A BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SURVEY OF THE BRITISH STUDY OF CALVIN, 1900–1940

I. BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography deals solely with work by British scholars, and does not include the translation of foreign works (e.g. E. Troeltsch’s *Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*) or foreign studies which have appeared in British periodicals. Because it is confined strictly to the present century, reprints of earlier works have not been included, and also such an important book as W. Hastie’s *The Theology of the Reformed Church* has been left out, because, although it was not published until 1904, it consists of lectures originally delivered in 1892. Not all the studies presented here are of equal value, of course; but for the sake of completeness I have included everything on Calvin I could discover¹ (with the exception of a novel by Deborah Alcock called *Under Calvin’s Spell* [1927], which did not seem to me to add anything to our understanding of Calvin and life under his regime). There is a further limitation: it would have been impossible to have given every book (in theology, philosophy, law, history, etc.) containing a section on Calvin. I have attempted, however, to suggest some representative books on certain subjects.

A. Biography


¹ If readers detect any omissions—particularly in periodicals—I should be grateful to learn of them.
See also:


In periodicals, see:


B. Theology

Most of the biographies contain a section on theology, though not always happily.


2. A. Dakin: Calvinism. 1940. Excellent introduction to the subject.

See also, e.g.:


In periodicals, see:

C. Social Teaching, etc.
In periodicals, see:

2. R. N. Carew Hunt: Calvin's Theory of Church and State; in Church Quarterly Review, cviii, pp. 56 ff. 1929.


8. G. T. Thomson: The Reformed Faith in its Ethical Consequences in the Church; as above, pp. 73 ff. 1938.

D. Art


3. P. A. Scholes: The Puritans and Music in England and New England; Calvin and Music, pp. 332 ff. 1934. Both these books, by expert musicians, dispel the old legends of Calvin’s abhorrence of all art.


E. Miscellaneous


An examination of the bibliography reveals the interesting fact that (apart from sections in more general works, which are an inaccurate guide) the decade 1931–1940 produced more work on Calvin than the previous thirty years. The exact statistics are as follows:

1900–'20. Five books; and eight essays in periodicals.
1921–'30. No books; but four essays in periodicals.
1931–'40. Eight books; and fifteen essays in periodicals.¹

It is clear from this that there has been at the least a revival of interest in the Reformer. The numbers would seem to indicate a definite revival of Calvinism, but numbers are poor witnesses, and we must proceed to ask the reason for the resurgence, and to examine the bibliography more closely.

There can be no doubt that the chief cause of the new widespread interest in Calvin which has produced or caused to

¹ This figure includes papers at the Calvinist Congresses.
be produced a large number of books is the theology of Karl Barth. He showed in a most decisive fashion that the message of the Reformers was valid, in a new form, for our own day. By the thirties his influence began to grow in England and Scotland, with the result that some British theologians began also to take notice of what Luther and Calvin had said. For the past fifteen years we have been learning that, with all the differences between our age and the sixteenth century, the problems that the Reformation raised are still with us, and that the answers given then cannot be lightly passed by. This renewed study of the Reformers was not confined to classical Calvinists, nor to Scotland, the traditional fortress of British Calvinism; but it is discernible even, for example, among High Anglicans. We notice, in this regard, Mr. A. G. Hebert translating Swedish Lutheran theologians, and Dr. Leonard Hodgson treating Calvin as a serious subject alongside Augustine and Aquinas in his book on the Trinity.

Before this great upheaval, however, classical Calvinism was quietly going about its work, forced to defend itself in apologies, but holding grimly on to sixteenth-century truths, usually in sixteenth-century forms. On the Continent—in France and Holland, for example—"High" Calvinism was not greatly influenced by Barth, and even showed itself hostile to his theology. But British Calvinists, even those who had bowed down in the house of Rimmon, were driven back, either in joyful acquiescence or wrathful opposition, to their sources. Moreover, they found themselves in the happy position of no longer needing to apologise so desperately for their existence. Classical Calvinism, in fact, came to life again.

Studying the bibliography more closely, we see the weakness and the strength of British Calvin study.¹ The weaknesses are obvious. In the first place, no edition or translation of any of Calvin's works has appeared here during this century.² We expended all our energy on the labour of the Calvin Society a hundred years ago, and have since lain back, exhausted, but happy in our achievement. The Institutes is out of print in Great Britain. Nor can we call any of the translations satisfactory

¹ A comparison of this bibliography with that given by P. Barth in Funfundzwanzig Jahre Calvinforschung, 1909-1934 (in Theologische Rundschau, 1934), will prove instructive.
² A few reprints have appeared: e.g., the Institutes published in America is Allen's translation; and the Sovereign Grace Union has issued the Epistle to King Francis (S.G.U. Publ., 252. 1936) and H. Cole's translation of the Treatise on Predestination.
for our present needs. Thomas Norton is the best, but he is nearly four hundred years old. Allen's translation is not always successful in conveying Calvin's thought. And Beveridge, although he is accurate enough, is dull and pretentious. A Latin or French edition has never, I think, been published over here.

With regard to theology, the situation is also grave. Only two books devoted entirely to the subject have appeared, although they are both good, and Dr. Dakin's book, in particular, provides a good introduction. Of the other work that has been done, much is far above the mediocre; Dr. Barclay's book on the Eucharist, for example, is worthy to stand with the best studies of Calvin's thought. The trouble is that so little work has been done. We have only to consider some of the great names in Continental Calvin scholarship—Doumergue, Pannier, Lefranc, P. Barth, Wernle, R. Seeberg, O. Ritschl, Niesel—to see how little we have attempted, let alone performed. It is certainly no wonder that even reputable theologians hold (and express!) the strangest and most outdated ideas of Calvin's theology.

It is in these two respects particularly that British study of Calvin shows its weakness. When we pass to practical matters there is little to be ashamed of. The best work has been done in the historical and aesthetic studies. Fairbairn and Lindsay are both brilliant; and Mr. Carew Hunt has written easily the best English life of Calvin, even though his review of the theology leaves something to be desired. In aesthetics, while nothing has been written of the stature of Wencéliaus' L'Esthétique de Calvin, the work is no way inferior in quality to what the Continent has produced. Dr. Mary Ramsay and Mr. Scholes both show up the folly of the old idea of Calvin as an enemy to beauty and the arts. Sir Richard Terry's book is in four parts: first, in a preface, he corrects errors concerning Calvin's appreciation and use of music, and examines the sources of words and music; the second section consists of a facsimile of the Psalter; the third has the Psalter transcribed into modern notation; and in the last the editor adds modern modal harmonies to the Psalms, with a translation of the verses into good English verse.¹ This book is invaluable for the study of Calvin's aesthetics, and thus of the whole man also.

The most important work for British Calvin study in the

¹ Many of these hymns are as worthy as many of Luther's or of the German pietists to have a place in our hymn books.
future does not lie in history. Enough has been done to give us a good picture of the Reformer and as accurate a reconstruction of the facts as the documents allow. It will need to be done again for another generation, but it has been done enough in our own day. The same might be said, though to a lesser degree, about aesthetics. Whereas biography has a long tradition behind it, the scientific investigation of Calvin's views on art and beauty is in its childhood. His literary style has been a frequent study, his relationship to music has been well treated, and Dr. Ramsay's book gives a short study of his views on art. But a larger and more comprehensive work is needed, containing his aesthetics (which, according to Wencélius' account, is startling to our modern minds, bred on romanticism and humanism), his place as a writer, and his influence on literature, painting, music and the plastic arts, as well also as the "useful" arts—book-binding, embroidery, etc.

The first need, however, is for some new translations, particularly of the Institutio. The ideal would be a complete edition running to several volumes, containing the first edition, the 1539-41 edition and the 1559 definitive edition, complete with critical apparatus. There should also be selections from the commentaries, sermons, letters and tracts.

In theology, the need is not now for a straightforward, generally uncritical exposition of the Institutio, since that has already been done, and well done. Calvin study in Great Britain should concern itself with a serious investigation and criticism of his theology. In this regard, many questions leap to the mind at once. For example, can we find natural theology in Book I of the Institutio? What is Calvin's doctrine of the atonement, and wherein lies the significance of his Anselmian terminology? There is also the rich mine of comparative theology to be worked. Was Professor Lang right in ascribing so large a place to Bucer in Calvin's development? How did Calvin stand in relation to Melanchthon, or Zwingli, or Bullinger, or the Englishmen? Perhaps as important as anything would be to discover, by comparison with, for example, the second generation of Calvinists in Geneva, Holland, and Britain, whether Calvin really was a Calvinist in the traditional sense. In the matter of churchmanship, too, there is work at hand to do. When Dr. J. S. Whale boldly asserted in Christian Doctrine that Luther and Calvin were great High Churchmen, he
astonished many readers. In fact, one even wrote to *Theology* about it and, with the use of Beveridge's translation and the noble army of witnesses, Warfield, Hodge and Kuyper, sought to show the folly of this new idea. A study of Calvin's churchmanship would treat his ecclesiology, doctrine of the Church, and his use of tradition.

The aim of Calvin study here must be to establish his thought both in its basic concepts and also in its various ramifications. When this is done, there is no doubt that few theologians will turn Calvinist, but at least there will be no excuse at all for them to betray innocence of his theology. To call it ignorance would perhaps be too harsh: it is the sweet and retiring modesty of a maiden confronted by forbidden things. Perhaps if the facts of Calvin are presented in their truth British theology may grow out of the charm of its innocence into maturity of knowledge and understanding of one of the four or five greatest theologians in the Church.

*Luddesdown,*  
*Kent.*