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## Calvin, Geneva and the Reformation: A Study of Calvin as Social Reformer, Churchman, Pastor and Theologian (Book Review)

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pressure to remove evangelicalism from university curricula, and (3) the fundamentalist controversies which separated the process of knowing into the realms of faith and science and left fundamentalists out in the cold as far as university-level education was concerned. . . ." (297).

Second, having noted signs of evangelical recovery in higher education, Marsden inquires about what can be done to improve the relationship between evangelicalism and higher scholarship. He suggests two steps: (1) a sustained effort to stress the importance of Christian scholarship, and (2) the mobilization of current evangelical academic resources initially by way of research institutes and study centers.

Thus far I have tried to share something of the content and the high quality of the book under consideration. Although they vary in worth, most of the essays are excellent pieces which are deserving of serious consideration on an individual basis.

Throughout the book there are things to be noted with appreciation, e.g., the acknowledgment of the Reformation principles that there can be "no long-term flourishing of the church apart from a concern to educate each generation" (40); the insistence that Christian colleges not try to isolate their students "from the principal currents of cultural life" (11); the description of Christian liberal arts education as "the pursuit of the integration of all human knowledge with the Christian faith, and the formation of people qualified to function competently in all areas of life" (48); the significance of "supporting Christian scholarship at the highest academic level" (295); the importance of changing "recent declines in minority enrollments in colleges and universities" (281); and the declaration that "The goal for which Christian educators are to teach is that their students be agents and celebrators of shalom . . ." (211).

At the same time, I have problems with the book.

My first problem has to do with the title of the book—*Making Higher Education Christian*. Are the editors sug-

gesting that higher education stands there as some neutral entity or arena, waiting to be made Christian? It would seem that those who chose the title are guilty of the very thing which Mark Noll criticizes in "Christian Higher Education in the Early Republic":

. . . where Puritan education had proceeded from a Christian perspective, which sought to dominate the shape, purposes, and structure of learning, leaders in America's Christian colleges after the Revolution allowed truths of the didactic Enlightenment to lay out the shape, purposes, and structure of knowledge, within which they were delighted to find a place for Christianity. (64)

My second problem has to do with the understanding of the nature of Christian higher education. For example, in "Bringing Christian Criteria to Bear on Academic Work," Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen writes about the importance of a Christian "world-view from which scholarship proceeds" (195). But, in "The Contribution of Theological Studies to the Christian Liberal Arts," William A. Dyrness suggests that theology should function as "the integrating element" in Christian higher education (173). What is required for "making higher education Christian"? The essays in this book give different answers to that question.

Marsden suggests that "making higher education Christian" will require the existence of a major evangelical university. He also observes that the establishment of such an institution calls for more than a large constituency or adequate funding (294, 295). I agree; but I would go on to remark that if an evangelical university is to be established and if we are to succeed in "making higher education Christian," we must come to a clearer understanding of the nature and essence of Christian higher education itself. That understanding has not yet been attained—not even by the authors of the essays found in this excellent book.

*Calvin, Geneva and the Reformation: A Study of Calvin as Social Reformer, Churchman, Pastor and Theologian*, Ronald S. Wallace (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1988). 309 pp. \$29.95. Reviewed by Arnold Koekkoek, Associate Professor of History.

Ronald Wallace is a Scot who, after a long career as a parish minister, taught fourteen years at Columbia (Georgia) Theological Seminary before retirement. This book represents the distillation of a lifetime's reading and thinking about John Calvin by one who tells us he collected and read material for years but never found time to master all the details necessary to write such a book himself (vii). In retirement, drawing on what footnotes show to be an immense store of secondary works as well as on the primary sources, Wallace has produced this study.

In a sense, therefore, this is an ambitious work, for it attempts to synthesize and summarize all that collected material in the space of 300 pages. On the whole it must be said that Wallace succeeds rather well within the limitations he sets himself: not a "Life of Calvin", but . . . a series of essays on his work and on the thought and devotion which he put into it" (vii). I find the value of the book not so much in the originality of the author's ideas—in fact, there is probably not much that is really new—as in the concise distillation of the ideas of the great

reformer into a book of this size. If one wants to know Calvin's thinking on the topics noted in the subtitle, this is a good place to find it, with Wallace's own insights to add to one's understanding and appreciation.

Though the aim is not to tell the reformer's life story, the author wisely elects to begin with a brief biography, in order that the reader may understand both the context and the thrust of Calvin's ideas. Wallace's major effort is "to show how his [Calvin's] thought determined his aim and policy" (vii). He demonstrates repeatedly that Calvin's ideals were not ivory tower theologizing but were *practiced* (*passim*, esp. 19,41,43). Calvin was not just a theorizing academic but was involved in the practical experience of trying to be an everyday leader. In the author's words, Calvin was "close to life" (45).

Wallace might also have said he wished to show how vital it is to know Calvin's life situation in order to understand his thought, for this is a recurring motif. Indeed, it is one of the book's chief virtues that it does well, thus bearing out the wisdom of Wallace's decision to open with biographical chapters, which are remarkably thorough in view of the space allotted. The historical context provides valuable clues to the proper understanding of many ideas, emphases, and actions.

Students of Calvin have spilled much ink in arguing about what they see as the central idea or first principle in the reformer's thought. Wallace claims and shows clearly that the first principle is the central importance of the Word of God. Both beliefs and actions are shown to rest wholly on that Word (*passim*). His was a "theology of the Word" (222), and from that flowed views on such matters as government, both church and state (114), discipline (51), personal honor (60), the ministry (60-63), the Lord's Supper (83-84), and pastoral work (176), to

give only a partial listing. Calvin, like Luther, made the Word of God his touchstone.

Chapter 12 (166-184) is of special significance because it focuses on what the author regards as one of the Genevan reformer's major emphases, his pastoral concern. Wallace stresses Calvin's view of the preacher as being first of all a pastor, and he shows how much of the reformer's work, including his writing, is underlain by a concern for the welfare of the individual parishioner. Many a modern minister could learn from a study of Calvin on this point.

Since this is a collection of essays, no review can deal with every topic covered, but one would be remiss not to note that Wallace, while refuting many of the unjust or untrue criticisms often leveled at Calvin, has not simply written a whitewash. Though showing how many commonly repeated assertions are without factual basis, he also deals honestly with some of the matters about which a modern Calvinist feels out of sympathy with the reformer, and he devotes considerable space to a discussion of the most controversial doctrine commonly, though wrongly, seen as peculiarly Calvin's, namely, predestination (Ch. 17). Not every Calvinist will agree with Wallace's interpretation, but at least all must admit that he does not try to dodge issues.

All in all, this is a useful and thoughtful book, well-written, clear, and with every indication of thorough scholarship and total mastery of the subject. I have two minor criticisms. The proof-reading let a number of printing errors slip through, and there ought to be a bibliography appended. It is a nuisance to have to thumb through many previous pages hunting for a title to which one now sees only *op. cit.* as a footnote reference. Neither of these, however, detracts from the basic value of the book.

*The Great Divide - Christianity or Evolution*, Gerard Berghoef and Lester De Koster (Grand Rapids: The Christian's Library Press, 1988). Soft cover, 76 pp. \$8.95. Reviewed by Aaldert Mennega, Professor of Biology.

In the Foreword the authors plainly state the thesis of their book in the following words: "Theistic evolution, also called 'creationomic science,' perverts Christianity into just another man-tailored religion" (13).

The principal reason they give in support of this strong assertion is that

Theistic evolutionists reject Genesis by paying it lip service. They label God's Word as primeval history, or poetry, or saga, myth or legend, to justify reading their own meaning into what Genesis says. The result is a hybrid "religion" mislabeled "Christianity" to mislead. (14)

They trust that God's Word will persuade the reader that the thrust of their book is correct.

Structured according to the Plan of Redemption, the book has three main parts, dealing with Creation (9 chapters), Fall (3 chapters), and Incarnation (4 chapters). Part four is a summary and consists of a single chapter.

At the beginning of each chapter the authors indicate in short statements what Genesis says on a subject, and then contrast it with the positions of secular evolution and theistic evolution. In the chapters they elaborate on those summary statements.

The recurrent theme of the book is that there is a great divide between God and Christianity on the one hand, and evolution on the other hand. As they move from one chapter to the next, the authors illustrate the contrast and incompatibility of the evolutionist positions with Scripture. They speak specifically to the initial beginnings (vs. the Big Bang), the origin of light, the origin of man and