

**Calvin, the Academy of Geneva and 150 years  
of theology at Stellenbosch:  
historical-theological contributions to the conversation  
on theological education**

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*Abstract*

The concurrent celebrations of the 500th anniversary of Calvin's birth, the 450th anniversary of the opening of the Genevan Academy and 150 years of theology at Stellenbosch invite reflection on theological education. With this in mind, this article revisits some aspects of the founding and early years of the Genevan Academy. It will be shown how, in the first instance, the architects of the Genevan Academy did not view theology as isolated from other sources of wisdom; secondly, that the commitment to train ministers for the Reformed churches formed part of a larger vision to transform society; and thirdly, that the Genevan Academy was not immune to tensions inherent in early modern Reformed higher education. Against the backdrop of these three brief observations, and in view of the reception of Calvin and Calvinism at Stellenbosch, the rest of the article offers some remarks on the challenges facing theological education in contexts such as the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch. The article suggests that some notes on "the Reformed habit of mind" (Gerrish) may be valuable in navigating the possible tensions between confessional identity and ecumenism, between academic and ecclesiastical theology.

**150 years of theology**

In 2009 the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University celebrates 150 years of theological education at Stellenbosch. The official opening of the Theological Seminary took place on 1 November 1859. The festivities of that day are described in detail by one of the attendees (*een feestgenoot*), who recalls:

The ceremony was to start at 10 a.m. in the church. But long before this hour the church was packed. Although the church seats only 600 people, on this day it housed 1300. The congregation of Stellenbosch, as could be expected, attended in great numbers. Many also came from the congregations of Cape Town, Wijnberg, D'Urban, Somerset, Paarl and Wellington. Outside of the church stood a crowd of about 800 persons, mostly members of the local mission churches. They were dressed festively and seemed to compete with the members of the local congregation in showing their interest in this joyous occasion on this joyous day (*Gedenkschrift* 1859:27, my translation).<sup>1</sup>

The rest of this text also recalls the opening prayer by the Rev A Faure (who can rightly be called the father of the Theological Seminary)<sup>2</sup>, the congregational singing, the sermon by Prof NJ Hofmeyr, the closing prayer by Rev JH Neethling of the local congregation, the ceremonial procession through the town and the opening address at the Seminary by Prof John Murray. The author is clearly enthused and moved by these events and concludes with the conviction that God will make the Seminary a centre of light and life for the church in South Africa.

These recollections of the opening of the Theological Seminary in 1859 are included in a memorial book (*Gedenkschrift*), a text dedicated to the members of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa “with the prayer that it may contribute to keep alive and operative their and their children’s interest in the Theological Seminary” (1859: dedication page).<sup>3</sup> These words testify to the close relationship between the Theological Seminary and the Dutch Reformed Church. In addition, one should consider the fact that the Theological Seminary played a key role in the establishment of Stellenbosch University (which was founded in 1918), pointing to a further significant relationship that continues to shape the identity of the Theological Seminary.<sup>4</sup> In 1963 the Seminary became a full faculty of Stellenbosch University. Another important milestone in the history of theology at Stellenbosch was the decision of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa to move its theological training to Stellenbosch, which meant that since 2000 the Faculty has had formal agreements with other churches than the Dutch Reformed Church as well. And in 2002 the first students of the Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa officially enrolled at the Faculty. Today the Faculty views itself as an ecumenical faculty, while it also acknowledges its Dutch Reformed roots.

In celebrating 150 years of theology at Stellenbosch one needs to be mindful of these historical beginnings and developments.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the Faculty of Theology is placed within a specific university context with a par-

ticular vision about research, teaching and community interaction. Within such a setting, one is faced with challenges regarding the optimal relationship between seminary and university, as well as the related questions regarding the interrelation between church, academy and society, to use David Tracy's well-known distinction of the three "publics" of theology (cf. Tracy 1991:3-46). In addition to these demanding questions regarding the context of theological education at Stellenbosch today, one is challenged to grapple with the question of how to reconcile ecumenical and confessional commitments, as well as how to view the relationship between theology and the other sciences.

In addressing these seemingly perennial tensions, we are also reminded of the fact that the celebration of 150 years of theology at Stellenbosch coincides with the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin, as well as with the 450th anniversary of the opening of the famous Academy of Geneva in 1559. For those who stand in the Reformed tradition, as well as for institutions with Reformed roots, these concurrent events offer the opportunity for some historical-theological reflections on the nature and task of theological education from a Reformed perspective. In this process the danger arises of assuming too much of a continuity between ourselves and Calvin, or sixteenth-century education institutions and the seminaries or universities of today. Nevertheless, an engagement with the past, such as revisiting aspects of the history of the Genevan Academy or the history of theology at Stellenbosch, can contribute to the conversation on theological education – even if only to help us understand the complexity of the challenges or to hint at promising trajectories for consideration.

With this in mind, this article revisits some aspects of the founding and early years of the Genevan Academy, highlighting three aspects. First, the architects of the Genevan Academy did not view theology as isolated from other sources of wisdom. Second, the Academy had as its goal the training of ministers for the Reformed churches. However, for Calvin, this goal was also part of a larger vision to transform society. Third, the Genevan Academy was not immune to the tensions inherent in early modern Reformed higher education – tensions that are also familiar to us today. Karin Maag (1995:2) summarises this well in her book *Seminary or University? The Genevan Academy and Reformed Higher Education, 1560-1620*:

On the one hand, especially in Reformed areas where sufficiently educated Reformed ministers were in short supply, ecclesiastical leaders in particular felt that centres of learning had to act primarily as training grounds in the doctrines and practices of the Reformed faith. On the other hand, more practical minded civic leaders felt that the strength and survival of their institutions lay in providing the best possible professors

and education to students, irrespective of confessional constraints.

Against the backdrop of these three brief observations, the rest of the article offers some remarks on the challenges facing theological education in contexts such as the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch, reflecting also on the possible tension between confessional identity and ecumenism, as well as the tension between academic and ecclesiastical theology.

### **Calvin, Beza and the early years of the Academy of Geneva**

There is no doubt that theological education was high on John Calvin's agenda. When he came to Geneva in 1536, he was appointed as reader in Sacred Scripture and held lectures on the New Testament, especially on the letters of Paul. The problem, however, was that these lectures were not backed by a comprehensive strategy for education in Geneva. Upon Calvin's return to Geneva from Strasbourg (where he went after he was banned from Geneva in 1538), he expressed his vision for a college different from the existing institutions. Calvin was influenced by his experiences in Strasbourg, where there was a well-established educational institution. In 1541 he writes in his *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, within the context of a discussion of the office of doctor, that a college should be instituted for instructing young people to prepare them "for the ministry as well as for civil government" (Reid 1954:63).

Nothing came of Calvin's plans until the political situation changed in 1555, which led to the consolidation of Calvin's position of authority in the city. The 1550s saw a change in the power balance of Genevan politics, a process enhanced by the influx of French-speaking religious refugees.<sup>6</sup> These developments contributed to Calvin's rise to power in Geneva.<sup>7</sup> Within such a context, the long-projected plans for the establishment of an academy could take shape once more. In 1556, when Calvin was on his way to Frankfurt, he visited Strasbourg to ask for advice from the head of the local academy, Jean Sturm.<sup>8</sup> Besides the strong influence of Strasbourg as a model, Calvin also had knowledge of the Academy of Melancthon in Wittenberg. The fact that the buildings of the Collège de Rive, the Latin school started after the city accepted the Reformation in 1536, were in need of renovation offered further impetus to Calvin's plans for developing a new college.

Calvin and the other ministers submitted a plan to the Council, according to which the existing Collège de Rive was to become the *schola privata*, a lower-level Latin school. From there students could go on to the upper-level *schola publica*. When Calvin received the backing of the city authorities, he started searching for competent teachers, a process which initially met with some difficulties.<sup>9</sup> Calvin's search for professors was helped

by the fact that a conflict arose between the professors in Lausanne and the Council of Bern (under whose jurisdiction they fell), resulting in the dismissal of the teaching staff of the Lausanne Academy. Theodore Beza (who taught Greek in Lausanne) left Lausanne for Geneva before the quarrel reached its peak and others would follow. The registers of the small council reported in March and May 1559 the acceptance of Antoine le Chevalier as professor in Hebrew, Francois Bérauld as professor in Greek and Jean Tagaut as professor in Philosophy, while Jean Randon, also from Lausanne, became the regent of the highest class of the *schola privata*.<sup>10</sup> Calvin and Beza became the professors in theology. It is clear that they saw their lecturing at the Academy as an extension of their role as ministers.<sup>11</sup> In addition, Calvin played an important role, bad health notwithstanding, in liaising between the Academy, the Company of Pastors and the City Council. Through his reputation and correspondence Calvin attracted many young men to come and study in Geneva.

Calvin's vision of, and work at, the Genevan Academy must furthermore be seen within the context of the way he understood his calling as teacher and pastor, as well as in the light of his commitment to the church as a school. Zachman (2006:7) writes: "Calvin envisioned the church as a school in which Christians act as both students and teachers, under the instruction of the Holy Spirit, the author of Scripture." Calvin described his own "sudden conversion to teachableness" in the Preface of his Psalms commentary and it was his life-long objective to teach people how to read Scripture. He did this through his *Institutes* and biblical commentaries, as well as through his work as pastor in Geneva. It is not surprising then that Calvin's passion for teaching found further concretisation in the Genevan Academy.

It is beyond the scope of this article to go into the detail of the founding and early history of the Genevan Academy.<sup>12</sup> Suffice to say that once sufficient funds and the personnel had been found, the official inauguration took place in the main church of Saint Pierre on 5 June 1559. After an opening prayer by Calvin, the secretary of the small council (Michel Roset) read aloud the Academy's statutes and ordinances and its confession of faith.<sup>13</sup> After that Theodore Beza, the first rector, gave the inaugural address. In this address Beza argues that scholars are endowed with intelligence and must make use of this gift of God, albeit that this requires training and hard work. Beza also saw continuities between the Academy of Geneva and the academies of antiquity:

In our *respublica scholastica*, where doctors and students work together, it will be possible to acquire an education in good letters and in the rational disciplines, so that, as they used to say in antiquity, men of reason and intelligence will be meta-

morphosed out of wild and savage beasts. Wisdom comes down to us from Moses, but also from the Egyptians, passing from them to the Greeks. Among the *profana gentes*, especially among the Greeks, there was, by the grace of God, light in the darkness. Because of that we should regard ourselves as at one with the academies of antiquity (quoted by Lewis in Pettegree, Duke & Lewis 1994:39).

In addition, Beza turned to the scholars and reminded them of the famous saying of Plato rendered by Cicero: *Scientia quae est remota a iustitia, calliditas potius quam sapientia est appellanda* (That kind of knowledge which is remote from justice better deserves the name of ingenuity than of wisdom). Beza gives concrete content to this affirmation:

Virtue is that which is subordinated to the will of the Almighty God. To this you must be obedient, and in that obedience, diligent in all your studies. To be idle and negligent is a perfidious rejection of the gift of God. You are not here to take part in frivolous games, but in order that you may become imbued with true religion and equipped with all good arts, the better to amplify God's glory and to be a credit to your native land. Never forget that you have enrolled under the sacred military discipline of the great Commander himself (quoted by Lewis in Pettegree, Duke & Lewis 1994:39-40).

Commenting on Beza's speech, Gillian Lewis notes that this inaugural speech displayed some characteristics of the ethos of the founders of the Genevan school. First, there is a note of warning against ingenuity or artificiality (*calliditas*), hence the emphasis "on the old Christian view that frivolity and 'curiosity' were a danger against which able men must guard" (Pettegree, Duke & Lewis 1994:40). A second characteristic that emerges is an emphasis on industriousness, since service to God is active service. A third aspect regards providence. Lewis writes: "The students are reminded to regard their obligations in the light of God's revealed purposes and never to forget that they are soldiers in an historic cause" (Pettegree, Duke & Lewis 1994:40). This emphasis on history is mirrored in the way Beza situated the circumstances leading to the establishment of the school in a local and European context of struggle and victory.

Lewis further emphasises the fact that the architects of the Genevan Academy did not share the view that Scripture offered a complete compendium of guidance relating to all aspects of human knowledge and that recourse to pagan writers is therefore unnecessary or blasphemous. On the contrary, pagan authors were regarded "not only as permissible, but indeed as

indispensable in the early education of godly gentleman and citizens and of future ministers of the Word” (Pettegree, Duke & Lewis 1994:46).<sup>14</sup> In our own discussion regarding theological education in institutions with a Reformed heritage, it is worthwhile remembering that the architects of the Genevan Academy were open to other sources of wisdom. This observation alerts one not to equate uncritically the Reformed tradition with an insular view of theology or a narrow orthodoxy.

Calvin’s and Beza’s openness to the wisdom found in antiquity must not obscure the fact that it was Calvin’s intention that the Academy was to educate future ministers for the Reformed churches, including an increasing number of men from France. These would-be pastors were expected to hold public services on Saturdays in which they displayed their competence in biblical exposition. However, training for pastoral duties did not form part of the curriculum. The Geneva Academy was therefore not solely a seminary in the narrow sense of offering merely practical training for the ministry.<sup>15</sup> In another regard the *schola publica* was close to a seminary model. According to the founding statutes of the Academy, the schoolmasters, the professors and the students of the *schola publica* had to assent to a detailed confession of faith.<sup>16</sup> The close relationship between the Academy and the Reformed churches is also seen in the fact that the professors took part in the Friday meetings of the ministers (*congrégations*).

Moreover, it is important to take into account the fact that Calvin’s vision for theological education was not only focused on the training of ministers, although this task was at the heart of the Academy’s work. Already in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of 1541 Calvin had expressed his vision of an educational institution for ministers and civil servants. We further ought to consider that Calvin’s real aim was never education for the sake of mere education. Education – of ministers and civil servants – never formed an end in itself; it had a particular *telos*. As Lewis rightly remarks:

For although he would not rest until he had secured formal backing from the city for the school in which teachers would be selected and put forward by the ministers, and recognised and paid by the magistrates, his real aim, as always, was to bring about a community-wide transformation of values. The institution of a school, as such, was to be only one means among many whereby ministers and magistrates could work together to make the city a single school of Christ (Pettegree, Duke & Lewis 1994:37).

Calvin’s focus was not merely on the church in Geneva, but also on the city, and in fact on the religious transformation of Europe. Indeed, for him Geneva became an important centre in the European religious landscape; this was

also because of the many religious refugees who found refuge in the city and who would later contribute to Geneva's reputation as a centre of Reformed life. John Knox's well-known description of Geneva as "the most perfect school of Christ" shows something of the impact Geneva made on foreigners coming to the city, or at least on some of them.<sup>17</sup>

Given such remarks, one may be tempted to view the training of pastors and civil servants at the Academy in Calvin's Geneva as a type of "golden age" not besieged by the problems, conflicts and challenges besetting theological education today. However, the early years of the Genevan Academy were not at all free of political strife. There were often conflicting views between the pastors and the magistrates regarding the direction of the Academy. Under the 1559 legislation, the schools were placed under the authority of the Company of Pastors and the City Council. The former was responsible for overseeing the teaching and the latter for paying the staff and practical matters. The Academy therefore was under the joint direction of ministers and magistrates. While this joint leadership could conceivably be considered a healthy situation, over time tensions developed. Karin Maag observes that for many of the magistrates, and also a few of the pastors, the foundation of the Academy offered the opportunity to establish a prestige institution of higher education that could compete with other European universities. She comments:

Thus, almost from the Academy's first years, the magistrates and ministers of the city embarked on a long-running conflict, rooted in their differing conceptions of the Academy's purpose and exacerbated by constant financial difficulties. While the ministers emphasized theology, the magistrates emphasized subjects such as civil law and medicine, among other strategies, to raise Geneva's profile in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century European education world, and thus to attract more wealthy and noble students to the Academy (1995:3).

What Maag's study confirms is that while the Academy's founding reflected the goal to train future ministers, the question soon arose whether Geneva's academy was to be a purely confessional institution. Recollecting this dispute reminds us not to harbour the nostalgic view that the Genevan Academy developed in a situation devoid of political strife and conflicting views regarding the nature and purpose of the educational institution.

Nevertheless, the first five years of the Academy of Geneva can be described as a resounding success. The student enrolment was high and students came from all over Europe. It is estimated that in the year of Calvin's death there were about 1 200 students at the *schola privata* and 300 students at the *schola publica*. Many scholars who later became well-known



figures, including Thomas Bodley (the founder of the Bodleian library at Oxford) and Kasper Olevianus (co-author of the Heidelberg Catechism) attended the Academy. The Genevan Academy certainly contributed to Geneva's international reputation. Yet, as Alister McGrath has noted, even this illustrious Academy soon lost its appeal. With Calvinism becoming an international movement, the Universities of Leiden and Heidelberg "rapidly gained an international reputation both as centres of learning and as strongholds of Calvinism, eclipsing the more modest reputation of Calvin's personal foundation" (McGrath 1990:201). Yet the Academy of Geneva still rightly occupies a privileged position in Reformed memory.

### **The Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch, Calvin and "the reformed habit of mind"**

It is to be expected that Calvin and the Genevan Academy played an important role in the memory of Reformed educational institutions. In 1959, for instance, the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam focused on Calvin and his Academy (*Calvijn en zijn Academie*) as part of the Calvin memorial year.<sup>18</sup> In the same year the Theological Seminary at Stellenbosch celebrated its centenary but, surprisingly, not much is made in the centenary publications of the fact that this event coincided with the 400th anniversary of the founding of the Genevan Academy.<sup>19</sup> One also does not find reference to the Genevan Academy in the *Gedenkschrift*, which contained the proceedings and speeches at the opening of the Theological Seminary at Stellenbosch in 1859.

Notwithstanding this fact, Calvin and Calvinism are often closely associated with the Theological Seminary at Stellenbosch. For instance, in the aftermath of the infamous Du Plessis case (in which a Seminary professor, Johannes du Plessis, was accused of heresy and a drawn-out court case ensued), a form of confessional neo-Calvinism grew in strength from the 1930s onwards, although it was not uncontested. A detailed discussion of the reception of Calvin and Calvinism at the Theological Seminary at Stellenbosch during this period requires a fuller exposition than I am able to give here, but suffice it to say that Calvinism became equated with a certain type of confessional orthodoxy.<sup>20</sup> It is a question whether this type of Calvinism was informed by a thorough engagement with Calvin's writings, but nevertheless "Calvin" and "Calvinism" were used with great rhetorical effect during this period. The editorials and many of the articles in a journal called *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel* (The Reformed Banner), started in 1933 with three Seminary professors (EE Van Rooyen, DG Malan and D Lategan) as editors, reflect something of the way in which Calvin and Calvinism were often used in an apologetic and antithetical way to counter perceived dangers and threats. In addition, this strand of Calvinism rather uncritically embraced the rising Afrikaner nationalism and patriotism. It is a question whether this

form of Calvinism was really infused with an in-depth engagement with Calvin, yet Calvin and Calvinism were definitely used as identity markers and rhetorical devices. One should also note that Prof BB Keet, a colleague of Van Rooyen, Malan and Lategan, did not share the narrow confessionalism of his colleagues and was more ecumenical in his approach to theology.

The Theological Seminary at Stellenbosch developed out of various concerns, one of them being an attempt to counter what was viewed as the prevailing liberalism at European educational institutions. Many saw this development as harmful to the church in South Africa. Within the context of such a perceived threat, it became important to find the right balance between “the mind” and “the heart”. That this was no easy feat is evident in the polarisation developing between, on the one hand, those who were accused of an over-optimistic acceptance of the Enlightenment ideals and, on the other hand, those who were suspected of an uncritical confessional orthodoxy. In the aftermath of the Du Plessis case it seemed that a narrow confessional understanding of theology had won the day, rooted in a particular understanding of Calvin and Calvinism.

When we reflect on theological education at Stellenbosch in the year celebrating the 500th anniversary of Calvin’s birth, we can indeed ask whether this strand of confessional Calvinism is the most authentic and responsible way of claiming the legacy of the 16th-century Reformer. There is also another strand of Calvin’s reception in the Reformed tradition in South Africa that presents a more ecumenical, even radical, Calvin.<sup>21</sup> As the Faculty of Theology reflects on its Reformed roots, we need to consider the ways in which some of the former students, some of whom later became professors at Stellenbosch and other theological institutions, embodied this different understanding of Calvin in their writings and witness. The fact that other Reformed institutions became part of the faculty after 2000 adds to this list the names of influential theologians who did not, or could not, study at Stellenbosch, but whose work drew on the Reformed tradition and Calvin, often contrary to the way the Reformed tradition and Calvin were portrayed by those who defended apartheid theologically. Regarding this “other” strand of Reformed theology, one could mention, for instance, Bennie Keet, Ben Marais, Jaap Durand, Beyers Naudé, Willie Jonker, Dirkie Smit, Allan Boesak, Russel Botman and Douglas Bax, as well as the work of John de Gruchy (who is currently an extraordinary professor at Stellenbosch). In my view, an engagement with this strand of Reformed theology offers valuable resources for the revitalisation of the Reformed tradition in South Africa, also within the context of institutions that explicitly claim their ecumenical identity.

As the Faculty of Theology celebrates 150 years of theology, we continue to be challenged by the facts that the Faculty is part of a university

setting *and* that it houses seminaries for various churches. This reality raises a set of issues that corresponds with the debate over whether seminaries or universities provide the best setting for theological education. One often hears the comment that universities and seminaries seem to be drifting further apart, or that the gap between the church and the academy is widening. For some this is cause for great concern, while others see no reason to bemoan it. In his essay "Tradition in the Modern World: The Reformed Habit of Mind" the Reformed scholar Brian Gerrish highlights a double stereotype often at work in this conversation between proponents of academic and ecclesiastical theology:

On the one side, the seminaries are suspicious of what they call the "academic theology" of the university. They perceive it as addressed to the wrong audience and the wrong situation; namely, to supposedly enlightened colleagues in other departments of the university for whom theology has become a quaint anachronism ...

On the other side, the universities, when they notice theology at all, gladly turn it over to the seminaries because it is not a serious intellectual discipline: it lacks rigorous norms of argument and inquiry, is helplessly captive to passing fads and fashions, and trades critical reflection for mere ideology (Welker & Willis 1999:3-4).

Although one certainly ought to respect the difference between Gerrish's North American context and the particularities of the South African theological landscape, many scholars in our interwoven global context may identify with Gerrish's remark that some theologians find themselves in a type of uncomfortable middle position in these debates, "under fire from either side, depending on which of their friends they are eating their lunch with" (Welker & Willis 1999:4).

Gerrish goes on to argue that the university and the seminary suffer from a similar educational malaise, namely disintegration. For Gerrish a remedy, or at least a partial remedy, for this condition "is education viewed as imparting not information or skills, but good habits" (Welker & Willis 1999:5). With this remark in mind, Gerrish continues by discussing what he calls five notes on the Reformed habit of mind. The first is the habit of *respect for the past*, in the way that one shows deference to an elder. This habit implies that we realise that we stand in a tradition. Second, the Reformed habit of mind is *critical*. It is no easy task to show respect for the past and at the same time to be critical, but without criticism of the tradition there will also be no renewal of the tradition. Third, the Reformed habit of mind is *open* to wisdom and insight wherever it is to be found. Theological

education in the Reformed tradition cannot therefore become insular and ingrown. Fourth, the Reformed habit of mind is unabashedly *practical*. This implies that knowledge of God is for the sake of both personal and social change. For Calvin knowledge of God was linked to piety, and piety was directed at transforming society into a mirror of God's glory. The fifth note of the Reformed habit of mind regards *standing under the Word*; hence the idea of the Reformed church "reforming according to the Word of God".<sup>22</sup>

I briefly recall Gerrish's discussion of "the Reformed habit of mind" here because it offers, in my view, important insights for institutions that want to claim or reclaim their Reformed roots in a way that is not opposed to theological education in an ecumenical and university context. In addition, Gerrish's remarks offer the implicit challenge to be critical in our thinking about the nature and purpose of ecumenism and the university. The tension between church and academy, and the concomitant stereotypes, will probably not be easily resolved. Perhaps the best that one can hope for is that this tension remains healthy and constructive, and that it does not result in a schism in which a choice is made for either an academic theology with a strong anti-church bias or for an insular ecclesiastical theology. Gerrish's observations challenge, in my view, theological institutions with a Reformed heritage to show the necessary deference to the past (thus also not forgetting their denominational roots and constituencies) while not succumbing in the process to an isolationist stance. Such a respect for tradition is not to be set up as a counter to openness to other sources of wisdom or a critical academic approach. A deeper engagement with those concerns that Gerrish connects to the Reformed habit of mind might indeed prove to foster an ethos in which academic excellence as well as a healthy ecumenism flourishes.

### **Conclusion**

The concurrent celebration of the 500th anniversary of Calvin's birth, the 450th anniversary of the opening of the Genevan Academy and 150 years of theology at Stellenbosch invites reflection on theological education by drawing on the Reformed tradition. One certainly has to acknowledge that the Reformed tradition is filled with ambiguities and inherent tensions, but it also contains insights that can help to unmask a climate of anti-intellectualism and insular thinking. In the discussion of the Genevan Academy I have referred to its openness to other sources of wisdom. A reading of a document setting out a vision for a Reformed theological seminary in South Africa (at the synod of 1824) also indicates a broader intellectual vision.<sup>23</sup> In our day a similar spirit might be displayed in the willingness to engage in interdisciplinary modes of doing theology, while at the same time maintaining theological integrity.

Even a cursory overview of Calvin's vision of theological education, and its concretisation in the early years of the Genevan Academy, reveals that

there was a very clear *telos* to train pastors and civil servants as part of the transformation of the church, the city and society – a goal linked to Calvin’s theological stance. In our very different context, we are challenged to reflect on the question of what we view as the *telos* of theological education today. As in Calvin’s day, we cannot address this question in a vacuum devoid of political strife, but we have to acknowledge that it is an environment characterised by budgetary constraints, a culture of exclusion and conflicting views. Amidst these realities, the challenge remains to cultivate what Elna Mouton called in her reflection on the future of theological education at Stellenbosch “an ethos that is transformative, healing and hopeful for all” (Coertzen 2009:155).

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## Endnotes

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- 1 The original text reads: “De plegtighede zouden ten tien ure in de kerk aanvangen. Lang reeds vóór dien tijd was het kerkgebouw druk opgevuld. Terwijl het slechts voor 800 personen zitplaatsen heft, bergde het dein dag nagenoeg 1,300. De gemeente van Stellenbosch was, naar men verwachten kon, in groot getale opgekomen, terwijl er velen aanwezig waren uit de gemeenten van de Kaapstad, Wijnberg, D’Urban, Somerset, de Paarl, Wellington. Buiten de kerk stond er eene schare van 800 personen, meest allen leden van de zendingkerken alhier. Zij waren feestelijk gekleed, en schenen met die lede onzer kerk te wedijveren in de betoening hunner belangstelling in de blijde gebeurtenis van dien blijden dag” (27).
- 2 Faure had pleaded for an institution for theological education already 45 years before the opening of the Theological Seminary in 1914. See *Gedenkschrift* (1859:3). The official opening of the Theological Seminary took place on 1 November 1869.
- 3 The original text reads: “Aan de Leden der Nederduitsch-Gereformeerde Kerk in Zuid-Afrika, wordt dit GEDENKSCHRIFT eerbiedig opgedragen, met de bede dat het moge bijdragen de belangstelling in het Theologisch Seminarium bij hun en hunne kinderen steeds levend en werkzaam te houden”. This volume also contains a chapter on the pre-history of the Seminary by Abraham Faure, Prof Hofmeyr’s word to the congregation (with 1 Corinthians 3:9 as text), the speech by the president curator the Rev Philip Faure and the opening address by Prof John Murray.
- 4 Shortly after the opening of the Theological Seminary the two professors, Hofmeyr and Murray, together with the pastor of the Stellenbosch congregation, JH Neethling, became the driving force for the establishment of the Stellenbosch Gymnasium and other schools. In 1886 the section for higher education was renamed Victoria College, and in 1918 it became the University of Stellenbosch. Cf. *Gedenkboek van het Victoria-Kollege* (1918); also Coertzen (2009).
- 5 For the most extensive history of the Theological Seminary at Stellenbosch, see Ferreira (1979). See also *Gedenkboek van die Seminarie (N.G. Kerk) Stellenbosch: Driekwart Eeufees 1859-1934* (1934); *Feesuitgawe van die Kweekskool Stellenbosch, 1859-1959* (1959) and Coertzen (ed.), *Teologie vier 150 jaar: die verhaal van teologiese opleiding op Stellenbosch – die mense en geboue* (2009).
- 6 See Vosloo (2009a:42–45).
- 7 See, for instance, Naphy (1994).
- 8 See De Greeff (2008:36); also Selderhuis (2008a:206).
- 9 Calvin was especially interested in finding the right people to teach Hebrew and Greek. Attempts to attract Jean Mercier (who taught Hebrew at the Collège Royal in Paris) and Emmanuel Tremellius (who was rector at the new academy in Hornbach in Germany and had previously taught Hebrew at Oxford) failed.
- 10 See Maag (1995:14).
- 11 Cf. Maag, K, “Calvijn en de studenten’ in Selderhuis (2008b).
- 12 On this history, see the standard work by Charles Borgeaud, *Historie de l’Universite de Geneve* (1900). See also the work by Marco Marcacci, *Historie de L’Universite de Geneve 1558–1986* (1987). For a pre-history of the Genevan Academy, see also Naphy, WG, “The Reformation and the Evolution of Geneva’s Schools” in Kumin (1996). In this article I will draw especially on Gillian Lewis’s chapter “The Geneva Academy” in Pettegree, Duke and Lewis (1994) and Karin Maag’s study *Seminary or University? The Genevan Academy and Reformed Higher Education, 1560-1620* (1995).
- 13 In 1559 Robert Estienne published the school’s Statutes as *Promulgatio Legem Academiae* for an international audience and as *L’Ordre du Collège* for Genevans and other French-speaking circles. For an interesting discussion of the subtle differences between these versions, see Lewis (Pettegree, Duke & Lewis 1994:48-49). For a discussion of the Rules by a South African scholar, see J. Chr. Coetzee’s essay “Calvin and the School” in Hoogstra (1959:206-211).
- 14 There was, however, also the provision that discretion must be exercised in the choice of authors and that the authority of the Word of God must be maintained. For Lewis this fact conceals an underlying dogmatism (Pettegree, Duke & Lewis 1994:45).
- 15 Lewis also notes that the Academy cannot be regarded at its founding as a university either: “Unlike the ancient schools of Bologna, Padua, Paris, Oxford and Salamanca ... it had not corporations of students, no ‘faculties’ of masters in arts, law, medicine or divinity, no chancellor, no dean and not proctors. It charged no fees (until 1584) and it awarded ‘testimonia’ instead of licenses or degrees” (Pettegree, Duke & Lewis 1994:47).

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- 16 See Lewis (Pettegree, Duke & Lewis 1994:47-48) and Maag (1995:16-17). Maag comments: “Through this statement of belief, the Genevan company of pastors hoped to insure doctrinal conformity among its students, demonstrating again how close the *schola publica* was to a seminary model” (1995:17). Over time the demand of the 1559 Rules for the students to declare in writing their assent to the confession of faith was weakened.
- 17 CO 16:33. See also Van’t Spijker (2009:108).
- 18 See Nauta *et al.* (1959). This publication includes the speeches of D. Nauta on “Calvijn en zijn Academie in 1559” and H. Smitskamp on “Calvijn’s Akademie en die Nederlanden” at a public meeting of the senate of the Vrije Universiteit on 22 May 1959.
- 19 In *Die Kerkbode* of 8 July 1959, which celebrated the 450th anniversary of Calvin’s birth, one does find a brief reference to the 400th anniversary of the Academy of Geneva in an article by André Hugo, which discusses lectures delivered at the Calvin celebrations at the University of Utrecht. See *Die Kerkbode*, 8 July 1959, 8. One can note that the Preface to a volume in anticipation of the 125th anniversary of the Theological Seminary in 1984 does refer to the fact that the celebrations coincide with the founding of the Genevan Academy 425 years before. See Brown (1982:9).
- 20 For a discussion of this strand of confessional (neo-)Calvinism in the aftermath of the Du Plessis case, see my essay “Konfessionele Calvinisme na die Du Plessis-saak” (2009: forthcoming).
- 21 See in this regard Smit (2007), as well as Vosloo, RR, “Calvin and Anti-Apartheid Memory in the Dutch Reformed Family of Churches in South Africa” in De Niet, Paul & Wallet (2009:217-244).
- 22 In the light of this fifth note, Gerrish concludes his article: “The end product of a seminary education in the twenty-first century may very well be *master* in divinity, or a *doctor* of ministry, or even a doctor of divinity *honoris causa*. Let us hope so. But as long as there are Reformed pastors and theologians, they will understand themselves first and foremost, whatever their degree, as *servants* of the Word of God” (Welker and Willis 1999:20). This remark, in my view, further implies the need for a responsible hermeneutic.
- 23 See the addendum “Ontwerp van een reglement voor het Theologisch Seminarium” in *De Handelingen der Eerste Vergadering van de Algemeene Synode der Nederduitsch Gereformeerde kerk van Zuid-Afrika* (1824) This document suggests that the church had more than just a Theological Seminary in mind, as is seen in the way the text envisaged faculties of Arts and Philosophy, Natural Science and Theology. Cf. Ferreira (1979:91).