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EDITORIAL

It is just coincidental that three of this Issue's articles have a Genevan Reformation flavour, namely the ones by Esther Chung-Kim, Karen Spierling, and Arjen Terlouw. Taken collectively, all three studies are, however, a salutary reminder that Calvin's Geneva (as one is wont to say) was not comprehensively a cosy, gated, impeccably ordered and magnificently exemplary Reformed community forming a settled 'school of Christ' living by the Word of God individually and collectively. Most contemporary sources, including Calvin, reveal little of such a pipe dream. But they do disclose a high-octane energy and focussed creativity in church circles faced with a partially Laodicean Christianity, internecine crises, disruptions, revelations, and stand-offs in society due to acute religious, political, social, economic, security problems and even ethnic tensions. Following the roll-out of the Reformation in the city, such a mercurial mix helped determine its development or lack of it in a beleaguered and volatile situation.

The three studies intimated confirm directly or indirectly the realities of the situation. One by Terlouw is on an aspect of Calvin's homiletic style and objectives. It underlines that Calvin was well aware that while people were willing mostly subscribe to the Reformation, it was a challenge for preachers to break down the crusted hearts of many people in order to induce genuine conversion to the authentic Christian way. The article discusses how Calvin's preaching, far from being calmly expository or a pleasing religio-cultural lift for the listeners, was at points right confrontational, a spiritual cold shower. There is a focus on Calvin's robust and vehement style which he employed particularly in the sermons on the sacrament – well testified in contemporary sources of friends and colleagues. Accompanying this is evaluation of how far these high-pitch tones in familiar and accommodating language were attributable to Calvin's irascible nature and character, or to his masterly recourse to the techniques of classical rhetoric and oratory, and so communication skills; the aim was not just to move and persuade the congregation, part of which was indifferent, hypocritical and nonchalant, but also to force it to submit in order to help the Word of God gain urgent entry. For voluntary or spontaneous adoption of Christian righteousness, inwardly and outwardly, by many people remained illusory. Eucharistic participation in the body of Christ and *sursum corda* were hard to translate into real life.

The other two essays show, however, that there were positives as well as negatives; both studies belong to the developing modern genre of religio-cultural identity formation and consolidation. Chung-Kim illustrates the disruptive effects in Geneva of a problem again

affecting the Europe of to-day – a swelling tide of immigration. In the case of Geneva it was largely religious refugees, mostly committed Protestants originating in France among other places. Highlighted are manifestations of resentment, xenophobia, and spitefulness on the part of some among the old, native Genevan population. Accompanying these demographic changes were stresses on housing, social welfare services, the labour market and so on. The defusing strategy of Calvin, himself a refugee, and the church leadership, all keen to take a major evangelical opportunity, is outlined. This was: to apply to those immigrants struggling with their displacement in an unwelcome environment the biblical ethical mandate to care for the poor and strangers. And since some immigrants were relatively rich, the master stroke of establishing a voluntary and so self-funding scheme to cater for needy immigrants of any kind, and even of any religion, was established to ease burdens on the municipality and established citizenry. This was the famous *Bourse française*, not just a private charity, but seen also (theologically) as a resource to promote – aided by the church diaconate – both settlement and sanctification in a fractious, non-homogenous community. Chung-Kim notes that this Genevan model was exported elsewhere in Europe where there were diasporas of Calvinist religious exiles. And then, the aspiration to realize sanctification and the consistorial discipline associated with that end, typical of Calvinian Reformed milieus, is the context of K. Spierling's study. This is on that which also threatens collective holiness, namely community 'scandal.' The application of this biblical concept invoked at the time ranged from trivialities like snoring in church to more serious matters that came close to, or were, crime. Obviously such things can especially disturb a pretended godly community. The author has examined consistory records to show that coping with so-called scandal was not a rule-book, kind of parking-ticket procedure. From here she suggests that research has been thin on how scandal was actually defined. For the evidence shows that in the sphere of scandal, there were grey areas leading to discussions and negotiations between putative offenders and church courts – typical of a consistorial (and inquisitorial) system. This was because there was no automatic equivalence between 'scandal' and 'crime.' Underlying this were concerns and uncertainties about legitimate ethical expectations, cultural traditions, community harmony and public peace – and so norms and red lines within a morally ambitious, self-consciously religious society exercising surveillance. Spierling's study is part of a wider project on Reformed communities' identity perceptions.

A fourth article, by Jeff Fisher, also has a Genevan resonance since it involves Michael Servetus, burned in Geneva in 1553 for denying the Nicene-Chalcedonian formulations of the Trinity. But the centre of gravity in the study is not this endpoint, as is

usually the case. Rather, Servetus's longer pre-history is examined, and particularly his personal interactions with Basle's reformer, Oecolampadius (and even Bucer) over 20 years previously. Traditional accounts zoom in on Geneva's and Calvin's active role in the affair in 1553. But refreshingly this essay goes back to Servetus's initial entry on the stage, to his early heterodox publications along with his controversial discussions in 1531 with Oecolampadius, in whose Basel home he was a guest for nearly a year. Fisher assesses the correspondence between the two as well as Oecolampadius's prudential circular to other Swiss and Alsatian reformers about the dynamite in Servetus's thinking. The article also provides a useful résumé of the content of Servetus's first anti-orthodox book – illustrating how it was based on his empirical analysis of Scripture and patristic tradition before and after Nicaea. As Servetus's disturbing case reached its deadly climax in 1553, when all powers civil and ecclesiastical inside and outside Geneva lined up against him, the author shows how there was explicit collective gratitude for the hard line that Oecolampadius had taken earlier, alerting everyone else at the same time. There was even self-justifying satisfaction expressed in the recollection that even such a nice and gentle person as Oecolampadius had roundly repudiated and denounced Servetus's ideas.

Lastly there is a contribution which is intriguing, since it deals with a subject – chiefly in a pre-Reformation, predominantly Catholic, Scottish context – that has been generally eclipsed and so not much ventilated. This has been due to preoccupation with other, more headline-grabbing, controversial matters. Here Flynn Cratty retrieves the fact that in much of Reformation Europe and not just Scotland, the Scottish poet and dramatist David Lindsay's question of 'To whom say you your paternoster?' (post-Erasmus and post-Luther), was a very leading one. For it would probably reveal one's implicit stance on the religious and theological contentions of the day. This query was intertwined with a variety of fundamental issues. These included praying directly to God / Christ, or to the saints as intercessors and messengers; accompanying the Lord's Prayer with, or substituting it for, the Ave Maria; the source and means of grace and salvation; the very nature of prayer; the value of personal and private prayer in the vernacular in relation to priestly, liturgical prayer in Latin; the relationship between ritualistic prayer and individual or collective comprehension, and so on. The article discloses very clearly how the issue in Scotland in the early 1550s, when the (Protestant) Reformation was still a minority interest, reflected alignments elsewhere, such as in the Rhineland, France, and Italy where it was said: 'heresy started with the paternoster.' In other words, the Scottish theatre at St Andrews depicted by Cratty was also divided into corresponding groupings: conservative Catholic, moderate reform Catholic, Erasmian

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Catholic (or ‘devotional humanist’), and Protestant, expressed in their respective attitudes to prayer and the divine-human relationship – the ultimate problem of the epoch.

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