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Michael Jinkins

Theodore Beza: Continuity and Regression in the Reformed Tradition

Dr. Jinkins' interest in the history of Reformed thought was apparent in his essay on James Hogg in THE EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY 62, 1990, 157-74. Here he gives us a helpful introduction to a Reformer whose name is well enough known to students but whose theology is often much less familiar.

Theodore Beza has been the subject of a number of fine, though diverse and frequently irreconcilable, interpretations.¹ Yet, to many serious students of Reformed theology he remains something of a sphinx, the inscrutable man of mystery behind the second-generation of Continental Reformation.

The present essay will seek to provide a much-needed brief introduction to the life and thought of Beza. It will also introduce a few of the more critical issues that have confronted Beza scholars, particularly the issue of Beza's relationship to the Calvinist Scholasticism which was emerging in the mid- to late-sixteenth century. The goal of this essay will be to illuminate this fascinating and at times controversial Reformer whose influence continues to be felt especially in British and American Evangelicalism.

¹ Henry Martyn Baird, *Theodore Beza: The Counsellor of the French Reformation, 1519-1605* (New York/London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899). Ernst Bizer, *Frühorthodoxie und Rationalismus, Theologische Studien*, vol. 71. Edited by Karl Barth and Max Geiger (Zurich, 1963). Richard A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1986). Walter Kinkel, *Vernunft und Offenbarung bei Theodor Beza: 'Zum Problem des Verhältnisses von Theologie, Philosophie und Staat'*. (Neukirchen: Beiträge zur Geschichte und Lehre der reformierten Kirche 1967) vol. 25. Also see Jill Raitt, *The Eucharistic Theology Beza: Development of the Reformed Doctrine*, AAR Studies in Religion, No. 4 (Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, 1972).

I. Beza's Life and Principal Writings

As John Calvin lay dying he recounted his life in Geneva and commended to its citizens 'Monsieur de B  ze' whom they had elected 'to hold my place'.² Indeed Theodore Beza was the chosen successor to Calvin's place of leadership, the man groomed as guardian of the Genevan Reformation. In many ways Beza's entire life seems to have led to that climactic moment in 1564 when Calvin and Geneva placed the reins of the Reformed Church in his hands.

The young Beza had trained from 1528 to 1534 under the tutorship of the German humanist and adherent to Luther, Melchior Wolmar. This was the same Wolmar who was Calvin's elder contemporary in the Faculty of Arts in Paris, the man credited with having taught Calvin Greek.³ Beza's studies with Wolmar at Orl  ans doubtless would prove significant for his eventual conversion to Protestantism, though this conversion was yet some years away. In 1530 Beza accompanied Wolmar to Bourges when Wolmar was invited, by Margaret of Angouleme, sister of Francis I, to join the group of scholars that surrounded her there. Continuing his studies at Bourges, Beza's competence in Latin and Greek increased.

When Wolmar returned to Germany in 1534, Beza, at his father's insistence, returned to Orl  ans to study law. His interest in the study of law was minimal. Of more interest were Greek and Latin classics. Especially he loved classical poetry, a fact often greeted with astonishment by those familiar only with Beza's reputation as the author of rather prosaic theological treatises. Following four years of legal studies in Orl  ans, Beza received a licentiate in law in 1539 and moved to Paris.

Theodore Beza had been born into a family of minor nobility in V  zeley, Burgundy, in 1519. Thus, as he entered Paris society at the age of twenty-one, he possessed an apparently brilliant future in the world of French politics and religion. His uncle had been a member of the judicial Parliament of Paris. Beza received the revenues from two ecclesiastical benefices. He was educated as a humanist and as a lawyer (the two not necessarily going together). Family, education and finances suited him admirably for a distinguished future either in the Roman Church or in the corridors of legal and political power. But, there were other less

² T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin* (Tring: Lion, 1987 edition) 183.

³ James McKinnon, *Calvin and the Reformation* (London: Longmans, Green, 1936).

apparent indications that Beza might be headed in a different direction.

Beza had never taken a vow of celibacy and was not a priest. He remained a layman. None-the-less, he did not wish to jeopardize his beneficial revenues when his romantic attention turned toward a young woman, Claude Desnoz. Thus, in 1544, when he married Claude, he did so in secret, witnessed only by his most trusted friends. Beza's fortunes increased during the first four years of this secret marriage. In 1548 his volume of *Poemata Juvenilia* was published, a volume which would cause him some embarrassment in years to come. But 1548 was marked by more than the publication of his verse.

Beza had continued on his conventional course until the fateful year of 1548 when unexpected and unseen forces converged in a moment of physical and spiritual crisis. During this year he fell gravely ill. And, as has been the case for many others, Beza's physical illness precipitated a crisis of the spirit as well. It was in the course of this perhaps life-threatening illness that Beza converted to the Protestant faith, though he seems to have been considering such a conversion for many years. He and Claude left France, with its financial security from family and Church income, and journeyed to Geneva. Once there, Beza and his wife publicly solemnized their marriage.

Calvin welcomed Beza to Geneva. Beza then traveled on to Tübingen where his old tutor Wolmar hosted him. After visiting Wolmar, on the way back to Geneva through Lausanne, Beza met Pierre Viret. Viret, recognizing Beza as an exceptionally gifted scholar, asked Beza to remain in Lausanne as a professor in the Académie, the Lausanne University. Beza, after conferring with Calvin and his Genevan colleagues, accepted the post of Professor of Greek at Lausanne, serving there until 1558.

Beza wrote, in 1550, the work which marked his transition from classical poetry and the world of humanism to the realm of the biblical scholar and theologian: *Abraham's Sacrifice*. This drama is notable for its combination of elements of Greek tragedy and Medieval mystery plays in the framework of a biblical theme.

Beza's next publication, however, proved the event which would gain for him international fame, and notoriety. Following the arrest, condemnation and execution in Geneva of Michael Servetus, whose *Restitutio Christianismi* (1553) had so enraged Calvin and other Protestant theologians, Beza took upon himself to issue a defense of the policy of turning over heretics to civil authorities for punishment. Beza's *De Haereticis a civili Magistratu Puniendis* (1554) maintained that while it is improper for

ecclesiastical authorities to wield the sword, they do have the duty to direct the civil authorities to punish persons engaged in serious blasphemy or heresy. And the civil authority is bound to its duty not to bear the sword in vain. Beza, like Calvin, felt that dogmatic purity is essential to the survival of the Church. To allow false doctrine to flourish is to sanction the Church's downfall. Thus even capital punishment was justifiable, in their view, to preserve the purity and vitality of the Church's dogma.

Although the popular image of sixteenth-century religion tends to picture ecclesiastics of that age, Protestant and Catholic, as overwhelmingly approving such a repressive policy, historical evidence does not, in fact, warrant such a conclusion. Certainly the author of *De non Puniendis Gladio Haereticis* (1554)⁴ can be considered as representing a dissenting opinion opposed to the policy which sent Servetus to the flames. And, it is evident from Beza's own argument, that he felt a compelling need to defend the Genevan policy and to persuade some, perhaps significant, element among his readers of its rightness.

The perception of Beza and many other Reformed leaders was that the infant Protestant movement, whose care they oversaw, was threatened on many fronts. The Roman Church, on one side; the Radical Reformers, Anabaptists, Antinomians and Antitrinitarians, on other sides; leaders of hostile political powers who would use the ruses of religion to conquer territories occupied by those sympathetic to Reformed doctrine; heterodox factions within the Reformed Church itself; all were seen as threatening the life of the movement. Entrenchment became a virtue. The necessity of retaining the gains of reformation came to have priority over original thought and theological innovation. Intolerance, as a means to survival, became the order of the day. Beza emerged, in this climate, as Calvin's bulldog devoted to the defense of the gains of Reformation. Beza was largely unoriginal in his thought, but he was deeply committed to the truthfulness of the Reformed position and brilliant in his defense of its tenets. His skills, in other words, fit perfectly the defensive needs of the movement.

Beza's next published work reflects this defensive spirit, while its focus was rather different from *De Haereticis*. In 1555 he published *Tabula praedestinationis* (or *Summa totius Christian-*

⁴ The author signed himself Martinus Bellinus, but was believed to be Sebastian Castellio (certainly Beza believed Castellio to be the author), the Protestant theologian who had broken with Calvin over personal disagreements and who had attacked Calvin's view of predestination.

ismi). The schematic diagram, for which the *Tabula* is named, has become one of the most frequently consulted of Beza's works in recent years, due at least in part to its accessibility in Heinrich Heppé's *Reformed Dogmatics*, and in part to its brevity and clarity. Reliance upon analysis of this document, either alone or in conjunction with Beza's later *De Praedestinationis doctrina et vero usu tractatio*, has led Kickel, and others, to understand predestination as the *Centraldogma* of Beza's theology.⁵ Such an appraisal cannot be taken, on balance, as fully representative of Beza's theology. But, it does point toward a problematic tendency in Beza, of framing his dogmatics around a supralapsarian perspective. More will be said of this later.

At the moment, it is important to note the dating of the *Tabula*. Published in 1555 as a clear statement of Reformed doctrine, indeed as a defense of the Calvinist position on predestination, we find no indication that Beza's summary was rejected by Calvin. And, since Calvin did not seem to hesitate to criticize those with whom he did disagree, we may assume that Calvin did not see Beza's early statement on predestination as being essentially at variance with his own views, at least not at this critical point.

Although one should be cautious of making too much of any argument from silence, this particular argument seems quite impressive. The only alternative would be that Calvin had not seen Beza's *Tabula*. Most unlikely. It is more likely that Calvin understood the *Tabula* as an occasional paper, a topical and general exposition, a basic schema of Reformed faith, as seen from the perspective of predestination. In this case, Calvin would have understood Beza's *Tabula* as a defense of the reasonableness of the *ordo salutis* which many of his teachings on predestination implied. The obvious problem with this view is that Calvin, particularly in his *Institutio* (1559), is not nearly as explicit as is Beza in maintaining a supralapsarian view, nor in tracing-out its implications.

The precise nature of Calvin's intellectual relationship to Beza is something of a puzzle. Calvin's predestinarian views are closely related to and indeed were dependent in large measure on Martin Bucer's. Both Bucer and Calvin stood in the larger Augustinian tradition.⁶ But, as Richard Muller has recently noted, it is also

⁵ Kickel, 167–168. Also: Brian Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth Century France* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 41–42.

⁶ John W. Beardslee III, ed. and transl., *Reformed Dogmatics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 16.

possible that Calvin was influenced by his younger contemporary, Beza.⁷ At any rate, there is every reason to believe that Beza, at least in his *Tabula*, is presenting an understanding of Christian faith to which Calvin would not have objected, though there are elements in the Bezan approach, as will be seen, which seem to go against Calvin's own essentially Christological emphasis.

The last major publication which Beza finished during his years in Lausanne was his annotated Latin translation of the Greek New Testament (1556).⁸ Two years after its publication Beza left Lausanne for Geneva, where he would, in 1559, assume a professorship in Calvin's newly founded Academy. Beza now entered the most productive period of his long ministry.

Beza, in the same year that he assumed a rectorship in the Genevan Academy, wrote his *Confession de la foy chrestienne*. The following year the Confession would appear in Latin as *Confessio Christianae Fidei*. The English translation *A Brief and Pithie Summe of the Christian Faith* first appeared in 1563, and went through six editions between 1563 and 1589.

Beza was invited, during 1560, to Nérac by the king and queen of Navarre to counsel them on the Huguenot problem. The following year he served as spokesman for Protestantism at the Colloquy of Poissy, attempting to convince those in attendance that the Reformed faith was both rational and Scriptural, that it was not a new innovation, but was based upon the original teachings of the Apostolic Church. Beza's prayers and theological arguments were heard by the eleven-year-old king, Charles IX, along with a host of nobility, church officials, Protestant ministers and delegates. Beza was aided, especially in the discussion concerning the Sacrament of Holy Communion, by the Scholastic-minded Reformer, Peter Martyr (Vermigli), the exiled Florentine.

On January 17, 1562, a royal edict, the *Edict of January*, was published, in which Protestants in France were given official recognition and permission to worship. This amounted to a repeal of the earlier *Edict of July* which had left these same Protestants virtually powerless. Later that same year, the *Edict of January* notwithstanding, a group of Protestants were attacked by followers of Duke Francis of Guise, leaving some fifty worshipers dead. The Huguenots, who had come to see Beza as a champion of their cause, asked him to intercede for them. Beza immediately did so and received a favorable response. But within weeks the

⁷ Muller, 90.

⁸ The Cambridge edition of 1642 is the finest edition of this work.

civil wars had broken out, involving Beza in even larger concerns on behalf of the Protestant cause in France.

In the midst of political and social upheaval, when Beza's skills as a negotiator and advocate for the cause of Reformation were most in demand, he also completed a work of singular importance for the liturgy of the French Reformed Church, the Huguenot Psalter. The Psalter was begun by Clement Marot who, by 1543, had presented the public a collection of fifty psalms translated into French. Unfortunately, Marot died at Turin the following year, leaving the Psalter unfinished. The task fell to Beza, who, as a poet, was somewhat less able than Marot, to finish the translation. Fortunately, what Beza lacked as a poet, he compensated for as a subtle and industrious translator. In 1551, he added thirty-four Psalms to Marot's original collection. By 1562 the complete Marot/Beza Psalter stood complete.

Beza remained in France throughout most of the turbulent period from 1561 to 1563, leaving only long enough to assist in recruiting German troops as auxiliaries to the army of the prince of Orléans, during which time he also paid a brief visit to Geneva to speak with Calvin. When on 5 May 1563 Beza was able finally to return from France to Geneva, Calvin's health was declining rapidly, having preached his last sermon in early February of that year. Only twenty-two days after Beza's return to Geneva, Calvin died. Thus the mantle of leadership passed to the shoulders of the man Calvin himself hoped would become his successor.

Beza quickly published his *Vita Calvini*, a work which should be regarded as a pious tribute rather than as a biography in the modern sense.⁹ The book is valuable largely for the insight it provides into Beza's own character. Beza paints Calvin's life in clear tones of darkness and light, evil and good, enemies and friends. Those who stood with Calvin—such as Beza, of course—were clearly listed in the column of light, good and friends. Those who opposed Calvin—Servetus, of course, as well as former ally Castellio—were placed in the darkness, evil, enemies category. Calvin was described, in Beza's narrative, as 'a kind of Christian Hercules' who subdued 'so many monsters, and this by that mightiest of clubs, the Word of God.'¹⁰ Beza stretched his rhetorical devices almost to the limits of credulity, borrowing

⁹ The standard English edition remains the Beveridge translation. John Calvin, *Tracts Relating to the Reformation, with His life by Theodore Beza*, translated, with introduction by Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh, 1844), Vol. I, xix-c.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xcix.

from his knowledge of classical literature to find suitable images to employ in describing his colleague, picturing Calvin astride the chaos, swinging his Bible at the diabolical foes of the Reformed faith. But, it was when Beza descended from these Olympian heights, he delivered his finest eulogy to Calvin.

Having been a spectator of his conduct for sixteen years, I have given a faithful account both of his life and of his death, and I can now declare, that in him all men may see a most beautiful example of the Christian character, an example which it is as easy to slander as it is difficult to imitate.¹¹

Beza, in the following year, was to publish what many consider to have been his most influential work, his Greek New Testament (First, edition, 1565), to which he added the Vulgate and his own translation. Together with the second edition of this Greek text (1582), Beza's textual studies carried his influence far beyond his own lifetime, particularly in the English-speaking world.

As Irena Dorota Backus has shown convincingly, Beza's critical textual work, together with his theological perspective, shaped the choice of readings of the translators of the Authorized Version (KJV). She explains that Beza's work 'had a crucial influence on AV 1611 and that his influence seemed to increase as revision progressed.'¹² It is widely recognized that the Authorized Version reflects the general tone of William Tyndale's translations. What is less often noted is that the English Churchmen who produced this masterpiece of translation had a profound respect for Beza as a linguistic scholar and as a theologian. And this ultimately shaped their translation. Largely unseen, Beza's influence quietly increased in the world of English-speaking Christendom through the channel of biblical translation.

Beza's influence upon the English-speaking Church was not limited to his work in textual studies, however. Sixteenth-century Europe was united (and divided) by a common scholarly language, Latin. Those who had access to this language had access to ideas which knew neither national nor regional boundaries. So it was that when Thomas Cartwright, once Lady Margaret Professor at Cambridge, was deprived of his professorship in 1570, he made his way to Geneva. And in Geneva he established a relationship with Beza. Cartwright returned to England in 1572, was forced to flee again, but returned in 1585 to

¹¹ *Ibid.*, c.

¹² Irena Dorota Backus, *The Reformed Roots of the English New Testament: The Influence of Theodore Beza On the English New Testament*, preface by Basil Hall (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1980), xix.

remain till his death. And as he travelled, and when he returned, the evidence is that he carried with him much he had learned in Geneva.

Other English Reformed scholars were also on the Continent during the last part of the sixteenth-century, men who drew from Beza, Vermigli, Wolfgang Musculus and Zacharias Ursinus, as well as from contrasting teachers such as John Cameron and Moses Amyraut. From this ferment of contrasting Protestant ideas emerged Federal Calvinism and English Puritanism, which found uses, not only for Aristotelian logical devices such as the practical syllogism, but also for the revisionist logic of Petrus Ramus, whose method of bifurcation Dudley Fenner, William Perkins and William Ames were to press into service.

During the same year that Cartwright found his way to Beza's Geneva, Beza produced his *Quaestionum et responsionum christianarum libellus* (1570). This treatise made its way into English translation in 1572 as *A Booke of Christian Questions and answeares*.

Beza's career is marked, one notices, by a marvelous rhythm between his teaching, his preaching, his writing, and his involvement in the public forum. In 1571 Beza found himself again involved in the latter, presiding as moderator at the National Synod of La Rochelle.

The following year saw the horrific Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre of Huguenots. Beza wrote his *De Jure Magistratum* in response to this carnage. In the treatise he maintained the right of magistrates to rise against their governors. It was the Huguenots themselves, however, who produced the more influential treatise some seven years later. The Huguenot *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*, written under the pseudonym of 'Brutus' (the hero of those who fought against tyrants) would become a touchstone of religious and political thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries. It combined the Stoic belief in a natural law which is over all people, even over Emperors, with the Old Testament narratives. The Huguenot *Vindiciae* and Beza's *De Jure*, along with Scottish writer George Buchanan's *De Iure Regni apud Scotos*, were to find receptive auditors among those who were searching for a solution to the religio-political dilemma of the time. Beza's influence upon the developing political consciousness of Reformed leaders was indeed significant.¹³

¹³ The 1689 translation of the *Vindiciae* is available in a limited edition reprint, Junius Brutus, *A Defence of Liberty Against Tyrants (Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos)* (Edmonton AB. Canada: Still Waters Revival Books, 1989. Buchanan's *De Iure* has been published together with Samuel Rutherford's *Lex Rex* (Harrisburg: Sprinkle Publications, 1982).

Beza's *Petit Catéchisme* was published in 1575. It appeared in English translation as *A Little Catechism* three years later, in the same year, interestingly, that Faustus Socinus's *De Jesus Christo Servatore* was published. 1580 saw the publication of the *Histoire ecclésiastique des Eglises réformées au royaume de France*, the history of the Protestant movement in France, which, though sometimes attributed to Beza, is widely thought not to have been Beza's own work, but a compilation of the memoirs of others throughout France. Beza, in 1582, revised and republished the three volume collection of his *Tractationes Theologicae*. And, in the same year, he published the second edition of his Greek text of the New Testament, supplemented by the Codex Bezae, the Peshitta, and a Latin translation of the Arabic version.

It was also in 1582 that Beza published *De Praedestinationis doctrina*. John Bray notes, in contrast to Beza's earlier *Tabula*, that in the publication of his second treatise on predestination, Beza's 'scholastic, rationalistic tendencies' had 'come more to the fore'.¹⁴ Here one may see, more clearly than in his earlier work, the moderate scholasticism of Beza, which gives credence to Basil Hall's evaluation that 'Beza re-opened the door to speculative determinism which Calvin had attempted to close'.¹⁵ Though Beza's scholasticism was never as rigid as that of Vermigli, or of many of his Reformed successors, it does represent an important step toward the more abstractly rationalistic systems that marked mature calvinist Scholasticism.

Beza's ill-fated meeting with Lutheran Jacob Andrae at the Colloquy of Montbéliard occurred in 1586, under the auspices of Count Frederick of Württemberg. Beza and Andrae wrangled over the controversies that separated the Lutheran and Reformed Churches, bitterly refusing, at the end of the conference, even to find enough common-ground for a handshake. The proceedings of the conference were published in 1588 as *Ad Acta Colloquii Montisbelgardensis Tubingae Editae. Theodori Bezae Responsionis Pars Altera*.

Beza sought in the conference to distinguish 'between the role of Christ as the eternal second person of the Trinity' and that of 'Christ as the fulfillment of the decree of predestination', indicating that 'Christ was the foundation of election as he participated in the eternal counsel of the Trinity', while he 'was

¹⁴ John S. Bray, *Theodore Beza's Doctrine of Predestination* (Nieuwkoop: B. DeGraaf, 1975), 73.

¹⁵ Basil Hall, 'Calvin against Calvinists', *John Calvin: A Collection of Distinguished Essays*, edited by Gervase E. Duffield (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1966), 27.

the executor of the decree in his incarnate life.¹⁶ Undoubtedly, Beza perceived here the dangers inherent in the economical tendencies of early Scholastic Calvinist thought, in which the focus became progressively more upon the enactment of God's eternal purposes through the temporal instrumentality of Christ. Gradually a dichotomy was developing which could easily lead to a dichotomy between God's being *in essentia* and God as revealed in the economy of salvation. That Beza saw this problem is indicative of his theological perception; that he failed to resolve it says perhaps more about the failure of scholastic methodology, in general, than about his personal ability as a dogmatist.

The door was left open at this point for the unsatisfactory speculative solution to the problem posed by the seventeenth-century Federal theologians who would devise a pre-incarnational, intra-trinitarian contract, the so-called 'Covenant of Redemption', whereby the Father and Son would come to a legal, contractual agreement that the Son would carry out the eternal decree to save the elect. Such an approach has been ably critiqued by Karl Barth¹⁷ and by Thomas F. Torrance.¹⁸ The 'Covenant of Redemption' gives the impression that Father, Son and Spirit are three separate divine subjects who must enter into a legal contract to accomplish their will, rather than understanding Father, Son and Spirit as three *personae* having their triune being in communion, ontologically in the unity of divine love, as well as being at one in loving action. There is, as Torrance explains, a separation made, in the 'Covenant of Redemption' construction, between the eternal being and acts of God and God's temporal being and action. The Federal dichotomy between divine ontology and the economy of salvation has its roots in early

¹⁶ William Robert Godfrey, *Tensions Within International Calvinism*, (Ph.D. Thesis, Stanford University, May 1974), 84–85.

¹⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, Volume IV: I. editors G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 65. Barth refers to this federal conception of a pre-incarnational contract as a 'Mythology, for which there is no place in a right understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity as the doctrine of the three modes of being of the one God, which is how it was understood and presented in Reformed orthodoxy itself.

¹⁸ Thomas F. Torrance, *The School of Faith: The Catechisms of the Reformed Church* (London, 1959), lxxix. Also see: John von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* (Atlanta, Georgia; Scholars Press, 1986), 43 ff., Von Rohr gives a substantial amount of space to discussing this pre-incarnational 'covenant', though he does not seem to discern the fundamental ontological problems inherent in such a view.

Reformed formulations, as reflected in Beza's statements at Montbéliard.

Beza and Andrae also entered into discussions concerning the question of limited atonement. Beza maintained that the benefit (*beneficium*) of the atonement belongs to the elect alone. Against Andrae's attack on limited atonement, Beza responded, arguing that 'Christ did not die for the damned'. Unlike his colleague, Wolfgang Musculus, Beza would not accept Peter Lombard's distinction between the efficiency and the sufficiency of the death of Christ, a distinction which Musculus argued represented the universal consensus. Lombard's distinction was too ambiguous to be useful, according to Beza. Rather he maintained that Christ's death 'was not for all men individually either with respect to the intention of the Father in sending his Son to die or with respect to the actual effect of the death'.¹⁹

Whether or not Beza departed from Calvin, on the point of limited atonement, has been the subject of intense debate in recent years.²⁰ Richard Muller's penetrating analysis of Calvin's thought is helpful at this point. He explains that Calvin believed Christ's *expiatio*, his propitiatory sacrifice, and Christ's *satisfactio*, his reparation for the wrong committed by humanity against divine justice, are unlimited. But, when Calvin discussed the benefits of Christ's death, 'the *reconciliatio* or actual *redemptio*, the restoration and purchase of individuals, is restricted to the elect, to those upon whom Christ bestows his benefits'.²¹ Calvin's understanding, as described by Muller, demonstrates a closer affinity to Lombard than to Beza.

However there is more to Calvin's understanding of Christ than Muller here indicates. Calvin understood reconciliation primarily as that which took place *in Christ*, in the person of the God-man, who does not simply acquire a package of salvific benefits which can be applied to the elect, but assumes the sickness-unto-death of humanity, healing humanity in his own flesh. Calvin's was the soteriology of the 'wonderful exchange', a thoroughly ontological understanding of salvation, in which the Triune God was

¹⁹ Godfrey, 86–87.

²⁰ The list of recent works which have treated the subject of the debate is long indeed. Along with Armstrong, Muller, Raitt and Bray, it includes, Tadataka Maruyama, *The Ecclesiology of Theodore Beza: The Reform of the True Church*, Travaux: D'Humanisme et Renaissance, No. CLXVI, (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1978); R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); and Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982).

²¹ Muller, 34.

understood to have stood-in for humanity.²¹ This is rather a different picture of salvation from the scholastic image of salvation as a collection of benefits purchased by the merits of Christ and applied to the elect believer by gracious means, an image derived largely from Latin theology.²³

Calvin's emphasis is on the all-sufficiency of Christ's accomplishment of the whole of human salvation, *in himself*, and upon the mystery of God's unconditioned choice of some among humanity for salvation *in Christ*, recognizing that many are apparently not Christians.²⁴ He reflects the belief that because all things ultimately derive from God's will, for the purpose of God's glory, then election and reprobation are to be attributed to God's sovereign will. The elect are those who receive, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the fullness of salvation in Christ, while the reprobate, who are not *in Christ*, are justly damned for their disbelief. But, Calvin's soteriological focus is not upon the reception of benefits; it is upon our union with the person of Christ whose grace triumphs over human sin and creates a communion of persons with the Triune God, *in his own divine-human personhood*. In attempting to deal with the mystery of election, one observes again and again, Calvin's over-riding concern is the preservation of *Sola gratia*. There are many parallels between Calvin and Beza, but there are also fundamental and profound divergences in this.

Following the disastrous colloquy at Montbéliard Beza returned again to his preaching, teaching and writing in Geneva. His final years were marked by continued though somewhat

²² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John T. McNeill, ed., Ford Lewis Battles, trans. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960) II. xii. 2; II. xvi. 19; II. xiv. 2.

²³ I wish to thank Professor James B. Torrance for his careful and critical reading of this essay, and for his continued insistence that Calvin's soteriology (in contrast to much of the 'Calvinist' tradition) stressed the ontological over the mechanical. Also see: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christology*, introduced by Edwin H. Robertson, translated by John Bowden (London: Collins, 1966), 27–40. Bonhoeffer especially notes the problem, common among Reformed and Lutheran theologians such as Beza and Melancthon, of attempting to know Christ by his benefits.

²⁴ Calvin, *Inst.*, III. xxi–III. xxv. (inclusive); also: *Commentary on Ephesians*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, tran. T. H. L. Parker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, sixth reprint, 1980), 123–133, 139–147. Note: John Leith, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 120–138. And: Trevor Hart, 'Humankind in Christ and Christ in Humankind: Salvation as Participation in our Substitute in the Theology of John Calvin', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 42 (1989) 1, 69–72.

curtailed activity. Beza and Corneille Bertram made further revisions to the French edition of the Bible, which had been printed first in 1535 in Serrieres, and which had received the benefit of Calvin's own editorial attention. Beza continued to give lectures in the Academy. And, following the death of his wife, Claude, in 1588, he remarried the widowed Genevieve del Piano, though he was by that time over seventy years old. Beza had no children by either wife.

The aged Beza, in 1597, received a young priest, by the name of Francis, who attempted to lure him back into the Roman Catholic Church. This Francis (the future Bishop of Geneva and Saint Francis of Sales) visited Beza on many occasions, apparently optimistic that he might convert 'the first of Calvinistic heretics', as he called Beza in a letter to Pope Clement VIII.²⁵ The rumor spread that Beza had converted, probably due to Francis's and his friends boasts that such a conversion was imminent. But Beza did not convert. He continued to carry on a modest (and decidedly Protestant) ministry, especially through his correspondence, into his eighth decade. He died 13 October 1605 at the age of eighty-six.

II. Beza and Calvinist Scholasticism

Both Martin Luther and John Calvin had serious misgivings about the value of scholastic philosophical methodologies. Luther remained throughout his life an opponent of Aristotelianism. Calvin warned of the 'deceitful subtleties' of the 'Schoolmen'. Yet, Calvin himself employed Aristotelian categories when discussing divine causation. And, even within their lifetimes, their followers were making extensive use of scholastic methods. It must be said that scholasticism was never abandoned by Protestant theology in the sixteenth-century Reformation; though it must also be added that scholastic thought was brought under close scrutiny and was placed in a tension both with humanistic values and with biblical-theological perspectives which were often at odds with scholastic methods and assumptions.

Considerable debate has taken place concerning the nature of scholasticism and the extent to which scholasticism played a role in Reformed theology during the latter part of the sixteenth-century. Brian Armstrong's analysis of scholasticism provides, on the whole, the most helpful set of criteria for determining the characteristic tendencies of Scholastic Calvinism. Armstrong, like

²⁵ Baird, *Beza*, 336.

others, understands the term 'Protestant Scholasticism' to be descriptive of 'a spirit, an attitude of life' as much as a specific method. Armstrong understands scholasticism as characterized in the following manner:

(1) Scholasticism employs a particular theological approach 'which asserts religious truth on the basis of ratiocination from given assumptions or principles, thus producing a logically coherent and defensible system of belief'.²⁶ Armstrong notes the frequency of syllogistic reasoning in scholastic thought and Aristotelian logical methods. The Aristotelianism of Protestant Scholasticism, it should be cautioned however, is not a pristine Aristotelianism, but a derived and redacted form of Aristotle's thought.

(2) Scholasticism employs reason in such a manner 'that reason assumes at least equal standing with faith in theology, thus jettisoning some of the authority of revelation'.²⁷

(3) Scholastics often 'comprehend the sentiment that the scriptural record contains a unified, rationally comprehensible account and thus may be formed into a definitive statement which may be used as a measuring stick to determine one's orthodoxy'.²⁸

(4) Scholasticism exhibits a 'pronounced interest in metaphysical matters, in abstract, speculative thought, particularly with reference to the doctrine of God'.²⁹

As one examines Beza's theological statements, culminating especially in his later works such as *De Praedestinationis doctrina et vero usu tractatio*, it becomes apparent that his thought does conform generally to these characteristics and represents a nascent scholasticism. It would be accurate, then, with Bray, Maruyama and Raitt, to understand Beza as a key transitional figure between Calvin and Calvinist Scholasticism.

The major theologians of the Reformation received a large measure of their training from scholastic sources. Reformed theologians such as Vermigli and Musculus (both of whom were colleagues of Beza), the Heidelberg theologians, as well as many among the Lutheran reformers, such as Melanchthon, were deeply influenced by the structured discussions and carefully articulated methods of the scholastics. The question as to why scholasticism raised its head in Reformed thought is answered, thus, on the one hand, by many scholars, including Wilhelm

²⁶ Armstrong, 32.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

Gass, Dietrich Tiedemann, Ernst Troeltsch and Paul Althaus, by pointing to the internal nature of Protestantism itself, as it developed, working out the implications of the doctrines upon which it was founded.³⁰ Properly speaking, scholasticism had never been absent from Reformed thought. Although Luther and Calvin personally had not favored it, most of their followers made use of its methods and adhered to many of its assumptions, using it to develop their systematic statements and to work out the implications of the issues raised by Reformed dogma.

Scholars, such as George Hornias, Emil Weber and John Beardslee, on the other hand, observing the hostile environment in which the Protestant Churches attempted to exist, have stressed that the Reformed Church felt the need nationally to defend its beliefs, to buttress its gains, against the onslaught of external threats both from within its own ranks and from without.³¹ Thus scholasticism could be seen as a defensive weapon.

Both the internal-developmental and the response-to-external-threat theories concerning why scholasticism gained prominence in the Reformed tradition are probably true. The Reformed Churchmen of the sixteenth-century do seem to have had an interest in mapping-out the implications of doctrines only generally presented by Luther and Calvin. They did this often by applying to these doctrines the methods of the scholastics which they knew well and respected. And, as they attempted to come to terms with the threats surrounding the young Church they reached for apologetic and polemical weapons that in the past had proven useful in rhetorical disputation.

The question that next must be asked is clearly this: Did the methods of scholasticism distort the essential message of the Reformers? Walter Kickel, as has been noted earlier, would answer emphatically—Yes! He believed that the logic of scholasticism removed both ‘Christ and the Word from their place of centrality in theology’. And, in their place, scholasticism had substituted ‘a rational system of final causation’. Christ was removed ‘from his place as the foundation stone [*Realgrund*] and criterion of knowledge [*Erkenntnisgrund*] for theology’.³² Ernst Bizer claimed that Beza, in particular, elevated reason and Aristotelian logic ‘to a position equal to that of faith in theological epistemology’.³³ Although interpreters such as Muller are correct

³⁰ This is the conclusion of Bray, 17, with which this writer fully concurs.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 16–17.

³² Kickel, *Vernunft und Offenbarung*, 167–168, in Bray, 122–123. Also: Armstrong, 41.

³³ Armstrong, 39.

in saying that both Bizer and Kickel have overstated their cases, it is conversely true that there is a danger for those who appreciate Beza to minimize the creeping ratiocination that finds a place in his theology. Beza's theology *does* represent structurally a more consistent, but also a more scholastic, more rigid and deterministic distillation of Calvinist doctrine.

Predestination:

'Quo apud semetipsum decrevit certos homines'.³⁴

Beza's tendency toward the consistent, the scholastic and the deterministic is nowhere more evident than in the development of his doctrine of predestination. In his early occasional paper, the *Tabula*,³⁵ written as a defense of Calvin's doctrine of predestination, he attempted to present a summary of Christian theology in its essentials. Beza, in this treatise, used predestination as the foundational and guiding principle around which to organize the essential dogmas of the Church. And, though Karl Barth is altogether correct in saying that predestination is not used by Beza as a 'speculative key' from which all other doctrines could be deduced in a 'derivative' manner.³⁶ predestination certainly is used here as the fundamental interlocking ground for Beza's dogmatic treatment of the *summa totius Christianismi*.³⁷

Beza's schematic 'diagram of the theological system shows creation as the outgrowth of God's purpose (*propositum*), by which he has 'decreed' certain men for his own glory'.³⁸ These decrees proceed from the hidden purposes of God, taking the form of decrees of election (*eligere*) and decrees of reprobation (*reicere*). Humanity is created '*in recto statu, sed mutabili*' (in an erect, but mutable state'). Its '*corruptio*' is '*spontanea et*

³⁴ Theodore Beza, schematic diagram to *Tabula*: 'whereby in Himself He decreed certain men to His glory'.

³⁵ See: Heinrich Heppé, *Reformed Dogmatics*, foreword Karl Barth, revised edition by Ernst Bizer, English transl., by G. T. Thomson (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1950), 147-148. The German edition of this work, *Reformierte Dogmatik* (originally published in 1861 as Volume II of Heppé's grand study of Reformed Theology) contains the Latin version of Beza's *Tabula*.

³⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III. 2. pp. 77-78. Cf. Bray, p. 83.

³⁷ Heppé comments: 'In the supralapsarian sense Beza is fullest in his ordo rerum decretarum in his *Summa totius Christ.* (Op. I. p. 170)'. *Reformed Dogmatics*, 147.

³⁸ John W. Beardslee, III., translator and editor, *Reformed Dogmatics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 19.

contingens' ('spontaneous and contingent').³⁹ 'Thence in two parallel lines proceed the chains of cause from unmerited love and just wrath, leading to salvation and damnation, and finally reunited in glory of God, by his eternal decrees'.⁴⁰

Following the line of election, in the diagram, one observes Christ as the one in whom the elect are freely loved and elected ('*Amor gratuitus Dei erga corruptos quidem in se ipsis, sed in Christo gratis destinatos electioni et salutis*'). But following the line of reprobation, one only observes the just hatred of God (*Odium Dei iustum*), unmediated, flowing upon the reprobate, justly damning them to hell, for his own glory.⁴¹

The decree of election, Beza explains, is the 'original source of the salvation of the children of God'.⁴² It stands above all else, even above Christ, understood in his instrumentality in the economy of salvation, as the ground of salvation. The children of God are directed in their desire to find assurance of election, to ascend above the 'testimony of second causes', higher even than 'Christ himself, who as our head, has, nevertheless, elected and adopted us', to ascend 'higher—even to that eternal purpose which God has determined only in himself'.⁴³

Clearly what Beza is attempting to do is ground assurance of election in the free grace of God, unconditioned by human actions. This was, after all, Calvin's emphasis. But, in his attempt to do this, Beza tends to sever Christ as eternal second person of the Trinity from Christ in his temporal activity as revelation of the fullness of God and as Redeemer. He has, in effect, said that Christ reveals only the loving Fatherhood of God to the elect, through his activity as *their* Savior, while God remains, for the vast number of humanity, only the hateful judge, unrevealed in the face of the Son. The essential nature of God is revealed in the carrying-out of God's eternal decrees of election and reprobation, in which God's unconditioned grace is manifested in contrast to his absolute hatred of sin and just damnation of the reprobate. A wedge is driven between God, 'the just and incomprehensible', and Christ, the executor of the decree of election in the economical scheme of salvation. Beza, in this, is at odds with Calvin, although it is apparent he is attempting to follow what he perceives as Calvin's own teachings.

³⁹ Beza, *Tabula* in Heppe, 147–148.

⁴⁰ Beardslee, 19.

⁴¹ Beza, *Tabula*, in Heppe, 147–148.

⁴² Theodore Beza, *Tractationes*, I, 171, in Bray, 86.

⁴³ Bray, 86.

Calvin insisted that Christ is the full revelation of the hidden God, that God's essential being and purposes are revealed in Christ, that the temporal acts of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, issue forth from creation to redemption as the expression of the just, holy and loving communion of the Triune God. Beza comes perilously close to the deadly error of separating God in himself from God revealed in Jesus of Nazareth. And he does this despite the fact that he is attempting to give expression to the essential Reformed teaching of *sola gratia*.

Maruyama makes the case that Beza's doctrine of predestination must be understood in the context provided by his later and more comprehensive *Confessio*. But even here Beza places predestination, in the first point in his discussion of the unity and trinity of God, and in the second point in the development of his doctrine of God as Father, so that predestination precedes his development both of Christology and soteriology, allowing, in effect, predestination to dominate his subsequent theological discourse. This clearly is contrary to Calvin's placement of the doctrine in the context of his discussion of the Christian life, at the end of Book III of the *Institutio* (1559 edition).⁴⁴ Indeed, John Bray has observed in Beza's mature work, *De Praedestinationis doctrina*, that his handling of Romans Chapter 9 (perhaps the key passage to Beza's understanding of predestination) can hardly be called 'exegesis', as it represents an often forced reading-into-the-text of Beza's own supralapsarian predestinarian concerns.⁴⁵ This is undoubtedly true. And the consequences are devastating.

Assurance of Election: 'by γ which eche one of them being afferteined in his heart of his election'.⁴⁶

We have already given some consideration to Beza's understanding of limited atonement, in the context of the Colloquy at Montbéliard. What has not been noted is the manner in which the conception of limited atonement made the question of assurance especially urgent. Given the belief that God chooses, freely and on the basis of his own unconditioned will, some individuals for salvation and others for damnation—a choosing which from the human side may appear arbitrary and even

⁴⁴ James B. Torrance, 'The Incarnation and "Limited Atonement"', *The Evangelical Quarterly*, LV (April 1983) 2, 87.

⁴⁵ Bray, 73.

⁴⁶ Theodore Beza, *A Briefe and Piththie Summe of the Christian Faith* (London, 1565), 13.a. Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

capricious, considering that one may possess only 'temporary faith' and may thus be 'ineffectually called', and may not even be aware that one is not 'effectually called', and given that this God cannot even be understood as one who is essentially loving in character, since love is that which is restricted to only the elect, while just hatred eternally flows forth to the reprobate—it is easy to see why the question would occur to many sensitive souls, 'How can I know I am among the elect and not among the reprobate?' The stakes could scarcely be higher.

As has been seen, Beza's early attempt to answer this question was not entirely unlike Calvin's, though it resulted in raising even more fundamental problems in relation to revelation and the doctrine of the Trinity. Beza wanted to ground assurance in the absolutely free grace of God. In this way one could be certain that nothing one might do would possibly jeopardize one's election. This related directly to the Reformed affirmation of *sola gratia*.

Calvin's own discussion of assurance, in contrast to Beza's, makes this affirmation clear without severing the Father from the Son.

But if we have been chosen in him, we shall not find assurance of our election in ourselves; and not even in God the Father, if we conceive him as severed from his Son. Christ, then, is the mirror wherein we must, and without self-deception may, contemplate our own election. For since it is into his body the Father has destined those to be engrafted whom he has willed from eternity to be his own, that he may hold as sons all whom he acknowledges to be among his members, we have a sufficiently clear and firm testimony that we have been inscribed in the book of life if we are in communion with Christ. . . . The fact that, as we said, the firmness of our election is joined to our calling is another means of establishing our assurance. For those whom Christ has illumined with the knowledge of his name and has introduced into the bosom of his church, he is said to receive into his care and keeping.⁴⁷

As R. T. Kendall observes, 'What Beza does not do is to make Christ the mirror of our election.'⁴⁸ Beza, as one will read in *A Briefe and Piththie Summe of the Christian Faith*, refers the unassured individually to an introspective and experiential ground for assurance. He writes: 'when Sathan putteth us in doubt of our election, we maye not searche first the resolution in the eternall counsell of God whose majesty we cannot comprehend, but on the contrarye we must beginne at the sanctification

⁴⁷ Calvin, *Inst.*, III. xxiv. 5–6.

⁴⁸ Kendall, 32.

which we feele in our selves.⁴⁹ Thus, Beza opened the door, again, for a kind of subjective speculation that Calvin, with his more objective Christological focus, had not allowed. Calvin warned against the perils of subjective reflection, seeing that such *a posteriori* attempts to gain assurance as were represented in the use of the *sylogismus practicus* tended to turn one back upon confidence in works and to the corresponding uncertainty when works fail, as they inevitably will.

Karl Barth saw the fundamental problem with 'Beza, Gomarus, the men of Dort and Wolleb' in their development of the *sylogismus practicus* into an independent system.⁵⁰ He perceived that in their use of the practical syllogism, they tended to construct a method for assurance outside the person of Christ, as though one could be certain of one's belonging to God on the basis of experiential evidence. As one sees in Puritan theology and in the seventeenth-century controversies regarding Antinomianism, both in Britain and in New England, this issue remained an essential feature of Calvinist Scholasticism after Beza. Again, one is led back to the problem in Beza's understanding of revelation which undercut his discussion of assurance.

*The Nature of Atonement: 'our saluation commeth of God'*⁵¹

Turning from Beza's conception of limited atonement to his conception of the nature of atonement one is struck with the sense of respect Beza maintains for the multifaceted presentation of redemption which one meets in Scripture and in the Reformers. Beza does not reduce the various aspects of atonement to a single theory. Although he, like Calvin, stresses Anselmic themes, his description of redemption, also like Calvin, does not dwell there alone. Unlike Calvin, one does not sense, however, that at bottom, atonement is an essentially filial matter for Beza. Perhaps this grows from Beza's corresponding lack of emphasis upon the universal Fatherhood of God, as fatherly creator of all things. In any case, one does find in Beza a profound sense of the greatness of atonement to which no single theory will do justice.

⁴⁹ Beza, *A Briefe and Piththie Summe*, 36a, 37. Also: Theodore Beza, *A Booke of Christian Questions and Answers, wherein are set fourth the cheef points of the Christian religion in manner of an abridgement*, (London, 1572), 53. b., Bodleian.

⁵⁰ Bray comments on Barth's interpretation here, but seems to misunderstand Barth's critical point, 108–109.

⁵¹ Beza, *A booke of Christian Questions and Answers*, p. 37.a.

In Beza's discussion of atonement in *A Briefe and Piththie Sum*, there is even a limited sense of the 'wonderful exchange', which one meets so often in Calvin and in the Greek Fathers, especially in St. Athanasius. There is also a strong affirmation of Christ's radical substitution in the place of sinners, as one finds in Luther and in Calvin. There is a conception of Christ's fulfillment of the righteousness of the law on behalf of the elect, as would be anticipated, and of Christ's priestly office, taking upon himself to make satisfaction for the elect. There is a glimpse of the moral exemplary aspect of the atonement, as Christ moves ahead of Christians showing them the 'true way of salvation'. And, finally, there is a triumphant strain of the *Christus Victor* motif. And all of this Beza expresses in the space of one extraordinary paragraph.

He therefore came down on earth for to draw us up to heaven. He hath borne the pain due to our sins, clearly to discharge us even from the beginning of his conception unto his resurrection. He hath fulfilled perfectly all righteousness, for to cover our unrighteousness. He has declared to us all the will of God his father both by works and also by words, to the end to show us the true way of salvation. In fine for the whole and full satisfaction for our sins which he took upon himself: he was bound to unbind us: condemned for to deliver us: he suffered great and infinite shame, for to deliver us from all confusion: he was nailed on the cross for to fasten thereon our sins: he died and sustained the curse and malediction which was due to us for to appease the wrath of God forever by his only oblations made: he was buried to approve and verify his death and to vanquish death even to the house thereof, that is to say even to the grave wherein he felt no corruption, for to declare that even in dying he had overcome and vanquished death. He was raised again in triumph as a conqueror, to the end that all our corruption being dead and buried, we should be renewed into a new spiritual and everlasting life, and that thereby the first death should be no more to us a punishment due for sin, and as it were an entrance into the second death, but contrariwise a finishing and end of the death of our corruption, and an entrance into eternal life.⁵²

Though Beza will stress justification as a legal imputation, he also stresses a renewal of life which flows from salvation. In this he even goes so far as to indicate that 'good works' are 'needful to salvation', echoing The Epistle of St. James, chapter two.

He writes:

Quest. What callest thou Imputation?

⁵² Beza, *A Briefe and Piththie Summe*, 10.a.-b. (spelling and punctuation standardized).

Ans. That benefit of God the father, whereby he vouchsafest to account Christ's obedience as ours, in as ample wise as if we ourselves had fulfilled the law, and made full satisfaction for our sins.⁵³

Quest. You say then, that we be justified before God, that is to say, that we be counted and denounced righteous, because Christ's obedience is imputed unto us, which consisteth chiefly of two parts: namely of satisfaction for our sins, and full performance of all righteousness of the law.⁵⁴

Beza turns, later, to ask if good works are significant, since it has already been established that the elect are justified by God's gracious and unconditioned act. His answer is that the elect are justified by grace through faith. But, faith that is true cannot be separated from good works. Thus good works 'of necessity accompany true faith'.

Quest. Say you then that good works be needful to salvation?

Ans. If faith bee needful to salvation, and works of necessity accompany true faith, surely the other followeth also, that good works be needful to salvation, howbeit not as a cause of salvation . . . but as a thing that of necessity cleaveth unto true faith.⁵⁵

The door is open here for Beza to make the step suggested by his syllogistic logic, as earlier noted, to say that good works can provide assurance of salvation.⁵⁶ He could have avoided this movement to the subjective had he followed Calvin at this point, in understanding all parts of salvation as being fulfilled *in Christ*. For Calvin, even sanctification was the gift of grace already accomplished *in Christ*.⁵⁷ The focus was not upon the individual and the individual's piety or works, although these occupy a place of secondary importance. The focus for Calvin was upon God in the historical person of Christ Jesus taking upon himself, as Karl Barth has said, 'the lost cause of man' and making this cause 'His own in Jesus Christ, carrying it through to its goal and in that way maintaining and manifesting His own glory in the world.'⁵⁸

Still, when one reflects upon Beza's discussion of atonement, one is struck not so much by how he has failed to come up to the

⁵³ Beza, *A booke of Christian Questions and Answers*, 37. b. (spelling and punctuation standardized).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.a.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.b.

⁵⁶ The door is also open for Beza to place law in priority over faith, a step Kendall believes Beza took. Kendall, 37.

⁵⁷ Calvin, *Inst.*, II. xiv. 2.; II. xvi. 19.; and II. xvii, 1-6.

⁵⁸ Barth, *C.D.* IV.1. 3.

mark of Calvin, but by how well he avoids the pitfalls of his successors. For Beza, though atonement is limited in scope, it is understood as being much more than a legal transaction. Though individualism and the subjectivism are emphasized, yet Beza's fundamental intention is to remain true to the Reformation insights of our 'justification by grace through faith'.

Beza's Enduring Influence on Reformed Thought

Those who read the works of William Perkins⁵⁹ and William Ames⁶⁰ cannot fail to hear Beza's voice, both in Perkins' reliance on Beza and in Ames' revisions of Perkins. The Synod of Dort reflects much of Beza's supralapsarian predestinarian thought, his belief that even before creation 'God hath not only foreseen, but also eternally ordained to create men to spread forth and declare his glory in saving by his grace those which pleaseth him . . . and condemning others by his just Judgement,⁶¹ and that 'the counsel of God doth not exclude second causes.'⁶²

The Puritan disputations on practically every subject from Antinomianism and Arminianism to assurance of salvation, from predestination to subjectivism in conversion, from the use of the law in preparation for faith to pietism and biblicism owe something to Beza. He stands as a shadowy, often unrecognized influence, behind arguments among churches in the Reformed tradition from the seventeenth-century to our own time. Indeed wherever the Authorized Version of the Bible is read and heard, Beza's quiet influence is felt.

The fact that many of us would question the positive value of Beza's influence should not disparage his significance. Giants may not always appear benevolent, but this should not prevent us from recognizing their stature. Beza remains one of the most important theologians to emerge from the Reformation. To fail to take appreciative, though critical, stock of his thought is to risk overlooking the ground from which has sprung much we now call 'Reformed' and 'Evangelical'.

⁵⁹ William Perkins, *The Work of William Perkins*, introduced and edited by Ian Breward (Appleford: The Sutton Courtenay Press, 1970). In particular note: Perkins, *A Golden Chain or the Description of Theology* (1590) and his *De Praedestinatione Modo et Ordine* (1598).

⁶⁰ William Ames, *Medulla Theologiae* (first edition, 1627), Bodleian.

⁶¹ Beza, *A Briefe and Piththie Summe*, 3.b.—4.a.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 3.b.