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John Calvin, "the theologian"

ABSTRACT

It is not unfair to say that in the last two hundred years the name of John Calvin has been vilified more than that of any other theologian in Christian history, except perhaps for the apostle Paul. The church historian Will Durant infamously stated that Calvin "darkened the human soul with the most absurd and blasphemous conception of God in all the long and honoured history of nonsense".[1] In contrast, the purpose of this article is to elaborate on an admiring – though by no means hagiographic – tribute given to Calvin by one of his own contemporaries, Luther's erudite associate Phillip Melanchthon. Melanchthon said of Calvin that he was "the theologian", a title previously conferred upon the Cappadocian father Gregory Nazianzen.[2] Not even the great Augustine had been honoured in this way,[3] but in recognition of his specific contribution to the doctrine of God in the Trinitarian century, Gregory was. As was Calvin in the sixteenth century.

1. INTERPRETING CALVIN

By way of further introduction, it may be helpful to say a few brief words on the current status of Calvin interpretation. Leading up to recent times, Calvin and Calvinism was frequently maligned for its "inhumane" theological schema based on as it appeared to its critics, the severity of a theologician's predestinarian and merciless God. Thankfully, recent scholarship has shown this perception to be false, and in the descriptive words of Jim Packer, "all serious Calvin-scholars now know that the Calvin of legend – the slobbering ogre, the egoistical fanatic, the doctrinaire misanthrope, the inhuman dictator with a devilish God – is a figure of fancy, not of fact. The real Calvin was not like that, nor was his theology the monstrous and misshapen thing that the legendary image would suggest".[4] So much for disagreeing perceptions of Calvin in the popular theological mindset. As to the scholarly comprehension of his theology, different challenges presented itself. A recurring quest in Calvin research has been the desire to nail his theology to a single supposition (separating the kernel from the husk), or in failing to do so, propounding its theological rootlessness. In 1954, the historian and Calvin scholar JT McNeill neatly summarised the irony of the growing situation, "Calvin formerly stirred debate because people agreed or disagreed with his teaching. Recently, men have been in disagreement over what that teaching was."[5] It has now become commonplace to read not merely of an undecided Calvin, but of two

1 Cited in *Christian History* 5:4 1986:3.
2 For this claim see Torrance, TF 1994. The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity in Gregory Nazianzen and John Calvin, in *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement.* Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 21-22.
3 Augustine, however, normally receives honour as the *Magister Theologiae* of orthodox theology.
4 Packer, James I 1999. Calvin the Theologian, in *Honouring the People of God: The Collected Shorter Writings of J I Packer, vol 4.* Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 142.
5 McNeill, John T 1954. *The History and Character of Calvinism.* New York: Oxford University Press, 202.

Calvins, one riddled with doubt, the other rigidly dogmatic,[6] or, of "Calvin against himself".[7] Clearly this resolution is neither feasible, nor historiographically responsible. Melanchthon's designation of Calvin as "the theologian" was equally a recognition of his coherence, consistency and comprehensiveness as biblical and theological expositor.

2. CALVIN'S KNOWABLE GOD

When Calvin uttered the word "God", was it Durant's "blasphemous conception" that came to his mind, or something very different?[8] We can begin answering that question by recalling Calvin's noteworthy rejection of medieval theological method by substituting the scholastic's *quid sit Deus* ("what is God") with *qualis sit Deus* ("what kind of God is he"). Those who pose the "what" question were in Calvin's mind "merely toying with idle speculations" (*Institutio* 1.2.2). The "who" question in contrast, was a question about knowing based on God's self-revelation, and one which gave way to "reverence" and "piety" – *godliness* (defined as "that reverence joined with the love of God which knowledge of his benefits induces"; *Institutio* 1.2.1). Calvin was determined that it was only Scripture that gathered up "the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, [and] having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God … Not only does he [that is, God speaking through the Word as by 'his own most hallowed lips'] teach the elect to look upon a god, but also shows himself as the God upon whom they are to look" (*Institutio* 1.6.1). Calvin thus found the scholastic notion of penetrating the "essence" of God abhorrent, and used a favourite quotation from Hilary to support his position:

> Indeed, how can the mind by its own leading come to search out God's essence when it cannot even get to its own? Let us then willingly leave to God the knowledge of himself. For, as Hilary says, *he is the one fit witness to himself, and is not known except through himself*. But we shall be "leaving it to him" if we conceive him to be as he reveals himself to us, without inquiring about him elsewhere than from his Word (*Institutio* 1.13.21).[9]

The Scriptural and exegetical priority that became the hallmark of Calvin's theology is clearly stated. However, it is upon investigating his exegetical findings that we come across the unusual and distinguishing features of Calvin's doctrine of God. The first surprising feature is that in the *Institutio* there is no *locus* for discussing the doctrine of God other than the chapter on the Trinity (*Institutio* 1.13).[10] This may not seem surprising to us, but in stark contrast to the theological methodology of his Medieval inheritance, Calvin did not include a treatment of the *virtutes Dei* in the *Institutio*. His doctrine of the Trinity *was* his doctrine of God, a significant departure from his

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6 This is the central thesis of William J Bouwsma in his massively influential study, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). His psychological-historical thesis suggests two Calvins coexisting uncomfortably within the same personage, the one a rationalistic orthodox theologian, and the other, a creative, free humanist and rhetorician.

7 So Suzanne Selinger in her study *Calvin Against Himself* (Hamden: Archon, 1984).

8 I am alluding here to AW Tozer's penetrating comment regarding the shallowness of contemporary Christian reflection upon God, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us … For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at any given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like." *The Knowledge of the Holy* (Kent: OM Publishing, 1961, 1999), 11.

9 Emphasis added.

10 In the *Institutio* 1.10.2 under the heading of God's attributes, Calvin after mentioning God's eternity and self-existence, steers the discussion away from God as "he is in himself" to how "he is toward us: so

received doctrinal tradition. Ever since Aquinas, Western theology has separated the treatment of *de Deo uno* ("on the one God") from *de Deo trino* ("on God the Trinity"). In the Modern period, the dual-knowledge method that gave rise to this separation, has had devastating consequences. For example, if knowledge of the biblically-revealed Triune God was conditional upon the establishment of a philosophical "God category" into which the former was to fit, then the epistemological presuppositions of the post-Kantian mind found virtually no obstacle in dismissing God altogether. Likewise, the relegation of Trinitarian dogma to the background of the discussion on God made the doctrine appear to be nothing more than ecclesiastical conjuring, a mere remnant of authoritarian medieval dogmatism. Calvin, at least as far as his theology was formulated, cannot be said to have had a hand in causing these problems in Modern theology. The Trinity was integral to Calvin's conception of God. Gregory's emblematic aphorism, "When I say God, I mean Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"[11] was equally applicable to Calvin.

But what about Calvin's Trinitarian *doctrina* in the context of the Reformation? It is stated with authoritative regularity that "classical Reformed theologians made no substantive contributions to [the] traditional formulae of the patristic era,"[12] and with particular reference to Calvin, that his Trinitarian doctrine was merely "traditional"[13] and "orthodox precisely on account of its unoriginality".[14] Yet, there are those who have challenged this reigning consensus. BB Warfield argued that Calvin's Trinitarian formulation marked instead "an epoch in the history of the doctrine of the Trinity".[15] James Houston suggested on the basis of Calvin's theological contribution, "that the greatest impact made upon the Christianisation of the world of the fourth century, as upon the sixteenth century, [was] the recovery of the doctrine of the Trinity",[16] and Gerald Bray derided the ineptitude of historical theologians to discern Calvin's contribution to Trinitarian theology by claiming that,

> … the Protestant Reformers [especially Calvin] … *had a vision of God which was fundamentally different from anything which had gone before, or which had appeared since*. The great issues of Reformation theology – justification by faith, election, assurance of salvation – can be properly understood only against the background of a trinitarian theology which gave these matters their peculiar importance and ensured that Protestantism, instead of becoming just another schism produced by a revolt against abuses in the medieval church, developed instead into a new type of Christianity.[17]

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that this recognition of him consists more in living experience than in vain and high-flown speculation". It should also be noted that Calvin's discussion of the Trinity is introduced by a reminder of God's "immeasurable and spiritual nature'" (1.13.1).

11 Gregory Nazianzen, *Oratio* 38:8; 45:4.

12 Cynthia Campbell, cited in Butin, Philip Walker 1995. *Revelation, Redemption and Response: Calvin's Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship.* Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 128.

13 So for example, Wendel, François 1997. *Calvin: Origins and Development of his Religious Thought*, translator Philip Mairet (1950). Grand Rapids: Baker, 165, 169.

14 McGrath, Alister E 1990. *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture.* Oxford: Blackwell, 155.

15 Warfield, BB 1956. Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity, in Craig, Samuel G (ed). *Calvin and Augustine.* Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 230, 283.

16 Houston, James M 1996. Knowing God: The Transmission of Reformed Theology, in Lewis, Donald & McGrath, Alister E (eds). *Doing Theology for the People of God; Studies in Honour of J I Packer.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 236-237.

17 Bray, Gerald 1993. *The Doctrine of God.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 197-198. Emphasis added.

There is evidently more to Calvin's Trinity doctrine than meets the eye. If we leave aside the hermeneutical and structural importance of the doctrine in the *Institutio* (with its self-evident and programmatic creedal-Trinitarian layout)[18] as well as the singular role theological conflict surrounding the Trinity played in Calvin's life (leading to the publication of at least ten individual monographs and including the famous conflicts with Caroli and Servetus),[19] how would one explicate the distinguishing characteristics of Calvin's "epoch-making" Trinitarian doctrine? As it is impossible to exhaustively treat his doctrine in this paper, we will briefly discuss only one aspect, namely *triunity*.

In his desire to present God the Holy Trinity to his readers in as clear and simple a manner possible, Calvin was fond of quoting Gregory, "that passage in Gregory of Nazianzus vastly delights me: 'I cannot think on the one without quickly being encircled by the splendour of the three; nor can I discern the three without being straightaway carried back to the one'" (*Institutio* 1.13.17).[20] The simplicity of the statement belies its profundity. Calvin's approach to the Trinity, like that of Gregory, was one in which the interrelations of the persons in the Godhead did not in any way *detract* from the unity of his being, but instead, *constituted* that unity. His consideration of the integration of the One and the Three was essentially based on the exegetical and soteriological necessity of Christ's deity, and hence the saving significance of the consubstantial relation (*homoousios*) between the incarnate Son and God the Father. Like the Nicene champion Athanasius, Calvin wanted to defend the biblical truth "God was manifest in the flesh" against all false interpretations (eg *Institutio* 1.13.24). The crux of his argument thus hinged on the eternal deity of the Son (cf *Institutio* 1.13.7-13). Calvin uniquely argued on the basis of the biblical text that Christ was *autotheos* (see *Institutio* 1.13.25), that his essential deity with respect to the Father was "unbegotten" and "from himself" (*a se ipso*), while his Sonship – his person – was from the Father (*ex patre*). He explained the important aspect of the *principium* (originating role) of the Father not in terms of being, but in terms of the external operations of the Trinity (the *economic* Trinity), the distinct roles each of the divine persons played in the history of redemption,

> ... to the Father is attributed the beginning of activity, and the fountain and wellspring of all things; to the Son, wisdom, counsel, and the ordered disposition of all things; but to the Spirit is assigned the power and efficacy of that activity (*Institutio* 1.13.18).

Calvin thus vigorously opposed any notion of ontological subordination in the Godhead, and in him church history thus finds its greatest opponent of all forms of Origenism latent beneath much of what is often understood to be Nicene Trinitarianism.

Indeed, Calvin did not arrive at an agreement with the Nicene conception without an exegetical struggle. In the early days of his interaction with Nicene terminology (particularly in

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18 THL Parker's argument on the basis of the origin and development of the *Institutio*, that it ought to be read along a creedal-Trinitarian axis, is still the most persuasive amongst the alternatives. See the introduction to his *Calvin: An Introduction to his Thought* (Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1995).

19 For background and details, see De Greef, Wulfert 1993. *The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide.* Translator Lyle D. Bierma. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 171-181.

20 Gregory *Oratio* 40:41. He continues: "When I think of any One of the Three I think of Him as a Whole, and my eyes are filled, and the greater part of what I am thinking escapes me. I cannot grasp the greatness of That One so as to attribute a greater greatness to the Rest. When I contemplate the Three together, I see but one torch, and cannot divide or measure out the Undivided Light.".

his conflict with Caroli), Calvin refused to subscribe to the creedal formula simply for its own sake. His exegetical priority and commitment to the saving significance of Christ's deity initially prohibited him from paying lip service to churchly dogma. However, his Trinitarian conflicts soon convinced him of the necessity of using extrabiblical language in order to exclude error, and led him to vigorously defend what he saw as the true intention of the catholic creeds and language of the church (cf *Institutio* 1.13.3). Calvin's genius in Trinitarian formulation lay therefore not only in his Scriptural fidelity (giving a biblical foundation to the terminology), but also in his profound understanding of the fourth-century debate, including its Eastern and Western elements. For example, Calvin used the Eastern conceptuality of *hypostasis* (an individual instance of a given essence) and *perichoresis* (mutual interpenetration of the persons)[21] to explain "triunity" (cf his use of Gregory above), and the Nicene *homoousios* (consubstantiality) to explain "equality". The heretical alternatives of Arianism (Christ is a lesser God) and Sabellianism (Christ loses distinction within the Godhead) were thus both decisively repudiated in favour of a truly triune understanding of God.

What was the consequence of all this theologising? Other than Calvin's legitimisation of the Protestant cause along reformed Nicene lines, and his broadening of the Western Trinitarian conception, what benefit has it brought Christianity? For Calvin, we must be reminded, the singular motivation was to expound the saving knowledge of God on the basis of Scripture. Outside of a biblical conception of the Trinity, a Gospel truth, there was no salvation. If the Trinity in the words of TF Torrance, amounts to "the fundamental grammar of" and "the greatest revolution to" our knowledge of God,[22] then Calvin's reformed exposition of the doctrine remains highly significant. Indeed, it can be argued (though we have not done so in this paper) that conceptions of God other than that of Calvin "the theologian", leaves God *unknowable*. This leads us to explore the matter of *knowing* in the sixteenth century.

3. CERTAINTY IN AN AGE OF SCEPTICISM

There is no doubt in the mind of any Calvin commentator that knowledge of God is a, if not *the*, central theme in all of his writings. The *Institutio* with its programmatic layout and provocative opening lines makes this abundantly clear,

> Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves (*Institutio* 1.1.1).

What has freshly been brought to the attention of Calvin scholars, however, is that given its historical context, the *Institutio* as a whole can be considered a discourse on *knowing*. (And, I would want to argue, a discourse on *knowing the Triune God*.) Recent studies in Renaissance and Reformation history have revealed that the problem of knowing was the dominant theme in all-intellectual discourse in the sixteenth century, and that Calvin the humanist was profoundly aware of this.[23] Moving closer to matters concerning the church, it has been noted that *certainty* was "the fundamental *theological* locus of the sixteenth century",[24] and that the Reformation "began with

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21 Though Calvin never actually used the term *perichoresis* and spoke sparingly on intra-Trinitarian relations, he clearly understood its conceptual use. See the *Institutio* 1.13.19-20 and 1.13.25

22 Torrance *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 1.

23 See in particular William Bouwsma's essay Calvin and the Renaissance Crisis of Knowing, in *Calvin Theological Journal* 17:2 (Nov 1982), 190-211.

24 Schreiner, Susan E 1996. "The Spiritual Man Judges All Things": Calvin and the Exegetical Debates about Certainty in the Reformation, in Muller, Richard A & Thompson, John L (eds). *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation.* Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 215. Emphasis added.

the question of certainty".[25] The debate around knowing and theological certitude therefore propelled one to the centre of the sixteenth-century drama. How did this situation come about?

In the sixteenth century, following on from the rebirth of secular learning and the overall quest for knowledge spurred on by the Renaissance, there was a revival of interest in the ancient philosophers, and ironically, a rediscovery of classical or Pyrrhonian scepticism. The sixteenth-century Pyrrhonists for example, launched an attack on all intellectual and religious claims to knowledge, especially knowledge of God (and interestingly, particularly the claims made in this regard by the followers of Calvin[26]). This said, they not only gave birth to a rising tide of religious doubt, but created suspicion of both the main streams of philosophical reasoning as well. These seeds of epistemological discomfort particularly regarding knowledge of God, eventually culminated in Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*, a fatal attempt to regain religious certainty on non-biblical grounds, and subsequently the birth-cry of Modern man.

The Reformation, which itself revolved around a reappraisal of questions of authority, sources of knowledge and methods of thinking, was hugely intensified by the entrance of sceptical ideas into the theological arena. It is impossible here to sketch the extent to which the theological debate was impacted by this, but suffice it to say that Calvin of all the Reformers was most aware of these changing winds in the intellectual world. His approach to the question of knowing God was therefore not merely a theological exercise, but also a response to the general epistemological drift of his times. This makes the *Institutio* primarily a sixteenth-century text, but as I shall argue at the end, also theological literature to be read with enormous relevance and profit in our own time.

How is it that Calvin dealt with this crisis in knowing? In general terms it can be said that he held epistemology and soteriology to be inseparable. With regards to knowledge of God, he therefore not only made an appeal to Scripture as epistemological basis, but also to the Gospel of salvation received and understood as God's economic-Trinitarian self-revelation. His (Trinitarian) definition of faith, which he coincidently defined as *knowledge*, makes this abundantly clear,

> Now we shall possess a right definition of faith if we call it a firm and certain knowledge of *God's* benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in *Christ*, both revealed in our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the *Holy Spirit* (*Institutio*. 3.2.7).

To illustrate his approach to the question of knowing further, one can look at the polemics surrounding the exegetical debates on hermeneutical certitude. Who after all, held the correct position and could therefore justifiably be called "the church"? Like Luther and Zwingli before him, Calvin was forced to justify the Protestant position against Roman "Catholicity" on the one side, and Anabaptist "apostolicity" on the other. Against the former, he appealed to the Holy Spirit as God speaking in and through Scripture, and against the latter, by positing the inseparability or "inviolable bond" between Word and Spirit (cf *Institutio* 1.7.4). This is an oversimplification of a much more complex debate, especially as all parties appealed to Scripture *and* Spirit, but it serves to make the point that Calvin had

25 Balke, Willem 1999. Revelation and Experience in Calvin's Theology, in Willis, D & Welker, M (eds). *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology: Tasks, Topics, Traditions.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 350.

26 According to Colin Brown, Jesuit apologists like Hervet, Gontery and Veron who taught philosophy and theology at the Jesuit College de la Flechte, were bent on the destruction of Calvinism. The reason for the specific attack was unclear, though it no doubt had to do with Calvin's epistemological claims. See *Christianity and Western Thought: A History of Philosophers, Ideas & Movements, Volume 1: From the Ancient World to the Age of the Enlightenment* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 169.

found a way of breaking the antithesis between the objective and subjective aspects of Christian knowledge. Keep in mind also, that Calvin's appeal to Spirit and use of Spirit-language must be viewed against the backdrop of a mature and well-developed doctrine of God's triunity.

In the continuing exegetical debates when Calvin found it necessary to measurably demonstrate the persuasive power of good Spiritual and Scriptural exegesis, we discover another neglected feature of his thought. Good exegesis, argued Calvin, was demonstrable through the "inner certitude" afforded the "spiritual man" (1 Cor 2:15). For example, in his *Commentary on Galatians* 4:6, Calvin stated that "ungodly men have no experience of certainty" and that Roman Catholic theology ("the Christianity of Popery") in spite of its claim to the Spirit, has "neither the Spirit of God, nor certainty". Along similar lines we find that Calvin appealed in passages too numerous to list to *scientia experimentalis*, the knowledge that experience brings. Even *doctrina* was given "verification" through experience.[27] Of course, Calvin was not conceding authority to the subjective notion of a "certainty of experience", as much as he was arguing for the Spirit-given "certainty that can be experienced".[28] Nevertheless, Calvin's pervasive emphasis on a knowledge of God that is experiential, affective, relational, even mystical, led Hermann Bauke to describe him pre-eminently as an *Erfahrungstheologe*, a theologian of experience.[29] This picture of Calvin is a long way removed from the austerity of Calvin the caricature.

In the context of the growing epistemological crisis of the sixteenth century, Calvin thus employed methods of knowing that were more intuitive and relational than those often associated with his name. He did not give in to scepticism nor did he give up on Christian certainty. Instead, he rooted his faith in Word and Spirit. In the final analysis, certainty was nothing other than the experienceable reality of the believer being united with Christ through the indwelling of the Spirit, the work of the Triune God in redemption and self-revelation. What set Calvin apart from both his theological detractors and his unbelieving sceptical contemporaries, was his faith in the Triune God revealed in and through Scripture.

4. TO KNOW THE TRIUNE GOD …

How relevant is Calvin for our time? Though it is a dangerous comparison to make, there seems to me much that our transitional and *post*-modern world has in common with the sixteenth century.[30] As Tom Wright observed, "The question that hangs over all contemporary intellectual

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27 As Coertzen put it, "Elke doctrina behoort in die 'experientia,' die ervaring 'n plek te kry. Die verifikasie van die teologie vind plaas op etiese vlak asook in die ervaring." Coertzen, P 1997. Spiritualiteit en Teologie: Eenheid of Vervreemding. Die Posisie van Johannes Calvyn. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* XXIII:1&2 (Dec 1997), 71.

28 Balke 1999:349.

29 Cited in Charles Partee, Calvin and Experience. *Scottish Journal of Theology* 26:2 (1972), 177.

30 The sharp edge of Postmodernism is its deconstruction of Truth in favour of "situated truths", which like reality, are linguistically "manufactured". Renaissance Humanism equally emphasised the contingency of human knowledge and truth, and also had its sharp edge in the humanities and philology. The Renaissance saw a flowering of the arts, as does Postmodernism. Renaissance Humanism was mostly secular in orientation, as is Postmodernism. Renaissance Humanism was parasitic on the Classical period, and Postmodernism is eclectically parasitic on previous periods. In this vein one can continue to draw out comparisons, in spite of the chronological chasm and the very obvious fact that we do not quite know yet what Postmodernism will become.

31 Wright, NT 2000. The Letter to the Galatians: Exegesis and Theology, in Green, JB & Turner, M (eds). *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 221. Emphasis added.

discourse in the Western world concerns the very foundations of all *knowing* and *being*."[31] As the dogmatic certitude of Medievalism surrendered to the growing sceptical mood of the sixteenth century, so the boastful confidence of Modernism is giving way to the suspicion and scepticism of Postmodernism. Crunching under the wheel of both transitional cultural movements, is the question of knowing God.

Calvin, in his own epistemologically charged context, had argued that knowing can never be an autonomous enterprise (as in Medievalism and also in Modernism), nor can it ever be left to the prejudices of the would-be-knower (as Renaissance and Postmodern sceptics are prone to argue). *All* knowledge for Calvin, was "theonomous" (even and especially true knowledge of self), and ultimately derived from God and his grace. The greater knowledge was therefore his knowledge of us, and ours of him only in response (cf Gal 4:9). Furthermore, no God of human conception could shake the foundations of all knowing and being in the same manner as the self-communicating and self-giving Triune God. If we reject the Trinity, we face the peril of "objectifying" God, of turning him as Gunton put it, into "a static and impersonal object to be subjected to our unfettered intellectual control, or into an abstraction, the object of pure speculation and the projection on to eternity of conceptual patterns from the merely finite world".[32] A "blasphemous conception" indeed. When the word God is uttered, it should imply Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as it did for both Gregory and Calvin the theologian.

32 Gunton, Colin E 1991. *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology.* Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 162.