

Calvin's views on political structures²

ABSTRAK

Calvyn se insigte oor politieke strukture

Hierdie artikel argumenteer dat Calvyn se denke oor die politieke bestel uit die primêre bronne nagegaan moet word. Dit moet derhalwe histories en teologies onderskei en begryp word. Oor'n tydperk van meer as 30 jaar het hy as Franse regsgeleerde in Genève hom in 'n verskeidenheid geskryfte oor hierdie saak uitgelaat. Hoewel dit duidelik is dat sy gedagtes reeds voor 1540 gevorm was, is die hoofstuk oor die burgerlike regering in Boek IV van die 1559 Institusie die beste sistematiese uiteensetting van sy insig en siening.

Owerhede, en persone wat die funksies van owerhede uitvoer, is deur God daar gestel. Daarom staan selfs die magtigste politieke instellings van sy tyd onder kritiek en aanspraak van die Woord. Hoewel Calvyn in Genève 'n voorkeur vir kollektiewe regeringsvorm ontwikkel het, is dit egter nie rede genoeg om af te lei dat die moderne Westerse demokrasie na hom teruggevoer kan word nie. Die ter saaklike bronne bied ook nie genoeg grond om te meen dat Calvyn 'n teorie (of selfs teologie) van politieke weerstand sou inisieer het nie. Wel gaan die gehoorsaamheid aan God bokant dié van gehoorsaamheid aan die owerheid uit, maar ook hierin is Calvyn niks meer as 'n toegewyde bedienaar van die Woord. In sy denke oor die politieke instellings en bestel van sy tyd, bly hy teoloog.

Calvin's arguments and concepts concerning the state or political order must be apprehended and distinguished in terms of historical and theological differentiation. Indeed, he had argued his views and convictions in this regard over a period of more than 30 years in a variety of literary works within the Geneva context. Although the core of his thoughts was formulated before 1540, he continued to engage with and reflect on these matters for many years after. The ensuing article on Calvin's political ideas follows a chronological line, focusing on formal and published documents with acknowledged public and official status (e.g. catechisms, confessional statements and the *Institutio*). He did not contradict his views on the political order in the rest of his written work (published and unpublished – such as commentaries, tracts, sermons, correspondence, advices, etc.).

Living in Geneva as an eminent French refugee and prominent lawyer (his legal advice was highly sought after), he was inevitably involved in the city's politics. Throughout his life, however, he never aspired to, nor held, any political position. His expatriate interests which particularly surfaced in his sermons and correspondence and which indeed had political consequences in Geneva, never impacted his teaching on civil government expressed in the more

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formal documents such as his catechisms, confessional statements and of course the *Institutio* as a conclusive theological textbook. As theologian he outlined the political ideas he professed to be contained in Holy Scripture most explicitly in the final chapter *On civil government* of his 1559-*Institutio*.

1. THE CHANGE: PARIS (1532) TO BASEL (1535)

As a 23 year old French humanist Calvin (1509-1564) illustrated his intellectual ingenuity in a commentary on Seneca's (4-65AD) *De Clementia* (1532). Although he was mainly interested in Seneca's art of persuasion, the young Calvin indeed alluded to the political ideas and beliefs he kept at the time. He held both Roman law and the natural, inherent order in high regard. He considered the *civitas* to be coherent and organic, as did Aristotle (384-322 BC) and Cicero (106-42 BC). A "society constitutes a lawful state" in which the subjects must live "by upright morals and fair laws" (Transl. Battles & Hugo, De Clemm 1,212.11 ff.). In citing Cicero he affirms: "As our bodies without the mind, so also a state without the law cannot use its parts, which are analogous to sinews and blood and members" (Transl. Battles & Hugo, De Clemm 1,214.14 ff.). He approves of Seneca's view that the prince is not subordinate to law (cf. Battles & Hugo, De Clemm 1,42.22 ff; 302.3 ff.). However, no ruler or potentate can "exercise their power for harm," converting it into tyranny (Battles & Hugo, De Clemm 1,146.9-14). When this happens, law, order and justice implode.

Calvin is also aware of the religious underpinning of classical political philosophy. Sovereigns thus enjoy an exalted status. He quotes (i.a.) Plato (427-347 BC) and Plutarch (c. 46 - c. 120 AD): "Princes are God's ministers, for the welfare and care of men ..." To this he adds that "our religion too, has such a confession: Power comes from God alone, and those that exist have been ordained by God (Rom. 13)" (Transl. Battles & Hugo, De Clemm 1,30.22-35).

After the *subita conversio ad docilitatem* (1533/4) Calvin aligned himself unreservedly with the cause of the *evangelicals* (i.e. protestants) in France. The subsequent persecution by King Francis I (1494-1547) confronted him with a threatening situation. Fleeing for his life, he ended up in the tolerant and free city of Basel. Here he completed the *Christianae religionis institutio* (1536), which was to become one of the most distinguished explications of reformed theology. In an extensive paragraph *de politica administratione* ('concerning the political administration', OS I,258-280) he applies himself to political structures, legal order and organization. Basing his arguments upon applicable biblical material he now explicitly assures his readers that all worldly authorities and powers are ordained by God. He subsequently deals with matters such as civil obedience and subordination, political liberty, laws, judicature and the mutual obligations and duties of authorities and subjects. In the accompanying letter addressed to the king of France (OS I,21-36), the classical presentation of and insistence on the just ruler is marginalized. Calvin emphasizes that the true king recognizes himself to be a minister of God in governing his kingdom. He admonishes his sovereign with the assertion that the king, who in ruling over his realm does not serve God's glory, does not exercise kingly rule (*regnum*), but commits robbery (OS I,23). For 1535 these were explicit words. Rulers (princes) are subject to the critique of the Word of God! With this a new element began to dominate his view on the most powerful political institution of his world.

In 1536 Calvin left Basel for a short stay in Italy. Coming back from there, he passed through Geneva, where Farel (1489-1565) convinced him to remain.

2. GENEVA 1536-38

Geneva had been an imperial free city under the suzerainty of a prince-bishop, a vassal of the dukes of Savoy. Supported since the 1520s by Bern, the city finally liberated itself from the duchy of Savoy in August 1535 and became protestant. When Calvin arrived in July 1536, he was immediately involved in the establishment of the new dispensation, which was embodied and sanctioned in documents that had ecclesiastical and official approval.

By November 1536 the city had received a *Confession de la Foy* (OS I,418-425), presented by Farel and Calvin. The last article is devoted to the *Magistratz* (OS I,425-426, magistrates or officials, persons in which official authority are invested). According to this article the supremacy of kings, princes, magistrates and officers is a good ordinance of God. They must be regarded as 'vicars and lieutenants of God' (OS I,425, *vicaires et lieutenans de Dieu*). In performing their office they serve God. In sustaining society, they must defend the afflicted and innocent, and correct the malice of the perverse. They must, in turn, be rendered subservience and obedience, in so far as it does not offend God. Those who conduct themselves unfaithful toward their superiors and show no concern for the public good of the country they live in, thereby, the *Confession* states, demonstrate their infidelity toward God.

On 16 January 1537 the ministers of the city submitted the *Articles concernant l'organisation de l'Église et du culte a Genève* (OS I,369-377) to the *Petit Conseil*. The third article provided for the religious instruction of children, primarily by the parents (OS I,375). Subsequently the *Instruction et confession de foy, dont on use en l'Eglise de Genève* (COR III/II,3-113), prepared by Calvin, appeared before the end of January. The Latin text, *Catechismus seu christianae religionis institutio ecclesiae Genevensis* (COR III/II,2-112) was published in Basel in 1538.

The last article also deals with *Du magistrat* (COR III/II,109 ff.), which leaves us with a clear picture of what Calvin thought that children (and their parents) should be taught on civil authorities. Calvin asserts, referring to Proverbs 8:15-16, Psalm 82:6-7, Deuteronomy 1:17, 2 Chronicles 19:5-7, Romans 12:8 and 13:1-7, that God approves of *l'estat des magistratz* (COR III/II,109.10). Their power is based upon the ordination of God: they are his *ministers* (COR III/II,109.22). *Princes et magistratz* (COR III/II,111.1 'princes and officials') are obliged to conserve *la purete forme publique de religion* ('the true form of public religion') and to regulate the lives of the subjects *par tresbonnes loix* (COR III/II,111.5 'by excellent laws'). They must provide for and protect the public and private well-being of their subjects. This can only be achieved *par justice et jugement* (COR III/II,111.7 'by justice and judgment'). Both were advocated by the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 22:3 ff.), Calvin tells his learners. Justice, accordingly, is to support and protect, to conserve and deliver the innocent. Judgment comprises of resisting the onslaught (or offensive) of the Evil One by preventing violence and punishing criminals (COR III/II,111.9-12).

Correspondingly, Calvin continues, subjects have the duty to honour and revere *leurs superieurs*, to commend their salvation and prosperity in prayer to the Lord, to voluntarily submit to their authority, to obey their laws and commands, to pay taxes, *et cetera*. This does not only pertain to those authorities that administer their power in a rightful way, but also to those that abuse it in a tyrannical manner, *iusques a ce que par ordre legitime nous ayons este delivrez de dessoubz leur ioug* (COR III/II,111.23-24 'until we are delivered from their yoke lawfully.')

This is a significant remark. The case in point was revolt against and the overthrow of political authorities and governments. Theologically it was a question whether, and under what circumstances the Bible allows for the deposition of a God-ordained institution. Here Calvin not only ratifies the termination of tyranny and misuse of power *par ordre legitime* (COR III/II,111.23

‘in a legitimate way’ or ‘lawfully’), but also in fact endorses the recent political history of Geneva. Its liberation from the duchy of Savoy was indeed carried out by the collective civil authorities of the city, which constituted, to his mind, the legitimacy of the act in that it complied with Biblical teaching in this regard. Two years later, in his *Responsio* to Cardinal Sadoletto (1477-1547) dated 1 September 1539, Calvin touched on the same matter. ‘The power of the sword, and other parts of civil jurisdiction, which bishops and priests, under the semblance of immunity, had deceitfully seized from the magistracy (*magistratus*) and claimed for themselves, have not we restored (*restituimus > restitutio*) it,’ he then asked, ‘to the civil authority (*magistratui*)?’ (OS I,461).

In conclusion, Calvin asserts that the obligatory obedience to superiors and authorities is nothing more than willing submission to God. Even *les commandemens de tous Roys* must give ground to the decrees (*edictz*) of the Lord (COR III/II,113.5). Appealing to Acts 4:19 (and 5:29), he underscores the fact that obedience to God is preferred over obedience to humans. In the explanation of the fifth commandment in the *Instruction et confession*, children are taught that compliance to fathers and mothers - as well as those that are appointed (*constituez*) ‘over us’ - does not outweigh obedience to the law of God. If they should command anything that counteracts God (*contre Dieu*), they should no longer be regarded as parents, but instead as strangers, *lesquelz nous veullent retirer de l’obeissance de nostre vray Pere* (COR III/II,21.29-30, ‘that want to tear us away from obedience to our true Father’).

As a matter of interest, this explication is exclusively used here. Calvin nowhere repeated it. In the exposition of this commandment in the 1536 *Institutio* neither the obedience of authorities nor the biblical conditions that apply were mentioned (cf. OS I,49). This also pertains to the 1542/45 *Catechismus*, except that Calvin there included obedience to authorities. The 1537 addition can be explained as a reflection on the fluidity of the situation in Geneva. Not all accepted the Council’s manner of setting up a reformed church for the city. Parents, still adhering to Roman Catholicism could have called for their children to refrain from protestant instruction and doctrine. Biblical texts such as Luke 14:26 and Matthew 10:37 were probably also at the back of Calvin’s mind.

3. STRASSBURG 1538-1541

In April 1538 both Calvin, Farel and their blind colleague Courault were forced to leave the city. The *Confession* had only limited subscription and met with resistance. Against the background of the new foreign policy of appeasement with Bern the so-called ‘Bernese ceremonies’ were introduced into Geneva. The ministers were unwilling to follow Bern’s lead and relations between them and the council became very strained. When they did not celebrate the Lord’s Supper on Easter Day, incidents followed and they were ordered to leave the city. In Basel Bucer (1491-1551) insisted that Calvin should come to Strassburg as minister of the French refugee congregation. This pastorate, along with Calvin’s encounter with protestant theologians such as Bucer, Capito (1478-1541), and Melancthon (1517-1560), and participation in the religious debates at Hagenau (1540), Worms (1540/1) and Regensburg (1541), broadened his theological views and insight. In the meantime his pen remained hard at work and a number of significant publications came from the press. A thorough revision of his *Institutio christianae religionis* (in volume now three times the size of the 1536 edition) was completed in 1539. Two years later his French translation of the 1539 *Institutio* was published. Soon after his answer to Cardinal Sadoletto, a comprehensive *Commentarius in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos* (COR II/XIII) was printed in Strassburg (March 1540). His exposition of chapter 13:1-7 is of particular relevance, because he explicitly appealed to these verses in the *Instruction et confession* regarding his

teaching on civil and political authorities.

His comments on the mentioned verses are in congruence with the structure of his thoughts as deposited elsewhere in his above consulted works. The 'higher powers' have been placed there (appointed or ordained) by the Lord, because it is the will of God to govern the world in this manner as evidence of his providence, made manifest in civil government (COR II/XIII,272.19 ff., 22-23 *qui iuris politici autor est...*). God has ordained the right of government (even unjust authorities and tyranny – COR II/XIII,273.33 ff.) for the well-being (*salutem* COR II/XIII,272.29; cf. also COR II/XIII,273.30-32) of mankind. They have a calling from God, are answerable to Him, thus with an obligation toward God and man (COR II/XIII 274.3-4). This clearly demonstrates the reality of God's providence. It is given for the purpose of consolidating society. Obedience is due to all who rule, because they have been raised to that honour not by chance, but by God's providence (cf. COR II/XIII,272.22 ff.). A 'well ordered administration of the state' (*bene ordinatam reipublicae administrationem* COR II/XIII,273.38) is characterized by the rewarding of the virtuous and the punishment of the immoral, through laws, as classical philosophy, Calvin adds, also had apprehended (COR II/XIII,273.37). Authorities are therefore committed by God to the use of the sword. The individual does not have the right to deprive those in power of their authority (COR II/XIII,275.3 ff.).

By now (1541) it was clear that Calvin formulated his thoughts on civil government in close connection with biblical information. He noticeably presented his thoughts in a dynamic way, appropriate to the genre which he used. A political change in Geneva, that saw the anti-appeasement party rise to power, resulted in an invitation to return. Calvin eventually returned to the city on 13 September 1541, this time to stay for good.

4. GENEVA 1541-64

Recovering from intense factionalism, Geneva desperately needed internal stability to consolidate its position as a protestant republic. As a gifted preacher, administrator and trained lawyer Calvin offered the expertise that was needed to provide Geneva with a constitutional government and society. He was involved in drafting the *Ordonnance sur les offices et officiers* (1543) (CO 10/1,125-146) which was ultimately to serve as the constitution for the city. The new constitution finally relinquished the ducal, Episcopal and cathedral powers and instituted the transformation to a collective government of locally elected and appointed bodies that existed previously. The different authorities regulated civil life and the administration of justice.

A committee, led by Calvin, instituted the regulations for Geneva's church. These were marked by Calvin's Strasburg experience. By the end of September 1541 *Les ordonnances ecclésiastiques* (CO 10/1,15-30; OS II,328-261) was completed and, during the next two months, officially accepted. In 1547 it was supplemented, and in 1561 it was given a final revision, being slightly adapted to the situation. The *ordonnances* is therefore a fundamental document that articulated the Geneva ecclesiastical structure and order. It depicts the church as a organism that is governed by four offices, viz. deacon, elder, minister and doctor. These are elected according to what resembles a combination of aristocratic and democratic principles. The Consistory, made up of ministers and elders (who were elected counselors) and the Company of Pastors, served as ecclesiastical bodies. Ministers were recognized as persons of public standing and status.

The question needs to be addressed as to whether an analogy can be drawn between Calvin's ecclesiastical and political views. One must, however, be cautious for rectilinear assumptions and deductions. It is true that church and state, ecclesiastical order and civil order,

were thought of as an indivisible unity, and this defined the relations between church and state. In areas of consensus counsellors and ministers worked effectively and efficiently together, particularly in the sphere of education and poor relief (social welfare), which were both held by Calvin to be the responsibility of the state. At the same time it is clear that Calvin was aware of fundamental differences between state and church, society and the body of Christ. Christ rules in and over the church, performs specific acts for and in the church and gathers, protects and oversees the church in a way that can neither be applied to nor imitated by the state. This Christocracy constitutes the fundamental nature of the church. Thus, in the thoughts of Calvin a homology between church and state can not be mapped out.

In 1542 *La forme des prieres et chantz ecclesiastiques, avec la maniere d'administrer les Sacremens, et consacrer le Mariage: selon la coustume de l'Eglise ancienne* (CO 6,161-210, OS II,11-58; Calvin SA 2,149 ff.) was also prepared by Calvin. Noteworthy in terms of our theme is the prayer of intercession for rulers, integrated into this liturgical document (Calvin SA 2,164.32 ff.). This prayer should not be overlooked in our discussion of Calvin's political views. Calvin bases it on the biblical command to pray for the *superieurs et gouverneurs* (Calvin SA 2,164.33 'authorities and rulers.' Cf. also his commentary on I Tim. 2:2 ff., CO 52,266 ff.). For them, *tes serviteurs* (Calvin SA 2,166.6 'your servants') to whom *le regime de ta iustice* (Calvin SA 2,166.6 'the government and your justice') are entrusted, must be prayed: 'Give them your Spirit so that they in true faith may acknowledge and profess Christ, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, to whom is given all power in heaven and upon earth. That they may serve Him *et exalter son Regne en leur domination conduisant* (Calvin SA 2,166.12 'and praise his Kingdom in their dominion of authority'). Subsequently that they may guide their subjects - 'the work/creation of your hands, the sheep of your pasturage' - in conformity with 'your will and pleasure' in order that they may serve Him in all peace and rest and holiness and honesty (*honesteté*), liberated and entrenched against the fear of enemies, in praise and gratitude towards God, life long (Calvin SA 2,166.13-18). This prayer was an important part in the order of the service, and conforms to Calvin's teaching and instruction on authorities.

A third ecclesiastical text deserves attention. During November 1541 Calvin, in a very short time, wrote *Le Cathéchisme de l'Eglise de Genève*. This he translated into Latin and published it in 1545 as the *Catechismus Ecclesiae Genevensis* (COR III/II.1-120), obviously also for use outside Geneva. In contrast to the *Instruction et confession* of 1537, treatment of *de magistratibus* is absent. The explication (now in question and answer format) of the fifth commandment is also adjusted to the new circumstances. The qualified exhortation to regard parents as strangers rather than to obey them should their commands counteract God's will and law, (COR III/II,20.), is also omitted. As a matter of fact, the *Catechismus* does not refer to the issue of obeying God in preference to humans, in the event of conflicting loyalties. Rather, it stresses the consequences for children that are wilfully disobedient to parents. Calvin adds that though only father and mother are mentioned in the commandment, it must be understood as 'all who are over us' (COR III/II,20). The reason is that it is the Lord who has raised them to a high degree of honour. There is indeed no authority (parents, princes, rulers of any description), no power, no honour, but of the decree of God (*ex Dei decreto*), because it so pleases God to order the world (COR III/II,20).

Over the years Calvin formulated also many legal opinions and, as the city's premier lawyer, cast a legal eye on laws, treatises, *et cetera*. In this capacity, he was in charge of the committee that commenced its work in 1560 to redraft the constitution. Various events (e.g. the Lect affair 1546, disputes about baptismal names) and clashes with prominent persons such as Ameaux, Perrin, Bolsec, and Berthelier had political undercurrents and made Calvin's life in

Geneva contentious and difficult. External factors, for instance the influx of French refugees after 1550 - who threatened the city's social fabric, and at the same time upset the political stability - added to this. These conflicts and tensions sometimes reverberated in his sermons, commentaries, and correspondence. Yet it was in Geneva that Calvin came into his own right as a reformed theologian. Here he had time to revise, translate and finalize his *Institutio*. The *Institutio* in fact comprises Calvin's most comprehensive treatment of the civil government and political authority. This remained the case in the subsequent editions, and it is to the *Institutio* that we must now turn our attention.

5. THE *INSTITUTIO*

In the *Institutio* Calvin offers three reasons for his compulsion to discuss civil government. In the first place he wanted to rectify according to Scripture the unfounded assumptions and non-compliant position to overturn (*evertere conantur* Inst. 4.20.1; OS V,471.22) the divinely established order— particularly a popular and fundamental issue in radical Anabaptist circles. Secondly he aimed to denounce any form of state absolutism, given the biblical view of the civic authorities (cf. Inst. 4.20.1; OS V,471.22-24). Thirdly, Calvin had a pastoral motive. It is of great importance, he remarks, to know how caringly (*consuluerit*) God has provided for mankind in this respect in order that a greater zeal for piety may flourish 'in us to attest our gratitude' (cf. Inst. 4.20.1; OS V,471.25-472.3). It is indeed God's will to order and supervise the world in this way.

5.1 A twofold government in man

Calvin finds the widely accepted two kingdoms doctrine a useful point of departure. There exists, he says, *in homine regimen duplex* ('in man a twofold government' Inst. 4.20.1; OS V,471.12; cf. also Inst. 3.19.15; OS IV,294.5-7): a *regnum spirituale* and a *regnum politicum*. The one is spiritual, *quo conscientia ad pietatem et cultum Dei instituitur* (OS I,232 'thereby the conscience is instructed in piety and reverencing of God'). The other one is political, *quo ad humanitatis et civilitatis officia, quae inter homines servanda sunt* (OS I,233 'thereby man is skilled in the human and civilian obligations that must be performed towards his fellow human'). The *regnum spirituale* is related to the eternal and spiritual kingdom of Christ. This kingdom can not be entangled by bonds, laws and human institutions of this world. Its *Sitz im Leben* is the inner mind, the inward man, the life of the soul. Herein is received the complete liberty in and of Christ, also as a benefaction to the conscience (cf. Inst. 3.19.15; OS IV,294.35 ff.). The *regnum politicum* has its *Sitz im Leben* in the present and transient life and its concerns. This government concerns the civilian and political order, and regulates outward behaviour. It is embodied in regularizing laws whereby man may live his life, honourably, temperately and with holiness among his fellow men (cf. Inst. 3.19.15; OS IV,295.28 ff.).

Obviously both these governments are at variance, and must as such be differentiated (cf. Inst. 4.20.2; OS V,473,6 ff.). However, in the reality of present life, they also configured as a coherent whole. This is why Calvin is not moored to the notion *regnum* (kingdom). He writes: 'We may call it a *regnum spirituale*. We may call (*vocare nobis liceat* Inst. 3.19.15; OS IV,294.16-17; cf. also OS I,232-233) it a *regnum politicum*. *Regimen*, contrary to *regnum*, does not have an ontological and static denotation, but rather suggests, as Wilhelm Neuser has shown, a dynamic and functional meaning. Calvin thus thinks relationally, coherently and percipiently, and not in terms of fixed categories. In this sense he endowed the two kingdoms doctrine with a meaning

and contents of his own, which must be distinguished for example from the thoughts of Luther in this regard. The civilian government is an 'external aid (*adminiculum*) by which God invites us into the society of Christ and holds us therein' (Inst. 4.1.1; OS V,1.4). The Bible does not secularize the public order and its political structures.

1.2 Authorities are ordained by God

Calvin makes his point clearly in the *Institutio*: civil government and authorities are ordained by God. Both the Old and New Testaments (referring to texts such as Ex. 22:8; Deut. 1:16; 2 Cron. 19:6; Ps. 82:1, 6; Prov. 8:14, 15-16; Jer. 48:11; Luke 22:25; John 10:35, Rom. 12:8; Rom. 13:1-4; I Cor. 12.28 and I Pet. 2:17) provide enough support to locate this ordination in divine providence and the holy decree (*sed divina providentia et sancta ordinatione*) of God. It indeed pleased Him so to rule the affairs of men (Inst. 4.20.4; OS V,475.5 ff.). God, and Christ therefore towers above the power of all kings and earthly authorities (cf. Inst. 4.20.5; OS V,476.1 ff.) Authorities (*magistratus*) are equipped with power, they are ordained – in their own right - as ministers of divine justice (*divinae iustitiae ministros*) (Inst. 4.20.6; OS V,476.22-23). As vicars of God (*Dei vicarii*) they should watch with all care and diligence to present in themselves to all men an image (*imaginem*) of divine providence, protection, goodness, benevolence and justice (Inst. 4.20.6; OS V,476.29 ff.). Here lies implicitly the substance and sense of their office and work. But, at the same time, it also serves as the standard of comparison with regard to the integrity and quality of their commitments and acts. Compared to the correlative remark in the Seneca commentary, viz. that princes and kings are servants of God, it is apparent that Calvin no longer enhances the excellence of such positions, but that his emphasis now has shifted to the sovereignty of God, who destines the position and service of authorities and officials.

1.3 Plurality of political structures and governments

The existence of different political structures, (recognised by the Bible and also identified and distinguished in classical philosophy as monarchy, aristocracy and democracy) does not at all inhibit the underlying premise that all authorities are ordinations of God, Calvin asserts. The plurality of political structures be it monarchy, aristocracy or some mixed form is equally legitimate and equally competent to perform its divinely appointed office.

Calvin is also not convinced that an ideal form of government exists. The existent diversity should not be abolished without any further ado – it is in fact embedded in the providence of God (cf. Inst. 4.20.8; OS V,479.19 ff.). Noteworthy is the addition to his argument (formulated already in the 1536 edition): the fall from kingdom to tyranny is easy. It is much more difficult to fall from the rule of the best men to the faction of a few; yet it is easiest of all to fall from popular rule to sedition (Inst. 4.20.8; OS V,478.18-21; cf. OS I,263). Thus, each form of government harbours the seeds of evanescence.

Did Calvin foster an evident preference? In the 1543 revised Latin edition of the *Institutio* he significantly added that "if the three forms of government which the philosophers discuss be considered in themselves, I will not deny that aristocracy, or a government compounded of aristocracy and citizens, far excels all others" (Transl. Battles; Inst. 4.20.8; OS V,478.21-24 ... *minime negaverim vel aristocratiam, vel temperatum ex ipsa et politia statum aliis omnibus longe excellere*). In the history of Israel, he points out, God also confirmed this when he ordained among them an aristocracy (*quum aristocratiam politiae vicina*, cf. Inst. 4.20.8; OS V,479.2-6.

Calvin refers to Ex. 18:13-26 and Deut. 1:1-9, but he also has in mind particularly the time of the Judges, prior to the institution of the kingdom). Historically this observation coheres directly with his endorsement of a collective form of government for Geneva, as expressed in the *Ordonnance sur les offices et officiers* (1543). His main consideration is to curb arbitrariness and the term of office. Calvin is also concerned for a secure and ordered liberty. He adds that this kind of government best regulates liberty with moderation (*moderationem > moderatio*) and is properly established on a durable basis (Inst. 4.20.8; OS V,479.7ff.).

As is evident in the documents discussed thus far, Calvin also commented on kings and monarchies. These were the most powerful institutions of his world, especially in France. He lived in close union with his fatherland where an absolute form of monarchy enforced itself particularly in bloody persecution of protestants. He was well-acquainted with this situation and it deeply concerned him as a Frenchman. He continued to value the monarchical form of government, provided that it does not degenerate into tyranny.

Kings are, in Calvin's view, subject to the critique of God's Word and are accountable to Him. He opposes the despotic misuse and tyranny of kings and their corresponding behaviour, rather than the monarchy as establishment. In the 1559 edition of the *Institutio* he adds that it is very rare for kings so to control themselves that their will never disagrees with what is just and right or for them to be endowed with such great keenness and prudence, that each knows how much is enough (Inst. 4.20.8; OS V,478.24-28). In a later remark, also included in the 1559 edition, he confirms this view: 'I do not discuss the men themselves as if a mask of dignity covered foolishness, or idleness, or cruelty, as well as wicked morals full of infamous deeds, and thus acquired for vices the praise of virtues; but I say that the order itself is worthy of such honour and reverence that those who are rulers are esteemed among us, and receive reverence out of respect for their office of prefectship (lordship)' (Inst. 4.20.22; OS V,493.36-494.5). These observations, as well as Calvin's position in this regard, must be understood against the backdrop of events in France, where the young reformed church severely suffered in the 1550's under Henry II (reigned from 1547-1559), Francis II (reigned 1559-1560) and in the 1560's under the Guise family.

In Geneva Calvin developed a preference for a collective form of government. It raises a question: can this be considered as the initiation of what later eventuated in western democracy? One should be careful with assumptions and postulates. Calvin is not directed by political philosophy and theories. He is a theologian. The tracts of his thinking consequently lead back to Scripture. Governments and authorities are servants of God, not of people or citizens. What is true though is that Calvin did not opt for the political principles the realist Machiavelli (1469-1527) settled on in defending the absolute power of rulers in his *De Principe*, translated into Latin in 1553.

The *regnum politicum*, in all its different forms, as an ordination of God, is thus related to the unfolding of the providence of God. Calvin accordingly argued that a proper and lawful government and its officials inevitably have to put into effect the political consequences of this biblical apprehension. We must therefore now attend to those matters *de politica administratione* ('concerning the administration of civil government'), that Calvin disclosed.

1.4 The occupation and responsibility of civil government

In considering the role (vocation) and responsibilities of civil government Calvin took into account the laws with which a Christian state (*Christiana politia*) should be governed and what benefit the people should derive from them. He also tackled the issue of what obedience is

owed to the authorities (*magistratus*), who are the protectors and guardians of the laws (Inst. 4.20.3; OS V,474.17; see also Inst. 4.20.3; OS V.474.19ff.). His focus is therefore on matters such as the office of 'magistrates' and rulers, the administration of their duties, the making of laws, and the public welfare.

According to the Word of God, Calvin writes, the office of authorities extends to both tables of the Law (Inst. 4.20.9; OS V,479.32ff.). Authorities accordingly cannot neglect God's right (*Dei iure*) and take care only for men (*tantum hominibus consulunt*) (Inst. 4.20.9; OS V,480.1). The first table of the Law obliges civil governments to cherish and protect the external worship of God, to defend sound doctrine of piety (*sanam pietatis doctrinam*) and the condition or position (*status*) of the church (cf. Inst. 4.20.2; OS V,473.13-14, added in 1559). They must therefore carefully prevent society from idolatry, sacrilege against God's Name, blasphemies against his truth and other forms of harassment against religion from arising and spreading among the people (Inst. 4.20.3; OS V,474.1-3). In doing so they assert the honour of God, whose representatives they are, and by whose grace they govern (cf. Inst.4.20.9; OS V,480.7 ff.).

The second table of the Law contains the socio-ethical effects of the first and must therefore also be exemplified in the administration of civil duties. Citing (in the 1559 edition) for example Psalm 82.3 ff., Calvin affirms that authorities are exhorted to give justice (*ius*) to the poor and the needy, to rescue the destitute and to deliver them from the hand of the oppressor (cf. Inst. 4.20.9; OS V,480.25 ff.). Authorities should do justice and maintain and preserve righteousness (cf. Inst. 4.20.9; OS V,480.21-25, 28ff.; Calvin has i.a. Jer. 7:5-7, 22:3 and Deut. 1:16 in mind). As stated already, this includes the retaining of freedom or liberty as well (cf. Inst. 4.20.8; OS V,479.7 ff.).

Encapsulated in these and similar observations is the belief that authorities should mould social behaviour in terms of civil righteousness, that they should include social care in their programmes of government. In society mutual and general peace and tranquillity should be promoted. Authorities are ordained defenders of God's pious worshippers, protectors and vindicators of public innocence, modesty, decency and tranquillity (Inst. 4.20.5; OS 5,476.7 ff.). Their sole endeavour should be to provide for the common safety and peace of all (Inst. 4.20.9; OS V,481.5 ff.). Authorities, he concludes, must prevent the public peace from being disturbed in order that each one may keep his (legal) property safe and undamaged, that people may conduct uninterrupted trade among themselves and that honesty and modesty may be preserved among them (Inst. 4.20.3; OS V,474.4-6.) Calvin obviously has in mind the collective and mutual economic, social and political well-being of society.

Legitimate laws are the means by which these duties and responsibilities are achieved. Elsewhere in the *Institutio* Calvin observed that every kind of human organization must be regulated by laws. The principles of such laws must obviously also be comprehended (cf. Inst. 2.2.13; OS III,256.31 ff., esp. 36 ff.).

1.5 The need of public laws and judicial procedures

Calvin's concern is to demonstrate the laws with which a Christian state ought to be governed, that is which laws can be piously used before God and rightly administered among men (*notabo quibus legibus pie coram Deo uti possit, et inter homines rite administrari* Inst. 4.20.14; OS V,486.19-20). Indeed, next to magistracy in the civil state comes the laws, the sinews (*nervi*) of the commonwealth, the souls (*animae*) of the state, as Plato and Cicero called them, Calvin explains (cf. Inst. 4.20.14; OS V,486.9 ff.). Without them authorities cannot exist. And, laws

have no force apart from the magistracy (Cf. Inst. 4.20.14; OS V,486.12 ff.). Laws are therefore indispensable for the existence and essence of the state.

Calvin thus conceived the state as a organism, an organic unity, a corpus or body. The state is edified by the society and community which lives together in good order founded upon equitable and righteous laws that must be obeyed. Obviously this corresponds with the classical views of Plato, Aristotle and Cicero. In his academic training this was impressed upon him and efficiently interpreted and explained. Calvin combines classical philosophy and Roman Law therefore into an agile and historical frame of reference. However, he never applied classical philosophy and Roman Law normatively in the articulation and concretizing of his views and of the state and civil government. He does not attribute the political order to human concerns or even a legal causality, but secures it in the sovereignty of God.

Because he related the duties of authorities or magistracy to the Decalogue (and not classical philosophy), the major question is whether the Mosaic law in its entirety (i.e. the 'political system' of Moses) should therefore not only underlie all laws, but also stipulate or determine their contents? Calvin expresses strong theological reservations in this regard. He endorses the traditional and common division (following Aquinas (1225-1274)) of the Mosaic law into moral, ceremonial and judicial laws (cf. Inst. 4.20.14; OS V,486.26-28). The moral law consists of the Ten Commandments. The Law expresses the unchangeable will of God: that He Himself be worshipped by all, and that men should love another. This is therefore according to Calvin the true and eternal rule of righteousness (*iustitiae regula*), prescribed to all people and nations and times, who wish to conform their lives to God's will (Inst. 4.20.15; OS V,487.6 ff.). This is a consistent standard against which all laws must be measured.

This does not extend to the Jewish ceremonies and judicial laws. Both of these constituted an outward structure, which God historically gave his people in terms of the special demands of historical circumstances, and which therefore can be altered - or even abolished - according to circumstance. The enduring and underlying principle that cannot be changed is the moral law. If this is true, Calvin concludes, then every nation is free to make such laws as it foresees to be profitable for itself. Yet, these must be in conformity to that perpetual rule of love articulated in the Decalogue. They may indeed vary in form, but must have the same purpose and foundation (Inst. 4.20.15; OS V,487.27 ff.). The secret is embedded in the universal validity of the Ten Commandments, i.e. love to God and neighbour. This is the criterion to which all laws should comply. This also constitutes the sense and meaning of the laws. Only then, as expression of an attentive responsiveness to God's purposes with a just civil order, are they 'excellent laws', as Calvin observed in the *Instruction et confession*.

In all laws, Calvin concludes, there are two sides: the *constitutio* and *aequitas*: the 'constitution' and the 'equity' on which the constitution itself is founded and rests (cf. Inst. 4.20.16; OS V,487.36 ff.). The *constitutio* depends in part on certain circumstances and they may differ or change. *Aequitas* is an expressed legal principle of all written laws. It is something natural. The law of God (i.e. the moral law) is nothing else than a testimony of natural law (*naturalis legis testimonium*) and of that conscience which God has engraved upon the minds of men (cf. Inst. 4.20.16; OS V,488.3 ff.). *Aequitas* on the other hand, is the principle prescribed in the moral law. In this sense equity is the goal and rule and limit of all laws (cf. Inst. 4.20.16; OS V,488.7-8). Calvin, however, does not build his argument upon the eternal validity of positive law or natural right. The apprehension of all laws must be deepened and be explained by God's revelation, i.e. by his (moral) law. Underlying thus this exposition is a well thought-out legal concept in which justice and law plays a vital role and in which the socio-political well-being of the commonwealth is maintained.

Both subjects and authorities are bound to these laws. This is the only means by which a legitimate administration of the state can function. Calvin goes on to broach the subject of law enforcement. Referring to Solon (born c. 600 BC), he states, all commonwealths are maintained by reward and punishment. If these are removed, the whole order (*disciplina*) of the state collapses. The concern (*cura*) for equity and justice is thereby suspended. Calvin finds this same line of thought in Scripture. Citing Jeremiah again (Jer. 21:12, 22:3) he shows that the prophet bid kings and rulers to execute judgment and justice (*iudicium et iustitiam*) (cf. also the 1537 *Instruction et confession* in COR III/II,111.9-12). Justice consists in receiving into safekeeping, embracing, protecting, vindicating and liberating the innocent. Judgment consists in withstanding the boldness of the impious, repressing their violence, and punishing their misdeeds (cf. Inst. 4.20.9; OS V,481.11-26).

Authorities thus are armed with power (*potestas*) to coerce the malefactors and criminals by whose wickedness the public peace is disturbed (Rom. 13:3; 1 Tim. 2:2). The imposition and execution of punishments, even capital punishment, is related to the judgment and wrath of God. In the enforcement of these, authorities remain the servants of God, and do not execute these under their personal authority. As Lawgiver (*Legislator*) God Himself puts into the hand of his ministers a sword to be drawn against all murderers, Calvin writes (cf. Inst. 4.20.10; OS V,481.32 ff.). Their true righteousness is to pursue the guilty and the impious with the drawn sword (cf. Inst. 4.20.10; OS V,483.10 ff.). This can not be done at random - Calvin does not favor undue cruelty and austerity (Inst. 4.20.10; OS V,483.17 ff.). The integrity of the administration of justice and judgment must be demonstrated in the disciplined and contained exercise of just regulation.

Calvin is also of opinion that Christians may call upon the help of the government or officials. They may indeed appeal to the civil court of justice without any qualms of conscience (Inst. 4.20.17; OS V,489.27-29). They may even, if appropriate, act to instigate judicial procedures. The 'magistrate' is a minister of God 'for our good'. This God-given benefit may however not be misused for personal gain or profit (cf. Inst. 4.20.17; OS V,489. 29-490.6. See also Inst. 4.20.29; OS V,499). Of utmost importance is the recognition that the help of the 'magistrate' is a holy gift of God and that subjects should guard against polluting it by sin (cf. Inst. 4.20.18; OS V,490.30 ff.). In this way God's gift retains its credibility.

1.6 Obedience at a certain cost

The last aspect of Calvin's treatment of civil government and its administration in the *Institutio* focuses on the mutual relation between subject and authority. Subjects must recognize their 'magistrates' as a jurisdiction bestowed by God. They must therefore esteem and reverence them as ministers and representatives of God, and must take care to honour their office and obey them (cf. Inst. 4.20.22; OS V,493.16 ff. See also Inst. 4.20.26; OS V,496). This attitude is embodied in the acceptance of proclamations, by paying taxes, and in undertaking public offices and burdens which pertain to the common defence and well-being (Inst. 4.20.23; OS V,494.6 ff.: Tit. 3:1, 1 Pet. 2:13, 14; 1 Tim. 2:1-2, Rom. 13:1). Governments do have the right wage war, that is to defend by war the dominions entrusted to their safekeeping if at any time they are under enemy attack (cf. Inst. 4.20.11; OS V,483.29 ff.). In this way their subjects and the concerns of their subjects are defended. Everything else ought to be done before taking up arms – war is to be regarded as the final recourse (Inst. 4.20.12; OS V,485.6). In the event of war, however, authorities must not be carried away by headlong anger and hatred, nor be burned by implacable severity (Inst. 4.20.12; OS V,484.33 ff.). They are not allowed to wickedly abuse their power, which was given them for

the benefit and service of others (Inst. 4.20.12; OS V,485.8 ff.). Tributes and taxes are the lawful revenues of princes and governments to meet the public expenses of their offices (Inst. 4.20.13; OS V,485.18 ff.). These may not be squandered or despoiled. They are to provide support for matters of public necessity. Exploitation imposes a tyrannical burden upon the people (Inst. 4.20.13; OS V,485.36 ff.). Authorities cannot exercise unrestrained power.

If authorities and rulers do exercise unrestrained power to the injury and detriment of the subjects, is there a point where they can (or even must) resort to justified resistance? Calvin had to contend with this question ever since he left France as a refugee, as we have already seen in the documents consulted. In the *Institutio* he maintains his line of thinking. In the first place, he puts an extremely high premium on obedience: citizens owe reverence toward all rulers in the highest degree (*ad extremum praefectis* Inst. 4.20.29; OS V,499.13), even to the utmost. Even when they are tormented by a savage prince or hounded for the sake of their faith by a ruler who is impious and sacrilegious (Inst. 4.20.29; OS V,499.33 ff.) and who rules unjustly and incompetently (Inst. 4.20.25; OS V,496.3). Obedience to and honor of authorities are God's command. Secondly, Calvin points out, it is not without reason that the providence of God has wisely arranged that various countries should be ruled by various kinds of governments (Inst. 4.20.8; OS V,479.23 ff.). In this providence lies the duty of obedience and submissiveness (Inst. 4.20.8; OS V,479.28 ff.).

Thirdly, in the context of the reality of life, Calvin reminds his readers to allow for the fact that God can raise a tyrannical ruler to punish the wickedness of the people (Inst. 4.20.25; OS V,496.4). Mindful of own misdeeds, Calvin continues, such rulers must be recognized as the chastisement to restrain impatience (cf. Inst. 4.20.29; OS V,500.1 ff., included in the 1559 edition). Besides, he observes, it is not for man to remedy such evils. The only remaining recourse is to implore the Lord for help. He holds the hearts of kings and the changing of kingdoms in his hands (Prov. 21.1; Inst. 4.20.29; OS V,500.3-7; added in 1539). Relief and the hope of relief, comes from divine intervention.

God dethrones, Calvin reminds his readers, unjust and inequitable governments, rulers and authorities at times determined by Him. Unbridled despotism is the Lord's to avenge (Inst. 4.20.31; OS V,501.13 ff.). Sometimes he raises up overt (*manifestos* Inst. 4.20.3; OS V,500.15) avengers from among his servants, and arms them with his command (i.e. *legitima Dei vocatione* –'a lawful calling of God' Inst. 4.20.30; OS V,500.30) to execute a legitimate punishment of the wicked government and to deliver God's people. Calvin refers to the exodus from Egypt (Moses) and to the time of the Judges in Israel's history as well as what happened during the Babylonian captivity (cf. Inst. 4.20.30; OS V,500.14 ff.). Sometimes however, God directs to this end the rage of men whose actions are implicitly evil (cf. Inst. 4.20.30; OS V,500.18; 501.2 ff.).

Calvin does not condone private persons and individuals to actively resist their authorities. However, legitimate resistance can be performed lawfully by lesser institutions and officials. Constitutional 'magistrates' were traditionally, he observes, appointed to restrain the tyranny and wilfulness of kings, as evidenced in ancient times by Spartan ephors, the Roman tribunes, the demarches of Athens and the current power of the three estates in Europe (cf. Inst. 4.20.31; OS V,501.16 ff.). In accordance with their duty, they have to guard against the fierce licentiousness of kings and monarchical absolutism. Their concealment of iniquity involves nefarious treachery. They then dishonestly betray the freedom of the people while knowing that they have been appointed protectors by God's ordinance (Inst. 4.20.31; OS V,501.22 ff.). Calvin urges here action by a constituted 'magistrate' to protect the liberties of the people. However, he carefully guards against any endorsement of popular revolutionary actions.

With regards to the obedience owing to rulers, one exception has always to be made

– and is indeed held to be of primary importance. This obedience may never conflict with obedience to God and to the commands. The Lord is the King of kings. When He opens his sacred mouth (*qui ubi sacrum os aperuit*, Inst. 4.20.32; OS V,501.35), Calvin states, He alone must be heard before and above all men. All are subject to those men who are in authority above them, but only next to Him and in Him. Calvin points to an edict (*edictum*) in this regard, proclaimed by Peter: “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29, Inst. 4.20.32; OS V,502.22 ff.). In rendering this obedience which the Lord requires, one must be prepared to suffer anything, rather to turn aside from piety. To encourage us says Calvin, Paul ‘pricks us with another goad: We have been redeemed by Christ at so a great price as our redemption cost Him, so that we should not alienate ourselves to the corrupt desires of men – much less subject to their impiety’ (1 Cor. 7:23; Inst. 4.20.32; OS V,502.28-31).

Did Calvin establish the foundations of a theory or even theology of resistance? Again we must be cautious. Although Calvin, toward the end of his life strongly supported the revolt by Louis I de Bourbon, the Prince of Condé, against the French kingdom in 1562 (before this he was always discouraging proposals and actions to overthrow the French monarchy), it was still with marked reservations. Active resistance can only be led by governmental leaders of the rank of princes of royal blood and with a reasonable chance of success. This position is still within the parameters of his 1537 formulation: *iusques a ce que par ordre legitime nous ayons este delivrez de dessoubz leur ioug* (COR III/II,111.23-24; ‘until we are delivered from their yoke lawfully.’) It must be added that Calvin’s students and younger reformed ministers that were physically confronted with the provocation of absolutism and the ferociousness of the religious wars in France after 1560 and events like the massacres at Vassy (1562) and later that of St Bartholomew’s night on 23 August 1572, argued the issue of justifiable resistance in their own right. Their work indeed opened more avenues for active resistance on political and religious grounds. The books of Francis Hotman (1524-1590) *Franco-Gallia* (1573), Theodore Beza (1519-1605) *Du droit des magistrats sur leur subiets* (1574) translated as *De iure magistratuum in subditos* (1576) and Philippe Duplessis-Mornay (1549-1623, as editor) *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos* (1577) are good examples.

6. A CONFESSION FOR CHURCHES LIVING IN DISPERSION 1559

During the latter part of the sixth decade, Calvin was also involved in the drafting of confessional documents, e.g. the *Formulaire de confession de Foy, que les escoliers auront à faire et souscrire entre les mains du Recteur* (1559: CO 9,721-730). The *Confessio ecclesiae Pariensis* of 1557 (CO 9,715-721) was at least inclined to his theology. When French reformed churches met in 1559 in concealment in synod in Paris, they received a draft *Confession de foy faite d’un commun accord par les Eglises qui sont dispersees en france, et s’abstinent des idolatries Papales* from Geneva. Its design and argumentation derives the spirit of Calvin’s theology. He was in fact deeply involved in its formation. With slight additions it was accepted by the churches in France and became known as the *Confessio Gallicana*. The draft *Confession de foy* for dispersed reformed churches in France, is thus a significant document, also with regard to Calvin’s political ideas, since the last article (35) involves the worldly authority or government. It was drafted at the height of King Henry II’s persecution of protestants in France and constitutes a potent summary of Calvin’s views on civil government. It is therefore appropriate to conclude our survey and discussion of his views by taking into consideration this *Confession de foy*.

Article 35 of the *Confession* states that God wishes to govern the world, to restrain its disorders, *par loix et polices* (‘by laws and authorities’ Calvin SA 4,74.4-5). He therefore has established kingdoms (including hereditary), republics and other principalities, as well as all that

apartient l'estat de iustice ('belong to a just government' Calvin SA 4,74.8, with reference to Matt. 17:24-27, Rom. 13:1 ff., 5-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-14). He has put the sword in the hands of authorities (*magistrats*) to suppress crimes against the Laws of God. They have been commissioned to exercise a legitimate and holy authority. Subjects should therefore submit and obey their laws and statutes, even if they are unbelievers (*infideles*), provided that the sovereign empire of God (*l'Empire souverain de Dieu*) remains in tact (Calvin SA 4,76. 2ff.). The *Confession* detests those who reject authority, establish community and confusion of property and overthrow the order of justice (Calvin SA 4,76.8-10).

Although the historical and political contexts differ, a conformable line runs through the *Confession de foy* (1536), the *Instruction et confession* (1537) and the *Confession de foy faite d'un commun accord par les Eglises qui sont dispersees* (1559) - a line that also impacted on the formulation concerning authorities in the *Confessio Scotia* (1560) and *Confessio Belgica* (1561). Calvin's political ideas thus had a key bearing on confessional documents, which played a decisive role in shaping the views on civil government in churches and countries far removed from Geneva.

7. CONCLUSION

In following a historical line (from Paris (1532) to Geneva (1559)), we have traced Calvin's political ideas, as expressed in the more formal or public recognized works. He indeed articulated his views on government, political authorities and the civil legal order - though never blindly nor impetuous. He was cognizant of the contemporary political dispensation and affairs of Europe. As a trained humanist scholar he also had the competence and proficiency to interpret these political structures comprehensively in a coherent and critical way. He was acquainted with classical political philosophy, Roman jurisprudence, the opinions of church fathers, Christian and Medieval thinking as well as abreast with contemporary literature. And, he was directed by biblical information. Furthermore, he was not only exposed to different political structures – the Catholic and monarchical Paris, the civilian aristocratic and protestant cities of Basel, Geneva and Strasburg – but was also confronted with their exercise of power and force. His reflection on the political and civil order was thus firmly rooted in life as reality. Calvin did not theorize. He worked out a Christian and reformed view of civil order that was meaningful and directorial, both for his time and the future. Even in his day his political ideas transcended the immediate setting of Geneva. Published also in Latin, his works, and therefore ideas, were accessible to a circle of readers far beyond the walls of the city.

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KEY WORDS

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TREFWOORDE

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