

## CALVIN AND THE BIBLE

During the past several decades a growing number of scholars have come to appreciate the importance of studying John Calvin's interpretive work as a commentator on Scripture in addition to his better-known writings on theology. In this volume ten essays by scholars specializing in Calvin's exegetical methods examine the approaches and themes Calvin emphasized when he interpreted major portions of Scripture. These essays focus on Calvin's work in his biblical commentaries with appropriate cross-referencing to his other writings, including his sermons. A concluding essay synthesizes the main features of what has gone before to present an overall view of John Calvin as an interpreter and commentator on Holy Scripture. An appreciation of Calvin's exegetical labors and his work as a biblical commentator is now recognized as a key element in Calvin scholarship.

DONALD K. MCKIM is Academic and Reference editor for Westminster John Knox Press. He is author and editor of over twenty-five books including the *Cambridge Companions to Martin Luther* (2003) and *John Calvin* (2004).

# CALVIN AND THE BIBLE

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DONALD K. MCKIM



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*Dedicated to  
I. John Hesselink  
Superb Calvin scholar and valued friend*

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## *Preface*

A common perception of John Calvin (1509–1564) is that he was a rigid logician and systematic theologian of the Reformation period. While it is true that Calvin presented Christian theology in a more organized or “systematic” form than Luther, it is also true that there is much more to his theological understandings than is found within the pages of his *magnum opus*, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

The past several decades have focused more attention on Calvin’s biblical interpretation as found in his commentaries. A growing number of scholars have now contributed to the increasing recognition of the importance of studying Calvin’s interpretive work as a commentator on Scripture. To recognize the issues, conversations, questions, and conclusions Calvin drew from his exegetical work on virtually all biblical books is to gain a much wider and deeper appreciation for the nature of his biblical and theological understandings than has been possible before. Scholars will continue to reflect on the relation of Calvin’s interpretation of biblical texts to the development of his theology as a whole. But an appreciation of his exegetical labors and his work as a biblical commentator is now recognized as a key element in Calvin scholarship.

This book provides a study of Calvin as a biblical interpreter and commentator on Scripture. The following chapters are written by Calvin specialists who have studied Calvin as an interpreter of the major portions of Scriptures represented here. It struck me a few years ago while participating in the International Congress on Calvin Research that while it is now axiomatic in Calvin studies to recognize the importance of his exegesis, we did not have a scholarly resource where we could turn to understand the ways he functioned as a biblical interpreter on major segments of the Bible. This book seeks to fill this need and provide such a resource.

I would like to thank the international array of Calvin scholars who have participated in this project and those who have translated essays. They have contributed their expertise to help us gain a clearer understanding of Calvin and the Bible. This book supplements other studies but is unique in its format and gains its significance from the generosity of these colleagues who have shared their scholarship and insights. I would like to thank all of them and especially David Steinmetz for undertaking the challenging task of writing the concluding essay.

This book owes much at its inception to the interest and facilitation of Kevin Taylor of Cambridge University Press. He listened to the idea and encouraged me to shape an understanding of the project that made it more viable. I am grateful to him for valuable help and support.

Kate Brett, Senior Commissioning Editor for Religious Studies at the Press, took over Kevin's duties and has been unfailingly helpful, patient, and kind as the project took shape and as the manuscript was completed. It has been a great pleasure and delight to work with her again. I also greatly appreciate the competence of Joanne Hill in her copy-editing work on this volume.

The love and support of my wonderful family means even more as the years go by. I am grateful beyond words to my wife LindaJo and to our sons Stephen and Karl McKim. Their lives bring joys to mine and their love nurtures me in every way.

This book is dedicated to I. John Hesselink, former President and Albertus C. Van Raalte Professor of Systematic Theology, Emeritus at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. John is a superb Calvin scholar who has contributed much to Calvin studies and to the Reformed tradition through the years. For his friendship, I am most grateful.

DONALD K. MCKIM

## Abbreviations

- BC* *Bibliotheca Calviniana: les oeuvres de Jean Calvin publiées au xvie siècle.* Ed. Rodophe Peter and Jean-François Gilmont. *Travaux d'humanisme et Renaissance*, no. 255, etc. *I. Écrits théologiques, littéraires et juridiques 1532–1554.* Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1991. *II. Écrits théologiques, littéraires et juridiques 1555–1564.* Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1994. *III. Écrits théologiques, littéraires et juridiques 1565–1600.* Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2000.
- CCSL* *Corpus Christianorum, series Latina.*
- CNTC* *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries.* Ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (various translators). 12 vols. Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press; Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1959–1972.
- CO* *Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia.* Ed. G. [Wilhelm] Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss. 59 vols. bound in 31. *Corpus Reformatorum*, vols. 29–87. Brunswick: C. A. Schwetschke and Son, 1863–1900.
- CR* Philip Melancthon, *Philippi Melancthonis opera quae supersunt omnia.* Ed. C. G. Bretschneider. Vols. 1–28 of *Corpus Reformatorum.* Halle: C. A. Schwetschke and Son, 1834–1860.
- CSEL* *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.*
- CSW* *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters.* Ed. Jules Bonnet, trans. Marcus Robert Gilchrist. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1983.
- CTS* *Calvin's Commentaries.* 45 vols. Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844–1856. Reprinted in 22 vols. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1981.

- xiv *List of abbreviations*
- Inst.* John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles. 2 vols. Library of Christian Classics. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960.
- LW* Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*. American Edition. 55 vols. St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress Press, 1958–1986.
- MW* Philip Melancthon, *Melancthons Werke in Auswahl* (Studienausgabe). Gen. ed. Robert Stupperich. Vol. iv, ed. Peter F. Barton. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1980.
- NPNF A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Ed. Phillip Schaff et al. 2 series of 14 vols. each. New York: Christian Literature, 1887–1894; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- OC* *Ioannis Calvini opera omnia*. Series 2: *Opera exegetica veteris et novi testamenti*. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1992–. Series 3: *Scripta ecclesiastica*. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1991–.
- OE* John Calvin, *Opera exegetica veteris et novi testamenti*. Series 2 of *Ioannis Calvini opera omnia*. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1992–.
- OS* *Ioannis Calvini opera selecta*. Ed. Peter Barth, Wilhelm Niesel, and Dora Scheuner. 5 vols. Munich: C. Kaiser, 1926–1952.
- PL* *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*. Ed. J. P. Migne. Paris, 1844–1864.
- SC* *Supplementa Calviniana. Sermons inédits*. Ed. Erwin Mulhaupt et al. Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1936–1961.
- T&T* John Calvin, *Tracts and Treatises*. Trans. Henry Beveridge. 3 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959.
- TT* *Calvin: Theological Treatises*. Trans. with Introduction and notes by John K. S. Reid. Library of Christian Classics. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954.
- WA* Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe [Schriften]*. 65 vols. in 127. H. Bohlau, 1883–1993.