

Volume 4 | Number 1 Article 3

September 1975

John Calvin in Mission Literature

James A. De Jong Dordt College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege

Part of the Christianity Commons, Higher Education Commons, and the Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons

Recommended Citation

De Jong, James A. (1975) "John Calvin in Mission Literature," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 4: No. 1, 6 - 17.

Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol4/iss1/3

This Feature Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University Publications at Dordt Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pro Rege by an authorized administrator of Dordt Digital Collections. For more information, please contact ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu.

John Calvin in Mission Literature

by James De Jong Assistant Professor of Theology



Dr. De Jong joined the Dordt theology department last year after spending four years at Trinity Christian College as assistant professor of theology. He received his education at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, and he earned a doctorate in history of missions from the Free University of Amsterdam in 1970.

John Calvin has been the subject of scholarly controversy on almost every issue on which he took a position. He has had his sharp critics and his passionate defenders. Both have at times misread and misjudged him. A slighted dimension of this ongoing controversy is Calvin's contribution to missions. No less noted Calvin scholar than the late John T. McNeill passed over in silence the litera-

ture on this topic in his initial and still useful bibliography of Calvin studies, and he listed only three recent articles in the updated version. 1 As recent a bibliography of literature on Calvin as that published in the Calvin Theological Journal fails to include a topical entry on Calvin and missions and is only partially complete in its inclusion of studies in this area. 2 Yet both the number and the controversial

character of these studies on the missionary aspect of Calvin's life and work deserve more recognition than they have received. A survey of this discussion will hopefully not only call attention to this dimension of Calvin scholarship, but will also give me the opportunity to analyze the more controversial issues in terms of two contemporary topics in mission: the problem of the definition of mission and the relationship of church and mission.

Survey of the Discussion

In missiological literature negative judgments on Calvin's contribution to missions more often than not can be traced to Gustav Warneck. Warneck, the father of the modern science of missions, was professor of missions at the University of Halle in Germany at the turn of the century. His Outline of A History of Protestant Missions went through numerous German editions and revisions during a twenty-five year period. Throughout that time it saw several English translations. The eighth German edition became the basis for the definitive, third English edition in 1906. This study was not only widely circulated in his day, but has made an impact that is still felt in mission literature today.

Warneck's paragraph on Calvin is both brief-as is understandable in a survey-and incomplete. His judgment that Calvin did not recognize the church's missionary obligation is based solely on Calvin's view of the apostolate, which I will consider below, and on a quote to the effect that God alone will advance the kingdom of Christ. On this slim evidence Warneck concludes that for Calvin "a special institution for the extension of Christianity among non-Christian nations, i.e. for missions, is needless."3 Calvin followed the Catholic, colonial model of Christian rulers as being responsible for converting the heathen. Warneck argues that this conception permeated both Lutheran and Reformed orthodoxy until the rise of Pietism,

the real spirit behind modern Protestant missions, in the late seventeenth century. In Part I of his scathing critique of Warneck's negative attitude toward the reformers, including Calvin, and their missionary significance, Walter Holsten shows how pervasive Warneck's influence was on subsequent scholarship. He shows that much of it was more critical even than Warneck's analysis of the reformers. It is not uncommon to find such scholars deducing from doctrines like predestination, quite apart from evidence in the sources, an anti-missions bias in Calvin.

"It is not uncommon to find ... scholars deducing from doctrines like predestination, quite apart from evidence in the sources, an anti-missions bias in Calvin."

Partially in response to Warneck and his followers a number of scholars have found in Calvin both a theoretical and a practical exponent of missions. During the past twenty-five years several excellent articles have argued that various of Calvin's doctrines not only imply missions, but that the reformer actually demonstrated ardent longing for the conversion of non-Samuel Zwemer, the well-Christians. known Reformed missionary to Arabia, points to Karlfried Frohlich's 1930 study of Calvin's theological articulation of the cosmic struggle between Christ and Satan as basic to the Genevan's missionary consciousness, and Zwemer himself contends that Calvin's doctrines of God's creation of man in his image and with a sense of divinity and of common grace are fundamental for his understanding of the heathen.⁵ Zwemer documents Calvin's ideas of a gospel call to all men, of the obligation of Christians to pray for the heathens' conversion, and of the glory that accrues to God in such conversions. Johannes van den Berg, H. Bergema and Charles Chaney have carefully worked through Calvin's <u>Institutes</u>, sermons and commentaries and found that the reformer's theology contains missionary principles.⁶ Van den Berg observes that Calvin appears to anticipate the conversion of the world's

Chaney finds explicit statements in Calvin which recognize the role of all believers in extending Christ's church by witnessing to others. He suggests that among the factors explaining the absence of a call to foreign missions in Calvin's writings are one aspect of his doctrine of election and his eschatology. 9 God "elects" the times and instruments for the spread of the gospel, and the global extension of the church still lies in the future. Although it would have been less confusing for Chaney to employ the term "providence" instead

"...a number of scholars have found in Calvin both a theoretical and a practical exponent of missions. During the past twenty-five years several excellent articles have argued that various of Calvin's doctrines not only imply missions, but that the reformer actually demonstrated ardent longing for the conversion of non-Christians."

nations to Christ while recognizing that in his day the spread of the gospel had just begun; however, Calvin believed that God's kingdom would certainly increase. He notes Calvin's emphasis on this growth as the work of God, not men, and acknowledges the ambiguous nature of Calvin's doctrine of the apostolate. 7 Chaney pushes even farther than does van den Berg. He contends that though references to missions are scarce in Calvin's works, they "provide adequate documentation for at least an outline of missionary principles" in Calvin's theology.8 He then spells out these principles as the calling of the Gentiles, the progress of the kingdom, the gathering of the church, and personal Christian responsibility to share the gospel with others. With respect to the last two

of "election", he has isolated two strands of Calvin's thought which curbed his own missionary dynamic but which became dominant motives in the missionary thought of later Calvinists. They thought that God had opened doors to the nations for them, doors which had been shut to Calvin, and that the final, glorious spread of the church before the eschaton was in progress.

Although it is unnecessary to repeat the references to Calvin's writings made by these defenders of his missionary sensitivity, it is important to note that their research has rendered a simple repetition of the Warneck thesis intellectually untenable. Calvin deserves to be judged on a basis including more than his interpretation of Matthew 28:19-20 or Mark 16:15 and

his notion of the magistrate's role in propagating Christianity, although these should be elements in any balanced assessment of his missionary significance. The issue cannot be settled by an easy dismissal of the points raised by Warneck. Van den Berg himself acknowledges that there is no developed doctrine of missions in Calvin, 10 and others have asked why, if he regarded missions as obligatory, Calvin did not promote them.

In response to the last query a number of scholars have argued that Calvin was not only theoretically committed to missions but that he was practically engaged in them. R. Pierce Beaver adduces the Villegagnon colonization attempt in Brazil, supported by the Calvinist nobleman, Coligny and accompanied by two Genevatrained pastors who were mandated to convert the natives, as evidence of Calvin's mission commitment. 11 Others have for some time defended the thesis that Calvin's outreach from Geneva to the rest of Europe was in fact an extended and vast home missions effort. The Genevan Academy, which trained pastors who carried the Reformation to their homelands, Calvin's copious correspondence and theological writings, his reorganization of the church, and his church education contributions are all seen as dimensions of a Genevan home missions project. Klooster is the most recent advocate of this position in an article in which he summarizes this argument by such men as Charles Edwards, H. Bergema, S. van der Linde and P. E. Hughes, 12 Klooster could have cited other proponents of this thesis, 13

In the light of Calvin's alleged theoretical and practical contributions to missions, therefore, it is noteworthy that a broad spectrum of missiologists have maintained essentially the Warneck position. They give little recognition to the substantial defense and careful assessments of Calvin's mission contributions written since World War II. William Ritchie Hogg, a well-known American historian of missions, is one of the most balanced writers

to fall into this category. In a widely circulated symposium of essays on mission, edited by Gerald Anderson, Hogg has a chapter on the Reformation era and missions. He begins, "The Reformers evidenced no concern for overseas missions to non-Christians."14 While he recognizes the necessity of doing justice to the literature on his subject, he takes his point of departure from Warneck by referring his readers to him for documentation of "the Reformers' amazing lack of a theology of missions,"15 His footnote to this statement also mentions van den Berg's dissertation and Kenneth S. Latourette's seven volume History of the Expansion of Christianity. Hogg makes the observation that "the reader who wishes to pursue the question would do well to compare Warneck, J. van den Berg, and Latourette and the larger literature to which they point."16 He acknowledges missionary implications in certain themes in Calvin's theology which were developed by later Calvinistic mission figures, thus showing awareness of the literature. But his verdict is ultimately that of Warneck:

"In the light of Calvin's alleged theoretical and practical contributions to missions, therefore, it is noteworthy that a broad spectrum of missiologists....give little recognition to the substantial defense and careful assessments of Calvin's mission contributions written since World War II."

searches John Calvin's <u>Institutes</u> and commentaries without finding any positive recognition of a theology of missions."17 The judgment on Calvin is negative in tone and Pietism is seen as responsible for modern missions.

While Hogg at least recognizes the

presence of scholarly debate on the subject, standard surveys of the history of missions fail to do even this much. Latourette's work, mentioned above, which was completed slightly prior to the era on which I am focusing, dates Protestant missionary theory and practice from a post-Reformation period. Stephen Neill's conclusion that the reformers' reference to mission "amounts to exceedingly little" and his interpretation of the rise of Protestant missions against the background of the Saravia-Gerhard differences on the great commission and of Justinian von Welz's work indicate his dependence on the Warneck tradition. 18 His three examples of influence on Kane in the latter's judgments on the theology of the reformers and also in his tracing of Protestant missions to Pietism.20

The writing of surveys is a demanding and hazardous occupation. By indicating that these mission histories have been but little influenced by recent literature on Calvin and missions, I do not intend to detract from their indispensability and general excellence. I wish only to indicate the thorough and pervasive influence that an emphasis such as Warneck's can make and in fact has made on the field of mission history. I also make an appeal for general studies in this area to either

"The writing of surveys is a demanding and hazardous occupation. By indicating that these mission histories have been but little influenced by recent literature on Calvin and missions, I do not intend to detract from their indispensability and general excellence. I wish only to indicate the thorough and pervasive influence that an emphasis such as Warneck's can make and in fact has made on the field of mission history."

sixteenth century Protestant mission efforts do not include the Brazilian expedition inspired by Calvinists. J. Herbert Kane does, and then quite inconsistently, after having observed that the theology of the reformers was "the first, and perhaps the most potent, factor contributing to the lack of missions in the Reformation era."19 He cites the reformers' notion that the great commission was limited to the apostles, Calvinists' doctrine of predestination, and Luther's apocalypticism. He also repeats the Calvin quote stressed by Warneck to the effect that God's kingdom is advanced by God, not by One therefore senses Warneck's men.

adjust their interpretation of Calvin's role in missions or to resume the discussion in the journals by answering those who have found Calvin more amenable to missions than they had thought. Little will be accomplished in either direction, however, unless two deeper aspects of the current difference of emphasis in assessing Calvin are taken into consideration: the problem of the definition of mission and the relationship of church and mission. Both are enormous subjects in mission literature today, and I will refer to them not exhaustively but only insofar as I feel they help to clarify issues in the discussion about Calvin.

Definition of Mission

"Missions" is a fluid and frustratingly nebulous term. J. H. Bavinck defines it as follows.

Missions is that activity of the church—in essence it is nothing else than an activity of Christ, exercised through the church—through which the church, in this interim period, in which the end is postponed, calls the peoples of the earth to repentance and to faith in Christ, so that they may be made his disciples and through baptism be incorporated into the fellowship of those who await the coming of the kingdom.21

Bavinck allows room in his definition for both the professional missionary and the missionary role of every believer, that is, for the role of the church as institute and the church as organism. Further, he emphasizes the task of missions as witness to the kingdom and proclamation of the gospel unto repentance and faith, disciple-

"Although our ecumenical age is more inclined to judge the Reformation as a unique, historically qualified form of proselytism, it must be granted that by Bavinck's standards Calvin in his own mind was engaged in what we have come to know as missions."

ship and incorporation into Christian fellowship. He minimizes a geographic dimension as normative for defining missions, referring only to "the peoples of the earth," and thus he allows for both foreign missions and home missions, both missions and evangelism.

If one grants Calvin his premise that the Roman Catholic establishment of his day was anti-Christian, by Bavinck's definition he was engaged in missions. The home missions thesis regarding Calvin's reforming work, as defended by Klooster and others, therefore has validity. Although our ecumenical age is more inclined to judge the Reformation as a unique, historically qualified form of proselytism, it must be granted that by Bavinck's standards Calvin in his own mind was engaged in what we have come to know as missions.

Not all missiologists share Bavinck's highly theological and inclusive or openended definition, however. The geographical factor has had a predominant function in the understanding of missions employed by many. Just as the Christian layman upon hearing the term generally thinks of a professional, full time ambassador of Christ sent overseas by either a denominational board or a non-denominational agency, many missiologists deliberately or inadvertently employ the word "missions" in this sense. This usage is the baggage carried from our recent, Western colonial and neo-colonial past. When the monolithic, corpus Christianum conception of society, which characterized the medieval and Reformation periods, was displaced by the religious voluntarism and pluralism of the modern but still predominantly Christian period of Western history, and when this displacement was wedded to the mercantile and colonial expansion of Protestant nations, this more restricted definition of missions became the dominant one. is the definition assumed by Warneck, and it explains his defense of Pietism as the progenitor of modern Protestant missions. Given his definition of missions, it was! Pietists were pioneers in commissioning overseas ambassadors for Christ who were free from political ties and support. This is based as much on their acceptance of religious voluntarism and their shift to the free church concept as to their zeal

for the conversion of heathen. Van den Berg and especially Walter Holsten have shown the anachronism in judging Calvin by this more restricted definition of missions.22 English speaking missiologists, particularly in North America, would be well served by a good translation and widespread reading of Holsten's article. At one point Warneck admitted the restricted sense of his definition: miss in the Reformers not only missionary action, but even the idea of missions, in the sense in which we understand them today"23 (italics mine). Since he did not apply the implications of this statement to his own historical methodology, however, there is little wonder in the fact that those dependent on him are no more appreciative of Calvin's position than he is.

Perhaps today's ambiguity regarding the term "missions" constitutes the climate for making Holsten's point stick. include medical work, educational programs, agricultural training and assistance, linguistic work, radio outreach, various community development plans, and world relief under the big umbrella of missions. This is rightly defended by an appeal to the principles of missions in word and deed, to the Old Testament concreteness of shalom and to God's redemptive mission (missio Dei) as renewing man's whole life, including the structures of society. It is but a short step from these modern forms of missions to the sanctioning of the support of guerilla movements against tyrannical regimes and to the boycotting of Chase Manhatten Bank for investing funds in South Africa—all under the aggis of missions. Much has been written about the church as missionary in nature and about the missionary aspect of all her functions and activities. Since the Mexico City Conference, convened in 1963 by the Division of World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches. the presence of the church on six continents has been emphasized. Increasingly the traditional idea of North Atlantic or Western missions to the rest of the world has been resented and resisted. Partially

in response to the more recent emphasis on the mission of the whole church to the whole world, the International Review of Missions changed her name to The International Review of Mission in 1969 and church leaders today are declaring a moratorium on missions in the older sense. Ecumenical circles are accused of defining missions in strictly horizontal, this-worldly categories. Evangelicals are regarded as throw-backs to a by-gone era and as purveyors of a patronizing gospel and of cheap grace. Recently it has been suggested that the trinitarian nature of God and the consequent pluralism of his works in the world and of the church's ministries might require our speaking of the missiones Dei rather than of the missio Dei.24 Clearly the church is groping through complex theological questions and a changing historical situation in an effort to define her calling (mission) in today's world.

"We include medical work, educational programs, agricultural training and assistance, linguistic work, radio outreach, various community development plans, and world relief under the big umbrella of missions."

Mission, understood as the church's response to her sense of responsibility to make Christ known in her age, has changed historically. For the apostle Paul it was closer to what we would call evangelism; his world was politically united under Rome and culturally permeated with Hellenism. For the medieval monastic missionary vocation connoted a personal, ascetic pilgrimage through a sinful world; his Christianizing work was a dimension of that pilgrimage. For the colonial age the church's responsibility was bound to

the Christian calling of the monarch: church and crown were God's co-operating servants, with each playing their clearly defined role in the coming of God's king-For the people of God in a pluralistic, mercantile era, her calling towards others was in part conducted overseas via societies and their emissaries. Today the church's vocation appears to be ecumenical and environmental; she shares resources and personnel with fellow Christians throughout the world in proclaiming Christ in the context of various social, political and cultural situations or environments. In every age she must respond to God by establishing her priorities, developing forms of ministry, marshalling her resources and channeling her energies. While the forms change with the age and

"In a sense mission today (or missions, if you prefer) is closer to the reformers' renewal and outreach of the church in dialogue and co-operation than to the form of missions between 1700 and 1950."

her motives, always impure, fluctuate, the divine miracle of God's advancing kingdom and of lives conformed to Christ occurs. In a sense mission today (or missions, if you prefer) is closer to the reformers' renewal and outreach of the church in dialogue and co-operation than to the form of missions between 1700 and 1950. But mission today would be impossible without the missions of the past, just as they in turn are indebted to the mission of Calvin and his contemporaries.

Van den Berg raises the pointed question of whether Calvin saw the need for

the church to go to the non-Christian world.25 Van den Berg obviously means the world beyond the corpus Christianum of Calvin's day. This was the burning, exclusive missionary question for Warneck. We have seen that a definitional exclusiveness can blind us to Calvin's seminal theological principles for the church's global mission, to his work in Europe which is so similar to our mission to the post-Christian world around us, and to his indirect role in the ill-fated colonial mission to Brazil. But van den Berg and even Warneck force us to conclude that in the ultimate analysis Calvin was not a complete mission figure. Mission always has a global dimension; for the church always has a calling to "the peoples of the earth." Our adjectives "home" and "foreign" capture dimensions of the church's calling in the world that belong to the esse of the church's mission in any age. Warneck legitimately criticizes the reformer for failing to focus the church's attention on her responsibility for those outside Western Europe and for developing a theological rationale for such responsibility. Simultaneously Warneck is legitimately criticized for his timebound view of missions which blinds him to Calvin's stature as a missionary figure. Both sides of the discussion have produced indispensible insights for a final. balanced evaluation of Calvin's significance for missions. And both sides do well to remember the importance of clarity in defining the concept of missions with which they operate.

The Apostolate and Ecclesiology

Just as lack of clarity in defining missions has inhibited a balanced evaluation of Calvin's missionary significance, so has his position on the apostolate. Today's missionary literature on the missionary nature and calling of the church is too vast and well known to require documentation. One need think, however, only of Johannes Blauw's significant Biblical-theological study, The Missionary Na-

ture of the Church, to recall how theologically imperative it has become to think of the church in missionary categories. Today it is common to speak of the church as mission. One dimension of this contemporary emphasis is the doctrine of the church's apostolic character and calling. The Dutch missiologists Hendrik Kraemer and J. C. Hoekendijk are significant contributors to our modern understanding of the apostolate. 26 Calvin's position on the apostolate has received great emphasis in evaluations of his missionary significance.

As noted above, Warneck's negative judgment on Calvin's missionary significance rests in large measure on the reformer's view of the apostolate, particularly his exegesis of Matthew 28:19-20. After noting that Luther and Melancthon regarded the great commission as binding only on the apostles, he recognizes that Bucer, Zwingli and Calvin held that although the apostles had responded to Christ's command by bringing the gospel to vast sections of the earth, their work had not been completed among every Calvin did not "teach directly people. that already through the Apostles the Gospel has been preached in the whole world, but...the extension of Christianity is still in progress, albeit the apostolate was a 'munus extraordinarium' (extraordinary office), which as such has not been perpetuated in the Christian church."27 Less precision is shown by Hogg, who cites as one reason for lack of missions among the reformers in general, Calvin included, "attitudes congenial to the notion that the Great Commission had been fulfilled by the Apostles."28 Kane actually is in error by including Calvin in the statement, "They taught that the Great Commission pertained only to the original apostles: that the apostles fulfilled the Great Commission by taking the gospel to the ends of the then known world...."29

The most careful and respected students of Calvin's theology concur that the reformer distinguished between ordinary and extraordinary offices, functions and ministries in the church.30 The ordinary offices are so vital to the life of the church that they are to be present at all times. These consist of the deacons, elders and two types of ministers, pastors and doctors or teachers. Calvin speaks of five offices functioning in the ministry of the Word: pastor, teacher, apostle, evangelist and prophet. "Although he discerned a sense in which pastors correspond to apostles and evangelists, and teachers to prophets..., he regarded all save pastors and teachers as extraordinary offices, raised up by the Lord at the beginning and revived by Him from time to time as the need demands...."31 The most relevant passage in the Institutes is the following one.

According to this interpretation (which seems to me to be in agreement with both the words and opinion of Paul), these three functions were not established in the church as permanent ones, but only for that time during which churches were to be erected where none existed before, or where they were to be carried over from Moses to Christ. Still, I do not deny that the Lord has sometimes at a later period raised up apostles, or at least evangelists in their place, as has happened in our own day. For there was need for such persons to lead the church back from the rebellion of Antichrist. Nonetheless, I call this office 'extraordinary, duly constituted because in churches it has no place.32

It is obvious, therefore, that while Calvin said that the apostles and evangelists had received extraordinary offices from Christ for the purpose of planting the church where she had not existed before, he did not maintain that the divisio apostolorum, i.e. the notion that the apostles had divided among themselves and evangelized the world, precluded the appearance of apostles after the New Testa-

ment twelve nor excused the church thereafter of evangelizing non-Christian peoples. In later Calvinism Theodore Beza, in his debate with Hadrian Saravia, and the Second Helvetic Confession, Chapter 17, maintain this position. But it is not to be confused with Calvin's own views, which are much more complex and ill-defined.

Among missiological assessments of Calvin's position on the apostolate, J. van den Berg uses such qualifications of it as "cautious," "rather vague," "not quite loose from the old concept," and "realistic enough to recognize the insufficiency of the idea of the divisio apostolorum."33 In his earlier article he ventures the guess that under different circumstances, had Calvin been faced with more direct contact with the world beyond the corpus Christianum, he would have clarified this ambiguity.34 Willem F. Dankbaar has given us the most thorough missiological analysis of Calvin's view of the apostolate.35 On this topic he finds

to the apostles while regarding the consequent promise as valid for the church of all ages. Dankbaar regards this as invalid division of the text. Calvin does not apply Christ's statement, "As the Father has sent me, so send I you" to the church of all ages. Positively, however, Calvin does not declare the apostolic office closed, at times uses the term for others than the twelve (commentaries, Rom. 16:7 and I Cor. 4:9), refers to Luther as an apostle (preface to commentary on Romans), and regards the work of the apostolate as necessary until Christ's return (commentary, Isa. 45:23). In the dedication of the commentary on Acts Calvin sees apostolic authority and responsibility as transmitted to Christian princes. Clearly, therefore, Calvin did not come to clarity and consistency in his explanation of the apostolate. certainly did not regard it as the basis for the permanent, on-going missionary calling of the church. Yet he maintained

"The most careful and respected students of Calvin's theology concur that the reformer distinguished between ordinary and extraordinary offices, functions and ministries in the church. The ordinary offices are so vital to the life of the church that they are to be present at all times."

two strands in Calvin's writings. Negatively, he observes that Calvin held the divisio apostolorum and split the apostolate into two dimensions, a temporary and occasional missionary aspect and the permanent service of the Word and sacraments as passed on to the pastors. Hence Calvin's commentaries restrict the great commission

the apostolate as a temporary and repeatable official function of the church, thus actually opening the door to later institutional ecclesiastical outreach to the nations. His exegesis of the great commission, however, was so conditioned by his polemic against the Roman Catholic church's claim to apostolic succession that

it disregarded the obvious missionary vocation of the church contained in it. Harry Boer shows that for Warneck, indeed for most Protestant missionary activity of the past one hundred fifty years, obedience to the great commission was the primary and basic motive for missions.36 This renders understandable the German scholar's negative assessment of Calvin on the apostolate. But a balanced view of the reformer will also take cognizance of positive statements fleeting on apostolicity and of their implications for future missionary thought and action.

Calvin's ambiguity on the apostolate, however, is an indication of a deeper missionary problem in the reformer's the-This problem centers in his ec-While his writings on the clesiology. church stress the permanent offices and their functions, the importance of the Word and sacraments for God's people. instruction of covenant youth, Christian discipline, Roman errors, and historical and exegetical arguments for his positions, we find a lacuna in his ecclesiology. His doctrines of God's sovereignty, election, Christ's all-sufficient atonement, the calling of the Gentiles, the coming of the kingdom, and the gathering of the church have implications for a Biblical perspective on the church which was never spelled out in Calvin's ecclesiological passages. concern for the unconverted and his reminders to believers of their priestly role towards others are present. But he does not articulate a doctrine of the church's mission to those outside Western Europe, of her permanent apostolic calling, of how and why the church in her ministry could reach out to others. This is work for princes and believers and for the instituted church only in special seasons. Had Calvin brought the missionary perspectives of other sections of his theological writings to bear directly upon his ecclesiology, he may well have developed, as van den Berg suggests, a clear doctrine of the apostolate. He may even have given an articulation of the church's mission in his ecclesiology. But he did

not, and in this regard his reforming work is incomplete.

Conclusion

The mission literature on John Calvin, therefore, is large and significant enough to warrant wider recognition by Calvin scholars. It struggles with an elusive dimension of the reformer's thought and But both those who minimize and those who exaggerate his missionary significance have assisted us towards a balanced evaluation of the man. Differences sometimes resulted from insufficient clarity in defining missions, and today's struggle in this regard can be brought to bear on the Calvin issue in a way that helps us see the whole reformer in both his missionary strengths and weaknesses. Negative judgments on his missionary significance which are based solely on his notion of the apostolate as related to his execusis of Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15. have done him injustice by ignoring the complexity of his thought on this topic. However, they also suggest to us that there is a lacuna in Calvin's ecclesiology. which could have been avoided had he brought other missionary insights in his theology to bear on his doctrine of the church.

Footnotes

- 1. John T. McNeill, "Thirty Years of Calvin Study," Church History, 17 (1948), 207-240; expanded and updated in Williston Walker, John Calvin: the Organizer of the Protestant Reformation, 1509-1564, with a bibliographical essay by John T. McNeill (New York, 1969), xvi-lxxvii.
- 2. Joseph N. Tylenda, "Calvin Bibliography, 1960-1970," Calvin Theological Journal, 6 (1971), 156-193; Peter De Klerk, "Calvin Bibliography 1972," Calvin Theological Journal, 7 (1972), 221-

250.

- 3. Gustav Warneck, <u>Outline of A</u>
 <u>History of Protestant Missions</u>, ed. and trans. by George Robson (3rd English ed., based on 8th German ed.; Edinburgh, 1906), 20.
- 4. Walter Holsten, "Reformation und Mission," <u>Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte</u>, 44 (1953), 1-32.
- 5. Samuel Zwemer, "Calvinism and the Missionary Enterprise," in <u>God-Centered Living</u> (Grand Rapids, 1951), 59-60. This article is reprinted from <u>Theology Today</u>, 7 (1950), 206-216.
- 6. Johannes van den Berg, "Calvin and Missions," in John Calvin: Contemporary Prophet, Jacob T. Hoogstra, ed. (Grand Rapids, 1959), 167-183; and "Calvin's Missionary Message," Evangelical Quarterly, 22 (1950), 174-187. H. Bergema, "De Betekenis van Calvijn voor de Zending in de Missiologie," Vox Theologica, 20 (1958), 44-54. Charles Chaney, "The Missionary Dynamic in the Theology of John Calvin," The Reformed Review, 17 (1964), 24-38.
- 7. Van den Berg, "Calvin and Missions," 168-170.
 - 8. Chaney, 25.
 - 9. <u>Ibid.</u>, 32-36.
- 10. Van den Berg, "Calvin and Missions," 167-170.
- 11. R. Pierce Beaver, "The Genevan Mission to Brazil," The Reformed Journal, 17 (1967), 14-20.
- 12. Fred Klooster, "Missions—The Heidelberg Catechism and Calvin," <u>Calvin Theological</u> <u>Journal</u>, 7 (1972), 186-192.
- 13. George C. Fry, "John Calvin: Theologian and Evangelist," <u>Christianity Today</u>, 15 (Oct. 23, 1970), 3-6, takes essentially this position. James Mackinnon, <u>Calvin and the Reformation</u> (New York, 1962), Chapter 14, "Director of the Evangelical Mission," 195-205.
- 14. William Ritchie Hogg, "The Rise of Protestant Missionary Concern, 1517-1914," in <u>The Theology of the Christian Mission</u>, ed. by Gerald H. Anderson (New York, etc., 1961), 95.
 - 15. Ibid., 97.

- 16. Ibid., n. 2, 97-98.
- 17. Ibid., 98.
- 18. Stephen Neill, A History of Christian Missions (Vol. 6, The Pelican History of the Church; Grand Rapids, 1965), 222.
- 19. J. Herbert Kane, <u>A Global View</u> of <u>Christian Missions</u> (Grand Rapids, 1971), 73.
- 20. For an analysis of Kane's book see my review in <u>Calvin Theological Journal</u>, 8 (1973), 172-177.
- 21. J. H. Bavinck, An Introduction to the Science of Missions, trans. by David H. Freeman (Grand Rapids, 1960), 62.
- 22. Van den Berg, "Calvin and Missions," 168.
 - 23. Warneck, 9.
- 24. Johannes Aagaard, "Mission after Uppsala 1968," <u>International Review of Mission</u>, 1973 (62), 8-25.
- 25. Van den Berg, "Calvin and Missions," 168.
- 26. For a summary of their views see G. Brillenburg Wurth, "'Het Apostolaat van de Kerk' in Deze Tijd," in De Apostolische Kerk (Kampen, 1954), 98-133.
 - 27. Warneck, 19.
 - 28. Hogg, 100.
 - 29. Kane, 73.
- 30. Wilhelm Niesel, <u>The Theology of Calvin</u>, trans. by Harold Knight (Phila., 1956), 201; Francois Wendel, <u>Calvin</u>, trans. by Philip Mairet (New York and Evanston, 1963), 303.
- 31. J. F. Peter, "The Ministry in the Early Church as Seen by John Calvin," Evangelical Quarterly, 35 (1963), 74.
- 32. John Calvin, The Institutes of the Christian Religion, ed. by John T. McNeill and trans. by Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols. (Vols. 20 and 21, The Library of Christian Classics; Phila., 1960), II, 1057.
- 33. Van den Berg, "Calvin and Missions," 169.
- 34. Van den Berg, "Calvin's Missionary Message," 178.
- 35. Willem F. Dankbaar, "Het Apostolaat bij Calvijn," <u>Nederlands Theologisch</u> Tijdschrift, 4(1949-1950), 177-192.
- 36. Harry Boer, <u>Pentecost and Missions</u> (Grand Rapids, 1961), 26-27.