

# JOHN CALVIN'S TWO-FOLD NOTION OF FAITH AND THE POSSIBILITY OF FAITH FORMATION: THE EMERGING GENEVAN CHURCH'S UNDERSTANDING OF FAITH AND ITS RELATION TO PASTORAL CARE

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore John Calvin's two-fold notion of faith in the 1559 edition of the *Institutes* and its central implications for pastoral theology in the emerging Reformed tradition, in order to reclaim a broader and contextualized understanding of pastoral care and its relation with faith formation. To that end, this article will focus on the ways the emerging mid-sixteenth century Reformed church in Geneva applied the Calvinian notion of faith to pastoral theology. Some applications of such an understanding for the church today are also explored, especially for the modern American-Dutch Reformed church.

## KEYWORDS

Calvin's Notion of Faith; Early Reformed Church; Intellectualism; Pastoral Care; Pastoral Theology; Providential Faith; Redemptive Faith; Voluntarism.

## INTRODUCTION

Even in the Reformed tradition, there has been a tendency among some theologians and clergy to read Calvin narrowly. Such tendency has impacted to some degree the theology and praxis of pastoral care, affecting thus the ho-

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listic vision of pastoral ministry in the Reformed church. “Part of the problem for interpreting Calvin as a spiritual leader is his reputation as one of the most gifted and intellectually rigorous theologians of the sixteenth century,” Elsie A. McKee rightly states.<sup>1</sup> I stand by that assessment. In fact, some modern scholarship – Richard A. Muller writes – has interpreted the knowledge of God in John Calvin’s notion of faith merely as an intellectual assent, neglecting the other aspect of Calvin’s understanding of faith which focuses on the assurance and will of the heart.<sup>2</sup> In response to positions like these, Muller correctly argues that “Calvin does not lodge faith in the intellect and place only the capability of choice in the will. Faith, for Calvin, is a matter of intellect and will in conjunction – with the highest part, not merely the instrumental part, of faith belonging to the will.”<sup>3</sup> Therefore, despite his later reputation, Calvin presents his readers a balanced and integrated theological thought where he gave pastoral theology a great importance during the sixteenth-century Reformation.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Elsie Anne McKee, ed. *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 3. In this same section, McKee, Professor of Church History at Princeton Theological Seminary, writes: “In fact, although Calvin’s theology is regarded as primarily intellectual, he himself put the greater weight on the heart; heart and head must go together but the heart is more important.” McKee also invites her readers to reimagine the historical Calvin. In her article “(Re)Introducing Pastor John Calvin,” *The Journal of Presbyterian History* 87, n. 2 (2009), she states: “[Everyone]... has heard stories of John Calvin – mostly extreme: very negative or very laudatory – and more than a few probably untrue. So let’s try a new tack. How about a religious exile whose wife and infant son died prematurely, while he himself suffered increasing ill health in a lifelong ministry to other religious refugees; a resident alien pastor to the people of a beleaguered city-state precariously situated between large, hungry neighbors?” (53) This question helps us to pay closer heed to Calvin’s socio-cultural and religious context.

<sup>2</sup> See, Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University, 2000), 159. As one of the theologians who have understood Calvin’s faith as intellectual-cognitive assent, Muller (Professor Emeritus of Historical Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary) mentions theologian Robert T. Kendall, who considers that Calvin’s notion of faith refers basically to intellectual assent, excluding the will (159-160). Another theologian who tends to give more prominence to the intellectual over the assentive aspect of faith is the American philosopher Gordon H. Clark (1902-1985) in his book *Faith and Saving Faith* (Jefferson, MD: Trinity Foundation, 1990). Although Clark does not reduce faith to merely intellectual assent, he tends to overlook the fiduciary aspect of faith (79-80).

<sup>3</sup> Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 171. In this same section, Muller says that “intellectual knowledge is not ultimately constitutive of the *cognitio* that is faith. For this ‘knowledge’ to occur, the heart must apprehend what the intellect knows.” (171) For an overview of this topic, I recommend the complete reading of Chapter 9: “*Fides* and *Cognitio* in Relation to the Problem of Intellect and Will in the Theology of John Calvin,” in Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 159-173.

<sup>4</sup> Despite the place Calvin gives to Christian piety in his theology, I agree with Muller’s assertion that “to call Calvin a ‘theologian of piety’ or a ‘theologian of rhetoric’ is as vacuous as to call him a ‘theologian of polemic.’ The modern notion of ‘genitive theologies’ – theologies of this, theologies of that – is a twentieth-century imposition on the sixteenth-century mind, as is the radical dichotomization of pastoral or biblical and dogmatic or polemical forms of theology,” Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 181.

Because I think a proper understanding of the notion of faith produces a better appreciation of pastoral care in an ecclesiastical context, I will explore in this paper the Calvinian notion of faith in the 1559 *Institutes* and its central implications for pastoral theology in the Reformed tradition in order to reclaim a broader understanding of pastoral care and its relation with faith formation. Such a purpose is based on the belief that for Calvin and the early Reformers (for instance, Theodore Beza and other reformed ministers), faith seemed not to be merely an intellectual-assentive knowledge (*notitia/assensus*), but also a fiduciary-experiential knowledge of God (*fiducia*).<sup>5</sup> In fact, the knowledge of God in Calvin's understanding of faith relates both the intellectual assent of faith and the apprehension of the heart of such assent by which one is illuminated by the Holy Spirit regarding the way God relates, takes care, and sustains all His creation.<sup>6</sup> And such intellectual assent of the knowledge of God in Calvin's view of faith cannot be separated from the apprehension of the heart of such knowledge,<sup>7</sup> since both elements are completely ingrained in the Calvinian thought. This integral knowledge of God and ourselves in Calvin's discussion of faith is what Calvin refers to when he talks about *cognitio*, and it is also what allows us to procure an ample vision of pastoral theology. Defining the ministry of pastoral care in terms of Calvin's understanding of the functions of the visible church as mother,<sup>8</sup> we could understand pastoral care as the communal and individual exercise of the calling and mission of the visible church as mother to make believers aware of the proper knowledge of God and of themselves as realized in the Scripture with the guide of the Holy Spirit in the process of bearing, nourishing, caring, and guiding such believers.<sup>9</sup>

Taking into account what it has been said above, the first part of this essay will be focused on Calvin's notion of faith, the knowledge of God, Calvin's understanding of the heart, and the formation of faith as found in the last edition of the *Institutes*. The second part of the paper will be an exploration of how the emerging reformed church understood and applied pastoral care during the

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<sup>5</sup> For an overview of Beza's understanding of faith, see, Jeffrey Mallinson, *Faith, Reason, and Revelation in Theodore Beza, 1519-1605* (Oxford New: Oxford University Press, 2003), 214-34. In general terms, Beza follows Calvin's doctrine of faith, but with some minor changes.

<sup>6</sup> It is noteworthy to mention that for Calvin the apprehension of the heart of the knowledge of God is an activity led by the Holy Spirit when He illuminates us through Scripture. It is not merely self-awareness/introspection in the therapeutic sense, but an activity which goes beyond human understanding.

<sup>7</sup> Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 170.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 4.1.4 (hereafter: *Inst*). In regard to the functions of the visible church as mother, Calvin writes, "For there is no other way to enter into life unless this mother conceive us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us at her breast, and lastly, unless she keep us under her care and guidance until, putting off mortal flesh, we become like the angels [Matthew 22:30]."

<sup>9</sup> It must be noted that when Calvin speaks of the visible church as mother, he is referring to the institutional church.

second mid-sixteenth century in Geneva and its intersection with faith formation. In the third part of this article, I will make some remarks about a series of aspects the American-Dutch reformed church can learn from the Genevan church in relation to the nature of pastoral theology and pastoral care.

## 1. CALVIN'S TWO-FOLD NOTION OF FAITH AND THE POSSIBILITY OF FAITH FORMATION: THE OBJECT OF PROVIDENTIAL FAITH

Let me start this section with the following statement: The notion of faith in Calvin's thought changes through the different editions of the *Institutes* and other Calvin's writings such as his sermons and biblical commentaries.<sup>10</sup> So it would be a mistake to make final conclusions about Calvin's view of faith since his understanding of it went through a process of development and consolidation through time. However, for the purpose of this essay, I will focus on the 1559 final edition of the *Institutes*, where Calvin affirms that faith is "a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit."<sup>11</sup> It must be noted that faith here is understood as assurance rather than comprehension.<sup>12</sup> In this regard Muller writes,

Calvin...balances the functioning of intellect and will in his conception of faith, rather than argue either a purely intellectualist or purely voluntarist definition: in other words, if faith is knowledge (*cognitio*) then this *cognitio* is not to be restrictively understood as a function of intellect.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For further information, please see Barbara Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See: Calvin's Doctrine of Faith in its Exegetical Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 131-164. Also, Muller clarifies his readers that Calvin's earlier definitions of faith, such as the one in 1536 *Institutes*, might lead us to believe that Calvin lacks an adequate balance of mind and heart if we read such definitions in isolation (Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 163). In this respect, Muller also states, "...Calvin's own definition of faith carries with it clear reflections of traditional, scholastic definition. Thus, following the traditional Aristotelian distinction of 'mind' into faculties of intellect and will, Calvin insists that faith addresses the whole person in both faculties: 'the heart,' he writes, must be 'straightened and supported' even as the intellect is illuminated given that 'faith is much higher,' and, we add, broader, 'than human understanding (*intelligentia*)," (Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 49).

<sup>11</sup> *Inst.* 3.2.7.

<sup>12</sup> *Inst.* 3.2.14.

<sup>13</sup> Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 170. Muller argues that Calvin seems to endorse a soteriological voluntarism, probably based on Augustine's discussion of the problem of sin and salvation (172). Muller writes, "When placed into the context of this debate [The problem of intellect and will in Calvin's Theology], Calvin appears to echo the voluntarist tradition insofar as he places choice in the will and does not make the intellect either efficiently or finally the cause of the will's choice, despite the intellect's role as 'governor.' Rather, under ideal conditions, the free choice (*liberum arbitrium*) of the will becomes the basis for a decision in favor of the good known to reason rather than of the evil inclination of sense. The will 'stands in between reason and sense' (*inter rationem et sensum medium locant*) with the capacity to turn toward either." (166)

Calvin's definition of knowledge in his notion of faith led him to affirm that there is no such thing as an unformed faith.<sup>14</sup> In fact, Calvin argues that the unformed faith is "of no importance" and "does not deserve to be called faith" at all.<sup>15</sup> Unformed faith, therefore, is not steady and reliable since "it does not all penetrate to the heart itself, there to remain fixed. And although it seems sometimes to put down roots, they are not living roots."<sup>16</sup> As one observes, Calvin seems to link the unformed faith to that kind of faith (knowledge) which lies merely on the intellectual assent, which it has not been apprehended and sealed in the heart.

On a similar note, when Calvin speaks of the heart, one ought to pay much closer attention to what he refers to. In that regard, Muller writes,

Calvin does not intend to argue purely cerebral meaning of faith when he identifies faith as *cognition* (knowledge). Even so, Calvin speaks of a 'sense of the divine' engraved not only in mind or brain but upon the heart. As Stuermann suggested, 'heart' is frequently used by Calvin as synonym for 'soul' (i.e., *animus*), but particularly when juxtaposed with 'mind' (*mens*), the term also refers to 'the seat of the emotions' or 'the whole range of human affections,' or, indeed, the faculty that reaches out toward known objects, which is to say, the will<sup>17</sup>... Calvin's linkage of mind and heart in faith appears to be a statement concerning the necessity of involving the whole person, or more precisely, the entire spiritual side of the person, the soul in both its faculties, intellect and will, in faith.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, the heart in the Calvinian sense is not equated to merely a person's emotions or feelings. It has a broader meaning.<sup>19</sup> As Muller pointed out above, Calvin has the tendency of using the term "heart" in the biblical sense, as a way to refer to the spiritual dimension of the human being (the soul), or even to the whole person.

### **1.1 Calvin's Two-Fold Notion of Faith**

After explaining briefly Calvin's notion of faith in the final edition of the *Institutes* and Calvin's use of the term "heart" in relation to faith, I will discuss the elements of Calvin's notion of faith. In that regard, one of the questions that

<sup>14</sup> For further discussion on this topic, see Victor A. Shepherd, *The Nature and Function of Faith in the Theology of John Calvin* (Vancouver: Regent College, 2004). Shepherd offers a critical assessment of Calvin's understanding of unformed faith and argues that Calvin contradicts himself when he introduces the notion of unformed faith (Cf. 126-128).

<sup>15</sup> *Inst.* 3.2.10.

<sup>16</sup> *Inst.* 3.2.10.

<sup>17</sup> Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 168.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Calvin's Commentaries of Rom. 10:10.

arise in Calvin's notion of faith is whether his definition refers exclusively to saving faith. Discussing the relation between faith and the knowledge of God, Barbara Pitkin in *What Pure Eyes Could See: Calvin's Doctrine of Faith in Its Exegetical Context* studies Calvin's understanding of faith and its historical development. She writes,

While it is true that the description of saving faith in book 3 represents a primary element of faith for Calvin [in the 1559 *Institutes*], the reflections in book 3 do not fully exhaust his understanding of the nature and role of faith any more than the reflections on Christ in book 2 represent all that he has to say about Christology. Rather, in 1559 he assumes a twofold notion of faith, which is not two faiths or faith in two Gods or Christs but rather one faith inevitably comprising two elements, or alternatively, one act of believing in a twofold motion.<sup>20</sup>

Pitkin is quite right. If one understands the concept of faith merely as saving faith in Calvin's theological thought, one might be restricting and misrepresenting (and thus, reading narrowly) Calvin's notion of faith as exposed in his work as a whole—e.g. the previous editions of the *Institutes*, sermons, and Calvin's biblical commentaries.<sup>21</sup> Asserting that Calvin understands faith merely as saving faith is misleading and inaccurate despite the fact that saving faith plays a central aspect in Calvin's doctrine of faith. The problem appears because equating Calvin's notion of faith with merely saving faith does not offer an integral reflection of Calvin's understanding of faith. It is for this reason that Pitkin argues that the discussion of faith in Book 3 of the *Institutes* does not find its center there.<sup>22</sup> This leads her to affirm that, “[F]aith, for Calvin, in its proper sense is knowledge of God's redemptive activity. However, it is also appropriate, proper, and indeed, necessary to understand the knowledge of faith as including a knowledge of God in God's general creative activity as well.”<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See*, 132.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. For further explanation, see Herman J. Selderhuis, *John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2009), 45-46. Selderhuis argues that despite Calvin's 1559 edition of the *Institutes* was well known and praised, most people did not read it at all. He also states, “For centuries, Calvin's thought has been analyzed almost exclusively on the basis of the *Institutes*, as if it were the only book he wrote or as if the rest of his writings have nothing significant to add” (46).

<sup>22</sup> Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See*, 133.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. Pitkin acknowledges to her readers that she follows Dowey here. For further reference, see, Edward A. Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994). I agree with Charles Partee's critique of Dowey's two-fold knowledge of God in his book *The Theology of John Calvin* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), when he states, “Dowey is correct in viewing the knowledge of God as twofold (which has ramifications for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit), but that this distinction is ‘the foundation of Calvin's theological writing’ might be questioned.” (37). In order to follow with more details Partee's discussion, see pp. 33-39.

Providential faith, as Pitkin defines it, allows us to infer God's work as creator and sustainer in the world through the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>24</sup> She writes,

Providential faith is a knowledge of God through God's creative and providential works, as illuminated by the word of scripture and as revealing Christ the eternal Son... [while] [s]aving faith is a knowledge of God's redemptive works, as illuminated by the word of scripture and as revealing Christ incarnate.<sup>25</sup>

As one notes here, Pitkin's analysis of the two-fold knowledge of God (*duplex cognitio Dei*)<sup>26</sup> in her exegetical/historical reading of Calvin's understanding of faith proves useful and necessary if a more holistic vision of Calvin's thought is desired.<sup>27</sup> It must be clarified, nonetheless, that Pitkin presupposes Dowey's analysis on Calvin's knowledge of God.<sup>28</sup> I would rather prefer Pitkin's approach because of the modifications and improvements she makes to Dowey's study.

Following Pitkin's renewed interpretation of Calvin, therefore, I am interested in discussing briefly some of the general implications that this two-fold notion of faith in Calvin's thought may have for pastoral theology/pastoral care in the church. The first implication of such notion is that both saving and providential faith – and not exclusively saving faith – constitutes Christian piety in the Calvinian theological thought.<sup>29</sup> When neglecting the central role of the providential element of faith in Calvin's thought, one might put piety in a second place to the detriment of a person's spiritual life. If one gives more importance to the intellectual-assentive aspect of the knowledge of God than its fiduciary-experiential aspect, one can also make the mistake of merely focusing on the intellectual-assentive faith formation (e.g. catechisms, creeds, and doctrinal standards) and overlooking the formation of piety and

<sup>24</sup> Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See*, 159.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>26</sup> Calvin's phrase *duplex cognitio Dei* refers to the two different yet related ways humankind has knowledge of God: through nature where God is known as Creator and Sustainer of the world, and through Scripture where God is known as Redeemer.

<sup>27</sup> This theme of the *duplex cognitio Dei* or 'twofold knowledge of God,' highlighted in the twentieth century by Dowey's now classic study was hardly an idea unique to Calvin. Not only was it used by contemporaries of Calvin (such as Viret) and later Reformed theologians (including Polanus and Du Moulin): it probably also reflects the medieval Augustinian identification of the *objectum theologiae* as God the Creator and Redeemer (Giles of Rome) or God the Creator, Redeemer, and Glorifier (Gregory of Rimini)," Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 73.

<sup>28</sup> For a critic overview of the new and older methodology of Calvin's studies, see Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 72-77.

<sup>29</sup> Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See*, 133.

spirituality.<sup>30</sup> If one wants to promote a healthy church with a holistic vision of pastoral ministry, our theological understanding of faith must be integrated into the life and calling of the church. This also takes us to the second implication of Calvin's two-fold notion of faith: faith is also affective. The revealed knowledge of God must not remain in the believer's mind as a theoretical and abstract knowledge, but such revealed knowledge must be sealed by the Holy Spirit in the heart. The Spirit's sealing affects the person as a whole in body and soul. Such illuminated knowledge is guided by the Holy Spirit and points us to Christ.<sup>31</sup> The fiduciary-experiential element of faith, therefore, is also the result of the knowledge of God illuminated by the Scriptures. As pointed out above by Pitkin, Calvin does not assume that there are two different kinds of faith. Instead, Calvin believes that there is one only faith constituted by two ingrained elements.<sup>32</sup> And the third implication of the Calvinian two-fold understanding of faith is that such view amplifies the believer's understanding of the centrality of both saving faith and providential faith in human history. The Calvinian notion of faith plays a significant role in pastoral theology since it allows believers to focus on both the present and eternal life, not dismissing the relevance of one or the other. A balanced position on this subject is required in order to promote a state of spiritual healthiness in the church. As Herman J. Selderhuis – commenting on Calvin's preaching style – notes: "Calvin's strength lay in the way he applied the [scriptural] text to the situation of his listeners. His sermons built bridges between the past and the present."<sup>33</sup> By placing emphasis on the notion of Calvin's two-fold notion of faith, pastoral care integrates a person's faith and spirituality into the process of caring. Therefore, if a believer receives pastoral care without being sufficiently aware of the role his/her religious beliefs play in such process, the care received might result to some degree unfruitful. In the case of the Reformed tradition, the connection between faith formation and pastoral theology has been traditionally strong and thus, both elements must be understood together.

### ***1.2 The possibility of faith formation in Calvin's theology***

In his exposition on faith, it must be noted that although Calvin seems to reject the notion of an unformed faith,<sup>34</sup> he does seem to refer to faith forma-

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<sup>30</sup> I am aware that in a pastoral theological sense, the term "piety" as used in theological discussions might be limiting and easily misunderstood. If the term is narrowly understood, "piety" could be mistaken for religious legalisms and monastic lifestyles. As I use it, the term "piety" must be understood in a broad sense. In this way, piety would be closely related to the notion of embodiment – how faith is embodied and enacted intrapersonally, interpersonally, and communally.

<sup>31</sup> *Inst.* 3.2.1.

<sup>32</sup> Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See*, 132.

<sup>33</sup> Herman J. Selderhuis, *John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 112.

<sup>34</sup> *Inst.* 3.2.8. Calvin considers that an unformed faith is an illusion of faith.



tion, even without naming it.<sup>35</sup> In *Inst.* 3.2.20, Calvin affirms that believers are always learning more about the knowledge of God because of their imperfection. Thus Calvin, for example, seems to refer to faith formation in his commentary on Ephesians. In that regard Pitkin states,

Paul frequently urges knowledge and wisdom in his letters; Calvin understands many of these passages as speaking about faith. A characteristic example is in the exegesis of Eph. 1-17-18, in which Paul prays that the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God be granted to the Ephesians and that the eyes of their understanding be enlightened. Calvin interprets this to be about the increase of faith.<sup>36</sup>

Believers not only have an intellectual-assentive knowledge of God when they study carefully the Scriptures about God's redemptive work, but they also know God through the providential and creative work that God performs in his creation and in the believer's heart. Such knowledge never reaches an end. True believers give testimony of this when – after a significant time of growing in the knowledge and grace of the Lord – they properly recognize the work done by the Holy Spirit in their lives throughout the years. As Pitkin observes, “Just as the doctrine of creation serves as a guide for viewing nature, the scriptural teaching about God's providence also functions as a guide for viewing the actual manifestations of providence in the present.”<sup>37</sup> The experiences of many faithful believers in which they recognize the providential and creative work of God working toward them serve as formative and living examples to the church. That is, the church experiences God's providential care in both ways, in a relational and a communal sense. When believers use the Word as their guide, they may meditate on God's manifestations applied to their current situations, and as a result, their fiduciary-experiential knowledge of God is strengthened and increased through the power of the Holy Spirit.

### ***1.3 The object of providential faith in Calvin's theology***

I have discussed so far Calvin's two-fold notion of faith and its holistic approach, some of the implications of such view, and the possibility of faith formation under the Calvinian understanding of faith. All these aspects have opened the doors to adopt a broader definition of pastoral theology and pastoral care. Nonetheless, one last step is needed: Calvin's providential faith has been discussed in relation to the natural order (e.g. God taking care of the cosmos).

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<sup>35</sup> Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See*, 56. Pitkin claims that Calvin's certainty of faith does not imply the exclusion of faith increase and progress, since Calvin indeed “allows for faith's weakness and imperfection.”

<sup>36</sup> Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See*, 156.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

But does Calvin extend such God's providence also to human history? If not, it would very difficult to claim a close relation between providential faith and pastoral theology in a broader sense. It is necessary to demonstrate that the Calvinian notion of faith allows us to argue that God's providence works on both nature and history.

If demonstrated, God's providence working on human history would allow us to reclaim a broader understanding of pastoral theology/pastoral care in Calvin's thought. In this regard, Pitkin argues that Calvin strongly connects faith and providence in his commentary on the Psalms:

In the commentary, Calvin is most concerned with how human beings perceive God's providential activity. He not only tells his readers that this *how* is faith but also teaches them what kind of faith this is. Faith in Calvin's commentary on the Psalms is primarily a kind of perception that corrects the noetic effects of sin and enables believers to recognize God's fatherly benevolence not only to God's redemptive work in Jesus Christ but specially in God's providential care of creation and history. It is this latter testimony to God's goodness that receives the greatest attention in Calvin's treatment of the Psalms. Calvin speaks about faith in God's providence to indicate an apprehension of and trust in God's promise of sustaining care that is distinct but never separated from knowledge of God's promise of salvation in Jesus Christ.<sup>38</sup> ...In his comments [of the Psalms], Calvin frequently distinguishes two realms that are the objects of God's providential care: the natural (but now also fallen) order and the realm of human affairs, i.e. history.<sup>39</sup>

Pitkin also writes,

Out of the knowledge of God's fatherly love and mercy, which is, for Calvin, initially (and perpetually) attained through saving faith in Jesus Christ, grows a faith in God's powerful providential word. It is in this way that faith "penetrates more deeply," perceiving God's hand in God's works in nature and signaling the restoration of nature to its original purpose.<sup>40</sup>

This is the connection that lacked in our discussion of Calvin's understanding of faith: affirming that God works in both the natural order and human history. God's providence working in both nature and history allows us to understand pastoral care as part of God's work of redeeming and sustaining humanity. The benefits of such approach are noteworthy: Following the definition of pastoral care given in the introduction, I would say that pastoral care, in general terms, would not be defined merely as a project to fix people and

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 113.

their problems, or something that only concerns to spiritual unhealthy persons. On the contrary, pastoral care would be understood as an integral spiritual endeavor – both spiritually healthy and unhealthy believers are subject to pastoral care because God uses it as a means to proclaim both the blessings of the Lord’s favor to the believer and God’s judgment on the world. This latter part needs some clarification: God’s judgment is not necessarily evil per se, but part of the Good News as well – that God has in Jesus Christ condemned all wrongdoing, all injustice, all marginalization, and everything that goes against God’s just intentions for the world and His people. It also has to do with the revealed promise that God in Christ will come again to fully and finally judge and overcome all that has gone wrong in this world.

## 2. PASTORAL CARE AND THE FORMATION OF FAITH IN CALVIN’S EMERGING REFORMED CHURCH

Calvin does not understand the notion of pastoral care exactly in the way modern Christianity does, especially in the North American context. The pastoral vision of the early Genevan church made possible that church leaders could understand pastoral care as an integral part of the calling and mission of the church. Therefore, for Calvin pastoral care (as we understand it today) is the result of proper and adequate pastoral leadership. Thus, pastoral care and pastoral leadership were seen as a unified yet multifaceted ministry in the early Genevan church.

The question that arises is regarding the relation between pastoral theology and faith formation in Calvin’s theology. As seen previously when discussing Calvin’s two-fold notion of faith, proper understanding of the central role of faith formation in pastoral theology produces a better appreciation of the holistic, communal, and affective aspect of pastoral ministry from a theological perspective. To that end, I will briefly discuss how the emerging reformed church – especially Calvin and his colleagues – understood pastoral care during the second mid-sixteenth century in Geneva.<sup>41</sup> I will focus on the historical study in *Calvin’s Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church 1536-1609*, where Manetsch fills a gap in the Reformation tradition today – one that deals with how Calvin’s theological vision shaped the Genevan church in terms of pastoral care, ministry functioning, and the consolidation of the Reformed faith. Manetsch discusses the role that Calvin’s Company of Pastors played in the development and consolidation of the Genevan reformed church. In this study, one learns about Calvin’s concerns regarding the spiritual

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<sup>41</sup> Scott M. Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536-1609* (Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1. The Company of Pastors was a “...group of ministers into a formal church institution...which met every Friday morning to examine candidates for ministry and discuss the theological and practical business of the church, both locally and internationally.”

wellness of the church. In that regard Manetsch writes, “Between 1536 and 1609, Calvin, Beza, and the Company of Pastors recruited over one hundred and thirty men to preach and provide pastoral care in Geneva’s city and countryside churches.”<sup>42</sup> Pastoral care here is not understood as an isolated activity, but as part of the integral mission of the church through the shepherding of congregants. One may also observe the profound interest of the emerging church in pastoral care and faith formation when they decided to send a young minister to the hospital “to deliver regular sermons and give catechism classes for orphan children.”<sup>43</sup> For the reformed ministers, pastoral care had an ample definition which encompassed all pastoral work. The ministry of pastoral care, thus, was not apart from the functions of the church as the mother of believers. Furthermore, Manetsch shows how pastoral care was strongly associated with the following five pastoral areas with a keen emphasis on faith formation: baptism, catechism, communion, visitation, and consolation.<sup>44</sup>

### ***2.1 Baptism functioning as pastoral care***

It is not a surprise that the practice of baptism in Geneva was one of the areas that radically changed in the Reformation.<sup>45</sup> The change was reflected both theologically and practically. Under the reformed church, the observation of baptisms became aesthetically simpler and more pastorally-oriented—e.g., a series of liturgical acts were removed, parents became involved in the baptismal act since previously they usually did not attend the baptism, and congregants were instructed about the meaning of baptism.<sup>46</sup> Despite these positive changes, Manetsch states,

Many of Geneva’s townspeople and country folk were slow to embrace the changes in baptismal theology and practice introduced by Calvin and his reformed colleagues. Indeed, some of Geneva’s residents were openly hostile to these reforms.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors*, 38.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>44</sup> On a similar note, McKee writes: “The people must be educated to understand and live their faith day by day. Two means for this were teaching the basics of the faith (the catechism), and how to pray “without ceasing” using the Psalter. Calvin believed the faithful should be worshipping the Lord all the time, singing Psalms “even in the homes and in the fields...praising God and lifting up our hearts to Him” as they went about their daily lives. While Calvin insisted that faith is more a matter of the heart than the head, he was clear that the mind must not be neglected. Educating God’s people also meant, therefore, attention to schools and eventually the establishment of the Genevan Academy (1559).” McKee, “(Re)Introducing Pastor John Calvin,” 58. It is noted here the broad understanding of pastoral theology used by Calvin.

<sup>45</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors*, 257.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

This situation made reformed ministers work harder in their theological instruction and in offering pastoral care to people in their parishes who demanded that baptismal liturgy was performed according to the Catholic tradition of those times. For instance, the use of baptismal names was an area of disagreement between reformed ministers and townspeople: while the ministers would only accept names drawn from the Scriptures, the townspeople would use names based on Catholic saints and superstitions.<sup>48</sup> Manetsch tells us that the controversy arose fiercely during the summer of 1546 when a certain reformed pastor unilaterally changed the name of a child during a baptism, and the child's father ended up in prison because he strongly opposed this in public.<sup>49</sup>

The disagreement between the reformed ministers and townspeople regarding baptismal names was not only a religious matter, but it was also one of power. Manetsch in that regard notes:

What was a religious principle for the city's pastors was for many townspeople an egregious infringement of a traditional privilege that diminished their personal prestige and threatened to loosen the social ties that bound families and kingship groups together.<sup>50</sup>

The problem was not easy to deal with since by this time religion and state were strongly tied. This made the tension between both sides strong, and pastoral care was needed in order to prevent this particular issue from escalating even more. Calvin and his colleagues then decided to work hard in their public campaign to eradicate names given out of superstition.<sup>51</sup> This campaign produced good results throughout the two decades following the incidents, but not without addressing the problem in the church by preaching sermons and educating townspeople about the Reformed faith and baptismal practices.<sup>52</sup> Such application shows us the multidimensional aspect of pastoral care – situations should be understood and approached dynamically, taking into account not only the person as an individual, but also as a member of a larger body. Not addressing the issue in public at all or overlooking it would have possibly created a significant division in the early reformed church resulting in a severe marginalization of congregants.

The importance of addressing these topics is that the celebration of baptism in the reformed church functioned as pastoral care since baptism represented the believer's welcoming to the visible church, and as a such, the

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 263.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 263.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

Reformed ministers could not be oblivious of the proper practice for the health of the church. Baptism in the reformed tradition made a strong emphasis on the believer's identity and his/her union with Christ. Due to the fact that living out such identity is a continuous process of transformation toward Christlikeness and wholeness, the church needed to offer continuous pastoral care to believers in order that they could grow in the knowledge and grace of God.

## ***2.2 Catechism and religious instruction functioning as pastoral care***

The normal pattern observed in Calvin's church regarding religious instruction, as Manetsch highlights, was that baptized children received catechism instruction at home, at school, and at the church so that by the time they reached early adolescence, they were prepared to profess their Christian faith and receive admission to the Lord's Table.<sup>53</sup> For Calvin, catechism instruction was paramount in the church. The result of his catechism formation was successful. For instance, Manetsch also tells us that until 1564, the number of disciplined people was around ten percent. However, by the end of the sixteenth century, less than one percent of people were disciplined, not because discipline was not applied at all, but because the cases worthy of discipline were low.<sup>54</sup> This was not only the result of memorizing Calvin's Catechism – a summary of Christian doctrines he designed for children, but was due to the illumination given by the Holy Spirit that the main goal of Christian life is to know God.<sup>55</sup> This had implications for the believers' faith development – the goal of faith instruction was not simply to acquire intellectual-assentive knowledge of God and His Word, but to apply that knowledge to daily life and to the relationship with God and other believers, and to be able to declare the reasons of Christian belief.<sup>56</sup>

One sees here that religious instruction, therefore, functioned as pastoral care since it was properly contextualized and applied to the believer's current

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 266.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 273. In this regard, McKee clarifies what discipline was about in the Genevan church. She states, "Contrary to legend, the great majority of cases brought to the consistory were resolved without excommunication. In fact, most excommunications consisted of suspension from the sacraments until the individual either demonstrated a basic knowledge (ability to recite the Lord's Prayer, Apostles' Creed, and Decalogue in French) or the appropriate forgiveness of and reconciliation with neighbors. Calvin's discipline dealt only with 'public' or known sins; the 'fencing' of the table was essentially oriented toward examination of self, not others. What moderns perceive as the intrusiveness of Genevan discipline was partly a simple result of life in early modern Europe: like life in a small town, everyone knew everyone else's business. The difference was that in Calvin's church people must be responsible for each other, conscious of quarrels, and prepared to reconcile." In McKee, "(Re)Introducing Pastor John Calvin," 59.

<sup>55</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*, 267.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Ibid., 273.

situation. Note that this area deserved some attention in the Genevan church because it was necessary to reach a balance between the intellectual aspect of faith and the fiduciary-experiential one.

### **2.3 Communion functioning as pastoral care**

Manetsch states,

According to Calvin's theology, the heavenly Father, who graciously adopted the children of believers into his household through baptism, was the same benevolent Father who now provided them with spiritual nourishment in the Eucharistic meal.<sup>57</sup>

The intersection of the Communion and pastoral care allows believers to experience more closely God's benevolence toward them in the process of dying-rising with Christ. In the Communion, the Spirit illuminates the believer's awareness of such a process where they die to their desires and sinful life and are raised in Christ. This makes Communion a very meaningful liturgical act, not only for the church, but also for the life of the believers. In the Genevan church, reformed pastors worked diligently in their parishes to make congregants understand the significance of partaking the bread and the wine in the spiritual growth of believers. Manetsch highlights,

In the liturgy, Geneva's ministers explained to their congregations that the Lord's Supper was like a 'spiritual table' that provided 'heavenly bread' for hungry souls and 'spiritual medicine' for poor, sick sinners. In the Supper, believers were made 'participants' of Christ's body and blood, joined to Christ 'to the end that we might possess him entirely in such a manner that he lives in us and we in him.'<sup>58</sup>

It is not difficult to observe the pastoral approach of the minister's words regarding the Lord's Supper. The implications for pastoral care are noteworthy: God is the provider of believers in this life and He is proactively looking for people's spiritual wellness. By being participants of Christ's body, believers enjoy the benefits of the union with Him. As Manetsch notes, "Genevan ministers believed that as they proclaimed Christ's salvation through the symbols of the sacrament, as they distributed the holy food to their parishioners, they were providing crucial pastoral support and care to the people of God."<sup>59</sup> The celebration of Communion functioned strongly as pastoral care. Reformed ministers provided pastoral care to their parishes as a whole and to the individual in

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 275.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 277.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

situations such as members who missed the holy meal, partook despite being excommunicated, gambled on Sunday, did personal affairs instead of participating in the meal, and dressed in provocative clothing.<sup>60</sup> One can observe that pastoral care in the early Reformed church was provided to church members through different ways, including but not limited to the application of individual discipline in order that the congregant might increase their awareness of their behavior and might be ready to be restored in the community of faith.

#### ***2.4 Pastoral visitation functioning as pastoral care***

Although personal visitation is a common practice today, the emphasis of the Genevan church on this spiritual practice is significant to note. Pastoral care was reflected in the ministers' practice of using pastoral visitations for supporting the believer's faith. In that regard, Manetsch writes,

The proclamation of God's Word in public assemblies was crucial, but not sufficient in itself. The [Genevan] ministers believed that they needed to know and show personal care for the men and women in their parishes, helping them apply the truths of God's Word to their particular life circumstances and challenges to promote personal godliness and spiritual reformation.<sup>61</sup>

In the early reformed church, the elders shared with the minister the responsibility of taking care of the spiritual wellness of their parishes. This duty, nonetheless, was not exclusive of the elders, but of the ministers as well. As an example, Manetsch offers us Beza's comment of John 21:15. Beza states, "It is not only necessary that [a pastor] have a general knowledge of his flock, but he must also know and call each of his sheep by name, both in public and in their homes, both night and day."<sup>62</sup> Manetsch also observes that this aspect of pastoral care had more significance during the times when the plague hit Geneva because the plague made Reformed pastors to stress their responsibilities in the affected communities, and moral and ethical concerns were aroused regarding the duty of the pastors in times of distress. Beza himself fought against the common practice of some Christians – including ministers – of running away from the plague without paying attention to their Christian duty in the community.<sup>63</sup> As one observes, the visitation to the sick and needy people was part of the pastor's duty and a way to be present and offer pastoral care to their community of faith. Indeed, Manetsch argues that pastoral care for the sick was never more urgent, nor more dangerous, than when the plague

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 278.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 281.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 289.



visited Geneva,<sup>64</sup> and though Calvin thought that “pastors should not jeopardize the well-being of the larger church for the sake of caring individual persons,” he also claimed that the duty of the minister is to take care of its congregants, even during distress.<sup>65</sup>

The issue of power arises again when Manetsch tells us about the magistrate’s decision to remove the names of well-known ministers from the lottery list to choose a minister and send him to the hospital. While “Beza insisted that he should be included in the lottery” because it was the minister’s responsibility to fulfill all the requirements that his office required,<sup>66</sup> the magistrate thought otherwise. After a long battle with the magistrate, Manetsch affirms that the Company of Pastors agreed that every minister should be responsible for its congregation and visit its own congregants in the hospital.<sup>67</sup> This particular episode of the Genevan church dealing with the plague made reformed ministers to reconsider the nature of responsibilities of their pastoral calling.<sup>68</sup> Revising the minister’s responsibilities according to the specific needs of the church was also a matter of pastoral care.

### ***2.5 Spiritual counsel and consolation functioning as pastoral care***

Although scholarship has been divided on the topic, Beza was a key figure in developing and promoting pastoral theology after Calvin’s death. He not only followed Calvin’s reformed theology, but he also developed it further – especially in the area of Christian piety. Manetsch notes Beza’s pastoral approach to “human suffering, God’s providence, and Christian consolation” in his *Household Prayers* published in 1603.<sup>69</sup> Beza’s approach also allowed him to understand better the role of pastoral care with an integral vision according to reformed theology, regardless of the fact that some of reformed theodicy of his time would later slightly change.<sup>70</sup>

“Because sick persons are especially prone to doubt and unbelief, Beza also petitions the Lord to strengthen the faith of the suffering believer,” Manetsch writes.<sup>71</sup> It seems probable that the aspect of strengthening the believer’s faith allowed discussion about faith formation in Geneva’s emerging reformed church. The increase of faith was seen as one of the main works

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 284.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 287.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 288.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 291.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 292.

done by the Holy Spirit in the church toward the believer's wholeness. Such a formation does not happen, however, overnight. Instead, it happens through a life-long process of molding and dying-rising with Christ and a process of sealing the intellectual-assentive knowledge of God. For example, Manetsch recounts that when Jonathan Crato – Beza's friend – was ill, Beza addressed him in order to comfort him because of his fear of death. Though they had changed correspondence in the past, the personal letter Beza sent Crato regarding his illness shows Beza's pastoral concerns. Crato later thanked Beza for giving him encouragement and Christian assurance.<sup>72</sup> As one sees here, the ministry of spiritual counsel and consolation in the Genevan church demonstrates the early reformed church's holistic understanding of pastoral ministry. The reformed church also recognized the close relation between faith formation and the exercise of pastoral care. Thus, the ministry of spiritual care and consolation functioned as well as pastoral care in this community of faith.

### ***2.6 Some remarks on the relation of faith formation and pastoral care***

As practiced by the emerging Genevan church and Calvin's Company of Pastors, pastoral care was not understood as a single model to try to fix the congregants' problems, but instead as a holistic approach which molded pastoral work as a whole, and the character and *ethos* of the believers in Christlikeness.<sup>73</sup> The sacraments, the preaching of the Gospel, and the ministry of counsel/consolation were tied together by the proclamation of the Word and the functions of the church as mother. This approach allowed that the celebration of Christian baptism and Communion, religious instruction, visitation, and consolation to function as pastoral care in the early reformed church since these practices were means by which the visible church took care of the congregants' spiritual health and promoted an adequate understanding of the believer's on-going process toward Christlikeness and wholeness, that is, the believer's formation in both Christian faith and piety.

## **3. INTERLUDE: BRIEF HISTORY OF PASTORAL CARE AND THE FORMATION OF FAITH IN THE AMERICAN-DUTCH REFORMED TRADITION**

Overall, the study of the Reformed pastoral theology can be traced back in general terms to the pastoral vision of the early Reformed church during the sixteenth century (e.g. Martin Bucer, Calvin, and later Beza, among others). Such vision, at the same time, was developed in the early church and the Middle

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 294.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Luke 4:18-19 and Isa. 61:1-2. The restoration of God's blessing includes our spiritual relationship with God and with others, but it is not limited to these elements only.

Ages, as Gerben Heitink observes.<sup>74</sup> In spite of the fact that post-Reformation Calvinism continued mainly in two close and related larger streams – the Belgic/Heidelberg/Dort tradition (i.e. Dutch Reformed Church) and the Westminster tradition (i.e. Scottish Presbyterianism), both streams approached and developed pastoral theology differently. While the Belgic/Heidelberg/Dort tradition tended to change little in this respect, theologians such as John Owen (1616-1683) and Richard Baxter (1615-1691) in the Westminster tradition profoundly influenced pastoral theology by emphasizing the theme of personal piety in relation to the work of the minister.

During the seventeenth century, many Dutch immigrants arrived in America, so the Dutch Reformed Church in the Netherlands established the American branch of the denomination in 1628. It remained in such away until 1819, when the American branch of the Dutch Reformed Church became independent as the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church (today the Reformed Church in America.) In 1857, a group of congregations and leaders seceded from the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church and formed what is known as the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Despite the secessions, both the RCA and the CRCNA have continued in the Belgic/Heidelberg/Dort tradition until today. For the purpose of this article, I am using the name *American-Dutch reformed church* to refer to the development of the Dutch reformed tradition in the United States.

During the first part of the twentieth-century, two major things influenced the understanding of pastoral theology and pastoral care in many reformed churches (e.g. mainline Protestant churches) in the United States, including the American-Dutch reformed church: the Emmanuel Movement of 1906 and the embrace of Karl Barth's dialectical theology in many theological circles. Barbara J. McClure offers a brief assessment of the Emmanuel Movement, when addressing the change of a religious framework to a secularized perspective in pastoral care and counseling. She states,

By the twentieth century, with the advent of the Emmanuel Movement (a movement briefly popular in the early part of twentieth century that advocated the use of Freudian and other psychological principles in order to better reach the parishioner), many pastoral writers began to understand pastoral care “almost exclusively as the healing” of groups and individuals, and by the 1930s some ministers virtually equated pastoral care with private conversations between a pastor and a parishioner.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Gerben Heitink, *Practical Theology: History, Theory, Action Domains: Manual for Practical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 90.

<sup>75</sup> Barbara J. McClure, *Moving Beyond Individualism in Pastoral Care and Counseling: Reflections on Theory, Theology, and Practice* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 82. For those interested, see, pp. 83-84 where McClure continues offering a good critique of the development and professionalization of pastoral care after the 40s, the birth of the Clinical Pastoral Education during the 1950s, and the professionalization of pastoral counseling.

As one notes from McClure's words, the Emmanuel Movement appropriated a psychological framework and brought it into pastoral ministry, which eventually led to the departure, or at least, to the reframing of the traditional understanding of pastoral care as *care of the soul*. A well-recognized pastor, Norman Vincent Peale (1898-1993), from the American-Dutch reformed tradition (an RCA ordained minister), is perhaps a good example of someone who appropriated and welcomed the Emmanuel Movement's vision into his pastoral and philosophical thinking.

The second major aspect which influenced pastoral theology in the American-Dutch reformed church during this period was Karl Barth's dialectical theology. Despite being a post-Calvinist, Karl Barth's theological thought strongly influenced the Reformed faith and also contributed to shaping modern theology as few theologians have done. It still does. However, as Heitink observes,

Studies of the significance of Karl Barth for practical theology often ignore the critical content of his theology. This is understandable from a formal perspective. Barth viewed theology as the task of the church: Theology is a critical reflection on the pronouncements of the church.<sup>76</sup>

This line of reasoning, Heitink notes, led Barth to divide the study of theology into three parts: exegetical studies, practical theology, and systematic theology, where the underlying basis of all three was the proclamation of the Word.<sup>77</sup> As a product of the broad expansion and acceptance of Barth's dialectical theology, the tendency also grew to read Calvin under Barthian lenses,<sup>78</sup> leading to another reframing of pastoral theology.

The application of Barth's dialectical theology to pastoral care is better appreciated, for instance, in the work of Swiss Reformed theologian Eduard Thurneysen titled *A Theology of Pastoral Care*. In that respect, Deborah Hunsinger affirms,

The basic attitude toward Thurneysen found in American circles is summarized in an encyclopedia article on Protestant pastoral theology. "Eduard Thurneysen, the principal advocate of Barthian pastoral theology on the continent, is little known and generally disliked by American pastoral care leaders, who have tended to view him as the antithesis of the clinical tradition." The heart of Thurneysen's concern is perhaps best understood as a polemic against those who confuse properly theological with essentially psychological concepts.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 75.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, vii; viii.

<sup>79</sup> Deborah Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 82.

...In his passion for giving the tasks of proclamation precedence, Thurneysen tends to allow no real place for psychology to stand in its own right, to be a discipline that contributes in an essential way to the tasks of the pastoral counselor.<sup>80</sup>

Although Thurneysen did not have a strong and direct influence in the American reformed churches, however, many aspects of his pastoral vision did find a niche in the American-Dutch reformed church since he endorsed Barth's own theological thought. In fact, Hunsinger – though aware of some of the shortcomings of his dialectical theology – believes that Barth's ecumenical approach is useful for a dialogue between theology and counseling.<sup>81</sup>

One could add a third major aspect which has influenced the understanding of the ministry of pastoral theology and pastoral care in the Reformed faith, including the American-Dutch reformed church: Process and Relational theologies. During the second half of the twentieth century, Seward Hiltner, professor of Pastoral Care at Princeton Theological Seminary, introduced three functions of pastoral care in his 1958 book *Preface to Pastoral Theology: healing, guiding, and sustaining*.<sup>82</sup> After offering a critique of Karl Barth and Paul Tillich's approaches, Hiltner's theory advocated a model which could serve better pastoral theology. In this respect, Paul A. Mickey concludes,

Certainly Hiltner's work points to the emergence of a process theology. The theological implications of his pastoral theology may or may not point unilaterally to a systematic process theology. But Hiltner's use of the "common currency of the Christian faith," his emphasis upon the necessity for "two-way communication at all times," his critique of neo-orthodoxy and existentialism, suggest an operational process theology at work in his pastoral theology.<sup>83</sup>

Hiltner's new approach allowed a better integration of psychology into pastoral theology. However, the theological framework Hiltner used – Process philosophy/theology – had a series of significant elements that raised some concern: Process thought's departure from important Christian beliefs such as the theistic notion of God and the doctrine of the omnipotence of God.<sup>84</sup> Despite these shortcomings in the theological framework used by Hiltner, the clinical tradition of pastoral care benefited significantly from his pastoral theory and insight.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Ibid., 12.

<sup>82</sup> Hiltner, Seward. *Preface to Pastoral Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958.

<sup>83</sup> Paul A. Mickey, "Is There a 'Theology' in Seward Hiltner's Pastoral Theology?" *Pastoral Psychology* (1970) 21: 27.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. E. B. Holifield, *A History of Pastoral Care in America: From Salvation to Self-Realization* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 339.

Six years later after the publication of Hiltner's *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, William A. Clebsch and Charles R. Jaekle, based on Hiltner's theory, offered a solid case where they studied pastoral care from the ecumenical Christian history.<sup>85</sup> More important is Clebsch and Jaekle's definition of pastoral care:

The ministry of the cure of souls, or pastoral care, consists of helping acts, done by representative Christian persons, directed toward the *healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling* of troubled persons whose troubles arise in *the context of ultimate meanings and concerns*.<sup>86</sup>

As seen, Clebsch and Jaekle added a new function of pastoral care: reconciling. By 1966, Howard Clinebell in his work *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counselling*, introduced another function of pastoral care named *nurturing*.<sup>87</sup>

Although the ministry of pastoral care in the Reformed faith basically operates under the tradition of Calvin, the Genevan church, and other Reformers, the understanding of such care has undergone multiple aspects which have influenced it in creating a series of expressions – sometimes in tension – of how pastoral care has been understood. In this respect William V. Arnold tells us that pastoral care in the American reformed tradition has been understood as

those acts designed and carried out by pastor and congregation which help persons interpret the significant events in their lives and which invite persons into involvement and growth in the life of the community of faith...Pastoral care in the Reformed tradition is a ministry of nurture and support. Its forms of expressions vary over time. Sometimes the reaching out has been done from a dogmatic, or authoritarian, posture; at other times with more gentleness and winsomeness.<sup>88</sup>

Important to highlight is Arnold's acknowledgment about the different expressions of pastoral care which emerged in the American reformed tradition. Such expressions might have emerged from the continuous interaction of different approaches to pastoral theology. In any case, due to recent scholarship done on Calvin and the reformers, many aspects of the early Reformed church have been clarified. Based on this, I am of the opinion that the American-Dutch reformed tradition should continue rediscovering the theological framework

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<sup>85</sup> Emmanuel Y. Lartey. *In Living Color: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling* (London New York: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2003).

<sup>86</sup> William A. Clebsch, and Charles R. Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1983), 4.

<sup>87</sup> Howard J. Clinebell, and Bridget C. McKeever, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counseling: Resources for the Ministry of Healing and Growth* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011).

<sup>88</sup> Robert Benedetto, et al. *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith* (Louisville, KY. Edinburgh: Westminster/John Knox Press and Saint Andrew Press, 1992): 271.

of pastoral care. A Process and Relational philosophical framework may function relatively well in ecumenical environments where a general spiritual care is provided; nevertheless, such approach might be problematic under certain frameworks—e.g. the Reformed faith. Not all propositions given from a Process and Relational perspective can be in harmony with the Reformed faith. This situation may impact negatively the recipient of pastoral care in the Reformed faith. It is in this regard that the relation of faith formation and pastoral care should not be ignored in ecclesiastical environments. On a similar note, the functions of pastoral care provided by Hiltner, Clebsch and Jaekle, and Clinebell do not necessarily reflect the perspective of pastoral care found in the Reformed faith based on the functions of the church as mother (i.e. bearing, nourishing, caring, and guiding believers).<sup>89</sup>

#### **4. WHAT THE AMERICAN-DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH CAN LEARN FROM THE EARLY REFORMED CHURCH'S UNDERSTANDING OF FAITH AND ITS RELATION TO PASTORAL CARE**

In this section, I will discuss some aspects I find in Calvin and the early reformed church's pastoral vision which I think the modern American-Dutch church can pay closer attention to in relation to her understanding of pastoral theology and pastoral care. Despite their general character, these areas, adequately contextualized, are significant because of the series of aspects that have impacted the American-Dutch reformed church in the past and in the present: reading too narrowly Calvin's works, the radical separation of mind vs. body, the tendency to separate the intellectual-assentive element of faith from its experiential-fiduciary one, the widespread influence of Barth's dialectical theology in the Reformed faith, the uncritical appropriation of psychological tools into ecclesiastical pastoral care, and the rampant individualism and heavy compartmentalization of a person's life in North American culture, among others. Note that I do not consider that the aspects I will discuss have been lost in the American-Dutch reformed church, but it is my belief that those aspects have tended to be overlooked in the praxis of pastoral care.

##### ***4.1 The communal-relational dimension of pastoral care***

One of the aspects Calvin emphasized in the emerging reformed church is the communal aspect of pastoral theology. The reformed church cannot forget promoting both the communal and individual dimensions of pastoral care, where pastoral theology nurtures believers in the knowledge and the grace of

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<sup>89</sup> Cf. Dale P. Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 27. Andrews offers good a critique of Hiltner's functions from the black religious experience.

God grounded in the Scriptures. McKee, in this regard, argues that interpreting Christian piety and spirituality in individualistic terms mainly has led us to misunderstand Calvin's emphasis on spirituality – an element that also leads to a lack of attention to the communal aspect of faith.<sup>90</sup> This not only has affected the way the modern reformed church has read Calvin's writings, but also how the church has developed and promoted an over-individualistic approach to pastoral theology. In pastoral care, for example, such approach can be observed in the common practice of understanding a person's behavior in isolation of instead of taking into account the socio-cultural context where that behavior develops. Thenceforth, it is not a surprise that in the praxis of pastoral care, church representatives have sometimes understood pastoral care as an exclusively private practice regarding a person's life affairs far from the communal spirit of the church. When offering pastoral care, the biblical principle that every congregant belongs to the body of Christ and is united with Christ is fundamental, since the believer must not be seen as an isolated individual but as a member within a body who needs the body's nourishment and care.

Putting it in different words, both the communal and individual aspect of pastoral care are indispensable elements in order to have a healthy person and a healthy community. The fact that all persons in a particular community are spiritually healthy does not mean the community as a whole is also healthy, because the spiritual health of a community of faith as a whole is more than the sum of all the spiritually healthy states of her individual members. Thus, a community that places emphasis only on the communal sense of pastoral care may tend to form Christians who overlook their own needs as individuals. Likewise, a community that only emphasizes the individual dimension of pastoral care may tend to form self-centered Christians who, perhaps, might not realize the role of the church as a community in the cultivation of believers' spiritual growth. Thus, the modern church is called to pay close attention to the fact that faith understood from the Reformed perspective, besides intellectual-assentive, it is also fiduciary-experiential. The consequences of an over-emphasis on the individuality of the Christian believer might result in an isolated person, susceptible to develop not only behavioral problems, but to live in an unhealthy spiritual state. This is one of the reasons why the communal dimension of pastoral care allows church leaders to proactively promote, educate, and put into practice those aspects that concern the church as a whole: hospitality, fight against all oppression, un-marginalization, social awareness, social justice, human flourishing, and the like. Now, in certain contexts (especially dealing with some ethnic groups) and due to the growth of diversity in the modern reformed church, it is the individual dimension of pastoral care instead that

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<sup>90</sup> McKee, *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety*, 3-4.



must be rediscovered. This is the case of congregants who grew up in societies with a high score on collectivism.

#### **4.2 *The relation of pastoral care and the proclamation of the Word***

Another aspect worthy of attention is the connection between pastoral theology and the proclamation of the Word, since the communal and spiritual formation in Calvin's church usually happened through the proclamation of the Word and preaching. "Calvin relied upon preaching to create a godly public opinion in the community and to be a means of grace in the church. Preaching for Calvin took priority over discipline as a means of social change as well as of strengthening the life of the church," John H. Leith writes.<sup>91</sup> And not only for Calvin and the early reformed church, the proclamation of the Word – e.g. through preaching, spiritual counsel, spiritual direction, lamenting, and so on – is a powerful means for the modern reformed church as well. The proclamation of the Word nurtures the people of God. In fact, such proclamation functions as pastoral care in this particular context.<sup>92</sup> One must not confuse the preaching of a sermon with the proclamation of the Word. The first is a concrete manifestation or practice of the second one.

Let's note that not all modern preaching and proclamation function as pastoral care. For example, the Scriptures depict the Holy Spirit as a teacher and counselor in John 14:26. A reformed minister might connect this passage to the sanctification process in the life of believers by focusing on the intellectual-assentive faith. Nonetheless, if the passage of John 14:26 is proclaimed in a broader and integrated context of pastoral theology, the minister might come to the conclusion that the teaching and counseling of the Spirit are only two of the many tasks performed by the Spirit, and that the different images of the Holy Spirit found in the New Testament are strongly related to the pastoral ministry – the Spirit gives believers assurance (Rom. 8:15-16), empowers them (1 Thess. 1:15), guides them in truth (John 16:13), helps their weakness (Rom. 8:26), leads them (Rom. 8:14), transforms their character (Gal. 5:22-23), sanctifies them (Rom. 15:16), strengthens them (I Cor. 2:4), and gives them peace (John 14:27). As one observes, the more holistic the proclamation of the Word is, the more it will be useful for pastoral theology.

<sup>91</sup> John H. Leith, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word and its Significance for Today in the Light of Recent Research," *Review & Expositor* 86 (1), 1989: 29.

<sup>92</sup> Although discussing this topic in the Afro-American context in North America, Dale P. Andrews comes to a similar conclusion in *Practical Theology for Black Churches*. He writes, "I suggest that preaching and worship function as pastoral care in the faith community. They function as pastoral care particularly when they embody the narratives of Scripture along with African American experiences, which in turn re-present the spiritual and communal values of African American folk religion." (26)

Another aspect to rediscover is that the way ministers proclaim the Word is also a matter of pastoral care. The pastor ought to always be believable yet authentic, speak the truth but with compassion, and listen carefully to both what the congregation says and what the Holy Spirit speaks. These areas were commonly put into practice in the early reformed church, and through the cases provided by Manetsch, one can easily observe them. The relation of pastoral care and the proclamation of the Word thus cannot be ignored. The proclamation of the Word, when properly done, is a means that the Spirit uses to form the believers' faith and strengthen them. In fact, many of the functions of the visible church as mother can be done from the pulpit as well. For this reason, the proclamation of the Word ought to be pastorally sensitive, without losing its forming character.<sup>93</sup>

### ***4.3 The centrality of theology in pastoral care***

A third aspect that the modern reformed church can learn from Calvin's thought is the centrality of theology in pastoral care. Andrew Purves states,

The discipline of pastoral theology today is difficult to define. Often associated with various psychological perspectives and psychotherapeutic techniques, pastoral care has been cut adrift from clear theological foundations. Pastoral theology continues to be associated with the practical end of the curriculum, having acquired a functionalist and professional character. Much has been learned, but at the cost of a lost identity. Contemporary pastoral care within the Reformed churches is not exempt from this condition.<sup>94</sup>

I stand by Purves' assessment. Because of the professionalization of the field at the beginning of the twentieth century, pastoral care has been strongly redefined since Calvin. For a long period of time, the shepherd metaphor was used to define, at least in basic terms, what today we call pastoral care in the church. More recently, other useful metaphors have emerged.<sup>95</sup> Regrettably, although scholarship dealing with spiritual care from a theological perspective does exist, further and deeper exploration of the topic needed to be done. The appropriation of psychology in pastoral theology brought a series of benefits to pastoral care insofar as it brought improvements and a refreshing voice to the old field. Notwithstanding such a positive aspect, psychology practically displaced theology as the main discipline of the soul care in the church. Both

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<sup>93</sup> Though sometimes misunderstood, confrontation is a valuable tool and frequently functions as pastoral care in the context of a church.

<sup>94</sup> Robert Benedetto, et al. *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith* (Louisville, KY; Edinburgh: Westminster/John Knox Press; Saint Andrew Press, 1992): 271.

<sup>95</sup> For an overview of those metaphors, see Robert C. Dykstra, *Images of Pastoral Care: Classic Readings* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005).

areas co-existed in the end, but in an unbalanced state of affairs, creating first an unnecessary dichotomy between the two fields, and second, pastoral care was reduced, or at least limited, to certain practices – trying to fix a troubled person, one of them. The tension between psychology and pastoral theology can be seen, for example, in the different approaches – usually in strong tension – which currently exist in the Christian tradition, even in the Reformed faith: pastoral care, pastoral counseling, Christian counseling, biblical counseling, and pastoral counseling, to mention just some of them. This situation contrasts with the mid-sixteenth century reformed church in Geneva, where the place of pastoral theology and pastoral care was prominent and particularly holistic.<sup>96</sup> This does not mean that the emerging reformed church was free from having pastoral issues and problems. On the contrary, the early reformed church faced many issues; however, Calvin and his colleagues worked hard in order that the church of their times could understand the importance of the Word, the sacraments, and the functions of the church as mother for the spiritual health of believers. It must be noted here, as Helderhuis asserts, that church discipline for the Genevan church was not an odd practice as it might seem, but a form of pastoral care.<sup>97</sup> Although a modern person may think that such a system of discipline, for instance, did not bear its fruits, Manetsch demonstrates in his historical study how by the end of the sixteenth century in Geneva many issues – e.g. fornication, Catholic beliefs, ignorance, and blasphemy – were reduced significantly.<sup>98</sup> One sees again how faith formation was also related to the growth and cultivation of Christian piety, spirituality, and assurance. Such growth happens holistically and not merely in one particular area, since the knowledge of God has to do with the whole person.

The discussions above demonstrate, at least in a general fashion, that theology was centralized in Calvin's understanding of pastoral leadership and pastoral care. Theology exists to serve the church, and not vice versa. Therefore, theology must remain the center of pastoral leadership, not in order to serve itself but to serve Christian piety. Does this mean that psychology or sociology of religion, for instance, would not be of importance in pastoral theology? Of course not. One should not dichotomize radically, as dialectical theology used to do, psychology or any other useful mainstream field from pastoral theology.

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<sup>96</sup> I am aware this comparison can be problematic and other more compelling comparisons can be made. I have selected this approach by assuming: (a) that the emerging reformed church had an exclusive reliance on religious resources for the application of pastoral theology, and (b) that there exists some kind of theological continuity between the modern reformed tradition and the sixteenth-century reformed church in Geneva.

<sup>97</sup> Selderhuis, *John Calvin*, 120.

<sup>98</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*, 210. For the reformers, Catholic belief was considered a serious offense that deserved discipline.

Nevertheless, one cannot forget that neither psychology nor sociology should be the main source of pastoral theology. They are valuable tools that may be used in the church, but it is dangerous to make pastoral theology depend exclusively on those tools or reduce spiritual care to a particular set of instrumental practices to try to fix someone's life problems, overlooking other dimensions of a contextualized pastoral care. It is an open secret that many discussions of current pastoral care have a series of uncritically appropriated psychology notions. Such trend is not fair for the therapist, the minister, the pastor-theologian, the person looking for spiritual support, or even the church. In order to have a healthy and fruitful dialogue between different areas of study (e.g. pastoral theology and psychology), clear boundaries should be set to avoid an uncritical appropriation of either area into the other.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the Reformed faith Calvin's two-fold notion of faith should not be ignored in the field of pastoral theology since it allows theologians and clergy to continue reclaiming a broader and contextualized understanding of pastoral care and leadership. I showed how pastoral theology and pastoral care were strongly related to the proclamation of the Word and faith formation in the sixteenth-century Geneva reformed church, and how reformed theologians and church leaders of those times understood rightly that it is in the church where the *ethos* of the believer's heart is mainly formed and strengthened. By experiencing God's providence, the believers have their faith strengthened by the Holy Spirit and are formed into the image of Christ. Their faith also shapes their understanding of God's providential work in creation – past, present, and future. Therefore, pastoral care in the Genevan church was more than providing simple answers to complex questions, but an integral calling of the church to turn and press into the knowledge of God and ourselves toward the process of Christlikeness and wholeness in the community of faith. As this essay has explored it, pastoral care may be understood broadly and narrowly in an ecclesiastical context, depending on our understanding of faith. In the general or broader sense, pastoral care is strongly related to faith formation in the Reformed tradition, where spiritual care shapes pastoral work and the functions of the visible church as mother. In the particular or narrower case, pastoral care is seen more as an individualized practice between the pastor and the congregant to discuss a person's life affairs in light of the Scriptures.

Overall, the emerging reformed church also understood pastoral care mainly as a communal and individual service to God, where the particularized practices of such care were concrete manifestations of a bigger picture, which is an integral part of the calling and mission of the church. Consequently, rediscovering the broader aspect of pastoral care based on Calvin's two-fold notion of faith will allow the American-Dutch and other reformed churches

today to pay closer attention to their calling as forming bodies not only of the intellectual-assentive (catechisms and religious instruction), but also of the fiduciary-experiential knowledge of God (piety). In this respect, Calvin's view of faith constitutes a solid resource for pastoral theology in the Reformed tradition because it offers a well-grounded framework where pastoral theology may also interact and engage in conversations with other areas of study. In my view it is urgent that the modern church may rediscover the classical notion of soul care where not only suffering but also sin can be properly addressed when offering pastoral care in an ecclesiastical context, and thus avoid a position in which one of these two elements may be overlooked to the detriment of the other.

### **RESUMO**

O propósito deste estudo é explorar a dupla noção de fé de João Calvino na edição das *Institutas* de 1559 e suas implicações centrais para a teologia pastoral na emergente tradição reformada, a fim de resgatar um entendimento mais amplo e contextualizado do cuidado pastoral e sua relação com a formação da fé. Com tal objetivo, este artigo enfoca duas maneiras pelas quais a emergente igreja reformada de Genebra em meados do século dezesseis aplicou a noção calviniana de fé à teologia pastoral. Também são exploradas algumas implicações desse entendimento para a igreja de hoje, em especial para a moderna igreja reformada americana-holandesa.

### **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Noção de fé de Calvino; Igreja reformada nascente; Intelectualismo; Cuidado pastoral; Teologia pastoral; Fé providencial; Fé redentora; Voluntarismo.