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*The Patristic Inheritance in Calvin's
Understanding of Sin as an
Obstacle to Theological Knowledge*



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A very basic theological question is, "Is theological knowledge possible?" And if it is, under what conditions? When we pose these questions to John Calvin, we receive answers that illustrate both his indebtedness to patristic traditions and the difficulty of tracing dependency upon particular patristic writings and texts. In particular, it appears that he tacitly follows a line within the patristic tradition that emphasized piety as a prerequisite to theological knowledge.

Calvin, in common with the Christian tradition in general, contemplates the possibility of acquiring theological knowledge both through observation of the created world and through the Word of God as given in Scripture. With regard to the former, Calvin has been construed both as affirming and as denying the possibility of natural theology—or at least of a "Christian natural theology," as Emil Brunner phrased it in the 1930s.¹

An approach to Calvin's thought on this matter could begin with the two kinds of twofold knowledge found in the *Institutes*. First there is the *duplex cognitio dei* or *domini* (twofold knowledge of God or of the Lord) that became an organizing principle of the *Institutes* in the 1559 Latin edition. Calvin grouped its eighty chapters into four books, the first titled, "On knowledge of God as creator," and the second,

"On knowledge of God as redeemer."² Another *duplex cognitio* is spelled out in the opening sentence of the *Institutes*: "Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves."³ Calvin says that it is not easy to discern which precedes and which follows. The subheadings added in chapter 1 in the McNeill-Battles edition ("1. Without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God." and "2. Without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self") encourage the impression that these two knowledges are mutually dependent and mutually transforming: a balanced pair.⁴

Serene Jones, however, has pointed out that the opening paragraphs of the *Institutes* are carefully crafted for rhetorical effect.⁵ They are meant to capture the benevolence of literate humanists of the early sixteenth century by acknowledging the renaissance emphasis on human beings as worthy objects of study—then lead such readers to properly theocentric piety. Calvin may show his hand early in the 1560 French edition. Where earlier Latin and French versions say something like, "knowledge of God and of ourselves,"⁶ the final French edition in 1560 says, "in knowing God each one of us also knows himself."⁷ At any rate, Calvin's closing observation in this opening section of the *Institutes* was already in place in 1539: "The order of right teaching requires that we discuss first [knowledge of God], then proceed afterward to discuss [knowledge of ourselves]."⁸ As the *Institutes* unfolds, the two are in fact interwoven. Clearly self-knowledge needs to be corrected and illuminated by knowledge of God as revealed in Scripture. Human sinfulness makes it impossible for humans to know either God as their creator or their own nature unless they come to know themselves as impaired by sin and God as their redeemer.⁹

In editions prior to the 1559 *Institutes*, chapter 1 was titled, "Knowledge of God," and chapter 2 was, "Knowledge of man." More specifically, in the 1539 Latin edition and the 1541 French editions, chapter 2 was, "Knowledge of man and free will." In the 1543 Latin edition and 1545 French editions, the title of chapter 2 is less optimistic: "On the knowledge of man, in which are treated original sin, the natural corruption

of man, the impotence of free will, and the regeneration effected in us by grace and by the help of the Holy Spirit." Finally, in 1559 and 1560, "Knowledge of man" is no longer a heading in its own right. The material formerly included in the chapter so titled is still present, but it has been repositioned near the beginning of book 2, which is titled, "The knowledge of God the redeemer in Christ," and whose first chapter is titled, "How by the fall and revolt of Adam the whole human race was subjected to a curse and has declined from its origin, and concerning original sin." The rhetorical features that Jones points out are still there to draw more optimistic humanists into Calvin's analysis, but clearly this analysis will not flatter anyone's delusions about the human condition and potential apart from divine intervention. Calvin states in *Institutes* 1.3.1 that all humans share in a *sensus divinitatis* (an innate awareness of God's existence) and in 1.4.1 notes a corresponding *semen religionis* (an innate seed of piety). Furthermore, in 1.5.1 he follows Paul's argument in Romans 1:19-20 that the created universe itself is a kind of mirror in which God's power and deity are apparent. But meanwhile in 1.4.1 he has already cited Romans 1:21-22 to the effect that humans through their own wickedness became foolish, their thinking futile. Humankind's natural knowledge of God is possible but not actual.

With regard to Calvin's interpretation of Romans 1, David Steinmetz has compared Calvin's Romans commentary, originally published in 1540, with the earlier commentaries of Augustine (i.e., the *Expositio quarundam propositionum ex Epistola ad Romanos*), Denis the Carthusian (as a representative of the late medieval tradition), and three Protestant commentators: Melancthon, Bullinger, and Bucer.¹⁰ He finds that Calvin agrees with his predecessors "that the created world demonstrates God's existence and that human beings without exception know by nature that there is a God . . . and that . . . [the world] reveals enough of God's will and nature to stimulate human beings to praise and glorify God." But unlike the others Calvin does not find in Paul a statement that humans have any reliable natural knowledge of God's will or essence.

From the 1540 Romans commentary through Calvin's latest works, Steinmetz finds that Calvin distinctively perceives a gap between what God offers and what humans actually receive. As in Calvin's eucharistic theology, which holds that Christ's body and blood are truly offered wherever the eucharist is observed but truly received only by faith, so also with the natural knowledge of God: the whole universe is suffused with its revelation, but humans only receive this knowledge aright by faith.¹¹

The fall corrupted whatever natural ability humans had, as created beings, to know God, making necessary the revelation given in Scripture (*Institutes* 1.6). Calvin uses the simile of spectacles: just as an old man who cannot read the letters in a book may begin to see them clearly when he puts on eye-glasses, so Scripture clarifies what otherwise remains confused for us and so makes accessible the knowledge of God (*Institutes* 1.6.1). But here again a gap appears between what is offered and what is received: biblical revelation is ineffective apart from a properly receptive (Latin and French: *dociles*) and correctly guided reader. Just as there can be no natural knowledge of God apart from *religio* and *pietas* (1.2.1), there can be no biblically-derived knowledge without them (*Institutes* 1.6.2). But given his convictions regarding human inability to muster adequate *religio* and *pietas*, Calvin attributes effective revelation through Scripture to the Holy Spirit: the *testimonium internum* whereby the Christian comes to credit Scripture as God's own utterance, (1.7.4) and the illumination whereby the Christian is enabled to receive that utterance and act on it (2.2.21).¹² The theological knowledge that Calvin is interested in is indistinguishable from faith.¹³ Calvin analyzes the noetic effects of sin not as an exercise in psychology or epistemology but as a pointer to piety as the necessary condition of a saving knowledge of God.¹⁴

To return now to the feature that Steinmetz found to be the *novum* in Calvin's exegesis of Romans 1, the gap between the knowledge of God that is offered and the knowledge that is actually received: this gap corresponds to what Dowe had observed in Calvin's whole teaching on this question. In

Dowe's terms, "the revelation itself is not harmed. Man's receiving apparatus functions wrongly."¹⁵ Steinmetz finds none of the many Romans commentaries written in Calvin's day arguing for culpable human blindness in the same way that Calvin does.¹⁶ Steinmetz believes that Parker, in his earlier survey of commentaries on the same pericope of Romans from the same decade, was too cautious in worrying that "such short passages of commentary . . . would fail . . . to do justice to the author."¹⁷ But even if Steinmetz has not missed anything in the sixteenth-century figures whose commentaries he surveys, we may ask whether Calvin's conception of the noetic effects of sin is perhaps found elsewhere in Augustine or in other earlier Christian writers. If we broaden our search beyond commentaries on Romans and keep piety in mind as the scope of Calvin's argument, we find ample precedent.

Calvin certainly knew Augustine's treatise *De Trinitate*.¹⁸ The opening sentence of this treatise targets "the sophistries of those who disdain to begin with faith, and are deceived by a crude and perverse love of reason" (*Trinitate* 1.1.1) and the inadequacy of reason for gaining knowledge of God is emphasized throughout. Readers are told that they must purge their minds (1.1.3), that the "eye of the human mind . . . is dazzled . . . unless it be invigorated by the nourishment of the righteousness of faith." Successive books of the treatise begin with similar metadiscussion of the possibility of achieving theological knowledge. The beginning of book 4 suggests that while humans are fond of seeking knowledge of things terrestrial and celestial they might do better to begin with self-knowledge, that is, with recognizing the human self's weakness, so as afterward, having been awakened toward God and "kindled by the warmth of the Holy Spirit," to be able to seek knowledge in a way that builds up. Those who have thought they could purify their own minds sufficiently to be able to contemplate God have been disabled by pride (4.15.20). Quoting Romans 1:21-22, Augustine indicates that those philosophers in professing themselves wise became fools with the consequence that their mind's eye was

unable to perceive the creator in the creation or even to receive angelic messengers, as the humble and pious prophets did (4.15.23). At the beginning of book 14 Augustine makes explicit the role of *pietas*. Quoting Job 28:28, Augustine holds out *pietas* (*theosebeia*) as a properly human *sapientia* (*sophia*) and *scientia* (*episteme*). The route to this knowledge lies through the restoration of the *imago dei*, which comes up for discussion in book 9 and dominates the rest of the treatise. Augustine finds that the mind itself, which is the *imago* or the residence of the *imago*, has a trinitarian structure. The renewal of the *imago dei* is the renewing of the mind mentioned in Romans 12:1, and, according to Colossians 2:11, it is a renewing in the knowledge of God (*Trinitate* 14.16.22).

At the beginning of the fifteenth and final book of the *De trinitate*, Augustine indicates that so far he has been trying to teach believers on the basis of biblical interpretation to find traces of the Trinity in things created. He will now attempt to reach any who are open to reason (15.1.1)—though with the stipulation that the quest for understanding must begin from faith (15.2.2). This project soon leads him into conflict with the philosophical schools, beginning with the Academics in 15.12.21. He also mentions Eunomius, one of the so-called neo-Arians of the fourth century against whom the standard rap was that they were impious logic-choppers. Even when attempting to argue on the basis of reason, Augustine fears his readers will be done in by the dullness and weakness of the human mind. He urges them first to believe the Scriptures, then to “strive, by praying and seeking and living well, that they may understand” (15.15.49). It seems that conversion produces the hermeneutical stance that is a prerequisite to theological knowledge.

Is the assertion that the human subject must be predisposed in a certain way in order to attain knowledge a rhetorical topos, a case of question-begging, or an integrated theological argument? *Captatio benevolentiae* is a task of the effective orator, but could also serve as a label for what, at least in certain streams of the Christian tradition, becomes a work of divine grace. The second chapter of the *Epistle to*

Diognetus, an apologia for Christianity as a third way over against paganism and Judaism, urges:

Come then, clear yourself of all the prejudice which occupies your mind, and throw aside the custom which deceives you, and become as it were a new man from the beginning, as one, as you yourself also admitted, who is about to listen to a new story. (LCL)

This is conventional rhetoric, and rather weak at that. The reader is simply and briefly urged to have an open mind. Compare the second chapter of another early apology, the *Ad Autolyicum* of Theophilus of Antioch, which opens: “But if you say, ‘Show me thy God,’ I would reply, ‘Show me yourself, and I will show you my God’” (*Ad Autolyicum* 1.1; ANF 2:89).

As far as I know, Calvin never mentions Theophilus, but here is a general precedent for Calvin’s twofold knowledge of God and of self. The eyes of the soul and the ears of the heart are meant to perceive God, but something has gone wrong.

For God is seen by those who are enabled to see Him when they have the eyes of their soul opened: for all have eyes; but in some they are overspread, and do not see the light of the sun. Yet it does not follow, because the blind do not see, that the light of the sun does not shine; but let the blind blame themselves and their own eyes. So also thou, O man, hast the eyes of thy soul overspread by thy sins and evil deeds. As a burnished mirror, so ought man to have his soul pure. When there is rust on the mirror, it is not possible that a man’s face be seen in the mirror; so also when there is sin in a man, such a man cannot behold God (ANF 2:89).

There follows a Paul-style sin list, then this:

All these things, then, involve you in darkness, as when a filmy defluxion on the eyes prevents one from beholding the light of the sun: thus also do iniquities, O man, involve you in darkness, so that you cannot see God (ANF 2:89).

In the fourth century, Athanasius contributed a two-part work, *Contra gentes* and *De incarnatione*, to the apologetic tradition—probably at least in part in order to replace the overly rationalistic writings of Eusebius, whose *Praeparatio evangelica* begins with the claim that the Christian message can be demonstrated in *apodeixis* and so does not need to rely on *alogos pistis*.¹⁹ We cannot prove that Athanasius is dependent on his Alexandrian forebear Theophilus, but he appears to follow along a similar track. Unlike Diognetus, who appeals for a reasonable, unbiased hearing, Athanasius narrates the human failure to heed God in *Contra gentes* 2–3 and proceeds to describe the remedy. God made humankind according to the divine image, and while the human soul remained pure, it could contemplate God unceasingly, in accord with Matthew 5:8, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” But humankind fell from this purity and into involvement with material things and bodily lusts—a more Platonic spin than Paul or Theophilus evidences. The result:

Although the body has eyes in order to view creation and through its harmonious order to recognize the Creator, although it also possesses hearing in order to listen to the divine sayings and the laws of God, and has hands too, in order to do necessary actions and stretch them out to God in prayer, yet the soul abandoned the contemplation of the good and virtuous activity, and was from then on deceived and moved in the opposite direction (*Contra gentes* 4; translated by Robert W. Thomson).

So natural and biblical revelation become ineffective because humankind willfully abandons them. Thus the soul as mirror (as in Theophilus) no longer reflects the image of the Father (*Contra gentes* 8). From humankind’s evil choices follows the development of idolatry.

De incarnatione begins with a repeated reference to the errors of idolatry and superstition (a pairing that recurs in Calvin) and then describes the incarnation as God’s way of overcoming death (*De incarnatione* 4–10) and renewing the

imago dei (11–16). The coming of the Word, who is the image, restores humankind according to the image (13). At length Athanasius concludes by exhorting his readers to study the Scriptures (56), adding that in order to be able to grasp their meaning they will need a good life, a pure soul, and virtue according to Christ (57).

Calvin follows Athanasius and Augustine’s pietist hermeneutic. The witness of nature is spoiled by sin, and the right predisposition is needed for even biblical revelation to be effective. Even with the right predisposition, a reader who is not yet well practiced in Scripture will benefit from the help of a guide.²⁰ Calvin’s commentaries on the various books of Scripture address this need, and so does the *Institutes*. Calvin’s preface to the 1560 French edition indicates that the purpose of the *Institutes* is to provide a guide lest unpracticed readers of Scripture wander here and there in it and miss the point of the whole. The responsibility for providing such guidance falls upon those who like himself “have received from God fuller light than others.” But the essential quality of one who is able to interpret Scripture rightly is not erudition but *pietas*. The title *Institutio Christianae Religionis* announces not a theological summa but an instruction manual in Christian piety—his *summa pietatis*, as it has been called.²¹ The fact that it provides apologetic material in addition to fuller and in a sense more academic instruction than, for example, the catechisms that Calvin wrote for the Christian communities in Geneva and Strasbourg takes nothing away from its focus on the inculcation of piety—which after all in premodern usage denotes not only an attitude but also doctrinal content.²² As Serene Jones points out, the *Institutes* simultaneously addresses several distinct readerships and so is rhetorically complex. We can nevertheless safely say that in general it aims to help its readers understand Scripture by informing them of a *regula fidei* and by forming in them the piety that is prerequisite to understanding. Calvin understands the importance of the interpreter in the interpretive process. Ganoczy and Held suggest that this may account in part for the absence in Calvin of the Lutheran dictum about “*sacra scriptura sui ipsius interpres*”

(sacred scripture as its own interpreter). A text doesn't interpret itself without the subjective intervention of an interpreter. Nor, as Ganoczy and Held suggest further, does Calvin share the early Luther's interest in excluding churchly teaching authority from the interpretive process.²³ Calvin's work as a *doctor* is a ministry of the church. It is not an academic exercise and does not follow rationalistic presuppositions and methods. Here he follows Athanasius and Augustine faithfully—adding a heavier emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit.

References to early Christian writers permeate Calvin's writings.²⁴ Appeals *ad fontes* were a prominent feature of his renaissance milieu. In the church, Reformers in and out of communion with Rome sought restoration of what they believed to have been an original purity lost through medieval accretions. In his Preface to the King of France Calvin devotes a major section to refuting opponents' attempts to set the fathers in opposition to the Reformers. In the polity sections of book 4 of the 1559 Latin version Calvin characterizes the fathers as "ancient and from a better era than this."²⁵ Roughly speaking, for Calvin this age continued through the age of Gregory the Great, i.e., the first six centuries of the Christian era.²⁶ By highlighting the agreement of Reformation teachings with writers of that era, Calvin thought to "guarantee the integrity and the catholicity of the Reformation."²⁷ So he cites various early writers frequently. Lane suggests that when Calvin *explicitly* cites the fathers it is usually for polemical purposes, but any sharp distinction between positive and polemical function seems artificial.²⁸ As Lane also warns, when Calvin does not cite a patristic writer we must be wary of claiming direct dependence on the basis of similarity of ideas; how would we know, he asks, whether Calvin is directly dependent on Augustine at some particular point, for example, or has picked up the Augustinianism of the later tradition?²⁹ Since Calvin "almost never names late medieval theologians or theological schools,"³⁰ even thorough familiarity with the whole corpus of Christian writing between Augustine and Calvin would not make it easy to trace actual lines of influence. Both Lane and Van Oort foreswear

any such attempt.³¹ What they do choose to do is valid and helpful, and they should not be faulted for not undertaking the further vast and undefinable task of mapping Calvin's reception of the patristic heritage throughout his corpus. Given, however, that Calvin documents his agreements and disagreements with earlier writers not throughout as a matter of obligation but only where some rhetorical purpose will be served, at many points he will follow a line of thought that is found earlier in the tradition without crediting earlier writers. This practice reminds me of one patristic author's suggestion—not an innovative suggestion on his part, I believe, but a common assumption—that whereas heretical notions have founders and histories, orthodoxy has no history. It simply is what it is. If intellectual historians today disagree and hold that orthodoxy—including Calvinian orthodoxy—does indeed have a history, then we should be willing to try to trace that history even when Calvin has not left us clear markers and our results must consequently be at best probable.³²

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Notes

1. For English translations of the Brunner-Barth debate, see *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply "No!" by Dr. Karl Barth*, translated by Peter Fraenkel (London: Centenary Press, 1946). Brunner had written a book on nature and grace in which he claimed Calvin's support for the idea that enough of the *imago dei* survived to make possible some kind of knowledge of God though observation of the creation. Karl Barth replied that in Calvin's view sin had so corrupted humankind that its natural knowledge of God could no longer produce anything better than superstition and idolatry. For Edward Dowey's comments, see especially *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology* (expanded edition; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1994), 265–67. For a number of additional references, see Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See: Calvin's Doctrine of Faith in Its Exegetical Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 239, note 117. Among more recent Calvin scholars, William J. Bouwsma offers the opinion

- that the debate "is futile because of Calvin's ambivalence; he can be cited on both sides of the issue" (*John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1988], 262, note 51.). For the purposes of the present paper, see especially David Steinmetz, "Calvin and the Natural Knowledge of God," in *Calvin in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 23-39, at 23-24.
2. The titles in Latin: Book 1, "De cognitione dei creatoris"; Book 2, "De cognitione dei redemptoris"; book 3 is "De modo percipiendae Christi gratiae et quae inde fructus nobis proveniant, et qui effectus consequantur"; Book 4 is "De externis mediis vel adminisulis, quibus Deus in Christi societatem nos invitat, et in ea retinet." For the *Institutes* in Latin, I have used Petrus Barth and Guilelmus Niesel, editors, *Joannis Calvini Opera Selecta*, volume 3 (3d edition; Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1967); volume 4 (3rd edition; Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1968); volume 5 (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1936).
 3. That last phrase in the 1559 Latin edition is "Dei cognitione et nostri."
 4. Calvin's own heading for chapter 1 in the Latin and French editions of 1559 and 1560 is more vague: 1559: "Dei notitiam et nostri res esse coniunctas, et quomodo inter se cohaereant." 1660: "Comment la cognoissance de Dieu et de nous sont choses conioinctes, et du moyen et liaison." For the French, I have used Jean-Daniel Benoit, ed., *Jean Calvin: Institution de la religion chrestienne, Livre premier; Livre second* (two volumes in one; Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1957).
 5. Serene Jones, *Calvin and the Rhetoric of Piety* (Columbia Series in Reformed Theology; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995).
 6. The Latin versions: "Dei cognitione et nostri" or "cognitione Dei et nostri"; the French editions: "cognoissance de Dieu et de nous-mesmes."
 7. "C'est qu'en cognoissant Dieu, chacun de nous aussi se cognoisse."
 8. The reading "ordo recte dicendi" in the Latin editions from 1539 through 1545 is evidently a secretary's error; the 1559 edition has "docendi." Benoit's edition of the 1560 French version has "l'ordre de bien enseigner" with no notice of any different reading in earlier French versions.
 9. T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (revised edition; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 117-25, criticizes Dowey's understanding of the *duplex cognitio dei* as the major organizing principle of the *Institutes* and asserts that the *duplex cognitio* reflected in the *Institutes* is the knowledge of God and of ourselves. Richard Muller agrees with Parker: "Parker is certainly correct in arguing against Dowey that the initial and most basic twofold knowledge in the *Institutes* is not the 'twofold knowledge of God' but the 'knowledge of God and ourselves.'" Muller does not comment on Serene Jones's argument, which appears to me to undermine Parker's criticism of Dowey on this point. (Muller's own criticism of what he characterizes as the rigidity of Dowey's understanding of the *duplex cognitio dei* as the ordering principle of the *Institutes* is a separate matter). See Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 134. Dowey himself found Parker's criticism to have been

- made "so irresponsibly as to cast doubts on Parker's desire to be taken seriously" (Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, xvi).
10. Steinmetz, "Calvin and the Natural Knowledge of God," 23-32. For Calvin's comments, see T. H. L. Parker and D. C. Parker, editors, *Commentarius in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos* (Ioannis Calvini Opera Omnia, series 2, Ioannis Calvini Opera Exegetica, volume 13; Geneva: Droz, 1999), 29-34.
 11. This crucial distinction is presumably what Steinmetz believes Bouwsma is missing in referring to Calvin's ambivalence on the question of natural theology (see note 1 above). Steinmetz says that on this point Calvin is sometimes ambiguous but never ambivalent ("Calvin and the Natural Knowledge of God," 32).
 12. See Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, 172-80.
 13. On faith and knowledge in Calvin, see the whole argument of Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See*. To be sure, the noetic effects of sin are felt even beyond natural and revealed theological knowledge, though not to the same extent. Human thought does relatively better in earthly things (politics and government, mechanical and liberal arts, natural sciences), relatively worse with respect to heavenly things. Cf. E. Doumergue, *Jean Calvin: Les hommes et les choses de son temps* (Lausanne: Georges Bridel, 1910), Book 3, volume 4, chapter 2, "Le péché et la raison," 147-49.
 14. Later Calvinist theologians would explore the psychological and epistemological ramifications. See e.g., Abraham Kuyper's psychological remarks on "science and sin" in his *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), 106-14, and his comparative analysis of the effects of sin on his "five faculties" (natural philosophy, medicinal, philological, juridical and theological), 220.
 15. Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, 73.
 16. In addition to Denis, Melancthon, Bullinger, and Bucer, Steinmetz lists Erasmus, Faber Stapulensis, Luther, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Erasmus Sarcerius, Andreas Knöpken, Bugenhagen, Cajetan, Johannes Lonicer, Jean de Gagny, Sadoletto, Ambrosius Catherinus Politus, Marino Grimani, Johannes Arboreus, Claude Guillaud, Conrad Pellikan, Alexander Alesius, Wolfgang Musculus, Johannes Brenz, Peter Martyr Vermigli, Domingo de Soto, and Andreas Hyperius ("Calvin and the Natural Knowledge of God," 31).
 17. Steinmetz, "Calvin and the Natural Knowledge of God," 33, note 14, quoting T. H. L. Parker, *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans, 1532-1542* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 7.
 18. According to Lane, Calvin cites *De Trinitate* explicitly ten times in seven different sections of the *Institutes* (*John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers*, 56). The index to the McNeill-Battles edition has twenty-five references for *De Trinitate*, but that figure includes places where the editors suggest comparing but do not claim dependence. English translations here quoted are from Arthur West Haddan's translation in *NPNF1* 3.

19. Robert W. Thompson, editor and translator, *Athanasius: Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971). Translations quoted below are Thompson's. Regarding the possibility that these treatises are meant to replace works of Eusebius, see James D. Ernest, *The Bible of Athanasius of Alexandria*, (BAC 2; Boston: Brill, 2004), 49 n. 14, 56 n. 25, 83 n. 58, 100, 103 n. 89.
20. Cf. *Contra gentes* 1, where Athanasius insists on the sufficiency of the scriptures before explaining that nevertheless it is useful to have teaching from others such as himself.
21. For this definition of *institutio* see Jean-Daniel Benoît, "The History and Development of the *Institutio*: How Calvin Worked," in *John Calvin* (Courtenay Studies in Reformation Theology 1; Appleford: Sutton Courtenay, 1996), 102-17, at 103. Cf. Fr. *institutrice*, school-teacher. Johannes van Oort refers to the *Institutio* as a *pietatis summa* in his article "John Calvin and the Church Fathers," in Irena Backus, *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), volume 2, 661-700. So does B. A. Gerrish ("summa pietatis") in his preface to Elsie Ann McKee, editor, *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety* (New York: Paulist, 2001), xiv.
22. Richard A. Muller points out that between 1537 and 1541 Calvin stopped using the word *institution* in the titles of his catechisms (his foundation-level texts), reserving the word henceforth for his academic-level treatment, the *Institutes* (*The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 123). Regarding Calvin's purposes in writing the *Institutes*, see Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See*, 170-71, note 9.
23. Alexandre Ganoczy and Stefan Scheld, *Die Hermeneutik Calvins: Geistesgeschichtliche Voraussetzungen und Grundzüge* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1983), 96-100.
24. Numerous works address Calvin's use of the church fathers. Two monographs are William Newton Todd, "The Function of the Patristic Writings in the Thought of John Calvin," Th.D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1964; and Anthony N. S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1999). See also Johannes van Oort, "John Calvin and the Church Fathers."
25. *Calvini Opera*, 3:17, "antiquos et melioris adhuc seculi scriptores"; ICR 1:36, "les escrivains du premiers temps de l'Eglise." Cf. the reference to Origen as writing "in a purer age" in the 1536 *Institutio* (OS 1:49), cited by Van Oort, "John Calvin," 666. (*Calvini Opera* is the standard edition of Calvin's works in Latin except for works like the *Institutes* which are included in the more recent *Opera Selecta*.)
26. Todd, "The Function of the Patristic Writings," 141.
27. Todd, "The Function of the Patristic Writings," 144.
28. Lane, *John Calvin*, 29. Cf. Van Ort finds in the Dedicatory Epistle to King Francis an exemplary illustration of the coincidence of theological (catechetical) and polemical (apologetic) intentions ("John Calvin," 664); but finally he also concludes that "Calvin's use of the Fathers was primarily polemical" (698).

29. Lane, *John Calvin*, 15-16.
30. Lane, *John Calvin*, 2.
31. Van Oort, "John Calvin," 663.
32. David Steinmetz warns: "It would be a mistake to judge Calvin's relationship to the Fathers solely on the basis of his explicit references to them" ("Calvin and Patristic Exegesis," in *Calvin in Context* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1995], 122-40, at 135).