

JOHN CALVIN'S THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

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Abstrak:

Yohanes Calvin (1509-1564) adalah figur penting di balik perkembangan Gereja Protestan. Salah satu dari sejumlah sumbangannya yang penting ialah terkait dengan gagasan dan pendekatannya terhadap Kitab Suci. Menurutnya, Alkitab sebagai Kitab Suci adalah Sabda Allah sendiri. Alkitab memang berwujud sebuah buku dengan tulisan yang berciri manusiawi, namun keberadaannya tidak dapat dilepaskan dari inspirasi Roh Kudus. Penafsiran atas Alkitab yang memuat Perjanjian Lama dan Perjanjian Baru – dan keduanya ini memiliki kedudukan yang setara – boleh dilakukan oleh siapa saja; tak ada satu pihak pun yang berhak meng-klaim sebagai penafsir tunggal. Calvin menekankan perlunya pendalaman atas teks dan konteks, sebagaimana itu dulu juga dikembangkan oleh para penulis Injil dan penulis surat-surat Perjanjian Baru dalam berhadapan dengan teks-teks Perjanjian Lama. Dengan ini, menurutnya, penafsiran Alkitab akan selalau bersifat majemuk dan tidak mandeg dalam acuan masa lalu saja.

Key words:

Hermeneutics, biblical hermeneutics, understanding of Holy Bible, Institutes, Word of God, Church.

1. Introduction

The name of Calvin is inseparable from 'Protestant'. The word 'Protestant' itself may have a negative sound to modern ears, but its original use was actually positive. It never depended negatively upon its opposition,¹ for it was first of all a protest in the sense of making a solemn declaration. Indeed, it solemnly declared a reaction against the exclusively hierarchical understanding of 'Church'².

I would like to present here my reflection on Calvin's theological and biblical hermeneutics. For this, first of all, I would introduce who Calvin is. Then, I would speak about his understanding on Holy Scripture; and this is continued with a presentation on his approach to the Holy Bible. Furthermore, I would try to give my notes on the significance and critical remark of his approach. Finally, as conclusion, I would show the importance of his contribution on Theology, and especially on hermeneutics.

2. Biography of John Calvin

John Calvin was born on 10 July 1509 at Noyon, in north-eastern France. Along with his three brothers and two sisters, he grew up in a bourgeois family. His father, Gerald Calvin, worked at the Episcopal offices. No wonder, his father had intended Calvin to get a good position in the Church by entering the priesthood³. It was for such an ambition that Calvin was sent to study theology in Paris in 1523⁴. At the age of fourteen, Calvin initially attended the College de la Marche, and then moved on to the College de Montaigu. He seemed to enjoy a good education from those colleges. There he learnt much about the fathers of the Church, the humanists and Martin Luther.

Around 1528-1529, Calvin gained the degree of Master of Arts which terminated the course of his philosophical studies. In this moment, he withdrew from the study of philosophy, and decided to pursue the study of law⁵. He was then sent to master civil law in Orleans and Roman law in Bourges. With the death of his father, however, he changed his mind. Calvin went back to Paris and, without completely giving up his study of law, he devoted himself to literary studies, humanism and arts⁶.

Calvin's first work was the *Commentary on the De Clementia* of Seneca (1532)⁷. With this work, it seems that Calvin have responded to the challenge stimulated by Erasmus' publication of the works of Seneca. Calvin said that he tried to put into his work all kinds of things in Seneca which Erasmus has not noticed.⁸ He chose to work on Seneca because, according to him, there are resemblances between Christianity and Stoicism, the philosophy embraced by Seneca. Both are the same in affirming the existence of a supernatural providence.⁹ Yet, it does not mean that Calvin was a blind admirer of Stoicism. In fact, he strongly criticised the Stoics, and the philosophers in general, for their inability to come to reliable conclusions and for their indifference towards the needs of human beings¹⁰.

Between the years 1533-1534, Calvin experienced a sudden conversion (*subita conversio*)¹¹. His conversion did not designate merely a private and interior religious experience; it also embraced an outward and radical shift in institutional allegiance¹². He broke with the Roman Church, and also with humanism. Indeed, his understanding of humanism had changed. He came to the conclusion that humanism is basically rested upon the greatness of human being, and thus ignores the fact that human being has been corrupted and alienated from God¹³. Calvin still admired philosophy and humanism, but he no longer considered them as an end in themselves. Rather, he then believed in human dependence on God, and human submission to the decrees of predestination.

After leaving France in 1535, Calvin went to Basle where he was entirely preoccupied with theology. He forced himself to master this 'new' science. At the same time he was also busy with the publication of his book *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536),¹⁴ the Commentaries on the Holy Bible, the fathers of the

Church, and various Reformation figures. After a short visit to Italy, and again to France, Calvin then went to Geneva in 1536. There he began his career as a Reformer with the status of a reader. But soon afterwards, he was commissioned as a preacher and professor of Holy Scripture. Apart from his pastoral service in Strasbourg (1538-1541)¹⁵, Geneva was finally to be his home for the rest of his life until 1564.

3. Calvin's Teaching on Holy Scripture

According to Calvin, Holy Scripture is in itself the Word of God¹⁶. It is in Holy Scripture that God is truly and vividly described to us from His works¹⁷. Holy Scripture has made God, the Creator of the universe, manifest to us. It has revealed to us what we ought to, and can know about God. Yet Calvin reminded us that we should not limit ourselves to treating the Holy Bible as we would do to any other book¹⁸. We must not treat the Holy Bible as merely pure human writings containing dead letters¹⁹. According to Calvin, what we confront in Holy Scripture is, in fact, the mysteries of God²⁰. We must thus have faith (Mat. 13: 11)²¹.

The only true faith is that which the Spirit of God seals in our hearts²². Due to the intervention of the Holy Spirit, we can find the living word of God in the dead letters²³. It is the Holy Spirit who works within us, so that we may discover and accept this word as coming from God²⁴. At the same time, this Holy Spirit causes Scriptural writings to be effective as the Word of God. Indeed, only those who are inwardly taught by the Holy Spirit and illuminated by his power will be completely convinced that Holy Scripture has come 'from the very mouth of God'. Calvin said, "The testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason. For as God alone is a fit witness of himself in his Word, so also the Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts, before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same spirit, therefore, who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what had been divinely commanded"²⁵.

For Calvin, Holy Scripture have its authority from the Holy Spirit. There is here one necessary and indissoluble bond between Holy Scripture and the Holy Spirit. There is nothing in Holy Scripture inconsistent with the Holy Spirit²⁶. Accordingly, the Holy Bible was authorised by God Himself, and not by the Church. Calvin argued that the Roman Church had corrupted the gospel (glad tidings) concerning the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. In fact, Holy Scripture is and remains the Word of God; it transcends the word of man as found in the papacy²⁷. For him, to make the authority of Holy Scripture depend on the authority of the papacy was to make it depend on human decisions²⁸.

The fact that its authority came from God also means that Holy Scripture bears its own authentication. It is not right to subject Holy Scripture to proof and reasoning. Holy Scripture really and actively proves itself; it obtains full authority

among believers only when human beings regard it as having sprung from heaven, as if there the living words of God were heard²⁹. Since it was inspired³⁰ by the Holy Spirit, we may say that the real author of the Holy Bible is God Himself. The human authors wrote the Holy Bible under the total guidance of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 27: 9). Indeed, the Holy Spirit inspired the authors of the books of the Holy Bible, and He also inspires us in reading their writings, so that we may have tangible proof of the identity of that inspiration³¹.

The inspiration by the Holy Spirit of the authors of various books of the Holy Bible carries the consequence that all the contents of the Holy Bible are divine. The inspiration of the Holy Spirit extends to the whole contents of Holy Bible. All books of the Holy Bible are thus in the same level. Indeed, Calvin would not allow anyone to draw distinctions between the different books of the Holy Bible³². Yet, if all the books are equally inspired, does it necessarily follow that the Old Testament has as much value as the New Testament? Apparently, Calvin came to the conclusion that the will of God is immutable; God cannot therefore have said anything in the Old Testament other than what is in the New Testament³³. There is no question but that the two parts of the Holy Bible, the Old Testament and the New Testament, can claim with equal right to be regarded as the word of God.

Indeed, the Old Testament and the New Testament have the same function. They help us to know who the true God is. In sum, Holy Scripture becomes a guide and a teacher to find the knowledge of God. Through Holy Scripture, God has provided a useful assistance and instruction on how we should live in this world. Only Holy Scripture can save from falling into error and forgetfulness. Using another metaphor, Holy Scripture is like a pair of spectacles³⁴. We are like old or bleary-eyed men with weak vision. What we have in our mind is confused knowledge of God. Holy Scripture is certainly important for us; it helps us to 'view' better the signs of God's Divinity in the universe. The splendour of the divine countenance is for us like an inexplicable labyrinth; and we can reach the centre, the glory of God, only by following the thread of the Word. Holy Scripture thus helps us to aspire to the pure contemplation of God³⁵. This also means that Holy Scripture directs us aright to the true understanding of the relationship between God and us, the Creator and creatures.

Calvin had no doubt that every human being is born with a natural knowledge of God. Through this innate knowledge, human beings can grasp the manifestation of God as the Creator of the universe. In fact, God continuously manifests Himself in His creation. But, due to the human falls, human beings do not and cannot know God in His external works. Since human beings fell into sin, the knowledge of God inasmuch as He is the Creator needs to be conjoined with the knowledge of God as the Redeemer. Holy Scripture certainly provides the way how to grasp those two sorts of knowledge of God³⁶. The Old Testament and the New Testament become

a better help for us to derive many testimonies about God as our Father and as our Saviour in Jesus Christ³⁷.

4. Approaching and Understanding the Holy Bible

Of course, the Word of God that mediated to us is not obscure in itself. Yet, it may be obscure to us. We will certainly find it difficult to grasp the meaning of the Word of God. Calvin realised that we need another help to understand better Holy Scripture. It is for such a reason that he finally wrote a commentary on the Holy Bible. He said, "Although Holy Scripture contains a perfect doctrine, to which one can add nothing, ... yet a person who has not much practice in it has good reason to need some guidance and direction I can at least promise that it can be a key to open a way for all children of God into a good and right understanding of Holy Scripture. Thus, if henceforth our Lord gives me the means and opportunity of writing some commentaries, I shall use the greatest possible brevity, because there will be no need for long digressions, seeing that I have here treated at length almost all the articles pertaining to Christianity"³⁸.

Calvin argued that every Christian has a right to interpret the Holy Bible for himself or herself. This is due to the fact that every human being has been given an innate knowledge of God. There is no reason to say that only some Christians have a right to interpret the Holy Bible. Indeed, Calvin strongly opposed the belief that the interpretation of the Holy Bible can only be practised by a certain office of the Church. He even insisted that every Christian must be prepared to accept the different interpretations of the Holy Bible. He said, "Each may use his own judgement, provided no one tries to force all others to obey his own rules"³⁹.

Yet, as a human being, we have to acknowledge that we are very limited. Our understanding of Holy Scripture, thus, will never be complete. Calvin argued that we will never be able to fully understand the Word of God as attested in the Holy Bible. Consequently, we cannot claim that our interpretation is the most adequate one. Calvin's commentary itself must be regarded as only one among many other commentaries.

The basic methodological principle Calvin held in his Biblical interpretation is that everything must be presumed in God and not in the office of the Church. We must understand the Word of God as attested in the Holy Bible by referring always to the standard of the ultimate Truth, namely God Himself. We must not allow ourselves to be directed by our own prejudices. We must let our mind engage in a way of knowing in accordance with the ultimate Truth of God. For Calvin, this way of acknowledgement is nothing but the act of referring back to the Truth of God as the source and ground (*analogia fidei*). As a matter of fact, this is identical with the act of the obedience of faith (*obedientia fidei*).

Calvin insisted on finding the 'genuine sense' of the Scriptural writings⁴⁰. He argued that the natural meaning of a statement is its essence. Consequently, it must be preferred to the allegorical meaning. He despised the allegorical method because it made Christians tempted to twist the Holy Bible into a religious book of their own liking. Allegorising is speculation as well as misunderstanding; and misunderstanding is the evil a scholar has to avoid by all means⁴¹. For him, the natural interpretation of a passage is the only way that does justice to the intention of the author⁴².

In his Biblical hermeneutics, Calvin approached a text directly and interpreted it within the linguistic and historical parameters of its context, and applied it to the needs of the present day⁴³. His approach was, in fact, 'inspired' by the epistles and the Evangelists of the New Testament. Indeed, he was concerned with the way in which, after the death and resurrection of Christ, the epistles and the Evangelists related the Old Testament to their own history. In this matter, Calvin showed how the epistles and the Evangelists of the New Testament 'applied' the prophecies of the Old Testament to their own situation⁴⁴. In this matter, he realised that there may be a natural working of the human mind which is not always too clear or too apt. There is always a problem in connecting the context of the past with the context of the present. He said that the epistles, and even Jesus Christ himself, could be inaccurate⁴⁵.

5. Significance and Critical Comments

Calvin was known as a theologian. Yet he was also known as a Biblical commentator. He himself emphasised the connection between theology and Biblical commentaries. Both are inseparable as well as complementary. Here, he understood 'theology' not simply as a 'Biblical exposition', but an echo of the Biblical text.⁴⁶ On the one hand, theology provides a general framework within which the broad thrust of the Scriptural proclamation may be grasped and understood. On the other hand, Biblical commentaries may clarify points of detail within scriptural texts⁴⁷.

According to Torrance, the key to Calvin's theological and Biblical hermeneutics lies in the two opening chapters of the *Institutes*⁴⁸. The title of the first chapter is 'The Knowledge of God and The Knowledge of Ourselves are Connected; How They are Interrelated?'⁴⁹ According to Calvin, the Christian sound and true wisdom consists of two parts, namely the knowledge of God and of ourselves⁵⁰. What Calvin emphasised here is the absolute transcendence of God and His majesty above any human attitude. Before God's majesty, what human being should do is nothing but to surrender to Him, "Leave to God the privilege of knowing Himself; for it is He only who is able to bear witness of Himself who is known to Himself by Himself alone. And we shall be leaving Him what belongs to Him if we understand Him as He declares Himself, and ask nothing at all concerning Him except through His word"⁵¹.

The title of the second chapter is 'What It is to Know God, and to What Purpose the Knowledge of Him Tends?'⁵² Calvin's emphasis in this chapter is that, in the ruin of mankind, no one can know and experience who God is. Our essence is so incomprehensible that His majesty is hidden, and His essence is far above all our senses. Our mind cannot apprehend God without rendering some honour to Him. Moreover, we must also be persuaded to hold that He is the fountain of wisdom and light, righteousness, power, rectitude and genuine truth. He is the only One who sustains this universe by His boundless might, regulates it by His wisdom, preserves it by His goodness, rules mankind by His righteousness and judgement, bears with it in His mercy, watches over it by His protection. Only by that kind of attitude we may receive *pietas* and *religio* for the true knowledge of God⁵³.

Torrance argued that Calvin regarded the knowledge of God and the knowledge of human being as bound together. Without knowledge of ourselves, knowledge of God does not take place; but without knowledge of God, there is no clear knowledge of ourselves⁵⁴. There is here a conjoint knowledge (*con-scientia*) which humans share with God. The importance of conscience for Calvin is a way of knowing God in which God is allowed to bear witness to himself, and in which a human being turns in critical judgement upon his own self. Human being lets himself be judged in question before the truth of God, for God alone is the sole standard in the formation of our judgements and understanding⁵⁵.

Torrance regarded Calvin's theological and Biblical hermeneutics as based on the principle of objectivity⁵⁶. Yet, we must understand the meaning of the term 'objectivity' correctly. It is true that the term 'objectivity' can be understood as the opposite of 'subjectivity'; and 'objectivity' in this sense refers to something which does not depend on the individual point of view. Torrance did not understand the term 'objectivity' in that sense, because Calvin himself supported the practise of individual interpretation. Calvin even accepted the possibility of differences in interpretation. Accordingly, the term 'objectivity' must refer to something else. Torrance said that the term 'objectivity' here is related to the 'object' of the theological and Biblical interpretation, that is the Word of God itself⁵⁷. Indeed, the centre of authority for Calvin is always in the Word of God, and not in the Church.

By reading Calvin's commentary on the Holy Bible we will see that he was influenced by many other thinkers, such as Thomas a Kempis, John Major and Martin Luther. From Kempis, Calvin learnt that we owe our knowledge of God to the act of divine grace. Kempis himself emphasised that there is nothing we can do on our part, but to practice the act of humility and self-denial⁵⁸. Since Holy Scripture is the Word of God, we cannot understand it merely by the aid of our worldly knowledge. We must listen to it with our humility. Then, from Major and Luther, Calvin learnt that human being has been given a means to understand the meaning of the Word of God. Major said that every human being has a kind of 'intuitive audition' by which the meaning of the Word of God can be intuitively grasped. God

has spoken to us personally, so He must also provide us with the appropriate means for intuitive experience. Similarly, Luther said that God has communicated himself in all His grace and power to us⁵⁹. Justification by grace alone calls man so radically into question that he must be stripped of himself⁶⁰. The Word of God is itself the mighty living active Word; so it is God Himself who would reveal the meaning of His Word to us.

Apart from that, Calvin's theology and Biblical hermeneutics were influenced by the humanists⁶¹. From Erasmus, for example, Calvin learnt that we ought to be able to reach the 'genuine sense' of the Scriptural writings⁶². Indeed, Erasmus regarded the importance of knowing the original meaning. Erasmus himself held the dictum: 'anybody who would be a true theologian must return to the sources; the more obscure passages of the Holy Bible should be interpreted with the help of those which are clear'⁶³. Calvin also learnt from Erasmus that the Holy Bible must be understood not only in its spiritual sense but also in its natural, historical and grammatical one. In fact, Erasmus stressed the relation between philology and historical research; he respected the interconnections between literature and the socio-historical structures of human life⁶⁴.

Like the humanists, Calvin studied the Holy Bible as a book composed by human beings. But if some humanists went back to the classical authors for new wisdom on man, Calvin went back to the Holy Bible for the wisdom of God⁶⁵. No doubt, a humanistic method of approaching the Holy Bible requires an investigation of time, place, and authorship raised by the texts; yet one should also be prepared to leave them unsettled, and go on to the main point, to what was said by God Himself.

As Reformer, Calvin insisted that the Word of God is authorised by the Holy Spirit, and not by the Roman Church. Yet Calvin's elaboration on the doctrine of the inspiration and authority of the Holy Spirit may lead to certain problems. On the one hand, there may be an impression that he supported the idea of the Spiritualists, namely those who believed that Holy Scripture is obsolete⁶⁶. This impression must be incorrect because Calvin himself opposed any identification between the word of God and the Spirit⁶⁷. On the other hand, there may also be an impression that he affirmed literal inspiration. It is true that Calvin recognised a human ability to find the Word of God in the Holy Bible. He nevertheless said that the word we possess in the Holy Bible is a mirror which reflects something; thus it does not impart to us the thing itself⁶⁸. Holy Scripture itself is 'an instrument by which the Lord dispenses the illumination of the Spirit to the faithful' but it is not to be identified with the Lord himself⁶⁹. Therefore, according to Calvin, Word and Spirit belong inseparably together in Holy Scripture.

There may be other criticisms against Calvin. On the one hand, he may be accused of preparing the development of historicism⁷⁰. This accusation was based

on his recognition that the human authors wrote the books of the Holy Bible for their own times and situations. On the other hand, Calvin may also be accused of preparing the ground for the coming of biblicism⁷¹. This was based on his invitation to get back at the original meaning of a text. How do we understand such criticisms? We must not forget that these criticisms seem to appear as a consequence of the way in which Calvin interpreted a Biblical text. In his Biblical commentaries, we find that, as the occasion demands, he went into details in discussing a geographical and historical point. He even took a further step by connecting it with the context in which he lived. His effort was certainly nothing but to make a kind of dialectical movement between the past and the present. In other words, Calvin would try to understand the Word of God as spoken by the text, and interpret its meaning for the present situation.

6. Conclusion

Calvin believed that Holy Scripture is in itself the Word of God. Holy Scripture has a role as a pair of spectacles which provide us assistance on how we should live in this world. The Holy Bible helps us to come to the knowledge of God the Creator and God the Redeemer. According to Calvin, the two parts of the Holy Bible, the Old Testament and the New Testament, are at the same level⁷². Both of them are under the authorisation and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, both of them are divine. Even if they have some inaccuracies, they do not lose their 'sacredness'. Such inaccuracies are only caused by a natural working of human mind. In fact, the Old Testament and the New Testament are still suitable for guiding the Church.

Calvin must be given credit for his attempt to free theological and Biblical hermeneutics from any political-ideological 'censorship'. He allowed anybody to interpret the Holy Bible. Calvin himself believed that the centre of authority lies in the Word of God, and not in a certain office of the Roman Church. In this matter, he argued that Biblical commentaries need to be accompanied with theology. The fundamental purpose of theology is to serve and inquire into the principal notions and doctrines found in the Holy Bible. Theology helps us to set up the direction where we should interpret the Holy Bible adequately.

Calvin's theological and Biblical hermeneutics developed through many influences. On the one hand, Calvin was influenced by his studies on law and humanism⁷³. We have seen that the humanists developed a method of approaching a text by getting back to the original source and the genuine sense. In this matter, they tried to take the literal sense rather than the allegorical one. It seems obvious that, in such a kind of method, the author of the text becomes the point of reverence. Here, we do not allow ourselves to go beyond what is said by the text. What we can try is to reach the intention of the author of the text.

On the other hand, we know that Calvin was interested in the way in which the epistles and the Evangelists treated the prophecy of the Old Testament. The epistles and the Evangelists used the materials found in the Old Testament for their personal interests in accordance with their cultural context. We see here that the interpretation is somehow steered by the personal interest of the epistles and the Evangelists of the New Testament. We may then say that the meaning of the text is determined by the reader and not the author. It is dependent on the interpreting subject.

Do those approaches not seem to 'contradict' each other? Indeed, the first approach wants to reach the original meaning, and thus focuses on the author of the text. The other approach wants to adjust the meaning of the text according to the context, and thus focuses on the reader or the interpreting subject. Then, how can they be harmonised or reconciled? This must be a difficult process! To get back to the original meaning as intended by the author is in itself not easy. Yet Calvin showed that Biblical texts can promote a dialectical movement in the act of reading. This is due to the fact that the text does not yet represent a definite meaning. The reader of the text is, in fact, invited to participate in its disclosure. Calvin himself always tried to take into account both text and context. He thus tried to disclose the meaning of the text in accordance with the context without, however, losing sight of the demands of the text itself⁷⁴.

Calvin's approach certainly brings us to some important implications. Firstly, the Holy Bible must be accepted as a part of historical achievement. In this matter, we may approach the Holy Bible by applying the historical-critical method. Yet Holy Scripture must also be lived in faith. This is due to the fact that it is in itself the Word of God. Here, we may approach God's Word by trying to reach its genuine sense. In sum, Calvin invited us to understand the Holy Bible scholarly as well as religiously. Secondly, Calvin's theological and Biblical hermeneutics carries the consequence that we must understand theology and Holy Scripture in a dynamic spirit. Here, we are encouraged always to re-think our theology and to re-interpret our Scriptures according to the context in which we live. Calvin has shown us that the Holy Bible is never a book of the past that has gone and which can only be reached through history. As a matter of fact, it remains a book of the present, which grows clearer in the light of the theological acquisitions of the passing centuries.

Then, what attribute should we give to Calvin? Prof. Haroutunian said, "Calvin was liberal in his determination to understand the Biblical writers historically. He was orthodox in his belief that the Bible was dictated ⁷⁵by the Spirit. He was neo-orthodox in making Christ who came to save sinners central to the whole Bible...."⁷⁶.

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Catatan Akhir

- ¹ J.H. Leith, *Introduction to the Reformed Tradition*, 33.
- ² It was said, for example, in one of the decrees of the Council of Trent (4 April 1546), ... in questions of faith and morality nobody should dare to interpret the Scripture against the sense held by the [Roman] Church *cuius est iudicare de vero sensu et interpretatione Scripturarum sanctorum* (whose task is to determine the true sense and interpretation of the Holy Scripture). Cited in W. Jeandron, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 170.
- ³ F. Wendel, *Calvin*, 21.
- ⁴ Yet, According to McGrath, Calvin sent Calvin to Paris in order that his son might escape an outbreak of plague that afflicting the town. A. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 22.
- ⁵ The motivation which Calvin attributed to his father for this change of subject and university was actually financial. There was more money to be had from the practice of law. A. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 32.
- ⁶ The term 'humanism' refers to the study of poetry, grammar, rhetoric, Greek and Latin classics, etc. Humanism was concern with how ideas were obtained and expressed, rather than with the precise nature of the ideas themselves. A. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 52-54.
- ⁷ According to McGrath, the origins of Calvin's methodology of commentary lie in his study of law. In the commentary of *De Clementia*, Calvin established the meaning of phrases or words by providing a philological explanation, followed by an appeal to grammar and rhetoric in order to explain the manner in which the words are related. A. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 62.
- ⁸ F. Wendel, *Calvin*, 28.
- ⁹ For Calvin, Seneca's *De Clementia* has brought him to say that 'this is also the teaching of our religion, that there is no power but of God, and that everything is ordered by Him (Romans 13)'. F. Wendel, *Calvin*, 29-30.
- ¹⁰ F. Wendel, *Calvin*, 32.
- ¹¹ F. Wendel, *Calvin*, 40.
- ¹² He described his vocation as a reformer by asserting that he was 'so strongly devoted to the superstitions of the papacy' that nothing less than an act of God could extricate him from his situation. A. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 70.
- ¹³ F. Wendel, *Calvin*, 44.
- ¹⁴ This book developed through certain changes in some editions (1536, 1539, 1543-1550, 1559). In the last edition it was divided in 4 parts: (1) on the knowledge of God the Creator, (2) on the knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ, (3) on the way the grace of Christ is to be received, and (4) on the external means by which God invites us into the Church.
- ¹⁵ Calvin was expelled to Strasbourg because there was tension among the inhabitants of Geneva. They seemed not to accept the ecclesiastical ordinances proposed by the Reformer. McGrath said that the Reformation at Geneva might have altered civil and ecclesiastical structures and practices; but it did not, and could not, alter human nature. McGrath, A., *A Life of John Calvin*, 99.
- ¹⁶ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 71.
- ¹⁷ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 73.
- ¹⁸ The power of the Holy Bible is clear from the fact that of human writings, there is none capable of affecting us at all comparably. Here Calvin compared the Holy Bible with the books of Cicero, Plato and Aristotle. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 82.
- ¹⁹ Calvin, *Commentaries*, 82. See also Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 95.
- ²⁰ Calvin said, "If God has willed this treasure of understanding to be hidden from his children, it is no wonder or absurdity that the multitude of men are so ignorant and stupid." Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 81.
- ²¹ In his commentary on Micah 4: 2, Calvin said, "When God speaks, he does not only intend men to know [that] what is announced by him is true; he also requires their obedience. We shall be truly taught by God only if we walk in his ways." Calvin, *Commentaries*, 80.

- ²² Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 81.
- ²³ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 95.
- ²⁴ See T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin: An Introduction to His Thought*, 25.
- ²⁵ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 79. See also Calvin's commentary on II Tim. 3: 16-17. Calvin, *Commentary*, 84-85
- ²⁶ In other words, the Holy Spirit is recognised in his agreement with the Holy Scripture. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 94.
- ²⁷ Calvin, *Commentaries*, 34.
- ²⁸ T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin: An Introduction to His Thought*, 23.
- ²⁹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 74.
- ³⁰ Calvin did not offer an explanation of the manner of inspiration in the origin of the Holy Bible. According to McNeill, 'inspiration' here does not refer to a mechanical verbal dictation. It means an impartation of divine truth that enters the hearts of the authors of the Holy Bible. Cited in Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 71. Yet, according to Haroutunian, Calvin indeed insisted that the Spirit 'dictated' the oracles of God. Cited in Calvin, *Commentaries*, 32.
- ³¹ F. Wendel, *Calvin*, 157.
- ³² F. Wendel, *Calvin*, 158.
- ³³ Calvin commented on Rom. 15: 4, "If the spirit of Christ is in all things and everywhere like unto itself, there can be no doubt at all that today, by the Apostles, he has dispensed his teaching to the edification of his own, as he did of old time by the Prophets. Cited in F. Wendel, *Calvin*, 159.
- ³⁴ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 70.
- ³⁵ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 73.
- ³⁶ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 70.
- ³⁷ Calvin argued that Jesus Christ is, in fact, at the centre of the whole of the Holy Bible. This statement is seemingly contradictory with what he said about the equivalency between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Here, Calvin said that he would draw his own inspiration as much from the Old Testament as from the New Testament, but he did so by making every effort to find in the one as much as in the other, what he regarded as the end of the Holy Bible, namely Jesus Christ. F. Wendel, *Calvin*, 155.
- ³⁸ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 6-7
- ³⁹ Cited in W. Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 34.
- ⁴⁰ Calvin, *Commentaries*, 28.
- ⁴¹ Calvin, *Commentaries*, 28.
- ⁴² When Calvin protested against allegorising, he was protesting not against a spiritual meaning in a passage, but against finding one that was not there; for the Word of God was, of course, spiritual. Calvin, *Commentaries*, 28.
- ⁴³ A. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 59.
- ⁴⁴ Calvin basic conviction is that the writers of the New Testament applied the Old Testament to the situation of the early Church. In turn, he applied the Holy Bible as a whole to the situation of the Church in his time. Calvin, *Commentaries*, 28.
- ⁴⁵ Calvin accused Peter of misconstruing Isaiah (1 Peter. 3: 14), and accused Paul of changing Psalm 68: 19 (Eph. 4: 8). Jesus Himself did not quote Isaiah exactly, but applied Isaiah's words to His own purpose. (Matthew 15: 7). Calvin, *Commentaries*, 30-31.
- ⁴⁶ A. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 146.
- ⁴⁷ A. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 146-147.
- ⁴⁸ See T. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin*, 162.
- ⁴⁹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 74.
- ⁵⁰ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 35.
- ⁵¹ F. Wendel, *Calvin*, 152.

- ⁵² Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 39.
- ⁵³ *Pietas* is the union of reverence and love of God. As for *religio*, it is the union between faith and an earnest fear of God; fear embraces willing reverence, and carries with it such legitimate worship as is prescribed in the law. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 39 and 43.
- ⁵⁴ T. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin*, 162.
- ⁵⁵ T. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin*, 64.
- ⁵⁶ T. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin*, 64.
- ⁵⁷ T. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin*, 71.
- ⁵⁸ T. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin*, 76-77.
- ⁵⁹ T. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin*, 156-158.
- ⁶⁰ T. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin*, 86-87.
- ⁶¹ We might well endorse the opinion that there was a gulf between the Calvin before and the Calvin after conversion. We must not forget, however, that Calvin's conversion took place relatively late, during his twenty-fourth year. By then, his mentality had thus assumed its definitive character. According to Wendel, Calvin remained always more or less the humanist he had been in 1532. F. Wendel, *Calvin*, 32-33.
- ⁶² Calvin, *Commentaries*, 28.
- ⁶³ T. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin*, 132.
- ⁶⁴ T. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin*, 132.
- ⁶⁵ Calvin, *Commentaries*, 31.
- ⁶⁶ Concerning the Spiritualist, he said cynically, "For of late, certain giddy men have risen who ... despise all reading and laugh at the simplicity of those who ... still follow the dead and killing letter." Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 93.
- ⁶⁷ Wendel, F., *Calvin*, 157.
- ⁶⁸ Wendel, F., *Calvin*, 160.
- ⁶⁹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. I, 95.
- ⁷⁰ Calvin, *Commentaries*, 29.
- ⁷¹ W. Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 34.
- ⁷² This is one of the differences between Calvin and Luther. For Luther, the Old Testament and the New Testament are not at the same level. Luther argued that the Old Testament can only be understood when it is interpreted christologically. T. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin*, 157.
- ⁷³ This is the other difference between Calvin and Luther. Indeed, Luther was less faithful to humanist principle than Calvin. T. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin*, 157.
- ⁷⁴ We may say that Calvin has prepared for the development of what we call, in the theory of hermeneutics, 'theory of aesthetic effect' or 'reader-response criticism'. See W. Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 98-99.
- ⁷⁵ See footnote 30.
- ⁷⁶ Calvin, *Commentaries*, 35.

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