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# EXERCITIUM PIETATIS — CALVIN'S INTERPRETATION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

## ABSTRACT

This article examines Calvin's interpretation of the Lord's Prayer by scrutinising it in the successive editions of his *Institutes*, the 1537 *Catechism*, the 1542 *Geneva Catechism*, the short paraphrase for the Geneva liturgy (1542), the exegesis of the Lord's Prayer in the 1555 commentary or harmony of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), and his explanation of the questions and answers for the 43<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the 1542 *Geneva Catechism* (c. 1563). These sources reveal that, in the texts prior to 1555, Calvin placed a dogmatic emphasis on the six petitions. Later he shifted his attention to the actual practice of prayer. Initially he tried to understand the correct theological meaning of the Lord's Prayer; later he urged the person who prays to use it correctly. At the outset the theologian spoke, later he became the pastor of souls. A comparison of the various texts reveals that throughout his life Calvin endeavoured to enhance his understanding of the Lord's Prayer and its meaning.

## 1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND SOURCES

Calvin's principal work, the *Institutio Christianae Religionis*, gives the impression of a compacted, dovetailed structure of doctrine. His intention was to extend and expand on the book by adding sentences and paragraphs in subsequent editions. Obviously, in doing so, he did not intend to omit earlier sections of his written text with the view to redrafting it. Calvin's substitution of one section for a new one requires special attention. One should presuppose a measured decision on Calvin's part to dispose of the earlier text. As a rule this must be related to further theological consideration and reflection on Calvin's part. I know of no example where he re-wrote a paragraph entirely on stylistic grounds. Calvin's expansion of his work and re-writing of a text provides us with the opportunity to glimpse into his theological thinking.

His interpretation of the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer in the 1559 *Institutes*, as indicated in the *Opera Selecta*, replaces that of the first edition. If, in addition to this, one compares his exegesis of this prayer in the commentary or harmony on the Gospels of the year 1555, it becomes ap-

parent that throughout his life Calvin endeavoured to enhance his understanding of the Lord's Prayer and its meaning. His later interpretations differ, in some instances considerably, from the earlier ones. He did not alter the interpretation of the Lord's Prayer in the editions of the *Institutes* but only made minor alterations. It must be emphasised that in all editions most passages are unchanged. The researcher, however, must compare both the earlier and later texts, as they shed light on what Calvin wanted to say and did not want to say.

An examination of the sources reveals that Calvin initially placed a dogmatic emphasis on the six petitions. Later he shifted his attention to the actual practice of prayer. At first he tried to grasp the correct theological meaning of the Lord's Prayer, whereas later he strove for its proper use by the person who prays. At the outset the theologian spoke; then he became the pastor of souls.

As far as is known, Calvin explained the Lord's Prayer eight times, of which seven have survived. To the early interpretations belong (1) the explication in the 1536 *Institutes*, expanded in the 1539 edition; (2) an abbreviated clarification in the 1537 *Catechism*, and (3) the treatment of this prayer in the 1542 *Geneva Catechism*. (4) He also wrote a short paraphrase for the Geneva liturgy in the year 1542. The later expositions incorporate (5) Calvin's exegesis of the Lord's Prayer in the 1555 commentary on the Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) and (6) in the partially revised edition of the 1559 *Institutes*. (7) In the year 1561 he made available his exegesis of the harmony of the Gospels in sermons. Unfortunately the printed sermons ended before the interpretation of the Lord's Prayer; the postscript of the sermons is also missing.<sup>1</sup> (8) In 1964 R. Peter of Strasbourg published Calvin's explanation of the questions and answers for the 43<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the 1542 *Geneva Catechism*.<sup>2</sup> It examines in detail the sixth petition and the concluding doxology. Calvin thus explained his own *Catechism*. Indications are that this explanation was intended for the Geneva pastors and that it dates from 1563 or earlier.<sup>3</sup>

The present investigation is based on these sources.

## 2. CALVIN AS SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGIAN

Calvin investigated the Lord's Prayer from a doctrinal or, more precisely, a systematic theological point of view. This is, of course, not the only angle from which he considered it. Nevertheless, it is fundamental to his exposition

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- 1 H. Scholl, *Der Dienst des Gebetes nach Johannes Calvin* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1968), 154.
  - 2 Jean Calvin, *Deux Congrégations et Exposition du Catéchisme ... avec une introduction et notes par Rodolphe Peter* (Paris: Presses universitaire de France, 1964).
  - 3 *Ibid.*, XXVI.

of the prayer. The systematic theologian seeks a categorisation of the Lord's Prayer. In nearly all interpretations he stresses the fact that the six petitions are divided into two parts:

The first three petitions are focused on the glory of God with no allusion to us. The remaining three are intended for us and deal with our welfare and benefit.<sup>4</sup>

This division is theologically significant. The glory of God always comes first, "then only do we descend to think of ourselves".<sup>5</sup> In the commentary on the Gospels Calvin observes that the two parts of the Lord's Prayer correspond to the two tables of the Decalogue, the first of which containing the claims of devotion to God (*officia pietatis*) and the second charity (*caritas*) to the neighbour.<sup>6</sup>

Clearly the Lord's Prayer does not offer grounds for further classification. Calvin does not find an underlying order in the petitions of the second part. The forgiveness of sins in the fifth petition should have preceded the petition for sustenance because the soul is more important than the body.<sup>7</sup> In the commentary on the Gospels Calvin notes that Christ disregarded a particular order in the sequence of petitions.<sup>8</sup> In the *Institutes* he observes that a gradual ascent (*gradatim*) may be perceived from the fourth to the fifth petition.<sup>9</sup> One senses Calvin's uneasiness with the sequence of these petitions.

In his later statements on the Lord's Prayer it is clear that what impressed him most in the first three petitions was their identical content. "Between these first three petitions there is a great affinity and likeness", he comments in the harmony of the Gospels.<sup>10</sup> Calvin made this assertion without further reflection.

Calvin did not understand the form of the Lord's Prayer. The words of Mathew 6:9 "After this manner also pray" was not an ordinance of Christ to pray according to a dictated formula (*conceptis verbis*). Christ, however, gave an "ordinance for correct prayer" (*rite precandi legem*). This ordinance applies not to the words but to the matters He enumerated.<sup>11</sup> What are these "matters"?

4 *Geneva Catechism* 1542, Question 257; *OS* 2, 118f. Also 1, 405f. (1537); *CO* 45, 195 (1555); *OS* 4, 344, 31; *Inst.* III.20.35.

5 *CO* 45, 198, 53-54.

6 *CO* 45, 198, 38-40.

7 *CO* 45, 198/199.

8 *CO* 45, 195, 8-10.

9 *OS* 4, 357, 15; *Inst.* III.20.44.

10 *CO* 45, 196, 31-32.

11 *CO* 45, 195, 8-25.

The fifth and sixth petitions contain a *crux interpretum* which was also a matter of concern to Calvin.

If one asks about the peculiar character of the Lord's Prayer, the answer is to be found in the commentary of the Gospels: It is an excellent exercise in piety (*praecipuum pietatis exercitium*),<sup>12</sup> since it teaches what is lacking in us. Christ wanted to control and order our petitions so that we do not stray beyond the prescribed boundaries. He is the heavenly teacher (*coelestis magister*) who guides our heart and our words.<sup>13</sup> According to Calvin, the Lord's Prayer shows us what the most important things are for which we should pray to God. In this sense the Lord's Prayer is the "sum" of all prayers and is characterised by its "perfection".<sup>14</sup>

### 3. INCREASING UNDERSTANDING

As indicated earlier, Calvin revised his explanation in the 1539 *Institutes* and supplemented it in the 1559 *Institutes*. His expansions fit organically into the text. Some examples are worth mentioning: (1) In 1559 he inserted the comment, citing Plato's acquaintance with the fact, that men bring foolish desires to God and it is a good thing that not every desire is granted to them.<sup>15</sup> (2) In 1539, in the passage dealing with the words "Our Father", he refers to Romans 8:15: The Holy Spirit teaches us to cry "Abba, Father".<sup>16</sup> Calvin thus attempted to enhance and clarify our understanding of what is said by adding new biblical references. (3) He also tried to give a better understanding of the words "in heaven" by inserting new reflections for the supplicant.<sup>17</sup>

What is more important though is that Calvin showed an increasing line of development in the assertion of his interpretation of the first three petitions. A comparison of the texts of 1536, 1539 and 1559 reveals which reflections he omitted later and which were added to replace them.

In explaining the *first petition* in the *Institutes*, Calvin distinguishes between God and his "Name". "The Name of God is used here as He is known *among men*". In other words, "We petition that this majesty be hallowed in excellencies such as these, not in God Himself (*apud se*) to whose presence nothing can

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12 CO 45, 195, 13.

13 CO 45, 195, 16-17.

14 OS 4, 366, 1.5; *Inst.* III.20.49.

15 OS 4, 344, 17-19; *Inst.* III.20.34.

16 OS 4, 348, 3-4; *Inst.* III.20.37.

17 *Inst.* III.20.40.

be added, nothing taken away".<sup>18</sup> God's "excellencies" or distinctive qualities are his power, wisdom, righteousness, mercy and truth.<sup>19</sup> Calvin equates these with his "Name". His works are commensurate with his Name.<sup>20</sup> What he means is that behind his Name God is hidden "in Himself".

Later Calvin did not relinquish the distinction between God "Himself" and God as He reveals Himself "over against us" (*apud se, apud nos*). The corresponding passage in the *Institutes* on the doctrine of God (I.10.2) also remain unchanged. In the 1555 commentary on the Gospels though, he expunged this reflection from the exposition of the first petition. He wrote: "May the Name of God be sanctified, which means nothing else than that God retracts his glory".<sup>21</sup> God and his Name are identical. Accordingly, in the 1559 *Institutes*, Calvin speaks first of the glory of God which may not be diffused, then of his qualities and finally of his revelation in the doctrine and in his works. His "Name" embraces all things. Therefore, when the first petition was under consideration, Calvin spoke of God in terms of God revealing Himself to men. This implies that the "doctrine" of God will be kept holy, i.e. his Word, or as Calvin puts it: "Thus it will come about that Holy Scripture will obtain a just authority among us."<sup>22</sup> In summary, God's Name, as mentioned above, is his work. These works include all that God sent, happiness and unhappiness, judgement and grace. Now Calvin states that God's works are made manifest in us and bring forth fruit. These fruits are recognisable signs (*notae*) indicating that they come from God.<sup>23</sup> The problem of faith and experience emerges in this instance.<sup>24</sup> Dogmatically it is referred to as *sylogismus practicus*.

Calvin's comprehensive understanding of the first petition "Hallowed be thy Name" is impressive. He revised his explanation considerably since the 1536 *Institutes*. One is intrigued by the question why Calvin did not understand the Name of God as a proper name, such as one uses to address God in prayer.

Calvin also revised his exegesis of the *second petition* in 1559. His first definition of the "Kingdom of God" seems to have met with disapproval.

18 OS 4, 352, 23 (1536).

19 OS 4, 351, 43 (1536).

20 OS 4, 352, 26, 29.

21 CO 45, 196, 37-39.

22 OS 4, 351, 29-30.

23 OS 4, 351, 28.

24 See W. Balke, The Word of God and experience according to Calvin, in: W.H. Neuser (Hrsg.), *Calvinus Ecclesiae Doctor: Die Referate des internationalen Kongresses für Calvinforschung vom 25. bis 28. September 1978 in Amsterdam* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1979), 19-31.

The Kingdom of God consists of two parts. God reigns in the governance of his own (people) through the Holy Spirit but also by overcoming and destroying the reprobate who are unwilling to accept his authority.<sup>25</sup>

The division between the elect and the wicked, which was also taught in the 1542 *Geneva Catechism* (Question 268), is omitted in the 1559 *Institutes*, in which Calvin mentions the godless (*impii*) and the anti-Christ, but avoids mentioning predestination. The two parts of the "Kingdom of God" are now the mortification of carnal desire and the new obedience. Calvin speaks of the "Kingdom of God" as it is realised in the supplicant. He inserts the significant sentence: "Therefore no other keeps a lawful order in the petition but those who begin with themselves."<sup>26</sup>

Likewise, Calvin substituted the exegesis of the *third petition*. In the first and second editions of the *Institutes* he also incorporated the eternal decrees of God concerning election and damnation, the execution of which is asked for by the supplicant. In the 1555 commentary of the Gospels and in the *Institutes* of 1559 he removed the "hidden will" of God which is incomprehensible to men.<sup>27</sup> The supplicant comes face to face with the will of God which is certainly unknown to the angels in heaven and to men on earth. He prays for strength to fulfil this "will".<sup>28</sup>

To summarise: In his exegesis Calvin removed the idea of God "within Himself", of one who is independent of man and whom the Christians do not know. He omits the "reign" of God and his rule over the wicked and also his "secret will" which is still hidden from us. These doctrines themselves remain unaltered, but they are not directly specified for the supplicant who is meant to confess his sins against the revelation of God and to pray for the right remedy. Calvin's interest in the supplicant is revealed in the petition for the "Kingdom of God" which he now describes as mortification and quickening (*mortificatio* and *vivificatio*). The pastoral intention took precedence over the doctrinal exposition. The Lord's Prayer was thus interpreted more literally, i.e. as a prayer. Calvin's interpretation thus became more emphatic and existential.

25 OS 4, 353, 26-29 (1559).

26 OS 4, 352, 16-17; also CO 45, 197, 43-46.

27 OS 4, 354, 7.10; CO 45, 198, 10-13.

28 In his commentary on the harmony of the Gospels, Calvin emphasises the open will of God for the first time, "die kontradiktorische Gegenüberstellung des göttlichen und des menschlichen Willens rückt in den Hintergrund zugunsten der stärkeren Betonung dessen, dass es um einen consensus mit dem göttlichen Willen geht".

See P. Opitz, "Dein Reich komme" — Variationen reformierter Unservater-Auslegung, in: P. Opitz (Hrsg.), *Calvin im Kontext der Schweizer Reformation* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2003), 259.

#### 4. THE FIFTH AND SIXTH PETITIONS — A *CRUX INTERPRETUM*

The fifth and sixth petitions present different problems. Why are they an obstacle to interpretation? Added to the petition for the forgiveness of sins is the condition “as we forgive our debtors”. In the petition that God may not lead us into temptation the question arises as to whether God does indeed lead men into temptation.

In the 1559 *Institutes* the explanation of the concluding sentence to the *fifth petition* “as we forgive our debtors”, remains unchanged and is still formulated in the words of the first edition of 1536. In the commentary on the Gospels (1555), though, Calvin revised the interpretation of the fifth petition. The two interpretations do not correspond, giving rise to contradictions. The reader is further compelled to ask why Calvin did not re-write this interpretation in 1559.

The problem should first be delineated. For the reformers the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins was of utmost importance. The assurance of faith rested absolutely on God’s forgiveness, unaccompanied by human merit. Based on grace alone, it is *gratis, sine meritis, sola gratia*. The sinner accepts the forgiveness of sins only by faith. Every deed of righteousness is excluded. However, the fifth petition seems to contain a restriction: “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors”. Was God’s forgiveness contingent upon human forgiveness?

It is known that Zwingli had a conflict of conscience with regard to the fifth petition before he joined the Reformation. It appeared to him like a “mountain” he could not ascend; he repeatedly turned back from it. He confessed that he could find no peace at that time, because he was afraid that God would judge him according to the measure of forgiveness he meted out towards his debtors. He knew that under these conditions he would not attain God’s forgiveness. The question weighed heavily upon him whether God loved the supplicant more than he (the supplicant) loved his enemy. Zwingli only found peace when he recognised that the fifth petition reveals the supplicant’s sins and teaches him to rely on the grace of God. In this way Zwingli revised his earlier understanding of the fifth petition, namely that human forgiveness was a prerequisite for the forgiveness of sins by God. He likely knew the strict interpretation of the church-father Augustine in his exegesis of the Psalms: “Say it wholeheartedly, say it with absolute confidence, say it with certainty, ‘Forgive us as we also forgive, but do not forgive if we do not forgive.’”<sup>29</sup> By sanctioning

29 Zwingli in the exposition of the twentieth Schlußrede 1523; Z 2, 225, 27ff. Augustine on Psalm 143, 7; CCSL 40, 2078, 16. See W.H. Neuser, *Die reformatorische Wende bei Zwingli* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977), 139 ff.

the fifth petition in its negative form, Augustine made the supplicant's pardoning a condition for God's forgiveness.

In the *Institutes* Calvin obviously followed Augustine's interpretation:

For this reason we ought not to seek forgiveness of sins from God unless we ourselves also forgive the offences against us of all those who do or have done us ill. If we retain feelings of hatred in our hearts ... by this prayer we entreat God not to forgive our sins. For we ask that He do to us as we do to others. This, indeed, is to petition Him not to do it to us unless we ourselves do it.<sup>30</sup>

These observations are found in the first and last editions of the *Institutes*. Calvin does not seem to have had any sympathy for Zwingli's dilemma. The text cited portrays an uneasiness on Calvin's part. He adds that our forgiving cannot be the "condition" for God's forgiveness in the sense that we could deserve forgiveness. He is aware of the danger inherent in the concluding sentence of the fifth petition. He himself steers in a different direction, that is, to the *sylogismus practicus*:<sup>31</sup> Our forgiving will strengthen our faith, because it will serve to assure "as by a mark" (*nota*) that we do not belong to those who practise revenge.<sup>32</sup>

In the 1555 harmony of the Gospels, Calvin instructs differently:

"As we also forgive": This condition has been added to prevent anyone daring to approach God to seek forgiveness who is not quite free and clear of all hatred. Nevertheless the forgiveness we ask does not depend on that way that we might forgive all injuries.

The thought is reiterated that our forgiving is like a seal (*sigillum*) that confirms our confidence in the forgiveness we receive.<sup>33</sup> The citation shows that Calvin realised that God's goodness is greater than our obedience. If God's forgiveness was made conditional upon our being forgiven by God, we would have received nothing. The words of Christ are not a condition, but an admonition.

30 *Inst.* III.20.45; *OS* 4, 361, 2-10.

31 Example of *sylogismus* and *sylogismus practicus* (cf. 1 John 4:18)

Thesis	A = B	Faith has good works
Antithesis	B = C	Good works are signs of assurance
Synthesis	A = C	Faith has signs of assurance

32 *OS* 4, 361, 21-22 (*nota*); *OS* 1, 409, 24 (*signe*).

33 *CO* 45, 201, 34-41.



This corresponds with Bucer's exposition in his commentary on the Gospel (1530): "For it is not the condition but the likeness that is noted here."<sup>34</sup>

The sixth petition is also a *crux interpretum*, because if God leads into temptation, then this comes close to saying that He is the origin or cause of sin and that He leads men to destruction. I know of only one reformer who taught that God is also the source of sin, namely Zwingli in his document *De Providentia* (1530).<sup>35</sup> Calvin always objected to this conclusion.

Theologians have always grappled with the proper understanding of this sixth petition. There are two opposing views. Marcion changed the wording of the sixth petition: "And do not allow us to lead into temptation." The one who leads into temptation, according to this rendering, is not God, but someone else. Bucer, on the other hand, denoted three groups of people who are referred to in this petition:

1. The Lord leads his own into temptation when He puts their faith to the proof by adversity.
2. He sometimes also leads us into temptation and turns us over to Satan for a time, to turn us toward sinning; in this sort of temptation He led David, Peter and many other elect and beloved of his.
3. Finally, the Lord leads into temptation (and an unending one) certain persons whom He straightway turns over as captives to Satan, stubborn in impiety, that they are ... vessels of wrath, not vessels of grace.<sup>36</sup>

This citation indicates that Bucer understood the sixth petition literally: God Himself leads into temptation. He thus solved the problem by assuming a threefold temptation. What are Calvin's conclusions?

Both views are noted in Calvin's writings: God does not allow us to be lead into temptation and God may lead us into temptation. The contradiction may be resolved if attention is focused on a fundamental declaration which he inserts into all his expositions of the sixth petition: Temptations emanate from the "devil" and from his "wicked desires of our flesh".<sup>37</sup> With repeated references to human behaviour he argues that temptations come from one's own heart. In the elucidation of the *Geneva Catechism* he uses a striking image:

34 *Enarrationes Perpetuae in Evangelia*, 1530, fol. 65v.

35 Z 6,3 p. 154, 8f. See W.H. Neuser, Von Zwingli und Calvin bis zur Synode von Westminster, in: C. Andresen (Hrsg.), *Handbuch der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 186.

36 *Enarrationes Perpetuae in Evangelia*, 1530, fol. 66v/67r.

37 *Catechism* of 1542, Nr. 289; OS 2, 126.

Temptations are the bad desires which the devil set alight within us. For the heart of man is like an oven. If one puts coal into the oven and then blows, a fire is kindled.<sup>38</sup>

Calvin wanted to say: If there are wicked desires in the heart, the devil will kindle them into a blazing fire.

Calvin does not deviate from this assessment when, in addition to the inner temptations, he lists the outer ones.<sup>39</sup> To the *Geneva Catechism* he adds: Outer temptations are houses and land which we would like to have at all costs, or a beautiful woman or the sun which gives light and warmth. These are good things and are gifts from God which become temptations only through our greed, our unchastity and (with respect to the sun) our heathen idolatry.<sup>40</sup> The outer temptations referred to in the *Institutes* are “temptations from the right”, namely “riches, power and honour”.<sup>41</sup> The “temptations from the left” are “poverty, disgrace, contempt, afflictions and the like”.<sup>42</sup> Calvin takes it further: “It is not without cause that the Lord daily tests his elect” by these means.<sup>43</sup> God does put us to the test: He wants to strengthen and purify by means of these temptations. The devil on the other hand wants to topple the believers. Thus God also leads into temptation.

The main temptations, however, are the inner temptations.<sup>44</sup> They come from the devil and from our own desires. Calvin's examples make it clear that the external temptations also emanate from the heart. Only through the heart of man do they become temptations. It is not God who is involved in the inner temptations, but the devil and our own hearts. Calvin rightly formulates the prayer: “We ask of the Lord that He does not bring us down with temptations or allows us to be overwhelmed by them.”<sup>45</sup> This implies: “God shall hold unto us with his hand.”<sup>46</sup> It is again evident that Calvin interprets the Lord's Prayer in a pastoral manner. He wants to motivate the supplicant to engage in prayer. He either prays that God may not put him too much to the test or that he

38 Jean Calvin, *Deux Congrégations*, 39/40.

39 CO 45, 202; OS 4, 362, 5 (*oculis*); Jean Calvin, *Deux Congrégations*, 39, 22 (*tentations exterieures*).

40 Jean Calvin, *Deux Congrégations*, 39, 23-25, 35-36.

41 *Inst.* III.20.46; OS 4, 362, 8.

42 *Inst.* III.20.46; OS 4, 362, 12-13.

43 *Inst.* III.20.46; OS 4, 362, 27-28.

44 CO 45, 202, 23 (*interior tentatio*); *Inst.* III.20.46; OS 4, 362, 1 (*animi*), R. Peter, *Deux Congrégations*, 39, 41-42 (*tentations au dedans*).

45 CO 45, 202, 31-33: *petimus tamen a Domino, ne tentationibus nos subiiciat vel obrui patiatur*.

46 CO 45, 202, 35. Similarly, *Inst.* III.20.46; OS 4, 363, 5-11; 2, 126 (Nr. 289).

does not allow the devil and his own desires to gain the upper hand. In the latter it is not God who leads into temptation.

It becomes clear that in his exposition of the Lord's Prayer Calvin is mainly interested in the supplicant. The pastoral intention determines his interpretation. The question, however, arises as to whether the wording of the sixth petition contradicts his explanation. It is typical of Calvin the exegete to maintain the *sensus literalis*. He wants to be a listener to the words of the text and not to be the master thereof. In the *Institutes* he observes "that the sixth petition is not an improper expression."<sup>47</sup> In a concluding paragraph he adduces as proof: "God uses the devil as the servant of his wrath. Whenever He determines to plunge people head-long into destruction He actually leads them into temptation in his own way". King Saul serves as an example.<sup>48</sup> Calvin concludes the interpretation of the sixth petition in the *Institutes*, the *Geneva Catechism* and the commentary on the Gospels with reference to eternal damnation. Like Martin Bucer, he now links the Lord's Prayer to the secret will of God. As noted earlier, he omitted this from his interpretation. Only in the last paragraph does he revert to the biblical text.

It now becomes clear why he insisted in all his interpretations that there are six and not seven petitions. The final sentence gives the petition its proper orientation: "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." The deliverance is asked for by the supplicant.

Calvin undoubtedly wrestles with the problems of the sixth petition. It is helpful to glance at Calvin's understanding of "temptation" in other parts of the *Institutes*. The *Calvin Concordance* by F. L. Battles allows us to analyse the entire spectrum of this concept in Calvin's writings. Fourteen of the 27 passages deal with the subject of temptation. Constantly using new incidents, like that of the temptation of Christ, most of these passages depict God letting his own live in sorrow and need while seeming to disregard the vices of the godless; the believers doubt their election.<sup>49</sup> It appears that Calvin struggled mostly with the "temptation of the left".

47 *Inst.* III.20.46; *OS* 4, 364, 11-12.

48 *CO* 45, 202, 39-46.

49 *OS* 3, 417, 2; 27, 23, 30; 38, 41; 4; 304, 14; 320, 33; 321, 25; 414, 10; 414, 22; 433, 18.

## 5. SUMMARY

1. Calvin interpreted the address "Our Father" with particular care. The supplicant first had to feel complete consolation before discovering his own failing in the sixth petition.
2. In his exegesis Calvin omitted the idea of God "within Himself", of one who was independent of man and whom the Christians did not know. He obliterated the "reign" of God and his rule over the wicked and also his "secret will" which was still hidden from us. These doctrines remained unaltered but they were not directly specified for the supplicant who was meant to confess his sins against the revelation of God and to pray for the right remedy. Calvin's interest in the supplicant was shown most clearly in the petition for the "Kingdom of God" which he then described as mortification and quickening (*mortificatio* and *vivificatio*). The pastoral aspect took precedence over the dogmatic.
3. At the same time the supplicant was confronted with the majesty of God which exerted a total claim on men. Beginning with the first petition, the Lord's Prayer confronted the supplicant with this claim. Sanctification determined the content of this prayer.
4. Calvin knew that the apostle Paul did not teach the Lutheran formula *simul iustus, simul peccator* (the believer is righteous and a sinner at the same time) in his Letter to the Romans. The believer was righteous for Christ's sake even if he sinned. Calvin taught a progression in faith which was effected by the Holy Spirit. His interpretation of the Lord's Prayer is marked by the repeated statement that faith indeed progresses.<sup>50</sup>
5. Faith recognised "*nota*", "*signum*" and "*tessera*" which were practical confirmations of assurance. W. Niesel's<sup>51</sup> excellent paper "*Syllogismus practicus?*" should be studied and supplemented. Calvin's interpretation of the Lord's Prayer should be given special consideration.
6. Calvin took seriously not only the spiritual petitions, but also those that dealt with physical needs. The fourth petition meant one's real "daily bread" and not a "super-substantial bread". To this petition belonged "honest labour". The external temptations of the Christian also stemmed, as noted, from day-to-day living.

50 *OS* 2, 121, 20; *CO* 45, 196 (*profectum*); 197 (*progressus*); *OS* 4, 351, 36; 352, 39; 353, 26 (*incrementum*); 354, 35; 357, 1 (*profectum*); 360, 12 (*paulatim*); 363, 31 (*incrementum*).

51 *Aus Theologie und Geschichte der Reformierten Kirche. Festgabe für E.F. Karl Müller zu dessen 70. Geburtstag. Überreicht von Schülern und Freunden* (Neukirchen: Buchhandlung der Erziehungsvereins), 1933, 158-179.

7. The interpretation of the second and sixth petitions in the *Geneva Catechism* are in the form of a prayer. And in this way the circle closed: The explanation of the Lord's Prayer itself became a prayer. Instruction about prayer and the practice of prayer coalesced. It is a known fact that the *Heidelberg Catechism* followed Calvin in his interpretation of the Lord's Prayer. It followed the road taken by Calvin as it formulated all the interpretations of the six petitions as a prayer. It would therefore be of value to make a detailed comparison of the interpretations of the Lord's Prayer in the catechism of Heidelberg and that of John Calvin.

*Keywords*

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