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# ORIGIN AND ORIGINALITY OF JOHN CALVIN'S 'HARMONY OF THE LAW', THE EXPOSITORY PROJECT ON EXODUS-DEUTERONOMY (1559-1563)

## ABSTRACT

John Calvin's plan to study Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy in the form of a Harmony on the Last Four Books of Moses was conceived in the weekly Bible studies of the joint ministers of Geneva. A surviving manuscript of Calvin's introductory exposition to the series, studied here for the first time since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, reveals intriguing details on the conception and execution of this plan. It also sheds light on the history of the congregations, this fascinating example of concentration on the Bible in Geneva, on the co-operation of the ministers, and on Calvin's role as the moderator of the Company of Pastors. The origin of the Harmony idea is an adaptation of the Gospel Harmonies. Calvin's approach is highly original in the history of exegesis. The text of the congregation points to Calvin's reading of the commentary of the Lutheran Martin Borrhaus and, possibly, of Johannes Brenz' commentary on Exodus.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The year 1559 was a season of harvest in John Calvin's life, but also of new beginnings, even though his health was failing him. On June 5, the Academy of Geneva was publicly launched. It was the culmination of hard work to reform both the organization and housing of education in the city.<sup>1</sup> In the same year John Calvin also re-worked the *Institutes* into four books, now finally organized in a form that fully satisfied him. Also in 1559, immediately after the completion of these two grand projects, he developed the plan for another work — his last — of some magnitude, the Harmony of the last four books of Moses. It is to the conception of this plan, Calvin's *Harmony of the Law*, that this essay is dedicated.

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1 Gillian Lewis, 'The Geneva Academy', in: *Calvinism in Europe 1540-1620*, ed. Andrew Pettegree, Alastair Duke, Gillian Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 35-63.

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## 2. LA CONGRÉGATION, THE INCUBATOR OF CALVIN'S COMMENTARIES

How did Calvin's commentaries grow from the conception of the idea to the ultimate point of publication? We know that he had an (nearly) all-encompassing program of Biblical exposition since 1539. He did, however, chose three different methods of oral exposition to achieve the impressive result of his Biblical commentaries.

- a. We know that some of his commentaries were the *fruit of his lectures*. Since 1549 friends of Calvin's started to take notes in class. On the basis of these transcriptions of the Old Testament lectures commentaries were produced, basically edited by his associates, starting with Isaiah in 1550.
- b. Other commentaries were composed by Calvin and published *following or near the end of a series of sermons* on that particular book, such as Acts in 1552 (the sermons were held between 1549 and 1553).
- c. He also used the Bible studies in the weekly *congrégations* on Friday mornings for his own purpose of writing a commentary in the course of the study of a Biblical book.<sup>2</sup>

The *congrégation* is an ecclesiastical institution, prescribed by the Church order of Geneva and intended for all ministers from the city and the surrounding villages, in order 'to maintain purity and unity in doctrine' (*pour converser pureté et concord de doctrine*). The method of working was the exposition of biblical books in *lectio continua*. Every minister expounded (part of) a chapter, probably in order of seniority, when his turn came around. The colleagues added their thoughts or gave critique. Lay members from the Church were present and could ask questions or participate in the discussion. John Calvin had the lead in expounding a passage only when it was his turn. However, as the moderator he had the right to give his reaction first and always presented a summary at the end of the session and lead his brothers in prayer. That is whenever he was present in this session of the Company of Pastors of Geneva.<sup>3</sup>

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- 2 See Appendix II, which shows the relation between the various forms (*congrégations*, lectures, and sermons) of oral education and the final publication of all Calvin's commentaries, in: Jean-François Gilmont, *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1997), 374-376.
  - 3 For an introduction to the *congrégations* as an ecclesiastical institution, see *Deux congrégations et exposition du Catéchisme*, ed. Rodolphe Peter (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964) and my essay 'The *Congrégations*: In-Service Training Center of the Preachers to the People of Geneva', in: *Calvin and the Company of Pastors. Calvin Studies Society Papers* 2003, 57-87.

What exactly is the relation between the discussions in the Bible studies of the Company of Pastors in Geneva and the commentary written by Calvin in the course of such a series? He only wrote the following commentaries proper on books of the Old Testament: on the book of Psalms (1557), on the Harmony of the four last books of Moses (1563), and on Joshua (1564, published posthumously). These three Old Testament commentaries were a fruit of his preparations for and presentations in the weekly Bible studies.

Usually all traces of Calvin's preparations for his commentaries — his drafts and manuscript pages — were destroyed after a work was seen through the process of printing. In the case of his commentary on Exodus to Deuteronomy luckily one such written 'Vorlage' survived. This document, some eleven folios in handwriting, is the transcript of John Calvin's very first, introductory contribution to the study of the last four books of Moses in the *congrégation*.

This unique piece survived in the volume *manuscript français 40a of the Bibliothèque Publique Universitaire* of the University of Geneva, a curious collection of copied sermons.<sup>4</sup> The historical and literary information, gathered from this manuscript, sheds some light on the origin of that unique undertaking, the composition of a Harmony or synopsis of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy in Calvin's mature years as Biblical expositor. This essay presents an investigation of this manuscript and its context, the weekly Bible studies of all the preachers of Geneva, and its relation to Calvin's commentary project. What does this first and only surviving manuscript of what would become his famous Harmony, testifying to the oral exposition of Scripture in the *congrégations*, tell us of the Bible studies as matrix or incubator of Calvin's written commentaries on the Old Testament in general? We also include a more systematic theological question: What does the introduction to this Harmony reveal on his concept of Law and Gospel?

A word on the terminology is in order: the Latin *harmonia* is mainly a musical term, expressing the harmony of instruments and voices. It also expresses the harmony of nature and people, being in balance and unanimity. The technical term *harmonia* refers to the collation of similar

4 The text of the introductory exposition by Calvin is the only surviving contribution to this series. It is found among a collection of sermons in manuscript, known as ms.fr. 40a (f. 133a-138a). The volume contains many single copies of sermons, collected and organized only in chronological sequence. The quality of the paper is poor. The folios are blotted, the margin is damaged. In the text of the *congrégation* on Ex. 1:1-8 the lower half of the folios has small holes, so that the middle of the last lines is hard to decipher. Still, the text could be restored. See for a table of contents and bibliographical description of ms.fr. 40a: *Supplementa Calviniana* VI: p. VII-VIII, XV (further: SC). E. Mülhaupt called it a 'ein Auswahlband', but the volume is rather a bunch of loose copies, preserved from getting lost by collecting them (SCVI: 40, n. 28).

texts, as in the case of the Synoptic Gospels. Still the musical tone rings through. In French the term *Harmonie* is clarified by the synonymous *Concordance*, which also means either agreement or an index (of words or names). Already in the Middle Ages such concordances were compiled and used as a tool for Bible study. While in modern English the technical meaning of concordance (index) is predominant, in French both aspects ring through. When Calvin wants to express the unanimity of for example the Church of Pentecost, he uses musical terms like *mé lodie* and (*d'un commun*) *accord*.<sup>5</sup> Latin words like *consonantia*, *symphonia*, and *harmonia* — all musical terms — are used as synonyms.

### 3. CALVIN'S MASTER PLAN

In 1559 the Company of Pastors selected Exodus-Deuteronomy as the next Biblical books to be studied in their *congrégations*. The introductory exposition offers a date, 1 September 1559, one of the few clues to the conception of the Harmony. The *Vie de Calvin* is vague on the date, but accurate on the contents:

Towards the end of that year [1559] they began in the Friday meetings the exposition of the four last books of Moses in the form of a Harmony, just as Calvin assembled the material in his commentary which he had published afterwards.<sup>6</sup>

This is written in retrospect, after the publication of the Harmony. But the line 'just as Calvin assembled the material in his commentary' points to the method of working chosen for the Bible studies on Fridays at Calvin's suggestion.

When we simply look at the order of Biblical books, chosen for exposition in the *congrégations*, the choice of the next book to expound seems random: Galatians is followed by Exodus-Deuteronomy. When placed in the context of Calvin's whole program of exposition, however, the choice becomes logical. In the previous years the pastors had studied the book of Psalms (1555f), before that the Harmony of the Gospels (1553-1555), and the Gospel of John (1550-1553). As the study in the *congrégations* always culminated in the publication of Calvin's commentary on the very same Biblical book, the conclusion is clear that the joint Bible studies facilitated the moderator to present his own exposition and profit

5 See the fragment of Calvin's sermon on Acts 2:46-47 in: E.A. de Boer, 'Pagina Obscura in Geneva: a Fragment from a Sermon by John Calvin', in: *Calvin Theological Journal* 34 (1999), 164-166 (162-179). See the semantic study by Michael Becht in his *Pium consensus tueri. Studien zum Begriff consensus im Werk von Erasmus von Rotterdam, Philipp Melanchthon und Johannes Calvin* [Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte, vol. 144] (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2000), 395-405.

6 CO 21:90.

from the insights of his colleagues. Thus the choice of the next Biblical book for the joint studies must have fitted Calvin's personal plans, while his colleagues benefited from his groundwork. The commentary on Genesis had appeared in 1554. The *congrégations* provided the setting to produce also an exposition of the last four books of Moses. When the Harmony of Exodus-Deuteronomy was published in 1563 (translated by Calvin into French, published posthumously<sup>7</sup> in 1564), the volume on Genesis was included, but with separate page numbering: *Mosis libri quinque cum commentariis. Genesis seorsum, reliqui quatuor in formam harmoniae digesti*.<sup>8</sup> It must have been Calvin's explicit wish to proceed his project of exposition on the Old Testament with the last four books of Moses.

Calvin's introductory exposition in the *congrégation* begins by referring to the overall plan. 'We have contemplated — by the grace of God — for right insight not to expound only one book of Moses, but we will take the four together.'<sup>9</sup> He proceeds by pointing out that all four books contain an account of history and points of doctrine, scattered throughout the books.

Because therefore the contents are so interwoven, it seemed right to our Company to follow a clear order. Not that we tried to change anything in what has been dictated to Moses by the Holy Spirit, but it is to this end: that from now on those who may visit the meetings regularly, can have a clear entrance and understand better how they should read both the histories and the doctrine that are thus interwoven.<sup>10</sup>

The idea was thus to provide a better way into the understanding of the last four books of Moses to all participants of the Bible studies. Calvin mentioned particularly the regular lay visitors (*ceux qui peuvent hanter les congrégations*), who were no members of the Company of Pastors and did not present an exposition, but could participate in the discussion.<sup>11</sup> However, he also wanted his col-

7 CO 20:199. Cf. Beza in CO 21: 33f, 42.

8 BC II:63/16 (p. 1013-1016). Text in CO 24-25.

9 Ms.fr. 40a, f. 133a: 'Nous avons deliberé (par la grace de Dieu) pour bon regard de n'exposer pas seulement un livre de Moysse, mais conjoindrons les quatre ensemble.'

10 Ms.fr. 40a, f. 113a:

D'autant donc que les choses sont ainsi entrelacées, il a semblé bon à nostre compagnie de suivre un ordre cert<ain>. Non pas que nous attentions de rien changer en ce qui a esté d<ict>é à Moysse par le Saint Esprit, mais c'est à fin que d'orenant ce<ux> qui peuvent hanter les congregations, puissent avoir une certaine adresse et qu'ilz cognoissent mieux [133b] comme ilz doivent lire tant les histoires que la doctrine qui sont ainsi entremeslées.

11 See E.A. de Boer, 'The Presence and Participation of Lay People in the *Congrégations* of the Company of Pastors in Geneva', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 35 nr. 3 (2004), 651-670.

leagues to profit from this method of exposition. In the preface to the commentary he states that he himself is the initiator of this plan: 'I have proposed ...'.<sup>12</sup>

Calvin's later preface to the commentary also reflects the link to the Biblical conference. He defends himself against the expected objection of having changed the order of the books, given by the Holy Spirit.

But I have proposed to gather and digest what is contained in these four books in such a way that it could seem at first sight — not having looked at the matter at close range — that I have wanted to try to do too much.

Over against this impression Calvin says:

For I have aimed at nothing else in ordering the material as I have done, than to address the readers, who are not yet very well trained, so that the reading of the books of Moses, presented to them in a much easier form, also brings them much more fruit.

Or in other words:

I wanted to shorten the way for him, putting before him a clear goal, so that he does not stray and get lost, lacking knowledge of where the doctrine is related to, as happens to various people.

What had been said in the *congrégation* to the regular visitors is in the preface to the commentary transferred to the readers.

In the text of the *congrégation* Calvin presents various reasons for the application of the Harmony model to the four books of Moses. The various parts are highly interwoven, he says, especially history and doctrine. People tend to wander while reading in Exodus and to look only at what has been written in that place (without comparing it to related parts in the other books). In the *Argumentum* to the commentary Calvin begins by answering the critique of 'having undertaken a thoughtless changing of the order which has been given by the holy Spirit.' His only reason for the Harmony model is 'to address the readers who are not yet well trained, so that the reading of the books of Moses is made easier for them and is also more fruitful to them.' He does not intend to keep his readers from reading the books of Scripture independently, but to provide them with a clear overview.<sup>13</sup> In the dedicatory letter to young prince Henry of Navarre Calvin gave a secondary reason for this 'brief' commentary

12 French version, f. a.i. The Latin edition has *Ego ... statui* (CO 24:5).

13 CO 24:5-6. Cf. the dedicatory letter to the commentary:

Car d'autant que ces quatre livres font desja peur par leur longueur à gens delicats, j'ay craint, que si je m'estendoye librement à les bien deschiffre, on ne s'nuyast encore plus pour en estre desgousté (Jean

and for not writing separate commentaries on each of the four books: his frail health. 'I would rather have assembled a concise exposition than to leave an unfinished work behind' (which is quite an understatement for a book of 625 folios in the Latin edition).<sup>14</sup>

It is clear that Calvin wrote the master plan for this method of working with so many ministers participating. There must have been a written outline in which Calvin ordered the historical and legal material. Following the historical material of Exodus 1-19, expounded in the normal sequence of the chapters, the clustering of passages from the various books begins with an introduction to the giving of the Law (Ex. 20, Deut. 5). At such a point we can detect in the commentary a reference to the original master plan in the Bible studies.

Since the order of teaching (*docendi ratio*), which I have proposed to follow, and the sequence require that this same preface, as it is repeated in Deuteronomy in as many words, should also be read in connection at this point, I have thought it fitting to insert the five verses [Deut. 5:1f], which in this place precede it [the Law], for they are connected to the same chief matter.<sup>15</sup>

Such statements, found scattered in the text of the commentary, remind us of the master plan of the project in the Company of Pastors.<sup>16</sup> Every minister had to know what combination of passages to study, before his turn in expounding came round. Calvin must have presented a written outline to his colleagues, in which the various chapters and sections of the Biblical books which should be read in conjunction, were indicated. Such an outline was at the same time both the program of the Bible studies of the Company of Pastors and Calvin's own sketch of his growing commentary. It is a pity that this outline did not survive, since scholars tried to analyze the structure of the commentary (as for example T.H.L. Parker).

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Calvin, *Commentaires sur les cinq livres de Moÿse. Genese est mis à part, les autres sont disposez en forme d'Harmonie*; Genève: François Estienne, 1564; CO 20: 121: no 3998).

14 J'aimois mieux en avoir recueilli une exposition sommaire, que de laisser un labeur imparfait (Jean Calvin, *Commentaires sur les cinq livres de Moÿse*; CO 20: 121). T.H.L. Parker also points to the fact that Calvin re-arranged the historical material on the basis of chronological probability (*Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986], 93.)

15 CO 24:210.

16 See also CO 24:238:

These things will be spoken of in their proper place in the regular course of history, from which my method of teaching (*ratio docendi*) has compelled me to wander a little.

#### 4. THE CHOICE: NOT A RUNNING COMMENTARY

Were there other, hidden reasons in Calvin's own mind why he decided not to expound the books of Moses in consecutive order, but to develop the model of a Harmony? In 1544 Johannes Brenz' commentary on Exodus had appeared, in 1555 Martin Borrhaus' *In Mosem divinum legislatorem* [...] *Commentarii*. In September 1559 a colleague in Geneva, Nicolas Des Gallars, was ready to publish the first of his Biblical commentaries, *In Exodum, qui secundus est liber Mosi, commentarii* (Genève: Jean Crespin, 1560),<sup>17</sup> with a long and jubilant dedication to Farel, Calvin, and Viret. On 22 August 1559 — that is just one week before the Company of Pastors started their study of the Harmony, beginning with Exodus — permission to print Des Gallars' commentary on Exodus had already been asked by the printer Jean Crespin.<sup>18</sup> Des Gallars still worked in Geneva when his book came out (in April 1560 he was assigned to a new task in London, where he arrived in June). He thus partook in the early phase of the *congrégations* in which the Company of Pastors studied the historical part of Exodus. Des Gallars' expository insights, laid down in his commentary, could have contributed both to the Bible studies and to Calvin's own Harmony. Nicolas des Gallars offered a complete and running commentary on Exodus. This must have influenced Calvin's suggestion to take the alternative approach of a Harmony. In the one and only contribution by Calvin, however, there is no allusion to Des Gallars' work. The relation between that remarkable commentary and Calvin's Harmony should be traced in the critical edition of the latter.

The Harmony project kept the ministers occupied until late in 1562, when they chose Galatians as the next book to expound in the *congrégations*. The two surviving texts on Galatians bear no date, but Colladon reported the beginning of that series as: in November 1562.<sup>19</sup> The reading of the four books of Moses thus took the Company over three full years to complete: from 1 September 1559 until late October 1562. On 12 January 1563 Calvin asked the Council's permission to publish 'the Harmony of the books of Moses, which has been explained in the Bible studies.'<sup>20</sup> In July the work was being printed. In the second half of 1563 Calvin worked on the French translation (published in 1564).<sup>21</sup> The fact

17 P. Chaix, A. Dufour, G. Moeckli, *Les livres imprimés à Genève de 1550 à 1600* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1966), 43; Jean-François Gilmont, *Bibliographie des éditions de Jean Crespin, 1550-1572*, vol. 1 (Verviers: Librairie P.M. Gasson, 1981), no. 60/6.

18 Gilmont, J.-F., *Bibliographie des éditions de Jean Crespin*, vol. 1:131.

19 *CO* 21: 93.

20 Quoted after the *Registres du Conseil* in *BC* II:1016.

21 On 30 November 1563 Calvin wrote to Krzysztof Trety:

I have undertaken to translate my commentaries on Moses in the French language, not only so that the reading of this work should be accessible



that Galatians was inserted before the Company proceeded to their reading of the historical books of the Old Testament with Joshua in June 1563, may indicate that Calvin was occupied with the final work on his commentary and its French version until May 1563.

Although the *congrégations* were the incubator of Calvin's plan in which all ministers participated, the Harmony was still — as were his other commentaries proper — his project. This is underlined by the fact that as early as July 1561 Ambrosius Blaurer wrote to Calvin that he is looking forward to the publication of the Harmony.<sup>22</sup> Blaurer was informed — the letter suggests by another participant to the *congrégations* — of the fact that a commentary was written, while the four books of Moses were studied by the Company of Pastors in Geneva.

## 5. THE HARMONY OF THE GOSPEL

What is the origin and originality of Calvin's idea to expound Exodus-Deuteronomy in the form of a Harmony? John Hesselink already called this undertaking 'rather unique', but commented only on the manner in which Calvin organized his material, following the preface to the Harmony.<sup>23</sup> According to Parker, the re-arrangement of the material is 'both radical and a masterpiece of organization and systematization'.<sup>24</sup> 'To what extent, if any, Calvin's construction of his harmony was influenced by earlier works has yet to be investigated', says David F. Wright.<sup>25</sup> In this and the next paragraph various contributing

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to our people, but also because it is necessary to correct the numerous errors with which it is teeming — a work which by the way I do not regret (CO 20:199).

See Beza's *Vie de Calvin*: 'Il a traduit luy-mesmes de bout en bout ce gros volume de ses Commentaires sur les quatre derniers livres de Moyse, reconferé la translation du premier [the volume on Genesis]' (CO 21:34). And: '[...] il a entièrement traduit de Latin en François son Harmonie sur Moyse, revue la traduction de Genese [...]' (CO 21:42).

- 22 CO 18:538 (no. 3430). Calvin's response to an earlier letter (CO 18:474f, no. 3401, compared to p. 422, no. 3371) suggests that Blaurer had his information on the Harmony project not from Calvin.
- 23 I. John Hesselink, *Calvin's Concept of Law (Princeton Theological Monograph Series, vol. 30)* (Allison Park PA: Pickwick Publications, 1992), 15f and 40, n. 28; Albert Thiel, *In der Schule Gottes. Die Ethik Calvins im Spiegel seiner Predigten über das Deuteronomium* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1999) does not use the Harmony in his study of the sermons (cf. p. 74f).
- 24 Parker, *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries*, 94.
- 25 David F. Wright, 'Calvin's Pentateuchal Criticism: Equity, Hardness of Heart, and Divine Accommodation in the Mosaic Harmony Commentary', *Calvin Theological Journal* 21 (1986), 34.

factors and possible influences to the idea of a Harmony of this part of the Old Testament are investigated.

It seems forcing an open door to point to the fact that Calvin published his *Harmony of the Gospels* in 1553 as the last of his New Testament commentaries in 1555. Still, it is worthwhile to look into this obvious parallel. In 1553 he had suggested to the colleagues to expound the first three Gospels in the *congrégations*, 'put together in the form of a harmony'.<sup>26</sup> The commentary was published in a French edition with the title: *Concordance, qu'on appelle Harmonie, composée de trois Evangelistes, ascavoir S. Matthieu, S. Marc, et S. Luc*.<sup>27</sup> The Latin title has only *Harmonia*.

But the relation between the two Harmonies is even closer in time. In July 1559, shortly before the series on the last four books of Moses in the Bible studies started, Calvin chose to expound in the pulpit '*l'harmonie des trois Evangelistes*'.<sup>28</sup> This series lasted until the very last day of his preaching, Sunday 6 February 1564.<sup>29</sup> It must have been a clear choice to work once again on the three Gospels, while expounding the last four books of Moses in a similar form of a Harmony.

The first example of a harmony of the four Gospels is the *Diatessaron* of Tatian (c. 160), who used the chronology of the Gospel of John. Eusebius referred to Ammonius, who followed Matthew and printed the parallel passages from the other Gospels alongside.<sup>30</sup> Eusebius himself wrote his *Canones*, an overview of the parallels between the four Gospels in ten charts.<sup>31</sup> Augustine's theoretical work, referred to below, is connected with this tradition. Erasmus' edition of the Greek New Testament presented the text of Eusebius' charts to the scholars of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

In choosing the form of a Harmony of the Gospels Calvin may have followed the suggestion by the Church Father Augustine in his *De con-*

26 CO 21:76: *Lors aussi on commença en la Congrégation les vendredis, les trois Evangelistes conjoints ensemble par manière de Concordance.*

27 BC II:55/5.

28 CO 21:89.

29 Denis Raguenier wrote down 65 sermons (see the catalogue of 1796, SC II, p. XIX). These were published in 1562 by Conrad Badius (BC II:62/22-23). The transmission of the series on the Gospel Harmony came to an end because of Raguenier's death (late 1560 or early 1561). R. Peter established that the last of the 65 sermons, as transcribed by Raguenier, was held on 17 November 1560. The publication can be regarded as a tribute to the deceased scribe (BC II:954).

30 Berthold Altaner - Alfred Stuiber, *Patrologie. Leben, Schriften und Lehre der Kirchenväter*, 9. ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1978), 210.

31 Printed in: *Novum Testamentum Graece*, ed. E. Nestle - K. Aland, 26. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1979), 73\*-78\*.

*sensu evangelistarum*.<sup>32</sup> He certainly followed the example of Martin Bucer's *Commentary on the Synoptics* (1527; 1530; 1536). The Lutheran scholar Andreas Osiander also published a *Harmoniae evangelicae libri quatuor* (Froben, Basle 1537).<sup>33</sup> Bucer's attempt only went halfway to a harmonization. He had the text of Matthew printed and followed it, inserting expository notes on Marc and Luke. Osiander offered a parallel text of all four Gospels and scrupulously tried to avoid breaking up the sequence of each Gospel. In 1549 a Roman Catholic bishop, Cornelius Jansenius, also published a *Concordia evangelica* (Gent).<sup>34</sup> Charles du Moulin criticized Calvin for having only collated the first three Gospels in his *Collatio et unio quatuor Evangelistarum Domini nostri Jesu Christi*, written in 1563 and published two years later (Paris: Nicholas Laurent, 1565).<sup>35</sup>

The concept of a Harmony of the Gospels surely was not Calvin's own. Was the similar concept of a Harmony of Old Testament books a borrowed one as well, or was this an original variant of John Calvin? The solution is easy: Calvin developed the traditional idea of the Gospel Harmony into a highly original application to the last four books of Moses. His motives are both practical and systematic theological. The practical reason is given in the preface: so that readers of Scripture may have an easier access to these books.

## 6. THE HARMONY OF THE LAW

What was Calvin's systematic theological motive? I would suggest that Calvin wanted to write a counterpart to his Harmony of the Gospel in a *Harmony of*

32 CSEL 43. See Dieter Schellong, *Calvins Auslegung der Synoptischen Evangelien (Forschungen zur Geschichte und Lehre des Protestantismus, 10. series, vol. 38)* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1969), 43-58; Dieter Wünsch, *Evangelienharmonien im Reformationszeitalter. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Darstellungen (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte, vol. 52)* (Berlin - New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1983).

33 Cf. Gerhard Müller, 'Osianders "Evangelienharmonie"', in: *Histoire de l'exégèse au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Textes du colloque international tenu à Genève en 1976*, ed. Olivier Fatio - Pierre Fraenkel (*Études de Philologie et d'Histoire* 34) (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1978), 256-264.

34 On Osiander and Jansen, see *Le Bible de tous les temps*, vol. 5. *Le temps des Réformes et la Bible*, ed. Guy Bedouelle - Bernard Roussel (Paris: Beauchesne, 1989), 274-279 (further: BTT 5).

35 In the words of Robert M. Kingdon: 'It is intended to be a systematic supplement and correction of Calvin's famous collation of the Gospels. It attacks Calvin's exegesis in general, and in detail at many specific points' (*Geneva and the consolidation of the French Protestant Movement 1564-1572. A Contribution to the History of Congregationalism, Presbyterianism, and Calvinist Resistance Theory [THR 92]* [Genève: Librairie Droz, 1967], 141).

*the Law*, an original approach for which no parallel has yet been found in the preceding history of exegesis. Although Calvin does not employ the term '*harmonia legis*', it seems the obvious parallel.

A preliminary remark must be made. When we discuss the relation between Law and Gospel we only hear the systematic theological connotations. We tend to forget that 'law' in the 16th century referred to the body of texts, known as Roman and canon law. John Calvin drew his formative knowledge of what we call 'systematic theology' from his legal studies in Orleans and Bourges, where he was introduced to Justinian's *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, the codification of the laws of the Christian state, as testified by his Commentary on Seneca's *De Clementia*.<sup>36</sup>

The process of collecting legal texts (canons) started in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, that is after the great councils. In the early fourth century the compilation *Lex Dei sive Mosaycarum et Romanarum legum collatio* ('The Law of God or a Comparison of Mosaic and Roman Law'), was written. This source was known to Theodore Beza (see below §9).<sup>37</sup> In the following centuries these compilations of the decisions of councils and popes developed. The study of the Biblical text, hardly quoted in the early collections, developed at the same time and led to the compilation of the Gloss. This led, for example in Ireland, to the composition of the anonymous *Liber ex lege Moyse* ('Book on the Law of Moses') in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, drawing on the moral and legal prescriptions of the last four books of Moses. Of the four known manuscripts three are found in Bretagne, France, and were thus known on the continent. Even more manuscripts were found of another collection of mainly Biblical

36 See F.L. Battles in the introduction to *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's De Clementia with Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, ed. Ford Lewis Battles - André Malan Hugo (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969), 134-140.

37 I want to thank Prof. David F. Wright, Edinburgh, for identifying the *Collatio*, encountered in Beza's edition of 1603 (see §9), as a fourth century source. The compilation of *Lex Dei sive mosaicarum et romanarum legum collatio* is dated between 302/313. For literature and modern editions, see: *Clavis patrum latinorum*, ed. Eligius Dekkers - Aemilius Gaar, 3. edition [Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina] (Brepols: Editores Pontificii, 1995), 51f. This *Lex Dei* is a compilation from the work of 1. Aemilius Papinianus (c.146-212), regarded as one of the greatest classical Roman jurists, quoted in the *Digesta* of Justinian; 2. Julius Paulus (c.200), representative of classical Roman jurisprudence, and assessor to Papinianus; 3. Domitius Ulpianus (†228), from whose work most of the *Digesta* stems; 4. Gaius (c.110-c.180), who wrote his *Institutes* in four books, describing civil law, which was used as the basis of Justiania's *Institutiones*; 5. Herennius Modestinus, and 6. Julianus Antecessor. The first three were close to Septimius Severus, the latter two 'praefectus praetorio' of the emperor.

passages on Christian ethics, the *Hibernensis*, which incorporated the *Liber ex lege Myose*. Here we find the Old Testament and its precepts quoted as *Lex*, and the New Testament as *Evangelium*.<sup>38</sup> The culmination of this process can be seen in Gratian's Decretum of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, which became the first part of the *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, to be studied by all students of law in the 16<sup>th</sup> century — and Calvin in his formative years at the universities of Bourges and Orleans among them.

It is in this context of the study of Christian law that a comparison between Roman and Biblical law can be expected. Calvin could have encountered a 'legal' approach to the last four books of Moses from the early Middle Ages during his studies. To Calvin, the lawyer and theologian, it was therefore a logical step to compose his own 'Harmony of the Law'.

What was Calvin's theological motive? When he began to compose his 'Harmony of the Law' of the Old Testament, the fundamental hermeneutical decisions had already been made. A number of observations can be made.

6.1 The first is his distinction between history and doctrine. This distinction as such is not found in the *Institutes*, but in the introduction to the first *congrégation* on the Gospel of John (one of the few texts that also survived). This distinction is not found in the *Argumentum* of the Harmony of the Gospels. In 1550 the ministers had started working on the Gospel of John, preceding the Harmony of the Synoptic Gospels (1553-55). In the *congrégation* on John 1 Calvin had made the same distinction between '*histoire*' and '*doctrine*'.<sup>39</sup> That is the main difference between the Gospel of John and the three Synoptic Gospels. All four Evangelists are historians, but John has much more emphasis on doctrine (while Paul, speaking of 'his Gospel', has pure doctrine), the other three on history. They speak only briefly of the doctrine of Jesus Christ. This hermeneutical distinction between history and doctrine is also the basis of Calvin's second Harmony.

6.2 All other theological and hermeneutical distinctions had already been made in his treatment of the law in the *Institutes*. Calvin's treatment of the Decalogue already had its place in the ethics of the *Institutes* in 1536 following the Catechism structure of Martin Luther. In 1559, shortly before he started working on the Harmony of Exodus to Deuteronomy, Calvin had finished the ultimate Latin edition of the *Institutes*. The following changes were made. First, the treatment of the Decalogue was now placed within book II on redemption, Chapter VIII. Secondly, while in the earlier editions the section 'On the use

38 Jean Gaudemet in: *Bible de tous les temps*, vol. 4, *Le Moyen Age et la Bible*, ed. Pierre Riché - Guy Lobrichon (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1984), 333-339 (further: *BTT* 4).

39 *CO* 47:467f.

and service of the law' (*De legis usu et officio*) was found after the treatment of the Decalogue, in 1559 this section became Chapter VII, preceding the explanation of the Decalogue.<sup>40</sup> The material found in this chapter of the *Institutes* of 1559 provided the systematic theological starting point for Calvin's new undertaking, a Harmony of the books of the Mosaic Law, launched also in 1559.<sup>41</sup>

6.3 In Chapter VII of *Institutes* II we find the Christological perspective of Old Testament law. 'Paul justly calls Christ the fulfilment or end of the law' (*l'accomplissement ou la fin de la Loy*, II vii 2).<sup>42</sup> We also find the basic distinction between the moral and ceremonial law (vii 14, 16-17). And, of course, the treatment of the law is centred around the Ten Commandments. The distinction between promises and threats is found in the introduction to the Decalogue (viii 4). This systematic theological design is the basis of Calvin's model of the Harmony of the law.

Also from occasional remarks in the Harmony it is clear that Calvin — as always — intended this connection between his Harmony, a Biblical commentary, and *Institutes*. In the context of the prologue of the law Calvin remarks: 'How far the law is perpetual I have more fully discussed in the second book of the *Institutes*, Chapter 11.'<sup>43</sup> At the end of his discussion of Christ as the aim and use of the Law, which follows his exposition of the Ten Commandments in the Harmony, Calvin refers his readers to *Inst.* II vii: 'Let my readers seek in the second book of my *Institutes*, Chapter VII, what further tends to the explanation of this subject.'<sup>44</sup>

Calvin did not employ the term 'Pentateuch' in his commentaries. The term itself is known since Origen's commentary on John and was also used by the Latin Church Father Tertullian.<sup>45</sup> Calvin did not use the term Torah in its technical sense either. Only once, in commenting on Deut. 17:8, he gave a lexicographical discussion on the Hebrew word, 'which, although it means teaching, yet undoubtedly signifies that

40 Cf. *CO* 1:426-438 (§ 91-105) to *CO* 2:252-266; *OS* III:326-343.

41 'In some ways this is a greater monument to Calvin's systematic genius than the *Institutes*' (I. John Hesselink, *Calvin's Concept of Law*, 16). Cf. Marten H. Woudstra, 'Calvin Interprets What "Moses Reports"'. Observations on Calvin's Commentary on Exodus 1-19', *Calvin Theological Journal* 21 (1986), 151.

42 Jean Calvin, *Institution de la religion chrestienne. Edition critique avec introduction, notes et variants*, ed. J.-D. Benoit, vol. II (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1957), 117.

43 *CO* 24:256: *Quatenus autem lex sit perpetua, libri 2. Institutionis cap. 11 fusius disserui.*

44 *CO* 24:728: *Caetera quae ad huius loci explicationem faciunt, ex libro secundo Institutionis, capite septimo petant lectores.*

45 R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1969), 495.

teaching which is comprised in the Law, nay, it is equivalent to the word law'.<sup>46</sup> The Jewish concept of Torah is not part of Calvin's frame of reference, but the elliptical union of Law and Gospel.

One final observation on the large picture: the basic distinction between law, history, and prophecy is mirrored in the expository program of his later years. In his lectures Calvin worked during the years 1559-1563 on Old Testament prophecy (Daniel, Jeremiah, and Lamentations), in his weekday sermons on history (Genesis, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel), while in the Bible studies on Fridays he concentrated on the law of the Old Testament.

## 7. THE DISTINCTIONS OF THE HARMONY

In §2 of this essay we began the comparison between the text of the *congrégation* and the commentary regarding Calvin's remarks on the overall plan. In the middle of the introduction in the *congrégation* is a short paragraph on the title of the book Exodus ('that is: departure or exit'; no reflection on the Hebrew name) and on the mixed contents of the second book of Moses.<sup>47</sup> In the commentary this part is transferred to the more logical place of the exposition of Ex. 1:1. There the remark on the book title 'Exodus' is developed a little further: 'The departure of the people of Israel out of Egypt is called the birth of the Church.'<sup>48</sup> This is then applied to the Church of today: it is a mirror of God's goodness in electing his Church by grace alone.

The primary distinction in the *congrégation* is between history and doctrine in the four books of Moses.<sup>49</sup>

1. Calvin divides history in two parts.

- 1.1 God's goodness and promises as the first part of history.
- 1.2 The second element in the historical parts of Exodus-Deuteronomy is found in castigations, meant to correct the sins of the people.

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46 CO 24:471.

47 Ms.fr. 40a, f. 133a-b.

48 Cf. Jean Calvin, *Des scandales*, ed. Olivier Fatio (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1984), 100-102; E.A. de Boer, *John Calvin on the Visions of Ezekiel. Historical and Hermeneutical Studies in John Calvin's Sermons inédits especially on Ezek. 36-48* [Kerkhistorische bijdragen 21] (Leiden - Boston: Brill, 2004), 173-177.

49 The Latin edition has in the second paragraph of the preface a passage on the distinction between history and doctrine (*Hanc distinctionem non tenet Moses in suis libris ... until ut admoniti de sancti prophetarum mente et consilio in eius scriptis melius proficiant*, CO 24:5-6), which is omitted in the French translation.

2. Doctrine is divided into four parts:

- 2.1 The preface to (the giving of) the Law;
- 2.2 The Ten Commandments, 'together with what should be added', the various laws spread throughout the books which can be related to one of the Ten Commandments;

2.3 The aim of the Law;

2.4 The ceremonies of the Old covenant.

For it will not be enough to understand what the Law contains, but we have to know why it has been given to us and to what aim, to which end it should serve us and what is its true use: that the whole shall be in agreement with the benedictions and maledictions of God, which He pronounces, as we shall see.<sup>50</sup>

The ceremonies can also be distinguished into:

- 2.4.1 Those of the first table of the Law, on the temple, the priesthood and sacrifices;
- 2.4.2 Those of the second table, that is the civil ordinances and punishments.

3. After that comes the following of the historical parts, 'everything that Moses recounts in that book regarding the redemption of the people until the publication of the Law.'<sup>51</sup>

4. Finally, the canticle of Moses and his death form together the end of these four books.<sup>52</sup>

A nearly identical division is found in the *Argumentum* to the commentary. Only the third and fourth aspects of doctrine, the aim and ceremonies of the Law (2.3 and 2.4), are inverted in the commentary. But in his *congrégation* Calvin already noted, speaking from memory, that these two aspects should be put in reversed order:

There is yet another point which I have left out, that is what is the supplementary [aspect] (*l'accessoire*) to the Ten Commandments, comprising up to a third part of these books, for Leviticus is full of it and even in Exodus a quarter part is dealing with this.<sup>53</sup>

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50 Ms.fr. 40a, 134b.

51 Ms.fr. 40a, f. 135a.

52 Cf. *CO* 25:57: *In relinqua huius operis parte contextum historiae sequemur, usque ad finem Deuteronomii, ubi narratur mors ipsius Mosis*, introducing the last part called *Reditus ad historiam*.

53 Ms.fr. 40a, f. 134b.



In the commentary this introductory part of the *congrégation* is inserted in the Argumentum, preceding the textual commentary.

There is one major difference between the introduction in the *congrégation* and in the commentary. In the *congrégation* Calvin remarks on the ceremonies: If we ask why God has ordered the ceremonies of the tabernacle and priesthood,

[T]his was for no other reason than to keep the people in his obedience, to train them in his service and to provide the people with the means and aids there to (so to speak), so that it would be confirmed in the first table of the Law.<sup>54</sup>

This passage on the positive meaning of the ceremonies to Israel is replaced in the preface of the commentary by a long passage on the relevance of the Old Testament ceremonies to the Church:

... that all additions which are given with the Ten words, are not — to say it correctly — of the substance of the Law, add nothing to the service of God, and are not required as necessary or even useful, unless they are put in their lower position. In short, all ceremonies are but accessories (*accessories*), not [meant] to add a single detail to the Law, but to keep the faithful in the spiritual service of God [...].

The same is stressed regarding the ceremonies to the second table of the Law.<sup>55</sup> This sharp distinction between the substance of the Law and the ceremonies is in accordance with Calvin's teaching in the *Institutes* (II xi 4).

54 Si nous demandons pourquoy il a fait cela, ce n'a esté sinon pour entretenir le peuple en son obeissance, pour l'exercer en son service, pour luy donner des moiens et comme adminicules qu'on appelle, à fin qu'il fust confirmé en la pre<mie>re <table> de la Loy (Ms.fr. 40a, f. 134b).

55 Et pourtant Dieu proteste que ce que j'ay touché est vray, assavoir que toutes editions qui sont mises avec les Dix paroles, ne sont point à proprement parler, de la substance de la Loy, & n'emportent rien de soy quant au service de Dieu, & ne sont requises comme necessaries, ou mesmes utiles, si elles ne sont rangées en leur degree inferieur. En somme, toutes ceremonies ne sont qu'accessoires, non point pour adjouster une seule minute à la Loy, mais pour entretenir les fideles au service spiritual de Dieu, qui est de se fier en luy, de s'assujettir avec vraye repentance, de l'invoquer avec louanges, lesquelles monstrent qu'on n'est pas ingrat envers luy; & aussi de s'humilier pour porter en patience toutes afflictions. Quant est des commandemens politiques, il ne s'en trouvera pas un qui adjouste rien à la perfection de la seconde Table; il s'ensuit donques qu'on

This approach to the books of Moses with systematic theological distinctions in the pre-critical era of Biblical studies differs greatly from the literary and historical criticism of the Pentateuch since Julius Wellhausen. For Calvin and the expositors of the 16<sup>th</sup> century there is no Jahwist narrative or Elohist source, no Priestly Code or Deuteronomic document. Calvin's approach is a precursor of sound Biblical theology, working from the acceptance of the basic unity of the Old and New Testament and of the elliptical unity of Law and Gospel.

## 8. CALVIN'S SOURCES

We turn now to another aspect of the *congrégation* to pave the way for further comparison of its text and the written commentary: What does this comparison tell us about Calvin's exegetical preparations? It becomes clear that he did his groundwork in preparing for the Bible studies on Fridays. He read the Hebrew text, probably from an annotated Bible. His exegetical tools are Sebastian Münster's *Biblia Hebraica*, as usual, and Martin Borrhaus' *In Mosem, divinum legislatorem* of 1555. Borrhaus, also called Cellarius, was professor for Old Testament at the University of Basel since 1546. Calvin usually chose to study one particular Lutheran commentator to confront himself with in his exegetical work. For the last four books of Moses this was Borrhaus, as it had been Martin Luther on Genesis, and Johannes Brenz on Isaiah.<sup>56</sup>

Calvin may also have cast a glance on Cajetan's *Commentarii illustres*.<sup>57</sup> Besides these commentaries no other source can be discerned in this introductory exposition in the *congrégation*. These comprehensive commentaries on all five Books of Moses and the expected publication of Des Gallars' commentary on Exodus provided Calvin with a solid reason to try an alternative road in expounding, after Genesis, the Books of the Law. It is not clear whether or not he used Johannes Brenz's *In Exodum Mosi Commentarii*. Both Borrhaus', Brenz's and Cajetan's commentaries are noted in the library of the Academy.<sup>58</sup>

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ne peut rien imaginer pour regler les hommes à bien & justement vivre, outré le contenu des Dix paroles (Jean Calvin, *Commentaires sur les cinq livres de Moïse*, CO 24:7-8).

I quote the French edition to make comparison to the *congrégation* easier.

- 56 Jean Calvin, *La famine spirituelle (sermon inédit sur Esaïe 55)*, ed. Max Engammare with English translation of Francis Higman (Genève: Librairie Droz, 2000), 20.
- 57 Cajetan's commentary was used by Calvin in his commentary on Genesis. See A.N.S. Lane, 'The Sources of Calvin's Citations in his Genesis Commentary', *Interpreting the Bible. Historical and Theological Studies in Honour of David F. Wright*, ed. A.N.S. Lane (Inter-varsity Press, 1997), 78.
- 58 Alexandre Ganoczy, *La Bibliothèque de l'Académie de Calvin. Le catalogue de 1572 et ses enseignements* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1969), 184f, 215, 228.

Also Paul Fagius' *Thargum in quinque libros Mosis* was, according to the catalogue of 1572, present in the library of the Genevan Academy,<sup>59</sup> but the text of the *congrégation* does not contain a hint of this work. There is no trace of Augustine,<sup>60</sup> Des Gallars, and Pellikan's *Commentaria bibliorum* in Calvin's exposition either. The one manuscript on Exodus 1:1-8 is of course a very small basis for bold conclusions. These observations give a hint of the work that has to be done on the critical edition of Calvin's Harmony on the four last books of Moses. The preface to the commentary and the exposition of Exodus 1:1-8 do not reveal any other sources which Calvin might have used.

We are now in the position to precede with the comparison between the spoken exposition in the Bible studies and the written commentary. The same Biblical passages gave Calvin reason for exegetical or lexicographical discussion. We give a few examples.

8.1 The exegesis of the Biblical text of Exodus 1:1-8 begins with the number of seventy persons who entered Egypt. In the *congrégation* Calvin refers to Genesis 46:27, where a total of 66 people, descending from Jacob, is given, plus Joseph and his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh, and of course father Jacob himself (that is seventy in total). In the commentary Calvin simply refers to Genesis 46 and to Deuteronomy 10 (verse 22), but comments on and rejects the Rabbinical suggestion that Jochebed, Moses' mother, was among the seventy (as found in Sebastian Münster, *Hebraica Biblia* (Basle, 1546) on Genesis 46:27). There he also rejects the number 75, given in Acts 7:14, which reading he blames on an error in the transcription of the Hebrew number into Greek. This passage is added to the *congrégation* at a later moment (after the elements mentioned below in 8.3). The drift of the exposition in *congrégation* and commentary is the same: The small number of 70 people entering Egypt stands in telling contrast with the multiplication of Israel during the oppression in that foreign land (Ex. 1:7).

Both the *congrégation* and commentary also have next a discussion of the number of years in Egypt, 400 (in God's promise to Abraham) or 430 (according to Paul). In fact, Israel could not have lived in Egypt for more than 200 or 230 years, according to Calvin, when Jacob came down to Egypt. This means that the oppression and the miraculous multiplication of the people took place in only two centuries.

59 Ganoczy, La Bibliothèque, 165.

60 See Augustine's *Quaestionum in Heptateuchum libri VII, Locutionum in Heptateuchum libri VII* in: *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, pars V* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1958). The first question is on Ex. 2, the midwives' lie to Pharaoh.

8.2 This brings Calvin in the *congrégation* to a point of lexicography: the meaning of the Hebrew *sharas*. This verb is, according to some, a comparison of the procreation of fish or reptiles (as he found in Münster and Johannes Brenz<sup>61</sup>). Calvin takes it in a less specific sense, meaning all kinds of multiplication or procreation.

There is no doubt that Moses wants to show us here that God has unfolded a strength which is more than humanly possible and which must carry away in astonishment all those who have thought about it. As again today our minds should be lifted high above all our senses when we hear speak of this blessing of God, which surpasses the whole course of nature.<sup>62</sup>

The commentary has more or less the same.

8.3 Israel's procreation in Egypt is miraculous, but how could it happen? A rabbinical exposition is that the women carried up to three or four (Ibn Ezra, according to Münster<sup>63</sup>), or even seven children in one pregnancy (as related by Borrihaus<sup>64</sup>). 'Even some Christians, being also drenched in this dreaming

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61 Münster: *Verbum Hebr. shâras significat procreari in morem reptilium, ut sunt ranae, formicae, et locustae, quae semper in maximo producuntur numero* (f. 113), frogs, ants, and grasshoppers. Brenz: '... hoc est, ita fructiferi fuerunt, quemadmodum arbores ferunt, et ebullierunt, in morem reptilium aut aquatilium' (p. 5b).

62 Or il y a nulle doute que Moise ne nous vueille icy monstrer que Dieu a desployé une vertu plus qu'humaine et laquelle a deu ravir en estonnement tous ceux qui y ont pensé. Comme encores aujourd'huy il faut que nos esprits soient elevez en haut par dessus tous nos sens quand nous oions parler de ceste benediction de Dieu, laquelle a surmonté tout le cours de nature (Ms.fr. 40a, f. 135b).

63 Münster quotes Ibn Ezra:

Nam singulae mulieres genuerunt duos aut tres filios simul, ut dicit Aben Ezra, qui etiam meminit se quatuor vidisse filios ab una muliere simul natos. Et idem dicit, quod naturaliter una mulier possit simul septem parere filios (f. 113).

64 Borrihaus:

Sunt qui putant ex uno utero sex foetus editos, alii geminos crebro natos, neque id pugnare cum natura. Scriptores rerum autores sunt, Faustam quandam è plebo Ostiae duos mares, totidem foeminas exinam. Et reportam in Peloponneso quinos quater exinam, maioremque partem ex omni eius vixisse partu. Et in Aegypto septenos utero simul gigni, à Trogo proditum. Quanto foecundior redditur uterus, si hunc ubertatis divinae genitale verbum foecundaverit (p. 423).

and to give it substance argue that there are nations which procreate rather fast' (Borrhaus). Calvin is not interested in the biological way, but in God's extraordinary blessing of Israel — which means the multiplication of the Church, to separate his people from the rest of the world. To this is added a passage on Isaiah 51:2, found much shorter and earlier in the commentary. The commentary only has the number of four (children in one pregnancy).

8.4 The drift of the exposition of Exodus 1:6 on the death of Joseph and his brothers and of verse 8 on the new Pharaoh is in *congrégation* and commentary the same. Only a rabbinical exposition on verse 6, commented on in the *congrégation*, is suppressed in the commentary: 'The Rabbis of the Jews' have suggested that Joseph died before his brothers (as Sebastian Münster noted, referring to the *liber Sedar Olam*<sup>65</sup>).

This concentration on lexicographical and exegetical detail is important to the *congrégations* and sets this type of exposition apart from the sermons. In the circle of colleagues and theologians the standard is set high. The Hebrew (or Greek) text is discussed. They turn to commentaries and dictionaries for information and discussion.

The transcription of the *congrégation* ends with a long passage on God's keeping his promise in the midst of the oppression in Egypt, already revealed to Abraham (Gen. 15:13f). Without such oppression we would not understand why God pulled his people out of Egypt. But God had already announced that He would bring judgment on that nation,

[A]s if He said: I will take your cause in my hand and show that I have not elected the people without wanting to continue my goodness towards you. Even though I allow your [Abraham's] posterity to be thus oppressed and I seem not to care, it is so that I will show that it is my battle and that I am the friend of your friends and the foe of your foes, according to the promise I have given you.<sup>66</sup>

65 Münster begins his annotations with a chronology of Jacob's and Joseph's life, according to *liber Sedar Olam, capite secundo*, remarking on Joseph's age of 110 years: 'Breuiorem itaque habuit vitam quam singuli fratres sui' (f. 113).

66 Ms.fr. 40a, f. 137b:

Comme s'il disoit: Je prendray ta cause en main et monstreray que je ne l'ay pas eleu sans que je vueille continuer ma bonté envers toy. Combien donc que je souffre que ta lignée soit ainsi opprimée, et que je dissimule, si est-ce que je monstreray que c'est ma querele et que je suis amy de tes amis et ennemi de tes ennemis, selon la promesse que je t'ay donnée.

Having referred already to Isaiah 51:2, Calvin now points to Isaiah 52:4, where a comparison is made between Egypt and Assyria. He suggests that the Egyptians had some excuse to oppress Israel, since the people had come to their land out of their own will and not by force. That is, according to Calvin, the drift of the line 'My people went down into Egypt to sojourn there' (Is. 52:4).

Therefore it was necessary that the people would be oppressed unjustly so that, when God came to its aid by his compassion, He would show himself to be a just and fair judge against the Egyptians. And that also we for our part learn to praise the fatherly goodness of our God when we see that He can not bear the tyranny and cruelty which they exert against his poor children and those who have not the least earned it.<sup>67</sup>

This whole passage — in the context of the *congrégation* maybe a hint for future preaching on Exodus 1 — is suppressed in the commentary, in which brevity was Calvin's goal.

The text of the *congrégation* ends with an invitation to the Company of Pastors to respond to the presentation (thus giving us a glimpse of the actual proceedings in the Bible studies):

If I wanted to expound the whole of the text which I have read, I would go on to long. I therefore have to stop here [at verse 8], leaving the rest for the one who will propound the next time. I ask you to be excused from the rest and also ask the brethren that each one of them shall say what can be useful for the instruction of the church according to the grace God has given him.<sup>68</sup>

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67 Ms.fr. 40a, f. 137b-138a:

Ainsi donc il a falu que le peuple fust oppressé injustement à fin que, quand Dieu le secoureroit par sa misericorde, il se monstrast juste juge et equitable contre les Egyptiens. Et que nous aussi de nostre costé apprenions de magnifier la bonté paternelle [138a] de nostre Dieu quand nous voions qu'il ne peut souffrir les tyrannies et les cruautez qu'ils exercent contre ses povres enfans et ceux qui ne l'ont point merité.

68 Ms.fr. 40a, f. 138a:

Or si je voulois exposer tout le texte que j'avoye leu, je seroie par trop long. Il faut donc que je face icy fin, reservant le reste pour celui qui proposera cy apres. Je vous prieray d'estre excusé au reste, et prieray aussi aux freres qu'un chacun d'eux dise ce qui pourra servir pour l'instruction de l'Eglise selon que Dieu luy en aura fait la grace.

Calvin probably read the whole chapter, Exodus 1, at the beginning of the session. The appeal to the gifts of God's grace to the other ministers is in accordance with the *congrégation* as an application of prophecy to biblical exposition, as found in 1 Corinthians 14.

## 9. THE MASTER'S EXAMPLE

Calvin's undertaking in expounding the Last Four Books of Moses seems unique in the light of the history of exegesis until his days. In the 1570s one example can be found that reflects some imitation of this specific Harmony model. In 1577 Theodore Beza published the material of a series of lectures (held four years earlier<sup>69</sup>) as *Lex Dei moralis, ceremonialis et politica, ex libris Mosis excerpta et in certas classes distributa* ('The Moral, Ceremonial, and Political Law of God, Drawn from the Books of Moses and Divided into Various Categories').<sup>70</sup> The corresponding material from Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy is printed in three columns (not of Numbers). In his letter to the reader Beza mentions Calvin's work as the example set to him.<sup>71</sup> Beza had come from Lausanne to Geneva in 1559 and took part in the series of Bible studies on Exodus to Deuteronomy. The Harmony of the Law was thus the first running series of the Bible studies in which he partook.<sup>72</sup>

69 F. Geisendorf, *Théodore de Bèze* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1949), 331.

70 Frédéric Gardy, *Bibliographie des oeuvres théologiques, littéraires, historiques et juridiques de Théodore de Bèze* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1960), 172f. A Dutch translation by Willem Vink Dircksz. was published in 1611 with the title: *De Wet Godts Moralisch, oft der Seden, Ceremonialisch oft der Ceremonien ende Politisch oft der Politien. Ghenomen uit de Boecken Mosis ende in sekere Classen verdeylt, van Theodoro Beza Vezelio* (Rotterdam: Wed. J. van Ghelen, 1611) (see Grady, *Bibliographie*, no. 324).

71 Beza wrote:

Sum autem hoc quicquid est operae, eo maiore fiducia aggressus, quòd praeceuntem mihi summum illum et omni laude maiorem hominem D. Johannem Calvinum habeam, praeceptorem olim meum, cuius tanti semper iudicium feci, ac meritò quidem, ut quod ipso auctore facerem, bonis et doctis hominibus vix posse displicere, mihi persuaserim. Neque tamen ordinem ab eo institutum, per omnia sum sequutus, quoniam aliquantulum fuit ipsius consilium ab hoc meo instituto diversum (*Lex Dei moralis, ceremonialis, et politica, ex libris Mosis excerpta, et in certas classes distributa à Theodore Beza Vezelio*, Apud Petrum Santandream, 1577, f. II r-v).

72 Secondary literature on Calvin's Harmony of the four last books of Moses: Raymond A. Blacketer, 'Smooth Stones, Teachable Hearts: Calvin's Allegorical Interpretation of Deuteronomy 10:1-2', *CThJ* 34 (1999), 36-63; John I. Hesselink, *Calvin's Con-*

In 1603, near the end of Beza's life, a second edition of this work appeared as *Mosaycarum et Romanarum legum collatio. Ex bibliotheca P. Pithoei IC cuius etiam Notae emendatiores adiectae sunt*, with at the end of the title also the original title of Beza's book of 1557. The volume contains his letter to the reader of 1577 and his *Lex Dei* (with the same number of 95 pages), followed by 52 pages of the *Lex Dei sive Mosaycarum et Romanarum legum collatio*, with the addition: 'From the library of P[ierre] Pithou, of whom corrective notes are added'.<sup>73</sup> Beza may have borrowed his own original title, *Lex Dei*, from this fourth century source, which was added in the second edition to his booklet. Although this fourth century text, 'The Law of God or a Comparison of Mosaic and Roman Law', was published after Calvin's death, its existence can already have been known to humanist scholars like him in the 1550s.<sup>74</sup> Is it possible that such a source stimulated Calvin in developing his idea of a Harmony of Old Testament Law (see above § 5)?

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*cept of Law*; T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 122-175 (analysis of first and eighth commandment with an appendix, offering an outline of the treatment of the material around the other commandments); H.M. Woudstra, 'Calvin Interprets what "Moses Reports". Observations on Calvin's Commentary on Exodus 1-19', *Calvin Theological Journal* 21 (1986), 151-174; David F. Wright, 'Calvin's Pentateuchal Criticism: Equity, Hardness of Heart, and Divine Accommodation in the Mosaic Harmony Commentary', *Calvin Theological Journal* 21 (1986), 33-50.

- 73 Bibliographic description in: Gardy, *Bibliographie de Théodore de Bèze*, 173 (no. 323). The book was published in Heidelberg by Jerome Commelin, who published earlier also in Geneva. He was a nephew of Antoinette Commelin, the second wife of Calvin's brother Antoine (*BC* III, 620). In a letter of 1565 Beza asked Nicolas Pithou (1524-1598) to recommend him to his brother (Pierre), of whom he read a Latin treatise with an exposition of passages from classical authors (Théodore de Bèze, *Correspondance*, vol. VI (1565), ed. Hippolyte Aubert, Henri Meylan, Alain Dufour, Alexandre de Henseler [*THR* 113] (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1970), 93). He had been introduced to Pierre Pithou by the latter's brother, Nicolas, who arrived in Geneva in 1559. Nicolas, an advocate, settled in Geneva in 1559. Pierre Pithou (1539-1596) is known for his publication of medieval texts (Paul Chaix, Alain Dufour, Gustave Moeckli, *Les livres imprimés à Genève de 1550 à 1600* [*THR* 86] [Genève: Librairie Droz, 1966], 128, 142, 159).
- 74 Beza probably simply added the *collatio*, known in the edition of 1574, to the second edition of his own work (*Mosaycarum et Romanarum legum collatio, ex integris Papiniani, Pauli, Ulpiani, Gaii, Modestini, aliorumque veterum juris auctorum libris ante tempora Justiniani Imp. desumpta, eiusdem Imp. Justiniani Novellae constitutiones III. Juliani Antecessoris C.P. Dictatum de consiliariis. Collectio de contutoribus, eiusdem Juliani Collectio de contutoribus, ex bibliotheca P. Pithoei IC. cuius etiam notae emendatiores adiectae sunt* [Basel: Thomas Guarin, 1574]). Another edition appeared in Heidelberg, 1656, without Beza's *Lex Dei*. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century a *Concordantiae Bibliae ad Jura* was compiled by Jean Calderini, an alphabetical list of Biblical names and terms (*BTT* 4:378).



The form of a Harmony was later on applied to other books of the Old Testament as well. Jean Mercier and Lambert Daneau published their *Harmonia sive Tabulae in duos Salomonis libros Proverbia et Ecclesiasticen* in 1573.<sup>75</sup> With the development of the Harmony model into his highly original approach to the Pentateuch in his mature years as Biblical expositor John Calvin provided a stimulus to later generations.

In later years such a model was even applied to the Reformed confessions. Responding to the Lutheran *Formula concordiae*, published on the fiftieth anniversary of the Augsburg confession (1580), Jean-François Salvard, Antoine de la Roche Chandieu, Lambert Daneau (author of the Harmony of Proverbs, mentioned above), Simon Goulart, and Theodore Beza set about to harmonize twelve confessions. The *Harmonia confessionum fidei* appeared in 1581, an in-quarto of more than 550 pages (Geneva: Pierre de St. André). It is striking that not only Reformed confessions, but also those of Augsburg, Saxony, and Württemberg are incorporated in order to prove the *concordia* of basic Reformed and Lutheran teaching over against Jesuit doctrine. Following the order of the Second Helvetic Confession, the text of the various articles is arranged in nineteen chapters. The annotations of the editors reveal the proximity of this Harmony to the confession of the French Churches. The weakness of this edition is that only outdated Lutheran positions are discussed, while the current accents of the *Formula concordiae* are passed over.<sup>76</sup> In the form of a *Harmonia* we find an expression of the ideal of concordance and harmony in doctrine. This is a central element in the doctrine of Scripture and of the Church of the Reformation, striving for catholicity and consensus.

## 10. CONCLUSIONS

The comparison of the text of the *congrégation* of 1 September 1559 with the preface and first textual part of the commentary, published in 1563, leads us to the following conclusions regarding the literary relation between *congrégation* and commentary (1-4), the Bible studies in general (5), and the origin and originality of this Harmony model (6-8).

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75 BTT 5:180.

76 Francis Higman, 'L'*Harmonia confessionum fidei* de 1581', in: id., *Lire et découvrir. Le circulation des idées au temps de la Réforme* [Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance, vol. 326] (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1998), 675-690. A second comparable Harmony appeared as *Corpus et syntagma confessionum fidei* in 1654 (in Geneva: P. Chouet).

10.1 The arrangement of Calvin's exposition in the *congrégation* is very similar to that of the preface to *Comm. Ex.* and the exegesis of Exodus 1:1-8. The same line of argument is followed and the sequence of Biblical references can easily be recognized. Still, the text of *Comm. Ex.* is much shorter and better organized. The similarity in the arrangement of the material, the references to other expositors, and the lexicographical discussion strikes us. The first possible explanation is that Calvin worked from his highly organized memory and turned to the same sources in writing the commentary at a later date. The other possibility — more probable — is that he wrote the commentary on the various parts of the Harmony shortly after the oral exposition in the *congrégations* during the years since September 1559. He may have used the transcription, made by the scribe, as a set of notes, available to refresh his memory.

10.2 Thus the weekly Bible studies were the incubator of some of Calvin's commentaries.<sup>77</sup> Calvin's own groundwork and the contributions of his colleagues provided the Company of Pastors with an opportunity to learn from each other on a constant basis. Although the commentaries were Calvin's own work from the concept until the final printed form, still the weekly Bible studies provided an exchange of ideas and learning. The Company of Pastors facilitated their Moderator to use these meetings as a try-out of his exposition. The commentaries can — at least in part — be regarded as the fruit of co-operation.

10.3 Comparison of the texts proves that Calvin worked first on the Latin edition of the commentary and that he wrote the French translation without using the transcripts of the *congrégations*.<sup>78</sup> There is no textual similarity between the *congrégation* and the wording of the Latin version. Nor are there any textually identical lines in the *congrégation* and the French edition of the commentary.

10.4 It is also possible that Calvin had the transcripts of the *congrégations*, made by the team of Denis Raguenier (and after his death in late 1560 or

77 This conclusion corroborates my findings in comparing the *congrégation* on Isaiah 1 with the commentary (E.A. de Boer, 'Jean Calvin et Ésaïe 1 (1564). Édition d'un texte inconnu, introduit par quelques observations sur la différence et les relations entre congrégation, cours et sermon', *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 80 [2000], 371-395). The main difference between this article and the present study is that in the case of Isaiah the commentary (1551; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1559) precedes the *congrégation* (1564), while in the present study the *congrégation* precedes the commentary.

78 This conclusion contradicts T.H.L. Parker's suggestion regarding the commentary on Joshua that 'Calvin wrote the commentary in French and that he did so because a large part of it consists of revised and integrated transcripts of his contributions to the *Congrégations* [...]' (Calvin's *Old Testament Commentaries*, 33).

early 1561 by Prostat Paris), on his desk when he started writing the commentary. The various manuscripts and editions that survived, even if they are few in number, suggest that Raguenier began taking notes in the weekly Bible studies in 1549, the very same year in which he started his work as the official scribe of Calvin's sermons. It is a fact that also transcripts of two later contributions by Calvin on Galatians (published in 1563) and a series of transcripts on Joshua (treated in the *congrégations* from June 1563 to January 1564) survived. This is an indication that Raguenier and — later — Paris took notes during the series on the Harmony.<sup>79</sup> The fact that so few transcripts survived and all manuscripts were usually destroyed once a work was printed, suggests that the transcripts of all Calvin's contributions to the *congrégations* were regarded as something of a literary basis of the commentary.

With regard to the Genevan practice of the weekly *congrégations* we can conclude the following:

10.5 John Calvin often presented the first and introductory exposition to a new series in a Biblical book he did as in the series on John (1550-1553), Joshua (1563-1564), and Isaiah (1564). We saw that the colleagues were happy to facilitate Calvin in following his choice of the next Biblical book to expound according to his project of Biblical commentaries. Calvin and his colleagues took turns in presenting an exposition on an equal basis. But Calvin always spoke as Moderator in the Bible studies, adding his thought after the expositor of the day had finished. In the series on the Harmony — first of the Gospels and then on the last four books of Moses — Calvin's leading role was even greater. It was he who presented the outline of which parts had to be studied in conjunction.

Regarding the origin and originality of the Harmony of Exodus to Deuteronomy the following conclusions can be drawn:

10.6 The introductory *congrégation* to the series reveals the conception of the idea of a Harmony of the last four books of Moses in mid-1559, a master plan written by Calvin, and its gestation during three years in the Bible studies of the preachers of Geneva more clearly than the preface to the commentary itself.

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79 Denis Raguenier's death in late 1560 or early 1561 may have made an end to the transcription of the series on the Harmony of the Gospels (see n. 30). These 65 sermons, printed in 1562, were Raguenier's legacy as scribe. It is feasible that there was also a gap in the recording of the series of *congrégations* on the Harmony of the last four books of Moses. Prostat Paris, Raguenier's successor, is mentioned for the first time in the account books of the *Bourse française* already on 7 February 1561 as 'Paris who writes the sermons' (Jeannine E. Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare. Deacons and the Bourse française* [Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1989], 48)

10.7 The existing commentaries on Exodus by the Lutheran scholars Martin Borrhaus and Johannes Brenz and the expected publication of Nicolas des Gallars' commentary on Exodus gave Calvin a solid reason to try an alternative approach to the last four books of Moses. The Harmony model was a traditional form in expounding and comparing the Synoptic Gospels. The application of this model to the Pentateuch was Calvin's original creation. He may have encountered a parallel to this approach in medieval compilations, either through his own legal training or through scholars of his age (Pierre Pithou).

10.8 The hermeneutical decisions in his treatment of the Law and the rearrangement of the material in the *Institutes* of 1559 prepared Calvin's approach to a 'Harmony of the Law' as counterpart for his *Concordance, qu'on appelle Harmonie* of the Gospels. These hermeneutical decisions are: a. The division of history and doctrine, b. The *par synecdoche* approach of the Ten Commandments, and c. The elliptical union of Law and Gospel in the Bible. The Harmony's explicit references to the *Institutes* tie these two works together.

## 11. 16<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY LITERATURE (PRIMARY SOURCES)

BEZA, T.

*Lex Dei moralis, ceremonialis, et politica, ex libris Mosis excerpta, et in certas classes distributa à Theodore Beza Vezelio, Apud Petrum Santandreanum, 1577.*

BORRHAUS, M.

*Martini Borrhai in Mosem, divinum legislatorem, paedagogem ad Messiam Servatorem mundi, Commentarii* (Basel: Joannes Oporinus, [1555]).

BRENZ, J.

*In Exodum Mosi Commentarii. Autore Ioanne Brentio* (Halle: Petrus Brubachius, 1544).

CALVIN, J.

*Commentaires sur les cinq livres de Moyse. Genese est mis à part, les autres quatre livres sont disposez en forme d'Harmonie* (Genève: François Estienne, 1564) (BC II, 64/5).

*Mosis libri quinque cum commentariis. Genesis seorsum, reliqui quatuor in formam harmoniae digesti* (Genève: Henri Estienne, 1563) (BC II, 63/16).

CAJETAN, T DE V.

*Commentarii illustres planeque insigne in Quinque Mosaicos libros, Thomae de Vio, Caietani quondam Cardinalis* (Paris: Joannes Yuernel, 1539).

DES GALLARS, N.

*In Exodum, qui secundus est liber Mosis, commentarii* (Genève: Jean Crespin, 1560).

MÜNSTER, S.

*Hebraica Biblia, latina planeque nova Sebast. Munsteri translatione [...]*, 2 ed. (Basel, 1542).

PELLIKAN, C.

*Commentaria biblicorum et illa brevis quidem ac catholica [...]* (Zürich: Chr. Froschauer, 1532), vol. 1, f. 66f.

ZWINGLI, H.

*In Exodum alia farraginis annotationum particula* (Zürich: Chr. Froschauer, 1527), in: Z 13, 291-427.

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