

JOHN CALVIN AND INERRANCY

Roger Nicole*

If anyone rightly deserves to be called "a man of the Bible," surely John Calvin will qualify. His dedication to the authority of the Word of God is articulated in the most careful manner in his *Institutes* I.vi-ix and IV.viii, not to speak of many other pages throughout the work. This is backed up by the steady purpose manifested from beginning to end to expound nothing but what is contained in Scripture. Thus while the organization of the *Institutes* is systematic in nature the contents are intended to be profoundly Biblical, and the references to Scripture simply abound. An index in the Beveridge translation actually has fourteen three-column pages (with many passages that are referred to more than once) with some sixty lines in each column. This amounts to over 2,500 references.¹ Calvin furthermore undertook to preach on Scripture covering the whole of the Bible, although the limits of his life did not permit him fully to carry out his program. To give some indication of the scope of this undertaking, one can note that he preached 200 sermons on Deuteronomy and 159 sermons on Job. In the 22 sermons on Psalm 119 the whole theme of the messages centers on the necessity and profitableness of Scripture. Moreover Calvin prepared and published extensive commentaries covering Genesis to Joshua, Psalms and all the OT prophets except Ezekiel 21-48 as well as the whole NT except for three books (2 John, 3 John, Revelation). In Calvin's treatises and letters we furthermore find ample evidence of his interest in and obedience to Holy Scripture.

Throughout this literature direct statements abound to the effect that God is the author of Holy Writ, that the sacred writers were penmen or mouths of God, that God dictated the Scriptures to them, and that the authority of the Bible is grounded in the reality of its divine authorship. There are literally scores of references that could be quoted and have been quoted in support of this view. The well-known comment of Calvin on 2 Tim 3:16 may serve as a sample of a position that could be illustrated from practically any of Calvin's writings:

This is the principle that distinguishes our religion from all others, that we know that God has spoken to us and are fully convinced that the prophets did not speak of themselves, but as organs of the Holy Spirit uttered only that which they had been commissioned from heaven to declare. All those who wish to profit from the Scriptures must first accept this as a settled principle, that the Law and the prophets are not teachings handed on at the pleasure of men or produced by men's minds as their source, but are dictated by the Holy Spirit. If anyone object and ask how this can be known, my reply is that it is by the revelation of the same Spirit both to learners and teachers that God is made known as its Author. Moses and the prophets did not ut-

*Roger Nicole is professor of theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts.

¹H. Clavier, *Etudes sur le Calvinisme*, p. 87, has a listing that totals 1755 references to the OT and 3098 to the NT, while McNeill and Battles yield still larger figures (2351 to OT, 3998 to NT).

ter rashly and at random what we have received from them, but, speaking by God's impulse, they boldly and fearlessly testified the truth that it was the mouth of the Lord that spoke through them. The same Spirit who made Moses and the prophets so sure of their vocation now also bears witnesses to our hearts that He has made use of them as ministers by whom to teach us. . . . This is the meaning of the first clause, that we owe to the Scripture the same reverence as we owe to God, since it has its only source in Him and has nothing of human origin mixed with it.²

In using the word "dictated," which we encounter frequently in Calvin's works, he apparently did not mean to indicate a special method that God would have used in communicating scriptural content to the mind of the human authors. The focus seems to be rather on the result—that is, on the fact that the text that issued from the hands of the sacred writers was as authentically God's own work as if it had been dictated word for word by him. How God managed to achieve this end without using a method that would have reduced the human authors to the function of robots is not elucidated. This problem, which upholders of plenary inspiration have to face again and again, indeed surfaces in the writings of Calvin, but we do not find here an attempt at a rational resolution of the tension.

Calvin's acceptance of the authority of Scripture is made apparent in a striking manner in his opposition both to Roman Catholic theology on the one hand and to "enthusiasm" on the other.

In his opposition to Roman Catholics it is noteworthy that he never chided them for yielding an excessive obedience to Scripture. On the contrary, he seemed to have been entirely willing to accept without reservation the authority of canonical Scripture that was passed on to him by the Catholic Church. The limits of the canon were yet to be examined and the Roman view in this respect revised, but when a book was acknowledged as canonical there never was on Calvin's part demurral with respect to its authority.

In his relation to "enthusiasts," on the other hand, Calvin strongly emphasized that our knowledge of God comes from Scripture alone and that we do not have private revelations that can come alongside of Scripture to replace or even supplement its teaching. He carried this same insight into the controversy about the Roman Catholic concept of tradition and insisted on refraining from speculation, even when there was a great allurements in that direction, in order to confine himself in sobriety. We may quote again the commentary on 2 Tim 3:16:

He is indirectly rebuking those triflers who were feeding the people with empty speculations as with wind. For the same reason we may today condemn all who abandon concern for edification and agitate over ingenious but profitless questions. Whenever ingenious trifles of that kind are introduced, they should be warded off with this phrase as with a shield, "Scripture is profitable." It follows from this that it is wrong to use it unprofitably.³

Under those circumstances it does seem strange that the precise nature of Calvin's doctrine of inspiration should be the subject of fairly intense contention. Since this doctrine is pivotal for the whole structure of the faith as Calvin conceived it, one would normally expect that he would have made his position on this

²J. Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 330.

³Ibid.

topic quite clear. It is the contention of this paper that he in fact did so and that those scholars who suggest that Calvin set forth some sharp limitations in his doctrine of the authority of Holy Scripture are really obscuring matters in an attempt to make it appear that Calvin's belief corresponded to their own and/or that their own doubts or questions simply reflect ambiguities or uncertainties that were already present with the Genevan Reformer.

It is a matter of plain fact that an ample body of literature has been produced on the subject. In Erichson's 1900 bibliography there were already six relevant titles, not counting some sixteen works dealing with Calvin as an exegete. Niesel's work, which carries us to 1959, adds another fifty-two titles, and D. Kempff still another seventy up to 1974.⁴ In the last eight years or so further contributions have been produced. Obviously within the framework of one presentation it would be impossible to deal in detail with this large mass of material. The Bibliographical Appendix is intended to provide a survey of the works accessible to me, with a brief evaluation of their relationship to Calvin's attitude toward inerrancy. At this point it will suffice to list in chronological order the names of those writers who contend that Calvin endorsed verbal inspiration and inerrancy and then those who deny it and therefore would claim that he could not properly have been admitted as a member of the Evangelical Theological Society.

Authors who claim that Calvin held to Biblical inerrancy (for details of the works see the Appendix; the names of those who themselves do not accept inerrancy are starred, and their support is especially significant since they are not concerned to assimilate Calvin to their own position) include L. Bost (1883), C. D. Moore (1893), *R. Seeberg (1905; 1920), *O. Ritschl (1908), *P. Lobstein (1909), *J. Orr (1909), B. B. Warfield (1909), *P. Wernle (1919), *A. M. Hunter (1920), *Herman Bauke (1922), D. J. de Groot (1931), C. Edwards (1931), T. C. Johnson (1932), A. Christie (1940), J. M. Nicole (1943), *R. Davies (1946), K. Kantzer (1950; 1957), *E. Dowey (1952), *B. A. Gerrish (1957), *R. C. Johnson (1959), J. K. Mickelsen (1959), A. D. R. Polman (1959), L. Praamsma (1959), J. Murray (1960), P. Hughes (1961), *H. J. Forstman (1962), J. I. Packer (1974; 1984), J. Gerstner (1978), R. A. Muller (1979), L. J. Mitchell (1981), J. Woodbridge (1982).

Authors who contend that Calvin rejected verbal inspiration and inerrancy include H. Heppé (1861), P. Menthonnex (1873), J. Cramer (1881), C. A. Briggs (1883; 1890; 1892), E. Rabaud (1883), A. Benezech (1890), J. Pannier (1893; 1906), E. Gauteron (1902), J. Chapuis (1909), E. Doumergue (1910), J. A. Cramer (1926), H. Clavier (1936), W. Niesel (1938), P. Lehmann (1946), F. Wendel (1950), T. H. L. Parker (1952), H. Noltensmeier (1953), R. S. Wallace (1953), W. Kreck (1957), J. K. S. Reid (1957), J. T. McNeill (1959), L. de Koster (1959; 1964), R. C. Prust (1967), F. L. Battles (1977), R. Stauffer (1978), J. Rogers and D. McKim (1979), D. W. Jellema (1980).

Among these a number hold to a high view of Scripture, and most attempt to claim Calvin as an upholder of their own position. A notable case in point is found in the recent volume by Rogers and McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*. Their contention is that Calvin by a prodigious feat of scholarship liber-

⁴A. Erichson, *Bibliographia Calviniana* (Berlin: Schwetschke, 1900) 108; W. Niesel, *Calvin Bibliographie 1901-1959* (Munich: Kaiser, 1961) 75-78 (nos. 1026-1076); D. Kempff, *Bibliography of Calviniana, 1959-1974* (Potchefstroom: I. A.C., 1975) 52-57.

ated himself from the fetters both of scholasticism and of the Roman Catholic Church's domination. He firmly grounded his theology on the authority of Scripture, seen as a norm of faith and practice given by God but intended exclusively for religious purposes. To the extent that matters of faith or ethics were at stake, therefore, God saw to it that the Scriptures would be wholly reliable, but this divine watchcare did not extend equally to matters that are irrelevant to the faith, such as historical, geographical or scientific details. In these areas, Rogers and McKim believe, Calvin held that the writers were permitted to function in terms of their limited knowledge and may therefore have incorporated into the record erroneous data. Specifically in his commentaries, it is urged, Calvin did own that some apparent discrepancies were due to human frailty. The freedom with which the OT quotations are adduced in the NT, a freedom that Calvin recognized in a number of places, is considered also to support this contention.

In response to this whole line of approach one can proceed in two distinct directions.

One can examine in detail the examples adduced to evidence that Calvin acknowledged errors in the original text of Scripture. Indeed one must examine those, since obviously if there are express statements that error exists, even in fact one such express statement, this will provide a substantial basis for a claim that Calvin's doctrine of authority did not include or imply an affirmation of inerrancy. This of course assumes as a presupposition that Calvin was consistent with himself and that he did not affirm in one place what he denied in another. Those who know his writings appear to be fairly well agreed that this is not an unreasonable assumption. This task has often been performed, and I may be forgiven if I do not in this paper undertake to go over the whole gamut of alleged acknowledgments of error.⁵

Or one may proceed by examining how the alleged positions of "limited inerrancy" (or "limited errancy," since these two are generally synonymous) would fit in the total scheme of Calvin's life work. It is particularly along this line that I would like to make some comments. My suggestion is that five enigmas of major proportion surface if it is to be assumed that Calvin did not hold to the doctrine of inerrancy.

The first enigma relates to the proposition that Calvin would have distanced himself from the current scholastic doctrine of inspiration, which involved inerrancy and which is acknowledged to have been widely prevalent in the first half of the sixteenth century, but would not have sensed any need to articulate the fact that he was rejecting the inerrancy implication. We are confronted therefore with the very implausible suggestion that while Calvin was expressing strongly his differences with the Roman Catholic position on one hundred varied subjects, sometimes in a way that appears to us excessively contentious, he would have allowed their view of Scripture to remain virtually unscathed. Surely if Calvin chided the Roman Catholics in this area it is not for having been too slavishly attached to scriptural statements but rather for having failed to follow with sufficient care the mandates of Scripture or to confine themselves to what Scripture stated. It would seem passing strange that someone who had managed by a great effort of faith to emancipate himself from the thralldom of a slavish acceptance of Scripture would

⁵In the Bibliographical Appendix there are some comments relating to this line of approach.

so utterly fail to take issue with those who remained under that yoke. It could of course be suggested here that Calvin feared that any attack on his part on that point would make his teaching unacceptable and that on the ground of expediency he felt it wiser not to be forthcoming with respect to his questions concerning the authority of Scripture. But this line of reasoning appears on the face of it subject to serious objections in view of the candor with which Calvin was wont to assert what he understood to be the truth.

A second enigma that arises when the assumption is made relates to the fact that Calvin inveighed against those—like Servetus, Castellion, etc.—who failed to accept the authority of Scripture or to take it sufficiently seriously. On the other hand he also took strong issue with those who wanted to accept as authoritative anything that was not clearly mandated by Scripture. In protesting therefore against both inroads into scriptural authority and excrescences beyond it, Calvin articulated strongly his own confidence in and acceptance of the principle of *sola scriptura*. To have functioned in this way while holding *sub rosa* reservations about the complete acceptance of divine inspiration would seem to be the height of hypocrisy, and it is difficult to imagine that this would have characterized Calvin.

The third enigma relates to Calvin's ability to function in fellowship with people—like Peter Martyr, Zanchius and others—who confessedly recognized the doctrine of inspiration even to the point of accepting some scholastic formulations of it. We never find a word of criticism that he offers with respect to their stance. Surely if Calvin had perceived that this strong view of inspiration could be the origin of serious deviations in the Church he would not have hesitated to express his displeasure. What is perhaps even more significant is that Calvin recommended as his successor Theodore of Beza, who is thought by practically all scholars to have been oriented toward a scholastic methodology and whose views of Scripture do manifestly fit with the framework of inerrancy. It cannot be pleaded that Calvin made such a recommendation on the basis of ignorance, for he had ample opportunity to be thoroughly acquainted with Beza's views and methods. It is through Calvin's influence that Beza was called to the Academy of Lausanne and that later on he was placed at the head of the Academy of Geneva (1559)—a project that was supremely important in Calvin's eyes. During the five last years of Calvin's life Beza shared with him the responsibilities of the pastoral ministry in Geneva. With Calvin's blessing Beza succeeded him as the pastor *primarius* of that city, where his influence prevailed over well nigh forty years. To imagine that Calvin would in this way recommend someone whose views were highly objectionable or that he would fail to see the gap between Beza and himself appears simply ludicrous, especially since on Beza's part the proffering of such views would seem to be a protest against Calvin's own approach. In fact, however, if any objection can be raised against Beza's biography of Calvin it is that it is tinged with some elements of hagiography. Thus Beza no more than Calvin perceived a big gap between their respective views.

The fourth enigma arises from the fact that even long after Calvin's death nobody appears to have imagined that he held anything but the strictest views of inspiration. People who did not accept such views then ordinarily desired to distance themselves from Calvin. The effort to corral Calvin in support of limited inerrancy appears to be a relatively recent development that is made the more

implausible by the fact that it arises so late in the history of thought. It seems difficult to accept the view that the position of Calvin was misunderstood by friends and foes alike and that we had to await the end of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries in order to recapture his true standpoint. If indeed Calvin held the position that Rogers and McKim for instance ascribe to him, we must also believe that he managed to keep it in hiding not only during his lifetime but some three hundred years beyond his death. It is assuming a miracle that it would then be recovered without the discovery of any new sources to which previous authors did not have access. In fact the position does not appear documented by any reliable statements of Calvin or his contemporaries. The primary reason for asserting that Calvin had such views appears grounded in the desire that many feel that they can line up Calvin on their side, but this would seem to be the result of wishful thinking rather than of objective scholarship. We are certainly grateful that some people do desire to have Calvin on their side, but this desire is not an automatic warrant for claiming him in support of positions that can scarcely be documented in the texts.

The fifth enigma relates to the nature of the evidence advanced to prove that Calvin did not hold to inerrancy.

Calvin, it is urged, acknowledged the freedom with which the NT writers quoted the OT—and so do modern inerrantists—but he showed great concern to manifest the harmony in meaning and the propriety of the methodology of the NT writers.

Calvin, it is urged, acknowledged approximations, lack of precision in chronological details, accommodations to ancient world-and-life views in the description of natural phenomena—and so do modern inerrantists—but he labored in such cases to show the appropriateness of the practice of the Biblical writers (cf. e.g. 1 Cor 10:8).

Calvin, it is urged, used the same strong language with respect to preaching as he did concerning Scripture—and so may modern inerrantists—to the extent that the preaching conforms to the pattern of sound words established by Scripture. For Calvin, preaching was expounding Scripture and nothing else.

Calvin, it is urged, was concerned about the doctrine and the ethics of the Word and did not waste his time with peripheral details—and here also modern inerrantists do not have good ground to part company with him—but that does not mean that he viewed contradictions in minor matters to be a possibility in the autographic Scriptures. Hence his studied efforts to correlate passages, notably in his *Commentary on the Harmony of the Gospels* but also throughout his writings. Some people deem his explanations farfetched, but the more strained the explanations that he gives the more evident his concern to show the unity and harmony of Scripture.

Calvin, it is urged, stated that there were mistakes in the Bible and that it should be corrected—and this modern inerrantists will not say concerning any autographic text—but the only two examples of this type adduced from Calvin's writings are his comments on Matt 27:9 and on Acts 7:16, and both of these are more naturally interpreted as emendations in textual criticism rather than a correction by Calvin of the original message. Surely if real acknowledgments of error existed in Calvin's writings, somebody among the twenty-eight scholars in my second list would have discovered them and quoted them to prove their point

rather than to leave the matter in suspense and keep quoting unconvincing passages.

I am so certain of my stance in this matter in terms of what I know of John Calvin that I am prepared at this point to offer a reward of \$100 to be paid to the first person who would present an authentic text of Calvin in which Calvin rejects the truthfulness of the autographic text of any statement of Scripture.⁶

⁶If a contention should arise as to the meaning of a text, an arbitrator acceptable to both parties should be selected to adjudicate the merits of the case. Obviously the passages referred to in the body of this essay and in the Bibliographical Appendix will not qualify, since I have already examined them and found them inconclusive if not counterproductive. I did not designate a higher figure, not because of a lack of assurance but because my financial limitations might make a larger offer incredible.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

Allison, Leon McDill. *The Doctrine of Scripture in the Theology of John Calvin and Francis Turretin*. Unpublished thesis. Princeton Theological Seminary, 1958, 106 pp.

I had no access to this work.

Battles, Ford L. "God was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity." *Int* 31(1977) 19-38.

This stimulating article by an accomplished Calvin scholar is well summarized in these words: "For Calvin, the understanding of God's accommodation to the limits and needs of the human condition was a central feature of the interpretation of Scripture and of the entire range of his theological work" (p. 19). Battles discusses the concept of "accommodation" in the rhetorical tradition and in the Church fathers, then in Calvin's *Institutes*. Accommodation is a dominant theme of God's ways with humanity. It is apparent in revelation, in the Law, in the Lord's prayer, in the sacraments, and supremely in the incarnation. No specific discussion of the inspiration of Scripture is contained in this article, but its relevancy to the subject is obvious. Battles in his preface to Roger/McKim protests against "the defensive, intransigent position of inerrancy that marks the handling of Scripture among certain twentieth-century children of the Protestant Reformation" (p. xv).

Bauke, Hermann. *Die Probleme der Theologie Calvins*. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1922, viii+108 pp.

In this work Bauke sets the thesis that Calvin was a paradoxical theologian and that his very strict doctrine of inspiration was in conflict with his view of the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

Benezech, August. *Théorie de Calvin sur l'Écriture Sainte*. Paris, 1890, 59 pp.

A thesis disputing that Calvin endorsed verbal inspiration. A list of errors allegedly acknowledged by Calvin is found on pp. 29-39. It is very similar to the evidence advanced later by Doumergue.

Bost, Léon. *L'Autorité des Écritures d'après l'Institution de la Religion Chrétienne de Calvin*. Lausanne: Bridel, 1883, 38 pp.

A brief thesis affirming that Calvin had an unqualified commitment to the authority of Scripture.

Briggs, Charles Augustus. In the first edition of *Biblical Study* (New York: Scribner, 1883, xv+506 pp.) stated that Luther and Calvin were prepared to acknowledge error in Scripture. He refers to Calvin's handling of OT quotations in Rom 10:6 and Heb 4:4 and to "the error of Matt. 27:9 in the citation of Jeremiah instead of Zechariah" (p. 141). This statement—which really was not well related to the subject of textual criticism that Briggs was discussing at that point—disappeared in the tenth very much enlarged edition which appeared in 1899 under the title *General Introduction to the Study of Holy Scripture*. In *Whither?* (New York: Scribner, 1890, xvi+303 pp.), however, he had referred back to this passage to support his claim that "it is well known that the Great Reformers recognized errors in the Scriptures and did not hold to the inerrancy of the original autographs" (p. 69). In *The Bible, the Church and Reason* (New York: Scribner, 1892, xiv+298 pp.) Briggs returned to this topic and instanced Matt 27:9 and Acts 7:16 as passages in which Calvin acknowledged error in Scripture (pp. 110-111). In an appendix he quotes twenty-three authors to this same effect: Calvin is no. 5, and references are made to his commentaries on Acts 7:16; Rom 10:6; Heb 11:21 (pp. 219-221). Murray is careful to consider this evidence in some detail and to give an account of it that shows that Briggs' contentions are by no means convincing (J. Murray, *Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960] 12-15).

Brubaker, Lauren Edgar. "A study of John Calvin's Doctrine of Revelation." Unpublished thesis. Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1942, 168 pp.

I had no access to this work.

Chapuis, J. *Le Témoignage du Saint-Esprit dans la Théologie de Calvin*. Lausanne: Bridel, 1909, 94 pp.

A thesis that undertakes to distinguish between Scripture and God's Word, the latter term being synonymous with "celestial doctrine." Chapuis asserts without proof that "Calvin never identifies Scripture with God's Word" (p. 91).

Christie, Alexander. "The Doctrine of Holy Scripture in Calvin and Brunner." *USQR* 52 (1940-41) 19-32, 116-127, 325-351.

A very careful comparison, with a rather full examination of passages where Calvin has been accused of admitting errors in Scripture (116-127).

Clavier, Henri. *Etudes sur le Calvinisme*. Paris: Fischbacher, 1936, 163 pp.

A well-documented study where Calvin is acknowledged "to incline at times toward a radical literalism." Clavier, however, resists this interpretation on the ground, he avers, that Calvin's exegetical practice as well as his view of "the Testimony of the Holy Spirit runs counter to it" (p. 28). In an interesting appendix (pp. 81-84) Clavier feuds against those who hold Calvin to have held to inerrancy (Wernle, Cornill, Eck, Viénot, Tschackert, O. Ritschl, R. Seeberg). He rehearses the difficulties pointed to earlier by Doumergue, some of which (division into chapters and verses, interpolations into the text by copyists) obviously do not relate to the autographs.

Cramer, J. "De Schriftbeschouwing van Calvijn." *Nieuwe Bijdragen op het Gebied van Godgeleerdheid en Wijsbegeerte* 3 (1881) 91-184.

While recognizing that Calvin held to a very strict doctrine of inspiration, Cramer seeks to establish that he was a pioneer in securing liberty for Biblical criticism. J. Cramer's son, J. A. Cramer, carried on in the same vein.

Cramer, J. A. *De Heilige Schrift bij Calvijn*. Utrecht: Oosthoek, 1926, iv+153 pp.

A very bold attempt to establish the thesis that Calvin viewed not every statement in the Bible but only the gospel of Jesus Christ as the Word of God. A whole chapter is

devoted to "Calvin's critical attitude toward Scripture" (pp. 116-138), but the examples adduced do not differ much from Doumergue's. A summary of Cramer's position is given in 24 theses (pp. 138-141).

A critical review of this book is given by S. Greijdanus in *Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift* 27/9 (1927) 353-366. Cramer's view is also sharply disputed in D. J. de Groot's thesis and in A. G. Honig, *Om Gods Heilig Woord* (Kampen: Kok, 1928, 38 pp.).

Davies, Rupert E. *The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers*. London: Epworth, 1946, 158 pp.

A detailed investigation dealing both with primary evidence and with various interpreters of Calvin, to whose views nearly half of the volume is devoted. Davies speaks of Calvin's "identification of the word of God with the Bible, and his ascription of supreme authority to it as such" (p. 109) and asserts that "Calvin committed himself to a completely verbal and mechanical theory of inspiration" (p. 114). This study also includes a treatment of Calvin's view of the authority of the Church and of the state.

Dean, Eric Thomas. "Calvin and Barth on Scripture and Tradition." Unpublished thesis. University of Chicago, 1959, 165 pp.

A summary is found in *Encounter* 13 (1962) 277-291.

de Groot, D. J. *Calvijns Opvatting over de Inspiratie der Heilige Schrift*. Zutphen: 1931, 181 pp.

A fine doctoral thesis with very numerous quotations of Calvin and an extensive discussion of the position of J. A. Cramer. De Groot argues that Calvin held to an organic view of inspiration, like that of A. Kuyper and H. Bavinck. This appears to be the most voluminous work in print on this subject. No bibliography and no index are provided.

de Koster, Lester. "Calvin's Use of Scripture." *The Reformed Journal* 9/6 (1959) 3-6.

De Koster contrasts Kantzer and Noltensmeier and then proceeds to advance quotations from Calvin with respect to dictation, accommodation, correction by Calvin of the inspired writers, inaccuracies, harshness of temper, and emphasis on general meaning rather than detail. The impression left by this collection of statements favors Noltensmeier rather than Kantzer. One could easily cull from Kantzer's work (let alone Calvin's works) a much longer list of passages in the other direction.

_____, "Living Themes in the Thought of John Calvin. A Bibliographical Study." Unpublished thesis. University of Michigan, 1964, viii+564 pp.

Chapter 4 of this work deals with Calvin's attitude to and interpretation of the Bible. It includes a survey of some of the literature covered in this Appendix and of some contributions not noted here (pp. 142-156); a bibliography of books and articles dealing with Calvin's view of authority, revelation, inspiration and interpretation with 64 entries numbered 807-870 (pp. 157-161); 14 excerpts from Calvin's works dealing with various aspects of the subject (pp. 162-166); a very significant addendum on "Calvin's Use of the Scriptures" (pp. 167-176), which contains the most extensive list known to me of some 227 passages from the *Commentaries* where "Calvin in some manner tampers with the text before him" (p. 169). Some of these are then classified under 5 headings: (1) God accommodates himself to the reader (p. 172); (2) Calvin corrects the writer for having made a mistake (p. 172); (3) he chides the writer for temper or inappropriate words (p. 173); (4) he expresses indifference as to what the writer says (p. 173); (5) he applies the test of what is meant, though it may not altogether harmonize with what is said (p. 173). The addendum closes with a list of passages from the *Commentaries* containing a strong endorsement of Scripture (pp. 173-176).

Obviously, it is category 2 that is really significant for the purpose of testing Calvin's

view of scriptural inerrancy, but I do not find anything here that would really qualify as an acknowledgment of error in the autographic text.

Doumergue, Emile. *Jean Calvin, Les Hommes et les Choses de son Temps*. IV. Lausanne: Bridel, 1910, 70-82 pp.

A chapter in the monumental eight-volume study of Calvin by a scholar of the first magnitude with decided conservative convictions. After a fine positive exposition of Calvin's acceptance of the divine inspiration and authority of Scripture (pp. 70-74) Doumergue seeks to prove that Calvin did not endorse a theopneustic view. This he documents in three ways: (1) The same language used of Scripture as the Word of God is used also with respect to preaching (p. 74); (2) the progressive character of Biblical revelation often acknowledged by Calvin militates against the plenary inspiration of the earlier parts (pp. 74-76); (3) in certain passages Calvin acknowledges difficulties, chronological reversals, and free quotations of the OT by NT writers (pp. 76-78). This list of difficulties constitutes the main source that later authors exploit, some with and others without acknowledgment, in order to document that Calvin did not hold to inerrancy. John Murray submitted all of these to a detailed scrutiny and found them notably wanting (pp. 22-31).

Dowey, Edward. *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1952, x+261 pp.

A very well documented study. Pages 90-105 deal with "the inspiration of the writers of the Bible" and after an elaborate discussion of the evidence Dowey concludes: "To Calvin the theologian an error in Scripture is unthinkable. Hence the endless harmonizing, the explaining and interpreting of passages that seem to contradict or to be inaccurate" (p. 104). "It is not, however, any given, specific and sacrosanct edition or translation of the Bible, but a hypothetical original document that is inerrantly inspired" (p. 105).

Edwards, Charles E. "Calvin on Inerrant Inspiration: Excerpts from Authorities." *BSac* 88 (1931) 465-475.

A brief article summarizing the presentations of Warfield and Moore.

Forstman, H. Jackson. *Word and Spirit. Calvin's Doctrine of Biblical Authority*. Stanford University Press, 1962, 178 pp.

Forstman distinguishes two strands in Calvin: knowledge of faith, and wider knowledge. For the former, "Calvin does not need and does not use a theory of verbal inspiration"; for the latter, he "both needs and is forced to use Scripture in such a way as to emphasize its literal inerrancy" (p. 65). The documentation is ample and a good bibliography is annexed (pp. 167-175).

Gauteron, Ellis. *L'Autorité de la Bible d'après Calvin*. Montauban: Orphelins, 1902, 92 pp.

A thesis emphasizing the authority of the doctrine of the Bible as contrasted to peripheral matters.

Gerrish, Bryan A. "Biblical Authority and the Continental Reformation." *SJT* 10 (1957) 337-360.

The study of Calvin is carried on pp. 348-357. After considering Calvin's emphasis on the sufficiency of Scripture, Gerrish discusses his approach to authority. He says, "For Calvin, in fact, the whole Bible is the 'Word of God'" (p. 353). "Calvin is obliged by his view of inspiration to think of the Scriptures as inerrant" (p. 354). "The authority of the Bible then, according to Calvin, rests upon its character as the verbally-inspired 'Word of God', dictated by the Holy Spirit" (p. 355).

Gerstner, John H. "The View of the Bible Held by the Church: Calvin and the Westminster Divines." *Inerrancy* (ed. Norman L. Geisler; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979) 383-410, 482-485.

A paper first prepared for the Chicago meeting of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, October 1978. On pp. 389-395 Gerstner surveys Calvin's view and what has been written about it and shows how those who assert that Calvin did not accept inerrancy commit the "phenomenal *non sequitur*" or the "accommodation *non sequitur*"—that is, they assume that the use of phenomenal language or of accommodation necessarily implies error. This assumption is palpably false.

Heppe, Heinrich. *Reformed Dogmatics*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1950, xiv+721 pp. (The original edition appeared in Elberfeld: Friderichs, 1861, vi+520 pp.)

Heppe states: "At the root of the original Reformed doctrine of inspiration lay the distinction *between*, at the root of the later church doctrine the identification of the concepts 'Word of God' and 'H. Scripture' [the English translation reads "H. Spirit," but this is obviously a mistake]. . . . God is described not so much as the 'author' of Scripture, as rather the author of the doctrine attested in it, which He Himself has announced to men (I.vii.4)."

Heppe does not provide any convincing text of Calvin to support this distinction, and it would be very easy to multiply passages where God is presented as the "author" of Scripture (cf. Dowey, pp. 91-92).

Hook, W. J. "Calvin on the Authority of the Word of God." Unpublished thesis. Trinity College, Dublin, 1965, 80 pp.

Hughes, Philip. "The Inspiration of Scripture in the English Reformers Illuminated by John Calvin." *WTJ* 23/2 (1961) 129-150.

A parallel is drawn here between the view of Calvin and that of some early English Reformers, notably Jewel, Pilkington, Tyndale and Whitaker. A remarkable concurrence is exhibited between them in support of plenary verbal inspiration.

Hunter, A. M. *The Teaching of Calvin*. Glasgow: Jackson, 1920, viii+311 pp.

Hunter devotes 30 pages to Calvin's attitude to and handling of the Scriptures (pp. 63-92). He contends that Calvin was a resolute advocate of inerrancy and was prepared to defend it by "frequent transparent evasions, jugglings, and violences" (p. 76). He gives examples where he charges Calvin as having recourse to such subterfuges. We do not concede that Calvin was wrong in all, or even any, of the instances adduced, but Hunter certainly makes a strong point that Calvin was keenly eager to validate the truth of Scripture even in small issues.

Jellema, Dirk W. "God's 'Baby-Talk': Calvin and the 'Errors' of the Bible." *Reformed Journal* 30/4 (1980) 25-27.

An article stressing strongly the principle of accommodation with numerous examples from Calvin's *Commentaries* where accommodation is invoked to explain anthropomorphisms or phenomenal language. No instance is noted where Calvin uses the term "error."

Johnson, Robert Clyde. *Authority in Protestant Theology*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959, 224 pp.

Pages 42-57 are devoted to Calvin. The two noetic offices of the Holy Spirit with respect to Scripture are carefully distinguished: (1) Inspiration means that God is the Author of Scripture; (2) witness means that God attests its authority to the believers. "It appears quite certain—recent denials of the fact notwithstanding—that Calvin ascribed

the verbal, conceptual substance of the original Biblical documents to God, acting through the Holy Spirit" (p. 50).

Johnson, T. C. "John Calvin and the Bible." *EvQ* 4 (1932) 257-266.

A brief article examining some of the texts where Calvin is alleged to have acknowledged errors in the Bible. Johnson argues that none of these provides cogent evidence to this effect, and he quotes a number of statements from the *Institutes* and the *Commentaries* in support of inerrancy.

Kantzer, Kenneth. "The Knowledge of God and the Word of God in John Calvin." Harvard Ph.D. thesis, 1950.

———, "Calvin and the Holy Scripture." *Inspiration and Interpretation* (ed. J. Walvoord; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) 115-155.

This article summarizes the research and conclusions of Kantzer's doctoral thesis. It is extremely well documented (165 footnotes in 40 pages) and discusses a great variety of issues including the need for special revelation (pp. 116-121), the case for Scripture as revelation (pp. 121-127), the witness of the Spirit (pp. 127-137), the method and extent of inspiration (pp. 137-148), the canon (pp. 148-152) and the use of Scripture (pp. 152-155). Kantzer concludes: "Calvin's loyalty to the written Scripture knows no bounds. For him the words of the Bible are the very words of God spoken through the prophets and apostles of long ago and now bringing unerringly to the souls of men the immediate voice of the living God with all the authority of the supreme Sovereign of the universe" (p. 155).

Kreck, Walter. "Wort und Geist bei Calvin." *Festschrift für Günther Dehn* (Neukirchen: Erziehungsverein, 1957) 167-181. French translation: "Parole et Esprit selon Calvin." *RHPR* 40/3 (1960) 216-228.

A thoughtful study pointing to the correlation of Word and Spirit in Calvin's theology.

Lehmann, Paul L. "The Reformers' Use of the Bible." *TToday* 3/3 (1946) 328-344.

This article deals with both Luther and Calvin. A key feature of these Reformers is their recognition of Jesus Christ as the center and content of the Biblical message. At times Lehmann appears to suggest that Biblical authority is restricted to what pertains to this message, and yet he writes that "the Reformers not infrequently speak about the Bible in ways that suggest its literal inerrancy" (p. 339).

Lobstein, P. "La Connaissance Religieuse d'Après Calvin." *RTP* 42 (1909) 53-110.

An article written by a proponent of symbolo-fideism and taking issue with Calvin on account of his doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture (p. 85).

Some important excerpts of this article have been republished in *Études sur la Pensée et l'Oeuvre de Calvin* (Neuilly: "La Cause," 1927) 113-153. In the same volume Lobstein asserts that "the Genevan Reformer has been, among Protestants, the creator of the dogma of the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures" (p. 104).

McNeill, John T. "The Significance of the Word of God for Calvin." *CH* 28/2 (1959) 131-146. (A reprint is paginated 1-16.)

A very lucid discussion in which McNeill first points to Jesus Christ as the Word of God personified. He is the center and theme of the message of Scripture attested by the Holy Spirit, and hence the OT and NT form one progressive deposit of revelation. While asserting the truth and authority of Scripture Calvin also stressed the importance of the human personality of the writers. Says McNeill, "Such a point of view does not harmon-

ize with a doctrine of the verbal inerrancy of Scripture—a doctrine which has been zealously embraced by some Calvinists with alleged support from Calvin” (p. 140). He proceeds to examine five passages of Calvin in which some have seen an endorsement of verbal inspiration (*Inst.* IV.viii.6, 9; *Com.* on 2 Tim 3:6 [sic for 16]; on John 12:13; on Jer 36:4-6) and finds them unconvincing. On the other hand Calvin is free to state that the NT writers took liberties in quoting the OT and paid little attention to chronological order or to niceties of style. McNeill writes: “In Acts 7:16 Luke has ‘made a manifest error’ ” (p. 143). Calvin, however, had not ascribed the error to Luke, and it appears more natural to view this as a case where he surmised a faulty textual transmission and so said flatly, “This passage (*locus*) must be corrected.”

Menthonnex, Paul. *L'Inspiration des Saintes Ecritures d'après Calvin*. Lausanne: Bridel, 1873, 52 pp.

This master's thesis contends that Calvin was interested only in the inspiration of the substance of the teaching of Scripture. Menthonnex lists certain statements of Calvin where a mistake is acknowledged (Matt 27:9; Acts 7:16). A shift in the chronological order occurs (Luke 10:25; 24:12) or OT citations have been quoted without exact accuracy by the NT authors (Matt 2:6; 5:40; Luke 6:30). This list is meager, but it constitutes the heart of what will be advanced later to document Calvin's alleged acceptance of errancy.

Mickelsen, John K. “The Relationship Between the Commentaries of John Calvin and His *Institutes*. . . , and the Bearing of That Relationship on the Study of Calvin's Doctrine of Scripture.” *The Gordon Review* 5/4 (Winter 1959) 155-168.

This title describes very accurately the substance of the article. From Mickelsen's sampling it is apparent that there is great concordance between the use of Scripture in the *Institutes* and the interpretation given in the *Commentaries*. Evidence is supplied for Calvin's high view of inspiration, and passages where he is alleged to have found errors in Scripture are discussed. Helpful data are found in four appendices.

Mitchell, Louis J. “The Doctrine of Scripture in the Thought of John Calvin.” Unpublished paper. 1981, 59 pp.

An excellent statement, taking ample account of previous literature. “Such affirmations as the inerrancy of the Scriptures in the original texts, and, concerning the words themselves, verbal inspiration seemed to be consistent with Calvin's own working pre-suppositions” (p. 45).

Moore, C. Dunlop. “Calvin's Doctrine of Holy Scripture.” *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 4 (1893) 49-70.

A valuable article contending that Calvin clearly held to plenary inspiration and to inerrancy. Proof by Calvin's direct assertion as well as by his concrete handling of scriptural difficulties is adduced. Certain passages where Calvin is asserted to have acknowledged error in the original Scriptures (Matt 27:9; Acts 7:16) are examined, and it is argued that Calvin envisioned the error to have “crept in” in the process of manuscript transcription. The incongruity of Calvin's admitting of errors of fact in view of his strong statements about the divine authorship of Scripture is argued very effectively.

Muller, Richard A. “The Foundation of Calvin's Theology: Scripture as Revealing God's Word.” *Duke Divinity School Review* 44/1 (Winter 1979) 14-23.

A helpful article emphasizing the correlation of Calvin's doctrine of Scripture with his outlook on the Trinity. “Calvin would have agreed with later doctrines of verbal inspiration but would have questioned the advisability of grounding the authority of Scripture solely on an objective statement of its divine origin which must remain forever external to the believer” (p. 22).

Murray, John. *Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960) 11-51.

An excellent treatment dealing with scrupulous care with every instance of Calvin's alleged admission of errors in Scripture adduced by C. A. Briggs and E. Doumergue. This book also contains a discussion of Calvin's understanding of the relation between the finality of Scripture, God's Word written, and the finality of Christ, God's Word incarnate. The ground of acceptance of Scripture and the testimony of the Holy Spirit are discussed in conclusion.

Nicole, J. M. "Calvin, Homme de la Bible." *Revue de Théologie et d'Action Évangéliques* 3 (1943) 310-327. Also in *Calvin et la Réforme en France* (Aix: Faculté Libre, 1959) 42-59.

A very clear article documenting Calvin's acceptance of plenary inspiration and dealing with some of the difficulties raised by Doumergue.

Niesel, Wilhelm. *The Theology of Calvin*. London: Lutterworth, 1956, 254 pp. (translation of *Die Theologie Calvins*. Munich: Kaiser, 1938, 241 pp.).

Niesel represents Calvin's doctrine of Scripture in thoroughly neo-orthodox manner: The Bible is only a witness to the true Word of God, Jesus Christ. "Calvin does not confuse but distinguishes the one Word and the words of Scripture, Jesus Christ the soul of the Bible and the extant written message which bears witness to Him" (p. 35). "Calvin neither championed the idea of the demonstrable mechanical inspiration of the Bible nor did he believe in its inspired literal inerrancy" (p. 36). The only evidence of such statements is a reference to Doumergue.

Noltensmeier, Hermann. *Reformatrische Einheit. Das Schriftverständnis bei Luther und Calvin*. Graz: Böhlau, 1953, 95 pp.

Noltensmeier deals with Calvin on pp. 44-82. He emphasizes that for Calvin preaching was a proclamation of God's Word (pp. 73-77) and proceeds to discuss the relation of Scripture as a text (*Buchstabenkörper*) to the Word of God. Here he denies that Calvin held to verbal inspiration, because Calvin represented the Bible as a mirror in which faith contemplates God (*Inst.* III.ii.6); because Christ himself is the only revelation of the divine secret; and because Calvin took considerable liberties in critical matters in his exposition of Scripture (pp. 77-80). In this way Noltensmeier sees a basic agreement between Luther and Calvin, both of them being reinterpreted in neo-orthodox terms.

Orr, James. "Calvin's Attitude Towards and Exegesis of the Scriptures." *Calvin Memorial Addresses* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1909) 89-105.

A brief treatment by a conservative scholar, who was himself not wholly committed to the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture. He concludes his essay with the statements: "There can be no doubt that Calvin treated the Bible as through and through inspired—the word of God in all its parts. . . . Those who seek countenance for a lowering of the authority of Scripture must seek it elsewhere than in John Calvin" (p. 105).

Packer, J. I. "Calvin's View of Scripture." *God's Inerrant Word* (ed. J. W. Montgomery; Minneapolis: Bethany, 1974) 95-114.

A very succinct presentation articulating the view that Calvin held to the plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture. Passages that are claimed to be out of line with inerrancy are considered (pp. 105-107) and shown to be consistent with Calvin's high doctrine. This is a remarkably incisive and pithy statement, well documented with references to primary and secondary sources.

———, "The Scriptures and John Calvin: A Case for Biblical Infallibility." *Inerrancy and the Church: A Historical Perspective* (ed. John D. Hannah; Chicago: Moody, forthcoming).

Pannier, Jacques. *Le Témoignage du Saint-Esprit*. Paris: Fischbacher, 1893, 227 pp.

A very able doctor's thesis by a man who was to become one of the most learned specialists in the history of French Protestantism. It is in this book that we find the statement, not otherwise demonstrated, that "in any case Calvin has not written a single word that one could invoke as supporting literal inspiration" (p. 200).

———, "L'Autorité de l'Ecriture Sainte d'après Calvin." *Revue de Théologie et des Questions Religieuses* 15 (1906) 193-211, 367-381.

A very positive statement, emphasizing the unity of the Spirit and the written Word.

Parker, T. H. L. *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God. A Study in the Theology of John Calvin*. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1952, 120 pp.

A valuable compact study of the knowledge of God as Creator (pp. 7-56) and Redeemer (pp. 61-116), studded with references to Calvin's works. The discussion of the nature and function of the Scriptures occupies pp. 42-51 and 93-99. It is very positive with a strong emphasis on the thought that Scripture functions for us as the Word of God only when it is received by faith and obedience under the impact of the witness of the Holy Spirit. "The expression 'the Holy Spirit says' is synonymous in Calvin for 'the Scripture says'" (p. 42). The question of inerrancy or verbal inspiration is not discussed, although a certain neo-orthodox aura permeates the book.

Polman, A. D. R. "Calvin on the Inspiration of Scripture." *John Calvin, Contemporary Prophet* (ed. J. T. Hoogstra; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959) 97-112.

A brief treatment with a very emphatic affirmation of Calvin's doctrine of Scripture. One "cannot deny that Calvin professes the authorship of the Holy Spirit with respect to the entire Bible, even including language, style, and diction. The inspiration of the Spirit pertains not only to Spiritual doctrine, to cardinal soteriological truths, but even to the smallest details" (p. 100).

Praamsma, L. "Calvin on Scripture." *Torch and Trumpet* 9/4 (1959) 4-7.

A brief article contrasting the positions of J. A. Cramer and D. J. de Groot. Praamsma sides decidedly with de Groot.

Pruden, E. H. "Calvin's Doctrine of Holy Scripture." Unpublished thesis. Edinburgh, 1930.

I had no access to this work, but R. C. Prust quotes it as representing Calvin as endorsing inerrancy.

Prust, Richard C. "Was Calvin a Biblical Literalist?" *SJT* 20/3 (1967) 312-328.

Prust's answer to this question is "No." He begins by stating the case for viewing Calvin as holding to verbal inspiration, then he raises some objections to it: the cleavage between Word and Spirit; Calvin's "imperturbation over scriptural discrepancies in many places"; his recognition of a human factor in the Bible, which somehow is construed by Prust as ruled out by verbal inspiration. Prust offers a solution by suggesting that for Calvin it is "doctrine" that comes from God, yet not as a set of propositions but rather as an existential encounter, a feeling of God as a power to whom humans respond through obedience. Hence both the strong and the hesitant passages in Calvin. Of course it must be owned that there are difficulties with this view—e.g., the many places where Calvin labors to explain away inaccuracies, the passages where he speaks of the variety of literary styles as due to the Holy Spirit, or again when he argues from prophecy to divine authorship. Yet these are minor inconsistencies into which Calvin lapsed, because the heresy of his day was not fundamentalism. All this appears to be gratuitous speculation.

Rabaud, Edouard. *Histoire de la Doctrine de l'Inspiration des Saintes Ecritures dans les*

Pays de Langue Française de la Réformation à nos Jours. Paris: Fischbacher, 1883, xx+351 pp.

The treatment of Calvin (pp. 52-64) is ambivalent: Rabaud acknowledges that Calvin viewed God as the author of Scripture but held back from carrying the logical implications of his position. He holds that "those who veered to the left and those who veered to the right have an equal right to claim support from the fathers of the Reformation" (p. 73). This is a notable concession from the pen of a determined opponent of inerrancy, who felt that Calvin's doctrine shackled the theological development in France for more than two centuries (p. 54).

Reid, J. K. S. *The Authority of Scripture*. Kerr Lectures. New York: Harper, n.d. (1957), 286 pp.

Chapter 2 deals with Calvin's view of the authority of the Bible. Reid begins by presenting evidence "for holding Calvin to be a literalist," and he says that "the case is formidable" (p. 35). He introduces caveats, however. The humanness of the Bible, the latitude in Calvin's use of terms, his emphasis on the importance of Biblical teaching rather than peripheral details, his stress on the witness of the Holy Spirit and on the centrality of Christ—all these carry out "the demolition of the idea that Calvin teaches a verbal inspiration" (p. 54). Reid has a supplementary note in which he lists Peter Barth [*sic* for Brunner], H. Clavier, E. Doumergue, H. Heppe, W. Niesel, J. Pannier, O. Ritschl, R. Seeberg, R. S. Wallace and F. Wendel as denying infallibility to be Calvin's view, while H. Bauke, R. E. Davies, E. A. Dowey, A. M. Hunter, P. Lobstein and J. Mackinnon assert it. The names of O. Ritschl and R. Seeberg appear to be in the wrong list.

Rickabaugh, Homer Tyndale. "Calvin's Witness to the Bible as Religious Authority." Unpublished thesis. Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, 1962, 176 pp.

I had no access to this work.

Ritschl, Otto. *Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908), 1. 63-65.

A brief statement in which Calvin is represented as teaching that "the Scriptures originated by a verbal dictation of the Holy Spirit" (p. 63). Ritschl disputes the contention of Heinrich Heppe to the contrary.

Rogers, Jack B., and Donald K. McKim. *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*. San Francisco: Harper, 1979, xxiv+484 pp.

The view of Calvin is treated on pp. 89-116 (with 168 footnotes on pp. 134-144). A decided effort is made to establish a cleavage between Calvin and the so-called scholastic Calvinistic theology that flourished in the seventeenth century and that Rogers and McKim deem to be the principal fountainhead of the idea of inerrancy. There is much valuable material in these pages (and especially the footnotes), although in developing their view of Calvin's acceptance of a limited erroneousness in Scripture the authors do not provide new examples from Calvin but simply have recourse to his comments on Matt 27:9 and Acts 7:16 (where it is surely plausible to posit that Calvin had in view a correction in a text damaged in transcription rather than a mistake in the autograph) as well as certain remarks relating to the NT writers' freedom in quoting the OT (Rom 3:4; 10:6; Heb 2:7; 10:6 [*sic* for 5]). From the footnotes one can add Acts 4:6; Rom 5:15; 1 Cor 2:9; 10:8; Eph 4:8. All of these instances have been frequently scrutinized before and were advanced either by Doumergue, McNeill or both. Some of these are actually counterproductive when the full text of Calvin's *Commentaries* is in view, for Calvin's concern for harmonization in these passages is unmistakable. The extensive critique in John Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), should be consulted.

Seeberg, Reinhold. *Textbook of the History of Doctrines* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1905), 2. 395-396 (cf. a more detailed handling in the 3d German ed. of this work [Leipzig: Deichert, 1920], 4. 566-570).

A very positive treatment of Calvin's view of the authority of Scripture. According to Clavier, de Groot, Dowey, Wendel, Doumergue and Davies, Seeberg was among those who contend that Calvin held to verbal inspiration and inerrancy, although Reid for unknown reasons contests this. Yet Seeberg stated that "Calvin is the author of the so-called inspiration theory of the older dogmaticians" (2. 396). See also his little volume *Revelation and Inspiration* (London: Harper, 1909), where Calvin is presented as holding that "Scripture is inspired, word for word, by the Holy Spirit" (p. 24).

Spencer, Robert E. "A Comparative Evaluation of the Idea of Revelation in the Theology of John Calvin and Karl Barth." Unpublished thesis. Biblical Seminary, New York, 1964, 102 pp.

I had no access to this work.

Stauffer, Richard. *Dieu, la création et la Providence dans la prédication de Calvin*. Berne, etc.: Peter Lang, 1978, 343 pp.

An extremely fine and well-documented study, making very ample use of Calvin's sermons including many that have only recently been printed (*Supplementa Calviniana* 1936-1971) and some that are available only in manuscript form (sermons on Genesis 1-20). The chapter on special revelation fills pp. 53-71, followed by 33 pages of footnotes, literally brimming with quotations from Calvin's sermons. On the question of inerrancy Stauffer opts against the view that Calvin held to verbal inspiration. He quotes Calvin's first sermon on the evangelical harmony, where Calvin said, "The Apostles have not intruded themselves . . . but God has so worked in them, that they were witnesses of the doctrine of salvation. . . . They have introduced nothing on their own: they have not stepped forward even as much as by one word: but they have faithfully transmitted to us what God had committed to them. . . . Men are not the authors of the Gospel, it has not proceeded from their brains, but God used them as instruments of His Spirit and spoke through their mouth" (p. 64). Stauffer remarks: "When one reads this text objectively, one must concede that nothing here can provide a basis for the doctrine of the literal inspiration of Scripture as defended by Reformed orthodoxy." This comment is surely puzzling since the expressions "not . . . by one word," "not . . . from their brains," "instruments of His Spirit," "God spoke through their mouth" would seem to warrant precisely the opposite conclusion. What is even more puzzling is that Stauffer thinks that he can claim Warfield to support his view (p. 65). Apparently Stauffer considers verbal inspiration to be identical with mechanical dictation, but Reformed orthodoxy, represented notably by Warfield, has never countenanced this identification. On p. 72 Stauffer has a splendid bibliography.

Wallace, Ronald S. *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1953, xii+253 pp.

In this lucidly written volume with very abundant references to Calvin's own works, chap. 8, "The Written Word as the Word of God" (pp. 96-114), is of primary concern here. For Calvin, says Wallace, Scripture—authenticated by the witness of the Holy Spirit—is the only true source of our knowledge of Christ, the sole authority in the life of the Church and the object of a reverent approach. Its unique origin is the basis of its authority (pp. 106-111). Here Wallace waxes eloquent: "Calvin insists that in the resultant Word there is freedom from human error and from the marks of human infirmity" (p. 108). Yet he refrains from ranking Calvin's view "alongside that which is called today 'fundamentalism'" because Calvin "is at times careless about details" (p. 111). Wal-

lace gives 15 examples of this alleged carelessness, which add nothing to those previously mentioned (p. 112). Other considerations are the earthly form of Scripture (p. 113), the emphasis on the identity of Jesus Christ with the Word of God, and "the sacramental relation which is so important a feature of Calvin's theology. . . . The divine character never becomes inherently and inseparably connected with the human element, though it is true that the human action and indeed the human element can be *spoken* of as if it did so partake of the divine nature" (p. 114). One wonders how this principle would apply to the incarnation.

Warfield, B. B. "Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God." *PTR* 7 (1909) 219-325. Reprinted in *Calvin and the Reformation* (New York: Revell, 1909) 130-214; *Calvin and Calvinism* (New York: Oxford, 1931; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 29-130; and *Calvin and Augustine* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1956) 29-130.

A superb article formulating in a classic manner the case for Calvin's adherence to inerrancy. Warfield was a "top-notch" specialist both on Calvin and on the doctrine of inspiration. Anyone wishing to dispute the position that Calvin held to inerrancy will certainly need to take careful account of Warfield's arguments.

Watterson, Aulton Douglas, Jr. "The View of the Inspiration of the Bible in Martin Luther and John Calvin." Unpublished thesis. Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1958, 110 pp.

I had no access to this work.

Wendel, François. *Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*. New York: Harper, 1963, 383 pp. (the original edition appeared in Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1950, viii+292 pp.).

A very fine volume with a biographical sketch and a valuable summary of Calvin's teaching with excellent documentation from a wide range of Calvin literature. In chap. 2 of the second part Wendel deals with Book I of the *Institutes* and stresses the complementarity of the Scriptures and the witness of the Holy Spirit. He says: "The writings of the Bible are the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit who inspired their authors attests to us the faithfulness with which they have performed their task. From this fact one often draws the conclusion that Calvin held to the literal inspiration of the sacred Scriptures. . . . Yet, in fact, Calvin never asserted literal inspiration. . . . The authors of Biblical books wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and yet they were allowed to introduce into them human errors in peripheral matters which do not affect the doctrine" (p. 160). Wendel then refers to Calvin's commentaries on Matt 17:9 and Heb 11:21, passages sufficiently considered elsewhere.

Wernle, Paul. *Der evangelische Glaube nach den Hauptschriften der Reformatorn. III. Calvin*. Tübingen: Mohr, 1919, xii+412 pp.

A rather brief treatment of Calvin's view of Scripture on the basis mainly of the 1539 edition of the *Institutes* (pp. 175-186). Wernle identifies the witness of the Holy Spirit with religious experience, but he acknowledges that Calvin identifies the Word of God with Scripture (p. 175).

Woodbridge, John. *Biblical Authority*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982, 237 pp.

A thoroughgoing critique of the book by Rogers and McKim. On pp. 56-67 Woodbridge examines the contention that Calvin acknowledged discrepancies and scientific errors in Scripture. He shows that these claims are ill-founded, as can often be made manifest through a reading of the full text rather than the excerpts quoted by Rogers/McKim. In the case of Acts 7:16 it is on a mistranslation of Calvin's comment that the claim of an error by Luke is grounded.