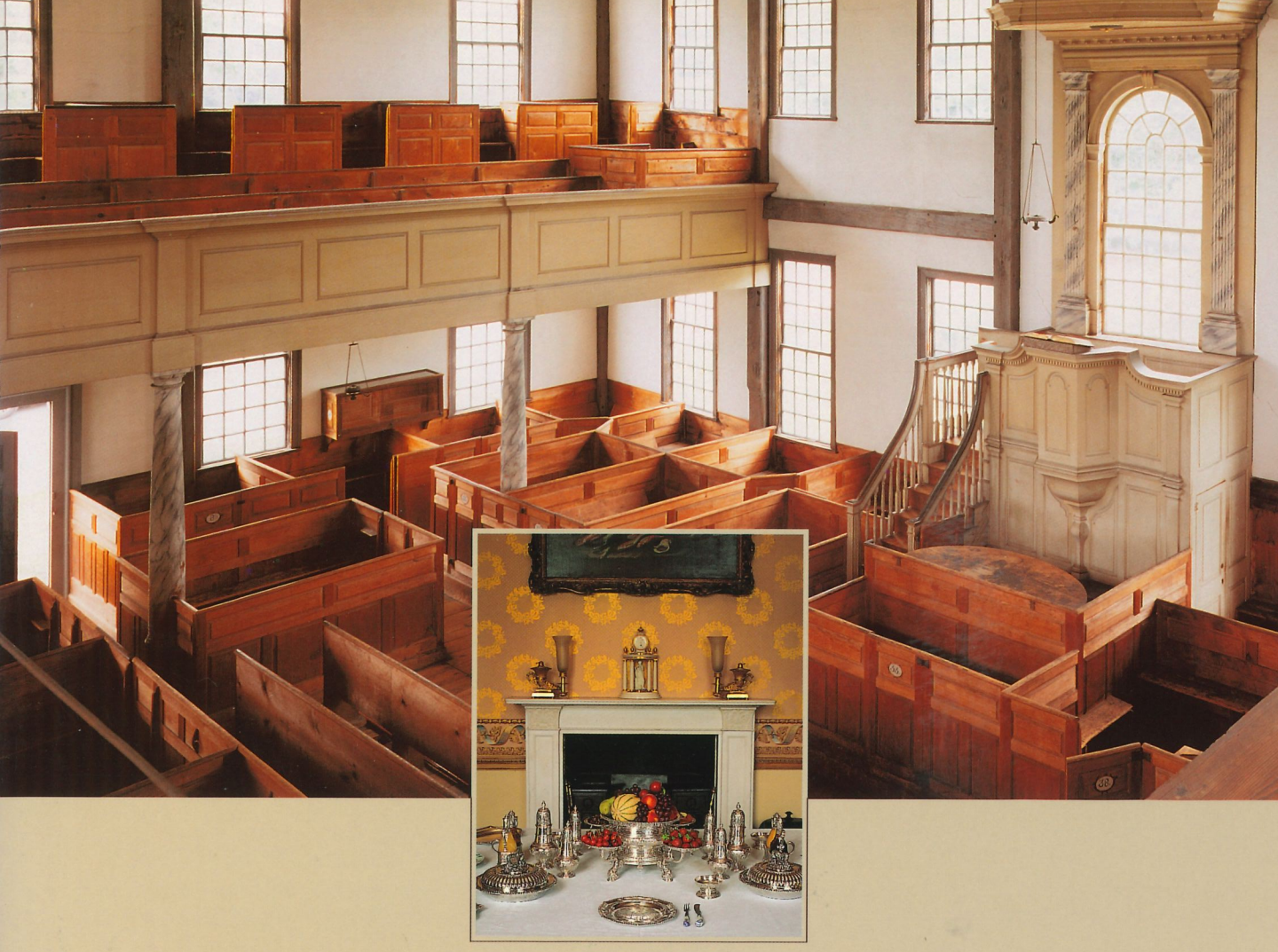

SEEING BEYOND THE WORD

VISUAL ARTS AND THE CALVINIST TRADITION

EDITED BY

PAUL CORBY FINNEY

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William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company
Grand Rapids, Michigan / Cambridge, U.K.

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Calvinism as a Culture? Preliminary Remarks on Calvinism and the Visual Arts

PHILIP BENEDICT

Those who seek in scholarship nothing more than an honored occupation with which to beguile the tedium of idleness I would compare to those who pass their lives looking at paintings.[1]

John Calvin made this remark in a letter that he wrote in 1540 to an unknown young man whose progress in his studies he praised but whom he sought at the same time to inspire to greater devotion to the cause of true religion. Although little more than an offhand comment, the sentence still reveals basic aspects of the Genevan reformer's attitude toward the visual arts. Implying, characteristically, that all activities should be performed for the greater glory of God, it situates the act of looking at paintings at the very antipode of such behavior. Not only is there no suggestion that this activity might be morally or devotionally edifying; there is also no hint of the fetishization or sacralization of the work of art on aesthetic grounds that a few theorists of art were just beginning to promote in Calvin's own lifetime and that would become so central to Western discussions of art from the eighteenth century onward. But if looking at pictures is in no way

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This paper owes a great deal to conversations with Jeffrey Muller and to comments and critical questions posed by my fellow symposiasts at the CTI symposium. I wish to express my thanks to all of them.

1. *Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia,* ed. W. Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss (Brunswick and Berlin, 1863-1900), vol. XI, p. 56.

ennobling or improving, it is a pastime in which Calvin can imagine acquaintances engaging. Although idle, it may amuse.

This quotation from Calvin has not been chosen as the starting point for this essay in order to emphasize the importance of Calvin himself for the subject of this volume or to imply that his passing comments represent normative pronouncements for the religious tradition that we often label for convenience "Calvinism." Calvin in fact only expressed a broader consensus among Reformed theologians on matters pertaining to the visual arts, and while his prestige was great within the different churches and religious movements that constitute this tradition, recent scholarship has underscored the variety and changeableness of the theological influences shaping the different branches of this tradition. "Reformed," not "Calvinist," is now the generic classification of choice among specialists, even if "Calvinist" retains the advantage of greater accessibility for nonspecialists.

What the quotation does offer, however — beyond a certain puckish appropriateness to the subject at hand — is an immediate dip into the words of the sixteenth century. That in turn is perhaps the best antidote to anachronism and special pleading. And this is valuable because these two qualities long abounded in discussions of the subject of Calvinism and the visual arts, and still threaten to cast their shadow over the way in which the subject is approached.

The history of scholarship about the topic of Calvinism and the visual arts can be roughly divided into two eras. In the nineteenth century, and for the better part of the twentieth, the question was cast in a manner heavily tinged by confessional polemics and the prevailing conceptions of the nature of art and of culture. As the elements of apologetics and anachronism became more and more apparent in the work produced within the parameters of this discussion, interest in the question declined. But then, in the past fifteen years or so, a new generation of scholars has begun to approach the topic with very different assumptions, generating a revival of interest that is just beginning to gather steam. Today, the issues at stake look quite different, and far more complex, than they once did.[2]

For an introduction to the way in which the question of Calvinism and the visual arts was traditionally framed, we can do no better than to turn to two lectures delivered within four years of one another nearly a century ago by a pair of leading theologians and Calvin scholars of that era, Abraham Kuyper and Émile Doumergue. Kuyper, a prominent Dutch political leader as well as a theologian, chose the subject of "Calvinism and Art" for one of the six L. P. Stone Lectures that he delivered at Prince-

2. For an excellent bibliography of the relevant literature, focused primarily on the sixteenth century, see Linda B. Parshall and Peter W. Parshall, *Art and the Reformation: An Annotated Bibliography* (Boston, 1986). The preface, pp. xv-xlvi, surveys the trends that have promoted the recent revival of interest in this topic.

ton Theological Seminary in 1898 and subsequently published under the title *Lectures on Calvinism*. The work was reprinted as recently as 1994.[3] Doumergue, the scarcely less distinguished French Calvin scholar, took up the same question in a series of lectures given in the Salle de la Réformation in Geneva that he entitled *L'art et le sentiment dans l'oeuvre de Calvin*.[4]

The context in which both men worked was that of the still-bitter confessional and clericalist-against-anticlericalist rivalries of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Already in the eighteenth century Voltaire had mocked dour Geneva's hostility to the pleasures of the theater and the arts. This tradition was still alive among French critics of art and literature at the end of the subsequent century. Ferdinand Brunetière, a leading literary scholar of the Third Republic, asserted that "Horror of art was and would remain one of the essential, characteristic traits of the Reformation in general and the Calvinist Reformation in particular." The prominent art critic Eugène Müntz asked about "the proud and cruel Calvin": "Where and when can one find that the author of the *Institutes* ever demonstrated the slightest interest in any branch of art?"[5] Doumergue felt himself compelled to rebut such views. To do so, he deployed "the protestant method, which consists of putting listeners in the situation where they can decide for themselves against error and in favor of the truth." He cited passages from the *Institutes* where Calvin indicates that the arts are gifts of God to man, and that inventions such as musical instruments should not be condemned, even though they serve pleasure and delectation more than utility. The Genevan reformer was thus no joyless enemy of all beauty and amusement, Doumergue asserted. He then, quickly and typically, moved on to a discussion of Dutch art of the Golden Age, and in particular of Rembrandt, whose painting represented "the most brilliant and logical expression of the artistic temperament of his country and his people." Further equating Holland's spirit with Calvinism, he found in Rembrandt's art the emancipation, the laicization, and the interiorization of the visual arts. These, he concluded, had been the genuine consequence of the Calvinist Reformation for art.[6] Kuyper similarly responded to the charge that Calvinism had not produced a great architectural style in the manner of other great world religions by emphasizing that Calvinism refused to embody its religious spirit in monuments. As the alliance of religion and art represented a lower stage of human development, the emancipation of art from the guardianship of the church and its separation in a distinctive

3. Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, 1931; 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, 1994).

4. Doumergue, *L'art et le sentiment dans l'oeuvre de Calvin* (Geneva, 1902).

5. Both quoted in Doumergue, pp. 9, 33.

6. Doumergue, pp. 8, 13-14, 36-41.

aesthetic sphere, the true achievements of Calvinism, in fact demonstrated its superiority.[7]

Today, the element of confessional apologetics in these interpretations is immediately evident. It is equally apparent in the Catholic tradition of scholarship of the same era that chronicles the Calvinist destruction of Catholic churches and works of art, within the tradition of what Louis Réau called in 1959 the "history of vandalism."[8] Suspended between history and apologetics, these works cast the central question about the subject of Calvinism and the visual arts as an essentially evaluative one: Did Reformed theology comprise purely negative prohibitions that encouraged the destruction of existing works of art and were antithetical to the creation of new ones, or did it also act as a creative force that helped to shape an alternative aesthetic within post-Reformation Europe and North America? This manner of posing the question dominated thinking about this issue until at least 1960, when no less a figure than Erwin Panofsky delivered a series of remarks that still stand clearly within this tradition.[9]

But it is not simply the heavy overtones of confessional apologetics in these works that now make their conceptualization of the basic issues appear to be potentially misleading. In their efforts to attribute praise or blame to the Reformed tradition according to the standard of the degree to which it contributed to the progress of the arts, they also replicate the modern sacralization of art. The process of extending our knowledge of the social world often involves both historicization and disenchantment, as deeply valorized and sentimentalized features of social organization or culture are revealed to be not natural features of all human life, but temporally and culturally specific. Art history has undergone such a process of disenchantment in the past generation, coming to recognize that works of art do not simply express timeless aesthetic impulses but have served very different functions in different societies — indeed, that the modern Western category of "art" is a historically specific category of the past several centuries that may have very little to do with the way in which other cultures or more distant eras of the Western past categorized and thought about those objects that we today classify as works of art. The very title of a recent book on the history of icons and holy images, *Likeness and Presence:*

7. Kuyper, pp. 142-52.

8. See, e.g., Victor Carrière, *Introduction aux études d'histoire ecclésiastique locale* (Paris, 1936), III, part 6: "Les épreuves de l'église de France au XVIe siècle"; Louis Réau, *Les monuments detruits de l'art français. Histoire du vandalisme* (Paris, 1959).

9. Erwin Panofsky, "Comments on Art and Reformation," in *Symbols in Transformation: Iconographic Themes at the Time of the Reformation* (exhibition catalogue, Princeton, 1969), pp. 9-14. Panofsky's comments were originally delivered in 1960, largely in response to Alexander Rüstow, "Lutherana Tragoedia Artis," *Schweizer Monatshefte* 39 (December 1959): 891-906. Perhaps the most important twentieth-century work in the apologetic tradition is G. G. Coulton, *Art and the Reformation* (New York, 1928; 2nd ed. Cambridge, 1953).

A History of the Image before the Era of Art, testifies clearly to the new awareness of the historicity of the idea of art that developed in Europe between the Renaissance and the age of romanticism, with its claim to constitute an autonomous realm in which artists gave expression to their particular vision of the world and, by virtue of their genius, revealed the aesthetic values and worldview of their times.[10] With the recognition that the functions of the visual arts and of art objects within the culture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may have been very different from what they subsequently became has come an awareness of the anachronism involved in judging the people or doctrines of that era according to their relationship to "art."

Still another feature that is visible in the work of both Kuyper and Doumergue is a tendency to interpret works of art in Hegelian or romantic idealist ways as manifestations of a larger guiding spirit. Doumergue, we have seen, postulated a Dutch national spirit that expressed itself in the art of Rembrandt and could be equated with Calvinism. Kuyper explicitly spoke of Calvinism as a "life system," a *Weltanschauung.* The faith's deepest life principle sprang from its particular religious consciousness, he asserted. From there it worked its way out into the various realms of theology, church life, politics, science, and art.[11] This aspect of their work raises theoretical questions that deserve particularly close attention, for if the imperative to avoid anachronistic understandings of the character of art and its function in society is now broadly accepted by historians of art, the issue of how to conceptualize the relationship of individual works of art to the larger collectivities in which these are produced remains a field where competing assumptions still contend for dominance.

For much of the twentieth century, and particularly in the half-century since World War II, the tendency seemed clearly to be that the Hegelianism and romantic idealism so palpable in these works, and whose influence could also be detected in the writings of such exemplary cultural historians as Jakob Burckhardt and Panofsky, were in decline within the different branches of cultural history. In the past decade or two, however, this trend has been partially reversed. Views of culture that postulate considerable internal coherence and unity within the various forms of thought and expression of a given group are making a comeback in important corners of cultural history and cultural studies, thanks most obviously to the influence of Michel Foucault, of contemporary American versions of romantic nationalism, and of the ways in which these mesh with identity politics. The highbrow vernacular speaks about America today as if every group has its own culture, expressed most clearly in its literature and art,

10. Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago, 1994).

11. Kuyper, p. 17 and passim.

which reveals that group's experience and perhaps even essence. Comparable issues of group formation and mobilization, it might be noted, were part of Kuyper's political project in a very different historical context.

Nearly thirty years ago, Ernst Gombrich subjected the often unconscious Hegelianism that still informed so much cultural history in his lifetime to a penetrating critique in his *In Search of Cultural History.*[12] The particular object of his critique was the view that periods formed coherent wholes, held together by the spirit of the age. On the contrary, he observed, the art of any given moment was typically characterized by rival schools and movements. Individuals and movements, not periods, formed the proper subject of study of cultural history. It was at once unjustifiable and misleading to assume that the different aspects of the culture of a period — its art, its literature, its customs, its political life — were all expressions of a single spirit. Each one of these areas had its own internal traditions, what literary scholars now call intertextuality. While changes in one area might be influenced by contemporaneous developments in another, no necessary connections could properly be assumed in advance.

In discussing the subject of Calvinism and the visual arts, the question that must be confronted is whether or not Calvinism formed a distinctive culture of such strength and coherence that works of art produced by Calvinist artists or for a Calvinist audience can properly be interpreted as expressing a Calvinist sensibility. A critique similar to that which Gombrich develops of the idea of a spirit of the age can easily be extended to the view that religious or ethnic groups within a larger population constitute distinctive cultures. In complex, pluralistic societies, many cultural practices are shared across different groups. Groups have their own internal cultural differences that may be far more salient than the common features that hold them together. To speak of French as opposed to Dutch culture may seem to be doing nothing more than expressing the truism that in some ways the Dutch are or were different from the French. For ethnic minorities to assert the existence and dignity of their own culture is unquestionably a useful political strategy for increasing their cultural capital. But insofar as a culture is understood to be, in the widely influential definition of Clifford Geertz, a "system of meanings embodied in symbols," the a priori postulation of a proliferating variety of such systems is only likely to cloud our understanding of the actual dynamics of culture and cultural history, by suggesting systematic differences and boundaries where there is in fact much overlap, and by promoting the narcissism of petty differences. As one anthropologist has observed, "This use of culture as a blanket term for intuited or assumed similarities within a group of people is usually misleading. Not only do cultural groupings tend not to correspond neatly with geographical, national, religious and other sorts of groupings, but

12. Gombrich, *In Search of Cultural History* (Oxford, 1969).

those things which constitute culture tend not to occur together in neat bundles which contrast sharply with other such bundles."[13]

The thrust of recent historical studies of individual regions of Calvinist strength, as well as the historiography of the Reformation more generally, provides empirical substantiation of these rather abstract theoretical considerations. Many historical discussions of Calvinism have treated the faith as if it were so all-pervasive an ideology, so hostile to all forms of cultural expression arising from folkloric or nonreligious sources, that it constituted a highly distinctive culture. As important a work of historical scholarship as Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie's *The Peasants of Languedoc,* for instance, reiterates the view that the Huguenots of the Cévennes, that mountainous region of southern France where Protestantism took deeper root than anywhere else in France, became so imbued with Calvinist biblical culture that this obliterated all preexisting elements of profane culture. Nineteenth-century folklorists who visited the region, it is said, found no trace of any indigenous lullabies. Babies were rocked to sleep with psalms.[14]

While such cultural patterns would have conformed to the aspirations of certain godly Calvinist ministers — Pierre Jurieu wrote in 1675, for instance, "it would be necessary, if it were possible, to train our heart so that it conceives its thoughts and forms its meditations only in the terms of the Holy Spirit as expressed in the Psalms"[15] — abundant historical evidence shows that such aspirations were indeed unrealizable and that the Bible always had to make its peace with beliefs, motifs, and genres derived from nonbiblical sources, even in the greatest strongholds of Calvinist fidelity. When the folkloric belief that May was an unlucky time for couples to be married spread across southern France in the early seventeenth century, it took hold among the Huguenots of the Cévennes just as it did among the Catholics of neighboring areas, despite what we might postulate to be Calvinism's greater hostility to superstitious practices and its insistence upon calendrical regularity.[16] Folklorists studying the region may not have found local lullabies, but they have reported a vigorous undergrowth of beliefs in the efficacy of magical healing and the evil eye, despite the church's long hostility to such practices.[17] Many elements of the folkloric culture of this region, in short, were shared between Calvinists and Catholics alike.

13. Kenneth A. Rice, *Geertz and Culture* (Ann Arbor, 1980), p. 241.

14. LeRoy Ladurie, *Les paysans de Languedoc* (Paris, 1966), vol. I, p. 613.

15. Jurieu, *Traité de la devotion* (Rouen, 1675), p. 184.

16. Philip Benedict, *The Huguenot Population of France, 1600-1685: The Demographic Fate and Customs of a Religious Minority,* Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 81, part 5 (Philadelphia, 1991), pp. 86-90.

17. Philippe Joutard, "Protestantisme populaire et univers magique: le cas cévenol," *Le Monde Alpin et Rhodanien,* vol. V (1977), pp. 145-71.

In similar fashion, studies of elite culture in seventeenth-century France have revealed that the circles of those given to literary, artistic, scientific, or antiquarian interests were among the locales where the confessional differences of the era were most easily overcome. Catholics and Huguenots gathered together in such places to cultivate their common interests, and it is far from certain that the way in which individual members did so was significantly inflected by their religious views. The thrust of much recent work in the history of the Reformation more generally has likewise been to point out the very substantial areas of agreement between the different post-Reformation confessional families on matters such as political theory. There were even substantial areas of borrowing and overlap in their devotional literature.[18] If practices and precepts were often shared between the different confessions even in this realm where we might think that the differences between them would be the most marked, we clearly need to be cautious about postulating from the outset a distinctive Calvinist culture or life system that found expression in the art that Calvinists produced or commissioned.

Rather than beginning from such postulates, the most fruitful way of approaching the problem of Calvinism and the visual arts would appear to be to start with some simpler observations and questions. Whether or not Calvinism was a culture, it was undeniably a certain set of theological pronouncements, some of which had direct implications for what might be depicted in works of art, the ways in which paintings and sculptures might be used, and how churches ought to be decorated. Just what did various generations of Reformed theologians say about these theological matters with relevance for the visual arts? How much room for disagreement was there about these principles? How vigorously were they enforced by authoritative church bodies? These are the most basic questions from which to

18. The exploration of the shared features and parallel consequences of the Lutheran, Calvinist, and Catholic Reformations was pioneered with particular influence by E. W. Zeeden in Germany, Jean Delumeau in France, and John Bossy in England. See especially Zeeden, *Die Entstehung der Konfessionen: Grundlagen und Formen der Konfessionsbildung im Zeitalter der Glaubenskämpfe* (Munich, 1965); Delumeau, *Naissance et affirmation de la Réforme* (Paris, 1965); Delumeau, *Le Catholicisme entre Luther et Voltaire* (Paris, 1971); Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1985). For more detailed research demonstrating the shared features within political thought and devotional culture, see Quentin Skinner, "The Origins of the Calvinist Theory of Revolution," in *After the Reformation: Essays in Honor of J. H. Hexter,* ed. Barbara C. Malament (Philadelphia, 1980), pp. 309-30; Heinz Schilling, "Between the Territorial State and Urban Liberty: Lutheranism and Calvinism in the County of Lippe," in R. Pochia Hsia, *The German People and the Reformation* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1988), pp. 263-83; Schilling, *Civic Calvinism in Northwestern Germany and the Netherlands: Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries* (Kirksville, Mo., 1991), esp. pp. 5-6, 100; Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill, 1982), pp. 25-39; Udo Sträter, *Sonthom, Bayly, Dyke und Hall: Studien zur Rezeption der englischen Erbauungsliteratur in Deutschland im 17. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen, 1987).

start. Once these questions have been explored, it then becomes possible to move on to a series of further questions. What were the consequences for artistic production of the establishment of Calvinist churches in different parts of Europe? As Calvinist artists and architects explored their crafts within the confines of the permissible and the impermissible as defined by Calvinist theology, did they develop distinctive styles or interpretations of their subject matter? If so, were these directly influenced by the religious beliefs of either the artists who produced them or the individuals who commissioned them, or did such innovations as appeared spring simply from the process of working within a new set of parameters? Since many of these questions involve trying to locate aspects of the art produced by Calvinist artists or in Calvinist areas that can be demonstrated to have been distinctively influenced by Calvinist precepts, it deserves some stress that these questions cannot be answered by looking at Calvinist artists or countries alone. Instead, they may often be best answered by looking comparatively at work produced in Calvinist and non-Calvinist countries, or by Calvinist and non-Calvinist artists within the same country.

A considerable body of recent literature has explored the theology of images and the phenomenon of iconoclasm during the era of the Reformation. It is abundantly clear from this work that an adequate treatment of Reformed theological pronouncements on this issue must recognize two fundamental points. The first is that central to the Reformed tradition from its very inception was a particularly strict and insistent interpretation of the biblical commandments against idolatry, and a sensibility that saw any excessive investment in the adornment of churches as a misuse of funds that could better be spent on the poor.

The first Reformation expression of such views came in Wittenberg in late 1521 and early 1522, where Carlstadt parted company with Luther over precisely the image question. He took the position that the Old Testament prohibition of graven images was clear, binding on Christians, and required them to purge their churches of statues and altarpieces. Devotional actions involving physical representations of God were antithetical to the proper worship of a spiritual being, for Christ is not known through the flesh.[19] Luther also opposed the idolatrous veneration of images, but he was willing to retain statues or altarpieces that were not objects of such veneration. When the issue of images was debated in Zurich in October 1523, Zwingli followed Carlstadt in advocating the removal of all paintings

19. James S. Preus, *Carlstadt's "Ordinaciones" and Luther's Liberty: A Study of the Wittenberg Movement, 1521-22* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974); M. Stirm, *Die Bilderfrage in der Reformation* (Gütersloh, 1977), pp. 38-44; Giuseppe Scavizzi, *Arte e architettura sacra. Cronache e documenti sulla controversia tra riformati et cattolici (1500-1550)* (Rome, 1981), pp. 42-83; Carlos Eire, *War against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 55-73; Sergiusz Michalski, *The Reformation and the Visual Arts: The Protestant Image Question in Western and Eastern Europe* (London, 1993), pp. 43-50.

and sculptures from the city's churches. To the considerations highlighted by Carlstadt he added a third argument: that it was wasteful and unchristian to spend money on church decoration that could better go to the poor.[20] In Strasbourg, Martin Bucer reached similar conclusions by 1524.[21] Calvin consequently expressed little that was novel when he devoted a long chapter of the first book of the *Institutes* to the propositions "It Is Unlawful to Attribute a Visible Form to God, and Generally Whoever Sets Up Idols Revolts against the True God." The chapter stresses that any figurative representation of a purely spiritual God is a betrayal of both the character and the commandments of the divinity. Far from being the books of the unlettered, images in church are a standing invitation to idolatry, not to mention often "examples of the most abandoned lust and obscenity" because of the manner in which they were painted.[22] If Calvin stood out in any way from his Reformed predecessors, it was in the depth of the abhorrence he displayed for the polluting consequences of idolatry. At one point in his *Excuse à MM les Nicodémites,* he likens idolaters with latrine cleaners, who cannot understand why people find them so foul-smelling. "Hardened by habit, they sit in their own excrement, and yet believe they are surrounded by roses."[23]

Undergirding Reformed belief in the inappropriateness of representing the divine in physical form was the Platonic dualism between matter and spirit, communicated to the leading Reformed theologians via Erasmus and Lefèvre d'Étaples.[24] Here Lutheran orthodoxy would always part company with Reformed, as subsequent Lutheran theologians not only retained Luther's acceptance of paintings and sculptures in church so long as they did not become cult objects, but also developed the eucharistic doctrine of ubiquity to explain how Christ could be physically present in the bread and wine of communion. The Lutherans also preserved the dominant medieval system of numbering the Ten Commandments, which subsumed the prohibition against graven images within the first commandment ("Thou shalt have no other gods before me") and typically did not even cite the words warning against idolatry in basic expositions of the commandments. The Reformed, by contrast, elevated the prohibition of

20. Charles Garside Jr., *Zwingli and the Arts* (New Haven, 1966), pp. 76-178; Stirm, pp. 138-53; Scavizzi, pp. 83-102; Eire, pp. 73-86; Michalski, pp. 51-59.

21. Frank Muller, "Bucer et les images," in *Martin Bucer and Sixteenth Century Europe,* ed. Christian Krieger and Marc Lienhard (Leiden, 1993), pp. 227-37.

22. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 1.11. In quoting from the *Institutes,* I have generally relied upon the translation of John T. McNeill and Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia, 1960), but I have occasionally ventured my own translation. The most extended secondary discussion of Calvin's views on art, although heavily apologetic in character, may be found in Léon Wencelius, *L'esthétique de Calvin* (Paris, 1937). See also Eire, pp. 195-233; Stirm, pp. 161-228; Michalski, pp. 59-73.

23. Quoted in Eire, p. 220.

24. Highlighted well in Eire, passim, esp. pp. 31-36, 168-77.

graven images to the rank of a separate commandment, a reorganization of the Decalogue that they could make without spoiling the round number of ten commandments by at the same time bundling into a single rule the prohibition against coveting one's neighbor's house, wife, children, servants, or goods. These prohibitions were split between two commandments in the Catholic and Lutheran versions.[25]

The particularly intense Reformed concern with the danger of idolatry and the consequent emphasis on the need to banish images from churches was codified in many Reformed confessions and church ordinances. The Tetrapolitan Confession of the South German cities of 1530 asserted that "when all have begun to adore [images] they should be universally removed from the churches, on account of the offence which they occasion."[26] The Heidelberg Catechism included the following questions and answers:

> Should we, then, not make any images at all?
>
> God cannot and should not be pictured in any way. As for creatures, although they may indeed be portrayed, God forbids making or having any likeness of them in order to worship them, or to use them to serve him.
>
> But may not pictures be tolerated in churches in place of books for unlearned people?
>
> No, for we must not try to be wiser than God, who does not want his people to be taught by means of lifeless idols, but through the living preaching of his word.[27]

The Second Helvetic Confession likewise forbade depicting the person of Christ or employing pictures instead of the Bible to teach the laity.[28] Elizabethan legislation of 1559 required the destruction of all "monuments of feigned miracles, pilgrimages, idolatry and suspicion" and criticized "abused images, tables, pictures, and paintings," although the Thirty-nine Articles of the faith were silent on the matter.[29] The church order established in Scotland in 1560 that subsequently became known as the first

25. See especially Stirm, pp. 17-22, 134-40, 154-61, 235-39.

26. Arthur C. Cochrane, ed., *Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth Century* (Philadelphia, 1966), p. 80.

27. Cochrane, p. 324.

28. Cochrane, pp. 229-30.

29. John Phillips, *The Reformation of Images: Destruction of Art in England, 1535-1660* (Berkeley, 1973), p. 114; Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts*, vol. 1, *Laws against Images* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 298-302. These two works offer an excellent guide through the full, complicated history of English legislation concerning images, set in the larger context of the debates inspired by Lollardy and the Reformation.

Book of Discipline ordered the abolition of idolatry, including the "adoration of images and the keeping and retaining of the same."[30]

It is hard to overemphasize the force and significance of the anti-idolatrous impulse in shaping Reformed attitudes toward the visual arts. Certain sacred images had become the objects of passionate veneration in the later Middle Ages. Many other works of art were used in devotion to help believers visualize beloved religious figures or events such as the episodes of the Passion for use in contemplative prayer. Representations of sacred scenes or figures were justified as the Bible of the poor, and the rich decoration of churches was taken to be a worthy expression of human love for the divine. When Reformed theologians attacked these practices, they cut to the heart of late medieval religious culture and achieved one of their most powerful transvaluations of values. No other rallying cry appears to have mobilized crowds as galvanically across the length and breadth of Europe as the cry to purge the churches of their idols.[31] Théodore de Bèze declared at the colloquy of Saint-Germain in 1562 that the abuse of images was a key reason why he and many others left the Catholic Church.[32] Students of the various iconoclastic episodes that dotted the history of the Reformation have observed that the church purifiers often displayed a clear hierarchy of concerns. Sculptures were attacked first and destroyed most consistently since they particularly lent themselves to personification and veneration; paintings occupied something of a middle position; and stained glass was most often spared, in some cases because it was deemed least likely to become the object of behavior deemed idolatrous, in others simply because it was difficult to reach and costly and time-consuming to replace.[33]

The Reformed castigation of idolatry, furthermore, was quickly reinforced by an interpretation of Christian history that saw the reintroduction

30. James K. Cameron, ed., *The First Book of Discipline* (Edinburgh, 1972), p. 95.

31. Martin Haas, "Der Weg der Täufer in de Absonderung. Zur Interdependenz von Theologie und sozialen Verhalten," in *Umstrittenes Täufertum 1525-1975. Neue Forschungen*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Goertz (Göttingen, 1975), p. 69; Claire Cross, *Church and People, 1450-1660* (London, 1976), pp. 76-77; Eire, p. 159. Many excellent studies have recently been devoted to the place of images in pre-Reformation devotional life and the dynamics, motivation, and significance of Reformation iconoclasm. In addition to the works already cited, see especially Solange Deyon and Alain Lottin, *Les 'Casseurs' de l'été 1566: L'iconoclasme dans le nord de la France* (Paris, 1981); David Freedberg, *Iconoclasm and Painting in the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1566-1609* (New York, 1987); R. W. Scribner and M. Warnke, eds., *Bilder und Bildersturm im Spätmittelalter und der frühen Neuzeit* (Wiesbaden, 1990); Olivier Christin, *Une révolution symbolique: L'iconoclasme huguenot et la reconstruction catholique* (Paris, 1991); Belting; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven, 1992); Lee Palmer Wandel, *Voracious Idols and Violent Hands: Iconoclasm in Reformation Zurich, Strasbourg, and Basel* (Cambridge, 1995).

32. Donald Nugent, *Ecumenism in the Age of the Reformation: The Colloquy of Poissy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), p. 193.

33. Muller, p. 231; Christin, pp. 152-54.

of false forms of worship into the church as an ever-present danger against which constant vigilance was necessary. In this view, to whose elaboration Zwingli, Bullinger, and Calvin all contributed important elements, the idolatrous practices of the church of Rome had gradually corrupted the pristine worship of the early church as a consequence of the innate human tendency to depict God in human form and to wish to demonstrate reverence in new manners. Since such impulses were basic elements of human nature, constant vigilance was necessary lest worship, once properly reformed, be corrupted anew. The call to such vigilance provoked continuing, anxious scrutiny of the legitimacy of different artistic practices and could generate some extremely strict definitions of what might constitute idolatry, as in William Prynne's later warning against stained glass — "Popery may creep in at a glasse-window" — or in the reticence of a number of churchmen in Zurich in 1550 to allow the painting or export of portraits of the city's leading theologians, lest "a window to idolatry might therefore be opened to posterity."[34] Patrick Collinson has even argued that English Protestantism passed through a two-stage process of development that took it from iconoclasm to outright iconophobia. At first, the cause of the Reformation was willing to embrace existing cultural forms and to use them for its own purposes, as was done for instance by employing certain forms of visual propaganda for the Protestant cause. After about 1580, however, suspicion of possibly illegitimate uses of images became so intense that what Collinson characterizes as "visual anorexia" set in. He illustrates his thesis with several telling episodes. When a Flemish ship ran aground off Sussex during the Civil War, the parliamentary authorities who impounded it sputtered with indignation at the paintings in its cargo, including a "monstrous" image of the Trinity. The 1610 devotional work entitled *Contemplative Pictures with Wholesome Precepts* was in fact a blind emblem book with no pictures.[35]

While recent scholarship has made abundantly clear the depth of Reformed concern at the misuse of images and the powerful iconoclastic impulses that this encouraged, this scholarship has also underscored a second point of equal importance: If Reformed warnings against idolatry should not be underestimated, neither should they be taken to constitute a blanket condemnation of all use or enjoyment of the visual arts. On the contrary, Zwingli wrote in 1525 that "No one is a greater admirer than I of paintings and statuary." He was willing to allow stained glass in churches, and felt that images of a historical nature, including historical episodes

34. Michalski, p. 56; Mary G. Winkler, "A Divided Heart: Idolatry and the Portraiture of Hans Asper," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 18 (1987): 222-23.

35. Patrick Collinson, *From Iconoclasm to Iconophobia: The Cultural Impact of the Second English Reformation* (Reading, 1986), esp. pp. 22-25. Collinson restates much of his argument in *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York, 1988), pp. 45-51.

from the Bible, were appropriate for private homes, where the same rules did not apply as in the decoration of churches.[36] Calvin and after him the great English theologian William Perkins likewise stressed the distinction between private homes and churches, allowing biblical scenes in private households.[37] In his extensive treatment of the dangers of idolatry in the *Institutes,* Calvin also paused for a moment to state, "I am not so scrupulous as to think no images are to be tolerated." "Only those things are to be sculpted or painted which the eyes are capable of seeing," he quickly added; "let not God's majesty, which is far above the perception of the eyes, be debased through unseemly representations." Histories, trees, landscapes, and persons were all fit subjects for paintings. "The histories are instructive; the others are only to give pleasure."[38] The tradition of defending the appropriateness of most sorts of pictures in private homes continued to define the majority position within Reformed ranks into the seventeenth century. In the first part of the century, for instance, the Dutch Reformed theologian Jacobus Trigland defended the private possession of paintings, except for those that contained naked figures, against Quaker criticisms that the possession of all pictures whatsoever was sinful.[39] A suspicious, begrudging quality marks certain of these statements about the permissible uses of the visual arts, and they do not add up to a very detailed positive program or set of guidelines about how the skills of painters or sculptors are to be used, but they demonstrate an interest in and appreciation of the visual arts within defined boundaries.

Additional aspects of the attitude of leading Reformed theologians toward the appropriate uses of the visual arts may be inferred from the nature of certain works of art produced in the cities and regions over which they exercised so much influence. Thus, the growing volume of works of devotion and propaganda produced in Geneva during Calvin's lifetime for export throughout western Europe included works of graphic satire or propaganda, among them no fewer than nine editions of a reworked version of Lucas Cranach's famous antipapal visual satire, the *Passional Christi und Antichristi.*[40] As the powerful Company of Pastors is not known to have made any protest about this work, it can be assumed that Calvin accepted

36. Huldreich Zwingli, *Commentary on True and False Religion,* ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson and Clarence Nevin Heller (Philadelphia, 1929), pp. 330-37, esp. p. 337; Garside, p. 76; Michalski, p. 56.

37. Wencelius, p. 166; Aston, p. 451.

38. *Inst.* 1.11.12.

39. R. B. Evenhuis, *Ook dat was Amsterdam,* vol. 2, *De Kerk der Hervoming in de Gouden Eeuw* (Amsterdam, 1967), p. 131.

40. Paul Chaix, "Un pamphlet genevois du XVIe siècle: l'*Antithèse* de S. DuRosier: Recherche iconographique," in *Mélanges offerts à M. Paul-E. Martin* (Geneva, 1961), pp. 467-82; Philip Benedict, "Of Marmites and Martyrs: Images and Polemics in the Wars of Religion," in *The French Renaissance in Prints* (exhibition catalogue, Los Angeles, 1994), pp. 117-20.

recruiting the talents of woodcutters or engravers to aid in the spread of Reformation ideas (see Betsey Rosasco's article, pp. 231-42 in this volume). Illustrated Bibles produced in both Strasbourg and Zurich in the early Reformation were characterized by far greater richness and originality of illustration than those printed in Wittenberg at the same time. Bucer and Zwingli's insistence that all instruction in God's word pass through the medium of Scripture thus did not preclude illustrated Scriptures, although the production of illustrated Bibles would be discouraged in Geneva after 1566 because the illustrators were introducing improper novelties into their plates.[41] Vernacular emblem books with illustrations also began to appear in England from 1580 onward, the date when Collinson diagnoses the onset of visual anorexia. These were used even in advanced Protestant circles to drive home moral and spiritual lessons. Within limits, then, images continued to be used within Reformed circles for meditative and didactic purposes of a religious character.[42]

As Tessa Watt has persuasively shown, Collinson's larger thesis that Reformed suspicion of images bred nothing less than visual anorexia in English culture after 1580 cannot be accepted. In permitting only certain forms of visual material within devotional literature, Reformed theology may have had significant consequences for the character of religious practice and the religious imagination. Barbara Lewalski has suggested that where Catholic devotional practice encouraged believers to meditate upon or to summon up in their minds religious scenes, with which they were then to develop a vicarious personal identification, English Protestant works of devotion encouraged believers to apply the salvific or moral implications of biblical scenes to their own lives, to focus, in other words, not on the scene itself but upon its implications for belief and behavior.[43] The manuals of practical devotion that began to multiply within the Reformed tradition from the late sixteenth century onward did not seek to evoke mental images as consistently as their Catholic counterparts, or so at least some selective reading in the genre seems to indicate. Yet in assessing Collinson's thesis, it must be remembered that sixteenth-century England was a technological backwater with few graphic artists or highly skilled painters, where most of such painting as was done took the form of wall paintings that have subsequently been largely obliterated rather than framed canvases of a character and quality likely to have survived down to the present day. Within this artistically underdeveloped society, Watt's careful inventory of all visual works in circulation reveals their continued

41. Muller, p. 234; W. Deonna, *Les arts à Genève des origines à la fin du XVIIIe siècle* (Geneva, 1942), p. 300.

42. Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 138, 238-53; Hambrick-Stowe, pp. 29ff.; Rosemary Freeman, *English Emblem Books* (London, 1967).

43. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton, 1979), chap. 4.

and even expanded production in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth century. The subject matter of most of this work fell within the admittedly restrictive parameters set by the dominant Reformed consensus within the English church at the time, but the trend was toward the expansion of the volume and variety of images in circulation in English society, not toward its desiccation.[44] A larger methodological point is illustrated here. Scholars have recurrently attributed the absence or only modest production of certain kinds of images in Calvinist regions to Reformed concern about the dangers of idolatry, yet the cause may often have been the simple absence of the relevant traditions or technology. Questions of this sort cannot be discussed outside the context of the highly regionally differentiated economic geography of European artistic production at the time.[45]

Issues of church architecture other than the appropriateness of images in churches generated much less discussion than questions of painting and sculpture among the early Reformed theologians, for the simple reason that the initial thrust of the Reformation involved taking over already constructed Catholic churches and adapting them for properly reformed worship, rather than establishing new churches whose physical form required extended attention. Calvin nonetheless warned in the *Institutes* against confusing the physical structures of church buildings with God's proper dwelling place and asserted that "What is bestowed upon the adornment of churches . . . is wrongly applied if that moderation is not used which both the nature of sacred things prescribes and the apostles and other holy fathers have prescribed." Such was hardly the case in the Roman church, where money was squandered on church buildings that ought to go to God's living temples, the poor.[46] The Second Helvetic Confession also specified a modest architectural program. "The places where the faithful meet are to be decent, and in all respects fit for God's Church. Therefore, spacious buildings or temples are to be chosen, but they are to be purged of everything that is not fitting for a church. And everything is to be arranged for decorum, necessity, and godly decency. . . . All luxurious attire, all pride, and everything unbecoming to Christian humility, discipline and modesty are to be banished from the sanctuaries and places of

44. Watt, pp. 41-42, 131-253, 324-25.

45. Another example to illustrate this point: the leading expert on early French evangelical propaganda, Francis M. Higman, attributes the smaller quantities of illustrated propaganda produced in Geneva than in Germany in the early years of the Reformation to the distinctive Reformed theology of images. Higman, "Le domaine français 1520-1562," in Jean-François Gilmont et al., *La Réforme et le livre, L'Europe de l'imprimé (1517–v. 1570)* (Paris, 1990), pp. 121-23. But French propaganda in defense of the Catholic Church was also very sparing in its use of visual materials until the last decades of the century. The paucity of illustrated Reformation propaganda produced in Geneva or France probably should be attributed primarily to the rarity of French-speaking woodcutters and engravers and the still far more limited uses to which their technologies were put in Francophone than in Germanophone Europe.

46. *Inst.* 3.20.30, 4.5.18.

prayer of Christians. . . . Let all things be done decently and in order in the church, and finally, let all things be done for edification."[47]

If these were the theological principles of the various Reformed theologians and confessional statements with regard to the practice of the visual arts, how energetically did the churches actually seek to ensure that the artists within their ranks followed these precepts? Several early synods of the French Reformed churches legislated about such matters, the 1562 synod of Orléans decreeing that printers, painters, and other members of the faith should not make anything that would abet Roman superstitions, and the 1567 synod of Verteuil warning painters, sculptors, and masons against making anything that was in any way idolatrous.[48] In 1613 the presbytery of Glasgow censured a painter who had recently painted the crucifix in many houses, "quhilk [which] is liklie . . . to turne the hearts of the ignorant to idolatrie."[49] Also in 1613, the elders of the church of Amsterdam spoke to the sculptor Hendrik de Keyser and got him to cease working on a statue of Saint John the Evangelist for a church in Den Bosch (see Ilja Veldman's article, pp. 397-420 in this volume) that they feared would be "misused for idolatry by all who come to the church."[50] A generation earlier, the consistories of both Le Mans and Nîmes took similar action on several occasions against goldsmiths or other artisans working on Catholic liturgical objects or churches, with the Le Mans consistory even offering in 1561 to compensate one goldsmith for his financial loss if he would renounce a commission to produce a silver crucifix.[51] Thus, measures were passed that entered into the disciplinary system of the Reformed churches, and disciplinary agencies occasionally acted to uphold these measures.

But it does not appear that these agencies were especially energetic in the quest to dissuade craftsmen from accepting idolatrous commissions. At any rate, they did not stop Reformed artists from producing monuments of idolatry. Biographies of Calvinist artists living in majority Catholic countries in the seventeenth century have meanwhile shown that many were quite willing to accept commissions from the Catholic Church that entailed the violation of the rules articulated by the French national synods, including commissions of such importance and public notoriety that the

47. Cochrane, p. 289.

48. Jean Aymon, *Tous les Synodes Nationales des Eglises Reformées de France* (The Hague, 1710), pp. 27, 73, 75.

49. Walter Roland Foster, *The Church before the Covenants: The Church of Scotland, 1596-1638* (Edinburgh, 1975), p. 98.

50. Volker Manuth, "Denomination and Iconography: The Choice of Subject Matter in the Biblical Paintings of the Rembrandt Circle," *Simiolus* 22 (1993-94): 242.

51. "Papier et registre du consistoire de l'Eglise du Mans réformée selon l'Evangile 1560-1561," in P.-A. Anjubault and H. Chardon, eds., *Recueil de pièces inédites pour servir à l'histoire de la Réforme et de la Ligue dans le Maine* (Le Mans, 1867), p. 7; Philippe Chareyre, "Le Consistoire de Nîmes 1561-1685" (thèse de doctorat d'etat, Université Paul Valéry, 1987), pp. 571-72.

local consistory could hardly have been unaware of them. The Huguenot Sébastien Bourdon, for instance, found himself in a violent quarrel with a rival artist after painting *The Fall of Simon Magus* for the high altar of Montpellier's cathedral — a building, ironically enough, whose refurbishing was largely necessitated by the wave of iconoclasm that accompanied the Protestant domination of Montpellier in 1621-22 — but there is no evidence that he fell afoul of the consistory for taking this commission. The equally Huguenot Salomon de Brosse collaborated in the design of an engraving in honor of Pope Gregory IV. Perhaps the most remarkable case of a Calvinist artist active in a Catholic artistic center was Jacob Jordaens, who was a member of the clandestine Reformed congregation that met in Antwerp from 1650 onward even as he continued to receive commissions for Catholic altarpieces that he painted in his lavish baroque.[52]

These last cases are extremely significant. One of the distinctive features of the sociology of the early Calvinist movement in places like France and the Low Countries was the disproportionately large number of converts who came from the ranks of the skilled artisans, including many painters, sculptors, and goldsmiths.[53] As the Reformed became a permanent minority in France and the southern Netherlands, it would appear that the consistories stepped lightly when it came to denying church members work that may have been necessary to their livelihood and professional success. It would remain a feature of the French art world in the seventeenth century that an important fraction of leading painters and graphic artists were Calvinists, including at least a fifth of the original members of the Academy of Painting and Sculpture.[54]

52. Charles Ponsonailhe, *Sébastien Bourdon* (Paris, 1886), pp. 175-79; Rosalyn Coope, *Salomon de Brosse and the Development of the Classical Style in French Architecture from 1565 to 1630* (University Park, Pa., 1972), p. 6; Menna Prestwich, "Patronage and the Protestants in France, 1598-1661: Architects and Painters," in *L'age d'or du Mécénat (1598-1661)*, ed. Roland Mousnier and Jean Mesnard (Paris, 1985), pp. 82-84; Christian Tümpel, "Jordaens, a Protestant Artist in a Catholic Stronghold: Notes on Protestant Artists in Catholic Centres," in *Jordaens (1593-1678)* (exhibition catalogue, Antwerp, 1993), vol. I, pp. 31-37.

53. Natalie Zemon Davis, "Strikes and Salvation at Lyon," in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975), p. 7; Joan Davies, "Persecution and Protestantism: Toulouse 1562-1575," *Historical Journal* 22 (1979): 40; Philip Benedict, *Rouen during the Wars of Religion* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 73-85, esp. p. 80; James R. Farr, "Popular Religious Solidarity in Sixteenth-Century Dijon," *French Historical Studies* 14 (1985): 202-4; Guido Marnef, *Antwerp in the Age of Reformation: Underground Protestantism in a Commercial Metropolis, 1550-1577* (Baltimore, 1996), pp. 176, 182.

54. Prestwich, p. 82. It must be said that reliable statistics on the full extent of Protestant representation within the ranks of seventeenth-century French artists remain difficult to establish. Prestwich asserts that seven of the first twenty-three members of the Academy were Protestant, but her count appears mistakenly to include Jean Michelin among the ranks of the original members. From the evidence provided in her article and in standard biographical dictionaries of the period, it is nonetheless certain that six of the first twenty-four members of the body were Huguenots. Such a figure reveals the continuing overrepresentation of

Calvinist artists are known who did not simply accept whatever commissions came their way, but sought scrupulously to avoid indecent subjects or improper representations of the divinity. In this context, scholars have recently highlighted the Amsterdam painter Jan Victors. A conscientious member of the Reformed church, Victors avoided in his oeuvre all depictions of Christ, shunned Old Testament scenes involving angels, and developed unusual interpretations of scenes such as the Finding of Moses in order to avoid the inclusion of nude figures.[55] It may also be significant in this context that while several of the leading French sculptors of the mid–sixteenth century, including Jean Goujon and Ligier Richier, joined the Reformed churches as they took shape in the kingdom after 1555, relatively few Huguenots appear to have gained prominence working in this medium in the seventeenth century.[56] If this impression is correct, the lower representation of Huguenots in this branch of the visual arts may have stemmed from a shared conviction that three-dimensional images were particularly likely to evoke the kinds of responses that the Reformed deemed idolatrous. The willingness of many Calvinist artists to paint altarpieces that expressed elements of Catholic theology or violated Reformed rules of what was appropriate in artistic representation nonetheless underscores how substantially the content of works of art at this time was controlled by those who commissioned them. The postromantic assumption that paintings express the particular viewpoint or sensibility of the artist who produced them simply does not apply to this period without significant quali-

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Protestants in this sector of the economy, for in this period Protestants made up only 5 to 6 percent of the total French population. But Nathalie Heinich, *Du peintre à l'artiste. Artisans et académiciens à l'age classique* (Paris, 1993), p. 149, reports considerably lower Protestant representation among the 140 individuals admitted to the Academy from 1648 to 1681: just 9 Huguenots. Unfortunately, her work fails to indicate the sources used in reaching this conclusion, which is more controversial than the author appears to be aware. In verifying the undeniably important representation of Protestants among the initial members of the Academy, I have relied upon the list of original academicians in Heinich, p. 240; Prestwich; François Bluche, ed., *Dictionnaire du Grand Siècle* (Paris, 1990); Emmanuel Bénézit, *Dictionnaire critique et documentaire des peintres, sculpteurs, dessinateurs et graveurs,* 2nd ed. (Paris, 1966); and E. and E. Haag, *La France protestante* (Paris, 1877-88).

55. Christian Tümpel, "Die Reformation und die Kunst der Niederlande," in *Luther und die Folgen für die Kunst,* ed. Werner Hoffman (Munich, 1983), p. 317; Manuth, p. 240.

56. Stanislas Lami, *Dictionnaire des sculpteurs de l'école française du moyen age au règne de Louis XIV* (Paris, 1898), and *Dictionnaire des sculpteurs de l'école française sous le règne de Louis XIV* (Paris, 1906), reveal just three sculptors identified as Protestant among fifty sculptors active between 1600 and 1680 for whom the most extensive biographical information is supplied (Jean Richier, d. 1625; Barthélemy Prieur, d. 1611; and Mathieu Lespagnandelle, 1617-89). The actual percentage of Protestants may, however, have been somewhat higher, with gaps in the available information accounting for some underrepresentation of Protestants in this sample. For only thirty of the fifty sculptors in question is burial in the Catholic Church noted, and in some of these instances the individual in question died after 1685, when this was the only legally tolerated church in the country.

fication. These cases also provoke further questions. Did Calvinist artists working for Catholic patrons seek to introduce details or inflections into their depictions of the subjects they were commissioned to produce that might have made their finished works slightly less offensive to Reformed sensibilities than they otherwise might have been? Just how, if at all, did artists of different religious affiliation working in the same places and the same sectors of the marketplace differ from one another in their choices of subject matter or style? Only through such detailed investigation of the oeuvre of artists of different religious affiliations working alongside one another in religiously plural localities will it become possible to determine just how the personal religious affiliation of individual artists may have affected the shape and content of their work. It is clear that too direct a link cannot simply be assumed.

If no simple relation can be assumed between the theological implications of a given canvas and the religious beliefs of the artist who produced it, there can be no doubt that wherever a Reformed Reformation triumphed, it immediately and substantially altered the conditions of artistic patronage and production. As early as 1525-26, painters and sculptors in both Strasbourg and Basel, two cities caught up in the ferment of the early evangelical movement, addressed pleas for help to the civic authorities. Since the pure word of God had come to be announced in their cities, they claimed, their business had fallen off. No more altarpieces or other works of art destined for churches were being commissioned, and several painters had already been obliged to abandon their craft. As Carl Christensen has demonstrated, the ranks of artists subsequently thinned significantly in four such South German and Swiss cities where the early evangelical movement bore a heavy Reformed imprint.[57] (See table 1 on page 39.) Sculptors particularly suffered. In another corner of Europe where Reformed churches became the state-supported ecclesiastical establishment, the Netherlands, the painter and art theorist Samuel van Hoogstraten still lamented the Reformation's negative consequences for his trade a century after the fact. "Art in Holland has not been entirely destroyed since the Iconoclasm of the previous century," he wrote in 1678, "but the best avenue has been closed to it, namely the painting of altars and histories for churches, as a result of which most painters have been obliged to paint modest things, even banalities."[58] Hoogstraten's assertion must be evaluated in light of the hierarchy of genres at the time that accorded history painting the greatest prestige, and it fails to mention that the numerous Catholic congregations that met throughout Holland behind the plain fa-

57. Carl C. Christensen, "The Reformation and the Decline of German Art," *Central European History* 6 (1973): 207-32.

58. Quoted in Tümpel, "Die Reformation und die Kunst der Niederlande," p. 314; Manuth, p. 239.

cades of ordinary houses in the seventeenth century commissioned their share of altarpieces and paintings.[59] Still, the most obvious consequence of a Reformed Reformation for the livelihoods of painters and sculptors was the virtual disappearance of ecclesiastical patronage. Since this was the source of many of the most valuable commissions for artists on the eve of the Reformation, the economic impact of this is hard to overstate. If today Holland appears to us as the Calvinist-dominated region where the painter's art weathered the crisis of the Reformation most successfully, this must be attributed to the extraordinary number of artists working in the broader region even before the Reformation, as well as to the high level of general prosperity in the newly independent Dutch Republic that gave rise to strong demand for individual ownership of paintings.

TABLE 1
Painters and Sculptors Appearing in the Public Records of Four Swiss and South German Cities, 1500-1575

	Painters			Sculptors		
City	1501-25	1526-50	1551-75	1501-25	1526-50	1551-75
Basel	33	14	13	13	4	2
Constance	15	10	10	11	0	5
Strasbourg	20	17	29	13	4	3
Ulm	21	14	14	13	8	2
Total	89	55	66	50	16	12

Note: Catholicism was restored in Constance after 1548, while Lutheran orthodoxy increasingly came to define the church life of Strasbourg and Ulm after 1555.

Source: Carl C. Christensen, "The Reformation and the Decline of German Art," *Central European History* 6 (1973), Appendix A.

In addition to eliminating most forms of ecclesiastical patronage, the triumph of a Reformed Reformation also generated dramatic shifts in the sorts of themes favored by those who purchased paintings for display in their homes. Several examinations of probate inventories from religiously divided communities have shown well the influence of religious affiliation both on the degree of interest in owning works of art and on preferences for different painted subjects owned by individuals. In seventeenth-century Metz, an outpost of French control in Lorraine with a significant Huguenot minority, Calvinism only modestly diminished the desire of its adherents

59. Xander van Eck, "From Doubt to Conviction: Clandestine Catholic Churches as Patrons of Dutch Caravaggesque Painting," *Simiolus* 22 (1993-94): 217-34.

to possess and display paintings in their homes. Canvases appear in virtually the same percentage of Calvinist and Catholic households, with the Catholic painting owners possessing a mean of 8.9 works, as opposed to 6.5 for the Huguenots. But the sorts of works favored by each group were quite different. While 61 percent of the paintings in Catholic hands were religious in character, just 27 percent of those owned by Calvinists were. In their choice of subject matter within the religious category, Metz's Huguenots shunned almost completely the canvases of the Virgin, the saints, the crucifixion, and the Magdalene that were the favored subjects of paintings in the Catholic homes of the city. Instead the largest single category of religious paintings that they owned was Old Testament histories; the second largest, New Testament stories; with depictions of the nativity coming third. The Calvinists were meanwhile more likely to own genre scenes, paintings of the twelve months of the year or the five senses, and mythological scenes, although these kinds of works, like landscapes and portraits as well — which appear evenly distributed between the two confessions — also appeared often in Catholic households.[60]

The contrast between Catholic and Calvinist preferences was less sharp in seventeenth-century Amsterdam, where secular genres that were less confessionally marked accounted for a far higher percentage of the total output of local artists. The pattern was nonetheless similar. Thirty-eight percent of the canvases owned by a sample of Amsterdam Catholic picture owners between 1620 and 1679 were religious in character, while just 16 percent of the canvases owned by Calvinists were. The most common works of a religious character owned by Amsterdam's Calvinists were once again Old Testament histories first, New Testament histories second, and nativities third, while Catholics demonstrated a preference for scenes of the crucifixion, the Virgin, and the saints.[61]

Clearly, these differences reflect important differences in the religious sensibilities of the two groups. The ordinary Calvinist inhabitants of these towns had largely accepted and internalized the Reformed insistence that biblical histories were the sorts of religious images most appropriate for private homes, while avoiding fairly scrupulously those images that were the classic accompaniments to private prayer and devotion or that represented elements of sacred history that the Reformed rejected as fabulous. These statistical investigations also demonstrate that the consequence of the triumph of a Reformed Reformation would have been to shift demand

60. Philip Benedict, "Towards the Comparative Study of the Popular Market for Art: The Ownership of Paintings in Seventeenth-Century Metz," *Past and Present* 109 (1985): 108-12.

61. John Michael Montias, "Works of Art in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam: An Analysis of Subjects and Attributions," in *Art in History/History in Art: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Culture*, ed. David Freedberg and Jan de Vries (Santa Monica, 1991), table 5 (figures combined and recalculated).

for works of art toward the production of intimate biblical histories and nonreligious genres such as landscapes and genre paintings, while diminishing interest in such previous staples of religious art as scenes of the crucifixion or the holy family. Christian Tümpel has declared that the Dutch tradition of intimate biblical histories epitomized by artists such as Rembrandt represents "a fundamental Protestant contribution to art," even though he also notes the important role played in the development of this genre by Rembrandt's Catholic teacher Pieter Lastman; the key, in his view, was that the genre developed within an artistic milieu whose contours and possibilities were shaped by Calvinism.[62]

More broadly, it might be hypothesized that Calvinism exercised its most powerful influence on the visual arts through the ways in which it restructured the contours of artistic patronage and altered dominant understandings of the nature and appropriate uses of works of painting and sculpture. From such a hypothesis flows a series of further questions that clearly merit additional study. Where similar sorts of works were purchased by Catholics and Protestants alike, were they understood and appreciated in a similar fashion? Did the Calvinist sensitivity to the dangers of iconoclasm create a different psychological relationship to visual images of all sorts than was characteristic of Catholics, or were the differences confined to the way in which certain sorts of works of art were thought of and used as aids to devotion? (There may yet remain some merit in Doumergue's argument that Calvinism promoted the emancipation and laicization of the work of art.) Were the differences in subject preferences between Catholics and Calvinists matched by differences in stylistic preferences? Insofar as shifting market preferences directed artists in Protestant lands toward exploring subjects such as landscape or genre scenes, did Protestant artists do so in a different manner from their Catholic counterparts specializing in similar themes?

In the realm of architecture, the chief consequences of the establishment of Reformed churches in any given area stemmed at least as much from the process by which these churches came into being and the degree of political power they obtained, as they did from the faith's relevant theological precepts. In those areas where Reformed churches became established as state churches, the Reformed simply took over existing church buildings and modified them for their own purposes. The volume of new church construction was very small over the subsequent centuries, as new churches were required only in new towns, in rapidly growing cities, or in the wake of disasters such as the Great Fire of London that gave Christopher Wren such an opportunity to leave his architectural mark on London. It was first and foremost in areas such as France, where the Reformed church became a legally tolerated minority faith expected to finance its

62. Tümpel, "Die Reformation und die Kunst der Niederlande," pp. 314-15.

own houses of worship, or in overseas territories newly colonized by Calvinist settlers, that substantial numbers of new Calvinist churches had to be constructed.

The challenge for those who designed these churches was to create buildings suited for the public activities of Calvinist worship, which centered primarily around the preaching of the word and secondarily around the eucharistic ritual. (The manner in which the Lord's Supper was celebrated differed among the Reformed, with the Eucharist generally being celebrated by parishioners being seated at a long table in Scotland and the Netherlands; with the congregation coming forward in a line to receive the elements and then standing at a table in Geneva, France, and the German Reformed churches; and with congregants served at their places in Zwinglian Switzerland and among the English Independents and New England Congregationalists.)[63] The challenge was also to respect the injunctions against wasting money unnecessarily on the ornamentation of the building itself while respecting the requirements of decorum, decency, and edification.[64]

To conclude, we have seen that among the members of Antwerp's clandestine Reformed church was the baroque painter Jacob Jordaens, whose commissioned altarpieces for that city's Catholic churches run as sharply counter as it is possible to imagine to what preconceived notions might suggest that "Calvinist art" ought to look like. Among the works of art listed in the postmortem inventories of seventeenth-century Metz were certain kinds of paintings that appear in Catholic and Huguenot households alike. Evidence such as this underscores that Calvinism did not constitute a distinctive cultural system of such force that all works of art produced by or for Calvinists expressed something distinctively Calvinist. Calvinist artists often worked for Catholic patrons. Even when they

63. James Hasting Nichols, *Corporate Worship in the Reformed Tradition* (Philadelphia, 1968), p. 49; Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans* (Westminster, 1948), p. 214; Davies, *The Worship of the American Puritans, 1629-1730* (New York, 1990), pp. 163-66.

64. Good architectural histories explore how builders met these challenges in three parts of Europe where the Reformed largely took over existing pre-Reformation church structures but constructed a modest but growing number of new churches over the subsequent centuries: M. D. Ozinga, *De Protestantsche Kerkenbouw in Nederland van Hervorming tot Franschen Tijd* (Amsterdam, 1929); George Hay, *The Architecture of Scottish Reformation* (Oxford, 1957); and Georg Germann, *Der protestantische Kirchenbau in der Schweiz von der Reformation bis zur Romantik* (Zurich, 1963). (This last work is also excellent on Huguenot church architecture in France and its international influence.) Brief historical surveys may be found in Andrew Landale Drummond, *The Church Architecture of Protestantism: An Historical and Constructive Study* (Edinburgh, 1934), pp. 19-140; James F. White, *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture: Theological and Historical Considerations* (New York, 1964), pp. 78-117. And see further G. W. O. Addleshaw and Frederick Etchells, *The Architectural Setting of Anglican Worship* (London, 1950); George Yule, "James VI and I: Furnishing the Churches in His Two Kingdoms," in *Religion, Culture, and Society in Early Modern Britain: Essays in Honour of Patrick Collinson*, ed. Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 182-208.

worked for Calvinist patrons or an anonymous market composed largely or exclusively of Reformed believers, they did so in genres and iconographic traditions that had developed gradually over time and were the common property of artists of all post-Reformation confessional families. The appeal of many works cut across confessional boundaries.

Evidence such as this now makes unconvincing the quick steps that interpreters once made from works of art to the ambient "national genius" or "religious life-systems" of the societies or the artists who produced them. It makes it difficult to sustain an interpretation of a pre-eighteenth-century artist's oeuvre in light of his or her personal confessional affiliation without a careful investigation of the artistic vocabulary more broadly characteristic of the artist's time and milieu and a clear demonstration that the artist employed that vocabulary in ways that different from peers of another religious outlook. But if the guiding assumptions and relevant parameters of the topic of Calvinism and the visual arts have thus changed since the generation of Kuyper and Doumergue, the questions that this topic opens up are no less interesting for scholars today, at a moment when art history is increasingly seeking to integrate itself with contemporary developments in cultural studies and sociocultural history, while historians of the early modern and modern worlds are increasingly recognizing the value of material objects and visual images as sources.

The Reformed tradition embraced a set of theological positions regarding the legitimacy of visual images within churches and the degree of ornamentation appropriate for church buildings that set it distinctively apart from Lutheranism as well as Catholicism. For the history of humanity's psychological relationship to images that David Freedberg and Hans Belting have begun to explore, that theology's stigmatization as profoundly offensive to God of certain manners of interacting with visual images that were so prevalent in pre-Reformation Europe is a central part of the story.[65] The issue of how those raised within this tradition subsequently used images of all sorts, and whether or not Calvinist theology served to promote a consistently different kind of relationship with visual materials, also stands as a potentially fruitful avenue of investigation within the sort of cultural history that Roger Chartier has recently pioneered, focused on practices of appropriation and the ways in which different groups use cultural materials common to a given culture as a whole.[66]

Wherever a Reformed Reformation triumphed, the principles of Reformed theology brought about the desiccation of ecclesiastical patronage

65. Belting; Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago, 1989).

66. See especially Chartier, "Culture as Appropriation: Popular Cultural Uses in Early Modern France," in *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Steven L. Kaplan (Berlin, 1984), pp. 229-53; and Chartier's two edited collections, *Pratiques de la lecture* (Marseille, 1985) and *Les usages de l'imprimé* (Paris, 1987).

for painters and sculptors and important shifts in the character of private demand for works of art, although only modest apparent decline in the level of such private demand. Where the course of the Reformation brought into existence a minority Reformed church that had to construct a new set of church buildings on its own, or where the processes of demographic and geographic expansion led to the need for new churches, it also confronted architects with a novel set of guidelines and constraints within which to carry out their church designs. The churches, for the most part, do not appear to have been consistently watchful about trying to ensure that those of their members who were artists themselves cleaved strictly to the principles that they deemed appropriate for the fabrication of art objects, leaving it largely up to the individual artists to make whatever compromises between the demands of the market and the demands of their faith that their consciences allowed. Nor were the guidelines shaping Reformed church architecture particularly detailed. The changing ways in which different architects or anonymous craftsmen interpreted the architectural commandments of this church tradition can thus illuminate how, in this domain of culture as in so many others, theological precept came to be blended with nonecclesiastical cultural elements and traditions, both vernacular and learned, and how this blend changed over time in ways that reveal broader processes of religious or cultural change within Calvinist communities. The ways in which individual artists reconciled the competing demands of theological precept and the wishes of the market or of individual patrons can illuminate the extent and limits of artistic autonomy in this era, as well as the force of theological prescription in the lives of individual believers. The transformations of the market that occurred wherever a Reformed Reformation triumphed and the ways in which this might have spurred artists to explore in new ways those genres that continued to be deemed acceptable represent important elements in the emerging economic history of artistic production that J. M. Montias has done so much to inspire.[67]

In short, the topic of Calvinism and the visual arts takes one today into a rich set of questions about processes of cultural appropriation, cultural change, and individual creativity within the constraints of inherited traditions, market forces, and institutional oversight. The topic raises important questions about the force of theological systems and their interaction with other elements of a culture. It asks its student to consider the changing uses and appreciations of images and material objects over time.

67. John Michael Montias, *Artists and Artisans in Delft: A Socio-Economic Study of the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton, 1982); Montias, "Cost and Value in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art," *Art History* 10 (1987): 455-66; Freedberg and de Vries, eds., especially the articles by de Vries, van der Woude, and Montias; Richard A. Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy, 1300-1600* (Baltimore, 1993).

Whether or not the investigation of such questions would amount in Calvin's eyes to more than just a way of beguiling the tedium of idleness is, of course, an open question. In light of the ways in which this corresponds to the aspirations and preoccupations of more than one contemporary scholarly discipline, it is nonetheless no wonder that the topic should suddenly appear an exciting one for scholars approaching the subject from a variety of methodological perspectives, even if the confessional impulses that once motivated so much discussion of this topic have now lost most of their force.

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