

Calvin's Sermons: Treasure and Surprise*

Elsie McKee

Abstract: Reflecting the recent increasing interest in the sermons of John Calvin, this article offers a brief survey of how the sermons came to be preserved and their fate through the intervening centuries. It examines ways in which the sermons were viewed and valued in the reformer's own day and offers some insights into his own perspective on the texts of his daily exposition of the Word to the people of Geneva, while also drawing attention to some surprising omissions in the subject matter of his preaching.

CALVIN'S SERMONS WERE GREATLY VALUED in his own day, and there has been new and increasing interest in them in the last several generations, but there was a long interval of neglect between these times. This essay, which is part of a larger project, recounts first a brief history of how the sermons came to be preserved and their fate through the centuries, and then examines some of the ways that the reformer's contemporaries viewed and valued specific sermons.¹ The process will also offer some insight into Calvin's own perspective on the texts of his daily exposition to the Genevan people, and the rather surprising omissions from his recorded preaching.

* It is a pleasure to thank the Center of Theology and Ministry for the invitation to give the J. B. Northey Lectures, and to express my warm thanks to Prof. Christiaan Mostert and his colleagues, and Prof. Brendan Byrne S.J., and the editors of this journal for inviting me to participate in this journal.

1. The larger work is tentatively entitled *The Pastoral Ministry in Calvin's Geneva*; points alluded to but not discussed will be treated in this study. A different form of a small part of this material has appeared in Elsie McKee, "Calvin's Sermons: Suspected, Unique, and Prized", in Michael Bush (ed.), *Calvin Studies XII* (Due West SC: Erskine Theological Seminary, 2007) 87-114.

I

The fact that so many of Calvin's sermons were preserved might not seem surprising, given his stature as a reformer. The fact that most of his sermons were taken down essentially word-for-word as he spoke them, however, is indeed surprising. In the Reformation, as in other eras before modern technology made recording so easy, very few sermons were preserved exactly as they were given. Every Protestant minister was expected to preach regularly – that was one of the key practical changes in the reform project. (In fact, Catholic reformers also put new emphasis on preaching as a part of a priest's work, but for Protestants it became *the* central task of pastors.) Naturally, the weekly sermons of most ministers were not likely to be of interest to anyone beyond their flocks – and one might guess that not all their parishioners found these discourses worth remembering. The point is that, in the nature of the genre, a pastor's regular sermons were not intended to be preserved but to be observed, i.e., put into practice. That is why Calvin himself was not involved in the preservation, much less the publication, of his own sermons.

To understand this apparent lack of interest in extemporaneous sermons it is important to note that by long-standing tradition, only polished, written sermons were circulated to the public. In the middle ages, although most preaching to the laity was done in the vernacular except when the audience was very well educated, the recording and publication of sermons was almost exclusively in Latin. This meant that the only evidence for sermons-as-preached was usually some notes, and almost all published texts were consciously written and polished and presented in Latin.² Protestants broke with the tradition of publishing in Latin only, but the reformers themselves kept to the practice of preparing sermons for publication, i.e., polishing, touching up, and even re-writing them before they willingly allowed or sought printing. This is the way Martin Luther's popular sermons were preserved. Some were copied down and tidied up by his colleagues as best they could (not being trained as stenographers), others he wrote himself for publication.³

2. See Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*. Volume 3 *The Medieval Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 453 for Tauler's sermons written out by Dominican nuns. G. R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England. An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the period c.1350-1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926) chap. III, esp. pp. 223-33. Larissa Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ. Preaching in Late Medieval and Reformation France* (NY/ Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), esp. chap. 4.

3. See summary of the character of Luther's sermons in Lowell Green, "Justification in Luther's Preaching on Luke 18:9-14", *Concordia Theological Monthly* 43 (1973) 733-34. See also H. O. Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*. Volume 4 *The Age of the Reformation* (2002): on p. 5 there is a reference to Luther's "stenographers"; pp. 8-9 n.11 a reference to a sermon writer who was not a trained stenographer.

So what is the story of Calvin's sermons? In the early years of his preaching there is a large blank – a point to be examined later. In November 1545 one of his colleagues, Jacques Cousin, copied down two sermons on Psalms which Calvin had preached on the day of prayer, and these were published some months later.⁴ In 1549, however, a man named Denis Raguenier began to record the reformer's sermons as he preached. Raguenier was a Frenchman who, like an increasing number of Calvin's compatriots, had come to Geneva as a religious refugee. Among these refugees, although many were poor, some were wealthy, and the latter organised a relief foundation called the *Bourse française*, to help their less fortunate fellow exiles.⁵ While some refugees were destitute, others simply needed a means to be able to use their skills. Raguenier, a trained stenographer, was one of the latter, and so the deacons of the *Bourse française* hired him to continue his profession by recording Calvin's sermons. The idea was that Raguenier would have a job and the *Bourse* would gain a valuable investment, because any one who wanted Calvin's sermons would have to apply to them, and the money gained by the sale of published sermons would thus benefit the fund for the poor refugees. It is clear, then, that some lay people believed that Calvin's extemporaneous sermons were a kind of treasure: worth recording and even marketable in a world where the Bible was greatly valued and relatively unknown at least to the laity.

The resulting sermons produced by Raguenier were remarkable in their own right, because they were among the very few texts preserved verbatim, as the preacher spoke. In fact, Calvin's sermons can be considered virtually unique, since there are only a handful of other contemporary texts of actual extemporaneous preaching in the vernacular, and certainly nothing like the corpus of his texts. To have many sermons, essentially exactly the way they were preached, is truly a treasure for historians of preaching and lay education, as well as for students of Calvin and the Reformed tradition.

What were these treasures? For that it is necessary to remember that Calvin, like other Reformed pastors, preached in the fashion called *lectio continua*, i.e., straight through books of the Bible, verse by verse.⁶

4. See Rodolphe Peter and Jean-François Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana. Les oeuvres de Jean Calvin publiées au xvi.e siècle*. I. *Ecrits théologiques, littéraires et juridiques, 1532-1554* (Genève: Droz, 1991). II. *Ecrits théologiques, littéraires et juridiques, 1555-1564* (Genève: Droz, 1994). III. *Ecrits théologiques, littéraires et juridiques, 1556-1600* (Genève: Droz, 2000). #46/3. Hereafter Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, with number, and page(s) for quotations.

5. On Raguenier, see Jeannine Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare: Deacons and the Bourse française* (London: Associated University Presses, 1989) 99-100 *et passim*.

6. The major treatments of Calvin's sermons are T. H. L. Parker, *The Oracles of God: An Introduction to the Preaching of John Calvin* (London and Redhill: Lutterworth, 1947); idem, *Calvin's Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992). Erwin Mühlhaupt, *Die Predigt Calvins, ihre Geschichte, ihre Form und ihre religiösen Grundgedanken* (Berlin: de

Usually on Sundays his text was from the New Testament, and on weekdays from the Old, with Psalms possible on either Sundays or weekdays. Raguenier entered upon his duties on 29 September 1549, when Calvin had just begun Acts on Sunday mornings, and while he was working his way through Jeremiah on weekdays, with certain Psalms on Sunday afternoons, so the Jeremiah record begins in mid-book, and all three of these sets are not precisely sequential. (Evidently Raguenier was still getting settled into the job.) The next sets of sermons, however: the second half of Acts, the twenty-two sermons on Ps. 119, and all of Lamentations, were completely recorded.⁷

The Sunday sermons continued with complete series on Thesalonians, the pastoral epistles (Timothy and Titus), Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians, along with some other Psalms. (Calvin's approach to the Psalms was different from that of other books. He explained each one as it was put into metrical form for singing, and this naturally meant that the order in which he expounded the Psalms as sermons was not consecutive.)⁸ The weekday sermons continued after Lamentations with complete sets on most of the prophets: first the minor prophets – Micah, Zephaniah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah. Raguenier fell ill while he was recording the next prophet, Jonah, and missed the latter part of that book, all of Nahum, and the first chapters of Daniel. When he recovered, he went back to work, picking up Daniel, followed by Ezekiel, Job, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Genesis. Raguenier died in late 1560 or early 1561, while Calvin was preaching through the synoptic gospels according to the order of Matthew, so the record for this series broke off part-way through the Sermon on the Mount (after *only* 65 sermons!). After Raguenier's death some further sermons were recorded by other secretaries, including ones on both books of Samuel and on First Kings. Some few other sermons were

Gruyter, 1931); idem, ed./ trans, *Johannes Calvin. Diener am Wort Gottes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1934). See Bernard Gagnebin, "L'histoire des manuscrits des sermons de Calvin", *Sermons sur le Livre d'Esaië*, pub. by G. A. Barrois (Neukirchen Kreis Moers: Neukirchener Verlag, 1961), pp. xiv-xxviii; here pp. xx-xxi. Richard Stauffer, "Les sermons inédits de Calvin sur le livre de la Genèse", *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* 98:1 (1965) 26-36; Stauffer, *Dieu, la création et la providence dans la prédication de Calvin* (Bern/Frankfurt/Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 1978).

7. See Gagnebin, "L'histoire des manuscrits des sermons de Calvin", pp. xv-xvii, for the list which Raguenier made of his transcriptions. He added the indication for each set after the sermons were completed; each entry gives the date the series began and how many sermons it included. A translated form of this is found in Wulfert de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin. Expanded Edition. An Introductory Guide*, trans. L. Bierma (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008) 95-96; for other information on sermons, pp. 93-100, although some points noted in the French list are missing here.

8. See Gagnebin, "L'histoire des manuscrits des sermons de Calvin", p. xv-xvi. For Calvin's practice with regard to the Psalms, see comments in Nicholas Colladon's biography, OC 21:71 for 1549: "Au sermon du soir les Dimanches il preschoit les Pseaumes, prenant seulement ceux qui n'estoyent pas encore traduits en rythme (car desia auparavant il avoit presché les autres), et en estoit au 40."

taken down at various times, e.g., a series on Hebrews, and a number of special services such as passion sermons delivered the week before Easter in certain years, and nativity, ascension, and Pentecost sermons on those special occasions.⁹

As the attentive auditor glimpsed in the reference to *only* 65 sermons on the synoptics from the birth narratives through the Beatitudes, it took many months of regular preaching for Calvin to cover each Biblical book in his careful *lectio continua* fashion. There is time here for only a few statistics: for example, there were two hundred sermons on Deuteronomy; three hundred forty-three on Isaiah; one hundred fifty-nine on Job; one hundred and three on the Pastoral Epistles; one hundred and ten on First Corinthians and another sixty-six on Second Corinthians. Even relatively short Biblical books received their full due: for example, twenty-eight sermons on Micah, forty-eight on Ephesians, and sixty-five on Hosea. Even texts which might seem an odd match for Calvin, such as Ezekiel, were carefully explained in one hundred seventy-four sermons (with probably one more missing).¹⁰ Certainly both Calvin and Raguenier were busy! The stenographer wrote down the preacher's words in short hand and then dictated them to trained scribes to produce fair copies, which were bound and stored by the deacons of the Bourse française, to be loaned out as people wished to read them – or, sometimes, to publish them, with proceeds going to the Bourse.

The fate of Calvin's sermons so carefully preserved by Raguenier and the Bourse is, however, clear evidence for the history outlined at the beginning: the reformer's contemporaries highly valued his preaching, but then for centuries these Biblical expositions for lay people were forgotten... or worse! As will be discussed below, a number of individual sermons or sermon series were published in Calvin's own lifetime or shortly thereafter, but many remained in manuscript form, huge folio tomes on the shelves of the library of what became the University of Geneva.¹¹ In 1805 there were forty-four of these books which, when the library was pressed for space for new acquisitions, seemed redundant; after all, these books were not written by Calvin himself, they were very difficult to read, and there were many other autograph texts in the library. And so forty-three of the tomes were sold by weight, as old paper, with only one preserved as a

9. Erwin Mülhaupt, "Einleitung", in Jean Calvin, *Psalmpredigten Passions-, Oster- und Pfingstpredigten*, ed. E. Mülhaupt (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), pp. xlvii-xlviii (table of texts in collections, now lost).

10. Gagnebin, "L'histoire des manuscrits des sermons de Calvin", pp. xx-xxi. Eric de Boer reports one missing, "Introduction", *Sermons sur le livre des révélations du prophète Ezechiel, chapitres 36-48*, ed. de Boer and B. Nagy (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2006), p. xiv n.5.

11. For the whole story, see Gagnebin, "L'histoire des manuscrits des sermons de Calvin", pp. xx-xxii.

kind of souvenir! Years later, in 1823, some theology students influenced by the early nineteenth-century evangelical revivals found their purchases being wrapped in Calvin's sermons, and uncovered eight volumes in the shop of a dealer in old clothes; these they promptly bought to return to the library. Finally in 1826 there was a public outcry about the original sale of the forty-three tomes, and over time a few more of the lost sermons have been recovered, but of the 2023 sermons from Raguénier's collection which remained in manuscript, most have completely disappeared.

It is not too surprising that the Enlightenment was an age when Calvin's sermons were not truly appreciated and that it was revivalists who rediscovered them with appreciation, but in fact even after some manuscripts were found, they remained unpublished until well into the twentieth century. Clearly, access to these old texts was not of urgent importance to pastors even though the latter prized them more than some other early nineteenth-century contemporaries did. The Calvin renaissance in the twentieth century brought new attention to all of the reformer's corpus, and since 1936, under sponsorship of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the series *Supplementa Calviniana* has slowly been producing critical editions of the remaining manuscript sermons.¹² As one of the editors, I may add that the process has taken so long since it is extremely difficult to sustain transcription for long periods at a time because of the eye strain, and because the texts themselves are quite long. For example, my own volume on 1 Corinthians 1-9 comprises fifty-eight sermons covering 493 folio pages front and back.

Besides the publication of the French originals, the production of translations of Calvin's sermons, especially in English, was important in the reformer's own lifetime and, after centuries of being forgotten, has experienced a modern renaissance.¹³ At first, the modern

12. The original editorial committee of the *Supplementa Calviniana* (Neukirchen Kreis Moers: Neukirchener Verlag, 1953/61-; hereafter SC) was gathered by James I. McCord, with Erwin Mühlhaupt as main editor, and Georges A. Barrois, Jean Daniel Benoît, Willem Frederik Dankbaar, Bernard Gagnebin, Henri Meylan, Barnabas Nagy, Thomas H. L. Parker, Hanns Rückert, and Richard Stauffer as members. Later, as it became evident that the task was more time-consuming than anticipated, other editors were added: Willem Balke, Erik de Boer, Max Engammare, Olivier Fatio, Francis M. Higman, Elsie Anne McKee, Wilhelmus H. Th. Moehn, Rodolphe Peter, and Lewis Thorpe. Rückert (SC 1: 2 Samuel, 1936-61). Barrois (SC 2: Isaiah, chap. 13-29, 1961). Benoît (SC 5: Micah, 1964). Peter (SC 6: Jeremiah and Lamentations, 1971). Mühlhaupt (SC 7: Psalms, Passion/Easter/ Pentecost, 1981). Balke and Moehn (SC 8: Acts, 1994). Higman, Parker, and Thorpe (SC 3: Isaiah, chap. 30-41, 1995). Engammare (SC 11: Genesis, 2000). De Boer (Ezekiel, 2008). Still to come are the rest of Ezekiel (Engammare) and 1 Corinthians, chaps 1-9 (McKee).

13. Some examples of 16th century, modern facsimile, modern retranslation of old, and modern translation of new SC: *The Sermons of M. John Calvin upon the fifth booke of Moses called Deuteronomie*, trans. Arthur Golding (London, 1583), facsimile by Banner of Truth Trust, 1987. *Sermons of M. John Calvin upon the x. commandments of the lawe*, trans. I. H.

translations were essentially reprints of sixteenth century translations. Increasingly, however, there are new translations, made directly from the French, either of sermons published in the sixteenth century or of the newly edited *Supplementa* volumes.

So much for the history of Calvin's sermons; what about the ones which did get into print in his own day?

II

A significant number of Calvin's 2,300+ recorded sermons were printed in the sixteenth or very early seventeenth centuries, mostly by the reformer's colleagues in Geneva or by other Protestant admirers. In fact, Calvin himself did not want to publish his extemporaneous sermons for two reasons: that is, they were unpolished, and they were set at the level of his own congregation (i.e., the explanation was expanded with examples and application fitted to the simplicity of his own parishioners) and he did not think such material should be broadcast as if he were trying to teach the whole world.¹⁴

There is one exception to the reformer's objection to publishing his sermons – which in effect proves the rule, since Calvin personally (re)wrote the five expositions which appeared in 1552 under the title: *Quatre Sermons fort utiles pour nostre temps avec exposition du Pseaume 87*, i.e., *Four Sermons Very Useful for our Time, with the Exposition of Ps. 87*. Four of these were on Psalms: one on Ps. 16:3, two on Ps. 27 (verses 4 and 8), and one on 87, while the last was on Heb. 13:13. In his preface Calvin explained that the main purpose for making this set of sermons public was the need to deal with the problem of Nicodemism, or hiding one's religious convictions for the sake of safety.

Although I have previously written two treatises sufficiently extensive to show that it is not allowed for a Christian who lives

(London, 1581). John Calvin's Sermons on the Ten Commandments, trans./ed. Benjamin Farley (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980). *Sermons on 2 Samuel, chapters 1-13*, trans. D. Kelly (Grand Rapids: Banner of Truth Trust, 1992). *Sermons on the Acts of the Apostles, chapters 1-7*, trans. R. R. McGregor (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2008).

14. The concern about lack of polish is frequent, but in 1557 Badius expresses this clearly: "Non qu'il soit si chagrin et difficile de sa nature: mais d'autant que toute son entente est à ce que les oeuvres qu'il met en lumiere, sortent avec tous leurs ornemens, il luy fait mal que ce qu'il a presché simplement et neument pour s'accommoder à la rudesse du peuple, sans appareil ne disposition exquise, soit subit mis en lumiere, comme s'il affectoit que tout ce qu'il dit soit incontinent semé par tout, et que le monde soit rempli de ses escrits. Voila pourquoy il a tousjours fait refus, que tant ses leçons que ses predications fussent imprimees." OC 25:597-598. In 1558: « [I]l desireroit que ses predications ne s'estendissent pas plus loin que sa bergerie: tant pource qu'elles sont faites specialement pour ses brebis, a la capacité desquelles il s'accommode le plus qu'il peut: pource qu'il luy semble qu'un autre ordre et disposition y seroit bien requise pour estre ainsi mises a la veue de tout le monde: mais de les re veoir pour les polir, outre ce qu'il n'a pas le loisir, il ne s'y voudroit iamais occuper." OC 35:589-590. cf. quotation at n.22.

under the papacy, and who knows the pure doctrine of the Gospel, to do anything which appears to be a consent or adherence to the abuses, superstitions, and idolatries which reign there; Nevertheless every day there are people who ask me afresh for counsel, as if I had never spoken. I understand that there are others who do not cease to make their retorts and offer subterfuges against what I have written about this. So, in order to cut short those who ask about what ought to be known and notorious, and those who think to cover themselves with a wet sack against the judgment of God [excuse themselves], I have thought it expedient to revise and put in order a sermon which I preached on this subject, of which a summary was taken down.¹⁵

Here Calvin explicitly names the source of the sermons as his own writing based on an auditor's notes. As for the reason for publishing, one may speculate that the reformer thought that the homiletical format, the exposition of specific Biblical texts, would reach those who ignored or seemed impervious to treatises. In any event, Calvin not only published these in French with Robert Stephanus, his usual printer, but sponsored their translation into Latin the next year, and certainly must have approved of the Italian and English translations which appeared even before the Latin.¹⁶

Yet the great majority of Calvin's sermons – all the extemporaneous ones – were published by other people, rather against the reformer's own wishes. At the time he brought out his chosen texts in 1552, only two other sermons (the Psalms texts preached in 1545) had been printed, for Genevans, and that was six years earlier. Calvin had probably allowed this request because the intended readers were his own congregation. Therefore, despite the sermons' unpolished style, this publication at least met his second objection to letting extemporaneous sermons go public, i.e., the intended users were local and so his homiletical application would fit the audience.

Soon after the reformer's own publication of the *Four Sermons and Exposition of Ps. 87*, however, Calvin's colleagues and friends began

15. "Combien que j'ay escript par ci devant deux traictez assez amples pour monstrier qu'il n'est pas licite à un chrestien cognoissant la pure doctrine de l'Evangile, quand il vit en la Papauté, faire semblant en façon que ce soit du consentir ou adherer aux abus, superstitions et idolatries qui y regnent: toutesfois il y a tous les jours gens qui m'en demandent conseil de nouveau, comme si jamais je n'en avoye parlé. J'enten aussi qu'il y en a d'autres qui ne cessent d'alleguer leurs replicques et subterfuges contre ce que j'en ay escript. Ainsi pour couper broche tant à ceulx qui s'enquierent de ce qui leur doit estre assez cogneu et notoire, qu'à ceulx qui se pensent couvrir d'un sac mouillé contre le jugement de Dieu, j'ay pensé qu'il seroit expedient de reveoir et reduire en ordre un sermon que j'avoye faict sur ceste matiere, duquel la somme avoit esté recueillie." OC 8:373-374.

16. See Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, #52/9, #53/1 (Italian), #53/3 (English), #53/4 (Latin).

begging the preacher to allow them to publish others of his sermons, even though these were not polished, and even though now it was obvious that the audience would not be simply the Genevans for whom the explanation had been originally intended. Calvin appears to have agreed to this idea with considerable reluctance and he did not give comprehensive permission, because every succeeding new publication (at least during his lifetime) indicates the same disinclination. Whether this was false modesty or not must be considered elsewhere. However, it should be noted that, while it was certainly a convention to appear reluctant, in this case there may well have been more to it, since Calvin's own humanist regard for language was probably offended by the idea of having such unsophisticated, if not actually awkward texts, made public under his name. Given his own distinct ambivalence about it, how then did the reformer's sermons get into print?

It may be helpful first to identify which sermons Calvin's contemporaries decided to publish in printed form. The appended table gives the full picture but a summary of the kind and category is appropriate here. The first ones published were selections of individual sermons. Some of these were occasional texts, others were excerpts from full *lectio continua* series. Only near the end of Calvin's life did his colleagues begin to produce sets of sermons on complete Biblical books. The selected sermons which appeared in the 1550s were essentially theological and didactic, but it must be remembered that in sixteenth-century terms this was not only not counter to devotion but a support for it, since an informed grasp of Biblical teaching was clearly regarded by editors and translators (if not necessarily by all readers) as spiritually edifying. The expositions of Psalms printed in 1546 and 1554 combine consolation with an explicitly instructive character. Theological and pastoral concerns and more edification are evident in the next publications: two on Christ as sole Mediator, sixteen on the Ten Commandments, twenty-six on Christological topics (especially the major liturgical year feasts which Geneva retained), and then nineteen on 1 Corinthians 11-12 (the Lord's Supper). These were followed by titles emphasizing justification and election (seven on Genesis 14-15, three on Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, thirteen on Genesis 25-27). Two other groups of sermons also appeared, these with perhaps a more devotional theology: eleven sermons on Luke 1-2 (printed together with Genesis 14-15) and three on Isaiah 38 (Hezekiah's illness and miraculous healing) which support the point that doctrine and piety could be interchangeable.¹⁷

While it seems that individual believers were more in view in earlier selective collections of sermons, the up-building of churches

17. See first three items in the Appendix below, under 1560.

was becoming an increasingly important interest, as is evident in the fact that the first complete Biblical books to be published (in 1561) were the sermons on the Pastoral Epistles. Then followed more theological texts: the synoptic sermons which Raguenier had transcribed before his death (birth narratives through the Beatitudes), and the complete series on Ephesians (both 1562). Before Calvin's death the series on Galatians and that on Job appeared (both 1563), and a few years later the extant ones on Daniel (minus the ones Raguenier missed when he was ill: 1565) and the complete Deuteronomy sermons were published (1567). At the beginning of the seventeenth century a Latin translation of First Samuel appeared (1604). Naturally, there were also re-prints and translations of various publications, as well as occasional small booklets (e.g., more Psalms).

III

One of the most interesting things about the sixteenth-century publications of Calvin's sermons is the reasons given by the publishers/editors, and who those people were. In a measure, it is possible to distinguish person from motivation, but in some ways it is more appropriate to discuss each editor and his or her reasons, this time not proceeding in strict chronological order but according to the gender of the editor. Here the focus is the first two editors and then two of the women who published or translated selected sermons; a full analysis will be given elsewhere.

Most of the editors and sponsors of Calvin's sermons were Geneva-based men with significant theological background and/or engagement, because most were French refugees themselves. The first sermons were published by Jean Girard: the expositions of Psalms 115 and 124 copied out by Jacques Cousin, which appeared in 1546; and then eight years later, the twenty-two sermons on Psalm 119 done by Raguenier.¹⁸ In the early years, Girard appears to have been one of the few printers interested in publishing the extemporaneous sermons. Although he also produced the Latin and Italian translations of the *Quatre Sermon*,¹⁹ it was his work in beginning the publication of Calvin's "unpolished" daily expositions for the ordinary people of Geneva which deserves special attention.

In the three groups of sermons which he produced, Girard gives explanatory notes, each time clearly expressing both Calvin's reluctance and the over-riding considerations which led to the publication. The very first sermons in 1546 are introduced carefully.

Because the author is not accustomed to having his sermons published, it is good that everyone be informed why we have

18. Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, #46/3.

19. Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, #53/1, 53/3.

published these two sermons. The reason is that, a number having seen that the content and argument were worth remembering, asked for copies, so that it would have been a great deal of trouble to copy it out so many times. Along with that is the fact that the truth of the teaching would be beneficial to all, as much for the teaching as for the knowledge of the story which is touched on there, in which we see clearly how God has helped His church in its need. For the rest, it is also good that people be informed that the author did not write these sermons but that we are publishing them according to what could be taken down as he spoke from the pulpit. This notice will serve two purposes: that the reader may excuse it if matters are not expressed as precisely as one could wish and the words are not well polished, considering that these are sermons spoken once, not composed to be published to the world. Also, so that the argument treated here may be the more efficacious, as it should be if the readers think that they are there at the presentation.²⁰

Plainly, the publication of his sermons was a somewhat touchy matter for Calvin, although the editor seems to be reminding his readers – who included the original hearers of the sermons – that they should put these copies in the context of attending regular worship in Geneva. It is also important to note, however, that Girard emphasizes the “truth of the teaching” and the “knowledge of the story”. These two sermons had been preached, in what was almost certainly an interruption of Calvin’s *lectio continua* series, because a particular threat and corresponding act of mercy had prompted special day of prayer services.²¹ Therefore both the occasion of their preaching and their content were considered worthy of note and significantly comforting, because these showed “how God has helped His church in its need”. In fact, it is probable that Calvin himself had taken special pains with these texts

20. “Pource que l’auteur n’a point accoustumé de faire imprimer ses sermons, il est bon que chascun soit averty pourquoy nous avons publié ces deux cy. La raison est, que plusieurs voyans le contenu et argument estre digne de mémoire, en demandoyent copie, tellement que c’eust esté trop grand peine de les escrire tant de fois. Jointt aussi qu’a la verité la lecture en sera proffitable à tous, tant pour la doctrine qui y est comprinse, que pour la cognoissance de l’histoire laquelle y est touchée : en laquelle on voit clairement comme Dieu a assisté au besoing à son Eglise. Au reste, il est bon aussi qu’on soit averty que l’auteur ne les a pas escrits, mais que nous les publions selon qu’on les a peu recueillir de sa bouche, quand il parloit en chayre. Et cest avertissement servira à deux choses: à fin que si les choses n’estoyent point couchées tant à point qu’on pourroit desirer, ne la parolle tant bien polie, qu’on excuse cela: ayant esgard que ce sont sermons prononcez une fois, non point composez pour estre publiez par le monde. Apres, afin que l’argument ainsi traité ait plus d’efficace, comme il doit avoir quand les lecteurs penseront estre en la chose presente.” Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, #46/3, p. 219. [text not found in CO]

21. See Elsie McKee, “John Calvin’s Day of Prayer: Origin, Nature, and Significance”, in Irene Dingel (ed.), *Calvin und Calvinismus – Europäische Perspektiven* (forthcoming).

because of the occasion, and that might have lessened his anxiety about their unpolished character.

Girard's preface for the second publication, the twenty-two sermons on Psalm 119, elaborates a little on Calvin's reluctance, since for the first time there was no claim for merely local use: these extemporaneous sermons were being directed to those beyond Geneva.

I begged him, at the insistence also of more than a few good faithful people, that he would allow his sermons – just as they had been taken down as he spoke – to be published so that the profit of them might extend further. He objected, preferring to print some short commentary when the occasion lent itself to that, rather than fill paper with such long matter as one unfolds in the pulpit. Nevertheless, since he cannot hope to do that [the commentary] for a good while, given the small amount of leisure which he has, and meanwhile the world would be denied the great usefulness which reading these sermons – just as they are – could provide, I thought it was better to publish them. If God pleases to allow the author to make a work more polished and perfect, nothing will be lost if the children of God have been edified by the holy teaching which they will find here.²²

Girard was willing to allow that this publication might be an interim measure but he was evidently determined that those outside Geneva should have the benefit of Calvin's exposition of scripture, since he could and did cite requests from "more than a few good faithful people" which prompted his publication. It is particularly interesting for a modern audience to note the reason which he gives as grounds for choosing to publish Psalm 119 – with its 176 verses, each of which speaks of the law or precepts of God: "Because this Psalm...contains an argument in which all Christians ought to be exercised night and day."²³ As Peter Opitz points out, this Psalm in fact served as a kind of

22. "Je l'ay prié [Calvin], estant requis aussi de plusieurs bons fideles, qu'il souffrist que ses sermons comme ils ont esté recueillis de sa bouche fussent publiez: afin que le profit s'en estendit plus loing. Or combien qu'il en ait fait difficulté, aimant mieux faire imprimer quand l'opportunité s'y addonneroit, quelque brief commentaire, que de remplir le papier de si longs propoz qu'ils se desduisent en chaire: toutesfois, n'esperant pas que cela se peust faire de long temps, veu le peu de loisir qu'il a, et cependant que le monde seroit frustré d'une grande utilité que pourra apporter la lecture desditz sermons selon qu'ils sont couchez, j'ay pensé que le meilleur seroit les publier. S'il plaist à Dieu donner grace à l'Autheur de faire un ouvrage plus poly et exquis, il n'y aura rien de perdu que les enfans de Dieu ayent esté edifiez de la saincte doctrine qu'ils trouveront icy." Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, #54/13, p. 540.

23. Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, #54/13, p. 540. "Pource que le pseume, qu'on appelle les octonaires, contient un argument auquel tous chrestiens se doivent exercer nuicts et jours, et qu'il avoit esté familierement expose par Maister Jean Calvin en autant de sermons qu'il y a de huictains: je l'ay prie, estant requis aussi de plusieurs bons fideles, qu'il souffrist que ses sermons comme ils ont esté recueillis de sa bouche fussent publiez."

"ABC" for teaching the faith.²⁴ Today the more devotional character of the first Psalm sermons (115, 124) seems natural, but the instructive value of the Psalms (as witnessed in the *Quatre Sermons* as well as this presentation of Ps. 119) was a significant concern to early Protestants.

The last booklet of Calvin's sermons which Girard published was a pair excerpted from the series on the Pastoral Epistles: just two sermons on 1 Tim 2:4-5 – Christ as Mediator – printed in 1555 with a brief note about the importance of this text.

After having heard these two sermons, and considered the teaching contained in them, it seemed to me good to bring them to light for the purpose that such a treasure might not remain hidden but might benefit the whole church, not only among the papists but also those who profess the Gospel.²⁵

Although it is always difficult to interpret such public notes to the reader, the apparently personal character of this short commendation is significant for the publisher's own appreciation of Calvin's teaching. At the least, it is worth noting that Girard thought the exposition of Christ as the sole Mediator was important not only as a means of evangelizing French members of the traditional church (Catholics) but also teaching followers of the gospel (Protestants) who might not understand their new faith very well. The value of having these two sermons in print was clearly felt by Raguenier, the stenographer who copied them down, as is evident in his little poem printed at the end of Girard's booklet:

Whoever wants to have God for Savior
 And does not want to return to Him empty
 But to find in Him all grace and favor;
 He must have Jesus Christ for his guide;
 Because otherwise a person, poor and timid,
 Would not dare approach his God
 If Jesus Christ did not intervene in between
 To grant him favor, access and grace.
 So let us not seek salvation somewhere else
 Than in Jesus and his pure grace.
 I hope for better.²⁶

24. Peter Opitz, "Ein Thorapsalm als ABC des christlichen Glaubens", in W. H. Neuser, H. J. Selderhuis, W. van 't Spijker (eds.), *Calvin's Books* (Heerenveen: Groen, 1997) 117-31.

25. Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, #55/8, p. 585: "L'imprimeur aux lecteurs. Apres avoir ouy ces deux sermons, et consideré la doctrine qui y est comprise, il m'a semblé bon de les mettre en lumiere, à celle fin qu'un tel thresor ne demurest cache, mais qu'il peust profiter à toute l'Eglise, non seulement aux Papistes, mais aussi à ceux qui font profession de l'Evangile."

26. Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, #55/8, p. 585:
 "Quiconque veut avoir Dieu pour Sauveur Et qui ne veut de luy retourner vuyde
 Mais y trouver toute grace et faveur Il faut qu'il ait Jesus Christ pour sa guide;

It should be remembered that Raguénier was a French refugee who had come to Geneva for his faith. The emphasis on Christ and faith in Him as the sole means for reconciliation with God which the poet expresses was obviously central to Protestant teaching. Here, though, the writer also suggests the anxiety about salvation which had led him and others to seek an assurance which the traditional teachings of the church had not provided, even if to enjoy it meant going into exile.

Girard's most important successor as an advocate for publishing Calvin's sermons was Conrad Badius, who began his production of sermons in the later 1550s, when the number of French church groups was growing. First, in 1557 Badius published the sermons on the Ten Commandments excerpted from Deuteronomy, but soon he was envisioning larger things. In 1558 he brought out a collection of Christological sermons, in which he announced his plan for future publications.²⁷ The next would be another sequence, chapters ten and eleven of First Corinthians excerpted from that series, and then he would go on to publish an entire series, the 103 sermons on the Pastoral Epistles and then Galatians. It is not possible here to explore fully how Badius developed his thinking about Calvin's preaching, but several central themes can be highlighted as his sermon editions are taken in order.

In each publication Badius explains clearly why he chose the sermons he was presenting. The first book on the ten commandments, which turned out to be one of the most popular sets of Calvin's sermons, is published with the persecuted French believers prominently in mind.

Because all the poor faithful, who are scattered about in the countries in the world and places where the pope still has dominion, cannot enjoy every day this precious gift [of preaching],

Car autrement l'homme povre et timide
Si Jesus Christ n'intervient au milieu
Ne cerchons donc salut en autre lieu
J'espere mieux."

N'osera pas approcher de son Dieu,
Pour luy donner faveur, accez, et grace.
Fors en Jesus et on sa pure grace.

27. "Et a ceste mesme raison nous avons deliberé de vous presenter consequemment les Sermons que ce bon Docteur a faits sur le dix et onzieme chapitre de la premiere Epistre de S. Paul aux Corinthiens, où la vraye institution de la Cene est clairement monstree, et la corruption et abus qui depuis sont survenus vivement refutez. En outre, pource que les deux Epistres de S. Paul à Timothée et celle à Tite sont éomme les oeconomiques de l'Eglise, c'est a dire contenant l'estat et gouvernement d'icelle, et comme chacun en particulier doit se porter en son office, maintenant que le Seigneur par sa misericorde estend les rayons de sa lumiere Evangelique en meints endroits, nous esperons publier les predications qui ont este faites sur ces trois Epistres-la. Et pource aussi que la grace par Iesus Christ et l'aneantissent du merite des oeuvres humaines sont excellemment traittez en l'Epistre aux Galatiens, nous esperons vous presenter les sermons faits sur icelle: chose autant necessaire en ce temps que nulle autre. Que si nous appercevons que tels presens vous soyent agreables, nous n'espargnerons tous les moyens que Dieu nous donnera pour vous faire participans de plusieurs autres." OC 35:591-92.

I thought that I would give them great comfort if, using the beneficial character of my art [of printing], I let them see on what kind of pasture we are nourished and in what simplicity, purity, truth, reverence and zeal God's word is proclaimed to us by those whom the Lord Jesus has commissioned as pastors for His poor flock in this country.²⁸

After expressing Calvin's reluctance, Badius refers to the preacher's reasoning – similar to his own – for allowing the publication.

Nevertheless he is so agreeable [debonnaire] that he cannot well refuse the importunities of those around him so as not sometimes to allow [the publication].... For if the desire of every faithful person should be that all should come to the knowledge of the truth, and all participate in the same heavenly riches which He gives, who is there – seeing that there are so many poor members of Jesus Christ in the world (detained in worse servitude under the Roman antichrist than in Egypt or Babylonia), people who are languishing and parched for lack of this spiritual pasture – who would not be induced to give them succor?²⁹

The concern for the hunger of French Protestants who do not have gospel preaching is evident in Badius' other publications, but it is also combined with other issues. One is the desire to contribute to the training of French ministers "on the job" by providing a model of good preaching, and in this connection Badius also wanted to defend the character of Calvin's preaching. In the preface to the sermons on various Christological days when the Lord's Supper was celebrated, Badius justifies bringing out these texts.

Because all cannot live in this church to participate in the heavenly pasture which this good shepherd has been administering for twenty years and continues to do; and because it is necessary that those who are newly come to this charge [of preaching] see his manner of teaching in order to follow it; and likewise so that those

28. Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, 57-10, p. 650: "Pource que tous povres fideles qui sont espars par les contrées du monde et lieux où le Pape ha encore domination, ne peuvent estre jouissans par chacun jour de ce don precieux, j'ay pensé que je leur donneroye grande consolation si, usant du benefice de mon art, je leur faisoye veoir de quelle pasture nous somes nourris et en quelle simplicité, pureté, verité, reverence, et zele la parolle de Dieu nous est annoncée par ceux que le Seigneur Jesus a commis Pasteurs sur ton povre troupeau qui est en ce pays."

29. Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, 57-10, p. 651: "Cependant il est si debonnaire qu'il ne peut si bien se deffendre des importunités de ceux qui sont autour de luy, qu'il ne se laisse quelque fois aller... Car si le desir de chascun fidele doit estre que tous viennent à la cognoissance de la verité, et que tous participent aux mesmes richesses celestes qu'il fait, qui est celuy qui voyant qu'il y a tant de povres membres de Jesus Christ par le monde detenus en pire servitude que l'Egyptiaque ou la Babylonique, sous l'Antechrist Romain, qui sont languissans et assechez par faute de ceste pasture spirituelle, ne soit induit à leur donner secours?"

who think that he does nothing in the pulpit but slander and cry out against the pope and his followers, and thunder against their traditions without otherwise explaining Scripture, or indeed that he does not cease to lead people into carnal liberty and unsettle the yoke of kings and princes and all authority: let them read his sermons in which they can see that it is all wrong to make such accusations, and get rid of the bad opinion of him which they have conceived.³⁰

It is notable that this vindication of Calvin the preacher focuses on the content of the sermons, insisting that they are not simply polemic against Rome and they are also not fomenting sedition, the two most dangerous accusations which Protestants faced in France. Badius obviously takes both points seriously but he is certain that these published sermons will counter the indictment. He then goes on to explain why he chose sermons from sacramental occasions.

For the rest, we have considered to choose, as much as possible, sermons which were preached on all the days when the Holy Supper of the Lord is celebrated in this church, as much because they are naturally more vehement and intense, as because the purpose of the sacrament is always explained.³¹

In view of Calvin's concerns about unpolished texts, it is interesting that the editor, who had also been an auditor, commends these sermons for their heightened intensity of their sacramental focus as well as the educational character of this subject matter.

The importance of the Supper was obviously the primary reason for Badius' next publication, the sermons on 1 Corinthians 10-11. Particularly the context of the on-going Supper strife in western Europe, and the fact that most French Christians did not have organized churches or pastors, made an accessible form of Calvin's teaching on the sacraments imperative.

30. Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, 58/5, p. 678: "Or d'autant que tous ne peuvent pas avoir habitation en ceste Eglise pour participer à la pasture celeste que ce bon berger depuis vingt ans en ça ne cesse d'administrer : et qu'il est expedient que ceux qui viennent nouvellement à ceste charge voyent sa manière d'enseigner pour l'ensuyvre : semblablement aussi que ceux qui pensent qu'il ne fait que mesdire et crier en chaire contre le Pape et les siens, et foudroyer contre leurs traditions, sans autrement exposer l'Escriture, ou bien qu'il ne cesse d'induire les personnes à liberté charnelle, et à secouer le joug des Rois et Princes, et toute sujétion, lisent ses predications à ce qu'ils puissent veoir que c'est à grand tort qu'on luy met tels blames sus, et oster la mauvaises opinion qu'ils ont conceue de luy, ..."

31. Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, 58/5, p. 679: "Au rest, nous avons regardé de choisir le plus que nous avons peu les predications qui se font tous les jours esquels se celebre la sainte Cene du Seigneur en ceste Eglise, tant pource qu'elles ont volontiers plus grande vehemence, que pour ce que le poinct de ce Sacrement y est tousjours esclairci."

We thought it would be very suitable to bring to light the sermons of our faithful pastor John Calvin on the tenth and eleventh chapters of the first epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, where among other matters the Supper is treated in a familiar (accessible) way. It is true that in his *Christian Institutes*, and in a treatise which he wrote expressly on the *Lord's Supper*, and similarly in the *Accord on the sacraments, their nature and right usage, agreed upon between the doctors and pastors of the Church of Zurich and those of this city of Geneva*, one may well see that he [Calvin] does not detract in the least from the pure and true ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that he faithfully declares what we ought to know about this sacrament. Nevertheless, because he is more familiar in his sermons, we thought it good to publish these, so that it might be clear to everyone that we bear as much honor and reverence for the Supper of the Lord as anyone alive, and that we seek what Jesus Christ presents to us there, that is, His body and His blood as food for our souls, but not in a carnal way but a spiritual one.³²

There are plainly two motivations at work here, one pastoral and one polemical. Even though other works by Calvin on the sacrament were available in French, Badius considers the familiar and accessible way that the teaching was presented in the sermons to be sufficient reason to publish them. In his view, lay Protestants in France, who had to defend the purity of the sacramental teaching which they affirmed in opposition to Rome's doctrine, needed more help than the doctrinal treatises would afford. (Although he does not say so, one might speculate that Badius thought that sermons might be more easily slipped over the border and/or might seem more innocuous in the hands of lay people than theological pamphlets.)

According to the publication program which he announced in 1558, Badius' next projects after 1 Cor. 10-11 were to have been the sermons on the Pastoral Epistles and Galatians. In 1561 he did bring out the former, which was the first complete series of sermons of Calvin's sermons to appear in print, a fat book on Timothy and Titus.

32. "[N]ous avons pensé qu'il viendroit bien à point de mettre en lumiere les Sermons de nostre fidele Pasteur Jean Calvin sur le dixieme et onzieme Chapitre de la premiere Epistre de S. Paul aux Corinthiens, ou entre autres matieres celle de la Cene est familierement traittée. Vray qu'en son Institution Chrestienne, et en un traitté qu'il a fait expres de la Cene du Seigneur, et semblablement en l'accord passé entre les Docteurs et Pasteurs de l'Eglise de Zurich, et ceux de ceste cité de Geneve, touchant les Sacremens, leur nature et vray usage, on peut bien appercevoir qu'il ne derogue en rien à la pure et vraye ordonnance de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ, et qu'il declare fidellement ce qu'il nous convient sçavoir touchant ce Sacrement. Toutesfois par ce qu'il est plus familier en ses predications, il nous a semblé bon d'imprimer celle-ci, afin qu'il soit notoire à tous que nous portons autant d'honneur et de reverence à la Cene du Seigneur que nuls autres, et que nous y cerchons ce que Jesus Christ y presente, à sçavoir son corps et son sang en aliment de nos ames: mais non pas d'une façon charnelle, ains spirituelle." OC 49, pp. xiv-xv.

Constantly before his eyes are the persecuted French believers who have few preachers, whom Badius addresses directly and cites as prompting his publication.

And because you do not yet have such a freedom in the preaching of the gospel as we do, and because God has only begun to gather some little flocks here and there in France - flocks which are daily in fear of the wolves - and because the pastors to whom they have been entrusted do not yet minister the pasture of life to them except in secret, surreptitiously [as if they were stealing], the faithful there have thought that the publication of these sermons would be extremely useful.³³

With the usual reference to Calvin's reluctance about publishing the sermons, Badius also explains that though the readers may miss some clarity or grace which was experienced by those present when the sermons were delivered, he urges them to concentrate on the pure doctrine.³⁴ Perhaps the editor's excuse of pointing to the difference which the preacher's delivery made in the original is a sop to Calvin's pride, but the preacher would certainly agree with the commendation of the value of the Biblical content.

The following year Badius continued his program of publishing Calvin's sermons, although with a change, presenting the first sixty-five sermons on the synoptic harmony instead of the Galatians he had projected. He includes a progress report on how the earlier sermon publications have benefited the French church.

I beg you to consider the contribution to the progress of the Church of God which has resulted from the sermons of our good Master John Calvin which have been published to date. Although he did not have the leisure to revise these sermons and we were obliged to bring them to light just as they were taken down, nevertheless they have served as mute teachers to those who, deprived of the freedom to hear the living voice, have enjoyed reading these sermons, and have been brought to a knowledge of the truth by that means. And likewise [they have served as] a form

33. "Et par ce que vous n'avez pas encore la predication de l'Evangile en telle liberte que nous, et que Dieu a seulement rassemble en la France quelques petis troupeaux par ci par la, qui sont journellement en crainte des loups, et que les Pasteurs qui leur a commis ne leur administrent encore la pasture de vie sinon en cachette et comme à la desrobbee, les fideles de pardeça ont estime que la publication de ces sermons vous seroit grandement utile..." OC 49, pp. xvi-xvii.

34. "Par ainsi [these sermons were extempore] si vous trouvez des sentences concises et propos entrecoupez, considerez que le geste qu'on ha en prononçant, aide beaucoup à l'intelligence des propos, lesquels estans leus, bien souvent n'ont telle grace qu'ils ont estans prononcez. Puis quand on est accoustumé au style et façon d'enseigner d'un Pasteur, on entend, par maniere de parler, à demi mot, ce qu'il veut dire. Ne vous arreztez donc pas tant à l'ornement externe, qu'à la pureté de la doctrine." OC 49, pp. xvii-xviii.

for a number of those who in these times of visitation [trial] have been called to the ministry of the Gospel and who, being conformed to this manner of teaching: pure, simple, and far from all ostentation and affectation of human eloquence, today are fishing for souls in great heaps, to dedicate and consecrate them to their Lord and Shepherd.³⁵

It appears that not only were Calvin's sermons serving as "mute teachers" for believers who were beyond reach of his voice, but they were also playing a role in spreading the gospel. Their role in training preachers was not new, but it was still very important since the French church was growing so fast. In fact, Badius' words about using Calvin's sermons as models might have been directed to himself, since shortly after the appearance of these sermons he left for France, to be a pastor there until his death in a visitation of the plague. Presumably he followed the pattern he had been hearing, publishing, and recommending!

Before Badius departed from Geneva other publishers had become involved in producing Calvin's sermons, both in French and in translation. A fuller discussion will be presented elsewhere. It is appropriate here, however, to add only two more figures because of what they illustrate about the surprises in studying the publication of Calvin's sermons.

One is a French woman, Marie Dentièrre.³⁶ Dentièrre had been a nun before she learned of and was converted to the Protestant understanding of faith and left her convent to work in exile in Switzerland and Geneva. Along with her husband Antoine Froment, a former priest, Dentièrre was active – and preaching – in Geneva before Calvin came. The couple moved away in 1537, when Froment was called to another ministry, but they remained in close contact with affairs in Geneva. In 1561, it appears that Dentièrre published a single one of Calvin's sermons on 1 Tim 2:9-11. (The publication is signed M.D. and the attribution to Dentièrre is usually accepted, especially since it is not the only text from her pen and is in character with her style and

35. Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, 62/22, 957: "[J]e vous prie de considerer l'avancement que l'Eglise de Dieu a receue jusques icy de la publication des Sermons de nostre bon Pasteur M. Jean Calvin, lesquels combien qu'il n'ait eu le loisir de remanier, et que nous ayons esté contrainsts de les mettre en lumiere selon qu'ils ont esté recueillis, toutesfois ont servi de docteurs muets à ceux qui, privez de la liberté d'ouïr la vive voix, ont eu la jouissance de la lecture d'iceux, et par ce moyen sont parvenus à la cognoissance de verité; et semblablement de formulaire à plusieurs qui en ces temps de visitation ont esté appelez au ministere de l'Evangile, et lesquels s'estans conformez à ceste façon d'enseigner, pure, simple, et esloignée de toute ostentation et affectation d'eloquence humaine, peschent aujourd'huy les ames à grans moceaux, pour les dedier et consacrer à leur Sauveur et Pasteur." (missing from OC).

36. See M. B. McKinley, "General Introduction", to Marie Dentièrre, *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre and Preface to a Sermon by John Calvin*, ed./ trans. M. B. McKinley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) 91-94.

reforming concerns. However, the fact that it was published in France the year that she died in Geneva poses problems for this identification.³⁷ Recognizing the uncertainty, it is still interesting to examine this curious publication, which seems to be the work of a woman.)

Dentière's preface expounds the importance of defending against vices which can lead the faithful astray. In keeping with the Biblical text (that women should "adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety; not with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment", etc), she focuses on "extravagant clothing" to which she considers women particularly prone. Besides appeals to "St. Cyprian" and various classical figures, and an allusion to a medical metaphor, Dentière closes with a commendation of Calvin. "Let us listen to the Apostle speaking to Timothy and to the man who preached about that passage, a man who because of the purity of his teaching deserves to be heard among all the ministers and faithful pastors in Europe today."³⁸ For a woman to select the topic of women's dress as a publication may be rather surprising to modern readers, and it suggests that gender issues in the sixteenth-century reformation were more complex than is often assumed. At the least, Dentière's positive appreciation for both a difficult Biblical text and a reformer usually remembered as very strict about morals indicates that Calvin's sermons could speak to more audiences than one might guess.

Another woman translator/ editor of some of Calvin's sermons, whose identity is well attested, shared with Dentière both a history of exile for her faith and the desire to make available to fellow believers some of the Biblical expositions she had found comforting and salutary. Anne Vaughn Lock was a gentlewoman among the English Marian exiles in Geneva,³⁹ and she probably heard Calvin preach the sermons which she soon translated and published (1560). The ones she selected were three on Isaiah 38, the story of King Hezekiah's illness and healing. Lock's translation is dedicated to Katharine, Duchess of Suffolk, who had also been an exile from Mary Tudor's rule, and Lock's words explain both why she chose this particular text and how she saw Calvin's role. The importance of the example of Hezekiah is evident in the analogy which Lock applies to the spiritual ills which English Protestants had suffered. She begins with a comparison between physical and spiritual ills. "[T]he peines and diseases of minde and soule are not only the most grievous, and most dangerous,

37. See McKinley, "General Introduction", 22-23. Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, 61/23, 855-86.

38. Dentière, "Preface to a Sermon by John Calvin", in *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre*, 93-94.

39. See S. M. Felch, "Introduction", to Anne Vaughn Lock, *The Collected Works of Anne Vaughn Lock*, ed. S. M. Felch (Tempe AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999), pp. xvi ff, esp. xxv-xxvi.

but also they onely are painfull and perilous... He then, that cureth the sicke minde, or preserveth it from disease, cureth or preserveth not onely minde, but bodye also..."⁴⁰

Lock's appreciation for Calvin is evident in the extended medical metaphor which shapes the whole of her preface, linking God who provided the "recipe" for health of mind and body in the Bible, and the preacher who interpreted it, and the friend who "boxed" the medicine for another.

This receipte [wherby health both of body and mynde is preserved, and wherby if health be appaired, it may be restored, yea whereby sicknes and common miseries continuing shall not have so muche power to trouble a man as to make him sicke, or miserable] God the heavenly Physitian hath taught, his most excellent Apothecarie mast[er] John Calvine hath compounded, and I your graces most bounden and humble have put into an Englishe box, and do present unto you.⁴¹

While Calvin might not have called himself an apothecary, it is probable that he would have found this metaphor very apt. Lock goes on to speak in a way Calvin would approve about how the duchess may express her gratitude. First she denies that her patroness owes her any thanks; then she turns to the apothecary and the Physician.

Master Calvine thinketh his paynes recompensed if your grace or any Christian take profit of it: bicause how much soever is spent, his store is neverthelesse. And for God, recompensed he can not be: but how he is continually to be thanked, your graces profession of his worde, your abidyng in the same, the godly conversation that I have sene in you, do prove that your selfe do better understand and practise than I can admonishe you.⁴²

Calvin would certainly appreciate the point about being recompensed for his labor if Christians profited from his preaching, and agree that spreading his Biblical exposition would multiply rather than diminish "his store" (God's word).

It is clear that whether they pictured his sermons as medicine or not, a wide range of people, both pastors and lay leaders, thought Calvin's vernacular expositions of scripture were well worth preserving, publishing, and propagating through translations.

Much more could be said about Calvin's sermons, but here it is appropriate in speaking of surprises to conclude with a topic which seems to have escaped notice. That is, we can read what editors say

40. Anne Vaughn Lock, "[Dedication] To the Right Honorable... Lady Katharine, Duchesse of Suffolke", *The Collected Works*, 4.

41. Anne Vaughn Lock, "Dedication", *The Collected Works*, 5.

42. Anne Vaughn Lock, "Dedication", *The Collected Works*, 5.

about why they published particular sermons, but as far as I know, no one but myself has examined the point of what is missing.⁴³ There are no sermons by Calvin on Romans or the Gospel of John, and no explicit record that Calvin ever preached on these books. There are no sermons on Philippians, Colossians, or the epistles of Peter or John, and no record of any ever having been preached, although there is some probability that Calvin's first little commentary on James is evidence for sermons on that book. Obviously, these New Testament books were very important to all Protestant reformers, and the epistle to the Romans and Gospel of John were two of Calvin's own favorites. As Gary Hansen points out, Calvin explained the order of his commentary production according to "the books that have the greatest clarity on the most important subjects",⁴⁴ and the same logic surely applied to his preaching as his teaching, even though he might have ordered the book somewhat differently. Therefore it is inconceivable that he did not preach on Romans and John, and probably most of the other New Testament books. If James qualified for attention, the other Pauline epistles surely did, and First Peter and First John were also very important to Calvin. In fact, their absence is, in a counter-intuitive way, a signal of their significance, and they were the subject of the young reformer's first expositions...

It is virtually certain that Calvin preached on some, if not all, of these books in his early years of ministry, before Raguenier came to Geneva. Probably no contemporary writer commented on the matter because it was taken for granted that Romans and John were natural choices for the first Protestant sermons in a city. It is very likely that Calvin was working through Romans in the pulpit as well as classroom in the late 1530s, when he was also preparing his commentary on this book. It is also very possible that he was preaching on the Gospel of John soon after he came back to Geneva.⁴⁵

What is surprising, then, is not that Calvin skipped these vitally important Biblical books – he did not – but that the fact of their omission from lists of his preaching has (apparently) never been a subject of note by scholars. That is probably one further small demonstration of the general neglect of Calvin's sermons since the sixteenth century, and one of the questions which comes to mind now that the reformer's ordinary Biblical expositions are being freshly appreciated. Calvin's sermons were a treasure to many in his own day, and they remain a surprising treasure in the twenty-first century.

43. See "Calvin's Sermons: Suspected, Unique, and Prized", pp. 91-94.

44. Gary Neal Hansen, *John Calvin and the Non-Literal Interpretation of Scripture* (Princeton Theological Seminary Ph.D. dissertation, 1998) 16; he also points out that the Pauline epistles, John and Hebrews were keys in Calvin's theology.

45. See evidence in McKee, "Calvin's Sermons: Suspected, Unique, and Prized", 91-94.

APPENDIX: PUBLISHED SERMONS

Records for 1546-1600 from Bibliotheca Calvinica, 1-3

- 1546 *Deux sermons faitz en la ville de Geneve, l'un le 4 nov. 1545, le second le mercredy suyvant*, [transcribed by Jean Cousin] Geneva: Jean Girard, 1546.
- 1552 *Quatre sermons fort utiles pour nostre temps avec exposition du Pseaume 87*. Geneva: Robert Estienne, 1552 [Ps. 16, Heb. 13, Ps. 27 (two sermons)].
- 1553 *Certaine homilies conteining admonition for this time, with an Apologie* [trans by Robert Horne] "Rome" [Wesel?], 1553. [trans. of 2 sermons, on Ps. 16 and Heb. 13].
Del fuggir le superstitioni che regugnano a la vera e sincera confession della fede. [Geneva: Jean Crespin], 1553. [second part is translation of Quatre sermons].
Homiliae quatuor et explanatio Ps. 87, trans. by Claude Baduel. Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1553.
- 1554 *Vingtdeux sermons auxquels est exposé le Pseaume 119*. Geneva: Jean Girard, 1554.
Vingtdeux sermons sur le Pseaume 119. Geneva: [Zacharie Durant], 1554.
- 1555 *Deux sermons prins de la premiere Epistre à Timothée au second chapitre*. [signed D.R. = Denis Raguenier] [Geneva] Jean Girard, 1555. [two sermons preached Nov. 4, 1554, part of series].
Six sermons à sçavoir quatre exhortatifs et deux où il est traité du seul moyenneur. [Geneva] Pierre-Jacques Poullain & René Houdouyn, 1555. [Quatre sermons & Deux sermons].
- 1556 *Homiliae sive Conciones VII*, trans. Claude Baduel. [Geneva] Jean Crespin, 1556. [Quatre sermons with first three from Vingtdeux].
- 1557 *Sermons sur les dix commandemens*. Geneva: Conrad Badius, 1557. [16 sermons].
- 1558 *Plusieurs sermons touchant la divinité, humanité et nativité de N.S. Jesus Christ*. [Geneva] Conrad Badius, 1558. [26 sermons].
Sermons sur le 10e et le 11e chapitre de la premiere Epistre aux Corinthians. [Geneva] Conrad Badius, 1558. [19 sermons].

**Sermons sur les dix commandemens*. Geneva: Conrad Badius, 1558. [original 16 plus 2 more on Deut. 4:15-24].

- 1559** *Sermons sur les dix commendemens*. Geneva: Etienne Anastaise, 1559.
- 1560** *Dixhuict sermons ausquels l'histoire de Melchisedec et la matiere de la justification sont deduites*. [Geneva] Etienne Anastaise, 1560; [Geneva] Jean Bonnefoy, 1560. [7 on Gen. 14-15, 11 on Luke 1-2].
Sermons upon the songe that Ezechias made after he had bene sicke, trans. A.L. (Anne Locke). London: John Day, 1560. [3 on Isa. 38].
Traité de la predestination eternelle. Treze sermons de l'election gratuite de Dieu. [Geneva] Antoine Cercia, 1560. [Geneva] Jean Durant, 1560. [13 on Gen. 25-27].
Two godly and notable sermons preached in 1555. London: William Seres, [1560?] [text 2 Tim. 1:8-10; translator not known].
- 1561** *Four godlye sermons agaynst the polution of idolatries*. London: Rowland Hall, 1561. [first translation for sermons three and four and expo of Ps. 87].
Sermon où il est montré quelle doit estre la modestie des femmes en leur habillements. [Caen: Pierre Philippe?, 1561].
Sermon de la modestie des femmes [second part of composite book beginning with Beza's Conditions et vertus requises en la femme fidele...] [Paris: Michel Fezandat], 1561.
Sermons sur les deux Epistres à Timothée et sur l'Epistre à Tite. Geneva: Conrad Badius, 1561. [54 on I Timothy, 30 on 2 Timothy, 17 on Titus].
Trois sermons sur le sacrifice d'Abraham. [Geneva: Jacques Bourgeois], 1561.
- 1562** *Sermons sur les dix commandemens*. Geneva: François Estienne, 1562.
Sermons sur les dix commandemens. [Lyon: Symphorien Barbier], 1562.
Sermons sur l'Epistre aux Ephesiens. Geneva: Jean-Baptiste Pinereul, 1562. [Some printed without place name] [48 sermons].
Sermons sur l'Epistre aux Ephesiens. [Lyon: Symphorien Barbier], 1562.
Sermons sur le cantique que fait le bon roy Ezechias. Geneva: François Estienne, 1562. [4 sermons].

- Soixante cinq sermons sur l'Harmonie ou Concordance des trois Evangelistes.* Geneva: Conrad Badius, 1562. [these were the only ones completed before Raguenier's death].
- Soixante cinq sermons sur l'Harmonie ou Concordance des trois Evangelistes.* Lyon: Symphorien Barbier, 1562. [also some without place or publisher named].
- Three notable sermons upon the Psalm 46 [and 48],* trans. William Warde. London: Rowland Hall, 1562. [Ps. 46:2-6 preserved only in English].
- Treze sermons traitans de l'election gratuite de Dieu en Jacob et de la rejection en Esau. Response à certaines calomnies et blasphemes.* [no place, no name] 1562.
- Vingtdeux sermons sur le Pseaume 119.* Geneva: François Estienne, 1562.
- 1563** *Plusieurs sermons touchant la divinité, humanité et nativité de N.S. Jesus Christ.* Geneva: Michel Blanchier, 1563.
Sermons sur le 10e et 11e de la premiere Epistre aux Corinthiens. Geneva: Michel Blanchier, 1563.
Sermons sur l'Epistre aux Galatiens [Galates]. Geneva: François Perrin, 1563. [43 sermons].
Sermons sur le livre de Job. Geneva: Jean de Laon, 1563. [159 sermons].
Sermons sur les deux Epistres à Timothée et sur l'Epistre à Tite. Geneva: Jean Bonnefoy, 1563.
- 1565** *Quarante sept sermons sur les huict derniers chapitres des propheties de Daniel.* La Rochelle: Barthélemy Berton, 1565.
Sermons ausquels l'histoire de Melchisedec et la matiere de la justification sont deduites, avec l'exposition du sacrifice d'Abraham. Geneva: [Jean Bonnefoy for] Jean Durant, 1565.
- 1566** *Deux sermons, l'un auquel tous chrestiens sont exhortez de fuir l'idolatrie exterieure, l'autre à souffrir persecution.* [Orléans: Eloi Gibier], 1566. [first 2 of Quatre sermons].
- 1567** *Sermons sur le V. livre de Moyse nommé Deutéronome.* Geneva: Thomas Courteau, 1567. [200 sermons, including previously published 10 commandments].
- 1569** *Sermons sur le livre de Job.* Geneva: François Perrin, 1569.
- 1574** *Four sermons upon the songe that Ezechias made,* trans. A.L. (Anne Locke). London: John Day, 1574.

- Sermons upon the books of Job*, trans. Arthur Golding. London: Henry Bynneman, 1574.
Sermons upon the books of Job, trans. Arthur Golding. London: Henry Bynneman, 1574. [different format].
Sermons upon the Epistle to the Galathians, trans. Arthur Golding. London: Henry Bynneman, 1574.
- 1577 *The Sermons upon the Epistle too the Ephesians*, trans. Arthur Golding. London: [Thomas Dawson & Thomas Gardiner]
- 1579 *Foure sermons of matters very profitable for our time, With a brief exposition of the 87. psalme*, trans. John Field. London: Thomas Dawson, 1579. [new ? trans.; from French].
Sermons on the Epistles to Timothie and Titus, trans. L.T. (Lawrence Tomson). London [Henry Middleton], 1579.
Sermons upon the books of Job, trans. Arthur Golding. London: Thomas Dawson, 1579 (=1580).
Sermons upon the X. commandentes of the Lawe, trans. J. H. (John Harmar). London: Thomas Dawson, 1579.
Thirteen sermons, entreating of the free election of God in Jacob, trans. John Field. London: Thomas Dawson, 1579.
- 1580 *Sermons upon the books of Job*, trans. Arthur Golding. London: Thomas Dawson, 1580.
Two and twentie sermons upon the 119th Psalme, trans. Thomas Stocker. London: Thomas Dawson, 1580.
- 1581 *Divers sermons concerning the divinity, humanitie and nativitie of Jesus Christ*, trans. Thomas Stocker. London: Thomas Dawson, 1581.
Predication over den Lofsanck des Coninckx Ezechie, trans. Th.O. Anvers: Jasper Troyens, 1581.
Sermon conteining an exhortation to suffer persecution, upon Heb. 13.13 (trans. John Field). London: Robert Waldegrave, 1581.
Sermons upon the X. commandentes of the Lawe, trans. J. H. (John Harmar). London: Thomas Dawson, 1581.
- 1583 *The Sermons upon the fifth booke of Moses called Deuteronomie*, trans. Arthur Golding. London: Henry Middleton, 1583.
- 1584 *Sermons upon the books of Job*, trans. Arthur Golding. London: Thomas Dawson, 1584.
Two godly and learned sermons, trans. Robert Horne [see *Certaine Homilies*], edited Anthony Munday. London: [John Charlewood], 1584.

- 1586 *Vier Predigten, drey uber den englischen Gurs, die vierde uber das fünffte Gebott*, trans. under direction of Kaspar Olevianus. Herborn: Christoph Rab, 1586.
- 1587-88 *Predigten über das Buch Job*, trans. from French under direction of Kaspar Olevianus. Herborn: Christoph Rab, 1587-88. [4 volumes, 2 in 1587, 2 in 1588].
- 1590 *Soixante cinq sermons sur l'Harmonie ou Concordance des trois Evangelistes*. Geneva: Jacob Stoer, 1590.
- 1592 *Sermons on the historie of Mechisedech*, trans. by Thomas Stocker. London: John Windet, 1592. [group of ten sermons collected in 1565 book].
- 1593 *In librum Jobi Conciones*, preface T. Beza. Geneva: Heritiers de Eustace Vignon, 1593.
- 1598 *Vergaderinghe ofte proef-predicke, op het beginsel van den Evangelio des Joannis. Een predicatie vander geboorten Jesu Christi. Noch negen predicatien*, trans. Jan Martini. Delft: Jan Andriesz [Cloeting], 1598. [congrégation and first 10 sermons of Plusieurs sermons].
- 1602 *XL Predicaten I.C. gethogen uyt alle zyne Sermonen die hz ghedaen heeft over het Boeck Iob*. Amsterdam: Laurens Jacobus, 1602.
- 1604 *Ioannis Calvini homiliae in I. Librum Samuelis*. Geneva: Gabriel Carterius, 1604.
Thien Predicaten I.C. In Welchke onder andere de gheschiednisse Melchisedechs' end den handel des rechtveerdighmakinghe met de verclaringhe van Abrahamas offerhande verhaelt worden. Delf: I. Martin, Ian Andriess. 1604.
- 1615 *Der 119. Psalm des Königes und Propheten Davis erklärt und augelegt in zwo und zwanzig Predigten*. Cassel, Wessel. (1615).