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ABSTRACT.

HENRY PETER JANSMA,

THE PROPHETIC OFFICE IN JOHN CALVIN'S THEOLOGY.

The aim of this thesis is to re-examine how Calvin understood the threefold office, with particular attention to the prophetic office, in his Christology. The author suggests that the offices are best understood in light of Calvin's fresh interpretations of Chalcedonian Christology and the insights of the Reformation. The problem of the offices is their interrelation. Calvin understood the unity of the offices in their relational character. Relational in the person of Christ as divine and human, and relational in the structure of the Trinity. These two elements, the relationality of the person of the Mediator, premised upon the relation of the persons of the Trinity, gave the offices the necessary ontological structure from which Calvin could postulate a theory of redemption with a single point of view, rather than previous theories of redemption which are simply juxtaposed. This unifying centre is the person of the Mediator in the activity of the offices. It is from this centre that Calvin interpreted the various biblical metaphors which are extremely difficult to bring together into a unity.

The argument is carried further as the prophetic office in Calvin is shown to contain the required ontological structure of the remaining offices of king and priest. Calvin's insistence on the unity of the activity of God in each of the offices explains why there is a unity within the Church, which transcend temporal distinctions. The distinctions of the offices in history allows Calvin to underscore the centrality of Christ's incarnation into a particular time in history, further grounding the work of God in history and creation.

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THE PROPHETIC OFFICE IN JOHN CALVIN'S THEOLOGY

by

Henry Peter Jansma

A Thesis Submitted
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The Department of Theology
The University of Durham

1991



- 9 JUL 1992

ERRATA

- P. 15 *for* he include the *read* he included the
- P. 22 *for* acted his *read* acted as his
- P. 28 *for* God In *read* God. In
- P. 48 *for* Wilhelm Niesel's *read* Wilhelm Niesel's
for R. B. Wallace's *read* R. B. Wallace's
- P. 52 *for* corallary *read* corollary
- P. 54 *for* allegue *read* allègue
for prophete *read* prophète
for Jeremie *read* Jérémie
for meme *read* même
for annoncee *read* annoncée
for fidelement *read* fidèlement
for donnee *read* donnée
- P. 61 *for* Theologica *read* Theologiae
- P. 67 *for* exposition Christ's *read* exposition of Christ's
- P. 76 *for* ⁴⁷ *read* ⁴⁵
for ⁴⁵ *read* ⁴⁶
- P. 77 *for* ⁴⁶ *read* ⁴⁷
- P. 99 *for* solo *read* sola
- P. 118 *for* ⁴⁷ *read* ⁴⁵
for ⁴⁵ *read* ⁴⁶
for ⁴⁶ *read* ⁴⁷
- P. 121 *for* Muller *read* Muller's
- P. 124 *for* thought reflect crudely *read* thought reflects crudely
- P. 132 *for* "He *read* " He
- P. 139 *for* He is then *read* He then
- P. 147 *for* and protect the *read* and protects the
- P. 160 *for* as a: *read* as
- P. 175 *for* In in *read* In
- P. 214 *for* υποστασιν *read* ὑπόστασις
- P. 235 *for* a *read* à
for institue *read* institué
- P. 278 *for* askwhat *read* ask what
- P. 317 *for* Niesel, Wilhelm *read* Niesel, Wilhelm
- P. 323 *for* 'Die Christologie Calvins' *read* 'Die Christologie Calvins'

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that no part of the material contained in this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in any other University or College.

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'Sizzen is neat, mar dwaan is in ding'.

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April 1991

H. P. J.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to re-examine how Calvin understood the prophetic office in his Christology. The prophetic office, one which has become familiar to students of Reformed theology, is usually discussed along with the offices of king and priest to form what is classically called the *munus triplex* or the threefold office of Christ. The threefold formula was not original to Calvin, but appears in Eusebius, Chrysostom, Aquinas and Osiander.¹ According to the Reformed tradition, it is in Calvin's thought that the doctrine of the threefold office became for the first time in the history of dogma a strict doctrinal category and a formula determinative of the shape of Christology.² Usually explained, Christ as a prophet brings the full light of intelligence and thus becomes the fulness and consummation of all revelations. As king of a spiritual and eternal kingdom he not only brings his people external and passing aid, but equips them especially with the gifts of eternal life and guards them against their enemies. As priest Christ secures to his people by his atonement and vicarious suffering the blessing that God deals with them not as judge but as gracious father. Calvin emphasized that communion with God is found in Christ's living person and in life communion with that person.³



Chapter One

Since the days of the Reformation the distinction was quite generally adopted as one of the commonplaces of Christology, though there was no general agreement as to the relative importance of the offices, nor as to their interrelation. Some placed the prophetic, others the priestly, and still others the kingly office in the foreground. There were those who applied the idea of a chronological succession to them, and thought of Christ functioning as prophet during his public ministry on earth, as priest in his final sufferings and death on the cross, and as king now that he is seated at the right hand of God.

The threefold office as a structure for understanding how the person and work of Christ interrelate, is not a simple structure for it must satisfactorily take into account the ground of Christ's being as both divine and human, yet give full account of the reality of Christ's entrance into history for the salvation of humanity. This, I believe, was Calvin's original intention in providing this structure. Unfortunately, this challenge has not been accepted by his successors. Instead, the function of Christ has come to the forefront, rather than the balance of ontology and function which Calvin suggested in saying that the threefold office was actually a single office with a threefold character, '*tribus partibus constare quod ei iniunctum a Patre munus fuit.*'⁴

I have chosen the prophetic office for the subject of my thesis because of the three it has been the subject of a significant criticism in twentieth century Calvin scholarship. In 1956 John

Frederick Jansen published his influential book on the offices of Christ as Calvin understood them, entitled *The Doctrine of the Work of Christ*. In it Jansen suggested that the prophetic office was merely 'peripheral' and 'an artificial change.' In fact, 'It is not an adequate or true expression of his [Calvin's] own theology.'⁵ Although attempting to prove that Calvin's exegesis has little evidence of the prophetic office as a separate office, his theological supposition for the rejection of the prophetic office is functional. For Jansen, the function of teaching, what is usually considered as the main task of the prophet, has difficulty in standing alone. It is rather subsumed by the function of the priest.

Subsequent writers within Calvin research have expressed dissatisfaction with this view. Most significantly, it is for underlying theological or christological reasons. E. David Willis writes,

A look at what Calvin says about the boundless power of the Son and the prophetic office will indirectly substantiate the contention that the prophetic office is much more integral to Calvin's thought than J.F. Jansen admits it to be.⁶

Other writers, such as Robert Peterson, and R.S. Wallace, Klauspeter Blaser and Joachim Staedtke also raise questions concerning the status of the prophetic office due to Calvin's underlying theological categories.⁷

These comments concerning the threefold office are intriguing. Yet there has been no significant study on the prophetic offices within Calvin studies since Jansen, in light of the observations other

Chapter One

Calvin scholars have been making concerning Calvin's christological structure. I propose therefore to examine the prophetic office once again, this time being concerned with Calvin's deeper theological rationale for the offices. In sum, I see the need for this research because: 1) The threefold office is considered Calvin's significant contribution in Christology. 2) In analysis of the threefold office the prophetic office has been marginalized due to a mistaken emphasis on function. 3) Calvin scholars have pointed to this weakness in the course of their own investigations on other matters in Calvin's theology. 4) Little if any at all has been written on this subject.

The question left before me in this introduction is to explain how this investigation into the prophetic and other offices will be done in the course of this thesis. I will attempt an examination in the following manner. In Chapter Two I will begin by examining the starting point of Calvin's understanding of the Christology: the active love of God and the image of God in humankind. We will learn that Calvin, in explaining the love of God in his activity toward humanity, established the necessity of a relation with humanity actually existing. Thus in this starting point Calvin has stressed a dynamic principle: the relational character of God and its reflection in humankind. This relational dynamic begins to set the stage for the offices.

In Chapter Three I will examine the structure of Calvin's Christology in light of trends in the Middle Ages and in his reaction to the Anti-trinitarians. From this work, I will demonstrate that

Calvin saw a proper ontological understanding of Christ as grounded in the understanding of the Trinity as relational. He then emphasized the union of the person of Christ, who must be seen as relational in the foundation of his being, rather than giving a separate ontological value to both natures. For Calvin, in Christ's person, to be is to be in relation. I will suggest that this language comes from his understanding of the insights of Chalcedon and his understanding of the Fathers, rather than from St. Augustine. I will demonstrate that for Calvin, person and essence must be thought of simultaneously if one is to avoid christological heresy. This is significant because it gives Calvin an ontological structure for the person of the Mediator which joins being and activity in the character of God. This unity of being with activity gave Calvin's Christology a trinitarian and relational structure, allowing for a unity of person yet a distinctiveness in activity.

With this insight, Calvin was then able to combine the contribution of the Reformation with a traditional Chalcedonian Christology in the offices of Christ. This is the subject of Chapter Four. In the first part I will discuss the unity of activity in the offices founded upon the unity in the person of the Mediator, the activity of the Trinity, and Calvin's affirmation of our participation in his activity as his body. In the second part I will examine the distinctions in the offices of Christ, explaining them in the light of Calvin's insight that any christological speculation must be tied to the necessity of salvation and the coming of Christ in history. The distinctions are those of that history as Christ fulfils the promise

Chapter One

made to Israel in the Old Testament. We discover therefore a twofold dimension to the offices: a unity of activity and distinctions of history.

In Chapter Five where the prophetic office in particular is discussed, I illustrate that the elements of unity of person, trinitarian activity and a relational premise are contained in Calvin's exposition of the prophetic office, hence allowing their inclusion in the structure of the offices of king and priest.

Having given the christological justification for the inclusion of the prophetic office as an aspect of the threefold office, I then turn my attention to the prophetic office in human instruments as described in the New and Old Testaments. Here I note the continuing twofold dimension of the unity of divine activity and the distinctions of Christ's advent. This way of understanding the christological rationale of the offices allows Calvin a flexibility in his exegesis of Scripture, so that each passage does not become a crass christological typology, yet sees a unity to diverse ministry founded upon Christ, the true prophet and teacher, as its head.

The argument I present is not uncomplex, yet I believe that it follows Calvin's own intention in his contribution to the Church's christological doctrine. In trying to avoid the problems of a functional approach, I attempt to reinstate the importance of Calvin's understanding of the Trinity and the unity of the

divine/human natures in the person of Christ the Mediator in his exposition of the offices.

Methodological Questions.

It could be said that I did not use to full effect the actual historical data when trying to explain the nature of the offices and the prophetic office in particular. This has certainly been used by others to some extent. Jansen contended that the prophetic office was added because a rationale was needed to support Calvin's understanding of ministry, perhaps against the Anabaptist notion. I would be able to support this view while still contending that Calvin's construction of ministry was actually based upon what he was already saying in his Christology, which set the parameters as to what was actually possible in the ministerial role. Calvin seemed to surmise correctly that the Anabaptist view, far from being created in a theological vacuum, actually developed from a particular understanding of the character of God. That view, as described by Calvin, seemed to mix what Calvin saw as important distinctions between Christ and the Spirit. The Anabaptist, overwhelmed as he was by the work of the Spirit, saw less significance in Christ's human nature, it was the work of the Spirit which subsumed the person. Similarly, the Roman Catholic position gave cause to Calvin's criticism that the integrity of the human/divine relation was compromised; due to the Roman Catholic insistence upon a medieval ontology which again lessened the significance of the human/divine relation in the person of Christ.

Chapter One

For a thesis which has dealt with issues of historical theology, the use of various contextual sources are acceptable if they help clarify the theological issues at hand. I have used the views of the Anabaptists and Roman Catholics because Calvin himself cited them as incorrect and marking the boundaries of fruitful christological discourse. I have been concerned with describing the process of Calvin's Christology in the prophetic office from Calvin's own point of view, trying to understand Calvin's texts on their own terms. One of the central problems for this type of description is the reliability of a particular informant, in this case Calvin himself. In practice, those with a more socially historical view would try to use a number of informants, checking their information from as many angles as possible. In this way one could suggest that the Anabaptist and Roman Catholic views are used in this thesis like various informants, providing differing angles and setting the context for Calvin's discussion.

This has also been a synchronic study, one seeking to illuminate the language used by Calvin within a particular community at a particular time. A synchronic study focusses on serial slices of history, treating each slice as a systemic whole. In this regard, the use of the Anabaptist and Roman Catholic christological alternatives served to highlight that larger whole in which Calvin found himself.

I have also sought to offer the best theological explanation of the subject matter at hand, and this could have at times entailed the use of concepts and explanations which were entirely foreign to the

historical context studied. Terms such as relationality, actuality, the premise of divine/human relation and office Christology are part of a analytical language of which Calvin himself might never have been aware. Yet I have suggested that such understandings which more modern terminology sets out was actually behind such phrases as 'in Christ', 'fulness of Christ', 'an office with three aspects', 'the unity of the person of the Mediator', 'how the two natures of the Mediator make one person', 'the instrument of God'; in Calvin's discussions of the relationship between the Son and the Spirit and in his discussions of the twofold structure of the offices as a unity of activity and distinctions of history. Each highlights the dynamic understanding which Calvin possessed and which became so important for his exposition of the threefold office.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER ONE

¹ J. F. Jansen, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Work of Christ* (London: James Clarke, 1956), pp. 26-32.

² E.F. Karl Müller, 'Jesus Christ, Threefold Office of,' *The New Schaff Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, E. Jackson (ed.) (1977), vol. 6, pp. 173-174.

³ The influence of Calvin's conception of the threefold office is seen in nearly all the systems of later Protestantism, Lutheran as well as Reformed; on this see E.F. Karl Müller, *op. cit.*, vol. 6, pp. 173-174 and J. F. Jansen, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-32. For treatment of this doctrine by later theologians see Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, chap 18, pp. 447-487 and Heinrich Schmid, *Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (repr. Minneapolis, 1961), part III, chap. 2, pp. 337-376.

⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Ford Lewis Battles (trans.), John T. McNeill (ed.) Volumes 20 and 21, *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 2.15.1. Hereafter called *Institutes*.

⁵ Jansen, *op. cit.*, p. 51, 105f.

⁶ E. David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology, The Function of the so-called extra-calvinisticum in Calvin's Theology*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), p. 67. Milner's objection is likewise for ontological reasons as his understanding of the word and Spirit relation is so important in his analysis of Calvin's doctrine of the Church, 'J.F. Jansen... has shown that Calvin's discussion originally embraces only the latter offices, and that the prophetic is a later addition. This leads Jansen, mistakenly I believe, to minimize the importance of the prophetic (teaching) office for Calvin.' B.C. Milner, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Church* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), p. 164.

⁷ R.S. Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva and the Reformation*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1990).

Richard A. Muller, *Christ and Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins. Studies in Historical Theology 2* David Steinmetz (ed.) (Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, 1986), pp. 31-33.

Robert A. Peterson, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Atonement*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1983), pp. 27-39.

Joachim Staedtke, 'Die Lehre von der Königsherrschaft Christi und den zwei Reichen bei Calvin' in his *Reformation und Zeugnis der Kirche. Gesammelte Studien*. Hrsg. von Dietrich Blaufuss. Zürcher Beiträge zur Reformationgeschichte, 9. (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1978). pp. 101-113.

Klauspeter Blaser, *Calvins Lehre von Den Drei Ämtern Christi*, (Zürich: EVZ Verlag, 1970).

CHAPTER TWO
GOD, HUMANITY AND CHRIST:
CALVIN'S INTERPRETATION OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP.

Introduction.

Periodically within Calvin studies a suggestion is put forward as to how one can interpret the particular shape of Calvin's Christology. In the past and up to the present time, predestination, the doctrine of the Church, and the Word/Spirit relationship have been suggested.¹ Presently, the emphasis among Calvin scholars is that the shape is determined by his fidelity to biblical authority, or some sort of dialectical tension based upon his reading of the biblical text.² What this means is that Calvin is continually attempting a harmonization of what he has read within the Medieval theological tradition and his humanistic *ad fontes* (return to the original sources) biblical approach. That is, Calvin seems to fluctuate between the two rather than developing a complete harmonization. Others feel that nothing can really be profitably said upon this issue until Calvin is seen within as full an historical context as possible.³

The argument of this Chapter, while not attempting to provide a definitive basis for Calvin's Christology as in the foregoing examples, will nevertheless demonstrate that in Calvin's description of God and humankind a certain relational dynamic is present. Each section of this Chapter therefore, will provide evidences of this

relationship and so set the structure of Calvin's understanding of the offices as: relational, Calvin understood the persons concerned in the offices, whether God or humankind, as existing in relation; trinitarian, Calvin saw the starting point of the God/human relation in the love of God, which must be directed, hence the love of God reflects a trinitarian relation; participatory, Calvin saw Christ in a unique middle position in which a genuine relationship between God and humankind exists. Humanity can know God because Christ constitutes the relation between human and God. His being constitutes relation.

Here then we will discuss broader categories of description which Calvin used. It is E. David Willis who suggests that it was Calvin's descriptions of a doctrine's function rather than its presence which played a significant role in Calvin's Christology.⁴ In other words, a particular model of Christology in Calvin may be assumed at all points of his discussion rather than included in exposition because of its presuppositional nature. It is necessary therefore, to examine the way Calvin describes his models of Christ before any real principles can be discerned. Clearly, the lack of agreement on a central theme in Calvin's Christology calls into question this approach to Calvin. It is my suggestion that one try to begin to understand his Christology, and thus his understanding of office, in the way in which Calvin began, namely, with his understanding of the relation between God and humanity as in the *Institutes*; and so to move forward to further explanations of the place of the threefold office in his understanding.

If Calvin did not begin with first principles or dogmas where did he begin? As he was a good humanist I could say that Calvin began with 'humanity', and as he was an equally good theologian I could say he began with 'God'. That is, Calvin began with an understanding of God for humanity; this was a relational rather than substantial beginning. In other words, Calvin began in the *Institutes* with a description of an already existing relationship between humanity and God.³ Calvin began his theological discourse assuming that an intimate relationship with God was not only possible but did in fact exist in the world. He then saw his task as a theologian to specify the particulars of the that relationship to others also within it, so that they too would understand its effect upon them. He spoke of the relationship in ways that indicate to us that he deeply believed in it as already existing in himself. Calvin never presented his theological explanations from the perspective of those outside the relationship, from the viewpoint of the 'unbeliever'.⁴ This perspective did appear in his writings but it was used only by way of contrast or illustration in order to highlight the position of the believer.

In what ways did Calvin describe this relationship to others? Calvin saw the relationship as a scale which ascended by degrees from unbelief to belief: what God communicated more specifically indicated a higher degree of intimacy within the relationship. There was nothing in the relationship that did not have some immediate reference to humankind. This meant that Calvin did not see any chasm between God and humankind which could not be crossed by God to us. God enables humanity and humanity responds to God. It is a relation based upon

God's continual activity. We will now examine some of the ways Calvin described the relationship.

The Possibility: God's Empowering.

One must go all the way back to the eternal relations of the triune God to reach the primary source of Calvin's doctrine of the offices of Christ. The free love of God in Jesus Christ is the starting point. In his commentary on John 3.16, Calvin specified as much: 'Christ shows the first cause and as it were source of our salvation. And this He does that no doubt may be left. For there is no calm haven where our minds can rest until we come to God's free love.'⁷ In numerous other places in his commentaries Calvin insisted that the free love of God in Christ is the starting point for any understanding of Christ's activity for humanity,

The ground of our redemption is that immense love of God towards us by which it happened that He did not even spare His own Son.

For it is not true (as some carelessly make out) that repentance is put in the first place, as though it were the cause of the remission of sins, or came before God's starting to be well-favoured towards us, but men are told to repent that they may perceive the reconciliation that is offered to them. As first rank comes the free love of God, in which He embraces poor men, not imputing their sins to them.⁸

The love of God plays an important role in the theology of John Calvin as a whole. His comments on John's words, 'By this the love of God was manifested,' are especially apt,

The love of God is testified to us by many other proofs as well. For if it is asked why the world was created, why we have been put in it to have dominion over the earth, why we

are preserved in this life to enjoy innumerable blessings and are endowed with light and understanding, no reason can be given but the free love of God towards us. But here the apostle chooses the chief example, which transcends everything else... Christ is such a shining and remarkable proof of the divine love towards us, that, whenever we look to Him, He clearly confirms to us the doctrine that God is love.⁹

When Calvin formulated a minimal confession of faith necessary for church union, he include the love of God: 'God is one; Christ is God and the Son of God; our salvation rests in God's mercy.'¹⁰ Erwin Mülhaupt, who did painstaking work in studying Calvin's sermons, underscored the importance of love for Calvin's practical theology: 'A study of Calvin's sermons reveals that it is not his ideas of law, but the lovingkindness of God which predominates.'¹¹

The best witness to the importance of love in Calvin's theology is his in his own exegesis of Ephesians 3.17, ('That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ...'),

By these dimensions Paul means nothing other than the love of Christ, of which he speaks afterwards. The meaning is, that he who knows it truly and perfectly is in every respect a wise man. As if he had said, "In whatever direction men may look, they will find nothing in the doctrine of salvation that should not be related to this." The love of Christ contains within itself every aspect of wisdom.¹²

In many other places in his commentaries Calvin insisted that the free love of God was the starting point of the relationship between God and humankind. This was to be some type of assurance for Calvin. When he said that God's love was free he meant that God in his majesty

was under no real necessity to direct his love towards human beings. God did it because he wanted to do it. God acts because he chooses to act. There is no resource within humankind which moves us towards God, as Calvin related in his Commentary on Titus, '[Paul] is right to mention first the kindness that prompts God to love us. He will never find in us anything worthy of his love, but He loves us because He is kind and merciful.'¹³ Humanity's assurance was found in a reliance upon God's commitment to humanity rather than in humanity's commitment to God. Calvin emphasized along with God's freedom to act in the way he does toward humankind, his freedom to love his people. Calvin did not speak of God's love without speaking of its direction toward humanity.¹⁴ That love is demonstrated in creation, in providence, and in redemption. One could say that Calvin's phrase 'the free love of God' includes an adjective describing the sovereignty of God's love and a noun describing his lovingkindness. The fact that the relationship was sustained at all in spite of human failure to respond to God was the measure of the love of God even before human beings existed.¹⁵

It is significant that Calvin chose the love of God as the starting point of Christ's person and work, for the expression of the love of God within the theological tradition from which Calvin drew, had a trinitarian structure. The starting point is the recognition that Jesus is in person God's loving self-communication. Yet he not only renders present what always was in God; he is also radically new, historical realization. Hence Calvin's descriptions of the offices of Christ which contain this twofold emphasis: the unity of God's

activity, and the distinctiveness of time and history. Consequently Christ is also the revelation of God's freedom in his love. This freedom too belongs to God's eternal being. That means that Father and Son are not limited so to speak to their love for each other. This surplus and effusion of freedom in the love between Father and Son is the Spirit, as Calvin could have seen in the tradition of the Greek Fathers. At this 'edge' in God, he is at the same time God's innermost essence, as Calvin would say in the tradition of trinitarian theology of the West. In the Spirit, God's innermost essence, his freedom in love impels him outwards. In him, as a love that is utterly free, God at the same time has the possibility of producing something outside, that is, a creature, and while maintaining its creaturely distinctiveness, draw it into his loving relation. 'The Spirit is, as it were, the theological transcendental condition of the very possibility of a free self-communication of God in history'.¹⁶ In him, God can not only reveal but carry into effect his freedom in love in an historical manner. The Spirit as mediation between Father and Son is at the same time part of the mediation of God into history.

The divine/human relationship is sustained first of all by God's overwhelming authority. In other words, God is the *fons omnium bonorum*,¹⁷

This I take to mean that not only does he sustain this universe (as he once founded it) by his boundless might, regulate it by his wisdom preserve it by his goodness, and especially rule mankind by his righteousness and judgment, bear with it in his mercy, watch over it by his protection; but also that no drop will be found either of wisdom and light, or of righteousness or power or rectitude, or of genuine truth, which does not flow from him, and of which he is not the cause.¹⁸

Because of his creation and preservation of the world humanity is able to exist and to achieve a relationship with God, much in the same way it is sustained in the divine and human Christ.¹⁹ In other words, Calvin's argument progressed from the God who is the Creator to the God who is the Redeemer; the one activity of God must be seen as part of the other. This idea was very pervasive in Calvin's thought. To him, the day-to-day events of the natural world were miraculous in themselves and not in themselves a reflection of an ordered universe.²⁰ Humankind then hangs in the balance of a created order which is sustained by God against the forces of chaos.²¹ Each natural event was cause for Calvin to consider that God was indeed committed to a relationship with humanity because humanity still existed within a precarious framework.²² The very fact of our continued existence was a reflection of humanity's created purpose, to have a relationship with God. Humanity reflects this possibility for relationship in its other social undertakings.²³ According to Calvin, humanity was to answer God in thankfulness and praise.²⁴ This became the criterion for measuring the value of humankind's contribution to the world. Value was assessed according to the degree they enhance in relationship to God. Even the unbeliever's responses can in some sense have a benefit and be appreciated. Yet these responses fail the final test of ultimate value to God because such acts are not God-directed, rather they are driven by selfish ungodly interests rather than an interest in the divine/human relationship.²⁵

Is it correct to interpret Calvin as placing the relationship as being logically prior to communication about it? I would suggest that

Calvin believed that in order for communication to take place some sort of relationality must already exist, for there is no relationality unless God acts.²⁶ Communication then can be seen as God making himself more specific to humankind in order that a better response exists between God and humanity when more is revealed by the one to the other. A sort of 'school' exists where God can gradually raise humankind's perceptions to ever deepening understandings of the Creator/Redeemer. But this education is only possible if there is a capacity in God to reach humankind and who restores a capacity in humankind to respond to him.

Yet it must not be thought that Calvin believed that humankind possessed any innate capacity which can claim some independence from God himself. The fact that the relationship between God and humanity exists at all indicated for Calvin an overwhelming divine operation.²⁷ Within this, Calvin firmly anchored the certainty of the relationship. In other words, Calvin did recognize that there was an ultimate authority in the divine/human relationship: Jesus Christ who by his incarnation embodied an accommodation of his revelation so that certainty can overcome humanity's limitations due to sin.²⁸ The certainty resided in God's action for humankind which was traced to the love or high regard that the Creator has for his creation. So, in speaking of the relationship of God to humanity Calvin would have spoken of its particular *benefits*.²⁹ It is these benefits within the believer which ever raises him/her to higher intimacy with God, which indicate God's intent of loving-kindness or good faith toward humankind. The benefits take the form of the general sustenance of the

world, or acts of providence, which bring about moral redemption of the believer and lead to a fuller and more meaningful relationship with God in every aspect of their existence. Calvin would not speak of God in abstraction from the relationship he has with his creation.³⁰ He would therefore see benefits as focussed on the one and the triune God, rather than as a range of benefits apart listed side by side. When he described this relationship, the characteristics of the Father were then meant to empower it.

Characteristic of God's revelation about himself, Calvin wrote, were his majesty, divinity and power,

As soon as we feel God's majesty it must of necessity cast us down. But it is Christ's office to raise up the prostrate; for he descends to us so that believers, led by Him, might boldly appear in the sight of God and His Majesty, which otherwise would consume all flesh, might no longer be terrifying to them.³¹

Another aspect of the majesty of God for Calvin was the will of God. The relationship between humanity and God exists because God wanted it that way.³² Why did Calvin find it necessary to discuss the reasons for God entering into relationship with us by first repeating that its source was in God's character? It was because the reasons indicated the intent and hence the intent of the mind of God himself. Calvin wanted to show how these attributes of God, usually thought of in abstractions, prior to any discussion of God's person, actually in the activity revealed more information about the subject, thus enabling a higher level of intimacy. On the basis of this new knowledge about God, Calvin would then argue that one could only understand the certainty of the relationship's existence because God

has shown that he must want it. God would sustain a relationship in spite of humanity's shortcomings or faults because of the love of God which sustains the relationship throughout.³³

One could then ask, how did Calvin answer the problem of the copresence of God's wrath with his love? Time and time again both in the *Institutes* and in the *Commentaries* Calvin referred to some sort of contradiction or inconsistency between the love and wrath of God.³⁴ The problem was well summarized by Calvin in his comments on Romans 5.10,

We were enemies, he says, when Christ presented Himself to the Father as a means of propitiation ...The apostle, however, seems here to be contradicting himself. If the death of Christ was a pledge of the divine love towards us, it follows that we were even then acceptable to Him.³⁵

In trying to make sense of this copresence of love and wrath Calvin appealed to that scale of knowledge which is part of the human-God relationship. Calvin explained that it is indeed true that although God loved us even before we are born, one still acted and thought as an enemy of God until that time that God made himself known through his grace. Calvin wrote,

He receives us into the body of Christ by His secret counsel, He ceases to hate us. Our return to grace, however, is unknown to us, until we attain it by faith. With regard to ourselves, therefore, we are always enemies, until the death of Christ is interposed to propitiate God. This double aspect ought to be noted.³⁶

Because of this ascending scale, this growing into knowledge of God through a more intimate relationship, Calvin could answer questions raised concerning the reality of random misfortune in the world. In other words, he sought to anticipate the question, if God loved us

first, why did Christ need to suffer for us? Calvin would reply, because we thought ourselves enemies of God. God, who is ever the same, took action to reach us, even though we thought and acted his enemies. He did this because of his love for us. The fact that the world is still an evil place is because of sinful humanity who still acts as the enemy of God. Our knowledge of God and our relationship to him was a growing into God, what would now be called the eschatological aspect of knowledge.

The reality of the love of God was so real to Calvin that he in the end was at a loss for words to explain it. He believed that it was a mystery which is not revealed to us because it is a part of God which is beyond our capacity to understand. This love 'was hidden in the bosom of God and far exceeds the grasp of the human mind.' Indeed, 'it is a wonderful goodness of God and incomprehensible to the human mind, that He was benevolent towards men whom He could not but hate.'³⁷ Quoting Augustine, Calvin wrote, 'In some ineffable way, God loved us and yet was angry towards us at the same time.'³⁸ Calvin tried to use the appeal to mystery as a way to preserve what he saw as the reality of the wrath of God while still trying to emphasize God's free love, by stating that this relationship which we have was freely entered into by God's love because, at the same time, he should rightly hate us. Humankind's proper response was to be thankful for the fact that God entered into the relationship at all.

Clearly, the problem for Calvin was the unity of God's activity and the activity of God in time. The work of Christ happened in time.

The work of reconciliation between humanity and God has a beginning, middle and end.³⁹ A normal temporal point of view, although real to humanity because of our limitations, must not be applied to God. Temporality is in the action of God, but it is not the normal sense of time which humanity perceives. Again relying on the ascending scale, Calvin argued that humankind was both an enemy and a friend toward God.⁴⁰ That is, the redeemed and the reprobate were on the same scale, which encompassed all of God's activity as Creator and Redeemer. Both activities gave knowledge and the capacity for a relationship, but the response of each group, the elect and the reprobate, differed. Because of the difference the wrath of God or the providence of God fell on all at this time. At a future time, however, both love and wrath, the marks of two relationships to humanity, would be completed.

Calvin preferred to see humanity differently than did Luther, not *simul iustus et peccator*, but as one who was the sinner, who is now justified. There was no tension between sin and justification, the sinner was justified or had ascended a bit further toward greater knowledge of God. The love and the wrath of God were still a part of the life of one who was within a more intimate relationship with God because of the pedagogical role which deepened our dependence upon him.⁴¹ Calvin periodically spoke of the reality of God's punishing wrath for the Christian.⁴² The difference seems to be in the cause of the wrath. In the case of most of humanity who were outside an intimacy with God they would only see the wrath of God, yet enjoy God's preservation of the world.⁴³ This relationship between the unbeliever and God will end with the final judgment of humankind.⁴⁴

This is contrasted with wrath for the believer. In this case, the wrath of God is revealed in order to improve the standing of an individual or nation within its relationship with God. The sinful human being is put to death, so that the believer can respond to God with greater intimacy.⁴⁵ The preservation of the world is enjoyed by the Christian so that he can respond to God. Any misfortune in the natural world must be endured through a reliance upon the relationship to God rather than a search for meaning in natural events.⁴⁶ Calvin believed that all problems with the love and wrath of God would be put away when we are in the highest state of intimacy after the resurrection from the dead.

Humanity: The Image of God.

In turning to a consideration of the nature of humankind in its relationship with God, Calvin turned to descriptions of humanity as the image of God. Humanity was in some sense God's image, reflection or likeness. The question we must ask is, how did Calvin seek to define the manner in which humankind is oriented to God in this way. It would be helpful to consider briefly some of Calvin's insights because these insights on what is humanity would have tended to shape the remainder of his thinking upon the relationship between humanity and God.

What Calvin attempted in his description of humanity as the image of God was what we may call a psychological activity. That is, Calvin spoke of humanity's endowment with certain gifts or details which

enabled it to recognize God, as the first of several 'activities'. But this first activity cannot be thought of as separated from the next activity which is the response of humanity to God that the gifts or details make possible. The purpose of assigning order was due mostly to logical consistency. In Calvin's view of the image of God one cannot divide the enablement of activity from the activity itself. When trying to give a formal definition of the image Calvin began with descriptions of anything and everything which set humankind apart from the rest of creation. Borrowing from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, for example, Calvin spoke of humanity's upright stature in distinction from the rest of animal life in enabling them to look upwards and have the opportunity to consider God.⁴⁷ Humanity begins as the privileged seers. It was endowed with the capacity to turn its eyes outwards and to admire the handiwork of God in other things. God had done all this in his commitment to a relationship with humanity,

How great an ingratitude it would be now to doubt whether this most gracious Father has us in his care, who we see was concerned for us even before we were born! How impious would it be to tremble for fear that his kindness might at any time fall us in our need, when we see that it was shown, with the greatest abundance of every good thing, when we were yet unborn!⁴⁸

Like St. Augustine, Calvin's definition of the image of God contained a heavy psychological emphasis, that is, he sought to place the importance of the image within the human soul or in the 'very seat of reason', summarized in the following way,

The integrity with which Adam was endowed is expressed by this word [*imago*], when he had full possession of right understanding, when he had his affections kept within the bounds of reason, all his senses tempered in the right order, and he truly referred his excellence to exceptional

gifts bestowed upon him by his Maker.⁴⁷

Adam therefore had a light of mind and an uprightness of heart with all his senses in a 'right order'. That is to say that Adam saw everything and understood everything with a type of clarity which enabled his affections or emotions and senses to be balanced and regulated in their proper order.

What then underlies this emphasis? As we have said, Calvin intended an antithesis, setting humankind apart from the rest of creation, in other words, by establishing a boundary between humankind and the rest of the world, Calvin focussed his reader's attention on humanity's uniqueness. This is because he wished to ask and answer the question, how did one then generally describe the unique activity of the image of God in contrast with the lower created order? The answer is reserved for the last clause of Calvin's definition, '...and he truly referred his excellence to exceptional gifts bestowed upon him by his Maker.' Humanity is distinguished from the rest of the created order by its ability to reflect God's glory in a conscious response of thankfulness.⁵⁰ Ordinary animal life owes its existence and preservation to God but cannot know it.⁵¹ Humanity's endowment, or its 'soul' or 'seat of reasoning,' powers the divine image. This did not mean for Calvin that the soul itself was the image but that the soul 'images' or 'reflects' God in its response toward God. Humankind echoes the initial activity of God in coming down to humankind because humankind could not ascend to him first. So Calvin did not define image solely by what humanity naturally possesses, but from the manner in which it responds to and acknowledges God.⁵²

This is not to say that a relationship of sorts cannot exist in those who do not respond to God, but Calvin believed that a restored relationship with God was constitutive of humanity and set its value because that was what God had intended in humankind's initial creation.⁵³ He would have considered it dehumanizing to be satisfied with a relationship that lacked its full potential. What Calvin saw, then, as the proper or whole image of God in humankind, was the correct use of humanity's gifts in response to an act of God which establishes the relationship. This affirmation of what is positive about humanity's image of God then forms the basis of the restoration of the image in Christ.⁵⁴ Calvin asserted that faith and love for God, since they are restored to us in Christ, must be accounted lost by the fall, yet they are not completely missing but corrupted. The enablement of humanity is not wiped out; humanity still has the potential to respond to the activity of God because God has originally given it that capacity, either to accept or reject his offer of a relationship. Yet left to its natural state, humankind cannot respond except in rejection. It is the activity of God as Redeemer which enables the elect to respond correctly.

With such remarks, the transition is already made by Calvin to speaking of the relationship of humanity to God while in the sinful state. As we saw, humanity is, in particular, a rational being. That is, humanity can understand God in ways which the beasts do not possess. This was inferred by Calvin from the Prologue of John's Gospel. But Calvin's view of humanity was incomplete unless he added the reason why humanity, who is still a rational being, does not seek

a relationship with God whereby it images God. In this case Calvin wanted to assess the deformity of the image of God in humanity without asserting that it was totally destroyed. Even in such statements as he did make, 'destroyed' is immediately qualified; it means that the traces of the image are infected by sin.

The question we must ask ourselves is, why was Calvin so careful in making such a qualification? It would be possible to suggest that Calvin, by an explanation of what was marred in the image of God, would also suggest possible perspectives on what was restored in Christ. It seems that when Calvin spoke of the corruption of the image by sin it was not to be taken in any absolute sense, that humanity is no more able than stones to respond to God, but the image of God in humankind is corrupted relative to a proper response to God. Calvin then did not come to understand the corruption of the image of God from a presuppositional point, but rather from an inductive approach.

Calvin tried to come to terms with what 'being off the mark' really meant. For Calvin, the original state was one in which we acknowledged and responded to God within his provision for a relationship with us; and the fallen state was the failure to respond to God due to pride, the cause of sin, which led humanity to claim something for itself. Not content to be defined in relation to God, humanity wanted to be like God and to develop its own response. In trying to seek this capacity for ourselves alone, we lost the capacity to respond to God correctly. Calvin adopted the metaphor of insanity to help describe this state, In other words, those without the

relationship because of sin were like the insane because though they appear human, they have not fulfilled the potential to be truly human in responding to God. They possess the capacity but are unable to use it. The image of God, is present in unbelievers because they still possess the faculties that enable them to know God, but they cannot use them. They cannot respond to God correctly.⁵⁵

The Description of the Relationship.

With the very fact and possibility of the relationship between humanity and God firmly established by Calvin in his descriptions of God and humanity, it seems best to continue the discussion with Calvin's understanding of the hallmarks of that proper relationship. These were communication and balance or order. These two hallmarks, which are always part of Calvin's discussion of the relationship between humanity and God, occur with regularity in his exposition on the incarnation of Christ and in his use of the offices in his Christology. It would seem profitable therefore, to describe and evaluate these two aspects.

What I have so far alluded to in the discussion has been the character of God as forming the relationship as well as the character of humanity as responding in the relationship. Calvin's descriptions indicated that the relationship of humanity to God was a rise in quality of relationship rather than a completely different relationship. In other words, Calvin saw the relationship move from a certain randomness and disorder, from a problem of communication, to a

patterning and balance, a clarity and felicity of expression. Because Calvin wished to retain the harmonization of the mediation of Creator and Redeemer, he would describe the improvement in relations as an improvement rather than something different. The reason for this was partly his own theological viewpoint which contained the twofold structure of the unity of divine activity in all things, and the specific acts of redemption in history.

As we saw, Calvin also assessed the relationship in two aspects: on the part of God, the establishment of a norm, on the part of humanity, the continuous correct response to the norm. The emphasis, therefore, is on the evaluation of the activity of each in the relationship with the other. This is not to be understood merely in terms of social interaction; rather, the very purpose of humankind's creation, the reason for his being was to respond to God. Since this was the goal of the creation of humankind, Calvin would argue that this then tells us that God himself by reason of his being is relational in character. If he were not, then humanity would be far different and the world a far different place than it is: chaos would overwhelm it, the wicked would triumph. The very fact that this does not happen shows the ordered providential hand of God governing all that we see and experience. Relationality, therefore, must contain this hallmark.

The second hallmark is that of the activity of communication, and it must be goal centred. That is, communication between God and humankind must be evaluated in terms of an understandable or

accommodated knowledge of God. This was to serve two purposes: to leave those who refuse to acknowledge the lordship of God over them without excuse and to give the believer the confidence in knowing that God was indeed accessible to them. God was capable of reaching humankind in his fallen condition. Relationality must contain trustworthy information.

In discussing relationality, Calvin was usually concerned with more basic or individual relations.⁵⁴ Relationality is not based upon an examination of static entities but upon a dynamic activity on the part of God and of humankind. This is a reciprocity; a discourse of some kind exists between them. The value of an individual human being depends on his response to the activity of God on his behalf. A failure to respond is a failure to achieve the purpose of humankind: to be the image of God. In Calvin's Christology then, Christ's activity has as its goal the specific needs of humankind which enables it to respond correctly to God. This activity on the part of God has a trinitarian character: the love of the Father sustains humankind in creation and redemption, Christ redeems humankind which enables humanity, the Holy Spirit is the guarantee for the sustenance of the relationship, as the diversity of humankind is brought into a unity of relation with the triune God.

Communication.

God actually shows himself to humanity or God possesses a particular way of being for humankind. Calvin, confident that the very

nature of God assured the reliability of his accommodation, then assessed the performance of humanity upon their response: any knowledge of God which did not conform to his revelation of himself was unprofitable. Any knowledge which did conform to God's accommodation was profitable. The boundary then of response was dependent upon God's reliable activity. This encompassed all knowledge of the the created order, because of the sustenance of that order by God himself.⁵⁷

Calvin would then see communication within particularly prescribed limits. An unprofitable response would be questions asked by humanity in its pride about its relations toward the rest of creation and toward God which had not been revealed.⁵⁸ This functioning was outside the way in which God is actually oriented toward us. Calvin's emphasis is upon the result of such inquiries. The inquirer ended in what he would call a 'labyrinth' or 'abyss'. These were favourite words used by Calvin to indicate the anxiety of the individual with the incorrect response toward God as revealed in his questioning.⁵⁹ Conversely, profitable knowledge had a higher value because it told the believer the nature of God in his relationship with him. Calvin made the point that unprofitable and profitable knowledge would become self-evident as long as the individual responds to God. Profitable knowledge increases the degree of intimacy between God and the believer, enabling the individual to respond ever more correctly to God in relationship; it is effective knowledge. Christ is the scale of this intimacy as he is the mediation of this knowledge. Greater understanding of Christ's revelation and a greater response to

Christ in relationship measured the closeness of an individual's knowledge of God. Unprofitable knowledge lessens the chance of intimacy and evinces incorrect responses.⁴⁰ The relationship as well as the communication has 'gone cold', again a favourite metaphor used by Calvin to describe this particular state.⁴¹ So, in summary, Calvin believed that God had acted in a particular way toward humankind which took humankind's limitations into consideration. And this activity of God constituted his and humankind's truth.

What underlay Calvin's conception of accommodation? The concept seems to incorporate an understanding of ontological and physical boundaries between God and humankind.⁴² This boundary or gulf between God and humankind was an ontological one because the nature of God's power enabled him to far outreach humanity's being. More importantly, the boundary was one of knowledge because humanity's thinking is limited and also affected by the disorder of the fall. Calvin was confident, however, that God as the sustainer of the relationship was able to accommodate himself to our capacity or to shape his way of being to reach us within our boundaries. The problem for Calvin again was the failure of some of humanity to respond correctly even to this. The only explanation he was able to arrive at for this continued lack of response was the division between the elect and the non-elect. That is, God had chosen some to understand and so respond correctly while others are left to respond incorrectly to the information they have been given.⁴³ Because the limits were well defined by Calvin it was possible yet again to see God's sustaining hand as the only way this boundary could be breached. In all of the ways God communicates within

humankind's limits, humanity must continue to respond correctly to God.

The question we must ask is what possible result did Calvin foresee if the boundary between humanity and God was less well defined? For Calvin, if the boundary was less well defined the creator/creature distinction became blurred and humankind could no longer find rest in the creator's certainty because he was no longer clearly defined in relation to humankind.⁴⁴ In other words, the certainty of God's communication would be called into question because the responsibility for its reliability was not merely left to God; God would not have been true to himself. With this foundational principle called into doubt, the advance of the relationship will suffer the same fate. Because of sin humanity itself can do nothing to aid God in this; if God is not true to himself then there is no hope for humankind. This disorder will ultimately make sure that a gulf between God and humanity will continue to exist and the conceptual boundary will lead to conceptual uncertainty. Mixture, then, for Calvin was tantamount to a descent into chaos, the ultimate in adulteration and corruption.⁴⁵ This insistence on boundaries between humanity and God did not leave Calvin with a lofty God who is untouched by human weakness and changeableness. Calvin presented a view of God, who as a loving Father committed himself to a relationship with humanity and in light of that commitment accommodated his communication with people in order to inform, delight, and move them to respond to him, in other words, 'to do his will', which represented for Calvin the glory of God and the highest state of intimacy with him.

A distinctive element in this communication by God to humankind is God's vulnerability, or his 'captivity' to the limitations of humanity.⁴⁶ Calvin declared that rather than choose to deal with the human race despotically, God chose to deal with humankind in a generous and paternal way. What were the implications of such a statement? First, it allows for the possibility that all humanity can respond to God in some sort of correct way through God's gift. That is, if God chooses to be related to us, the way he particularizes himself to us is the best way possible to initiate and increase the fruitfulness of the relationship. Second, and conversely, any human who still resists, or responds to God in a negative fashion, must be resisted by those who possess the higher degree of intimacy; they must not follow the incorrect example.⁴⁷ The individual who resists does not merely contend with human or social structures, but against God himself.⁴⁸ We can certainly explain the certainty and vehemence with which Calvin worked against his opponents. To resist the way God shapes himself to humanity was in reality to reject the love of God himself. Third, such an emphasis upon divine captivity to the needs of humanity gained realism with historical reflection upon men's interaction with God in the past; in other words, by examining God's response to humanity's needs in the past, such as in the text of Scripture, Calvin encouraged his audience to make a similar response in the present and move back and forth from their understanding of the present to the earlier context. Calvin compelled his audience to identify with the biblical figures because of the similarities of human limitation.⁴⁹ In other words, relation to Christ's revelation as

the scale of knowledge who gradually raises humankind up by degrees has not altered since creation.

Balance and Order.

Balance, order and regulation are also measures of the integrity of the relationship between God and humanity; this appeared in Calvin's analysis of the human/God relationship. We would expect this emphasis in Calvin to help him interpret any existing patterns of world order not as random events having arisen out of trial and error but the product of an intelligence which guided and directed it, in other words, making the order and cycles of the world as actually something more personal, accessible and direct. This requires some explanation.

Calvin's emphasis on balance, order and regulation in the relationship between humanity and God was based upon the assumption that this relationship was under constant threat. The move toward balance and order was therefore a move ~~away~~ from disharmony, disorder and chaos.⁷⁰ I believe that this point of view arose from what could be called his persistent preoccupation with a sense of the imminent collapse of everything familiar and reliable in his world. We can take two examples. Calvin's treatment of sin frequently used a vocabulary not of good and evil, but of order and disorder. Order and disorder were treated by Calvin as the hallmarks of good and evil. Salvation often presented itself to him as a blessedness or as a recovery of a personal righteousness and as a restoration of order. Calvin wrote in

his *Commentary on Jeremiah* 5.25, 'We throw heaven and earth into confusion by our sins.'⁷¹ Restoration by Christ was seen as the restoration of a 'well tempered order.'⁷² What seems to disturb Calvin most about the human condition after the fall is the anarchic use of humankind's image of God. That is, the unreliability of the cosmos as a whole was expressed in the microcosm of humanity with its own tendency toward chaos.⁷³

Secondly, this description of anarchy was also used more specifically for human behaviour as a whole. Human behaviour which was balanced, ordered, and regulated was kept within bounds and so its destructiveness towards the world and towards others was reduced. The freedom of human beings in their emotions was evidence for the existence of a fallen 'seat of reasoning'. Calvin was to go to great length to explain why Christ was able to be very emotional at times yet unaffected by sin.⁷⁴ The measure was again in its correct use. Emotions must be kept within proper bounds. Calvin distrusted unrestrained zeal as evidence of the move toward chaos; 'anyone who goes too far will experience at last the unhappy outcome of transgressing his limits.'⁷⁵

The conceptualization of balance, order and regulation would certainly affect the way Calvin viewed the covenant structure of the Old Testament. The covenant itself was not an abstract ordered institution but a personal contract between God and his people. Principles of the covenant would have arisen from the relationship. God would impose codicils within the covenant which allow for an

ordered society which could then worship God more efficiently, in other words know him better. The tendency of Old Testament Israel to turn from God and follow others was used by Calvin to reinforce the instability of the covenant relationship as used by human beings in their attempts to overstep the boundaries set by God for that relationship to take place, to highlight the need for God's direct intervention so that this covenant community be sustained.⁷⁴ The relationship was under constant threat even without reference to a personal evil. This is not to say that the reality of a personal evil did not play an important role for Calvin, yet in this particular context it did serve to heighten an already existing tension.

This emphasis upon balance, order, and regulation would also have affected Calvin's idea of providence. Calvin would have insisted upon the idea that providence governed the experience of all humanity, namely, that the recognized events of providence could only be seen in light of the ordering of a personal God.⁷⁷ Events were not self-explanatory but required interpretation. This can be seen within the general framework of providence itself and in Calvin's explanation of the confusion of providence with history. The appeal to balance, order and regulation by Calvin was an assumption made from the reality of the threat of anarchy within the created order and within humanity itself. The very presence of the threat increased the value of the relationship and stressed the need for constant attendance to it and to the symptoms of its disruption. Balance, order, and regulation by their nature were antithetical to chaos and disorder. This indicated to Calvin the significance of these characteristics as an indication

of a healthy intimacy with God. The external order highlighted the inner relational stability. If balance, order and regulation were not present it was very likely that a higher degree of intimacy did not exist.⁷⁶

The Fullness of Christ

Recalling our earlier discussion of the trinitarian structure of the love of God, Calvin therefore believed that Christ is inseparable from this love of God; God's free love is *in Jesus Christ* and comes to humanity through Jesus Christ.

But it accords beautifully with Christ clothed in the flesh that He is loved by the Father. Nay, we know that it is by this pre-eminent title that He is distinguished from both angels and men: "This is my beloved Son" (Matt. 3.17). And we know that Christ was chosen that the whole love of God might dwell in Him, so as to flow from Him to us as a full fountain.

He is the beloved Son in whom the Father is well pleased (Matt. 3.17). If therefore, we cleave to God by Him, we are assured of God's inflexible and unwearied kindness towards us. Paul now speaks here more plainly than above, placing the fountain of love in the Father, and affirming that it flows to us from Christ.⁷⁷

By means of the biblical notion of adoption, Calvin connected humanity with the love of God and the person of Christ. In the *Institutes* he discussed at length how the God-human was the source of adoption. Again and again Calvin expressed the basic premise that God became a human being, thereby making it possible to participate in what Christ has by nature through the efficacy of the Holy Spirit. He, the Son of God, became a Son of humanity so that we, as children of

humanity and heirs of Gehenna, might become sons and daughters of God.⁸⁰

It is also interesting to note in light of what has already been said of the unction of the Spirit in Christ, that he also presented his doctrine of spiritual union by adoption in his commentary on Matthew 3.17, where the Father speaks from heaven at Christ's baptism, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased',

Further, Christ was presented to us by the Father with this proclamation, in His coming forth to fulfil his task of Mediator, that we might rely on this pledge of our adoption and without fear call God Himself our Father. The title of Son truly and by nature belongs to Christ alone, yet He was revealed as Son of God in our flesh, that He who alone claimed Him as Father by right, could win Him for us also. So God, in introducing our Mediator with words that praise Him as the Son, declares Himself to be a Father to us all. This is exactly the aim of the word *beloved*, for as in ourselves we are hateful to God, His fatherly love must flow to us in Christ.⁸¹

This quotation contains another of Calvin's favourite expressions to describe how Christ is intimately bound up with God's love for His people. Jesus is 'a pledge of God's boundless love towards us',⁸² and 'the pledge of God's fatherly mercy in redeeming us.'⁸³

Jesus Christ is so closely joined to the free love of God for humanity by virtue of his intrinsic relation to the Father, that he too is said to love them. Thus at times Calvin expressed the love of God as the love of Christ,⁸⁴ still relying on his trinitarian understanding of the love of God himself.

Besides placing great importance on the appearance of Christ as the expression of the love of God and as the most significant historical event, Calvin spoke of Christ as the theological focus of the relationship between God and humanity precisely because he is God-human and because this is how God is known.⁶⁵ On one side of the relationship, Christ as God in the flesh is able to explain all that is necessary to know concerning how God behaves towards us in this relationship,⁶⁶ as he speaks with that authority and power which assures us that the relationship between God and humanity is at its closest and is therefore of the highest value. On the other side of the relationship, Christ as God in the flesh exhibits to us precisely those aspects of character and action which we ourselves must display if a proper response is to be successful.⁶⁷ We know God, but because of Christ we know God in a human way.

Conscious of God's captivity to our limitations, Calvin focussed on Christ as the summary of God's accommodation. He was God manifested in the flesh.⁶⁸ This type of concreteness, that is, because Christ himself was human and received the gifts of God in his humanity, he enhanced or became the paradigm for our understanding of what was 'proper' to us in relation to God, and because God is the ultimate author it can also show us what is proper to God: what God is for us. Both parts are equally important for Calvin and require a fuller explanation.

In speaking of the Christ who is God, Calvin stressed a variation on the theme of St. Anselm: Christ's value was linked directly to his

status as God in himself.⁸⁹ But this evaluation by God was not done because of some static relation in the God-man but because God empowered Christ in such a way as to make his incarnation possible. Without this power of God enabling the incarnation the incarnation itself could not take place.⁹⁰ Because of this power of God in Christ Calvin was able to speak of some sort of atoning exchange which God through Christ was able to make possible for us.⁹¹ This exchange by God in Christ's obedience and sacrifice on behalf of humankind permitted the restoration of a relationship with us and could take on many aspects: his light for our darkness, his knowledge for our ignorance, his strength for our weakness, his capacity for our incapacity. The list can reflect every aspect of fallenness which Calvin felt required God's power to restore. In short, Christ is empowered to respond to our specific needs in his incarnation and atonement.

Coupled with this idea of God's power as an ingredient in the way God deals with us in Christ, as he is committed to relationship with us, is actually its opposite: the very lowliness of Christ raises us up in knowledge.⁹² Without a human Christ, God could not be known by human beings. This type of knowledge was necessary because of the fall of humankind and the distortion of humanity's power to know and have a relationship with God.⁹³

The question we must ask is whether Calvin then thought that humanity's power to know and therefore have a relationship with God before the fall was anything other than one of a human kind. Calvin

would have insisted that even then humanity could have known and related to God but still only as human being, or as created being. It could not, along with the angels, know God as God knows himself.⁹⁴ That is, that unique and distinctive relationship God has in himself as one and three. In this way a mediator of information or revelation was still necessary. According to Calvin, the fall of humanity made necessary an atoning restoration for humankind to regain the power to relate to God which it at one time possessed.

The lowliness of Christ showed how much such a lowly position was necessary. The lowliness of Christ was in contrast to the very exalted position God did indeed possess.⁹⁵ God in the 'raw,' or without the benefit of a mediator, would cause human beings to die or flee in terror.⁹⁶ Calvin seems to have marvelled at the attempts at description of God's majesty in the Old Testament. He took great pains to explain the psychological state of those who were spectators at such powerful revelational events.⁹⁷ What Calvin saw in these descriptions was what I believe to be his seeking for some sort of confirmation for his descriptions of the lowliness of Christ: God in flesh. The miracle of Christ in the incarnation was that God became 'ordinary' for us. His person, thinking and language were ours, sin of course excepted; and still he remained God. This was what Calvin meant by 'Christ in our place', as though it was the closest God could come to us and yet retain his own distinctiveness.⁹⁸ His very existence on the earth at a particular point in time was because of us, rather than for himself. To stress the reality of this personal God Calvin stressed God in the flesh, because this identification with humanity

was the closest and bore the clearest revelation to us. This attempt at more concreteness served to enhance most of the descriptions of Christ's role in the God-human relationship: what God is for us."⁹⁹

Continuing with the human side of the relationship, namely, God in the flesh and humanity's response to God, what are some other characteristics of Calvin's description? As we have said, Christ as God in the flesh became for Calvin the author and the obedient servant of the atoning exchange between God and humankind. This led Calvin to expand his description of the nature of the specific needs of humanity. For every positive comment he made about the performance of Christ and aspects of his very human character, Calvin contrasted humankind and his failure to correspond to this pattern. In other words, the contrast is between the propriety of the God-human relationship in Christ and its absence in humankind. Connections from humanity to Christ were usually seen as an individual's correct knowledge of him which led to a correct, ordered and balanced working relationship; Christ as the scale of revelation again meant that a higher degree of knowledge measured intimacy, a resemblance to the propriety of Christ, a lower degree of intimacy is seen as a corruption or denial of Christ himself.

To what extent was this Calvin's reiteration of the medieval notion of *imitatio Christi*?¹⁰⁰ I believe that the *imitatio* illustrated Calvin's way of expressing the constant process of exchange of power between the human character and Christ, exhibited outwardly through a likeness or *imitatio* to Christ.¹⁰¹ Calvin did not

really seem to criticize the value of the *imitatio* piety of the Middle Ages, rather, the criticism was of the failure to understand the ultimate enablement of the *imitatio* in the power of Christ responding to our needs. For Calvin, that direct contact was essential. This was what Calvin termed Christ's power to save. Without this empowering the reason for the very existence and work of Christ, namely, a commitment to a relationship of God to humanity, no longer exists. Christ, in this case, remained merely 'titular.'¹⁰² A purposeless Christ becomes more and more distant as his response to our specific needs is mediated through other agents.¹⁰³

Calvin was concerned to preserve our direct access to Christ and so to God. This type of directness was possible because of Christ's self-emptying, or accommodation to humankind. This meant that the nature of the relationship of humanity to Christ was particularly clear as the properties of divinity and humanity harmonized so perfectly within Christ himself that he is the unique paradigm of any divine-human relation, so humanity's dependence upon him increases to the point where Christ's value to humankind is without limit.¹⁰⁴ In other words, the directness of humanity to Christ was enabled in Christ's incarnation: Christ by becoming a human being was capable of real personal relationships with believers, because he was truly human. Christ's relationships can be true relationships by the power of the Holy Spirit, because the Spirit enables true relations beyond the limitations of creation by making Christ present. His criticisms of other christological positions, specifically that of the Roman Church of his time, highlighted this within Calvin's own mind.

The discourse between humanity and God is based upon the excellent activity of Christ on behalf of humankind and as God manifested in the flesh. Without this activity, without the direct power of God, the clarity of communication and order between humanity and God begins to erode. As we have seen, this was to Calvin tantamount to a descent into the abyss and an ultimately dehumanizing process. To be fully human was to ascend toward God, to respond to the gifts performed on our behalf. Therefore, Calvin's description of the bond between Christ and humankind has its ultimate source in the very actions and being of Christ himself.¹⁰⁵ This stress upon its correctness, within its proper bounds of divine and human, gave Calvin's Christology a compelling personal force.¹⁰⁶ It is the making specific of this response of Christ to the needs of humankind which shaped Calvin's descriptions of the concrete and personal Christ in his activity, that is his person and his office. It is the endowment within Christ's activity that must take the form it does because God's character must remain true to itself, which parallels the reflection of the image of God within Christ as God and Christ as human being. Most analysis on the image of God in Christ has centred for the most part on how Calvin saw it as a reflection of the divine in Christ, but there is more. What of the image of God in Christ as a reflection of the image in humanity? In the image of God in Christ Calvin equally affirmed the divine and the human in the way the image functions. The humanity is affirmed in the deliberate parallelism of Christ who is capable of performing his offices as a human being, because God endowed him with certain gifts of the Spirit which he received in the incarnation.¹⁰⁷

We have discussed certain elements in this Chapter: the possibility of the relationship with God; its assessment in terms of a higher degree of intimacy; the power of God versus the lack of power in humankind; the emphasis on the communication of correct knowledge as the measure of intimacy; its balance, order and regulation in the establishment of proper boundaries which preserve clarity and, therefore, certainty should recur in Calvin's more specific descriptions of the God to human relationship as seen in Christ. Calvin emphasized the intrinsic relationship between God and humanity and between other human beings. He therefore saw Christ embodying this intrinsic relation, because he constitutes the relation between human and God. This is in marked contrast to the common ideal of human independence today. In his unique middle position and as the embodiment of the proper relationship between humanity and God and so its measure, Christ becomes an official person, as we shall see in Chapters Three and Four where we will argue that Calvin organized Christ's personhood for humanity in the *munus triplex*.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER TWO

¹ See for example: Henry Cole's *Calvin's Calvinism*, Paul Helm's *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982); Wilhelm Niesel's *The Theology of Calvin*, H. Knight (trans.) (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956); R. B. Wallace's *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959); B. C. Milner's *Calvin's Doctrine of the Church. Studies in the History of Christian Thought*, Vol. 5, (Leiden: EJ Brill, 1970).

² See R. B. Knox's 'John Calvin - An Elusive Churchman.' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 34 (1981).

³ See A. N. S. Lane's 'The Quest for the Historical Calvin.' *Evangelical Quarterly* 55 (1983) and W. J. Bouwsma's 'The Quest for the Historical Calvin.' *Achiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 77 (1986).

⁴ E. D. Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology: The function of the so-called extra calvinisticum in Calvin's Theology. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought*, Vol. 2, (Leiden: EJ Brill, 1966), p. 86, 'It will become apparent that the significance of the doctrine in any theological system was not its presence but its function.'

⁵ 'Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.' *Institutes* 1.1.1.

⁶ See for example, The Preface to *Institutes*: 'My purpose was solely to transmit certain rudiments by which those who are touched with any zeal for religion might be shaped to true godliness.' Wilhelm Neuser suggests that this conception of 'teachableness' or 'shaping to true godliness' was Calvin's way of speaking of the life after conversion. 'Calvin's Conversion to teachableness,' *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Tydskrif* 26 (1985), pp. 14-17.

⁷ Paul Van Buren, *Christ in Our Place: The Substitutionary Character of Calvin's Doctrine of Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), pp. 8f.

⁸ Commentaries on Hebrews 2.9 and Matthew 3.2.

⁹ Commentary on 1 John 4.9.

¹⁰ *Institutes* 4.1.12. See also Joachim Staedtke, *Johannes Calvin: Erkenntnis und Gestaltung, Persönlichkeit und Geschichte* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt-Verlag, 1969), p. 85.

¹¹ Erwin. Mülhaupt, *Die Predigt Calvins, ihre Form und ihre religiösen Grundgedanken* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1931), p. 151.

¹² Commentary on Ephesians 3.18. The extended discussion of God's love in Calvin is in E. A. Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), pp. 205-9.

¹³ Walter Kasper, *Jesus The Christ* (London: Burns & Oates, 1976), p. 250.

¹⁴ *Commentary on Titus* 3.4.

¹⁵ Cf. Paul Van Buren, *loc. cit.* See also *Institutes* 2.17.2, 'These words clearly demonstrate this fact: that nothing might stand in the way of his love towards us, God appointed Christ as the means of reconciling us to himself.' *Commentary on Romans* 3.25, 'Paul is referring to the free mercy of God in having appointed Christ as our Mediator to reconcile the Father to us by the sacrifice of His death. It is no ordinary commendation of the grace of God that of His own accord He sought out a way by which to remove our curse.'

¹⁶ Quoting Augustine in *Institutes* 2.16.4, 'Rather he loved us before the world was created, that we also might be his sons along with his only-begotten Son - before we became anything at all.'

¹⁷ '...unless we are also persuaded that he is the fountain of every good, and that we must seek nothing elsewhere than in him.' *Institutes* 1.2.1.

¹⁸ *Institutes* 1.2.1.

¹⁹ 'Thereupon his powers are mentioned by which he is shown to us not as he is in himself, but as he is toward us.' *Institutes* 1.10.2. See also *Commentary on Hebrews* 11.3, 'Moreover they understand the power of His Word not only as shown at the moment of creating the world but as continually displayed in its preservation ...which encourages them to the worship, love and reverence of God.' Cf. *Institutes* 1.2.2.

²⁰ 'Calvin saw every natural event as a miracle and the integrity of the universe and the survival of mankind as both dependent on the constant and direct support of God.' William J. Bouwsma, 'John Calvin's Anxiety,' *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 128 (1984), p. 254.

²¹ Bouwsma, *loc. cit.*, 'The work of Christ is, in these terms, the restoration of 'well-tempered order.' What sometimes appears to disturb Calvin most about the human condition after the fall is an innate tendency to anarchy that constantly threatened to dissolve cosmos into chaos.'

²² 'The sun and the moon, when they rise up, might overwhelm the whole earth. While a body, indeed almost immeasurable, hangs over our heads and rolls on so swiftly who ought not be afraid?' *Commentary on Jeremiah* 31.35-36.

²³ 'The humanists transformed the *homo sapiens* of the philosophers into the *homo socialis*.' Bouwsma, 'Calvin and the Renaissance Crisis of Knowing,' *Calvin Theological Journal* 17 (1982), p. 195.

²⁴ *Latin Catechism of 1545*: 'M-What is the chief end of human life? S-To know God by whom men were created. M-What reason have you for saying so? S-Because he created us and placed us in this world to be glorified in us. And it is indeed right that our life, of which himself is the beginning, should be devoted to his glory.' See also *Commentary on Jeremiah 9.24*, 'Yet to know God is man's chief end and justifies his existence. Even if a hundred lives were ours, this one aim would be sufficient for them all.'

²⁵ 'And indeed, we are not allowed thus to pretend ignorance without our conscience itself always convicting us of both our baseness and ingratitude.' *Institutes* 1.5.15.

²⁶ 'The appearance of heaven and earth compels even ungodly men to recognize some Creator... Certainly religion would not always have flourished among all peoples if the minds of men had not been persuaded that God is the Creator of the world.' *Commentary on Hebrews 11.3*. Cf. *Commentary on Genesis 1.31*. The argument is similar to Cicero's in *De Natura Deorum*.

²⁷ 'He deems himself violated in their person. Thus, although they have nothing of their own by which they obtain the favour of God, he looks upon his own gifts in them, and is thereby excited to love and care for them.' *Commentary on Genesis 9.6*.

²⁸ 'Whence it follows, that they childishly err who regard original sin as consisting only in lust, and in the inordinate motion of the appetites, whereas it seizes upon the very seat of reason, and upon the whole heart.' *Commentary on Genesis 3.6*. '...and this also must suggest the fragility of human claims to anything but the most contingent knowledge of whatever exists.' Bouwsma, *op. cit.* p. 202.

²⁹ For example, 'Thereupon his powers are mentioned... kindness, goodness, mercy, justice, judgment and truth.' *Institutes* 1.10.2.

³⁰ '...the folly of these philosophers, who out of mediate and proximate causes weave themselves veils, lest they should be compelled to acknowledge the hand of God, which manifestly displays itself in his works.' *Commentary on Psalm 29.5*. I would suggest that Calvin has here in mind all the works of God, including redemption.

³¹ *Institutes* 2.12.1. The passage continues, 'The situation would surely have been hopeless had the very majesty of God not descended to us, since it was not in our power to ascend to him. Hence, it was necessary for the Son of God to become for us 'Immanuel, that is, God with us' [Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23], and in such a way that his divinity and our human nature might by mutual connection grow together. Otherwise the nearness would not have been near enough, nor the affinity sufficiently firm, for us to hope that God might dwell with us.' See also *Commentary on John 8.17*.

³² *Commentary on John 3.32; 4.34*.

³³ '...because the heavenly Father does not wish the human race that He loves to perish. And this sequence should be carefully noticed. ...Accordingly, we imagine that God is favourable to us because He has reckoned us worthy of His eternal regard. But Scripture everywhere extols His pure and simple mercy which abolishes all merits.' *Commentary on John 3.16.*

³⁴ *Institutes 2.16.2; Commentaries on 1 John 4.10; John 17.23; Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5.19.*

³⁵ *Commentary on Romans 5.10.*

³⁶ *ibid..*

³⁷ *Commentary on John 17.23.*

³⁸ *Institutes 2.16.2. Cf. 2.16.4.*

³⁹ 'Our return to Grace... is unknown to us *until* we attain it by faith.' 'God revealed His love for us *when* He was reconciled to us by Christ's blood [*Italics mine*].' *Commentary on Romans 5.10 and Institutes 2.17.2.*

⁴⁰ 'And indeed Paul tells us that we are loved in a double sense in Christ. First, because the Father chose us in Him before the creation of the world (Eph. 1:4). Secondly, because in Him also God has reconciled us to Himself and shown that He is gracious to us (Rom. 5:10). See how we are both enemies and friends until atonement has been made for our sins and we are restored to favour with God!' *Commentary on John 17.23.*

⁴¹ The story of Job presented some problems with regard to Calvin's understanding of sin and suffering. Normally, for Calvin, suffering is due to sin; it should lead us to examine our faults. Job was the exception. Calvin acknowledged that the reasons for afflictions varied, but he insisted that the relationship between sin and suffering is often not discernible in this life. See *Calvini Opera* 34.617; 35.9, 145, 174.

⁴² 'Nevertheless, he not only pricks his believers with slight severity, but sometimes so wounds them that they seem to themselves to be not far distant from the damnation of Hell. Thus, he testifies that they deserve his wrath, and so it is fitting for them to be displeased with their own evil acts, and be touched with greater care to appease God, and anxiously hasten to seek pardon.' *Institutes 3.4.32. Cf. Commentaries on Isaiah 12.1; Habakkuk 3.2; Micah 7.9; Psalm 89.30-33.*

⁴³ Cf. *Institutes 3.4.33.*

⁴⁴ Heinrich Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine of The Last Things*. Harold Knight (trans.) (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955), p. 153, 'The last judgment is identical with the future disclosure of the wrath of God. Calvin understands the wrath of God chiefly in an eschatological

sense.' See also *Commentaries* on 1 Thessalonians 2.16, 5.4; 2 Thessalonians 2.11.

⁴⁵ *Supra. Institutes* 3.4.32.

⁴⁶ Susan Schreiner, '"Through a Mirror Dimly": Calvin's Sermon's on Job.' *Calvin Theological Journal* 21 (1986), p. 193, 'Standing within a history they did not understand, they could not only confess a justice they did not see, and contemplate, as through a mirror dimly, a providence they would one day see face to face.'

⁴⁷ See *Institutes* 1.15.3. '*...os homini sublime datum est, caelumque videre iussus, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus.*' *Metamorphoses* 1.84. Cf., Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, 2.56, 140.

⁴⁸ *Institutes* 1.14.22.

⁴⁹ *Institutes* 1.15.3.

⁵⁰ Brian Gerrish, 'The Mirror of God's Goodness: A Key Metaphor in Calvin's View of Man.' In *Readings in Calvin's Theology*. Donald McKim (ed.) (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 114.

⁵¹ 'We are no different from brutish beasts if we do not understand that the world was made by God.' *Commentary on Hebrews* 11.3.

⁵² 'Man is the apex of creation in the sense that the entire creation has its *raison d'etre* in the praise that man alone, of all God's earthly creatures, can return to him.' *ibid*

⁵³ The corollary is the activity of the knowledge of God in the relationship. See *Institutes* 1.2.1, 'I speak only of the primal knowledge to which the very order of nature would have led us if Adam had remained upright.'

⁵⁴ Richard Prins argues that the restoration of the image of God in Christ completely replaces the original Adamic descriptions in Calvin's theology. See 'The Image of God in Adam and the Restoration of Man in Jesus Christ.' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 25 (1972), pp. 32-44.

⁵⁵ See for example, Calvin's description of the fall in Genesis Three.

⁵⁶ Calvin would even suggest that a social value can be attached to a relationship between persons and inanimate objects or an animal. The social value is not immediately apparent, however, until the individual uses his interaction with other objects in social discourse with others. See Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'The Wounds of God: Calvin's Theology of Social Injustice', *Reformed Journal* 37 (1987), p. 18. 'Away then, with that inhuman philosophy which, while conceding only a necessary use of creatures, not only malignantly deprives us of the lawful fruit of God's beneficence but cannot be practiced unless it

rob a man of all of his sense and degrades him to a block.' *Institutes* 3.10.3.

⁵⁷ 'But although this principle has prevailed in the church from the beginning and ought to prevail today, that the servants of God should teach nothing which they have not learned from him, still, according to the diversity of times they have had divers ways of learning.' *Institutes* 4.8.5. Cf. *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 1.20, 'Futhermore, this must also be said, in all truth, that these fine gifts of God: quickness of mind, shrewd judgment, liberal sciences, knowledge of languages, all are in some way spoiled, whenever they fall into the hands of ungodly men.'

⁵⁸ 'In other words, to investigate the secret mysteries of the Kingdom of God, or force his way through to knowledge of them for they are hidden from human perception.' *ibid.*

⁵⁹ A good example is 1 Peter 1.14: 'In short, as the kingdom of God is a kingdom of light, all who are alienated from Him must necessarily be blind and wander in a labyrinth.' Cf. *Institutes* 1.6.3; 1.13.21; 3.6.2; 3.8.1; 3.19.7; 3.21.1; 3.25.11; 4.7.22. For 'abyss' see the example in *CO* 34.108 or *Commentary on Micah* 2.6.

⁶⁰ 'And here again we ought to observe that we are called to a knowledge of God: not a knowledge which, content with empty speculation, merely flits in the brain, but that which will be sound and fruitful if we duly perceive it, and if it takes root in the heart.' *Institutes* 1.5.9.

⁶¹ 'Sophists who are content to roll the gospel on the tips of their tongues when its efficacy ought to penetrate the inmost affections of the heart, take its seat in the soul, and affect the whole man a hundred times more deeply than the cold exhortations of the philosophers!' *Institutes* 3.6.4.

⁶² 'Here we begin to see that, for Calvin, accommodation has to do not only with Scriptures and their interpretation, but with the whole of created reality...' F.L. Battles, 'God was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity.' *Interpretation* 31 (1977), p. 21. 'God it is true, fills both heaven and earth; but as we cannot attain to that infinite height to which He is exalted, in descending among us by the exercise of His power and grace, He approaches as near to us as is needful, and as our limited capacity will bear.' *Commentary on Psalm* 78.60. 'Inasmuch as we are God's creatures, we ought to serve his honor and glory, and obey his commandments. And we are not allowed to excuse ourselves by claiming that we lack ability... for the guilt that binds us is our own, arising from our own sin, leaving us without the will or the capacity to do good.' *Institution of the Christian Religion* 1536, Ford Lewis Battles (trans. & ed.) (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1975), 1.3.

⁶³ 'Now among the elect we regard the call as a testimony of election. Then we hold justification another sign of its manifestation, until they come into glory in which the fulfilment, of

that election lies, but as the Lord seals his elect by call and justification, so, by shutting off the reprobate from knowledge of his name or from the sanctification of his Spirit, he, as it were, reveals by these marks what sort of judgment awaits them.' *Institutes* 3.21.7. Cf. *Institutes* 3.24.13.

⁶⁴ 'And let us not be ashamed to submit our understanding of God's boundless wisdom so far as to yield before its many secrets. For, of those things which it is neither given nor lawful to know, ignorance is learned, the craving to know a kind of madness.' *Institutes* 3.23.8 Cf. *Commentary on John* 13.7.

⁶⁵ There are many passages in Calvin's commentaries and lectures on the Old Testament which give support to this interpretation: Hosea 4.8; 5.2; 9.7; Micah 1.15; 3.11-12; Zechariah 13.2; Lamentations 1.9. '...unhappy men wandered so long in gross darkness, as if God were absent, because they had dared to pollute all His worship with their inventions.' *Commentary on John* 6.15.

⁶⁶ 'The distinctive element in this presentation seems not the gracious condescension of God but his malleability, even his vulnerability, indeed even his captivity to the passions and lusts of his rude people.' David Wright, 'Calvin's Pentateuchal Criticism: Equity, Hardness of Heart, and Divine Accommodation in the Mosaic Harmony Commentary.' *Calvin Theological Journal* 21 (1986), p. 46.

⁶⁷ 'So in its most reprehensible contemporary form, the Papacy had mixed human invention with what God had ordained. *Scriptura sola* was thus a principle designed to preclude mixtures.' William Bouwsma, 'Anxiety' *op. cit.* p. 255. '...for as soon as we are infected by the concoctions of men, the temple of God is defiled by filth.' *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 3.17.

⁶⁸ For example, 'The prophet now reproves the Israelites with greater severity, because they attempted to impose a law on God and on his prophets, and would not endure the free course of instruction.' *Commentary on Micah* 2.7.

⁶⁹ 'It is also tempting to discern in Calvin's tireless emphasis on the wilfulness, blindness, and sluggishness of the Israelites that God had to deal with some reflection of his own experience as a pastor in Geneva.' Wright, *op. cit.* p. 47. 'Si on allegue que je ne suis pas le prophete Jeremie, il est vrai. Mais tant y a que je porte une meme parole, laquelle il a annoncee, et je puis protester devant Dieu que je le sers fidelement, selon la mesure qu'il m'a donnee de son Esprit.' CO 41.540.

⁷⁰ 'Unhappy consciences find no rest from being troubled and tossed by a terrible whirlwind, from feeling that they are being pierced and lanced by deadly darts, quaking at God's lightning bolt, and being crushed by the weight of his hand - so that it would be more bearable to go down into any bottomless depths and chasms than to stand for a moment in these terrors.' *Institutes* 3.25.12. It is possible that Calvin is betraying a certain Stoicism. The question of

latent Stoicism in Calvin has been suggested by Ganoczy in *The Young Calvin*. D. Foxgrover and W. Provo (trans.) (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1987).

⁷¹ See also, 'Since the fall of the first man, we see nothing but frightful confusion which troubles even the dumb creatures... that confusion cannot be repaired but by Christ.' *Commentary on Isaiah* 51.16.

⁷² *Commentary on John* 16.11.

⁷³ Calvin concurred with the concept of man as microcosm, 'Certain philosophers, accordingly, long ago not ineptly call man a microcosm because he is a rare example of God's power, goodness, and wisdom, and contains within himself enough miracles to occupy our minds.' *Institutes* 2.1.2.

⁷⁴ See especially *Commentary on Matthew* 26.39, 'He had an integrity of nature which could take the effect of temptations without hurt while we are pierced with their stings.'

⁷⁵ *Commentary on Matthew* 14.28.

⁷⁶ '...the prophet here affirms, that though they sought every escape, they would yet be held bound by God's hand, so that they could not by any means shake off the burden designed for them.' *Commentary on Micah* 2.6.

⁷⁷ 'Has not God constituted this order in heaven, in the air, in the earth, in order that his judgments might be known? Do we not contemplate high and low works of God only in order that his goodness, wisdom, justice and all his virtues might be known? This is indeed certain.' *CO* 34.68.

⁷⁸ Hence the basis for Calvin's argument against Anabaptists and Spiritualists who, in flying over the bounds of Scripture, sought a new revelation of God. This was typical of Calvin's polemic against them.

⁷⁹ Commentaries on John 5.20 and Romans 8.39.

⁸⁰ *Institutes* 2.12.2.

⁸¹ See also his comments on 2 Corinthians 1.10 and John 20.17.

⁸² *Commentary on Romans* 8.32.

⁸³ *Commentary on John* 10.17. See also his comments on 2 Corinthians 1.10 and John 3.16 for outstanding statements of God's love for his people in Christ.

⁸⁴ 'So also God's inestimable mercy upon us shines out, in lowering His only-begotten Son to these depths, for our sake. By this

proof Christ witnessed to His amazing love for us, in refusing no insult at all for our salvation.' *Commentary on Matthew 27.27.*

⁶⁵ 'For the knowledge of God is the door by which we enter into the enjoyment of all blessings. Since, therefore, God reveals Himself to us by Christ alone, it follows that we should seek all things from Christ.' *Commentary on John 1:18.*

⁶⁶ 'In God, indeed, is the fountain of life, righteousness, power and wisdom; but this fountain is hidden and inaccessible to us. Yet in Christ the wealth of all these things is laid before us that we may seek them in him... And when Christ was revealed in the flesh and blessings were poured out as it were, with a full hand even to satisfaction.' *Commentary on John 1:16.*

⁶⁷ 'By this (as I interpret), he meant that each man descends into himself and ponders within himself... whether he aspires to the imitation of Christ with zeal of innocence and holiness; whether after Christ's example, he is prepared to give himself for his brethren and to communicate himself to those with whom he shares Christ in common.' *Institutes 4.17.40.* The whole life is seen in a sacramental context as dedicated to a response to God.

⁶⁸ 'There are two reasons why there can be no faith in God, unless Christ put himself as it were in the middle (*quasi medius interveniat*), for we must first ponder the vastness of the divine glory and at the same time the slenderness of our understanding. Far from certain is it that our keenness could climb so high as to apprehend God. Therefore all thinking about God, apart from Christ, is a bottomless abyss which utterly swallows up all our senses... The other reason is that when faith ought to join us to God, we shy away from and dread all approach, unless the Mediator meets us to free us from fear... Hence it is clear that we cannot trust in God (*Deo credere*) save through Christ. In Christ God so to speak, makes himself little (*quodammodo parvum facit*), in order to lower himself to our capacity (*ut se ad captum nostrum submittat*); and Christ alone calms our consciences that they may dare intimately (*familiariter*) approach God.' (Translation mine) *Commentary on 1 Peter 1:20* Schipper ed., 1667-71, Tom. 7, p.8. It has also been suggested that 'simplicity' or 'ease' was part of Calvin's method. See R. Gamble, 'Exposition and Method in Calvin.' *Westminster Theological Journal* 49 (1987), pp. 153-165.

⁶⁹ That is, in his *aseitas*. 'He who rewards someone either gives what the latter does not have or foregoes what can be required of him. But before the Son did this great work, all that belonged to the father belonged to him, and he never owed anything that could be remitted to him.' St. Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo?* in *The Library of Christian Classics*, Vol. 10. Eugene Fairweather (ed.) (London: SCM Press, 1956), 2.19.

⁷⁰ 'Sit thou at my right hand is taken metaphorically... It comes to mean holding supreme power and authority in God's name, as we know that God has given personal authority to His Son to govern His Church

by His might... but includes Heaven and Earth in the rule of God.' *Commentary on Matthew 22:44.*

¶⁹¹ 'Finally let us seek not the half, or some part, but the totality of the benefits in Christ which are listed here. For Paul does not say that He has been given to us as something to add on to, or to be a buttress to righteousness, holiness, wisdom, and redemption, but he ascribes to Christ alone the complete fulfilment of them all. But since there is scarcely another passage in Scripture which gives a clearer description of all the offices of Christ, it can also give us the best understanding of the force and nature of faith.' *Commentary on 1 Corinthians 1:30.*

¶⁹² 'In fine, the Image of God shone forth in Christ in such a manner that He was nevertheless abased in outward appearance and brought to nothing in the estimation of men; for He bore the form of a servant, and had assumed our nature, expressly that He might be the Servant of the Father, nay, even of men. For Paul calls Him the Minister of the circumcision (Rom. 15.8); and He Himself testifies of Himself, that He came to minister (Matt. 20.28); and the same thing had long before been foretold by Isaiah. 'Behold my servant, etc. (42.1).' *Commentary on Philipians 2:7.*

¶⁹³ 'As soon as we feel God's majesty it must of necessity cast us down. But it is Christ's office to raise up the prostrate; for He descends to us so that believers, led by Him, might boldly appear in the sight of God and His Majesty, which otherwise would consume all flesh, might no longer be terrifying to them.' *Commentary on Matthew 17:6.* See also *Commentary on John 3:13*, 'For He did not ascend into heaven to benefit Himself personally and alone, but to be our Leader and Guide. And He calls Himself the Son of man so that we shall not doubt that we have an entrance in common with Him who clothed Himself with our flesh to make us participants in all blessings. Since, therefore, He is the only interpreter of the Father, He admits us into those secrets which would otherwise have lain hidden.'

¶⁹⁴ 'Thus we understand first that the name of the Mediator applies to Christ not only because he took on flesh or because he took on the office of reconciling the human race with God. But already from the beginning of creation he was truly Mediator because he was always the Head of the Church and held primacy even over the angels and was the first-born of all creatures (Eph. 1.2; Col. 1.15ff; Col. 2.10). Whence we conclude that he began to perform the office of Mediator not only after the fall of Adam but insofar as he is the Eternal Son of God, angels as well as men were joined to God in order that they might remain upright.' *Responsio ad Fratres Polonos*, CO 9.338.

¶⁹⁵ 'For it must needs be that the incomprehensible brightness would bring us to nothing. God, therefore, whilst He withholds us from a complete knowledge of Him, nevertheless manifests Himself as far as is expedient; nay, at tempering the amount of light to our humble capacity, He assumes the face which we are able to bear.' *Commentary on Exodus 33:20.*

⁹⁶ See *Commentary on Matthew 17:6, Supra*.

⁹⁷ Ezekiel is a good example of this phenomenon. 'He confirms what we saw a little earlier, that he was driven by God's Spirit, so that he was in a sense outside himself-yet not what the heathen writers call ἐνθουσιασμός. Their 'prophets' were men ravished and transported; the devil so wrought with them that they became insane. Therefore the prophet does not mean that he was ravished and transported, for God's Prophets were always sober and sound in mind. He meant that he was so guided and governed by the Spirit of God that he was unlike himself and had no earthly thoughts.' *Commentary on Ezekiel 1:14*.

⁹⁸ 'Yet Christ's passion of grief and fear was such that He held Himself in limits. As various musical sounds, different from each other, make no discord but compose a tuneful and sweet harmony, so in Christ there exists a remarkable example of balance between the wills of God and of man; they differ from each other without conflict or contradiction.' *Commentary on Matthew 26:39*.

⁹⁹ 'But we are very ill-disposed if we despise the Lord of glory because He emptied Himself and took the form of a servant for our sake. Rather was this the shining example of His boundless love toward us and of His wonderful grace. Besides, the divine majesty of Christ was not so concealed under the contemptible and lowly appearance of the flesh that it did not send forth beams of His manifold brightness.' *Commentary on John 6:41*.

¹⁰⁰ T.F. Torrance suggests that Calvin had been strongly influenced by the Franciscan tradition of which Thomas a Kempis was a part. Yet the actual use of similar language does not immediately conclude a similarity of thought to the extent that Prof. Torrance would have us believe; however the existence of an influential tradition is possible. See *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1988), pp. 73-79.

¹⁰¹ Writing on the *imitatio*, Calvin wrote, 'Not that these duties both of faith and of love can now be made perfect in us, but that we should endeavour and aspire with all our heart toward this end in order that we may day by day increase our faith once begun.' *Institutes 4.17.40*.

¹⁰² Or, 'a bare name.'

¹⁰³ 'And indeed, faith should not cling only to the essence of Christ, so to say, but should pay heed to His power and office. For it would be of little advantage to know who Christ is unless the second point is added of what He wishes towards us and for what purpose He was sent by the Father. Hence it has come about that the Papists have nothing but an esoteric Christ, for all their care has been to apprehend His naked essence; His Kingdom, which consists in the power to save, they have neglected.' *Commentary on John 1:49*.

¹⁰⁴ 'Why then does He say that He revealed all things? I reply: This is restricted to the person and office of the Mediator. He sets Himself between God and us; for He has received from God's secret sanctuary those things which He was to deliver to us from hand to hand.' *Commentary on John* 15:15. See also *Commentary on Romans* 8:29, '...So Christ is placed in a state of pre-eminence, not only that He should excel in honour among believers, but also that He should include all believers within Himself under the common mark of brotherhood.'

¹⁰⁵ 'But it will, to my mind, be more agreeable to Scripture if we make the simple statement that when the Son of God put on our flesh He also of His own accord put on human feelings, so that He differed in nothing from His brethren, sin only excepted.'

¹⁰⁶ See for example, Jean-Marc Chappuis, 'The Reformation and the Foundation of the Person.' in *Ecumenical Review* 39 (1987), pp. 4-16.

¹⁰⁷ A usual text for the divine aspect on the image of God in Christ is *Commentary on John* 1:18, 'He makes generally that, since God dwells in inaccessible light, He cannot be known except in Christ, His lively image.'

CHAPTER THREE

THE HALLMARK OF CALVIN'S OFFICE CHRISTOLOGY

Introduction.

This Chapter is divided into four sections. The first and second sections are used illustratively. I will show through a brief overview of the Middle Ages in the first that one could suggest that there had been a softness in christological approach, most noticeably in St. Augustine, which was inherited by those theologians which followed in the Reformation. In the second, I will illustrate the style of Calvin's christological argument in his dealings with the Anti-trinitarians and that this style of argument makes better sense if explained as indicating that Calvin employed a Christology of relation. This thesis is explained in the third section and again illustrated in the fourth as I examine his use of more formal christological language. I will suggest in the conclusion that if Calvin's use of christological terms is understood with the meanings I have supplied one can make better sense of Calvin's christological understanding as one premised as 'being in relation'. This thesis will then become important in understanding how Calvin understood the offices of Christ, and most particularly, the office of prophet.

Some Important Christological Trends in the Middle Ages.

Calvin, in his description of the offices of Jesus Christ in the *Institutes*, criticized the Roman Catholic's interpretation of the term *office*,

Yet it would be of little value to know these names [the offices of Christ as prophet, priest and king] without understanding their purpose and use. The papists use these names, too, but coldly and rather ineffectually, since they do not know what each of these titles contains.¹

What did Calvin mean by this criticism? McNeil in his note to the text of the *Institutes* marked that Calvin simply made reference to the existence of the threefold office in the *Summa Theologica*². I would suggest that Calvin had a broader scope of criticism in view than simply a reference to Aquinas. Rather, it was a signal of synecdoche. Calvin was dissatisfied with the entire Roman Catholic christological understanding of person or office. It was their meaning, rather than the appearance of the terms, which compelled Calvin to this criticism in his preamble to his discussion of the offices of Christ. Proof of this can be found in the place our first quotation is found. The emphasis of *Institutes* Chapter Fifteen is the total work of the Christ as the Mediator. Calvin was concerned to link the work with the person of Christ.

Calvin noted in *Institutes* Chapter Fifteen that Rome's Christology had separated the person and the work of Jesus Christ. This separation led to an insubstantiality of the person, that is, the person of Christ was explained in a philosophical language which left little room for what had been revealed of Christ in his relational

activity, and that the insubstantiality of the person led to the insubstantiality of the character of God and the work of restoration performed by him.

So today the words 'Son of God, Redeemer of the world,' resound upon the lips of the papists. Yet because they are satisfied with vain pretence of the name, and strip him of his power and dignity, Paul's words apply to them: 'They do not hold fast to the Head.' [Col. 2.19p]³

An abstraction of the work led to the practice of dividing grace into a number of 'effects' so that Christ was significant only insofar as he was the originator of these effects. Christ had become impersonal 'first cause' of a range of benefits. In Calvin's view, this theology of benefits⁴ led to a compromise in the understanding of Christ. Calvin caricatured that by this process the Roman Catholics saw Christ as the mover of other agents: the Church and its bishops. The Roman view led to a misunderstanding of Christ as a person and what he had tried to accomplish. All the events of salvation history were made to be external to Christ, that is, part of the Christ's causality, but not from Christ as he truly is: divine and human, truly God and truly human.

In order to understand more of what Calvin meant when he wrote concerning the *office* and *person*, I suggest that we begin with a sampling of Roman Catholic Christology from Augustine to its height in Aquinas and see if any patterns develop which Calvin might then have criticized or developed. I will also suggest that from the time of Augustine, that Trinity and Christology were inextricably linked.

Augustine.

We will begin with the Christology of St. Augustine, because elements of Augustine's Christology became characteristic of the Middle Ages. I believe that this is due to two reasons. First, that Augustine was the last great theologian of the western Empire. His link with the Ancient Fathers meant that his works would be highly prized. Second, because of that link with the ancient world, Augustine's theology, and especially his Christology, still to a great extent contain the ancient western world's philosophical presuppositions in understanding God and man. These presuppositions were to play a key role in later Christologies, as each age 'rediscovered' the wisdom of classical philosophy. So a cursory reading of his Christology will give us some indication of the road ahead. Third, that it is Augustine who gave the Western Church a definitive doctrine of the Trinity.

What needs to be said first of all is that Augustine never completely separates himself from his Neo-Platonist past. This is especially clear in his explanation of the soul's relation to God. Augustine was suspicious of the material world. With the Neo-Platonists, he found it difficult to conceive that the material world could be truly real and the instrument of genuine knowledge. It was difficult for him to treat the world as creation, and so to hold the activity and state of creation and redemption in balance. In this way Augustine spoke often of the soul as being satisfied by the flight of the alone to the Alone.⁵ The result was that the highest experience

of religion was a mystic union with God as simple being, in which the meaning of Christ as Incarnational was forgotten or ignored. This Neo-Platonist distrust of materiality as being related to God led Augustine to speak in abstractions, removed from creation itself. Augustine spoke of humanity's relation to God as that of form to archetype. Participation in Christ was focussed in the soul of a human being which could still reflect in a certain fashion its uncreated Creator and so participate in him.⁶ Human beings become partakers in the divinity of Christ. Ennoblement comes by becoming more 'godlike', not more human. Augustine was able to use this type of understanding very successfully. It taught him the nature of a transcendent God which we could only reach through the immaterial soul.

Obermann and others suggest that this tradition developed in the West because of Chalcedon and the incompatibility of the Greek and Latin idiom. The Latin West had to struggle towards establishing the meaning of Chalcedon in Latin terms.⁷ It is possible that writers like Obermann reflect Orthodox criticisms of Western theological developments in that the Latin speaking Roman West did not possess a history of philosophical enquiry and was thus bereft of the philosophical understanding necessary to ontology. This philosophical understanding was derived from the Greek speaking East. It became the task of Western Latin speakers to translate the Greek understanding of those terms into the Western Latin idiom. Some of the subtleties of the Greek understanding were lost, and Augustine was trying to find his way through trial and effort back to the formulations of Chalcedon.

Because Augustine did not understand the Greek distinction yet inseparable in thought between *hypostasis* and *ousia*, in his understanding of the Trinity, he continued to use relation as a logical rather than ontological predicate. He was precluded from saying anything particular about the persons of the Trinity and their relation. Thus, because of their lack of distinctive identity, they tend to meld into the one God. This tendency toward modalism affected Augustine's understanding of Christology, especially in the relation of the divine and human in Christ, which in reality was meant to reflect the relation ontology of the Trinity. This was a very significant development. Christ, could not be spoken of in terms of his personal being because it lacked a proper ontological structure, he too became modalistic, the divine/human relation disappeared in the all embracing oneness of the divine. The Holy Spirit became a substantial rather than relational presence, it could no longer explain the divine/human relation. The love of the Father in relation to the world is evacuated of meaning as reality is sought in substratum essence beyond as first cause. This process, begun in Augustine's trinitarian understanding and affecting his Christology, I will term the modalization of Christ, as the being of Christ was no longer sought in the divine/human relation of Christ's person, but in the divine mover which lay behind the manifestation of the Mediator.

So it was in the treatment of Christ's person that his humanity is reduced in importance to the divine. Christ becomes 'impersonal' and so was not nor could ever be truly like us. Augustine was accustomed to saying that Jesus Christ is man and God in one person

as each of us is flesh and spirit.⁸ But the phrase is still a symptom of what became a general tendency in the West, that is to speak of Christ's *body* or *flesh* rather than that of Christ the person. This depersonalization could lead to an almost docetic tendency in Augustine's Christology. Augustine maintained that the Word existed everywhere in its entirety⁹ so that 'The Son of God both walked on earth and the selfsame one remained Son of Man in heaven.'¹⁰ Dorner argued that if the Word were everywhere in its entirety, as Augustine maintained, it would appear to have no distinctive manner of being and the only difference between Christ and others would seem to be that he possessed a degree of susceptibility to God no one else had.'¹¹ Augustine 'did scarcely anything in the way of showing that the incarnation was more than a close... *relatio*... to that particular point of humanity which became Jesus in consequence of its special and unquestionably God-created susceptibility to God.'¹²

However, it must be said that in his reading of the text of Scripture Augustine was not reluctant to assert Christ's real humanity. It is 'just in proportion as He is man, that He is mediator.'¹³ So far from being ashamed of the humility of Christ, Augustine was quick to indicate it. It is the manifestation of God's love for us and the inspiration to lives of love and service.

So far from being ashamed of the humility of Christ, Augustine rejoices in it. It is the manifestation of God's love and service. 'It was mainly for this purpose that Christ came, to wit, that man might know how much God loves him; and that he might learn this, to the intent that he might be enkindled to the love of Him by whom he was first loved, and might also love his neighbour.' Thus the 'Lord Jesus Christ, God-man, is both a manifestation of divine love towards us, and an example of human humility with us.' 'Here is great misery, proud man. Here is greater mercy, a

humble God.'¹⁴

Here Augustine probably asserted most strongly the two nature doctrine. In the manhood of Christ he saw the supreme example of God's grace and an example of humility for us to follow.¹⁵ But this almost intuitive approach, lacking a sound understanding of Christ's ontological being, tended to emphasize functions of Christ as a human being for us to imitate, rather than seeing any real metaphysical rational for the divine/human relationship. The necessity of Christ's incarnation became progressively less and less significant, and the material world, as the place where meaning, including theological meaning, became less than adequate.

It was in this type of writing that Augustine mirrored the problems to come. One can suggest that in the application of the work of Christ he made a significant contribution to the Church's understanding of the divine incarnation for practical or popular religion. But one must conclude that in his understanding of the Trinity and in his formal treatments of Christology a theologically consistent exposition Christ's humanity and divinity was generally obscured. It is in Christ's function that his personhood was brought into relation with our redemption. Christ in his humanity is the 'example' of the humble life. Augustine's emphasis was not on the personal experience of Christ but on his function as an instrument to show us how salvation is done. Dorner wrote,

It is characteristic, that in the writings of Augustine, and through the whole of the Middle Ages, Christianity, so far as in it we have to deal with a communication from God, was not defined as the religion through which we attain to vital fellowship with the living Christ, who is the true creative ground of salvation; but for the *personal* expression

'Christ,' was substituted as the predominant technical term, the *impersonal* expression, 'grace.'¹⁶

The practical faith kept a firm grasp upon the humanity of Jesus as a role model for the way to conduct the Christian life, in other words, the *imitatio Christi*. The immense amount of *imitatio* literature of the Middle Ages shows this up to the dawn of the Reformation. However, such an understanding, without an satisfactory structure of ontology, meant that the gulf between God and humanity was never satisfactorily crossed.

Peter Lombard.

Medieval Christology after Augustine tried to draw together formal christological speculation with fresh speculations derived from ancient philosophy. Starting from this appraisal, Willis suggests, the christological interpretation of the Middle Ages can be divided into the *habitus-assumptus*-subsistence schema when discussing the two natures in Christ.¹⁷ The *habitus* theory is most often associated with Peter Lombard. Lombard taught that the immutable God cannot change and did not change in the incarnation but dressed himself in the human nature as in a mantle (*habitus*). The union between the two natures is minimal since the bond between the humanity and divinity in Christ, though indissoluble, is only external in character. It was an extrinsecism, making corporality something external to being. Body and soul are not part of the essence of Christ.¹⁸

Medieval Scholastics like Lombard began with a Mediator whose actions and death are raised to an infinite value because of Christ's deity. Divinity therefore became the only ontological category which contained any value. And so it was possible for Lombard to argue that Christ need merely be the Mediator in his human nature only, because the divine nature remained, as it were, apart. Humanity must be reconciled with the Second Person of the Trinity as well as the Father and the Holy Spirit. Because he is the Mediator as a true human being Christ can mediate between God and humanity, especially as an example to both of obedience.¹⁹ As with Augustine, because the being of Christ was in his deity, humanity was understood modalistically, that is, Christ's humanity was a non-essential or accidental feature of the Son of God and in no sense a determinant of his person. When confronted with the texts of Scripture which would seem to indicate otherwise, that is, humanity is described as integral to the person of Christ, Lombard explained the person of Christ in terms of an ontology of divine being, that Jesus was full of grace and wisdom from the very moment of conception. In him was the fulness of the Godhead, by contrast with the saints who possessed particular gifts of the Spirit. All Jesus' actions as a human being were didactic.²⁰ In other words, what Jesus did in his activity had no direct correlation with who he was as a person.

Again, as in Augustine, in Lombard's understanding of Christ's work, the person of Jesus has importance only insofar as he is the example of the ideal type to follow from our point of view and the example of the full potential of humanity from God's point of view. In

formal christological ontology, one can argue that Lombard at his most extreme saw no role for the humanity at all.

Thomas Aquinas.

In general, Aquinas reflected the tendency we have already noted in the Augustine. In the treatment of Christ's person, his humanity appears shadowy and unreal; in the treatment of Christ's work, his humanity gains importance as the means by which he won merit for us and became the Mediator between God and human beings.

Aquinas was the developer of the subsistence theory. This theory of the divine/human relation stressed that while every nature or substantial form has its own carrier, the mystery of the incarnation would consist precisely in the fact that now two natures are carried by one hypostasis, the Word. Christ would be composed of body and soul, the substantial form of man, and divinity, all three carried by the person of the Word.²¹

In reaction to the *habitus* theory Aquinas tried to stress the unity and what he termed the triple suppositum in Christ.²² But modalistic language again appeared in his descriptions of Christ's human nature as instrument when regarding the divine person: 'Similarly, the human nature participates in the activity of the divine nature as an instrument participates in the activity of its user.'²³ What would result from this view of instrumentality with its emphasis on the divine nature? If the nature of the Word is infinite

It can comprehend or contain all finite natures. Therefore when the divine Second Person of the Trinity assumed human nature the Second Person could not extend beyond Himself, beyond the divine nature so it took up within itself the addition of the humanity of Christ.²⁴ I suggest that one is left with an absorption of the human by the divine. This type of reasoning by Aquinas has led some critics to charge that Thomas understood Christ's humanity as a mere instrument of the divine and that he deliberately tried to evade discussion of the incarnation.²⁵

In his discussions on the incarnation, his emphasis on the divine Word rather than unified aspects of Christ's humanity and divinity appeared again and again. His emphasis on divinity was so extensive that he asserted that each of the divine persons could have become incarnate: 'Thus divine power could have united human nature to the Father or to the Holy Spirit even as it did unite it to the Son. And therefore we must acknowledge that the Father or the Holy Spirit could have assumed flesh, even as the Son did so', or that one must acknowledge that the incarnation was not necessarily final or exclusive,

After the Incarnation the Father can still assume a distinct human nature from that which the Son has assumed; for in nothing is the power of the Father or the Son lessened by the Incarnation of the Son. Therefore it seems that after the Incarnation the Son can assume another human nature distinct from the one He has assumed.²⁶

One could argue that Aquinas taught that the Word takes into unity with itself an impersonal, though somehow individual, human nature and that the effect was a union real in human nature but not

In God. Put in different terms, the natures are not so much united as brought into commonality with the Second Person. The conclusion is a Christology which could have led to a monophysite tendency.²⁷ In defence of Aquinas it could be said that in the preceding discussions on the nature of the unity of natures he had been speaking in terms of *de potentia absoluta* only. Yet it would still indicate a trend in his thought to think in terms of modalistic abstraction: the divine *de potentia absoluta*. This trend of the Middle Ages was one still under the influence of Platonist/Aristotelian thinking which saw the divine and human as basically incompatible entities. Any properties that could form the basis of unity would reside in the soul alone. Because of his suspicion of materiality, inherited from Augustine, Aquinas called attention away from the concrete historical events in which God is present to the world in creation and salvation. The correlate was to stress a knowledge of God solely from within, from the mind; hence abstraction from creation and physicality with the rest of humanity became the theological starting point of christological explanations.

Following in this vein, Aquinas also adopted the principle laid down by Lombard, that Christ was Mediator as man only and not as God. This was possible only if the humanity held no real ontological significance. As the Mediator, it was the mission of Christ to unite the extremes. Acting as God alone he could not do this. This is because as God there was no difference between the Son and the Father and the Spirit. But as human being Christ occupied a middle-ground, being different from God because of the addition of human nature and different from man because of the infinite value of the divine which

he possessed.²⁸ So the divinity endowed with an addition is the mediator rather than a truly divine/human person.

Like Lombard, Aquinas also regarded the grace which was in Christ as not gradually increasing, but communicated in perfection at the very moment of the incarnation. Christ, from the moment of conception, was not merely *viator* but also *comprehensor*. Thomas said that the human Christ had neither faith nor hope.²⁹ Christ had the perfect knowledge of the blessed which we can only hope for eschatologically.³⁰ He was born without pain to his mother or to himself and even in his birth Mary remained a virgin.³¹ So little did he share real humanity that his prayers were uttered for mere didactic reasons,

Being both God and man, He wished to send up prayers to the Father, not as though He were incompetent, but for our instruction. First, that he might show Himself to be from the Father... secondly, to give us an example of prayer.³²

Christ was entirely removed from our experience. The 'intuitive' vision of God which Christ possessed will always be impossible for us. Our hope is turned to some supernatural or eschatological future after death. Personal identification with Christ while on the earth is kept to a minimum because our human ontology and Christ's divinity were incompatible.

In summary, what particular christological trends have been observed? The period of the Middle Ages was marked by a christological understanding which was unsuccessful in establishing new categories of explanation of the divine/human relation in Christ,

free from St. Augustine and his problem of materiality and his doctrine of the Trinity which formed the categories for any discussion of the divine/human relation. Augustine's successors in the Middle Ages continued to develop a Christology from first philosophical principles concerning the character of God. With the knowledge that Christ was truly God in the modalistic sense described by Augustine, there was little room to speak of the human Christ because their philosophical presuppositions held to a basic incompatibility between 'flesh' and 'divine'. Lacking a fitting ontological structure for Christ's humanity, Christ became for them overtly divine, with accessibility of meaning sought from beyond the created order in the divine. As I have already suggested, in their formal Christology this was a depersonalization of Christ.

In respect to popular piety, however, the functional Christ, the Christ who acted in humility was seen as an example for all churchmen to follow. But this piety lacked a proper theological structure as its starting point and hence gave no real metaphysical meaning to Christ but rather saw him merely within functional terms. These functions were thought to be within the possibility of each Christian by simple imitation. It was this resulting tension between the way Christ is known through his works and how he is in being that the Middle Ages failed to resolve. A fresh approach, in dialogue with traditional christological terms, awaited the Reformation and John Calvin.

Calvin, Servetus, Blandrata and Stancaro.

Introduction.

Of all the controversies which played a part in Calvin's life, none will be more interesting to the course of our study on Calvin's understanding of the premise of relation between God and humanity than his controversies with the Anti-Trinitarians, especially Servetus. Yet for the purposes of our study we shall examine the method Calvin used in answering both Servetus Blandrata and Stancaro, as the controversies gave rise to similar question of relation and meaning in relation. This was expressed in terms of the nature of language about God, and what was certain, a limit of understanding, and how God is known to mankind.

Servetus.

Calvin knew the contents of Servetus' works on the trinity, *De Trinitatis Erroribus* (1531) and *Dialogi de Trinitate* (1532) as early as 1540.⁴³ The uproar these works caused made Servetus go into hiding and assume the name of Michael Villeneuve. It was under this name that Servetus first made himself personally known to Calvin. Servetus secured through a common acquaintance some copies of Calvin's writings. He wrote to Calvin with questions which asked him to explain the relation of the crucified man Jesus (*an homo Jesus crucifixus sit filius Dei: et quae sit filiationis ratio*) as son to God.⁴⁴

Servetus believed that Christianity had been taught in a system of obtuse doctrines, not the least of which was the Trinity. The doctrine as he understood it was religiously sterile. He believed that it was possible to rediscover the true form of the doctrine as it was taught in the New Testament, avoiding the form of the doctrine which used terms like Trinity, hypostasis, person, substance. These were not terms of the Bible but invented by philosophers whose Christ was little more than a philosophical abstraction. As a biblical literalist Servetus tried to explain the person of Jesus as the human who was the son of God because he was supernaturally begotten, an almost magical mixture of divine and human elements, unique in creation. Jesus shared in the fulness of the deity and was therefore without human perfections. However, he was God in a different sense from that of the Father,

But in our own age too, no less deadly a monster has emerged, Michael Servetus, who has supposed the Son of God to be a figment compounded from God's essence, spirit, flesh, three uncreated elements...

His subtlety takes this direction: having overturned the distinction of the two natures he regards Christ to be a mixture of some divine and some human elements, but not to be reckoned both God and man. For his whole logic bears upon the point that before Christ *was revealed in the flesh* there was only shadow figures in God; the truth or effect of these appeared only when the Word, who had been destined for this honor, truly began to be the Son of God.⁴⁷

Calvin suggested that Servetus claimed the harmony was in their power or authority, God in a sense gave authority to Jesus as his representative in bestowing him with a god-like or demi-human nature in conception. There was no unity of being between Jesus and God.⁴⁸

According to Calvin, Servetus believed that Christian theology was so flawed by philosophical speculations about Jesus that a comprehensive revision was necessary. This can be found in his last book, *Christianismi Restitutio* (Christianity Restored). This work contained references to Calvin's *Institutes* of 1543 and contained Servetus' entire plan for a thorough reformation of Christianity by restoring the doctrine of the Church to its original biblical form.⁴⁴

Servetus would not live to see any success from his works. He was executed in the same year that his last book was published. Calvin replied to Servetus' arguments in the next revision of the *Institutes* in 1559. Calvin attacked Servetus from the creeds, saying that the use of relational terms is justified on the basis of Scripture and tradition. Calvin believed that the conceptualization of a hypostatic union is essential to understanding how the Word and the Father relate. Calvin also reiterates the theological meaning in the creeds as arising out of controversy with heresy,

Meanwhile, the Church's definition stands firm: he is believed to be the Son of God because the Word begotten of the Father before all ages took human nature in a hypostatic union. Now the old writers defined 'hypostatic union' as that which constitutes one person out of two natures. This expression was devised to refute the delusion of Nestorius, because he imagined that the Son of God so dwelt in the flesh that he was not man also.

Yet this ought to be unwaveringly maintained: to neither angels nor men was God ever Father, except with respect to his only begotten Son; and men, especially, hateful to God because of their iniquity, become God's sons by free adoption because *Christ is the Son of God by nature*.⁴⁵

One could suggest that it was in his anxiety over the mystery of the *Deus manifestatus in carne* that Calvin retreated to the creeds for two purposes: to attack Servetus and to reassure his readers of his own christological orthodoxy. Yet it is also necessary to note that Calvin very carefully emphasized the unity of the person of Christ in relation to the Father as part of his interpretation of the creeds.⁴⁹ At this stage we would also wish to underscore Calvin's favouring of the *hypostatic union* when explaining the relation between the Father and Son. I would suggest that Calvin did this in order to establish an understanding of the term within trinitarian relations. With this in mind, one can see that much of what Calvin had to say to Servetus concerning the person of Jesus, had direct bearing on a proper understanding of the Trinity. For Calvin, therefore, a lack of a proper understanding of the Mediator was a direct result of Servetus' Anti-Trinitarian position. Let us now continue with an examination of the Blandrata controversy.

Blandrata.

Dr. Giorgio Blandrata (Latin: *Blandrata*) fled to Geneva from Italy in 1556 where he joined an Italian congregation.⁵⁰ After a period of quiet adjustment he began to raise questions over the deity of Christ. In 1558 he repeatedly came to Calvin with his questions, going away apparently satisfied yet returning soon after with the same questions in a different form.⁵¹ Another Biblical literalist, he wished to know to whom the name of God might be applied; what was the meaning of the terms person, essence, subsistence, and property as

used in the creeds. Calvin treated him very patiently and finally wrote out an extended reply to his questions.

As we have already seen in the case of Servetus, Calvin began his reply by explaining his understanding of these differing metaphysical terms to explain the person of the Mediator and the relation of persons in the Trinity,

When we confess that we believe in one God under the name of God we understand one and simple essence, in which we perceive three persons or hypostasis.⁵²

In the battery of letters to and fro, Blandrata tried to entangle Calvin in the more subtle christological and trinitarian terminology and asked if the eternal Word of God is something substantial and essential.⁵³ Calvin criticized that Blandrata had phrased his questions in a deliberately ambiguous and deceptive way,⁵⁴ but gave an answer, 'Concerning the term substance, it is not properly understood to be essence, but hypostasis. And so the Word is something hypostatic.'⁵⁵ Calvin has correctly discerned that *hypostasis* had come to be used in distinction from *ousia* to refer to the concrete particularity of the Father, Son and Spirit. *Hypostasis* was therefore not to be thought of as an individual, simply because the three are not individuals but persons, beings whose reality can only be understood in terms of their relations to each other, constituting the *ousia* of the one God.

The significance for my suggestion concerning the shape of Calvin's Christology lay in that Calvin continued to explain Christ not as an individual but as person, a being whose reality can only be

understood in terms of relation to the Word, a relation which constitutes the being (*ousia*) of the one God. A person for Calvin was not relations, but concrete particulars in relation to one another. Calvin continued in his reply to Blandrata by explaining Christ's *persona* by these two aspects. Calvin again provided a framework for thinking about Christ which highlighted a relational understanding: now about Christ as the Word, now as God manifested in flesh,

But the name of person, when it is ascribed to Christ, can be said in two ways: for as the Word born of the Father before the creation of the world, he is a person in the eternal essence of God. And just as he is the Christ, God manifest in the flesh, so that two natures thus united constitute one person. And therefore it is one thing to speak of the eternal wisdom of God before he put on flesh and another to speak of the mediator from the moment he was revealed in flesh.⁵⁶

In light of what we have already seen, Calvin has clearly tried to understand the meaning of the person of Christ away from abstractions of solely natures or states, to the integrity of the person of the Mediator. In other words, Christ is the Word, the *Sermo*, and therefore must be seen as in a deep trinitarian relation. Calvin equated this person in deep relation with the person of the Mediator, 'God manifested in the flesh. He seemed to wish to stress a very real presence in the person of Christ of both the divine and human. Word and flesh are thus united.

Calvin stressed this deep relation and its uniqueness in Christ by reference to Christ's 'middle status'. This was not to mean that Christ was in some way a *tertium quid* between God and humankind, rather, the term middle status was used by Calvin to express Christ's

character as relational. Calvin wrote that Christ is called Lord by humanity because he holds a middle status between God and us, but this is without compromising his equality with God.⁵⁷ This middle status for Jesus was also to be understood in terms in light of God's manifestation in flesh. In other words, understanding the relation was dependent upon the revelation of God to our capacity in the incarnation itself.

What did this type of explanation accomplish? Calvin seemed particularly interested in addressing the problem of understanding the epistemological implications of the relational Christ. The relationship between God and humankind could be understood because God had revealed it through Christ himself. The reason for Christ's manifestation to us was to lead us by degrees to the Father. Christ's relative relatedness to the Father was revealed with respect to the flesh, in other words, with respect to our capacity, rather than the hypostatic relationship between Christ and the Father being understood as mere abstractions from creation.⁵⁸ It was therefore possible to speak of or about and to understand the relationship between Christ and the Father to the limits of our capacity as created beings. The exposition of relation and its trinitarian structure formed the crux of Calvin's office Christology.

As I intimated in the earlier discussion of Augustine, there was difficulty in the Latin West with certain Greek theological terms, not the least of which were terms like *hypostasis*, *ousia* and *prosopon*. The problem actually began with Tertullian, who first used the terms

persona and *substantia* in identifying the relational three and one in God. It was not until the time of Alexander of Hales that the definition of *persona* approached the patristic concept of *hypostasis*. And it is this definition which became so important to Calvin: a person is the incommunicable intellectual existence of a nature or a thing existing by itself alone according to a certain *mode of existing*. It was the term *mode of existing*, *modus existendi*, which pointed to the relation of being.

We read how Calvin deliberately used the Greek term *hypostasis* in his replies to Servetus and Blandrata because he wished to be as precise as possible in the way he described the manner of existing. In other words, he recognized that the Greeks went further in describing first a *uniqueness*, something incommunicable that was constitutive of person; and that this was defined in relation or in a manner of existing. The importance then lay in the way Calvin understood *persona*. He wrote,

I shall proceed to speak of the thing itself: 'Person,' therefore, I call a 'subsistence' in God's essence, which, while related to the others, is distinguished by an incommunicable quality. By the term 'subsistence' we would understand something different from 'essence.'⁵⁹

Calvin therefore saw the issue in the heresies of Servetus and Blandrata as their failure to recognize relatedness, rather than their concept of mixtures between Father and Son, as the crux of trinitarian and hence christological understanding. It was the distinctions determined by relatedness which are necessary for the related modes of existence.

What then were the implications for such an interpretation? When Calvin spoke of the total person of the Mediator in Jesus Christ our understanding of what he meant must begin with this starting point: the manner of relationship. This was true of the Mediator as divine and human, in relation to God and to us. It forms the basis, therefore of his office Christology.

It was this which coloured his interpretation of the sense of Scripture. Calvin was convinced that a proper understanding of the Trinity as persons whose reality can only be understood in relation to each other, relations which constitute the being of God was graspable by human beings in the exegesis of Scripture. Calvin believed that there must be a dialogue in the mind of the reader, recalling the text of the creeds as he/she read Scripture, relying on the presence of the Spirit to enable the Christian to understand what God wished one to know.⁶⁰

We do not speculate beyond that which Scripture raises us but we return to its genuine and simple sense. For no one by the powers of his mind would know Christ to be his God unless he grasped diverse persons in the unity of essence.⁶¹

Calvin was therefore interested in the balance of theology with fresh scriptural understanding. It was this conviction that the scriptural images of Christ were true and in harmony with the creeds which allowed Calvin the freedom to consider the offices of Christ in a fresh way. It therefore made the different images of Scripture more important for his Christology.

Stancaro.

Stancaro's position was neatly summarized by him in an encyclical letter written to Musculus, Peter Martyr, Calvin and Bullinger,

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the one God, the only one and true God, of one essence, of one will and of one operation, and that our Lord Jesus Christ, True God and True man, is our pontiff, priest and mediator according to his humanity alone. According to his divinity he is with the Father and Holy Spirit and is the source of the office of priest, pontiff and mediator, as it is clearly found in the sixth synod of Constantinople.⁴²

Calvin's written replies to Stancaro are found in two treatises. The first and shorter treatise was written some time during 1560.⁴³ This work, occupying a mere five columns in the *Calvini Opera*, would have been written at a time when Calvin was not yet fully acquainted with the writings of Stancaro. The second, written in 1561, was published after Calvin received the encyclical letter.⁴⁴ Although the second treatise does not differ substantially from the first, it is twice as long. In the second Calvin spoke directly to Stancaro and refuted his particular interpretation of Scripture and the Church Fathers.

Why did Stancaro believe that his view of the person of Christ as Mediator was similar to Calvin's? Stancaro believed that the only way to avoid the charge of Arianism was to emphasize the role of the Mediator in the humanity only. As we have seen, Calvin wrote that Christ held a middle status between God and mankind. Stancaro was unaware that this middle status was not actual but relational in the

persons of the godhead, so believing that one would become an Arian in thinking. He did not realize Jesus Christ the Mediator was not to be understood as an individual but as a person in the trinitarian sense, hence allowing God's manifestation in the flesh. Calvin reasoned in his reply that since Stancaro denied a role to Christ's divinity in the Mediator, he had to show that the divinity is essential to that activity. In the first and second responses Calvin began with his understanding of the creeds.⁶⁵

But the stress in both treatises is slightly different from what we have so far seen. The focus is specifically on that of the person of the Mediator: Christ is not only the Mediator from the time that he put on flesh and reconciled mankind, but also from the beginning of creation, as the head of the Church and the first-born of every creature. In order to underscore the divine nature in the person of the mediator, Calvin included the headship of Christ. This headship was convenient in showing how a relatedness to Christ can be established without the incarnation. In other words, we are related to Christ because in the ordering of the creation he was responsible for us and we were answerable to him,

But we maintain, first, that the name of Mediator suits Christ, not only by the fact that he took on the office of reconciling the human race to God, but from the beginning of creation he was already truly the Mediator, for he always was the head of the Church, had control over the angels, and was the firstborn of every creature (Eph. 1.22; Col. 1.15; 2.10). Therefore, we conclude that not only after Adam's fall did he begin to exercise his office of Mediator, but since he is the eternal word of God, both angels as well as humanity were united to God by his grace so that they would remain uncorrupted.⁶⁶

Mark the correlation between the person and the activity of the

office. Calvin explained that the office of the Mediator consists in guiding us and directing us to the Father and for this reason he is required to be like us in the flesh. In this treatise, Calvin was unable to speak of the Word of God without some sort of mediation by the person of Christ.⁶⁷ Calvin argued that the office must be identified with the person of the Mediator. Christ is able to perform that office precisely because his person encompasses both the divinity and humanity.

In order to emphasize this relation, Calvin began to use a new term here, that of *tota persona* or the whole person,

Nor is the name of God incompatible, as long as it is correctly applied to the whole person (*toti personae*), because nothing is less reasonable than that life, which is only to be sought in God, residing in the flesh.⁶⁸

Calvin strongly contended in the wording of the second reply that in order to understand the significance of the redemptive work of Christ one must bear in mind the reality of Christ as God manifested in the flesh. Calvin explained that the word **Mediator** referred to Christ in totality; one cannot speak of the name of Christ without reference to the entire divine-human relationship in the person of the Mediator. As we have already seen, Calvin used the person of the Mediator to mean both divine and human activity in Christ. It is this divine-human *persona* who is revealed to us,

...we conclude that the name of Mediator is properly attributed only to the complete person (*toti personae*) (Rom. 14.11). For certainly all who stand before his tribunal (Because it is written: "To me all knees will bend"), do not fall to the human nature, and yet Paul adjusts this to the person of the Mediator (Phil. 2.10).⁶⁹

We now see that Calvin tried to relate the second person of the Trinity with how he is known as the person of the Mediator. I suggest that Calvin attempted to show that what was known about Christ could only possibly be known if he truly existed this way in the Trinity. Christ revealed what was true about himself: he was God and man. This was the treatise's purpose. Calvin wanted to prove to Stancaro that it was incorrect to separate the activity from the person who performed it and that the shape or the way the activity was performed was only possible if the office was truly part of him. For this reason one should leave the Latin *persona* as person rather than as role or office as Tylenda does.⁷⁰ Tylenda, in thinking that Calvin was interested only in function, rather than distinctive activity and person, has missed the purpose of the treatise.

After his analysis of Stancaro's position and his replies, Calvin established the relation between the office and the person of Christ,

It now appears clear that a union of both natures is required for the office of the mediator, but whatever touches the Mediator's person should not be indiscriminately ascribed to either nature.⁷¹

The office or distinctive of the Mediator required the integrity of the distinctive activities of the persons of the Trinity being of one essence. They provided the reality of the activity of divine and human as one in the whole person of the Mediator.

Calvin's Understanding of a Relational Christology.

Christ as Person.

Calvin began his Christology not with the traditional exposition of the person and work but with the essentially Anselmic argument concerning the necessity of the Mediator, the God-human. Here Calvin has drawn upon Scripture as a source of doctrine but has also examined the tradition for structures of thought conducive to the organization of the insights of the Reformation.

Calvin's restructuring of his Christology has the effect of recognizing the divinity of Christ and focussing on the concrete Christ who enters history and on the integrity of both the divine and human nature. This understanding of Jesus was made in the affirmation that Christ must be seen as the person of the God-human. I suggest that Calvin's usage did not merely have the connotation of individuality that clearly belongs to the term in contemporary usage, rather, Calvin argued from the basis of person as mode or manner of subsistence, much like some Greek patristic predecessors. The great contribution of the Cappadocian Fathers was that the term *hypostasis* became less associated with *ousia* and became identified with *prosopon*. But this latter term was relational, and was so when adopted in trinitarian theology. This meant that from then on a relational term entered into ontology and an ontological category as *hypostasis* entered relational categories of existence. To be and to be in relation became identical. *Person/hypostasis*, by reinterpreting the

ontological character of *ousia*, became capable of signifying God's being in an ultimate sense.⁷² This was to mean that *ousia* and *hypostasis*, must be thought of as related categories of existence.

Calvin likewise argued for a balanced status of the person of the Mediator who must likewise be conceived in terms of the relationality of divinity and humanity. Hence it was Christ's whole person (*hypostasis*) and not the natures which become the ultimate ground of Christ's being. He felt that as person the Son subsists in relation to the Father by generation and as God he contains in and of himself the full essence of the Godhead.⁷³ Calvin's originality was to move Christology away from individualized existence as person and work to an understanding in which the activity of mediation becomes determinative and the person of Christ must be considered in and through his office. I would like to regard this original contribution to Christology as a person/office approach. He emphasised that Christians are placed in union with a person rather than an impersonal essence. In the person of the Mediator Calvin understood the ground of being as relational and trinitarian.

This type of reasoning about the person of Jesus Christ was developed by Calvin out of the general christological insights of the Reformation period. The contemporary alternatives of Calvin's day, which Calvin would be eager to answer, were the Christologies of the Anti-Trinitarians, Anabaptists and the Roman Catholic Church. The tendencies of the Roman Catholic and Anti-Trinitarian positions we have already discussed at length. The insistence of Servetus,

Blandrata, Stancaro and Roman Catholic theologians to begin Christology within certain philosophical presuppositions about the nature of God led to a depersonalized and abstract conception of Christ. As the Roman Catholic theologians confronted the plety of the lalty or the account of Christ in the Gospels, they developed a psychology for Christ which would try to account for these factors. Jesus was in a state of total blessedness from birth and was, if one were to push far enough, miming his emotional reactions to be a good example to the rest of humanity. As we have seen, the final result was that any true personhood was compressed into a basically monist Godhead. What was left was an almost docetic Christology.⁷⁴

It is this same result, the tendency towards Docetism which would typify the Christology of most of the Anabaptists as Calvin understood them. Anabaptists held to a view of the Holy Spirit which usurped a trinitarian relational ground of being to solely pneumatological understanding which did little justice to the person of Christ.⁷⁵ I will briefly consider here a representative view. It is unclear when Calvin became aware of the Christology of Melchior Hoffmann,⁷⁶ but it was this view which was passed on by Obbe Philips to Menno Simons.⁷⁷ Menno taught that since 'a woman has no procreative seed,'⁷⁸ Christ 'did not become flesh of Mary, but in Mary.'⁷⁹ Hence Christ 'is of the Holy Ghost... not of Abraham's natural flesh and blood.'⁸⁰

Menno, like Hoffmann and Phillips, taught that 'the man Christ did not have his origin on earth but in heaven.'⁸¹ 1 Corinthians 15:47 ('The first man is from the earth, earthly; the second man is from

heaven.'⁸¹ was explained by Menno in this way: 'For the first man, Adam, is called earthly on account of his being of the earth; so also, the second man, Christ is called heavenly because He is from heaven.'⁸² Menno taught that Christ was brought forth or begotten from 'the divine seed, material, or essence' of God the Father.⁸³ To Menno the matter was clear, 'Christ says that His flesh came from Heaven. He is a heavenly fruit or man.'⁸⁴ Indeed, the Lord Jesus did not have human flesh, but 'heavenly, innocent, obedient, blessed, and quickened flesh...'⁸⁵

What ultimately did Calvin strive for in his conceptualization of Christ? Was it merely to safeguard the way of salvation outside the confines of the Roman Catholic system of grace? For Calvin the question found its solution in his feeling of the necessity of the reality of the subject and object that is Jesus Christ, that is to say his striving after the unique mystery of the one Christ in the singleness of person. He is the subject of all his deeds. And he is the object of our praise and worship as the one who performed his work in the absolute unity and faithfulness to his task. What Christ is as a person is in which Christians participate by his benefits.⁸⁶ For Calvin all the deeds of Christ were performed by his one person and in his acts of humiliation and glory the human nature of Christ was indissolubly united with the divine as the hypostatic union. This communion of natures comes to full expression in his descriptions of a communion of actions. It is this communion of actions which is part of the communion between the divine/human natures in Christ.

In Calvin's perspective the tensions in the life of Jesus Christ are not the tensions of an abstract connection between the divine and human, but rather those of Christ's humiliation in the unity of person. This attempt to explain the ways in which this was possible in Christ stemmed from Calvin's reliance upon what he believed to be the most succinct definition of Jesus Christ: *Deus manifestatus in carne*.⁸⁷

Now that I have provided a general sketch of the motivations and characteristics of Calvin's understanding of the whole Christ as *persona*, I may ask how then did Calvin explain the divine/human ontological reality in the person of Christ? Was he original or even successful in the details of his understanding. It is to answer these questions, so important to how Calvin saw the offices, that we now turn.

The Divine/Human Distinction in Persona Mediatoris.

What is the nature of Calvin's use of the divine/human distinction? Let us begin with a truism: It has been said that Calvin did not consider himself an innovator in his Christology. What does this mean? Does it mean that Calvin relied on the decrees of Chalcedon concerning the nature of divine/human in Jesus Christ as starting point?⁸⁸ Perhaps it would be useful to quote the section of Chalcedon where Calvin found his basis for the divine/human distinction,

Following then, the holy Fathers, we all unanimously teach that our Lord Jesus Christ is to us One and the same Son, the Self-same Perfect in Godhead, the Self-same Perfect in Manhood; truly God and truly Man; the Self-same rational

soul and body; coessential with the Father according to the Godhead, but in the last days, the Self-same for us and for our salvation (born) of Mary the Virgin Theotokos as to the Manhood; One and the Same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten; acknowledged in Two Natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the difference of the Natures being in no way removed because of the Union, but rather the properties of each Nature being preserved, and (both) concurring into One Person and One Hypostasis; not as though He were parted or divided into Two Persons, but One and the Self-same Son and Only-begotten God, Word, Lord, Jesus Christ.⁸⁹

In harmony with Chalcedon Calvin laid strong emphasis on the distinction of the two natures in the person of Christ.⁹⁰ It is a characteristic of Calvin's Christology to insist upon the finitude of the humanity which the Word assumed. What can be seen as the logic of his position, although he never expressed it in this way, is that the majesty of the humanity of Christ consisted in the very fact that it remained finite and creaturely even when hypostatically joined to the infinite Creator. Did Calvin retain a proper balance of unity and distinction in the person of Christ?

In discussion of the issue, I think Calvin would first turn to a recognition of the communication of properties. In the communication of attributes, he said, one did not see the communication of natures and hence the key to Christ's work, rather, 'Let this, then, be our key to right understanding: those things which apply to the office of the Mediator are not spoken simply either of the divine nature or of the human.'⁹¹ In the communication of attributes, Calvin did underscore the unity of person.

In trying to understand what he meant it is best to remember what has already been said about Calvin's support of the Chalcedonian definition of a Christ without distinction or confusion. Calvin's support of Chalcedon is made in his polemic against Nestorius in the *Institutes*. Nestorius, he said, tore the two natures apart instead of preserving the distinction. The Scriptures, according to Calvin, cry out against the theory of Nestorius, 'there the name 'Son of God' is applied to him who is born of the virgin [Luke 1:32p]...' ⁹² And later, 'still one must not imagine a mixture of natures in the unity of person.' ⁹³ We can see that Calvin wished to remain faithful to Chalcedon in his concern with unity and distinction in the divine/human relation in Christ.

In his understanding of Chalcedon Calvin stressed that there be no confusion. One must bear in mind what he had already established in his definition of person. That is, there must be no confusion because it will compromise the mode or manner of subsistence. For Calvin, then, the communication of attributes was not a real ontological communication of properties where the characteristics of one nature, in an ontological sense, belong to the other nature, but it is the assignment of attributes to a person or subject. ⁹⁴ Christ's being was not defined by natures but by his person. With this ontological understanding the explanation of what took place in Scripture when it assigned to one nature what is proper to another, Calvin wrote that an attribute of one nature is assigned to the person of Christ, though designated by his other nature. That is, the description of the attributes in the text of Scripture, described first for one nature

then for the other, affirmed the ontological reality of the person. There was no exchange of attributes in the actual nature of the Christ. For Luther, the attribute of one nature is granted to the other nature.⁹⁵

For Calvin, true to his understanding of the Bible, the stress was upon the semantics of the words used to describe Christ in the Scriptures. The communication of attributes was that interchange of attributes by which the subject dominated by one of his two natures, so possesses the other nature and its properties that these properties may be truly attributed to him.⁹⁶ The subject is always the Christ of the Scriptures. Calvin never discussed the two natures by themselves but always with the person in which Christ reveals himself as both God and man.⁹⁷ Yet, while Calvin repeatedly distinguished between the two natures in Christ, he did not, because of an understanding of the significance of the person, assign an ontological status to each nature. His concern was rather to give expression to the testimony of Scripture concerning the unity of the person of Christ and it was within that context that he discussed the communication of attributes.⁹⁸

The Problem.

It is this very point, Calvin's adherence to the testimony of Scripture and his refusal to draw out the absolutely precise ontology of natures due to his understanding of person as *modus subsistendi*, which has been the subject of criticism. Johannes Witte⁹⁹ insists that

Calvin remained faithful to the Chalcedonian formulation in the sense that he emphasized certain worthwhile Antiochene elements, especially the adverb 'without confusion' and the expression, *salva proprietate utriusque naturae*.¹⁰⁰ He warns, however, that Calvin would have more fully reflected other elements in the Chalcedonian formula had he taught that kind of *communicatio idiomatum* which provides for the ontological foundation of the natures.

Witte is not entirely correct in his assertion that Calvin had no clear conception of the ontological foundation of the incarnation. As a partial answer one could suggest that it was due to his awe before mystery and his distaste for speculation which set the limit on his descriptions.¹⁰¹ I suggest that Witte has misunderstood Calvin's understanding of the ground of Christ's being in the *hypostasis*, and his relation to the Trinity, rather than divine and human as separate ontological categories. One must therefore conclude that Calvin customarily affirmed the unity of the person in Jesus in the hypostatic union of the divine/human person, an ontological foundation which was necessary for Calvin's use of the relational *medius gradus* of the Mediator. Unity is based on the action of God,

When he says that the Word became flesh, we can plainly infer the unity of His person. For it does not make sense that He who is now man should be other than He who was always very God, since it is God who is said to have become man. Again, since he distinctly attributes the name of the Word to the man Christ, it follows that when He became man Christ did not cease to be what He was before and that nothing was changed in that eternal essence of God which assumed flesh.¹⁰²

The conclusion of Witte and others is to charge Calvin with Nestorianism because of its lack of an ontological foundation for the natures.¹⁰³ If one were to accept Witte's understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum* as requiring divine and human natures as separate ontological categories, then he is correct in saying that Calvin did follow this paradigm. There would then be a gap in ontology. Have we not rather proven that Calvin assumed or presupposed the hypostatic union through his allegiance to Chalcedon and the activity of God in Trinity which animates his understanding of how the Mediator was to be understood?

I would suspect that what Witte is uncomfortable with are those passages where Calvin, relying on the integrity of the person of the Mediator, de-individualized his existence in favour of his true person. Calvin assumed the hypostatic union and tried to come to grips with it in passages where Christ's intense humiliation is the subject. Calvin's focus was on those moments of truth in the life of Jesus, times of tension and strife, of temptation and decision. In honouring the divine/human relation, Calvin affirmed the reality of Christ's stress as the one who was the incarnate one, part of time and history,

As this seems to be below the dignity of Christ's divine glory that He was affected with panic and sorrow, many interpreters are vehemently concerned to find a way out. Their efforts were thoughtless and fruitless: if we are ashamed of His fear and sorrow, our redemption will trickle away and be lost. Ambrose was right, I think, when he said, 'there is no need of excuse. Indeed, I find nothing more wonderful than his piety and majesty. He would have done less for me, if He had not borne my affliction. He grieved for me, who on His own account had nothing to grieve over; He laid aside the delights of His eternal Godhead, to feel the weariness of my infirmity. I boldly speak of this

sorrow, because I preach the cross. He did not assume an appearance of incarnation, but a reality. He had to bear grief in order to conquer sadness, and not shut it out: they do not have the praise of fortitude who are drugged by wounds and not hurt.' Thus far Ambrose.¹⁰⁴

Calvin's concern was the person of Christ who assumes the suffering which is bonded to our sin and guilt.¹⁰⁵ In these passages Calvin went to great lengths to explain the divine/human relation in answering questions as to how Christ as God could react in this way.¹⁰⁶ The union was his major assumption. It was also because of the integrity of this union that Calvin then went on to explain Christ not in terms of an individual with a particular personality, but as a true person, whose very being was in communion with God,

Yet Christ's passion of grief and fear was such that He held Himself in limits. As the various musical sounds, different from each other, make no discord but compose a tuneful and sweet harmony, so in Christ there exists a remarkable example of balance between the wills of God and of man; they differ from each other without conflict or contradiction.¹⁰⁷

It is possible to discuss briefly at this point the *finitum non capax infiniti* within the context of Calvin's Christology.¹⁰⁸ It is clear that Calvin did not use this particular terminology, although it has been alluded to by some writers who see this tendency in Calvin's discussions of the Christ who is the one acting subject which contains distinct properties, the tension of the finite and the infinite.¹⁰⁹ Calvin found it necessary to reflect on the finite and the infinite in order to speak about the union of the two natures in Christ, and on the integrity of the person in relation, as we have seen in his

discussion of scriptural passages which deal with the stresses placed on Christ.

Calvin rested his Christology upon an understanding of being in relation in which, by virtue of the incarnation of the Logos who sustains all of creation, humankind can relate by participation. For Calvin it seems that the riches of Christ consisted in the fact that he redeemed us as one of us. The Son of God assumed human nature in an act of loving kindness towards us, wrote Calvin, and this human nature is in all things truly like us and remains like us. Calvin would also not admit to a human nature in which certain essential properties changed. His refusal to admit this was based upon his understanding of the unity of the divine/human person which the term *finitum non capax infiniti* expressed and upon a recognition of its reverse, *infinitum capax finiti* reveals the positive application of the teaching. The infinite God grasps finite human nature *solo gratia*. Humanity is restored into communion with God.¹¹⁰

In Calvin's use of traditional christological categories, one can now observe his distinction from his predecessors which previous writers, such as Witte, have failed to understand. As one can see from his Anti-Trinitarian writings, Calvin began with the assumptions of Chalcedon and the Trinity to begin his formulation of a personal Saviour, not a universal individual, but a true person whose ground of being was in relation to God the Father and Holy Spirit. Calvin was willing to lessen the importance of separate human and divine natures into differing ontological categories in his understanding of the

communication of attributes for what he saw as the essential person of Christ. When pressed, he would emphasise the integrity of the person as the proper understanding of the communication of attributes.

Calvin's Christological Expression.

But why then is this introduction on theological language necessary? It is important because it highlight two strands of thinking which were very important to Calvin's Christology and his ultimate understanding of the offices to that Christology. Calvin, in line with earlier christological thinking, believed that the meaning of Christology gave a reliable understanding relative to our capacity. So, for example, human understanding of the relations in the Trinity were reliable because this was what God had chosen to reveal about himself to humanity. The revelation, the language of words, reflected the truth behind the veil which blocked our total understanding of God.

What Witte has failed to do is to give sufficient weight to the way Calvin understood christological language: *persona, hypostasis, subsistence, modus existendi*. As I have shown, Calvin continually insisted upon the reality of Christ's humanity as part of the hypostatic union, while running the risk of those who demanded a separate ontology for the humanity. Calvin chose to account for Christ's obvious, full humanity by saying that the Logos, in fully concealing himself, enabled the fully human character and actions of the Redeemer to shine.¹¹¹ Even in the human nature and servitude of

Christ, wrote Calvin, there was a heavenly power to be considered.¹¹² Christ's incarnation was no simple appearance. Christ assumed not just the form of a human being, as do the angels, but he put on our human nature and was truly human; he was fatigued by journey, he did weep and was in anguish.¹¹³

Christ was a true human person because by virtue of incarnation the Son becomes history, entering the human condition with the inevitability of the biological imperative: one must die. Yet Christ did not sin by virtue of his ground of being in relation with God the Father and Holy Spirit. However, Christ as a true person and entering history could experience what other creatures experienced. Calvin described sin as the Stoic concept of *ataxia* or lack of control.¹¹⁴ Christ was able to become emotional in the extreme but it was still not sinful because he held all things in proper control by virtue of the relation to the Trinity. The Holy Spirit liberated the Son from the bondage of history. If what I have suggested is correct then it would be possible to mark this aspect of God which is knowable: his being relational and trinitarian. Calvin's emphasis was not on how much is revealed but on the quality of the revealed.

In this example Calvin was able to hold the divine and human together in various analogous descriptions. The category of description is a symbol or metaphor of God as he is known. This knowledge is confirmed in a complete identification with us through Jesus Christ. Not content with a de-individualization which made Christ appear less than 'human', the terms of Christ's experiences



were not interpreted by Calvin as acts of power alone but as psychological aspects of the God-human. Calvin used the psychological in situations when Christ's real humanity was evident in order that Christ's person be known and human beings could identify him with them.¹¹⁵

This type of operation in Calvin's Christology would answer to some extent Calvin's understanding of Christ and the Lutheran debate.¹¹⁶ When Calvin wished to criticise he referred to the question of the bare essence of Christ and its unsuitability when describing Christ outside of hypostatic relation and our relation by participation with him,

It is clear from this that the apostle is not discussing the eternal being of Christ but the knowledge of Him which flourished among believers in every age and which was the lasting foundation of the Church. It is certain that Christ existed before He put forth His power. It may now be asked what the apostle is dealing with. I say that this verse refers to quality (so to speak) and not essence, because there is no discussion of whether He was eternally with the Father, but what was the knowledge that men had of Him.¹¹⁷

Calvin had again referred to quality of our relationship with Christ, what we now know of him.

Calvin's main concern was not Lutheran separate natures but the quality of what is known. This led him to use a variety of ways to express what is knowable to us about Jesus Christ. In descriptions of another aspect of Christ such as the link with the transcendent Word, Calvin relied most on his understanding of language as metaphor and so used examples of political language: majesty, power, authority,

glory.¹¹⁶ Indeed, I would suggest that the existence of this type of metaphor points back to a relational ontological starting point.

For example, it is this use of political power by which Calvin described the incarnation of Jesus and the divine/human relation. I would even go so far to say that what Gustaf Aulen¹¹⁷ described as the classical idea of the atonement with its use of military language, is an extension of a political context in Calvin's Christology. What does the political language attempt to describe? It describes the incarnation as a reassertion of Christ's rule over that part of creation which had rebelled. In the incarnation the Son of God left heaven only in such a way that he continued to exercise his dominion over creation; the incarnation was an extension of his control and not an abdication of it. The analogy of political control assured Calvin on the unity of the divine/human relationship.¹²⁰

The solution regarding how to express Christ's divine/human relation suggested by earlier Christologies was to compromise aspects of Christ's humanity in order to avoid diminishing Christ's eternal reality, seeing them as separate entities in which one must be subsumed in the other. That is, the solution was to say that the eternal properties were shared in some way by the humanity. Calvin felt this would compromise the real humanity of Christ. Calvin reflected a deeper understanding for the metaphoric nature of language about Christ. Calvin showed his hesitancy to leave this form of expression at the points where he does speak of the divine/human relation in a more linear fashion. Here Calvin resorted to the use of

such words as 'somehow' or 'in some way'. He resisted the temptation to speak literally in terms of an absolute direct correlation. It is the use of political metaphor which forms the context of Calvin's comments on 1 Corinthians 15:27,¹²¹

Of course we acknowledge that God is the Ruler, but His rule is actualized in the man Christ (*sed in facie hominis Christi*). But Christ will then hand back the Kingdom which He has received, so that we may cleave completely to God. This does not mean that He will abdicate from the Kingdom in this way, but will transfer it in some way or other from His humanity to His glorious divinity, because then there will open up for us a way of approach, from which we are now kept back by our weakness. In this way, therefore, Christ will be subjected to the Father, because, when the veil has been removed, we will see God plainly, reigning in His majesty, and the humanity of Christ will no longer be in between us to hold us back from a nearer vision of God.¹²²

It is interesting to note that Calvin never said in his description of this final state that Christ will *relinquish* his humanity. He said only that Christ will transfer his *reign* from his humanity to his divinity. If one were merely thinking in natures it would be possible to argue here that Calvin's understanding of the relation between the humanity and divinity was compromised through the end of Christ's human significance or that Calvin's view of the human Christ was merely soteriological.¹²³ The point then is that Calvin is not speaking in terms of natures or states, rather, his descriptions of Christ's activity are more important because they give us an understanding of who Christ is as true person.

Because of his use of political metaphor to express the divine/human relation Calvin deliberately avoided using any real spatial language. The political metaphors speak of actions and activity. With the words, when the kingdom is handed over in some way

or other Calvin expressed his unwillingness to become specific as to the way this was to be done or how the divine/human Christ is affected. It has been pointed out by Willis that according to Calvin, the incarnation was not the Eternal Son's abdication of his universal empire but the reassertion of that empire over rebellious creation.¹²⁴ It is this overarching theme which sets the context of the 1 Corinthians Fifteen passage. Calvin did not see Christ's work purely in soteriological terms. That is, as if the whole humanity of Christ was bound to his atoning death alone. Rather, in the final state man does remain man. There is a special dignity expressed by Calvin in the restoration. Man does not lose his uniqueness and become God: man remains man. In his use of metaphor Calvin could speak of Christ's full humanity while doing justice to the divinity. It allowed him to raise the level of human with the divine framework and show how much of Christ (and so ultimately God) is precisely like us. This is one of the more compelling conclusions of Calvin's *personal* Christology.

Exinanitio.

The question one should ask at this point is in what other ways did Calvin use the Christ as true person yet not dehumanized in his theology? The most significant way, and one which lends support to our thesis regarding Calvin's *personal* Christology, is in kenosis. In other words, Calvin confronted a Christ who to our eyes would appear quite *ordinary*. Christ had no real aura of holiness which was obvious to those who confronted Jesus. One would expect Calvin to be more sympathetic with Christ's listeners as there was nothing obvious about

Christ's claim to be the Messiah. Yet the opposite is true. Calvin in his commentaries can be very severe with individuals or groups because of their unbelief. Why is this the case when we read Calvin, 'On all occasions when it was necessary for him to perform the office of teacher, his deity rested and was somehow concealed, that it might not hinder what belonged to him as Mediator.'¹²⁵

How does the teaching of Christ relate to his *exinanitio*? How did Calvin see the relation between hidden and revealed in Christ, hence addressing the integrity of Christ's person? A helpful example is the account of Christ's meeting with the travellers to Emmaus. Calvin contended that in this passage we are not confronted here with a problem of the concealed/revealed but restricted to the object of revelation: Jesus Christ. Calvin upheld a condemnation of the travellers lack of belief based upon the men being confronted with a person who by his actions is virtually surrounded by other individuals from the past who give witness to Jesus Christ: the prophetic and apostolic witness. Christ did not need to seem a divine being, yet according to Calvin the fleshy body still did not eclipse the glory of God even though he appeared quite ordinary. God's glory was carried by the word of Moses and the prophets. The Word was concealed to allow the word of God carried by the prophets to cry out.

When those who encounter Christ manifest unbelief, Calvin rebuked this unbelief because they have not believed the witness made to Christ by Moses and the prophets. Outside of this word of God Christ cannot be correctly seen or known. Christ's witness was

pneumatologically conditioned, as the Spirit revealed Christ in the prophets. The men of Emmaus are deeply depressed, wrote Calvin, because they have not understood the cross and its related events in the light of the prophetic witness:

This passage shows us how Christ is revealed to us through the Gospel, for understanding of Him comes from the light of the Law and the Prophets. No one was ever a more gifted or suitable Teacher of the Gospel than the Lord Himself, and we see that He borrows from the Law and the Prophets the proof of His teaching.¹²⁶

The men of Emmaus lived in despair because they ignored the trinitarian activity of God in revealing himself. For the men of Emmaus, God appeared as one who had cloaked intentions which were not revealed to them. Calvin spoke of the way that their hearts were filled with a sort of ignorance or unbelief towards Christ combined with the witness of other human beings provided by the loving activity of God who pre-interpreted the work and person of Christ.¹²⁷

So when Calvin used *exinanitio* his conceptualization of offence was unique. The possibility of offence can be different if the *exinanitio* of the flesh is placed in an intimate relationship with the Christ-revealing word. For when the offence of which Calvin spoke is not isolated from the revelation concerning Christ, it is possible to say that Calvin believed that revelation of the past which is still sanctioned by the Holy Spirit caused an understanding of the person of Christ.¹²⁸

This is also the line of argument used by Calvin at the story of the Transfiguration. For Calvin the revelational significance about

the event is that Moses and Elijah¹²⁹ appear to discuss with Jesus what is to take place in Jerusalem and it is this witness to the future of Christ which is commended to us, 'for it concerned our faith greatly that Christ did not come without a witness but as one commended by God.'¹³⁰ The word of Moses and Elijah explain the glory of Christ which was not apparent in the flesh and blood person of Christ that was seen,

This should not be restricted to them as private individuals but rather to the embassy once laid upon them. For the Lord wished, although they were long dead and the course of their vocation was done, to seal again by their voice what they had taught in life, so that we might know that set before us in the sacrifice of Christ we have a salvation in common with the holy fathers.¹³¹

Note the distinction made between what Calvin termed, 'private individuals' and 'embassy'. Calvin has stressed how the prophets in communion by participation with God, were not to be thought of as individuals but as true persons, whose ground of being was relational with God, hence giving their messages a character which transcends their own deaths and the time in which they lived. Calvin's criticism of Peter's remarks was founded upon Peter's lack of comprehension of the knowledge the disciples now had concerning Christ through the prophetic witness.¹³²

Calvin did place emphasis in these passages on the things said about Christ, but we should not construe that this omits a correlation of person to person. For example, Calvin commented that the significance of Elijah is not that he left any writings but that throughout his life he championed the cause of the true Church in the face of overwhelming apostasy.¹³³ The larger context for Calvin is the

relationship of Moses and Elijah as representatives. Each individual represents a particular life which is famous for particular qualities. It is their relation to God as true persons which help give meaning to who Christ is. Calvin said that because Moses and Elijah represent Christ they tell us something about Christ.

This type of representation is further used by Calvin in his description of Christ's relation to other teachers in the Church. It is not the similarity in the office which gives structure but what sort of personal relation a teacher possessed. Calvin asked, 'How much does he sustain or represent Christ's person?'¹³⁴ The office is **personalized**. This is a direct result of Calvin's emphasis upon the quality of the relation, whether that individual was one of the prophets or Jesus Christ himself, the importance of the person remained.¹³⁵

Christ's Relationship to the Rest of Humanity.

It is often said that a dominating motif in Calvin's Christology is a Christ who is known fruitfully not in his essence but as he has been towards us in his office.¹³⁶ What are some of the implications of such statements for my thesis?

A helpful way forward has been provided for us by B.G. Armstrong, who writes that what gave Calvin's theology its richness and uniqueness are the terms relationship/communion with God,¹³⁷

If there is one fundamental assumption which underlies the whole of Calvin's theology it is found, I believe, in the

dictum of St. Augustine: that man is created for fellowship or communion with God and is restless until he finds his rest in that God. The relationship or communion with God which is necessary for spiritual life, and therefore for man to be what God created him to be, is most consistently described by Calvin as being a veritable union with the Maker.¹³⁸

How did this participation work for Calvin? For Augustine, as we have seen, the concept of participation was that as a creature the only realm in which participation was possible was in the vestige of the divine, the soul. A human soul reflects in some way its uncreated creator and can therefore in some degree participate in him.¹³⁹ Christ, therefore, causes us to participate in his divinity.¹⁴⁰ For Augustine the emphasis was upon the Platonic distrust of materiality, the soul retains some divine spark. Participation is used to describe the relation between that unseen eternal spirit of the person, the existing object and its archetype or form from which it derives being.¹⁴¹

Calvin was very concerned never to speak of an impersonal participation in the deity as soul to archetype. The real relationship was in communion with the person of Jesus Christ. Berkouwer has said that Calvin was too Scripturally governed to make philosophical distinctions which would utilize an impersonal God.¹⁴² One cannot know Christ until the loving activity of God reveals him, wrote Calvin, then, dependent upon his God's loving activity, something is known about him. This was what Calvin described as Christ's benefits, power or office. Calvin's concern in keeping the unity of the work of the

office with the person was the concern to retain the integrity of the person of Jesus Christ,

And indeed, faith should not cling only to the essence of Christ, so to say, but should pay heed to his power and office. For it would be of little advantage to know who Christ is unless the second point is added of what He wishes towards us and for what purpose He was sent by the Father. Hence it has come about that the Papists have nothing but an esoteric Christ, for all their care has been to apprehend his naked essence; His Kingdom, which consists in the power to save, they have neglected.¹⁴³

Calvin was able to keep the focus on our identification with Jesus the person not by resorting to acts of power through an impersonal deity but through the true person of Jesus who was delivered by the Holy Spirit in ways which we experience by participation in Christ.

Jesus as God in the flesh was granted certain gifts of the Spirit to help him in the completion of the work assigned to him. This was not accomplished by some absorption of the human by the divine but by the work of the Spirit. This sort of confession by Calvin was the direct result of all we have discussed previously: the unity and distinction discussed at Chalcedon, the divine/human relationship, the nature of the incarnation. Christ was genuinely human and assumed our likeness; the Son became subject to history. The relation to the Spirit indicated to us that the person Jesus Christ was grounded in divine relation for the fulfilment of Christ's work.¹⁴⁴

Humanity knows Jesus Christ only as he is towards us according to his office and power. But, Calvin said, we so know him only because of the way he is towards us, because of the unity of the person which is the consequence of the initiative of the Trinity. Calvin argued that

like us Christ was subject to history and death. But the power of the Holy Spirit enabled him to conquer death and to be truly present with humanity now. Between Christ and ourselves there is no gap to fill by means of grace. Christ is pneumatologically present now, with as much power as two thousand years ago. Because of the divine/human relation that is Christ we can know this uniqueness through his Spirit.¹⁴⁵ References to this power of the Spirit were various in Calvin's text, sometimes calling it the divine Spirit of Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ's divine or secret power, or Christ's spiritual power.¹⁴⁶

Calvin continually paralleled the power Christ received to complete his work as the same power we receive of the Holy Spirit to accomplish what we must do.¹⁴⁷ This seems to be one of the most striking aspects of Calvin's teaching. There is no participation in the benefits of Christ except after a communion with his person, hence the motivation of Calvin's doctrine of the eucharist. The communion is not with the impersonal grace of Christ conceivable also apart from him, but with himself through the power of the Spirit.

In contrast to the prophets that went before him, Christ alone was given the Spirit without measure¹⁴⁸ and he alone received the Spirit in order to bestow him on all others. Calvin wrote that Christ did not receive the Spirit as Eternal Son but according to his divine/human manifestation in the flesh,

Moreover, there is no bond of relationship more holy than the spiritual; for He ought not to be considered according to the flesh but by the power of His Spirit in which the Father gave Him to renew men, that those who were by nature

the impure and accursed seed of Abraham might begin by grace to be the holy and heavenly sons of God.¹⁴⁹

Willis explains this use in support of my suggestion as Calvin's *Filloque* Christology.¹⁵⁰ Willis goes further to say that,

The controlling concern for Calvin is how the efficacy and power of Christ's work and person can become real for us, so that we may be a part of his ordering and restoring work. It is by being joined in faith to Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church and the world, that this happens. What safeguards our union with the risen Lord is fervently and carefully affirmed by Calvin. What threatens the union (such as the making of Christ's presence in the Eucharist merely or even overtly symbolic) or the Lordship (such as a Christology which in deifying Christ's humanity offers a Lord who is not the One who suffered on the cross and is not the Lord of our undeified flesh) is rejected with patience and impatience, theological calm and polemic heat.¹⁵¹

For Calvin, speculation on the work of Christ apart from his person was over-speculation. This was because what Christ was in his bare essence apart from any trinitarian activity was not as such, revealed to us. Rather, what we had was the work of Christ and in the ordering of that work we possess the revelation intended for us as to who Christ is.¹⁵² Christ in the way reconciliation is ordered, reveals what he is. As Weber put it, God has involved his total self in Jesus Christ for the sake of humanity.¹⁵³

Calvin's concept of person and office was not merely categorized as function versus ontology. Calvin spoke of the one who is sent; Jesus is personally obligated in the redemption of mankind.¹⁵⁴ This conceptualization of Christ's work as done for us can be found in each of the section headings on the office of Christ in *Institutes* Fifteen: Christ did not receive the anointing to be a prophet for himself;

Christ, the spiritual king, overcame death in such a way that he is bound together with his members, his power is not given for himself alone. As priest, he intercedes for us in eternity and we are supposed to, and may, place ourselves under his intercession. This makes us priests with him¹⁵⁵

In his explanation of the activity within Christ's relational ground of being, Calvin supported his theory of Christ revealed in the ordination of his work by defending the work of Christ from any charge of being accidental or arbitrary. The work dwelled in Christ as a whole person, -it is his work by nature of who he is. In other words, Christ was to fulfil the office of Mediator in precisely the way he did because as God and man he undertook the office freely and obediently. Calvin therefore placed more emphasis on the office of the Mediator as belonging to Jesus as ground of being than as something which was conferred on him. For example, Calvin viewed the baptism of Christ as a temporal designation rather than as the beginning of his official ministry.¹⁵⁶ Calvin wrote that Christ is able to perform his work freely and voluntarily as well as in obedience because of the nature of the divine/human being that he is.¹⁵⁷ Nothing external is necessary to enable Christ to complete his redemptive task because his person was suited to the task set for him.

In trying to summarize what Calvin's different comments have demonstrated, I suggest that it would be best to say that he had an unusually clear eye for a unity and integrity within the person of Christ which led almost naturally to descriptions of his work in which

the hypostatic union of both natures was the most significant. It was the mode of existence, rather than the divine and human as separate and mutually exclusive categories of ontology which shaped Calvin's Christology in his understanding of the person of the Mediator.

For Calvin the fruit of Christ's work was therefore not an impersonal blessedness, a peace and happiness which could also be abstracted from his person, but his blessing and his nearness. Calvin wrote 'that the whole of our salvation, and all the branches of it, are comprehended in Christ' and since 'blessings of every kind are deposited in him, let us draw from his treasury, and from no other source, till our desires are satisfied.'⁵⁰ All of Calvin's Christology has but two objects: to show the relational person that is Jesus Christ and that this person in his activity completely reveals the Trinity of God according to our capacity.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER THREE

¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Ford Lewis Battles (trans.), John T. McNeill (ed.) (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960). Hereafter *Institutes*, 2.15.1.

² *ibid.*, note 3.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Otto Weber, *Foundations in Dogmatics*, Vol. 2. Darrel L. Gruder (trans.) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), p.11. Barth noted this also. A doctrine of the person of Christ separate from his work would lead sooner or later to the question whether this work could not have been accomplished by another agent (*Church Dogmatics* 4.1., p. 127ff.) Barth did not mention it, but I believe Calvin would say that the obvious choice here would be the doctrine of the Church which distributes the grace it has received from Christ.

⁵ Sidney Cave, *The Doctrine of the Person of Christ*. (London: Duckworth Press, 1925), p. 125.

⁶ Gerald Bonner, 'Christ, God and Man in the Thought of St. Augustine', in *God's Decree and Man's Destiny, Studies on the Thought of St. Augustine of Hippo*. (London: Variorum Reprints, 1987), p. 272.

⁷ Heiko A. Obermann, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 252-3. A similar view is suggested by Colin Gunton in 'Augustine, The Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43 (1990) pp. 33-58.

⁸ H.R. Mackintosh, *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ*. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912), p. 225.

⁹ *Verbum quod ubique totum est*. Quoted in J.A. Dorner, *The History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ*. Division 2 Volume 1. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1869), p. 400.

¹⁰ St. Augustine, *De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione* 1:60 (31). In Migne, Jacques-Paul (ed.), *Patrologia cursus completus, series Latina*. (Paris, 1844ff), vol 44, p. 144.

¹¹ Dorner, *op. cit.*, p. 399.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 400. Yet Willis suggests that, 'Augustine's Christology might indeed have been strengthened had it given more attention to the manner of the Incarnation. But it is not correct to imply Augustine felt he was confessing anything less than the Incarnation of the Eternal Son. Augustine was quite certain that in taking our flesh the Eternal Son assumed to himself what was not united to him before the Incarnation.' E. David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology: The function of the so-called extra*

calvinisticum in Calvin's Theology. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought, Vol. 2 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), p. 48 note 2.

¹³ 'In quantum enim homo in tantum mediator.' St. Augustine, *Confessiones* 10:43. In Migne, Jacques-Paul (ed.), *Patrologia cursus completus, series Latina*. (Paris, 1844ff), vol 32 p. 144.

¹⁴ Cave, *op. cit.*, quotation from *On Catechising*, 4. p. 126.

¹⁵ 'Augustine asserts in strongest terms the two-nature doctrine. In the manhood of Christ he delights to see at once, the supreme instance of God's grace, and an example of humility for us to follow. 'What merit had the human nature in the man Christ earned, that it should, in this unparalleled way, be taken up into the unity of the person of the Son of God? ...Now wherefore was this unheard-of-glory conferred on human nature - a glory, which, as there was no antecedent merit, was of course wholly of grace - except that here those who looked at the matter soberly and honestly might behold a clear manifestation of the power of God's free grace, and might understand that they are justified from their sins by the same grace which made the man Christ Jesus full from the possibility of sin.' (*Enchiridon*, 36).' Cave, *op. cit.*, p. 125-6.

¹⁶ Dorner, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

¹⁷ Willis, *op. cit.*, p. 38-9, note 4.

¹⁸ Peter Lombard, in *Sententiarum Libri IV*. In Migne, Jacques-Paul (ed.), *Patrologia cursus completus, series Latina*. (Paris, 1844ff), vol 192. See especially III *Sent.* d 6 cap. 4, 5, 6; d 7 cap. 2 and d 10 cap. 1. Lombard said that in respect to his humanity Christ was nothing at all.

¹⁹ Dorner, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 318.

²¹ Obermann, *op. cit.*, p. 251-2.

²² Walter H. Principe, 'St Thomas on the *Habitus*-Theory of the Incarnation.' In *St. Thomas Aquinas 1274-1974*. Commemorative Studies. Armand D. Maurer (ed.) (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1974), p. 417, 'The positive meaning of all this for Thomas' own doctrine is that these intricate analyses show once again how strong is his insistence on the unity of person and supposit in Christ, and how persistently he seeks to eliminate a human supposit in Christ's human nature.'

²³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae, Blackfriars*. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1975), 3a. 9, 1.

²⁴ Willis, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

²⁵ Dorner, *op. cit.*, p. 318, 'That Thomas not only did not arrive at the true idea of the incarnation, but even endeavoured to evade it, is plain from what has been advanced; but especially clear from the mode in which he discusses the formulas, 'God is Man, Man is God.' *Summa Theologiae* III q. 16.'

²⁶ 'Sed Pater post incarnationem Filii potest assumere naturam humanam aliam numero ab ea quam Filius assumpsit; in nullo enim per incarnationem Filii est diminuta potentia Patris vel Filii. Ergo videtur quod Filius post incarnationem possit aliam humanam naturam assumere, praeter eam quam assumpsit.' *Summa Theologiae* 3a. 3, 7.

²⁷ 'At the same time Biel shares the concern of Scotus and Occam that the subsistence theory, which proved to be such an excellent barricade against the inroads of Nestorian errors, should not itself become a matrix for the opposite danger: monophysitism.' Obermann, p. 259.

²⁸ *Summa Theologiae* 3a. 26, 2.

²⁹ 'But from the moment of conception Christ had the full vision of the very being of God, as we will hold later on. Therefore he could not have had faith.' *Summa Theologiae* 3a. 7, 3. 'Now from the moment of conception Christ enjoyed the full possession of God... Hence he had not the virtue of hope.' *Summa Theologiae* 3a. 7, 4.

³⁰ *Summa Theologiae* 3a. 9, 2 and 34, 4.

³¹ *Summa Theologiae* 3a 28, 2 and 35, 6.

³² *Summa Theologiae* 3a. 48, 2.

³³ E.M. Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism: Socinianism and Its Antecedents* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 94.

³⁴ Baum, Wilhelm, Cunitz, Edward, and Reuss, Edward (eds.) *Ioannis Calvini Opera quae supersunt omnia*. (Braunschweig [and later Berlin]: C.A. Schwetschke & Sons, 1863-1900), vol. 8, p. 482. Hereafter CQ

³⁷ *Institutes* 2.14.5. Cf. *Dialogi de Trinitate* p. 263-268, [Italics mine], 'Rorem illum coelestem virgini ovum brantem, et semini eius et sanguini sese immiscentem transformasse in Deum humanam materiam.'

'Duas naturas confundens dicit lucem creatam et increatam fuisse in Christo unam lucem: et ex Spiritu divino et omnia humana constituisse in Christo unam substantialem animam'

³⁸ Wilbur, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-145.

³⁶ 'He felt that Christian theology urgently required to be reconstructed from bottom to top, both in its speculative doctrines and in its relation to practical life; and it was his distinction in this book to be the first to propose a thoroughgoing plan, however

Imperfect for carrying out such a reconstruction: *Christianismi Restitutio*. *Totius Ecclesiae Apostolicae est ad sue limina vocatio, integrum restituta cognitione Dei, fidei Christi, justificationis nostrae, regenerationis baptismi et coenae domini manducationis. Restitutio denique nobis regno caelesti, Babylonis impiae captivitate soluta et Antechristo cum suis penitus destructa.*' *ibid.*, p. 142.

⁴⁸ *Institutes* 2.14.5.

⁴⁹ *Institutes* 2.14.7, 'For even though the description of him was then somewhat obscure, it is clearly proved that he was eternal God solely because he was the Word begotten by the eternal Father; and that this name belonged to the person of the Mediator, which he had taken upon himself, only because he was God manifested in the flesh.'

⁵⁰ Wilbur, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

⁵¹ CO 19.39-40, '*Coepit deinde per ambages in quaestionem trahere fidei nostrae articulum de Christi deitate... Eodem ipse tempore suis quaestionibus fatigabat Calvinum: eoque magis, quod quum subinde fingeret se peccatum esse, et acquiesceret responsis, postidie redibat quasi novus, nec desinebat ea ipsa de quibus saepe audierat sciscitari.*'

⁵² CO 9.325. Translation mine.

⁵³ CO 17.170.

⁵⁴ CO 9.330, '*Quaestio: An aeternus sermo Dei aliquid substantivum sit et essentiale, ambigua est: ac proinde captiosa esse potest.*'

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, Translation mine.

⁵⁶ CO 9.326. Translation mine.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ CO 9.327, '*Hoc autem respectu filius ipse subicitu patri in futuro saeculo, quia ipse divinitas perfecto tunc nobis erit conspicua, qua nunc in imagine pro nostro modulo relucet.*' Cf. *Commentary on Luke 19.41.*

⁵⁹ *Institutes* 1.13.6.

⁶⁰ CO 9.330, '*Si tamen aliter accipere libeat, facile concedo.*'

⁶¹ CO 9.331. Translation mine.

⁶² CO 18.261-262. Translation mine.

⁶³ *Responsum ad Fratres Polonos Quomodo Mediator Sit Christus ad Refutandum Stancari Errorum*, Translation mine. CO 9.333.

⁶⁴ *Ministorum Ecclesiae Genevensis Responsio ad Nobiles Polonos et Franciscum Stancarum Mantuum De Controversia Mediatoris*, Translation mine. CO 9.343.

⁶⁵ For example, 'Nor do we deny that the entire deity is understood in the word Father, and that the God of one essence in three persons was appeased.' CO 9.353. Translation mine.

⁶⁶ CO 9.338. Translation mine.

⁶⁷ 'Nor should we omit in this matter the saying of Peter, that the holy prophets once spoke by the spirit of Christ (1 Pet. 1.10), because here it is not only a question of the eternal Word, but of the office of the Mediator; if he governed the prophets by his spirit when he was not yet clothed in the flesh, it follows that divinity is included in this same person.' CO 9.340. Translation mine.

⁶⁸ CO 9.351. Translation mine. See also, '...there is no doubt that Paul means the whole person, because if the glory and power proper to the one God resided in him as belonging to him, with regard to his human nature alone, then that saying of Isaiah would destroy it, 'I live,' says Jehovah, 'my glory I give to no other' (Is. 42.8). CO 9.338-9.

'Furthermore, no sane man will deny that Christ sits at the Father's right hand, insofar as he is God revealed in the flesh and this is affirmed of the whole person.' CO 9.351.

'It is also true to say that all the actions which Christ performed to reconcile God and man refer to the whole person and are not to be separately restricted to only one nature.' CO 9.340.

'If the objection be raised that the kingdom was given him by divinity, there is nothing absurd in saying that Christ can increase in reference to his complete person.' CO 9.351.

'To whom does he say the supreme name is given, unless to the Son of God who, though equal to the Father, emptied himself taking the form of a servant? Paul places before our eyes a complete person composed of two natures.' *ibid*

'John's whole gospel in fact, is brought to mind by similar statements of Christ as when he claims for himself what does not belong to either nature but concerns the complete person.' CO 9.352.

'Both these elements are clearly joined in Christ's words: 'For these I sanctify myself' (John 17.19); to be sanctified belongs to the flesh, and on the other hand, to sanctify belongs to God, but both are found only in the complete person.' *ibid*

⁶⁹ CO 9.351. Translation mine.

⁷⁰ Joseph N. Tylenda, 'Christ the Mediator: Calvin versus Stancaro,' *Calvin Theological Journal*, 8 (1973), p. 5ff.

⁷¹ CO 9.353. Translation mine.

⁷² John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church*. (New York, NY: St. Vladimir's Press, 1985), p. 88.

⁷³ *Institutes* 1.13.19, 25. The terms employed here by Calvin are *autotheos* and *a se ipso*, from which aseity is derived. Similarly these terms are the basis of the debate with the Anti-Trinitarians. Muller suggests that Calvin's use of these terms sufficiently proves that Calvin began from an Augustinian basis in his Christology. Richard Muller, *Christ and Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins. Studies in Historical Theology* 2. David C. Steinmetz (ed.) (Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, 1986), p. 30. Yet I would argue that Muller has missed some of the deeper ontological questions of Calvin's restructuring of Christology in his exposition of the person of Christ as God-man. The emphasis on the unity of the person of the Mediator assumes an integrity of divine and human natures and their ontological position in relation. It is only in relation that Nestorian tendencies can be avoided. A focus on the concrete person of Jesus in history does not preclude a being in relation. Muller has done little with the evidence of the gospel commentaries which, while affirming Christ's true humanity, also emphasize his uniqueness as Second Adam, sustained by the fullness of the Spirit. Muller's position would then view the activity of the Spirit as gaping the distance between the transcendent divine and the human.

⁷⁴ What is meant by a docetic tendency is the general assumption that divine and non-divine are basically incompatible, hence based upon dualistic foundations.

⁷⁵ I would like to pursue this statement further; the following is a list of evidences indicating this tendency.

⁷⁶ George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), p. 589. Williams suggests Calvin came in contact with Hoffmanites at Strasbourg.

⁷⁷ Williams, p. 394.

⁷⁸ Menno Simons, *Complete Writings*, Leonard Verduin (trans.) John C. Wenger (ed.), (Scottdale, PA.: Herald Press, 1965), p. 793.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p. 433.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 807.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 797.

⁸² *ibid.*, p. 798.

⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 907.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 796.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 437ff.

⁸⁶ Calvin was also willing to risk the charge of theopaschitism which could be seen as a tendency of this view.

⁸⁷ 'The most fitting description of Christ's person is contained in the words, 'God manifested in the flesh...' he asserts the unity of His Person by declaring that it was one and the same Person who was God and who was manifested in the flesh.' Commentary on 1 Timothy 3:16.

⁸⁸ I realise that this does not answer the charge that Calvin refused to subscribe to the Nicene and Athanasian creeds in his dispute with Caroli. The question in that context was not over the content of the creeds but their authority over the believer as opposed to Scripture. Obviously, Calvin would never agree to Caroli's proposal in those terms.

⁸⁹ Herbert Bindley (ed.), *The Oecumenical Documents of the Faith* (London: Methuen & Co., 1899), p. 297.

⁹⁰ See E. Emmen, *De Christologie van Calvijn* (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1935), p. 40. Cf., *Institutes* 2:14:4. Commentary on 1 Timothy 3:16.

⁹¹ *Institutes* 2:14:3.

⁹² *Institutes* 2:14:4.

⁹³ *Institutes* 2:4:7.

⁹⁴ Joseph N. Tylenda, 'Christ the Mediator: Calvin versus Stancaro,' *Calvin Theological Journal*, 8 (1973), p. 64.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 65.

⁹⁶ Tylenda, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁹⁷ See *Institutes* 2:14:4, 'This is because they do not consider the expressions suitable either to his person, in which he was manifested as God and man, or to the office of the Mediator.'

⁹⁸ Hence in his statement concerning the statement of Christ, 'Before Abraham was born, I am,' he commented that this statement was very inapplicable to his humanity because he clearly distinguishes here the day of his manifestation from his eternal essence. On the other hand it is also plain, wrote Calvin, that Christ's increase in stature and wisdom, his not knowing the day of the Lord, his not doing his own will and his being handled and seen belong to the humanity. It is always a question of the activity of the concrete subject, Jesus Christ. Cf. *Institutes* 2:14:2.

⁹⁹ Johannes L. Witte, 'Die Christologie Calvins' *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Band 3, *Chalkedon Heute*. A. Grillmeier, H. Bacht (Hrsg.) (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1954), pp. 487-529. Hereafter KCGG.

¹⁰⁰ Witte, KCGG p. 529, *Calvin hat einige wertvolle antiochenische Elemente der Christologie betont, welche zum*

»despositum fidei« gehören, so besonders das »Unversmicht« und das »salva proprietate utriusque naturae«.

¹⁰¹ *Commentary on John 1:14*, 'Although the Evangelist touches only briefly upon the ineffable mystery of the Son of God putting on human nature, this brevity is wonderfully clear.'

¹⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁰³ Für Calvin ist die *communicatio idiomatum* nicht in einer ontologischen Vereinigung zwischen den beiden Naturen grundgelegt, sondern ausschließlich im Amte Christi als Mittler, was eine persönliche Vereinigung («persönlich» im Sinne Calvins) erforderte. KCGG p. 503. As early as 1927 H. Bauke cited Calvin's understanding of the *finitum non capax infiniti* and the *extra-Calvinisticum* as proof of the softness of Calvin's christological position, *In dem von Calvin festgehaltenen Grundsatz des „finitum non capax infiniti“ wie in dem später sogenannten „extra-Calvinisticum“, wonach der Logos ganz ausserhalb der menschlichen Natur existiert, das „Nestorianisieren“ ganz deutlich wird.* Emmen, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁴ *Commentary on Matthew 26:37*.

¹⁰⁵ *Commentary on Hebrews 5:7*, 'In what way was Christ heard out of His fear, when He underwent the death which He shrank from? My answer is that we must look to the point of His fear. Why did he dread death except that He saw in it the curse of God, and that He had to wrestle with the total sum of human guilt, and with the very powers of darkness themselves. Hence His fear and anxiety, because the judgement of God is more than terrifying.'

¹⁰⁶ *Commentary on Matthew 26:39*, 'The same vehemence took from Him any present thoughts of the decree of heaven, so that for a moment He did not think how He was sent to be the Redeemer of the human race.'

¹⁰⁷ *Commentary on Matthew 26:39*.

¹⁰⁸ See Bauke mentioned above. The most significant contributor to this view is Werner Elert, who sees this principle operating in the Antiochene Christology and characteristic in Reformed Christology. From this Elert concludes that wherever the principle is at work, one is moving toward Nestorius. *Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie*, 16 (1939), pp. 500-504.

¹⁰⁹ Willis, *op. cit.*, p. 74; Cf., G.C. Berkouwer, *The Person of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), p. 282.

¹¹⁰ Willis, *op. cit.*, p. 74. Cf., *Commentary on John 1:14*. 'The transcendence of the divine provides Calvin with the conceptual background for his doctrine of the union of the divine with human nature in Christ. The absolute transcendence of Christ's divinity represents on one hand Calvin's ever present concern for maintaining the sovereignty of God while on the other demonstrates his effort to

underscore the reality of Christ's human nature and its identity with the nature of all men,' Richard Muller, *Christ and Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins. Studies in Historical Theology 2*. David C. Steinmetz (ed.) (Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, 1986), p. 20. 'The *extra-calvinisticum* was an effort to show that the human nature of Christ is *homousios* with man just as the divine nature is *homousios* with the Father.' *Ibid.*, p. 187, note 16.

¹¹¹ Willis, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

¹¹² *Commentary on Matthew 3:16*, 'So now, in the fulness of time, to equip Him for the fulfillment of the office of Redeemer, He is endowed with a new power of the Spirit, and this not so much for His own sake, as for others. And this is deliberately done to teach the faithful to receive and embrace with reverence His divine power, and not treat the weakness of his flesh with scorn.' Cf. *Institutes* 4:17:2.

¹¹³ *Commentary John 4:6; 11:33*.

¹¹⁴ Bouwsma, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-48.

¹¹⁵ *Commentary Luke 2:40*.

¹¹⁶ Willis *op. cit.*, p. 74-5, 'Part of the charge that Calvin works on the basis of the *finitum non capax infiniti* principle is that his thought reflect crudely naive spatial categories.'

¹¹⁷ *Commentary Hebrews 13:8*.

¹¹⁸ Willis *op. cit.*, p. 75, 'The supremacy of political language is manifest in Calvin's account of the Incarnation.'

¹¹⁹ Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement*. A.G. Herbert (trans.), (New York: MacMillan & Co., 1969).

¹²⁰ *Commentary on John 12:31*, 'Now we know that outside Christ there is nothing but confusion in the world. And although Christ had already begun to set up the kingdom of God, it was His death that was the true beginning of a properly-ordered state and the complete restoration of the world.' See also *Commentary on John 1:21*, 'This will become clearer by a metaphor. Even ambassadors who are sent on matters of no great moment receive the name and authority of ambassadors, if indeed they hold personal commissions. Such were all the prophets who, provided with definite prophecies, discharged the prophetic office. but suppose a matter of great weight comes up and two ambassadors are sent, one of whom announces that another will soon come to negotiate the whole affair and with a commission to carry the business through. Will not the former be reckoned a part and appendix of the principal one? So it was with John, to whom God had enjoined nothing other than the preparation of disciples for Christ.'

¹²¹ First suggested by Heinrich Gulstorp in *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*. Harold Knight (trans.) (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955), as an indication of the 'softness' of Calvin's Christology.

¹²² *Commentary on 1 Corinthians 15:27.*

¹²³ Willis, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹²⁵ *Commentary on Luke 19:41.*

¹²⁶ *Commentary on Luke 24:27.* See also further, 'That Christ may be seen by us today through the Gospel, Moses and Prophets must take their place as forerunners.'

¹²⁷ In another passage, Calvin wrote, 'God had promised a redeemer to bring help to the wretched and the lost. The extreme need into which they were cast demanded above all God's help. The Redeemer is present, first heralded by John and then Himself bearing witness to His office; they are forced to acknowledge something divine in Him, and yet they slip into imaginings and transmute Him into other persons.' *Commentary on Matthew 14:2.*

¹²⁸ *Commentary on Luke 24:32.* 'They did not infer that it was Christ from the bare sign of His speech setting their hearts on fire; but because they gave Him His due honour - 'when He spoke with His mouth, our hearts glowed with the inward fire of His Spirit.' Paul boasts that the ministration of the Spirit was given him (2 Cor. 3. 8), and Scripture often gives marks of approval to ministers of the Word, as they convert hearts, illuminate the minds, and renew men to make them pure and sacred victims: and this is not to put forward a display of their own power, but rather what the Lord does through them. Christ alone enjoys both properties, of speaking a word outwardly, and effectively shaping the heart to obedience of faith.'

¹²⁹ Elijah is thought by Calvin to represent all the prophets. Cf. *Commentary on Matthew 17:3.*

¹³⁰ *Commentary on Matthew 17:3.*

¹³¹ *Commentary on Matthew 17:3.*

¹³² 'For although he had heard Moses and Elijah say the time of Christ's death was nigh, yet in his stupor he dreamed that this appearance, in fact temporary, would be eternal. Why did he narrow down Christ's kingdom to a little space of twenty or thirty feet? Where was the redemption of the whole Church? Where the fellowship of eternal salvation? It was also very perverse to think that Elijah and Moses were colleagues of the Son of God, as if it were not necessary for all to be forced into their proper place so that He alone might be pre-eminent.' *Commentary on Matthew 17:4.*

¹³³ *Commentary on Matthew 17:3*, 'And there is truth in another reason often given, that Elijah was chiefly chosen to represent all the prophets. Although he left no writings, yet after Moses he was the chief, restoring the vitiated worship of God; he was the incomparable champion of the Law and true godliness, almost extinct in his day.'

¹³⁴ *Commentary on Matthew 23:6*, 'We must always keep it distinct that Christ alone is to be obeyed, because for Him alone the Father's voice was heard from heaven, 'Hear him.' Teachers are His servants, duty bound to let His voice be heard in them, and they are masters under Him so far as they represent His Person (*personam eius sustinent*).'

¹³⁵ Willis, *op. cit.*, p. 85, 'The *triplex munus* scheme is not a vehicle to help Calvin delineate three different functions of Christ; it sets forth three aspects of the ministry of the one redeeming Mediator. And the central fact about that office, the thread which ties the *triplex munus* together much more than later orthodoxy is wont to acknowledge, is the obedience of the one who is the subject and the active executor of these functions.'

¹³⁶ Willis, *op. cit.*, p. 61, 'The theme which dominates Calvin's Christology is that Christ is to be known fruitfully not in his essence but in his power to save, not as he is invisibly in himself, but as the Father willed him to be towards us in his office.'

¹³⁷ B.G. Armstrong, 'The Nature and Structure of Calvin's Thought According to the *Institutes*: Another Look.' in *John Calvin's Institutes his opus magnum. Proceedings of the Second South African Congress for Calvin Research, July 31-August 3, 1984*. Johannes van der Walt (ed.) Wetenskaplike Bydraes of the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education. Series F: Institute for Reformational Studies F3: Collections, 28 (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1986), p. 62.

¹³⁸ *ibid.* p. 61.

¹³⁹ Gerald Bonner, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 276.

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 272.

¹⁴² Berkouwer, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

¹⁴³ *Commentary on John 1:49*.

¹⁴⁴ Berkouwer, *op. cit.*, p. 295, 'With the gifts are meant those which equipped the man Jesus Christ for the fulfillment of his official calling. This is not a granting of the supernatural to the human nature but the equipment, but the gifts of the Spirit, of Jesus Christ for the completion of the work assigned to him.'

¹⁴⁵ *Commentary on Genesis 28:12*, 'For although all power is committed even to his human nature by the Father, he still would not truly sustain our faith, unless he were God manifested in the flesh. And the fact that the body of Christ is finite, does not prevent him from filling heaven and earth, because his grace and power are everywhere diffused.'

¹⁴⁶ Cf. *Institutes* 2:13:2; *Commentary on John* 16:7, 16:5.

¹⁴⁷ *Institutes* 2:13:4; *Commentary on Hebrews* 2:11; *Commentary on Matthew* 3:16.

¹⁴⁸ *Commentary on Luke* 1:15, 'We know that to Christ alone the Spirit was given without measure that from his fulness we may all drink.'

¹⁴⁹ *Commentary on Matthew* 12:48. See also *Commentary on Luke* 19:41.

¹⁵⁰ Willits, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 91-2.

¹⁵² See *Commentary on John* 1:49, 'And indeed, faith should not cling only to the essence of Christ, so to say, but should pay heed to His power and office. For it would be of little advantage to know who Christ is unless the second point is added, for what He wishes to be towards us and for what purpose He was sent by the Father. Hence it has come about that the Papists have his naked essence; His kingdom, which consists in the power to save, they have neglected.'

¹⁵³ *op. cit.*, p. 12.

¹⁵⁴ This theme is well discussed by Paul Van Buren in *Christ in Our Place*. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), *passim*.

¹⁵⁵ *Institutes* 2.15.2,3,6. See also *Commentary on Matthew* 3.16, 'So now, in the fulness of time, to equip Him for the fulfillment of the office of Redeemer, He is endowed with a new power of the Spirit, and this not so much for His own sake, as for others.'

¹⁵⁶ In describing the baptism of Christ Calvin wrote, 'Thus John sees the Holy Spirit descending upon Christ, to teach us that there is nothing carnal or earthly to be looked for in Christ as such, but rather He comes forth from heaven as a divine man under the royal power of the Holy Spirit. We know that He is God, manifested in the flesh, but His heavenly power is also to be thought upon His person as minister, in His human nature.' *Commentary on Matthew* 3.16.

¹⁵⁷ *Commentary on Matthew* 3.14, 'So Christ tells him to consider what suits the character of the servant He has assumed, for His voluntary submission takes nothing away from His glory.'

¹⁵⁸ *Institutes* 2:16:19.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE OFFICE INTERRELATIONSHIP

Introduction.

This Chapter will develop further the argument presented in Chapters Two and Three. In the structure of the threefold office, Calvin has outlined the necessity of the relational character of the person of the Mediator. As we come to discuss the interrelation of the offices, several strands of the structure reveal themselves. The strands of this structure will be areas which we will discuss in this Chapter.

The first section of the Chapter will deal with a further exploration of Calvin's christological rationale in the offices. This will focus on his understanding of the term 'Christ' or 'anointed'. By this biblical concept, Calvin grounded his understanding of the activity and relational person of God in history. It further underscores the reality of the coming of the person of the Mediator as the fulfillment of Old Testament promise. Hence the necessity of God's activity is emphasized. Throughout his description of the offices, Calvin continued to underscore Christ's relational character.

The second section of the Chapter will examine the text of *Institutes* Chapter Fifteen in particular. We will see evidence in the terminology of the office that Calvin developed his soteriological

theory in a unity, focussed on the unity of the person, who by his very being was in relation with the Father and Holy Spirit, and that humanity relates to him by participation, grounded in the power of the Holy Spirit. We will also catalogue Calvin's application of the office. This will focus particularly on the offices of king and priest, as the prophetic office is the particular subject of the next Chapter. I will suggest that even in the distinctive activities in each of the offices, Calvin still retained a trinitarian understanding of their activity.

The third section of the Chapter will discuss the distinctiveness of each office, grounded upon Calvin's understanding of Christ's ontology. The fourth will examine some of the claims made by John Frederick Jansen, highlighting his functional approach. The last section will examine the significance of what we have discussed.

The Christological Rationale.

The question of where to begin would seem to be an important issue to settle. At this point I suggest Calvin's *Institutes* as a desirable starting point. This is because of the value Calvin himself placed upon later editions of the work as a help to the Christian reader in establishing the traditional doctrinal context of the biblical text. It would be helpful, therefore, to consider first an analysis of Chapter Fifteen, Book Two of *Institutes*. Through this analysis the basic characteristics of Calvin's understanding of the threefold office will become clear.

The Chapter, including the title,¹ as it now stands in the final 1559 edition of the *Institutes* was almost completely rewritten from the 1539 Latin edition. The remaining sections of the Chapter were in place within the 1536 and 1539 editions.² The Chapter itself is divided into six sections with the bulk of the work focussed upon the kingly office followed by the prophetic and the priestly. The actual sequence of the Chapter can be broken down into sections: 1,2 prophetic; 3-5 kingly; 6 priestly. These sections were not titled in Calvin's original Latin edition. As far as the development of Chapter Fifteen itself is concerned, we can begin with the first edition of 1536 which laid down the schema of the editions to follow. In 1536 Calvin wrote,

We also believe that Christ himself was sprinkled with all the graces of the Holy Spirit. These are called 'oil' because without these we waste away, dry and barren. And as the Spirit has rested upon him, and has poured itself wholly upon him, in order that we may all receive from his fulness (that is, whoever of us are partners and partakers of him through faith) [Isa. 11:1-5; 61: 1-3; Jn. 1:16].³

Within this text and his *Instruction in Faith* of 1537⁴ Calvin mentions only the two-fold office of king and priest. In the edition of *Institutes* 1539, however, the prophetic office of Christ begins to appear, and it was explicitly added to the other two.⁵ By the time Calvin wrote his Latin *Catechism* of 1545,⁶ the threefold office was clearly placed under the Messianic name: Christ. The full title read: *To Know The Purpose For Which Christ Was Sent By The Father, And What He Conferred Upon Us, We Must Look Above All At Three Things In Him: The Prophetic Office, Kingship, And Priesthood*. Thus it was the title of the Christ, the one anointed by the Spirit at a specific point in

history, which became the significant focus for Calvin's structure of the offices.

With the anointing of Jesus by the Holy Spirit, Calvin was able to bring the activity of God firmly within history. In using the term Jesus is the Christ, Calvin has brought us back to a basic christological statement: Jesus is the Messiah. In the Old Testament the Messiah was in fact expected precisely as the bearer of the Spirit. Jesus is the Christ inasmuch as he is anointed by the Spirit. Thus as the Messiah he is not just a private person but an 'official' person. In the Old Testament, anointing of kings and priests signified public authorization by God.

In the confession of faith that Jesus is the Christ, Calvin sums up Jesus' significance for salvation. The statement means first that the person of Jesus himself is salvation; it therefore expresses the unique and irreplaceable character of the gospel. It contains a public and universal claim and thereby excludes any false idea that salvation is only interior and private. It also says how Jesus is the salvation of the world; he is filled with the Holy Spirit and we share in the fulness of that Spirit. Salvation is therefore participation through the Holy Spirit in the life of God as revealed by Jesus Christ.

Calvin expressed the work of the Holy Spirit in the offices in a significant way. The Spirit is first of all the freedom of God's love and its possibility, as the Spirit impels him outwards. Thus the activity of the Trinity is thrust into history, as Jesus in this

anointing receives all the gifts of grace of the Spirit and is in fact, wholly filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowers Christ in the accomplishment of his work. In the same way that the Spirit has given Christ the ability to enter creation by the incarnation, like Jesus' whole history and culmination, is done in the Holy Spirit.

The unction of the Spirit which Christ received in the offices, and the blessing which followed from God the Father, set up for Calvin the trinitarian structure of the offices. At his baptism Jesus is installed in his Messianic office by the Spirit.⁷ The Spirit is, as it were, the medium in which God graciously acts in Jesus Christ and in which Jesus Christ by his obedience to the will of the Father is the response in a personal form. The Spirit is that personal bond of freedom of the love between the Father and Son and is the medium through which the Father freely and out of pure grace sends the Son. Thus all persons of the Trinity are represented in the activity of the office of the Mediator. The pneumatological relation in the offices becomes particularly significant as the Church is enabled to participate in this office, as each of the benefits are shared between us.

The anointing of Christ has further significance in the unity of the Old and New Testaments, that is in the fulfilment in Christ of the Old Testament promises.⁸ The Spirit is active in creation and in the Old Testament civilization, agriculture and politics; all human wisdom is the gift of the Spirit of God.⁹ He 'comes upon' particular human

belongs and makes them instruments of God's design. The Spirit is, so to speak, the sphere in which persons moved by him are placed. The Judges, Moses, Joshua, David¹⁰ and the Prophets are therefore not described as the bearers of the Spirit but as people borne up by the Spirit. It is said both that the Spirit is in them and rests on them, and also that they are in the Spirit. But most of all, it is expected of the Messiah who is to come that 'the Spirit of the Lord rests upon him.' Calvin's comments on *munus triplex* were therefore very concisely put in *Institutes* 2:15. The definition for the *munus triplex* was drawn along the following pattern: Old Testament images and the nature of the office explained in light of their fulfilment, certain distinctives considered, and the unified meaning of the office 'for us'.

The Christ as unifying centre of relation.

In relation to humanity, the title Christ seems to contain a twofold structure. The first Calvin employed in references to the uniqueness of the person of the Redeemer: He, the Christ, was the unique 'person' of God of whom there is no other. Calvin here underscored the unique ground of Christ's being as relational. The second describes the activity of the person of the Mediator, in the power of the Spirit, drawing humanity into closer relation with God. Here Calvin referred to Christ as the activity of human and God in relation to one another, focussed on the person of Jesus Christ.

Even in writing on what one might call a general or 'classical redemptive' list of benefits, such as righteousness, wisdom, holiness and redemption.¹¹ Calvin still stressed the necessity of sourcing such benefits in the person of Christ. In his comments on 1 Corinthians 3:11-12, Calvin summed them all up when he wrote,

We must therefore note how the Church is properly built up on Christ; viz. if He alone is set up for righteousness, redemption, sanctification, wisdom, satisfaction, cleansing, in short for life and glory... Now if Christ is not properly known, and is given merely the name of Redeemer, while at the same time righteousness, sanctification, and salvation are sought elsewhere, He is ejected from the foundation and counterfeit stones are substituted in His place.¹²

These characteristics were a summation of the mode of existence for the believer in Christ; in other words, this listing of characteristics by Calvin was to emphasize what was lost when a focus was erroneously placed outside of Christ.

I suggested in Chapter Three that Calvin was conscious of a deliberate patterning of soteriological benefits from an unfruitful christological view, most likely that of earlier scholasticism. This is certainly borne out by the location of such passages within their larger context. That is, Calvin usually appended a criticism of the scholastic position toward Christ in his commentary at these locations. In other words, what is meant by the 'mode of existence' is the idea that a believer has possession or ready access to these characteristics, and receives them with Christ in relation to him.¹³ This is usually set in contrast by Calvin in his more polemical passages with those outside a relationship with God, which was either the caricature of earlier scholasticism or the false or papal church

of his period.¹⁴ As we look at the passage just quoted that particular context becomes apparent. Calvin in this passage answered how the Church was built upon Christ, but he also called in the metaphor of the rejected or counterfelt stone as a precursory event once done by Israel and now repeated by the Church of Rome. For Calvin in his comments on this passage the main part of the exposition of the text in explaining Christ was in the very rejection of Christ in the work of the 'apostate' or papal church.¹⁵

Overall then, we have Calvin speaking most of all of the activity of Christ as the person of the Mediator: a unique position as God relation, and a corporate position as one 'of us' in relation to God. His main thrust was to underscore the accessibility which the believer has to Christ and that these benefits do not require the secondary mediation of another. Calvin further employed a particular way of speaking here which indicates his reference to the unfruitful christological views which focus outside the person of Christ. It is contained in his reference to the papists of 'stripping' Christ of his dignity.¹⁶ The Latin *dignitate* can normally in modern English refer to merely the 'worth' of something, but I suggest that Calvin's Latin could also include a range of meaning which can contain connotations of Christ's rank or position. Clearly a word which links well with the terms *munus* or *officium*, Christ's rank or position in his role as mediator was stripped by those who thought to mediate for Christ within the structure of the Church.¹⁷

Once again, surrounding the organization of older theological models, Calvin stressed the working of the benefits within Christ rather than outside of Christ, and that this activity of Christ was due to the uniqueness of his position as mediate office holder. This religion, said Calvin, which sought redemption outside of Christ through robbery of Christ's office for themselves, was counterfeit, that is, was not inwardly correct; the relation of the believer to Christ was compromised.

I suggest that the theological significance of relation equally argues the change. Calvin believed that the healthy or living relationship between Jesus and the believer was supposed to focus on the person of Christ himself.¹⁶ Not content with a bare listing of the benefits of Christ, Calvin proposed seeing differing biblical metaphors in light of what Christ in his activity does for his own people. Such a metaphor is found in Genesis 28:12, about which Calvin wrote,

For the similitude of a ladder well suits the Mediator, through whom ministering angels, righteousness and life, with all the graces of the Holy Spirit, descend to us step by step. We also, who were not only fixed to the earth, but plunged into the depths of the curse, and into hell itself ascend even unto God.¹⁷

Calvin's interesting comment on Jacob's ladder in Genesis 28:12, underlies his focus on the pneumatologically conditioned person of Christ, who comes with the Spirit in his office of Mediator. Thus it is not the benefits abstracted from the person, it is the Christ in his descent, who is joined to us and this possibility of his descent to us and our ascent to God is made possible by God himself, allowing

him to become familiar to us. The power of the ladder/stairway is in the commitment to us made within the triune God.

An Examination of the Threefold Office.

In what has been discussed so far, a twofold structure to the offices as Calvin understood them presents itself. That is, the focus on the person of the Mediator in his relation to God and the work of the Trinity in that relation, making Christ relational in his very being, and that of the relation of Christ to the believer, that is, in the diversity of the Church throughout time, bringing each into an intimate relation with God. In this event one would continue to see this double structure in the exposition of the threefold office in its particulars. It will be trinitarian, supplying the necessary ontology for the offices to be ground in the central person of Christ. It will be concerned with the relation of believers to Christ in the application and spread of blessing by the Spirit in his activity to all humanity.

The Trinitarian Activity.

Recalling what was argued in Chapters Two and Three, Calvin's description of the pattern of the trinitarian activity in each of the offices, prophet, king and priest can be stated in a summary fashion, as each office articulates various aspects of trinitarian relation. By attempting a reasonable balance of the activity of the Trinity in the

offices, Calvin avoided the tendency toward a one sided Christomonism.

In the office of prophet, the Father by his love and power in the sustenance of creation, makes the teaching/preaching office possible; by giving all authority to his Son, the Father's authority becomes the basis for the the Son's commission in all teaching matters. The Son becomes the actual teacher and makes God known to us. Because of his relation to the Father, his teaching encompasses his entire life, thus revealing the fulness of God to us. He is the substance and presenter of his teaching. The Spirit, as the inward teacher, draws all the people of God into a deeper knowledge of God, transcending all of history and bringing a unity to the teaching office by calling to remembrance the words and work of Christ and keeping them present. Christ therefore as the prophet continues to teach through his ministers and people.

In the office of king, the Father underwrites the eternality of the kingdom. As with the prophet, the Father in his love for the Son, gives the Son the commission and power to rule. The Son, by assuming flesh, makes reconquest possible. Because his person is grounded in relation, he becomes our head and leads us by victory over death and the devil to the Father. In the last judgment, the last act of the Son's reign, Death is finally defeated and life is opened for those who believe. The Spirit again draws us into the blessing of the Father through the Son. The diversity of humanity rules with Christ the king. Because Christ is bound by creation in the incarnation and subject to

death for our sake, it is the power of the Spirit which raised Christ from the dead. It is this dominion over things spiritual which has been restored to believers as they rule through the Spirit with Christ who gives them all that is necessary for victory over sin and the devil.

In the office of priest, the Father by his love makes the reconciliation between himself and humankind possible. It is because of the love of God that any sacrifice is made. Christ because of his ontological being is grounded in his relation with the Father, can become both the substance and executor of the sacrifice. He is then becomes the true priest and victim. Because of the divine/human relation within him he has has the power of God to effect the sacrifice in the shedding of his own blood and the efficacy of his identification with humanity which makes the sacrifice applicable to all. Therefore, Christ's act of priesthood makes us clean, sanctifies us and obtains grace for us in the act of sacrifice accomplished by the Son from the love of the Father, and applied through the Spirit. The Spirit makes humanity priests with Christ. As our Head, he grants us access to the Father and so we attain the sacrificial blessing before God and become priests with him, interceding for the world.

In this manner a pattern in common with all three offices presents itself. The Father's activity is in providing the possibility of each office through his love, power and authority. He thus guarantees the unity of the activity as the source for their authority is bound to his person. The Son's activity in the offices is in their

actualization. Christ in his person achieves the tasks he is the true teacher/preacher, pastor/king, and priest. The Spirit draws humanity into this relation by his power. Sensitive to a diversity of time and peoples, he nevertheless achieves the mystical union between God and humankind.

Calvin made the second strand of the structure, the relation of the believer to the Christ, much more specific as he matched the need in humanity with the response by the loving God in Christ. Calvin wished to increase the level of intimacy that the believer felt between himself and Christ, what could be called a more pastoral response, and secondly to actually explain the relationship while explaining the nature of Christ himself. One could call this a more ontological response. Calvin tried to direct the believer to the fact that the ultimate reference point was no longer in himself/herself or in creation, but in the relation to God in Jesus Christ. Calvin also employed the images of each of the Old Testament roles in his description of Christ, and thus sought confirmation for his approach within the text of the Scriptures. This was meant to highlight the unity of God's activity in all the history of salvation, as well as demonstrate in what way Christ was the fulfilment of Old Testament promise. I will now examine the distinctives of each of the aspects of the office of Christ, being conscious to highlight the various strands of the structure so far discussed.

The Prophet.

Since I will discuss at length the nature of Christ as the prophet in Chapter Five, let us now discuss the fulfillment of Christ the prophet in light of the Old Testament example. Christ as the prophet was explained by Calvin as Christ in the preaching of the gospel. Christ, because he is a prophet, guarantees the clarity and certainty of what is the content of the message: Christ himself, in other words the messenger, is endorsed by his own message because the messenger and the message are uniquely the one and same.²⁰ Christ, also one with the prophets who preceded him, is still blessed with the Spirit beyond measure.²¹ Calvin described Christ within the office of prophet as identical to the prophets of the Old Testament but that because of his unique relation to God, he could receive the gifts of the Spirit without limit. The prophetic office then contained this double characteristic: distinction in what Calvin termed his 'greater measure of the Spirit,' which in reality was his relation to God as part of his nature. The fruit of the office is in what Christ accomplished for us and through us, including at all times the individuals of the Old Testament.²² Christ shares the office with believers in the power of the Spirit to unite his teaching.

What sort of patterning did this represent? The double aspect we have already mentioned was maintained: the uniqueness of Christ was located in his position as the one who possessed by nature relation to God; he was uniquely the message and the messenger. This was due to his rank as the God-human. The second aspect of Christ's person was

his position along 'with us' as one of the other prophets. Calvin hesitates to draw any special considerations at this point in trying to represent Christ as the Mediator of all wisdom, but only wished to join Christ's exercise of the office of teacher while on the earth, as one who exercised the gift of teaching at one with the prophets of the Old Testament.

Another related aspect, what Christ accomplishes through us, which suggests the continuing relevance of the offices of Christ for the Church of his time, is the operation of the spiritual unction of Christ in his office. By the power of the Spirit, the mediation of Christ was not merely the historical event of the past but is truly alive in believers of that day. This was the power of Christ which Calvin accused the Roman Church of stealing in their attempts to mediate instead of Christ, thus circumscribing the trinitarian activity in salvation, as the Spirit is left with no activity in history. So now there are two elements in the way that Calvin described the *munus propheticum* the uniqueness of Christ and the corporate identification of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit in relation to humanity now.

The work of the Spirit in the prophetic office is of such importance, for Calvin did not see the role in terms of rigid teaching, but in a living way. Thus Calvin reiterated that the prophet speaks. He is the mouth of God and can therefore speak with the presence of God.²³ Calvin, in his descriptions of the prophets, can comment on their ability to illustrate by actions what God wished to

say to his people. This is a very significant image for Calvin. It is an essential feature of the prophet that he does not occupy an absolute standpoint beyond history, but that his utterances are part of the events. His message breaks through the ambiguity of the situation to speak with the clear voice of God. Thus Calvin made an important distinction between the prophet as an individual called by God and the prophet as part of a collected order. This was related to his comments on the prophet versus the corrupt false prophets of later Old Testament Israel in his commentaries on the Major and Minor prophets. It is the 'office' of the prophet throughout the ages which has guaranteed the continuance of truth, or God's presence. This is because God has promised that his voice will come from them and no other. This type of corporate discussion was usually found in Calvin's comments on the way God related to his prophets and how he spoke to them. Calvin's *Commentary on Micah* has a good example of this type of discussion,

When anyone is not exercised with great difficulties in discharging his office of teaching, a common measure of the Spirit is only necessary for the performance of his duties; but when anyone is drawn into arduous and difficult struggles, he is at the same time especially strengthened by the Lord: we see daily examples of this; for many simple men, who have never been trained up in learning, have yet been so endued by the celestial Spirit, when they came to great trials, that they have closed the mouths of great doctors, who seemed to understand all oracles.²⁴

Paralleling the fulfilment of Old Testament promise, Calvin encouraged the identification of individual prophets with Christ. One could argue that this may have been due to the greater amount of psychological or personal detailing of the individual which was part of the text. In other words, in drawing out details of an individual

prophet, Calvin encouraged his audience to make similar comparisons to Christ himself, as well as to their own situation.

But I suggest that Calvin wished to stress the activity of the Spirit in the deep relation between the prophet in the Old Testament and its analogy with Christ. Christ as the prophet was one in a continual succession of prophets, each endowed with the Spirit of God. By this Spirit, the deep relation between God and the prophet was made manifest in the speech of the prophet himself. With that we have again a double emphasis within Calvin's discussion of the prophetic office itself: the uniqueness of the individual called to be the prophet of God as having a deep relation with God and the solidarity that individual possessed as part of the prophetic tradition which Calvin saw as the fulfillment of God's promise to the Old Testament Church, which climaxes in the appearance of the person of the Mediator. What the prophets of the Church have by participation through the Spirit Christ possesses in his very being of relation to God from which the Spirit flows. Thus Christ as prophet was called by Calvin the supreme teacher and doctor of the Church because he possesses that perfect knowledge which such a level of intrinsic relation can provide.²⁵

Thus in the relation of Christ the true prophet and the prophets who share in his office by the Spirit, we have an intensity of relation necessary to ensure true teaching concerning the character of God. The position of the prophet was the foremost way to make an identification of a personal relationship between humanity and God within Calvin's exegesis. This was possible because of the way in

which the prophet is portrayed within the Old Testament text. Calvin spent a great deal of time upon the psychology of the prophets themselves as they are used by God to be his mouth to the people and upon the repercussions which follow.²⁴ These examples, analogous to the extremes of Gethsemane, tested the boundaries of the human/God relation. The prophet felt the stresses of this deep relation, subject to trial and persecution in a way in which Calvin could easily identify as a condition similar to his own, especially in situations when the Old Testament cultus was completely corrupted, where the kingdom and priesthood were no longer viable. According to Calvin, God continued his presence through his prophets so that the Israelites were not left without his witness.

God's continual presence was spoken through the Spirit through his 'mouth' the prophets. These prophets, Calvin pointed out, were also specific people who were not particularly impressive in their outward appearance.²⁵ This was necessary, Calvin believed, if the power of the message was to be attributed to the voice of God rather than the individual prophet. The messenger must not get in the way of the message. Also, the prophet in his relationship to God, represented a particular type of continuity for Calvin. The prophets and their successors the apostles and pastors, could see themselves as part of a tradition of 'correct teaching' sustained by the Spirit.²⁶ The believer can rely on the speech of God because it is guaranteed by its continuity through the present-day prophets and so to us. Any attempt to mix the doctrine of God with humankind's own ideas was to cross and

blur the boundaries between humanity and God, compromising again the work of the Spirit in the teaching office.²⁹

Throughout Calvin's exposition the strands of the twofold structure of the prophetic office of Christ remain. It on the one hand focussed on the person of the prophetic Christ, how the office is supported by his relational being as Trinity, and on the other, it focussed on the culmination of Old Testament promises of prophecy, underwriting the validity of their message by the work of the Spirit and thus carrying it forward into the diversity of the Church as a whole, as the Spirit is now the common heritage of the entire Church.

King.

Christ was anointed as king by the Holy Spirit.³⁰ In fact, Calvin taught that Christ was called the Messiah especially with respect to and by virtue of his kingship.³¹ Thus the importance of the kingship for Calvin is bound up with the witness of the Old Testament kingdom. Here the particular emphasis is on the spiritual nature of the kingdom of Christ, that is, the kingdom over which Christ rules is not a physical kingdom upon the earth. Calvin attempted rather to emphasize its universal and eternal character. Calvin did this for two reasons. The first was to underscore the fulfilment of Old Testament kingship in the kingship of Christ. The former was temporary and limited. The latter eternal and boundless. The former was physical, the latter is spiritual.³² The second reason was to establish the citizenship of humanity in this kingdom through its king. That is, the Church,

Christ's kingdom, is seen by Calvin as a corporate entity 'for us' and an entity 'through Christ, the true person'. Calvin spoke of the idea that we as believers in Christ have by virtue of this relationship a particular type of assurance: that Christ protects the Church throughout the ages and protect the individual believer now from spiritual harm.³³ That usually meant for Calvin the harm of the devil and his attempts at the complete mortification of the flesh.

The characteristic of kingship is based upon Christ's relational being to God, he is to rule in power and authority because he is truly God;³⁴ Christ is the Head of the Church, the final authority in his kingdom. Much like the prophet, therefore, there is a twofold structure of the person of the king whose ontology as in relation to God gives him the power and authority to rule, and the relation to his 'subjects', who share in his rule through the Spirit. Thus believers are given the characteristic of assurance, that firmness of conviction that what God has done and is doing evidenced by his power to preserve the created order for us.³⁵

Again, the corporate relation is bound to the uniqueness of Christ as the one eternal king. Calvin saw Christ's kingship bound very much to the power and authority that he possessed as God himself.

The Father has given all power to the Son that he may by the Son's hand govern, nourish, and sustain us, keep us in his care, and help us. Thus while for the short time we wander away from God, Christ stands in our midst, to lead us little by little to a firm union with God.³⁶

In this passage we can see the way in which Calvin lists the ontological ground of the person of the Mediator as king within the

Trinity. Calvin listed the role of the Father in giving Christ the authority to rule and that he rules through the Son. The Son actualizes this rule in the blessings and presence he bestows upon those he rules. This is done through the power of the Spirit who, in relation to the Father and Son, makes the Son truly present to those who follow him, leading them by degrees into a deeper relation with God. Jesus Christ gives of the Spirit to believers to help them in their need. Humanity then receives eternal life itself from the Spirit sent from their king, Jesus Christ,

For it is only this way that we are invigorated. Especially with regard to heavenly life, there is no drop of vigour in us save what the Holy Spirit instills. For the Spirit has chosen Christ as his seat, that from him might abundantly flow the heavenly riches of which we are in such need. The believers stand unconquered through the strength of their king, and his spiritual riches abound in them. Hence they are called Christians.³⁷

In order to bind the work of God into history, Calvin also emphasized the fulfilment of the Old Testament king in his role in God's order. The fact that the kingdom finds fulfilment in Christ emphasized to Calvin the time-bound quality of what was the Israelite kingdom. This link to the personal fitness to rule in Christ led Calvin to emphasize Christ's uniqueness as one whose very person was in relation to God. Taken at this starting point then, the reason for Christ's descent is seen as part of a political reclamation as Christ re-establishes his rule upon the earth.³⁸

The extension of this rule upon the created order was a work of reclamation, an extension of the presence of God over all the earth

through the kingship of Christ. Christ has overturned the rule of the devil upon the earth and now seeks to reclaim what was rightfully his from the beginning. The unique characteristic of the king is in its double aspect as a present and future event: Christ rules those who submit and will eventually destroy those who do not. It means that the kingly office also encompasses a present and future aspect, eschatologically, final victory is assured.³⁹

Thus in the office of king Calvin continued to maintain the twofold structure of the uniqueness of the king in fulfillment of the Old Testament promise: the fact that the king is God himself and the diversity of the work of the Spirit in drawing human beings into his kingdom. The emphasis on its eternal and spiritual nature underlies the substance of the person who rules: he is unique, eternal, ruling through the Spirit, involved in unseen struggles; yet he rules on behalf of his kingdom, the Church, and the believers within it. In such a vein Calvin wrote,

Now with regard to the special application of this to each of us - the same "eternity" ought to inspire us to hope for blessed immortality... Therefore Christ, to lift our hope to heaven, declares that his "kingship is not of this world" (John 18.36). In short, when one of us hears that Christ's kingship is spiritual, aroused by this word let him attain to the hope of a better life; and since it is now protected by God's hand, let him await the full fruit of this grace in the age to come.⁴⁰

For Calvin the source of this power to rule is held by God himself and by Christ the King.⁴¹

If there is a distinctive element in the kingship of Christ it is in the final full and outward manifestation of God in Christ's kingship at his Second Coming and Last Judgment, which Calvin says will be the final act of Christ's reign over the earth, but he will still rule over us forever.⁴² I suggest that this is an aspect of the future role of the mediation of Christ which Calvin felt meant that in the future state of glorification of the Church it would enable us direct access to him. In that particular state the necessity of mediation through the priesthood would end, along with the need to overcome humanity's limitation and the necessity to identify as completely with us as the prophetic office demands. Yet Christ will continue to rule, and it is this aspect of kingship, the right to rule, which Calvin preserved in his discussion of the king's future role in Christ. The present and future role of the king Christ is to rule in relation with us. This could make the kingly office the most significant office in Calvin's understanding, as it transcends the end of the world and continues for eternity.

Priest.

The characteristics of priesthood in the *munus triplex* of Christ are not as fully expressed by Calvin in *Institutes* 2:15. He explained in that section that he was to be brief (*breviter*) because the whole argument for the priesthood is based upon the paradigm of Christ as the sacrificial victim. His role as a corporate/unique high priest in a pattern similar to the author of Hebrews is mentioned by Calvin in the first few sentences. Calvin then began a summary or stated the

main point of that argument (*summa tamen huc redit*). Once again in the office of the priest Calvin arranged his twofold structure: Christ is the unique High Priest, who by his very being can make the perfect sacrifice and fulfill the promise of the Old Testament covenant, and he is an intercessor between God and the group he represents who share in his activity by the power of the Spirit.⁴³

Calvin expressed the ontology of Christ's person in the priestly act of reconciliation. Christ's priestly office is unique because he was both the priest and the sacrifice.⁴⁴ Because of his ontological relation to the Father, he operates from the life of God, which is his blood sacrifice. Thus Christ's uniqueness as high priest before God is further demonstrated by the union of natures in his person. As Calvin wrote in his letter to Stancaro, 'The divinity is a necessary requisite of the office of Priesthood.'⁴⁵ Calvin further underscored the necessary integrity of the two natures in hypostatic union in his Commentary on Hebrews,

He says that priests are taken from among men. Hence it follows that Christ must have been truly man. Because we stand a long way off from God, we are in some way placed before Him in His priestly character. This could not be so if He were not one of us. The fact that the Son of God has a common nature with us does not detract from His dignity, but rather commends Him more to us. He is fitted to reconcile God to us because He is man.⁴⁶

Christ's priesthood was unique because his relation to God made his very self the element of the sacrifice,

Although God under the law commanded animal sacrifices to be offered to himself, in Christ there was a new and different order, in which the same one was to be both priest and sacrifice. This was because no other satisfaction adequate

for our sins, and no other man worthy to offer to God the only-begotten Son, could be found.⁴⁷

Also important to the office of the priest is the fulfillment of the Old Testament priesthood in Christ, much as the Epistle to the Hebrews argues. One could say that he has interpreted the high priestly office almost entirely in the sense of Hebrews Seven and Eight to Ten.⁴⁸ In the *Institutes* and in his Commentary on the Letter to the Hebrews, Calvin did follow the suggestion of the letter very closely and reiterated the importance of Christ as the true high priest in relation to the Old Testament priesthood. Thus Calvin once again grounded the activity of the person of the Mediator within history and the completion of Old Testament covenant promise,

When Christ, the true Melchizedek and the eternal priest, was brought to light there had to be fulfilled in him what was foreshadowed in the figures of the law.⁴⁹

The argument is firmly grounded on the uniqueness of Christ in his position as the priest and sacrifice whose benefits are given by the Spirit to the Church in relation to him. This emphasis was in the corporate solidarity that Christ exhibited as the true high priest who can now mediate between God and us for us. As for the question of Christ's uniqueness in the priest this is seen on two levels by Calvin. The first is the one already mentioned in relation to his Commentary: Christ's uniqueness as the true high priest who replaces the corrupt Old Testament priesthood. Once again, in a discussion of a particular office, Calvin spent much time on the way that Christ's work as priest is more perfect than the Old Testament model. The

question of perfection does not seem to function on the same level as the king which we discussed earlier, the eternal aspect of Christ; but upon the uniqueness of Christ's ability to sacrifice and to be sacrificed. Calvin was able to emphasize the unique nature of Christ's sacrifice against the backdrop of the failure or the inadequacy of the Old Testament priests. The continuity of the priesthood, like the kingship, was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who was able to bring the blessings of his priesthood to the Church in the power of the Spirit. This contrast was grounded in the actual act of reconciliation, the first aspect of the priestly role.

The value or the power of the sacrifice originates in the divine/human in Christ. Because of this divine/human relation in Christ, Calvin also emphasized the unique position of corporate solidarity Christ has with us. This led him to think of humankind as participating priests in the activity that Christ does as the high priest.⁵⁰ Because of the divine/human relation Christ's sacrifice has an 'absolute' power in it. Because of the divine/human Christ's intercession is everlasting.⁵¹ Calvin did write that the Christ was similar to the old high priest in that he alone had the dignity of the priest,⁵² again Calvin made reference to the *dignitas* or Christ's position for the priesthood. What this meant for Calvin was that to diminish the priesthood of Christ was to call into question Christ's unique position as the Mediator or intercessor between God and humankind.

So far our discussion has centred upon Christ's act of reconciliation. The second strand of the structure emphasized the work of the Spirit in drawing us into a priestly role. This was the further and very important characteristic of the priesthood for Calvin, that is the perpetual benefits of intercession. Once again, the intercession of Christ which is made in his person is uniquely part of himself because he stands in the unique position of sacrifice and sacrificer. Access to him remained continuous because Christ cannot separate himself from his humanity.⁵³ The grounds for our reliance upon the intercession, or as Calvin sometimes put it, its 'eternal character,' was founded in the eternal relational nature of Christ,

For, having entered a sanctuary not made with hands, he appears before the Father's face as our constant advocate and intercessor (Heb. 7.25; 9.11f.; Rom 8.34). Thus he turns the Father's eyes to his own righteousness to avert his gaze from our sins. He so reconciles the Father's heart to us by his intercession that he prepares a way and access to the Father's throne. He fills with grace and kindness the throne that for miserable sinners would otherwise have been filled with dread.⁵⁴

I suggest that for Calvin any attempt to lessen or call into question the office of Christ's priesthood was to call into question the very relational nature or 'construction' of Christ himself. I believe that this ultimately was the source of much of Calvin's polemical heat regarding the Roman Catholic Mass, that the Roman Catholics have compromised Christ's *dignitas* and so called into question not only where he is or what position he fulfils but ultimately who he is, the God-human.⁵⁵ It is not that Calvin did not see a reaffirmation of the sacrifice of Christ. The power of the sacrifice was in Christ's perpetual intercession for his own people.

It was on precisely this point: Christ as everlasting Intercessor was always contrasted by Calvin with the Roman concept of sacrifice combined with the intercession of the Roman Church's priests and saints.⁵⁶

The activity of the Spirit in the priestly office is to draw us into a close priestly relation with Christ. Thus, like Luther, Calvin reiterated the priesthood of all believers,

Christ acted to receive us as his companions in this great office (Rev. 1.6). For we who are defiled in ourselves, yet are priests in him, offer ourselves and our all to God, and freely enter the heavenly sanctuary that the sacrifices of prayers and praise that we bring may be acceptable and sweet smelling before God.⁵⁷

Once again, in the office of priest Calvin is concerned with the integrity of the person of the Mediator providing the proper ontological ground for the activity of the Mediator, also drawing upon the activity of the Trinity in the office as Christ brings the sacrifice to God, and making it present to the diversity of the Church through the power of the Spirit.

Some Preliminary Conclusions.

In summary then, what can be said as to the overall emphasis of the *munus triplex*? Calvin continued to hold to a twofold structure in his exposition of the offices. In his discussion of the person of Christ, Calvin was concerned to express the ontology of relation in Christ which is exhibited in the presence of the activity of the

Trinity and in his descriptions of Christ's uniqueness: his ability to be in his person the right relation to God and humanity. Calvin combined the message with the messenger in the prophet, the priest with the victim in the priest and the king with the substance of the kingdom: the body of Christ. But this was not the only unique quality which Christ possessed. Calvin in the king and priest would speak of the uniqueness of Christ in relation to us. Because of the fulfilment of the Old Testament institutions of the kingdom and priesthood, Calvin saw Christ's eternal nature employed to pull mortal humanity into a shared kingship and priesthood: we rule with him and are priests with him. The prophets, however, continued in their succession and are fulfilled in the true teaching of the Mediator, which continues in the Church's preaching ministry.

Calvin was able to establish a means of corporate relationship between Christ and humanity. This is a relationship which appears to depend more upon those things which are not seen; in other words, the relationship is inner or within the believer as Christ relates to him/her by the power of the Spirit. Consider some of the evidence: Calvin wrote that Christ's perfect doctrine lends a clarity and therefore a certainty within the believer.⁵⁶ He also wrote that the 'blessings' of Christ do not rest in external prosperity but in a heavenly life after death, that Christ enriches us with what we need to fight courageously and successfully against our spiritual enemies and that despite all earthly tribulations, Christ our King will not leave us destitute but we are to continue with the assurance that his power is ever ready to aid us.⁵⁷ Lastly, Calvin wrote that as the

Epistle to the Hebrews shows, only by Christ's sacrifice of himself can Christ share the characteristics of his priesthood with us. And what are those characteristics? Christ is an everlasting successor and so we have trust in prayer, peace of conscience and a reliance upon God's mercy because we are received through the intercessor as Christ's companions because we are represented in his person.⁴⁰

The Question of Location.

The descriptions of the position of Christ as the unique Mediator of humankind and his identification 'with us' mark what we would consider to be the richness of the *munus triplex* in Calvin's theology. Each office, some with stronger force than others, demonstrates Christ to us in a unique and internal relationship with humanity. We participate with Christ because of this internal relationship. What Calvin has said is very powerful here. We cannot see the relationship, yet it exists because of the position which Christ holds between us and God. So this internal emphasis reinforces the relation of Christ to believers. It also calls us to ask the question as to what is the precise location of the *munus triplex* within Calvin's theology. In other words, what is its role in redemption; that is, is it merely a redemption in the act of Christ upon the cross and in the resurrection which is then applied to humankind, or did Calvin reflect a more compelling structure concerning the nature of Christ himself which would effect the way one understood the relationship between God and humanity?

The importance of this type of location cannot be overemphasized. It is, in fact, essential. A mislocation will cause a series of incorrect questions to be asked and hence an incorrect series of answers will result. In other words, an incorrect starting point predetermines the answers to the question posed because the context will preclude the availability of certain evidences to supply the questioner with answers which could indicate a different direction. This is precisely the weakness of the only other analysis of the offices of Christ in English by J.F. Jansen.

Jansen chronicles in a functional way the exposition of Calvin's text upon the *munus triplex* and concludes that the prophetic office was incidental to the offices of priest and king because it is not found in Calvin's exegesis of Scripture concerning Christ's act of redemption.⁴¹ We do not disagree with the evidence which Jansen presented that Calvin did indeed speak only of the priest and king in the passages Jansen specified. That evidence is clear. It is possible to argue however, that these passages are merely generally 'functional.' Our question is more concerned with what is the location of these passages within Calvin's overall theological understanding, or of how Calvin spoke of the *munus triplex* in its overall context. Is it possible that Jansen has missed the change of meaning within this larger ontological and trinitarian framework which Calvin discussed in his writings concerning the offices? Is Jansen by his approach endangering the centrality of the person to the benefits bestowed?

We have already noted that Calvin seemed to speak of the characteristics and benefits of Christ's *munus* with a different emphasis at different times. That is, the *munus* as an expression of the unique position of Christ and *munus* as an expression of the uniqueness of Christ's position as the one who identifies with us because he is one of us. These are not, a Jansen would have us think, more general categories than those more intimately linked with the *munus triplex*. Does not this fact indicate to us that the location of the *munus* of Christ is not merely or simply the historical act of redemption, the external act of Christ alone?

I would like to suggest that the various ways Calvin utilized the *munus* concept of Christ could very likely indicate that a different view is called for when they are considered within Calvin's schema. I have so far discussed within this thesis what I consider to be a better starting point for an examination of the *munus triplex*, and more specifically, because this office has been neglected in Jansen's analysis of Calvin's doctrine, the *munus propheticum*. In consideration of the evidence so far, I have tried to show that Calvin's description of the *munus triplex* contained within it a particular way of thinking about Christ by asking the question of what is the actual ontological relation of Christ as he works through the drama of reconciliation. Christ, according to Calvin, was unique in his divinity which enabled him to fulfill the functions of king, priest and prophet.

This unique position of Christ as God incarnate drew the believer to consider these acts of Christ as continuing acts of a loving God.

So the offices of Christ in Calvin are better seen as aspects of the action of God as a: in creation, in the fall and in restoration. The location of the offices in the position of Christ's divinity are found in God's commitment to a relationship with humankind, humanity's response and Christ's position as the Mediator of this relationship, in other words, part of a larger Mediator Christology rather than tied to the functions of redemption alone. But what of the other position of Christ as the one who is so like us we can identify and involve ourselves in what is happening, in other words, Christ's corporate identification with us?

Jansen's analysis betrays his bias toward a particular starting point for the offices. If it were necessary to term what this is it could be said that Jansen begins with the *munus* in functionalism. He is very concerned to organize his discussion under the headings or titles of the particular office functions.⁶² What I would like to suggest is that the offices are not merely sourced in this type of detail but that they have a deeper theological substance to them, as we have seen in the evidence of the way Calvin organized his material in the *munus triplex*. Each category of office stressed who Christ is based upon his position and equally upon his person. The two cannot be separated. Christ was the unique mediator because of what he did and being in the right position or in the right place in the relationship to be able to do what he did. So the offices are the substance of what Christ is and where Christ stands, and this, their power to us.

What then is the role of reconciliation within this framework? I have suggested that Calvin's concern was not attached merely to redemption in his understanding of the bare functional titles of the *munus* in question, rather, I would like to suggest that redemption is part of the means of restoration of a higher degree of intimacy between the human and God. That is, that the question of relation between humanity and God also asks the question of the relative position of the participants. Redemption then points back toward those that are a part of the ongoing process. One could then understand redemption in its penal substitutionary sense as almost an enallage, a part of a much larger and significant whole.⁴³

I believe that in Jansen's interpretation, Christ's position in these aspects becomes merely an external function and simply a convenience of expression. If one were to think like Jansen implied that the offices were added on in some sense to the person of Christ I would reply that the office are then too small to contain him.

The Significance of the *Munus Triplex*.

The significance of the *munus triplex* is in what Calvin saw as humanity's need. The fact that Christ was anointed into the threefold office finds its explanation in Calvin in the fact that what Christ restores is humankind's original intention. As created by God, humanity was endowed with knowledge and understanding, with dominion over creation, and with righteousness and holiness. Calvin developed the offices of Christ in the way in which he did to try and meet a

need within humankind. Christ must restore that which was lost through sin and the fall of humanity. Any attempt to move a discussion of Christ away from the offices is to 'strip Christ of his dignity', or to compromise the position of Christ. This position is his because of who he is and where he is between humanity and God.

Thus the believer 'discovers' the relationship to the Christ in his offices⁴⁴. This was the pastoral need for an understanding of the offices in which the believer is confronted by varying degrees of intimacy based upon different aspects of the distinct offices of prophet, king and priest. For example, the prophet shows us a Christ who is with us by virtue of the teaching which he brings concerning himself: his relation to God. The kingly model shows us a Christ who is with God and rules for God and for us by virtue of the failure of the Old Testament model and the need for the power of the divinity of Christ to set an eternally powerful rule for us. This concept of eternality is further reinforced by the way that the kingdom of Christ is invisible and spiritual. This would have enabled Calvin to more readily speak of the eternal nature of the kingdom which Christ rules and that the enemies which were to be fought were those that were not seen. The priestly model shows the believer a Christ who is with us who speaks for us before God. This type of intercession is again invisible and spiritual, in contrast to the Roman view of the intercession of the Church.

The question of the Mediator, under which this entire discussion falls, was developed by Calvin from the starting point of the position

or status of Christ. What Calvin tried to do was to answer the question of what is the actual position of Christ? It is this very basic discussion which caused Calvin to develop the doctrine of the offices in the way that we see it in the *Institutes*. What Calvin did in the adoption of the three offices from their Old Testament starting place was to push very forcefully the whole use of the prophet, king, and priest as the inner logic of the mediation of humanity and God. Each of these Old Testament examples dealt with a mediation of some sort between God and humanity. This type of mediation became the core of the way Calvin saw Christ. The most powerful element in this unique way of seeing Christ was its ability to speak of the way Christ was in us. This would lead one to consider the opposite: are we then in him as much as he is in us? Calvin would give an affirmative answer, that believers are carried along implicitly in these offices of Christ: He is our human. The force of this direct participation by humanity in Christ gave an individual a belief that had its own dynamism in it: what we read about Christ, about the experience of the Old Testament and the New, is our experience. The assurance of Christ's participation in us is that the opposite is also true: one is with him unless one decided to go out through rebellion and sin. Attention to the relationship, and more importantly, knowledge passed on through the relationship enables one to stay within it.

The threefold office of Christ contains a structure which explains the redemption of humankind in such a way that combines the insights of the Reformation with earlier christological traditions concerning the person of the Mediator. Our survey of the offices has

tried to illustrate the strands of that structure. I have argued that the structure of the offices takes its shape by the necessity of Christ's own person as relational with God the Father and God the Spirit. I have also argued that by grounding the activity of the person of the Mediator within the promises of the Old Testament, Calvin firmly set God's activity in salvation in history and in the scope of biblical example. These examples, the offices of prophet, king and priest, are steeped in the deep relation between God and humankind. It therefore becomes an important model for exposition of the character of God. Hence Calvin's continual description of Christ in the offices as unique, descriptions of his character toward God, and corporate, descriptions of his character toward humanity.

As far as his relation to humanity is concerned, Calvin wished to stress the unity of God's activity toward us, yet also highlighting the diversity which the Church brings to that activity by its participation in it. The unction by the Spirit, so important to the offices by what it tells us about the person of the Mediator, also tells us much about the way God is for us. In effect it sums up the relation of God and humankind.

There is not a perfect symmetry in the offices. In each of its aspects a particular relation comes to the fore and recedes in the others. In the prophet, Calvin was most concerned to stress how we can possibly relate to God, who is so far above us. Hence there is more emphasis on the way God comes down to us by the efficacy of the Spirit, so that our knowledge of him is reliable and true. In the

king, Calvin was most concerned to stress how God achieves final victory and dominion over the earth. Hence there is more emphasis on the way Christ's power achieves such a victory, the relation between us through the power of the Spirit recedes slightly to make this important point. In the priest, Calvin is focussed on the person of the priest, how in his union of the two natures, divine and human, he is capable of making the perfect sacrifice for us. There is a greater distinction between the person of the Mediator as priest in reconciliation and what is done with us by the power of the Spirit in intercession. Such asymmetry is a necessary condition in discussing unity and distinctions in the person and work of Christ, as they are analogous to the unity and distinctions in the character of God himself.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER FOUR

¹ The full title reads: *Ut sciamus quorsum missus fuerit Christus a Patre et quid nobis attulerit, tria postissimum pectanda in eo esse, munus propheticum, regnum et sacerdotum.* OS 3.471.

² See CO 1.513-515.

³ Battles, *Institution*, p. 73.

⁴ The French text is found in CO 22.53. The Latin in CO 5.338. A translation done by P.T. Fuhrman, *John Calvin's Instruction in Faith*. London: W.L. Jenkins, 1949, p. 47, reads, 'The title "Christ" signifies that through unction He has been fully endowed with all the graces of the Holy Spirit. These graces are called "oil" in the Scriptures, and rightly so, BECAUSE with them we fall as dry and barren branches. Now through such an unction the Father has constituted Him King... Secondly, God has constituted Him Priest...'

⁵ 'Therefore it is accomplished that all the faithful were anointed. The prophets have their own unction also, and the kings have it, and the priests, not in the manner of outward ceremony but spiritually.'

⁶ And so the French text of 1543 reads.

⁷ Commentary on Isaiah 61.1.

⁸ So the title of *Institutes* Book Two reads: 'The Knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ, First Disclosed to the Fathers under the Law, and then to Us in the Gospel.'

⁹ This underscored Calvin's argument on the unity of the Old Testament and New Testament in *Institutes* 2.10.

¹⁰ For example, see his comments on Psalm Two, 'But this was more truly fulfilled in Christ, and doubtless David, under the influence of the spirit of prophecy, had a special reference to him.'

¹¹ 'Christ has been given to us for righteousness; anyone who abtrudes the righteousness of work on God strive to deprive Christ of his office.' Commentary on Romans 9:32. Cf. Commentary on John 5:21. 'The meaning, therefore is that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ. by this he means that we are perfect in wisdom if we truly know Christ, so that it is madness to wish to know anything besides Him. For, since the Father manifested Himself wholly in Him, that man wishes to be wise apart from God who is not contented with Christ alone. Should anyone choose to explain it of the mystery, the meaning will be that all the wisdom of the godly is included in the Gospel, by which God is revealed to us in His Son.' Commentary on Colossians 2:3. 'But since all Scripture proclaims that to become our Redeemer he was clothed with flesh, it is too presumptuous to imagine another reason or another end. We well know

why Christ was promised from the begining: to restore the fallen world and to succor lost men.' *Institutes* 2.14.4.

¹² CO 49.354.

¹³ Latin: *modus subsistendi*. 'For here he ascribes to Christ four titles which sum up all His perfection, and every benefit that we receive from Him.' Commentary on 1 Corinthians 1:28.

¹⁴ The burden of texts in Calvin's criticism of the scholastics is that they have stripped Christ of his office and power and given them to others. See for example, Commentary on Matthew 2:4, 'We have a brilliant instance of this matter in the Papist of our day. They admit, without controversy, that Christ is the only-begotten Son of God, bearing our flesh, and confess one Person of God and man in two natures, but when one comes to Christ's power and task, the argument suddenly blazes up, for they do not allow themselves to be forced into line, and far less to be brought to nothing.' Cf. Commentary on Colossians 1:12; 1 John 2:22, 4:2; Acts 4:12.

¹⁵ See for example, 'This evil has almost always prevailed in the world, and it does so greatly today, for a great many judge Christ according to the false opinion of the world.' Commentary on 1 Peter 2:6; 'Those who transfer this honour to Peter, and maintain that the Church is founded on him, are so shameless as to pervert this text to support this error.' Commentary on Ephesians 2:20. Cf. Commentary on Isaiah 28:16.

¹⁶ *Institutes* 2:15:1.

¹⁷ Calvin did use the words *munus* and *officium* interchangeably so it is difficult to establish a set meaning for the terms. 'The cause of death is Adam, and we die in him hence Christ whose office (*officium*) it is to restore to us what we lost in Adam, is the cause of life in us.' Commentary on 1 Corinthians 15:21. Also, 'Nor is the title "Christ" given to him without reason, for it designates the office (*munus*) to which he was appointed by the Father.' Commentary on 1 John 5:1. Or particular offices, '...the royal power of Christ is combined with the office (*officium*) of priest.' Commentary on Genesis 14:18 or '...the benediction pertained especially to his sacerdotal office (*munus*).' *Ibid*. What is clear from the definition of *munus* and *officium* are their stress upon economic or social relations relative to one's position in that relationship. See P.G. Glare, *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968, p.1146 and p. 1243 respectively.

¹⁸ 'Thou are the Christ. A brief confession, but one which contains the whole sum of our salvation.' Commentary on Matthew 16:16. 'He was filled with the Holy Spirit, and loaded with a perfect abundance of all his gifts, that he many impart them to us... Thus from him, as the only fountain, we draw whatever special blessings we possess.' *Catechism of 1545*. CO 6.19.

¹⁹ Commentary on Genesis 28:12.

²⁰ *Institutes* 2: 15: 1.

²¹ *Ibid*

²² 'All that you have said then comes to this, that the name of Christ comprehends three offices which the Father bestowed on the Sone, that he may transfuse the power and fruit of them into his people.' *Catechism of 1545*.

²³ Commentary on Zechariah 7: 11, 12; 8: 9-11.

²⁴ Commentary on Micah 3: 8.

²⁵ See Commentary on John 8: 26, 13: 30, 15: 15; Commentary on Matthew 12: 42. Cf. Sermon 31 on the Gospels, CO 46. 380.

²⁶ This was especially true of passages where the prophet was allowed to speak his own grief in pronouncements of destruction upon his own people. The parallel is made to Christ: 'There is pathos in Christ's voice raised up at the monstrous sight-God's holy city so sunk in mental decay that it had long tried to extinguish God's teaching by the bloodshed of the prophets.' Commentary on Matthew 23: 37.

²⁷ Commentary on Micah 2: 6, 'Because I will effect nothing; nay, I subject my prophets to reproaches; for they lose their labour in speaking, they pour forth words which produce no fruit; for ye are altogether irreclaimable.'

²⁸ Commentary on Zechariah 1: 5, 6, 'Your fathers and my Prophets have both perished; but after their death, the memory of the teaching, which has not only been published by my servants, but also been fully confirmed, is to continue, so that it ought justly terrify you; for it is very foolish in you to enquire whether or not the Prophets are still alive; they performed their office to the end of life, but the truth they declared is immortal.'

²⁹ *Institutes* 2: 15: 2, 'This, however, remains certain: the perfect doctrine he has brought has made an end to all prophecies. All those, then, who, not content with the gospel, patch it with something extraneous to it, detract from Christ's authority.'

³⁰ *Institutes* 2. 15. 5.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 2. 15. 2.

³² 'We know that there was a long interruption of the splendour of the kingdom of God's ancient people, which continued from the death of Solomon to the coming of Christ.' Commentary on Psalm 47. 2.

³³ Commentary on Psalms 2: 7-8, 20: 1, 9.

³⁴ Commentary on Psalms 2: 1-6.

³⁵ Commentary on Psalms 20:1, 9.

³⁶ *Institutes* 2.15.5.

³⁷ *Institutes* 2.15.4.

³⁸ See the discussion in E. David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966. pp. 74-78, where Willis explains that God's transcendence is not expressed in spatial terms by Calvin but phrased in the language of political reconquest.

³⁹ 'We see today several examples of this fact, but the full proof will appear at the Last judgement which may also be properly considered the last act of his reign.' *Institutes* 2:15:5.

⁴⁰ *Institutes* 2.15.3.

⁴¹ 'For God mediatly, so to speak, wills to rule and protect the church in Christ's person... for the same reason, Scripture usually calls Christ 'Lord' because the father set Christ over us to exercise his dominion through his Son.' *ibid*.

⁴² Commentary on Matthew 25.31. Cf. *Institutes* 2.15.5.

⁴³ '...so they all went into the sanctuary together in the person of the one man. The apostle is therefore right when he states that our High Priest has entered heaven, because He has done so not only for Himself but also for us.' Commentary on Hebrews 6:19.

⁴⁴ *Institutes* 2:15:6.

⁴⁵ Joseph Tylenda, 'Christ the Mediator: Calvin versus Stancaró.' *Calvin Theological Journal* 8 (1973), p. 14.

⁴⁶ Commentary on Hebrews 5.1.

⁴⁷ *Institutes* 2.15.6.

⁴⁸ Joachim Staedtke, 'Die Lehre von der Königsherrschaft Christi und den zwei Reichen bei Calvin.' *Kerygma und Dogma* 18 (1972), p. 205.

⁴⁹ Commentary on Mark 16.19.

⁵⁰ 'For we who are defiled in ourselves, yet are priests in him, offer ourselves and our all to God, and freely enter the heavenly sanctuary that the sacrifices of prayers and praise that we bring may be acceptable and sweet-smelling before God.' *ibid*.

⁵¹ 'In short, he died on earth, but the power and efficacy of His death came from heaven.' Commentary on Hebrews 8:4.

⁵² 'In this respect Christ is like that old high priest because He alone has the dignity and the office of Priest.' Commentary on

Hebrews 9:11. Note how Calvin combines the position (*dignitas*) with the office here.

⁵³ 'There is this second likeness between the old high priest and ours that both go into the holy of holies through the sanctuary, but they differ in this that Christ alone has entered heaven by the temple of His body.' *Institutes* 2:15:6.

⁵⁴ *Institutes* 2.16.16.

⁵⁵ 'The more detestable is the fabrication of those who, not content with Christ's priesthood, have presumed to sacrifice him anew! The papists attempt this each day, considering the Mass as the sacrificing of Christ.' *ibid.*

⁵⁶ 'The priestly office belongs to Christ alone because by the sacrifice of his death he blotted out our guilt and made satisfaction for our sins [Heb. 9:22]. ...in Christ there was a new and different order, in which the same one was to be both priest and sacrifice.' *ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Institutes* 2.15.6.

⁵⁸ 'And the prophetic dignity in Christ lends us to know that in the sum of doctrine as he has given it to us all parts of perfect wisdom are contained.' *Institutes* 2:15:2. Note again the combination of position with the office: *prophetica dignitas*.

⁵⁹ *Institutes* 2:15:4.

⁶⁰ *Institutes* 2:15:6.

⁶¹ 'It would seem that in this instance Calvin the exegete refuses to follow Calvin the systematizer.' J.F. Jansen, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Work of Christ*. London: James Clarke and Co., Ltd., 1956. p. 75.

⁶² See especially his discussion on pages 88-102.

⁶³ See especially the parallel to the atoning exchange between Christ and us within the office relationship and the union of Christ to us in the sacraments of *Institutes* 4:17:2. The sacrament focussed upon the an historical act of redemption which allows for the giving of benefits to the believer in an invisible yet real way. A reaffirmation of the atonement takes place within this exchange. So the parallel of exchange can work metaphorically within the offices in a similar way: Christ becomes the son of man with us, He has made us sons of God with Him; Christ's descent to us, our ascent to God; Christ takes on mortality, immortality conferred upon us; Christ accepts our weakness, we have His strength by His power, He became poverty, we receive his wealth; He became iniquity, we have His righteousness.

*4 See the comments made by Calvin in his discussion of Zechariah 7: 11, 12. The prophets are 'middle persons' and God so speaks by their mouths that contempt is offered to him when no honour is shown to the truth the prophet bears.

CHAPTER FIVE
CHRIST AS PROPHET

Introduction.

Much of what I have argued in the preceding chapters of this thesis is that Calvin searched through the Christian christological tradition for a fresh approach within which he could codify many of the insights of the Reformation. In Chapter Two I argued that Calvin sought to maintain the actuality of the divine/human relationship as the gift of God, one which would reflect to a high degree the revealed characteristics of God, what I have termed, balance, order, and most importantly, communication. This is not to say that Calvin then sought only to develop a Christology merely from the transcendent God. Indeed, his concern for the possibility of relationship with God led Calvin to write of the possibility of the unity of the divine and human in Jesus, premised on God's already apparent activity. In Chapter Three I also argued that Calvin's must be seen in light of his critique of other contemporary Christologies, namely that of the Roman Catholic and Anti-trinitarian/Anabaptist movements. For Calvin, the danger in the approaches taken by others was in their compromise, either in the case of Roman Catholicism and Anabaptists, of the humanity of Christ, or in the case of the Anti-trinitarians, the deity of Christ. Calvin was convinced that much of what had gone wrong with other Christologies derived from their inability first to come to terms with a proper understanding of the divine/human relationship, or what I have termed, the relationality of God and humankind.

So in accepting the traditional doctrine of the Church, Calvin wanted to retain the transcendence of God, yet was mindful of the pitfalls of those theologies which focussed purely on the transcendence of God to the exclusion of his activity toward us in Jesus Christ. There was a tendency to speak of Christ in purely docetic terms, or at the very least since the time of Augustine, there was a problem of materiality. In other words, the divinity is more important than the humanity because the metaphysical ahistorical approach proceeded from formulae in which the work of mediation focuses upon the flesh which is assumed and not on the eternal person who assumes it. According to Calvin, the characteristic of these Christologies is their failure to take into account what the unity and distinction of the divine and human in Christ actually signified: it is the reality of the Trinity which established the divinity and humanity of Christ. The divinity and humanity of Christ was supported in the capability of God to sustain the relation between human and God; the infinite is capable of grasping the finite. So it was the humanity of Christ and the divinity of Christ, their unity in the divine/human person which set the first stage for his discussion of mediation and the offices. The work of Christ must express this relational unity.

I suggest that when Calvin applied his critique to the prevalent christological positions of his day, the Roman Catholic, the Anti-trinitarian and the Anabaptist, his basic premise was (1) That of the God/human relationality; this meant that in any consideration of the activity of Christ one must give full weight to the *homoousion*. This

was what Calvin meant in laying great significance in his exposition of the *munus triplex* on both transcendence or uniqueness, and solidarity with humanity, or humanness. The whole of the *munus triplex* then affirmed the *homoousion* of Christ, relationality of God and humanity.' (2) Any exposition of the activity of God must then necessarily be trinitarian if such an exposition is to have a sound ontological basis and not slip into functionalism.

If I am correct concerning the premise of relation and its trinitarian activity as the main thrust of the *munus triplex* and the reason why Calvin spent so much time in explaining the problems with the views of others when considering Christ's person and work, then Calvin's actual exposition of the hallmarks of the prophetic office should contain a similar structure to the other two offices of king and priest which follows this formula. This means that much previous work on the role of the offices in Calvin's theology has overlooked the importance for Calvin of the *homoousion* in any explanation of Christ's activity in the *munus triplex*. Calvin's work on the offices of Christ is rather seen in terms of function, in terms of their effects or benefits for the Church. This is only a partial analysis. It is certainly true that in describing the work of Christ as a three-fold office, Calvin presses upon us the historical continuity of the covenants, the historical dynamic of salvation from promise to fulfilment and the historical matrix of salvation toward which the all of history points, but this does not mean that a proper ontological grounding was necessarily sacrificed.

I then argued in Chapter Four that the offices for Calvin were built upon and illustrate the divine/human relation while also providing a sustainable and historically oriented Christology. I argued that Calvin felt this double emphasis was necessary to ensure a proper ontology for the activity of Christ, avoiding a functional view and to ensure the integrity of the incarnation in time and history, avoiding a metaphysical Christology. In this manner Calvin successfully integrated the contributions of the early Fathers with Reformation insights. In the second part of the Chapter I illustrated the theological common ground of each office, as well as some aspects in which they differ.

In the present Chapter I will continue illustrating Calvin's christological insights. The Chapter is divided into three parts. In the first, the setting of *Institutes* Book Two Chapter Fifteen is discussed in order to illustrate that Calvin saw the Chapter as one based upon the previous chapters of Book Two in which he successfully integrated his ontological discussions of the natures of Christ and the person of the Mediator with the necessity of the Mediator in the plan of salvation in history. I will suggest that this argument is the basis for the discussion of Chapter Fifteen as the person of Christ is seen through his office. In the second part, I will expand the argument by illustrating to what extent Calvin saw the prophetic activity of Christ in communication as grounded in creation and ontology. In the third, I will suggest that Calvin's ensuing descriptions of the prophetic office illustrate that there is a significant theological justification for its inclusion with the

kingly and priestly offices. These aspects are: Christ as the teacher, the mediator of God's revelation through all time, the prophet as the mouth or voice of God as indicative of a deep relation between human and God; the activity of the Trinity in the office, either in Christ's actual work on the earth or in the pre- or post-incarnational Christ; the prophet who breaks into history as illustrative of God's ability to reach humankind in Jesus Christ (versus any discussion of the timeless or eternal benefits of Christ).

The Setting of *Institutes* 2.15.

When we read the contents of *Institutes*, Book Two, in its entirety, the plan of the book can be divided into three parts. The first part concerns the actual nature of humanity as fallen in Adam and needing a Mediator-Saviour who is capable of restoring mankind to its original state, explained within the context of the Old Testament, as the title explains: *The Knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ, First Disclosed to the Fathers Under the Law, and Then to Us in the Gospel*. In Chapters One to Six Calvin began by discussing the nature of mankind now under sin and how mankind must now seek salvific knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. The second part, Chapters Seven through Eleven, is an explanation of this knowledge, namely, an exposition of the revelation of God in the Old Testament and what were the links between what had happened in the history of salvation and its 'main event' which all else anticipated, the revelation of Jesus Christ. So Chapters Seven through Eleven, as the second part, are Calvin's explanation of the law and how it was both to be thought of

in its own terms, and yet offered hope for the people of the Old Covenant in the coming of the Mediator and salvation in Jesus Christ, because the Word Himself was active in its work. I believe this also anticipates his exposition of the status of the offices of Christ in Chapter Fifteen.

It is in the third part, Chapters Twelve through Seventeen, that the actual person of Jesus Christ and his activity in redemption are considered. This is easily seen in the actual chapter headings: (1) *Christ had to become man in order to fulfil the office of Mediator.* (2) *Christ assumed the true Substance of human flesh.* (3) *How the two natures of the mediator make one person.* (4) *To know the purpose for which Christ was sent by the father, and what he conferred upon us, we must look above all at three things in him: the prophetic office, kingship, and priesthood.* (5) *How Christ has fulfilled the function of redeemer to acquire salvation for us. Here also, his death and resurrection are discussed, as well as his ascent into heaven.* (6) *Christ rightly and properly said to have merited God's grace and salvation for us.²*

It is in these chapters that Calvin developed his understanding of the necessity of Christ's humanity and to a certain extent paralleled his arguments for Christ's divinity and the nature of the Trinity in Book 1.13. This is an important consideration. In any examination of the person and activity of Christ in Book Two, one must remember what Calvin had said about the divinity of the Son and the activity of the Trinity, about who God is, in Book One. This has been

slightly obscured because Calvin's subsequent revisions of the *Institutes* obscured the more obvious links with the discussion of God in Book One and the discussion of the mediator in Book Two. Yet Calvin made deliberate attempts to keep the two linked by tacit references to the earlier sections of Book One in his discussion of Book Two.

This assertion is well borne out in the third section of chapters in Book Two itself. The evidence can be found in what I have already cited in Chapter Two of this thesis, regarding Calvin's concern for 'defective' Christologies. In Chapter Twelve one finds that the positions of Osiander and Servetus are attacked. In Chapter Thirteen, Calvin refutes the historical positions of the Manichees in his preamble to the Chapter and then turns his attention to the 'New Marcionites', that is, the Christologies of the Netherlands Anabaptists, especially Menno Simons. In these chapters, Calvin addressed the questions of transcendence in the refutation of Osiander,³ and of humanness in the refutation of Simons.⁴ Calvin characteristically summed up these sections and anticipated the one to follow in his expression of the transcendence of God in Jesus Christ as part of the revelation of God in the Mediator,

Here is something marvellous: the Son of God descended from heaven in such a way that, without leaving heaven, he willed to be borne in the virgin's womb, to go about the earth, and to hang upon the cross; yet he continuously filled the world even as he had done from the beginning!⁵

So Calvin explained in Chapter Fourteen the necessity of the unity of the two natures of Christ in terms of their relation. In other words, Calvin explained the closeness of the relation between the natures of Christ as the communication of properties. He saw the

significance in the *communicatio idiomatum* in the way in which Scripture spoke of Christ's person in terms which emphasized, either the human nature or the divine, or both. As Calvin explained the person of Christ, what was most significant was the passages which spoke of the conjunction of both natures under the person of the Mediator. So, even in the application of the terms of one nature for the other and vice versa, the significance was in the way neither nature was subsumed in the other. This type of approach, in which limited language still allows knowledge of the being of God to shine through it, is the ingenious way in which Calvin avoided the more abstract questions of the 'natures' of Christ which seemed to have plagued the Roman Catholic theologians and more especially in this Chapter, Servetus. One could then conclude that any significant ontological questions concerning Christ were not based by Calvin in the analogy of being but in the mode of existence and revelation, a relational structure. One must not rest expositions of Christology upon analogies between the Creator and creature, but rather on the basis of scriptural revelation.

It is at this point that the new chapter on the offices of Christ was placed and provided the link with the chapters which preceded it and continued his critique of the Roman Catholic christological view which began in earnest in *Institutes* 2.14. Calvin wrote:

As Augustine rightly states, the heretics, although they preach the name of Christ, have herein no common ground with believers, but it remains the sole possession of the church. For if we diligently consider the things that pertain to Christ, we will find Christ among the heretics in name only, not in reality. So today the words 'Son of God, Redeemer of the world,' resound upon the lips of the papists.*

The significance of this passage rests upon Calvin's concern for what were christological views which used the terms of Scripture, but were ignorant of their meaning and scriptural context. He sought in Chapter Fifteen to remedy this type of questioning by explaining Christ's person and natures in the *homoousion* in scriptural terms.

The use of Scripture in explaining the person of Christ becomes significant as it became the justification for the use of the Old Testament offices of prophet, king and priest. As the evidence of the *Institutes* shows, all of Calvin's criticism rested upon the inability of the other Christologies to work out the fundamental relation of God and mankind. It was this observation which animated what was to follow in *Institutes* Chapter Fifteen.

How the Premise is Known.

I suggest that one call the God/human relationality a premise for a very particular reason. Calvin himself greatly believed that because of God loving activity in fundamental principles found in creation which made it unnecessary to construct abstract premises. This undercut much of the dualism which was latent in the Roman Catholic, Anti-trinitarian and Anabaptist positions which then necessitated their christological abstractions. Christianity has always held that God is other than the world, but because He is the Creator, has denied that the two are related only in a negative way. Because the created order is dependent upon God, he can be conceived to interact with it. Dualism denies such an interaction either explicitly or by conceiving

the two in such a way that it becomes impossible consistently to relate them. As I showed in Chapter Three, because their assumptions were dualistic, they were compelled to deny that Jesus was fully God or that he was fully human. As I have intimated, Calvin's view was not to be thought of in terms of a bare *analogia entis* (analogy of being), by which the link to the creator is built into the stuff of creation, rather as based on God's loving active sovereign will creating a relational premise. It is a premise because it is reliable or trustworthy on account of God's fidelity. The use of the term 'idea' for relationality is wrong because ideas, outside of Platonism, are not permanent. Relationality is permanent because God continues to act in that way in his loving will.

The importance of the premise of relationality as deriving from the willed activity of God cannot be over-emphasized. It is in the explanation of this premise that Calvin did much of his work on the person of God as he is known, and here too Calvin began his exposition of the Trinity and the mode of revelation. One must bear in mind that because the premise of relationality and trinitarian activity are so fundamental, Calvin made continual reference to them as he shaped his theological exposition. One must not merely look in those sections of the *Institutes* which dealt with the doctrine of the Trinity, that is, under the usual theological *loci*. It is helpful, therefore, to review some of my conclusions in Chapter Three.

For Calvin, the patristic idea of hypostatic union made the person, not the natures, the ultimate ground of Christ's being. There

was a subtle but significant distinction between this view and that suggested by an idea of *communicatio idiomatum* which seems to assign, or at least to assume, an ontological status in each nature taken in itself. Christ was never an individual to Calvin, rather he saw Christ not in terms of individualized existence but in terms of a true person.⁷ The difficulty with Calvin's position, as expressed by Witte, is its lack of ontological content,⁸ that is, Calvin was content to speak of the person of the Mediator, rather than the ontology of the divine/human natures. But Witte has missed the important reason why Calvin has very little to say here, beyond his affirmation and exposition of the hypostatic union in the person of the Mediator. It is impossible within our experience of individualized existence to find any analogy whatsoever with an entity who is fully and ontologically personal. Christ, according to Calvin, fully realises his personhood in his role as Mediator. Our experience of this mediation, through communion and love for example, gives an idea of this kind of existence, but without exhaustive and complete ontological content. True life, without death, is impossible for us as long as our being is ontologically determined by creaturehood. The purpose of Calvin's defence of the person of the Mediator was to show the immediate and direct character of God's presence in Christology. It is only within this mode of existence that being and nature are true.

Zizioulas suggests that the christological mystery, as declared by Chalcedon, signifies that salvation as truth and life is possible only in and through a person who is ontologically true, something

which creation cannot offer. The only way for a true person to exist is for being and communion to coincide. The triune God offers in himself the only possibility for such an identification of being with communion because he is Trinity; He is the revelation of true personhood.⁹ For Calvin, Christology was founded precisely upon the assertion that only the Trinity can offer to created being the genuine base for personhood and hence salvation. Relationality and Trinity are distinct concepts, but cannot be separated one from the other. Calvin's assertion of the person of the Mediator, underscored a similar conceptional framework for understanding Jesus Christ. How then are the premise of God/human relationality, in the person of the Mediator and the trinitarian relation and activity of God, knowable? For Calvin, knowability was in the manner of revelation.

As Calvin wrote in Book One of the *Institutes*, knowledge of God in accordance with his own essence must be through the willed activity of God in which he manifests himself to us in his effects.¹⁰ One could then say that God is the voluntary object of our knowledge. A voluntary object, according to Calvin, was known through his willed activity.¹¹ Torrance and Bouwsma suggest that Calvin gave the intellect primacy over the will, hence within the relationship of knowing set up by the willed activity of God and the willing response of humanity, the intellect cannot but assent to the truths of God which it apprehends when it encounters the divine reality in his self-manifestation.¹²

According to Calvin, knowledge of God, like all true knowledge, is determined by the nature of what is known, so knowledge of this personal God is determined by his nature as personal being. God thus comes to us as one who encounters us in his own incommunicable personal being, but who wills to reveal himself to us, so long as we on our part are placed in a position of personal obedience to him.¹³

The point of Calvin's understanding of the way God is for us, which is important for the place of the prophetic office as equal among the other offices, is the ultimate relation of the Word as such in the eternal being of God. This is where Torrance suggests Calvin spoke in a refreshing way of the *homoousion*.¹⁴ The Word is really something that reaches us from the other side of creaturely being, that proceeds out of the very essence of God. This meant that in order for Calvin to underscore the importance of the manner of revelation of God, he must have been very clear about the epistemological import of the *homoousion*. The Word is eternal reality and resides as Word in the eternal being of God Himself and proceeds from him without being less God.¹⁵ The Word is in fact God himself speaking to us personally, for He personally resides in His Word even when He communicates it to us.¹⁶

It is the revelation by the Word of God which we hear in the Holy Scriptures; it derives from and reposes on the inner being of the One God, and that is the objective ground, deep in the eternal Being of God, upon which our knowledge of God rests.¹⁷ I suggest that Calvin then argued that in His own eternal Essence God is not mute or dumb,

but relational, the Father, Word, and Holy Spirit communicating or speaking Himself. That is the Word which we hear in the Bible, given by the Father, which works or effects in us through the Spirit. While knowledge is certainly a human activity, due to our creaturely status we do not know the Truth of God through our own artificial constructions, through images of our own, but only through modes of knowing imposed upon us from the person of God and from His own self-manifestation through his Word.

Now what is so distinctive in Calvin's understanding of the relationality between God and mankind and so significant for the establishment of all the offices as a legitimate exposition of the person of Christ is that it is in and through his *Word*.¹⁸ That is, the understanding of relationship comes through hearing rather than seeing.¹⁹ Calvin must have realized the place of vision in our knowledge has but a limited range and that perceptibility cannot be taken as the final criterion of the way God is for us. There is no point in rejecting the proper place of vision in God's revelation, but joined to his view on the primacy of the intellect, it cannot be allowed to dissolve away the hearing element which is basic and essential to the capacity for reason. Hence the way God is for us includes the biblical and theological statements which attest to it. They are basically heard statements.²⁰ The justification for the inclusion of the differing Old Testament offices of prophet, king and priest is built upon their relation with God (which now acts along lines set by Christ himself). In other words, it rests on their inclusion in the text of Scripture, and the trinitarian activity of

God: the love of the Father in their existence, their relation to the Holy Spirit and their consummation in Christ.

Calvin insisted that in knowing God we are cast wholly upon His own prior and given activity in presenting Himself to us. He spoke of the Trinity and the divine/human relational premise in terms of activity which was essential for the being of God. This is his reason for linking any trinitarian exposition with divine/human relational reflection on what was found in Scripture,

It is not fitting to suppress the distinctions that we observe to be expressed in Scripture. It is this: to the Father is attributed the beginning of all activity, and the fountain and wellspring of all things; to the Son, wisdom, counsel, and the ordered disposition of all things; but to the Spirit is assigned the power and the efficacy of that activity.²¹

It is in the Spirit that Calvin brought together his understanding of the transcendence of God and the explanations of the way God is for us. For in all relation of thought and language to being we are confronted by what is inexhaustible, that is, something that remains transcendent and resistant so far as our knowledge is concerned, and something that can never be subdued to our statements. Here we could easily get lost in a labyrinth, Calvin said, unless we follow the line or thread of the Word.²²

The Holy Spirit, then, is an extension of God's creative personal presence among humanity. In him we find the Truth in the form of personal being, God speaking to us in Person, who is himself in his own personal nature the Word he speaks to us. Because the Spirit of

God is God's personal presence and yet is God's living creative action, his impact upon us creates personal relations, places us as subjects over against the divine subject, and at the same time gives us God as the object of our knowing in such a way that God remains in control by presiding over all our judgments about Him.

So in our personal relations with God and in the very act of faith we engage in a movement of the mind in which we presume everything of God and nothing of ourselves, so that from beginning to end it involves us in a reshaping of self and reconstructing our prior understanding. Thus one of the outstanding marks of Calvin's theology is that he was able to hold objectivity and personalism together. As Calvin saw it, the activity of God who presides over all our judgments about him, allows us to be truly personal ourselves and have personal relations with one another, but he who ceases to speak with God is unable to establish meaningful relations with other human beings. Hence being is established within participation in Christ whose very being is relational as the Son of God in Trinity. Likewise in the office of Christ such true personhood should be found as human beings participate in the activity of the offices..

The way God does this is trinitarian. The offices then explain the actuality of God's activity. The Word of God, Jesus Christ, is the operative activity of God. He is the 'official person' who is God before humanity. The Father is the loving subject of the activity who sustains it by his power and authority while the Spirit by his unction in the offices draws us into participation in much of our

understanding of God. In other words, the Spirit facilitates that understanding.²³ Calvin carefully explained the 'school of Christ' as the work of the Spirit, as in the case of the Samaritan woman²⁴ or in his own understanding of a conversion to teachableness,²⁵ the *opera ad extra* of the Spirit is actually developed, as the Spirit incorporates believers into the activity of God. There is no real subordination of the Spirit here. The Trinity then is copresent in the activity of God, not working separately. The work of Christ and the Holy Spirit is the total work of the Father.

With so much contained in the significance of the mode of revelation and of the purpose of the Word in the Activity of God, it is no wonder that Calvin then used the offices as a way of explaining the way God is for us. The prophetic office in itself, then, contains this type of balance and is most significant in Calvin's exposition of the knowledge of God and its premise in the relationality of God and mankind.

Relationality found in the World: Experientia Demonstrat.

In Chapter Three we saw several of the characteristics of the relationship between humanity and God to be balance, order and communication. It is now necessary to look again these hallmarks for they illustrate that Calvin was justified in using the supposed human offices for ontological and theological rather than mere exegetical reasons, as Jansen suggested. In looking closely at Calvin's Christology, I will now suggest that Calvin's understanding of

relationality was: 1) A fundamental principle found in the world. 2) God's active loving will creates the premise of man-God relationality.

Perhaps Calvin was distinguished from many in the 16th century by a stronger sense of the visible orderliness of the world, through which the power of the Maker 'shines out.' So deeply impressed was he with the tokens of design in the cosmos that he envied the natural scientists, whose observations enabled them to penetrate more deeply than most into the secrets of nature (which are *divinae sapientiae arcana*). The activity of God was a fact of experience, and I suggest that it was this fact that allowed Calvin to say so much about the prophetic, kingly and priestly offices. He also had a deep sense of awe before the cosmos, not merely because of its order and grandeur, but also because of its sheer enigma, which is impenetrable to the human mind. Even by the redeemed, whose vision has been restored, the divine purpose in the world order cannot simply be read off from the face of nature and history. Calvin's understanding of providence as the loving activity of God in sustaining the world comes into bold relief by discerning in the activity a sense of the hiddenness of God. We do not invariably see God's hand at work. We believe it on the basis of God's activity of revelation to us.

It is certainly true that in the Law and the Gospel are comprehended mysteries which extend far above the bounds of our sense. But since God illumines the minds of his own with the spirit of understanding, so that they may grasp these mysteries which he has designed to lay open by his Word, now no abyss is there, but a way in which we are to walk in safety and a lamp to guide our feet, the light of life and the school of certain and manifest truth. Yet his wonderful way of governing the world is justly called an 'abyss' because while hidden from us, it ought reverently to be adored.²⁶

Perhaps the last phrase, 'it ought reverently to be adored' gives the impression that humanity can make peace with the active and hidden will of God. But it must not be overlooked that for Calvin, the hiddenness and activity of God is subjectively apprehended by a sense of terrifying contingency, apart from his relation to us in Jesus Christ. That is, he portrayed the threatened insecurity of human existence ('its ultimate anxiety and dread') with quite extraordinary power. Life itself is 'enveloped in death.' 'Half alive in life [man] hardly dares to draw an anxious feeble breath, as though he had a sword perpetually dangling over his neck.'²⁷

It was within this setting, for example, that Calvin wrote of election. It was, on the one hand, demonstrable in the world, and on the other, only understood through the activity of Christ as its Mediator. Election, much the same as what is said about the person of God itself, can be seen as an indicator of the God/human relationality premise because it is in fact woven into the fabric of human experience. For Calvin election was about experienced diversity. He observed the fact that some do and some do not believe the Gospel. The mystery of the activity of God, is continuous with a more universal mystery of human existence: life's goods, from birth onwards, are bestowed or withheld with a discrimination which we ourselves do not control, *experientia demonstrat*. It is a fact of experience.²⁸ Men are preferred above animals, one nation is preferred over another, one brother over another.²⁹ Not all are privileged to hear the Gospel; and yet of those who hear it not all receive it with joy. The seed may fall among thorns or stony ground. Hardening and blessing alike are

finally beyond our ability to explain: they are in the will and activity of God³⁰ As Augustine exclaimed: 'Peter denies, the thief believes. "Oh, the depth!" Do you ask a reason? I shudder at the depth.'³¹

Awe, humility and a thankful activity in the world are not, however, the only possible modes of response to this recognition of the facts of life. To the question, Who knows how it stands between me and God in heaven?, Calvin responded with the activity of God in Jesus Christ. To move beyond the Word is to find oneself in terrifying darkness, a maze without exit, a pathless waste, a bottomless whirlpool, inextricable snares, an abyss of sightless darkness.³² We must only look to the Christ for assurance of the loving activity of God. Anxiety that what Christ tells us in the end may prove to be something other than the will of the Father is groundless, for Christ is the revelation of the Father where the knowledge of the subject shines through.³³ And yet the anxiety is very persistent.³⁴ The threat of the infinite depth of the unknown God never quite disappears. If it did so, the exhortation to embrace Christ would surely be superfluous. If the enigma of human existence is to be identified with the hiddenness and the revealed activity of God, according to Calvin, that will be because like all things human, the experience of hiddenness and activity was not alien to the Redeemer himself. 'And surely no more terrifying abyss can be imagined than to feel yourself forsaken and estranged from God; and when you call upon him, not to be heard.'³⁵

Calvin took God's actual activity in his revelation in Jesus Christ and explored it. This was not what some might call an abstract exploration but something dynamic: what we know by faith occurs in Christ, we find in faith that God is active in this way. The importance of the prophetic office is in how Christ then explained the way God is for us. The prophet then exhibited the characteristics of our knowledge of God which is in the activity of God in Jesus Christ. Calvin unfolded the implications of the relationality of God and humanity in the offices, refuted the opinions of his opponents, and then went on to explain its comfort for those in the Church.

Hence the inclusion of the prophetic office in Calvin should not be based merely within the activity alone, that is, in what is actually ministered in the office. Instead, it is the necessity of a unique person in the Mediator who is not bound by the terrifying contingency of the created order. It was ontological rather than mere exegetical considerations which drove Calvin in his definition of the person of the Mediator and his offices.³⁴ And so, it is to the particular description of the prophetic office that we now turn.

Christ the Prophet as *Doctor Ecclesiae*.

Christ was the teacher of his people. Calvin taught that doctrine is a matter of teaching the truth about God (so far as it concerns humanity to know) about himself and about the universe as an entity which lets the revelation of God shine through. Teaching demands a teacher, and the one and only Teacher (*unicus magister*) of the Church

is Jesus Christ. 'For it is not written of any other at all, but only of him, "Hear him"'.³⁷ Consequently ministers of the Church may not preach or teach anything except only what they have been taught by Christ. But this is a universal truth; it applied to the priests and prophets as well as to the apostles and their successors. In one way or another, they were all not only commanded to proclaim the Word of God but also what they were commanded to speak was given to them: 'none of them spoke without the Lord dictating his words.'³⁸

Thus all the teachers of the Old Testament were personally taught by Christ himself. Calvin wrote,

First, if what Christ says is true, 'No one sees the Father except the son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him,' surely they who would attain the knowledge of God should always be directed by that eternal Wisdom. For how could they either have comprehended God's mysteries with the mind, or have uttered them, except by the teaching of him to whom alone the secrets of the Father are revealed? Therefore, holy men of old knew God only by beholding him in his Son as in a mirror. When I say this, I mean that God has never manifested himself to men in any other way than through the Son, that is, his sole wisdom, light, and truth. From this fountain Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others drank all that heavenly teaching. From the same fountain, all the prophets have also drawn every heavenly oracle that they have given forth.³⁹

So all the secret revelations, oral traditions, and writings were all, through the Spirit, the teaching of the Son, the Wisdom of God. For Calvin, this principle only intensified after the incarnation. The apostles and their successors had to allow him alone to be their Teacher. Yet even so, this does not mean that the apostles were to confine themselves to the teaching of Jesus while he was with them on the earth. They were to confine themselves to the teaching of Jesus, but that teaching embraced all the Old Testament. Calvin went further

and put the apostles on the same level with the prophets in this respect,

From this we also infer that the only thing granted to the apostles was that which the prophets had had of old. They were to expound the ancient Scripture and to show that what is taught there has been fulfilled in Christ. Yet they were not to do this except from the Lord, that is, with Christ's Spirit as precursor in a certain measure dictating the words.⁴⁰

Klauspeter Blaser suggests that Calvin's understanding of the prophetic office of Christ should be seen as predominantly guaranteeing the unity of the two testaments, as well as undercutting the suppositions of the Roman Catholic Church's *magisterium*.⁴¹ While this was certainly a result of Calvin's doctrine of the prophetic office, Calvin was still more concerned with the establishment of the way in which Christ truly actualizes the activity of God in his revelation and so underscores or supports his God/human relationality premise. This was particularly visible in the trinitarian activity within the exposition of the prophetic office, and his emphasis on the prophet as the mouth of God.

Relationality and 'The Mouth of God.'

Another explication of the prophetic Christ which contains the premise of the God/human relationality is the prophet as the mouth of God. Calvin usually reiterated that the prophet *speaks*. He is the mouth of God and can therefore speak with the presence of God.⁴² Calvin, in his descriptions of the prophets, can comment on their ability to illustrate by actions what God wished to say to his people.

This is a very significant image for Calvin. He did make a distinction, however, between the prophet as an individual called by God and the true prophet as part of a collected order. This was related to his comments on the prophet versus the corrupt false prophets of later Old Testament Israel in his commentaries on the Major and Minor prophets. It is the 'office' of the prophet throughout the ages which has guaranteed the continuance of truth, or God's presence. This is because God has promised that his voice will come from them and no other.

This type of corporate discussion was usually found in Calvin's comments on the way God related to his prophets and how he spoke to them. Calvin's commentary on Micah has a good example of this type of discussion,

When anyone is not exercised with great difficulties in discharging his office of teaching, a common measure of the Spirit is only necessary for the performance of his duties; but when anyone is drawn into arduous and difficult struggles, he is at the same time especially strengthened by the Lord: we see daily examples of this; for many simple men, who have never been trained up in learning, have yet been so endued by the celestial Spirit, when they came to great trials, that they have closed the mouths of great doctors, who seemed to understand all oracles.⁴³

It is interesting to note that it is the single prophet who carries the greater identification with Christ. This may have been due to the greater amount of detailing of the prophetic character as representative person which was part of the text. These prophets possessed such a closeness to God in their relation to Him that Calvin by analogy could speak of Christ's person as well as the character of the Church. In other words, in drawing out details of an individual

prophet, Calvin encouraged his audience to make similar comparisons to Christ himself, as well as to their own situation. With that we have again the double emphasis within Calvin's discussion of the prophetic office itself: the uniqueness of a person called to be the prophet of God and the solidarity that person possessed as part of the prophetic tradition which Calvin saw as the fulfilment of God's promise to the Church.⁴⁴

Evidences of the Trinitarian Activity.

Much of Calvin's exposition of the Old Testament prophetic office necessarily, though tacitly, depended upon his doctrine of the prophetic office of Christ. In the Preface to Isaiah, Calvin said of the verse, *he will raise up a prophet*, 'as it is interpreted by Peter, the passage refers properly and above all to Christ, because he is the Head of the prophets, and they all, together with their teaching, depend on him and with one accord are directed toward him.'⁴⁵ Where Calvin spoke of the prophets being taught by the Holy Spirit, then we should take it that he meant they were taught by Christ through the Spirit. In other words, we must always be conscious of the trinitarian activity in the prophetic office.

How then was this explained? Calvin wrote of Christ who continues to teach humanity by the outward teaching of the mouth and by the inward teaching of the Spirit.⁴⁶ Calvin described Christ's prophetic role as that of an inner/outer teacher. Because the prophetic Christ is God with us, Calvin believed that Christ carried out the duty of

the inner teacher by the Spirit and the outer teacher through words. This was uniquely Christ's in his incarnation, but it was also the activity of Christ through his ministers of the Church, that is, both in the *Doctores* of the Old Testament and the New Testament. This role of the inner and outer teacher as belonging to the Church in union with Christ was used by Calvin as the indicator of trinitarian activity in the Christ's prophetic office,

But it must at the same time be noticed, that it was designedly on account of false apostles, that a contrast was made between the literal disciples of the law, and the faithful whom Christ, the heavenly teacher, not only addresses by words, but also teaches inwardly and effectually by his Spirit.⁴⁷

We can again see how this hallmark stands in the prophets. So strongly and so often did he speak of Christ the teacher through the Holy Spirit, dictating to the prophets what they are to say, that much of the discussion has revolved around the question of Calvin and verbal inerrancy. Yet what seems to be missed in this discussion is not so much that Calvin spoke of the need for dictation due to the fact that God and mankind were separated to such an extent that such an absolute possession was necessary in order to become the voice of God, rather that it is the very fact that the possibility remains that a human being can become the instrument of the Spirit because of the God/human relationality premise. Thus in Jeremiah 6.2-3 (*I have likened the daughter of Sion to a quiet and delicate maiden. The shepherds with their flocks shall come upon her, they shall pitch their tents against her round about...*) Calvin wrote,

The place where the prophet was brought up was in sheep country, and he kept many forms of speech from his early upbringing. God does not strip his servants of everything

that is in their mind when he promotes them to teaching his people. The prophet here is speaking out of what he knew as a little child and a boy.

The meaning of the passage is that God does not replace their minds, formed by education and environment, with a new intelligence clean and unformed because God's revelation to humanity was beyond the capacity of his mind. It is rather that the human being, just as he is in his own diversity, with his own language and idiom, is taken over by the Spirit to be his instrument. Likewise in Christ's teaching capacity among the apostles Calvin underscored that Christ's promise that the Spirit would lead the Church into all truth is not to be taken as a promise of new revelations, on the contrary,

The Holy Spirit, certainly, did not teach the apostles anything else than what they had heard from the mouth of Christ himself, but by enlightening their hearts, he drove away their darkness, so that they heard Christ speak, as it were, in a new and different manner.⁴⁸

Here again Calvin reiterated the basic trinitarian activity contained within his exposition of Christ as the Teacher of the Church. Christ is the operative activity of God. The Holy Spirit then incorporates believers into the activity of God. In this case, makes them educable and fit teachers, dependent upon Christ as the supreme Teacher. To be the *organum* of the Holy Spirit is not therefore to be the vehicle of new revelations apart from the activity of Christ the Teacher.

One can then suggest how Calvin understood the way in which the power of the gospel is present in the whole body. This is an important issue as some, like Jansen, have singled out the prophetic office of Christ as lacking a wider application to the Church. Calvin believed that the power of the gospel manifested itself in the whole body

similarly to the way it was manifested in particular apostles, prophets, and ministers: the congregation is to try or test what is being said by its ministers through the spirit of discernment and judgement conferred upon them by God and given through the Holy Spirit, having been taught by Christ the teacher through his word. So in the method of examining the similar trinitarian activity is present, the method of examining is by the Word and the Spirit of God,

But it may be asked, when have we this discernment? They who answer, that the word of God is the rule by which everything that men bring forward ought to be tried, say something, but not the whole. I grant that doctrines ought to be tested by God's word; but unless the Spirit of wisdom is present, to have God's word in our hands will avail little or nothing, for its meaning will not appear to us... That we may be fit judges, we must necessarily be guided by the Spirit of discernment... But the Spirit will only so guide us to right discrimination, when we render all our thoughts subject to God's word.⁴⁹

For Calvin, the activity of the Father in the prophetic office was explained in terms of paternal or fatherly favour, love or grace (*gratia*). In numerous places in Chapter 15 Calvin wrote on the reality of fatherly love which animated the activity of the Son as Teacher. This was especially true in the key passage which thematically collected the three offices together, that of the title *Christus*,

We see that he [Christ] was anointed by the Spirit to be herald and witness of the Father's grace⁵⁰

Even when terms such as favour, love or grace were not specifically mentioned, the real activity of the Father's love was the foundation of any teaching activity,

We have already said [*Institutes* 2.6.2-4] that although God, by providing his people with an unbroken line of prophets, never left them without useful doctrine sufficient for salvation, yet the minds of the pious had always been imbued with the conviction that they were to hope for the full

light of understanding only at the coming of the Messiah.⁵¹

In other words, it was because of the love which God had for his people which guaranteed the continual succession of teachers and useful doctrine, which was crowned in the coming of the Messiah who would be the summit of God the Father's revelation to humanity.

The inclusion of the activity of the Father as grace or love within the teaching office not only balances what has been said about Calvin's description of the trinitarian activity in all the offices, but also firmly places the prophetic office within the salvific framework as the love of God is for the Son and for humanity. The reason for this was, as I explained earlier in Chapter Three, that the love of Father for the Son was the love which was shared with us because we were meant to share in his human sonship. That is, due to our saving union with Christ, all that he has and all that he does now belong to us, and vice-versa. As I have argued, what he does and what he has depend entirely upon who he is: the obedient, loving Son of the Father, loved by the Father and in the closest fellowship with Him. Thus Van Buren argues 'God's love for men is none other than the Father's love for the Son,'⁵² or as Calvin wrote,

...we may safely conclude that, since by faith we are engrafted into His [Christ's] body, there is no danger that we shall be cut off from the love of God; for this foundation cannot be overturned - that we are loved because the Father has loved Him.⁵³

It may be argued that such an emphasis on the love of the Father for the Son is an unbalanced understanding of the activity of the Trinity, as if God's love for us was only something extrinsic to our

relationship. Yet Calvin balanced this by explaining the love of God as something which preceded creation itself,

For it was not after we were reconciled to him [God the Father] through the blood of his Son that he began to love us. Rather, he has loved us before the world was created, that we also might be his sons along with his only - begotten Son - before we became anything at all.⁵⁴

Relationality and the Break into History.

In 1553, Calvin wrote in his Commentary on the Gospel of John,

Indeed faith ought not to fix upon the essence of Christ alone, so to speak, but should be intent upon his power and office. For there was little profit in knowing who Christ was unless this second thing happened, that Christ be known as he willed to be towards us and for what purpose he was sent by the Father. Hence it is that the Papist have nothing but a little shadow of Christ because while they were concerned to grasp the bare essence they neglected his kingdom which consists in the power of his serving.⁵⁵

Calvin warned that any christological approach of the Church which did not take into account the significance of the manner of God's revelation, was no guarantee that Christ himself would be correctly embraced by the Christian. As I have argued, Calvin saw that the object of our knowledge of God should not be Christ in his unknown essence but in how he is revealed to us: Christ is the person of the Mediator. If the offices were an explanation of the person of the Mediator, it is in the offices then, that one must find the use of relationality, activity of the Trinity, and the manner of revelation in Calvin's explanation of who the person of the Mediator is.

The prophetic office, like that of king and priest, admirably serves this task. Calvin argued that the prophetic office actually

supported his contention that God had indeed been able to break into history and time by the continual succession of prophets in the Old Testament and that the prophetic office supported his contention that the manner of revelation was not extrinsic but actually based within the person of the Mediator. The reason is that Calvin wished to insure that all that is said about Christ remained as a discussion primarily of his person.

I will argue that what Calvin was actually arguing for the supposition that the God/human relationality be followed in all its implications, not the least of which is God's ability to break into history and accommodate his manner of revelation to humanity. It is these two realities, the manner of revelation and God's break into history which were part of Calvin's exposition of the prophetic office of Christ.

The problem with the usual metaphysical starting-point, which can be seen as early as Augustine, was with its failure to come to terms with materiality.⁵⁴ That is, the material order was incapable of being really and truly the bearer of divinity. Because of his premise of God/human relationality, Calvin was concerned to see that there was sufficient emphasis on both the divinity and humanity of Christ in mediation. So Calvin's method of explaining both divinity and humanity was to describe the Mediator's break into history and the manner of revelation as contained in the words 'distance' and 'nearness' to us. It was therefore meant to parallel what Calvin had said of Christ's uniqueness and commonality with us. Nearness was

meant to overturn any suggestion that God did not have the capacity to reach mankind, distance to affirm that what was known of God was not absolute, hence the suggestion of some triad rather than Trinity. Nearness was also a way of undercutting any discussion of the Mediator and his natures *in abstracto*, as well as when linked with distance, it became an explanation as to how the divine and human must be contained in the person of the Mediator.

This combination of distance and nearness marked much of Calvin's exegesis of the revelation of Christ the prophet. In passages like 1 Timothy 2.5 Calvin said that Paul could have emphasized either human or God, 'But the Spirit speaking through Paul's mouth and knowing our weakness willed, by specifying the "man" to emphasize the Mediator's nearness to us.'⁵⁷ This question of the nearness and distance of God combined with man's limit or weakness became Calvin's framework for the necessity of Christ the prophet breaking into history. So key words like *accommodatio* and *capus*, accommodation and capacity, are important in showing the relationality premise. One must examine in detail these terms in relation to Christ's break into history.

In many places Calvin associated the accommodation of God with the ability to reach mankind within their necessary capacity, 'For because our weakness does not attain to his exalted state, the description of him that is given to us must be accommodated to our capacity so that we may understand it.'⁵⁸ This is the same pattern for relationality discussed above. Again, in Calvin's Catechism of 1538 it is said that God's nature is incomprehensible, and remotely

hidden from human understanding.⁵⁹ God's majesty was so great to Calvin that for humanity to be faced with the task of comprehending God as He is in Himself,

...this would be to measure with the palm of the hands a hundred thousand heavens and earths and worlds. For God is infinite; and when the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, how can our minds comprehend Him?⁶⁰

So incredible is this essence of God that humanity in direct contact with Him would be lost in an incomprehensible brightness. If God should never begin a way of communicating to us and call us into communication with Him, the great distance at which we stand would strike us with despair.⁶¹ Calvin never tired of emphasizing that because God is who he is and humanity is the way it is we can never cross the gulf which separates us.⁶² God as the revealer, according to Calvin, has to 'transform' himself by covering over that in Himself which in man's mind is too great to grasp.⁶³ This transformation was an exchange of roles, God became flesh. He became God with us, a part of time and history.

God's loving willing activity is contained in God the accommodating revealer to human capacity due to mankind's sinful condition. When we look at what Calvin said about the revealer in redemption we see God's love in relation to us, in other words it is the supreme act of God's grace to us in coming near to us. Calvin wrote that God's '...incomparable lovingkindness whereby in manifesting Himself to His elect, He does not altogether absorb and reduce them to nothing.'⁶⁴ God is so near to us, Calvin said, that we can now enter into a relationship with him. This relationship with the

person of God is necessary if, wrote Calvin, God is to be seen face to face. Without Christ the teacher or Christ the prophet, this nearness would never be possible.

Any speculation beyond this relationship and what it reveals was for Calvin, blasphemy. Because such a fundamental principle, being found in the world, being part of history, if overlooked, caused the fundamental error of the scholastics and ancient philosophers who tried to discuss the being or metaphysical essence of God apart from his own revealing relationship in time. Calvin was concerned with the boundary of the human-God exchange beyond which humanity cannot pass. In other words, God outside the nearness which He provided was still a God of immense distance. In Calvin's words, any speculation was to walk within a labyrinth,

For each man's mind is like a labyrinth... for as rashness and superficiality are joined to ignorance and darkness, scarcely a single person has ever been found who did not fashion for himself an idol or spectre in place of God.⁶⁵

But godliness, to stand on a firm footing, keeps itself within its proper limits. Likewise, superstition is so called because, not content with the prescribed manner and order, it heaps up a needless mass of inanities.⁶⁶

According to Calvin, the prophet Christ by breaking into history shows humanity what true worship and obedience is. In other words, God, in becoming near to humanity, defined what was lawful worship through his prophet. This lawful worship made the prophet balance the other offices of Christ, for Christ must be with us, he must be revealer, if he is to be priest and king for us.

If God in the activity of Jesus Christ, can break into history, then Christ must be capable of displaying all aspects of revealer as part of his office prior to the incarnation. Hence, Calvin saw Christ as performing a similar prophetic task even as the second person of the Trinity. The role of Christ as the prophet, therefore, did not begin merely at the incarnation. As we saw, Calvin asserted that before the incarnation Christ as the Word of God was the source of all revelations and present when the oracles of God were spoken.⁶⁷ God never revealed himself to the fathers '...but in his eternal Word and only begotten Son.'⁶⁸ The whole story of the prophetic role of Christ in the Old Testament for Calvin was how Christ, the eternal Word of God, becomes the prophet and enters the life (and so enters history) of those whom he has elected to be his people by teaching and confronts them in these 'shadow' forms through which they can come to know him and have a relationship with God,

When God therefore, delivered His people from the hand of Pharaoh, when He made a way for them to pass through the Red Sea, when He redeemed them by doing wonders, when he subdued before them the most powerful nations, when He changed the laws of nature on their behalf - all these things He did through the Mediator. For God could not have been propitious either to Abraham himself or to his posterity, had it not been for the intervention of the Mediator.⁶⁹

So Calvin, understood the teaching office of Christ as structured by God's relationality and the entrance of God into history, identified all theophanies as Christophanies.⁷⁰ In the line of this exegesis Calvin used these appearances in time and history to emphasize the coming importance of Christ's incarnation at a future time, in other words, his ultimate break into history by assuming human flesh; thus speaking of Christ's prophetic appearances as the

Angel of the Lord as anticipatory appearances. That is, Christ's appearances at these times were not real appearances in the flesh as if Christ had a real body which he discarded later, as the angels sometimes did.⁷¹ The appearances, in fulfilment of the prophetic Christ were 'in shadow'. So Calvin felt that Christ was truly present, that the spiritual or the real was represented in Christophanies, but that these were not to be identified with the *Deus manifestatus in carne*. Calvin's emphasis was on the Christ as revealer in history.⁷² These frequent appearances in the Old Testament were applied by Calvin to Christ as the revealer in Old Testament history, '...God's only begotten Son, who was afterwards manifested in the flesh.'⁷³

Similarly, Calvin used miracles as evidences for God's decisive break into history. Calvin believed that acts of power by God in miracles served as a supporting activity to the words of revelation which were accompanied by the act.⁷⁴ Even if an act of power was, in Calvin's words, self-evident, he believed that the words, the prophetic was still needed. Calvin wrote that Israel did not recognize the significance of the manna until Moses explained it, '...for the power of God was manifested to the eye, but the veil of unbelief prevented them from apprehending God's promised bounty. Therefore God gave His word through Moses.'⁷⁵

Continuing in this vein Calvin followed, in his exegesis of 1 Corinthians 10:2, an interpretation of miracles as being 'sacramental' in character, where the word and the external sign are inseparably connected though not identified with each other. Miracles, Calvin

wrote, cannot produce faith or traverse the gulf which separates us from God. Apart from the word that is joined to it and the reception of that word by mankind in relation to God, the miracle is merely an act of extraordinary power, a *nuda signa*. Calvin put such an importance upon the mediatorial role of Christ's prophetic office that he believed it was the sign of the judgement of God if the words of the gospel or Christ as prophet were removed. The removal of the prophetic was the removal of God's presence among us.⁷⁶

This emphasis upon the prophetic sign and word and the prophetic God who is afar off and yet is near us was the subject of the chapters on Christ and the Old Testament in *Institutes* 2.7-11. The Mediator was immediately present in the history of the Old Testament. This pattern of the essence of God as hidden and revealed was firmly placed by Calvin within Christ's prophetic role as the revealer, God with us. So the prophetic break into history by Jesus Christ corresponds to an actual break into history by the Mediator. In other words, Christ the revealer contained the two related concepts of Mediator as the Sustainer of the theatre of creation which demonstrated the glory of God and as the reconciler of sinful humanity. Calvin's exposition contained the role of the prophet as a way to highlight the status of the prophet as Mediator. Calvin wrote that as the Mediator Christ performed in the *assumptio carnis* our reconciliation with God without ceasing the mediation of revelation in the universe, 'It is the same person who orders unfallen creation and who reconciles rebellious creation.'⁷⁷

Calvin then interpreted Christ's mediation in the flesh with a firm reliance upon this double aspect of the prophetic office of Christ: Christ was able to have a full real humanity because the Word was hidden yet revealed in Christ. The paradigm was the way in which Christ fulfilled a prophetic role in the Old Testament: God is revealed yet his glory is 'suppressed' in the prophet's person,

I confess indeed that we may not only rightly conceive the Son of God in any other way than as clothed with the flesh. But this did not prevent him, while filling heaven and earth with his divine essence, from supporting his flesh in the womb of his mother and on the cross, in the sepulchre. Indeed then he was not less the Son of God in heaven than he was man on earth.⁷⁶

Calvin confidently balanced the divine and human in Christ along the lines of the roles of Christ in the offices. Calvin explained the distribution of God's gifts in terms of what Christ did as prophet: Christ was truly human he was able to receive the gifts of the Spirit so that he might pour them out on us. Because Christ was divine he was unique in that he could possess extraordinary knowledge which was due to the special relation of his divinity with the Spirit.⁷⁷

Because of the prophetic Christ's ability to break into history Calvin felt that the picture of Christ in the New Testament did truly represent God to us. As in the prophets of the Old Testament, Christ because of his lowliness, or his humanity, revealed and concealed God. This process of hidden and revealed Calvin continually returned to in his discussion of Christ's person,

The majesty of God was not annihilated, although it was surrounded by flesh; it was indeed concealed under the low condition of the flesh but so as to cause its splendour to be seen.⁷⁸

God is not to be sought out in his unsearchable height, but is to be known by us in so far as he manifests himself in Christ.²¹

Conclusions

In accepting the traditional doctrine of the Church, Calvin wanted to retain the transcendence of God, yet was mindful of the pitfalls of those theologies which focussed purely on the transcendence of God to the exclusion of his activity toward us in Jesus Christ. In other words, there was a tendency to speak of Christ in purely metaphysical, ahistorical terms or in a Christology purely from above. According to Calvin, the characteristics of these Christologies was in their failure to take into account what the unity and distinction of the divine and human in Christ actually signified: the reality of the Trinity established the divinity and humanity of Christ and the divinity and humanity of Christ demonstrated the capability of God to sustain the relationality between humanity and God. So it was the humanity of Christ and the divinity of Christ, their unity and distinction which set the stage for his discussion of the offices.

Because I have suggested that there was an underlying ontological basis to Calvin's understanding of the offices of Christ, so that he could truly confess that the offices were aspects of the one person, it can be difficult to separate what is the sole contribution of the particular offices in question. With the problem of function versus ontology unresolved within subsequent Reformed Christology, function

seems to have determined what has been said of the offices. Hence, the prophetic office with its unique functional difficulties in terms of continual succession, runs the risk of being subsumed in the offices of king and priest. It is no wonder that when previous Calvin scholars, usually from a Reformed background, have tended to miss the theological rationale of the offices which integrates ontology with history. This was precisely what the offices have done in Calvin's Christology.

With this in mind it should not be thought a weakness in my argument that the analysis in this Chapter of the setting of *Institutes* Chapter Fifteen, the illustration of relationality found in the world or the break into history, as those elements uniquely possessed by the prophetic office of Christ. That each of these arguments could equally be stated for the kingly or priestly offices actually supports my contention that there is indeed a significant theological rationale for the structure of the offices. The whole of the *munus triplex* affirmed the relationality of God and humanity. If I am correct, then the prophetic office assumes its rightful place alongside the other offices and Calvin has indeed provided a fresh structure for his Christology.

One now comes to the relation of Calvin's scriptural exegesis and his more systematic statements as found in the *Institutes*. If one seeks systematic statements in the commentaries, one will have a difficult task. Accepting the notion that the offices integrate christological ontology with the historical continuity of salvation,

one would expect to find Calvin making comments to this end in his exegesis of particular prophets in the Old and New Testaments. Yet one must exercise some caution in this investigation. For example, it is difficult to know what Jansen meant by the statement that Calvin did not arrive at the *munus triplex* formula through exegesis. If he meant that Calvin did not find a passage of Scripture in which the three-fold office was clearly stated then of course he was right because no such systematic passage exists. But if he meant that Calvin did not have exegetical and theological reasons for employing the prophet in the *Institutes* then he ignored the reasons which Calvin gave there for introducing it, namely, that prophets are an explication of the way God is for us because they contain the God/human relationality and are part of the history and continuity of salvation. Prophets also show a trinitarian activity as they were taught by Christ through His Spirit, hence the reason why they were anointed along with kings and priests.

Calvin did make a distinction between passages which supported his more christological understanding of the prophetic office and the actual context of the office in the Old and New Testaments. It is a description and analysis of these distinctions which is the subject of the next Chapter: the prophet in the Old and New Testaments.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER FIVE

¹ François Wendel affirmed that the function of the Trinity is to underscore the divinity of Christ, 'To deny the divinity of the three Persons was tantamount to ruining the divinity of Christ, and, at the same stroke, removing the keystone not only of Christian theology, but of all saving faith.' in *Calvin, The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*. Philip Mairet (trans.), (London: Collins & Co., Ltd., 1950), p. 167. However, Wendel did not make much of the Trinity for the humanity of Christ in Calvin. I suggest that this is because his own emphasis on the aseity of Christ as bearing the fullness of the Godhead tended to strain any understanding of relation between *hypostasis* and *ousia* as Calvin saw it. It is also possible that he has been influenced by Doumergue who suggested that Calvin was not influenced by the insights of Chalcedon (Jean Doumergue, *Jean Calvin Les Hommes et Les Choses de son Temps* (Lausanne: Georges Bridel & Cie., 1899-1927), vol. 4, p. 220.) There is not much relatedness in Wendel's analysis. He therefore did not have much to say about the humanity in his own analysis of Calvin's Christology.

² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Ford Lewis Battles (trans.), John T. McNeill (ed.), (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960).

³ See *Institutes* 1.15.3-5 and 2.12.5-7 for Osiander. As I said in Chapter Three, Calvin's contention was in the way Osiander attempted to 'mix heaven and earth,' in other words, that humanity is substantially righteous due to the infusion of both the essence and quality of God in mankind. This was clearly a question of the inviability of the transcendence of God. Because of this mixture of essence, according to Osiander, Christ would still have come even if Adam had never sinned. It seems Osiander wished to take seriously that grace imparts real salvation to humanity and that this in some sense involves us in a union with God or in sharing in the divine life. Calvin cannot allow any mixing of the divinity and the humanity. See Trevor Hart, 'Humankind in Christ and Christ in Humankind: Salvation as Participation in our Substitute in the Theology of John Calvin,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 42 (1989) pp 67-84.

⁴ See especially *Institutes* 2.13.1-3. Menno taught that women were receptive only in the sexual act and 'the father is the real origin of the child,' *Reply to Gellius Faber* p. 768; cf. his *Reply to Martin Micron*, trans. Verduin *op. cit.*, pp. 849ff.; 886-892; 906. Christ therefore was not truly human because his line of descent is traced through the Virgin Mary.

⁵ *Institutes* 2.13.4.

⁶ *Institutes* 2.15.1.

⁷ This is opposed to the suggestion of Irena Backus, '"Aristotelianism" in some of Calvin's and Beza's expository and exegetical writings on the doctrine of the trinity, with particular

reference to the terms οὐσία and υποστάσις.' in *Histoire de l'exégèse au XVI^e siècle*. Textes du Colloque International tenu à Genève en 1976. Réunis par Olivier Fatio et Pierre Fraenkel. Etudes de Philologie et d'Histoire, 34. Genève: Librairie Droz, 1978. Pp. 351-360, 'Calvin here [in the exposition of John One], as in the *Institutio* is much closer to Aquinas' interpretation of a person as a «subjectum» or an independent subsistence than to Augustine's more diffident account of person as a (subsistent) relation.'

⁸ Johannes L. Witte, 'Die Christologie Calvins,' *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart, Band 3. Chalkedon Heute*. Hrsrg. A. Grillmeier, H. Bacht, (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1954), pp. 529. Yet Hans Helmut Eßer ('Hat Calvin eine »leise modalisierende Trinitätslehre«?' in *Calvinus Theologus*. Die Referate des Europäischen Kongress für Calvinforschung vom 16. bis 19. September 1974 in Amsterdam. Hrsrg. von Wilhelm Heinrich Neuser, (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1976), pp. 113-129.) argues that examination of passages in Calvin with a view to establishing a 'slightly modalizing tendency' turns out to be negative: neither the systematic locus, where the doctrine of the Trinity is handled, nor the establishment of its basic principles, nor assertions about the divinity of the Son or the Spirit, or about the Trinity, - none of these confirms that. Furthermore, a study of Calvin's understanding of Genesis 1.26 and 2 Corinthians 5.6 in his commentaries comes to the same result.

⁹ John Zizioulas, *Being As Communion* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), pp. 105-122. Zizioulas makes the important point of highlighting the danger of seeing Christ as an individual. To do so disallows any possibility for the whole person of Christ as defined in relation to either God and humanity or the Church.

¹⁰ *Institutes* 1.13.18.

¹¹ *Institutes* 1.3.1.

¹² T.F. Torrance, 'Knowledge of God and Speech about Him according to John Calvin,' *Revue D'Histoire et De Philosophie Religieuse*, 44 (1964), pp. 402-422. William Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 72, 'He was not a philosopher, and he did not often make explicit, much less examine, the traditional assumptions that underlay his thought. He implied, rather than stated, the competence of the human mind to know the world in a traditional sense.' And especially, 'Fundamental to this kind of Christianity in Calvin was a conviction that all truth, having its source in God is objectively given, that it is the same for all people in all times and places, and that it is self-consistent and intelligible' (p. 98).

¹³ *Institutes* 1.10.2. Cf., 1.2.2; 1.5.9.

¹⁴ T.F. Torrance, *op. cit.*, p. 412.

¹⁵ Peter Toon, 'The Exalted Jesus and God's Revelation,' *Bibliotheca Sacra* 141 (1984), pp. 112-113.

¹⁶ *Institutes* 1.13.7. Cf. Torrance, *op.cit.*, pp. 413-415.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *Commentary on Luke 11.27*, 'In this way He opens to us all His treasures, and He has no commerce with us, nor we with Him apart from His Word. When therefore He communicates Himself to us by His Word He rightly and properly calls us to hear and keep it, that He may become ours by Faith.'

¹⁹ There is a tendency in Calvin to understand faith far less as trust in God's promises than as intellectual assent to a body of propositions. Bouwsma, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

²⁰ Hendrik Schroeten, *Christus de Middelaar bij Calvijn. Bijdrage tot de Leer van de Zekerheid des Geloofs*. Proefschrift. Utrecht, 1948. p.272.

²¹ *Institutes* 1.13.18.

²² Torrance, *op.cit.*, p. 415. Cf. *Institutes* 1.17.2.

²³ Willis suggests that Christ's existence and ordering reality beyond the flesh are in large measure to be accounted for Pneumatologically. 'Calvin so gives content to the *Filioque* provision that it serves not to buttress a subordination or devaluation of the Spirit to the Son, but to underscore that the Son is never effectively active in creation or redemption without the Spirit.' *op. cit.*, p. 83.

²⁴ *Commentary on John* 4.25-26.

²⁵ See Wilhelm Neuser, 'Calvin's Conversion to Teachableness,' *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Tydskrif* 26 (1985) pp. 14-27.

²⁶ *Institutes* 1.17.2.

²⁷ *Institutes* 1.17.10-11.

²⁸ *Institutes* 1.16.3.

²⁹ *Institutes* 3.22.1; 3.22.5,24-17; 3.22.5.

³⁰ *Institutes* 3.24.12,16; 3.24.12-14, 22.10, 23.13; 3.23.1. Cf. 3.22.2, that not all are members of Christ is open to observation; 3.24.15, experience teaches that God does not touch every heart.

³¹ Quoted in *Institutes* 3.23.5.

³² *Institutes* 3.21.1,2; 3.24.4.

³³ *Institutes* 3.24.3-6.

³⁴ *Institutes* 3.24.6 'At subit futuri status anxietas... ista sollicitudine liberavit nos Christus...' That Calvin has a perennial

oscillation in his mind that underscored the trust in the activity of God is supported from his sensitive treatment of anxiety and doubt in 3.2.16-28, not to mention his demonology in 1.14.13-19.

³⁵ *Institutes* 2.16.11.

³⁶ Trevor Hart, 'Humankind in Christ and Christ in Humankind: Salvation as Participation in our Substitute in the Theology of John Calvin,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 42 (1989) p. 71, wrote, '...the pattern of his christology is determinative of his soteriology. All that he [Calvin] has to say concerning humanity's relationship with God is directed by this reality, and none of the models of redemption to which he refers is allowed to trespass outside the interpretative context established by it. Who Christ is makes all the difference for interpreting the significance of what he does.'

³⁷ *Institutes* 4.8.1.

³⁸ *Institutes* 4.8.3.

³⁹ *Institutes* 4.8.5.

⁴⁰ *Institutes* 4.8.8, *Verba quodammodo dictante Christi Spiritu*. The adverb is a deliberate qualification, discounting any doctrine of exact verbal inspiration. The context has reference to Christ as Teacher, not merely to words as in verbal inerrancy.

⁴¹ Klaus Peter Blauser, *Calvins Lehre Von Den Drei Ämtern Christi*. Theologische Studien 105. (EVZ-Verlag Zurich, 1970), p. 10, 'Mit dieser Erklärung kann in der Tat gezeigt werden, wie das prophetische Amt mit Gesetz, Schrift und Bund zusammenhängt. Die innercalvinische Entwicklung könnte aber auch mit der Notwendigkeit zu tun haben, die von Rom bestrittene Authentizität des kirchlichen Amtes und das Priestertum aller Gläubigen zu verteidigen, die täuferische Ablehnung der kirchlichen Ordnung anderseits zu widerlegen. Nach Inst. IV/2.4 ist die Kirche nicht auf menschliche Meinungen und nicht auf menschliches Priestertum sondern auf die Lehre der Apostel und Propheten gegründet.'

⁴² *Institutes* 3.2.24.

⁴³ *Institutes* 3.11.10.

⁴⁴ Trevor Hart, *op. cit.*, p. 82, 'What he does and what he has depend entirely upon who he is - the obedient, loving Son of the Father, loved by the Father and in the closest fellowship with him. Yet even this is not something which Christ withholds from us. To be sure he alone is the true and eternal Son. Yet he gives us to participate in his Sonship.' See also Paul Van Buren, *op. cit.*, p. 9. 'God's love for men is none other than the Father's love for the Son.' Calvin spoke of the activity of the Father in terms of love for humanity through the Son.

⁴⁵ *Preface to Isaiah* 1.

⁴⁶ Commentary on Luke 24. 32.

⁴⁷ Commentary on Romans 8. 15.

⁴⁸ Commentary on John 16. 12.

⁴⁹ Commentary on 1 John 4. 1.

⁵⁰ *Institutes* 2. 15. 2.

⁵¹ *Institutes* 2. 15. 1.

⁵² Paul Van Buren, *op. cit.*, p. 9. Also, 'Our union with the humanity of Christ is such that we share in his filial human relationship of love and obedience to his heavenly Father, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and in the reciprocal love which flows from the Father's heart to him.' Trevor Hart, *op. cit.*, p. 83. See also Garret A. Wilterdink, 'The Fatherhood of God in Calvin's Thought,' *Reformed Review* 30 (1976/77) pp. 9-22, who concludes, 'The theology of John Calvin is one in which a large and fundamental place is given to the fatherhood of God. The concept of fatherhood is basically related to God as Creator and Redeemer. The roles usually associated with fatherhood - generation, discipline, nurture and responsiveness - are strongly emphasized by Calvin.' p. 20. Calvin also interpreted revelation and redemption in Christ in terms of the fatherhood of God. God is our Father only in Jesus Christ. Christ is the object of faith as the Father is the object of its trust. 'For God would have remained hidden afar off if Christ's splendor had not beamed upon us. For this purpose the Father laid up with his only-begotten Son all that he had to reveal himself in Christ so that Christ, by communicating his Father's benefits, might express the true image of his glory.' *Institutes* 3.2.1.

⁵³ *Commentary on John* 17. 23.

⁵⁴ *Institutes* 2. 16. 4.

⁵⁵ *Commentary on John* 1. 49.

⁵⁶ Collin Gunton, 'Augustine, The Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43 (1990) p. 36, 'Western theology has for the most part failed to develop adequate conceptual equipment to ensure due prominence to Christ's full humanity. Part of the cause of this may be found in Augustine's reluctance to give due weight to the full materiality of the incarnation.'

⁵⁷ *Institutes* 2. 12. 1.

⁵⁸ *Institutes* 2. 17. 13. Cf.: 2. 11. 13; 2. 16. 2; 3. 18. 9; 1. 14. 3; 1. 5. 1; 2. 7. 2.

⁵⁹ CO 5.324, Translation mine.

⁶⁰ Commentary on Psalm 86.8.

⁶¹ Commentary on Psalm 132.8.

⁶² 'If angels tremble at God's glory if they veil themselves with their wings, what should we do who creep upon this earth?' Commentary on Ezekiel 1.28.

⁶³ Commentary on Exodus 3.2.

⁶⁴ Commentary on Exodus 24.11.

⁶⁵ *Institutes* 1.5.12. Cf.: 1.6.1; 1.6.3; 1.13.21; 3.2.2-3; 3.2.31; 3.6.2; 3.8.1; 3.19.7; 3.20.14; 3.21.1; 3.25.11; 4.7.22.

⁶⁶ *Institutes* 1.12.1.

⁶⁷ *Institutes* 1.13.7. Cf. Commentary on Genesis 16.10.

⁶⁸ Commentary on Isaiah 6.1.

⁶⁹ Commentary on Habakkuk 3.13. Calvin in his exegesis of John 8.58 did not limit the 'I am' confession of Christ as referring to the eternal divinity of Christ alone but narrowed it much further to include the revelation of Christ as Redeemer of the world common to all time periods. The 'I am' meant that even in Abraham's time Christ was acknowledged to be the Mediator by whom God was to be reconciled to mankind.

⁷⁰ Gunton, *op. cit.*, suggests that the use of these is one indication if a theology is truly incarnational. If it is, then 'it should be able to look back at the Old Testament with eyes given by the person of Christ and see there further evidences of that interrelationship of God with his creation which comes to its perfection in Jesus.' p. 37.

⁷¹ Calvin would go into great speculation over this, see Commentaries on Daniel 10.5-6 and Luke 24.33 where Calvin believed that angels would take on real bodies to fulfil certain tasks and then discard them like an old suit of clothes.

⁷² '...true knowledge of God is perceived more by the ears than by the eyes' Commentary on Exodus 33.19. Also, Isaiah 1.1 and 6.7: 'Besides the vision was not speechless, but had the word annexed, from which the faith of Abraham might receive profit.' '...the chief part of these appearances consists in the word.'

⁷³ Commentary on Exodus 14.19. Cf.: Zechariah 1:18-21, 'There is no wonder that the prophet should indiscriminately call him Angel and Jehovah, He being the Mediator of the church and also of God. He is God, being of the same essence with the Father; and Mediator, having already undertaken His Mediatorial office...'

⁷⁴ Commentary on Exodus 4.5. Cf.: Daniel 3.28, 'But faith cannot be acquired by any miracle or any perception of divine power; it requires instruction also.'

⁷⁵ Commentary on Exodus 16.15.

⁷⁶ Commentary on Isaiah 49.7.

⁷⁷ *Responsum ad Fratres Polonos*, CO 9.338. Translation mine.

⁷⁸ *Ultima Admonitio ad Wesphali* CO 9.383. Translation mine.

⁷⁹ Commentary on John 1.48.

⁸⁰ Commentary on John 1.14.

⁸¹ Commentary on 2 Corinthians 4.6. Also, 'If God has spoken now for the last time, it is right to advance thus far; so also when you come to him [Christ] you ought not to go farther.'

CHAPTER SIX

THE PROPHET IN THE NEW AND OLD TESTAMENTS

Introduction.

We come now to discuss Calvin's exegesis of the prophetic office in the New and Old Testaments. I will discuss the New Testament in the first part of this chapter and the Old Testament in the second. I suggest that it will be more fruitful to discuss Calvin's understanding in this way for two reasons, the first being less significant than the second for this thesis.

The first argument is the chronological, that is, that the New Testament commentaries themselves were produced at an earlier period in Calvin's career, with the Old Testament left incomplete at his death in 1564. However, the Old Testament commentaries, due to their size and the amount of material dedicated to the prophets, contain a fuller exposition of Calvin's understanding of the prophetic office. We will then be moving in our own analysis from the lesser to the fuller exposition of the office.

The second reason follows from Calvin's own interpretation of history, which one could call 'theological'. He viewed history itself not as the arrangement of events as a movement forward diachronically from what was 'past' to 'present', as we in the modern world tend to do, but more in theological or christological terms with the focus of history being the incarnation and the presence of Christ now at its

centre. With this particular interpretation in mind, very typical in the Reformation, the New Testament is seen in terms of Christ's immediacy and directness. Christ is present now, so one moves from that centrality to the edge, that is, to those periods in history which were less direct and immediate for Christ had not yet come in the flesh, namely, the period of the Old Testament. With this understanding in mind, therefore, it would seem best to pursue any study of Calvin's exposition of the New Testament and Old Testament with his theological interpretation of history intact. The implications of this interpretation will be discussed below.

In the reading of Calvin's commentaries where the prophetic office is the subject, one is struck by the underlying twofold theological structure of his comments of the office of prophet. The first is his stress upon the unity of ministry in preaching throughout the history of the Church. This is understandable in what I have so far suggested concerning the unity of divine activity. The empowering by the Holy Spirit, the teaching of Christ and the sustenance of the Father never changes. The second is his stress upon the necessity and uniqueness of the incarnation and atonement of Christ in history, the *terminus ad quem* of the covenants of the Old Testament, and the historic dynamic of salvation from promise to fulfilment. As far as each of the offices were concerned there was a definite before and after the birth, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. Christ brings fulfilment to the offices in light of Old Testament promises: he is the true prophet, priest and king; the Church participates in

the offices in a more comprehensive fashion, as the gospel spreads beyond Israel to the entire world.

As far as the prophetic office was concerned, in Christ as the true teacher of the Church, who possessed the fullness of the Holy Spirit without measure, the entire measure of teaching had come. It was to be the end of all prophecies, the end of the particular Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles who brought God's revelation to humanity. Yet there is a unity of message, a unity of relation between ministers and people of the Church with Christ throughout all ages. This is a unity of message guaranteed by the eternal God himself. This explains why Calvin insisted that ministers were a unified body under Christ their head, always relying upon the witness of Scripture, be it the Law for Old Testament prophets or both New Testament and Old Testament for ministers of his own day. Their calling is the same, their relation to God is the same.

In the overview of the prophetic office in the New Testament and Old Testament one must keep this twofold theological structure in mind. The Chapter is divided into two major parts, the first dealing with the New Testament and the second dealing with the Old Testament. In each of the major parts of the Chapter I will discuss the juxtaposition of the unity and distinctions of the prophetic office as Calvin saw them. To this end, the section on the New Testament is divided into several parts. The first is Calvin's own problems of prophecy in his own time. The second is the unity of preaching throughout the Church's history. The third will then take these two

views and develop Calvin's expanded definition of pastor/teacher. The fourth will contain a statement of Calvin's expanded definition of prophets and prophecy. The section will conclude with some New Testament examples which illustrate the systematic structure of the preceding sections.

In the second part of the Chapter, I will examine the unity and distinctions as described by Calvin in the particular offices of prophet and priest in the Old Testament. I will analyse Calvin's view of their activity and relation in the first section, the failure of the Old Testament priest in the second, and the continuity of the Old Testament prophet in the third.

Part One: The Prophet in the New Testament.

The Ministry and the Church.

Calvin used the internal relationship with God in the prophets in order to substantiate what he saw as the way God actualizes his being through the prophet's activity in their office. This approach, analogous to his understanding of the relation of the person of Christ to humankind, which we discussed in Chapter Three, made for a very effective view of the way in which Christ is related to his prophets and to the rest of humanity. In other words, the actions or offices, far from being extrinsic, are actually an exposition of the very substance of communion with Christ, who makes us participants, not only in all his benefits, but also in himself.¹

According to Calvin, Christ acted in the role of Mediator in the form which we recognized because of the foundational divine/human relation which was essential to Christ. This meant that Calvin was usually concerned with the character or person of the Mediator in his exposition of the activity of mediation. In an analogous way the prophets in the Old Testament will have acted in the role of mediators to their audience because of the divine/human relation in them. When Calvin writes of the ministers in the text of the New Testament, he was careful to ensure that there was no absolute identification between the Christ and minister, rather there was a difference of intensity, perfection and process. Christ, Calvin wrote, had the anointing of the Holy Spirit without measure.² As human, however, Christ was related to God in a way like the prophets: actualized through the Holy Spirit.³ The prophets and ministers, through their relation to and participation in Christ, sustain the *persona* of Christ in their office. The relation is clearly one sustained by the Holy Spirit's anointing. Calvin then made applications of the New Testament characters as ideal 'types' which have universal applicability due to the reality of the Holy Spirit's anointing of Christ. The question which I would like now to consider, is to what extent Calvin was consistent in his application of this unity of relationship in his understanding of the prophet for the New Testament.

I will suggest that Calvin began with an understanding of the unity of ministry under Christ and therefore saw New Testament examples of ministers as having a timeless applicability. These ministers were models of ministry, models of integrity whose very

lives reflected an integrity of relation with God. I will suggest that this ministerial model was challenged within Calvin's own ministry at the time due to his interaction with the position of the Anabaptist movement. Calvin then began to generalize or expand his definition of an ideal minister, including that of the prophet, to include a deeper christological understanding of the relation of the minister to God. I will suggest that Calvin began to emphasize more of the internal motivations of the minister and to borrow freely from the prophetic or apostolic examples. This underlying theological rationale of relation and participation in Christ is important in understanding the prophet in the New Testament as possessing the correct structure to be considered a significant office in New Testament times, and because of this structure, to be applied to the general office of minister in the Church.

Calvin's Problem of Prophecy.

What was the problem of prophecy in Calvin's day? In the early days of Geneva, before Calvin's arrival, there had been a surge of Anabaptist and Spiritualist influence which would still appear from time to time after Calvin's arrival.⁴ Calvin, in his understanding of the prophetic office in the New Testament was concerned to avoid any reference to the then predictive and ecstatic utterances of modern prophets in Geneva.⁵ With this type of influence in mind, Calvin wrote that the type of person who was not a true prophet of God was one who refused to use the Scriptures but rather attempted to answer with the very voice of God.⁶ This binding to the Scriptures, like the important

example of the prophet and the Old Testament law, was Calvin's way of anticipating any response on the part of these prophets of the radical reformation. Why was Calvin so concerned to move in this direction? Like Luther, Calvin saw the influence of the radical reformation prophets in terms of their attack upon the order of the Church and Christian society as a whole.⁷

This would answer the question of Calvin's attacks on the movement as a whole, but why on the prophetic office as it was practised by them in particular? I suggest that Calvin held the prophetic office in very high esteem, even as the first office of ministry in God's dealings with humanity. This is evidenced in Calvin's understanding of the prophetic gifts in its most general sense, that is, that the prophet could be found outside the *grace of regeneration*,

And we know that God has often so distributed his spiritual gifts, that he has even honoured the ungodly and unbelieving with the prophetic office; for it was a special gift, that can be separated from the grace of regeneration.⁸

It is usually overlooked in Calvin's analysis of the prophetic office that Calvin himself understood that it was possible for prophets to exist outside of the recognized task of redemption. That is, God could use prophets in pagan society in the fulfilment of his providence or in the accomplishment of his ends. The usual example which he cited was the prophet Balaam in the Old Testament.⁹ It is possible also that due to his humanistic training that Calvin would respect the hand of God in the utterances of other pagan prophets of classical antiquity.¹⁰ Yet Calvin never spoke so positively about priestly

sacrifice or kingly motivations in providential history as he did about the prophetic office. In all cultures and epochs, this office gave what one could call, clear signs of God's revelation and relation to creation as a whole. Clearly then, Calvin was not adverse to seeing the bridge of the prophetic office between redemption and the larger context of creation. This would also underscore what was said in Chapter Four that the prophetic office did contain some fundamentality which can sustain it alongside the kingly and priestly activity in the world.

If this is correct, what could be Calvin's understanding of the prophet in its larger or more world-wide, cultural sense? It seems that Calvin understood that there existed prophets of God in different cultures, that God could allow the activity of prophets in the culture of the ancient world. The startling thing is that these prophets were to be considered in some sense as of God himself. It is well documented that Calvin's attitude to general revelation was more positive than some of his successors.¹¹ This idea of the prophetic would mean that there was the possibility that there was more to what he considered to be the way in which the mass of general humankind could know and understand God. In an examination of this idea Calvin would still reiterate that those peoples outside the grace of regeneration would have such information from their prophets and that in a sense the information would be correct or that the prophets had the ability to make predictive statements. What we are beginning to see here is a dynamic between an understanding of a prophet in the more general sense and (as we have so far discussed it) and the idea

of the prophet in its more particular, fundamental sense: the idea of the prophet as the bearer of redemptive word rather than merely the bearer of predictive utterance. This would seem to parallel Calvin's own understanding of the prophetic Christ, who is the sustainer of creation and the accommodation of redemption to humanity.

The lesson for Calvin seemed to be in the idea that these prophets although active in a similar way to the true prophets of God, were in effect unheeded by their countrymen. By way of concession, Calvin admitted to the reality of the pagan prophets, but was always quick to point to the moral lesson of these stories, much like the humanists of the Renaissance. This being said, it is possible that the idea of the prophet was one which did indeed indicate Calvin's humanistic appreciation of those things in the cultures of the ungodly. Could one say then that Calvin had an appreciation for the possibility that the prophets of God in different cultures could still function on the earth in the time of his life? It would seem from the evidence of his understanding, that the prophetic office in the classical world could continue in his own day because the activity of God in sustaining creation also continues.

We have the reason for the revision of the prophetic office in his own sense of vocation, that is, his own private relation with God, or what Ganoczy has called his prophetic call.¹² When the Church sank to a low estate, God could raise prophetic figures to return the Church to the path of correct doctrine and so to life. Luther was just such a person in Calvin's own time.¹³ More to the point, Calvin

believed that he himself was one of these latter-day prophets. This is further borne out by the fact that Calvin never received ordination while in residence in Geneva.¹⁴ One could suggest that it was possible that Calvin still felt that his ordination as a boy to the benefices which supported him throughout his university career was sufficiently valid for him to continue as a priest. However, it is rather more likely that Calvin, with the resignation of those benefices, also recognized the external nature of that type of ordination. Since it was the practice of so-called ordination for the income which Calvin attacked with so much vehemence in his later career, it is highly unlikely that it was possible for him to hold such a title from that period in his life, which he later condemned so strongly.

The remembrance of this prophetic call remained with Calvin through all of his life and had its start with his conversion.¹⁵ The context of the famous preface to Psalms did not relate to the idea of Calvin's conversion but rather to the idea of his vocation.¹⁶ This idea of how God could move him to do things with which he was unwilling to do, such as his return to Geneva in 1541, led Calvin to speak in terms of his own consciousness of a divine call to what he was to do.¹⁷ The idea of the divine call led Calvin to see himself as the prophet of God who is persecuted by all, for by the end of his life his ministry was under severe criticism. This type of attitude would then enable Calvin to alter what he saw as the correct understanding of the prophetic in a way which was similar to his understanding of himself.

With these elements in mind, let us consider what would be the attitude of the prophetic in Calvin at the time of writing his commentaries. One can see that there were two strands in Calvin's understanding of the prophetic, which were related to his understanding of ministry as a whole. The first, which was contained in the ministerial model, the prophet outside of regeneration, and his own understanding of calling, was a flexible understanding of ministry which focussed on the minister whose actuality of being was not to be thought of as the minister alone, but as the minister-in-Christ; that is, as relational to Christ himself. It was here that the prophetic office went far in explaining how it can still be applied to all. The second, which was contained in his precision of historical location and activity, was his precise understanding of ministry in response to the radical Anabaptist prophets. The time of ecstatic predictive utterances had ended because the fullness of teaching by Christ himself had come. On the one hand, we have what one could call the internal prophet, one who was answerable only to God, based upon the relation between God and humankind which never changes and, on the other hand, what one could call the external prophet, one who can be assessed by some sort of external word or structure as to the validity of his work and vocation in light of salvation in Christ taking place in time and history.

Yet one could suggest that there was a weakness with this suggested view which one could call the tendency toward rigidity of the ideal which the use of static models would suggest. In other words, because the notion of model is not adequately defined, there is

some uncertainty as to the extent of change which a particular model can allow before a different model suggests itself. This resistance to change leads to lessening flexibility in the exposition of the innate characteristics of relationship to God which are part of the minister's make-up. An ideal model also implies that these characteristics can then be easily assessed by the Church at large. The responsibility of the public Church which is called to evaluate the validity or suitability of a minister's call is made easier because their motivations can be assessed through the actions of the ideal model which are part of the public record of Scripture itself. Relationality to Christ could be lessened in favour of assessment by cross-examination in Scripture.

Clearly this was not Calvin's intention. The model of the minister-in-Christ was meant to have applicability throughout all time, highlighting the activity of God which never changes because his activity is premised upon his trinitarian being. Because Calvin was convinced in the notion that the person of Christ cannot be known outside of his activity, the distinctiveness of ministry must take into account the historical nature of that activity. This christological emphasis, either on the relation of the person of the minister in Christ or the activity of the minister in light of Christ's own saving activity, shaped Calvin's comments on the problem of predictive prophets in Geneva. It was this problem and his solution based upon his insights into the prophetic office of Christ which provided the shape to his comments on the role of the pastor-teacher in the Church. I suggest that because of his increasing awareness of

the flexibility of roles and the basic relational structure of the minister-in-Christ, Calvin began to redefine the prophet's historical character and internal calling in broader, unified terms. This is important in understanding Calvin's fuzzy boundaries between the apostle pastor and the prophet teacher in his New Testament commentaries.

The Unity of Preaching.

To begin, one must see that even in his earliest discussions of what is a 'true church' Calvin first of all defined the true Church in terms of the Word or the doctrine of Christ as constitutive of the Church.

It is not enough, therefore, simply to throw out the name of Church, but judgement must be used to ascertain which is the true church, and what is the nature of its unity. And the thing necessary to be attended to, first of all, is to beware of separating the church from Christ its head. When I say Christ, I include the doctrine [*doctrina*, teaching] of his gospel, which he sealed in his blood. Our adversaries, therefore, if they would persuade us that they are the true church, must first of all show that the true doctrine of God is among them.¹⁸

Calvin went so far as to call the teaching of the word a mark of the Church which must objectively constitute it, 'even if there be some imperfections and faults, as there always will be among men.' He added, 'On the other hand, where the gospel is not declared, heard and received, there we do not acknowledge the form of the church.'¹⁹ This question of the Church cannot be underestimated when thinking of the prophetic Christ. This is because the Word was described by Calvin as the Word in a basic and a dynamic sense, as in the prophetic Christ.

What this meant was that the person Christ as the revealer continually makes God present among the rest of humanity in the Church, now assumed first of all by the ministers of the Church who sustain the person of Christ. As Strohl suggested, '*Comme les autres Réformateurs, Calvin indique comme moyen de créer l'Eglise, la Parole donnée par Dieu, l'Evangile, et le ministère de la Parole institué par Christ.*'²⁰ The two ideas are absolutely inseparable in understanding what Calvin meant in this passage from his commentary on 1 Timothy 3.15,

The church is the pillar of the truth because by its ministry the truth is preserved and spread. God does not himself come down from heaven to us, nor does he daily send angelic messengers to publish his truth, but he uses the labours of pastors whom he has ordained for this purpose. Or, to put it in a more homely way: is not the church the mother of all believers, because she brings them to new birth by the word of God, educates and nourishes them all their life, strengthens them and finally leads them to complete perfection? The church is called the pillar of the truth for the same reason, for the office of administering doctrine which God has put in her hands is the only means for preserving the truth, that it may not pass from the memory of men. In consequence, this commendation applies to the ministry of the word, for if it is removed God's truth will fall.²¹

In the same place Calvin described the preaching of the word as 'the true mark of the church.' In fact Doumergue, after tracing Calvin's teaching on the *notae ecclesiae* through the various editions of the *Institutes* and Calvin's other works, concluded, '*Il est hors de doute que, pour Calvin, l'enseigne principale d'Eglise, c'est la prédication de la Parole.*'²²

More evidence of the juxtaposition of unity of God's activity and the distinctions of history is seen in Calvin's comments on preaching. Calvin affirmed that that God has ordained preaching, which is of

course, to say that he has appointed prophets and teachers to be the depositories of his word.²³ He has set them over us because 'if he himself should thunder from heaven his majesty would be intolerable to us.'²⁴ Duly ordained ministers, therefore, function as ambassadors of God,²⁵ Having resigned his office to them,²⁶ he does not wish to be heard but by their voice.²⁷

For his particular post, clearly, no one is qualified unless endowed with the Spirit,²⁸ and that means to have the interior power of the Spirit joined with his external voice, and so become the instrument of God.²⁹ Because of the trinitarian activity of God in the prophetic office, the preacher is encouraged to expect that his labours will exhibit the joining of the Spirit with his preaching. He has, after all, been made the instrument of God to this end.

Although it may seem that the preached word of God is hereby accorded an authority identical with that of the Scripture themselves, such is not the case. Calvin also pointed to the reality of Christ's own activity in history, making him the head of his Church in his incarnation, death and resurrection. Christ's promise that the Spirit would lead the Church to all truth is not to be taken as a promise of new revelations.³⁰ It is not the case that Christ taught only so as to lay down the first lessons,³¹ so that the apostles and their successors after them, would be free to contrive a new theology that would consist of revelations.³² On the contrary,

The Holy Spirit, certainly, did not teach the apostles anything else than what they had heard from the mouth of Christ himself, but by enlightening their hearts, he drove

away their darkness, so that they heard Christ speak, as it were, in a new and different manner.³³

Between the teaching of Jesus and the teaching of the apostles there is no discontinuity. Neither should there be any discontinuity between the intention of the New Testament and that of Christian preaching; yet there is a distinction of function to be made which is based upon the reality of Christ's coming in history,

Between the apostles and their successors, however, there is, as I have said, this difference: the apostles were the certain and authentic amanuenses of the Holy Spirit, and therefore their writings are to be received as the oracles of God; but others have only the office of teaching what is provided and sealed in sacred Scripture.³⁴

To be the instrument of the Holy Spirit is not, therefore, to be the vehicle of new revelations. The time of revelation is past, for Christ the teacher has come. The apostles have a more intimate status than their successors because they lived nearest to Christ himself. Hence a more unified view of the act of preaching by ministers of the Church reflect the activity of the offices. Here also, Christ activity and ontology form the basis for what Calvin has said concerning his successors in the office.

Calvin's Description of the Pastor/Teacher.

*Notons bien qu'il ne dit pas que Dieu a laisse l'Escripture a fin que chascun y lise; mais qu'il institue une police, qu'il y ait gens pour enseigner.*³⁵

Placed in the closest possible way with the word and spirit was Calvin's teaching on the ministry in the Church in the New Testament

economy. For Calvin, the essential government of the Church had not relied on human effort alone but on the very command of God. This led Calvin to see the importance of the ministry in the fulfillment of God's commands to the Church. That is, the ministry was held responsible in particular for those things God had commanded the Church to carry out in a general way. One would therefore expect to note some continuing development in the understanding of the offices in which Calvin discussed and tested certain distinctions and similarities between ministry in other ages and cultural situations. In other words, one would expect to find a degree of flexibility in Calvin's understanding of the terms and their meaning, with the important deeper relation of the minister to God remaining significant.

Calvin believed in certain distinctions in the ministry found in the New Testament. What was the extent of a distinction between the offices of pastor and teacher in Calvin's thinking? At first glance, it is marked that he did not use the terms interchangeably. In his interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14.6 Calvin identified four categories of *edification* within the Church in the New Testament age. On the relation between them he wrote as follows,

I bracket revelation and prophesying together, and I think that prophesying is the servant of revelation. I take the same view about knowledge and teaching. Therefore whatever anyone has obtained by revelation he gives out in prophesying. Teaching is the way to pass on knowledge. So a prophet will be the interpreter and the minister of revelation.³⁶

Revelation and prophecy are essence and activity in unity, similar to knowledge and teaching. They are in unity because they are subject to

the same infusion by the Spirit. Yet Calvin did not construe prophesying as the bearer of a new understanding of God, who never changes and always is the same in himself (a favourite phrase for Calvin); prophecy therefore could also be in the application of the word of God to a particular people or context. It was therefore like teaching in its essence, dependent upon the activity of the Spirit,

Prophesying does not consist in the simple or bare interpretation of Scripture, but also includes the knowledge for making it apply to the needs of the hour, and that can only be obtained by revelation and the special influence of God.³⁷

Here Calvin explained that preaching went beyond the simple explaining of the biblical texts to pass on knowledge to produce understanding; it included application to the hearers. All preaching was therefore prophesying. Calvin made the point that revelation is not necessarily new knowledge apart from Scripture, but a new application to the hearers in the activity of preaching. As one might expect, this characteristic of the prophetic office is something that depends upon God's special influence, which is the power of the Holy Spirit acting as the inward teacher.

The act of prophesying had this type of twofold effect: inward and outward. It can either soften or harden the heart. For Calvin the gospel was never preached in vain; it had the effect of life or death. It is interesting to note that this was the basis for Calvin's exegesis of the keys passage in Matthew 16,

The comparison of the keys is very properly applied to the office of teaching (in its broader sense)... We know that there is no other way in which the gate of life is opened to us than by the word of God; and hence it follows that the key is placed, as it were, in the hands of the ministers of the Word... As there are many, who are not only guilty of

wickedly rejecting the deliverance offered to them...the power and authority to bind is likewise granted to ministers of the Gospel.³⁸

But this condemnation is not to be considered the proper office of the gospel; it is an accidental one. It is the power of the Spirit which makes the work of the preacher so effective. Because salvation for Calvin ultimately resided with God, all power for action resides with the Spirit. Christ is always the master over the power of the minister; without this union of the human preacher and the word of God effected by the Holy Spirit the human word is nothing but a dead letter: 'When God separates himself from his ministers, nothing remains in them.'³⁹ However, in Calvin's mind, when the union did take place there is the closest identification between the divine and human activity: 'The Word of God is not distinguished between the word of the prophet.'⁴⁰

One could suggest that because Calvin strictly interpreted the activity of the doctoral office in the Church as the interpretation of Scripture, he seemed to regard it as a specialized activity along with the pastoral order. Although it is true that one could interpret Calvin as believing that it was possible to be a *doctor ecclesiae* without being a pastor, all those in the Genevan Church in Calvin's day holding the doctoral office were also pastors.⁴¹ With this in mind, then, when one reads that Calvin had identified the title of the prophet in the *doctor ecclesiae*, it is also equally true that Calvin in actual practice adopted a broader definition of *doctor ecclesiae*, so that it is an overstatement to say that the doctor was forbidden from preaching.

But what did it mean when in the *Institutes*, Calvin wrote that the prophets are the interpreters of the law or 'as Doctors correspond to the ancient Prophets, so do our Pastors to the Apostles'?⁴² One can interpret this passage simply as Calvin's attempt to stress the continuity of activity between offices which were present in his own day, and offices which were supposedly discontinued. Continuity, rather than discontinuity is the emphasis. The purpose was twofold: in activity and in relation; prophets, apostles, pastors and doctors were most importantly ministers in Christ. Although Calvin went to great lengths to show the close relation between God and the prophet, it is as the minister of the Church, and so like all ministers, that the prophet has always belonged. This was only possible under the ideal types, where the pastor and the prophet, although seeming to possess differing activities, are ministers which shared a common relational essence. Doctors can therefore teach or preach like the prophets.

Calvin's Expanded Definition of Prophets and Prophecy.

Several examples of this type of analysis on Calvin's part show that Calvin did revise the definition to one of a more public character which could be tested or verified. In other words, the use of the unity of ministry-in-Christ on Calvin's part allowed him to see the prophetic office as timeless; due to the nature of the person of the Mediator in which person and activity were one, Calvin felt that he was at liberty to combine the best elements of the earlier genre of the prophet and priest with the offices of pastor and teacher in the New Testament. This would partially explain why there is a unity in

the way Calvin described the two in his commentaries on Paul's epistles. The similarities of the two offices are found in their Spirit infused existence, in their obedience to the Law and to their relation to God in their calling.

The minister is to respond in obedience. Calvin, in his exposition on John the Baptist and the Apostle Paul, made much of their obedience to their calling and to the revelation of God in the Law which led them to feats of courage in the face of persecution. Calvin argued that it was this characteristic of obedience to the revealed word of God, in spite of all sorts of opposition, which proved the close relation of minister to God. The use of the *type* enabled Calvin to compel his readers to understand that although obedience itself was a very personal exercise, it did have its public character which should be common to all present-day prophets and ministers of the Church.

What sort of elements then were the causes for difference in the way Calvin described the offices in the New Testament and those applicable in his own time? For Calvin, it was the question of time when God revealed himself to the world. As we have already said, the uniqueness of each minister's historical situation marks the difference between him and the rest of the Church. Calvin seemed always ready in his New Testament commentaries to ask the question, 'When did the minister exercise his office in relation to Christ's advent?' This leads his readers to consider the primary importance of the way in which God revealed and communicated to the rest of the

world, even before that of the redemption of humankind. The idea of redemption is only used as a means to re-establish the communication between God and humankind. This made the office of the prophet, because of the nature of God as incomprehensible, probably the most basic office for humanity and the one naturally fulfilled by Christ.

In addition, as we said in Chapter Four, Christ as the prophet therefore links the two ideas of mediation in creation and in redemption as the being of the person of the Mediator is grounded in the Logos who sustains creation. But one must also see that it is the necessity of redemption which added another layer of the structure of the offices. Hence in his conflict with the Roman Catholic Church that this type of vocabulary and these issues of the activity and person of the Mediator which are most often spoken by Calvin in these writings.⁴⁹ So the restoration of the Church after the age of Christ would mean that the offices were again expanded and redefined. This would mean that Calvin felt that he was at liberty to highlight just such a change. The priest and prophet are again changed in the simpler and brighter age of the Church after the incarnation.

We will see that for Calvin, the prophet in the Old Testament context, prior to Christ's incarnation, was the outside voice of God which cried out against the sin of Israel, rather as he himself and other prophetic figures spoke out against the excess of the Roman Church. Yet within the renewed Church, Calvin's Church in Geneva, one could say that the context had changed, that the outside voice was no longer necessary. God's person was sustained in the ministry of the

Church to its members. Yet Calvin would speak of the significant difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament with the Church of the 16th century. The sum of difference for Calvin seemed only to be the nearness or distance to the advent of Christ and not the extreme of the cultural context in which the Church found itself in the Old Testament and New Testament. Calvin, in his desire for order and moderation, found the Church of those ages as one constantly poised on the edge of extinction or godlessness. This *de facto* was much like the case in Geneva. The false prophets and the priests who worked for advance or gain were no longer found within its borders, yet there was still the threat of false doctrine or the ecstatic utterances of the Spiritualists and Anabaptists. This meant that for Calvin discovering the structure of God/human relation in ministers was very necessary. As Calvin sought to answer the Roman Catholic position with the use of the New and Old Testaments, and the patristic christological tradition, the relational and unique prophet still remained an urgent question for Calvin to sustain. Again, can Calvin sustain the force of the prophet without reproducing and identical prophetic context? It was this problem of the prophet's uniqueness to the Church which forced Calvin to reconsider what was the essence of the prophet's activity and essence in the New Testament world.

One can see that Calvin always spoke of the prophet in more general and relational terms. As we have seen, Calvin began with a new definition of prophecy itself. For Calvin, the term prophecy went beyond the merely predictive to something more substantial and that was the prophet's unique ability to apply Scripture to the needs of

the age.⁴⁴ Teaching in the sense that Calvin meant it here was more or less the preparation in skills necessary for prophetic discourse. The act of teaching then, was in the passing on of skills or information in its more historical sense.⁴⁵ This would be analogous to the use of rhetoric at the time. Rhetoric as it was taught then dealt mainly with the use of historical examples and terms from the classical world to illustrate particular rhetorical techniques. Once these techniques were learnt, it was possible to then say that the student could go and use the skill in modern situations patterning what was done on the historical examples learnt. History functioned in a similar way. Before the historian can do historiography, he must learn history. This is the method and the events of the past. Again, once these are learnt, he can begin to address the needs of the age. As one looked at theology, although the medieval basis of theology in the theologies of the Church fathers was superseded somewhat by the primacy of Scripture, it was necessary first to learn what was in Scripture and what skills (like the teaching of Greek and Hebrew grammar) are needed to enable the student to apply the work of Scripture to the present situation. Clearly then, Calvin attempted to parallel the preacher and prophet in the tie to the rule of Scripture. Shorn even of its context of conflict, the prophet's role as the voice of God or the symbol of God's presence still remains.

According to Calvin, Christ, God's true presence or voice had come. It was this link with Christ in the word of God which moved the prophet's internal call, to the controls of Scripture itself. It was accomplished in Calvin's view of Scripture as the activity of the

Trinity: Christ the Word of God was in the words of God, infused by the Holy Spirit, sustained by the Father. In other words, there was to some extent a direct causal relationship between the words of the text of Scripture and what was deemed as the reality of the Christian situation because of divine activity in divine/human relation.⁴⁴ Therefore, Calvin believed that the minister could be evaluated now from the test of Scripture because of the Scriptures ability to link its statements on obedience, courage, character, calling, and so forth with actual evidences in the person who professed having such a call and relation to God. This was only possible because Christ, as the Mediator of the words of Scripture by virtue of a relationship with the writer and Christ in relation to the present minister, would sustain similar internal motivations. One was then led to see that the minister, like the prophets before him, shared in the person of Christ by participation.

The successor of Christ, the true prophet and revealer of God, would by its very nature be of a lesser status because of the very success of Christ himself. For Calvin then, the union to Christ, the full revealer of God, was part of the very nature of the Church of this age and could be claimed by all. This meant that the uniqueness of the prophet was no longer as evident as it had been before Christ's advent. Why then, was Calvin so concerned with the retention of the prophetic in his offices of Church, even more so than priest and king? This is a crucial question as to what was the reason for the place of the prophet in Calvin's understanding. It has led some Calvin scholars, as we have seen, to mistakenly marginalize the office by the

very fact that it still exists in the Church as part of the offices of ministry. This marginalization, it was supposed indicated that Calvin saw the office as alongside the more basic offices of the priest and king.

New Testament Examples.

How did Calvin first see the prophetic office in the New Testament text? One would think that the way Calvin saw Christ in the gospels would give ample evidence of the way he saw the activity of the prophet in the New Testament. However this was not precisely the case. For Calvin, mindful of the significance of the historical event, Christ was so unique and so perfect in his accomplishment of salvation that he saw any confessions of Christ's prophetic status by Jews and non-Jews in the gospels as being less than adequate. At best, they were the gradual reception of teaching which moved the hearer from recognition of Christ's anointing to the realization of the true nature of Christ's ministry to save the world.⁴⁷ This type of gradual recognition, was part of Calvin's understanding of conversion and has been called the *conversion to teachableness*.⁴⁸ In other words, Calvin was mostly concerned in these passages with the reality of the person's recognition of Christ as the saviour of the world in growing intimacy of relation rather than in an explanation of the word which Christ bore.

Because the characters of the New Testament are not given large narrative exposition as are those of the Old, Calvin was left with

very little. It is difficult then to parallel precisely with what will follow in the Old Testament. Rather, one must see if there are any persons in the New Testament text which gave Calvin the necessary primary material from which to comment, those which could indicate Calvin's concern specifically with the activity of God and the significance of Christ's advent. The two which did receive some sort of commentary on Calvin's part were those of John the Baptist and St. Paul.

I will first discuss John the Baptist, not because the prophet John the Baptist was of greater importance to Calvin, but because he came first in the New Testament narrative. How did Calvin explain John the Baptist in his understanding of the gospel narrative? First of all, Calvin began the motif we will continually see in the Old Testament: the fallen Israel. Because of the downward spiral within the Israelite worship immediately prior to Christ's advent, Calvin equated it with the fallen worship of the Roman Church, it was possible for him to see John the Baptist as one of the extraordinary prophets outside of the normal established structures of the Church, dependant on his intimate relation with God, an example of God's continual loving activity in spite of enormous odds.⁴⁹ But Calvin has very little to say as to the validity of John's internal calling.⁵⁰ Perhaps this was due to his understanding of John's unique ministry at the advent of Christ himself. But even in the nearness to Christ and the parallels with the angelic visitors to both Elizabeth and Mary, Calvin spoke of John more in terms of the herald of Emmanuel, much like prophets and other ministers were ambassadors for God.

Because of the historical structure of Christ's activity, Calvin was very careful to point out the similarity yet the differences between John and the prophets who preceded him.⁵¹ What was the nature of the distinctions? According to Calvin, John the Baptist was called in a similar way to the prophetic office as others of the Old Testament period, but the difference came in the fact that John immediately precedes the Christ. Calvin was also conscious of the way in which John the Baptist was chronologically unique, that is, he oversaw this changing condition of the Church from immediately prior to the announcement that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. Yet when looking for items of similarity of ministry, Calvin pointed out the way John was sustained by divine activity. Calvin seemed to focus was that the methods of John's preaching style, as infused with the Spirit, in the intolerance of opposition, to his message and his confidence in the face of criticism were to be the hallmarks of the ministry of those in the Church who follow after.⁵² For example, in a famous passage in the Harmony of the Gospels, Calvin discussed the way John sent some of his disciples to question Jesus as to whether or not Jesus was indeed the Christ. Calvin was in no doubt that John himself did not doubt, but as the example of the minister-in-Christ he questioned Christ in this way to teach others..⁵³ Calvin obviously felt that this message was one for the Church of the sixteenth century, as John's Spirit empowered courage in preaching and certainty of doctrinal discipline in the Law (as he called down judgement upon the unbelieving Pharisees) was to be a type for the minister in Calvin's own day. Calvin therefore assumes the structure of the unity of divine activity in John, hence linking him with all other ministers

of the gospel, and the uniqueness of his historical situation at the advent of Christ. Once again, the twofold structure of the offices is demonstrated in the New Testament text.

It is interesting to note that this theological supposition of divine activity in John actually lessened Calvin's skill in interpreting the text. As I have intimated, Calvin found it very difficult to see any doubt in John. Even though subsequent commentaries on the text have done much to indicate John's weakness in being imprisoned and the doubt he expressed, Calvin did not see it fitting to the text to examine the consolation to John which Christ sends but rather to see always a certainty in John's actions which would have forced Calvin to interpret John's actions in this way. Calvin is concerned to describe a particular unity of ministry, based upon a consistency in the offices which can form an example for all time. This unity of ministry becomes an aid for us, as in a mirror (a favourite expression for Calvin).

This pattern repeated in Calvin's comments on the Apostle Paul. There one sees a similar way of expressing what was historically unique and then common to all in the ministerial office. In the way Calvin spoke of the externals of Paul's office, he was quick to point out the unique nature of the apostolic office which was in effect only in the time of the first generation of the Church. The task of the apostles then was to see that the Church began again in the right footing or way.⁵⁴ After their deaths, the Church was to carry on with the writings and the teaching in those writings which were left

behind. As far as the person of Paul himself was concerned, in relation to his duty as an apostle of God, Calvin spoke of Paul in terms of the instrument of God's activity and focused on the way his example was relevant to all ministers of the gospel: in his certainty, purity of teaching, and his dedication to the service of Christ. In the more individual comments which make up part of the narrative of Acts and the epistles, Calvin was most interested in seeing how Paul bore the *persona* of Christ.⁵⁵

Calvin was conscious of the historical setting and the importance of the context of Christ's incarnation and this new chapter in the life of the Church. And so this uniqueness of historical situation enabled Calvin to emphasize the distinctions of history between John the Baptist and the Apostle Paul and the Church of Geneva.⁵⁶ Calvin was also certain of the timelessness of divine activity in relation with humanity and so he tried to speak of the way in which the prophet John the Baptist and the Apostle Paul are similar to the ministers of the gospel of the reformation by explaining how they are secure in their relation to God, as all ministers should be, and then went on to explain how unique they were to their time.

This twofold structure of continuity of divine activity and the distinctions of history culminating in Christ which influenced the relation of the New Testament prophets and apostles with the ecstatic prophets and radical Church of Calvin's own day. Calvin made a conscious decision in his earlier work New Testament work, while confined by the text itself, to see the prophetic office in the New

Testament as either a very unique office held for specific reasons of history or as an office which by virtue of its most basic internal relations of minister to God, were still applicable to the Church of the sixteenth century. In this way Calvin sought to reclaim what he saw as the possibility of a cold clericalism in the reformed Church, for him then, the act of the pastor in preaching was a parallel to the prophet of the Old Testament and the New Testament era. Because they shared the common definition of sustaining the *persona* of Christ in the act of preaching.⁵⁷ In other words, the dynamic of the minister of God, like the prophet of God, was in relation by participation in Christ's activity as the Mediator of God's revelation.

One could suggest that the internal and relational-in-Christ of the prophetic office can no longer be sustained as it had been as participation in Christ's activity. Yet during the period of Calvin's own lifetime and in the later period of his Old Testament commentaries, Calvin still laboured to keep the mediation of Christ and the mediation of the prophets as one and the same ministry. This was due to his understanding of the unity of divine activity in sustaining the ministry in the Church, a participation in Christ's ministry. If a minister were truly called to this most important of offices, Calvin reasoned, then God will be with him in such a way that the Church will recognize it. They, likewise sustained by divine activity in hearing the word of God, will be able to verify the activity of God in the minister.

Calvin could clearly see the problems caused by self-proclaimed prophets which were not subject to the affirmation of the Church. It was for this reason that Calvin saw the predictive role of the prophet in the New Testament as merely unique to that particular time period in the Church and to speak of the way in which the prophets were bound to the Law or to the writings of the apostles in the New Testament. This more general category with its combination of the priestly fidelity to the law, left Calvin with a prophetic office in the Church which was in the end only possible if the view of divine activity in the affirmation of Scripture and the Church was sustained. Calvin was always concerned with the idea that the Church of the reformers be not seen as a new Church but as a Church reformed. The question of uniqueness was not one to be pursued in the sixteenth century. It was a restoration of the correct teaching of the purer age. So we return to the theme of restoration, the need for the Church in restoration to still have the mediation of the word of God through the ministers of the Church.

The relational office of Calvin's Christology is not absent, but present. One can see its importance in Calvin's exposition of the call. It seems that Calvin thought that those who were true minister of God were able to sustain the *persona* of Christ. In many cases, this was to be the lowly or those who did not have an impressive appearance because the infusion of power by the Spirit is then more evident in them. One can almost see in this Calvin's assessment of his own appearance.⁵⁰ It would seem that as the threat of Anabaptism lessened in Geneva, and as Calvin developed a deepening understanding of the

prophet in his work on the prophets from 1551, and as he sharpened his own understanding of his divine call, Calvin continued discussing the prophetic office in terms of continuity of divine activity and historical change.

Part Two: The Prophet in the Old Testament.

In the second part of this Chapter I will suggest that the amount of material on the prophetic office in the Old Testament led Calvin further to discuss the prophet on various levels within their private relation to God and their public function with others and to make numerous applications to ministers of every culture. He noted that certain tensions between the internal psychology of the prophet in the reality of his calling in the dark times of an apostate Israel and a public activity which left little room for the validity of that internal call to the office in question unless a proper relational understanding of person and work was maintained. It has been suggested that the reason for this interest in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament was his concern for things prophetic in general and that his aim was a commentary on Revelation.⁵⁹ This is a rather dubious conclusion. It seems that the evidence for a possible Revelation commentary is ultimately an argument from silence as no Revelation commentary exists from Calvin. Rather, the explanation of Calvin's interest in the psychology of conversion concurs with his emphasis on the internal psychology of the Old Testament prophets and their relation to God.⁶⁰

The Prophet and Priest.

In 1563 Calvin wrote concerning the prophetic office in the Old Testament,

In a word, they were the organs of the Holy Spirit for all necessary predictions; and the credit due to their prophecies was of an equable and constant character, so that they never spoke absurdly or in vain. Besides, they were endowed with the power of adapting their prophecies to a just object and use. Thus after the Law was promulgated, they were its interpreters. In prosperity they bore witness to the grace of God; in adversity, to His judgements. In fine, their business was to ratify God's covenant, whereby He reconciles men to Himself to Christ.⁶¹

What did it mean for Calvin to say that the prophet was an interpreter of the Law and ratifier of God's covenant? When one attempts a close examination of the content of Calvin's Old Testament commentaries one is struck by the fact that a full understanding will include an unfolding of the relation between what are for Calvin two closely associated ministries in the Old Testament: prophet and priest. I believe that their relation and significance can help us become aware of the themes which Calvin included in his understanding of the relation between the prophetic Christ and his ministers in the Church. We will try to keep certain questions in mind as we examine them: What was Calvin's perspective on these offices? What were their similarities or differences? were they in any way dependent on each other? How important were they to Calvin?

The nature of prophetic activity in Calvin's Old Testament has not been much discussed in modern Calvin studies. If it is discussed the realm of the debate revolves around Calvin's use of the prophetic

In his more systematic expositions of his Christology. We have already discussed some of these aspects in the preceding chapters. Our continuing example has been John Frederick Jansen's *Calvin's Doctrine of the Work of Christ*. Works since Jansen have made mention of the fact that this is not all that Calvin had to say on the prophetic office but fall to follow through with any detailed study.⁶² However, the way forward for such a study has been provided by Calvin himself in the structure of sections one and two of Chapter Fifteen in Book Two of the *Institutes*. In section one Calvin devoted two paragraphs to explaining the need for the study of all three offices: prophet, king and priest. The third paragraph of the section begins as an historical preamble to Calvin's application of the prophetic to Christ. In addition, there is a further historical referent, 'We have already said,' which refers the reader back to *Institutes* Chapter Six, sections 2-4. All of his discussion is under the rubric of the 'ratification of the covenant,' which we have seen from our first quotation Calvin called the goal of the prophetic mission. So it is to this Old Testament witness that Calvin went in order to find confirmation and meaning of his conception of the prophet.⁶³ Calvin's Old Testament material was produced for the most part in the last twelve years of this life so we could expect to find a more mature reflection in Calvin's thought there than would be found in earlier New Testament commentaries. Most of the quotations in our study will be drawn from Genesis, Minor Prophets, Harmony of the Pentateuch, and Jeremiah.⁶⁴

The first similarity between the prophet and the priest can be found in Calvin's understanding of the role of the patriarch in Genesis. For Calvin, the prophet as God's ambassador or herald gave impetus to the other tasks of the patriarch such as kingly or priestly. Noah, for example, became a prophet as he made the commands given to him by God the foundation of the work done as intercessor or priest.⁶⁵ Yet Noah is not the paradigm of the prophetic for Calvin in Genesis. For that, Calvin will use the persons of Abraham and Joseph. Abraham is motivated by God to commit priestly acts yet these offerings on the whole were considered by Calvin to be offerings of thanksgiving. Expiatory sacrifices were not expiatory *per se* but only seen in the context of an expression of hope of a true expiation at a future time. The sacrifices therefore contained a 'pedagogical' value. This was possible, if the knowledge of the intent of the sacrifices had first been given by God to Abraham that is, God mediates through a human. Abraham became the prophet to his immediate clan.

It follows, therefore, further, that they had been spiritually offered to him: that is, that the holy fathers did not mock him with empty ceremonies but comprehended something more sublime and secret; which they could not have done without divine instruction.⁶⁶

Calvin went on to say that Abraham was the interpreter of God.⁶⁷ What Calvin began in his Genesis commentary was to focus upon particular persons in their particular tasks which became necessary to them by virtue of the relationship they had with God. The significance of this for the prophet in Calvin's Old Testament exegesis cannot be underestimated as it becomes the crux of all his later argumentation. It is this focus on the internal relationship with God contrary to all

the world which became one of the most dominant motifs of Calvin's Old Testament understanding.

Calvin did understand that this type of prophecy does include predictive events but this was not where his emphasis lay.⁶⁸ His emphasis in his description of predictive events is on its use as a power to teach and exhort.⁶⁹ This type of vocabulary occurs in Calvin's description of Joseph as the model of prophetic fidelity in patriarchal times. Note how the actions of Joseph and their consequences indicated by implication the status of the person's internal relationship with God in the passage quoted as well as the direct correlation Calvin made with all prophets and teachers, that is, even in his own day,

Joseph, by declaring without ambiguity, what had been revealed to him executed with fidelity the office divinely committed to him. This freedom must be maintained by prophets and teachers, that they may not hesitate, by their teaching to inflict a wound on those whom God has sentenced to death.⁷⁰

Calvin saw the patriarchs as fulfilling differing roles in their historical setting, yet the emphasis is upon God's knowledge communicated through human agency or, through a particular person which by his relationship to God then pledged fidelity to that prophetic message.

The general framework for the remainder of Calvin's Old Testament exposition of the relationship of the prophetic and the priestly can be found in his conception of covenant and fidelity to it. A great deal of time can be spent trying to unravel all of the implications of

Calvin's covenant concept. In our study we will attempt to mirror Calvin's own emphasis, the promulgation of the Law and its ensuing ramifications for the religious life of Old Testament Israel.⁷¹ For Calvin the Law was to be considered a monument to and a renewal of the covenant. Law and covenant were in his thinking not to be considered antithetical. Calvin would think of the Law as a later expression of the covenant, a public and permanent record of God's will to bind the people to himself and to reign over them.⁷² Most importantly for Calvin, the Law provided particular information regarding man's relation to God. What was only vaguely known could now be specifically applied. The Law focus then does not lessen the implications of covenant for Calvin but rather sharpens more the focus of the functioning of the prophet and priest within the framework of the Law. A failure in keeping the Law was a failure to sustain the internal relationship with God himself.

With the addition of the Law of God the role of the Old Testament priest becomes more clearly defined by Calvin. In many places Calvin put great stress on the ideal of the priestly office. A major part of that ideal for Calvin was the priestly task to teach the Law faithfully to successive generations of Israel, 'No sooner was the Law delivered, God appointed the priest in his Church to be public masters and teachers.'⁷³

The responsibility of the keepers of the Law in their teaching was to keep the Church pure from all foreign doctrines and ideas.⁷⁴ Calvin believed that it was this fidelity to the Law as the word of

God which forbade the priest to add anything to the Law which was part of his 'private' speculations.⁷⁵ They must assert what is true. Calvin repeated these themes constantly. In the covenant relationship God requires pure and holy individuals and corporate worship. The priest is to provide the knowledge, the information, in the Law to enable the Old Testament Church to perform its worship.⁷⁶ Once this mission was given to the priests how was it to be carried out? Calvin offered some suggestion as to how this was done. First, the priest was to live life as a teaching example of purity within the Law.⁷⁷ A further how in the life of the priest does shed some light on what Calvin believed were the precise duties of the priest's teaching office.⁷⁸ In his exposition of Haggai 2.10-14 Calvin commented on Haggai being ordered by God to inquire of the Old Testament priest a question concerning the Law. Calvin here seems to indicate that he believed that the priest was, if he was performing his office correctly, to answer narrowly within the question asked. The reason for this, Calvin explained, is that the priest was the safe depository of legal information.⁷⁹ Calvin implied that the question and the response of the priest and questioner is contained in what he termed as the 'bare law' (*nuda lex*). Interpretation for the priest has been seen by Calvin as paraphrasing in order to make the text more easily understood. This sharp delineation of boundaries was easy for Calvin due to his understanding of the unity of the ministry of Christ who by the power of the Holy Spirit guarantees the sense of Scripture.

When one approaches passages on the prophet one can see that part of Calvin's understanding was an assumption of continuity. In his mind

throughout Old Testament and New Testament history of the Church, there has been a competition between truth and untruth. Because the internal relation with God sustained the prophet in the Old Testament against all opposition, Calvin saw the prophetic office as the guarantee of this continuity.⁶⁰ This is the context for the *locus classicus* of Calvin's view of the prophetic, Deuteronomy 18.15. One must bear in mind that Calvin was writing with the idea that Moses was the author of Deuteronomy and that the written text existed from the earliest times in ancient Israel. Prior to the verses just mentioned, Calvin has said that the principle for knowing (*optima sciendi ratio*) is 'sobriety', that is, being willing to know no more than what is useful or expedient for man to know. Calvin thought that it was the insatiable curiosity in man, like Adam trying to be like God and to know all things, that has led to man's experience of sorcery. Humanity always seeks to know more than God has thought lawful; to try to gain more is an overstepping of bounds or an admixture.⁶¹

It was within this conflict of reliability that Calvin introduces his discussion of the prophet's amplified role in Israel. The prophet represents God's pledge of unity in his revelation. Calvin emphasis was on a continual succession of teachers to relate the unchanging knowledge of God to his Church,⁶²

Therefore it is true that there was no prophet like Moses, that is to say, similar to him in every respect, or in whom so many gifts were displayed; yet it is no less true, that they were all like Moses; because God set over His Church a continual succession of teachers, to execute the same office as he did.⁶³

Like the priest, the prophet was instructed to 'preach' the Law.⁶⁴

Calvin was very ready to employ the vocabulary of the Old Testament prophet's office with an illustration of the task of the sixteenth century preacher and theologian.

We must note more carefully what is put here that, when the Prophets had proclaimed what had been ordained to them by God, they made, so to say, a summary, and it is from these that we have the prophecies. For Isaiah did not write down word for word everything that he had declared with his voice. It would have made it far too long to have assembled all the sermons and make books of them. But Isaiah collected the summaries. And this is how the other prophecies were made. When they had preached a sermon treating some subject at length, they made a short resume of its statements and put that on the gate of the Temple or in some raised place where people came to read. And when the people had read it, those who had not heard the sermon, or even those who had heard it, to be better confirmed came there to see what had been said.⁸⁵

The motivation in such statements, as in the discussion of the patriarchal period already mentioned, was Calvin's concern for the work of the prophetic office in the Old Testament to be for the most part concerned with its teaching ministry rather than an ability to make merely predictive statements.⁸⁶ But what was the text the prophet was to use as the basis of his exhortation or preaching to the people? Like the Old Testament priest, the prophet was to use the Law. This identification of the prophet with the Law became a way of shorthand for Calvin in speaking of the work of the prophet. The prophets had become 'appendages' of the Law.⁸⁷ Again, like the priest, the prophet was referred to by Calvin time and time again as teacher or interpreter of the Law.⁸⁸

What did Calvin mean by 'teacher' when he spoke of the task of the prophet? Is the job identical to the role of the priest as teacher

or are they to be thought of as complimentary to each other? Based upon what Calvin said in his commentaries, he did seem to see bare teaching and its application, preaching as complimentary. The preaching of the prophet was to include the simple or accurate interpretation of Scripture, yet it also applied the teaching to the context of the day.⁸⁹ This type of teaching which the prophet accomplishes, according to Calvin, would go beyond the simple quotation of the Law text to the transmission of knowledge to produce understanding. It also included the activity of accommodation or rhetorical adjustment to the hearers on the part of the prophet.⁹⁰ As we can see Calvin felt justified in his description of the prophet's message as a teaching sermon in the Old Testament context.⁹¹

Calvin's exposition of the relationship between the Old Testament prophet and priest received greater clarity in his explanations of the historical context of the polity of ancient Israelite and Temple society. Most of the references appear in commentaries which discuss the uniqueness of a prophet's call from outside the known corrupted political structure, such as in the case of Amos. If Calvin believed that the purpose of the Old Testament structure was to pass on knowledge of the covenant promise in the Law it would seem necessary for him to identify some larger structure as a means of essential knowledge acquisition which would embrace both groups. At this point one could suggest that Calvin could be expressing more of the perspective of the sixteenth century in recognizing the need and efficiency of larger social groups in God's created order which would have particular tasks assigned to them as part of the larger national

whole, or that he understood the meaning of the Old Testament situation in terms of the balance of relations-in-Christ: the prophet and the Church.

In his commentary on Amos, Calvin explained the verse which states that Amos was not the son of a prophet in this way,

But he means that he was not a Prophet who had been from his childhood instructed in God's Law, to be an Interpreter of Scripture: and for the same reason he says that he was not the son of a Prophet for there were then, we know, colleges for Prophets [*prophetarum collegia*]; and this is sufficiently evident from sacred history. As then these colleges were instituted for the this end-that there might be always seminaries [*seminarium* should be translated as 'nurseries'] for the Church of God, also that it might not be destitute of good and faithful teachers, Amos says that he was not of that class [*ordine*].⁹²

What did Calvin mean by the seminary or the colleges of the prophets? The most likely reference of 'sacred history' would be of course Second Kings and the ministry of prophets like Elijah and Elisha. Unfortunately, Calvin never wrote a commentary on that Old Testament text and his sermons did not reach it. Yet this kind of terminology is found in his exposition of Jeremiah as well, '...for the priestly order was as it were the seminary of the prophets (*et ordo sacerdotalis ferit quasi seminarium prophetarum*).'⁹³ It would be possible to conjecture at this point. If one were to put sufficient weight to the *quasi*, one could then deduce that what Calvin had in mind was that the prophets and priest were not organized into formal clerical schools as in the sixteenth century sense but represented a fairly broad social group of educated leaders. The larger context of the Jeremiah passage would support this contention, 'He further says,

that he was of the 'priestly' order. Hence the prophetic office was more suitable to him than to many of the other prophets, such as Amos , and Isaiah.⁹⁴ The prophet, Calvin contended, was usually taken from the priestly class because in the social ordering of God the priests would naturally have more exposure to the content, transmission and preservation of the Law. Calvin wanted to stress the prophet's suitability as reflected in the structure of the educated priesthood then established. With the passage of the Law to Israel the Old Testament Church was to look to the established order of God for the prophets to emerge. This was probably the closest identification Calvin saw between the task of the Old Testament prophet and priest. They were to complement each other in their work. It could be seen to parallel the role of the pastor and doctor in Calvin's examination of the New Testament order. The prophet and priest were also to come from a particular class within Israel.

At this point it would seem best to recapitulate what has already been said concerning the similarity between the Old Testament prophet and priest. Calvin in his understanding of salvation history saw the start of the relationship embodied in the actions of the patriarchs from earliest times. Noah, Abraham, and Joseph are referred to by Calvin as prophets because they acted as God's interpreter, applying God's message for exhortation or condemnation as the situation demanded. Calvin also strongly emphasized their personal integrity as an indicator of their internal relation to God as essential to the prophet's ability to convey the truth and be the mouth of God. Second, the external structure of the prophetic and priestly relationship was

given greater definition with the establishment of covenant and the giving of the Law at Sinai. From that point the prophet and the priest were to share the task of teaching and thus preserving the Law of God in Israel. The priest was to promulgate the Law, as Calvin called it, to provide the clean and fit vessel for the substance of the Law as knowledge of God. The prophet, concerned with the continuation of truth was to take the general precepts of the Law and make particular applications to the situation as he saw them. This was to take the form of sermons which once written down could be read at a later date. Third, the prophet and the priest were to come from a similar nursery or class in Old Testament society, prophets could be priests and vice-versa; and by implication to be trained in a similar way. They were very much a part of the structure of Old Testament worship as Calvin saw it.

Calvin therefore saw the differing institutions of the Old Testament as operating in a relationship of what can be called checks and balances. The prophet, in his own internal relationship with God, possesses his fidelity to his own conscience in what he has received from God himself. The Law or the covenant of God acts as the prophet's control of empty or meaningless speculation, it retains the testimony and history of those who have also experienced true revelation and teaching from God himself. The more external controls were in the colleges and institutions. They were to preserve the body of correct interpretation, and assess the suitability of the prophet's teaching based upon their collective conscience and own internal calling from God; balancing the prophet's own internal relation to God. Knowledge

of God then, like God himself, according to Calvin, was timeless; only the application of teaching will change as God breaks into history in the person of his ministers. One could also suggest that Calvin had such confidence in God's own providential commitment to teaching and its institutions that he felt a balance was possible between each.

But can one sustain a personal integrity in light of timeless doctrine without becoming too rigid? Clearly one might argue that the experience of the Church in seeing biblical revelation in terms of timelessness has led to the gradual sublimation of the personal and internal as more and more is assumed as part of the timeless teaching of God. Calvin was certainly open to this criticism. Propelled by the pressures of his opponents, he was gradually forced or responded with more and more rigidity, as was much of what came later in Calvinism itself.

The Failure of the Old Testament Priest.

However, Calvin has much more to say in his commentaries about the Old Testament prophet-priest relationship. The reason for this is that the discussion so far had dealt with what could be called Calvin's ideal conception of an environment for the relationship. Yet the larger context of many of the passages we have discussed so far in Calvin's commentaries is the failure of the Old Testament *priest* as part of the general failure of Israel through religious apostasy. This was contrasted by Calvin with the success of the the Old Testament *prophet* in the execution of his. It would even be possible to argue

that nearly every instance where Calvin discusses the task of the priest as teacher the discussion is joined with an exposition of the failure of the priest to complete that task.

In describing this failure Calvin used the strongest possible language. For him, the failure of the Church's ministers to obey God in their office and teach the word of God can have tremendous consequences for the whole nation. The situation he described was to him literally one of a life and death contest, the life and death of individuals and of a nation. In this type of situation, Calvin believed, the Church in the Old Testament moved from the ordinary situation we have so far described, to one which was extraordinary.⁷⁵ The structure of mutual cooperation and support was replaced by one of conflict.⁷⁶ It is difficult to determine exactly when Calvin believed this took place. There is a hint that this situation had already developed before the period of the latter prophets from which most of the supporting evidence is taken. This seems to force the guarantee of the prophetic continuity Calvin made so much of in Deuteronomy 18.15 to the earliest period in the history of the Old Testament.⁷⁷

How precisely did Calvin identify the ways the Old Testament priest had failed? In part of his discussion of the Old Testament priest Calvin focussed his attention upon the priest's valid call to office. Calvin laid down two requirements of that call: sound doctrine and integrity of life.⁷⁸ These were not considered as separate parts but two aspects contained in the person called. Sound doctrine was possible because of an integrity of life and an integrity of life was

possible because sound doctrine existed which could be learned. Once installed in his office the priest was to execute the office faithfully. This for Calvin meant that the priest was to keep always at the front of his thoughts God's grace in his calling, to communicate faithfully the word of God without addition, to remain humble and have no regard in pride over the externals of the office. In short, the best way to remain faithful to Calvin's conception of the priest's office was to concentrate on the priest's own person and internal relationship to God rather than the external attributes of his office.⁹⁹

In Calvin's Old Testament commentaries the Old Testament priest failed in all these areas and so in the accomplishment of their teaching task. First, the priests became eager merely to please the people, allowing perhaps a relaxed repetition of the stipulation in the Law of God.¹⁰⁰ This, according to Calvin, led to several results: by his actions the priest as well as the people held the law in contempt, yet the Law was to be sought from the lip of priests.¹⁰¹ And the priest, rather than articulating what the Law of God said are now dumb or mute,¹⁰² unable to respond to God and so preserve the people in a pure and holy life.¹⁰³

As the downward spiral continued, Calvin saw the moral character of the priest worsened in two ways. The priest began to see the office merely as an end in itself.¹⁰⁴ The priest had separated the office from its true activity. The priests became teachers without true knowledge.¹⁰⁵ His attention was more and more taken up with the

attainment and retention of power within the office,¹⁰⁶ rather than seeing himself as a servant who was sustained by the power of God. This subversion of order led to terrible results. The priest, rather than continue under the blessing, was now under the curse of God. Now the priest was proud in the externals of his office and became more and more grasping for honours and power. The priest, according to Calvin, has begun to deteriorate morally, moving downward at a faster and faster rate.¹⁰⁷

Up to this point chronologically in the text of the commentaries Calvin has more or less placed equal blame upon the priests and the people. With greater and greater emphasis on the priest's moral decline Calvin now begins to lay more and more responsibility for the destruction of pure worship in Israel on the shoulders of the priesthood. This could be called the last phase or final degree of the priesthood's decline as a teacher in Israel. Rather than remaining silent and merely passing over the abuses of the people, the priest, because of his utter moral failure, now actively encourages corruption within all aspects of Israel's moral and religious life. Calvin now set up a comparison with the priestly ideal which was discussed earlier. The qualifications for the office of integrity and moral life are replaced by the priest as bad moral example and an active encouragement of false doctrine.¹⁰⁸ The disease, rather than the cure, spreads from the priests to the people.¹⁰⁹ Calvin freely borrowed from Old Testament metaphors, The priests are snares and nets ready to entrap the people.¹¹⁰ They are blind, without concern for others and drunk with power. The office of priest had become a thin facade

covering their merchandising or worse, their robbery of the people.¹¹¹ Their humility before God, replaced by an intense pride before other men, caused them to wail and to gnash their teeth against the truth. The priest had become a tyrant, a voracious wolf, a slaughter within the structure of the Church.¹¹² The priest had become a demigod, intent upon the destruction of truth and of the Church itself.¹¹³

The Continuity of the Old Testament Prophet.

As the priest and the people fall away from God, the covenant and the Law, Calvin saw the office of the prophet take on even more significance. The prophet did not share in this wholesale corruption; rather in Calvin's view the prophet remains the only reliable vehicle for the word of God. Why was this the case? Calvin in his exegesis is well aware of the existence of false prophets in ancient Israel who along with the corrupt priest did their best to deceive the people. Rather, Calvin is careful to put these prophets in the same category as the priests and use precisely the same language to describe them. It is important to note that it is not as Bouwsma suggests, the clerical offices which pledge fidelity to the truth but rather the individual prophets themselves. This is similar to the way Calvin used patriarchal figures in his Genesis commentary. When we discuss how the prophet is different this is not to say that Calvin believed that all prophets were different by virtue of their office or class but by their internal relationship to God.

As the situation deteriorates the prophet-priest relationship begins to change. Because the priest is no longer the depository of knowledge of the Law, the prophet assumed this responsibility.¹¹⁴ The prophet continues to repeat faithfully the content of the Law of Moses and to make particular applications for the well being of the people. Because of their presence, God fulfills his promise to provide a knowledge of himself through the teacher/prophet as in Deuteronomy 18.15.¹¹⁵ The prophets have a unified message because God has made their message clear.¹¹⁶ What Calvin meant by this was that individual prophets sustained a relationship with God in spite of the wholesale moral corruption around them. Because and only because of this relationship, these prophets could preach what God required and be called the mouth of God himself.

This faithfulness to the message of God in the Law led to a breakdown in the supportive prophet-priest relationship. For Calvin, the point of breakdown was the fidelity to the word of God by the prophet versus the false imagining of the priest. Second, the prophet in Calvin's exegesis has also assumed a greater role in providing a moral example previously given by the priest. So the priest and for that matter, the people, could not tolerate the purity of word or the life of the prophet showed to them. Calvin felt that this intolerance led to an anger toward the prophets themselves. Calvin believed that the ridicule and persecution which followed the prophet was a result of the priest's failure to obey the teaching of the prophet or to follow his example.¹¹⁷

As we reach the latter stages of Israel's and Judah's apostasy, Calvin noted the prophet assuming the role as the bearer of judgement of God to the priest because of his failure to fulfil the requirements of his teaching work in order that Israel remain pure in worship.¹¹⁸ The priests were to be cast down from the high place where they had placed themselves; the priests, because they had failed were to be cut off from the blessings of God. Calvin, in focus upon individuals, at times made reference at these passages to the tension involved in the mind of the prophet as a human being and as the bearer of judgement of God to his own people or to his own class.¹¹⁹ When the priestly class became utterly useless in the sight of God Calvin saw this as the background for the extraordinary calling of Amos and Isaiah. Calvin believed that the placement of prophets outside the structure which was established at Sinai became in itself a judgement against the priestly class.¹²⁰ It starkly highlighted their failure to fulfil their role.

Did Calvin suggest an answer as to why God guaranteed the prophetic fidelity as opposed to the failure of the priest or passages which speak of the false prophets? There is some material which could point to a possible answer to this question.

In his analysis of the priest's failure versus his ideal formation in his Commentary on Malachi, Calvin saw tremendous irony in the fact that the very thing which should have caused the greatest honour among Israel paid to the Levitical tribe, that is that God assigned a particular honour to the teaching of the Law, became a

matter of a curse for them.¹²¹ Calvin highlighted the contrast between the stipulations of God's covenant with Levi and the failure to uphold that covenant by his descendants. According to Calvin the real Levitical priest cannot claim the favour of God's covenant relationship by virtue of birth alone. That could only be claimed by a Levite who performed his reciprocal obligation to God. This obligation was the faithful performance of his office as God had stipulated. Failure to do so deprived him of this birthright.¹²² If the ancestors of the Levites performed their duties within the context of a proper relationship to God, they fulfilled the covenant promise. The Levitical descendants had failed and were under the covenant curse. Note that Calvin's paraphrase focussed on individual priests rather than the priestly class,

Hence our Prophet dwells especially on this point—that Levi taught the people... For God does not speak here of the tribe, but of individuals; as though he had said, 'Aaron and Eleazar, and those who followed them, knew for what end they were honoured with the priesthood, and they faithfully performed their duties'¹²³

As one might have surmised by now, individual prophets were a different matter. Calvin's emphasis is upon their internal rather than external call.¹²⁴ The prophet is called by the Holy Spirit and in some sense taught by the Holy Spirit; in short, he is to be considered the very mouth of God himself in his teaching office.¹²⁵ There is a much greater vocabulary of possession or submission to God by the prophet, but Calvin was always quick to add that the prophet's words were always to be considered his own.¹²⁶ What did this indicate as the ultimate role of the prophet in Calvin's theology? The prophet had become for Calvin the most essential representative of all that is

implicit in his theology of the man to God relationship and so also of the prophets relation to Jesus Christ as person.

These two aspects are often repeated in Calvin's exegesis of the prophet's relation to God. The true prophet of God parallels the true presence of God among the people of Israel. The prophet is set apart yet he is not entirely separate from it. Calvin pointed to this as the paradox of the prophet's humanity and his role as the instrument of God. Calvin said that the prophet at different periods was more or less aware of this paradox. What then is this paradox? It is the paradox of Jesus Christ in his offices, the Christ who is unique yet not unique which formed our discussion in Chapters Four and Five. So the cessation of the prophets was not like the priest's, the result of their failure, but was initiated by God as a judgement upon the people for a failure to listen. To remove the prophet was to remove God's presence or voice.¹²⁷

Conclusions to Part Two.

Calvin identified so strongly with the extraordinary context of the Old Testament that he was now quite willing to call his own time just as 'extraordinary' and claimed that he himself had a prophetic call.¹²⁸

There are those who will say today: 'Calvin is making a prophet of himself when Ezekiel says that we will recognize that there was a prophet among us! Calvin applies this to himself. Is he a prophet? Now since it is the doctrine of God that I proclaim, I must use this language.'¹²⁹

It was in this understanding of being like the prophets of the Old

Testament that Calvin first of all mirrored his concerns with major Old Testament prophetic figures like Moses, Isaiah, and especially Jeremiah and David.¹³⁰ In textual references of the Old Testament to any comments on the character of the prophets Calvin would focus on how the prophet was an example of steadfastness, humility, spirituality or purity in these persons which could be a valid example for ministers in the Church. Ganoczy makes the interesting point that the preface to the *Commentary on the Psalms* the dominant theme is not Calvin's conversion but his vocation: 'At the end of the Preface, Calvin compares himself several times more to the prophet David, who had to confront both external and 'domestic' enemies in the Church in order to accomplish his mission in Israel.'¹³¹

Mirroring that sense of vocation and internal relation to God in his own mind it is logical to assume that Calvin would make similar comparisons to the moral failure of the Roman Church which indicated their lack of a proper relation with God and with Christ. What we find is that the Roman Catholic priest is only concerned with the externals of his office and the power and authority attached to it.¹³² This led to the Roman Catholic priesthood's failure faithfully to instruct the Church. They had become, again like the Old Testament priest, blind and mute to the commands of God.¹³³ Again, in parallel to his exposition in the failure of the Old Testament priest Calvin charted the downfall of the Roman Catholic priest. At the lowest level which we are experiencing now, says Calvin, the Papist priest is given to immense greed.¹³⁴ Like the Old Testament priest, the Papist has moved from a failure to comment on the immorality present in his society to

actively leading in further disgusting displays. The Papist is drawn from the worst filth, the dregs of the cup of God's wrath.¹³⁵ His tyranny is destructive and more terrible in its outcome. Instead of suppressing an entire country it holds the entire world under its control.¹³⁶

The Church cannot exist unless it is led by faithful pastors, who, like the Old Testament prophets, are faithful to God's revealed teaching and the execution of their office. The force of the prophetic task and message was very real to Calvin, and the issues as he saw them were quite literally life and death. Calvin was very clear that like God's true prophets the minister and Church who remains faithful to their calling and work will suffer for it in one way or another. One can hear how closely Calvin tried to mirror the prophet's situation with his own. Calvin, like the Old Testament prophet saw the contest as one fought on personal terms.

When we resist the papal priests, we do not violate God's covenant, that is, it is no departure from the order of the Church, which ought ever to remain sacred and inviolable. We do not then, on account of men's vices, subvert the pastoral office and preaching of the word; but we assail the men themselves, so that the true order may be restored, that sound doctrine may obtain a hearing among men, that the worship of God may be pure, which these unprincipled men have violated. We therefore boldly attempt to subvert the whole of the papacy, with the full confidence that we minimize nothing of true doctrine... Indeed the order of the Church, the preaching of the truth, and the very dignity of pastors, cannot stand unless the Church is purged of its defilements and its filth removed.¹³⁷

In moving through this evidence from Calvin's Old Testament exegesis, what conclusions can be drawn as to the way he defined the

prophet in the Old Testament? Calvin focussed his examination of the prophet upon certain definite prophetic individuals who through a sustained relationship with God were made his voice or presence among humanity. These prophets, because of the deterioration of Old Testament worship could even be drawn from outside the ordinary institutions or seminaries of the prophets. For Calvin, the pledge by God for the prophet's continuity was not based on the sacrosanct nature of the office itself but in the commitment of God to establish a particular relationship with certain individuals. In other words, he would always 'call' and 'save' them and they would become the prophets of God.

The relation of Christ to the Church then, was still seen by Calvin through the relation first of the individual to Christ. That is, all parts of the Church must seek their teaching, grace, and gifts of the Spirit first in Christ. This was paralleled in the individual. Ministry was not based upon some external structure which was independent of Christ, but upon the integrity of particular office holders who are 'in Christ.' The pastor was not the pastor nor the prophet the prophet except through the gifts of Christ which sustained the office holder and so by implication the office. To consider it any differently was for Calvin to speak only of the titles and not of the substance of the office,

The main thing is that I accomplish the same function and use the same language as the ancient messengers of God. The name that one gives the person of the minister is only secondary in relationship to his acts, the service that he effectively accomplishes.¹³⁰

It becomes possible to postulate why Calvin then did not see discipline as a *notae ecclesiae* because he was convinced that the power of Christ was sufficient to sustain individual members of the Church and that this power would necessarily lead to a godly life. Calvin seems much more like the Anabaptists here. But we must not overestimate his aversion to perfectionism as a wholesale rejection of the Anabaptist emphasis upon the individual character of the office holder.

Clearly then, as far as the evidence of his Old Testament exegesis is concerned, Calvin did retain the relation of Christ to the Church as a parallel to the relation of Christ to the person. It was also impossible for him to see the preaching of true doctrine, one of the marks of the true Church as separate from what was the result of that preaching: the restoration of humanity to a relation with God in Jesus Christ. And it was this continual result from the patriarchs onwards which ensured that the following generation would also hear true teaching. We can see then how it was possible for Calvin to see the 'externals' of the Old Testament milieu as relatively minor obstacles as his focus remained on the individual rather than the corporate identity of ancient Israel.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER SIX

¹ In his recent book on Calvin, William Bouwsma suggests that the anxiety which all disorder produced in Calvin also inclined him to favour authoritarian modes of control. According to Bouwsma, this anxiety led Calvin to favour clericalism and reject any conceptualization of Luther's priesthood of all believers. [William Bouwsma, *John Calvin, A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 219.] If Calvin did adopt a more authoritarian mode for his doctrine of the offices of the Church, one must ask what effect did it have on his view of the offices of Christ? Clearly Bouwsma would not see a parallel between the offices of Christ and what was to be considered acceptable to the Church. This type of opinion, not new to Bouwsma, [See Harro Höpfl, *The Christian Polity of John Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 106-107.] does not follow the line of argument which this thesis has presented. We would expect to find some sort of reciprocity between Christ and the Church. As we saw in the preceding chapters difficulties in interpreting the offices of Christ, especially the prophetic office, resided in a failure to understand the manner in which Calvin integrated these with his understanding of the relation of the person before God and the relation of the Church before God. The question which Bouwsma raises is an important one. That Calvin had a high view of the ministerial order is certainly true; but is it then appropriate to accuse him of clericalism? Is Bouwsma correct in how Calvin defined the ministry?

Calvin seemed to think that the organization of offices can change but the definition of the believer and so of the Church did not. How can Calvin speak of the ministry of the Church without speaking of the organization of its ministers? The problem and the question of the prophetic office as it relates to the ministerial offices is, I believe, one of a lack of clarity in understanding Calvin's emphases in his conception of the relation in Christ of the prophet as minister of the Church and the relation of others of the Church in Christ. It was this balance of relation: Christ, the person, and the Church which were the hallmarks of Calvin's understanding of the prophetic office of Christ.

I suggest that Bouwsma has taken the view which began in the work of Battles, that Calvin constantly felt anxiety over extremes. [See '*Calculus Fidei.*' *Calvinus Ecclesiae Doctor.* Die Referate des Internationalen Kongress für Calvinforschung vom 25. bis 28. September 1978 in Amsterdam. Hrsg. von Wilhelm Heinrich Neuser. (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1980), pp. 209-228.] In the case of the Church the major point of extremity was the problem of control and the anxiety over clericalism. Calvin identified these in the extremes of the Anabaptist movement and in the coldness which he saw in those ordained in the Roman Church. Calvin also attempted to balance these two ideas in his understanding of the prophet in New and Old Testaments. The more christological rationale of the prophetic office gave the form to Calvin's exposition of the prophet in the Old and New Testaments. Now, Calvin thought, the prophet's responsibility to vocation and inner moral rectitude was the part of the relation-in-Christ of the pastor-teacher. The christologically understood prophet then, was a balance of the control

of Scripture and the Church and then combines the positive aspects of the old priesthood with its relation to the polity of the Church. The pastor therefore, inherited the duties of the Old Testament prophet, but not the absolute prophetic authority as understood by the radicals of Calvin's day. Even then, Calvin argued, the individual predictive image of the prophet was false, rather, the prophet must always be seen as participating in Christ, in harmony with a Church and Scripture in Christ.

Calvin also tried to combine what he saw in his own prophetic call as part of the inner man who was minister in the Church. This gave impetus for Calvin to speak more of the moral example of the prophet for all ministers of the Church for all ages. The problem then could become one of assessment of the true nature of the prophet. For this Calvin saw the political/social relation of the prophet first to Scripture and then because of the added priestly dimensions, as one subject to the authority of the elders of the Church under Christ, its head. This submission to authority Calvin sought to balance with the validity of the internal call of the prophet to his office. This was to be considered first and foremost in the understanding of the prophet. Even in the best or the worst of times for the Church, the internal call of God, the Spirit-led response of the Church, and the testimony of Scripture was what was necessary for any person to pursue the office.

² 'Though there was ever an amazing outpouring of the unique grace of the Spirit upon Christ, yet He contained Himself at home as a private individual right up to the time that He was to be brought out by the Father. So now, in the fulness of time, to equip Him for the fulfilment of the office of Redeemer, He is endowed with a new power of the Spirit, and this not so much for His own sake, as for others.' Commentary on Matthew 3.16.

³ 'We have already said that although God, by providing his people with an unbroken line of prophets, never let them without useful doctrine sufficient for salvation, yet the minds of the pious had always been imbued with the conviction that they were to hope for the full light of understanding only at the coming of the Messiah.' *Institutes* 2.15.1.

⁴ See Willem Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, William J. Heynen (trans.) (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1981), pp. 73-95, 123-153, 169-208. Also Phillipe Denis, 'La Prophétie dans les Églises de la Réforme au XVI^e Siècle.' *Revue D'Histoire Ecclesiastique*. 72 (1977), pp. 289-316.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ And so the reason for the title of *Institutes* 1.9: 'Fanatics, Abandoning Scripture and Flying Over to Revelation, Cast Down All the Principles of Godliness.'

⁷ 'Many, having shaken off the yoke of Christ will not endure any discipline; they want to overturn all order, though boldly claiming the name of reformation.' Commentary on Jeremiah 3.6-8.

• Commentary on Micah 6.1.

• Commentary on Numbers 22-24 in the Harmony of the Pentateuch, 1563. This is the fullest account of Balaam which Calvin uses in this way: 'Still there were some among the Gentiles who occasionally predicted future events by divine inspiration; and this was especially the case before the Law was given, inasmuch as God had not then distinguished His elect people from others by this mark.' Commentary on Numbers 22.12.

¹⁰ At present this is merely an hypothesis which I have yet to test. It would fit with the general appreciation in the church of the so-called oracles of the Sybil at Cumae. The only reference in the *Institutes*, 4.16.31, are part of his attack on the errors of Servetus.

¹¹ Astronomy, Calvin insisted, 'unfolds the admirable wisdom of God' (Commentary on Genesis 1.16) by displaying the wonderful order of the heavens, which are so cunningly arranged that nothing is 'nearer the earth nor farther from it than is useful for preserving order.' Commentary on Psalm 148.3.

¹² See Alexandre Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, D. Foxgrover and W. Provo (trans.) (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987), pp. 287-307. Ganoczy argues very conclusively that Calvin believed that his vocation was similar to that of the prophets of the Old Testament.

¹³ See *Defensio adversus Pighium*, CO 6.250: 'Luther, that distinguished apostle of Christ by whose ministry the light of the gospel has shone.' Cf., *Institutes* 4.3.4: 'Still I do not deny that the Lord has sometimes at a later period raised up apostles, or at least evangelists in their place, as has happened in our own day.'

¹⁴ Ganoczy, *op. cit.*, p. 311.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 287-307.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 311.

¹⁸ 'The Necessity of Reforming the Church,' *Tracts and Treatises*, Henry Beveridge (trans.). T.F. Torrance (ed.) (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1958), vol. 1 pp. 213ff.

¹⁹ 'The Genevan Confession of 1536,' *Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth Century*, W. Cochrane (ed.) (London, 1966), pp. 124ff.

²⁰ Henri Strohl, *La Pensée de la Réforme* (Neuchatel, 1951), pp. 211ff.

²¹ *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, D.W. and T.F. Torrance (eds.) (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980), p. 232.

²² Emil Doumergue, *Jean Calvin: Les hommes et les choses de son temps* (Lausanne, 1917), vol. v p. 30.

²³ Commentary on Joel 1.1-4.

²⁴ Commentary on Deuteronomy 5.24.

²⁵ Commentary on 2 Corinthians 5.18, 'When therefore, a duly ordained minister proclaims the gospel that God has been made propitious to us, he is to be listened to just as an ambassador of God (*dei legatus*).' Cf., Commentary on Luke 10.16.

²⁶ 'Inasmuch as he works by his ministers, by resigning to them his office, he imparts to them his titles... Pastors and ministers are supplied by him, who speak, as it were, out of his mouth.' Commentary on Acts 13.47.

²⁷ Commentary on Isaiah 50.10.

²⁸ 'No mortal is of himself qualified for preaching the gospel, except so far as God clothes him with his Spirit.' Commentary on Luke 24.49

²⁹ Commentary on Psalms 105.31.

³⁰ Commentary on John 16.12, 'The papists, for the purpose of putting forth their inventions as the oracles of God, wickedly abuse this passage. "Christ", they tell us, "promised to the apostles new revelations; and therefore, we must not abide solely by the Scripture, for something beyond Scripture is here promised by him to his followers."'

³¹ Commentary on John 16.14.

³² *ibid.*

³³ Commentary on John 16.12.

³⁴ *Institutes* 4.8.9.

³⁵ CO 8.412.

³⁶ Commentary on 1 Corinthians 14.6.

³⁷ *ibid.* Also, 'And one of the marks by which God always distinguished his own prophets from false prognosticators was to endue them with the power of teaching and exhorting ...which would form men to piety, would lead them to repentance, and would excite them to prayer when oppressed with fear.' Commentary on Genesis 41.33.

³⁸ Commentary on Matthew 16.19.

³⁹ Commentary on Malachi 4.6. See also Commentary on Acts 16.1.

⁴⁰ Commentary on Haggai 1.12. Also, 'God himself raised up the Prophets, and employed their labour; and, at the same time, guided them by his Spirit, that they might not announce anything but what had been received from him, but faithfully deliver what had proceeded from him alone.' Commentary on Amos 3.1,2.

⁴¹ John Montgomery, *The Relationship Between the Pastoral and Doctoral Offices in Calvin's Thought and Practice*. PhD Thesis, University of Durham, 1984. p. 276.

⁴² *Institutes* 4.3.4.

⁴³ William Bouwsma, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-44.

⁴⁴ *Supra*. Commentary on 1 Corinthians 14.6.

⁴⁵ See especially Robert White, 'The School in Calvin's Thought and Practice.' *Journal of Christian Education*. 12 (1969), pp. 5-26.

⁴⁶ Bouwsma, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-109. Calvin's heavy reliance on a rational religion and his abhorance for any multiple meanings in the text of Scripture suggests to me that he felt that the *sensus* of scripture could be understood and applied by all.

⁴⁷ 'Repentance, as I have already said, is the beginning of true teachableness and opens the entrance gate into the school of Christ. The woman teaches us by her example that when any teacher is given to us we must buy up the opportunity; otherwise we shall be ungrateful to God, who never sends prophets to us without as it were inviting us to Himself with outstretched hand.' Commentary on John 4.19.

⁴⁸ See Wilhelm H. Neuser, 'Calvin's Conversion to Teachableness,' in *Calvin and Christian Ethics*. Papers and Responses presented at the Fifth Colloquium on Calvin and Calvin Studies, sponsored by the Calvin Studies Society. Held at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan, May 8 and 9, 1985. P. De Klerk (ed.) (Grand Rapids: Calvin Studies Society, 1987), pp. 57-77, 79-82.

⁴⁹ 'So Malachi, speaking of this "turning", means that the condition of the Church would be all upset when the second Elijah would come. Of its state in these days we are more than adequately informed in the histories, as we shall clearly see in the appropriate places.' Commentary on Luke 1.17.

⁵⁰ See Calvin's comments on Luke 1.41. The baby John leaps in the womb yet Calvin did not make any comparison with the way Jeremiah was called from the womb to his prophetic office. Here it is rather just the idea that the child John leapt by the sudden impulse of the Spirit.

⁵¹ 'These words define what the task of John will be, and by this sign distinguishes him from the other Prophets, each of whom received a definite and particular call, in that John was sent only to walk before Christ, as one that prepares the way of the king... Altogether,

John's mission had the single aim of making a hearing for Christ, and preparing disciples for him.' Commentary on Luke 1.17.

⁵² 'But whereas others attacked and cursed Herod behind his back, John alone bluntly rebuked him to his face in an effort to bring him to repentance. This teaches us with what inflexible courage God's servants should be armed when they have to do with princes.' Commentary on Matthew 14.3.

⁵³ 'Some also hold the silly idea that the Baptist, soon to die, enquired of Christ what word he should bear of Him to the dead fathers. But it is plain that this holy herald of Christ, seeing he was not far from the end of his course, was looking for the crowning remedy to heal the weakness of his disciples, who were still undecided in spite of all the teaching he had given them.' Commentary on Matthew 11.2.

⁵⁴ *Institutes* 4.8.8.

⁵⁵ Calvin in his comments on 2 Timothy 4.13 spent most of the time expounding the virtue of reading: 'It is obvious from this that although the apostle was already preparing for death, he had not given up reading. Where are those who think that they have progressed so far that they need do no more, and which of them dare compare himself with Paul?'

⁵⁶ Although Calvin did speak of John as the first minister of the Gospel in his Commentary on Mark 1.1-6.

⁵⁷ '...that God is not exhibited to us without Abraham, that is, without a prophet and an interpreter.' Commentary on Malachi 2.10. Also, 'Hence by this kind of concession it is implied, that the Prophets are middle persons, and yet that God so speaks by their mouth, that contempt is offered to him when no due honour is shown to the truth.' Commentary on Zechariah 7.11,12.

⁵⁸ 'Alas, the will I have had, and the zeal, if it can be called that have been so cold and sluggish that I feel deficient in everything and everywhere. If it were not for (God's) infinite goodness, all the affection I have had (from him) would be nothing but smoke. Truly, even the grace of forgiveness he has given me only renders me all the more guilty, so that my only recourse can be this, that being the father of mercy, he will show himself the father of so miserable a sinner.' Calvin's Last Will and Testament, CO 20.299. Compare this with what Calvin wrote of ministers: 'This being the case, we hence see that God had not in vain employed the ministry of this Prophet for he is wont to chose the weak things of the world to confound the strong, (1 Cor. i) and he takes Prophets and teachers from the lowest grade to humble the dignity of the world, and puts the invaluable treasure of his doctrine in earthen vessels, that his power, as Paul teaches us, may be made more evident, (1 Cor. iv).' Commentary on Amos 1.1.

⁵⁹ Erik De Boer, *Calvin's Commentary on Revelation*. Unpublished monograph, Cambridge: Rutherford House Calvin Study Group, September 1988.

⁶⁰ Jeremiah was an excellent example of this approach in Calvin: 'It was a most grievous trial to the Prophet to know that his would pass away with the air and produce no good. What was to be expected but that God's wrath would thus be still more kindled against the people? The prophet then must have had his mind greatly depressed...' Commentary on Jeremiah 7.27.

⁶¹ Commentary on Numbers 22.8. All English quotations of Old Testament commentaries are taken from the Calvin Translation Society text.

⁶² 'A look at what Calvin says about the boundless power of the Son and the prophetic office will indirectly substantiate the contention that the prophetic office is much more integral to Calvin's thought than J.F. Jansen admits it to be.' E. David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), p. 67. 'J.F. Jansen... has shown that Calvin's discussion originally embraces only the latter offices, and that the prophetic is a later addition. This leads Jansen, mistakenly I believe, to minimize the importance of the prophetic (teaching) office for Calvin.' B.C. Milner, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Church* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), p. 164.

⁶³ This was of course in harmony with the way that Calvin saw the relationship of the *Institutes* to his biblical commentaries as a whole, 'In this way the godly reader will be spared great annoyance and boredom, provided he approach Scripture armed with a knowledge of the present work as a necessary tool.' *Preface to the Reader*.

⁶⁴ Isaiah, last revision 1559; Genesis, 1554; Psalms, 1557; Hosea, 1557; Minor Prophets, 1559; Daniel, 1561; Harmony of the Last Four Books of Moses, 1563; Jeremiah and Lamentations, 1563; Posthumously: Joshua, 1564 and Ezekiel 1-20, 1565. The New Testament on the other hand had their final revision in 1556. Calvin, although identifying strongly with the Old Testament situation, did not transfer the total Old Testament milieu to his sixteenth century context. The confidence Calvin expressed in his comments is related to his confidence in the reality of the events and the clarity of the Old Testament text. There was no real need for further propositional clarification between the terms prophet and priest; similarity or differences were self-evident from the text. Calvin's emphasis was upon elements in common, as much as the text will bear. This was similarity as defined by Calvin as *brevitas* and *facilitas*. He admired what he saw as the simplicity of the Bible and then attempts to imitate that style as his own. See R.C. Gamble, 'Brevitas et Facilitas: Toward an Understanding of Calvin's Hermeneutic,' *Westminster Theological Journal* 47 (1985), pp. 13-17. Calvin even went so far as to think that this simplicity was part of the very nature of Scripture itself. One need only to mirror that simplicity and brevity if one wished to represent the text correctly. It was because of this near certainty in his exegesis that Calvin felt able to supply

postulates to the reaction of the biblical writers in the form of paraphrasing the text or what one could call some sort of 'situational colouring', that is, again supplying in exposition the situational details of the Old Testament text in his sermons.

⁶⁵ 'Whence we conclude, that he undertook nothing without divine authority... Let us therefore know that the altar of Noah was founded in the word of God. And the same word was as a salt to his sacrifices, that they might not be insipid.' Commentary on Genesis 8.20.

⁶⁶ Commentary on Genesis 4.2.

⁶⁷ '...that God is not exhibited to us without Abraham, that is, without a prophet and an interpreter.' Commentary on Malachi 2.10.

⁶⁸ Calvin wrote, 'Still there were some among the Gentiles who occasionally predicted future events by divine inspiration; and this was especially the case before the Law was given, inasmuch as God had not then distinguished His elect people from others by this mark.' Commentary on Numbers 22.12.

⁶⁹ 'And one of the marks by which God always distinguished his own prophets from false prognosticators, was to endue them with the power of teaching and exhorting that they might not uselessly predict future events.' Commentary on Genesis 41.33.

⁷⁰ Commentary on Genesis 40.16.

⁷¹ 'The prophet calls the attention of the Jews to the first condition of the Church, for though God made his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, yet then only formed or framed for Himself a Church when the Law was promulgated.' Commentary on Jeremiah 7.21-24.

⁷² 'Though the word Law is equivalent to the edict which God commands to be promulgated when he shall be pleased to gather his Church, yet at the same time he describes his manner of reigning, namely, by his Law and by his doctrine.' Commentary on Isaiah 51.4.

⁷³ Commentary on Psalms 78.6. Cf.: Commentary on Deuteronomy 33.9, 'The Levites, therefore, are called the guardians of the Law and keepers of it, as being nomophulakes, since with them was deposited the treasure of Divine instruction...' And Commentary on Zephaniah 3.4, 'The tribe of Levi, we know, had been chosen by God; and those who descended from him were to be ministers and teachers to others...'

⁷⁴ '...that a priest was appointed who might observe the ceremonies enjoined by the Law, in order that they might worship God in purity.' Commentary on Leviticus 17.1.

⁷⁵ What Calvin meant here by 'personal' was those speculations which were not subject to the approved rules of grammar and rhetoric in the exegesis of the Law text. In other words, those ideas which were purely part of the priest's imagination rather than tied to certain defineable controls.

⁷⁶ 'We hence see, that not only teaching is required from priests but pure teaching, delivered from the very mouth of God.' Commentary on Malachi 2.9.

⁷⁷ 'But as God made them the leaders of the people, it behooved them to afford others an example.' Commentary on Joel 1.13-15. See also Commentary on Malachi 2.6, 'The chief duty of a priest is to show the right way of living to the people.'

⁷⁸ 'He farther explains himself by showing that the priest is to be the keeper of knowledge, not that he may reserve it for himself, but that he may teach the whole people.' Commentary on Malachi 2.9.

⁷⁹ 'Haggai is not bid to inquire respecting the whole Law, but only that the priests should answer a question according to the word of God, or the doctrine of the Law according to what is commonly said - "What is the Law, is the question." For it was not allowed to the priests to allege anything they pleased indiscriminately; but they were only interpreters of the Law.' Commentary on Haggai 2.10-14.

⁸⁰ So Klaus-Pieter Blauser has argued. See *Calvins Lehre von den Drei Ämtern Christi*, Theologische Studien 105. (Zurich: Schüler, 1970).

⁸¹ Commentary on Dueteronomy 18.9-14.

⁸² 'We hence conclude that the expression "a Prophet," is used by enallage for a number of prophets.' Commentary on Dueteronomy 18.15.

⁸³ *ibid.* It was more forcefully spoken in Commentary on Acts 3.22, 'For after Moses had forbidden the people to themselves to the superstitions of the Gentiles by turning aside to wizards and soothsayers, he at once shows then a remedy whereby they may avoid all such vanity; namely if they depend wholly upon the Word of God alone. By this means he promised that God will take care always to provide prophets to teach them aright, As if he should say, God will never allow you to be destitute of prophets from whom you may learn whatever will be advantageous for you to know.'

⁸⁴ 'But since it would be insufficient that they should be once instructed in the proper worship of God by a written Law unless daily preaching were subjoined, God expressly furnished His prophets with authority, and denounces the punishment to be inflicted if any should violate it.' Commentary on Dueteronomy 18.19. See also Commentary on Jeremiah 9.6-8.

⁸⁵ Ms. *Sermons sur Esaie 30-42* Class-mark Ms fr.18 fo. 13v-14r. Quoted in T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986), pp. 67-68.

⁸⁶ Calvin always spoke of male prophets. The reference to the female prophet Miriam in Exodus 15.20 Calvin commented that she was a choral leader in tabernacle music. He asserted that function was removed in New Testament times.

⁸⁷ 'The prophets, therefore, enter more largely into the illustration of doctrine, and explain more fully what is briefly stated in the Two Tables, and lay down what the Lord chiefly requires from us, Next the threatenings and promises which Moses proclaimed in general terms, are applied by them to their own time and minutely described. Lastly, they express more clearly what Moses says more obscurely about Christ and his grace, and bring forward more copious and more abundant proofs of the free covenant.' Commentary on Isaiah 'Preface.'

⁸⁸ Just from the Minor Prophets, Hosea 1,35; 4.1,2; 5.8,9; 14.9; Joel 2.28; 2.29; Amos 8.11,12; Micah 2,11; 3.1-3; Zephaniah 1.13; Zechariah 1.5,6; 7.1-3.

⁸⁹ 'Prophesying does not consist in the simple or the bare interpretation of Scripture, but also includes the knowledge for making it apply to the needs of the hour, and that can only be obtained by revelation and special influence of God.' Commentary on 1 Corinthians 14.6.

⁹⁰ Commentaries on 2 Corinthians 5.19; Jude 1.4.

⁹¹ 'And one of the marks by which God always distinguished his own prophets from false prognosticators was to endue them with the power of teaching and exhorting ...which would form men to piety, would lead them to repentance, and would excite them to prayer when oppressed with fear.' Commentary on Genesis 41.33.

⁹² Commentary on Amos 7.14,15.

⁹³ Commentary on Jeremiah 1.1-3.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹⁵ This was the meaning of the phrase in the Commentary on Jeremiah 14.14, 'The call of Jeremiah was extraordinary; for when the state of the Church was rightly formed, the chief priest was the teacher of religion and true doctrine...' Cf.: Commentary on Zechariah 7.1-3.

⁹⁶ Commentary on Jeremiah 6.14.

⁹⁷ The command to reread the Law every seven years was not observed at all, Calvin wrote, is evidenced by the discovery of the Law in Josiah's reign. (Commentary on Deuteronomy 31.10-13).

⁹⁸ Commentary on Exodus 28.4. It is important to note that this injunction was placed on all those holding offices in the church. Cf.: *Institutes* 4.3.12.

⁹⁹ Calvin's interest in the external manifestation seems in part to stem from his view of the importance of the internal relation of individual priests with their Lord.

¹⁰⁰ 'It is evident enough that Hosea speaks not here of God's true and faithful ministers, but of imposters, who deceived the people by their blandishments... and there was a great number of those who were indulgent to the people and to their vices.' Commentary on Hosea 4.5.

¹⁰¹ 'But the Prophet denounces vengeance on the priests as well as on the whole people, 'Because knowledge hast thou rejected, he says, I also will thee reject so that the priesthood thou shalt not discharge of me.' This is specifically addressed to priests: for the Lord accuses them of having rejected knowledge. But knowledge as Malachi says, was to be sought from their lips (Malachi 2.7).' Commentary on Hosea 4.6.

¹⁰² '...and yet men still deluded themselves, who, at the same time were expounders of the Law, who were the mouth of God, and to whom he had committed the office of reproving; but they were dumb!' Commentary on Jeremiah 23.10.

¹⁰³ '...for the priest abused the honour conferred on him; for though divinely appointed over the Church for this purpose, to preserve the people in piety and a holy life, he has yet broken through and violated every right principle: and then the people themselves wished to have such teachers, that is, such as were mute.' Commentary on Hosea 4.9,10.

¹⁰⁴ 'The prophet draws this conclusion-that the priests in vain gloried in the honour of their office, for they had ceased to be the priests of God.' Commentary on Malachi 2.9.

¹⁰⁵ 'In a word, he shows that the divorce, which the priests attempted to make, was absurd, and contrary to the nature of things, that it was monstrous, and to retain the title and its wealth, they wished to be deemed prelates of the Church without knowledge...' Commentary on Hosea 4.6.

¹⁰⁶ 'It was then an extreme wickedness in the priests, as though they wished to subvert God's sacred order, when they sought the honour and the dignity of the office without the office itself...' *ibid* 'So also our Prophet here shows, that the priests made pretences and deceived the common people, while they sought to prove themselves heirs of the covenant which God had made with Levi their father.' Commentary on Malachi 2.5.

¹⁰⁷ '...nor the priest, because they were dumb dogs, and had also led away the people from God's pure worship into false superstitions; and so great was their avidity for filthy lucre, that they perverted the Law and everything that was before pure among the people.' Commentary on Hosea 5.1.

¹⁰⁸ 'This is to be applied to the prophets and priests alone; they not only corrupted the people by their bad example, but shook off every fear of God, and by their impostures and false boasting took

away every regard and respect for the teaching of the true prophets.' Commentary on Jeremiah 6.14.

¹⁰⁹ '...but as the contagion among the whole people had proceeded from the priests... the Prophet compares them, not without reason, to snares.' Commentary on Hosea 5.1.

¹¹⁰ 'The Prophet, then no doubt means here, that both the priests and the king's counsellors were like snares and nets.' *ibid.*

¹¹¹ 'For what was found to be the priest's wickedness in the Temple, except that they practised a sort of merchandise under the cover of the priesthood?' Commentary on Jeremiah 23.11. 'Since the highest sanctity ought to have shone forth in the priests, it was quite monstrous that they were like robbers, and that the holy city, which was as it were the sanctuary of God, became a den of thieves.' Commentary on Hosea 6.8.

¹¹² The meaning is, that the priest is ever worthy of regard and honour when he faithfully performs his office and obeys the call of God. We may, on the other hand, conclude that all masked pastors ought justly to be excluded, when they not only are apostates and perfidious against God, but seek also to destroy the Church; yea, when they are also voracious wolves and spiritual tyrants and slaughterers.' Commentary on Zechariah 3.6,7.

¹¹³ 'The same thing is also to be seen in teachers. For when God favoured the priests with the highest honour they became blinded, as it will hereafter be seen, by that favour of God, that they thought themselves to be as it were semi-gods...' Commentary on Malachi 2.4,5.

¹¹⁴ 'What Ezekiel heard belongs to all teachers of the Church, namely, that they are Divinely appointed and placed as on watch-towers, that they may keep watch for the common safety of all.' Commentary on Ezekiel 3.16,17.

¹¹⁵ 'God indeed had been accustomed to lead the people as by an erected banner when they dwelt in the holy land, and Prophets continually succeeded one another in regular order, according to what the Lord had promised by Moses, "A Prophet will I raise up in the midst of thee," etc. (Deut. 18.15).' Commentary on Zechariah 7.1-3. 'As then God had dealt bountifully with the people, so that prophets had never ceased but continually succeeded one another, hence surely the baseness of their impious obstinacy became more evident; for they had not despised God for only one day, nor disregarded one prophet, or two or three, but resisted all the prophets, though they had been sent in great number.' Commentary on Jeremiah 7.25,26.

¹¹⁶ 'God himself raised up the Prophets, and employed their labour; and, at the same time, guided them by his Spirit, that they might not announce anything but what had been received from him, but faithfully deliver what had proceeded from him alone.' Commentary on Amos 3.1,2.

¹¹⁷ Hence by this kind of concession it is implied, that the Prophets are middle persons, and yet that God so speaks by their mouth, that contempt is offered to him when no due honour is shown to the truth.' Commentary on Zechariah 7.11,12. 'Though, then, they had in various ways provoked God, yet this was their extreme wickedness, that they exercised so great a cruelty against God's servants, that they constrained as it were the Holy Spirit to be silent.' Commentary on Lamentations 4.13.

¹¹⁸ 'But if we receive not this message and this embassy, there will remain for us the dreadful judgement, of which the Prophet now speaks, and our impiety will procure for us this awful doom. As though God then was now declaring war against all the ungodly and the despisers of his grace, the Prophet says that they shall find that God is armed for vengeance.' Commentary on Hosea 5.8.

¹¹⁹ 'It was a most grievous trial to the Prophet to know that his would pass away with the air and produce no good. What was to be expected but that God's wrath would thus be still more kindled against the people? The prophet then must have had his mind greatly depressed...' Commentary on Jeremiah 7.27.

¹²⁰ 'This being the case, we hence see that God had not in vain employed the ministry of this Prophet for he is wont to chose the weak things of the world to confound the strong, (1 Cor. i) and he takes Prophets and teachers from the lowest grade to humble the dignity of the world, and puts the invaluable treasure of his doctrine in earthen vessels, that his power, as Paul teaches us, may be made more evident, (1 Cor. iv).' Commentary Amos 1.1.

¹²¹ 'For when God favoured the priests with the highest honour, they became blinded, as will hereafter be seen, by that favour of God, that they thought themselves to be semi-gods...' Commentary on Malachi 2.4.

¹²² '...but I on my part promised to your father to his father, and I also stipulated with him that he was to obey me, to obey my word, and whatever I might afterwards require. Now ye will have me bound to you, and yourselves free from every obligation.' Commentary on Malachi 2.5.

¹²³ Commentary on Malachi 2.6.

¹²⁴ 'The inward call was principal when the state of the Church was in disorder, that is when the priests neglected the duty of teaching, and wholly departed from their required office.' Commentary on Jeremiah 29. 30-32.

¹²⁵ 'Since the prophets were the organs of the Holy Spirit, whosoever attempted to silence them, usurped to himself an authority over God himself and in a manner tried to make captive his Spirit...' Commentary on Micah 2.7.

¹²⁶ 'Therefore the prophet does not mean that he was ravished and transported, for God's Prophets were always sober and sound in mind. He meant that he was so guided and governed by the Spirit of God that he was unlike himself and had no earthly thoughts.' Commentary on Ezekiel 1.14.

¹²⁷ See Commentary on Amos 8.11-12.

¹²⁸ See Alexandre Ganoczy, *op. cit.*, pp. 287-307. Ganoczy argues very conclusively that Calvin believed that his vocation was similar to that of the prophets of the Old Testament.

¹²⁹ Sermon 5 on Ezekiel quoted by C.O. Viquet and D. Tissot, *Calvin d'après Calvin* (Geneva, 1864), p. 296. See also Sermon 21 on Daniel CO 41.540, 'If anyone alleged that I am not the prophet Jeremiah, it is true, but I am as much a prophet in the sense that I hear the same word that he proclaimed.'

¹³⁰ For Moses see Commentary on Exodus 3.11, 17.13, 19.10; Numbers 9.29, 12.6; Deuteronomy 32.48. For Isaiah see Commentary on Isaiah 5.1, 6.1, 15.5. For Jeremiah see Commentary on Jeremiah 1.6-7, 11.19, 12.3, 15.5, 17.17-18, 20.14-16, 26.7-24. For references to the prophet David see the Commentary on the Psalms, *passim*

¹³¹ See CO 31.32, 'And in this sense I may certainly complain rightfully as did David.' CO 31.34, 'Of the domestic enemies of the church... I am able to protest as did David... In describing the inner feelings of David as well as others, I speak of them as things with which I am very familiar.'

¹³² 'The case is the same this day as to the Papacy; for they who vaunt themselves as being clergy and priests are honeyed worms: as however, they retain the title, what the Prophet threatened to the false priests of his age may be justly said to them...' Commentary on Hosea 4.9

¹³³ 'As for instance, there is nothing at this day more stupid and senseless than the Bishops of the Papacy: for when anyone draws from them any expression about religion, they instantly betray not only their ignorance, but also their shameful stupidity.' Commentary on Micah 3.6,7. '...and the same thing as we find has taken place under the Papacy. For though it be quite evident for what reason pastors were appointed over the Church, we yet see that all, who proudly call themselves pastors, are dumb dogs.' Commentary on Micah 3.11,12.

¹³⁴ Commentary on Micah 3.11,12.

¹³⁵ 'Now the Papist boast, that the clergy, even the very dregs collected from the filthiest filth, cannot err; which is extremely absurd; for they are not better than the successors of Aaron.' Commentary on Zephaniah 3.4.

¹³⁶ 'For how have arisen so great impieties under the Papacy, except that pastors have exercised tyranny and not just governments.' Commentary on Malachi 2. 4,5.

¹³⁷ *ibid*

¹³⁸ C. O. Viquet and D. Tissot, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Since we have in Calvin's conception of the offices his deepest and most concrete understanding of person and activity of Christ, I am now in a position to draw some conclusions. First of all I must provide a statement of the basic patterns of his thought as it has emerged in this study. Lastly I shall want to set out the general meaning and significance of this office Christology.

The Unity of Calvin's Thought.

My analysis has made clear, I believe, that the unifying principle of Calvin's Office Christology is the relational being of the persons of the Trinity, the constitutive correlation of the person of Christ, and the contingent correlation of the relation of God with the diversity of humanity which becomes the activity of the offices attested by sacred history. When the work of the Holy Spirit is correlated with the threefold office, Calvin's balance of ontology and sacred history is set out. Jesus becomes the Christ, he is not just an individual person but an 'official person', that is, he makes an ontological claim before humanity that he is the true person whose relation to God is his very being. In Calvin's exposition, the being of the person of Christ can only be understood in light of trinitarian theology. Likewise, Jesus the Christ The Son of God is not properly

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called Christ apart from his office, for it is there, in his official capacity, that he manifests as the true fulfilment of the offices of the Old Testament his threefold work as prophet, priest and king.

Calvin himself lived in an age much like our own. Traditional means of explaining the world and the character of God in the Middle Ages had been eroded by the insights of the Reformation period. What Calvin sought to do, I believe, was to try and seek a way of explaining the character of God and his relation to humanity which took into account the new insights of the Renaissance and Reformation, while still incorporating what he saw as the fruitful insights of theological tradition as found in the Fathers.

Calvin surmised that the connection between the Trinity and the Incarnation, is of course recognized in scholastic theology, but is considerably loosened. For the western tradition, following Augustine, does not start from the revelation of the divine persons in history, but moves in a more metaphysical way from the one divine essence as the principle of all operation. Consequently the act of Incarnation belongs in common to all three divine persons by affirming God's aseity. Scholastic theology to some extent even goes so far as to maintain the thesis that passive incarnation would in itself have been possible to any of the three persons. While not abandoning a western perspective, Calvin strengthens the connection between the Trinity and the Incarnation in the offices. Calvin begins his Christology not with the doctrine of the union of two natures in Christ's person, but with the argument concerning the necessity of the Mediator, the God-man. As

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the offices placed the person of Christ firmly within time and history, they also emphasize the activity of the Spirit in diverse manifestations. Calvin's office structure provides a theory of redemption with a single point of view, rather than previous theories of redemption which are simply juxtaposed. This unifying centre is the person of the Mediator. Calvin reasoned that it is only from this centre that theology can correctly interpret the various biblical and traditional soteriological metaphors which are extremely difficult to bring together into a unity.

The fact that Christ was anointed to a threefold office finds its explanation in the fact that humanity was originally intended for this threefold office and work and so God must restore this original relation. As created by God, he was prophet, priest and king, and as such endowed with knowledge and understanding, with righteousness and holiness, and with dominion over the lower creation. Sin affected the entire life of humanity and manifested itself not only as ignorance, blindness, error, and untruthfulness but also as unrighteousness, guilt, and moral pollution and in addition to that as misery, death and destruction. Hence it was necessary that Christ, as the Mediator, should be prophet, priest and king. As prophet he represents God with humankind; as priest he represents humanity in the presence of God, and as king he exercises dominion and restores the original dominion of humankind.

The foregoing, I have tried to show, is the consistent pattern of Calvin's christological thought in the offices, and it is this - the

unity of relation in the person of the Mediator - which stands behind his frequent recourse to the formula, unity from a diversity of relational activity, whether this refers to the persons of the Trinity, the natures of Christ, or the single office with three aspects.

The reason for the failure of the functional interpretations of the offices in Calvin may now be clear, bearing in mind that we are dealing with it as a type, and that the issues at many points are a matter of emphasis. It is a basic weakness of functionalism that the balance of distinction is not accurately gauged in the unity of activity and ontology and so only one side of Christ's office activity is discerned. The inevitable consequence is a blurring of the distinctions, but with different results according to which aspect of the office is emphasized. There is an undue emphasis on functional distinctions at the expense of the unity of the person.

The Significance of Calvin's Office Christology.

Calvin's Office Christology, I believe, is neither a traditional 'Christology from above' nor a modern 'Christology from below' but a Christology developed out of the historical line of the covenant promise which points, as by a soteriological necessity, to the concrete historical person of the God-human. Like the 'Christology from above', Calvin recognizes from the outset the necessity of the hypostatic union and the relational nature of Christ's being from his divinity; but like the 'Christology from below' Calvin's thought

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focuses on the concrete Christ in history and on the integrity of the human nature as infused by the power of the Holy Spirit. Calvin and those who followed his arrangement of offices strove to manifest the unity of the person in the unity of the work. Here the focus is on the divine/human person concretely manifest in history. So Calvin's middle position gives a critique of each polarity. To the 'Christology from below' Calvin stresses the necessity of the transcendent who gives himself to be known, so that meaning in Christology is not seen to be a projection of the theologian's ideals or tradition upon events. To the 'Christology from above' Calvin stresses the necessity of understanding the person of God in his revelation in history, allowing the work to interpret the person.

In light of this study, I believe that it is time to re-examine Calvin's Christology for its sources, comparing what he has said with the Fathers and thus trying to establish some continuity or distinction in his thinking. I believe that much has been assumed about Calvin's relation to the Fathers and Chalcedon. It is interesting to observe that Calvin presents the outlines of patristic doctrine, but there seems to be little agreement amongst Calvin scholars as to the significant sources. To my knowledge, Chalcedon, Augustine, Athanasius, Ambrose, Hilary, Irenaeus, and Gregory of Nazianzen have all been suggested, but little has been written in establishing the greater or lesser significance of any.

This study has further demonstrated that the unity of Calvin's thought concerning the prophetic office becomes apparent in Calvin's

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exposition of the office, which reveals the required ontological structure: the being in relation of Christ, the activity of the Trinity within the office; and in its application by the power of the Spirit, that necessary unction, in his doctrine of the Church. I have shown that the first mark of the Church is the preaching and hearing of the word. Thus participation in the office of prophet by the Church continues as each minister is called and anointed by the Holy Spirit to their office of preaching and teaching. So much so that they are to be thought of as the very mouth of God himself. Like the prophet of old, he must go to the Scriptures, seek out their correct interpretation, making sure that all the while the truth of Scripture is faithfully served. The congregation, anointed with the Spirit of discernment, can test what has been said in light of the Scripture itself. Calvin's exposition of the prophetic office, in the interpretation of the Law, as the bearer of new revelations which became the Old Testament Scriptures, as the Spirit-filled ministers of God, set the structure for the important correlation of the word and Spirit, drawing people ever closer in relation to God. Calvin's doctrine of the Church contains a flexibility and diversity of roles, each sanctioned by the power of God himself.

In all this, I have demonstrated that Calvin has a structure for Christology which is remarkable for the way in which it holds together and balances a variety of insights. As it is conceived historically, it sustains both an appreciation for the Old Testament covenant promises, tradition, and an openness for the present situation of the Church as it moves toward culmination in the future. As it is

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conceived theologically, it prizes both the insights and limitations of previous christological doctrines and is willing to re-examine previous and present Christologies for fresh insights. And as it is oriented toward the renewal of humanity, it esteems not only the oneness of humanity, but also its diversity, and so affirms the vital point of contact between God and humankind.

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