

Melanchthon and Calvin on Confession and Communion

Early Modern Protestant Penitential
and Eucharistic Piety



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Herman A. Speelman

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To the cloister communities – the Trappists in Berkel-Enschot, the Friars Minor in 's-Hertogenbosch, and the Franciscan Friars in Stoutenburg, Kranenburg and Hagatna, Guam – who welcomed me warmly during my years as student, chaplain, missionary and pastor. Your celebrations of the Eucharist and of the Liturgy of the Hours have revitalised me every day again for more than forty years.

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Preface by prof. dr. A. van de Beek

Herman Speelman's book provides wonderful insight into Protestant thought on confession, penance, and the Lord's Supper during the period when the Reformation was consolidating itself in Europe. His main focus is on the work of Melanchthon and Calvin, but he also demonstrates how closely their views were intertwined with those of their contemporaries and, even more so, how much they related to medieval practices.

The book is not structured strictly chronologically, nor does it have a systematic framework. Rather, it provides different perspectives on the relevant issues in a kaleidoscopic manner, and in this way the author succeeds in demonstrating the complicated interrelations of confession, Eucharist, conversion, and penance.

The most striking feature for me was the degree to which the Reformers proved to be indebted to medieval practices; there appears to be more continuity than discontinuity. From the very first chapter it is clear that both the medieval church and the Reformers were interested in a reformation, and especially in a Christian life for all church people – in a godly life for all of society, in fact. From this perspective one can consider the efforts of Calvin in Geneva a prolongation and intensification of the rules of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.

A life according to God's will for all people was also Melanchthon's aim during the church visitations of the late 1520s. After the shock of the Reformation with its focus on grace alone, a Christian life proved to be a new challenge, since many interpreted Christian freedom as a license for libertine living. The church could not do without practices and rules for penance in order to keep its members on the right path.

Calvin's focus on the Christian life was even greater than in the case of Melanchthon. In light of later developments in Reformed church practice, one cannot but be amazed at how central the Eucharist was in his thought for Christian identity. Everything is centered around the Lord's Supper, which he wanted to be celebrated every time the church assembled, at least once a week in the Sunday services, but also, if possible, on other days. A sound preparation for

the Eucharist was also required, as well as a consequent renewal of daily life. In order to keep to these standards Calvin developed an elaborate system of home visitations, in which the consistory played a central role. The result can be viewed as an intensification of the rules of the Fourth Lateran Council – now not just once a year at Easter, but continuously, every week and even every day. In Calvin's theology one's whole life is oriented by the Eucharist, and thus by confession and penance. The major difference between medieval theology and that of the Reformers is that penance is no longer a matter of retribution, almost a payment for previous sins, but the expression of a new life in Christ which is nourished by his body and offered in the bread and wine.

A good book evokes desires. My wish, after reading this study, is a follow-up study comparing Calvin and the reformation of the Council of Trent, as well as a comparison between Calvin and Reformed Pietism.

Abraham van de Beek

Preface by prof. dr. P.J.J. van Geest

If one writes a book on Melanchthon's view on penance and Calvin's view on confession and on the Eucharist, one takes a great risk. The literature on these subjects is abundant and there is a great danger that one may lapse into a presentation of insights that have already been put forward by others. There seems to be only a very small chance that one may offer a new perspective on this area of research.

However, it may be deduced from the book presented here that there is no reason to despair. In the first half of the previous century theologians often used the works of Melanchthon and Calvin to find answers to questions that these two had not asked, at least not in the way assumed. Their questions were often coloured by the need for an all-embracing synthesis, by means of which the Christian world was supplied with a coherent image of man, the world and God, in times that were inversely proportional to the certainty and peace striven for in these theological syntheses. For the purpose of this synthesis the works of Church Fathers or theologians were used as stone quarries that one was free to ransack in order to construct a building of one's own self-assurance. That the intention of the author or the dynamics of a text were often neglected in the process was an unintended but all the same questionable result.

One of the strong points of Dr. Speelman's book is that the works of Melanchthon and Calvin in which they have developed their penitential and Eucharistic piety, have been read with the intention to do justice to the spirit that is implicit in them.

Usually two courses seem to be followed in order to get a proper picture of the piety of the ecclesial reformation of the first half of the sixteenth century in Europe. Some scholars study the continued effect of the guiding principles inherent in Melanchthon's and Calvin's way of thinking in order to find out where they were put on the Procrustean bed of their interpreters' own pre-suppositions. Others have tried to trace the dynamics in the texts themselves in order to be able to estimate at their true value the scope and the depth of these theologians' way of thinking.

The last-mentioned approach is no sinecure. Texts have to be read, reread, ruminated on and interiorised. Moreover, a double effort is demanded of researchers who want to trace the dynamics in the texts. On the one hand they will have to familiarise themselves with the texts to such an extent that they can, as it were, reap the same benefits from these that the contemporaries of Calvin or Melanchthon gained when they read the works and consequently came to repentance. Understanding of the text is promoted if the reader is touched by the contents. On the other hand, however, they will have to elucidate the work, with academic and critical distance, in the light of the historical, cultural, religious and biographical context, in order to estimate it at its true value. Interpreters who are able to combine the results of the double effort allow a text to come fully into its own and pass on to the next generation the treasures contained in it.

In this book, Dr. Speelman, on the basis of painstaking reading of the text, maps out the penitential and confessional system, as developed by Melanchthon and Calvin, with a view to participation in the holy sacrament. The way in which he does so reveals his attempt at a double effort. In the words of St. Paul, he delivers what he has received, to the scholars in the field of research and to the members of the community of interpretation and communication, which is the *Catholica* of all ages. In more respects than one his book is extremely instructive.

Paul van Geest

Introduction

This collection includes material from three earlier books, more particularly regarding Melanchthon's view on *penance*, and Calvin's view on *confession* and on the *Eucharist*,¹ and from several lectures I have given on these subjects over the last three years in Oslo, Berlin, Bologna, Amsterdam, and Zurich.² Some overlap has therefore proven inevitable in these eleven somewhat independent chapters.

At the heart of this collection is Melanchthon's and Calvin's search, after the yoke of the established church was abandoned, for a new balance between, on the one hand, the Protestant emphasis on religious freedom, and, on the other, the so-called 'Christian penitential confession' or practice of the imitation of Christ. Both these spiritual leaders placed their mark on a new spiritual balance between the inner experience and the external practices of the new, broadly supported Protestant traditions.

After the alarming experiences with the first church visitations in Saxony in the summer of 1527, Melanchthon demanded renewed attention for the necessity of penance, conversion, and the preaching the law. From the very beginning of his involvement in the reformations of the church, Calvin, in his turn, was to search for a replacement for the existing penitential system in the established Roman Catholic church. In this respect, the decisive and spiritual application and upholding of a stringent connection between the Supper and a controllable Christian doctrine and lifestyle in the church was of special importance.

1 SPEELMAN (2010), *Biechten bij Calvijn: Over het geheim van heilig communiceren*, SPEELMAN/KORTEWEG (2013), *Hoe overleeft de kerk? Melanchthons Onderricht aan predikanten*, and SPEELMAN (2014), *Eén met Christus: Een klein traktaat van Johannes Calvijn over het heilig Avondmaal, vertaald en ingeleid*.

2 The conference in Oslo addressed 'Preparing for Death, Remembering the Dead', in Berlin 'Anthropological Reformations-Anthropology in the Era of Reformation', in Bologna 'Arts, Portraits and Representation in the Reformation Era', in Amsterdam 'Protestant Traditions & the Soul of Europe' and the Congress in Zurich was on Calvin Research in general. Refer to, in particular, the chapters 1, 3, 6, 8–10.

The spiritual contribution of both men was of imminent importance in their days, with regard to theological content as well as form, for the continued existence of the evangelical movement in large parts of European Christendom. And even now, five centuries later, it appears that their contribution is still relevant, partly due to the connection that was made with older spiritual Christian traditions, both in their own ranks and in the broad ecumenical setting.

Due to the variety of subjects and the perspectives from which these will be discussed, this introduction will now first provide a short historical and theological sketch of several backgrounds behind the most prominent issues.

One can hardly underestimate the impact Philip Melanchthon had on the evangelical spirituality and more particularly the innovating way in which he reintroduced penance as one of the main focal points of the early Protestant movement. This is evidenced by the first official Protestant agreement regarding the church's doctrine and liturgical practices, which he wrote in 1527, and the impact it had on the evangelical movement which at that time still had little structure.³

As a member of the first official group of church and school visitors, Melanchthon discovered that the new doctrine regarding 'justification by faith alone' and 'Christian freedom' was misinterpreted by many and could give way to carelessness and false security if penitence, repentance and conversion were not first of all properly brought to the fore in the preaching. Shortly after some turbulent years of crisis, in which it was unclear whether the ten-year-old Wittenberg movement would prove to be viable and attract broad support, he wrote a manual for priests and preachers. The combination of the forcefully initiated visitations and Melanchthon's manual for parish clergy, in which he offered practical canonical and liturgical assistance and a new curriculum for primary and secondary education, proved to be not only of practical, but also of eminently theological importance for the survival of the evangelical movement. The *Instructions for the Visitors of Parish Pastors* offered a summary of the new view on the gospel to the primarily former priests in the shape of what we would nowadays call a confession of faith. In the long run, the document had a great impact on the reformation of church and school in many parts of Europe.

³ We are referring here to the *Instructions for the Visitators of Parish Pastors in Electoral Saxony* (the *Instructio visitatorum*) and its forerunner, the *Articuli Visitatores*, which was the concept Melanchthon wrote in 1527 during the first evangelical church visitations. The first mentioned document was used by Melanchthon in 1530 when the *Confession of Augsburg* was composed.

Our second main character is John Calvin, who, like Melanchthon, was to place a very particular mark on the penitential and Eucharistic piety of the evangelical and ecclesiastical reformation movement which was rapidly growing in the first half of the sixteenth century in Europe.

This book started in fact with Calvin, years ago during a trip to Scotland in which my wife and I visited a museum in the historical city of St. Andrews. This museum was partly set up as an old sixteenth-century consistory: there was a long table at one end with several seats and at the other end one small stool, the so-called ‘stool of repentance’, a Reformed confessional. With that image emblazoned on my retinas, I looked with new eyes on John Calvin’s attempts to give shape to an evangelical form of confession. In order for the reader to understand what I saw, I found a picture in the fresco of Ghirlandaio from 1480, a forerunner of Leonardo da Vinci’s *L’ultima cena*. It depicts a horseshoe-shaped Eucharist table and a sinner in front of the table in an isolated place before the Lord, which portrays to some degree the connection which in the late Middle Ages was made between the Eucharist and confession.

The result, this manuscript, is a description of the different stages in which Calvin developed his penitential and confessional system, whereby approaching and participating in the holy sacrament repeatedly involved the communicant’s appearance before God and simultaneously his experience of fellowship with Christ and, in Him, with fellow believers: the holy mystery of communion.⁴ Whereas today we usually view life through natural laws, Calvin placed everything within the framework of God’s government, his secret operation that is not visible apart from faith. The innermost circle of ecclesiastical worship, personal piety, and the experience of God’s care and guidance centres around the administration of God’s Word and sacrament. This secret operation of God’s Spirit sets forth the presence of Christ and makes us His table-companions.⁵

His thinking was dominated by the strong connection between the most holy mystery of the Lord’s table and what he called ‘Christian confession’, similar to the way in which the foci of an ellipse are inextricably bound together. In the late Middle Ages, confession had a range of functions but it was in the first place a form of church discipline and social control. Calvin adopted these and many other functions of confession in his process of restoration and sanctification, such as doing penance, showing contrition, confessing sin and guilt, repenting,

4 The French term *communion* has several denotations, such as communion with God and neighbour, the Christian congregation, mutual internal unity and solidarity, but most of all the table of the Lord.

5 In Calvin’s French the word *secret* and the Latin *arcanum* always refer to the *arcana operatio*, the secret operation of God. Heiko Oberman observed that no medieval theologian, nor even any Reformer from the sixteenth century, used the word ‘mystery’ as frequently and freely as Calvin. OBERMAN: 1988, pp. 19–21.

promising improvement and giving proof of it, receiving instruction, taking counsel, begging for and receiving forgiveness, making atonement, and so forth. It was the church that made it possible for people to be examined questioned, assisted, advised, and corrected to ensure the salvation of the church and the individual. Calvin opposed the way church discipline had been made into a separate and independent element, as was at times the case in the established church. From the very moment he joined the evangelical movement of reform, Calvin, steadily focused on that mysterious communion with God, sought new ways to help those who were burdened by their conscience and in danger of perishing to attain true, Christian freedom. I have distinguished five stages in the development of Calvin's reflection on ecclesiastical discipline, a process through which Calvin aligned himself with medieval practices of penitence and confession.⁶

Yet there still is much more to be written about this particular devotion of Calvin's spiritual, pastoral, and liturgical religious everyday experiences. Calvin spent a great amount of time, attention, and energy on this aspect of his pastoral ministry, that is, in working to bring about reconciliation between God and people by repentance and confession, and in the fight against evil and the growth in holiness. In Calvin's Geneva much attention was given to pastoral counseling and education, at home, in the consistory, and from the pulpit; there were also more than twenty weekly church services which mainly consisted of prayers, devotional singing of the Psalms, and listening to the Word of God.

1.

In the middle of the 1520s, large groups of church people in the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation rose up in protest, after having been stirred up by Protestant preaching on evangelical freedoms. More than a hundred thousand deaths were the result. In the summer of 1526, Emperor Charles decreed at the Diet in Worms that, up until a council that was yet to be planned, the different parts of the German empire were allowed to organize their ecclesiastical matters themselves. Following this, Elector John of Saxony initiated the church-reforming visitations in cooperation with Luther and Melanchthon a year later. Matters such as the dispossession of monasteries, the maintenance of church buildings, the preachers' salaries, and the dismissal and appointment of pastors came under attention. At the end of the 1520s, it was still not clear whether Protestantism would make a definite breakthrough. There was growing criticism from adversaries and the support for the evangelical innovations among the

⁶ See ch. 6 and in particular ch. 8.

followers of the Reformation was still fragile.⁷ But when the church increasingly became part of the state, new power relations came into being such that the Protestant princes in Germany became at once pope and emperor in their own territory and thus acquired even more power than their medieval predecessors had had.⁸

In the 1520s and 1530s, the evangelical reorganization of society and church in many parts of Germany was to follow the same pattern: the government was in charge and had a church order drawn up on the basis of which it ordered visitations. The church officials were evaluated and instructed according to this standard and all kinds of aspects of daily religious life, such as liturgy, had to be reformed. In 1527 there still was great unclarity over many different things. A form of ecclesiastical anarchy ruled, in which everyone acted as they saw fit.⁹ Already during the first official church visitation in July 1527, it became clear that to hundreds of (ex-)priests it was unclear what exactly the new doctrine of justification by faith alone implied and what the practical consequences were for the liturgy in the church and for the daily life of believers. It was concluded that first and foremost the preachers needed additional schooling. They had to learn how to interpret the Christian freedom and how to proclaim it for the salvation

7 The beginning of the 1530s was to be a crucial period for a definite breakthrough. Within a few years' time, however, Luther had already suggested that improvements had been made in church life in Saxony. On May 20, 1530, Luther reported to his elector from Cobourg that "God's Word was at work and fertile in the whole country (*im ganzen Lande*)." However, in this letter no direct references to the visitations in Saxony were made, but Luther tried to encourage the elector, who was in Augsburg at that time. He wanted to encourage his elector now that he had to endure the opposition of so many other sovereigns. "In this matter," Luther continues to write, "the merciful God shows himself to be all the more merciful, that He makes his word known in the land of His Electoral Grace in a manner thus powerful and fertile. Because it is certain that the land of His Electoral Grace has the very best and most parish clergymen and preachers, who teach the Gospel so loyally and purely and who thus help to encourage peace, unlike any other country in the whole world." Here he also speaks of the youth, who are raised through education and preaching from the catechism and Scripture: It touches me "when I see how, these days, young girls pray and believe better and are better able to speak about God and Christ than in the past and better also than in the convents, monasteries and schools." WA 5, nr. 1572 Luther to John, 20 May 20 1530, pp. 324–328.

8 PETTEGREE: 2000, pp. 158–162.

9 Some pastors assumed that their preaching was sufficiently reformatory when they proclaimed that the pope was the antichrist. During the visitations Melancthon complained: "I am involved in a complicated matter and as far as I can see, without result. Everything is confused, partly due to ignorance, partly due to the immorality of the teachers. My heart bleeds. I often isolate myself and I let my tears flow freely when we have finished a visitation in one or other place. And who would not mourn when he sees how the talents of mankind are so terribly neglected and that his soul, which is capable of learning and understanding so much, is even ignorant of its Creator and Lord?" Quote from KOOIMAN: 1963, p. 102. WEBER: 1844, p. 21. BURKHARDT: 1879/ 1981, pp. 18f. HERRMANN: 1929f, pp. 203–229. MW 7/2, nr. 116 Melancthon to Aquila in Saalfeld, shortly after 29 July 1527, pp. 22–23. SEHLING: 1902f, vol. 1, pp. 37f. and pp. 148–149. MAURER: 1969, vol. 2, pp. 470–477.

of the believers: “For the majority of the priests and clergy are of no use and incompetent; they do not instruct the people properly, but usually preached only one part of the gospel, that is, the forgiveness of sins, but without penance, so that the people’s consciences are worse and more rebellious than before.”¹⁰

This is why already during the first official church visitations in the summer of 1527, Melanchthon wrote a first confession to which a church order was appended, in which he demanded attention for penance and the preaching of the law. He emphasized this more than Luther had done. In his view not only forgiveness, freedom, and mercy ought to be proclaimed from the pulpit, but also repentance, conversion, and penance. Without real sorrow for one’s sins there is no room for the true comfort of the gospel, and without the fear of God the proclamation of the certainty of eternal life remains vague. Soon criticism arose. From all sides Melanchthon was reproached for falling back into the old Roman Catholic traditions, a reproach which was also made to Calvin ten years later. But because he had been so shocked by the noncommittal manner in which the new doctrine was proclaimed and given shape, Melanchthon insisted that faith can only find a place in a penitent heart. This is why, according to Melanchthon, the preachers who neglect penance and the preaching of the law have to be admonished, refuted, and punished. After all, in doing so they detract from one of the most principal issues in the gospel, since when they hold out a one-sided and cheap grace to the ordinary believers, these believers are put on the wrong track. They then erroneously think that their sins have been forgiven, and the consequence is a false sense of peace and security.

Thus we see that Melanchthon makes a highly significant turn in his visitation articles of 1527, which seems even to boil down to a rehabilitation of first penance or conversion, which in the old church had always been the gate through which one entered the Christian faith from a pagan past. “As Christ preached penance and forgiveness,” he begins, “thus the shepherds of the soul have to pass it on to the churches. There may be a lot of prognostication concerning faith these days, but what faith is still cannot be understood without the preaching of penance.” Faith without preceding penance, “without teaching the fear of God, without teaching the law,” to Melanchthon’s mind is like pouring new wine into old wineskins and makes the masses used to a “carnal security” and indifference.¹¹

10 MBW 3, nr. 574 Visitation report of 13 August 1527, p. 131, l.12–17. “Den die priester und selsorger der mehren theil fast ubel und ungeschickt, das volck nicht gnugsam unnterweisen, sonder alle gemeiniglich durchaus alleyn den eynen theil des ewangeliums, das ist *remissio peccatorum*, und nicht *penitentiam*, geprediget, dadurch das volck in yrem gewissen erger und roloser worden dan vor ie.”

11 AV, art. 1.

Yet this ‘first penance’ in Melanchthon hardly stands on its own. The reason is that also those who have responded to the preaching of the gospel must endure penance in the sense of the ‘killing of the flesh’ and the ‘mortification of the old man’. This is why the Ten Commandments must be impressed on the hearers time and time again. Also the cross, which Christians bear in their lives, serves to incite them to do penance, so that the oppression which they must suffer can count as ‘part of the instruction of the law’ and as a punishment imposed upon them because of their sins.¹² In addition, Melanchthon, despite the stress he places on the fear of divine judgment and punishment, does not teach the same attritionism as medieval theology. In the section on ‘the fear of God,’ he distinguishes between ‘servile fear’ (*timor servilis*), which only shudders at the judgment but does not believe in forgiveness, and ‘filial fear’ (*timor filialis*), in which the fear of God and faith in forgiveness again and again go hand in hand.¹³ This last issue, the dialectic of law and gospel, is therefore crucial, not only for the ‘first penance’ which must prepare the outsider for the preaching of the gospel, but also for the ‘second penance’ which permanently marks the Christian life from beginning to end.

In this study we will place our main focus on Melanchthon’s doctrine of penance, which is the central subject matter of both his visitation documents. Some wonder whether Melanchthon’s *Instruction* also brought about a turn in Luther’s doctrine of penance, in the sense that from then on, he placed penance, which before he had considered as the fruit of faith, before faith. Already since Richard Albert Lipsius’s 1892 dissertation on Luther’s doctrine of the penance (“*Luthers Lehre von der Busse*”), the general assumption has been that it would be incorrect to call it a turn, and that at the very most we could speak of a difference in accent.¹⁴ The question is whether this is also the case for Melanchthon.

Another question that ensues from Melanchthon’s *Instructions for the Visitors* is whether Luther and Melanchthon, in their attention for a continuing penance, oppose the medieval penitential practice or rather seek to connect to the spirituality of the late Middle Ages, in which the awareness of sin and ensuing fear of judgement played an important role, as Wolfhart Pannenberg claimed in 1986.¹⁵ A year later, Maarten den Dulk argued for the idea that in his *Institutes*, Calvin opposed Melanchthon’s and Luther’s thesis from 1527 concerning a penance that precedes faith.¹⁶ Here too, however, there is reason for reconsideration.

12 AV, art. 2.

13 AV, art. 6. See ch. 5, n. 30.

14 Thus SEEBERG: 1930, vol. 4/1, pp. 262f and BAVINCK: 1930, vol. 3, pp. 516f.

15 PANNENBERG: 1986, pp. 5–25. See ch. 2, n. 61.

16 DEN DULK: 1987, pp. 25f. In a side note, Petrus Barth and Wilhelm Niesel suggested that Calvin is also referring to Melanchthon’s opinion when he writes: “Some are of the opinion

Melancthon made an explicit connection between penance and faith and Luther emphasized that a true Christian should not be forced, but ought to come to confession and receive communion by an internal desire to do so regularly. Calvin agreed, but made the connection less noncommittal. He created an entire penitential and confessional system of his own in preparation for the Holy Supper and eternal salvation, in which the church maintained the final responsibility.

2.

This study partly considers the question to what degree Calvin was responsible for a Calvinistic organization of disciplinary church life and worship in which confessional and Eucharistic piety played a central role.

In his 1536 *Institutes*, Calvin had already observed that no one should be surprised that he committed “to the civil government the duty of rightly establishing religion.” For, I do not allow “men to make laws according to their own decision concerning religion and the worship of God.”¹⁷ And in 1541 Calvin together with the Genevan government introduced a new form of consistory, in his own words, “something like a judicial college of elders (*presbyterorum iudicium*),” a body that maintained supervision over the Lord’s Supper and churchgoers and that had only a small degree of independence from the city council.¹⁸

From the very beginning, Calvin fought the desecration of the sacrament. He wanted the Lord’s Supper to be celebrated frequently, although he did not view participation in it as a matter of course, without any form of supervision and discipline, which was emphasised already in his early articles “Concerning the organization of the Church and of Worship in Geneva.”¹⁹

that penance rather precedes faith, than it ensues from faith or is brought about by it like fruit from a tree, but they have never understood what penance truly means, and they are brought to this idea by very poor arguments.” “Christ and John,” they say, “inspire the people with their preaching to do penance and only then they add that the kingdom of heavens is approaching.” In this respect they refer to article 12 from the CA and from the Apology = BSLK, 64, 257–260 and to the Loci Communes from 1535 CR 21, 490. OS 4 (Inst. 3.3.1) 2, pp. 55–56, n. 3 and 4. See also McNeill: 1960, vol. 1, p. 593.

17 CO 1, 230, l.16–24 = OS 1, 260, l.23–30 = Inst. 4.20.3 = OS 5, 474, l.8–14. See SPEELMAN: 2014, chapter 2, n. 200. Cf. n. 157 and 115f.

18 Hermj.: 1886, vol. 7, no. 1100, 439, l.35 and l.26–27 = CO 11, no. 389, 379, l.13 and l.2.

19 See ch. 6, n. 32. In 1532, under the leadership of Farel and Calvin, the church of Geneva took a different turn with regard to the discipline of the Lord’s Supper than did the neighboring canton of Bern. The synod of Bern, which met in January 1532, changed its course when it decreased the ecclesiastical element of its *Chorgericht*. This is evident, for example, in the new regulations that were made regarding the discipline of the Lord’s Supper. Eucharistic discipline was no longer counted as a responsibility of the *Chorgericht*, but was placed in the

The oath policy of a few years earlier, in which at first the council and then every Genevan resident without exception was required to swear an oath of allegiance to the confession, so that the profanation of the Lord's Supper might be avoided, confirms that Calvin did not see religion in general or the Lord's Supper in particular as a purely individual choice. In Calvin's understanding, all inhabitants in a Christian community belonged to the church just as much as they belonged to that Christian community. Furthermore, church discipline as Calvin had prescribed it in the 1540s and 1550s was not intended for one part of the Genevan population alone, but extended to include all residents of this city state.

The Protestant churches in France were to be established under very different circumstances and under a government that was hostile to them. From 1559 onwards, they won a more independent position, in which they could celebrate the Supper in a Calvinistic manner and could apply the discipline of penance among each other. When in France in the beginning of 1562 the statesman Michel de l'Hôpital, chancellor and at the same time one of the leading spokesmen for the *moyenneurs*, stated that someone was a Frenchman regardless of his confession, the government could offer the French Calvinist church its protection by making an exception for it, and defined this exception legally.²⁰ This was an entirely unique situation, a historical starting point to ecclesiastical plurality.

When the Calvinists in the Netherlands shaped the ecclesiastical life of the Republic, they followed the model of the French Calvinists more than the example of Calvin. Even after the transition to the side of the Prince had been made in 1572, the Reformed maintained their refugee church organisation, patterned after the tried and true example of the French. This form of the church's existence, in which every citizen was free to enroll as a member of the church, now presented itself as the most essential one to them. The greatest difference with Calvin's view on the organisation of the church and worship was that the unity of church and nation was now effectively undone.

hands of the pastors. The pastors did not receive any new authority or power to keep someone from the Lord's Supper table; they were limited to using verbal admonitions alone. All the same, the celebration of the Eucharist in Bern was from then on a matter of the ecclesiastical side of social life alone, and was not connected to discipline. With this, the Lord's Supper was taken out of the public, legal sphere. See SPEELMAN: 2014, ch. 1. As a result, in Bern the sacrament became a matter that pertained purely to the conscience. Calvin saw the Lord's Supper as not only personal and internal, but also communal and external, with the government bearing the responsibility for the latter, public side. See SPEELMAN: 2014, ch. 2, n. 148 and 198, and ch. 4, n. 52.

20 NÜRNBERGER: 1948, p. 132, cf. 131.

It was in France that the seeds for this divergence were sown. A defining change occurred in the kingdom when the church turned from an organ of the state into a church that was independent, also from the state. This change went against Calvin's intentions for church and worship. A basic understanding in the state's ecclesiastical laws was that the official church of the Netherlands ought to be a public church. In other words, the official church was to be accessible for everyone, so that every baptised person on reaching the age of discretion participated as a church member and as such had the right to partake of the Lord's Supper. The same can be said about the discipline connected to the sacrament. Throughout the sixteenth century, and especially in the 1570s, the members of the Reformed churches amounted to considerably less than ten percent of the population in almost all parts of the Dutch Republic.

The close connection between discipline and the Lord's Supper can be seen as characteristic of Calvin's view of the church, as well as that of the Reformed synods in France and the Low Countries. In the Republic, admittedly still within the framework of the organisation of church and worship as Calvin had conceived of it, an independent ecclesiastical institution was formed which sought to achieve a certain amount of independence for itself over against the state. As the public church, the Reformed church was ready to cooperate with the governments, while still retaining a significant part of the independence that it had won for itself. The synod thus allowed for every inhabitant to be baptized in the established church, so that the greater majority of the population could consider themselves to belong to the Reformed church. However, the Reformed church also maintained some aspects that gave it the appearance of an 'association' or ecclesiastical 'society' of which someone could become a member, in this instance by way of a public profession of faith. The practical result was a situation in which many people in the Dutch population were not confessing members of the very church in which they had been baptised, and for that reason did not belong to the mysterious Eucharistic community.

For Calvin, in contrast, the church and worship were above all a Eucharistic community, of which every adult inhabitant of the city formed a part. Moreover, in the Dutch churches the people who had not enrolled as members could not be participants of the Lord's Supper and were not subject to church discipline; for Calvin, however, his system of penance, confession, and communal celebration had both a public and a personal character.

The book is generally structured around four periods or phases that refer to a turn in the reformation process: the time up to 1517, the period of Melancthon's turn in 1527 and Calvin's turn starting approximately ten years later, and, finally, the turn of Calvin's students from 1559.

The first part (chapters 1 to 3) deals among others with freedom, confession, and the mystery of the Eucharist, and the second part (chapters 4 to 6) treats the first Protestant church visitations, Melanchthon's new understanding of and renewed attention for penance, and the daily practices of life and death in the early modern era. The third main section (chapters 7 to 9) describes the development of Calvin's confession and reflects on his view on and the importance of a good preparation for Holy Communion. The last part (chapters 10 and 11) discusses the beginning of religious plurality in Europe and the new position of the church in society as well as the new place of penitential and eucharistic piety, especially also in later Calvinism.