide a measure of leadership during the early days of the Reformation in Geneva, had resulted in the selection of men (both by Calvin and by the Syndics) who were not necessarily the most gifted individuals. These first pastors needed to be replaced by more capable individuals as time and circumstance allowed.<sup>375</sup> It took time for Calvin to overcome this relative lack of manpower and talent. Indeed, Naphy has characterized the period from 1535 (when the Reformation first took hold in Geneva) until 1546 as a time when the corporate body of the Genevan ministers was characterized by instability, infighting and often scandalous behaviour.<sup>376</sup> Only after 1546 had Calvin succeeded in gathering a relatively capable and stable group of pastors who were marked by education, zeal and oratorical skill.

An additional challenge was posed by the geographical structure of the Genevan parish system. Within the city proper, there were four main parish churches that required staffing: St. Pierre, St. Gervais, St. Germain and the Madeline. In addition, however, the

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<sup>373</sup> Karin Maag, *Seminary or University? The Genevan Academy and Reformed Higher Education, 1560-1620* (Brookfield: Ashgate Publishing Co., 1995), 2.

<sup>374</sup> Naphy (1994), 53.

<sup>375</sup> Naphy (1994), 59.

<sup>376</sup> Naphy (1994), 72.

Genevan pastors were also called upon to provide ministers for a number of parish communities located outside the city walls. These country parishes included: Chancy, Dardagny, Satigny, Bossey, Vandouvres, Jussy, Draillans and Armoy, and it is important to recognize that several of these parishes (such as Draillans and Armoy) were located at a considerable distance from the city. The difficulty pastors experienced in traveling between Geneva and these outlying parishes is reflected in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* which did not require country pastors to be at every scheduled gathering of the pastorate.

It is also important to understand that these parish territories lay in what was very much contested territory and that they were not always clearly or firmly under the control of the Genevan government. Indeed, in his examination of Genevan history during the time of Calvin, E. William Monter reflected on that fact that, despite the existence of a number of important ties between Geneva and this contested hinterland, for much of the sixteenth-century Geneva remained a “city without a country.”<sup>377</sup> He also noted that one of the greatest challenges facing the Genevans during the early years of their independence was to try to establish a measure of control over the surrounding rural territories.<sup>378</sup> Ironically, during the time of Calvin’s tenure in the city, the most significant obstacle Geneva faced in attempting to gain a hold over these territories was the very power that had been key to securing their independence in the first place – the city of Bern.<sup>379</sup> Monter wrote of how, in many ways, sixteenth-century Geneva was encased by Bernese influence and that it existed as little more than a “satellite in the

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<sup>377</sup> E. William Monter, *Calvin’s Geneva* (New York: Wiley, 1967), 19-20.

<sup>378</sup> Monter (1967), 65.

<sup>379</sup> “In the war of 1536, Bern seized most of the land around Geneva. Almost all of what was left of the duchy of Savoie was scooped up by the Valaisans and the French. From these lands formerly belonging to the bishop, Chapter and Cluniac priory, Geneva managed to carve out a small discontinuous territory.” Lambert, 33.

orbit” of this more powerful city.<sup>380</sup> The debate over which city would control Geneva’s outlying environs was a matter of frequent and fierce debate, a debate which raged from beginning of Genevan independence into the 1540s. Ultimately, the matter was settled in 1544 with the treaty of Depart de Bale.<sup>381</sup> This settlement granted Geneva control of a dozen rural parishes (control of which had long been disputed) and the city also took over responsibility for their spiritual welfare and for providing competent Reformed pastors.<sup>382</sup> As will become clear below, however, collectively, the pastors evinced a rather ambivalent attitude towards these country parishes. There was a general inclination to view the rural parishes as a kind of ‘farm team’ for ministers who were not quite ready for the ‘big league’ action of the city. At other times the country parishes were used as a dumping ground for problematic pastors who the Company could only succeed in marginalizing rather than eliminating. Whatever their view of these parishes might have been, there can be no doubt that the relationship between the pastors and the country parishes was a complicated one; a relationship that, for many years, was further complicated by the ever present spectre of Bernese power.

Calvin also faced continuing political struggles within Geneva. The Libertines, in particular, proved a thorn in Calvin’s side for many years. Though the winds of political fortune had provided a favourable climate for his return in 1541, Libertine resistance to the imposition of what they perceived to be a Protestant episcopacy wrought by foreigners continued unabated until 1555. The main issue of contention centred on the question of who, the magistrates or the consistory, had the right to impose discipline on

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<sup>380</sup> Monter (1967), 64.

<sup>381</sup> Lambert, 33.

<sup>382</sup> Monter (1967), 126-127.



those who proved wayward in doctrine or life.<sup>383</sup> Calvin claimed that the consistory possessed the exclusive right to impose spiritual sanctions, while the magistrates insisted that such power belonged to the state. Calvin's most implacable foe in this struggle was none other than Ami Perrin, a man who had once been instrumental in supporting the coming of the Reformation to Geneva. Perrin became the figure head for a number of prominent families in Geneva whose sensibilities had been bruised by the pastoral exercise of church discipline. Perrin and his supporters wanted to limit the authority of the consistory by insisting that its judgements could be appealed to and overturned by the city magistracy.<sup>384</sup>

The struggle for control of church discipline raged most fiercely between 1547 (when Calvin's opponents controlled a majority of the city's syndics) and 1555.<sup>385</sup> Evidence of just how intensely those were burning can be found in events of 27 June 1547 when Calvin discovered the following note waiting for him on his pulpit:

Big pot-belly, you and your fellows would do better to shut up. If you drive us too far, you will find yourselves in a situation where you will curse the day you skipped your monastery. We've had enough of blaming people. Why the devil have these renegade ...priests come here to ruin us? Those who have had enough take their revenge. Beware that you

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<sup>383</sup> The consistory was first formed in 1541 after Calvin returned to Geneva. It was comprised of approximately twenty-five men who were either pastors or elders within the city. Of the twenty-five men, twelve were to be elders drawn from the ranks of the city's various councils. The remaining positions were filled by pastors who served in either the city or the surrounding parishes. In legal form the consistory was a committee of the municipal government, whose members were re-elected every February during the annual civic elections. For more information on the formation, organization and function of the consistory see: Robert Kingdon, "A New View of Calvin in Light of the Registers of the Geneva Consistory" A Paper Presented to the Sixth Quadrennial International Congress on Calvin Research, New College, Edinburgh, 1994. Robert Kingdon, "Calvin and the Establishment of Consistory Discipline in Geneva: The Institution and the Men Who Directed It," *Nederlands Archief voor Kerksgeschiedenis*, 70, 1990: 158-172. E. William Monter, "The Consistory of Geneva, 1559-1569" in *HumRen* 38 (1976):467-484.

<sup>384</sup> Gordon, 212.

<sup>385</sup> Parker, 110.

don't get what happened to Monsieur Werly of Fribourg. We don't want all these masters. Beware of what I say.<sup>386</sup>

While not the most coherent or accurate of threats, Calvin took the matter seriously. He believed that his life had been threatened as a means of trying to make him yield in the battle for control over church discipline. However Calvin chose to interpret this threat, Parker insisted that far from having Calvin banished or executed, the Libertines' actual goal was keep him alive and well within Geneva, but to ensure his complete submission to their authority.<sup>387</sup>

An indication of the depth of Calvin's disillusionment and frustration can be found in 1554 when a distraught Calvin, feeling that he had lost the battle and could no longer fruitfully labour in Geneva, actually petitioned to be released from his duties as pastor.<sup>388</sup> His request was denied as the Libertines, not wanting Calvin to become a martyr or an enemy capable of attacking them from afar, sought to contain and control him within the city. In these circumstances a number of desperate attempts to effect a degree of rapprochement were undertaken, including the arrangement of a meal to which both Perrin and Calvin were invited.<sup>389</sup> For a brief moment it appeared as if peace could be restored and, in letter to Viret, Calvin even spoke of being privately reconciled with Perrin.<sup>390</sup> Ultimately, however, no lasting détente proved possible and a stalemate emerged with neither side being able to claim victory in a decisive fashion.<sup>391</sup> The situation only gradually turned in Calvin's favour with the civic elections of 1555 in

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<sup>386</sup> Quoted in Parker, 108.

<sup>387</sup> Parker, 110.

<sup>388</sup> Parker, 116.

<sup>389</sup> Gordon, 213.

<sup>390</sup> *Letters*, 6 Feb. 1554, v3:15.

<sup>391</sup> Gordon, 213.

which Calvin's supporters achieved a slim majority. Sensing power slipping from their grasp, Libertine anger slipped its bonds in May of 1555 and erupted into violence. The result was spur of the moment attempt to seize power by force; an attempt which failed miserably and resulted in the Libertines being branded as insurrectionists and banished from the city.<sup>392</sup> Although from that point forward Calvin's position in the city was relatively secure, there can be no doubt that the long struggle with the Libertines profoundly shaped his sense of the need for clearly defined institutions that would assist in regulating and protecting faithful.

Calvin's personal experiences, as well as navigation of Genevan politics, impressed on him the need to develop institutions which could assist in the formation, maturation and supervision of the men who aspired to the ministry. It is also important to remember that Calvin's goal of providing the Genevan and wider Protestant world with orthodox and committed pastors must be understood within the larger context of his efforts at professionalizing the ministry. A fundamental component of Calvin's plan to ensure that the Protestant world was well served by a professionally aware and capable pastorate was ensuring that opportunities existed where men inclined to pursue the ministry could receive an education.

Calvin's awareness of this challenge and his desire to meet it, can be clearly seen as early as 1541 in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, where he reflected on the need to train men for the ministry and to create an institution to meet this need. This discussion occurs within the larger context of Calvin's discussion of the four-fold office of the church; most specifically within the context of his reflections on the doctoral office. Calvin suggested

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<sup>392</sup> Parker, 126.

that these doctors ought to be provided with “aids” that could assist them in “maintaining the doctrine of God and defending the Church”; Calvin referred to these aids cumulatively as “the order of the schools.”<sup>393</sup> In such schools, Calvin suggested, there ought to be lecturers in Old and New Testament studies, as well as lecturers in Greek, Hebrew, and the humanities. These lecturers were to be overseen by an experienced educator (i.e. a rector) of orthodox doctrine and reputable character, who was to be remunerated for his labours, subject to ecclesiastical discipline, and approved by the ministerial body.<sup>394</sup> The aim of all these efforts, as articulated in these *Ordinances* was to raise up the next generation of believers, preparing them for “ministry as well as for civil government.”<sup>395</sup>

While Calvin may have thought of constructing such a school in 1541, it was not until after 1555, when his political opponents in the city had been overthrown, that he had an opportunity to turn his vision into a reality. Even after the defeat of the Libertines, Calvin’s efforts to found the Academy did not always proceed unopposed. There was considerable disagreement between Calvin and the Genevan magistracy regarding the specific purpose of the Academy. For Calvin, the Academy had a single, over-arching purpose – it was to be a seminary dedicated to the provision of capable and orthodox pastors.<sup>396</sup> Calvin’s understanding of the primary function of the Academy was certainly reflected in the inaugural speech of its first rector Theodore Beza, who expressed a vision of the Academy as providing “goal oriented training” designed to help graduates function

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<sup>393</sup> J.K.S. Reid ed., *Calvin: Theological Treatises* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 62. Henceforth cited as: CTT, page number.

<sup>394</sup> CTT, 63.

<sup>395</sup> CTT, 63.

<sup>396</sup> Maag, 9.

as ministers in the Reformed Churches.<sup>397</sup> While Calvin and Beza may have envisioned the Academy as first and foremost a seminary, the city magistrates wanted to construct a university that supported the independence and prestige of Geneva as a city. Given the enormous financial investment involved, the magistrates wished to develop a school that would provide better educational opportunities for their citizens, as well as attracting students and businesses from abroad.<sup>398</sup>

Despite these contrasting, if not necessarily mutually exclusive aims, the Genevan Academy opened its doors to students in 1559, although the construction of the physical space was not completed until 1562. The defeat of the Libertines had not only provided the political climate which allowed Calvin to undertake this project, they unwittingly provided the finances as well. In an event sometimes referred to as the Genevan dissolution of monasteries, land confiscated from the exiled Libertines was sold and the proceeds used to finance the construction of the Academy's first buildings.<sup>399</sup> Additional funds for the Academy's construction and operation were solicited from the Genevan populace at large in the form of donations and bequests. The issue of finances proved a thorny one and it exacerbated the struggle between Calvin and the magistrates about whether the Academy could survive as a purely confessional institution.<sup>400</sup>

In terms of its organization and offerings, the Academy of 1559 was comprised of two parts. In the first place, there was the *schola privata* which was the Latin school.

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<sup>397</sup> Maag, 16.

<sup>398</sup> Maag, 21.

<sup>399</sup> Gordon, 300. Maag, 11.

<sup>400</sup> Maag, 3. Maag also noted the extraordinarily high operational cost of running the Academy, noting that some 53,000 florins were spent the first two-and-a-half years of its existence (Maag, 11). Gordon also noted that in 1559-1560, the Academy represented approximately twenty percent of the city's budget – and indication of the priority of this project in the minds of the Genevan magistracy (Gordon, 300).

The *schola privata* functioned as a kind of elementary and secondary school which aimed at providing a basic educational experience for the children of Genevan families. To be sure, this was the part of the Academy which most interested and occupied the attentions of the Genevan magistracy. It was the remaining portion of the Academy which attracted Calvin's attentions, however. This was the *schola publica* – or upper school – where theological education was given and the training of the next generation of pastors occurred.

The *schola publica* was staffed by five professors: one in the arts (including mathematics, rhetoric and logic); one for Hebrew, one for Greek and one each for the study of the Old and New Testaments.<sup>401</sup> Students were attracted to the Academy by the caliber of its faculty. In addition to Calvin, the Academy boasted amongst its staff: Theodore Beza, Lambert Daneau, Francois Berald, Isaac Causabon, Bonaventure Bertram, Claude Baudel, Esaie Colladon, Francois Hotman and Jacques Lect.<sup>402</sup> As a confessional school, students who attended the Academy were required to state their adherence to the principles of the Reformed faith as expressed in the catechism.<sup>403</sup> Students were taught not just via lecture and disputation, but also molded by the daily sermons offered in the Genevan churches.<sup>404</sup> Students were also required to deliver

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<sup>401</sup> Herman J. Selderhuis, *John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life*, trans. A. Gootjes (Nottingham: IVP Academic, 2009), 239.

<sup>402</sup> Scott Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 49.

<sup>403</sup> Gordon, 300. Selderhuis noted that the financial challenges which faced the Academy may have resulted in these strictures occasionally being relaxed – although such non-conformist students were not able to matriculate (Selderhuis, 239).

<sup>404</sup> Manetsch, 49.

practice sermons on Saturday afternoons, a process which occurred under the watchful eye of several of the city's pastors.<sup>405</sup>

From a personal perspective, the Academy absorbed a significant amount of Calvin's time during the latter years of his life. An assessment of Calvin's letters reveals just how much of Calvin's time and energy were devoted to the operation of the Academy, especially when it came to the matter of staffing the Academy with orthodox, capable and ideally acclaimed professors. As an example, in a letter to John Mercer (one which offered him the position of lecturer in Hebrew), Calvin says of the Academy that it is a cause that "merits the highest attention", one to which he wished he could devote the entirety of his attentions.<sup>406</sup> In a sales pitch that perhaps leaves something to be desired, Calvin endeavoured to entice Mercer away from his current position as chair of Hebrew at the College of France by suggesting that, in exchanging his currently illustrious post for the considerably more modest post in Geneva, Mercer would be directly involved in doing the work of God; a work which he characterized as being of inestimable value, the fruits of which would spread far and wide.<sup>407</sup> Calvin's contacts with prospective candidates also reveal something of the kind of individual Calvin believed was fit for such a task. In a letter addressed to Francis Boisnormand, in which Calvin expressed his regret that the position of Hebrew chair had already been filled, he noted that "religion and decorum" had urged them to give the position to a "pious brother" who had recently endured some trying times.

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<sup>405</sup> Selderhuis, 239.

<sup>406</sup> *Letters*, 16 March 1558, v3:413.

<sup>407</sup> *Letters*, 16 March 1558, v3:413.

In addition to matters of oversight and operations Calvin was also directly involved in the daily operation of the Academy. He regularly lectured there during the early years of the Academy's existence. Interestingly, Calvin seems to have recognized the toll that this commitment was taking on him. In a letter to Nicholas de Gallars in October 1560, Calvin bemoaned Beza's absence from the city and the extra work that this entailed for him. He spoke of the "extraordinary burden of lecturing" that had become his responsibility during Beza's absence.<sup>408</sup> Curiously, Calvin must have given way to frustration at some point because, in a letter to Beza in November of 1561, Calvin apologized profusely for any sorrow he had caused Beza by his complaints and he acknowledged his understanding that Beza continued to have the best interests of the Academy at heart!<sup>409</sup> Acknowledging the time and energy Calvin invested in the Academy, Gordon nevertheless correctly noted that the institution of the Academy came too late in Calvin's life for him to have directed it as significantly as he might have wished. Gordon acknowledged, however, that the Academy remains an essential part of Calvin's legacy because it represented one of the institutional structures which Calvin put in place to ensure the continued production of capable and orthodox pastors.

Gordon's identification of the Academy as central to Calvin's legacy resonates well with the arguments being made here. For Calvin the raising up of a capable and orthodox cadre of pastors was central to the entirety of his work as a reformer. As has been demonstrated, Calvin presented this new Protestant cleric to the evangelical world in the garb of a professional man offering professional services to his community. It

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<sup>408</sup> *Letters*, 3 October 1560, v4:139.

<sup>409</sup> *Letters*, 31 November 1561, v4:242.



stands to reason that professional men would require training and education as the foundation upon which they laid claim to that title. How could a prospective candidate work under the Master Builder, teaching and preaching in accordance with the plans that had been given to Him if he had not first been taught to read and interpret those plans correctly? If doctors distinguished themselves from ‘quack’ practitioners and claimed to offer more effective methods of care and treatment, did they not do so on the basis of the education and training they had received at the universities? Seen from this perspective, then, the importance of the Academy within the larger context of Calvin’s understanding of the pastoral office and indeed the whole of the Reformation movement, only grows larger. It was an absolutely essential part of his plan to help redefine the Protestant clergy away from the sacerdotal priesthood of the Middle Ages and firmly into the camp of the professional men who were offering an essential service to their community.

There are reasons to believe that the broader evangelical world responded positively to Calvin’s efforts in this regard. Students at the Academy tended to stay in residence for a period of months or perhaps a year, during which time they received instruction in Reformed doctrine and exegesis.<sup>410</sup> In the first year of its operation, some 162 students matriculated.<sup>411</sup> Between 1559 and 1564, 339 students matriculated following their studies in Geneva.<sup>412</sup> Indeed, when Calvin died in 1564 the *schola privata* boasted an enrolment of 1200 students and the *schola publica* laid claim to 300 more.<sup>413</sup> The graduates of the Academy would exert a profound impact on both the Genevan Church and the wider evangelical community. In the first place, Manetsch has

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<sup>410</sup> Manetsch, 49.

<sup>411</sup> Selderhuis, 239.

<sup>412</sup> Maag, 28.

<sup>413</sup> Selderhuis, 239.

shown that for the period 1560-1595, thirty-three of the ministers who would serve as pastors in Geneva had received some, or all, of their education in Geneva. Further, Maag's research reveals that of the 339 individuals who matriculated between 1559 and 1564, two-thirds of them are known to have become pastors. So many of those pastors left Geneva that Maag concluded that, until the time of Calvin's death, Geneva's primary export was ministers. These students often returned to their homelands and the "substance and quality" of their theological instruction (as well as the moral climate in which it was offered) were well received in "many corners of Protestant Europe."<sup>414</sup> There are good reasons, then, to believe then, that Calvin's efforts at professionalizing the ministry, undergirded as they were by the educational efforts of Genevan Academy, bore much fruit in the broader evangelical community.

In addition to the provision of theological training, Calvin also turned his attention to supporting and supervising pastors once they had been ordained to office. His most significant contribution in this regard was the formation of The Venerable Company of Pastors. The origins of the Company of Pastors can also be found in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of 1541. In the first section of the *Ordinances*, dealing as it does with the four orders (offices) of the church, the following statement was made: "in order that all ministers may maintain purity and agreement of doctrine among themselves, it will be expedient for them to meet together on one particular day of the week for discussion of Scriptures, and no one shall be exempted from this without legitimate excuse." The day chosen for this gathering was Friday and on that day all of the Genevan ministers – those who served within the city walls as well as those who

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<sup>414</sup> Manetsch, 49.

served in the outlying country parishes – were required to gather for a time of mutual study, fraternal correction and to deal with any business that they held in common.<sup>415</sup>

These weekly meetings were divided into two parts. The gathering of the Company began with what was known as the *congregation*. During the congregation each minister, taking his turn in order, was required to present a lecture on an assigned portion of Scripture. After presenting the lecture, the floor was opened and all of those gathered there were given the opportunity to critique and interact with what had been presented. It is important to note that the meetings of the congregation were open to the public and that the presenter was expected to field questions not only from his colleagues but also from any lay persons who were in attendance. As Thomas Lambert has pointed out, these sessions could and did become contentious.<sup>416</sup>

Following the congregation, the ministers would withdraw into closed session in order to consider privately any matters which concerned them or the church at large. In terms of the matters dealt with during this closed session several details need to be noted. In the first place, the private sessions of the Company provided the opportunity for the pastors to mutually and fraternally correct and admonish each other in the performance of their duties. While this might occur at any meeting that required such discussion, the *Ordinances* required that, four times per year, a day of censure be set aside “where any

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<sup>415</sup> It should be noted that the pastors who held positions in the country churches were held to a less rigorous standard when it came to attendance at Company meetings. As a rule, they were only explicitly required to attend when matters being dealt with concerned them directly or were of particular importance. Indeed, the *Ordinances* note that they would only be chastised if they were absent for an entire month.

<sup>416</sup> Lambert, 227. The most spectacular and noteworthy occurrence of such scandal is undoubtedly the instance where Jerome Bolsec (a former Carmelite monk who had converted to the evangelical cause and ultimately set up shop in Geneva as a physician) who stood up in a 1551 meeting of the congregation and proceeded to extensively and publically denounce Calvin’s teachings about the doctrine of predestination and Calvin’s use of Augustine to support those teachings. Unbeknownst to Bolsec, however, Calvin, who had arrived late to the meeting, was sitting in the rear of the meeting hall. When Bolsec finished speaking, Calvin arose and provided an hour long defense of both his teachings and his interpretation of Augustine.

member could air complaints about any other pastor.”<sup>417</sup> These private sessions also provided opportunities for the Genevan pastors to screen potential candidates for the ministry. Prospective candidates were required to deliver a practice sermon, a Bible lesson, and to sustain intense examinations in doctrine and Scripture knowledge. Finally, these meetings also provided a forum in which the pastors could collectively decide upon and frame up responses to events in the day-to-day life of the city or in the wider Protestant world.

As noted above, one of the most important functions performed by the Company of Pastors was the provision of a level of supervision and oversight for the pastors of Geneva and its surrounding territories. When necessary, the Company would also discipline members who had failed to either carry out their duties or to live in a manner worthy of their calling. The records of the Venerable Company provide examples of how, collectively, the pastors moved to deal with those who were one way or another guilty of conduct unbecoming. More importantly, in so far as Calvin served as the chair of the Company for the entirety of his tenure at Geneva, the Company records also provide a means of evaluating how effectively Calvin was able to transform his vision of the pastoral office into reality.

It has become clear that Calvin held ministers to a rigid and extraordinary standard of personal conduct. The severity of his demands was a reflection of the fact that he was convinced that any misconduct on their part could imperil the souls of those whom they served. Ministers, therefore, were to take special care to safeguard their public reputations because to do otherwise would impede their ability to proclaim the

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<sup>417</sup> Lambert, 228.

saving Gospel message. In this context, the ways in which the Company dealt with the pastors whom they believed had strayed in life or conduct is particularly illustrative of just how seriously the matter of pastoral behaviour was taken.

In April 1549, the Company found itself dealing with charges of sexual misconduct that had been levelled against one of their own – a pastor named Jean Ferron. The Register informs us that Ferron was “accused of a number of frivolities, to some of which he had confessed, including dishonourable contacts with his female servants.”<sup>418</sup> The matter of Ferron’s indiscretions had initially been brought to the attention of the Lieutenant (the magistrate in charge of drawing up criminal charges) as well as the city magistrates, but his guilt could not be definitively established because “there were only single individuals as witnesses.”<sup>419</sup> In light of this situation, the Company elected to admonish Ferron sternly and demanded that he conduct himself more fittingly in the future. This was not the end of the matter, however. The Register indicates that “the scandal was great throughout the city” and that there were “numbers” who were “withdrawing from his preaching.”<sup>420</sup> In light of Calvin’s strident concern that the inappropriate conduct of a pastor could negatively impact his ability to convey the salvific Gospel message, and in so doing imperil people’s souls, it is unsurprising that the Company quickly took an interest in the matter as well. After meeting to discuss the situation they requested that the magistrates relocate Ferron to a parish “outside the city.”<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> R.O.C.P., 109.

<sup>419</sup> R.O.C.P., 109.

<sup>420</sup> R.O.C.P., 109.

<sup>421</sup> R.O.C.P., 109.

The records of the Company, however, show that rather than quietly accepting a professional reprimand and the proposed relocation, Ferron lashed out against his fellow pastors, Calvin in particular, during a subsequent meeting of the Company. Ferron insisted that he had been targeted for removal for some time and that Calvin in particular had sought to do away with him. He claimed that Calvin was "...ill-disposed [toward] him" and was a "vindictive" man who bore grudges and who "liked to be flattered."<sup>422</sup> Ferron then turned his tongue against his colleagues more generally, claiming that he had no fellowship with them and that they had had it in for him for years. He then stormed out of the gathering "without returning."<sup>423</sup> The Company's initial response (a response that was based on advice received from William Farel who happened to be visiting the city in April of 1549), was to suggest that the entire matter be placed in the hands of the neighbouring churches of Lausanne and Neuchatel, and that both parties should agree to be bound by their judgement in the matter. The members of the Company presented this idea to Ferron who, for reasons that are not recorded, rejected their proposal out of hand.

In light of his response, the Company again brought the matter before the Genevan magistrates who declared that Ferron ought to swap postings with a minister named Jacques Bernard who had been serving in the country parish at Satigny. When the Company informed Ferron of the magistrate's decision, he responded by pleading with his colleagues for the right to retain his current post within the city, so that he could resign his office without public disgrace.<sup>424</sup> The ministers, however, replied that they could hardly be expected to overturn their earlier decision – and still less the ruling of the

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<sup>422</sup> R.O.C.P., 110.

<sup>423</sup> R.O.C.P., 110.

<sup>424</sup> R.O.C.P. 110.

magistrates – and they asked Ferron if he could abide by this decision – again Ferron replied in the negative.<sup>425</sup>

By this time, it was early June and the Company again presented itself before the magistrates this time informing the Messieurs that despite their best efforts to deal fairly with Ferron they “could not permit [him] to continue in his present position and place.” The matter dragged on until 30 August 1549, however, when, at a gathering of the Company for their scheduled session of mutual censure, Ferron confessed “of his own free will that in the absence of his wife he had sported with his chambermaid, [and that he had touched] her in certain places....” He claimed that he had done so only “...for the purpose of testing whether she was a good girl....”<sup>426</sup> Having proffered a confession of his crimes, the Company now possessed what they had hitherto lacked – a clear sense of Ferron’s crimes and guilt and they responded by immediately suspending Ferron from office and turning the matter over to the magistrates for further investigation. The magistrates in turn interviewed Ferron (who confessed to essentially the same story) and by speaking to the maid in question (who offered more salacious details regarding Ferron’s conduct). Ultimately, in light their combined testimony the magistrates officially suspended Ferron from office on 5 September 1549.

The day after his deposition Ferron made one final attempt to appeal for clemency from his former colleagues. He came before the company and declared that although he had been separated from them professionally that he desired to be united to them “in doctrine and charity” and that he desired their advice regarding how he should proceed in

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<sup>425</sup> R.O.C.P. 111.

<sup>426</sup> R.O.C.P. 111.

the future – and in particular whether he should depart for France.<sup>427</sup> The Company responded that, since he had clearly scorned their best advice in the past, that they felt it was unlikely that he would heed it in the present. They also suggested that his request was further evidence of his two-faced behaviour in that they had ample reason to suspect that he had already made up his mind about his future plans. Ferron persisted still further by asking if the Company would provide him with a certificate (essentially a statement by the company regarding the personal conduct and professional competency of Ferron as a pastor) but his request was denied.

Interestingly, Ferron’s deposition led to series of events that further illustrate just how seriously the Company took these lapses in professional conduct. Faced with the need to replace Ferron, the Company examined and ultimately put forth for election one Jean Fabri. Fabri took up his task as a pastor in Geneva in September 1549 and other than a brief mention of his name in connection with the troubles surrounding Philippe de Ecclesia (of whom more will be said below) in 1552, he seems to have served as a valued and trusted member of the company for a number of years. In March of 1556, however, Fabri was charged with having committed adultery with the “wife of a man named Jean Jacqueme.”<sup>428</sup> Adultery was one of the charges listed in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of 1541 as grounds for immediate dismissal from office and Fabri was suspended from the pulpit pending further investigation. Ultimately, although Fabri would deny “the greater part of the charge, [he] none the less confessed sufficient to be judged unworthy to

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<sup>427</sup> R.O.C.P. 112.

<sup>428</sup> R.O.C.P., 314-315.



continue as minister.”<sup>429</sup> He was, in turn, officially deposed from the ministry by the city magistrates.

The long-term fallout from Ferron’s deposition was not yet finished however. At the same time that Fabri’s misconduct was discovered a teacher in the Genevan school system named Pierre Duc was elected as a minister. Shortly after his election took place, however, “it was reported that he had entered into some usurious contract.”<sup>430</sup> An investigation was carried out by both the Company and the magistrates and Duc, who was found to be innocent, was exonerated of all charges and guilt. Nevertheless, in a remarkable turn of events, the Company made the radical decision to “proceed no further with his election” lest, in light of the “recent scandal with M. Jean Fabri” any further “evil suspicion should attach [itself] to the sacred ministry....”<sup>431</sup> On a positive note, however, the Company allowed Duc to continue in his position as teacher, acknowledging that his talents rendered him well suited for the task.

In assessing and evaluating the interlinked cases of Ferron, Fabri and Duc in the light of Calvin’s larger vision of the office of minister, the importance of the phrase “numbers were withdrawing from his preaching” cannot be overstated. For Calvin the minister’s primary and most pressing task was to fully and effectively proclaim the Word of God to those over who they had been set. To fail in this regard was to imperil souls and to hinder the coming kingdom of Christ. The ways in which the Genevan ministers dealt with these individuals are illustrative of just how seriously the Calvin and, under his leadership the Company, took the matter of professional conduct on the part of the

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<sup>429</sup> R.O.C.P., 314.

<sup>430</sup> R.O.C.P. 316.

<sup>431</sup> R.O.C.P. 316.

pastors. By the time they came to deal with Duc – an otherwise qualified and satisfactory candidate – even the mere hint of pastoral misconduct was enough to see one barred from serving as a minister. It is also interesting to note that, in the absence of proof positive about Ferron’s guilt they were willing to allow him to continue in his office if in an admittedly less prestigious post in the country. As will become clear below, the country parishes simultaneously provided a means of marginalizing substandard ministers and of providing valuable on the job experience for those deemed unfit for service in the city.

Curiously, the Company’s records reveal the fact that the Genevan pastors concerned themselves not only with the conduct of their own members but also with the conduct of ministers who served in the wider, yet still connected, Protestant community. In this regard the cases of Antoine Herault and Simon Goland prove particularly informative. We begin with a consideration of Herault who was a companion of Farel and who from 1549, served as a pastor in the church at Neuchatel. Herault, however, had been a one-time resident of Geneva and the church leaders at Neuchatel requested a testimonial from their colleagues in Geneva regarding his life and conduct among them. In the Register entry for 20 November 1551, it was noted that, although Herault was a committed and pious man, he nevertheless had been admonished in the performance of his public duties for having conducting himself with “too little seriousness and thoughtfulness.”<sup>432</sup> These comments about Herault are particularly noteworthy in light of Calvin’s warnings about the dangers of pastors conducting themselves with too much levity in public. On a positive note, unlike Ferron, it seems that Herault received this reprimand well and that he conducted himself more fittingly in the future.

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<sup>432</sup> R.O.C.P., 134.

Unfortunately, the circumstances involving another minister from a neighboring congregation seem to have concluded rather less positively. The Register includes a letter written by the Company to the church at Bern regarding the conduct of one of their pastors, a certain Simon Goland. Apparently Goland was in the habit of repairing to Geneva “not to teach or to learn, but to indulge in dissipation and debauchery” and the Company felt that they needed to inform the ministers at Bern about his behaviour in their city.<sup>433</sup> The letter went on to claim that while engaged in his debaucheries Goland spouted forth “...impure language unworthy of a minister of the Word.” Beyond simply uttering foul language, Goland also attempted to shield his fellow revellers from being called to account by those who took offense at their behaviour by claiming that no “private person” had the authority to rebuke either himself or those in his company. Things were made worse, however, by the fact that Goland had also publically claimed that those who had fled as refugees from areas where they could not worship freely or peacefully would have been better off staying where they were. Goland argued that those who were Protestant in their hearts could participate in the mass without fear of injury to their souls if they were compelled to do so. Indeed, he claimed, some parts of the mass must have been good because Calvin had retained certain liturgical elements from the Catholic rites in the Genevan ceremonies. The Company noted that such behaviour was “most unworthy of a minister of the Word” and that they could not fail to act when “...the doctrine of Christ...[was] so foully dishonoured by one who ought to defend it to the utmost of his power.”<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>433</sup> R.O.C.P., 135.

<sup>434</sup> R.O.C.P., 136.

Goland's case is noteworthy because it serves as something of a nexus of the kinds of concerns that Calvin expressed in his view of the office of pastor. In the first place, Goland's drunkenness and use of foul language were a clear contravention of the kinds of moral and ethical conduct Calvin understood to be required of those who served as ministers. Additionally, and perhaps more subtly, however, Goland's action contravened the notions of mutual teachableness that had characterized Calvin's vision of how the ministers and the laity ought to interact. Goland had used the authority of his office to place himself above the common lay believer and to shield himself from being called to account for his lifestyle and doctrinal deviations.

These cases illustrate how the Company sought to protect its professional reputation and by extension the eternal welfare of the laity from lapses in the personal conduct of its pastors. Calvin, however, was also very clear that professional standards needed to be maintained in terms of ability and the carrying out of one's duties as well, shortcomings in these areas being only marginally less concerning than moral and ethical failings. Here too, the Register of the Company of Pastors provides examples of how the Genevan pastors attempted to ensure that the laity were well served by capable and qualified professionals. In this respect the case of the minister Maitre Mathieu proves particularly noteworthy.

On 7 June 1557, Mathieu, a prospective candidate for the ministry, was brought before the company to be examined prior to being ordained in Geneva. To begin, he was given the task of expounding a passage from Acts 15 before the Company and in their assessment of his performance, the ministers concluded that Mathieu "was too timid and

as yet lacking in style.”<sup>435</sup> Nevertheless, despite this rather lukewarm assessment, the examination proceeded and “having been asked a variety of questions, he was judged to be a man of good knowledge, although he was slow in making his answers.”<sup>436</sup> On the basis of his performance the Company decided that he could not be given charge of city parish, but they encouraged him to do all that he could to equip himself for taking up the task of pastor. In the subsequent days, the pastors decided to do some shuffling of their ranks and when Nicolas Colladon was brought into the city from one of the country parishes it was decided that Mathieu who was not “sufficiently stylish” for the city should be sent to the rural parish of Russin and Dandagny. Mathieu’s examination as well as his ultimate posting in the country is demonstrative of the fact that the Company had clear standards about what they considered to be an acceptable level of knowledge and ability when it came to serving as a minister. Calvin was convinced of the need for pastors to be highly effective teachers who, by virtue of their learning and oratorical gifts, could powerfully, passionately and effectively proclaim the Gospel message in Geneva.

Of all of the cases of professional misconduct – whatever the form – that the Company dealt with during Calvin’s time, there was no case more serious or multifaceted than that of Philippe de Ecclesia. De Ecclesia’s case is worthy of particular attention not simply because of how heated the matter became, nor how long it took to resolve, but because it represents a situation in which concerns about professional misconduct gradually became entwined with concerns about personal misconduct. De Ecclesia’s

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<sup>435</sup> R.O.C.P., 324.

<sup>436</sup> R.O.C.P., 325.

circumstances are therefore a particularly valuable window into how the Company dealt with of these kinds of concerns.

Having been ordained in 1542, De Ecclesia served as a minister for many years, first in the city proper and subsequently in the country parish of Vandoeuvres (from 1544 onwards). His name can be found in the earliest records of the Company and the first sign of the difficulties that were to come can be found in those records in February of 1549. There we read of an extraordinary meeting of the Company being held to determine if de Ecclesia had expressed – within the context of the congregation – “certain propositions which were not edifying and [which] led to questions, often overthrowing and obscuring what had been clearly defined.”<sup>437</sup> We know from the previous chapter that Calvin had insisted that the preaching of the Word be clear and accessible to all and that the good teacher would accommodate himself to his audience. As part of that accommodation, the good pastor was to avoid in engaging in vain and speculative questions for fear that such activities would cloud and ultimately blunt the effective preaching of the Word. The Register informs us that de Ecclesia had been warned about straying into such speculative territory in the past and that he had been clearly advised to endeavour to speak in a more “edifying manner.” When he failed to do so his fellow pastors concluded that he needed to be “reprimanded for his rebelliousness” as well as his continued shortcomings on the pulpit.<sup>438</sup> After reflecting on the matter, the Company decided that de Ecclesia’s infractions did not warrant being brought to the attention of the city magistrates and that, for the moment, they would pursue private, fraternal correction

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<sup>437</sup> R.O.C.P., 92.

<sup>438</sup> R.O.C.P., 92.

within the confines of the private session of the meeting of the Company. Having done so, the ministers sternly warned de Ecclesia that, until the next scheduled date for mutual censure, he was forbidden to speak at all in any subsequent meetings of the congregation and that his willingness to obey these strictures would be taken as evidence of his “amendment and obedience.”<sup>439</sup> They also warned him that, should he fail to demonstrate sufficient amendment and obedience the ministers would be forced to bring his case to the attention of the magistrates. Finally, all present were strictly forbidden from speaking to anyone outside the Company about the decisions that had been made in this matter.<sup>440</sup>

By March 1549, however, it became clear that de Ecclesia had failed to heed the warnings that he had been given and that he was complaining publically about being censured. In addition to expressing his general displeasure the Register suggests that he had also slandered the ministers who had placed him under that censure. The Company brought de Ecclesia in for questioning and, despite his passionate denials, it was determined that he had indeed broken the injunction not to speak publically of the disciplinary action taken against him by the Company. The Company concluded that since de Ecclesia had not only failed to submit to their judgement in this matter, but had continued to promulgate false and confusing doctrines from the pulpit that he should be removed from his office as minister. In connection with this they also refused to allow de Ecclesia to participate in the congregation or in the practice of mutual censure until such time as there was clear evidence of his repentance and amendment of life. The

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<sup>439</sup> R.O.C.P., 92.

<sup>440</sup> R.O.C.P., 93.

magistrates, however (led by Ami Perrin, one of Calvin's most implacable opponents), after promising to sternly rebuke de Ecclesia and to caution him that this was his final warning, demanded that the Company "pardon him and grant him restoration."<sup>441</sup> In these circumstances the Company replied that, while they had no choice but to "tolerate an evil that they could not remove," they washed their hands of any consequences that might befall the church as a result of the magistrates' decision.

Remarkably, given the circumstances, the next time that de Ecclesia appeared in the records of the Company was some two years later in August 1551 when Nicolas, Pierre and Claude Faloy – de Ecclesia's brothers-in-law – appeared in the congregation and accused de Ecclesia of "ill-treating their sister[,]” as well as being unwilling to hand over her marriage contract and of slandering their father and relatives.<sup>442</sup> The Company responded by interviewing both parties and, having discovered some untruths in the statements of de Ecclesia's wife, elected to reprimand both of them and to dismiss them

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<sup>441</sup> R.O.C.P., 107.

<sup>442</sup> R.O.C.P., 133. While, the Register does not reveal the exact nature of de Ecclesia's offense with respect to the marriage contract, John Witte's research into the ways in which Calvin reshaped the liturgy and contractual practices associated with marriage in Geneva sheds some light on this matter. Witte noted that the ways in which Calvin reformed the "betrothal and marriage contracts" in Geneva were largely laid out in the Marriage Ordinance of 1546 (456). In that document, Calvin "distinguished between contracts of betrothal and marriage: betrothals and espousals he called them (456)." Betrothal contracts were evidence of future promises to marry and espousal contracts were evidence of present promises to marry. In addition to these contracts, provision was also made for the drafting of marital property contracts which established the economic terms on which a marriage was founded. Although these marital property contracts were not considered to be an essential component of a binding marriage agreement these "marital property contract[s] were] often combined with a betrothal or marriage contract, [although they] were actually independent agreements with different legal implications (464)." One of the most important details covered by these marital property contracts was the stipulation of the nature of the dowry. And it is important to note that a portion of the dowry – known as the marriage portion – was "reserved for the woman and her family" even after the wedding (465). Although, as general rule the management of all of the family property was turned over to the husband, wives could gain custody of this marriage portion and the wife's family could also continue to exert a degree of control over the marriage portion. If the marriage portion was invested, for instance, the family had the right to collect interest on any profits that accrued. Further, if the marriage portion was damaged or destroyed, the wife and/or the family had the right to seek restitution from the husband (465-466). As such, De Ecclesia's infractions regarding his refusal to turn over the marriage contract must be understood within this context. John Witte, "Marriage and Family Life," in *The Calvin Handbook*, Herman Selderhuis ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 455-465.



with the demand that they be reconciled and live peaceably with each other. The Register also indicated that de Ecclesia promised to turn over the marriage contract “as was required of him.”<sup>443</sup>

De Ecclesia appears again in the Register in March 1552, this time in connection with his refusal to be sent to the country parish of Jussy. On this occasion, the circumstances surrounded the return of Jean de Saint-Andre from Jussy where he had been pastor since 1548. Though he was pastor at the Genevan parish of Jussy, Saint-Andre had also been ministering to the church in Foncenex “which belonged at the time to the Bernese mandate of Gaillard.”<sup>444</sup> In March 1552, however, he was arrested by the “officers of that place for having said and preached that those who had received communion on Christmas Day had received the communion of Christmas and not of Jesus Christ, making more of that day than of any other, as though the sanctity of the Supper depended on days.”<sup>445</sup> Philip Hughes noted in his comments on this entry that Calvin travelled to Bern in an effort to defend Saint-Andre, but that his efforts were to no avail and Saint-Andre was banished from the territories of Bern and was therefore “unable to continue his ministry in the Bernese village of Foncenex, which was attached to the Genevan parish of Jussy.”<sup>446</sup> As a result of these circumstances, Saint-Andre was recalled to Geneva to serve as a pastor in the city and someone needed to be found to take his place in the Parish of Jussy. The man chosen by the Company for this task was Philippe de Ecclesia. When he was informed of the Company’s decision, however, de Ecclesia objected strenuously and “advanced a number of objections” to the Company’s

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<sup>443</sup> R.O.C.P., 133.

<sup>444</sup> R.O.C.P., 188, footnote #11.

<sup>445</sup> R.O.C.P., 188.

<sup>446</sup> R.O.C.P., 188.

plan to relocate him. When the Company brushed his objections aside, de Ecclesia insisted that he would bring his case before the magistrates and that he would only take up his duties in Jussy at their express command.<sup>447</sup> And, in fact, when he presented his case to the magistrates they supported him in his demand to continue on as pastor of Vandoevres. Faced with de Ecclesia's intransigence and the decision of the magistrates, the Company began to consider other alternatives to their staffing issues.

During this process, however, a number of new charges were levelled against the life and conduct of de Ecclesia. The Register records that, at this time, de Ecclesia was accused of usury and of having preached the Lutheran doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ's human flesh. In addition, it was also suggested that de Ecclesia was on good terms with Jerome Bolsec and that Bolsec had advised him to cover up his usurious activities.<sup>448</sup> In response to this, de Ecclesia was arraigned before the magistrates, as well as the ministers of both the city and country, on 14 November 1552 and investigated with respect to the new allegations. Once again, the ministers again demanded that he be deposed and again the magistrates refused their request.<sup>449</sup>

On 16 December 1552 at a meeting of the Company designated for the hearing of censures, the Company again concluded that they had seen no evidence of repentance in de Ecclesia – something which they noted was required “of a minister of the Word more than any other person.”<sup>450</sup> De Ecclesia responded to these charges by claiming that he had indeed kept company with Bolsec, but that he did not hold to his doctrines. He also claimed that he was prepared to receive whatever correction the Company might see fit to

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<sup>447</sup> R.O.C.P., 188.

<sup>448</sup> R.O.C.P., 190.

<sup>449</sup> R.O.C.P., 202.

<sup>450</sup> R.O.C.P., 202.

require of him, but only if he was found to be in error with respect to matters of doctrine. After a lengthy cross examination about his understanding of predestination and his dealings with those who denied that doctrine the Company concluded that they had not found “in de Ecclesia what they had wanted” nor had they found evidence of repentance and amendment of life. He was informed that they could not accept him in their Company and they “admonished [him] to consider whether he could conscientiously retain the office of a minister in the church.”<sup>451</sup> De Ecclesia once again responded by turning to the magistrates for defense, this time claiming that the Company had usurped the authority of the city government by instigating extralegal proceedings against him via their cross-examination about his doctrine and conduct. As a result, on 23 December the Company was again summoned before the Council and again the magistrates demanded that they reconcile with de Ecclesia. The ministers replied that they could not do so without “wound to their conscience.”<sup>452</sup> This time the ministers stood their ground and finally, after years of strife and conflict, de Ecclesia was deposed from office on 27 January 1553.

The founding of the Academy and the activities of the Venerable Company provide clear evidence of Calvin’s pragmatic efforts to meet one of the most significant needs faced by the early Protestant churches. Meeting the demand for clerics whose orthodoxy could be relied upon and who had been imbued with a clear sense of their responsibilities as pastors was an essential component of stabilizing and expanding the Protestant faith. The Academy sought to meet these demands and soon became a reliable

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<sup>451</sup> R.O.C.P., 203.

<sup>452</sup> R.O.C.P., 204.

source of capably trained men who served Protestant communities throughout Europe. Just as important as creating capable pastors was the need to ensure that these men faithfully carried out their tasks once they were in office. Those who attained to the office of pastor required the mutual support and encouragement of their peers and a context in which they could continue to hone their skills as pastors. The Company also sought to ensure that its member exemplified the highest standards of personal and professional conduct. Finally, the Venerable Company also provided a means of safeguarding the church against those who abused their authority by seeking after personal gain. The Company Record provide abundant evidence of Calvin's (and the pastors generally) efforts to ensure that the faithful in Geneva were served by men of exceptional personal and professional conduct. It was through these two institutions, then, that Calvin's ideal pastor (envisioned and presented in sermon and commentary) took shape in the daily world of sixteenth century Geneva.

## Conclusion

“All these things, indeed, demonstrate not what we are but what we wished to be.”  
*Calvin’s Reply to Sadoletto.*

In June 1549, presumably preaching to himself as much as to his congregation, Calvin offered this observation: “Whatever obstacles we face, we are completely committed to God. As I have said, all those who wish to faithfully bear the Word of God must prepare for war.”<sup>453</sup> This sentiment, expressed just as the conflict with the Libertines was intensifying, can fairly said to be reflective of much of Calvin’s ministerial career. Like Paul, who had been mocked, beaten, starved, stoned and shipwrecked, Calvin had borne his share of stripes both in body and mind. He knew what it meant to be slandered, to be hounded by foes, to have his safety and life threatened and even to be exiled from hearth and home. With the possible exception of the last few years of his life (which were marred by constant ill health) nearly the whole of Calvin’s career was spent at war.

A good deal of this hardship was generated by Calvin’s efforts to live out his calling in the ways he believed were required by the One Who had commissioned him. Why this unyielding decision to chart a course that seemed to yield naught but personal suffering and strife? Because Calvin believed that the cost of his failure would be paid in souls and that God would require of him all that he had, either through laxity or negligence, failed to accomplish as a pastor. It was this conviction that drove him to demand so much of himself and of those who served alongside him as pastors. In the long run his commitment did pay off. The Libertines were defeated and the substandard pastors of the early 1540s were slowly replaced with capable, educated men who shared

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<sup>453</sup> Sermon, Jeremiah 15:6-19, 947.

Calvin's vision of and commitment to the pastoral office. A seminary was constructed on Genevan soil and the Venerable Company provided the support and supervision the Genevan pastors needed to be effective in their task.

In a larger context, however, the true significance of Calvin's accomplishment was the development of a pastoral model that enjoyed success far beyond the walls of Geneva. The strength of Calvin's ministerial model was that it was both exportable and replicable. The successful exportation of this pastoral model owed a great deal to its inherent flexibility. As a consequence of his personal experiences in Geneva, both before and after the defeat of the Libertines, Calvin had come to understand that no pastor could reasonably expect to win every battle he fought, nor could he hope to carry out his task without opposition. What pastors (and the broader Protestant community) required was a set of guidelines which could be rigidly held to in principle, yet flexibly implemented within different sociopolitical contexts. For the far flung churches of the Protestant world what Calvin had provided was a set of principles and practices which could be received in and adapted to any local context. In Paul, he had provided an inspirational and irreproachable role model against whom pastors in all times and places could measure their calling, commitment and conduct. Reflecting the ubiquitous Protestant commitment to *sola fide* and *sola Scriptura* Calvin had explicated the thorny question of just how God, pastor and the laity were to be involved in the proclamation of the Gospel message. He had also outlined a set of professional standards which regulated the ways in which ministers lived and worked and that mediated the interactions between the pastors and the laity. Finally, he had developed institutions which could be erected as a means of ensuring that this system could be both propagated and effectively managed.

His success could not have been better timed. The years of Calvin's Strasburg sojourn (during which much of his ministerial model was developed) and the half-decade that followed his return to Geneva (a period in which he sought to implement the model he had developed), overlapped exactly with both the opening of the Council of Trent (1545) and Luther's death (1546). With Luther's passing the Protestant world lost the extraordinary energy and charisma that had carried the newborn faith through the first decades of its existence. With the convocation of Trent, Protestants came face to face with a Roman church that was marshalling its forces to resist the spread of Protestantism in an organized and determined fashion. Calvin's recognition of the need to find a solution to the problem of clearly defining ministerial office and his success in doing so ensured that Protestants were prepared to flourish in a post-Luther world that was filled with resolute opponents.

A comprehensive appreciation of Calvin's ministerial model not only provides a means of interpreting broader developments in sixteenth century Europe, but it may also help to develop a more nuanced understanding of Calvin himself. For centuries historians and theologians have attempted to paint a portrait of the real, the authentic Calvin. Those efforts have all focused on answering the question 'Who was John Calvin?' The reality, however, is that Calvin's reticence to speak of himself has ensured that there are a few sources which provide insights into Calvin's heart and mind. This situation is further compounded by the fact that the limited source material we do have has proven difficult to interpret. In light of these circumstances it no longer seems reasonable to continue asking the question of who Calvin really was.

If, however, Calvin's character could be approached in more oblique and creative ways, such strategies might yield surprising results. We might begin by refocusing our attention away from the question of who Calvin was, and asking instead 'Who was Calvin trying to be?' In light of this study it seems reasonable to conclude that Calvin was trying to be a faithful servant of God who, cast in the mold of Paul, labored diligently alongside God to save those whom He had chosen. That sense of calling, coupled with his recognition of the extraordinary cost of falling short in his duties, is what first drove Calvin to develop clear conception of ministry while he was in Strasburg and, subsequently, to fight tooth and nail to implement that model in Geneva. What might be discovered if Calvin's sense of calling and the ministry were employed as a prism through which the events of his life in Geneva could be interpreted? As a tentative foray in this direction, the events of Calvin's interaction with an individual he had identified as a substandard pastor will be considered through the filter of this interpretive lens.

In an article devoted to evaluating the utility of Calvin's letters in the study of Geneva's history, William Naphy noted that the most pressing problem Calvin faced when he returned to Geneva in 1541 was the deplorable state of the ministry.<sup>454</sup> Calvin, said Naphy, described his colleagues at that time as "having no zeal and less learning."<sup>455</sup> Worse yet, Calvin simply did not trust them. Calvin's ire was sparked by his conviction that, not only were these pastors personally opposed him, but they were also an

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<sup>454</sup> William Naphy, Calvin's Letter: Reflections on Their Usefulness in Studying Genevan History," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 86 (1995), 72.

<sup>455</sup> Naphy (1995), 72.



impediment to his efforts at winning control of church discipline for the consistory.<sup>456</sup>

The individual whom Calvin identified as being his most committed opponent in this regard was the pastor Henri de la Mare.

De la Mare was a long-serving minister who had occupied his post both before and after Calvin's exile. Calvin's antipathy towards de la Mare was rooted in his conviction that de la Mare was both a coward and prepared to use his position as pastor to secure his own comfort and advancement. Calvin justified the charge of cowardice by pointing out that de la Mare had refused to follow him into exile, choosing instead to remain in Geneva and to work with those who had banished Calvin and Farel. In terms of his concerns about personal advancement, Calvin was outraged that de la Mare had continued to demand the honours due to him as pastor despite the fact that he was not willing to sacrifice his personal comfort and security in order to maintain the truth of the Gospel. Calvin also came to believe that, in addition to hating him personally, de la Mare was actively working to undermine his position in Geneva by fostering resistance towards him within Geneva.<sup>457</sup> Naphy's article details the process by which (despite his protestations that he was willing to tolerate and work alongside these troublesome pastors), Calvin actively worked to first marginalize and then remove de la Mare.

As noted above, one means of dealing with a less than satisfactory pastor was to pack him up and send them to serve in one of the country parishes. Calvin attempted to deal with de la Mare in just such a fashion. He began by engineering a pastoral rotation which resulted in the minister of the congregation of Jussy (Poupin) being re-called to

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<sup>456</sup> Naphy (1995), 72.

<sup>457</sup> Naphy (1995), 73.

Geneva and de la Mare being dispatched to serve as his replacement.<sup>458</sup> Conditions in Jussy were hardly to de la Mare's liking and provided genuine grounds for complaint. In December 1544, de la Mare informed the Genevan Senate about his plight. He complained, for instance, that almost no one could be convinced to attend the worship services because the church building was in such poor condition. By poor condition, he indicated that the building possessed neither doors nor windows. He also related how he did not even have a pulpit to preach from. The conditions of his own residence were, if anything, even more astounding. In his report he stated that one of the walls of his house had collapsed and that despite his repeated pleas for aid his requests had been all but ignored.<sup>459</sup> Naphy related how it was not just the magistrates who had turned a deaf ear to de la Mare's petitions, but Calvin too had remained stonily silent. Naphy raised the question of why Calvin, who had so tirelessly worked to improve the plight of the other pastors, had refused to assist de la Mare in any way. Calvin's behavior is particularly difficult to explain in light of the fact that the deplorable conditions of the church in Jussy could only have resulted in bringing "disrepute to the ministry."<sup>460</sup>

Ultimately, for Naphy, the interpretive key that explained these events was to be located within Calvin's psychology. The picture of Calvin that emerges in Naphy's work is of a remorseless individual, implacably moving against his opponents, first by marginalizing them and then by breaking their resolve. Naphy concluded that "It is difficult to see any other interpretation of the events surrounding de la Mare that that he

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<sup>458</sup> Naphy (1995), 74

<sup>459</sup> Naphy (1995), 75.

<sup>460</sup> Naphy (1995), 76.

was the object of Calvin's special dislike."<sup>461</sup> Naphy also claimed that this kind of treatment awaited any minister unlucky enough to run afoul of Calvin.<sup>462</sup> This incident, Naphy argued, serves only to strengthen "the perception that Calvin had a particularly unforgiving side to his character."<sup>463</sup> Naphy concluded by insisting that any efforts on Calvin's part to present himself in a softer light were little more than masterful examples of propaganda.<sup>464</sup>

To deny that Calvin had an edge to his character or that at times he acted in less than charitable ways would certainly be disingenuous. Nevertheless, it may be that interpreting Calvin's reaction to de la Mare exclusively in the light of personality is too limited an explanation. It seems reasonable to posit that a clear and nuanced assessment of Calvin's sense of the pastoral office might helpfully complicate Naphy's assertion that there is no other way to interpret these events than to conclude that Calvin was temperamentally inclined to ruthlessly and relentlessly hunt down his opponents. What danger, for instance, did Calvin believe a pastor like de la Mare might pose for the Genevan church? In Calvin's estimation, false teachers were akin to adding thirst to drunkenness. Rather than rebuking and correcting the faithful they only encouraged their natural inclinations to pursue the lusts of the flesh. How did de la Mare fare when contrasted with Calvin's Pauline model of pastoral conduct? De la Mare's decision to remain in Geneva when Calvin was banished contrasts sharply with Calvin's insistence that nothing less than total commitment was acceptable for anyone bearing the title of

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<sup>461</sup> Naphy (1995), 76.

<sup>462</sup> Naphy (1995), 77.

<sup>463</sup> Naphy (1995), 76.

<sup>464</sup> Naphy (1995), 89.

minister. Calvin was firmly of the opinion that anyone unwilling to sacrifice their personal comfort for the cause of Christ need not apply. Calvin also alleged that de la Mare had used his position to pursue his own advancement and comfort. For Calvin, who had fixated on avarice as the greatest threat to the professional pastorate such behaviour was beyond contemptable. De la Mare's support of the Libertines' claim that the magistracy ought to control the exercise of church discipline was just further evidence of his willingness to compromise Gospel truths in favour of his own wellbeing. While Calvin's personality was certainly not free from flaw and while he could be both abrasive and aggressive, it seems reasonable to conclude that, with respect to pastors like de la Mare, there were factors at play that transcended Calvin's character and that involved his wider ecclesiological beliefs and concerns.

It might be suggested that making such claims is merely evidence of having imbibed Calvin's propaganda rather too deeply. However, an examination of Calvin's conduct during his tenure as a pastor consistently reveals how his understanding of the profound responsibilities which were part and parcel of the ministerial task shaped his responses to the events of his daily life. How might we think differently about his reaction to events like Farel's marriage, or his insistence on continuing to teach and preach about predestination, or even his willingness to sacrifice his own health, if we were to filter our understanding of those choice and events through the lens of his profound awareness of having been called to play a very specific role in the drama of God's plan of salvation. Ultimately, neither Calvin, nor the Protestant church whose future he so powerfully shaped and secured, can rightly be understood without the

recognition that a clear understanding of the ministerial office lies at the heart of them both.

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## Curriculum Vitae

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*Second year, full year course for approximately sixty students. Considers the period from the days of the Late Roman Empire until the Renaissance. Two hours of lecture and one tutorial hour per week.*

**2007-2008:**

History 236E – U.W.O. (Summer)

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**2006-2007:**

History 202 – University of Windsor

Europe: 1789-1945.

*Second year, single term course with approximately 100 students. Considered the development of European history from the time of the French Revolution until the end of the Second World War. Three hours per week.*

History 228E – University of Western Ontario  
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**2005-2006:**

History 029E – Huron University College

Major Issues in Global History (Team Taught)

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**2003-2004:**

History 103B – Redeemer University College

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