

Karl Barth as a Scholar and Interpreter of John Calvin

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Prolegomena

“Calvin is a waterfall, a primeval forest, overpowering, something straight down from Himalayas, absolutely Chinese, marvellous, mythological;”¹⁾ So Karl Barth

1) *Karl Barth - Eduard Thurneysen : Briefwechsel. Band 2 1921-1930.* Bearbeitet und herausgegeben von Eduard Thurneysen. Zürich : Theologischer Verlag, 1974. 8. Juni 1922, 80.

wrote to his friend, Eduard Thurneysen, while he was lecturing on the theology of Calvin during the 1922 summer semester at Göttingen. This expressionistic, Franz Kafka-like description,²⁾ of Calvin's irresistible impact was followed by these words:

I lack completely the means, the suction cups, even to assimilate this phenomenon, not to speak of presenting it adequately. What I receive is only a thin little stream and what I can then give out is only a yet thinner extract of this little stream. I could gladly and profitably set myself down and spend all the rest of my life just with Calvin.³⁾

What are we to make of this emotive and exaggerated language? First, Barth's language is reflective of the expressionism characteristic of the 1920s. Secondly, his modest disclaimer is definitely exaggerated. The "thin little stream," he received and the "yet thinner extract," he gave out, actually ran into and filled 552 pages of small-print text in *Die Theologie Calvins 1922*.⁴⁾ As H. F. L. Cocks humorously observed, "Life is short and Barth is long."⁵⁾ Long though it may be, it is a fascinating study of Calvin as well as an important work for understanding the beginnings and development of Barth's own theology.

Thirdly, unlike his brother Peter, Karl Barth chose not to spend the rest of his life "just with Calvin," but ranged far and wide in choosing theological

2) Hans Scholl, "Vorwort" to Karl Barth, *Die Theologie Calvins 1922*. Vorlesung Göttingen Sommersemester 1922. In Verbindung mit Achim Reinstädter, herausgegeben von Hans Scholl. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1933, VIII, XIX

3) Ibid., 80; James D. Smart, *Revolutionary Theology in the Making : Barth - Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914-1925*. Trans. by James D. Smart. Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1964, 101.

4) Karl Barth, *Die Theologie Calvins 1922*. Vorlesung Göttingen Sommersemester 1922. In Verbindung mit Achim Reinstädter herausgegeben von Hans Scholl. Zürich : Theologischer Verlag, 1993

5) Henry F. L. Cocks, *The Congregational Quarterly*, 35, 1957, 73. *Bibliographie Karl Barth*, edited by Hans Markus Wildi. Bd 2. Zürich : Theologischer Verlag, 1993.

conversation-partners, from Athanasius to Anselm, from Thomas to Luther, from Protestant Orthodoxy to Schleiermacher. He sought to set the Reformers within the whole theological tradition of the Church. Nevertheless, Calvin was never far removed or absent from his theological work. The 1922 Calvin lectures were, "only a beginning over which," Barth said, "I must wring my hands."⁶ He never quite finished grappling with the theology of John Calvin, anymore than he finished wrestling with the theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher.

Significantly, the time and space devoted to Calvin in Barth's lectures, seminars and massive literary output far exceeds that given to any other theologian, with Luther, probably, running a close second. In addition to the 1922 Calvin lectures, Barth conducted more than a dozen seminars on Calvin's *Institutes*, the first in 1926 in Göttingen and the last one in 1967 in Basel.⁷ Barth believed that the *Institutes* was "first-class stuff" for exercises with young theological students.⁸ Calvin's Geneva Catechism was the theme of seminars in Geneva, Lausanne and Neuchâtel and this material took shape in a volume entitled *La confession de foi de l'église*,⁹ as well as an earlier article in *Theologische Existenz heute*.¹⁰ During the 1936 Calvin celebrations, Barth lectured on Calvin in Zürich, Winterthur and Biel and gave the Calvin Celebration sermon in the Madeleine

6) Ibid.

7) Karl Barth – Eduard Thurneysen : *Briefwechsel*. Band 2 1921-1930. Bearbeitet und herausgegeben von Eduard Thurneysen. Zürich : Theologischer Verlag, 1974. 17, Januar 1926(Rundbrief), 394. The first seminar on Calvin's *Institutes* was given at Münster in 1927. See Eberhard Busch. *Karl Barth : His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*. Trans. by John Bowden. Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1976, 167.

8) E. Busch, 219.

9) Karl Barth, *La Confession de foi de l'Eglise*; Explication due Symbole des Apôtres d'après le catéchisme de Calvin/Sténogrammes de 6 séminaires adaptés par Jean-Louis Leuba.—Neuchâtel; Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1943. E. T. : *The Faith of the Church: A Commentary on the Apostle's [sic!] Creed according to Calvin's Catechism*. Ed. by Jean-Louis Leuba. Trans. by Gabriel Vahanian. New York : Meridian Books, 1958.

10) Karl Barth, "Gott erkennen, Gott ehren, Gott vertrauen nach Calvins Katechismus", *Theologische Existenz heute*, Heft 27. München : Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1935.

Kirche in Geneva. The Zürich lecture and the Calvinfeier sermon appeared as issues of *Theologische Existenz Heute*.¹¹⁾ Then on the occasion of the Calvin celebrations in 1959 Barth wrote two articles, one on "Calvin as Theologian" and a preface to a German edition of the Institutes. He wrote a short article in 1964 commemorating the 400th anniversary of Calvin's death.¹²⁾ These would be sufficient to establish Barth as a reputable and productive Calvin scholar, but as is generally the case with Barth, there is more. There are 297 references to Calvin in the thirteen volumes of the Church Dogmatics, exceed only by 320 references to Luther. Indeed, there is scarcely a major work of Barth which does not cite Calvin. It is no accident then that Barth placed the portrait of Calvin on the wall of his study side by side and at exactly the same level with the portrait of his favourite composer, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

What is, therefore, surprising and puzzling is that this concentration on Calvin has not received the attention it deserves. Apart from rather brief and obligatory sections on the influence of Calvin on Barth in most studies of Barth's theology, no major essay or book that I know of, with the exception of Bruce McCormick's thesis, *A Scholastic of a Higher Order*, makes the relation of Barth to Calvin a subject of scholarly study. The aim of this paper is to focus on Barth as a scholar and interpreter of Calvin. This is a mammoth task and I undertake it with some trepidation and regard my attempt, if I may use Barth's words, "s only a beginning over which I [too] must wring my hands."

My paper has three main parts. In the first part, I want to consider Barth's early encounter with the theology of Calvin. The second part deals with Barth's agreement and disagreement with Calvin's theology in three areas : theological

11) Karl Barth, "Calvin" in *Theologische Exstanz heute*. Herausgegeben von Karl Barth und Ed. Thurneysen, Heft 37. München : Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1936, 3-22 and Karl Barth, "Calvinfeier 1936" in *Theologische Existenz heute*. Herausgegeben von Karl Barth und ed. Thurneysen. Heft 43. München : Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1936, 3-5.

12) *Published in Fragments Grave and Gay*. London : Collins Fontana Library, 1971, 105-110.

method, the Scripture principle and the doctrine of election. Finally, I want to make a few general observations and draw some conclusions.

I . Karl Barth's Initial Encounter with John Calvin

Karl Barth's interest in Calvin was awakened, probably for the first time, during his first semester of theological studies at Berne, in the winter term of 1904-1905, when he heard his father, Fritz, lecture on the history of the Reformation.¹³⁾ In his own work on Calvin, Barth spoke of the stimulation of his father's lectures and his practice of setting forth Calvin's theology by lecturing on Calvin's life from beginning to end.¹⁴⁾

Yet it was not until his vicarship at St. Peter's Cathedral in Geneva from 1909-1911, that Barth began his first serious, independent study of Calvin's theology. It should not be forgotten that 1909 marked the 400th Anniversary of Calvin's birth, an event which was celebrated at great expense and much fanfare in Geneva. This prompted some scathing comments from Barth. During his vicarship Barth made his first inroads into the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. This did not result, as he observed later, in any sudden conversion.¹⁵⁾ As a brash, one-hundred per cent Marburger product, who "thought he knew everything and knew it better than anyone else," Barth was convinced that he could "combine idealist and romantic theology with the theology of the Reformation."¹⁶⁾ The

13) Hans Scholl, "Vorwort" to *Die Theologie Calvins* 1992, VII.

14) Karl Barth, *Die Theologie Calvins* 1992, 174. Barth adopts this method. The editor, Hans Scholl notes there is no record of Fritz Barth giving a special lecture on Calvin at Berne although he did lecture generally on the history of the Reformation (174, note 18). Yet Fritz Barth was the author of *Calvins Persönlichkeit und ihre Wirkung auf das geistige Leben der Neuzeit*. Festrede, Bern, 1909.

15) *Fakultätsalbum der Evangelisch-theologischen Fakultät Münster*, 1927, quoted by E. Busch, *Karl Barth*, 57.

whole idea of any such synthesis, Barth was later to repudiate with an energetic “Nein”! In a self-description written in 1962, Barth stated that during this period, he had studied Calvin’s *Institute* “with the peculiar glasses of my student years.”¹⁷⁾ He also confessed that “Calvin would hardly have been very pleased at the sermons which I preached in his pulpit then.”¹⁸⁾

The move to a pastorate at Safenwil, his close association with Eduard Thurneysen and especially his intensive study of the Epistle to the Romans, led to a greater familiarity with the thought of Luther and Calvin, and in particular, with their biblical interpretation. *Der Römerbrief* was the result. It was written, Barth said, “with a joyfull sense of discovery,” facilitated by the “creative energy” of Luther’s exegesis and “the systematic interpretation of Calvin.”¹⁹⁾ Adolf Jülicher was one of the critics of the first edition. Barth told Thurneysen that Jülicher had fired “a 42cm shell” at his commentary.²⁰⁾ Not one, not to fire back, Barth compared the Tübingen New Testament scholar unfavourably with Calvin, who “first established what stands in the text” and then “sets himself to re-think the whole material and to wrestle with it, till the walls which separate the sixteenth century hears.”²¹⁾ Another critic was Adolf von Harnack, Barth’s former teacher in Berlin. He called Barth “a Calvinist and intellectualist” and predicted that he would “found a sect and receive inspirations.”²²⁾ The scorn ridicule heaped on Barth’s first major effort definitely wounded him but also spurred him on to rewrite Romans and to say “the same things” in “another

16) E. Busch, 57.

17) Selbstdarstellung (June, 1962) in Karl Barth-Archiv., quoted by Bruce L. McCormack, A Scholastic of a Higher Order. Ph. D. Thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1989, 79.

18) E. Busch, 53-54.

19) Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*. Translated by E. C. Hoskyns. London: Oxford University Press, 1933, 2, 7.

20) *Karl Barth -Eduard Thurneysen: Briefwechsel*. Band I, 1913-1921. 14, Jüli 1920, 410.

21) Preface to the Second Edition, *Romans*, 7.

22) *Karl Barth-Eduard Thurneysen*, Bd. 1, 20 April, 1920, 379; Smart, *Revolutionary Theology*, 50.

way.” When his six-year old daughter was asked what her father was doing, she replied, “Daddy is writing another Romans, much better.”²³⁾ Eberhard Busch, Barth’s biographer tells us that during this time Barth spent his time studying Calvin.²⁴⁾ The second edition of Romans proved to be more Calvinistic than the first, but that was, as Barth observed, accidental rather than intentional.²⁵⁾

With his appointment in 1921 as Honorary Professor of Reformed Theology at Göttingen, a position financed by U. S. Presbyterians, Barth turned his attention to the classical Reformed confessional writings, which he admitted later, he did not possess and had not even read.²⁶⁾ He also immersed himself in the writings of Luther and Calvin and of the Reformation period in preparation for his 1922 summer-semester lectures on *Die Theologie Calvins*. These lectures gave him, as he said, *grosse Sorge* (“great anxiety”).²⁷⁾ He became so preoccupied with Calvin that he abandoned his proposed lectures on the Hebrews. From April 27 to July 28, 1922, with a week’s break at Pentecost, Barth lectured from 7 to 8 a.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays to thirty or forty students, visiting scholars and ministers. He noted that there were astonishingly few truants. The Nationalists with few exceptions kept out of his way.²⁸⁾

During subsequent academic terms at Göttingen, Barth lectured on Huldrych Zwingli and Friedrich Schleiermacher. Yet Calvin was the first major theological

23) E. Busch, 117.

24) E. Busch, 114.

25) Karl Barth, “Vorwort zum Nachdruck dieses Buches(1963)”, 9. Quoted by Bruce McCormack, 79.

26) Autobiographical Text, *Karl Barth-Rodolf Bultmann : Letters 1922-1966*. Ed. B. Jaspert. Trans. and ed. by G. W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids : Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1981, 156.

27) K-Th., Bd. 2, 22 Januar, 1922 (Rundbrief) ; Smart, 81.

28) K. B.-Th., Bd 2, 86; Smart, 104. Barth mentioned that occasionally there was “an overflow from the adjacent lecture of Stange.”

thinker that he tackled in such a comprehensive way. In the foreword to the volume, Hans Scholl, the editor, has observed that the Calvin lectures are significant for at least two reasons. First, they are an important milestone in the development of Barth's theology as well as an impressive work of scholarship showing Barth's outstanding ability, his minute research work combined with a larger outlook and attempt to think together "eternity and time" and the "knowledge of God and the knowledge of history." Secondly, Barth has produced a fresh, absorbing and reliable introduction to the work and theology of Calvin,²⁹⁾ in spite of his own negative assessment of the lectures, as *ein ziemliches Ungeheurer* "fair monstrosity": biography, theology, history of the time, illumination *sub specie aeternitatis*, and besides, a bit on the present day, all of them twined together into a single ball which slowly rolls on its was....!"³⁰⁾ Barth's familiarity with the secondary literature on the Reformation and the Middle Ages is impressive. He read F. R. Hagenbach (for whom he had a decided preference), Fr. Loofs, R. Seeberg, P. Tschackert, E. Troeltsch and H. Hermelink. W. Kampschulte and E. Stahelin two-volume life of Calvin in 1919. These were supplemented by the three-volume study by P. Henry, the magisterial five-volume work by E. Doumergue, whom Barth regarded as the best Calvin scholar of all time but who, Barth commented, is disagreeable because, of his panegyric style and his attempt to justify Calvin through thick and thin.³¹⁾ Bauke, A. Bossert, A. Lang, G. Bayer, K. Holl, and by his father, Fritz Barth.

Barth's interest in Calvin was carried forward in the next few years as he lectured on "The Word of God and the Task of the Ministry" in 1922, and "The Doctrinal Task of the Reformed Churches" in 1923. He pursued the theology of the Reformation, yet "not uncritically,"³²⁾ Barth saw the need to rethink the

29) Hans Scholl, "Vorwort", *Die Theologie Calvins* 1922, XVIII-XIX.

30) KB-Th., Bd. 2, 86 ; Smart, 104.

31) Karl Barth, *Die Theologie Calvins* 1922, 172-173.

relationship between philosophy and theology, nature and grace, law and gospel and election and Christology differently from how it had been worked out in the sixteenth century. He could not become an orthodox Calvinist anymore than he could support a Lutheran confessionalism. It is likely that Barth's controversies and unhappy relationship with E. Hirsch and Carl Stange, the two Lutheran systematicians on the Göttingen faculty contributed to making him a stronger advocate of the Reformed position than might have happened in some other setting. At any rate, Hirsch's immense erudition was a constant challenge and incentive to Barth to press on with his academic work.

Toward the end of 1923, Barth announced that he would lecture on "Prolegomena to Dogmatics" during the 1924 summer semester. As a consequence of Carl Stange's urging the Göttingen faculty requested Barth to announce his lectures as Reformed Dogmatics. To get around the objection, Barth used the designation Unterricht in der christlichen Religion, which of course was the German equivalent of Calvin's *Institutio Christianae religionis*. He took quiet satisfaction in the knowledge that Stange's third predecessor in the chair, Albrecht Ritschl had announced his minor Dogmatics with this title.³³⁾

The whole project of producing a dogmatics pursued Barth even in his dreams, particularly with regard to such questions as the object, the concept and the method of dogmatics. As is well known, Barth made a helpful discovery at this time. Heinrich Heppe's Reformed Dogmatics fell into his hands. His initial impression was that it was "out of date, dusty, unattractive." But he persisted, read and studied it, and he found that he was rewarded with the discovery that the way through the Reformers to Holy Scripture was a more sensible one to tread than the one familiar to him, namely, the way of Schleiermacher and

32) Karl Barth, *Autobiographical Texts IV* quoted by E. Busch, 143.

33) KB-Th., Bd., 2, 5. Februar 1924 (Rundbrief), 221; Smart, 166-67.

Ritschl.³⁴⁾

The *Göttingen Dogmatics* show the influence of the orthodox Reformed dogmatists on Barth. This may be a quibble but I cannot concur with Daniel Migliore's statement in his introduction to the English translation, which I gather is indebted to Bruce McCormack, that Barth cites the older dogmatists more often than either Luther or Calvin. This judgment is correct only if one treats the Reformed scholastics *en bloc*. By my count, no other Reformed dogmatist is quoted as many times as Calvin and if one adds up all the Luther, Calvin and Zwingli citations they exceed all citations from the Reformed scholastics.³⁵⁾ But we need not to do this kind of tally to see who ends up with the highest score. What is more decisive are Barth's words in a 1940 autobiographical essay:

Doesn't the supposed new orientation of theology consist in reality in a retrogression to the so-called Orthodoxy of the 17th century? Answer: whoever knows the very respectable work of the 17th century from a close acquaintance would not be ashamed to be reckoned to that so-called Orthodoxy. This assessment is not correct, however. Our teachers from the past were above all Luther and Calvin and the confessions of the 16th century.³⁶⁾

34) Karl Barth, "Foreword", Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*. Ed. E. Bizer. Trans., G. T. Thomson. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1950, v.

35) Daniel Migliore, "Karl Barth's First Lectures in Dogmatics", *The Göttingen Dogmatics*. Ed., H. Reiffen; trans. G. W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids : Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990, Vol. 1, XXXIV; Bruce McCormack, 345.

36) Karl Barth, "Die Neuorientierung der protestantischen Theologie in den letzten dreissig Jahren", *Kirchenblatt für die reformierte Schweiz* 96 (1940), 100, quoted by Bruce McCormack, 244, n. 258. McCormack's argument is that Barth was theoretically more indebted to Luther and Calvin but in practice quoted the older dogmatists more. Calvin is quoted most often. Heidegger is a close runner-up.

Barth went on to say that one cannot be a theologian without continually learning and also continuously opposing the theologians of the past, including Luther and Calvin. The primary binding of a Reformed theologian is to the Bible. Barth tried to learn from Luther, Calvin and the Reformed and Lutheran dogmaticians who followed them. Yet repristination was not his aim. What he took from them he reworked and renewed in his own unique way.

II. Karl Barth's Agreement and Disagreement with John Calvin

I want to look at three themes or topics to indicate the extent to which Barth used Calvin's theology to set his own theological agenda and to illustrate how he approached and interpreted Calvin. The first topic is theological method and Barth's choice of the loci method.

2.1 Theological Method

Here Calvin was the decisive influence. As early as his 1922 lectures, Barth had come to the conclusion that Calvin had no central doctrine, such as, the "gloria Dei", or predestination, or providence, or the "meditatio futurae vitae" from which everything else in his theology was derived.³⁷⁾ This interpretation was influenced by Hermann Bauke, who in his important 1922 monograph, *Die Probleme der Theologie Calvins* had argued: "The theology of Calvin has in fact no basic principle."³⁸⁾ A better way to approach Calvin's theology was to see that it contained a plurality of themes, those listed above and many others.

37) Karl Barth, *Die Theologie Calvins* 1922, 154-55.

38) Hermann Bauke, *Die Probleme der Theologie Calvins.*, Leipzig, 1922, 31.

Francois Wendel in his book on Calvin's is not a closed system elaborated around a central idea, but that it draws together, one after another, a whole series of Biblical ideas, some of which can only with difficulty be logically reconciled."³⁹⁾ In other words, Calvin's theology is systematic not in the sense of deriving everything from a central principle, but in the sense of arranging the loci theological systematically (ordine). One of the main aims of the Institutes was to provide a statement of "the sum of religion in all its parts" in order to assist the student of Scripture to know what to look for in Scripture and how to relate the different parts to one another. To this end Calvin systematized the biblical data into a coherent whole. In choosing the loci method, Calvin was more dependent on Melancthon and Zwingli than on Luther. It was this same method that Barth was to adopt in the Göttingen and also the *Church Dogmatics*.

Correspondence with Emil Brunner in 1924, shows that Barth considered different methods including the *loci* method, the scholastic method, a prophetic method and a confessional one.⁴⁰⁾ For some time he was attracted to the "scholastic approach" which involved the construction of a dogmatics, as a kind of "Sentence Commentary" in which Peter Lombard's *Sentences* would be replaced by the Geneva Catechism of 1545 or by Calvin's Institutes as the basic text. The method he finally chose, the method of theological topics, was fourth on his list of preferences. It is this method that Barth employed in his first attempt at producing a dogmatics, the *Göttingen Dogmatics*.⁴¹⁾ He carried it over to his *Church Dogmatics* where he states explicitly that Melancthon's and Calvin's method of *loci* is "the only truly scholarly method in dogmatics"

39) F. Wendel, *Calvin*. London:Fontana edn., 1965, 357-358.

40) Bruce McCormack, 280-82. These three were the preferred ones. Barth also listed other approaches: Biblical theology à la Biedermann and Schleiermacher's.

41) Karl Barth, *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion*. Ed. Hinrich Stoevesandt. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1985. Bd. 1, 108, 227-8, 366, 368.

(*wissenschaftliche Methode*)⁴²⁾ for the simple reason that it alone makes clear that the basic dogmatic statements do not derive from a higher unity, synthesis or systematic principle than from the Word of God itself. Consequently Barth differentiated himself from two earlier traditions of theological thought: first, from later Protestant Orthodoxy which departed from Calvin's *loci* method by trying to make a distinction between primary, secondary and non-fundamental articles of a faith; and secondly, from Neo-Protestantism which pushed this project further by attempting to define the essence of Christianity.

In an important essay, entitled, "Barth on the Centre of Theology", Stephen W. Sykes has argued convincingly that under the impact of Calvin's theology, Barth saw "that thile there is a centre in theology, there is no central doctrine, concept, or idea." Sykes goes on to say: "...we shall be correct in seeing in Calvin his principal precursor, though it remains the case that he develops the epistemological basis more explicitly and with greater thoroughness."⁴³⁾ On the basis of Sykes' argument, three points can be made : first, with regard to the matter of a centre in theology there is considerable congruence between Calvin and Barth. If Alexandre Ganoczy's is right, three major principles characterized Calvin's theology: the principle of "glory to God alone", the principle of "Christ alone" and the principle of the Word of God or "Scripture alone."⁴⁴⁾ For Barth,

42) Karl Barth, *KD* 1/2, 973; *CD*, Vol. I/2, 870.

43) Stephen W. Sykes, "Barth on the Centre of Theology", *Karl Barth - Studies of his Theological Methods*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 25, 26. See also George Hunsinger's recent fine introduction to the theology of Barth, *How to Read Karl Barth*. New York: Oxford, 1991 and this isolation of six motifs in Barth's theology: actualism, particularism, objectivism, personalism, realism and rationalism.

44) A. Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*. Trans. by David Foxgrover and Wade Provo. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987, 188-184. With regard to the principle of Christ alone, Ganoczy has noted that the name of Christ and the expression "in Christ" appears hundreds of times in Calvin's Institutes. "This powerful Christocentrism, the central principle of his theology," Ganoczy says, "led Calvin to repeat continually the

Jesus Christ is the centre of theology. Yet for him, as also for Calvin, the centrality of Christ was intimately connected with the truth of “glory to God alone” and “Scripture alone”. Secondly, both Calvin and Barth rejected the idea of a central doctrine and adopted the *loci* method. Yet, for Barth, no less than for Calvin, the *loci* method did not mean that one has a series of articles of faith that follow one another in an arbitrary fashion much like disparate articles of clothing strung one after another on a clothesline. Calvin arranged the different topics according to a pattern, namely, the tripartite form of the Apostles’ Creed and Barth did so also. Thirdly, on the matter of prolegomena, Barth differed from Calvin. Whereas Calvin’s *Institutes* begins with a discussion of the sum of human wisdom, the *sensus divinitatis*, religion and piety, and the role of Scripture, Barth opted for an internal prolegomena and rejected any notion of a natural knowledge of God.

2.2 The Scripture-Principle

The next topic I want to explore is Calvin’s and Barth’s use of the Scripture principle. Barth’s kinship with Calvin on this subject is first hinted at in the Preface to the Third Edition of the *Römerbrief*. In a review of the Second Edition, Rudolf Bultmann had remarked that behind Barth’s whole method of exegesis there lurked “a modern form of the dogma of Inspiration.” Barth replied simply that he had never tried to hide the fact that his manner of interpretation had certain affinities with the old doctrine of verbal inspiration. “As consideration....” He then raised the question: “Is there any way of penetrating the heart of a document—of any document!—except on the assumption that its spirit will speak to our spirit through the actual written words? This does not exclude a criticism of the letter by the spirit, which is, indeed, unavoidable.”⁴⁵⁾

refrain “Christ alone” in opposition to all idolatry and usurpation of Christ’s authority”, 191.

Barth took up this question again when he discussed Calvin's *Commentary on Romans* in his 1922 Calvin lectures. He began by making the point that the role of Scripture was different in the Reformed than in the Lutheran Reformation:

The introduction of the Reformed Reformation always meant one thing; the establishment of the Word of God contained in the Bible as the norm of faith and life. The Reformed Church is first a school where one learns, secondly, an institute, where one is educated. The desirable human attitude is first, "docility", secondly, "obedience." But Scripture is "lord" and "master" (Inst. I, 6, title). All that can sound dreadfully legalistic. But it is not so intended. Still it cannot be denied that the priority of the Scripture-principle (*Schriftprinzip*) in Reformed Protestantism... is surrounded with ambiguity.⁴⁶⁾

Reformed Protestantism found it necessary to affirm the authority of Scripture and to oppose this authority to the carefully constructed hierarchy of authorities of the Middle Ages. What saved Calvin's Scripture-principle from legalism was the emphasis on the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, Barth quoted Calvin's words in the *Institutes*, I.7.4: "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."⁴⁷⁾

All this raised again for Barth the issue of verbal inspiration in Calvin's theology. Although this doctrine was usually interpreted rather rigidly and mythologically, Barth believed that this did not have to be the case. What else could the notion of verbal inspiration mean than simply the hypothesis of a certain trustworthiness text, the assumption that a meaning must reside in the words?⁴⁸⁾

45) Karl Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, 18-19.

46) Karl Barth, *Die Theologie Calvins* 1922, 522-23.

47) J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I.7.4 quoted by Karl Barth, *Die Theologie Calvins* 1922, 526.

In September, 1923, Barth gave an address at Emden on "The Doctrinal Task of the Reformed Churches." Barth again took up the subject of the Scripture-principle:

For the immediate future the one serious necessity I see for Reformed theology is to study toward a new conception of the "scriptural principle," which should contain much more than that term now implies. I say study, for this new conception does not allow of sudden creation...we shall need to think through the category of *revelation* again, and learn again to read the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, from that viewpoint.⁴⁹⁾

Earlier in the lecture Barth explained what was meant by the Scripture-principle. At the outset, Reformed Churches saw that truth is contained only in the Word of God, found in the Old and New Testaments and "that every doctrine must therefore be measured against an unchangeable and impassable standard discoverable in the Scriptures."⁵⁰⁾ According to Barth, the Scripture-principle was not merely a formal but also a material principle. It underlined the truth that revelation means *Deus dixit* (God speaks).

All this was repeated in Göttingen Dogmatics where Barth asserted boldly that "the Reformation stands or falls with its scripture principle."⁵¹⁾ Scripture is God's Word. To say that is "to say that we do not know Christ outside or alongside scripture but only in scripture. We also know nothing about the Holy Spirit apart from scripture. We know nothing about a church where is no scripture."⁵²⁾ Barth

48) Karl Barth, *Die Theologie Calvins* 1922, 529.

49) Karl Barth, *Vorträge und Kleinere Arbeiten*, 229; Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*. Trans. by Douglas Horton. Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1928, 249-250.

50) Karl Barth, *Vorträge*, 222; Horton, 240-241.

51) Karl Barth, *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion. Herausgegeben von Hannelotte Reiffen. Prolegomena* 1924. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1985, Bd. I, 258; E. T. *The Göttingen Dogmatics*, trans. by G. W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990, 212.

goes on to speak of a (*Jenseits*), a “beyond” in scripture, that is, the Word of God or revelation and he adds: “But we must insist that revelation meets us only indirectly, only in scripture—there is no escaping this—and this means in biblical texts, in words and sentences,”⁵³⁾ For Barth the reality of revelation was only indirectly identical with the reality of scripture because the Bible is not the same as revelation. Yet we have revelation not in itself but in the Bible. Moreover, we cannot adduce proofs of the authority of Scripture. “The supreme proof of scripture” Barth said referring to Calvin’s statement in the *Institutes*, I.7.4., “is always that God speaks in it in person.”⁵⁴⁾

Again much of what Barth had said earlier was reworked in his discussion of Holy Scripture in the Church Dogmatics, Volume I, Part 2. He drew attention to an important event which had intervened between the 1924 Göttingen Dogmatics and the 1938 volume of the Church Dogmatics, namely the Synod of Verman in May, 1934 and pointed out that at Barmen “the Scripture principle of the Reformation was affirmed and confessionally stated with almost automatic necessity.” This principle, Barth continued, is essential to Protestantism as such. If it were abandoned it would be the end of Protestantism and consequently “the formulation of this principle is always unavoidable.”⁵⁵⁾

We can conclude : first, that Barth affirmed the Scripture-principle as emphatically as Calvin ; secondly, that he learned from and insisted as strongly as Calvin on the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit; and thirdly, that in support of his view that there is no direct identity between the human word of Scripture

52) Karl Barth, *Unterricht*, Bd. I, 262; E. T., 215.

53) Ibid.

54) Karl Barth, *Unterricht*, Bd. I, 246; E. T., 202.

55) Karl Barth, *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik*. Zollikon: Verlag der Evangelischen Buchhandlung, 1938. Bd. I/2, 509; E. T., *Church Dogmatics*, edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956, Vol. I/2 460.

and the Word of God he appealed to what Calvin said of the presence of God in the flesh of Christ, which Barth held could, *mutatis mutandis* be applied to the presence of God in the word of prophets and apostles; that is, Calvin's statement in the Institutes II.11.9 that the sacraments "teach that the matter of justification and salvation resides in his human nature; not that he either justifies or vivifies, of himself, as a mere man, but because it has pleased God to manifest in the Mediator that which was incomprehensible and hidden in himself."⁵⁶⁾ Barth's analogy certainly goes beyond Calvin but probably is not against Calvin's intention.

2.3 Doctrine of Election

Finally, we turn to Calvin and Barth on the doctrine of election. To employ Calvin's favourite analogy, election is a mirror of both Barth's agreement and disagreement with the theology of Calvin. Barth made this point rather bluntly in the Preface to *Church Dogmatics* II/2; "I would have preferred to follow Calvin's doctrine of predestination much more closely, instead of departing from it so radically".⁵⁷⁾

Barth had wrestled with the doctrine of election in his Commentary on Romans and kept returning to it in his occasional lectures.⁵⁸⁾ His earliest most sustained discussion was in the *Göttingen Dogmatics*. This treatment of the subject is significant because of several moves that Barth made anticipating his later discussion in the *Church Dogmatics*. First, he placed the doctrine of predestination

56) John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III.11.9 quoted by K. Barth, KD I/2, 553-54; CD I/2, 499.

57) Karl Barth, KD II/2, VIII ; CD II/2, x.

58) See the lectures "Biblical Questions, Insights and Vistas" (1920), "The Word of God and the Task of Ministry" (1922) and "The Doctrinal Task of the Reformed Churches" (1923) in Karl Barth, *Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie*. München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1929; E. T., *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans by D. Horton.

in the doctrine of God, arguing that predestination is a description of what God does. Secondly, he considered reprobation first and then election because reprobation is the universal human condition and also because there is no symmetry between reprobation and election. Thirdly he rejected the idea that there are a fixed number of reprobate from eternity. Fourthly, he spoke of "Christ with all his own" rather than individuals persons as the subject of election.⁵⁹⁾ For the most part, Barth took his stand with Calvin and spoke of predestination as "eternal, unconditional and twofold."

As Barth's theology took shape and acquired a more Christological focus, the link between Christology and election became stronger. In 1936, Barth attended the international Calvin Congress in Paris and heard a lecture by his friend, Pierre Maury on "Election and Faith" in which Maury argued that election must be viewed christologically with respect to both its foundations and orientation. Later in a Foreword to Pierre Maury's *Predestination and Other Papers*, Barth described Maury's lecture as "one of the best contributions made towards the understanding of the problem... it was he who contributed decisively to giving my thoughts on this point their fundamental direction."⁶⁰⁾ But Barth moved beyond Maury. In October of 1936 he lectured in Eastern Europe on "Gottes Gnadenwahl" and argued that Christ must be seen as the very ground and substance of election in whom alone we can recognize both reality of election and rejection.

Barth's fullest discussion of election is found in the Church Dogmatics II/2 of 1942. In no other part of the dogmatics is the conversation with Calvin so lengthy, far-ranging and sustained as on predestination. In addition to the

59) Karl Barth, *Unterricht*, Bd. 2, 172-183.

60) Pierre Maury, *Predestination and Other Paper*. Foreword by Karl Barth. Trans. by Edwin Hudson. London: SCM Press, 1960, 16. See also Karl Barth, *KD* II/2, 169; *CD* II/2.

Institutes, Barth studied Calvin's *The Eternal Predestination of God, Congrégation sur l's Élection éternelle, Sermons on Ephesians, Commentary on Romans, and the Geneva Catechism*. Barth also consulted such twentieth century Calvin scholars as Pether Barth, Loraine Boettner, Auguste Lecerf, Pierre Maury, Wilhelm Niesel, Heinz Otten and also Germans sociologist, Max Weber.

Barth's lengthy and detailed discussion repays careful study. I shall attempt to set out four points of agreement and three points of disagreement between Barth and Calvin.

First, Barth agreed with Calvin in ascribing great importance to the doctrine of predestination. He noted that Calvin gave the subject more and more space in the various editions of the Institutes and also wrote two works defending his doctrine against J. Bolsec and Albertus Pighius. While it was not Calvin's central doctrine from which all other doctrines were derived it was undoubtedly important, something which his brother, Pether, Heinz Otten and Wilhelm Niesel were inclined to underestimate. Barth disputed Niesel's statement that Calvin did not speak of election more fully than of other matters.⁶¹⁾ The doctrine was far more prominent in Calvin's theology than Niesel cared to admit. Between the two views, that it is Calvin's central doctrine, and that it is no more important than other doctrines, Barth proposed a third position; namely, that Calvin found in the doctrine of election the first and final word on the whole reality of the Christian life.

Secondly, Barth, no less than Calvin, insisted on the mystery, sovereign freedom and righteousness of the electing God. Calvin, Barth said, "did not wish the slightest diminution of the freedom of the divine election, but the preservation

61) W. Niesel, *Die Theologie Calvins*, 159, quoted by K. Barth, *CD II/2*, 86.

in all circumstances of the divine mystery. And yet he showed the righteousness of this election, and the need for us to do justice to it as an act as the act, of the only and true wisdom, with an impressiveness hardly surpassed by any other writer.”⁶²⁾ Yet this did not mean that God is capricious or tyrannical. For both theologians, the will of God is the source of all equity and justice.

Thirdly, Barth agreed with Luther, Calvin and the whole Reformed tradition that predestination means double predestination in the sense that election and rejection are two aspects of God’s intention and act. Barth observed that even the Arminians could not escape the idea of a double predestination.⁶³⁾ While Barth accepted double predestination he gave it a totally different interpretation than Calvin and most of the theological tradition.

Fourthly, Barth agreed with Calvin that it is to Scripture alone we must ultimately be responsible. The truth of election must be sought not in the doctrinal tradition, in its pastoral or practical usefulness, or in experience but in Scripture, or more accurately, in the self-revelation of God attested in Scripture.

Now for the areas of disagreement. I will begin with the last point of agreement which became one of disagreement. Barth criticized Calvin for coming to Scripture with certain decisions he had arrived at independently of Scripture. Calvin had observed : “If the same sermon is preached, say, to a hundred people, twenty receive it with the ready obedience of faith, while the rest hold it valueless or laugh or hiss or loath it.” The different can only be accounted for by God’s prior decision.⁶⁴⁾ While Calvin knew that there were no unequivocal signs of election he thought he saw in the words and actions of certain people

62) Karl Barth, *KD* II/2, 24; *CD* II/2, 23.

63) Karl Barth, *KD* II/2, 17; *CD* II/2, 17.

64) John Calvin, *Institutes*, III.24.12.

what Scripture describes as divine rejection. While expressing sympathy for Calvin's difficult position in Geneva, Barth says, tongue-in-cheek, that Calvin was comparatively tolerant in estimating the strength of the elect group as high as twenty per cent. Yet this experience could not claim the character of a revelation. "We may ask," Barth said, "Whether in Scripture the divine electing and rejecting are related to one another in the same way as are Christendom and heathendom the great multitude of *canaille* within the Church itself according to the construct which Calvin found so particularly impressive"?⁶⁵⁾ Barth was inclined to agree with Heinz Otten's criticism that Calvin had arrived at a decision on the basis of experience independently of Scripture. To ground election in human experience, Barth insisted, is to ground it ultimately in anthropology. I am not altogether persuaded by Barth's criticism. Calvin did not start with experience but with Scripture; experience simply confirmed what he believed he found in Scripture; moreover, there can be no question about Calvin's grounding of election in God.

The second major point of disagreement has to do with the relationship of predestination and Christology. Calvin, Luther and Aquinas, had all given prominence to Christ's role in election, and yet their great failure, Barth said, was that they did not ground election in Jesus Christ and even severed Christ from God with respect to election.⁶⁶⁾ The one in the theological tradition to whom Barth gives high marks for the Christological grounding of election is Athanasius. For him the subject of the divine decision is the Triune God, the Son of God no less than the Father and the Holy Spirit. Yet this theological interpretation had little or no influence on the later development of the doctrine, apart from the Reformed theologian, Polanus.⁶⁷⁾

65) Karl Barth, *KD* II/2, 43; *CD* II/2, 41.

66) Karl Barth, *KD* II/2, 128; *CD* II/2, 149.

67) Karl Barth, *CD* II/2, 110 and 60-61.

Barth acknowledges that Calvin spoke of Christ as “the mirror of election.” He even quotes Calvin’s statement in the 1559 *Institutio* : “But if we have been chosen in him, we shall not find assurance of our election in ourselves; and not even in God the Father, if we conceive him as severed from his Son. Christ, then, is the mirror wherein we must, and without self deception may, contemplate our won election.”⁶⁸⁾

Although this Christological reference is factually important, Barth said, it is not altogether satisfactory. What is not clear in Calvin’s doctrine is whether we are to hold to Christ alone because ontically there is no electing God outside of Christ. The Christological reference, though impressively made, is left hanging in the air. Jesus Christ is only the mediator of election while the electing God is God the Father, or occasionally the triune God, in a decision which preceded the being and word of Christ, a hidden God. The Christological reference is superseded by a divine decision which is before Christ and behind and above him. In other words, the electing God of Calvin, Barth says, is a *Deus nudus absconditus*. His considered judgment is: “All the dubious features of Calvin’s doctrine result from the basic failing that in the last analysis he separates God and Jesus Christ thinking that what was in the beginning with God must be sought elsewhere than in Jesus Christ.”⁶⁹⁾

Over against Calvin’s “horrible decree” and the *decretum absolutum*, Barth placed the *decretum concretum*, that is, the divine self-determination in Jesus Christ. Barth’s difficulty with Calvin and the whole theological tradition was that it spoke of a God-in-general and a humanity-in-general. “Danger lurks in generalities”, Barth was fond of saying. God elects in Christ. Jesus Christ is the electing God. The abstract *decretum absolutum* must be replaced by the Word

68) John Calvin, *Institutes* III.24.5 quoted by K. Barth, *CD* II/2, 61-62.

69) Karl Barth, *CD* II/2, 111.

who was in the beginning with God and who was made flesh and dwelt among us. Barth's interpreter, Eberhard Jüngel has commented: there is "no being of God" in-and-for -itself without humanity; there is no "non-human God" (Menschlosigkeit Gottes).⁷⁰⁾ Electio has its origin in God's self-determination or as Barth says, "it is God's choice that He wills to be God in this determination and not otherwise."⁷¹⁾

This involves, therefore, a total recasting of the doubleness of predestination. The categories, "elected" and "rejected" are primarily and properly applied to Jesus Christ, who was by name and nature the Beloved Son of the Father, "the elected one" and who for us and for our salvation was despised and rejected. Barth agrees with Calvin that God's eternal will is twofold, containing both a "Yes" and a "No." His difference from Calvin, and it is a significant one is his view that in the divine self-determination, God intended election, salvation and life for humanity; and rejection, damnation and death for himself.⁷²⁾ God took upon himself the rejection which humanity deserved. So far as a "no" is pronounced in predestination, it is no case "a No" that befalls humanity.

Barth recognized that Calvin's doctrine of predestination had its consequences in all areas of his interpretation of the Christian life. Interestingly, Barth believed that it was possible "to bracket off this problematical complex. Then one can rejoice at seeing Calvin's clear view of the centre of the gospel."⁷³⁾

Katherine Ann Sonderegger has said of Barth's doctrine of election that it

70) Eberhard Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: God's Becoming*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976, 108, n. 160.

71) Karl Barth, *CD II/2*, 54.

72) Karl Barth, *KD II/2*, ; *CD II/2*, 163.

73) Karl Barth, "In diesem Zeichen wirst du nicht siegen", *Orientierung*, 267.

“enjoys special privilege among Barth’s achievements: it is genuinely new.”⁷⁴) It is to Barth’s great credit that he broke through the impasses of the classical doctrine of predestination and presented election in a uniquely new and fresh way as good news rather than the “horrible decree” with its mixed message of salvation and damnation. Barth has directed our gaze, as John the Baptist does in Grünewald’s Issenheim altarpiece, to Christ on the Cross, Electing and elected, who took upon Himself our rejection so that we need not suffer rejection. Barth doctrine is not without its own problems, with regard to speculation about God’s self determination and about the ultimate force of the human “no.” Yet the doctrine of election has been put on a totally new foundation by Barth, on an evangelical basis, which makes it the sum of the gospel, “because of all the words that can be said and heard it is the best: that God elects humanity; that God is for humanity also the One who loves in freedom.”⁷⁵)

III. Epilegomena

A fuller discussion than is possible here would also look at Barth and Calvin on such topics as covenant, gospel and law, providence, Christology, extra *Calvinisticum*, the threefold office of Christ, faith, justification and sanctification, baptism, church and state to mention a number. It is evident from the three topics I have examined that Barth owed a considerable debt to Calvin. As one who sought to be an ecumenical theologian in the best sense of that term, Barth embraced the whole theological tradition of both the Eastern and Western churches, of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Yet Luther and Calvin had an

74) Katherine Ann Sonderegger, *Karl Barth’s Dogmatic Interpretation of Israel*. Brown University Thesis, 1990. Ann Arbor; UMI, 1990, 107.

75) Karl Barth, *KD* II/2, 3 ; *CD* II/2, 3.

especially significant role in Barth's theology. Individually and together, they command more citations and attention in the *Church Dogmatics* than any other individual theologian or group of theologians from a particular period.

Yet Barth was no *Calvin redivivus*. One of the earliest translators of Barth into English, Prof. Douglas Horton, said as much in a 1928 article in the *Christian Century*, entitled, "God Lets Loose Karl Barth." Horton wrote: "Karl Barth, in a word, is a reincarnation of John Calvin. His message, in nuce, is the Sinaitic sovereignty of God."⁷⁶ Professor Arthur Cushman McGiffert of the University of Chicago said something similar in a 1936 article in the journal *Christendom*, commemorating the 400th Anniversary of the publication of the first edition of Calvin's *Institutes*. "Is Calvin Coming Back?"⁷⁷ McGiffert asked, and answered that it was mainly in the Barthian movement that Calvinism was coming back and in a lively way. Barth and his circle stood in the great tradition of Augustine, Calvin and Jonathan Edward, "but they have embarrassed themselves by the very ebullience of their convictions", McGiffert said. He added, "Faith has gone to their heads..."⁷⁸ Many years later, Paul van Buren described Barth as "a sort of Luther redivivus."⁷⁹

If, from the left Barth was seen as a Calvin or Luther redivivus, meanwhile from the right, theologians such as Cornelius van Til of Westminster Seminary disputed the point that Barth was a Calvinist at all. He described Barth's theology as "The New Modernism." Against this attack, Barth was defended by G. C. Berkouwer, Professor at the Free University in Amsterdam. Though himself

76) *Christian Century*, February 16, 1928 in *The Christian Century Reader*, edited by Harold E. Fey and Margaret Frakes. New York: Association Press, 1962, 101.

77) A. C. McGiffert, "Is Calvin Coming Back", *Christendom*, Vol. I, Winter, 1936, No. 2, 310.

78) *Ibid.*, 319-21.

79) Paul van Buren, "Translator's Introduction", Karl Barth, *God Here and Now*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964, xvii.

critical of Barth on a number of points, Berkouwer repudiated van Til's caricature and acknowledged Barth's great debt to Luther and Calvin. Donald G. Bloesch in his short study of Barth, *Jesus is Victor* reports that Barth acknowledged to him personally that Calvin and Luther became less important to him as he developed his theology.⁸⁰⁾ One wonders why Barth would minimize the impact of Calvin and Luther on his theology when the evidence is otherwise and that even as late as 1967, a year before his death, Barth conducted a seminar on Calvin's theology? A more balanced view of the relation of Barth to Calvin and Luther was given by Hans Urs von Balthasar, perhaps the best Roman Catholic interpreter of Barth. He dismissed van Til's book, *The New Modernism*, as "wholly grotesque" and said:

Cutting through all the distorted developments of neo-Protestantism, he has gone back to the root sources of Protestantism, Calvin and Luther, and has even refined and purified these sources. He has modified or dropped certain points in Luther's doctrine, and he has done the same with Calvin. Calvin's doctrine is thought through to the end, spelled out more fully and corrected where necessary.⁸¹⁾

There can be no question at all that Barth distanced himself from the neo-Calvinism of Auguste Lecerf and Loraine Boettner and took the side of Pierre Maury.⁸²⁾ Yet when Emil Brunner attacked the Dutch neo-Calvinist,

80) Donald G. Bloesch, *Jesus is Victor*. Nashville; Abingdon, 1976, 15.

81) Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*. Trans. by John Drury. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971, 19. Von Balthasar cites Barth's *KD* II/1, 140-41; *Rechtfertigung und Recht*, 4ff.; *Gottes Gnadenwahl*, 18f.; and *Die Kirche Jesus Christi*, 7 in support of his statement. Von Balthasar was of the view that authentic Protestantism has found expression in Barth's theology and that, therefore, Barth was a worthy dialogue partner for Roman Catholic theologians.

82) See the helpful article by Roger Mehl, "Du Neo-calvinisme au Barthisme", *Etudes Théologiques et Religieuses*, Vol. 52(1997), 403-415.

Abraham Kuyper and his successor, Hermann Bavinck, Barth came to their defence and spoke of them as theologians with style.⁸³⁾ He took W. Niesel and T. F. Torrance gently to task when they defended Calvin on points on which Barth believed Calvin had to be criticized and corrected.⁸⁴⁾

Karl Barth was no Calvin *redivivus* nor would he ally himself with the Neo-Calvinists. The Reformed Church, he believed never encouraged the growth of a personality cult around any of its founders, in the way that Lutheranism did with Martin Luther. There was no other way to honour and imitate Calvin than to take our stand where Calvin stood. Calvin, Barth believed was an incomparable teacher. Indeed, what higher praise can one theologian pay to another than what Barth said about Calvin on the 400th Anniversary of Calvin's death in 1964: "... not withstanding all the necessary criticisms and corrections, there is hardly a better teacher apart from the biblical prophets and apostles than he."⁸⁵⁾ Barth did not wish to be a follower of Calvin in any other sense than to take up Calvin's understanding of the Christian faith and like the householder in Jesus' parable to discover in it things new and old. A repristination of the theology of the Reformers is not the answer. In order to be true to them Barth once said, "we will have to go further than they themselves went along the road they have pointed out."⁸⁶⁾

The *fin de siècle* predicament of Protestant theology is the question, which

83) Th.-KB, BD 2, 255.

84) See Karl Barth, *KD* II/2, 92-3 on Niesel's failure to recognize that predestination receives considerable attention by Calvin; and *KD* IV/1, 406, where Barth refers to Torrance's "schönen Buch", *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, 1949, 83f. and questions Torrance's interpretation that Calvin's doctrine of depravity is a "corollary" of his doctrine of grace.

85) Karl Barth, *Fragments Grave and Gay*. London: Collins Fontana Library, 1971, 109.

86) Karl Barth, *God Here and Now*, 15.

road? Is it to be the road of liberation or feminist, or process, or evangelical, or neo-confessional, or what-have-you-theology or even a combination of all of them? This is a particularly urgent question for the Reformed tradition which seems today to be so mixed-up, so without a sense of direction, and like Stephen Leacock's horseman is galloping off madly in all directions. What may protect us in our predicament is a bit of the Apostles' Creed, a bit of the Geneva Catechism and the Scots Confession, a bit of Luther and Calvin, and perhaps even a bit of Barth, not as heroes but as authorities by which to orient ourselves. "Free thinking with the help of authorities—this is the way." Barth once said.⁸⁷⁾

I began with something that Barth said about Calvin in 1922 and it is perhaps appropriate to conclude with what he wrote about Calvin in 1959: Unlike Luther, Calvin was not a genius, but a conscientious exegete, a strict and tenacious thinker and at the same time a theologian who was indefatigably concerned with the practice of Christian life in the church.... He is a good teacher, of a kind which has been rare in the church—who does not hand over to an understanding reader the results of his study, but asks him to take it up and to discover new results in his footsteps. Only a Christian and a theologian who has learned in Calvin's *Institutes* to pursue the truth with which he is concerned by using his own eyes and ears can be a "Calvinist."⁸⁸⁾

87) Karl Barth, *Göttingen Dogmatics*, 260.

88) Karl Barth, "Preface", quoted by E. Busch, 439.

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국문초록

칼빈학자이며 칼빈의 해석자로서의 칼 바르트 이해

칼빈은 거대한 폭포, 원시림, 마력적인 힘, 거대한 산 히말라야로부터 직접 내려오는 어떤 것 절대적으로 중국적이며, 경이스럽고, 신화적인 그 어떤 것이라고 말할 수 있을 것 같네;

1922년 괴팅겐(Göttingen) 대학교에서 여름 학기 강의를 칼빈의 신학으로 준비하면서 — 사실상 칼 바르트의 괴팅겐 대학에서의 첫 번째 임무 중 하나는 개혁자들의 신학에 대한 강의를 준비하는 것이었다 — 그의 친구 에드아르트 투루나이젠(Eduard Thurneysen)에게 쓴 편지의 일부이다.

이러한 사실적이며, 프란츠 카프카적인 서술이 칼빈에 대해 항거할 수 없는 엄청난 충격에 대한 서술로 다음과 같이 이어지고 있다.

“나는 그것을 적절하게 제시하여 언급하는 것은 고사하고, 심지어 이러한 현상을 소화해 낼 수 있는 수단, 흡입관을 전혀 가지고 있지 못하고 있네. 내가 받아들은 것은 단지 가늘고 작은 개울물일 뿐이고, 그때 내가 다시 내보낼 수 있는 것은 단지 이 작은 개울물 중에서도 훨씬 더 가늘어진 추출물일 뿐이네, 어쨌든 나는 즐겁고 그리고 유익하게 나의 생애의 남은 세월들을 칼빈과 함께 보내고 헌신 할 수 있을 것 같네”

칼 바르트의 이러한 천명에 대한 결실은 「칼빈의 신학」(*Die Theologie Calvins*)이라는 552 페이지의 책으로 출간되었다.

필자는 본고에서 신 칼빈주의자로서의 칼빈학자이며 또한 기독교 지향적인 칼빈의 해석학자로서의 칼 바르트의 신학에 대하여 칼빈과의 첫 번째 조우(遭遇)로부터 시작하여, 칼빈의 신학에 대한 동의하는 점과 동의하지 못하는 점을 중요한 모티프로 설정하여 칼 바르트 신학의 신학적 방법론(Theologische Methode), 칼 바르트의 성경원리(Schriftprinzip) 그리고 선택교리(Doctrine of Election)에 대하여 그의 대표적 저작인 「교회 교의학」(*Kirchliche Dogmatik*)을 중심으로 논구했다.

결국 칼 바르트는 1959년 칼빈에 대하여 마르틴 루터와는 달리 칼빈은 천재는 아니었으나 의식있는 해석자였으며 완고하나 집요한 사상가였고, 동시에 교회에서의 그리스도인의 삶의 실천에 지칠줄 모르는 관심을 지닌 신학자요, 훌륭한 선생이었다고 평가하면서 그리스도인들과 신학자들은 칼빈의 「기독교 강요」에 대한 진지한 학습자가 되어야 하며 진리에 대한 추구에 자신의 눈과 귀를 사용하려는 지대한 관심 속에서 칼빈주의자(Calvinist)가 될 수 있었다고 바르트는 고백하고 있다.